

Exodus 32:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

Analysis

Aaron's active role is clear: he 'received' (לִקַּח, laqach), 'fashioned' (יָצַר, yatsar—the same word for God creating man in Gen 2:7), and 'made' (עָשָׂה, asah) the calf with a graving tool (כְּרֵת, cheret). His later excuse (v24) contradicts this detailed account. The proclamation אלה אלֹהֵיכֶם (eleh elohekha, these are your gods) echoes Israel's covenant language perversely, crediting the calf with the Exodus. The עֵגֶל מֵסֶךָה (egel masekah, molten calf) likely represented Apis, the Egyptian bull-god, or Canaanite Baal.

Historical Context

Bull imagery was common in ancient Near Eastern religion, representing fertility and strength. Jeroboam later established similar calves at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12:28-29), using nearly identical words.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How do you rationalize active participation in sin while denying responsibility?
2. What modern 'golden calves' claim credit for God's work in your life?

Interlinear Text

וְיִקְרָא	לְיָדָם	וְיִצְחַק	אֶת־	בְּחֵצֶת
And he received	them at their hand	H3335	H853	it with a graving tool
H3947	H3027			H2747
אֱלֹהִים	אֵלֶּה	וְאָמַרְתֶּן	מִשְׁכַּן	אֱלֹהִים
after he had made	calf	it a molten	and they said	These be thy gods
H6213	H5695	H4541	H559	H430
וְיִשְׁבָּא	בְּצִדְקָה	מִן־	מִצְרָיִם:	וְיִשְׁבָּא
O Israel	H834	which brought	thee up out of the land	of Egypt
H3478	H5927		H776	H4714

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 9:18 (Creation): Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations;

Deuteronomy 9:16 (Creation): And I looked, and, behold, ye had sinned against the LORD your God, and had made you a molten calf: ye had turned aside quickly out of the way which the LORD had commanded you.

Acts 7:41 (Creation): And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

Exodus 32:8 (Creation): They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

1 Kings 12:28 (Creation): Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

Hosea 13:2 (Creation): And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.

Isaiah 46:6 (References God): They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship.

Acts 17:29 (References God): Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

Exodus 20:23 (References God): Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.

Hosea 10:5 (Parallel theme): The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth-aven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it.