

## Exodus 32: 1-14

(Lectionary Year A, Proper 23)

By Beth Barnett

Overview	
You will need:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Text of Exodus 32:1-14 (on screen or print copies) with highlighted words</li><li>• Flip chart or whiteboard and appropriate markers;</li><li>• trophy and envelope</li></ul>
Time required:	10-15 minutes

---

### Connect

So....we are still trekking through the wilderness with the runaway rescued slave Israelites and in the middle of the Bible reading today Aaron, a leader of God's people asks everyone to take off their jewellery and to donate it.  
I know - I can see your concern. There are a number of things that are strange about his request.

But don't be worried. I'm not going to ask for donations of jewellery, following his example. We always keep in mind that just because someone does it in the Bible, it doesn't make it a great idea - or mean that it's God's idea or got God's approval. In fact a whole lot of the bible is chocked full with 'don't do it this way - This is NOT God's way' examples.

So you can relax.

But just as a matter of interest, wouldn't it be fun to find out just how much jewellery we have here, if we were to hypothetically - but we're not - gather it all together.

Here's what we are going to do.

Let's just see how much gold and silver jewellery we have hauled here today. Don't take any of it off, but we're going to count up all our pieces of jewellery

*Pre-arrange for 5 scrutineers to take a clip board each and move about the group, taking a tally of different forms of jewellery: rings, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, pins/brooches.*

*As they do this keep a commentary on the progress. As each scrutineer finishes their count, add their tally to a central record on a flip chart or whiteboard.*

### **Connecting stories:**

While you are being counted, ask some one near you to tell you the story behind one piece of jewellery that they are wearing. For example:

A memory from their wedding day for their wedding ring; How they came to learn they should wear a medical alert bracelet; How old they were when they got their ears pierced...

## **Context**

So we've discovered that if this story was happening to us we would have X pieces of jewellery to stock pile from just amongst us.

And we've discovered and shared some of the stories that explain how a bunch of people like us, came to have such a lot of jewellery.

So I wonder if anyone else is puzzled by this question. Or knows the answer to this question...

How do a community of slaves in the wilderness come to be carrying lots of jewellery?

Aren't they likely to have been poor to start with, and had to leave behind most of their belongings?

*Allow for suggestions - welcoming and affirming all possibilities.*

*If reference is made to the Israelites being given the gold jewellery by their Egyptian neighbours, move to reading Exodus 3: 22 and Exodus 12:33-36, attached to the appropriate images (see below).*

*If no one in the gathering suggests that the Israelites were given the jewellery by the Egyptians, introduce the texts yourself.*

Where did these runaway slaves in the desert get so much gold jewellery?

Well, in previous Episodes of the Exodus story it tells us! Winding all the way back to Episode 3 when God first appears to Moses and calls him to lead the people to freedom he predicts: *(invite volunteer to read postcard (see below) or from screen)*

## **Content**

So now we know how much jewellery we have on us, and some of the story behind our jewellery, and we know how the Israelite runaway rescued slaves came to be carrying so much jewellery through the wilderness. Moses is up the Mountain speaking with God - and he's been gone awhile. And Aaron his brother has been left in charge.



**Intergen**

[www.intergen.org.au](http://www.intergen.org.au)

Time to read what happens.

If you are wearing any jewellery at all - please following along and join in on the words beginning with the letter G marked in **red**. And if you are not wearing any jewellery at all your special lines are in **orange** - please join in loudly. (Practice if you think it's required)

And if you have some keys in your pocket - on either the red or orange words - jangle it loudly - or if you don't want to - give them to someone who does want to!

## Read

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people **gathered** around Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make **gods** for us, 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** rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."

So all the people took off the **gold** rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron. He took the **gold** from them, formed it in a mold, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, "These are your **gods**, O Israel, **who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!**"

When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a festival to the LORD."

They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.

The LORD said to Moses, "**Go** down at once! Your people, **whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt**, have acted perversely; they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your **gods**, O Israel, **who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!**'"

The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a **great** nation."

But Moses implored the LORD his **God**, and said, "O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, **whom you brought out of the land of Egypt** with **great** power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will **give** to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'"

And the LORD changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.



Intergen

[www.intergen.org.au](http://www.intergen.org.au)

## Consider

This story is definitely worth a second reading - so we are going to swap groups and read again – if you read the red words, this time you get to read the orange words. If you read the orange ones, this time, you're reading the red ones.

*Read through the text again*

What did you notice about the text in your first reading?

Was there something that caught your attention in the second reading?

How many dumb ideas can you pile into one story? There are lots of ways the people in this story make strange and even stupid choices...

Make a list together.

***or for the more theatrical:***

Take nominations for the Golden Calf award for the silliest decision. Make a list of the nominees from suggestions from your group allowing the nominating person to explain why they think the decision is worthy of the silliest decision award.

**possible nominations might include -**

- leaving Egypt
- letting Aaron be in charge
- carrying so much jewellery in the desert
- giving up all your wealth for the future to make a cow-god when God is right there with you and has been all along
- Disobeying the second commandment straight after God's given it to you
- worshipping a cow
- wanting a god that is smaller and fake when you've been rescued by a mighty and loving and real God

Use an old sporting trophy - (if you are really keen make one from a toy cow spray painted gold, set on a wooden block.) and hold a mock award ceremony with a drum roll and some one to open an envelope announcing 'And the winner is...' Any will do!

**They are all lousy decisions**

Repeat with nominations for the person in the biggest trouble

- Aaron for being a terrible stand in leader
- All of the people for wanting another god
- the Egyptians - they still are worse than anyone for being slave owners
- God for rescuing people who aren't at all good at worshipping or trusting him



**Intergen**

[www.intergen.org.au](http://www.intergen.org.au)

It's fair to say there are a lot of bad decisions going on and you can imagine pretty well everyone is in some kind of trouble.

## **Conclusion**

And God is angry. Why wouldn't he be? The story lets us see God's feelings so that we understand God isn't vague and distant. God has deep deep love for us, and this can mean God gets hurt and feel anger at how stupid and wasteful his people are.

Imagine setting them up with all that wealth and then they make it into a cow.

But God's anger doesn't last. He lets Moses talking around. God loves people. And he doesn't carry our destruction and violence because he's angry.

He sends Moses to sort the people out. And forgives them and gives them a second chance.

It's the way God is.



**Intergen**

[www.intergen.org.au](http://www.intergen.org.au)

*So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders that I will perform in it; after that he will let you go. I will bring this people into such favor with the Egyptians that, when you go, you will not go empty-handed; each woman shall ask her neighbor and any woman living in the neighbor's house for jewelry of silver and of gold, and clothing, and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters; and so you shall plunder the Egyptians." (Exodus 3)*



*And in Episode 12 when the time comes for the slaves to cook their last meal and pack up and leave...*

*The Egyptians urged the people to hasten their departure from the land, for they said, "We shall all be dead."*

*So the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls wrapped up in their cloaks on their shoulders.*

*The Israelites had done as Moses told them; they had asked the Egyptians for jewelry of silver and gold, and for clothing, and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. And so they plundered the Egyptians. (Exodus 12)*



**Intergen**

[www.intergen.org.au](http://www.intergen.org.au)