

**GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL**  
**Exodus 32–34**

**Memory Verse:** *Little children, keep yourselves from idols* (1 John 5:21 ESV).

**Background Helps:**

The covenant that God made with Israel through Moses has been ratified, and the people have pledged their obedience to it (Ex. 24:1-11). But while Moses is away from the people on Mt. Sinai for forty days receiving the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments as well as detailed instructions on construction of the tabernacle (Ex. 24:12–31:18), the people are in the valley below breaking the covenant! With Aaron's assistance the people fashion a golden calf breaking the first two of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 32:1-6).

In response the LORD tells Moses that he will destroy the people of Israel and make a great nation of Moses (32:7-10), but Moses intercedes with the LORD on the basis of God's earlier covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (32:11-13). Specifically, Moses reminds the LORD of his oath to multiply their offspring like the stars of the heaven and to give them the land of Canaan (v. 13). The LORD relents and does not destroy the people (v. 14). However, he does discipline the nation (32:25-28, 35).

The LORD renews his pledge to give Israel the land he promised to the patriarchs; however, he also indicates that he will no longer accompany the people on their journey but will send his angel instead (33:1-6). Once again Moses intercedes for the people and once again the LORD relents and promises that his presence will accompany the people on their journey (33:12-17).

Moses ascends Mt. Sinai once more and receives a vision of the glory of God (33:18–34:8). After this God renews his covenant with Israel, including giving Moses a new set of the Ten Commandments on stone tablets (34:1-4, 10-28).

**Lesson Helps:**

Here's one possible lesson plan:

The aim: My students will learn how Israel broke their covenant with God by making the golden calf, so that they will keep themselves from idols.


**HOOK:** Use a “golden calf” or “idol” illustration (“American Idol”?) to arouse attention. Introduce the memory verse 1 John 5:21.

**BOOK:** Study the story in Exodus 32–34 of (1) how Israel broke the covenant God had just made with them by worshiping the golden calf, (2) how Moses interceded for the people on the basis of God's earlier covenant with Abraham, and (3) how God renewed his covenant with Israel, including a new set of stone tablets with the Ten Commandments.

**LOOK:** Webster’s Dictionary defines “idol” as “1.a. An image regarded as an object of worship. b. A false god. 2. A person or thing blindly or excessively adored.” Brainstorm question: What are some potential idols in our lives?

**TOOK:** Review the memory verse (1 John 5:21). How can we “keep ourselves from idols”? Review Exodus 34:29-35, “the shining face of Moses.” Use Paul’s commentary on this phenomenon in 2 Corinthians 3:6-18 to introduce the new covenant. Show your students that, though the old covenant introduced through Moses was glorious, the commandments etched on stone could not keep us from sinning. But the new covenant, the ministry of the Spirit, gives us life and freedom and divine enablement to keep God’s commandments. Invite your students to (1) repent of any “idols” in their lives, (2) ask for forgiveness through the blood of Christ, and (3) claim the Holy Spirit’s power to keep themselves from idols in the future.

**Home Assignment:**

 Read Exodus 25–31; 35–40.

 Memorize 1 Corinthians 3:16 ESV.