

God's Perfect Method for Shredding Your Idols

Just imagine if you were the bride at a wedding, and the groom went to a private room to discuss the details of the service. The meeting goes a little longer than expected, and when the groom returns, the bride has married the best man, and all of the guests are celebrating in the reception. Think about what would be going through the groom's mind at the moment he arrived in the reception hall. The swirl of hurt, anger and emotional turmoil he would be experiencing all at once. The groom confronts the bride, who responds with the words "You took longer than we thought you would, so in fear, I decided to marry the best man today. But don't worry; we will celebrate tomorrow as if it was our wedding that took place."

This is almost exactly the event that took place in Exodus 32:

Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together around Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us gods which will go before us. 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."

Aaron said to them, "Break off the gold earrings that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." So all the people broke off the gold earrings that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. He received them from their hand, and fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it into a molded calf. Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt."

When Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow will be a feast to the Lord." So they rose up early on the next day, and offered

burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play (Ex. 32:1-6).

Just think about it. Moses is up on the mountain receiving the covenantal tablets personally from G-D. In Judaism, this time of covenant-making between G-D and Israel is pictured as the *Ketubah* (wedding contract), with the cloud above the mountain being the *chuppah* (wedding canopy). So the scenario above is not far from the reality of the event. And the betrayal is no less dramatic.

While this scene is difficult for people of faith to imagine taking place, especially after all of the miracles G-D had performed on behalf of the Children of Israel, first in Egypt and now in the wilderness. Anyone who has experienced fear knows that real fear can in many ways disconnect ability to distinguish between our rational and irrational thoughts. While it is very difficult for us to understand how the children of Israel could so quickly turn their hearts from G-D to idolatry. It is an equal if not greater mystery to understand how G-D could so quickly forgive Israel after the golden calf.

However, it is precisely this event that allows us today to walk in the full confidence of the forgiveness of G-D through the atonement of our Messiah Yeshua. You may ask yourself, *What does the golden calf have to do with Yeshua's sacrifice?*

The answer is everything and nothing. Nothing because the golden calf was an idol, and as we know, he has no power at all. And everything because the golden calf is one of the greatest symbols of forgiveness in the Bible. It is directly after the golden calf event that we find G-D placing Moses in the cleft of the rock and showing him what we read in Exodus 33:23 in English: "Then I will take away My hand, and you will see My back, but My face may not be seen."

In Hebrew, the word translated as “back” is *ah-chor-eye*, which comes from the root word אָחֹר (Achor) which can mean “back” but also can mean, and I believe does mean in this verse, “past” or “history.” Moses was not shown G-Ds rear end while he was hidden in the cleft of the rock; rather, G-D showed Moses His history.

What history, you might ask? The history from creation until that very day, but not the history of man, rather the history of G-D. Why is this so important and what does it have to do with the golden calf, or Yeshua, for that matter? It is because the history shown was the history of G-D continuing forgiveness of man starting with Adam and completing in the forgiveness of the children of Israel for making and worshiping the golden calf. Remember the Israelites had been in Egypt for 430 years and had just been delivered from slavery. They built a golden calf out of fear, and because the perspective of G-D would have been based largely on the pagan gods of Egypt, they would have had no context to understand a G-D of true forgiveness and love. So G-D takes this moment to show Moses His history of forgiveness and love for His people.

Moses then responds in the same way each of us should respond when we get an understanding of G-D’s forgiveness provided for us even though we have been idolaters. Exodus 34:8-9:

Moses made haste and bowed to the ground and worshipped. He said, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray, go among us, for we are a stiff-necked people. Pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.”

Moses’ response once he saw the G-D’s history of forgiveness and love was to ask G-D to forgive the rest of Israel. You see, every time we are forgiven, we become a part of the History of G-D’s forgiveness that can be shared so that others will understand and accept that He can and will forgive them,

and they then will also become part of that History. Or as it says in 2 Corinthians 3: 1-3:

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, letters of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? You are our letter written in our hearts, known and read by all men. For you are prominently declared to be the letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on human tablets of the heart. {eoas}

Eric Tokajer is executive director of The Messianic Times and author of With Me in Paradise, Transient Singularity and OY! How Did I Get Here?: Thirty-One Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before Entering Ministry.