



The Adoration of the Calf, Nicolas Poussin, 1633-4

1 The LORD spoke to Moses, “Hurry down, for your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt, have acted
2 basely. They have been quick to turn aside from the way that I enjoined upon them. They have made themselves
3 a molten calf and bowed low to it and sacrificed to it, saying: ‘This is your G-d, O Israel, who brought you out of
4 the land of Egypt!’”

6 The LORD further said to Moses, “I see that this is a stiffnecked people. Now, let Me be, that My anger may blaze
7 forth against them and that I may destroy them, and make of you a great nation.”

9 But Moses implored the LORD his G-d, saying, “Let not Your anger, O Lord, blaze forth against Your people,
10 whom You delivered from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand. Let not the Egyptians say,
11 ‘It was with evil intent that He delivered them, only to kill them off in the mountains and annihilate them from
12 the face of the earth.’ Turn from Your blazing anger, and renounce the plan to punish Your people. Remember
13 Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, how You swore to them by Your Self and said to them: I will make
14 your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and I will give to your offspring this whole land of which I
15 spoke, to possess forever.”

17 And the LORD renounced the punishment He had planned to bring upon His people.

19 Thereupon Moses turned and went down from the mountain bearing the two tablets of the Pact, tablets inscribed
20 on both their surfaces: they were inscribed on the one side and on the other. The tablets were G-d’s work, and
21 the writing was G-d’s writing, incised upon the tablets.... As soon as Moses came near the camp and saw the calf
22 and the dancing he became enraged; and he hurled the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of
23 the mountain. He took the calf that they had made and burned it; he ground it to powder and strewn it upon
24 the water and so made the Israelites drink it. Moses said to Aaron, “What did this people do to you that you have
25 brought such great sin upon them?” ...

27 Moses saw that the people were out of control—since Aaron had let them get out of control—so that they were a
28 menace to any who might oppose them. Moses stood up in the gate of the camp and said, “Whoever is for the
29 LORD, come here!” And all the Levites rallied to him. He said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the G-d of Israel:
30 Each of you put sword on thigh, go back and forth from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay brother,
31 neighbor, and kin.” The Levites did as Moses had bidden; and some three thousand of the people fell that day.
32 And Moses said, “Dedicate yourselves to the LORD this day—for each of you has been against son and brother—
33 that He may bestow a blessing upon you today.”

35 The next day Moses said to the people, “You have been guilty of a great sin. Yet I will now go up to the LORD;
36 perhaps I may win forgiveness for your sin.”

38 Moses went back to the LORD and said, “Alas, this people is guilty of a great sin in making for themselves a G-d
39 of gold. Now, if You will forgive their sin [well and good]; but if not, erase me from the record which You have
40 written!”

41 But the LORD said to Moses, “He who has sinned against Me, him only will I erase from My record. Go now, lead
42 the people where I told you. See, My angel shall go before you. But when I make an accounting, I will bring them
43 to account for their sins.”

44 Then the LORD sent a plague upon the people, for what they did with the calf that Aaron made. Then the LORD
45 said to Moses, "Set out from here, you and the people that you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to the
46 land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your offspring will I give it'— I will send an angel
47 before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the
48 Jebusites—a land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go in your midst, since you are a stiffnecked people,
49 lest I destroy you on the way."

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51 When the people heard this harsh word, they went into mourning, and none put on his finery.

52
53 The LORD said to Moses, "Say to the Israelite people, 'You are a stiffnecked people. If I were to go in your midst
54 for one moment, I would destroy you. Now, then, leave off your finery, and I will consider what to do to you.'"

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56 So the Israelites remained stripped of the finery from Mount Horeb on....

57
58 Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say to me, 'Lead this people forward,' but You have not made known to me
59 whom You will send with me. Further, You have said, 'I have singled you out by name, and you have, indeed,
60 gained My favor.' Now, if I have truly gained Your favor, pray let me know Your ways, that I may know You and
61 continue in Your favor. Consider, too, that this nation is Your people."

62
63 And He said, "I will go in the lead and will lighten your burden."

64
65 And he said to Him, "Unless You go in the lead, do not make us leave this place. For how shall it be known that
66 Your people have gained Your favor unless You go with us, so that we may be distinguished, Your people and I,
67 from every people on the face of the earth?"

68
69 And the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have asked; for you have truly gained My favor
70 and I have singled you out by name."

71
72 He said, "Oh, let me behold Your Presence!"

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74 And He answered, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim before you the name
75 LORD, and the grace that I grant and the compassion that I show.

76
77 But," He said, "you cannot see My face, for man may not see Me and live." And the LORD said, "See, there is a
78 place near Me. Station yourself on the rock and, as My Presence passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and
79 shield you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will take My hand away and you will see My back; but My
80 face must not be seen."

81
82 The LORD said to Moses: "Carve two tablets of stone like the first, and I will inscribe upon the tablets the words
83 that were on the first tablets, which you shattered. Be ready by morning, and in the morning come up to Mount
84 Sinai and present yourself there to Me, on the top of the mountain. No one else shall come up with you, and no
85 one else shall be seen anywhere on the mountain; neither shall the flocks and the herds graze at the foot of this
86 mountain." So Moses carved two tablets of stone, like the first, and early in the morning he went up on Mount
87 Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, taking the two stone tablets with him. The LORD came down in a
88 cloud; He stood with him there, and proclaimed the name LORD.

89
90 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed: "The LORD! the LORD! a G-d compassionate and gracious, slow
91 to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving
92 iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He does not remit all punishment, but visits the iniquity of parents upon
93 children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generations."

94
95 Moses hastened to bow low to the ground in homage, and said, "If I have gained Your favor, O Lord, pray, let the
96 Lord go in our midst, even though this is a stiffnecked people. Pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for
97 Your own!"

98 He said: I hereby make a covenant. Before all your people I will work such wonders as have not been
99 wrought on all the earth or in any nation; and all the people who are with you shall see how awesome are the
100 LORD's deeds which I will perform for you.