



TRUSTING GOD IN THE SILENCE

Exodus 32

Min. Tonya Y Edwards



SETTING & HISTORY OF EXODUS 32 (GOLDEN CALF)

Where the story happens	At Mount Sinai (also called Horeb) in the wilderness. Israel is camped at the base of the mountain while Moses is up on the mountain meeting with God.
When it happens in Exodus	After the Exodus from Egypt and after Israel has already agreed to the covenant with the LORD (Exodus 19–24). Exodus 32 occurs while Moses is receiving: The Ten Commandments / tablets (being finalized/handed over), and detailed instructions for the tabernacle and worship (Exodus 25–31).
What “delay” means here	Moses is on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights (Exodus 24:18). The people interpret the wait as, “we don’t know what has become of him” (Exodus 32:1)—not just impatience, but fear and uncertainty about leadership and God’s guidance.
Spiritual background	Israel has recently witnessed major acts of God (plagues, Red Sea, manna), yet they are still influenced by Egyptian idol culture and the common ancient practice of using visible images to represent a deity.
Why it’s such a big deal	This is a direct breach of the covenant—especially the command against idols right as the covenant relationship is being established. The chapter becomes a turning point that highlights: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Israel’s tendency to replace trust with something tangible,◦ God’s holiness and covenant seriousness, and Moses’ role as intercessor/mediator.



SHEKINAH GLORY

(GOD'S DWELLING PRESENCE)

- Definition (word study): “Shekinah” (not a Bible word) is a later Jewish term used for God’s manifested, dwelling presence with His people.
- Hebrew idea behind it (Vine’s): shākan = “to dwell/abide,” and mishkān = “dwelling place/tabernacle” (God choosing to dwell among His people).
- Scripture anchors: God’s glory on Sinai during the delay (Ex. 24:16–18); God’s guiding presence as cloud/fire (Ex. 13:21–22); Israel’s panic in the wait (Ex. 32:1).

“We often overlook the divine because we expect it to be loud. But divinity whispers. It moves gently through everyday life, waiting for us to notice. Recognizing sacredness is an act of awareness and appreciation.”



TRUST

bāṭah (בָּטַח)

To trust/rely on with a sense of security and confidence (not just mental agreement).


Trust moves from thoughts to actions:	You keep obeying even when you can't "see" what God is doing (you don't rush into a substitute just to feel secure).	James 1:22
Trust includes waiting without panicking	You resist the urge to force control (over-planning, quick fixes, people-approval) and choose patient faithfulness instead.	Psalms 27:14
Trust treats God's character as your safety	You anchor to who God is (good, present, leading) more than to what you feel in the moment.	Psalms 37:5
Trust shows up in prayer before strategies	Planning isn't wrong, but trust means your first reflex is dependence prayer, surrender, and obedience rather than self-rescue	Philippians 4:6

Trust doesn't demand sight—it walks by faith while God works. (2 Cor. 5:7)



- God's presence is promised even when His activity isn't visible. Duet 31:6
- God's ways often operate beyond what we can see or understand in the moment. Ish 55:8-9
- Scripture normalizes feeling silence while still choosing trust. Psm 13:1-2,5
- Trust is anchored in who God is, not in immediate outcomes. Hab 3:17-19
- For we live by faith, not by sight. II Cor 5:7

**“Trust does not require explanation—
it rests in God's character”**



**“Trust is believing God is
still with good even when you
can't see what He's doing.”**



- Substitutes promise security but cannot replace trust in God. Psm 20:7
- Human substitutes fail to satisfy what only God can provide. Jer 2:13
- Substitutes often grow out of leaning on what feels understandable and controllable. Prov 3:5-6
- Waiting and trust are God's design; substitutes weaken rather than strengthen. Ish 30:15
- Idolatry is an exchange—substituting something created for trust in the Creator. Rom 1:22-25

“When trust weakens, substitutes rush in”



THE SILENCE OF WAITING EX: 32:1

The trigger in verse 1 is not disaster—it's delay.

- ⦿ Is a space between God's promise and God's fulfillment—a season where God's plan is still moving forward, but not on our preferred timeline.
- ⦿ When God's answer feels slow, He is not late—He is working according to an appointed time, calling His people to wait in trust rather than force control.

"When God feels silent, something else starts trying to speak for Him."



REDEFINING WORSHIP IN SILENCE (EXODUS 32:5–6)

- **THEY MIX WORSHIP LANGUAGE WITH DISOBEDIENT PRACTICE.**
- **DRIFT OFTEN HIDES UNDER RELIGIOUS VOCABULARY**
- **PROFESSION WITHOUT OBEDIENCE IS A SPIRITUAL CONTRADICTION**
- **EXTERNAL FORM IS NOT THE SAME AS SPIRITUAL POWER**

DON'T JUST ASK "DOES IT SOUND SPIRITUAL?—ASK "DOES IT MATCH GOD'S WORD?"



TRUSTING GOD IN SILENCE LOOKS LIKE PRAYER (EXODUS 32:11–14)

TAKEAWAYS

- When God feels silent, prayer is not a last resort; it is faithful resistance against fear. (Ex. 32:11–14)
- Prayer refuses the spiral of anxiety. (Phil. 4:6–7)
- Prayer “casts” the weight off your chest and onto God. (1 Pet. 5:7)
- Prayer keeps you from quitting in the waiting. (Luke 18:1)
- Prayer is spiritual alertness, not passive wishing. (Eph. 6:18)

SOMETIMES THE MOST OBEDIENT THING YOU CAN DO IS “BE STILL” BEFORE GOD INSTEAD OF FORCING AN OUTCOME (PS. 46:10).



PRIVATE SIN EVENTUALLY BECOMES PUBLIC REALITY EX 32:15-20

