

### **Background Information for Exodus 32:30-33:23**



The golden calf act has come to be known as the “original sin of Ancient Israel.” As every sin is an act of distrust of God as Eve displayed in the Garden, so also is every sin a type of idolatry. This is not to say that the original sin in the Garden did not affect human nature; but now, for the first time in the idolatrous worship of the golden calf, collective disobedience is portrayed, and its lasting consequences.

It can be deduced from Exodus 32 that the Israelites knew exactly what they were doing in their sacrifice. They witnessed Egyptian pagan worship for years and years in bondage. It seems that it left a lasting impression on them. They first offered up their riches that the Egyptians despoiled to them (Ex 32:3), then created a molten calf that was most certainly meant to represent the Egyptians’ fertility god, Apis (Ex 32:4) and then made the sacrifice on the altar (Ex 32:5). As you read the aftermath of this miserable event, keep in mind how offensive this would be to God.

Fortunately, as you see, God has mercy. Exodus 33 is an intimate dialogue in which Moses continuously pleads God to forgive Israel their “stiff-neckedness” (Ex 33:3). Moses has entered into the tabernacle to speak with God “face to face” as a “friend” (Ex 33:11). God affirms Moses’s faithfulness in his telling Moses that He “knows thee by name” (Ex 33:12). Moses’s favor is with God. God sees in him a servant. Moses makes of himself a living offering stepping in for Israel’s grave sin. God ultimately forgives Israel for the sake of Moses’s faithfulness (see Ex 33:17). Moses is a Christ figure that pleads to God on the basis of his merits. In the end, he is victorious just like Christ. Moses’s intimacy with God grants a divine “pick me up” of Israel and leads them towards the Promised Land, just like Christ’s intimacy with the Father gains the promised land of Eternal Life in Heaven for those in His grace.