

Exodus 32:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

Analysis

Moses' reaction was visceral: מִשְׁאָה וַיַּרְאָה (vayyichar-af Moshe, Moses' anger burned hot)—the same phrase used of God's wrath (v10). His shattering the tablets וַיִּשְׁבַּר אֹתָם (vayshabber otam, and broke them) at the mountain's foot symbolized Israel's covenant-breaking. The tablets represented God's covenant; their destruction enacted the broken relationship. Moses saw הַעֲגָל וְמַחְלָלָת (ha'egel umecholot, the calf and dancing)—the מַחְלָלָת (mecholot) suggests whirling, ecstatic pagan-style dancing likely with sexual overtones. Righteous anger at sin against God's glory is appropriate, especially for leaders.

Historical Context

This is the only time Moses' anger is recorded positively. His rage mirrored God's (v10), showing godly leaders should reflect God's attitude toward sin, particularly idolatry that attacks His unique glory.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What role does righteous anger play in spiritual leadership?
2. How does Israel's covenant-breaking prefigure the need for a new covenant (Jer 31:31-34)?

Interlinear Text

בָּאָשָׁר רַיִם
H1961 H834 And it came to pass as soon as he came nigh
בְּרֵבֶב
H7126
בְּמִקְדָּשׁ הַאֲלֹהִים
H413 H4264 unto the camp

וַיַּרְא אֶת בָּאָשָׁר וְמִתְחַלֵּת בָּעֵגֶל
H853 H5695 H4246
that he saw the calf and the dancing
וְמִתְהַרְּרָה אֶרְאָה מֹשֶׁה
H2734 H639 H4872
waxed hot anger and Moses

וְשָׁלַל
H7993 H3027
and he cast out of his hands
בְּפֶלַח תְּאַת מִזְבֵּחַ
H853 H3871 H7665
the tables and brake
וַיִּשְׁבֶּר אֶת מִזְבֵּחַ
H853 H8478
them beneath

בְּרֵרָה
the mount
H2022

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