

## Exod 04-08-08b

We find ourselves here in Exodus chapter 32 at one of the most famous episodes, spectacular setting at the foot of Mount Sinai with the glory cloud of the Lord broiling and roiling at the top, thunder emanating, Moses and Joshua absent for several weeks by this time, and at the foot of the mountain the people come to Aaron, which Moses told them to do if they had a problem. He said, come to Aaron and her. Her does not seem to be on the scene.

What do we know about her? He is often accompanying Aaron. The last time we saw him was when Joshua was leading the army in the battle and Moses is on the elevated height overlooking it, and when he raises his arms, Israel begins to prevail, and when his arms drop, they begin to be defeated, and so you have Aaron on one side and her on the other, lifting the arms of Moses as he holds the rod over his head, and you have in silhouette a picture of the Lord Jesus on the cross with a horizontal piece of wood in his two hands, and he is held up on each side by Aaron and by her, and we saw the great picture of prophet, priest, and king that was represented there in that vignette, and once again as Moses, the prophet, the leader of Israel, goes up in the mountain to receive the word of God, to bring it back to the people, you have the priest, Aaron, and the man from the tribe of Judah, who is supposed to be co-leader in the absence of Moses, is conspicuously not on the scene, and so you have a policy decision, a leadership decision that affects the entire nation being made by a guy without consultation, not in his area, he is not told to manufacture anything, and yet he manufactures. In fact, he has explicit instructions not to.

If there is anyone in Israel who ought to know that this is a bad idea, it is Aaron, but he is caught up in the moment, he is persuaded by this very simple argument, well, Moses, that has been leading us up to this point, what is it with him? He is gone, what is up with him? So, make us a God, make us Elohim, and he does. Well, Moses, meanwhile, if you were making a movie, you would have this down, and then you would cut to Moses up on the mountain, Moses basking in the glory of the Lord, receiving all these instructions, and you can tell that Moses is a man of faith, his mind is working, and he is thinking, oh, the symbolism, and you have got the Lord right there, and you can say, now Lord, this wood overlaid with gold, I mean, I can only guess at what Moses is learning up there, I think half of the glow in his face was just the richness of the word of the Lord and what it meant to him, he is a man of faith, it is not just instructions for construction, it is the revelation of God's plan of salvation, it is the revelation of God's character, it is the revelation of so much of why God created man in the first place. This is Moses, who probably has already set down Genesis by looking at the records deposited in the libraries of Egypt by Joseph, who got them from Jacob, who got them from Isaac, who got them from Abraham, who got them from Shem, who got them from Noah, who got them from people before the flood, and all of this great revelation is available to Moses, and it is cooking around, if there is anybody that knows the content of the book of Genesis, all 50 chapters, it is the man who wrote it, and this is the next stage in the progress of God's plan, this is the next big piece of revelation, God has never spoken at this length and in this detail like he is speaking

to Moses, and Moses is just literally in transport, visions of rapture now burst on my sight, that is Moses on the mountain, and God is delivering this, and there is a pause, and Moses is waiting for the next piece of instruction, and the next thing he hears is this, Lech, read, two short monosyllabic commands, emphatically delivered, Lech is from halak, it is the imperative that says go, read is the imperative from yarad, which means to descend or to go down, but it is in Hebrew, it is just like two claps of thunder, there is not even syllables here, it is just Lech, read, and you can imagine Moses, this has nothing in common with what he has been hearing for the last 40 days, so God says Lech, read, go, go down, because, and then you have this verb, shachat, amka is your people, which, and then you have a form of ala, which means to go up, this is the hipheal, the causative, which you caused to go up from the land of Egypt, and of course any time you have the land of Egypt, this is harking back to one of two things, it is either the slavery and bondage of Egypt, or the leeks and garlicks of Egypt, or that we had never left Egypt, you brought us out here to die, just the mention of Egypt, unless it is in the context of I am the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, it is a reminder of where you were and where you should be now, but God says your people that you brought up from the land of Egypt, and then you have this verb shachat, the actual form here is shichet, and the IE infix in Hebrew, first year Hebrew student can tell you when you see the IE, the shichet instead of shachat, that is the pieal, you have the same vowels in the word pieal, pieal is the intensive stem, and it is fascinating to see, you have it translated here as have corrupted themselves, and I can hear the Ten Commandments movie, and the voice of God have corrupted themselves, you remember that, I think it is Cecil B. DeMille himself who reads those words, but shachat doesn't exactly mean to corrupt, in the nifal, which is the passive stem, something is happening to you, you receive the action of the verb, it means to ruin or to spoil, if you leave your vegetables or your fruit too long, it goes bad, it spoils, and so in the nifal, which is the passive stem, it means to rot, to go bad, to ruin or spoil, in the pieal, it means to ruin, to destroy, to annihilate something, for example, Genesis chapter 6, verse 17, God speaks, behold, I, even I, am bringing the flood of water upon the earth to shachat, all flesh, in which is the breath of life, from under heaven, everything that is on the earth shall perish, that is the pieal, from shachat, it is the same form that we have here, to destroy all flesh, in which is the breath of life, Genesis chapter 9, God speaking to Noah, I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and never again shall the water become a flood to shachat, all flesh, I establish my covenant, all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to shachat, the earth, Genesis 13, verse 10, talking about a city, Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, this was before the Lord shachat Sodom and Gomorrah, it was like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zohar, who wrote Genesis? Moses, so far the two uses of shachat are the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah, so what do you think is going through Moses mind when he says, the people that you brought up out of the land of Egypt have shachat, this is not the word reflexive, this is almost an elliptical statement, the order that I read to you, he says lech, read, go, get down, because shachat, the people that you brought out of the land of Egypt, it is a third person singular, and of course the collective noun takes a singular verb, but the people are destroyed, the people are ruined, the people are corrupt, it is not the

reflexive, that would be the hithpahel, it is not the hithpahel, it is the peahel, they are destroyed, God says they are ruined, they are annihilated, and later on it has other connotations, but in Genesis, it is what God did to the earth and the people and all flesh with the flood, it is what God did to Sodom and Gomorrah, it is annihilation, and God basically says the people are annihilated, the people are destroyed, they are gone, the people you brought out of the land of Egypt, they are gone, they are annihilated, think of the flood, think of Sodom, that is the people, and so Moses hears this, get up, go down, the complete abrupt change of context and subject and mood for Moses who has been listening to the Lord for 40 days, that same word is used two more times in Genesis 19 when the angels speak to Lot, and they say get out of here, get out of Sodom, we are about to sheket this place, because their outcry has become so great before the Lord that the Lord has sent us to sheket it, thus it came about, verse 29 of Genesis 19, when God sheketed, if you will, the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot lived, so this word is as strong as you can get in terms of the deal is off, you are ruined, you are destroyed, you are annihilated, that is what God says to Moses here in verse 7, they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them, it has been not even a month and a half since the words of the book were read, since the people were sprinkled with blood, here is my question, we had the question on the break, how could Aaron do this, how could Aaron make the golden calf and declare it to be Yahweh, here is my question for you, where are the 70 elders who went up and less than 6 weeks earlier, ate and drank in the presence of God seated in the midst of the glassy sea, served by angel waiters it would appear, where are the 70, you say what is the matter with Aaron, what is the matter with all of the, there is 5 men from every tribe in Israel who saw God, where are they, it is stunning, and what it tells me when you think well, it is easy to look at somebody and say boy you really messed up, I am surprised God didn't just go ahead and wipe you all out, in fact it is kind of a self-fulfilling prophecy, as Joseph pointed out, a lot of these people, their first complaint, they weren't 5 days out of Egypt, he said you brought us in the wilderness to die, we are all going to die, and actually they all did, and I remarked to him, you think about year 35 or year 37 in the wilderness had people looking around saying I told you we were all going to die out here, didn't I tell you, I told you we shouldn't have left, he said look all of my friends are dead, I am one of the last that has left, I knew it, I knew it all the time, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy, there was no need for it to happen, but there are people that are just impervious, that is why God had to drop them in the wilderness, you can't have people like that going into the land, who are dismayed at the first sign of stress or having to wait, and you can see it here, they can't last, they can't subsist on the promise of God, they can't look at the promise and say well God has said, God would not bring us out here and leave us to die, if God sent Moses up into the mountain, he is going to send him back down, 70 of us have gone up there and eaten in the presence of God, have beheld his glory, we have all been sprinkled with his blood, we committed to God, all that the Lord has said we will do, a couple of weeks go by, make us a calf, we need a God that we can approach, you look back in chapter 20, and the people say, Moses you go before God, we don't want to get near him, we are afraid of him, you go speak to him, we want to be at a distance, well they are uncomfortable with that kind of God, they want a God they can approach, they want a God that

they can build the altar right in front of it, and sit down to eat and drink and rise up to play, and I mentioned last time that word play is the same one that is used of Isaac and Rebekah, when the king looks over the parapet and sees Isaac sporting as it says in the King James with his wife, well the idea here is, and of course Cecil B. DeMille loved that part, and he embellished the King James, and they did do all of these lewd and lascivious things, you've got the women whipping their hair around and doing these wild dances, well that actually is the implication of the word to sport or to play, they sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play, why? Because now once you have broken the ice so to speak and disconnected yourself and freed yourself from the restrictions of the law that says don't covet your neighbor's wife, once you have freed yourself from the restrictions of that by making the cap, well now you can make up your own rules, and you can follow the pattern of the other nations who incorporate lascivious activities shall we say with their worship, what do you think happened back in Egypt with the Apis bull and the Isis cult and all the rest of that? The Isis cow was sort of the virgin Mary to the Apis bull who was uniquely born, and it was the only calf born to this cow, and so the calf is holy and the mother is holy also, and they had all of this activity associated with it, well that's what's happening here, so God says they have turned aside quickly, and that's the understatement of the year, in a matter of weeks they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them, they have made themselves a molded calf, worshipped it, sacrificed to it and said this is your God oh Israel that brought you out of the land of Egypt.

The Lord said to Moses, I have seen this people and indeed it is a stiff necked people. Have you ever wondered about stiff necked? What kind of a picture does that give you? It's composed of two words in Hebrew, the first one is Qesheh, Q-E-S-H-E-H, this word in its root form means hard or difficult, it's used for example in Judges chapter 4 and verse 24, the hand of the sons of Israel pressed heavier and heavier upon Jabin the king of Canaan until they had destroyed Jabin, the hand of the sons of Israel literally was hard, harder and harder on the king, made it more and more difficult for him until they finally just ran him out of town, this is what President Reagan did to the Soviet bloc in the Cold War, he escalated the spending, it was a calculated risk to run up the national debt and spend so much on defense that they couldn't keep up and he basically broke the bank, it's like in a poker game where you eventually bid so high the other guy has to fold and if you read Dinesh D'Souza's book on President Reagan he documents that this wasn't sort of a happy accident, President Reagan with malice of forethought consciously decided and had policy meetings and it's all documented, he doesn't get credit for it, but he knew that the way to beat the Soviet bloc was to outspend them and bankrupt them and that's exactly what he did and it was no surprise to him, and he knew what he was doing when he said Mr. Gorbachev tear down this wall because he knew the guy was out of money and he knew the time was right and he knew the climate was right and he knew that the economic pressures were such that the thing was going to crack and fold from within, he didn't have to fight a war, he didn't have to and that was everybody made fun of the President for the quote Star Wars initiative, but you talk to Mr. Gorbachev even today and he will tell you that was one of the major things that made them realize they weren't going to be able to keep up because whether it could actually be done or not they thought it could be done and that was President

Reagan's intention, so he pressed his hand hard against them until they were destroyed, that's this word cache, it's used in Exodus chapter 1 here, when the Egyptians made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them, this is this word cache, it was intransigent, unmovable, consistently difficult, that's the idea of cache, Psalm chapter 16 verse 5 you have made your people experience hardship, you have given us wine to drink that makes us stagger, you have made your people experience cache, it's unrelieved, it's unrelenting, that's the first word here, literally this is a noun followed by two genitives, am is the people, just like God said am ka, your people, this is am cache oreph, O-R-E-P-H, so Q-E-S-H-E-H is followed by O-R-E-P-H, oreph, so you would expect well oreph is going to be the neck, and it is, the interesting thing is that when you look at this word in Hebrew you realize that in most places where it occurs it is translated back, because it has the idea of seeing someone from behind, in Arabic there is a cognate derived from the same root called erphat, the U-R-P-H there is from this and then they've added a feminine ending A-T, erphat instead of oreph, but it's the mane or hair on a horse's neck, it's the back of the neck, extending down to the upper back, so they use it for a mane or tuft of hair, it's used for the top of the head or the neck, but it's basically the back of the head, the prophecy of Jacob about Judah in Genesis 49.8, Judah your brother shall praise you, your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies, well what does this mean, your hand will be on the neck of your enemies, you think about the ancient near eastern world, you're looking at men, that's what you're dealing with, it's a patriarchal culture, so you're looking at men, men have full beards, it's just not practical to be clean shaven in the ancient world, so when you're talking about somebody's neck, you never see their neck from the front, it's obscured by a beard, the only time you ever see someone's neck is if they're facing away from you, and so it's not the fact that they won't turn their head, what does it mean to have a stiff neck, we've all had a stiff neck probably from sleeping crooked or having our head at a bad angle for too long, it has nothing to do with the orientation of the head, it means I'm looking at you from behind, reminds me of don't cast your pearls before swine, Jesus said because they will turn and tear you to pieces, they're running away already, they have faced in the other direction and they are departing, and Jesus says when the unclean, the unsaved are departing, don't take your pearls of truth and throw them out in front trying to get them to turn around, because they will turn, but they're going to turn and tear you to pieces, if they're leaving, if they don't express an interest, if they're not asking and seeking and knocking, if they're not asking you a reason for the hope that's in you, don't throw pearls out there, because if they turn, they're not turning because, oh, pearls, swine have no interest in pearls, they will turn and tear you to pieces because you're aggravating them with this rain of objects from the sky, so to see someone from the back, that's what the neck involves, so to be hard or difficult with regard to the neck is what's in view here, and this is somebody who is faced away from you, they're facing away from you and they've got a hard or difficult neck, this is why so often in scripture you find things like 2 Chronicles 29.6, our fathers have been unfaithful and have done evil in the sight of the Lord our God and have forsaken him, and then it says in the English translation, it says turn their faces away from the dwelling place of the Lord and have turned their backs, well, it's not turned their backs in Hebrew, it's the verb Natan, like Nathan, Natan, Benjamin Netanyahu, that's Benjamin,

son of the right hand, and then Netanyahu, his last name means given by the Lord, Natan is the verb that means to give, 2 Chronicles 29.6, they have turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the Lord and have given their necks, this is what it says, the contrast here, are you seeing your face or are you seeing your neck, they have turned their faces away and they're giving God their neck, they're insulting him, and of course turning the back is not a bad sort of euphemistic translation, but it literally says they have given their neck, you find this over and over again in scripture, Ezekiel 23.27, God says, I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion all the people among whom you come and I will make all your enemies give you their neck, flee, run away, face in the other direction, they're not going to oppose you anymore, they'll give you their neck, cause to turn their backs, over and over again in scripture, 2 Samuel 22.41, you have made my enemies turn their necks to me and I destroyed those who hated me, so when you go back to the blessing of Jacob on Judah and he says, your hand will be on the neck of your enemy, now you get the picture, the enemy is already fleeing, God is driving them before you and you're going to reach out and grab them by that neck and be able to do with them what you will, they are already beaten, they are already fleeing, so what does it mean when God says, this people is a people of a hard neck, they are constantly facing away from God, all he ever sees is their neck, and when he tries to put his hand on their neck, they're not compliant, they don't stop running, that idea of hard means consistent, it is the oppression that was put on Jabin and all that kind of thing, it is unrelenting, they are a people of an unrelenting neck, all I ever get from these people is their neck, they never turn and face me, they never turn and honor me, they never turn and pay attention to me, it's an unrelenting view of necks, this people is just a bunch of rear views, all I see is them facing the other way, that's what it means when the English says a stiff neck, it doesn't have anything to do with stiffness at all, God says, you know, I've called an assembly, but when I look out, what would happen if I was a pastor in a big congregation at all the pews, I looked out in the audience and everybody is facing the wrong way, that's what God says, this is what I've got, I've got a people of necks, I'm looking at the back of their heads, what am I, the choir? You know, the old joke about the people in the choir that are walking down the street and the pastor calls out to them and says, hey, and they look at him and they squint and they say, could you turn around for a second, and when he turns around they say, oh yeah, the pastor, because all they recognize is the back of his head, so God says, I have seen this people and behold, all I see is necks, all I see is people facing the wrong way. Now then, let me alone that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them and I will make of you a great nation.

Now take just a second and digest the content of verse 10 there, God is speaking to Moses, he says, I've got this obstinate people, they have, they're destroyed, they're gone, they're history, now let me alone so my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them and I will make of you a great nation. What does God say must happen before his anger can burn and he can destroy them? Moses has to let him alone. God says, let me alone so I may do this.

The idea being, if you don't let me alone, I can't do it. And sure enough, Moses in verse 11, entreated the Lord his God. He, in essence, disobeys a direct order from God.

God says, Moses, let me alone. I'm going to destroy this people and I'll make some out of you. Moses does the direct opposite.

Moses entreated the Lord his God and said, oh Lord, why does your anger burn against your people? God just got through telling him, let me alone. Moses is not letting him alone. Let me alone.

Now this is a strong example of the power of intercessory prayer. Because God may have a policy of destruction toward a person or toward a nation or toward a group. God may have a policy in a situation where your biblical expectation is that he is going to act in discipline and in judgment.

And yet, the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Now we know that some of what God does here is, not to be irreverent here, but it is a form of posturing. God knows all along that he is not actually going to destroy the people on this occasion.

But he tells Moses that he is going to. Why? Because by appearing in this form, just like when he sent the angel with the sword in front of Balaam. God has no intention of killing Balaam on that occasion.

But he appears to be ready to kill Balaam. And the angel says, if your donkey had not spoken up on your behalf, you'd be dead. God will create a situation to elicit a response from a believer who ought to know what to do in that situation.

And Moses does what he ought to do. God postures and says, stand aside, let my anger burn, I'm going to obliterate this people. Remember the flood? Remember Sodom? Well, watch this.

Let me alone now so I can do this. And Moses says, Lord, no. And he proceeds to make intercession.

Look at the content of his intercession. This is helpful to us because I have often wondered, well now, how can I pray on behalf of someone that, from everything I can see, deserves judgment? How can I pray for myself when I know I deserve judgment? How can you call God off from a righteous and just judgment? How can you do that? Well, this is how Moses did it. First of all, Moses says, why does your anger burn? And as was pointed out, God said, your people that you brought out of the land of Egypt, Moses.

It reminds me of a parent. The father comes in and talks to his wife. He says, well, your son has just done nothing so.

It's sort of a way of disclaiming responsibility for him. But Moses turns the tables and says, Lord, why does your anger burn against your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt? With great power and with a mighty hand. This is step one in intercessory prayer.

The issue is not the object of discipline or the object of God's love. The issue is the subject. God

is the author of grace.

God is the author of mercy. Moses shifts the discussion from the people to God. He says, and of course this takes Moses aback and you think he is really an advanced believer.

He's thinking pretty quickly on his feet. God says, these people are destroyed. These people are a bunch of necks looking away from me.

Moses says, but Lord, what about you? You are the God that brought them out of the land of Egypt. You are the God who claimed them for yourself. You are the God who brought them out with great power.

You are the God who brought them out with a mighty hand. The issue is not the quality of the object that was delivered. The issue is the quality of the deliverer.

And this is true in the nature of God's love. God's love depends on who and what he is, not who and what we are. God loves the world and we are a lost, hopeless, fallen, corrupt people.

But God's love is based on who and what he is. Our faith doesn't rest in who and what we are. Our faith and our confidence, our hope, rests in who and what God is.

Who and what the Lord Jesus is. What does the Great Hymn say? Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood, Jesus' righteousness. The terms of the discussion need to be God, not us.

We are not deserving of anything. The Israelites didn't deserve anything. Were they any more deserving before they came out into the wilderness? And were a nation of slaves who had to be convinced and cajoled and so quickly were swayed back into their slave-thinking ways after they crossed the Red Sea? Moses says, Lord, you knew these people.

You claimed them. You brought them out with a mighty hand. It is you.

Why should the Egyptians, verse 12, speak saying, He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth. Moses doesn't say, now, if this gets out, back to the Egyptians about what the people have done. He says, not what are the Egyptians going to think of the Israelites.

What are the Egyptians going to think of God? The focus is on God. Where is the glory of God? Not where is the shortcoming of the people. Turn from your burning anger and change your mind about doing harm to your people.

Moses, every other word out of his mouth, it refers back to God. The issue is God. The point is God.

Everything else revolves around God. The anger of the Lord, as it is presented to Moses, is revolving around the people. And Moses shifts the locus and the focus from the people to God.

He says, Lord, we have these people, but what about you? What are they going to say about you? You are the one that brought them out. You are the one that manifested your power. Then, in verse 13, Moses says, Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by yourself.

You said to them, I will multiply your descendants. It would be an interesting statistical analysis to count how many times Moses refers to God in these few short verses. Either directly or as the subject of a verb.

Lord, you remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You remember your servants, whom you swore by yourself. You said to them, I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven.

All of this land of which I have spoken, I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever. Well, the Lord changed his mind. And boy, the theologians just fall apart and unravel with God changing his mind.

You have Samuel talking to Saul, saying the Lord is not a man that he should change his mind. God changes his mind all over the place. God relents.

Why? Because it was a teaching opportunity. God presents himself as about to destroy Nineveh, when God has no intention of destroying Nineveh. But he presents them with the potential of being destroyed, and they turn.

And God says to his people, the godless pagans have got more sense than you've got. I threaten them with destruction, and they turn. I send prophet after prophet, and you pay no heed.

Same thing here. The Lord changed his mind about the harm which he said he would do to his people. Once again, how many references, just in that one verse 14, do you have to God? The Lord changed his mind about the harm which he said he would do to his people.

You've got five explicit references to God in that one short verse, because the issue is God. We look at our circumstances, we look at our problems, we look at the evil that's in the world, and we can easily begin to think, well, it's about me. I'm not going to go forward.

I had a failure. Somebody in my periphery has failed. There's a problem here.

There's a problem there. God's not going to be able to bless because of this, that, and the other. And we tend to think, well, it's all defined by the circumstances.

It's all defined by the people who are involved. And what's helpful for us is to think like Moses. It's not about the people, and it's not about the circumstances.

It is all about God. It is all about the glory of God. It is about the plan and purpose of God.

It is about the promises of God, which he has made to people before us that stand firm. And

when our hope is built on Jesus' blood and Jesus' righteousness, on Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.

The wise man builds his house on the rock. The foolish man builds his house on the sand. The thing that is in common is both of these guys don't seem to be able to get away from the bad weather.

It's not like there's a third man who builds his house where there are no storms. You'd think, well, you know, you can build on whatever you want to as long as there's no storms. The storm is a given.

The storm is going to come. So you have to find a place where you have solidity, where you have stability. And that is not in this earth.

It's not in us. It's not in people. Cursed is the man who trusts in man, who makes flesh his strength.

Moses doesn't say, but Lord, haven't you seen the glimmering? Some of these people are amenable. I mean, you did see them say all that the Lord has... Moses doesn't make a single argument about or related to the people at all. He doesn't say, well, Lord, you know, I've got Joshua down here.

I've got Caleb and I've got a few good men. He doesn't even make the argument that Abraham makes with regard to Lot. Well, if there are 50 righteous, if there are 20, if there are 10.

He doesn't even go that route. He says, Lord, this is all about you and what you have said and how you are going to be perceived in the world. And God says, well, you're right.

And he relents. The Lord changed his mind about the harm which he said he would do to his people. Well, so Moses has staved off the Sodom and Gomorrah biblical flood destruction.

Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand. Look at this in verse 15. Tablets which were written on both sides.

They were written on one side and the other. Why are we given this information? Tablets written on both sides. There's been a lot of speculation.

You know what the Hebrew rabbis think about this? They think that because these were written by God, the letters cut all the way through the tablet. So that on the front, you read it in normal fashion. And on the back, they're cut all the way through and it's in reverse.

There's some practical reasons why this cannot be true. Among others, you have the letters sonic and maim, which have a closed... They're like our letter O or Q. And you know, if you are making stencils, you can't get a letter O because of the center. And so the rabbis solved that by saying, well, God supernaturally held the center of the letter in there.

And they just had some sort of gravity field. Well, you know, this is nonsense. God didn't cut the letters all the way through.

It says it is written on the front and on the back. Well, so was it too long to fit all on one side? If you've ever seen little representations of the Ten Commandments, the little Hebrew letters, and it will say lo this and lo that, you know, thou shalt not. Well, it fits comfortably.

They're real short. Why are they written on the front and on the back? The best explanation for this is it's the same content on the front and on the back. It is a covenant.

And when you stand those between yourself and God, you can read it on one side. He can read it on the other side. It is the mediator in stone.

It is a shadow of what is to come. What does the New Testament say about the Lord Jesus Christ? What does He say about Himself? I have not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. He replaces the tablets of stone standing in the gap.

He replaces Moses standing in the gap as our intercessor. He is the Word of God incarnate. He is the tablet that is written on both sides.

God can read the divine side. We can read the human side. That's why these tablets are written on both sides.

The sad thing is that because of the rejection of the people, what's going to happen to these tablets? Because of the rejection of the people, what's going to happen to the Lord Jesus Christ? You see the parallel? In our lives, the same thing can happen. If we live a faithless life, if we redefine God in a comfortable image that we can live with and that we can approach, and do not stick with what His Word says about us, we have shattered the stones. What does Paul say to the Galatians? If you put on that yoke, if you redefine God and His plan, you are fallen from grace.

You are cut off from Christ. And this is believers. We can do this to ourselves.

It's so important for us to see this and not let it happen to us. We're out of time for today. We'll pick up in Exodus 32 next time.

Father, thank You for the privilege of studying Your Word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will sow it as seed into our hearts, that we will bear the fruit of righteousness, not just 30 or 60 fold, but 100 fold, and be prepared for all of the good things that You have prepared for those who love You in the kingdom to come. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.