

Cindy Bassett

The Bible Corner



A broken covenant, part II

"Lord, please change your mind!" Moses pleaded. "If it is true that I have found favor in your sight, then spare the Hebrews! For I am just as guilty in this as the rest of your people. I should have cast out all of their foreign possessions long ago."

The Hebrews had violated many of God's commandments and broken their covenant with Him, while Moses was away on Mount Sinai. So the Lord decided to destroy them and make Moses and all of his descendants into a great nation instead.

"If you kill these Hebrews," Moses continued, "the Egyptians will think that you took their slaves, not to free them for a better life, but to abandon them out in the wilderness to die. Remember, O Lord, your covenant, the promise that you first made your servant, Abraham. You pledged to him that he would become the father of a great nation, with descendants as numerous as the stars, and that the land of Canaan would be theirs."

Moses kept praying, until at last God changed his mind. Quickly, Moses emerged from the cloud in which he had remained for 40 days and nights.

"Joshua," he called, "come, we must go back down to the camp at once!"

When they had traveled halfway down Mount Sinai, Joshua stopped and said, "Listen, Moses, I hear a great uproar coming from the camp. Perhaps the people are preparing for war against some foreign nation that comes to threaten us?"

"No, Joshua," Moses replied, "you are mistaken. What you hear is the sound of singing and dancing. How soon the Hebrews rebelled against the faithful God who led them out of slavery?"

"I wish that you were wrong," Joshua answered sadly. "Why would they do such a terrible thing?"

"Because they started relying on their own strength and possessions instead of trusting in God for their lives," Joshua replied.

Before Moses and Joshua had even reached the foot of the mountain, they saw the golden calf gleaming in the sunlight. None of the people saw the two men approach. The people were too caught up in their feasting and drinking at the wild party that Aaron had arranged for them.

"How dare you treat God like this?" Moses thundered. "So this is how you have seen fit to repay him!" Moses took the two stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments had been written and threw them to the ground. They shattered in sight of everyone, and he walked away in disgust.

"Moses, wait!" Aaron cried, running after him. "You were gone so long, we feared that something had happened to you!"

"And this is the way you could lead the Hebrews?" Moses replied coldly. "What did these people do to you that you allowed them to commit such a grave sin?"

"It just happened," Aaron stammered. "I threw their jewelry into the fire and out came a golden calf!"

"Sin doesn't just happen," Moses retorted. "You led the people in their disobedience, Aaron!"

Moses took the false god that Aaron had created for the Hebrews and threw it into the fire to melt it back down. Then he ground into a powder the metal that remained, spreading it on water and forcing the people to drink it. The Lord sent a plague as punishment, and many of the Hebrews died.

A few days later, Moses called a meeting of the people who remained. "You have broken your covenant with God through your disobedience to His law," he told them. "I will go back up the mountain and see if I can obtain forgiveness for you." Those who were sorry for their sins urged Moses to go.

Moses went to the top of Mount Sinai and again begged the Lord to forgive the Hebrews. The Lord told Moses to cut two more stone tablets, on which he would once again write God's commandments.

When Moses returned with these tablets, God said, "I am a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in steadfast love. I show this love by forgiving the sins of those who are truly sorry."

Moses fell down and worshipped the Lord in thanksgiving. "Oh, God, please go before us in our journey, as before, and lead us to the Promised land," Moses prayed.

"Yes, Moses," the Lord agreed, "I will drive out all of the foreign people before you and give you victory over them. The Hebrews will see even greater miracles than ever before, but they must promise to obey all of my laws."

"Tell the people to be careful not to compromise themselves in any way," the Lord continued. "They must destroy all of the false gods and idols they encounter and have no part of them. If they refuse, soon they will be just as evil. For they are to worship no other gods."

Moses returned to the camp and told the Hebrews everything that God expected of them, if they wanted to restore their covenant

with him. When Moses had finished speaking, they brought any remaining Egyptian jewelry and ornaments to the foot of Mount Sinai. Before leaving for their journey, they buried the jewelry as a sign of their repentance and obedience to the one true God.

For discussion:

(1) In what did the Hebrews put their trust instead of in God?

(2) Aaron's first mistake was his jealousy of his brother, Moses. What other sins did this lead to?

(3) God did choose Aaron to be a special priest for the Hebrews. God gives all of us a special job to do. What do you think that God has given you to do?

(4) Why did God forgive the Hebrews who were sorry?

(5) Why did God tell Moses that the Hebrews shouldn't associate with the foreigners already living in the Promised Land? How does this apply to our own lives?

(6) Numbers that occur in the Bible repeatedly are symbols of other truths. Forty is symbolic of testing and judgment. Moses remained on Mount Sinai for 40 days and nights, while the Hebrews failed and broke God's covenant. On the other hand, Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days and nights before beginning his public ministry. During this time, he fasted and prayed, and the devil tempted him. Jesus refused to worship Satan. (Matthew 4:1-12).

For further reading:

(1) The story of the restoration of the broken covenant is found in Exodus, Chapter 32:9-34:18.

(2) Moses reminded God about the promise made to Abraham many years before. The original covenant was made by God with Abraham in Genesis 17:1-9.

(3) The terms of the new covenant that God makes with each one of us through Jesus Christ is described in John 3:16 and Hebrews 8:7-13.

Sisters of Mercy 'sent forth' to serve in Chilean mission

Two Sisters of Mercy will be the guests of honor at a "despedida" or sending ceremony Sunday, February 8, as they prepare to leave for mission work in Chile.

Sister Anne Curtis, a theology teacher and campus minister at Our Lady of Mercy High School, and Sister Carol Wulforst, former principal of St. Joseph's School in Penfield, will depart February 10 for Cochabamba,

Bolivia. They will spend five months in language school there before joining six other Rochester Sisters of Mercy at their mission in Santiago, Chile. Both sisters have visited the mission before, spending a month there during the summer of 1985.

All are invited to attend the sending ceremony on Sunday at 3 p.m. in the Mercy Motherhouse Chapel, 1437 Blossom Road.

Urban League seeks volunteers to tutor students in Rochester

The Urban League of Rochester is in need of volunteers to serve as tutors for students in grades seven through 12.

People qualifying to serve as tutors need not have teaching credentials, but should have sound knowledge of basic or advanced math, English, earth science, chemistry and general science. Teaching experience is not necessary, because training will be provided.

For information, contact Barbara

Franklin, tutoring program coordinator, at (716)325-6530, ext. 248.

Evening of renewal scheduled

An evening of renewal for married couples is scheduled for Saturday, February 14, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

The evening includes a candlelight dinner, a presentation, time for reflection and sharing, and celebration of the Eucharist. Call (716)271-8755 for information.

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