

Exodus 32:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD.

Analysis

Aaron's building a מזבח (mizbeach, altar) before the calf and proclaiming a חג ליהוה (chag l'Adonai, feast to Yahweh) reveals attempted syncretism—worshiping the true God through false means. This is more dangerous than outright paganism because it corrupts true worship while maintaining religious vocabulary. Aaron tried to redirect their worship toward Yahweh while accommodating their idolatrous form, but God accepts no such mixture. This violated the second commandment's prohibition of images just given on Sinai.

Historical Context

Aaron's attempt to control the situation by directing worship toward Yahweh while using the idol shows how religious leaders compromise to maintain influence and prevent worse outcomes, yet God rejected this entirely.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Where are you tempted to worship God on your own terms rather than His?
2. How does syncretism—mixing truth with error—corrupt genuine worship?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּרָא	אָהֳרֹן	וַיִּבֶן	מִזְבֵּחַ	לִפְנֵי יוֹ	וַיִּקְרָא
saw	And when Aaron	it he built	an altar	before	made proclamation
H7200	H175	H1129	H4196	H6440	H7121
אָהֳרֹן	וַיֹּאמֶר	חַג	לַיהוָה	מָחָר:	
And when Aaron	and said	is a feast	to the LORD	To tomorrow	
H175	H559	H2282	H3068	H4279	

Additional Cross-References

2 Kings 10:20 (Parallel theme): And Jehu said, Proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal. And they proclaimed it.

Leviticus 23:2 (References Lord): Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts.

Leviticus 23:37 (Creation): These are the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day: