

CHAPTER 33

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS 33

This chapter informs us, that the Lord refusing to go with the people, only sending an angel with them, they are filled with concern, and troubled, (⁽⁴²³¹⁾Exodus 33:1-6). Moses upon this pitched the tabernacle without the camp, where everyone that sought the Lord went; Moses entered into it himself, and the Lord talked to him in a friendly manner in the cloudy pillar that stood at the door of it, and the people worshipped, every man at his own tent door; all which foreboded good, and tended to reconciliation, (⁽⁴²³⁷⁾Exodus 33:7-11). Moses improved the opportunity, and entreats the presence of God to go with them, which was granted, (⁽⁴²³¹²⁾Exodus 33:12-17) and that he might have a sight of the glory of God; and this is promised to pass before him, he being put into the cleft of the rock, (⁽⁴²³¹⁸⁾Exodus 33:18-23).

Ver. 1. *And the Lord said unto Moses, depart, and go up hence,* etc.] Not from the place where Moses was, which was the top of the mount, but where the camp of Israel was, at the bottom of the mount; where they had lain encamped some time, but were now ordered to proceed on their journey:

thou, and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt; though his wrath was in some measure mitigated, and he had so far forgave their sin, that he would not cut them off from being a people; yet still he does not call them his people, or own that he brought them out of Egypt, as he does in the preface to the commands they had now broke, as if they were not under his care and conduct; but speaks of them in a different manner, as a people that Moses had brought out from thence, and whom he orders to go on with:

unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, unto thy seed will I give it: meaning the land of Canaan, which as he had promised with an oath to their fathers to give it to them, he would faithfully observe it, though they were unworthy of such a favour.

Ver. 2. *And I will send an angel before thee*, etc.] Not the angel before promised, (^{Exodus 23:20}) the Angel of his presence, the eternal Word and Son of God, but a created angel; and so Aben Ezra observes, he does not say the Angel that was known, that his name was in him; though even this was to be looked upon as a favour, and showed that he had not utterly cast them off:

and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite; who were now the inhabitants of the land, and these he promises drive out, to make way for their possession of it; and that “by his hand”, as the Targum of Jonathan interprets it, by the hand of the angel. Only six nations are mentioned, though there were seven; the Girgashite is omitted, but added in the Septuagint version.

Ver. 3. *Unto a land flowing with milk and honey*, etc.] Abounding with all the necessaries and good things of life, a description of the land of Canaan frequently made, (see ^{Exodus 3:8}):

for I will not go up in the midst of thee; would not grant them his presence in so near, visible, and respectable a manner as he had before done, though he would not utterly forsake them: the tabernacle was before in the midst of the camp, that is, that which was erected until the large one, ordered to be made, was finished, but now it was removed without the camp, (^{Exodus 33:7})

for thou art a stiffnecked people; ((see Gill on “^{Exodus 32:9}”)):

lest I consume them in the way; in the way to the land of Canaan, and so never get there; the meaning is, that the Lord being in the midst of them, their sin would be the more aggravated to be committed in his presence, before his face; and the glory of his majesty would require that immediate notice be taken of it, and just punishment inflicted; so that by this step God both consulted his own honour and their safety.

Ver. 4. *And when the people heard these evil tidings*, etc.] That God would withdraw his gracious presence, and go not up with them himself, only send an angel with them; and especially this may respect what is threatened, (^{Exodus 33:5}) and had been said at this time:

they mourned; were inwardly and heartily grieved for their sin, whereby they had provoked the Lord to depart from them, and gave some outward and open tokens of it:

and no man did put on his ornaments; they used to wear at other times, their rings and jewels, which the princes and the chief among the people especially were wont to wear; and in common the people did not put on their best clothes, or what they usually wore, but clothed themselves in mournful habits, in sackcloth and ashes, or in some such like manner.

Ver. 5. *For the Lord had said to Moses*, etc.] At the same time he had told it to the people:

say unto the children of Israel: Menachem, as quoted by Ainsworth, observes, that this is said in a way of mercy; for since their idolatry he had only called them the people of Moses, and the people, but now calls them by their beloved name, the children of Israel; but whether this was any hint of mercy and favour, is not very apparent by what follows:

ye [are] a stiffnecked people; obstinate and untractable, ((see Gill on “~~(233)~~Exodus 32:9”)):

I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee; before he threatens them that he would not go up in the midst of them, that is, in a way of grace and mercy, to guide, protect, and defend them himself; and now that he would come up in the midst of them, but in a different manner, in a way of wrath, and to take vengeance on them for their sins; and the meaning is, either that should he do so but one moment it would be all over with them, or they would be utterly consumed; or this is threatened on condition, provided they did not repent of their sins, and humble themselves:

therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee; not their armour, as some, nor the clothes they wore at the festival for the golden calf, for this was long after that; but the clothes they usually wore, the best they had, with all their decorations and ornaments, and put on mournful habits as an outward token of their repentance and mourning for their sins, if they had any real concern: this shows that these words must have been said before; since the people on hearing the evil tidings had clothed themselves in a mournful habit, and did not put on their ornaments, (~~(233)~~Exodus 33:4):

that I may know what to do unto thee; which does not suppose ignorance or irresolution in God, but is said after the manner of men, that he should deal with them in proportion to their conduct and behaviour, and as that should outwardly appear.

Ver. 6. *And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments,* etc.] Such as before described, and this they did,

by the Mount Horeb; before their departure from thence, and where they had been guilty of the idolatry: the words may be literally rendered, “from Mount Horeb”^{f958}; and Jonathan understands the preceding clause of something they put off which they received from thence; but the meaning is, that they went to some distance from Mount Horeb, and there stripped themselves to show their greater humiliation, and the sense they had of their unworthiness of being near to the Lord, or enjoying his presence.

Ver. 7. *And Moses took the tabernacle,* etc.] Not that, the pattern of which he had been shown in the mount, for that was not as yet made, rather his own tabernacle or tent, (^{<1287>}Exodus 18:7) or one that was erected for worship before the large one was ordered, and while that was building; for it can hardly be thought they should have no place of worship for a whole year after they were come out of Egypt; though this might be not a place on purpose, or only erected for that use, but might be one of the apartments of Moses; who, besides what he had for the use and convenience of his family, had a special and peculiar one, hath on a religious account, where he and the people sometimes worshipped, and God met with them, and on a civil account, to hear and judge the causes of the people, and resolve their doubts, and remove their difficulties, and make inquiries of God for them:

and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp; 2000 cubits distant from it, as the Targum of Jonathan, and so Jarchi, which he endeavours to confirm from (^{<1683>}Joshua 3:4) and was what was afterwards called a sabbath day’s journey: this was done partly that he might have the opportunity of conversing with God, and bringing about a thorough reconciliation between him and the people, who declared he would not go up in the midst of them; and partly that this might be a symbol to the people of the Lord’s departure from the midst of them; that so they might be brought to a thorough humiliation for their sin, who might fear that he would not only stand at a distance, but entirely remove from them: it might be considered as a token of his displeasure with them, and yet be a door of hope unto them; since he was not wholly gone from them, but might be sought unto by them as follows:

and called it the tabernacle of the congregation; as the great tabernacle was afterwards called, and as this might be before, though now renewed,

to give the people some encouragement to resort here; because here he and they met together, both on civil and religious accounts, and God met with them:

and it came to pass, [that] everyone which sought the Lord: about any affair of moment and importance, to know his will, and to have instruction and direction what to do; or that sought to him for peace and reconciliation, for the pardon of their sins, and the acceptance of their persons, repenting of their sins, and confessing the same:

went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which [was] without the camp; these went out of the camp, from their tents there, to this; who were not the body of the people, but either such who had difficult matters to inquire about, or were seriously and heartily concerned for the evil they had committed, and for the removal of the divine Presence from them.

Ver. 8. *And it came to pass, when Moses went out of the tabernacle,* etc.] For when he had pitched it he did not continue there; which shows it was not the tent or tabernacle he dwelt in, but whither he went to and fro, both to meet the Lord in it, and transact the affairs of the people, and especially the great affair now depending between God and them:

[that] all the people rose up: in reverence of him as their ruler, and the minister of God, and as their Mediator between God and them, though they had but lately thought and spoke very meanly and contemptibly of him, (^{<1311>}Exodus 32:1) (see ^{<898>}Job 29:8)

and stood every man at his tent door; none offering to go in, nor to sit down until he was gone into the tabernacle, which was an instance of their respect to him:

and looked after Moses until he was gone into the tabernacle; kept their eye on him as long as they could see him, thereby expressing their esteem of him, signifying their desire that he would intercede for them, and wishing him success therein: the Targum of Jonathan interprets all this of the ungodly among them that looked after Moses with an evil eye.

Ver. 9. *And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended,* etc.] From the top of the mount in which Jehovah was:

and stood at the door of the tabernacle; where Moses was just entered, and in sight of the people, which was a token of grace and favour both to him and them:

and [the Lord] talked with Moses; not the cloudy pillar, but the Lord in it, as we rightly supply it: what he talked with him about is not said, very probably concerning the children of Israel, their conduct and behaviour, and what was his will further concerning them.

Ver. 10. *And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door*, etc.] They being every man at his tent door; and this must be a pleasing sight to them, and give them some hope that God would be merciful to them, forgive their sin, and not depart from them:

and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door; not Moses, nor the cloudy pillar, but the Lord in it; it was not a civil bow they made to Moses, and in respect to him, for he was gone into the tabernacle out of sight, but a religious adoration of the Lord in the pillar of cloud.

Ver. 11. *And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face*, etc.] Not by an angel, but he himself in person; not by a dream or vision, but apparently, in real visible appearance; not in dark speeches, but clearly in plain words, easy to be understood; and not by a voice from heaven at a distance, but mouth to mouth, being very near, as when on the mount, and now at the door of the tabernacle:

as a man speaketh unto his friend; freely, familiarly, plainly, cordially, openly, without any reserve or show of authority, or causing dread and fear; for he also spake to the children of Israel “face to face”, but then it was out of the fire in a terrible manner which they could not bear,
(^{4RRH}Deuteronomy 5:4)

and he turned again into the camp; to acquaint the people, the heads and elders of them, what discourse he had with God, what success he had met with on their behalf, and how the Lord stood affected to them, or what was his will concerning them:

but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle; who is here described by his name, Joshua; by his descent, the son of Nun; by his relation to Moses, a servant of his, who waited on him wherever he went, when upon the mount and now at the tabernacle; and by his age, a young man, as he was in comparison of Moses, and is so

called chiefly because he was his servant, it being usual to call servants young men, of whatsoever age; for Joshua, strictly speaking, could not be a young man in years; he was the general of the army at the battle with Amalek; and, according to Aben Ezra, was now fifty six years of age, which he collects from his living to the age of one hundred and ten years; now to fifty six add the forty years in the wilderness, seven years, in which he subdued the land of Canaan, and seven more in dividing it, as say their wise men, the sum is one hundred an ten years: and it not being easy to account for it, that Moses should depart alone, unaccompanied by Joshua, who always attended him, and no sufficient reason is given why he should stay behind in the tabernacle; as for private devotion, which this was not a place for; or for judging the causes of the people in the absence of Moses, which we never find he did or to guard the tabernacle, to be a watchman in it, or even at the head of a watch over it, which, as it seemed unnecessary, so was an employment too mean for him; the words therefore may be rendered as they are by some, and the rather, as there is an accent which makes a considerable stop on the word $r [n$, translated a “young man”^{f959}, “and he turned again to the camp”, and “his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man”; that is, along with him; they both returned to the camp, and then it follows, “he”, i.e. the Lord, “departed not out of the tabernacle”, but continued there; to whom Moses afterwards returned and had the following discourse: a learned man^{f960} thinks that the grand tabernacle is here meant, yet unfinished, though not the final erection of it; and that here is a dislocation in the history, and supposes that Moses having been forty days absent, found upon his return a good progress made in the work of the tabernacle, and the ornaments and utensils belonging thereunto: and as soon as the wood work of the tabernacle was finished, he ordered it to be put together; but because the tabernacle had neither a door to it, nor were the hangings of the outer court finished, therefore Joshua the servant of Moses, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle, but remained there to preserve it from being polluted: but it is a mistake of his that the tabernacle had not a door to it, and it is strange he should make it, when it is twice mentioned in the preceding verses; and since the pillar of cloud and the Lord in it were there, no man durst draw near to pollute it, so that there was no need of Joshua’s being there to preserve it; and besides, it was after this Moses went up to the mount and stayed another forty days and forty nights, (see ~~1230~~ Exodus 34:4,28).

Ver. 12. *And Moses said unto the Lord,* etc.] Having returned from the camp to the tabernacle again;

see, thou sayest unto me, bring up this people: from hence to the land of Canaan, as in (⁽²³⁰⁾Exodus 33:1)

and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me; to guide and direct him, help and assist him, protect and defend him, and the people with him; he had signified something of this kind, but by some expressions, and by his present conduct, he was at a loss to know who was to go with him: he had told him that the uncreated Angel, in whom his name and he himself were, should go with them; but now it had been declared that he would not go up in the midst of them himself, but send an angel, a created one, but who that was he knew not; he thought he had reason to expect the pillar of the cloud and fire by day and night; but that had had so many motions that he could not be assured of the continuance of it:

yet thou hast said, I know thee by name; have a particular and special knowledge of thee, and distinguished thee from others, and have a personal affection for thee:

and thou hast also found grace in my sight: had an interest in his special favour and good will, was acceptable unto him, had received an abundance of spiritual grace, and many very extraordinary gifts from him, and had had many benefits bestowed on him, which were proofs of his being grateful and well pleasing to him.

Ver. 13. *Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight,* etc.] Which he said, not as doubting whether he had or not, but as taking it for granted he had, and so argues from it, and improves his interest in it, in his pleading with God:

shew me now thy way: either the way which he himself would take, the way of his providence in bringing the children of Israel into the land of Canaan; or the way he would have him take, the way of his duty, how he would have him behave in conducting them thither; unless he means the Messiah, Christ, the way to the heavenly Canaan, to whom he seems greatly to have respect in the following part of this chapter:

that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight; by which he might have a further evidence of his being acceptable to God, and having a share in his good will; as well as he would better know in what way grace is

communicated, Christ being the way both of access into the grace of God, and of acceptance with him, and of the communication of grace from him:

and consider that this nation [is] thy people; though they had sinned against him in the manner they had done, they were a people he had chosen above all people to be his; he had made a covenant with them, and was their covenant God; he had redeemed them out of Egypt, and had called them from thence, and had wrought a great salvation for them, and had bestowed many peculiar favours upon them; and though for this their gross idolatry and sad apostasy from him they were unworthy of the relation, and he had thought fit not to call them his people, but the people, or the people of Moses, yet they still were his people, and he entreats he would consider the relation they stood in to him, and show mercy to them.

Ver. 14. *And he said*, etc.] In answer to his request:

my presence shall go [with thee]; or before thee, both with Moses and before the people; meaning the Angel of his presence he had before promised, the eternal Word and Son of God, who saved them, redeemed them, bore and carried them all the days of old: or “my faces shall go”¹⁹⁶¹; all the three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit; there was Jehovah the Father, whose the Angel of his presence was; and there was Jehovah the Son, Christ, whom they tempted in the wilderness; and there was Jehovah the Holy Spirit, whom they vexed, (see ²³⁶¹Isaiah 63:9-11)

and I will give thee rest; not ease, and peace and tranquillity of mind, or a freedom from the fear of enemies, and all dangers by them, much less rest in the grave, before Israel should be brought into Canaan’s land; but rather the promised land itself, which was “the rest” that was promised, and would be given, and was typical of that eternal rest which remains for the people of God in heaven, and is a pure gift; for this promise is not personal and peculiar to Moses, but belonged to all the people, to whom God would give the typical rest, (see ⁶¹¹Deuteronomy 12:9).

Ver. 15. *And he said unto him*, etc.] Moses said unto the Lord:

if thy presence go not [with me]; or with us, as it may be as well supplied, and which agrees with what follows:

carry us not up hence; from the mount to the land of Canaan; though God had promised his presence, which was the thing requested, Moses could not forbear expressing himself after this manner, to show the high esteem

he had of this blessing, and how worthless and insignificant everything else was without it; that even Canaan, the land of rest promised, was nothing in comparison of it: it is not much matter where we are, or what we have, if God is not with us; but if he grants his presence, the greatest hardships in a wilderness are made easy, and difficulties are got through with pleasure; though some read the words in the preceding verse by way of interrogation, “should my face” or “presence go”, and “should it give thee rest”^{f962}? as carrying in it a kind of denial, which makes Moses here more urgent for it, and such a version those words seem to require.

Ver. 16. *For wherein shall it be known here*, etc.] At Sinai, among the mountains in the wilderness:

that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight: were acceptable to him, highly esteemed by him, and had received peculiar favours from him; what evidence would there be of this? how would it appear to others? what knowledge could they have of it?

[is it] not in that thou goest with us? in such a grand majestic manner, and so visible as in a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night: this is a full proof, and a strong and convincing argument, even to a demonstration, that they were a special and peculiar people, the favourites of God, highly esteemed and honoured by him; but should this be discontinued, as seemed to be threatened, there would be nothing to demonstrate that they had found more grace and favour than other people; but this being the case,

so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people [that are] upon the face of the earth; distinguished by this favour from them, and that in a very wonderful and marvellous manner, as the word signifies; and so some render it, “marvellously separated”^{f963}; for the pillar of cloud and fire was a very marvellous thing, and distinguished the people of Israel from all others in a surprising manner, none having been ever favoured in the like manner.

Ver. 17. *And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken*, etc.] Or asked for, namely, go with them himself in this amazing and distinguished manner, in the pillar of the cloud and fire; this he would do as well as show him his way and his works, and indeed all this he did by granting that:

for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name; he owns the truth of the thing, on which Moses had formed his plan, and by

granting his request gave a fresh proof and evidence of it; and what can be a greater blessing than to partake of the special grace, favour, and good will of God, and to be particularly and personally known to him, with such a knowledge as has connected with it the strongest affection and highest esteem?

Ver. 18. *And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory.*] Not any visible lustre, splendour, and brightness, as a symbol of the divine Presence, that he had seen, (⁽²¹⁶⁷⁾Exodus 16:7,10) nor the glorious essence of God, as Maimonides^{f964}, which is invisible and cannot be seen, and of which Moses could not be ignorant; nor the glory of the heavenly state, which also he must know he could not see until he came thither; but he seems to mean some visible glorious representation of God, such as he had never seen, though he had been with him so long on the mount in the cloud, and heard his voice, and saw some appearances of brightness and glory, yet not in any form that he could frame any idea of; perhaps he may mean the Angel of God's presence, called his face, the promised Messiah and glorious Redeemer and Saviour, in whom there is such a bright display of the glory of the divine perfections; yea, is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; and this favour was granted him, with some proper limitations and restrictions; for though this request was, no doubt, sincere and upright, it might be attended with frailty and weakness; yet it is not utterly denied, but with some explanation is allowed, and perhaps was the highest favour ever granted to any before the incarnation of our Lord, at least in so full and glorious a manner as this was; Moses having by his suit obtained much, wants more and is emboldened to ask it, and in a good measure had it, as the following words show.

Ver. 19. *And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee,* etc.] Which is his glory; the glory of the Lord lies in his goodness, and that appears in the works of his hands, in the methods of his providence, especially in the distribution of his sovereign grace and mercy, and particularly in his pardoning grace and mercy, through the blood of Christ; for as it is "the glory" of a man "to pass over a transgression", (⁽²⁰⁹¹⁾Proverbs 19:11) much more it is the glory of God, of which this goodness is afterwards interpreted; and may be understood of Christ himself, who is the goodness of God itself, is not only good, but the Lord's good One, emphatically good; as he is called his holy One, so his good One; because all his goodness is laid up in him, is prevented and filled as Mediator, with the blessings of his goodness; all are proclaimed in him,

displayed through him, and communicated by him; and he is that glorious Personage that Moses might be desirous of having a view of, and was favoured with; however, with a view of the divine goodness, as it is conspicuous in him, in what he is, and has done for his people; for God has shown forth the exceeding riches of his grace and goodness in him:

and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee: his name and his nature, his perfections, and the glory of them, as displayed in Christ; or when he is about to pass, or while he is passing by, lest he should pass by unobserved, I will proclaim aloud and give thee notice that he is now passing by thee, whose name is Jehovah, and whose nature, glory, and goodness, are as follow:

and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy: signifying that notwithstanding the children of Israel had sinned against him in such a manner as they had, yet he should show favour, grace, and mercy to them, in pardoning their sins; and it should be distributed, not according to any merits of theirs, but according to his sovereign will and pleasure, and not to all, but to whomsoever he thought fit; and in this would be seen his glory: and so it is with respect to grace and mercy, as displayed in Christ to sinful men; it is not in proportion to their deserts, but according to the purpose and good will of God, and that not unto all, but unto some whom he has appointed, not unto wrath, but unto salvation by Jesus Christ, and which is to the glory of his grace; and the more enlarged view men have of this, the more clearly and fully does the goodness and glory of God pass before them.

Ver. 20. *And he said, thou canst not see my face,* etc.] Meaning not his form, his essence, his very nature, and the glory of it, that Moses must know he could never see; but the brightest displays of his grace and goodness in Christ, the fullest discoveries of it, which are too much for man, in the present state of things, to have, who sees in part, and but through a glass darkly, not face to face, or in the most complete and perfect manner; it is but a small part and portion of God, and of his ways and works, as of creation and providence, so more especially of grace, salvation, and redemption by Jesus Christ, that is known of him; the things of the Gospel in their full perfection are what eye has not seen; and particularly were more hidden and unseen under the legal dispensation; this face was covered with types and shadows, and dark representations of things; though, in comparison of that state, we now, with open face, behold

the glory of the Lord, yet still it is through a glass darkly, and we have not the clear and full view of things as will be hereafter:

for there shall no man see me and live: if there was to be such a revelation made of the grace and goodness, and glory of God in Christ, as it really is in itself, it would be too much for mortals in the present state to bear; it would break their earthen vessels in pieces; the full discovery therefore is reserved to a future state, when these things will be seen as they are, and men will be in a condition to receive them; otherwise we find that men have, in a sense, seen the face of God in this life, and have lived; though many, and even good men, have been possessed with such a notion, that if a man saw God he must die, (see ^{<033>}Genesis 32:30 ^{<0241>}Exodus 24:11 ^{<0132>}Judges 13:22).

Ver. 21. *And the Lord said, behold, [there is] a place by me,* etc.] Near him, not in or by the tabernacle, where it may be the pillar of cloud now was, as it had been, (^{<039>}Exodus 33:9,10) but upon the rock, where it had been for many days, and near to which there was a fit place for Moses to be in, and have that view of the goodness and glory of God he would favour him with:

and thou shall stand upon a rock; in Horeb, typical of Christ the rock, the rock of Israel, and the rock of ages, the rock of refuge, salvation, and strength; comparable to one for shelter, solidity, firmness, strength, and duration; and happy are they who stand upon this rock; they are safe and secure, they stand on high, and have noble prospects of the perfections of God, and of the riches of his grace and goodness, (see ^{<0810>}Psalms 50:2,3 ^{<2336>}Isaiah 33:16,17 ^{<4024>}Matthew 7:24,25).

Ver. 22. *And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by,* etc.] The displays of his grace and goodness are made:

that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock; in one of the clefts, made by smiting it, through which the waters gushed out for the relief of the Israelites, and their flocks: and we are told ¹⁹⁶⁵, that to this day, on the summit of Mount Sinai, by the Arabians called Gibel el Mousa, or the mountain of Moses, is perceived a large chasm in the rock, said to be the cave where Moses hid himself from God, when the glory of the Lord passed before him. Now this cleft may be an emblem of Christ, as crucified, smitten, wounded and slain; who was smitten by the law and justice of God, as this rock was smitten by the rod of Moses: and had gashes and

wounds made in him like the clefts of a rock, being pierced with the nails and spear: and in these clefts of the rock saints dwell by faith, (^{<2124>}Song of Solomon 2:14):

and will cover thee with my hand; with his cloud, as Ben Melech, and so may denote the cloudiness, obscurity, and darkness of the legal dispensation: but here it seems to denote imperfection, not being able to bear the full sight of the divine glory, and which angels themselves cannot bear, but cover their faces; and also the danger of being consumed, were it not that saints are in Christ, and covered and secured in him, otherwise God is a consuming fire:

while I pass by thee; or his glory, the glory of all his perfections, wisdom, holiness, justice, power, and faithfulness, and especially of his grace, mercy, and goodness in Christ.

Ver. 23. *And I will take away mine hand*, etc.] As being covered with the hand may signify the obscurity of the former dispensation, the taking of it away may denote a more clear revelation of the grace and goodness of God in Christ, and so of the glory of it under the Gospel dispensation; and yet what is seen in this, in comparison of the reality of things as they are, or of the heavenly state, are but as next expressed:

and thou shalt see my back parts; which some understand of the humanity of Christ, and his sufferings in it, sometimes expressed by his heel, and the bruising of it, (^{<0085>}Genesis 3:15) or else the works of God in creation, by which the invisible things of God are seen, and which give a knowledge of him “a posteriori”; and so Maimonides^{f966} interprets the phrase, which follow me, flow from my will, i.e. all my creatures: or rather it denotes the imperfect knowledge of God in the present state, even as revealed in Christ, in whom there are the clearest and brightest displays of his glory; yet this, in comparison of the beatific sight of him, is but like seeing a man that is gone by, whose back is only to be seen:

but my face shall not be seen; in the present state, the face of God, that is, his favour, communion with him, and the light of his countenance, are to be sought for, and may be enjoyed; the glory of himself is to be seen in the face or person of Christ, and the glory of that face or person is to be seen in the glass of the Gospel, but at present imperfectly; God in Christ as he is, the fullest and brightest displays of his glory, grace, and goodness, are reserved to another state, (see ^{<4630>}1 Corinthians 13:9,12 ^{<618D>}1 John 3:2) or

it may regard the divine nature of Christ, which could not be seen by Moses, but his back parts, or human; Christ as clothed with flesh might, and would be seen by him, as he was seen by him on the mount, (~~47B~~ Matthew 17:3).