

The Leadership of Aaron and Moses

EXODUS 32:1-6, 15-29:

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.' **2**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.' **3**So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron. **4**He took the gold from them, formed it in a mould, 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!' **5**When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, 'Tomorrow shall be a festival to the Lord.' **6**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. ...

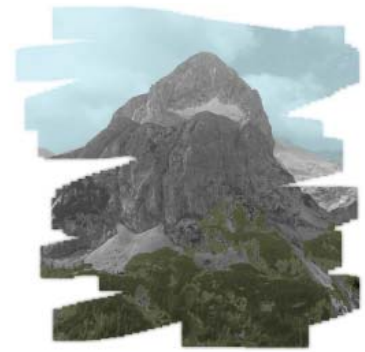
[v7-15: God threatens to wipe out the people; Moses intercedes on behalf of the people.]

15 Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain, carrying the two tablets of the covenant in his hands, tablets that were written on both sides, written on the front and on the back. **16**The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved upon the tablets. **17**When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, 'There is a noise of war in the camp.' **18**But he said, 'It is not the sound made by victors, or the sound made by losers; it is the sound of revellers that I hear.' **19**As soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets from his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. **20**He took the calf that they had made, burned it with fire, ground it to powder, scattered it on the water, and made the Israelites drink it.

21 Moses said to Aaron, 'What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?' **22**And Aaron said, 'Do not let the anger of my lord burn hot; you know the people, that they are bent on evil. **23**They said to me, "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." **24**So I said to them, "Whoever has gold, take it off"; so they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!'

25 When Moses saw that the people were running wild (for Aaron had let them run wild, to the derision of their enemies), **26**then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, 'Who is on the Lord's side? Come to me!' And all the sons of Levi gathered around him.

27He said to them, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, "Put your sword on your side, each of you! Go back and forth from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill your brother, your friend, and your neighbour." ' **28**The sons of Levi did as Moses commanded, and about three thousand of the people fell on that day. **29**Moses said, 'Today you have ordained yourselves for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of a son or a brother, and so have brought a blessing on yourselves this day.'



Compare the leadership of Moses and Aaron. What are their values and priorities?

How are people affected by the leadership of each?

INTERVARSITY®

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The Leadership of Aaron and Moses

MOSES	AARON	ME
Uncritically <input type="text"/> people's idolatry and helps them pursue it	<input type="text"/> idolatry and calls people to repent.	When have I risked people's disapproval to challenge their goals?
The people set goals; he spells out means. <input type="text"/>	God sets goals; Moses spells out the means. <input type="text"/>	Am I directed by God's priorities and goals or by those of other people?
<input type="text"/> responsibility and blames the people	<input type="text"/> responsibility and intercedes with God. Holds Aaron responsible for the people's idolatry.	Am I willing to take responsibility for those I lead?
Concern for <input type="text"/>	Concern for <input type="text"/>	Am I jealous for God's glory, or my own?
<input type="text"/> with sin and fails to see consequences	Angry with sin and <input type="text"/> of its consequences	Do I take sin seriously, or am I more likely to joke about it and fail to see its destructive results?
Result: People are <input type="text"/>	Result: People are <input type="text"/>	Am I and the people around me turning from our destructive idolatries?
Leads when it is <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	Leads when it is <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	Am I willing to call for a costly obedience or do I prefer being liked and known as easy-going?

Case Studies

- Consider what you can do to make the choice Moses made when it might be costly or uncomfortable. How can you make a difference in a way that would be most helpful? What are potential issues to address or questions to ask?

OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE THE CHOICE TO LEAD AS MOSES WOULD HAVE:

1. When Christians friends are joking inappropriately about sexuality...
2. When a small group member says he/she is unable to attend but asks for prayer for the big test or project deadline he or she is facing in two days...
3. When a small group member says something inappropriate and intolerant about homosexuals... or when a small group member says something entirely approving of the lifestyle choices of homosexuals ...

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V1: "Moses, the man who brought us up..." They forget that it wasn't Moses, it was God. They have a very short memory.

V6: Perhaps Aaron is worried about a mutiny, with Moses gone. So he capitulates to the desires of the crowd.



Compare the leadership of Moses and Aaron.

What are their values and priorities?

Aaron wants to please the people—he leads them into idolatry because they wanted to go there. Aaron values looking good, hence he justifies his own choice to Moses and blames the people. Moses values God's glory and is willing to take a costly and unpopular stance to call people back to a proper relationship with God.

How are people affected by the leadership of each?

The people are led astray by Aaron's choice and lives are lost. Moses' quick choice ultimately saves lives of faith by calling people to repent and return to the Lord's side.

V20: Moses is not patient with their idol—he destroys it and makes them drink it, producing a memorable bitterness. He doesn't even melt it down to be used later.

V24: Aaron speaks as if the calf miraculously appeared out of the fire

V26: "Who is on the Lord's side?" Response to that call was costly for these Levites.

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AARON	MOSES	ME
Uncritically <input type="text" value="accepts"/> people's idolatry and helps them pursue it	<input type="text" value="Rejects"/> idolatry and calls people to repent.	When have I risked people's disapproval to challenge their goals?
The people set goals; he spells out means. <input type="text" value="Aaron says 'You tell me where you want to go; I'll help you get there.'"/>	God sets goals; Moses spells out the means. <input type="text" value="Moses says, 'Follow me as I follow God.'"/>	Am I directed by God's priorities and goals or by those of other people?
<input type="text" value="Shifts"/> responsibility and blames the people	<input type="text" value="Takes"/> responsibility and intercedes with God. Holds Aaron responsible for the people's idolatry.	Am I willing to take responsibility for those I lead?
Concern for <input type="text" value="his own reputation"/>	Concern for <input type="text" value="God's glory"/>	Am I jealous for God's glory, or my own?
<input type="text" value="Patient"/> with sin and fails to see consequences	Angry with sin and <input type="text" value="aware"/> of its consequences	Do I take sin seriously, or am I more likely to joke about it and fail to see its destructive results?
Result: People are <input type="text" value="Lost"/>	Result: People are <input type="text" value="saved"/>	Am I and the people around me turning from our destructive idolatries?
Leads when it is <input type="text" value="popular"/> <input type="text" value="Aaron is more accommodating, less uptight, more fun, less serious"/>	Leads when it is <input type="text" value="costly"/> <input type="text" value="It may have been costly for Moses to lead, but it would have been more deadly if he had not."/>	Am I willing to call for a costly obedience or do I prefer being liked and known as easy-going?

Case Studies

- Consider what you can do to make the choice Moses made when it might be costly or uncomfortable. How can you make a difference in a way that would be most helpful? What are potential issues to address or questions to ask?

OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE THE CHOICE TO LEAD AS MOSES WOULD HAVE:

- When Christians friends are joking inappropriately about sexuality... *Rather than joining in, or in standing off or being judgmental, would it be possible to talk about the role that joking about sex can have in making improper sexual activity more attractive or more tempting? This addresses the (uncomfortable) topic without necessarily being dogmatic or judgmental, but leads rather than follows.*
- When a small group member says he/she is unable to attend but asks for prayer for the big test or project deadline he or she is facing in two days... *Aaron here would simply say, "We'll pray for you!" and wish the small group member well. Moses might at least ask if there is a way that he/she can still adequately prepare while coming to the group meeting and receiving prayer in person, gently challenging the potential idolatry and helping the member to grow in trust for God in this situation.*
- When a small group member says something inappropriate and intolerant about homosexuals... or when a small group member says something entirely approving of the lifestyle choices of homosexuals... *An Aaron-like leader might try to duck this conversation, saying something non-committal but polite, "Yeah, I know" or trying to ignore the comment. Others may be effected but unsure how to respond. A Moses-like response would involve taking a risk to talk about how Jesus would treat a homosexual, with neither animosity and condemnation nor approval, "Go and sin no more," as he says to the woman caught in adultery. The faithful position is a difficult choice, and not necessarily popular with either partisan crowd.*

