

Cindy Bassett

# The Bible Corner



## A broken covenant

It was midday on the Sabbath. Most of the Hebrews remained in their tents during the noon meal, but a few sat outside, greeting Moses warmly as he walked past on the way to his brother Aaron's tent. Everyone knew Moses, the greatest leader in the history of the Hebrews.

Moses said to himself, smiling, "Perhaps, at last, these people are beginning to understand the ways of the Lord."

Suddenly, the peace of this Sabbath ended abruptly. The sound of a heated argument broke the noonday calm, and Moses quickly strode to the tent where the disturbance was taking place. One woman was attempting to wrest a gold necklace from another, who was just as determined to keep it.

"What is the meaning of this?" Moses thundered. "All dispute are to be brought before the judges. And not on the Sabbath!"

"This woman stole my necklace!" one of them protested.

"She's lying, the necklace belongs to me!" the other woman challenged.

"It's mine," the first woman persisted, pulling and tugging it from her accuser.

Moses grabbed the necklace from them both and smashed it to the ground in disgust.

"This necklace belongs to neither of you," he shouted, his face reddening. "It bears the marks of an Egyptian craftsman, and you have allowed this thing to bring sin into your lives!"

Moses turned on his heel and stalked from the tent. When his anger finally subsided, a vague sense of uneasiness welled up inside of

him, thoroughly darkening his mood.

"I should have put an end to this when we first left Egypt," Moses fretted.

Eager for the Hebrews to depart from their country after the devastating plagues, the Egyptians had loaded their former slaves with presents of gold, silver and jewelry. The oppressed now had the possessions of the wealthy. Burdened with these thoughts, Moses entered his brother's tent. "Moses, why so downcast?" inquired Aaron, sensing his younger brother's brooding.

"How long will it take for you people to believe?" Moses complained bitterly. "How many more miracles must God perform?"

"What have I done to deserve this tirade?" Aaron objected.

"I'm sorry, Aaron," Moses sighed. "I get so frustrated with these people who think only of their pleasures of the moment. How easily they forget all that God has promised!"

"Maybe your own thoughts are too lofty, Moses. After all, how can you expect to understand such small minds when you converse with God?" Aaron chided. "I, on the other hand, must be content with the lot of those not so privileged to have the ear of God!"

"Aaron, your remarks sting with resentment," replied Moses in surprise, looking even more downcast.

"How do you expect me to feel?" Aaron demanded. "I am the eldest son, and yet God chose you as the leader!"

"God has a plan; we are not to question, just obey Him," Moses said firmly. "Tomorrow, I will go back up the mountain with

Joshua."

"And there's another fitting example of how I am passed over," Aaron snapped. "You choose Joshua as an assistant. Don't I have more of a right than he does?"

"I am leaving you and Hur in charge of the Hebrews," Moses answered. "If there are any problems, I am turning you to make the decisions," he said, turning to leave.

The next morning, Moses took Joshua with him to the top of Mount Sinai. When they arrived at the summit, Moses left Joshua and went inside the huge cloud that encircled the mountain. He remained there, praying to the Lord for six days. On the seventh day, the Lord called out to Moses.

God gave Moses many other laws for the people so that their lives would be happy. He told Moses exactly what He expected of His special people in their dealings with others. There were laws concerning servants, property and the annual feast days for the Lord.

Then the Lord told Moses about a special plan for Aaron. "Now at least my brother will be happy," Moses said.

A holy tabernacle was to be built. There, the Hebrews could go and worship God. Aaron and his sons were chosen as priests to minister the sacrifices to the Lord. They were to be given special garments to wear, and they were to be anointed with holy oil as a sign of their dedication to God.

When God had finished speaking to Moses, He gave him two stone tablets on which He had written the Ten Commandments.

Meanwhile, down below in the Hebrew camp, the people had grown restless. Forty days and nights had passed since Moses had ascended the mountain with Joshua.

So the people went to Aaron, and one of them stepped forward. "Something must have happened to your brother. Make us a new leader, a new god to take us to the Promised Land!" he suggested.

"At last the people are coming to me as their leader," mused Aaron. "I must do what-

ever I can to please them."

"Tell all of the women to bring their gold jewelry here to me, all of the ornaments that the Egyptians gave them as presents when we left their country," Aaron told the people.

Aaron made a huge fire, and when the women presented their jewelry, he threw it into a big pot to melt it down. The Hebrews formed a circle and danced around the fire.

When all of the jewelry had melted, Aaron fashioned a golden calf, just like the one he had seen in Egypt. And a huge cheer went up from the crowd for Aaron. He was very proud and proclaimed. "Here, O Israel, is the god that brought you out of Egypt! Tomorrow, we shall have a feast in honor of our god!"

Aaron made an altar before the golden calf and the people cheered even louder. And he became prouder still of the new position of success he had attained. Never in his life had he felt so powerful.

The next morning, the people brought burnt offerings to their new god. They sat down to a wild party of feasting and drinking. Aaron built a circle of fire around the altar, and the people danced until they were dizzy.

High up on Mount Sinai, the Lord told Moses, "Hurry, go back down to the Hebrew camp and see the rebellious people. They have forgotten everything and broken my covenant. My anger shall strike out against them and destroy them! I am going to make you, Moses, and all of your descendants a great nation instead."

**For discussion:**

1) How many commandments did the Hebrews break throughout this story?

**For further reading:**

- 1) The story of the disobedience of the Hebrews is found in Exodus, Chapter 32:1-9.
- 2) The story of the other laws God gave to Moses is found in Exodus, Chapter 20:22-Chapter 32.

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