



Handout for week of 9/9/19 Lk. 15: 1-10 & Ex. 32: 7-14

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Ex. 32: Ex. 32: And HaShem spoke unto Moses: 'Go, get thee down; for thy people, that thou broughtest up out of the land of Egypt, have dealt corruptly; 8 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 unto it, and said: This is thy God, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.' 9 And HaShem said unto Moses: 'I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people. 10 Now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them,

and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation.' 11 And Moses besought HaShem his G-d, and said: 'HaShem, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, that Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, saying: For evil did He bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants, to whom Thou didst swear by Thine own self, and saidst unto them: I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.' 14 And HaShem repented of the evil which He said He would do unto His people.

#### COMMENTARY:Golden Calf

An object of worship among the Hebrews, mention of which occurs principally in Ex., xxxii, where the story of the molten calf of Aaron is narrated, and in III Kings, xii (cf. II Par., xi), in connection with the policy of Jeroboam after the schism of the ten tribes. Various reasons make it probable that the rendering "calf" is not to be taken in a strict sense, for the Hebrew term has a wider signification, and it is likely that in the present case it stands for a young bullock just arrived at maturity.

Waiving all critical discussion as to the sources embodied in Ex., xxxii, the main features of the present narrative are as follows: Becoming impatient at Moses' long delay on the mount, the people ask Aaron to make them a god or gods to go before them. He yields to their solicitations, and, making use of the golden earrings of the women and children, he causes a "molten calf" or bull to be fashioned. Shortly after its construction Moses returns, and, moved to wrath and indignation, destroys the idol, reducing it to dust and throwing it into the brook from which the Israelites are made to drink. After the schism of the ten tribes, Jeroboam, fearing that the regular pilgrimages of the people of the northern kingdom to Jerusalem would endanger their political allegiance to himself, resorted to the natural expedient of furnishing them with a substitute for the sanctuary of the Temple (III Kings, xii); and he set up two golden calves, one in Bethel and the other in Dan. As to their construction information is lacking, but it is likely that they were life-sized bull figures constructed after the fashion of the one mentioned above. It seems also probable that they were intended as symbols of Yahweh, for, thus considered, they would be more effective in attracting the pious Israelites who were accustomed to go to Jerusalem. Most writers have accepted the view of Philo and the early Fathers, who regarded the worship of the golden calves as borrowed from the Egyptians, and in favour of this opinion is the fact that both Aaron and Jeroboam had sojourned in Egypt shortly before constructing their respective idols; this view, however, has its difficulties, among which is the improbability of an Egyptian deity being set up as the god "who brought Israel out of the land of Egypt". Hence, some recent scholars are inclined to seek the origin of the Hebrew bull worship in the conditions and surroundings of the Israelites as an agricultural people, for whom the bull was naturally an appropriate symbol.