

SERMON HANDOUT: THE GOLDEN CALF
THE 19TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST - YEAR A
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A RIDICULOUSLY BRIEF HISTORY OF ANCIENT ISRAEL

1800 BC	The Call of Abram ('Abraham')												
1280 BC	<i>The Exodus</i> (Exodus 1-15)												
1250-1200 BC	<i>Israelite conquest of Palestine</i> (Joshua 1-12).												
1200-1000 BC	ORAL PERIOD (Oral Tradition - No writings)												
1200-1020 BC	Tribal Confederacy: <i>Period of Judges</i> (Judges 4-5; Deborah).												
1020-1000 BCE	Israelite Monarchy: <i>Prophet Samuel elects Saul to be King of Israel</i> (I Samuel 8-15)												
1000-961 BC	Reign of King David (II Samuel)												
961-922 BC	Reign of King Solomon (I Kings 1-11)												
950 BC	J SOURCE: From Judah (South) during United Monarchy: Uses "JHWH" to name God.												
922 BC	Death of Solomon: United Israelite Kingdom divides:												
	<table><tr><td>NORTHERN KINGDOM: ISRAEL</td><td>SOUTHERN KINGDOM: JUDAH</td></tr><tr><td>"Ephraim," "Samaria"</td><td>"Judah"</td></tr><tr><td>CAPITAL: Shechem</td><td>CAPITAL: Jerusalem</td></tr><tr><td></td><td style="text-align:center"><u>DAVIDIC DYNASTY</u></td></tr><tr><td>King Jeroboam I</td><td>King Rehoboam</td></tr><tr><td>922-901 BCE</td><td>922-915 BCE</td></tr></table>	NORTHERN KINGDOM: ISRAEL	SOUTHERN KINGDOM: JUDAH	"Ephraim," "Samaria"	"Judah"	CAPITAL: Shechem	CAPITAL: Jerusalem		<u>DAVIDIC DYNASTY</u>	King Jeroboam I	King Rehoboam	922-901 BCE	922-915 BCE
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850 BC	E Source: From Ephraim (Northern Israel), after the division of the kingdom: Uses <i>Elohim</i> "God" [*could be singular or plural]												

In the Bible, J and E Sources have been combined and interwoven. Together this combination is called the "Old Epic" Tradition because they both recall common heritage in Moses, the Exodus, and the origins of Israel before the schism between North and South.

In the parallel passages below notice there are two equally possible translations of *Elohim* as either plural (in the New Revised Standard Version) and the singular in the New Jewish publication Society). The Hebrew "*Elohim*" ("God") is in the plural but can be translated as "God," "gods," or "the gods." Which of these best expresses the author's intentions must be discerned by the context. In the case below, the context itself is ambiguous.

"MAKE GODS FOR US" (NRSV)

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 (*Elohim*) 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."...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."**

"MAKE US A GOD" (NJPS)

When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, the people gathered against Aaron

and said t him, "**Come, make us a god (*Elohim*)** who shall go before us, for that man Moses, who brought us from the land of Egypt—we do not know what has happened to him."...This he took from them and cast in a mold, and made it into a molten calf. And they exclaimed,

"This is your god, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!" When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it;

and Aaron announced: **"Tomorrow shall be a festival of the LORD!"**

1 KINGS 12

1Kings 12:25 Then **Jeroboam** built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and resided there...²⁶Then Jeroboam said to himself...²⁷If my people continue to go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, the heart of this people will turn again to their master, King Rehoboam of Judah; they will kill me and return to King Rehoboam of Judah.”

²⁸So the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold. He said to the people, “You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. **Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.**”²⁹ He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.³⁰And this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one at Bethel and before the other as far as Dan.

³¹ He also...offered sacrifices on the altar; sacrificing to the calves that he had made... **he appointed a festival** for the people of Israel, and he went up to the altar to offer incense.

EXODUS 32

Exodus 32:4 [**Aaron**] 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!**”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.”

Ex. 32: ⁷The LORD said to Moses, “Go down at once! Your people... have acted perversely; ⁸ 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!**’”

