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Chapter 1

“Show Me Your Glory” (Exodus 33:18)

An Exegetical Analysis of Moses’s Request in the Context of Exodus 32–34

Rebecca G. S. Idestrom

Moses’s desire to behold the glory of the Lord in Exodus 33:18–23 is perhaps the most famous passage about God’s glory in the Old Testament. The fulfillment of his request is described in Exodus 34:5–7, followed by a description of the resulting impact on Moses—the bright radiance on his face (Exod 34:29–35).¹ Although limited and veiled in nature, Moses experiences God’s glory in a new and fresh way. YHWH’s glory reveals his glorious name and his character, his divine attributes, and this revelation is truly profound, giving reassurance and hope for Israel’s future. Moses’s understanding of the concept of the Lord’s glory is enlarged and enriched to include his wonderful character of goodness, mercy, compassion, steadfast love, and so forth. The truth and importance of this revelation are made even more apparent in the larger context of the Israelites having angered YHWH by worshiping the golden calf. Therefore, in order to understand the significance of Moses’s request and the subsequent result, we need to understand the larger literary context and consider Exodus 32–34 as a whole. In this setting, the profundity of the divine theophany is highlighted even more.

The literary unit begins in Exodus 32 with the golden calf incident, when the Israelites rebelled against the Lord while Moses was on the mountain receiving the Law. The result was God’s judgment of the people and Moses’s intercession on their behalf. The central issue in Moses’s dialogue with the Lord, leading up to and culminating in his request to behold the divine glory, is whether God’s divine presence will accompany the Israelites on the journey (33:2–6, 14–17; cf. 34:9). YHWH says that he is unable to accompany them by being in their midst because then he might destroy them (33:5). The phrase “among you” or “in your midst” (33:3, 5; see 34:9) clarifies what the

Lord is saying. Considering the larger literary context, specifically that God has already instructed Moses to build the tabernacle so that the Lord could dwell among his people (25:8; 29:46, 46), it is possible that the sin of the golden calf may have jeopardized the promise of the Lord to dwell in their midst.² YHWH would still be with his people but he would not live among them in such close proximity in the center of the camp. Instead, he would send his angel/messenger מַלְאָךְ (*malak*) to lead them (32:34; 33:2). This does not satisfy Moses. He pleads with the Lord to accompany them by his presence (literary “his face” 33:12, 15, 16).

Donald Gowan points out that there is a lot of tension in the passage as a whole between the essential need for the Lord to go with his people and at the same time, the danger associated with his presence. “At every point there is danger associated with the presence of God, but God’s presence is essential, and so Moses dares to approach and ask.”³ Although many scholars try to solve the tensions in the passage by assigning them to different sources, Gowan believes that the tensions are essential and make sense as they are in chapters 32–34 as a whole because they “are part of the authentic experiences of God in the lives of believers.”⁴ It is in this context of needing divine assurances of YHWH’s accompanying presence in their midst, even though the nearness of a holy God can be dangerous, that Moses makes his bold request to see the glory of the Lord (33:18).

Moses’s prayer to see God’s glory naturally follows his dialogue with YHWH; he wants additional assurance of God’s accompanying presence (33:15, 16). At the same time, it is possible to interpret his request to see the divine glory as part of his initial request that the Lord would teach him his ways so that he would know the Lord in a deeper way (33:13).⁵ If the latter is the intent of his prayer, then not only is Moses asking for a sign of assurance, but he also desires to know YHWH in a deeper way.

The Lord’s response to Moses is both surprising and profound. It is surprising because it is not what one would expect. Instead of simply making his glory כְּבוֹד (*kavod*) appear to Moses, the Lord begins to reveal deeper truths about his glory. Not only is God’s glory connected with his presence and with an awesome, visible, fiery radiance in the cloud (24:15–18), but his glory is also associated with his divine attributes, with a deeper, more profound revelation of his character. The Lord says that he will cause all of his goodness to pass before Moses and will proclaim his divine name YHWH before him (33:19). Moses’s understanding of the concept of the Lord’s glory is enlarged and enriched to include God’s attributes and his divine name.⁶ With this revelation, the Lord answers Moses’s earlier prayer that he would come to know the Lord and his ways (33:13).

Although some interpret “my goodness” טוֹבִי (*tuvi*) as the Lord’s beauty,⁷ I understand it as one of the divine attributes, the character quality of

goodness, along with God's mercy and compassion, and so forth (33:19; 34:6–7).⁸ God in his very essence or nature is good (Pss 86:5; 100:5; 118:1, 29; Ezra 3:11). This is in great contrast with the gods of the Ancient Near East who were not expected to be good. YHWH, the God of Israel, was a good God who demonstrated his goodness in benevolent acts on behalf of his people. Walter Moberly points out that there is a certain synonymy between glory and goodness by noting the parallelism between verses 19 and 22, "I will make all my goodness pass before you" and "while my glory passes by."⁹ "My goodness" parallels "my glory" and the same verb "to pass by" is used in both cases. At the end of verse 22, the Lord's glory/goodness is identified with the Lord himself, "until I have passed by." Moberly writes, "The point is that Yahweh is presenting an understanding of the divine glory in terms of divine goodness. God's glory is experienced in his graciousness."¹⁰ In linking the glory with divine goodness, Robert Gordon adds that this is a seminal text about the goodness of the Lord: "In the disclosure that is given in the next chapter (34:6–7), it is as if the light of the glory/goodness of God is passed through a prism to reveal the variegated attributes of deity."¹¹ When the actual theophany happens in Exodus 34:6–7, the Lord reveals even more of his attributes to Moses than are mentioned here in 33:19.

While causing all his goodness to pass before Moses, the Lord will proclaim his own personal name יהוה YHWH (33:19; 34:5, 6). In other words, God's glory is also revealed in the proclamation of his personal name YHWH; the very name of YHWH is glorious and communicates the faithfulness of the Lord and the beauty of his splendor.¹² This auditory experience will of course remind Moses of his initial encounter with the Lord in the burning bush when he first heard YHWH's name (Exod 3:13–15). On Mount Sinai, he will hear it again as part of his experience of God's glory (Exod 34:5, 6). Not only is God's name wonderful, but it is also intimately related to his very nature and character, as seen in the words that immediately follow, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (33:19). These beautiful words elaborate on God's glorious character. Cornelius Houtman concurs: "The proclamation of the name is to be regarded as the disclosure of YHWH's character, of the manner in which he manifests himself to those who are his."¹³ As when the Lord first revealed his divine name YHWH to Moses in Exod 3:14,¹⁴ the name of YHWH is "defined in terms of his compassionate acts of mercy."¹⁵ The Lord's character is revealed in his actions, in what he does for his people.¹⁶ This is wonderfully demonstrated in the exodus from Egypt when God rescued them. In the context of Moses's anxiety about God's presence and the Israelites' sin of apostasy, the Lord's gracious reply about his character is very comforting and reassuring and gives hope for the future.¹⁷

What is also striking about the Lord's response is that Moses will experience the theophany of the divine glory both visibly and audibly. Although the Israelites' experience of the glory of the Lord up until this point in the narrative accounts of the book of Exodus has included some sound, like the blowing of the trumpet and the rumblings of thunder (19:16–19; 20:18), the description of the physical appearing of the glory *כְּבוֹד* (*kavod*) has largely been visual.¹⁸ But here we learn that the Lord himself will proclaim his name YHWH and all his attributes audibly to Moses.¹⁹ Spoken words will be part of the theophany, spoken by none other than YHWH himself; he will call out his own glorious name.²⁰ Thus, the divine revelation will involve Moses's senses of hearing and seeing. In other words, it will be a physical, sensory encounter, not just a spiritual experience. In light of this, Hans Urs von Balthasar makes a helpful observation: "In the sphere of biblical revelation there are no such things as 'purely spiritual' revelations on God's part. This is so because man as man is never 'purely spiritual,' and because God, as the creator of the material world, takes this world as it is when he introduces into it a new relationship based on his self-revelation."²¹ Human encounters with the divine in the Bible often involve the physical, material, and earthly realm. In other words, the Lord condescends and communicates with his people on their creaturely level through his words and actions among them. Moses's senses will experience the divine glory. Moses's ears and eyes will be involved and one could perhaps even argue that Moses's sense of touch will also be involved as the Lord will put Moses in the cleft of the rock and will cover him with his hand (33:22, 23).

Scholars differ in their views on what Moses actually experienced and whether he was allowed to see the divine glory in light of 33:20, "You cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live." Some argue that Moses was denied his request outright in this response. Others say that the Lord refused him initially but later conceded and allowed him to see a partial glimpse. Then there are others, myself included, that believe that Moses's request was never denied in the first place, but that it was granted, even though it was restricted and veiled in nature. In light of 33:17 where God says that because Moses has received divine favor God will do what Moses asks, and the fact that in 33:22, the Lord says that he will cause his glory to pass by, I do believe that Moses's desire was fulfilled.²² Moses did see the glory of the Lord; even though it was limited and qualified in nature, it was still a glimpse of God's glory. At the same time, Moses experienced something much more profound than he had anticipated. That experience shaped Israel's understanding of the nature of YHWH ever after, as reflected in their almost creed-like statements throughout the Old Testament about the Lord's character based on this revelation to Moses in Exodus (Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Ps 103:8; 145:8, 9; Jonah 4:2).

Part of the difficulty in interpretation as reflected in the diversity of opinion on whether Moses was granted or denied his request has to do with the question of how "face" is related to divine glory. Are they identified as one and the same in this text?²³ There is confusion related to the fact that in other biblical texts, the appearance of the glory is clearly associated with the divine presence, and in Hebrew, the terms "face" and "presence" are translated from the same Hebrew word פָּנִים/פָּנִי (*panim/pane*; face, in the presence of).²⁴ For example, the English translation of "my presence" in 33:14 comes from the exact same word פָּנִי (*panai*) translated "my face" in 33:20, 23. Although they come from the same Hebrew term and are clearly related, each of them has a slightly different nuance determined by the context. The expression to turn one's face toward someone also indicates favor, whereas to hide one's face indicates disfavor (Num 6:24–26; Ps 67:1 [MT 67:2]; Ps 104:29). To add to the various nuances, there are also texts that state that Moses speaks with the Lord "face to face," where "face to face" is used metaphorically to indicate their intimate relationship (Exod 33:11; Deut 34:10; literally "mouth to mouth" in Num 12:8).²⁵ Because of the various nuances of פָּנִים (*panim*), I think that "my face" in 33:20 may have a different connotation than that of simply "my presence." Moses and the Israelites have seen evidence of YHWH's presence in the divine glory and they have survived and not perished. Thus, 33:20 might be better understood as "you cannot see me directly,"²⁶ or fully, or completely, or in all of my fullness. This interpretation is supported by the contrast made between seeing the Lord from behind, after the glory has passed by, rather than from the front (face versus back, before versus after, in front versus from behind),²⁷ and as well as Moses's need for divine protection to experience the glory. The Lord will cover Moses while his glory passes directly before him but once the Lord has passed by,²⁸ Moses will be able to look at the Lord from behind. He will catch a glimpse of the afterglow, the traces left behind,²⁹ or the outline or contours of the Lord.³⁰ In other words, he will not see the Lord directly in all his fullness or splendor, but Moses will still experience his glory in part, in a limited way, as much as humanly possible without perishing.³¹ The Lord himself will make sure Moses is protected.³²

Exodus 33:20 makes a general statement about human beings' הָאָדָם (*haadam*) inability to see the Lord without perishing. Seeing God fully or unmediated is impossible for humans precisely because they are human, and God is God. Not only because humans are sinful creatures and the Lord is holy, but also because of the very fact that humans are by their very nature limited, finite creatures and God is infinite and beyond human comprehension. Here Moberly makes the interesting and profound observation that there is a paradox in the text: "Yet the paradox is clear in the fact that it is precisely those passages which say that man cannot see or hear God which affirm that

just such has indeed happened. So too Ex. 33:20 provides the necessary theological balance to what has preceded.”³³ In Exod 24:11, the priests and elders saw the Lord at Sinai and they did not perish because the Lord protected them by his grace. In another example, this present text points out that the Lord also takes protective measures to ensure Moses’s safety.

What follows is a beautiful depiction of the careful and attentive preparation the Lord makes for Moses to experience the theophany of his glory (33:21–23). It is a very personal and intimate portrait described in anthropomorphic language (note the references to the Lord’s hand, face, back).³⁴ The intimacy between Moses and YHWH is seen in that the Lord tells Moses that, “there is a place by me” (33:21) יְתֵנִּי (*iti*) literally “with me.” Again, there is a paradox or tension in the text between divine nearness and distance. Moses will be so near the Lord, right there with him, and yet at the same time, there is a sense of distance created in that the Lord’s hand must cover Moses in the cleft of the rock until the “face” of the divine glory/YHWH has passed by.³⁵ Only after the *kavod* has passed by and is not as close to Moses can Moses look.

Moberly has observed that the theophany involves movement in the “passing by” of the glory of the Lord. It is a dynamic picture of “Yahweh leading on ahead with man capable only of following and looking on from behind.”³⁶ Moses’s divine encounter will not be a static vision but will involve movement and sound; it will be both visual and audible, a rich, awesome, incomparable, and beautiful experience.

This unique revelation of God’s glory to Moses promised in Exod 33 is fulfilled in Exod 34:5–7. The context is again on top of Mount Sinai, the mountain of revelation, since Moses has returned there with the new tablets of stone to be inscribed again with the Ten Commandments. He again remains there for forty days and nights, fasting and receiving instructions and commands from the Lord (34:4–28). Although this text does not explicitly mention the glory of the Lord, there are many indicators in the text that this passage is describing what the Lord promised Moses when he asked to see his glory in 33:18. There is no need for the two passages to be identical in description for the latter to be a fulfillment of the former. Although there are some differences between the two passages, (e.g., the details of 33:21–23 are not repeated and the judgment theme is not explicit in chapter 33:19–23 as it is in 34:7),³⁷ the greater abundance of similarities between the passages leads the reader to link the two.

There are many connections between the two passages: first of all, the Lord descends in a cloud, which is an indicator that the divine glory is present (34:5). In the Exodus narrative, this cloud has appeared many times before as accompanying or concealing the divine glory (cf. 24:15–18). The verb “to stand” (נָצַב, *natzav*) is used in both passages (33:21; 34:2), and a second

verb also meaning “to stand” (יָצַב, *yatzav*) occurs in 34:5. The Lord stands with Moses (literally “with him” עִמּוֹ, *imo*) again demonstrating the nearness or intimacy described in 33:21.³⁸ And the Lord proclaims his name YHWH and in doing so reveals his divine attributes to Moses. The same verb “to proclaim” (קָרָא, *qara*) is used as well as the verb “to pass by” (עָבַר, *avar*) in both texts (33:19, 22; 34:5, 6). The audible aspect of the revelation, proclaiming YHWH’s attributes or character, repeats some elements from Exod 33:19, but also elaborates further on his divine nature and ways; for example, the adjectives or attributes describing YHWH’s character as compassionate and merciful/gracious (רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן, *rahum vehanun*; 34:6) are the same terms used but are in verbal form in 33:19. At the same time, the Lord reveals more of himself and his glorious character by elaborating further on who he is by what he does for his people.

The Jewish philosopher Maimonides (AD 1135–1204) made the interesting observation regarding this text that the divine attributes revealed to Moses are attributes of action. He wrote: “what was made known to him were simply pure attributes of action: *merciful and gracious, longsuffering*. It is then clear that the *ways*—for a knowledge of which he had asked and which, in consequence, were made known to him—are the actions proceeding from God.”³⁹ For example, we know that the Lord is compassionate because he shows compassion to his people. In other words, we know YHWH’s character through his deeds. Throughout Israel’s history, they came to know their God by experiencing his acts of compassion, mercy, grace, goodness, faithfulness, patience, steadfast love, forgiveness, and justice toward them as revealed to Moses in this theophany. This revelation was so important that it became like a creed or confession of what Israel believed and confessed about their God, as demonstrated in how often it is quoted or referred to in the Old Testament.⁴⁰ Later in rabbinic Judaism, the rabbis identified Exodus 34:6–7 as outlining the Thirteen Attributes of God and these were adopted into the liturgy of Jewish prayer.⁴¹

Thus, using Robert Gordon’s metaphor, it was like the light of God’s glory being refracted through a prism revealing various colors or aspects of the divine nature,⁴² which the Israelites would then experience in YHWH’s dealings with them. In the context of Israel’s rebellion against the Lord in worshiping the golden calf, this revelation was profoundly significant. The Lord had extended his love and mercy and had forgiven his people, giving them another chance. No wonder Moses’s response to this theophany was to bow before the Lord in worship (34:8).

Moses’s request to see the glory of the Lord also had a powerful and personal impact on him in that Moses was changed physically by this experience. The Israelites saw the afterglow or traces of God’s glory in the bright radiance of Moses’s face after he came down the mountain (Exod 34:29–35). Literally

the Hebrew text says that the skin of his face shone or beamed (34:29, 30, 35).⁴³ The NETS translation of the Greek Septuagint reads, “his face was charged with glory.”⁴⁴ Moses is forever changed by this divine encounter. The text implies that it was a continuous state because Moses needed to put a veil over his face on a regular basis (34:33–35). From then on, whenever Moses went before the Lord to speak with him, he would remove the veil. Then he would speak to the people and give the message from the Lord and the people would see the radiance of God’s glory shining on his face. Only after Moses had finished speaking with the Lord and the people would he again put on the veil to cover his face.

The impact of seeing the divine glory on Moses’s countenance must have been so powerful and intensely bright because it caused Aaron and the Israelites to be afraid to come near him and they needed reassurance from Moses. In Moberly’s words: “As Moses was not able to see the face of Yahweh, so the Israelites can hardly endure to look on the face of Moses (v. 30); though insofar as Moses is man and not God, and the glory is reflected, they are able to behold him.”⁴⁵ Although diminished in intensity from what Moses experienced, the Israelites were also able to catch an awe-inspiring glimpse of the glory of the Lord on Moses’s face, but in a reflected state as in a mirror.⁴⁶ There are a number of Scriptures that associate the glory of the Lord with light, brightness, and fire (Isa 58:8; 60:1, 2; Exod 24:17). Therefore, it is not surprising that Moses’s face radiated light as a visible demonstration that he had experienced God’s glory.⁴⁷ Moreover, because of this profound revelation, Philpot argues that in this narrative, “Moses’ shining face functions to signify God’s goodness and grace to the Israelites, not his judgment and wrath.”⁴⁸ Joshua Philpot writes, “Moses’ shining face is emblematic of Yahweh’s ‘goodness.’ At its core, Yahweh’s glory in Exod 32–34 communicates his love, mercy, and compassion. In spite of Israel’s idolatry, Yahweh reassures them of his gracious character in the form of Moses’ shining face—that he is ‘slow to anger,’ keeps ‘steadfast love for thousands’ and ‘forgives iniquity’” (34:6–7).⁴⁹ Just as Moses experienced God’s goodness and grace on Mount Sinai, the Israelites were now reminded of God’s goodness, mercy, and steadfast love, each time they saw Moses’s shining face and heard God’s word spoken and mediated through Moses (34:31–35).

Finally, the fact that Moses’s face shone also indicates the divine favor that Moses had desired and received (33:13, 17; 34:9) and thus is an illustration of the Aaronic blessing (Num 6:24–26; cf. Ps 67:1; MT Ps 67:2).⁵⁰ The Lord had caused his face to shine upon Moses, indicating his favor and blessing. This divine blessing was now visibly evident to everyone. When Moses asked to see God’s glory, he was given more than he could have ever imagined. He received a profound revelation of who God is, YHWH’s character, which would influence Israel’s theology and understanding of God throughout their

history. Moses had an incredible, unique, and life-changing experience that elevated him in the history of Israel’s memory as a prophet like none other who knew the Lord face to face (Deut 34:10; cf. Num 12:8).

NOTES

1. This chapter is a slightly revised excerpt from a chapter from my forthcoming book: Rebecca G. S. Idestrom, *Show Me Your Glory: The Glory of God in the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, forthcoming). Used by permission from the publisher.

2. Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus* (Interpretation; Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1991), 293–94.

3. Donald E. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus: Biblical Theology in the Form of a Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 220.

4. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus*, 220.

5. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem, Israel: Magnes, 1967), 435. Interestingly, Ps 103:7–8 mentions that the Lord made known his ways to Moses, referring to the revelation of the Lord’s character as seen in Exod 33:19; 34:6–7.

6. Fretheim writes, “Glory includes also a ‘proclamation’ of the very nature of God, encompassed in the proclamation of the divine name (34:6–8). That ‘I’ which ‘passes before’ Moses will be a *speaking God*. The glory of God is something that Moses will both see (though only in part) and hear. The God whom Moses sees is the kind of God about whom Moses hears directly.” Fretheim, *Exodus*, 300.

7. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics* (Vol. VI; Theology: The Old Covenant; Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1991), 41. Although the revelation of God’s character is in itself beautiful, I do not think that טִיב (*tuv*) means beauty in this narrative.

8. Certain scholars have understood טִיב (*tuv*) in this text as bearing “the technical legal meaning of covenantal friendship” (Gen 32:10, 13; Josh 24:20; Jer 18:10; 33:9, 14) and thus may hint at the renewal of the covenant which takes place in Exodus 34. Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 214, who follows Michael V. Fox, “TÔV as Covenant Terminology,” *BASOR* 209 (1973): 41–42. Others have suggested that it has to do with God’s blessings or benefits to Israel (Jer 31:12; Ps 27:13). R. W. L. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32–34* JSOTSS 22; Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1983), 76; Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Old Testament Library; Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1974), 596.

9. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God*, 76. Interestingly, the Septuagint substitutes glory (*doxa*) for the term “goodness” in its translation of 33:19. Regarding this difference in the Septuagint, Perkins makes the following observation: “It seems that Moses’ request that Yahweh reveal his glory to him in 33:18 caused the translator to interpret ‘all the good attributes of Yahweh’ as his glory.” Larry Perkins, “‘Glory’

in Greek Exodus: Lexical Choice in Translation and Its Reflection in Secondary Translations” in *“Translation is Required”: The Septuagint in Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Robert J. V. Hiebert (Septuagint and Cognate Studies 56; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 99.

10. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God*, 77.

11. Robert P. Gordon, “טוב,” *NIDOTTE* 2:355.

12. In commenting on this passage, De Vries writes: “There is clearly a connection between the כבוד of YHWH and His Name. The כבוד of YHWH is revealed in His Name. Like the כבוד of YHWH, the Name of YHWH reveals His closeness and presence.” Pieter de Vries, *The Kābôd of YHWH in the Old Testament: With Particular Reference to the Book of Ezekiel* (Studia Semitica Neerlandica 65; Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2016), 131.

13. Cornelius Houtman, *Exodus–Vol. 3* (Historical Commentary on the Old Testament; Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2000), 702; see also James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 104. Names in the Ancient Near East and in the Old Testament often have to do with reputation or character of the person named.

14. Childs points out that the same grammatical structure is used in both cases, “the circular *idem per idem* formula of the name.” Childs, *Exodus*, 596.

15. Childs, *Exodus*, 596.

16. Houtman agrees that God’s character is revealed in what he does: “How are we to imagine the contours of YHWH which Moses was allowed to see? 33:19 shows that the theophany is to be understood as the manifestation of YHWH’s attributes. In all of YHWH’s doings the contours of what he is like become visible to man (cf. Job 26:14).” Houtman, *Exodus–Vol. 3*, 704.

17. Moberly highlights the importance of this reassurance. “The fact that at the supremely critical moment in Israel’s existence it is Yahweh’s ‘goodness’ rather than judgment which is brought to the fore is of great theological significance.” Moberly, *At the Mountain of God*, 77.

18. As a general observation, theophanies in the Bible are often both visual and audible. George W. Savran, *Encountering the Divine: Theophany in Biblical Narrative* (London, England: T & T Clark, 2005), 52.

19. Houtman writes, “The proclamation is an audible disclosure of YHWH’s attributes. In short, in the first half of 33:19, YHWH makes it known that both visibly and audibly he will confront Moses with his attributes” (Houtman, *Exodus–Vol. 3*, 702). Although Houtman agrees that the theophany is both audible and visible, he believes that the emphasis is on the audible experience. *Ibid.*, 707.

20. It is true that hearing the Lord speak audibly is part of the other theophanies as well, as when the Lord calls Moses from the cloud (24:16) and Moses received the words and commands of the Lord while on the Mountain, in the cloud of glory. The word of the Lord often follows or accompanies the revelation of the glory of the Lord (Exod 16:10, 11; cf. Isa 6; Ezek 43). YHWH speaking his own name may seem odd to us, but it fits with the context of the Lord doing everything, making all the preparations and giving the revelation, with Moses being the passive recipient.

21. Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord. Vol. VI*, 34–35.

22. When the fulfillment of this happens in 34:5–7, the Lord descends in the cloud.

23. Although I disagree with Savran that seeing the glory (*kavod*) is denied to Moses, Savran's comments reveal some of the struggle scholars have with the text. He writes that, "in Exod. 33.18–23, one is hard pressed to understand the precise difference between *kavod* and *panim*, which are forbidden to Moses, and YHWH's 'goodness' (33.19) and his 'back' (33.23), which are revealed to him." Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, 54.

24. In Brueggemann's study of this passage, he translates every reference to פָּנִים/פָּנִי (*panim/pane*) as "face," in order to demonstrate how often the motif of face occurs in the Hebrew text (and not so obvious in the English translations), even though the translation "presence" would be the more appropriate nuance. Walter Brueggemann, "The Crisis and Promise of Presence in Israel," in *Old Testament Theology: Essays on Structure, Theme, and Text*, ed. Patrick D. Miller (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 167–68.

25. "Face to face" is also applied to the Israelites in Deut 5:4 but here it probably means he spoke to them directly rather than intimately, in that they heard him speak from the fire (Deut 5:23–27).

26. As Houtman translates it. Houtman, *Exodus–Vol. 3*, 677.

27. The Hebrew word אַחֲרָי (*achorai*) usually translated as "my back" in 33:23 is not the normal Hebrew word for back, but is more related to the word "after" or "behind" and thus is better translated as "after me, see me from behind, my hinder parts."

28. The text clearly identifies the divine glory with the Lord himself (33:22).

29. Sarna and Moberly both use the term "afterglow" as well as "traces" of his presence to explain what Moses sees. Sarna, *Exodus*, 215; Moberly, *At the Mountain of God*, 82.

30. Houtman, *Exodus–Vol. 3*, 704.

31. Thus, in verse 20, "face" has the more specific meaning of a full and direct unmediated view rather than simply referring to God's presence in general. Moses is not denied seeing and hearing the glory; instead he will be restricted to a partial viewing.

32. One could argue that there is a mysterious dialectic between seeing and not seeing in the text. Von Balthasar observes that in Exod 33, "the dialectic of knowing and not knowing passes over into that of seeing and not seeing" (Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord. Vol. VI*, 38). Part of knowing is having experiential knowledge, seeing, hearing, experiencing, and so forth. Moses's desire to know the ways of the Lord is fulfilled in seeing his glory, yet this seeing is both limited and, at the same time, much more than simply seeing. As we have discussed, Moses will experience the name and character of YHWH proclaimed audibly.

33. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God*, 81.

34. Although Moses initiated the theophany by his request to see the Lord's glory, the divine preparation described is unique in the Old Testament in that, "Nowhere else is the recipient of the theophany prepared for the event by YHWH," as Savran has observed. Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, 89.

35. Moberly points out this tension between “bringing Moses close but preserving the distance at the same time,” Moberly, *At the Mountain of God*, 81.

36. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God*, 82.

37. The judgment theme may be implied in the fact that the Lord has freedom to show mercy to whom he chooses (33:19), which means he can also judge those to whom he chooses not to show mercy. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God*, 87.

38. In 34:5, the Lord standing with Moses is emphasized, whereas 33:21 focuses on Moses standing with the Lord. Either way, the point of both texts is the nearness and intimacy between Moses and the Lord; they are together, with each other, as the theophany occurs.

39. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Vol. 1, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 1:54, 124; (italics used by Maimonides when he quotes Scripture). Maimonides also concluded that Moses’s request to know the Lord’s ways in 33:13 was fulfilled in the theophany. Ibid., 123.

40. Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Ps 103:8; 145:8, 9; Jonah 4:2.

41. Carol Meyers, *Exodus* (New Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 264.

42. Gordon, “טוב,” 355.

43. קָרָן עוֹר פָּנָיו (*qaran or panav*).

44. Exod 34:29, 30, 35 (NETS). Perkins, who translated Exodus from the LXX into English for the NETS translation, explains his translation: “In NETS I have used the rendering ‘charged with glory’ to try to capture the sense of a transferred, shining radiance.” Perkins, “‘Glory’ in Greek Exodus,” 97.

45. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God*, 106.

46. Cf. 2 Cor 3:18.

47. Perkins, “‘Glory’ in Greek Exodus,” 97. Philpot points out that Moses had previously encountered God’s presence on numerous occasions without his face shining as a result of these divine encounters. Only after his unique experience of God’s glory did Moses’s face shine. “The shining of Moses’ face is no doubt the result of his unique experience with Yahweh’s glory in 34:1–9, for this is the only difference in terms of exposure with Yahweh between his first stint on Sinai and his second one.” Joshua M. Philpot, “Exodus 34:29–35 and Moses’ Shining Face,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 23, no. 1 (2013): 5.

48. Philpot, “Exodus 34:29–35 and Moses’ Shining Face,” 1.

49. Philpot, “Exodus 34:29–35 and Moses’ Shining Face,” 7.

50. Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 227–28.

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