

## 12.17a Golden Calf (Exodus 32:1–14; Deuteronomy 9:7–14; Psalm 106:19–23; Nehemiah 9:18, 19)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. It also indicates answers to questions.

### Visuals and Tools

- “Life of Moses” Series 2 Flash-a-Cards from A Beka Book and/or pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- (optional) *Herein Is Love Commentary Series; Exodus, A Commentary for Children*, by Nancy Ganz, Shepherd Press, 2002.

**Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:** Tips and terms are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *God*: (notice the capital G) the one true Creator God in three persons: Father, Son, Holy Spirit
- *god*: (notice the lower case g) false gods and idols
- *worship*: to honor an praise with reverence; worship belongs only to God

### Scripture: (NASB)

Exodus 32:1 Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, “Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” 2 Aaron said to them, “Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring *them* to me.” 3 Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought *them* to Aaron. 4 He took *this* from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, “This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.” 5 Now when Aaron saw *this*, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow *shall be* a feast to the LORD.” 6 So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

7 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, “Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*. 8 They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!’” 9 The LORD said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. 10 Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation.”

11 Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, “O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, ‘With evil *intent* He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth’? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about *doing* harm to Your people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit *it* forever.’” 14 So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.

Deuteronomy 9:7 Remember, do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD. 8 Even at Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, and the LORD was so angry with you that He would have destroyed you. 9 When I went up to the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD had made with you, then I remained on the mountain forty days and nights; I

neither ate bread nor drank water. 10 The LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God; and on them *were* all the words which the LORD had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly. 11 It came about at the end of forty days and nights that the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant. 12 Then the LORD said to me, ‘Arise, go down from here quickly, for your people whom you brought out of Egypt have acted corruptly. They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them; they have made a molten image for themselves.’ 13 The LORD spoke further to me, saying, ‘I have seen this people, and indeed, it is a stubborn people. 14 Let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.’”

Psalm 106:19 They made a calf in Horeb  
And worshiped a molten image.  
20 Thus they exchanged their glory  
For the image of an ox that eats grass.  
21 They forgot God their Savior,  
Who had done great things in Egypt,  
22 Wonders in the land of Ham  
And awesome things by the Red Sea.  
23 Therefore He said that He would destroy them,  
Had not Moses His chosen one stood in the breach before Him,  
To turn away His wrath from destroying *them*.

Nehemiah 9:18 Even when they had made for themselves a golden calf and said, ‘This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,’ and had committed great blasphemies, 19 you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness.

### **Introduction/Review:**

Three times the people of Israel had heard the Law, at least the Ten Commandments, and had promised to obey all that the Lord had said:

1. When God appeared to all Israel, what happened on Mount Sinai? [Fire, thunder, lightning, loud trumpet sound, shaking, smoke.] At that time, Israel had said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do” (Exodus 19:8). There at Mount Sinai God Himself had declared the Ten Commandments: “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. . . . You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol (a carved image). . . . You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God,” *etc.* Hearing God’s voice terrified the people so much that they asked Moses instead of God to speak to them. God’s voice and the frightening scene at Mount Sinai certainly could not be forgotten.

2. After God’s personal pronouncement, Moses went up onto the mountain where God gave him these laws again, the second of which was, “You shall not make gods of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold” (Exodus 20:23). Moses came down from the mountain and “told the people all the words of the Lord” (Exodus 24:3). With one voice “all the people answered, ‘All the words which the Lord has said we will do.’”

3. Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord in the Book of the Covenant and read them another time to the people. Again, the people said, “All that the Lord has said we will do and be obedient” (Exodus 24:7).

This time Moses set up twelve pillars, built an altar, and sacrificed oxen, sprinkling blood on the altar and on the people, and saying, “This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you” (Exodus 24:4–8). Certainly this experience was unforgettable.

One more unforgettable experience came for Aaron; his two sons, Nadab and Abihu; and seventy chief men of Israel as well as for Moses: they actually saw God (Exodus 24:9–11)! Tell me how they described God’s appearance. [Under His feet the floor was like a sapphire stone, clear as the sky.]

So here we have five unforgettable events to remind the people of God's awesome glory and the utter senselessness and sinfulness of thinking anyone or anything else could be God or even represent Him. Surely the people will remember all this and fear God. Or will they?

God wanted Moses to come up again, saying, "I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written so that you may teach them." So Moses told the chief men, "*Wait for us until we come back to you*" (emphasis added). Then Moses and his helper, Joshua, went up into the glory-filled mountain that looked from below like a consuming fire. Oh, it was awesome and scary!

Six days later God actually spoke with Moses, giving laws and instructions for making His tent with its furniture, for the duties and dress of the priests, for the way sacrifices were to be made, and so on. Moses was on that mountain forty days and forty nights—a full month plus ten days—during which time he did not eat.

## Story:

### ***Impatient people***

Meanwhile, the people, seeing the scary mountain and waiting days and weeks for the return of Moses, began to wonder if maybe God had consumed Moses up there in that smoke or fire. When the Israelites expressed their concern, Aaron and the chiefs could have said, "Oh, we know it's been a long time, but Moses said, 'Wait until we come back.' God would have let us know somehow if Moses is dead. We need to wait longer."

### ***Compliant Aaron***

But that's not what happened. Instead, when the people came to Aaron and said, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him," Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold earrings of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."

All the people took off their gold earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took all that gold, melted it, and *sculptured it into a golden calf*. Students, what did Aaron do? [Made a golden calf.] What do we call an image made for a god or to represent a god? [An Idol.] Why would Aaron do such a thing? Certainly it was not in obedience to God; rather, he gave in to the pressure of the people. Did Aaron protest at all? The Bible certainly does not tell us that he protested this great wickedness but rather assisted and facilitated it! This was a man of God!?! What a weak, ungodly man he was!

When the people saw the golden calf, they said, "This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"

Hey, you seventy chiefs of the people who saw God and lived! Is this what God looked like—like an animal?! Where is the sapphire stone? Where is the blue color of God's throne? It's not in this man-made gold calf! Why aren't you saying anything? Tell these rebels that God doesn't look like a brute beast that eats grass and spreads his manure over the field. What are you thinking?! Speak up!!

### ***False worship***

But no one spoke up. Rather, when Aaron saw that the people liked his calf statue, he built an altar before the idol and announced, "Tomorrow we'll have a feast to the Lord here." To the Lord? Are you mixed up, Aaron? That calf is not the Lord; it doesn't even remotely resemble God. God said not to make an image—not of Him nor of anything.

But early the next morning the people offered sacrifices in their own self-appointed way—perhaps in the way the Egyptians had worshiped their gods of cows, flies, *etc.* "They ate and drank and rose up to play." Does that sound like legitimate worship—eating and drinking and playing? The people were wild and loud and (as is sometimes translated) *naked*! Oh, what wickedness was going on in the name of worship!

## ***Angry God***

God knew what was happening. He said to Moses, “Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’”

The Lord continued, “I have seen this people; they are just plain stiff-necked (stubborn). Now leave me alone so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. Instead of them I will make a great nation out of you, Moses.”

God’s being so angry that He was willing to destroy His people shows that the sin of the people was super-wicked, for our God is patient and kind.

## ***Interceding Moses***

Moses could have been filled with self-importance at the thought of being a new Abraham, but he knew this would not be good. He pled with the Lord, “O Lord, why is your wrath burning hot against your people, the ones you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?”

Then Moses made two arguments as to why God should not destroy His people. See if you can identify them. Moses asked, (1) “Surely, you do *not* want the Egyptians to say, ‘God intended to bring evil upon His people when he brought them out of Egypt; He intended to consume them from the face of the earth’? O God,” said Moses, “turn from your burning anger and change your mind about this disaster against your people. (2) Also, remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land I will give to your offspring.’”

Did you hear the two reasons why God should not destroy His people? What were they? [The Egyptians might say God rescued His people to destroy them; God had promised the fathers He would give them the land.]

The Lord listened to Moses’ arguments and decided not to cause the disaster he had spoken of bringing on his people. Oh, the Lord would not destroy those wicked people. Isn’t he full of mercy and grace? Nevertheless, those people must be punished for this terrible sin. What will happen to them?

## **Lessons from this lesson:**

- We see Jesus:  
Even though Jesus had done only good, His own people hated Him even as they had hated God at Sinai. Their hatred is evidenced in their not following God’s commandments when they (Jews of Jesus’ day and Israel of Moses’ day) practiced their own mode of worship.
- Be thoughtful and serious before you make rash promises, even good ones. If you make a promise, keep it, especially if you promise God something.
- Realize that it is very easy for us to go our own way. Although believers today have the indwelling Holy Spirit, we still need to be watchful of our attitudes and thoughts that are contrary to God’s revealed Word. Read and study God’s Word, pray, and grow in the Lord.

## **Activities:**

- Play dough: (we will not make for ourselves an idol; so no golden calf or altar); two tablets
- Snack: Make edible commandment tablets. Mix 1/2 cup brown sugar, 1/2 cup peanut butter, and 1 tablespoon of granola. Shape into tablets. Write a commandment or pretend lettering on the tablet using a toothpick ([missionarlington.com](http://missionarlington.com)).
- Sing “Stop! It’s the Law!” found in Lesson 12:15 or at [teachingthebibleto kids.org](http://teachingthebibleto kids.org), where an audio and

visuals of the song are located.

- Have a Sword drill using Exodus 32:1; Deuteronomy 9:7; Psalm 106:21,22; Nehemiah 9:18
- Sing “The Golden Calf” found below.
- Review questions: (Game: Print and cut out the letters found below to form the words, “NO IDOLS.” String a 20-inch taut line or use a pocket chart. For each correct answer the student places a letter in the pocket chart or hangs a letter (folded at the crease line) on the line.)
  1. How long had Moses been on the mountain? [Forty days and forty nights.]
  2. Why did the people want an idol-god? [Because Moses was so slow in coming down the mountain.]
  3. What kind of worship did the people offer? [They ate, drank, and rose up to play before the idol.]
  4. Who does the Bible say protested about the idol? [No one.]
  5. What was God’s response to the idol? [He was angry enough to threaten the destruction of His people.]
  6. From whom did God say he would make a new nation? [From Moses.]
  7. Tell one of the two arguments Moses made about why God should not consume the people. [The Egyptians would think God brought the people out to destroy them; God’s promises to the fathers needed to be kept.]

#### **Memory Verse[s]:**

- Exodus 20:1–17 found on a separate page below.

#### **Handwork:**

- Students may color the clipart of Moses and the Ten Commandments below. Older students may first complete the dot-to-dot.

God

god

worship



























# The Golden Calf

(tune: "Mary Had a Little Lamb")

Thou shalt have no other gods, other gods,  
other gods.

"Thou shalt have no other gods."

God's first commandment said.

Make yourselves no idols, no idols, no idols.

"Make yourselves no idols,"

God's next commandment said.

The people made a golden calf, golden calf,  
golden calf,

The people made a golden calf

And said it was their god.

Moses saw what they had done, they had done,  
they had done.

Moses saw what they had done

And threw the tablets down.

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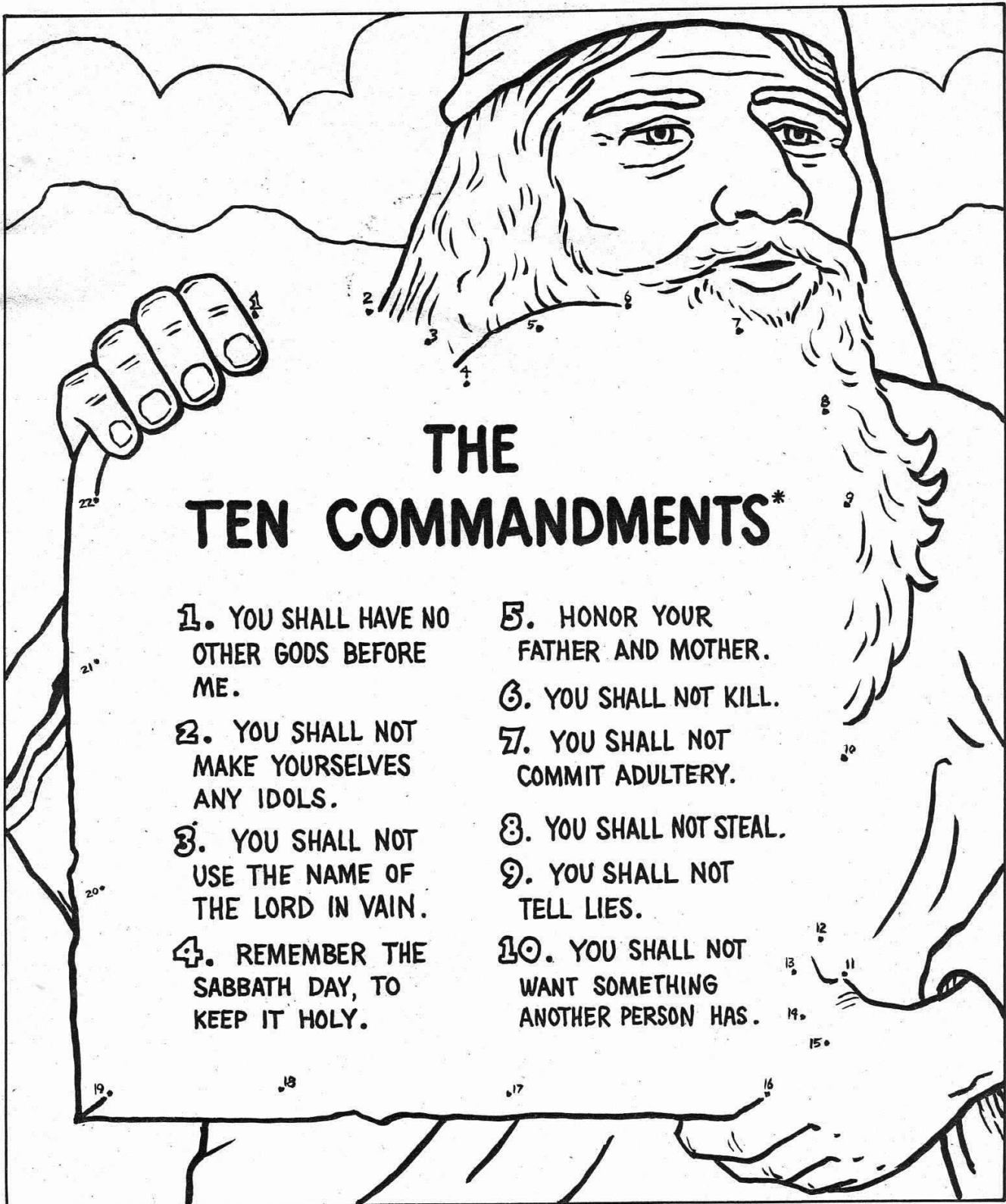
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Memory Work: Exodus 20:1–17 (NIV)

<i>Text</i>	<i>Motions</i>
And God spoke all these words:	hands cupped to mouth
“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.	point up; right hand facing side of face pulls down hands facing down and move from left to right; crossed fists facing chest
You shall have no other gods before me	shake head “no”; both little fingers pull down
You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.	shake head “no”; fingertips touch at top and pull down point up point down palms-down hands move like waves
You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.	shake head “no”; bow point up; pull hands toward heart clap hands once show 3 and then 4 fingers pull hands toward heart pull hands toward heart; point up; clasp hands
“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.	shake head “no”; point to mouth shake head “no”; point out; point to mouth
Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God.	wrap right hand around left index finger show 6 fingers; raise a muscle arm show 7 fingers; place right hand palm up on left hand palm up; point up
On it you shall not do any work neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.	shake head “no”; raise a muscle arm shake head “no”; point to boy; point to girl shake head “no”; point to boy; move palms-up hands back and forth; point to girl; move palms-up hands back and forth shake head “no”; wag hands on head as if ears shake head “no”; right index finger points to open left palm
For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day.	show 6 fingers; right hand facing side of face pulls down palms-out hands wave high once; point down palms-down hands move like waves wrap right hand around left index finger
Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.	right hand facing side of face pulls down; wrap right hand around left index finger; raise left palm as right palm facing out moves away
“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.	nod head; right thumb to center of forehead; right thumb to center of chin fists with thumbs up move from waist to chest; right hand facing side of face pulls down; palms up move out from body
You shall not murder.	shake head “no”; index finger and thumb point (like a gun)
You shall not commit adultery.	shake head “no”; hands sweep from head to knees
You shall not steal.	shake head “no”; right hand grabs and pulls in
You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.	shake head “no”; point to lips; point to others
You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.	shake head “no”; fists crossed toward body; finger tips form roof
You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”	shake head “no”; point to others; right hand comes down to clasp left hand point to boy; point to girl; move palms-up hands back and forth; index fingers point out from head; hands wiggle from head move palms-out hands from center out; point to others





God gave Moses the \_\_\_\_\_ as rules to keep.