

- Moses was up on Mount Sinai getting the Ten Commandments carved by the very finger of God. (Exodus 31:18)
- He was up there for such a long time that the people started to think he wasn't coming back (Exodus 32:1)
- Aaron (Moses' brother Exodus 6:16-20) was down below with the people and when he heard them saying Moses probably wasn't coming back, he built an idol that looked like a calf out of people's gold earrings that he melted down (apparently the boys were wearing them too) and the people had a big festival to the Lord, worshipping the calf (Exodus 32:2-5).
- God knew what was going on so he told Moses he was going to destroy the people. (He called them "stiff-necked"). Moses bargained with God not to do that. (Exodus 32:7-14).
- Ironic because they were already breaking the first two commandments. (Deuteronomy 5:7-8)
- Moses came down and Joshua (who probably went with him a certain way and waited for him, after all he was an aid to Moses (Exodus 24:13, Exodus 33:11) and told him that there was the sound of war in the camp. When Moses got closer realized it was the sound of singing (celebration). (Exodus 32:15-18)
- When Moses saw what was going on he smashed the original Ten Commandments, ground up the calf and put in water and made the Israelites drink it (Exodus 32:19)
- When he asked Aaron how he led the Israelites into sin, Aaron said he just threw a bunch of earrings into the fire and the Golden Calf popped out. (Exodus 32:22-24)
- Moses then asked people if they were for the Lord to join him. The tribe of Levi did. He then told them to go through the camp and kill their friends and brothers, so about 3,000 people died. (Exodus 32: 25-28)
- Moses talks again with God and God decides to strike the remaining Israelites with a plague. (Exodus 32:31-35)
- The great sin of the people was reverting to what was familiar to them because they had seen people worshipping Gods in the form of idols for 400 years in Egypt. We run the same risk today because it is easy for us to go back to familiar things but we are really putting things ahead of God. When God said "You shall have no other Gods before me" He wasn't just talking about idols. Anything we put ahead of our God we are making a god to ourselves. Paul wrote the Galatians about this very problem (Galatians 3:1-5). He even listed some of the problems the Ephesians faced when he wrote to them in Ephesians 5:1-7.
- God directed the Israelites to head toward the land He promised them. But He told them He was mad at them so He would not go with them (Exodus 33:1-6)
- Moses would create a tent of meeting outside the camp, where God would also come and speak with him face to face ("as one speaks with a friend"). (Exodus 33:7-11)
- Moses asks for a sign from God and really wants to see His glory revealed so that Moses can know he is doing the right thing. God hides Moses in "the cleft of the rock" and says I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by, so you can see my back, but my face cannot be seen." (Exodus 32:19-21)

- One of the verses of our most famous hymns is about this incident. In the hymn “A Wonderful Savior” part of the lyrics are “He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock” and “covers me there with His hand.”
- Can man see God and live? This is a complex theological question which we don’t have time to get into. There are verses like [John 1:18](#), [John 5:37](#), [John 4:36](#) and [1 Timothy 6:15-16](#) which are very clear that no one has seen God. The Bible records that God would talk with Moses face to face in [Exodus 33:11](#). There are other incidents where man sees God There are many possible explanations for this supposed contradiction. You will have to choose which one you believe. The most probably explanation has to do with the fullness of God’s glory. Notice that when God talk to Moses face to face we don’t read of his Glory being shown. If Moses had already been seeing God face to face, why would he need to ask to see Him a few verses later? He asks to see Him in all his glory.” Apparently, there must be a difference there.
- In any case, it is clear that Moses had a special relationship with God. In Exodus 34 we read that Moses came to get the Ten Commandments again (remember he broke the first copy), and when he comes back down from the mountain after 40 days with God, his face was so bright with God’s glory he had to wear a veil to cover it. ([Exodus 32:27-34](#))

Questions:

1. Who carved the Ten Commandment and how?
2. How long was Moses up on the mountain getting the Ten Commandments?
3. What was Aaron’s relationship to Moses?
4. What did Aaron use to make an idol?
5. What form did the idol which Aaron made resemble?
6. How does Moses prevent God from destroying Israel for idolatry?
7. What happens to the original version of the Ten Commandments?
8. How does Aaron tell Moses the idol was created?
9. How do 3,000 Israelites die?
10. How do we reconcile the fact that God talks to Moses face to face and yet makes Moses turn his back because he can’t see his face and live?
11. Why does Moses have to wear a veil over his face when he returns from getting the second version of the 10 Commandments?