

## YAHWEH AND MOSES, PART 2

### EXODUS 33:17-34:9

Once again, God confirmed His intention to do as Moses asked.

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

In verse 12, Yahweh told Moses the prophet had found favor in His sight. Moses then requested to know Him better and asked Him to consider the people as well. In verse 17, Yahweh agreed to do as Moses asked because the prophet had found favor in His sight. Favor, יָחַד, means favor, grace, and acceptance. Yahweh had a special relationship with Moses signified by the words "I have known you by name." Moses' intercession was successful and Yahweh would resume His leadership of the nation.

Moses had just presented an argument focused on the existence of Israel (Ex. 33:16). Was Yahweh going to destroy them or was He going to acknowledge them as His people to whom He had made covenant promises? Moses knew Israel had no chance to survive and possess the Promised Land if Yahweh was not with them. The prophet had such an intimate relationship with Yahweh that he could challenge Him to change His mind and restore the people to fellowship. Moses was respected enough by Yahweh that his request was given serious consideration and ultimately it was something to which Yahweh could agree. We have to acknowledge Moses also made the correct argument. He didn't want to be the father of a new nation and he didn't want Yah-

weh's name to be besmirched among the nations as it would be if the Lord did not go with them. He reminded the Lord that it was His reputation that was on the line and not Moses' reputation. Moses reminded Him that only His presence distinguished Israel from all the other nations.

Once that was settled, Moses had another request.

Exodus 33:18      <sup>18</sup>Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!"

This might seem to be an odd request. The Bible identified two incidents in Exodus where the glory of God was specifically said to be manifest. One was on the occasion of the provision of manna (Ex. 16:10) and the second was here on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:15-18). But wasn't the glory of Yahweh made manifest to the Israelites in other ways as well? I think it was. Moses had seen Yahweh in the burning bush. The angel of God stood behind the Israelites in a visible cloud that kept the Egyptian Army from killing them before they could cross the sea. The people had seen the miracles in Egypt that spared them and destroyed the Egyptians and their nation. They saw the glory of God in their deliverance at the Red Sea when Moses said, "stand by and see the salvation of the Lord" (Ex. 14:13). They were led by the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night both of which are reflections of the glory and the presence of God with them. They were enjoying the miraculous provision of manna up to that point in time and the water miraculously produced at the base of Mt. Sinai. Moses had just been immersed in the glory of God on Mt. Sinai for forty days. Each of these things is a manifestation of the glory of God. But Moses wanted more.

Some commentators claim God's glory had only been visible to the corporate group as a whole, was only visible at a distance, and God chose the time and place. They base that on the two Scriptures that specifically say they saw God's glory. That's true concerning the manna, but only partially true concerning Mt. Sinai. Moses was right in the midst of the glory of God on the mountain; he wasn't kept at a distance. One could argue the manifestation in the burning bush, the performance of the miracles, and the other instances I cited were not manifestations of the glory of God, but I think they were even though the Word of God does not specifically identify them as such. Each of these things is a manifestation of God's glory, the difference being they appear in different forms. Nevertheless, all of them still reveal the glory of God one way or another; everything God does reveals the glory of God. Everything God does serves his purpose for history which is to glorify His name. Regardless of how much Moses had seen of God's glory to this point in the Exodus, he wanted to see more of God's glory and he wanted it to be even more personal than it had been on the mountain. Which itself seems to have been an incredibly personal encounter.

Some commentators think Moses was seeking assurance Yahweh was actually going to be with them after threatening to withdraw His presence from them, but this seems to reflect a low view of God. Yahweh just told Moses twice his intercession was successful and He would, in fact, lead them to Canaan. Moses had faithfully believed God to this point, why would that change? Moses

certainly believed God was going to withdraw His presence from them when He said He would do so. Why wouldn't he believe Yahweh had changed His mind and granted Moses' intercessory petition? I fail to see any reason why Moses would doubt God's veracity.

The Lord consented to do as Moses asked. That was an indication of how much Moses was found faithful in God's sight. One commentator suggested Moses wanted a more "experiential sensory perception of God."<sup>1</sup> That's difficult to comprehend since Moses just spent forty days on a mountain in a personal meeting with Yahweh while immersed in the glory of God and hearing Him speak directly to him during that time. He had also heard God speak to him from a burning bush, he had seen God perform incredible judgmental miracles against Egypt and the gods of Egypt, he had seen the deliverance of the Israelites from certain death at the hands of the Egyptian Army through the Red Sea, and so on. There can't be much more of an "experiential sensory perception of God" than all of that, but in some way, what God is going to do next in terms of personal interaction with Moses is somehow more intimate than any interaction they had to that point. This was going to be an amazingly personal encounter with Yahweh that was more intense and revealing than anything Moses had experienced up to that time in the Exodus saga.

Exodus 33:19      <sup>19</sup>And He said, "I Myself will make all [כל] My goodness [טוב] pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Exodus* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 705.

be gracious [חַנּוּן] to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion [רַחֵם] on whom I will show compassion.”

Moses asked to know God's ways to an extent that surpassed the knowledge already revealed to him. This theophany was a way for Moses to know God even better, and God agreed to Moses' request. Moses was not going to see a physical representation of God, but in some way God's attributes were going to be revealed to him. He was going to know the person of God better after this than he knew Him before this revelation. Somehow, in this act, God revealed His goodness, His graciousness, and His compassion to Moses. He also revealed the fact that the exercise of those divine attributes is according to His will and not according to man's will. It is not within God's purposes that man can know what God is going to do at any one time or in any particular situation unless the Scriptures specifically state what His response will be in a certain situation. He also has the prerogative of dealing with different people in different ways at different times according to His will. God does not show partiality (Acts 10:34), but He does take into consideration personal situations and characteristics in deciding how to deal with each individual. God desires to be, and loves to be, gracious and compassionate, but it is His prerogative to act in that way or not. He also must be holy and righteous in keeping with His character.

Not only must we not have a desire to go beyond the will of God as it has been revealed in Word of God, we must never think we can manipulate God into doing anything against His will. Since the canon of Scripture is complete, the practical outworking of that thought for us is we are not to go beyond that

which Scripture has revealed and we are not to expect God to violate His attributes that have been revealed in those Scriptures. Having said that, there are many things we have the freedom to do that are not discussed in the Word of God, but the Scriptures can guide us in deciding whether or not it is something we should or should not do. God has also placed some controls within people. We know Him because He has placed the knowledge of Him and His truth within us (Rom. 1:18-19), and we have a God-given conscious of His will concerning right and wrong (Rom. 2:15).

Goodness, טוב, means goodness, fairness, and beauty. The root of the word refers to something that is desirable for enjoyment. In this context, it refers to the sum total of the excellence of all God's attributes which seems to be the purpose of God's response to Moses' request to know the ways of Yahweh. In the Old Testament there are five ways the concept of "good" is expressed: (1) practical, economic, or material good; (2) abstract goodness such as desirability, pleasantness, and beauty; (3) quality or expense; (4) moral goodness; and (5) technical, philosophical good<sup>2</sup> which is the highest good and which is the meaning in this context. God is innately good, it is part of His identity and He expresses that goodness in His relationship to and with mankind. God's goodness is represented by the sum total of all His attributes. He can do and be only what and who He is.

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<sup>2</sup> R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, s. v. "טוב," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1980), 345.

The word all, כֹּל, means all, every, total, or complete. That cannot mean Moses was going to see and know everything there was to know about the goodness of God as it is expressed through His attributes. It had to mean Moses was going to see all God was going to allow Him to see. We cannot see God now as we will be allowed to see Him when we possess our glorified bodies. That simply isn't possible for people who still possess a sin nature. Even then, God is inexhaustible and no created being will ever know all there is to know about Him. We can only know that which He sees fit to allow us to know.

Deuteronomy 29:29      <sup>29</sup>"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

We cannot know God as we know one another. God is among us, yet He is beyond us. He can come to us, but we cannot physically go to Him, at least not until we receive a glorified body. Doctrinally, we call these things immanence and transcendence.

Immanence is the concept that God is present in and with His created order. That does not mean God is in everything that exists; that is pantheism and it is a pagan thought. It means He is involved with His created order. God did not create the universe and then absent Himself from it in order to allow it to run by means of inertia. He is continually active in it. In Him all things hold together and without His leadership nothing could continue on.

Colossians 1:17      <sup>17</sup>He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Psalm 139:6–10   <sup>6</sup>Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it. <sup>7</sup>Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? <sup>8</sup>If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. <sup>9</sup>If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, <sup>10</sup>Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me.

Transcendence is the idea that God is uniquely different and apart from His creation. God is over and above everything that exists and He is superior to it. Nothing in creation is equal to God.

Isaiah 55:8–9       <sup>8</sup>“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup>“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Gracious, חַנּוּן, means to be gracious toward, to favor, or to have mercy on. It refers to an act of kindness or compassion to another person. It relates to a heartfelt response by a person who has something another person has need of and which they freely give to the one in need. The focus of this verb is on the One who gives, not on the one who receives. Grace embodies the concept of unmerited favor. If anyone is rewarded for work done or rewarded for some sort of personal merit, then it is no longer grace; it is something given to another because it was earned by that person. No one who receives God's grace has earned it; it is a freely bestowed gift granted to someone solely out of the goodness, mercy, and love of God. The word translated “favor” in verses 12, 13, and 16 is the noun form of this word, חֵן. Unlike the translation of “favor” as the rest of the English translations render it, the NKJV translates this word as “grace.”

Compassion, רַחֲמִים, means to have compassion, pity, or mercy. It represents a deeply felt sorrow on behalf of a person who has suffered some kind of calam-



ity or misfortune in life that produces a desire to help that person in his need. The root refers to a deep love of one person for another who have some sort of a natural bond together and it usually, but not always, refers to the relationship of a superior to a subordinate. It means to have a feeling or an attitude of strong affection toward an object based on association or relationship which can manifest in an action of kindness towards the object of one's love and affection. For example, this word may be used to refer to the compassion parents feel for their babies. It is not hard to see how this word is used here in reference to God's relationship with the Israelites. Calvinists use this verse to claim unconditional election, but the context of Exodus at this point was not about justification salvation; the rebellion was a sanctification salvation issue. The Israelites were already part of the family of God. The reference here was to what Yahweh's dealings with the Israelites should be in light of the apostasy they just exhibited with the golden bull idol. In this case, we know that Yahweh was gracious and compassionate to them and granted them grace and mercy rather than wiping them all out as He at first proclaimed He would do. He commuted their sentence, so to speak. He didn't have to do that, but He did.

By proclaiming His name before Moses, Yahweh was going to reveal Himself to Moses beyond the revelation Moses had already received. Not only would Moses be exposed to some sort of visual representation of God, he would be exposed to an audible confirmation of God's identity. We don't know what name God proclaimed that day, but I suspect it was the same name He pro-

claimed to Moses at the burning bush on this same mountain a year or so before.

There was a catch, however, because no man can actually see God and live. It is true God is invisible unless He makes Himself visible, which is His prerogative and He can do that, but that isn't the problem. The problem is man cannot see God and live unless He sovereignly and for the accomplishment of His purposes allows people to see Him to some degree.

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

Very few men were ever privileged to see a theophany and for some of them it was a very frightening experience. When Samson's father realized they had seen the angel of the Lord, he said, "We will surely die, for we have seen God" (Judges 13:22).

Judges 13:22      <sup>22</sup>So Manoah said to his wife, "We will surely die, for we have seen God."

Later, Moses reminded the Israelites they had been privileged to be so close to Yahweh without losing their lives.

Deuteronomy 4:33      <sup>33</sup>"Has *any* people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard *it*, and survived?"

One suspects the lives of anyone who experienced God's temporal presence in any form, had to be sovereignly spared or they would not have survived the encounter. The Israelites saw God's glory and heard His voice, but they

didn't actually see Him. Yet, Moses told them they were fortunate to have their lives spared for being even that close to His presence.

Sinful man inherently knows he has no business being in the presence of a holy being. Until mankind conforms to the image of Christ, no one can be in the presence of God, at least not in the way we will experience His presence after we receive our glorified bodies. When Yahweh declared the Ten Commandments to the people, they were so frightened at simply hearing His voice they asked Moses to be the intermediary between themselves and God.

Exodus 20:18–19 <sup>18</sup>All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood at a distance. <sup>19</sup>Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die."

Daniel was frightened to the extent he looked like death when he was in the presence of what was almost certainly the preincarnate Christ.

Daniel 10:8–9 <sup>8</sup>So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength. <sup>9</sup>But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

The Apostle John, the disciple Jesus loved, had a falling out spell as though he were dead when he had a vision of the risen Lord.

Revelation 1:17 <sup>17</sup>When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man....

The point of what God is doing here isn't about what Moses saw; it is about what Moses was going learn about God. We have to remember the Israelites didn't have the Scriptures as we have them today; they had nothing. This

was all new to them; they needed to learn about Yahweh and He was teaching them as they went along. As a person, God has various attributes or aspects of being that He wants to reveal to mankind. People can only understand who they are in relation to God and in relationship with God if they know who He is and who He wants them to be. It is important to understand that God is not just an abstract ideal, He is a person who interacts with His creation. He sustains it and He has a plan for it. Part of that plan involves the Israelites and their nation, Israel. The Jews were going to write the vast majority of Scripture. In order to do that, they have to know God and this event is part of revealing Himself to them. This is a special situation, one we should not expect to experience. It is not necessary to experience a theophany in this age when we have the Scriptures so readily available to us. Further, we have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit which is a permanent result of placing our faith in Christ Jesus. We don't need a theophany; we have God, who indwells us, with us at all times.

2 Corinthians 5:7 <sup>7</sup>for we walk by faith, not by sight—

Yahweh made provisions for allowing Moses to experience His glory yet without seeing His face so that the prophet would not lose his life.

Exodus 33:21–23 <sup>21</sup>Then the LORD said, “Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand *there* on the rock; <sup>22</sup>and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft [בִּקְרַח] of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. <sup>23</sup>“Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.”

Moses' request to see God's glory would be granted, but it would also be limited. Here, He explained to Moses how He would limit the prophet's exposure

to His glory. What Moses was going to experience, visually and audibly, was incredible, but it was not anywhere close to the full extent of what could be revealed to him if God so desired to do so. In Hebrew thought, to see someone's back is a way of saying they saw nothing. A personal encounter involved seeing a person's face. For example, after Absalom's rebellion against his father, he was prohibited from seeing the king's face.

2 Samuel 14:24 <sup>24</sup>However the king said, "Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face." So Absalom turned to his own house and did not see the king's face.

In Genesis, Joseph told his brothers that if they returned to Egypt for more grain, they would not see his face unless they brought Benjamin with them (Gen. 43:3,5; 44:23). Pharaoh told Moses he could not see his face again under the penalty of death (Ex. 10:28-29). In Jeremiah, God told the Israelites He would turn His back on them in the time of disaster that was coming to Israel meaning they would not be able to find Him when they needed Him.

Jeremiah 18:17 <sup>17</sup>"Like an east wind I will scatter them Before the enemy; I will show them My back and not My face In the day of their calamity.'"

The place referred as the rock is either a specific rock on Mt. Sinai with a cleft in it, or it is a general reference to the top of Mt. Sinai where Yahweh has been meeting with Moses. There was a cleft there large enough for Moses to shelter in to the extent Yahweh would be able to prevent him from seeing that which he was prohibited from seeing. Cleft, נִקְרָה, means a cleft or a cavern. It is some sort of a fissure in the rock or a crevice large enough for a person to either

hide in or shelter in, presumably from the elements. The word is used in Isaiah 2:21 to suggest people will hide from God in the clefts of rocks during the Tribulation.

Covering Moses with God's hand is an anthropomorphism to say God was going to keep Moses from seeing those things he should not see and still be able to see that which God wanted him to see. Anthropomorphisms describe God in a way that allows human beings to comprehend him in way that is relatable to the human condition. We should not think a huge God hand covered this cleft in which Moses was sheltered.

Provisions were then made for the broken tablets of the Ten Commandments to be replaced.

Exodus 34:1 <sup>1</sup>Now the LORD said to Moses, "Cut out for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered.

Yahweh provided the first two stone tablets, (Ex. 24:12; 32:16), they were God's work, but this time the Lord ordered Moses to cut them out himself and bring them back up the mountain. The first set was broken due to the unfaithfulness of the Israelites; therefore, a second set was needed in order to reinstate the Covenant. God did mention the tablets had been broken by Moses and some commentators believe the order for Moses to cut the new tablets out of stone was a rebuke for smashing the first set. For example, Carpenter wrote, "Since Moses broke them, Moses is directed to make new ones. The point is a mild, sarcastic rebuke to Moses. It may have been an excessive reaction on Mo-

ses' part to break tablets that contained words written "by the finger of God" (31:18), however much smashing the two tablets effectively symbolized what Israel had done."<sup>3</sup> That could be true, but with the breaking of the Covenant, the first tablets were abrogated and therefore no longer meaningful. The Covenant had to be renewed which called for new documentation of the Covenant. Previously, I noted that Moses wasn't out of control and didn't smash them simply because he was angry. He smashed them to show the people their Covenant with Yahweh was broken and their breach of the Covenant protocols was very serious business indeed. As a result of the Israelites' restoration to fellowship, the Covenant had to be renewed.

The first step in renewing the Covenant was the provision of two new tablets upon which Yahweh could write the commandments the second time. These tablets would be identical to the first in terms of the Covenant terms inscribed on them (Ex. 34:28). One could certainly suppose the first tablets cut out by the hand of God were more aesthetically pleasing than the second set chiseled out of rock by the hand of man, but they would have been otherwise identical.

Next, Moses received instructions for returning to Mt. Sinai and meeting Yahweh for the purpose of renewing the Covenant.

Exodus 34:2-3      <sup>2</sup>"So be ready by morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to Me on the top of the mountain. <sup>3</sup>"No man is to come up with you, nor let any man be seen anywhere on the mountain; even the flocks and the herds may not graze in front of that mountain."

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<sup>3</sup> Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, ed. H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick, vol. 2, *Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*, Logos Electronic ed. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 350-351.

Moses was to have the tablets ready the next morning and he was to go up Mt. Sinai to meet with God and bring the tablets with him. Once there, Moses would once again meet with Yahweh on the top of the mountain. No one was to go up with him this time. Aaron and the elders were not to go up and Joshua was not to go up. No one was to go up part way with Moses and stay below the summit on the slope of the mountain as Joshua did the first time Moses received the Commandments. No livestock were to be grazed at the base of the mountain while Moses was up there. The first time Moses went up there were boundaries set around the base of the mountain the people were not to violate (Ex. 19:12, 23), but some men were authorized to go up with Moses at least part way. Even then, they were not allowed to go all the way up where they could gaze on God (Ex. 19:21). This time things are a bit different, but not remarkably so. Yahweh is still jealousy guarding His holiness and setting the rules for who may approach Him and how He may be approached on that mountain.

Moses followed orders by cutting out the stone tablets, ascending the mountain the next morning, and taking the tablets with him.

Exodus 34:4 <sup>4</sup>So he cut out two stone tablets like the former ones, and Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and he took two stone tablets in his hand.

Once Moses went back up the mountain, the Lord descended onto the mountain top to meet with His prophet there.

Exodus 34:5 <sup>5</sup>The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD.



The cloud must refer to the glory of the Lord as it did before in Exodus 24:15-16, but the text doesn't say it looked like a consuming fire on the mountain as it did in Exodus 24:17. Whether or not all the people could see the glory of the Lord on Mt. Sinai at this time is not stated. Compared to the first time Moses went up, this time seems to be a bit muted since no one could accompany the prophet up the mountain and it doesn't say the mountain appeared to be on fire. That may be in keeping with the fact the Covenant had to be renewed due to the sin that rendered the first Covenant null and void. That's speculation, but it cannot be doubted that this time is a bit more subdued or scaled back than the first time.

Once again, we see the use of an anthropomorphism to describe God and His activity. He came down and stood. God is omnipresent so He was already there and He doesn't have legs upon which to stand unless He is engaging in a theophany which is not the case here. In other words, there is no physical representation of God here as there was in Daniel 10 and Revelation 1. Nevertheless, whatever happened here allowed Moses to know he was in God's presence once again. Stuart wrote, "Moses could perceive that a real personal being had come to him and not just a concept, or a feeling, or a numinous impression."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Exodus* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 714.

Did Yahweh proclaim His name or did Moses proclaim the name of the Lord? Most translations suggest it was Moses, but the context suggests Yahweh is proclaiming His name to Moses. That's what the following verses are about wherein God is revealing Himself to Moses in a more complete way than He had revealed Himself before.

At this point, Yahweh is going to respond to Moses' request to see His glory. Exactly what Moses can and cannot see, we don't know. He knows Yahweh is in the cloud of glory and he knows he is in God's presence. The most important factor here concerns what Moses learned and not what he saw.

Exodus 34:6–7      <sup>6</sup>Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate [רַחוּם] and gracious [רַחוּן], slow to anger [אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם], and abounding in lovingkindness [רַחוּם] and truth [אֱמֻנָה]; <sup>7</sup>who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives [נִשְׁכַּח] iniquity [עֲוֹן], transgression [פְּשָׁע] and sin [חַטָּאת]; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

God's name is expressed in His attributes. The name represents the attributes that make up the person who has the name. Moses wanted to really know Yahweh and this was a major part of that educational process. The Lord proclaimed those attributes as He passed by Moses who was sheltered in the cleft of the rock.

"The Lord, the Lord God" is literally, "Yahweh, Yahweh God" [יְהוָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי] The only translation I routinely look at that translates it that way is the *Lexham English Bible*. This may be not exactly like, but at least comparable to, the identification made to Moses at the burning bush, "I Am who I Am" (Ex. 3:14). All of

the listed attributes are part of the identity of God. They are all equal one with the other. One attribute cannot be taken away from Him and none can be elevated in significance over any other. That's why the "God is love and only love" crowd in churchianity today is mistaken. God's love cannot be said to be the only attribute that describes His nature to the exclusion of all His other attributes.<sup>5</sup>

Compassionate, רַחוּם, refers to being compassionate and merciful. It indicates a merciful and forgiving character and attitude.

Gracious, חַנוּן, means gracious or merciful. In the Old Testament, this word is never used to describe a man; it is only used to describe God. God treats people with grace by bestowing on them benefits they do not deserve. When people do not reap what they sow or get what they deserve from God in terms of discipline or punishment, He has granted them mercy.

Slow to anger, אַרְךָ אָף, means long drawn out or slow. It refers to being slow of temper or patient. God is patient with His people who often do things that ought to try the patience of even the most patient.

Lovingkindness, חֶסֶד, means kindness, lovingkindness, mercy, goodness, faithfulness, love, or acts of kindness. If you want to get a feel for this word as an attribute of God, read Psalm 136. This word refers to loyalty of one member of a covenant relationship to the other member of the covenant. God will be faithful to keep His promises even when mankind is unfaithful in return.

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<sup>5</sup> The following definitions are primarily from Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 2003).

Truth, אֱמֶת, means truth and faithfulness. The idea as it pertains to an attribute of God does not simply refer to truth as opposed to false; it refers to the possession of character that is so trustworthy and reliable that one may base his life on it. This not only applies to trusting Him with one's physical life, but with one's eternal life as well.

God is a God of forgiveness. Forgives, נָשָׂא, means to lift, to carry or bear, and to take away. His promise refers to generations rather than to a large number of people at any one time. Only God has the power to forgive sin and restore a person back to fellowship within the covenant relationship.

God forgives iniquity, עֲוֹן, meaning iniquity, evil, guilt, or punishment. This word indicates sin that is particularly evil, since it strongly conveys the idea of twisting or perverting deliberately. It also refers to the sin or transgression resulting from conscious wrongdoing and the requisite guilt one feels for committing the sin.

He also forgives transgression, פְּשָׁע, meaning transgression or rebellion. It primarily refers to rebellion against God although it can refer to interpersonal relations.

The third word that is the object of His forgiveness is sin, חַטָּאת, meaning sin or transgression.

While Yahweh is a God of forgiveness, He will not leave the guilty unpunished. In the context of dealing with the Covenant nation, this refers to temporal

discipline for those who refuse to conform to the Covenant stipulations. It does not refer to the loss of justification salvation which cannot be lost.

Punishing the following generations for personal sins does not mean that people suffer punishment for the personal sins their ancestors committed. It is hard to break sin patterns that originate in the family unit. Drug abuse, alcoholism, criminal behavior, spouse abuse, and so on seem to result in generational patterns of those sins in some families. That is not to say sin patterns can't be broken, particularly if someone in that line comes to faith in Christ. Each person will suffer the consequences for their own sin whether this be the temporal consequences that sin generates in life, or the eternal consequences of a life of sin that is never rectified in Christ. It is also true that succeeding generations can suffer the consequences that flow from their ancestor's sins even though they had no fault in the matter. For example, the young Israelites had to wander in the wilderness for forty years due to their father's sin of refusing to enter the land.

In terms of Israel, God tried to get generation after generation to turn to Him and each generation continued to pile on the rebellion until God exercised temporal discipline against the nation.

Once Yahweh revealed His glory to Moses in this way, the prophet could only do one thing and that was worship.

Exodus 34:8 <sup>8</sup>Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship.

Moses interceded for the people one last time.

Exodus 34:9 <sup>9</sup>He said, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own possession."

We already know Moses was favored in God's sight (Ex. 33:12). Moses petitioned Him to go with them to the land they were promised despite the fact the people were so obstinate. He asked they be forgiven for their rebellion and to be known as the people of Yahweh which would confirm their restoration.

Next, the Covenant was renewed and Yahweh stated He would go with into the land.