

Exodus 33 Commentary

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Irving Jensen ([Online](#)) - Used by Permission
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 View Chuck Swindoll's chart of Exodus.

Summary Chart of The Book of Exodus									
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Egypt 430 Years (15% of Exodus)			Wilderness 2 Months (30% of Exodus)			Mt Sinai 10 Months (55% of Exodus)		
From Groaning								To Glory!

[Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament](#) - online

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[Click for Events during the Sojourn at Kadesh-Barnea](#)

GENESIS	EXODUS
human effort and failure	divine power and triumph
word of promise	work of fulfillment
a people chosen	a people called
God's electing mercy	God's electing manner
revelation of nationality	realization of nationality

SUMMARY OF THE PENTATEUCH
(from Believer's Study Bible)

Exodus 33:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, '**Depart, go up** from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.'

- **Depart:** Ex 32:34
- **have brought up:** Ex 17:3 32:1,7
- **the land:** Ex 32:13 Ge 22:16-18 26:3 28:13-15
- **to:** Ge 12:7 13:14-17 15:18
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

GET UP AND GO UP TO THE LAND

Related Passage:

Ex 32:34+ "But **go** now, **lead** the people where I told you. **Behold**, My angel shall go before you; nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin."

Then the LORD spoke to Moses - Presumably Moses is still on the mountain and this follows Jehovah's refusal to forgive Israel's golden calf sin, although He does say He will delay the punishment.

Depart, go up from here - Two commands which speak of immediacy. Of course Moses still have to "write" Leviticus, but God is

ready for Israel to move on. And so Moses records in Nu 10:11 that "After **11 months in Sinai**, the people started for the Promised Land."

You and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt- Interesting that here Jehovah says these are the people **YOU have brought up**. which is what He had declared in Ex 32:7 "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, **whom YOU brought up from the land of Egypt**, have corrupted themselves." (cf Ex 3:12 = "when you have brought the people out of Egypt.")

THE LORD BROUGHT ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT - In Ex 6:7+ we read "Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, **Who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.**" (See Ex 12:42 = the LORD for having brought them out; Ex 12:51 = the LORD brought the sons of Israel out; Ex 13:3 = "by a powerful hand the LORD brought you out from this place.", Ex 13:9 = "with a powerful hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt." Ex 13:14 = "him, "With a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt," Ex 13:16 = "with a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt." Ex 16:6 = "the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt;" Ex 16:32 = "I (THE LORD) brought you out of the land of Egypt." Ex 18:1 = "how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt." Ex 20:2 = "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." Ex 29:46 = "I am the LORD their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt,"

to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.'- Jehovah is referring to the [Abrahamic Covenant](#), which Moses had alluded to as a reason for Him not to destroy Israel after the golden calf incident. The only other mention of Jehovah giving giving an oath is in Exodus 6:8+ 'I will bring you to the land which **I swore** to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ([Abrahamic Covenant](#)), and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD.'

Exodus 33:2 "I will send an angel before you and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite.

- **an angel:** Ex 23:20 Ex 32:34 Ex 34:11
- **the Canaanite:** Ex 3:8,17 De 7:22 Jos 24:11
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Exodus 23:20 "Behold, I am going to send **an angel** before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

Exodus 32:34 "But go now, lead the people where I told you. Behold, **My angel shall go before you;** nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin."

Exodus 34:11 "Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day: behold, **I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite.**

Exodus 3:8 "So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of **the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.**

Exodus 3:17 "So I said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of **the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite**, to a land flowing with milk and honey."

Deuteronomy 7:22 "The **LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little;** you will not be able to put an end to them quickly, for the wild beasts would grow too numerous for you.

Joshua 24:11 'You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho; and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, and the **Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Gergashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite.** Thus I gave them into your hand.

I will send an angel before you - Moses was to lead the people where God had told him (Ex 32:34) "Behold, My angel shall go before you." Who is this angel? Is it a created angel? Or is it the [Angel of the LORD](#). If we look at the context ([Keep Context King](#)) to aid interpretation, God's statement in verse 3 (**I will not go up in your midst**) would certainly suggest this angel is **NOT** the [Angel of the LORD](#). In other words this is not the same "Angel" that first appeared to Moses (Ex 3:2+) or the Angel that had been going

before the camp (Ex 14:19+, cf Ex 23:20-23+).

Warren Wiersbe agrees writing "God would keep the covenant promises He had made to the patriarchs, but instead of going before Israel in the person of His Son, the Angel of the Lord (Ex 23:20–23), He would appoint an angel to accompany the Jews. The reason? "You are a stiff-necked people" (Ex 32:9; 33:3, 5)...Better that God depart from them than that He come suddenly upon them and destroy them!"

Walter Kaiser - As the time approached for Moses to take up the lead of the Israelites, he became concerned as to the identity of the companion God had promised him (Ex 32:34; 33:2). He believed that a mere angel was no substitute for the presence of God.

Victor Hamilton - Israel is shortly to resume the journey to Canaan (v. 1), but with a messenger/angel going "before" the people (v. 2) as a surrogate for an absent, infuriated Yahweh who has dwelled "among" them (v. 3). There is a considerably different role for this messenger/angel in 33:3 than that mentioned in 23:20–23. In 23:20–23 the messenger/angel is a gracious provision of God for his people. In 33:3 the messenger/angel appears only because God has been deeply offended by his people's behavior. Such messengers/angels can represent either God's blessing (Exod. 23) or the withdrawal of God's presence (Exod. 33). Even in his wrath, however, the Lord is gracious. His presence with the Israelites means their possible annihilation. His absence from the people and limiting himself to a proxy means they have a future, another chance. If there is ever an occasion on which it is appropriate for the Lord to say that the gift of land has nothing to do with Israel's merits, but everything to do with his faithful promise to Israel's ancestors (v. 1a), this is it. ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

And I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite- Note the "I will" promises to back up, fortify or enable Moses to fulfill the command in verse 1 to **depart**. Notice also the passage above in Joshua (Josh 24:11) which speaks of Israel's part in driving out the *pagan-ites*. God's sovereignty and omnipotent power enabled Israel to drive them out!

THOUGHT - Beloved, this is the pattern for victory over our "ites", better known as the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#). We are called to fight the good fight, but notice it is a good fight of faith (1 Ti 6:12). In other words we fight forth from the Cross, where Christ defeated all three of these foes. We fight forth from the Cross believing He has won the victory and will give us victory "little by little" over our foes. The Christian life is to be a life of victory because of the power God supplies by His Spirit and our faith which issues in obedience (Php 2:12+), an obedience that is also enabled by His sufficient supply (see Php 2:13+). This is the same idea as in the "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)" (100/100). If you are attempting to kill sin or defeat the devil or the world by your own power, you are doomed to continual futility and failure which leads to frustration. But be careful and don't fall into the attractive but false teaching of "**Let go and Let God.**" That is not Biblically sound. That is saying it is all up to God and I am a passive participant in the struggle against my mortal foes. No, a better way, the Biblical way (and really the only way) is to "**Let God and Let's go.**" Do you see the clear difference. This second "saying" depicts God's part and our part. And ultimately He will win the victory!

Exodus 33:3 "[Go up] to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, because you are an obstinate people, and I might destroy you on the way."

NET Exodus 33:3 Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go up among you, for you are a stiff-necked people, and I might destroy you on the way."

NLT Exodus 33:3 Go up to this land that flows with milk and honey. But I will not travel among you, for you are a stubborn and rebellious people. If I did, I would surely destroy you along the way."

ESV Exodus 33:3 Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people."

NIV Exodus 33:3 Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way."

KJV Exodus 33:3 Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way.

LXE Exodus 33:3 And I will bring thee into a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up with thee, because thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee by the way.

ASV Exodus 33:3 unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiffnecked people, lest I consume thee in the way.

CSB Exodus 33:3 Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you because you are a stiff-necked people; otherwise, I might destroy you on the way."

NKJ Exodus 33:3 "Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people."

NRS Exodus 33:3 Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, or I would consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people."

YLT Exodus 33:3 unto a land flowing with milk and honey, for I do not go up in thy midst, for thou art a stiff-necked people -- lest I consume thee in the way.'

- **a land:** Ex 3:8 13:5 Lev 20:24 Nu 13:27 14:8 16:13 Jos 5:6 Jer 11:5
- **for I:** Ex 33:15-17 32:10,14 Nu 14:12 De 32:26,27 1Sa 2:30 Jer 18:7-10 Eze 3:18,19 33:13-16 Jon 3:4,10
- **an obstinate people:** Ex 32:9 34:9 De 9:6-13 Ps 78:8 Ac 7:51
- **and I might destroy you:** Ex 23:21 Ex 32:10 Nu 16:21,45 Am 3:13,14
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

JEHOVAH WILL NOT GO UP IN THEIR MIDST

Related Passage:

Exodus 25:8 "Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell **among** (in midst of) them.

Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey - Even though God reiterates the promise, he then describes the result of Israel going into this land. Now put yourself in Moses' sandals for a moment. Can you imagine his heart of compassion beginning to accelerate a few beats with this declaration of destruction?

Milk and honey - 20x in 20v - Exod. 3:8; Exod. 3:17; Exod. 13:5; Exod. 33:3; Lev. 20:24; Num. 13:27; Num. 14:8; Num. 16:13; Num. 16:14; Deut. 6:3; Deut. 11:9; Deut. 26:9; Deut. 26:15; Deut. 27:3; Deut. 31:20; Jos. 5:6; Jer. 11:5; Jer. 32:22; Ezek. 20:6; Ezek. 20:15

for I will not go up in your midst, because you are an obstinate people, and I might destroy you on the way - Moses repeats these words below as what he spoke to the people when he came down from the mountain. **Wiersbe** sees God's refusal to go with Israel as they march to the promised land as a form of judgment (to add on to the 3000 killed by the Levites in Ex 32:28).

Note other versions have "but" instead of "for" and note that "but" is a strong adversative.

NET Note - The verse is saying that because of the people's bent to rebellion, Yahweh would not remain in their midst as he had formerly said he would do. Their lives would be at risk if he did.

Currid on I will not go up in your midst - However, he himself will not be 'in [the] midst' of the people as they journey to Canaan. What that means is that he will not allow them to construct the tabernacle, the purpose of which was 'that I [God] may dwell in their midst' (25:8). In other words, the symbol of God's presence with his people will not now be built. There is irony here. God had given the Hebrews instructions to build a sanctuary so that he would reside among the people. They instead made a calf as a physical representation of gods being with them. Now Yahweh threatens to remove from them the true symbol of his presence. ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

Obstinate (hard, stiff, stubborn) ([07186](#)) see note below on [qasheh](#)

Review - God tells him to get up and go up and His angel would guide Moses (Exodus 32:34) but then in Exodus 33:3, He says He will not go up lest He destroy them. Moses sees the problem and so he offers a prayer....

Then he said to Him, "**if Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here** 16 "For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?" 17 The LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name." (Ex 33:15-17)

Exodus 33:4 When the people heard this sad word, they went into mourning, and none of them put on his ornaments.

NET Exodus 33:4 When the people heard this troubling word they mourned; no one put on his ornaments.

NLT Exodus 33:4 When the people heard these stern words, they went into mourning and stopped wearing their jewelry and fine clothes.

ESV Exodus 33:4 When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments.

NIV Exodus 33:4 When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments.

KJV Exodus 33:4 And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments.

LXE Exodus 33:4 And the people having heard this grievous saying, mourned in mourning apparel.

ASV Exodus 33:4 And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments.

CSB Exodus 33:4 When the people heard this bad news, they mourned and didn't put on their jewelry.

NKJ Exodus 33:4 And when the people heard this bad news, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments.

NRS Exodus 33:4 When the people heard these harsh words, they mourned, and no one put on ornaments.

YLT Exodus 33:4 And the people hear this sad thing, and mourn; and none put his ornaments on him.

- **they went into mourning:** Nu 14:1,39 Ho 7:14 Zec 7:3,5
- **and none:** Lev 10:6 2Sa 19:24 1Ki 21:27 2Ki 19:1 Ezr 9:3 Es 4:1-4 Job 1:20 2:12 Isa 32:11 Eze 24:17,23 26:16 Jon 3:6
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NO TIME TO CELEBRATE

When the people heard this sad word - I like the NET rendering "this troubling word." **Sad** is Hebrew word (['ra](#)) which means bad and in the Septuagint is translated as [poneros](#) which can mean evil but in this context ([Keep Context King](#)) means bad, toilsome, grievous.

They went into mourning - The lamented. So at some point Moses came down from the mountain and spoke the "judgment verdict" from Jehovah to the people (see Ex 33:5). Even obstinate people have enough sense to realize the truth of what God had said in verse 3 to Moses and which Moses passed on to them in verse 5. Why were they mourning? They were mourning over this consequence of their sin.

THOUGHT - Sin will steal, kill and destroy. Sin will make you sick, spiritually and physically. Sin will make you mourn and despise the moment you were so foolish to commit such a stupid sin! Oh, to learn to rest in and rely on the power of the Spirit as Paul said in Romans 8:13[±] "if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit (GOD'S SUFFICIENCY, GOD'S POWER) you are putting to death (OUR RESPONSIBILITY) the deeds of the body, you will live." There is the clear contrast - sin kills lives, killing sin lives!

NET Note makes an interesting statement - The people would rather have risked divine discipline than to go without Yahweh in their midst (ED: I AM NOT SURE ONE CAN MAKE THAT INTERPRETATION FROM THE CONTEXT - [Keep Context King](#)). So they mourned, and they took off the ornaments. Such had been used in making the golden calf, and so because of their association with all of that they were to be removed as a sign of remorse.

Victor Hamilton - Verse 4 (and 6) does not use the standard vocabulary of repentance: *šûb min* or *nāḥam oryada* (Hitpael), meaning to "turn from" sin or "repent of" sin or "confess" sin. But stripping oneself of jewelry or outer adornment may be a demonstrable way of renouncing one's sin. A parallel may be found in Gen. 35:4, where Jacob's household gets rid not only of all their foreign gods but also of "the rings in their ears," all of which Jacob subsequently buries ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

And none of them put on his ornaments - This seems to be a response to their mourning. Someone might see it as repentance (Victor Hamilton above for example), but nothing in context ([Keep Context King](#)) strongly suggests they were genuinely repentant.

Stripping their jewelry was good but notice that in Ex 33:5 God tells them to strip off their jewelry. So, yes, while their obedience could represent genuine repentance, I am dubious. One reason is because the text implies they did not put it back on for the next 40 years (verse 6 = "**Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward.**") And yet it is clear that they did not act like a repentant people for those next 40 years. Listen to the inspired sermon by Stephen in Acts 7 where (1) there is no suggestion of repentance and (2) there is a continual attraction to idolatry during the 40 years (Moloch [read Lev 20:2 where **Molech = Moloch**], star of Rompha which they made to worship! That does not sound like genuine repentance from the sin of making a golden calf! They just "graduated" to different and in some ways more evil idols during the 40 years!)

"This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you. 39"Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt, 40 SAYING TO AARON, 'MAKE FOR US GODS WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT—WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.' 41"At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands. 42"But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, 'IT WAS NOT TO ME THAT YOU OFFERED VICTIMS AND SACRIFICES FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, WAS IT, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL? 43'YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH AND THE STAR OF THE GOD ROMPHA, THE IMAGES WHICH YOU MADE TO WORSHIP. I ALSO WILL REMOVE YOU BEYOND BABYLON.' (Acts 7:38-43+)

No, I think Israel was more like the little boy who got caught stealing cookies and was sorry but not repentant. He was sorry he got caught! He was not sorry for his act! And so they did what I usually do when things are not going my way -- they had a "pity party" (mourning) minus the "party for **none of them put on his ornaments**. The NLT paraphrases it they "stopped wearing their jewelry and fine clothes." And as stated the context ([Keep Context King](#)) supports the premise that they did not put on their ornaments because Jehovah told them to **put off your ornaments** (verse 5). But at least they are obedient to that command from God.

Exodus 33:4-6 can seem a bit confusing at first. The most likely way to piece these passages together is in verse 4 the people remove their jewelry on their own initiative, and then Ex 33:5-6 Moses tells us that they have removed their jewelry because God told them to. In other words vv5-6 explain how and why they did not wear their ornaments, but instead (by implication) had removed their ornaments.

Currid - Chrysostom once commented that 'To be separated from God is greater punishment than a thousand hells.' No wonder the Hebrews went into great mourning and lamentation over God's threat not to be with them. No greater chastisement exists than separation from the Holy One of Israel. (cf 2 Th 1:6-10) ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

Exodus 33:5 For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the sons of Israel, 'You are an obstinate people; should I go up in your midst for one moment, I would destroy you. Now therefore, put off your ornaments from you, that I may know what I shall do with you.'"

NET Exodus 33:5 For the LORD had said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites, 'You are a stiff-necked people. If I went up among you for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments, that I may know what I should do to you.'"

NLT Exodus 33:5 For the LORD had told Moses to tell them, "You are a stubborn and rebellious people. If I were to travel with you for even a moment, I would destroy you. Remove your jewelry and fine clothes while I decide what to do with you."

ESV Exodus 33:5 For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, 'You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do with you.'"

NIV Exodus 33:5 For the LORD had said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites, 'You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments and I will decide what to do with you.' "

KJV Exodus 33:5 For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.

LXE Exodus 33:5 For the Lord said to the children of Israel, Ye are a stiff-necked people; take heed lest I bring on you another plague, and destroy you: now then put off your glorious apparel, and your ornaments, and I will shew thee what I will do to thee.

ASV Exodus 33:5 And Jehovah said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people; if I go up into the midst of thee for one moment, I shall consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.

CSB Exodus 33:5 For the LORD said to Moses: "Tell the Israelites: You are a stiff-necked people. If I went with you for a single moment, I would destroy you. Now take off your jewelry, and I will decide what to do with you."

NKJ Exodus 33:5 For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the children of Israel, 'You are a stiff-necked people. I could come up into your midst in one moment and consume you. Now therefore, take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do to you.'"

NRS Exodus 33:5 For the LORD had said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, and I will decide what to do to you.'"

YLT Exodus 33:5 And Jehovah saith unto Moses, 'Say unto the sons of Israel, Ye are a stiff-necked people; one moment -- I come up into thy midst, and have consumed thee; and now, put down thine ornaments from off thee, and I know what I do to thee;'

- **You are an obstinate people:** Ex 33:3 Nu 16:45,46
- **for one moment,:** Nu 16:21,45 Job 34:20 Ps 73:19 La 4:6
- **put off your ornaments from you:** Isa 22:12
- **I may:** Ge 18:21 22:12 De 8:2 Ps 139:23
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

A DIVINE PROMISE OF DESTRUCTION

For the LORD had said to Moses - This explains the people's reaction in Exodus 33:4.

Say to the sons of Israel, 'You are an obstinate people- NET = "Stiff-necked", NLT "Stubborn and rebellious" They were a people who as a general rule would not bow under God's authority.

Obstinate (hard, stiff, stubborn) ([07186](#))([qasheh](#)) means hard, harsh, cruel, severe, strong, violent, fierce. This term's basic function is to describe something as hard. **Qashen** is the verb mean **stiff** and is combined with the Hebrew word for **neck** ([oreph](#)), forming an idiom used in agriculture to describe cattle used as draft animals whose power was concentrated in their neck (Hos 4:16, Jer 5:5) so in the figurative sense whoever resists the yoke is "hard-necked." Hebrew anthropology often portrays the inner will in terms of the heart, neck, and face. They were like a stubborn horse that refuses to respond to the rider's tug on the reins! This idiom obstinate ("stiff-necked") occurs five more times all are in the Pentateuch (Ex. 33:3, 5; Ex 34:9; Dt. 9:6, 13) The sad record of Israel's history is one generation of stiff-necked men and women after another (Dt 31:27, 2 Ki 17:14, 2 Chr 30:8, 36:13, Neh 9:16, 17, 29, Jer 7:26, 17:23, 19:15). The irony is that this same expression used of Pharaoh who was stiff-necked (his heart was hardened) in refusing to let Israel go to worship Yahweh. Now that they have been delivered to worship Yahweh, they became stiff-necked like Pharaoh!

Should I go up in your midst for one moment, I would destroy you- Most commentators to take this as a conditional clause: "If I were to do such and such, then...." **One moment** speaks of instantaneous destruction! In Nu 16:45 [Rebellion of Korah](#)) the same phrase is used when God says "I may consume them **instantly**." (cf similar idea in Ps 73:19) In Ex 33:3 God tells Moses **He MIGHT destroy** them but here he says I **WOULD destroy** them which sounds a bit more definite and ominous!

Destroy is [kalah](#) a verb meaning to bring a process to completion and here used negatively meaning to consume. God uses this same verb in Nu 16:21, 45 in His response to the rebellion of Korah. This is the same verb used in Ex 32:10,12 when Jehovah told Moses He would destroy Israel because of their great sin with the golden calf. **Kalah** is used in Ex 33:3, 5 and again depicts Yahweh as consuming the nation of Israel! Ponder that picture -- if you consume a boneless, fat free, filet mignon, there is nothing left! The Septuagint translates

kalah with the verb **exanalisko** which is not found in the NT but is derived from [analisko](#) which means to consume. For example, [analisko](#) describes what will happen to the lawless one (antichrist) when Christ returns - Christ "will slay" him with the breath of His mouth (cf similar meaning in Lk 9:54+). And so **exanalisko** is a strengthened form meaning to destroy utterly. No wonder this was a "sad word" to Israel!

Moses successfully appealed this divine judgment decision in verses 12-17.

As **Warren Wiersbe** said "Sin is always costly, and Israel's sin had not only led to the death of thousands of people, but it had robbed the nation of the presence of the Lord in the camp and on their pilgrim journey to the Promised Land."

God never permits His people to sin successfully.

-- C H Spurgeon

Now therefore, put off your ornaments from you, that I may know what I shall do with you- The putting away of the ornaments was an appropriate sign of repentance from the sin which had involved their ornaments (Ex 32:2-4). Also, removal of ornamentation commonly accompanied mourning.

NET Note is interesting - The call to remove the ornaments must have been perceived as a call to show true repentance for what had happened. If they repented, then God would know how to deal with them.

Exodus 33:6 So the sons of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward.

- Ex 33:4 Ex 32:3 Jer 2:19
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

OBEDIENCE... FINALLY!

So - Term of conclusion. The following conclusion is based on the previous command.

the sons of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward- There is a bit of irony here for the verb ([natsal](#)) for **stripped** is the same verb translated **plundered** in Ex 3:22 Ex 12:36 explaining how the Israelites left Egypt with much gold and fine clothes. Stripping off of **their ornaments** reflects obedience to Yahweh's command but also a sense of mourning. They were paying a high price for their wild celebration around the lifeless golden calf! They had sown to the wind and were now reaping the whirlwind. (Hos 8:7). Israel had sown to the flesh and had reaped corruption and were in danger of reaping "consumption" by Jehovah! (Gal 6:7-8+).

Currid on stripped themselves - The point may be that Israel deserved to be plundered just as much as the Egyptians—they were really no different because of their idolatry! ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

The words of the prophet Jeremiah almost 900 years later directed at the Israelites in the land of Judah are apropos to the first generation

(Jer 2:19) "Your own wickedness will correct you (THEIR WILD CELEBRATION AROUND THE CALF), And your apostasies will reprove you; Know therefore and see that it is evil and bitter For you to forsake the LORD your God (WHICH THEY DID IN WORSHIPING THE GOLDEN CALF), And the dread of Me is not in you," declares the Lord GOD of hosts.

Exodus 33:7 Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp.

Currid And Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a far distance from the camp. And he called it 'the tent of meeting'. And anyone who sought Yahweh would come out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp.

NET Exodus 33:7 Moses took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, at a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. Anyone seeking the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting that was outside

the camp.

NLT Exodus 33:7 It was Moses' practice to take the Tent of Meeting and set it up some distance from the camp. Everyone who wanted to make a request of the LORD would go to the Tent of Meeting outside the camp.

ESV Exodus 33:7 Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp.

NIV Exodus 33:7 Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the "tent of meeting." Anyone inquiring of the LORD would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp.

KJV Exodus 33:7 And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.

LXE Exodus 33:7 And Moses took his tabernacle and pitched it without the camp, at a distance from the camp; and it was called the Tabernacle of Testimony: and it came to pass that every one that sought the Lord went forth to the tabernacle which was without the camp.

ASV Exodus 33:7 Now Moses used to take the tent and to pitch it without the camp, afar off from the camp; and he called it, The tent of meeting. And it came to pass, that every one that sought Jehovah went out unto the tent of meeting, which was without the camp.

CSB Exodus 33:7 Now Moses took a tent and set it up outside the camp, far away from the camp; he called it the tent of meeting. Anyone who wanted to consult the LORD would go to the tent of meeting that was outside the camp.

NKJ Exodus 33:7 Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of meeting. And it came to pass that everyone who sought the LORD went out to the tabernacle of meeting which was outside the camp.

NRS Exodus 33:7 Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp; he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp.

YLT Exodus 33:7 And Moses taketh the tent, and hath stretched it out at the outside of the camp, afar off from the camp, and hath called it, 'Tent of Meeting;' and it hath come to pass, every one seeking Jehovah goeth out unto the tent of meeting, which is at the outside of the camp.

- **a good distance from the camp** Ps 10:1 Ps 35:22 Pr 15:29 Isa 59:2 Ho 9:12
- **tent of meeting:** Ex 29:42,43
- **sought:** De 4:29 2Sa 21:1 Ps 27:8 Isa 55:6,7 Mt 7:7,8
- **went out:** Heb 13:11-13
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

TENT DEPICTING ISRAEL'S SEPARATION FROM GOD

Mark it down, sin separates us from God. Don't be deceived thinking you can sin a "little" and still experience the presence of the Holy One. That is (as they say) a lie from the pit of hell!

Exodus 33:7-11 is parenthetical, explaining the manner of Moses' communicating with God. Ex 33:12 picks up the account from Ex 33:6. **Currid** explains it this way "The entire section serves as a transition between the golden calf incident and what follows. The people are still under the judgement of God. Yet grace soon follows. In addition, this section provides the setting for the intercessory prayer of Moses that occurs in verses 12–16." ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp and he called it the tent of meeting - Note that **outside the camp** is followed by the phrase **a good distance** (a far distance) which emphasizes the separation of the people from God because of their sin (which is another reason I do not feel that Israel's removal of their ornaments was an indication of repentance. If they had repented of their sin, why would God still choose to be **outside the camp**?). This tent was not the tabernacle which had yet to be constructed and which was to be in the midst of the camp (Ex 25:8ESV+), not outside the

camp! Presumably it was Moses' personal tent (cf the tent in Ex 18:7+) which he set up to conduct spiritual business. We do not see the construction of the Tabernacle until we get into Exodus 36 and in Ex 40:33 we see its completion.

NET Note - A widespread contemporary view is that this section represents a source that thought the tent of meeting was already erected (see S. R. Driver, Exodus, 359). But the better view is that this is a temporary tent used for meeting the LORD. U. Cassuto explains this view very well (Exodus, 429–30), namely, that because the building of the tabernacle was now in doubt if the LORD was not going to be in their midst, another plan seemed necessary. Moses took this tent, his tent, and put some distance between the camp and it. Here he would use the tent as the place to meet God, calling it by the same name since it was a surrogate tent. Thus, the entire section was a temporary means of meeting God, until the current wrath was past.

Hamilton - The phrase "pitch one's tent" (nāṭā'ōhel) appears only here with Moses, and elsewhere in the Pentateuch with Abraham (Gen. 12:8), Isaac (Gen. 26:25), and Jacob (Gen. 33:19; 35:21). For other tent pitchers, see Jdg. 4:11 (Heber the Kenite); 2 Sam. 6:17; 1 Chron. 15:1; 16:1; 2 Chron. 1:4 (David); 2 Sam. 16:22 (Absalom). ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

And everyone who sought the LORD would go out- Notice the phrase **everyone who sought the LORD** is not the same as everyone sought the LORD. While this may sound like nit-picking, it is not. The NET translates it "Anyone seeking the LORD," and the CSB "Anyone who wanted to consult the LORD." There is a big difference between [everyone](#) and [anyone](#). The Hebrew word for **sought** ([baqas](#); Lxx = [zeteo](#) = devote effort to realize one's desire) conveys the sense that the person is earnest seeking something and thus can even have the nuance of to desire (cf uses of [baqash](#) in Ps 24:6 versus Zeph 1:6) "Anybody can approach the tent (ED. THEY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO APPROACH THE HOLY TABERNACLE) if they are on a God-seeking mission (v. 7b); at least they can go "out" to it, but not necessarily "into" it. " (Hamilton)

Isaiah 55:6; 7 says Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

Ps 27:8 When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, O LORD, I shall seek."

To the tent of meeting which was outside the camp- While tent of meeting is used in a different context to describe the holy tabernacle (Ex 27:21, 28:43, 29:4, 10, 11, 30, 32, etc), in the present context (remember [Keep Context King](#) in order to deduce the most accurate interpretation) **the tent of meeting** is rendered in the KJV as "*the Tabernacle of the congregation*," which could easily mislead someone to think this was the Holy Tabernacle. This was not the tabernacle, which was yet to be constructed. Rather, it was a tent belonging to Moses, which he set up for the special purpose of communicating with God. God showed His approval of this arrangement by the "cloud" (v. 9).

THOUGHT - Why was the tent of meeting outside the camp? Sin separates and undoubtedly the location was a symbol to point out to Israel their guilt and the consequences of their sin. Too often I fear we underestimate the fact that any sin will separate us from our Father. If you feel far from God today then sincerely pray Ps 139:23-24 "**Search** me, O God, and **know** my heart; **Try** me and **know** my anxious thoughts; And **see** if there be any hurtful way in me, And **lead** me in the everlasting way." Notice there are 6 commands which are not demands to God, but which do speak of a bold approach to God's Throne, coming based only on the finished work of Christ our Mediator and Great High Priest. If the Holy Spirit reveals some sin to you, confess and repent for Pr 28:13+ says "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion." (cf 1 Jn 1:9+) Then go out to the "tent of meeting," and meet with God.

NET Note - This unit of the book could actually include all of chap. 33, starting with the point of the LORD's withdrawal from the people. If that section is not part of the exposition, it would have to be explained as the background. The point is that sinfulness prevents the active presence of the LORD leading his people. But then the rest of chap. 33 forms the development. In vv. 7–11 there is the gracious provision: the LORD reveals through his faithful mediator. The LORD was leading his people, but now more remotely because of their sin. Then, in vv. 12–17 Moses intercedes for the people, and the intercession of the mediator guarantees the LORD's presence. The point of all of this is that God wanted the people to come to know that if he was not with them they should not go. Finally, the presence of the LORD is verified to the mediator by a special revelation (18–23). The point of the whole chapter is that by his grace the LORD renews the promise of his presence by special revelation.

2 Cor 3:18+ says "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

The supernatural transformation that is promised to those who behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord in the Word of the Lord recalls the description of the face of Moses in Exodus...

And it came about, whenever Moses went out to the tent, that **all the people would arise and stand, each at**

the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent. 9 Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the LORD would speak with Moses. 10 When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent. 11 Thus the LORD used to speak to **Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.** When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent...34 But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, 35 the sons of Israel would see the **face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone.** So Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him. (Exodus 33:8-11+, Ex 34:34-35+)

THOUGHT - Notice that both the Israelites and Moses had "close encounters" with Jehovah, but the difference was that Moses' encounter was a "**face to face**" encounter and the people's encounter (with **the pillar of cloud**) was at a distance. And yet even though their encounter was distant, it was sufficiently impressive that they responded with **worship**. But here is the question -- whose face was changed? Only the face of Moses, the one who had a "**face to face**" encounter with the Living Lord (cf Ex 34:34,35+)!

Can you see the application? If Christians today desire to grow in grace and Christ-likeness, the only way is by a "face to face" encounter with Jehovah. It follows that we need to be (1) daily looking into the "**mirror**" of God's Word and (2) we need to do more than just **gaze**" at it like the Israelites did. We need to sit at Jesus' feet and soak in the Word -- we need to be like Mary instead of Martha! (Lk 10:38-42+)! We do our part, the Spirit will take the glorious Word and transform us from glory to glory making us more and more like Christ! And not only that but our glory is even better than that Moses experienced, for in contrast to Moses, our transforming glory is increasing, not decreasing (see 2 Cor 3:13+)!

Father by Your Spirit stir our hearts to desire "face to face" encounters with the Living Lord and not just a passing gaze or glance, so that Your Spirit might conform you progressively into the image of Your Son for Your glory. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Exodus 33:8 And it came about, whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people would arise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent.

- **and stand:** Nu 16:27
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE PEOPLE GAZED AT MOSES MEETING GOD

And it came about, whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people would arise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent - Clearly Moses is held with some esteem and reverence at this point. Perhaps his order from Jehovah to slay the 3000 in Exodus 32 caused the people to have this enhanced reverence. There is a more likely reason they would **arise and stand...and gaze** and that is because of the appearance of **the pillar of cloud**. Notice also that here **all the people** would suggest not just those in verse 7 who **sought the LORD**, but the entire nation. So while some of the Israelites sought, all would arise and stand and gaze. Those who gazed remained at a distance, while the goers sought closer contact with Jehovah.

THOUGHT - There is big difference though between gazing and going. Don't just gaze at Jesus, but go to Jesus. Don't just say "I should pray," but "Pray." Don't be a gazer but be a goer. Don't just stand in amazement, but go in adoration. He is worthy. He Alone is worthy. Play [He is Worthy](#). (Rev 5:9,12+)

John Currid - In the opening scene of the golden calf incident, the Hebrews had spoken disparagingly of the covenant mediator. Their disrespect was evident when they called him 'this Moses' (see 32:1). But now, after judgement has come on them and Moses has interceded on their behalf, they have a newly acquired respect for the prophet. Whenever Moses went outside the camp to the tent of meeting the people stood and watched him—this probably reflects a series of emotions on their part, such as respect, affection and contrition. It also demonstrates alienation, because the tent of meeting was not in the middle of the camp. ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

Exodus 33:9 Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the LORD would speak with Moses.

- **the pillar of cloud:** Ex 13:21,22 Ps 99:7
- **speak:** Ex 33:11 Ex 25:22 Ex 31:18 Ex 34:3,9 Ge 17:22 18:33 Nu 11:17 Eze 3:22
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

HOLY GOD SPEAKS WITH MORTAL MAN

Related Passages:

Exodus 13:21+ The LORD was going before them in a **pillar of cloud** by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.

Exodus 13:22+ He did not take away the **pillar of cloud** by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent- This **theophany** is the **Shekinah glory cloud** which I personally think was a **Christophany** and so (in my humble opinion) Moses was speaking with the pre-incarnate Christ (even as had Abraham in Ge 18:1-10 albeit not in the pillar of a cloud but a human form). As Hamilton says Jehovah shows up "when Moses approaches the tent of meeting. The sanctuary tent, however, is God's permanent dwelling." There is not evidence that Jehovah would descend on the tent if just anybody seeking him came close. They had to draw near through the mediator, Moses, a clear picture of believers in the NT who draw near to God's Throne through our better Mediator Who is also our Great High Priest (cf Ro 5:1,2+, Heb 4:14-16+, Heb 10:19-22+)

Pillar of cloud - 12x in 11v - Exod. 13:21; Exod. 13:22; Exod. 14:19; Exod. 33:9; Exod. 33:10; Num. 12:5; Num. 14:14; Deut. 31:15; Neh. 9:12; Neh. 9:19; Ps. 99:7

Pillar of fire - 6x in 6v - Exod. 13:21; Exod. 13:22; Exod. 14:24; Num. 14:14; Neh. 9:12; Neh. 9:19

Compare the scene when the Tabernacle was finished and Jehovah descended

He erected the court all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the veil for the gateway of the court. Thus Moses finished the work. 34 Then **the cloud covered the tent of meeting** and the **glory of the LORD** filled the tabernacle. (Ex 40:33-34)

Currid writes that "God is with Israel to a degree, but there is still alienation and estrangement." ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

Alan Cole - This column or 'pillar' (literally, a 'standing' thing) of cloud, whatever its nature, signified the presence of YHWH, and whenever Moses entered the tent the sign of God's presence was to be seen. Exodus 40:33, 34 seems to describe the same phenomenon in connection with the completed tent of later chapters, as a sign of God's 'residence' (like the flag over a royal palace) ([TOTC-Exodus](#))

and the LORD would speak with Moses - While Jehovah had spoken at the outset from a burning bush (Ex 3:14) and then from the midst of the cloud on Mount Sinai (Ex 31:18) but now from a tent. In about less than a year the nation would leave Mount Sinai, so God had prepared another meeting place that would travel with the nation.

The writer of Psalm 99 gives us an interesting insight into holy men of old meeting with God writing

Moses and Aaron were among His priests, And **Samuel** was among those who called on His name; They called upon the LORD and He answered them. 7 He spoke to them in **the pillar of cloud**; They kept His testimonies And the statute that He gave them.

Exodus 33:10 When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent.

- **worship:** Ex 4:31 1Ki 8:14,22 Lu 18:13
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

WORSHIP OF

THE LIVING GOD

When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent - While not all the people went out to the tent of meeting, all did see the glory of God and did respond appropriately. The people of Israel understood that this **pillar of cloud** was a visible symbol of God's presence with his people (Ex 13:21). It was like a divine "flag" signaling that Yahweh was present, if not in their midst, at least in their line of sight! When the people saw the **cloud**, they would know that Moses and the Lord were in communion. How interesting that the same people who had worshiped and bowed down to a lifeless golden calf (Ex 32:8 uses same verb **shachah**) now willingly **worship** and bow down to the Living God even though they could not see an image of Him but only a **pillar of cloud**.

Guzik - The people watched and noticed when Moses worshipped. When Moses worshipped, they also worshipped. Moses prompted the people to draw close to God by his own example....Something about Moses and his relationship with God made others want to also worship God. ([Exodus 33](#))

NET Note - All the main verbs in this verse are perfect tenses continuing the customary sequence (see GKC 337 §112.kk). The idea is that the people would get up (rise) when the cloud was there and then worship, meaning in part bow down. When the cloud was not there, there was access to seek God.

Worship (bow down, prostrate) ([07812](#))(**shachah**) means to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to crouch, to fall down, to humbly beseech, to do reverence, to worship. The idea is to assume a prostrate position as would in paying homage especially to God (Ge 24:26, Ps 95:6). Shachah is translated in the **Septuagint (LXX)** in this passage with the picturesque Greek verb **proskuneo** (from **pros** = toward or facing + **kuneo** = kiss, adore) which pictures the practice among the Orientals (especially the Persians) of falling upon their knees and touching the ground with their forehead as an expression of profound reverence.

Exodus 33:11 Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

- **LORD used to speak:** Ex 33:9 Ge 32:30 Nu 12:8 De 5:4 34:10
- **just as a man speaks to his friend:** 2Ch 20:7 Job 16:21 Isa 42:8 Joh 3:29 11:11 15:14,15 Jas 2:23
- **his servant:** Ex 17:9 24:13 32:17
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

FACE TO FACE COMMUNICATION WITH THE LIVING LORD

Related Passage:

Deut 34:10 Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew **face to face**,

Numbers 12:6-8 He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a **vision**. I shall speak with him in a **dream**. 7 "Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household; 8 With him I speak **mouth to mouth**, Even openly, and not in dark sayings, And he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant, against Moses?"

Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend- What is amazing is that he spoke face to face and was not instantly consumed! **Face to face** is an anthropomorphic description of God because as we see later no man can see God's face and live. And yet in some form Moses communed in an intimate way with Yahweh. Numbers 12:8 says Moses beheld "the form of the LORD." How does a man speak to his friend? Is this not a picture of the close fellowship and sense of trust that good friends have, feeling like they can tell their friend their innermost secrets and struggles, etc. Unlike the later prophets, who would receive that word in dreams and visions, Moses spoke with God "face to face," i.e., directly or immediately. And from the Numbers 12 passage above we see that Yahweh speaks to Moses not as to other prophets in visions or dreams or "dark sayings" but intimately (mouth to mouth) and fearlessly.

One is reminded of the privileged status disciples of Christ have (Jesus is addressing the original 11 disciples but the principle is applicable to His disciples today as He speaks to us through His Word, through His Spirit)..

"No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but **I have called you**

friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you (John 15:15)

Comment - Notice a friend knows what his master is doing. This reminds of the fact that Moses knew God's ways whereas the sons of Israel only knew His acts (Ps 103:7) See [note below](#).

NET Note - "**Face to face**" is circumstantial to the action of the verb, explaining how they spoke (see GKC 489–90 §156.c). The point of this note of friendly relationship with Moses is that Moses was "at home" in this tent speaking with God. Moses would derive courage from this when he interceded for the people (B. Jacob, Exodus, 966).

Guzik on face to face - It is also possible this meant that God appeared to Moses in human form, as He did to Abraham in Genesis 18. More likely, the phrase face to face is simply a figurative expression, meaning free and open fellowship. Moses had not—and could not—see the actual face of God the Father in His glory. No one has seen the face of God the Father in glory, and this is why John wrote, No one has seen God at any time (1 John 4:12). ([Exodus 33](#))

Currid on face to face - It is an idiom that accentuates the intimacy that existed between Yahweh and Moses. In addition, it signifies that God spoke to Moses in word, not in dreams and visions as he spoke to the other prophets in the history of Israel. In 33:20 there is an apparent inconsistency because God tells Moses that no one can see his face and live. But that is not a problem when we understand 'face to face' as an idiom and the reference to God's 'face' in 33:20 as an anthropomorphism. The apostle Paul uses the Hebrew idiom '**face to face**' when he comments on the differences between the Christian's understanding here and now, in contrast to his understanding in the coming age. Paul says, 'For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known' (1 Cor. 13:12). Not that what we see now is untrue, but it is an imperfect vision. One day we shall look things straight in the face and have unhindered communication with God. Moses was closer to this vision than any man ever was, because God spoke to him face to face. ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part,
but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.
-- 1 Cor 13:12

When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent—Joshua is called Moses's "attendant" ([mēšārēt](#)) in Ex 24:13; Nu 11:28; Josh 1:1. Would not depart means he would not budge (cf same verb in Ex 13:22 of the pillar = "did not take away"). Moses was training Joshua to be his replacement and Joshua sought to stay close to where God had met with Moses. It is possible Joshua was to guard the tent against curious intruders.

NET Note suggests that while "Moses did not live in the tent....Joshua remained there most of the time (**would not depart**) to guard the tent, it seems, lest any of the people approach it out of curiosity." (**ED**: Joshua clearly got a lot of training on "waiting" -- he had been with Moses on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights and now he waits at this tent. How long this lasted is not clear, but it says a lot about Joshua's willingness to submit to and be a servant of Moses!)

Dwight Moody was once asked how he managed to remain so intimate in his relationship with Christ. He replied, I have come to Him as the best **friend** I have ever found, and I can trust Him in that relationship. I have believed He is Savior; I have believed He is God; I have believed His atonement on the cross is mine, and I have come to Him and submitted myself on my knees, surrendered everything to Him, and got up and stood by His side as my friend, and there isn't any problem in my life, there isn't any uncertainty in my work but I turn and speak to Him as naturally as to someone in the same room, and I have done it these years because I can trust Jesus.

Exodus 33:12 Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people!' But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, 'I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.'

Currid - And Moses said to Yahweh, 'See, you are saying to me, "Bring up this people!" But you are not letting me know whom you are sending with me. And you say, "I know you by name," and also, "You have found favour in my eyes."

NET Exodus 33:12 Moses said to the LORD, "See, you have been saying to me, 'Bring this people up,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. But you said, 'I know you by name, and also you have found favor in my sight.'

NLT Exodus 33:12 One day Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Take these people up to the Promised Land.' But you haven't told me whom you will send with me. You have told me, 'I know you by name,

and I look favorably on you.'

ESV Exodus 33:12 Moses said to the LORD, "See, you say to me, 'Bring up this people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.'

NIV Exodus 33:12 Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.'

KJV Exodus 33:12 And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.

LXE Exodus 33:12 And Moses said to the Lord, Lo! thou sayest to me, Lead on this people; but thou hast not shewed me whom thou wilt send with me, but thou hast said to me, I know thee above all, and thou hast favour with me.

ASV Exodus 33:12 And Moses said unto Jehovah, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found favor in my sight.

CSB Exodus 33:12 Moses said to the LORD, "Look, You have told me, 'Lead this people up,' but You have not let me know whom You will send with me. You said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.'

NKJ Exodus 33:12 Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people.' But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight.'

NRS Exodus 33:12 Moses said to the LORD, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people'; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.'

YLT Exodus 33:12 And Moses saith unto Jehovah, 'See, Thou art saying unto me, Bring up this people, and Thou hast not caused me to know whom Thou dost send with me; and Thou hast said, I have known thee by name, and also thou hast found grace in Mine eyes.

- **See:** Ex 33:1 32:34
- **know:** Ex 33:17 Ge 18:19 Ps 1:6 Isa 43:1 Jer 1:5 Joh 10:14,15 2Ti 2:19 '
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

MOSES PLEADS WITH GOD TO RESTORE PROMISE OF HIS PRESENCE

Now the narrative picks up where it had left off in Ex 33:6. Hamilton entitles this section "Moses Gets in God's Face about God's Face" (a bit of a slightly brazen title in my opinion).

Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people!' - See is an imperative and is being used to call something to God's attention.. NLT - "You have been telling me, 'Take these people up to the Promised Land." Again we see Moses' boldness in speaking with the God of the Universe. This man has grown in his faith by leaps and bounds since his timidity in Exodus 3.

Guzik - For Moses, it wasn't enough to know that he and Israel would make it to the Promised Land. In his estimation, the Promised Land was nothing special without the special presence of the LORD (**ED: INDEED THERE WOULD BE NOTHING SPECIAL ABOUT ISRAEL EITHER WITHOUT THE PRESENCE OF GOD - SEE Ex 33:16**). God previously promised to send an angel with Israel (Exodus 33:2). Moses pressed God on this point, wanting to know exactly whom God would send. ([Exodus 33](#))

But You Yourself have not let me know (yada) whom You will send with me - NLT = "But you haven't told me whom you will send with me." Ex 33:2 says "I will send an angel before you." So it seems that Yahweh has not made the identity of this angel known to Moses.

Moreover, You have said, 'I have known you by name - **Known** is [yada](#) which in this context ([Keep Context King](#)) speaks not of casual but of a very close relationship. This clearly implies a great degree of intimacy and this is not used to describe anyone else in

the Bible.

And you have also found favor in My sight - After claiming intimacy (**known you by name**), now Moses claims that God has said he has found the **favor** ([chen/hen](#); Lxx = [charis](#) = grace - God's unmerited favor) of Yahweh and "no one else in Scripture is characterized in this way apart from Noah (Ge 6:8)." (Currid)

Note that **favor** is a **key word** in this section (5x in 4v - Exodus 33:12, 13, 16, 17) where Moses is interceding on behalf of Israel with God that He might for a second time (in chapter 33) "change His mind" and bestow favor on His rebellious people. All 5 Hebrew words are [chen](#) and all are translated by the Greek [charis](#) which in simple terms is God's unmerited favor and supernatural enablement and empowerment for salvation and for daily sanctification. Grace is everything for nothing to those who don't deserve anything. Grace is what every man needs, what none can earn and what God Alone can and does freely give (see Ro 8:32+ where "freely give" is [charizomai](#) from [charis](#) = a grace gift!). Grace addresses man's sin, while mercy addresses man's misery. Another **key word** in this section is [yada](#) = know (in context to know intimately) and is used found 6x in 4 verses = Ex 33:12; Ex 33:13; Ex 33:16; Ex 33:17.

Guzik - Moses was bold in drawing near to God, but he based the boldness on the grace God had already shown to him. This was a good ground for drawing near. ([Exodus 33](#))

Favor (grace) ([02580](#))([chen/hen](#) from verb [chanan](#) = to favor) means favor (acts which display one's fondness or compassion for another), grace (acts of kindness displaying one's pleasure with an object, which benefit the object of pleasure), acceptance. The idea is that a person finds favor in the sight of another person or acceptance by the person. This word plays a major role in helping us understand God's relationship with sinful men as shown in the first use in Genesis 6:8 with those wonderful words "And Noah found favor (grace) in the eyes of the Lord." The result of this favor was that he was delivered by God from His judgment of the world through the Flood. In a similar vein, the nation of Israel was granted by God to receive "favor in the sight of the Egyptians." (Ex 3:21, 11:3, 12:36).

Exodus 33:13 "Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people."

Currid - And now, I pray, if I have found favour in your eyes, show me, I pray, your ways—that I may know you [and] so that I may find favour in your eyes. And see that this nation is your people!

NET Exodus 33:13 Now if I have found favor in your sight, show me your way, that I may know you, that I may continue to find favor in your sight. And see that this nation is your people."

NLT Exodus 33:13 If it is true that you look favorably on me, let me know your ways so I may understand you more fully and continue to enjoy your favor. And remember that this nation is your very own people."

ESV Exodus 33:13 Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people."

NIV Exodus 33:13 If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people."

KJV Exodus 33:13 Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.

LXE Exodus 33:13 If then I have found favour in thy sight, reveal thyself to me, that I may evidently see thee; that I may find favour in thy sight, and that I may know that this great nation is thy people.

ASV Exodus 33:13 Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thy sight, show me now thy ways, that I may know thee, to the end that I may find favor in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.

CSB Exodus 33:13 Now if I have indeed found favor in Your sight, please teach me Your ways, and I will know You and find favor in Your sight. Now consider that this nation is Your people."

NKJ Exodus 33:13 "Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people."

NRS Exodus 33:13 Now if I have found favor in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people."

YLT Exodus 33:13 'And now, if, I pray Thee, I have found grace in Thine eyes, cause me to know, I pray Thee, Thy way, and I know Thee, so that I find grace in Thine eyes, and consider that this nation is Thy people;'

- **if I have found favor in Your sight;** Ex 33:17 34:9
- **show:** Ps 25:4 27:11 86:11 119:33 Song 1:7,8 Isa 30:21
- **that I:** Ex 33:18 Joh 17:3 Eph 1:17 Col 1:10 2Pe 3:18
- **consider:** Ex 32:7 De 9:26,29 Isa 63:17,19 Joe 2:17 Ro 11:28
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

MOSES' PRAYER OF INTERCESSION BEGINS

Now therefore - Term of conclusion based on (1) God knew him by name and (2) Moses had found favor or grace.

Hamilton feels Ex 33:12-17 "picks up immediately after the Lord's words to Moses in 33:1-3 about "going up," and after the "digression" of vv. 7-11." ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

I pray You, if I have found favor ([chen/hen](#); Lxx = [charis](#) = grace - God's unmerited favor) **in Your sight** - Now Moses appeals to the grace he just described.

Find favor - 12x in 12v - Ge 32:5; Ge 33:8; Ge 33:15; Ge 34:11; Ge 47:25; Ex 33:13; Ru 2:2; 1 Sa 1:18; 1 Sa 25:8; 2 Sa 15:25; 2 Sa 16:4; Pr 3:4

Found favor - 32x in 32v - Ge 6:8; Ge 18:3; Ge 19:19; Ge 33:10; Ge 39:4; Ge 47:29; Ge 50:4; Ex 33:12; Ex 33:13; Ex 33:16; Ex. 33:17; Ex. 34:9; Nu 11:11; Nu 11:15; Nu 32:5; Jdg 6:17; Ruth 2:10; Ruth 2:13; 1 Sa 16:22; 1 Sa 20:3; 1 Sa 20:29; 1 Sa 27:5; 2 Sa 14:22; Neh. 2:5; Est. 2:9; Est. 2:15; Est. 2:17; Est. 5:8; Est. 7:3; Est. 8:5; Lk. 1:30; Acts 7:46

Hamilton - "To find favor/grace in the eyes of the LORD" does not mean "to earn favor/grace in the eyes of the LORD." Grace and divine favor can only be received, never achieved. ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

Let me know ([yada](#)) **Your ways that I may know** ([yada](#)) **You** - This is a prayer for greater intimacy with God. "He is simply asking that God should reveal to him his personality and how he works in creation." (Currid) David tells us how God answered this specific request writing "He (God) made known His **ways** to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel. 8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. (Ps 103:7-8) Notice the distinction - ways to Moses, acts to Israel. **Ways** speaks of deep intimacy. **Acts** speaks of superficial knowledge of God. You may know Lebron James from his 'acts,' his exploits as probably the world's greatest basketball player, but do you know his ways? Do you know him intimately or do you just know about him? There is a big difference. Moses knew God from face to face encounters. Israel knew about God through His great acts, but probably only a very few (e.g., Joshua) had an intimate relationship with Yahweh. (see [Adrian Rogers on Knowing God's ways and knowing God's acts below](#))

Guzik - Moses was almost obsessed with God. He was still on earth, but he connected everything to God in heaven. Another strong theme in this section is to know. In some form, the word is used repeatedly in these verses. In the sense of relationship, God knew Israel and Moses, and Moses wanted to know God. ([Exodus 33](#))

NET Note - The prayer uses the Hiphil imperative of the verb "to know." "Cause me to know" is "show me, reveal to me, teach or inform me." Moses wanted to know more of God's dealings with people, especially after all that has happened in the preceding chapter.

This recalls passages in the NT

Phil 3:10-11+ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

2 Peter 3:18+ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

So that I may find favor in Your sight (see Ge 18:3; 30:27; 33:10; 47:29; 50:4; Ex 34:9; Nu 11:15; 32:5; Jdg. 6:17; 1 Sa 20:29; 27:5; 2 Sa 15:25; Est 5:8; 7:3; 8:5) - This is interesting. Moses has just says he has found favor in God's sight (Ex 33:12), but what is he asking for in this request? That he might find favor ([chen/hen](#); Lxx = [charis](#) = grace - God's unmerited favor)!

THOUGHT - Beloved, Moses wants what we should all desire and that is grace upon grace, grace "piled upon" grace. We can never receive enough grace. We can't save up grace. We must receive new grace each day as

a gift from our Father, even as manna had to be received afresh each day. Are you trying to live today depending on yesterday's grace? Don't do that. Take the approach of Moses who had received grace and beseeched Jehovah for more grace! Instead of being "race hounds," believers ought to be "grace hounds!"

Consider too, that this nation is Your people-Now Moses bases his appeal to God on the basis that they are His people (**Your people**). If they are God's people, then what happens with them will reflect on God. It's not so much about Israel's reputation, but God's reputation, God's character, God's grace. And so here Moses intercedes for Israel asking God for compassion on them. Note the importance again of **context** in interpretation (see [Keep Context King](#)) --- As discerned from God's answer in verse 14 when Moses asks God to consider Israel as His people, he is also asking for God's presence to go with them.

NET Note on **consider (see)** - The verb "**see**" (an imperative) is a request for God to acknowledge Israel as His people by providing the divine leadership needed. So his main appeal will be for the people and not himself. To underscore this, he repeats "**see**" the way the section opened.

Adrian Rogers sermon on Exodus 33:12 - **Knowing the Ways of God** - Moses had the task of leading a congregation, more than 3 million people, through the wilderness, and into the land of Canaan. And, Moses knew that he was not able, not fit for the task. So, his prayer is this: "O God, if You love me, and if You have called me, and if You have this job for me to do, then, dear God, show me Your way. Show me Your way. I want to understand the ways of God." Was this prayer answered? Did God show Moses His way? Indeed He did. In Psalm 103:7, we read this, and it is very significant: "He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel" (Psalm 103:7). God "made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel."

There are two levels of the knowledge of God. You can know God's ways, or you can know God's acts. You can know God's ways, or you can know God's works. Moses knew God's ways; but Israel knew God's works. There are a lot of people that know the ways of God, and others know but of the works of God. Some know God so much differently than others know God. There are two levels of the knowledge of God. What is the difference between knowing the ways of God and the works of God? When you know the works of God, you know what God does. But, when you know the ways of God, you know God. One is to know God simply by observation. The other is to know God personally and intimately, to know God's character.

Moses was saying, "God, I don't want You just to show me what You do. I want You to show me why You do it. I want to understand what makes You operate as You operate. Now, Lord, if I'm going to be Your leader, if I'm going to be Your man, if I'm going to have to carry these people into the Promised Land, Lord, show me Your ways. I want to know Your ways." Ladies and gentlemen, when you understand the ways of God, it will transform your life. That's not an overstatement. To understand the ways of God will transform your life.

Most people simply know the works of God. Therefore, if they are saved at all, they remain immature, baby Christians. They are never much good to the service of the Lord, because they only know God by observation, but they do not know God by revelation. They do not know God intimately. They do not know the ways of God.... ([Listen](#))

...**Conclusion** - Again I want to say that the purpose of all counseling and preaching is not to solve problems for people but to bring them into the presence of God, so that they know God face-to-face. And, when we learn to seek His face and not His hand, we will know His ways and we will find rest for our souls. That is my prayer for you for the coming year—that you will know the ways of God. Father, seal this to our hearts. In Jesus' name. Amen. ([Listen to the entire sermon - Knowing the Ways of God](#))

Outline of Dr Rogers' Sermon on Knowing the Ways of God

I. The Difference Between Knowing God's Ways and Knowing God's Works

- A. It is the Difference Between Rest and Relapse
- B. It is the Difference Between Intimacy and Infatuation
- C. It is the Difference Between Being a Teacher or a Testifier
- D. It is the Difference Between Peace and Panic
- E. It is the Difference Between Intercession and Indifference

II. How Can You Know the Ways of God?

- A. Not Through Human Reason and Human Ingenuity
- B. Through Intimate, Face-to-Face Dealing with God

[\(Listen to the entire sermon Knowing the Ways of God\)](#)

Related Resources:

- [Adrian Roger's Bible Study on Knowing the Ways of God](#)
- [Exodus 33:11-15 Knowing God Intimately](#) - Adrian Rogers (short article)
- [Exodus 33:11-16 Knowing God Intimately](#) - Adrian Rogers (38 minute message - worth your time!!!)

Exodus 33:14 And He said, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest."

NET Exodus 33:14 And the LORD said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

NLT Exodus 33:14 The LORD replied, "I will personally go with you, Moses, and I will give you rest-- everything will be fine for you."

ESV Exodus 33:14 And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

NIV Exodus 33:14 The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

KJV Exodus 33:14 And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.

LXE Exodus 33:14 And he says, I myself will go before thee, and give thee rest.

ASV Exodus 33:14 And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.

CSB Exodus 33:14 Then He replied, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

NKJ Exodus 33:14 And He said, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

NRS Exodus 33:14 He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

YLT Exodus 33:14 and He saith, 'My presence doth go, and I have given rest to thee.'

- **My presence:** Ex 13:21 Jos 1:5 Isa 63:9 Mt 28:20
- **rest:** De 3:20 Jos 21:44 22:4 23:1 Ps 95:11 Jer 6:16 Mt 11:28 Heb 4:8,9
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

GOD AFFIRMATIVE ANSWER

And He said, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest - My presence is literally "My face ([panim](#))," which is the way Biblical Hebrew says, "I will go with you in person." (cf Dt 4:37) "This helps us to understand what it means when it says Moses met with God face to face (Exodus 32:11). It has the sense of "in the immediate presence of God." (Guzik)

What is not obvious in the English translation is that the pronoun **YOU (I will give YOU rest)** is not plural but is second person masculine singular. In other words Jehovah is saying that He will go with **YOU** meaning with Moses! This would help explain why in the next verse Moses replies "**If Your presence does not go with us.**" Moses apparently understood that yes, the LORD would go with him, but His presence would not be with the people of Israel. And that is what Moses addresses in his plea in verse 15.

Kaiser comments that "The Lord responded by promising, "**My Presence** [lit., 'my face'] will go with you". With this new word, the Lord reinstated **the angel of his presence** in whom he invested his "Name" (Ex 23:20–21+) as the leader of Israel's way to Canaan.

Cole on **My presence** - With this promise, Israel's ultimate 'rest' in Canaan will be assured. That means that the heavenly 'messenger' sent with them will now be 'the angel of his presence' (Isa. 63:9), i.e. a full manifestation of God, as in Exodus 23:20. ([TOTC-Exodus](#))

Isaiah writes

"In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the **angel of His presence** saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old." (Isaiah 63:9)

Comment - "The **angel of His presence** is the Messiah . . . Calvin sees in this angel merely a serving angel. But of this Angel it is said that He by His love and pity saved Israel; this can hardly be said of a created angel. It is the Christ who is meant here." (Bultema)

THOUGHT- The angel who delivered the Israelites out of Egypt was none other than Jesus Himself. He is

sometimes identified as the Angel of the Lord. He was so close to His people that He felt their afflictions as if they were His own. He is the Angel of His Presence (who saved His people; see Isa. 63:9). I can count on the presence of God, because that is Jesus' name. He is with me.

Rob Morgan - We must reflect His **Presence** in our demeanor. Missionary John Paton never forgot his father's deeply ingrained habits of daily devotions. Day after day, he would hear his father praying in the next room of the little cottage where he lived, and even as a boy of six, he noticed the bright countenance his father perpetually wore. He later said that while the outside world might not understand the light on his father's face, "we children knew that it was a reflection of the Divine Presence in which his life was lived." Paton recalled, "Never in temple or cathedral, on mountain or in glen, can I hope to feel that the Lord God is more near, more visibly walking and talking with men, than under that humble cottage roof of thatch and oaken wattles. Though everything else in religion were by some unthinkable catastrophe to be swept out of memory, my soul would wander back to those early scenes, and would shut itself up once again in that sanctuary closet, and, hearing still the echoes of those cries to God, would hurl back all doubt with the victorious appeal: He walked with God; why may not I?"

Related Resource:

- Discussion of Angel of His Presence

NET Note on My presence - Heb "my face." This represents the presence of Yahweh going with the people (see 2 Sa 17:11 for an illustration). The "presence" probably refers to the angel of the presence or some similar manifestation of God's leading and caring for his people.

Hamilton - Isa. 63:9, which LXX reads as "No messenger or angel but the Lord himself saved them" (and compare NIV's "and the angel of his presence [face] saved them," which follows the Hebrew text instead). ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

and I will give you rest (cf in 2 Sa 7:11; 1 Chr 22:9) - Does this **"I will"** promise not sound like Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28± **"Come** to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Rest is nuach (see below) which is translated in the Septuagint with [katapauo](#) means to cause to cease some activity (resulting in a period of rest). God offers His people rest from weariness.

Currid - The idea of giving rest is often linked with possession of the promised land (see Deut. 3:20; 12:10). And, so, Yahweh is making a promise to Moses in the same manner that he did with the patriarchs. Yet, once again, the nation of Israel is not mentioned. ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

Guzik - The Presence of God means rest and peace in life. This was an important and necessary gift from God to Moses and Israel. ([Exodus 33](#))

Rest ([05117](#))([nuach/nuah](#)) means to rest or pause and as noted from the many ways it is translated (see list of words below), nuach has many uses in the OT. **Nuach** essentially conveys a basic sense of absence of movement and of being settled in a particular place with overtones of finality. This is the same Hebrew verb used in Ex 32:10 where Jehovah told Moses **"let Me alone"** (*let Me rest*), but Moses would not obey and instead interceded for Israel. Nuach is used o God after He had created and then **"rested** on the seventh day." (Ex 20:11)

Exodus 33:15 Then he said to Him, "If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here.

Currid - And he [Moses] said to him [Yahweh], 'If your presence is not going, do not lead us from this place.

NET Exodus 33:15 And Moses said to him, "If your presence does not go with us, do not take us up from here.

NLT Exodus 33:15 Then Moses said, "If you don't personally go with us, don't make us leave this place.

ESV Exodus 33:15 And he said to him, "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here.

NIV Exodus 33:15 Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.

KJV Exodus 33:15 And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.

LXE Exodus 33:15 And he says to him, If thou go not up with us thyself, bring me not up hence.

ASV Exodus 33:15 And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.

CSB Exodus 33:15 "If Your presence does not go," Moses responded to Him, "don't make us go up from here.

NKJ Exodus 33:15 Then he said to Him, "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here.

NRS Exodus 33:15 And he said to him, "If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here.

YLT Exodus 33:15 And he saith unto Him, 'If Thy presence is not going -- take us not up from this place;

- Ex 33:3 34:9 Ps 4:6
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

MOSES BOLD REQUEST OF JEHOVAH!

Then he said to Him, "If Your presence ([panim](#) - face), does not go with us, do not lead us up from here- This is a bold prayer for sure, for God had already said His presence would go with "you," but as discussed above, that seems to indicate the promise only applies to the man Moses. And this is why Moses replies with a bold request to not even lead them up. He is saying that if God's **presence** did not go with the entire nation of Israel, then he would rather God not lead them up from Mt Sinai.

Exodus 33:16 "For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?"

Currid - By what means, then, will it be known that I have found favour in your eyes, I and your people? Is it not by your going with us that we are set apart, I and your people, from all the peoples that are on the face of the ground?

NET Exodus 33:16 For how will it be known then that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not by your going with us, so that we will be distinguished, I and your people, from all the people who are on the face of the earth?"

NLT Exodus 33:16 How will anyone know that you look favorably on me-- on me and on your people-- if you don't go with us? For your presence among us sets your people and me apart from all other people on the earth."

ESV Exodus 33:16 For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?"

NIV Exodus 33:16 How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

KJV Exodus 33:16 For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.

LXE Exodus 33:16 And how shall it be surely known, that both I and this people have found favour with thee, except only if thou go with us? So both I and thy people shall be glorified beyond all the nations, as many as are upon the earth.

Lexham LXE And how will it really be known that I have found==> grace before you, both I and your people, except if you go along together with us? And I will be honored, both I and your people, from all the peoples that are upon the earth."

ASV Exodus 33:16 For wherein now shall it be known that I have found favor in thy sight, I and thy people? is it not in that thou goest with us, so that we are separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth?

CSB Exodus 33:16 How will it be known that I and Your people have found favor in Your sight unless You go

with us? I and Your people will be distinguished by this from all the other people on the face of the earth."

NKJ Exodus 33:16 "For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who are upon the face of the earth."

NRS Exodus 33:16 For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth."

YLT Exodus 33:16 and in what is it known now, that I have found grace in Thine eyes -- I and Thy people -- is it not in Thy going with us? and we have been distinguished -- I and Thy people -- from all the people who are on the face of the ground.'

- **how then can it be known that** Nu 14:14 Mt 1:23
- **may be distinguished:** Ex 8:22 19:5,6 34:10 Nu 23:9 De 4:7,34 2Sa 7:23 1Ki 8:53 Ps 147:20 2Co 6:17
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

ISRAEL IS TO BE A DISTINCT PEOPLE

For how then can it be known ([yada](#)) that I have found favor ([chen/hen](#); Lxx = [charis](#) = grace - God's unmerited favor) in Your sight, I and Your people? - Moses will answer his own question. But notice the phrase **I and your people** which is a description of favor not just to Moses, but to the entire nation. Moses is in effect interceding for God's favor to be bestowed on the entire nation of Israel.

Is it not by Your going with us- Note again Moses' use of the plural pronoun **US**, emphasizing the entire nation. He is still defending his prayer in Ex 33:15 for God's presence not just with him but with the nation! He is saying the way that he would know that the nation was back in God's good graces (so to speak) is by Jehovah going with them. As an aside, God's **going with** them would be most clearly seen in the manifest presence of the Shekinah glory over the Tabernacle in the middle of all 12 tribes.

So that - Term of purpose. The purpose of God's presence. Why it was so vital or necessary.

We, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth- Moses understood that Israel was to have a testimony to the pagan world that they worshiped and served THE Living God. If they had no Living God going with them that meant there was no difference between the Chosen People and the pagans! Moses begins with **WE**, but amplifies it with the phrase **'I and your people'**. And so for the second time in this passage Moses appeals to the fact that they are **YOUR people**. In effect Moses is identifying himself with the sinful nation! He is willing to do that. If God does not go with them (he and the people), there is nothing distinct or special about the nation of Israel.

May be distinguished is [palah](#) which is translated in the Septuagint with the verb **endoxazomai** which means to be held in high esteem, to be glorified, to be honored. This verb is used several times in the Septuagint (Ex 14:4; Ex 14:17; Ex 14:18; Ex 33:16; 2 Ki 14:10; Ps 89:7; Isa 45:25; Ezek 28:22; Ezek 38:23; Hag 1:8; 2 Th. 1:10; 2 Th. 1:12) of Jehovah being honored or glorified so that ultimately He might be made known. In 2 Th 1:10 we read that "when He comes **to be glorified** in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed." So Moses sees the need to Israel to be "**glorified**" by God's presence, in a sense a foreshadowing of Jesus being **glorified** in His saints at His Second Coming. God's purpose for Israel was to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation so that the pagans would see the distinction and desire to know the God that made Israel so distinctive. In Acts 13 we read of God's purpose for distinguishing Israel **from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth** = Luke writing "For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I HAVE PLACED YOU (ISRAEL) ASA LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'" Here in Acts 13:47 Paul quotes from Isaiah 42:6, showing that he clearly understood God's intention for the Jewish nation had always been that they might be a light to the Gentiles. Israel as a nation failed on one hand, but on the other hand produced the lineage of the Messiah, the One Who would not fail to be "**a Light for the Gentiles**", the **Light of the World** (Jn 8:12).

Hamilton rightly says "Were it not for Moses, God would have wiped out Israel in chap. 32. Were it not for Moses, God would have been content with the deliverance of a solitary individual, Moses. Because of Moses's importunity, however, he will extend that grace to the multitudes, but not before Moses has convinced him of the same." ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

Guzik - Moses wanted something for Israel that would show that they were not just like all the other nations, and that could only be the unique, powerful presence of their God. Israel's relationship with Yahweh—a unique example of ethical monotheism in the ancient world—did make them different from all other ancient peoples. God among them made them different. It was important for Israel to know this for themselves; it was also important for the other nations to know this. ([Exodus 33](#))

Martin Lloyd-Jones - 'Now,' said Moses to God, 'I am asking for this something extra, because I am concerned. Here we are thy people. How are all the other nations to know that we really are your people? They are looking on at us, they are laughing at us, mocking us and jeering at us, they are ready to overwhelm us. Now, I am asking for something,' said Moses, 'that will make it absolutely clear that we are not just one of the nations of the world, but that we are thy people, that we are separate, unique, altogether apart.'

Currid - It is God's presence, and only his presence, that sets apart his people from any other human group on the earth. That verb in Hebrew means 'to distinguish / make distinct'. It was used earlier in the book of Exodus to stress the separation between the Hebrews and the Egyptians because of God's grace to his people (8:22; 9:4; 11:7). ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

THOUGHT - This is still the distinguishing Presence among believers. Believers should be different from all other people because of God's Presence within, as the temple of His Holy Spirit. Jesus commanded this of His disciples "**Let** your light **shine** ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) before men **in such a way** (SO THEY DON'T GLORIFY YOU!!!) that they may see your good (SUPERNATURAL, SPIRIT ENABLED) works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Mt 5:16+) Paul said the same thing in Phil 2:14-15 "**Do** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) all things (HOW MANY? JUST TRY THIS IN YOUR OWN POWER - WE NEED TO LIVE IN THE TRUTH OF Phil 2:13+) without grumbling or disputing; 15 so that (TERM OF PURPOSE) you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, **among whom you appear as lights in the world.**" These exhortations (commands) from Jesus and Paul beg the simple question dear disciple of Jesus - Is your light shining brightly and clearly in the (rapidly increasing) spiritual darkness of this world? Beloved don't think you can sin and shine! You cannot! You may need to confess and repent and walk in the light and then the blood of Jesus will cleanse you from all sin and your light will be clear and bright. You are under grace, but perhaps you need to look in the mirror very carefully tomorrow morning!

Distinguished ([06395](#))([palah](#)) means to be separated, distinct, set apart, to be different. The sense is wonderful in Ps 17:7 (**wondrously show** Your lovingkindness) Psalm 4:3 says "But know that the LORD has **set apart** the godly man for Himself; The LORD hears when I call to Him." Ps 139:14 "I am fearfully and **wonderfully** made." In Exodus 8:22 we see a similar sense as here in Exodus 33:16 = "But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are living, so that no swarms of flies will be there, in order (THE PURPOSE FOR MAKING ISRAEL DISTINCT) **that you may know that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land.**

Palah - 7v - distinguished(1), make a distinction(1), makes a distinction(1), set apart(2), wonderfully(1), wondrously show(1). Exod. 8:22; Exod. 9:4; Exod. 11:7; Exod. 33:16; Ps. 4:3; Ps. 17:7; Ps. 139:14

Exodus 33:17 The LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name."

NET Exodus 33:17 The LORD said to Moses, "I will do this thing also that you have requested, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name."

NLT Exodus 33:17 The LORD replied to Moses, "I will indeed do what you have asked, for I look favorably on you, and I know you by name."

ESV Exodus 33:17 And the LORD said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name."

NIV Exodus 33:17 And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."

KJV Exodus 33:17 And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

LXE Exodus 33:17 And the Lord said to Moses, I will also do for thee this thing, which thou hast spoken; for thou hast found grace before me, and I know thee above all.

ASV Exodus 33:17 And Jehovah said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found favor in my sight, and I know thee by name.

CSB Exodus 33:17 The LORD answered Moses, "I will do this very thing you have asked, for you have found favor in My sight, and I know you by name."

NKJ Exodus 33:17 So the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name."

NRS Exodus 33:17 The LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name."

YLT Exodus 33:17 And Jehovah saith unto Moses, 'Even this thing which thou hast spoken I do; for thou hast found grace in Mine eyes, and I know thee by name.'

- **I will do:** Ge 18:32 19:21 Isa 65:24 Joh 16:23 Jas 5:16 1Jn 5:14,15
- **which you have spoken:** Ex 33:12 Ge 6:8 19:19,21
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

FOR A SECOND TIME GOD CHANGES HIS MIND!

The LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken - God says "Yes" to Moses' request for Jehovah's presence (face) to go up with the nation of Israel. Is this not a supreme example of "scandalous grace," of grace totally unmerited by a group of people who have just in effect been unfaithful and "[dissed](#)" (disrespected) Him!

Currid - God will do what Moses asks. He provides full restoration to the people of Israel. They are all included in the promise: Yahweh will be present with the entire covenant community. It may be assumed that this statement is the confirmation needed for the Hebrews to go forward and build the tabernacle, in which God's presence will reside with his people. ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

for you have found favor ([chen/hen](#); Lxx = [charis](#) = grace - God's unmerited favor) **in My sight and I have known** ([yada](#)) **you by name** - These are the very things Moses had appealed to earlier.

Criswell - vv. 17-33) Moses was allowed to come closer to God than any other sinful man, though Paul's experience was somewhat similar (cf. 2 Cor. 12:2-4, 7). This communication took place in the tent, but the actual experience (34:2) was on Sinai. Limits were set because of the gulf between the finite and the infinite, the holy and the unholy. God's "back" has been understood to allude to His aftereffects. The glory of God that Moses saw was primarily His compassionate and gracious acts. Moses could appreciate best the glory of God by observing where He had been (cf. Job 26:14; Ps. 145; Rom. 1:20).

Exodus 33:18 Then Moses said, "I pray You, **show me Your glory!"**

NET Exodus 33:18 And Moses said, "Show me your glory."

NLT Exodus 33:18 Moses responded, "Then show me your glorious presence."

ESV Exodus 33:18 Moses said, "Please show me your glory."

NIV Exodus 33:18 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."

KJV Exodus 33:18 And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.

LXE Exodus 33:18 And Moses says, Manifest thyself to me.

ASV Exodus 33:18 And he said, Show me, I pray thee, thy glory.

CSB Exodus 33:18 Then Moses said, "Please, let me see Your glory."

NKJ Exodus 33:18 And he said, "Please, show me Your glory."

NRS Exodus 33:18 Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray."

YLT Exodus 33:18 And he saith, 'Shew me, I pray Thee, Thine honour;'

- Ex 33:20 Ps 4:6 Joh 1:18 2Co 3:18 4:6 1Ti 6:16 Tit 2:13 Rev 21:23
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

MOSES' GREAT REQUEST

Hamilton entitles Exodus 33:18-23 "Wanting to See a Face, but Settling for a Back." [Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory (*kabod* = literally weight; Lxx = *doxa*) - Moses prays to see the "full weight" of Yahweh, to see the essence of His glorious Being! A bold prayer for sure! Note that in Ex 33:13 Moses said "let me know Your ways that I may know You." Now Moses wants more divine revelation! The Hebrew word for **show** (*raah*) is an imperative, which speaks of a bold request of God and is translated in the Septuagint with the verb **deiknumi** ([aorist imperative](#)) which means to exhibit something that can be apprehended by one or more of the senses and so make known.

Currid - Moses has now had all his questions answered except one. In verse 13, he had requested, 'Show me, I pray, your ways.' In that passage Moses meant that he wanted to know the essential being of God, and how God operated in creation. Those same ideas, the essential reality of God and his deeds, are at the heart of the present request. ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

Hamilton - The LXX's rendering of "show me your glory" (*deixon moi tēn seautou doxan*) recalls the Greek of John 14:8, "Show us the father" (*Deixon hēmin ton patera*). ([Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary](#))

NET Note on **glory** - B. Jacob (Exodus, 972) says that the glory refers to God's majesty, might, and glory, as manifested in nature, in his providence, his laws, and his judgments. He adds that this glory should and would be made visible to man—that was its purpose in the world.

Guzik - Moses won a "yes" answer from God when he asked for the special presence of God to remain with Israel on the way to the Promised Land (Exodus 33:12–17). He also won a confirmation of the promise from God and an affirmation of close relationship. Yet he was still not satisfied. He wanted more in his personal relationship with God. This hunger for more of God—for more of an experience with God—is a mark of true revival and restoration of relationship. Whatever Moses had experienced with God, he now wanted more. "The more a man knows of God, the more desirous he is to know him." (Trapp) ([Exodus 33](#))

Lloyd-Jones - "We may have been Christians for many years, but have we ever really longed for some person, direct knowledge and experience of God? Oh, I know, we pray for causes, we pray for the Church, we pray for missionaries, we pray for our own efforts that we organize, yes, but that is not what I am concerned about. We all ask for personal blessings, but how much do we know of this desire for God himself? That is what Moses asked for: 'Show me thy glory. Take me yet a step nearer.' "

Moses has grown in faith and boldness, for we recall his initial encounter with Jehovah in Ex 3:6 when God said "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." **Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.** Now he is asking God to show him His glory unveiled!

THOUGHT - We ought to pray this prayer every time we open the Word of God "I pray You, show me Your glory." Would God answer that prayer? That is a rhetorical question (see 1 John 5:14-15⁺). Earlier Moses prayed "according to His will" when he reminded God of His immutable, unconditional covenant with Abraham (Ex 32:13⁺) And we should also pray this prayer in an "eschatological context" for we know from 1 John 3:2 " We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." In other words praying for God to show us His glory is in a very real sense a prayer for the LORD of glory to return. This is what I like to call a [Maranatha Mindset](#).

Criswell says "God's "glory" is essentially the profound, glowing, visible, confluent expression of the attributes of deity which bears witness to a still more profound and incomprehensible reality of essence. Moses wanted to see the essential nature of God, for he understood clearly that there was a distinction between God's absolute character and His revelation of Himself to man. In His character and essence, He is "Spirit," and thus invisible to man (John 4:24), but He has made Himself known to man through revelation by His many names and titles, by His attributes, by His written Word, and finally by His living Word, Jesus Christ. In the OT, God revealed His "glory" at Sinai (Ex 24:16, 17), in the tabernacle (Ex 40:34-38), and in the Jerusalem temple (1 Ki 8:10, 11).

THOUGHT - Moses' request to see the glory of God makes me think of our "glorious" future John describes in 1 John 3:2⁺ writing " Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because **we will see Him just as He is.**" WE WILL SEE HIM! Should not this motivate us to live holy lives now? John certainly thinks so writing that "everyone who has this hope (TO SEE HIM AND BE LIKE HIM!) fixed on Him **purifies himself, just as He is pure.**" (1 Jn 3:3⁺)

Glory ([03519](#)) (*kabod* from root *kabad* = to be heavy or weighty) conveys the central meaning of weight in most OT occurrences and most of the applications carry this figurative sense (cp "heavy with sin"). This sense gives rise to the idea of a "weighty" person in society or one who is honorable, impressive, worthy of respect

the meaning in >50% of uses. NT counterpart is doxa. Kābôd refers to the great physical weight or "quantity" of a thing. OT "GLORY" is a "technical term for God's manifest presence" (Ex 16:7), often connected with the cloud (Ex 16:10) and with the Ark of the Covenant. It can also be represented as a consuming fire (Ex 24:17). "GLORY" also involves "honor" or position of power. The "GLORY" of the Lord "reveals His person and dignity, and the proper response to such a revelation is to give God honor or glory" (cp. Ex 33:18). God's "GLORY" is essentially the profound, glowing, visible, confluent expression of the attributes of Deity which bears witness to a still more profound and incomprehensible reality of essence. In His character and essence, He is "Spirit," and thus invisible to man (Jn 4:24), but He has made Himself known to man through revelation by His many names and titles, by His attributes, by His written Word, and finally by His living Word, Jesus Christ (Jn 1:14). In the OT, God revealed His "GLORY" at Sinai (Ex 24:16, 17), in the tabernacle (Ex 40:34-38), and in the Jerusalem temple (1Ki 8:10, 11).

Related Resource:

- [Glory of God](#)

Exodus 33:19 And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

NET Exodus 33:19 And the LORD said, "I will make all my goodness pass before your face, and I will proclaim the LORD by name before you; I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy."

NLT Exodus 33:19 The LORD replied, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, Yahweh, before you. For I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose.

ESV Exodus 33:19 And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

NIV Exodus 33:19 And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

KJV Exodus 33:19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

LXE Exodus 33:19 And God said, I will pass by before thee with my glory, and I will call by my name, the Lord, before thee; and I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and will have pity on whom I will have pity.

ASV Exodus 33:19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and will proclaim the name of Jehovah before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

CSB Exodus 33:19 He said, "I will cause all My goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim the name Yahweh before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

NKJ Exodus 33:19 Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

NRS Exodus 33:19 And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

YLT Exodus 33:19 and He saith, 'I cause all My goodness to pass before thy face, and have called concerning the Name of Jehovah before thee, and favoured him whom I favour, and loved him whom I love.'

- **all My goodness pass before you:** Ne 9:25 Ps 25:13 Ps 65:4 Jer 31:12,14 Zec 9:17 Ro 2:4 Eph 1:6-8

- **proclaim:** Ex 3:13-15 34:5-7 Isa 7:14 9:6 12:4
- **I will be:** Ro 9:15-18,23
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you - Notice Moses had asked for a revelation of God's glory and here God associates His glory with His **goodness**. In fact the Septuagint in translating the Hebrew word for **goodness** ([tub](#)) with the Greek word [doxa](#) which means glory.

Currid on goodness - God's revelation comes in the form of a proclamation of his attributes—that is, his qualities. First, he declares that 'all my goodness' will go before Moses. God is frequently described in the Old Testament as being 'good' (see, for example, Ps. 86:5; 100:5; 118:1; Ezra 3:11; Jer. 33:11). Sometimes the term 'good' and the person of God are interchangeable (Hosea 8:3). 'Good' seems to be a generic term that includes many of his attributes (see 34:6–7). ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

NET Note - The word "**goodness**" refers to the divine appearance in summary fashion.

Lloyd-Jones gives the idea of what God said to Moses: "I will stoop to your weakness. I will let you see something. But, much more important than that, I will cause all my goodness to pass before you. I will give you a deeper insight and understanding into myself, into my character, into what I am. That is what you really need to know."

Guzik - God didn't reveal His justice to Moses, not His power, and not His wrath against sin. All those are truly aspects of God's nature, but when He showed Himself to Moses He displayed His goodness. Sometimes people think they must "balance" God, supposing there is something like a Yin and Yang to the universe, in the sense of light and dark, good and evil, law and grace. But God Himself is "unbalanced" in this sense. He is entirely good. Even His justice and power and wrath must be understood as aspects of His goodness. ([Exodus 33](#))

Goodness ([02898](#))([tub](#)) is a masculine noun meaning property, goods, goodness, fairness, and beauty. The basic idea of tub speaks of desirability for enjoyment whether material or spiritual.

Related Resource:

- [Goodness](#) of God

And will proclaim the name of the LORD before you- God's Name speaks of His character and person. Jehovah is saying in essence "I will preach you a message on My Name."

Walter Kaiser - A further aspect of the revelation of God's glory was the proclamation of his name. The name of God includes his nature, character, person (Ps 20:1; Luke 24:47; John 1:12), doctrine (Ps 22:22; John 17:6, 26), and standards of living (Mic 4:5). In this context his name includes his "mercy" (i.e., his "grace") and his "compassion" ([raḥam](#); lit., "womb," "bowels," i.e., deep-seated feelings).

Currid - That appellation reflects numerous characteristics of God, such as his immutability and eternity ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

Guzik on name - In the thinking of the ancient Hebrews (and also in other ancient cultures), the name represented a person's character and nature. God promised to reveal His character to Moses, not merely a title. ([Exodus 33](#))

NET Note - The expression "make proclamation in the name of Yahweh" (here a perfect tense with vav [י] consecutive for future) means to declare, reveal, or otherwise make proclamation of who Yahweh is. The "name of Yahweh" (rendered "the name of the LORD" throughout) refers to his divine attributes revealed to his people, either in word or deed. What will be focused on first will be his grace and compassion

Related Resource:

- [Name of the LORD is a Strong Tower: Summary](#)
- [Name of the LORD is a Strong Tower: Why Should You Study It?](#)

And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion- God has just expressed to Moses He (His presence) will go to the promised land with Israel who has just been unfaithful (golden calf). He is showing grace ([chanan](#); Lxx = [eleeo](#) = show sympathy) and compassion ([racham](#); Lxx = [oikteiro](#) = pity) as an act of His sovereign will, which is clear because Israel in truth deserved His wrath and punishment. "Israel can only marvel that she has been chosen as an object for divine mercy, for she cannot explain it in any human terms." (Cole)

Currid - "Yahweh uses an idem per idem formula to express other important aspects of his nature. This formula, **favour ... favour**'

and 'compassion ... compassion', signifies that God is autonomous, free to bestow his grace and compassion on whomever he pleases. It underscores the doctrine of the sovereignty of God."

This is the very passage Paul quotes in Romans 9:15⁺ to defend his view of God's sovereignty writing

"For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION."

NET Note - God declares his mercy and grace in similar terms to his earlier self-revelation ("I am that I am"): **I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.** In other words, the grace and mercy of God are bound up in his own will. Obviously, in this passage the recipients of that favor are the penitent Israelites who were forgiven through Moses' intercession. The two words are at the heart of God's dealings with people. The first is כָּחַן (khanan, "to be gracious, show favor"). It means to grant favor or grace to someone, grace meaning unmerited favor. All of God's dealings are gracious, but especially in forgiving sins and granting salvation it is critical. Parallel to this is רָחַם (rakham), a word that means "show compassion, tender mercy." It is a word that is related to the noun "womb," the connection being in providing care and protection for that which is helpless and dependent—a motherly quality. In both of these constructions the verbs simply express what God will do, without explaining why. (Bolding added)

Gracious (02603)(chanan) is verb meaning to be gracious toward, to favor, to have mercy on. Generally implies extending "favor" neither expected nor deserved. It is the heartfelt response by someone who has something to give to one who has a need. It reflects the action from a superior to an inferior who has no real claim for gracious treatment. The verb is used in social or secular contexts as well as theological ones. It often has the sense of showing kindness to the poor and needy. First used in Ge 33:5 "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." **Chanān** may express "generosity," a gift from the heart (Ps 37:21). God especially is Source of undeserved "favor" (Ge 33:11) God is asked repeatedly for such "gracious" acts as only He can do (Nu 6:25; Ge 43:29 Ps 119:29) God's "favor" esp seen in deliverance from one's enemies or evils (Ps 77:9; Am 5:15). God extends His "graciousness" in His own sovereign way and will to whomever He chooses (Ex 33:19). In many ways **chanan** combines meaning of Greek charis (w general classical Greek sense of "charm" or "graciousness") and NT sense of "undeserved favor" or "mercy." The Septuagint translates with [oikteiro](#) = pity or have compassion and with [eleeo](#) = show mercy or sympathy. Job begs his friends, "Pity me, pity me" (Job 19:21). The Hithpael stem means "to beseech," as in Gen 42:21 where the brothers recalled how Joseph had pleaded with them. The Syrian captain besought Elijah for his life and for the lives of his soldiers (2Kings 1:13). Esther implored the king with tears (Est 8:3; cf. Est 4:8). Amos (Am 5:15) urges his hearers to establish justice that the Lord might be gracious to them. In the final analysis the Lord is sovereign in acting graciously to those whom he selects (Ex 33:19). The verb hanan and its derivatives are components of the names of fifty-one persons (Hannah)

Gilbrant - This verb generally means "to be gracious," "to favor" or "to pity." With such a meaning, chānan appears some fifty times in Qal form in the OT, chiefly in the Psalms. The Psalmist pleads, "Have mercy upon me, O God" (Ps. 51:1) and "God be merciful unto us" (Ps. 67:1). The same general sense of the verb occurs in the Niphal "How gracious shalt thou be" (Jer. 22:23), the Poel, "but he that hath mercy on the poor" (Prov. 14:21), and the Hophal, "Let favour be shown to the wicked" (Isa. 26:10). A voice can be fair and pleasant, charming, or deceitfully alluring. Such a voice is called "gracious" in Prov. 26:25, "when he speaketh fair." The exilic psalmist laments for Jerusalem, indicating that the exiled Jews "take pleasure" in even the stones of the old city and "favor the dust" of the ground on which the city rested. This Psalm demonstrates the depth of love found in the hearts of the exiled Jews for their homeland (Ps. 102:14). Another meaning of chānan, seen in the Hithpael, or reflexive stem, is "to supplicate in prayer" or "to intreat for mercy and favor." Primarily the supplication is made to God (Deut. 3:23; 1 Ki. 8:33; 9:3; Pss. 30:8; 142:1; Hos. 12:4), but supplication or entreaty is also made to other human beings. Joseph "besought" his brothers to release him from the pit into which they had put him (Gen. 42:21). Mordecai charged his ward, Esther, to "entreat" her husband, the king of Persia, for deliverance from the deadly decree of Haman (Est. 4:8). When Esther actually appeared before the king and made supplication, the text uses the Hithpael imperfect (Est. 8:3). The same form is also used in 2 Ki. 1:13, which describes a captain of Ahab's army entreating Elijah for the lives of his men and himself. Entreaty clearly implies a humble approach to the one who can grant favor or mercy, whether in the form of supplication or prayer. In fact, entreaty for favor and help is one of the major purposes and uses of prayer. In another use, the word seems to imply something distasteful. Job uses chānan in the Qal in his complaint that his breath is "strange" to his wife (Job 19:17). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

Chanān - 73v - begged(1), dealt graciously(1), favor(1), feel pity(1), finds...favor(1), give them to us voluntarily(1), gracious(45), graciously(1), graciously given(1), graciously grant(1), groan(1), implore(1), implore his favor(1), implore the compassion(1), implore the mercy(1), implored(1), made(1), made

supplication(2), make supplication(5), pity(2), pleaded(2), show favor(1), show...favor(1), shown favor(1), sought his favor(1), surely be gracious(1). Gen. 33:5; Gen. 33:11; Gen. 42:21; Gen. 43:29; Exod. 33:19; Num. 6:25; Deut. 3:23; Deut. 7:2; Deut. 28:50; Jdg. 21:22; 2 Sam. 12:22; 1 Ki. 8:33; 1 Ki. 8:47; 1 Ki. 8:59; 1 Ki. 9:3; 2 Ki. 1:13; 2 Ki. 13:23; 2 Chr. 6:24; 2 Chr. 6:37; Est. 4:8; Est. 8:3; Job 8:5; Job 9:15; Job 19:16; Job 19:21; Job 33:24; Ps. 4:1; Ps. 6:2; Ps. 9:13; Ps. 25:16; Ps. 26:11; Ps. 27:7; Ps. 30:8; Ps. 30:10; Ps. 31:9; Ps. 37:21; Ps. 37:26; Ps. 41:4; Ps. 41:10; Ps. 51:1; Ps. 56:1; Ps. 57:1; Ps. 59:5; Ps. 67:1; Ps. 77:9; Ps. 86:3; Ps. 86:16; Ps. 102:13; Ps. 102:14; Ps. 109:12; Ps. 112:5; Ps. 119:29; Ps. 119:58; Ps. 119:132; Ps. 123:2; Ps. 123:3; Ps. 142:1; Prov. 14:21; Prov. 14:31; Prov. 19:17; Prov. 21:10; Prov. 26:25; Prov. 28:8; Isa. 26:10; Isa. 27:11; Isa. 30:18; Isa. 30:19; Isa. 33:2; Jer. 22:23; Lam. 4:16; Hos. 12:4; Amos 5:15; Mal. 1:9

Compassion (07355) (**racham**) has the root meaning of deep love (usually of superior for inferior) rooted in some "natural" bond. It means to have compassion, be merciful, pity. SHOW COMPASSION: Show sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it; includes the capacity for sharing the painful feelings of another; implies pity coupled with an urgent desire to aid or to spare. SHOW MERCY: exhibit compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power; show lenient or compassionate treatment; show compassionate treatment of those in distress; manifest a disposition to show kindness or compassion, esp compassion that forbears punishing even when justice demands it. Racham is translated "love" once: "I will love thee, O Lord..." (Ps 18:1) In God's promise to declare His name to Moses (Ex 33:19). Men pray appealing to this attribute of God (Ps 25:6) Isaiah prophesies messianic restoration (Isa 54:7-8) Interestingly, racham raham is used infrequently (twelve of 47x) of men.

Exodus 33:20 But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"

NET Exodus 33:20 But he added, "You cannot see my face, for no one can see me and live."

NLT Exodus 33:20 But you may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live."

ESV Exodus 33:20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."

NIV Exodus 33:20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

KJV Exodus 33:20 And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

LXE Exodus 33:20 And God said, Thou shalt not be able to see my face; for no man shall see my face, and live.

ASV Exodus 33:20 And he said, Thou canst not see my face; for man shall not see me and live.

CSB Exodus 33:20 But He answered, "You cannot see My face, for no one can see Me and live."

NKJ Exodus 33:20 But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."

NRS Exodus 33:20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live."

YLT Exodus 33:20 He saith also, 'Thou art unable to see My face, for man doth not see Me, and live;'

- **You cannot see My face** Ex 24:10 Ge 32:30 De 5:24 Jdg 6:22 13:22 Isa 6:5 Joh 1:18 1Ti 6:16 Heb 1:13 Rev 1:16,17
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

NO MAN CAN SEE GOD IN ALL HIS GLORY

But He said, "You cannot see My face - This helps under the phrase earlier of "face to face" as a figure of speech because clearly Moses did not see Jehovah's face. He would have been dead had he done so, so great and overwhelming is the glory of God! In the NT John writes "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." (John 1:18+). Paul adds "Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen." (1 Timothy 6:16) "No one has seen God at any time." (1 John 4:12+)

for no man can see Me and live - While this holds for the present life, in our glorified state we will behold His face and not die but live because He died for us that we might live with Him forever and ever. Amen.

Alan Cole - God as he is, in all his mystery, we cannot know or comprehend. For a full revelation of what God is like, man must wait until Jesus Christ (John 14:9). There is no contradiction between this and Exodus 24:10+, where the elders 'saw the God of Israel' (cf. Gen. 32:30). All they saw was the 'pavement of sapphire' that was 'under his feet': all that Isaiah saw was the skirt of the royal garments that filled the vast temple courtyard (Isa. 6:1+). ([TOTC-Exodus](#))

Currid - That mankind cannot see God in the fulness of his attributes—goodness, immutability, eternity—is taught throughout the Scriptures (see 3:6; Judg. 13:22; Job 13:20). Man's nature is fallen and unholy; thus he cannot look upon the effulgence of God's splendour, sinlessness and holiness. Not even the angels can look directly at God (Isa. 6:1–3). ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. **2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face,** and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. **3** And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."

No man hath seen God at any time,... he hath DECLARED HIM (John 1:18).

- The Word... John 1:1.
- The Word Was with God... John 1:1.
- The Word Was God... John 1:1.
- The Word of God... Revelation 19:13.
- The Word of Life... 1 John 1:1.
- The Word Was Made Flesh... John 1:14.
- The Image of God... 2 Corinthians 4:4.
- The Image of the Invisible God... Colossians 1:15.
- The Express Image of His Person... Hebrews 1:3.
- The Brightness of His Glory... Hebrews 1:3.
- Wisdom... Proverbs 8:12, 22.
- The Wisdom of God... 1 Corinthians 1:24.
- The Power of God... 1 Corinthians 1:24.
- My Messenger... Isaiah 42:19.
- The Messenger of the Covenant... Malachi 3:1.
- The Angel of Jehovah... Genesis 22:15.
- The Angel of God... Genesis 31:11, 13; Exodus 14:19.
- The Angel of His Presence... Isaiah 63:9.

WHAT DOES "YOU CANNOT SEE MY FACE" MEAN?

Has no man ever seen the uncreated God? This fascinating question is answered with three excerpts taken from [Hard Sayings](#) (edited by Walter Kaiser, et al)

(1) Exodus 24:9–11

Did Moses and the Elders See God?

(go to page 126 in [Hard Sayings](#))

The claim that Moses and his company "saw the God of Israel" appears to contradict the flat denials of such a possibility in texts such as Exodus 33:20. John 1:18 affirms that "no one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only [the only Son], who is at the Father's side, has made him known." Similarly, 1 Timothy 6:16 teaches that God is the one "who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see."

What are we to believe? Did some see God who is spirit and without form, or did they not? These passages surely look as if they contradict each other.

The translators who compiled the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, were so concerned about any wrong connotations in Exodus 24:9 that they added "in the place where he stood" to the words "they saw the God of Israel." There is no basis for such an addition, however, except the tendency of this translation to avoid any descriptions of God in terms that are used of human beings (the so-called antianthropomorphic trend of the LXX).

Even though Ex 24:10 clearly says that the leaders “saw the God of Israel,” the text does not go on to describe him, any more than did Isaiah when he saw Adonai exalted in the (heavenly) temple (Isaiah 6). The verb used in Ex 24:10 is used of seeing with one’s eyes. Only when we get to verse 11 is there a qualification, for it uses another verb that means “to see in a vision.”

Moreover, despite the assertion that Moses and the leaders saw God, the description of what they saw is of what was at his feet, not the appearance of God himself. It could well be that the group was not given permission to lift their faces toward God, but saw only the pavement beneath his feet. Maybe that is what the Greek translators were attempting to get at when they added the above-mentioned phrase.

When Moses asked to be shown the glory of God, he was refused on the grounds that humans cannot see the face of God and live (Ex 33:18–20). In the earlier text, since no request to see God’s glory is cited, we must assume that what Moses and his companions experienced was a theophany of the presence of God.

Even what little they saw of the setting of God’s presence so humbled and awed them that they apparently flung themselves down in an act of obeisance. Hence, what they saw and reported was no higher than the level of the pavement. In spite of the uniqueness and unnaturalness of this experience, Moses and his companions were not harmed or disciplined by God; he “did not raise his hand” against them (Ex 24:11). But they did experience a special nearness to God as they partook together of a covenantal meal.

We conclude that no one has ever seen God except the Son. What Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders experienced was the real presence of God and the place where he stood. When God is said to have shown his “back” or his “face” to anyone, it is an anthropomorphic usage—a description of God in terms used of humans so as to point to a definite reality, but only in ways that approximate that reality. God’s “back” suggests his disapproval, and his “face” suggests his blessing and smile of approval. In no sense can these terms be used to denote any shape or form of God. God remains unseen but mightily able to manifest the reality and majesty of his presence.

(2) Exodus 33:18–23

Did Moses See God’s Back?

(go to page 128 in [Hard Sayings](#))

Is it possible to see God? On the one hand some texts indicate that God was seen. Genesis 32:30 says, “So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, ‘It is because I saw God face to face.’”

Exodus 24:9–10 likewise teaches that “Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel ... saw the God of Israel.”

Exodus 33:11 strikes another intimate note: “The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.”

Judges 13:22 states that Manoah said to his wife, “We are doomed to die! ... We have seen God!”

Again, in Isaiah 6:1, “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted.”

Finally, Daniel 7:9 affirms, “As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire.” All these texts appear to claim that at times God can be seen and was seen.

However, there are other passages that appear to argue that it is impossible to see God. Foremost among them is Exodus 33:20.

Likewise, Deuteronomy 4:15 warns, “You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire.”

Even more to the point is John 1:18, “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.”

And again in John 5:37, “You have never heard his voice nor seen his form.”

Indeed, God is described in 1 Timothy 1:17 as “the King eternal, immortal, invisible,” the one “whom no one has seen or can see” (1 Tim 6:16).

To resolve this dilemma, note first that some of these sightings are visions, such as the cases of Isaiah and Daniel. In others the terms for sight stress the directness of access. For instance, in Exodus 24:9–11, Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders eat and drink in God’s presence, but they describe only his feet and what he stood on. They were apparently not permitted to look on God’s face. In another instance, Jacob’s access to God is described as being “face to face,” (See discussion of question [“With Whom Did Jacob Wrestle?” on page 103](#)) similar to Moses’ later friendship with God. (The difference may arise from the way

the term face of God was used in various contexts. In one, it expressed familiarity beyond previous visions or divine appearances; in others, it referred to knowledge of God which exceeds our abilities and hopes.) Others, such as Manoah and his wife, experienced a christophany or a theophany, which means an appearance of Christ or God through a vision or a preincarnate appearance.

What Moses requests in Exodus 33:18, “Now show me your glory,” was more than the Lord would grant for Moses’ own good. Even so, God allowed his “goodness” to pass in front of Moses and proclaimed his “name” in Moses’ presence.

Thus, instead of showing Moses his person or describing his appearance, the Lord gave Moses a description of who he is. The “name” of God included his nature, character (Ps 20:1; Lk 24:47; Jn 1:12), doctrine (Ps 22:22; Jn 17:6, 26) and standards for living righteously (Mic 4:5). Romans 9:15 quotes Exodus 33:19 and applies it to God’s sovereignty.

After God proclaims his name and sovereignty, he promises Moses a look at certain of his divine aspects. What these aspects were is still debated—needlessly, when one considers the range of meaning for the word back or the context in which it is used.

God placed Moses in a cleft in the rock, apparently a cavelike crevice, and he then caused his glory to pass by. The glory of God refers first and foremost to the sheer weight of the reality of his presence. The presence of God would come near Moses in spatial terms.

But Moses would not be able to endure the spectacular purity, luminosity and reality of staring at the raw glory of God himself. Instead, God would protect Moses from accidental (and apparently fatal) sight of that glory. Therefore, in a striking anthropomorphism (a description of the reality of God in terms or analogies understandable to mortals), God would protect Moses from the full effects of looking directly at the glory of God by placing his hand over Moses’ face until all his glory had passed by.

That this is a figure of speech is clear from the double effect of God passing by while simultaneously protecting Moses with the divine “hand.” Only after his glory, or presence, had passed by would God remove his gracious, protecting “hand.” Then Moses would view what God had permitted.

But what was left for Moses to see? The translators say God’s “back.” But since God is spirit (Is 31:3; Jn 4:24) and formless, what would this refer to? The word back can as easily be rendered the “after effects” of the glory that had passed by.

This would fit the context as well as the range of meanings for the Hebrew word used. Moses did not see the glory of God directly, but once it had gone past, God did allow him to view the results, the afterglow, that his presence had produced.

(3) John 1:18

No One Has Ever Seen God?

(go to page 458 in [Hard Sayings](#))

This verse is clearly saying that no one has ever seen God, but in Exodus 33:20 we read, “You cannot see my face ... and live,” and in Exodus 24:11, “They saw God, and they ate and drank.” How can John claim that no one has ever seen God when the Old Testament text indicates that people did see God on at least two occasions?

First, notice that even the Old Testament indicates that no one has seen the face of God: “You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live” (Ex 33:20). It is in this context that the two theophanies occur. In the earlier theophany it appears that what the elders see is “a pavement made of sapphire” (which will appear again in the early chapters of Ezekiel as the floor of the divine chariot). No form is seen, although they may have had some awareness of a Being above the pavement. In this sense they “saw God” but apparently did not see his “face.” In the later theophany Moses asks to see God’s “glory” (Ex 33:18). In the view of the author of Exodus, he is asking for more than what he saw along with the elders of Israel. God grants more, but not all that Moses asks for. The only experience God will allow is for Moses to be hidden while God passes by and declares his character audibly; then Moses will get to see God’s “back,” which some commentators identify with an “afterglow,” but which could mean the back side of a retreating form (in Near Eastern fashion this would be shrouded with clothing so only an outline would be visible). Even this experience is so powerful that Moses’ face glows afterward (Ex 34:29).

John is clearly contrasting Jesus with Moses (Jn 1:17; Moses’ theophany was at the giving of the law), but even later theophanies in the Old Testament do not contradict our observation. Isaiah has some awareness of a throne and a being on it, but the only things that he can describe are the hem of God’s “robe” and the seraphim who are associated with him (Is 6:1–5). Ezekiel in a vision sees a form on a throne (Ezek 1:26–28), but there is no face and no features, only burning fire in a vaguely human shape. The face of God is never seen.

Now we can understand what John is saying. The Word is with God (Jn 1:1), and the image implied in the preposition is the face-to-face position of equals. What is more, the Word is what God is (as we noted in the previous chapter). Now the Word becomes a human being (“flesh,” Jn 1:14), and he has a “glory” or character or reputation which is that of one who is exactly like his Father, full of grace and truth (which are Greek equivalents of “love and faithfulness” of Ex 34:6). So Moses brought law from God (Jn 1:17), but

Jesus brought the very character of the Father to us. Thus while no one has ever seen God, Jesus makes him known with an accuracy brought about by his being in the most intimate contact with him (“at the Father’s side” in the NIV or, better, “in the bosom of the Father” [RSV]). They may have seen a form or outline in the Old Testament, but Jesus, the Word incarnate, has not only seen the Father face to face, but has also looked into his soul and contains within himself his very character.

This is an important theological point. Ever since [Marcion](#) in the second century there have been those who contrast the distant and harsh Father with the gracious and kind Son. The Father seems to be law and the Son grace. The Father seems to be difficult or impossible to relate to, apparently existing without feeling, and the Son seems to be caring and even warm and friendly. **This contrast is entirely false.** What John is saying is that if we want to find out what the Father is like, we only have to look at the Son. The “love and faithfulness” we see in Jesus is the “love and faithfulness” of the Father. The kindness we see in Jesus is the kindness of the Father. The healing we seen in Jesus is his doing the works of the Father (Jn 5:19). In sum, Jesus is the place where we get our best view of the face of the Father; in Jesus we can see what the Father’s heart is really like. When this truth sinks into our heart, many of us will receive a renewed vision of the Father and thus develop a new love for and intimacy with God.

QUESTION - [Did Moses see God?](#)

ANSWER - In Exodus 33:20, God tells [Moses](#), “You cannot see my face, for no one can see me and live.” However, earlier, in Exodus 33:11, we read, “Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses [face to face](#), as a man speaks to his friend.” So, did Moses see God, and if so, how did he live? Also, how does this agree with John 1:18, which says, “No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son”?

In Exodus 33:18, Moses asks God, “Please show me your [glory](#).” God responds, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,’ he said, ‘you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.’ Then the Lord said, ‘There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.’” (Exodus 33:19–23). So, clearly, Moses never truly or fully saw God.

What, then, does Exodus 33:11 mean by saying God and Moses spoke “face to face”? Since [God is spirit](#) (John 4:24), He does not truly have a “face.” Exodus 33:11 is simply saying that God and Moses had a close relationship. They were in harmony with each other, just as close friends are. God and Moses were not literally face to face, but their relationship and communication was very much like two people who spoke to one another as close friends would.

While God can appear in human form (or in other physical form) if He wants to, He is, in His essence, not a physical being. Many people in the Bible witnessed [theophanies](#), or appearances of God. No one, though, other than Jesus Christ (John 1:18), has seen God in all of His glory. Even the [seraphim](#) in heaven cover their eyes as they worship God (Isaiah 6:1–4). [GotQuestions.org](#)

QUESTION - [Has anyone ever seen God?](#)

ANSWER - The Bible tells us that no one has ever seen God (John 1:18) except the Lord Jesus Christ. In Exodus 33:20, God declares, “You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.” These Scriptures seem to contradict other Scriptures which describe various people “seeing” God. For example, Exodus 33:11 describes Moses speaking to God “face to face.” How could Moses speak with God “face to face” if no one can see God’s face and live? In this instance, the phrase “face to face” is a figure of speech indicating they were in very close communion. God and Moses were speaking to each other as if they were two human beings having a close conversation.

In Genesis 32:30, Jacob saw God appearing as a man; he did not truly see God. Samson’s parents were terrified when they realized they had seen God (Judges 13:22), but they had only seen Him appearing as an angel. Jesus was God in the flesh (John 1:1, 14) so when people saw Him, they were seeing God. So, yes, God can be “seen” and many people have “seen” God. At the same time, no one has ever seen God revealed in all His glory. In our fallen human condition, if God were to fully reveal Himself to us, we would be consumed and destroyed. Therefore, God veils Himself and appears in forms in which we can “see” Him. However, this is different than seeing God with all His glory and holiness displayed. People have seen visions of God, images of God, and appearances of God, but no one has ever seen God in all His fullness (Exodus 33:20). [GotQuestions.org](#)

Related Resources:

- [If Moses met face to face with God, why, later, was he not allowed to see God’s face? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does it mean that God is spirit? | GotQuestions.org](#)

- [Why was God so evident in the Bible, and seems so hidden today? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is an epiphany? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is a theophany? What is a Christophany? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who were the three men who visited Abraham in Genesis 18? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Did God literally and visibly walk in the garden \(Genesis 3:8\)? | GotQuestions.org](#)

Exodus 33:21 Then the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock;

NET Exodus 33:21 The LORD said, "Here is a place by me; you will station yourself on a rock.

NLT Exodus 33:21 The LORD continued, "Look, stand near me on this rock.

ESV Exodus 33:21 And the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock,

NIV Exodus 33:21 Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock.

KJV Exodus 33:21 And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:

LXE Exodus 33:21 And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me: thou shalt stand upon the rock;

ASV Exodus 33:21 and Jehovah said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon the rock:

CSB Exodus 33:21 The LORD said, "Here is a place near Me. You are to stand on the rock,

NKJ Exodus 33:21 And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock.

NRS Exodus 33:21 And the LORD continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock;

YLT Exodus 33:21 Jehovah also saith, 'Lo, a place is by Me, and thou hast stood on the rock,

- **place by:** De 5:31 Jos 20:4 Isa 56:5 Zec 3:7 Lu 15:1
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Then the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock- God was about to reveal Himself to Moses in a unique way. God prepared the event carefully, giving Moses a specific place to stand.

THOUGHT - Beloved disciple, this is alsom how we will see His glory by standing on the rock, for Jesus said "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. 26 "Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 "The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall." (Matt 7:24–27+).

Exodus 33:22 and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by.

NET Exodus 33:22 When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and will cover you with my hand while I pass by.

NLT Exodus 33:22 As my glorious presence passes by, I will hide you in the crevice of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by.

ESV Exodus 33:22 and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.

NIV Exodus 33:22 When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by.

KJV Exodus 33:22 And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:

LXE Exodus 33:22 and when my glory shall pass by, then I will put thee into a hole of the rock; and I will cover

thee over with my hand, until I shall have passed by.

ASV Exodus 33:22 and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand until I have passed by:

CSB Exodus 33:22 and when My glory passes by, I will put you in the crevice of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by.

NKJ Exodus 33:22 "So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by.

NRS Exodus 33:22 and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by;

YLT Exodus 33:22 and it hath come to pass, in the passing by of Mine honour, that I have set thee in a cleft of the rock, and spread out My hands over thee, until My passing by,

- **I will put you in the cleft of the rock** Ps 18:2 Song 2:3 Isa 2:21 32:2 1Co 10:4 2Co 5:19
- **cover thee:** De 33:12 Ps 91:1,4
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

PROTECTED BY THE CLEFT AND GOD'S HAND

and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by - God will protect Moses from full view which would kill him. He does it two ways (1) cleft of rock and (2) cover with His hand (an anthropomorphism).

THOUGHT - Jesus is our Rock of salvation. We are hidden now in Him, in the "cleft of the rock" so to speak. The fact that we are in Christ our Rock keeps us safe from being destroyed by the glory of God which otherwise we could not endure. There are two Hebrew words for ROCK, (1) TSUR (70x) which speaks of a rock that can range from the size of a pebble to the size of a boulder and (2) SELA (54x) which generally describes a larger rock such as a crag (steep rugged rock), a cliff or a mountainside. Approximately 50% (62 of 124) of the OT uses of ROCK are metaphorical and in some way picture Jehovah. Play Maranatha's [Rock of My Salvation](#).

Related Resources:

- [Jesus - Rock of Our Salvation](#)
- Christ Our Rock
- Christ Our Rock of Refuge
- Christ Our Rock of Refuge-2

Currid - Moses does not see God in all his fulness. This serves as a physical symbol of a theological reality, which is that mankind can only partially perceive and discern the attributes of God. Humanity cannot comprehend his essential nature. ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

Guzik - God's glory could not remain in front of Moses, it had to pass by him. Even with that, Moses had to be protected by the hand of God and the cleft of the rock when the glory of God passed before him. This is a vivid and endearing image: protected both by the hand of God and hidden away in the rock of refuge He provides. The shelter in the cleft of the rock gave the image for Augustus Toplady in his famous hymn Rock of Ages: ([Exodus 33](#))

[Rock of Ages, cleft for me:](#)

Let me hide myself in Thee.

Listen to this great hymn by Fanny Crosby ...

[He Hideth My Soul](#)

A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord, a wonderful Savior to me;
He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock, where rivers of pleasure I see.
A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord—He taketh my burden away;
He holdeth me up and I shall not be moved; He giveth me strength as my day.

He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock that shadows a dry, thirsty land;
He hideth my life in the depths of His love, and covers me there with His hand,
and covers me there with His hand.

Billy Graham describes "peace" as hiding in the Rock, Christ Jesus...The storm was raging. The sea was beating against the rocks in huge, dashing waves. The lightning was flashing, the thunder was roaring, the wind was blowing; but the little bird was sound asleep in the crevice of the rock, its head tucked serenely under its wing. That is peace: to be able to sleep in the storm! In Christ we are relaxed and at peace in the midst of the confusions, bewilderments, and perplexities of this life. The storm rages, but our hearts are at rest. We have found peace—at last!

Guzik - Protected by God, Moses could endure the glory of God passing before him. Isaiah had a glimpse of the glory of God, and it moved him to mourn his own sin and unworthiness (Isaiah 6). John experienced some of the glory of God and fell at the feet of Jesus like a dead man (Revelation 1:17). Paul experienced the glory of God on the Damascus Road, but also in the experience described in 2 Corinthians 12. It was such an amazing experience that he could only barely describe it. We also should have an earnest desire to experience God deeply. Paul made it clear that we cannot fully see the glory of God—we see it as in a piece of polished metal, dimly (1 Corinthians 13:12)—but we can see something of it. Paul didn't say we see nothing of the glory of God, only that we can't fully see it or comprehend it. ([Exodus 33](#))

Others, beyond the times of the Bible, have also experienced glimpses of this glory. Lloyd-Jones mentioned a few:

- Jonathan Edwards described a time of praying in the forest, kneeling for an hour that seemed to pass in just a few moments because of the powerful sense of God's glory and presence.
- David Brainerd, a great colonial era missionary to the Native Americans, knelt in the snow and prayed for hours—literally sweating in his body though it was freezing cold in the air. The sweat was a physical reaction to the intensity of the spiritual experience.
- D.L. Moody asked God for such an experience, and when God gave it to him he had to ask God to pull back His hand, because he felt like it was killing him.

Exodus 33:23 "Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."

NET Exodus 33:23 Then I will take away my hand, and you will see my back, but my face must not be seen."

NLT Exodus 33:23 Then I will remove my hand and let you see me from behind. But my face will not be seen."

ESV Exodus 33:23 Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen."

NIV Exodus 33:23 Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."

KJV Exodus 33:23 And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

LXE Exodus 33:23 And I will remove my hand, and then shalt thou see my back parts; but my face shall not appear to thee.

ASV Exodus 33:23 and I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back; but my face shall not be seen.

CSB Exodus 33:23 Then I will take My hand away, and you will see My back, but My face will not be seen."

NKJ Exodus 33:23 "Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."

NRS Exodus 33:23 then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

YLT Exodus 33:23 and I have turned aside My hands, and thou hast seen My back parts, and My face is not seen.'

- **you shall see My back** Ex 33:20 Job 11:7 Job 26:14 Joh 1:18 1Co 13:12 1Ti 6:16
- [Exodus 33 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**MOSES TO SEE THE
"AFTERGLOW" OF JEHOVAH**

Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back - Moses could only see God's back (a unique term often not used for anatomy). The idea is that Moses could only see behind God, not God Himself.

S. R. Driver says while this may indicate just the "afterglow" that he leaves behind him, it was enough to suggest what the full brilliancy of his presence must be!

Kaiser on back - אַחֲרָי ('ahōrāy, "my back") is used of the "back" of the tabernacle (26:12), the "backs" of the twelve bronze oxen holding the molten sea in the temple courtyard (1 Kings 7:25), and of the "backs" of men worshiping in the temple in Ezekiel's day (Ezek 8:16). But since God is Spirit and has no form, and since no one can see him and live (v.20), the word 'ahōrāy could just as well and more accurately be rendered "the after-effects" of his radiant glory, which had just passed by. ([EBC-Ex](#))

Poole puts it like this: "Thou shalt see a shadow or obscure delineation of my glory, as much as thou canst bear, though not as much as thou dost desire."

Adam Clarke - "But at the same time he assures him that he could not see his face-the fulness of his perfections and the grandeur of his designs, and live, as no human being could bear, in the present state, this full discovery. But he adds, Thou shalt see my back parts."

but My face shall not be seen - Based on the previous warning of death to anyone who sees His face, God repeats that Moses will not be allowed to see His face.

Guzik - With these special protections, God rewarded the desire of Moses to see His glory as much as humanly possible. This demonstrates that God rewards the seeking heart. And as marvelous as this experience was for Moses, it still cannot compare to the revelation of God given to us in Jesus Christ. ([Exodus 33](#))

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Currid applies this section - In the Gospel of John the apostle comments, 'And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14). This statement on the incarnation of Jesus Christ refers to Exodus 33:18–23. Moses had asked to see God's glory, and he was allowed to receive a mere glimpse. With the coming of Christ, the believer too does not behold the full glory of God, but he sees the glory of God as it is manifested in the flesh of Jesus. The full nature of God is simply beyond human sight and comprehension. 'What Jesus does reveal is as much of the divine nature [holiness] as man can see and receive. This is the "glory".' F. M. Fairchild understands it this way: Jesus 'is the mirror of Deity. He is the express image of God's person. He interprets God to our dull hearts. In him God becomes visible and intelligible to us. We cannot by any amount of searching find out God. The more we try, the more we are bewildered. Then Jesus Christ appears. He is God stooping down to our level and He enables our feeble thoughts to get some real hold on God Himself.' ([Epsc Exodus Volume 2](#))

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