

Question: What is a chisel, as mentioned in Exodus 32:4?

Answer: Let's look at the passage:

Exodus 32:4

"He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a chisel. Then they said, 'These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'"

A chisel is a tool used for carving or shaping materials such as wood or metal. It's commonly used by carpenters to cut, shape, or decorate wood, often for making designs or inscriptions. (See illustration below.)

In the Bible, the word chisel appears only once in this very passage. It was used when the Israelites made a golden calf to worship, hoping it would lead them back to Egypt. They melted their gold and then shaped it into the image of a calf using a chisel.

Let's read the full account:

Exodus 32:1-7

1 When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

2 Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me."

3 So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron.

4 He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a chisel. Then they said, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf

and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord."

6 So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.

7 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt."

Spiritual Meaning

This event carries a message for us even today. Idols are still being "carved" not from gold or wood, but through our actions and desires. The sinful things we do are a form of idolatry, and our selfish desires are the chisels shaping those idols.

As it is written in:

Colossians 3:5

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.”

May the Lord help us to turn away from these modern idols and worship Him in spirit and truth.

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