

# God Versus Gods

**Key Verse:** *“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.”*  
—Exodus 32:8

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Exodus 32*

(Exod. 25-31) He was gone for forty days, which was a long time to be away from the people with regard to the events that had transpired since they had fled Egyptian bondage. The children of Israel had looked to Moses constantly for guidance and direction. They had come to view him as God’s representative in a very special way through experience, and seeing firsthand the miracles that he had performed.

**THE ISRAELITES EXPERIENCED** a severe trial of faith and obedience soon after they had entered into a covenant relationship with God. In this trial they were “a stiffnecked people” (Exod. 32:9), and they completely failed their trial. The covenant that God made with them through Moses was about to be broken.

The circumstances involving the words spoken by the Heavenly Father in our key verse involve Moses in the mount. Taking Joshua with him as his servant, he went up into Mt. Sinai. He had been called up to receive the gracious instructions concerning the tabernacle, priesthood, and sacrifices.

They had to have remembered the hard experiences that they endured. The Egyptians and slavery were behind them. They had already endured an attack from the Amalekites, who were still their enemies. (Exod. 17:11) Who would help them now against their enemies if their leader continued to delay his return?

As Moses' absence from them grew longer, worldly wisdom would come into the picture. Aaron, the high priest, and Moses, also his representative in leadership, were troubled as how to keep the people from complete discouragement. Unable to fully trust in God who they could not see, they desired to make a god who they could see. The leaders of the people took counsel together and decided to make their own god—an image that they could look upon and could use as an instrument of worship. “Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.” (Exod. 32:1) Under Aaron's direction, they brought all of their gold together and he fashioned a “molten calf” and “he built an altar before it.” (vss. 4,5) Having this idol before them they rejoiced in it, and took part in singing, dancing and completely “corrupted themselves.” (vs. 7) The people had broken the first commandment of God. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”—chap. 20:3

In the meantime, Moses, following God's instruction, returned from the mount with the tables “written with the finger of God.” (Exod. 31:18) Upon returning to the place where the children of Israel were camped and seeing what they people had done, “Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.” (chap. 32:19) As God's representative, he went down to the people very angry with them. Armed with divine authority, he inflicted upon them a just penalty for their sin of turning away from God who had so recently delivered them.—vss. 19-28 ■