

Exodus 31-32 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

Outline For Exodus

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CHAPTER 31

18. 31:1-11 - *The Artisan-Builders*

¹ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ² “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. ³ And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all *manner of workmanship*, ⁴ to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, ⁵ in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all *manner of workmanship*.”

As God had given Moses detailed plans for the building of the Tabernacle and the priestly service that would be carried out there, He now tells him He would raise up men to execute the construction. These men would be filled with the Spirit and anointed to both design and then craft all the things connected with the tabernacle.

The first man mentioned is Bezalel; he would be the leader, the foreman of the entire project.

At the end of our study last week in ch. 30, we read about the holy anointing oil.

We saw how it stands as a symbol of the Holy Spirit who would anoint Aaron and his sons in their role as priests.

As we read through all the details about the priesthood of Israel, we saw that these things all point to our role as priests, for in the NT *every* believer is called a priest.

And just as the Holy Spirit anointed the priests of Israel, equipping them to their priestly service, so you and I as the followers of Jesus Christ are anointed by God to *our* priestly service.

Here we see a man being anointed, not to priestly service, but to practical service – to do construction. This reminds us that each of us has a unique calling and vocation from the Lord.

We aren't all called into *full-time Christian ministry* – only a very small are.

Actually – we I need to restate that – we ARE all called into full-time Christian ministry – it's just that for the vast, vast majority of us, that doesn't mean in a local church or *parachurch organization*.

But we are called to be full-time Christians, including when we are at work.

Being a Christian means trusting in Jesus Christ for our salvation and following Him.

Following Him means going where ever He leads, and His leading is on and before every single one of us.

He has called you to follow Him into some career, some vocation, professional or otherwise.

Some are called in to the business world, others are called to remain at home and be domestic engineers.

The point is this – whatever the calling, God has given an anointing to fulfill that calling with excellence!

Bezalel was called to take the lead in the construction of the tabernacle, and God gave him all he needed to accomplish that with excellence.

There is a principle in the business world called the *Peter Principle*.

The Peter Principle says that a person gets promoted to the level of his/her incompetence.

Now, this makes sense: [Elaborate]

In the Kingdom, ambition ought not carry us to the level of our incompetence, but to the level of our

excellence.

Christian in the workplace – be mindful of this.

Don't let carnal ambition take you beyond your calling.

Prayerfully seek the Lord on what HE has called you to be and do, and then be content with it – serving Him with excellence.

And that leads us to the next verses . . .

6 “And I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all the gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you: ⁷ the tabernacle of meeting, the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat that *is* on it, and all the furniture of the tabernacle— ⁸ the table and its utensils, the pure *gold* lampstand with all its utensils, the altar of incense, ⁹ the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base— ¹⁰ the garments of ministry, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests, ¹¹ and the anointing oil and sweet incense for the holy *place*. According to all that I have commanded you they shall do.”

Besides Bezalel, God had raised up *others* to do the work of construction and had anointed them as well.

One man in particular was singled out by name – *Aholiab*.

The words convey the idea that this was to be Bezalel's *chief assistant*.

Aholiab had an anointing and call to be *second* – not first, not the lead, but the assistant.

And as he faithfully pursued *that* calling, he would know the blessing and peace of God.

A famous conductor was once asked in an interview what was the hardest position to fill in the symphony orchestra.

He replied, “First chair, second violin.”

The second violin plays the harmony; it responds to and really seeks to enhance and draw out the melody played by the first violin.

When the second violin is doing its job – it almost disappears into the first violin, making the first sound even sweeter and more excellent.

The conductor said he could find lots of people who would play first violin, even in the 5th chair – but few wanted to play the second violin.

In virtually every successful endeavor there's a leader who's surrounded by men & women who understand it's not their part to lead, but to assist, and they attack their role with delight, excitement, and diligence.

Aholiab was such a man.

We have several *Aholiab*s here at Calvary Chapel of Oxnard.

Charley – Jeff – Peter – Suzanne – Eric – Christy - Elders!

I regularly get compliments on what a great church we have – often from other pastors.

And I usually respond by saying that the real strength of Calvary Chapel of Oxnard is the wonderful people who comprise the body, and the excellent leadership team God has put together.

They are *Aholiab*s, and we are blessed for their faithfulness!

19. 31:12-17 – The Sabbath a memorial

¹² And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹³ “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it *is* a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that *you* may know that I *am* the LORD who sanctifies you. ¹⁴ You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for *it is* holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does *any* work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. ¹⁵ Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh *is* the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does

any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. ¹⁶ Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. ¹⁷ It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for *in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.*' ”

These verses seem almost out of place – why a reminder about keeping the Sabbath at this point?

Because God knows that when we get involved in a project, it's easy to forget the needful things.

It's especially easy to neglect our intimacy and fellowship with the Lord when we start a *construction* project, whatever the nature of that building is.

So He says – once begun, don't just plow through to completion, and neglect to rest and renew your fellowship with Me.

The oil of anointing needs to be renewed!

Christian – your effectiveness in your vocation, your calling, is directly related to your intimacy with Jesus.

If you are a student and are facing a massive exam or term paper – don't set aside time with the Lord in favor of research.

If you're a business executive and have a massive corporate report or project to complete – don't neglect spending time with the Lord so you can devote more to the report.

If you're a stay at home mom and are trying to remodel a room, don't forsake the quiet place with Jesus for the extra minutes you can spend painting.

God will more than multiply back to you the time you invest in your relationship with Him.

As God has given the elaborate plans here for the tabernacle and priesthood and then anointed the workforce, He reminds them they must not lose their sense of priority.

Work **FOR** Him, must never eclipse God in the hearts of those who serve Him.

But this passage makes it clear that God intended the Sabbath day to be a memorial, a sign of the special covenant He was making with the Nation of Israel.

V. 13 again –

“Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations.

Then vs. 16 & 17 –

Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever.

This makes it clear – the Sabbath is a sign between who? God and the children of Israel!

A sign of what? Of their being His unique covenant people.

Every so often you meet people who say Christians ought to keep the Sabbath, meaning they ought to observe a day of rest and worship on Saturday, not Sunday.

In fact, one well known group, says that Sunday worship is the “mark of the beast.”

They say that Sunday worship was instituted under the Roman emperor Constantine.

This is simply historically incorrect.

Consider this . . .

1) Jesus rose on Sunday, and it was Sunday when He first appeared to the disciples, breathed on them and they received the Holy Spirit. This was the birthday of the Church – Sunday.

2) Pentecost, which was the public presentation of the Church fell on a Sunday.

3) In the books of Acts, 20:7, we read that the church in Troas gathered for worship on Sunday.

4) In writing to the Corinthian church, in 1 Cor. 16:2, Paul tells them when they gather on Sunday for worship, they are to take a collection for the relief of the poor.

5) In the writings of the Early Church Fathers we repeatedly read of how the church was in the habit of meeting on Sunday to share their faith.

In the earliest days of the church, most of the believers were Jews, so they continued to observe the Sabbath day *as* Jews.

But they would also gather with other believers on Sunday to celebrate the Lord's table and encourage one another in the Faith.

Once Gentiles began to be converted, the whole issue of whether or not they had to observe the Jewish Sabbath was raised.

And the Church held a council to decide; this is recorded in Acts 15.

Their conclusion was that Gentiles need NOT observe the Sabbath.

Why? Because the Sabbath was a *sign* of the *Sinaitic covenant* between Yahweh and Israel.

Until Christ, the world was divided into two groups; Jews & Gentiles.

Since Christ, there are three: Jews, Gentiles, and the Church.

Once a person receives Christ, the distinctions of Jew & Gentile are removed as Paul says in Col. 3:11 and Ephesians 2:11-18.

The Jews had two main signs of their unique covenant and relationship to Yahweh: the Sabbath and circumcision.

Circumcision was a one-time mark while the Sabbath was a regular reminder.

In a similar way, there are two signs for believers; one singular and the other regular.

Baptism is a singular event that marks one as having been birthed by God into His covenant people.

Communion is a regular reminder of what has enabled us to *be* the people of God; the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

There's something else in these verses that is worthy of note.

God bases His call for them to rest on the Sabbath DAY, because of His example in the Creation.

V. 17 –

[The Sabbath] a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested.

In *how many* days? SIX! Six *what*? DAYS!

Okay – take note here; this is crucial: God bases His command for them to observe the Sabbath DAY

on His work of Creation is 6 DAYS and that HE rested on the 7th DAY!

In an attempt to reconcile supposed science with the Bible, a view has popped up called *Theistic Evolution*.

TE says that the 6 days of Gen. 1 were really epochs or ages spanning million of years.

Now, if that were the case, then what we find God creating in *each* of those 6 epochs simply wouldn't work; the scenario of creation would fall apart.

Besides, the main mechanism of evolution is *Survival of the Fittest*, which demands a lot of dying.

But the Bible tells us death did not enter creation until the Fall!

TE would require massive amounts of death *before the Fall*.

So – TE doesn't square, either with the Bible, or with science.

What it is, is another example of what happens when people try to help God out by taking the Bible and squeezing it through the filter of *supposed* science.

The problem in this case is to accept that evolution is an accepted law of science.

It isn't and never could be!

The only thing that's evolving is man's attempt to explain things without reference to God as Creator.

And the explanations are becoming more and more ridiculous as the years go by.

20. 31:18 – “Take two tablets . . .”

¹⁸ And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

“Here Moses, take two tablets and see me in the morning.”

CHAPTER 32

21. 32:1-35 - The golden calf incident

a. vs. 1-6 - Aaron makes the idol

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." ² And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." ³ So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 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 god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" ⁵ So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD." ⁶ 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.

Exodus 24:18 tells us that Moses was on the mount for 40 days, so he's been gone for over a month and the people begin to wonder what's become of him.

They look up and see this consuming fire burning on the top of the mountain and they think, "He's probably been burned up."

So they turn to the next guy in the line of leadership – Aaron, Moses' older brother.

Now, at this point, we've read all about Aaron's role as high priest and the glory and office that awaits him.

But that's all just what *Moses* has received – Aaron knows nothing about it at this point because Moses hasn't come down yet to tell him.

All Aaron knows at this point is that he's been serving as Moses' official spokesman.

And when the people come to him asking him for direction, he doesn't know what to do.

They asked for him to make some idols so they could worship.

Now, this is curious!

They had just heard God say they were to worship no gods but Him alone, and now they are asking for gods – PLURAL.

He's just told them they are NOT to make any idols, even in their worship of HIM! They ask for idols.

Aaron, being in the *position* of being a leader, but having no real direction, capitulated to their demands and made for them what they wanted – a golden calf!

Then He said it was a representation of Yahweh.

He tried to put a *religious* face on blatant sin.

Aaron is the classic example of a man who is more of a *people-pleaser* than a *God-pleaser*.

He knew what he was doing was a bold violation of God's will, but he was more concerned with appearing competent as a leader before the people than in being faithful to God.

He was an *image-man* rather than a *godly-man*.

Once Aaron made the idol, the people set to their worship of it.

And when Aaron saw how fervent and intent they were about their devotion, he elaborated and built an altar, proclaiming an official feast day.

The people joined in with great energy, rising early - bringing sacrifices and celebration.

The words, "rose up to play" conveys the idea of wanton, unrestrained sexual indulgence.

Aaron fashioned a golden calf because the main Egyptian deity that had been worshiped in the region the Children of Israel had lived in Egypt was Apis, a god represented by a young and virile golden bull.

The bull-calf spoke of both strength and fertility – and it wasn't long before the people, in their devotion to and worship of the calf, gave themselves over to the very things the calf represented.

The scene before the altar Aaron made turned into a drunken orgy.

There's a sobering lesson here for leaders in the church today.

When they are weak, and seek to *appease* the *people* rather than remain faithful to their calling to

represent God according to *His* truth and revelation, then they will begin to provide that which entertains and scratches the itch of the people.

Instead of leading the people to the Lord, they let the people dictate where they're going – and the people all too often want the world.

There's been a tragic trend toward accommodation and compromise in the church today.

Rather than boldly leading and encouraging people to grow spiritually mature, pastors and church leaders have sought to appease people by bringing the world into the church.

The excuse that's given is that this will make people more comfortable in brining their unsaved friends.

By making the church look more like the world and less like the Church, it's supposed to be *appealing* to the lost.

But the net result is that instead of attracting the lost, the saved are being taken *back* to the World!

Try to picture the scene for a moment.

Mt. Sinai, its summit ablaze with the glory of God.

The mount surrounded by 3 million, all of them His covenant people.

God is giving instructions to their leader about how to be His people.

And at one spot near the base of the Mount, there's an altar, and idol of a golden calf, and around it a drunken orgy!

This whole region ought to be one massive place of holiness and devotion to the Lord.

But smack dab in the middle of it is an outpost of Egypt!

In the middle of the Kingdom, is an enclave of the world.

And all of this is because the man who was in the place of leadership was more interested in pleasing the people and keeping his job, than in pleasing the Lord and being faithful to his calling.

People may *WANT* leaders who will please them – but what they *NEED* are leaders who will do what is right, even if it's not what they want at the moment.

Whenever the church tries to make itself appealing to the world, it loses its ability to be able to speak for God.

Aaron made this calf and said it was *Yahweh*.

But it wasn't and never would be, no matter how sincere the worship and devotion of the people seemed.

God can only be worshiped the way HE has proscribed!

We must be careful that in our attempts to serve the Lord we do not get so innovative that we end up using means that in fact lie under the ban of God.

b. vs. 7-10 – God tells Moses

⁷ And the LORD said to Moses, “Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted *themselves*. ⁸ They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, ‘This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!’ ” ⁹ And the LORD said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and indeed it *is* a stiff-necked people! ¹⁰ Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.”

God tells Moses that the people are running away from Him in their idolatry.

He says that He's had enough and will wipe them out, then start all over again with Moses.

This had to be a great temptation for Moses.

He knew what a trial the people could be.

But there was something in the way the Lord spoke to him that stirred up a boldness that would not be denied . . .

c. vs. 11-14 – Moses intercedes for Israel

¹¹ Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: “LORD, why does Your

wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. ¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit *it* forever.' "

In v. 7, God had said that they were *Moses' people*.

Moses says, "No Lord, they are YOUR people! You redeemed them; they belong to YOU! They are not my people."

You see, Moses sensed in God's words to him in vs. 7-10 that there was a kind of *test*.

All God said didn't square with what Moses had come to know about Him.

And as Moses intercedes on behalf of the nation, he bases his prayer on what He knows about God.

There are three things he bases his intercession on.

1) "They are YOUR people!" The people belong to God – they are His flock.

2) "It is YOUR glory, YOUR reputation that's at stake here"

What will the Egyptians say about YOU if You wipe out Your People?

3) "It's YOUR promise to give the land of Canaan to the descendants of Jacob, not me."

"Your people-glory-promise"

That's what Moses based his intercession on, and look at the result – v. 14

¹⁴ So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

Did God "change" His mind? No – Never!

But God did change his posture toward the children of Israel because of Moses' intercession.

Because we are time and space creatures, we have to explain the actions of God using terms that are common to our experience of time and space.

Trying to describe the eternal purpose and plan of God within such constraints strains the very structure of language.

When the children of Israel began to practice idolatry, at that point they fell under His wrath.

But God knew from the beginning Moses would pray and that He would defer that wrath in light of Moses' intercession.

His words to Moses were the instrumental agency that moved Moses to pray.

So really, it was God who initiated that which led to His deferring judgment.

This may all go beyond our comprehension, but what doesn't is the real lesson and point of all this – that God hears and answers prayers, and that He would rather show mercy than judgment.

Think of it, the people deserved to be smoked! But Moses secured mercy for them by intercessory prayer.

In Ezekiel 22:30-31 we find this regarding the nation of Judah. After giving a list of the people's sins, God says this –

³⁰ So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. ³¹ Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads," says the Lord GOD.

God held court and tried the nation and found them guilty and worthy of judgment.

But before He passed sentence, He looked to see if anyone was living a righteous life and praying for mercy for the nation.

Because no one was found, then judgment came!

Right now, our nation is doing all the things God condemned Judah for in Ezekiel.

In fact, we make Judah look like a bunch of choir boys!

The only thing that stays God's hand of judgment on our nation is the presence of God's people

who have the calling and ministry of intercession.
Intercessors are the little Dutch boy with their fingers in the dike, holding back the flood of God's wrath.

What happens when those intercessors are taken out in the Rapture?

When you pray for others, follow the model and pattern Moses used here.

- 1) That person belongs to God.
- 2) Let God's glory be manifest.
- 3) Let God's promise be fulfilled.

d. vs. 15-29 – Moses confronts the people

15 And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the Testimony were in his hand. The tablets were written on both sides; on the one side and on the other they were written. 16 Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets. 17 And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp." 18 But he said: "It is not the noise of the shout of victory, Nor the noise of the cry of defeat, *But* the sound of singing I hear."

As Joshua escorted Moses back down the mount, they came within earshot of the camp and could hear a raucous noise.

Joshua said it sounded like battle, but Moses said, "No – not battle, partying."

19 So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf *and* the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

This means the altar and calf had been set up at the very base of the mount, right there before the presence of the Lord.

How *blind* people can be when their hearts turn from the Lord.

Virtually every command contained on those tablets had been broken by the people in their wretched debauchery with the calf.

So Moses, in demonstration of the spiritual reality that greeted his eyes, cast them down and broke them there at the foot of the mount.

20 Then he took the calf which they had made, burned *it* in the fire, and ground *it* to powder; and he scattered *it* on the water and made the children of Israel drink *it*.

They wanted a calf? They wanted to partake of this idol, well Moses would give it to them.

I wonder if little Bart Simpsi said, "Don't have a cow, man."

Moses said, "Drink it! Have your fill of it you idolaters."

Now, why did he do this?

Think about it. This water they drink, and the gold it contains; were is it going to end up? What form will it *finally* take? [Don't say it! Poop]

Moses is giving them a graphic lesson on what their idol is!

Contrast Moses' leadership here with Aaron's.

Moses did what had to be done. He wasn't in the least bit concerned with pleasing the people – only with siding with God.

This is what we need from our leaders.

21 And Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?" 22 So Aaron said, "Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. 23 For they said to me, 'Make us gods that shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'

Aaron is the kid of guy who can't stand to have anyone mad at him, so he gives this lame excuse for what he did, hoping it will cool Moses' anger with him.

24 And I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them break *it* off.' So they gave *it* to

me, and I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out.”

“It just popped out!” Ha!

V. 4 tells us he molded and engraved it! He made it with purpose and skill.

25 Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies),²⁶ then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, “Whoever is on the LORD’s side—come to me!” And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him.

V. 25 says the people were still fully into their wild worship of the calf at this point!

The word “unrestrained” conveys the idea that they were naked and giving themselves to shameful acts.

So, in the midst of all this, Moses went to the edge of the camp and shouted out that anyone who would refuse to participate in the worship of the calf and wanted to remain loyal to Yahweh should immediately come to his side.

The entire tribe of Levi came and stood with him.

27 And he said to them, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.’ ”²⁸ So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.

Moses told the Levites who had shown their loyalty to Yahweh to take their swords and go forth to slay anyone they found who was still in flagrant rebellion against God by continuing in the worship of the idol.

3000 fell to the sword in the purge.

Interesting isn’t it; that on the day when the law came down 3000 died, but on the Day of Pentecost, when the Spirit came down, 3000 were saved.

As it says in John 1:17 – the law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ.

29 Then Moses said, “Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, that He may bestow on you a blessing this day, for every man has opposed his son and his brother.”

To the great mass of the people who had not been slain, and had not come to his side, He issues the invitation to renew their commitment to be the people of Yahweh.

e. vs. 30-35 – Moses returns to the Lord

30 Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, “You have committed a great sin. So now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”

When God had first told Moses about what the people were doing, Moses had no idea how bad it was.

Now that he’s seen what they were doing, he’s unsure if there are more consequences, if there’s more judgment yet to come.

He’s got to go find out.

But he says he will see if he can make atonement for them.

The word atonement in Hebrew means *to cover over*.

Moses says he will try to cover for them before the Lord.

31 Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold!³² Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.”

Moses first confesses the sins of the people and does so *specifically*. [Elaborate]

Then he asks for forgiveness for the people and offers to be a substitute for them if it will affect their forgiveness.

This is amazing!

The Apostle Paul said the same thing in writing to the Romans [9:3] when he said that if his being cursed would mean the salvation of Israel, he would bear it.

What an amazing stance to take – and it is the very spirit and love of Christ who became our substitute – HE took our place in judgment so that we might be forgiven.

33 And the LORD said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.

God tells Moses that he cannot be the substitute for others – only God Himself can take that role. And apart from that, each man/woman bears his/her own guilt.

34 Now therefore, go, lead the people to *the place* of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin.” ³⁵ **So the LORD plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.**

God heard and answered Moses prayer for *forgiveness* so that the people were not cast off from the covenant – but they still had to hear the *consequences* for their sin.

[Difference between forgiveness & consequences for sin. Sowing and reaping. Consequences act as *discipline*.]