

Study Notes and Questions for Exodus 32

- What is happening in this chapter?
- **Study note:** While Moses was on the mountain receiving instructions for Israel's worship, the people below were getting restless. Marching through the desert had been exhausting, but for more than a month now the community of Israel had been just waiting for Moses to reappear.
- What was causing the fear and worry among the people of Israel?
- Was the concern of the people legitimate? Why or why not?
- What could Aaron have done to allay their fears?
- What did the people ask Aaron to do and why did they do it?
- Why do you think people are so prone to making idols?
- What kinds of idols do we manufacture for our own comfort today?
- Compare the golden calf incident in Exodus with **1 Kings 12:25–33**. What are the similarities?
- **Study note:** The Hebrew term calf means “young bull in his first strength.” Bull images were common in Near Eastern religions, including in both Egypt and Canaan. “The sacredness of the bull as the symbol of strength and reproductive power runs from Baal worship in Canaan to popular Hinduism in South India today.
- Realizing he had done wrong, how did Aaron try to redeem the situation (see 32:5)?
- How did God see the situation and those involved in it? (see 32:7–10)
- Do you think it was appropriate that Moses broke the tablets of the Law? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Moses ground the gold up and made Israel drink it? (see 32:20)
- Moses interceded for the people. To intercede means literally “to stand between.” Psalm 106:23 describes Moses' actions in Exodus 32:11–14, 31–32 as standing “**in the breach**.” The imagery is one of standing in a hole in a wall to prevent enemies from getting in, or straddling a chasm between two cliffs so that people can pass to safety. What do you learn about intercession or standing in the breach from this chapter?
- What do you feel is the most important lesson from this passage?