

Exodus 32

While Moses has been on Mount Sinai receiving the details to worship Jehovah God, Israel is at the foot of the mountain, engaging in idolatry, violating the Ten Commandments they had earlier sworn (twice) to uphold: 24:3, 7. Chapters 32-34 is a turning point in the narrative of Exodus and interrupts the details of the tabernacle (chapters 25-31) with the fulfillment of those instructions (35-39).

TRANSLATION - 32:1-6:

1 And the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain and the people gathered to Aaron and they said to him, "Arise, make for us gods who will go before us because this man, Moses, who brought us up from the land of Egypt - we do not know what is with him." **2** And Aaron said to them, "Break off the gold ear rings which [are] in the ears of your women, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."

3 And all the people broke off the gold ear rings which [were] in their ears and they brought [them] to Aaron. **4** And he took from their hand and formed it by an engraving tool and they made a calf image and they said, "These [are] your gods, Israel, who brought you from the land of Egypt." **5** And Aaron saw and built an altar before them and Aaron called and said, "A festival to Jehovah tomorrow!" **6** And they arose early the next morning and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings and the people sat down to eat and to drink and they arose to play.

HEBREW WORDS:

"To delay" (ver. 1) is used 125 times in the OT, only here in Exodus. "To gather" or "to assemble" is used here first in Exodus, of two uses (35:1) in Exodus. The verb is used 39 times in the OT. "To know" was used earlier at 1:8. "To break off" (ver. 2) is used here and 32:3, 24. The verb is found 9 times in the OT. "Ear rings" are found here (32:2-3) and 35:22, out of 17 uses. "To form" (ver. 4) is used only twice, at Exodus 32:4; 1 Kings 7:15. "Engraving tool" is one word in Hebrew, used only here and Isaiah 8:1. "Calf" is used throughout this chapter: 32:4, 8, 19-20, 24, 35. It is used 35 times in the OT. "Image" is used three times in this text: 32:4, 8, 17. The word is found 26 times; it refers to the image of an idol. "Festival" (ver. 5) was used earlier at 10:9.

"To play" (ver. 6) also means to "laugh" or to engage in caressing between men and women. The word is used 11 times in Genesis, only here in Exodus.

REFERENCES (REFERIRI) AND ALLUSIONS TO GENESIS:

In Genesis 35:1-4, God commanded Jacob to put away the idols among his family and we see that earrings were a part of that idolatrous practice.

COMMENTARY:

Moses has been on Mount Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights (24:18). The previous chapters have discussed the revelation of the tabernacle and its accoutrements to Moses on Mount Sinai. Israel (ver. 1) sees that Moses has been gone a long time; whether they knew he was to be gone so long, we do not know. So the people assembled about Aaron (the preposition "about" could denote an aggressive assembly; see Num. 16:3, 42; 20:2) and called on him to make a "god" to lead Israel (ver. 2). As far as Moses was concerned, "the man" they call him, the one who had brought them this far, they do not know what has become of him.

As far as the text is concerned, Aaron does not try to argue against the idea nor to try to persuade the people to change their mind (ver. 3). He simply calls on them to take the gold rings from their ears (of the wives, sons, and daughters) and bring it to him. The verb "to break off" is related to the word "plunder" which Israel had done to Egypt (3:22; 12:35). Now, they were "plundering" themselves of the gold that was to be used in service to God!

The people complied (ver. 3). Aaron took that gold from their hands, fashioned the gold with an engraving tool, and formed it into a molten calf. As we have pointed out before, the Egyptians and many other religions of the Ancient Near East worshipped the bull as a symbol of fertility both for themselves, their crops, and their livestock. The Egyptians named him Apis. There was also Isis and Hathor who were associated with bovine imagery. Yet, it doesn't appear that Aaron is intending to worship *that* bull (ver. 4). It appears that Aaron is simply trying to use the image of the calf as an *aid* to the worship of God. Notice that: 1) He identifies this "god" as the one who brought them out of the land of Egypt; 2) He built an altar, made a proclamation, and called on Israel to worship "Jehovah" (ver. 5). The "feast" they were to celebrate to Jehovah (5:1) is now offered to the idol. Idolatry was punishable by death: 22:20; Israel knew that before they did what they did.

When God revealed the Ten Commandments, those first two related to idols: no *making* idols and no *bowing down to them* (20:3-6). The Israelites swore they would obey the Ten Commandments: 24:3, 7. Now they are violating the Commandments and their own oath! As Aaron had called them to do (ver. 6), the next day the Israelites arose early and offered burnt offerings (which showed their total commitment to this "god") and peace offerings (which showed their fellowship with this "god"). Then, they sat down to eat and rose up to "play." Some scholars suggest the verb to "play" has sexual connotations due to the use of the verb in Genesis 26:8. However, that interpretation here is not required. Perhaps it was; sexual behavior was often incorporated into pagan worship. The expression "to be wild" (ver. 25) perhaps refers to that idea since the verb can mean to be "uncovered."

APPLICATION:

Moses' contemporaries - Israel was guilty of impatience toward God before they were guilty of idolatry. How often does man sin against God because He does not have the faith and patience to wait for God to work?

Later Jewish writers - King Jeroboam imitated Aaron's sins, and quoted his words from verse 4, and made a bull to worship, in 1 Kings 12:26-33 (see also 2 Kings 10:29; 2 Chron. 11:15; 13:8; Hosea 3:2). The whole event is referenced in Psalms 106:19-23. Nehemiah (9:18) will refer to this event.

NT writers - Paul quotes part of verse 6 in 1 Corinthians 10:7 to point out the sinful tendencies of Israel, in order to call on Christians to be careful about their own steadfastness.

TRANSLATION - 32:7-14:

7 And Jehovah spoke to Moses, "Go! Go down because your people destroyed themselves whom you brought up from the land of Egypt. **8** They have turned aside; they have hurried from the way which I commanded them. They made for themselves an image of a calf and they are worshipping it and they are sacrificing to it and they are saying, "These [are] your gods, Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt."

9 And Jehovah said to Moses, "I see this people and behold a people this one [is] strong neck. **10** And now let them alone and let My anger burn against them and let it consume them and I will make from you a great nation."

11 And Moses implored the face of Jehovah his God and said, "Why Jehovah is your anger burning against your people whom You brought from the land of Egypt by great power and Your strong hand? **12** What they will say Egyptians, to say by evil you brought them to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from on the face of the land. Return from your anger burning and relent from the calamity against your people. **13** Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants whom You swore to them by Yourself and You said to them, 'I will increase your seed like the stars of heaven and all this land which I said I will give to your seed and take [it] indefinitely."

14 So Jehovah relented at the calamity which He said to do to His people.

HEBREW WORDS:

“To be destroyed” (ver. 7) is used often in the description of the world before the flood of Noah (Gen. 6:11-13, 17) and Sodom and Gomorrah (18:28, 31-32; 19:13-14, 29). It was used earlier in Exodus at 8:20. “To turn aside” (ver. 8) was used earlier at 3:3-4. “To hurry” was used earlier at 2:18. “To worship” was used earlier at 4:31. “To sacrifice” was used earlier at 3:18. “Strong” (ver. 9) or “difficult” was used earlier at 1:14. “Neck” was used earlier at 23:27. “To leave alone” (ver. 10) was used earlier at 16:23-24, 33-34. “To burn” is used with the word “anger” to denote wrath. It was used earlier at 4:14. “Anger” is used in the same context.

“To implore” (ver. 11) is used only here in Exodus. The word is used 75 times. “Power” was used earlier at 9:16. “Strong” was used earlier at 3:19. “Evil” (ver. 12) was used earlier at 5:19. “To consume” was used earlier at 5:13-14. “Return” was used earlier at 4:7. “Relent” is the verb often translated “to repent”, but this is not a proper translation relative to God. It would denote the wrong idea considering the holy God. Therefore, we translate it “to relent.” The verb was used earlier at 13:17. It is used of God also in Genesis 6:6-7. “Calamity” is the same word earlier translated as “evil.” Again, God cannot commit “evil,” so the word actually has a broader semantic range; here it denotes something bad or a “calamity.”

“To remember” (ver. 13) was used earlier at 2:24. “To swear” was used earlier at 13:5, 11, 19. “To increase” was used earlier at 1:7, 10, 12. “Seed” is used 59 times in Genesis. Its first use in Exodus is at 16:31. “Stars” is used only here in Exodus. It is used 37 times in the OT. The phrase “stars of heaven” is used 12 times in the Bible. “To take” was used earlier at 23:30.

REFERENCES (REFERIRI) AND ALLUSIONS TO GENESIS:

God’s oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel) is found often in Genesis; see 15:5; 22:17; 26:4. Abraham had appealed to God on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18:22-32. Abraham would intercede for Abimelech in Genesis 20:7.

COMMENTARY:

Now Jehovah God speaks (ver. 7) and commands Moses to leave, to return down the mountain to “your people.” God had repeatedly called Israel “My people” (3:7, 10; 7:14, 16, 25; 8:20-23; 9:1, 13, 17; 10:3-4; 22:25; cf. Hosea 1:9). Yet He now refers to them as Moses’ people because of His disappointment and anger at their idolatry. He even affirms that Moses (in contrast to Himself) brought them up from Egypt - they have “destroyed” or “corrupted” themselves through their idolatry.

In verse 8, Jehovah specifically tells Moses that Israel has left the way to which He had commanded them. More specifically, they have made a molten calf and then worshipped it and offered sacrifices to it! Jehovah tells Moses that they acknowledged that God as the one who brought them up from Egypt.

Consequently, in verse 9, Jehovah informs Moses that the people are stiff-necked, a likely allusion to an animal that is stubborn and obstinate. So, in verse 10, Jehovah tells Moses, “Let me alone, that My anger may burn against them and I will destroy them and make of you a great nation.” It is remarkable that God will allow Himself to be entreated by humanity. He allows humans to come to Him with their pleas and petitions and intercessions and He is willing to adjust His response to man, based on man’s response to Him.

Here, Jehovah is offering Moses an opportunity to plead with Him on their behalf or to allow Jehovah to destroy the family of Abraham and start over with a “family of Moses.” This is likely a test of Moses’ humility and his conviction in the plans of God.

In a long passage in this text (verses 11-14), Moses prays to God. He “entreats” God with several points.

1) The people are not Moses’ people; they are Jehovah’s people whom He brought out of Egypt with “great power and a mighty hand” (ver. 11).

2) The Egyptians would otherwise speak evil of Jehovah, saying that it was with evil intent that Jehovah brought Israel out of Egypt to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth.

3) Moses calls on God to leave His burning anger aside and to change His mind about doing harm (destroying) His people.

4) Finally, Moses calls on God to bring to mind the covenant He had made with the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. "Israel" is the name God gave to Jacob and to his descendants (Gen. 32:24-32) as a reminder that Jacob had fought with God and had won.

Jehovah responded to Moses' entreaty in verse 14: Jehovah changed His mind. He allowed Moses to persuade Him not to destroy Israel. In fact, He had a plan to fulfill. He had to bring Jesus into the world, in fulfillment of His promise to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:15) and each of the patriarchs.

APPLICATION:

Moses' contemporaries - The oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel is found also in Deuteronomy 9:26-29. On Israel as "stiff necked," see: Exodus 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deuteronomy 9:6, 13; 10:16; 31:27. Regarding the idea of making intercession for someone, see: Num. 11:2; 12:13; 14:13-20; 16:22; 21:7. Appealing to God's nature is a common theme in prayers: Num. 14:15-16; Deut. 9:28; 32:26-27. Balaam will state that God is not a man so that He must repent (Num. 23:19).

Later Jewish writers - On Israel as "stiff necked," see: Jer. 7:26; 17:23; 19:15; Isaiah 48:4. For more on God "relenting" of calamity, see: 2 Samuel 24:16; Psalm 106:45; Jeremiah 18:7-10; Amos 7:1-6. See Amos 7:1-6 where we have another example where prophets intercede with God for their people. God "relented" from the calamity He had promised to bring on Nineveh, which was prompted by their repentance (Jonah 3:4). Samuel also made intercession for Israel: 1 Sam. 7:8-9; 12:19, 23. Amos made intercession: 7:2, 5, 6. Jeremiah also made intercession (7:16; 37:3; 42:2). For more passages on appealing to the nature of God, see: Psalm 106:8; Isa. 48:9, 11; 66:5; Jeremiah 14:7, 21; Ezekiel 20:9, 14, 22, 44; Joel 2:17.

NT writers - Jesus is the only Mediator we need after the events of the cross: 1 Timothy 2:5-6.

TRANSLATION - 32:15-20:

15 And Moses turned and went down from the mountain and the two tablets of testimony [were] in his hand, tablets written on both sides, from this [side] and from that [side] these were written. **16** And the tablets [were] the work of God these [were] and the writing [was] the writing of God it was engraved on the tablets.

17 And Joshua heard the noise of the people, their shouting and he said to Moses, "The noise of war [is] in the camp." **18** And he said, "It is not the noise to answer of strength nor is it the noise to answer of defeat. [It is] the noise to sing I myself am hearing."

19 And it was just as he approached to the camp that he saw the calf and dancing and Moses' anger burned and he threw from his hand the tablets and he broke them at the bottom of the mountain. **20** And he took the calf which they made and he burned [it] in fire and ground until which it was crushed and scattered on the face of the waters and he made to drink the sons of Israel.

HEBREW WORDS:

"To turn" (ver. 15) was used earlier at 2:12. "War" (ver. 17) is used earlier at 1:10. "Camp" was used earlier at 14:19-20. The word "strength" denotes a warrior. This is its only use in Exodus, out of 62 uses. This word "defeat" is used only here. "To burn" (ver. 20) was used earlier at 12:10. "To ground" is used only here in Exodus, of 7 uses. "To crush" is used earlier at 30:36. "To scatter" is used only here in Exodus, out of 38 uses. "To drink" was used earlier at 2:16-17.

COMMENTARY:

In verses 15-16, Moses emphasizes the importance of the tablets in Moses' hands. As Moses descended Mount Sinai to confront his people in their sin, he held the two tablets of the testimony of God (the Law of Moses; perhaps only the Ten Commandments) in his hands. These tablets were written on both sides. We do not know how big these tablets were, but they were small enough to fit inside the Ark of the Covenant. As we pointed out earlier, we do not know how the Law was divided to have been written on two tablets on front and back. These tablets were "God's work," whether He personally inscribed the Laws (which we believe) or His work through Moses who wrote the laws down. The writing was God's writing engraved on the tablets.

When Moses reached Joshua, at some point in the descent, they have their own conversation about what is happening below. The last time we saw Joshua was in 24:13. Joshua had stayed about halfway up the mountain, where he apparently waited on Moses. Joshua heard sounds in the camp which, he being a military leader (see chapter 17), made Joshua believe it was the sound of war (ver. 17). However, Moses stated, in poetic form, that it was not the sound of the cry of triumph (victory) in war, nor the sound of the cry of defeat (in war) which Israel was making. It was, however, the sound of singing. But neither knew what that meant.

As Moses approached the camp, at the foot of the mountain, he saw the calf and the dancing. In verses 19-21, Moses is the subject, in quick succession, of ten verbs. Just as Jehovah God's anger burned earlier (32:10), now Moses' anger burns and he threw down the tablets with God's law engraved on them and they shattered at the foot of the mountain. The "foot of the mountain" was the place where Israel, or at least their elders, had assembled in 19:12, where they met with God (19:17). It was the place where an altar had been built (24:4). At the very place where they had vowed to obey the Law, Moses shattered the tablets of the law, symbolizing their own breaking, or destruction, of God's law.

As punishment, Moses took the calf, burned it with fire - either melting the gold and / or burning the wooden frame which had been overlayed with gold (ver. 20). He also ground to powder any metal that might have remained. This was similar to what God had commanded relative to pagan idols (Exo. 23:24). After scattering it over the surface of the water, Moses had Israel drink it. This sent a message to Israel: her "god" was edible and now it was expelled from the worshippers as waste. How could anyone worship such a god?

APPLICATION:

Moses' contemporaries - Israel had been commanded not to worship idols. Now they will eat their idol! But Israel will not learn easily how important it is to trust and follow the (invisible) living God.

Later Jewish writers - We commented above that King Jeroboam followed Aaron's example; his idolatrous altar was also destroyed: 2 Kings 23:15. Centuries later, Isaiah will mock Israel for worshipping idols: Isaiah 44:9-20.

NT writers - "Idolatry" is a transliteration of the Greek word. It is found in 1 Corinthians 10:14; Gal. 5:20 (where it is listed as a "work of the flesh"); Col. 3:5 (where it is made equivalent to covetousness); 1 Peter 4:3. The word "idols" (also a transliteration) is found 11 times: Acts 7:41; 15:20; Rom. 2:22; 1 Cor. 8:4, 7; 10:19; 12:2; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 John 5:21; Rev. 9:20. Christians, like Israel, need to make sure they do not have idols "in their hearts" (cf. Ezekiel 14:3). Nothing should take the place of our commitment, dedication, and loyalty to Jesus Christ and His pure word.

TRANSLATION - 32:21-35:

21 And Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you brought on them a great sin?"

22 And Aaron said, "Don't let your anger burn, my master. You yourself know the people that this [one is] in evil. **23** And they said to me, 'Make for us gods who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us from the land of Egypt, we do not know what is

to him. **24** And I said to them, ‘Who [has] gold? Let them break it off and let them give [it] to me and I threw [it] into the fire and there came out this calf!’

25 And Moses saw the people that wild they [were] because Aaron wild to their shame among their enemies. **26** And Moses stood in the gate of the camp and he said, “Who [is] for Jehovah? [Come] To me!” And they gathered to him all the sons of Levi. **27** And he said to them, “Thus says Jehovah the God of Israel, ‘Put each his sword on his thigh. Cross over and return from gate to gate kill a man his brother and a man his friend and a man his neighbor.” **28** And the sons of Levi did just as Moses spoke and there fell from the people in that day about three thousand men.

29 And Moses said, “Fill your hand today for Jehovah because a man against his son and against his brother and to give to you all today a blessing. **30** And it was the next day and Moses said to the people, “You have sinned a great sin and now I will go up to Jehovah; perhaps I will atone through your sin.”

31 And Moses returned to Jehovah and said, “O this people have sinned a great sin and they made for themselves gods of gold. **32** And now if you will take away their sin - and if not, blot out please from your book which you have written.”

33 And Jehovah said to Moses, “Whoever sins against Me, I will blot from My book. **34** And now, take, lead the people to where I will speak to you. Behold My messenger will go before you and in the day to visit and I will visit you, your sin.”

35 And Jehovah struck the people because which they made the calf which Aaron made.

HEBREW WORDS:

“Sin” (ver. 21) was used earlier at 5:16. “Wild” or “out of control” (ver. 25) was used earlier at 5:4. This verse is the last use in Exodus. “To shame” is used three times: Exo. 32:25; Job 4:12; 26:14. “Enemies” was used earlier at 15:7. “Sword” (ver. 27) was used earlier at 5:3, 21. “To kill” was used earlier at verse 12, first in Exodus at 2:14. “Friend” was used earlier at 2:13. “Neighbor” was used earlier at 12:4. “To fall” (ver. 28) was used earlier at 15:16. “Blessing” (ver. 29) is used 16 times in Genesis. This is its only use in Exodus; it is used 71 times in the OT. “To sin” is used earlier at 9:27, 34. The noun “sin” was used earlier at 5:16.

“O!” (ver. 31) is used only here in Exodus. It was used only once in Genesis (50:17). It is used only 13 times. “To blot out” (ver. 32) was used earlier at 17:14. “Please” was used 74 times in Genesis; it is used 15 times in Exodus, first at 3:3. “To lead” (ver. 34) was used earlier at 13:17, 21. “Angel” or “messenger” was used earlier at 3:2; 14:19; 23:20, 23. “To strike” (ver. 35) was used earlier in 12:23.

COMMENTARY:

Having punished the people, in general, Moses now approaches Aaron, whom he had left to be their leader (24:14). “What did this people do to you,” Moses asked Aaron (ver. 21), identifying the sin as a “great sin.” The phrase “great sin” usually refers to adultery: Genesis 20:9; 39:9 (and in ancient near eastern texts) but also to idolatry in 2 Kings 17:21. In this case, of course, it is idolatry, a violation of the first two commandments.

Some scholars want to defend Aaron, suggesting interpretations of various texts in this chapter that imply Aaron was doing this action reluctantly. However, neither Moses nor God (Deut. 9:20) acts as if Aaron was innocent. Aaron responds to Moses calling him not to be angry (ver. 22). Aaron reminds Moses of the wickedness of the nation of Israel. That should have simply motivated Aaron to go to God, asking for His guidance.

In verse 23, Aaron records almost word-for-word what has been told us in verse 1. In verse 24, Aaron records his own conversation with Israel, but fails to mention that he, himself, fashioned the gold with a graving tool and made the gold into a molten calf. He also fails to mention that he identified the calf as being the “god who brought Israel out of Egypt” (ver. 4). Instead, Aaron states something that makes us astounded and puts to falsehood the

suggestion that Aaron was against the idea all along. He claims to have thrown the gold into the fire and the calf came out!

In a shift in the scene, in verse 25, Moses observes that the people were “out of control” (which can be translated “uncovered”), since Aaron had allowed them to get out of control, which would potentially cause Israel’s enemies to mock both them and their God. This shows that Aaron was responsible for keeping Israel under control, to help them practice self-control. Consequently, Moses stood in the gate (the entrance) of the camp and called on whoever feared the Lord to step up to Moses’ side (ver. 26). The Levites gathered together to Moses. The Levites were the family of Moses and Aaron (6:16-25).

With this tribe at his side, Moses relates God’s punishment on Israel (ver. 27). The Levites were to walk through the camp with the sword on his thigh, from gate to gate, and kill each man his brother, his friend, and his neighbor among all those who were guilty of this “great sin,” but had refused to repent. It would be a powerful lesson to implement such discipline (the death penalty) on one’s family, friends, and neighbors.

The sons of Levi fulfilled God’s command through Moses and three thousand individuals were struck down that day (ver. 28). Moses concludes this scene by calling on Israel to dedicate themselves to Jehovah (ver. 29) in light of the horrific punishment they have had to implement (the Levites) and have experienced (the Israelites). If they dedicate themselves to Jehovah (again), then He will bless them. Sin requires punishment; repentance compels mercy from God.

The following day (ver. 29), Moses reminds Israel that they have committed a great sin - idolatry - against Jehovah God, but he would go to God and seek atonement (“covering”) for their sin. So, Moses goes to Jehovah (ver. 31) and confesses the “great sin” which Israel had committed, specifically having made a “god of gold” for themselves (ver. 31). Then, in a great act of selflessness (cf. Num. 12:3), Moses asks God to forgive Israel, but if not, he graciously asks God to blot his name out of the book which God has written (ver. 32). Apparently it was as widely practiced then, as now, for cities and states to have a record of all their citizens. The writers of the Bible use that book as a metaphor, the “book of life” (see below for further references to this concept), for God’s record of citizens in His nation. This idea is used also in the NT.

But God responds to Moses’ gracious request in verse 33, stating a theological truth: the soul that sins shall die (Ezek. 18:4, 20). God states that the one who sins will have his name blotted out. In other words, Moses cannot give his soul for another because Moses has (and will have) his own sins which need atoning. This is a hint of the future Savior who will have no sins of His own for which to atone (Heb. 7:26). So God commands Moses to return to Israel and lead them as God will direct. God will send His angel before Israel to put distance between His holiness and their wickedness. Yet, He does promise that He will “visit” them for their sins. The verb is understood in this context as “to punish.” Which He does (ver. 35) by striking them with some type of plague. We are not told how many were struck dead, but it was because they made the calf, notice “which Aaron had made.” No, he was not innocent in the matter.

Moses continues to intercede for Israel: Exodus 14:15; 15:25; 17:4, 11-12.

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries - Jehovah God was angry enough to have killed Aaron, according to Deuteronomy 9:20; yet His grace motivated Him to refrain. Phineas will show the same zeal for the reputation of Jehovah God, in Numbers 25:7-13 (compare also Numbers 25:1-6). The person who sins is responsible for his or her own sins: Deut. 24:16; Ezekiel 18:4. The verb “to blot out” often refers to removing one’s name from the “book of life:” Deut. 9:14; 29:20; 32:26. Although God had determined that Aaron’s sons would serve as priests (28:1), He had not yet set aside the tribe of Levi to be the assistants for the priests. Perhaps this incident is the reason God chose Levi for that important role.

Later Jewish writers - For other passages on the “book of life,” see Psalms 69:28; 2 Kings 14:27; Isa. 4:3. The author of Psalms is concerned about God not being a

“laughingstock” before unbelievers: Psalm 4, 5, 7, 22, 25, 26, 31, 35, 39, 41, 52, 55, 59, 64, 67, 70.

NT writers - Jesus will require of His followers to choose Him over their families: Matt. 10:37; Luke 14:26. Stephen will refer to this incident in Acts 7:38ff as he accuses the Jewish leaders that in rejecting Christianity, they were committing the same idolatry as their forefathers had done.

The NT, especially Revelation, mentions the “book of life:” Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27. Paul gives a similar expression of deep love for Israel in Romans 9:3. Yet, neither Moses nor Paul could, in actuality, give his life for someone else. Only the sinless Son of God could be a sacrifice for someone else (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus intercedes for His disciples: Romans 8:34; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1.