

## **Ki Tisa (*When you Elevate*)** **Exodus 30:11-34:35**

The worship of the “**golden calf**”. It sounds silly, doesn’t it? It seems hard to believe that the children of Israel, after experiencing the voice and the glory of יהוה (Yahweh), could have stooped to such a low as to demand for and worship an idol calf made of gold. Usually when something like this is so hard to believe, there’s more to the story. Let’s see if we can make any sense out of it.

Back a few chapters we were told that Moses (and Joshua) ascended Mt. Sinai without telling the people exactly when he would return:

**Exodus 24:12** Then יהוה said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them."<sup>13</sup> So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God.<sup>14</sup> And he said to the elders, "**Wait here for us until we come back to you.** Indeed Aaron and Hur are with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them."

The information that Moses leaves with the elders is totally open-ended as far as **when he will return**. Only we, the readers, are informed that he was on the mountain **for 40 days**:

**Exodus 24:18** So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain **forty days and forty nights**.

It’s been kind of hard to keep track of Moses. He’s gone on that mountain more than once to speak to Elohim:

**Exodus 19:3** And **Moses went up** to Elohim, and יהוה called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:

**Exodus 19:20** Then יהוה came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And יהוה called Moses to the top of the mountain, and **Moses went up**.

**Exodus 24:1** Now He said to Moses, "Come up to יהוה, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar."<sup>2</sup> "And Moses alone shall come near יהוה, but they shall not come near; nor shall the people go up with him."

None of these previous trips appear to have been more **than a day or two**. So how long do you think the children of Israel thought Moses would be gone? Supposedly Moses was just going up to get the tablets of stone that יהוה had written on (24:12). How long would **YOU** expect that to take? Now this is the rest of the information that the children of Israel had to process when Moses walked up on that mountain:

**Exodus 24:17** The sight of the glory of יהוה *was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain* in the eyes of the children of Israel.

Mankind is by nature **impatient**. In fact we have a name for that and it describes our bent much of the time.....**instant gratification**. Put yourselves in their sandals and think about what you might have thought. Perhaps Moses had been consumed by the **fire** on that mountain. It had been so long...he was probably dead. **SOMEONE** would have to make a decision about what to do from here. They probably waited with great expectation for days, even weeks...then the stress of the situation became too much for them.

It is encouraging that you don't see anyone talking about returning to Egypt. I'm sure the conversations were consumed with "**what shall we do?**" They had been told over and over again of their **future destination**:

**Exodus 3:8** "So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land **to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites** and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.

**Exodus 3:17** "and I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt **to the land of the Canaanites** and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey." '

**Exodus 6:8** 'And **I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage**: I am יהוה.' "

Well the truth was that they knew **where** they were headed (Canaan), but they really didn't know many of the **details** for the journey. The most recent information they had heard was given to them along with the ordinances Moses had already brought down from the mountain:

**Exodus 23:20** "Behold, I send an **angel before you** to keep you in the way and **to bring you into the place which I have prepared**.<sup>21</sup> "Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for **My name is in Him**.....**Exodus 23:23** "**For My angel will go before** you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.

An **angel** is the Hebrew word melak (מַלְאָךְ) and it means "**messenger**". It can be a **person** (like the leaders of the assemblies in Revelation 2 & 3, or it can be **of divine nature**. **Wouldn't** it have been a logical assumption that this angel/melak was **Moses**? Certainly Moses had performed many miracles in the **Name of יהוה**. So with the information that they had, they proceeded:

**Exodus 32:1** Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us **gods that shall go before us**; for *as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land* of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

Did you catch the similar phrases in Exodus 23:20 and Exodus 32:1?

- Exodus 23:20 – send an **angel before you**
- Exodus 32:1 – make us **gods that will go before us**

The word for **gods** in Exodus 32:1 is “**Elohim**”. This Hebrew word is usually used in the context of our Creator and Judge יהוה Elohim, but is sometimes translated in other ways:

**Psalm 8:5** For You have made him a little lower than the **angels (elohim)**, And You have crowned him with glory and honor.

So perhaps what they are asking for is not a **replacement** for the **Elohim** that led them out of Egypt, but rather someone who would **go before them**....someone/something that would lead them to the land of Promise. We know from Exodus 32:1 that they believed it was **Moses who had led them out of the land of Egypt**. Now with the possibility that Moses was dead, they are looking for another **leader**, and in their minds this **malek/elohim** could be a **symbol** (they still had an Egyptian mindset) as well as a **person**. In their minds, they were **not actively seeking idolatry** or polytheism. They were just reverting back to what was **familiar** to them. They were aware of the requirement that “יהוה’s **Name** must be in him” (Exodus 23:21).

It seems odd that Aaron supposedly goes along with their request. Some say that he was trying to buy time, hoping that Moses would return before the golden calf was completed. Still Aaron cannot be excused from his participation in this sin. Perhaps the **calf** required as a **sin offering** for Aaron’s ordination was a reminder of this incident.

Okay, let’s continue on to see if this all makes sense.

**Exodus 32:4** And he received *the gold* from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This *is your elohim*, O Israel, **that brought you out of the land of Egypt!**"

Oh dear! Something seems to be amiss. Hadn’t they already declared in Exodus 32:1 that it was Moses that had led them out of Egypt? Now it appears that they want to give the credit to this molded golden calf. Or...in the same way that they knew it was יהוה that led them out of Egypt yet in their words they say it was Moses that led them....were they also hoping that this calf could act as the **symbol** of the same יהוה they had put their trust in? In other words the calf just **represented יהוה**. They were not trying to replace יהוה. They were trying to replace **Moses**. Man has a need to have a **visible** proof of יהוה’s Presence. יהוה knew of that need, and had they waited for Moses to return they would have received the plans for the **Tabernacle** – יהוה’s **choice** for a physical reality based on a heavenly model.

Has not the **cross** become a **physical symbol of the presence of יהוה** for many believers? How many gatherings have gone forward **following someone carrying a cross**? Is the cross truly a symbol of the Presence of יהוה?

Now the actions that Aaron and the children of Israel took seem to make sense because the next scenario is almost identical to what happened 40 days earlier on Mt. Sinai. Compare the two:

**Exodus 24:4** .... And he **rose early in the morning**, and **built an altar** at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>5</sup> Then he sent young men of the children

of Israel, who **offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings** of oxen to יהוה..... So they saw Elohim, and **they ate and drank**.

**Exodus 32:5** So when Aaron saw *it*, he **built an altar** before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow *is* a feast to יהוה." <sup>6</sup> Then **they rose early** on the next day, **offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings**; and the people sat down to **eat and drink**, and rose up to play.

Did you notice these similarities?

- An altar built in front of some sort of a symbol
- Burnt offerings and peace offerings were offered
- Eating and drinking

It is not unlike יהוה to give the children of Israel **symbols**. The Tabernacle will be filled with them. Later on in Numbers and in the book of Joshua, **the Ark of the Covenant will lead them** into battle. The only difference is **WHO** it is that is dictating what the **symbol** will be.

So now we need to figure out...why did the children of Israel come up with a **golden calf**? We know that the nation had some issues coming out of Egypt. The culture that they had lived in for hundreds of years had taken its toll on them and they had not completely given up their **pagan ways**:

**Ezekiel 20:5** " Say to them, 'Thus says Adonai יהוה: "On the day when I chose Israel and raised My hand in an oath to the descendants of the house of Jacob, and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, I raised My hand in an oath to them, saying, 'I *am* יהוה your Elohim.'<sup>6</sup> "On that day I raised My hand in an oath to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, 'flowing with milk and honey,' the glory of all lands.'<sup>7</sup> "Then I said to them, 'Each of you, **throw away the abominations which are before his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt**. I *am* יהוה your Elohim.'<sup>8</sup> "But **they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me**. They did not all cast away the abominations which were before their eyes, **nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt**. Then I said, 'I will pour out My fury on them and fulfill My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.'<sup>9</sup> "But I acted for My name's sake, that it should not be profaned before the Gentiles among whom they *were*, in whose sight I had made Myself known to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt.

These verses make it clear that what we have is a group of people who have **physically left Egypt**, but still have some of Egypt left in **them**. They have already been given some **truth**:

**Exodus 20:4** " You **shall not make for yourself a carved image**, or any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth;

Still **their bent towards idolatry** would win out. Why? Because of their **stubbornness**. יהוה called them "**stiff-necked**":

**Exodus 32:9** And יהוה said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it *is* a **stiff-necked people**!

Someone with a **stiff neck** is not able to turn his head from the direction that he is going. Now if you're going in the proper direction...no problem!

**Proverbs 4:26** Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established.<sup>27</sup> Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.

But if you are walking based on the old ways that you are accustomed to...and they are contrary to Yah's ways, and you are **stubborn and will not change**....then you are risking the anger of יהוה. In fact He has this to say about **stubbornness**:

**1 Samuel 15:23** For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and **stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry**. Because you have rejected the word of יהוה, He also has rejected you from *being* king."

This verse is right on with what happened to the Israelites. **Stubbornness led them directly into idolatry**...even though in their minds, they would not have called it this. Okay, let's back up a little bit and take another look at Exodus 32:1:

**Exodus 32:1** Now when the people saw that Moses **delayed** coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, **we do not know** what has become of him."

The Hebrew word for **delayed** (בוֹשֵׁ) is a term that actually **implies that Moses had disappointed them**. They had **their own ideas** of how long he should be up there on that mountain. They took their disappointment and turned it into **a demand for a new leader who would fit their needs**. Aaron was their choice since Joshua was not with them either. **They remembered the promise for the land and they determined that it was time to move forward to claim their inheritance**.

Another phrase in the verse up above has significance... "**we do not know**". This can be our downfall. Actually it **was** the downfall of Adam and Eve. They "**did not know**" if what the serpent was telling them was correct. The tree they decided to eat from was the tree of the "**knowledge of good and evil**". This tree placed **experience over the relationship and trust of the tree of life**. How many times are we guilty of this when we become **tired of waiting**?

We would benefit to learn the valuable lesson of **waiting on Adonai**. **Waiting** with steadfast endurance is a great expression of faith. It means enduring patiently in confident hope that Yah will act for the salvation of His people. Here are some beautiful verses on **waiting**:

**Isaiah 25:9** And it will be said in that day: "Behold, this *is* our Elohim; We have **waited** for Him, and He will save us. This *is* יהוה; We have **waited** for Him; **We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation** (Yeshua)."

**Isaiah 40:31** But those who **wait** on יהוה **shall renew their strength**; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

And here is the advice for those of us who are eager to get to our **inheritance**, the Land of Promise...perhaps even tired of **waiting**:

**Psalm 37:7** Rest in יהוה, and **wait patiently for Him**; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.<sup>8</sup> Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret -- *it only causes harm.*<sup>9</sup> For evildoers shall be cut off; **But those who wait on יהוה, They shall inherit the earth.**

The **very last command** that **Yeshua** gave to His disciples before His ascension included **waiting**:

**Acts 1:4** And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but **to wait for the Promise of the Father**, "which," *He said*, "you have heard from Me;

**Had the disciples not waited as instructed**, they would have missed being baptized with the Holy Spirit. Think of all those who **waited**....Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob, Moses, David, Paul.... nearly everyone **waited for the promises** given to them. In Hebrew, the **root of hope is wait**. יהוה is the source of **hope** for His people, though they may have to **wait**.

**Jeremiah 29:11** For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says יהוה, thoughts of peace and not of evil, **to give you a future and a hope.**

Now look how Paul teaches the concepts of **waiting (persevering) and hope**:

**Romans 5:1** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with Yah through our Adonai Messiah Yeshua,<sup>2</sup> through whom also we have access by **faith** into this grace in which we stand, and **rejoice in hope** of the glory of Yah.<sup>3</sup> And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that **tribulation produces perseverance**;<sup>4</sup> **and perseverance, character; and character, hope.**<sup>5</sup> Now **hope does not disappoint**, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

And with verse 5 we connect again to Exodus 32:1 with the word "**disappoint**" which we saw earlier as one of the meanings of "**delay**". Thus in Romans 5 we see the **process of maturation** as we are **led in our trials from "waiting" to "hoping" which will not "disappoint"**. The reason why I think this is so important is that I also see in us **an inability to "wait" upon יהוה**. Sometimes we eagerly watch world events wondering if it is time for us to leave this Egypt that we live in and begin our trek to the Promised Land. Yet we are told to "**wait**". We will know when the timing is right to move forward:

**Amos 3:7** Surely Adonai יהוה does nothing, unless **He reveals His secret to His servants** the prophets.

Ancient sources speak of the **descendants of Joseph (Ephraim) leaving Egypt prematurely** (30 years too early), and as a result being **massacred**. The Jewish Encyclopedia surmises that the tribe of Ephraim **miscalculated** the time of **their deliverance from Egypt by 30 years**. Because they rebelled against the Word of Elohim in leaving Egypt **before the end of the captivity destined by Elohim** had arrived, all except ten were slain in their battle with the Philistines. The ten men who escaped from the battle returned to Egypt and related to their brothers what had happened.

According to Rashi, the source of the miscalculation was counting the years of exile from the Abrahamic Covenant, and not from the birth of Isaac, 30 years later.

The Bible teaches a **second Exodus**. The **details** of that Exodus have still not been **revealed** to us. What we do know is that we must **wait** on Him. **There is a danger of pressing on without Him.**

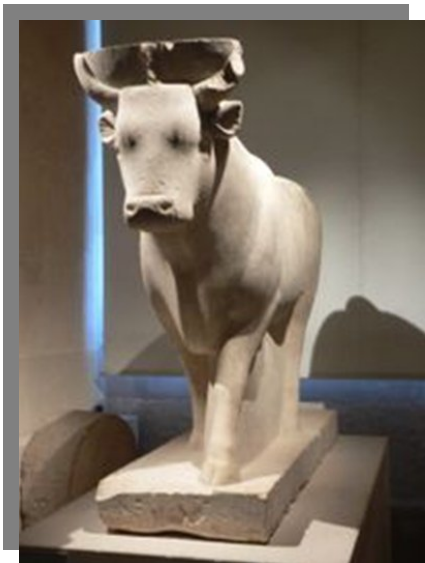
**Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**

Now to return to our Torah reading, what was the **result** of the children of Israel **not waiting on יהוה**? They made their own **symbol** and they identified it with יהוה. They declared a **feast day in the name of יהוה** and celebrated in a way they found appropriate. **Golden calf worship mixes יהוה's system of worship** with Egyptian, Babylonian, and Roman practices and beliefs and calls this **true worship**.

Hundreds of years later, with the split of the Northern Kingdom, **Jeroboam (Ephraimite) developed his own golden calf worship** (1 King 12:26-33). He built two tabernacles and strategically placed them in the Northern Kingdom. One was north in the city of Dan and the other was on the southern border that divided the two kingdoms. **Jeroboam mixed the Torah worship of יהוה with the Egyptian golden calf worship. He came up with a new festival date and called it יהוה's.**

We know that the patterns of history tend to repeat themselves. **Our history becomes our future.** The children of Israel were **notorious for declaring their own festivals to יהוה**. Why is that such a big deal? יהוה's **festivals, including the Sabbath speak of the death, resurrection, return, and the future dwelling of Messiah with His people.** These are intimate times יהוה **has chosen to spend with us.** When we do things differently....when we choose **our own festivals** and call them **His**, when we mix paganism with truth....we are choosing man's ways over יהוה's. Not only that, but we even call what we do **good**.

**Isaiah 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!**<sup>21</sup> Woe to *those who are* wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight!...<sup>24</sup> Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, And the flame consumes the chaff, **So their root will be as rottenness,** And their blossom will ascend like dust; Because **they have rejected the Torah of יהוה of hosts, And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.**



Let's take one final look at **the golden calf** and where that thought might have come from. During their time in slavery, the children of Israel would have had much exposure to **Egyptian sun-god worship**. According to Egyptian mythology, the Egyptians worshipped **Ra** as their chief Sun-god. The characteristics of Ra were said to be portrayed in the **strong and virile bull** who they named Apis. Apis was the most important of all the sacred animals in Egypt, and was said to have been **conceived from a light ray from heaven**.

**Sometimes Apis was pictured with his mother's sun ray between his horns.** I would refer you back to the previous commentary "Bo" for more on sun-god worship and about how we are still affected by that today.

Towards the end of our Parashah, after the children of Israel are once more in the good graces of ייְהוָה, He repeats the commandment to **not make an idol**:

**Exodus 34:17** "You shall make no molded gods for yourselves.

If you continue reading through verse 25, you will find what you should do instead:

- **Keep** the feast of Unleavened Bread (includes Passover)
- **Keep** the Shabbat
- **Keep** Shavuot (Pentecost)
- **Keep** Sukkot (Feast of Ingathering – fall)

I think we can see where **the heart of the Father** is. **Waiting** is difficult. But He's told us **what to do while we wait**. And what could be better than to **rest on the Sabbath** and to **celebrate the Feasts!**

Shabbat Shalom,  
**Ardelle**