

# CHAPTER 34

## INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS 34

In this chapter Moses has orders to hew two tables of stone, that God might write on them the ten commands, and bring them up with him to the mount, (<sup>(1341)</sup>Exodus 34:1-4) where the Lord proclaimed his name, and caused his glory and his goodness to pass before him, (<sup>(1345)</sup>Exodus 34:5-7) when Moses took this favourable opportunity that offered to pray for the people, that God would forgive their sin, and go along with them, (<sup>(1348)</sup>Exodus 34:8,9) upon which he made a covenant with them, which on his part was to do wonders for them, and drive out the inhabitants of Canaan before them; and on their part, that they should have no confederacy and communion with these nations, and shun their idolatry, and everything that might lead unto it, (<sup>(1340)</sup>Exodus 34:10-17) and he repeated several laws before given, and urged the observance of them, which Moses was to acquaint the people with, (<sup>(1348)</sup>Exodus 34:18-27) and after a stay of forty days and forty nights on the mount, he came down with the two tables of the law; and the skin of his face shone so bright, that the people of Israel were afraid to come nigh him, and therefore he put a vail over his face while he conversed with them, (<sup>(1348)</sup>Exodus 34:28-35).

**Ver. 1.** *And the Lord said unto Moses*, etc.] Out of the cloudy pillar, at the door of the tabernacle, where he had been conversing with him in the most friendly manner, as related in the preceding chapter:

*hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first*; of the same form, and of the same dimensions, and it may be of the same sort of stone, which perhaps was marble, there being great plenty of that kind on Mount Sinai. Now Moses being ordered to hew these tables, whereas the former were the work of God himself, as well as the writing, shows that the law was to be the ministration of Moses, and be ordained in the hand of him as a mediator, who had been praying and interceding for the people; and as a token of the reconciliation made, the tables were to be renewed, yet with some difference, that there might be some remembrance of their crime, and of their loss by it, not having the law on tables of stone, which were the work of God, but which were the work of man:

*and I will write upon [these] tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brakest*; the writing of these was by the Lord himself, as the former, shows that the law itself was of God, though the tables were hewn by Moses, and that he would have it known and observed as such; and the same being written on these tables, as on the former, shows the unchangeableness of the law of God, as given to the people of Israel, that he would have nothing added to it, or taken from it; and the writing of it over again may have respect to the reinscribing it on the hearts of his people in regeneration, according to the tenor of the new covenant: the phrase, “which thou brakest”, is not used as expressing any displeasure at Moses for that act of his, but to describe the former tables; and the breaking of them might not be the effect of passion, at least of any criminal passion, but of zeal for the glory of God, and the honour of his law, which was broken by the Israelites, and therefore unworthy of it; and might be according to the counsel of the divine will, and the secret direction of his providence.

**Ver. 2.** *And be ready in the morning*, etc.] This was, according to the Jewish chronology<sup>f967</sup>, on the twenty eighth day of the month Ab or July:

*and come up in the morning unto Mount Sinai*; the same mount where he had been before:

*and present thyself there to me on the top of the mount*; where the pillar of cloud removed and stood, and near it Moses was to stand and wait to hear what would be said unto him, and to see what would be made to pass before him.

**Ver. 3.** *And no man shall come up with thee*, etc.] Before, Aaron and his two sons, and the seventy elders of Israel, went up with Moses, though they did not go so near the Lord as he did; but now having sinned in the matter of the golden calf, though a reconciliation was made, they were not allowed to go with him, nor even Joshua his servant, though he had no concern in the sin; Moses must be alone, that the ministration of the law might be by him only, and in order to receive a peculiar favour in answer to his request:

*neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount*; in any part of it, as Joshua was before in some part of it, even all the while that Moses was there; but now not a single person must be seen anywhere, not only

because of the giving of the law to Moses, but because of the display of the divine glory, which was to be made particularly to him:

*neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount*; or over against it, or rather “near” it <sup>f968</sup>; which was ordered, not so much on the account of the flocks themselves, who were not capable of any moral guilt; nor that they might not come to any hurt, since they were to be stoned or thrust through with a dart if they touched it, which order it is highly probable was in force as before; but on the account of their keepers, that there might be none of them on the spot, or near, to observe what passed; and chiefly this was said to command fear and reverence in the minds of the people, while this solemn affair was transacting between God and Moses, and to check all curiosity in them.

**Ver. 4.** *And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first*, etc.] Which may be an emblem of the ministry of men, which God makes use of in hewing of his people, and bringing them to a sense of their sins, the breach of his law, and repentance for them, (<sup><2005></sup>Hosea 6:5):

*and Moses rose up early in the morning*: which, according to the Jews <sup>f969</sup>, was the twenty ninth of Ab or July, which showed his ready and cheerful obedience to the divine will, and the quick dispatch he had made in hewing the tables; which whether he did with his own hands only, or made use of others whom he directed, is not very material; though the phrase “hew thee”, or “hew unto thee”, seems as if he were to do it himself, and not another:

*and went up unto Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him*; which was the third time of his going there, and every time he continued forty days and forty nights, as Aben Ezra observes, (see <sup><1005></sup>Deuteronomy 9:18,25):

*and took in his hand the two tables of stone*; which could not be very thick and heavy to carry in one hand up a mountain, but must be a sort of marble slab or slate: at this same time an ark was ordered to be made, and was made, to put the tables into, which was a type of Christ, the fulfilling end of the law for righteousness, (<sup><1005></sup>Deuteronomy 10:1-5).

**Ver. 5.** *And the Lord descended in the cloud*, etc.] The same with the cloudy pillar, which was now gone up from the door of the tabernacle, and was on high in the air over the mount, and on which the Lord now descended in it, as he had before, (<sup><1005></sup>Exodus 19:9,16,18):

*and stood with him there*; not Moses stood with the Lord, as the Vulgate Latin version; but the Lord, or the cloud in which the Lord was, stood near to Moses:

*and proclaimed the name of the Lord*: Jehovah declared with a loud voice out of the cloud, that the Lord was there; the Targum of Jonathan is,

“and Moses called on or in the name of the Word of the Lord;”

and so the Vulgate Latin version refers it to Moses, and renders the words, “calling on the name of the Lord”; but the following verse clearly shows that it must be understood of the Lord, and not of Moses.

**Ver. 6.** *And the Lord passed by before him*, etc.] Or caused his Shechinah, his divine Majesty, and the glory of it, to pass before him, as the Targums; his glory and goodness, which he had promised should pass before him, (<sup><02339></sup>Exodus 33:19,22) and it is but a transient passing view the greatest of men, God’s peculiar favourites, have of him in this life:

*and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God*; the Jerusalem Targum wrongly paraphrases the words as a prayer of Moses thus, “and Moses prayed, and said, O Lord, Lord”; and so the Vulgate Latin version; but it is quite clear, and beyond all doubt, from (<sup><0447></sup>Numbers 14:17,18) that what follow are the words of God, and not of Moses: the sense is, that the Lord, as he passed by Moses, to raise and fix his attention, declared it was Jehovah that passed by; which is repeated the more to excite his attention, and is the name by which he had made himself known to Moses, even when he sent him into Egypt; for “I am that I am” is an explanation of this name, (see <sup><0214></sup>Exodus 3:14) and the word “El”, translated “God”, signifies mighty and powerful, and is true of all the three divine Persons, to whom respect may be had in the use of these three words. What is proclaimed or declared concerning God is, that he is

*merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth*; first “merciful”, and he is so in the most tender and affectionate manner; he is rich and plenteous in mercy, freely giving it, delights in bestowing it, constantly shows it to his people; it is manifested and displayed in Christ, the mercy seat; and it lays a foundation for faith and hope, and is the spring of all good things in time, and to eternity: and he is also “gracious”, good and kind to men, without any merit or desert of theirs, but bestows good things on them freely, of his own free grace, favour, and good will, as appears by various acts of his; in the eternal

choice of them to everlasting happiness; in providing a Saviour for them, and giving all grace and spiritual blessings to them in him; by giving Christ to them, and for them, justifying them freely by his righteousness, pardoning their sins according to the riches of his grace, regenerating, calling, preserving, and saving them by it: likewise “longsuffering”; both towards wicked men, the vessels of wrath, by whom his patience and longsuffering are abused and despised; and towards his elect, on whom he waits to be gracious, not willing that any of them should perish, but all be brought to repentance; and his longsuffering is their salvation: and it follows, “abundant in goodness and truth”; in providential goodness to all men; in special goodness to his chosen people, which he has laid up, and wrought out for them, and shown them in Christ; in his truth and faithfulness, in fulfilling his promises, both with respect to the mission of his Son into the world, to be the Saviour of it, and with respect to all other things promised, whether relating to this life, or that to come, to grace or glory; he never suffers his truth and faithfulness to fail; his promises are all yea and amen in Christ.

**Ver. 7.** *Keeping mercy for thousands*, etc.] In his own heart, in his purposes and decrees, in his counsels and covenant, in his Son, with whom he keeps it for ever, and for all in him, (<sup>1908</sup>Psalm 89:28) and they are many who are ordained to eternal life, for whom Christ gave his life a ransom, and for whom his blood was shed for the remission of their sins; and whom he justifies by his knowledge, and at last brings to glory as the great Captain of their salvation; these are even a number which no man can number. All the Targums render it to a thousand generations; and Jarchi interprets of two thousand generations. The first letter in the word, rendered “keeping”, is longer than is usual, in the Hebrew text; which, according to the Jews <sup>1970</sup>, denotes the largeness of the grace of God, its great extent and long continuance:

*forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin*; the word used signifies a lifting it up, and taking it away: thus Jehovah has taken it from the sinner, and put it on his Son, who has borne it, and made satisfaction for it; and in so doing has taken it quite away, so as to be seen no more; and, through the application of his blood to the conscience of a sinner, it is taken away from thence, and removed as far as the east is from the west; from whence it appears, that it is in Christ, and for his sake, that God forgives sin, even through his blood, righteousness, sacrifice, and satisfaction; and this forgiveness is of all sin, of all sorts of sin, original or actual, greater or

lesser, public or private, open or secret, of omission or commission, of heart, lip, and life. The Jews sometimes distinguish these three words; “iniquity”, they say, signifies sins through pride and presumption; “transgression” intends rebellions against God; and “sin”, what is committed through error and mistake<sup>f971</sup>; and much to this sense is Jarchi’s interpretation of these words; they no doubt include all manner of sin, which God for Christ’s sake forgives:

*and will by no means clear [the guilty]*; without a full and proper satisfaction to justice; which is provided in Christ, whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin, to declare his righteousness, that he might appear to be just, while he justifies and pardons those that believe in Jesus; otherwise all the world are guilty before God, and none would be cleared; but those for whom satisfaction is made, and a righteousness wrought out, they are cleared, acquitted, and discharged, and they only: or “though he will by no means let it go unpunished”,<sup>f972</sup>; that is, sin, expressed by the several words preceding; and so to this purpose is this phrase translated in (~~2301~~Jeremiah 30:11) and the meaning is, that though God pardons sin, all manner of sin, and so displays his grace and mercy, yet he takes care of the honour of his justice, and never suffers any sin to go unpunished, either on the sinner, or on the surety. Pardon of sin always proceeds upon the redemption that is through the blood of Christ, and is a branch of it, (see ~~832~~Romans 3:24-26 ~~4007~~Ephesians 1:7). Some understand these words as relating not to the justice, but to the mercy and goodness of God; and render the words, either “in extirpating he will not extirpate”, as Maimonides<sup>f973</sup>; and as Jonathan translates the same phrase in (~~2301~~Jeremiah 30:11) “in destroying I will not destroy”; and so De Dieu here, “in emptying he will not empty”, or destroy; and this sense is thought to be most agreeable to the prayer of Moses, and the promise of God, that his goodness and glory should pass before him, to which the other sense seems contrary; but the justice of God is as much his glory, and in it lies his goodness, as well as his grace and mercy; besides, the following words cannot be thought to be so expressive of the grace, and mercy, and goodness of God, but of his punitive justice, and so the objection would still remain:

*visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the childrens’ children, unto the third and to the fourth [generation]*; ((see Gill on “~~1215~~Exodus 20:5”)).

**Ver. 8.** *And Moses made haste*, etc.] Perceiving the voice ceased, and the Lord was passing on, lest he should be gone, and he lose the favourable opportunity he had:

*and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped*; threw himself prostrate upon it, and in the most humble manner put up his requests to God, which are expressed in the following verse; he gladly laid hold on this opportunity to use his interest with God for the people of Israel, and to improve the proclamation of grace and mercy, in the forgiveness of sins, now made; which encouraged his faith and hope to draw nigh with a holy boldness, and use freedom with him, and yet with an awe of his majesty, with reverence and godly fear.

**Ver. 9.** *And he said, if now I have found grace in thy sight*, etc.] Or “seeing now”, for he could have no doubt upon his mind but that he had found grace and favour in the sight of God, since he had caused his goodness and glory to pass before him, and made such a proclamation of his grace and mercy to him; but he takes it for granted, and improves it, and argues upon it, as follows:

*O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go amongst us*; as the Lord had signified as if he would not go among them, but leave them to the conduct of a created angel; and Moses had before prayed that his presence or face might go with them, (<sup><123B></sup>Exodus 33:3,14) and now having some fresh tokens of the favour and good will of God towards him, renews his request with great earnestness and importunity, entreating the Lord Jehovah the Father, that Moses’s Lord Jehovah the Son, the Angel of God’s presence, in whom his name was, might go with them, as he had said he should:

*for it is a stiffnecked people*; and therefore have need of such an one to be with them, to rule and govern them, to restrain and keep them within due bounds; or “though <sup>f974</sup> it is a stiffnecked people”; for this is the reason given by the Lord why he would not go among them, (<sup><123B></sup>Exodus 33:3) wherefore Moses prays that he would go, notwithstanding this; he owns the character of them was just, yet humbly prays that God would nevertheless vouchsafe his presence:

*and pardon our iniquity, and our sin*; which he had the greater reason to hope he would, since he had just proclaimed his name, a God pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin; and, the more to gain his suit, makes himself a party concerned, calling the sin committed, “our iniquity, and our

sin"; even his among the rest, who had found grace in the sight of God, and therefore entreats others might also, since they were all sinners, and there was forgiveness with him:

*and take us for thine inheritance*; to possess and enjoy, protect and defend, cultivate and improve, keep and preserve for ever.

**Ver. 10.** *And he said, behold, I will make a covenant*, etc.] Or renew the covenant before made the people had broke; which on his part was, that he would, as Moses had entreated, forgive the sin of the people, go along with them, and introduce them into the land of Canaan, and drive out the inhabitants of it before them; and, on their part, that they should avoid idolatry, and everything that led unto it, particularly making covenants, and entering into alliances with the idolatrous nations cast out:

*before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation*; both in their passage through the wilderness, and entrance into Canaan's land, and the conquest of that; such as the earth opening its mouth and swallowing alive Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and was a new thing God created; the smiting of the rock at Kadesh, from whence flowed waters abundantly; the healing of such as were bit by fiery serpents through looking at a serpent of brass; Balaam's ass speaking, and reproving the madness of the prophet; the division of the waters of Jordan; the fall of the walls of Jericho at the sound of rams' horns; the sun and moon standing still, until the Lord had avenged himself of his enemies:

*and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord*; for it should be visible, as the above things were, and plainly appear to be the Lord's doing, and not man's, being above the power of any created being to perform:

*for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee*; Aben Ezra restrains this to Moses's person, and interprets this of the wonderful shining of the skin of his face, when he came down from the mount, which made the children of Israel afraid to come nigh him; and of his vigorous constitution at the time of his death, when his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated, contrary to the nature of ancient persons: but it is better to understand it of the ministry of Moses, and of the awful things that God would do by him; or rather of the people of Israel, among whom, and for whose sake, God would do such things as should cause a panic among the nations all around them; particularly what he did for them to Og king of Bashan, and Sihon



king of the Amorites, on account of which terror fell, as on the king of Moab, so on the inhabitants of Canaan; (see <sup><BIB></sup>Numbers 21:33-35 22:3) (<sup><BIB></sup>Joshua 2:9-11).

**Ver. 11.** *Observe thou that which I command thee this day*, etc.] Which words are either said to Moses personally, as Aben Ezra thinks, as a direction to him to observe what had been said to him, and declare them to the children of Israel; or rather to the children of Israel, and respect the commands which are afterwards delivered out to be observed by them in the following verses; and what is expressed in the next clause is such as was not done by the ministry of Moses, nor in his time:

*behold, I drive out before thee*; not before Moses, but the people of Israel, *the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite*; six nations are only mentioned, though there were seven, the Girgashites being omitted, because either they left the land before, as some think, or because they at once submitted; they are added in the Septuagint version.

**Ver. 12.** *Take heed to thyself*, etc.] This is said not to Moses, but to the people of Israel, as a caution to them when they should enter the land of Canaan, and possess it:

*lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest*: enter into a league and alliance, to live friendly and amicably, and support and assist each other against the common enemy; whereas they were to smite the seven nations and destroy them, and show them no mercy, (<sup><BIB></sup>Deuteronomy 7:1,2)

*lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee*; be the means of drawing them into the same sinful practices with themselves, especially into idolatrous ones, and so of bringing ruin and destruction on them.

**Ver. 13.** *But ye shall destroy their altars*, etc.] On which they had sacrificed to their idols; since, if they were allowed to continue, they might be temptations to offer sacrifice thereon, contrary to the command of God:

*break their images*: of gold or silver, wood or stone, which they made for themselves, and worshipped as deities; seeing if these continued, the sight of them might lead to the worship of them, and so bring under the divine displeasure, as a breach of the command of God given them:

*and cut down their groves*; which were clusters of trees, where they had their temples and their idols, and did service to them, and where, besides idolatry, many impurities were committed. Such places were originally used by good men for devotion, being shady and solitary, but when abused to superstitious and idolatrous uses, were forbidden. It is said <sup>f975</sup>, the word for “grove” is general, and includes every tree they serve, or plant, for an idol.

**Ver. 14.** *For thou shall worship no other god*, etc.] Than the Lord their God, the one only living and true God, which was the first command given to the people of Israel, and binding upon all men:

*for the Lord whose name is Jealous, [is] a jealous God*; his name and nature answer to one another; he admits of no rival or competitor in worship; he will not give his glory to another god, or one so called, nor his praise to graven images; and in this he is distinguished from all nominal and fictitious gods, who have many joined with them, and are rivals of them, which gives them no concern, because insensible; but it is otherwise with the Lord, who knows the dishonour done him, and resents it, and is as jealous of any worship being given to another, as the husband is of the honour of his marriage bed; for idolatry is spiritual adultery, as is suggested in the following verse.

**Ver. 15.** *Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land*, etc.] A marriage covenant, taking their daughters in marriage to their sons, and “vice versa”, as the following words show; here the caution is to be understood and the words supplied from (<sup><12342></sup>Exodus 34:12) and inserted and connected thus, “take heed to thyself, lest thou make”, etc.

*and they go a whoring after their gods*; that is, the inhabitants of the land, and particularly those with whom the Israelites made a covenant, and entered into a marriage relation with, and perhaps on this condition, that they would abstain from idolatry; and yet, contrary to the obligation they laid themselves under, lust after their idols, and commit spiritual fornication or adultery with them, which is explained by the next clause:

*and do sacrifice unto their gods*; such as the first institutors of their idolatry enjoined, and their ancestors had observed, and were according to the rites and customs of the country:

*and [one] call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice*; invite to eat of what remained, that was offered to the idol: hence it appears, that having feasts

at sacrifices, and eating things offered to idols in a festival way, are very ancient practices; (see <sup><6027></sup>1 Corinthians 10:27,28).

**Ver. 16.** *And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons*, etc.] That is, marry them to them, which explains what is meant by making a covenant with them, entering into such a near relation, and joining families, and thus intermixing with one another;

*and their daughters go a whoring after their gods*; the worship of whom they have been trained up in from their infancy, and therefore hanker after them, and commit whoredom in a spiritual sense with them;

*and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods*; by the means of tempting and drawing them into idolatrous practices, as the wives of Solomon were a snare to him.

**Ver. 17.** *Thou shalt make thee no molten gods*.] Made of a melted liquid, whether gold, or silver, or brass, poured into a mould; and though graven images are not mentioned, they are included, a part being put for the whole, as appears not only from the injunction to break images in general, whether graven or molten, (<sup><0243></sup>Exodus 34:13) but from the second command, which expressly forbids the making and worshipping of them; but “molten” ones are particularly mentioned, because it is probable they were chiefly such the Canaanites worshipped, and especially, because the calf the Israelites had lately made and worshipped was a molten one.

**Ver. 18.** *The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep*, etc.] Which was instituted at the time of their coming out of Egypt, and on that account, and then observed, (<sup><0215></sup>Exodus 12:15,18,19 13:6,7) and afterwards repeated, and the month expressed in which they were to keep it, and the reason of it, as it here follows, ((see Gill on “<sup><0235></sup>Exodus 13:15”)).

**Ver. 19.** *All that openeth the matrix is mine*, etc.] Or “the womb”, and therefore to be sanctified, and set apart for his use: this also was declared, and the law concerning it given, at the time of their coming out of Egypt, and here repeated, ((see Gill on “<sup><0232></sup>Exodus 13:2”)), ((see Gill on “<sup><0232></sup>Exodus 13:12”)).

**Ver. 20.** *Every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem*, etc.] This goes along with the former, ((see Gill on “<sup><0233></sup>Exodus 13:13”)):

*and none shall appear before me empty*; at the grand festivals, the passover, pentecost, and tabernacles, ((see Gill on “<sup>(12315)</sup>Exodus 13:15”)).

**Ver. 21.** *Six days shalt thou work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest*, etc.] This is the law of the seventh day sabbath, which is after repeated, to fix it in the minds and memories of the people, (see <sup>(12300)</sup>Exodus 20:10 23:12 31:15) and here it is added, which has not been mentioned before:

*in earing and in harvest thou shalt rest*; that is, in the time of ploughing, and in the time of reaping and gathering in the harvest, which are both very busy seasons; the rest of the sabbath was not to be violated; such sort of works, though they might require haste and expedition, yet the sabbath was not to be broken on account of them: this is the common sense of the law, as it is understood; but Maimonides <sup>f976</sup> gives another sense from their doctors, who say, it is forbidden to plough in the sixth year what cannot be reaped but in the seventh; and so likewise that it is forbidden to reap on the seventh year, that of which profit may be had on the eighth year, and this is founded on what the Scripture says, (<sup>(12321)</sup>Exodus 34:21) “in earing”, etc. and they say, that here ploughing and harvest are not to be understood of the seventh day, because this is included in the general rule, “thou shalt not do any work”--they say, of that which is ploughed, whose reaping or harvest is forbidden, is the ploughing at the evening of the seventh year, and at the going out of the seventh; and know this, that the evening of the seventh is the sixth year, and the going out of the seventh is the eighth year, and so Jarchi on the text observes, that some of their Rabbins say, this is to be understood of the ploughing of the seventh year, the seventh year entering, and the harvest of the seventh year, at the going out of it; so that as there is a seventh day of rest, there is a year in which ploughing and harvest are forbidden; but there are others, he says, who say the text speaks only of the sabbath.

**Ver. 22.** *And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks*, etc.] The feast of Pentecost, called the feast of weeks, because seven sabbaths or weeks, or fifty days, were to be reckoned from the day in the passover feast, on which the sheaf of the wave offering was brought, (<sup>(12315)</sup>Leviticus 23:15,16) and which was also called the feast

*of the first fruits of wheat harvest*, to distinguish it from the barley harvest, at the time of the passover, when a sheaf of barley was the wave offering to the Lord; but at this two loaves or cakes of fine wheaten flour were brought as the first fruits of the wheat harvest, (see <sup>(12317)</sup>Leviticus 23:17)

*and the feast of ingathering at the year's end*; which was the feast of tabernacles, called the feast of ingathering, because at this time all the fruits of the earth, the corn, wine, and oil, and all others were gathered in; and this was at the close of the old year, and at the beginning of the new, according to the ancient account, which made Tisri or September the first month in the year; ((see Gill on "<sup>(12316)</sup>Exodus 23:16"))).

**Ver. 23.** *Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord God*, etc.] At the three above mentioned feasts, ((see Gill on "<sup>(12317)</sup>Exodus 23:17")) here it is added,

*the God of Israel*; who had chosen them to be his special people, had redeemed them out of Egypt, and done great things for them since; had made a covenant with them, and had now renewed that covenant with them, and was their covenant God, and they his people, and so were under great obligations to present themselves unto him at the times appointed by him.

**Ver. 24.** *For I will cast out the nations before thee*, etc.] Who are particularly mentioned, (<sup>(12311)</sup>Exodus 34:11) and therefore they need not be in any fear of them, when they should go up to the appointed place, and appear before the Lord; for to this they were not obliged, until they were come into the land of Canaan, and the inhabitants driven out before them:

*and enlarge thy borders*; so that as they should have no enemies within them, to hinder and molest them, or discourage and deter them from attendance on the Lord at such set times, so they would be set at a great distance from them, that they should have nothing to fear from them; and should it be objected that at such times, when only women and children were left at home, and their borders were defenceless, it would be a proper opportunity for their enemies to invade them, it is further promised:

*neither, shall any man desire thy land*; though it is a desirable land; and their neighbours, and especially the old inhabitants of it, envied the happiness of the Israelites, and could not but wish it was in their possession; yet God, who has the hearts of all men in his hands, and can direct their thoughts, and turn the inclinations of their minds, and influence their affections, and engage them with other objects, promises that they should not think of an invasion of them, or have their minds, and the desires and affections of their hearts, in the least turned that way at these seasons, whatever they might have at other times; even

*when thou shall go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in a year;* at the feasts before mentioned, which was a most wonderful display of the power and providence of God.

**Ver. 25.** *Thou shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven,* etc.] That is, not kill the passover, while there was any leaven in their houses; so the Targum of Jonathan, ((see Gill on “<sup><0238></sup>Exodus 23:18”))

*neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of passover be left unto the morning;* neither any of the flesh, nor of the fat of the passover lamb: if any were left, it was to be burnt, (see <sup><0220></sup>Exodus 12:10 23:18).

**Ver. 26.** *The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring,* etc.] This, and another law in this verse, concerning not seething a kid in his mother’s milk, are repeated from (<sup><0239></sup>Exodus 23:19). (See Gill on “<sup><0239></sup>Exodus 23:19”).

**Ver. 27.** *And the Lord said unto Moses,* etc.] Being still with him on the mount:

*write thou these words;* expressed in the preceding verses, from (<sup><0341></sup>Exodus 34:11-27), as he before had written in a book all those laws, contained in (<sup><0201></sup>Exodus 21:1-23:33) called the book of the covenant, (<sup><0248></sup>Exodus 24:4,7) and which perhaps might be destroyed, as well as the two tables were broken; and therefore upon the renewal of the covenant here, there is a repetition made of the principal laws before given, which are ordered also to be written in a book, which may very well be called by the same name, since it follows:

*for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel,* with Moses, as their representative and mediator, and with them represented by him: what is above related carries in it the form of a covenant between them, God having declared on his part what he would do for them, and what laws and rules he required to be observed on their part; which Moses assented to in their name, and was ordered to write them down, that he might repeat them to them.

**Ver. 28.** *And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights,* etc.] These were other forty days and nights, besides those he had been with the Lord, when he came down and broke the two tables in his hand, on sight of the idolatry of the people; yea, not only the Jewish writers think that he was on the mount three times forty days and forty nights, but also several

learned Christian writers, as Dr. Lightfoot <sup>f977</sup> and others; and it seems plain that he went up to the mountain three times, (<sup><1245></sup>Exodus 24:15 32:30 34:4) and it is not improbable that he was each time so long there; about the first and third times there can be no doubt, (see <sup><1248></sup>Exodus 24:18) and the text before us; and at the second time, when he went up to make reconciliation for the people, (<sup><1230></sup>Exodus 32:30) he says, that he fell down before the Lord, as at the first forty days and forty nights, (<sup><1898></sup>Deuteronomy 9:18) and from the seventh day of the month Sivan, the day after the giving of the law, to the tenth of Tisri, on which day he now descended, are just so many days:

*he did neither eat bread nor drink water*: and it is very likely slept not, he being supported without either of these by the power of God; and having such nearness of communion with God, and his mind taken up with what he heard and saw, he had no thoughts of, nor desires and cravings after such things, as well as he stood in no need of them; all which must be ascribed to the miraculous interposition of God in the support of him, ((see Gill on “<sup><1248></sup>Exodus 24:18”))

*and he wrote on the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments*; not Moses, for these were tables of stone, which he could not write or engrave upon without proper instruments, which it does not appear he had with him on the mount; but it was God that wrote them, who, in (<sup><1241></sup>Exodus 34:1) says he would write them, and from (<sup><1810></sup>Deuteronomy 10:2,4) we are assured he did.

**Ver. 29.** *And it came to pass, when Moses came down Mount Sinai*, etc.] Which was on the day of atonement, according to Jarchi, that is, the tenth of Tisri, or September; and so the Jewish chronologers <sup>f978</sup> fix his descent on this day:

*with the two tables of testimony in Moses's hand*; the two tables he carried up, on which God had wrote the law, called “the testimony”, being a testification and declaration of his will to the children of Israel:

*when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone, while he talked with him*: the Targum of Jonathan is,

“Moses knew not that the splendour of the form of his face was become illustrious, which he had from the brightness of the glory of the Shechinah of the Lord, at the time he talked with him.”

And this the apostle calls “the glory of his countenance”, (~~2~~2 Corinthians 3:7) the glory of the Lord as it passed before him, when in the cleft of the rock, and that degree of it he was admitted to the sight of, while conversing with God, during his stay on the mount forty days and forty nights, left a shining glory on his countenance; which while he was with God he could not be at all sensible of, the glory of God so infinitely surpassing that; and when he came down the mount, as he could not see his own face without a glass, so though the rays of light and glory that darted from his face were so bright and strong, that they might have been observed by him, yet his mind was so intent on what he had seen and heard, that he took no notice of them. The Vulgate Latin version renders it very wrongly, “that his face was horned”, which has given occasion to painters to represent him in a ridiculous manner, as having horns coming out of his forehead; though the word has the signification of an horn, and the meaning of that version, as of others, may only be, that the skin of his face “darted out rays”<sup>f979</sup> like horns, such as the rays of the sun appear to be like to the eye, (see ~~3~~Habakkuk 3:4 \*marg) hence Jupiter Ammon, the same with the sun, is described as having horns<sup>f980</sup>; and so Bacchus, who is supposed to be the same with Moses, is represented as having a horned face<sup>f981</sup>. Now this glory was left on the countenance of Moses, to show that he had had communion with God, and that the law he brought with him was from him; and to signify the glory of it, and to command awe and reverence, and make men afraid to break it.

**Ver. 30.** *And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses*, etc.] Who very probably met him at the bottom of the mount; these Israelites with Aaron were the princes, as Aben Ezra seems rightly to interpret it, and as appears from the following verse; for Moses could not well be seen by the whole body of the people at once, upon his descent from the mount:

*behold, the skin of his face shone*; darted out rays of light and glory all around it, much perhaps in the same manner as the glory about our Lord, and others, is painted by the Romanists:

*and they were afraid to come nigh him*; there was something so majestic and striking in it; and perhaps they could not tell whether it foreboded good or evil to them; and this may signify, that as by the light of the law sin is discovered, it fills with a sense of wrath and fear of damnation; and being the ministration of condemnation and death, it is terrifying and killing, though it has a glory in it.



**Ver. 31.** *And Moses called unto them*, etc.] Who, as it appears by what follows, on sight of him were so terrified, that they did not proceed on to meet him, but went back, and therefore he called unto them to return and come forward:

*and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him*; knowing him by his voice, and encouraged by his call of them, who before might take him to be something more than human, some glorious form, one of the heavenly angels appearing in this manner:

*and Moses talked with them*; after he had put a vail on his face, of which there is an account in the following verses. He talked with them friendly, and told them all that had happened to him in the mount; what a glorious sight he had been indulged with; what a proclamation of the grace and goodness of God had been made to him; and what laws and ordinances God had enjoined him and them the observance of.

**Ver. 32.** *And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh*, etc.] That is, after Aaron and the rulers had had a conversation with Moses, then the whole body of the people by turns were admitted to come before him, and hear the laws of God from him:

*and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai*; besides the two tables of stone, and the testimony written on them, he gave them all the other commands he was ordered to write in a book, and which are recorded in this chapter; he kept back nothing from them, but enjoined them to keep all the Lord had commanded.

**Ver. 33.** *And [till] Moses had done speaking with them*, etc.] Not when he had done, as the Septuagint version, for then there would have been no occasion for it; but when he first began to speak to Aaron and the “rulers”, and continued to speak to the congregation until he had finished what he had to say; even he did what follows, as soon as he perceived there was a glory on his face, which they could not bear to look at:

*he put a vail on his face*; something that covered it in a good measure, a mask, or linen cloth, or some such thing. The obscurity of the law may be signified by this vail, both of the moral and ceremonial law; the moral law, which though it makes known the mind and will of God, with respect to what is to be done, or not done, yet not with respect to the affair of life and salvation: it makes known the one God as the object of worship, but gives no account of a trinity of persons in the Godhead; no hint of God in Christ,

nor revelation of the Son of God; no view of a Saviour, no notion of pardon; nor does it point out the righteousness of Christ unto us; nor do we from it hear anything of the Spirit of God, and his grace, nor of eternal life and glory: the ceremonial law, and its ordinances, did give some light into evangelical things, and did point out Christ, and the blessings of his grace, yet but darkly and obscurely; they were shadows of good things to come, and gave some dark and distant views of them, but were not so much as the image of the things, and did not bring them near, and set them in a clear light: likewise this vail may be an emblem of the darkness of the minds of men, with respect to the law, and the knowledge of divine things; especially of the Jews, who, as the apostle says, “could not steadfastly look at the end of that which is abolished”: of the ceremonial law, which is disannulled, the end of which was Christ; he is the end for which it was made, the scope or mark at which it aimed, the term in which it issued, and in whom it had its complete fulfilment; but this they had not a perfect view of, and could not steadfastly behold: the moral law also is in some sense abolished by Christ, as the ministration of Moses, as a covenant of works, and as to the curse and condemnation of it to those that believe; and Christ he is the end of this, the fulfilling end of it, by conformity of nature, and obedience of life unto it, and by suffering the penalty of it; but such was the blindness of the Jews, that they were ignorant of the nature of this law, of the spirituality and perfection of it, of its use to convince men of sin, to condemn for it, but not to justify from it; were ignorant of the righteousness of God which the law required, and of Christ, and of the way of life and righteousness by him; and so of the Spirit of God, and his work, and of the mysteries of the Gospel, and of the books of the Old Testament; (see ~~4184~~ 2 Corinthians 3:14,15).

**Ver. 34.** *But when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him,* etc.] Went into the tabernacle to converse with him, to pray unto him, and inquire about any matter of difficulty respecting the people of Israel he was concerned for, which he often did:

*he took the vail off until he came out:* and so when men are truly converted, and turn to the Lord, the vail of darkness and unbelief is removed, and the true light shines, in which they see things in another light than they did before; and when they come into his presence, they come with hearts opened and unveiled, all things being naked and open to him with whom they have to do; and particularly saints under the Gospel dispensation, with an open face, as in a glass, behold the glory of the Lord;

and when they get to heaven, they will then see face to face, and know as they are known, <sup><40616></sup>2 Corinthians 3:16,18 <sup><46312></sup>1 Corinthians 13:12:

*and he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel [that] which he was commanded;* this respects not the present time of his coming down from the mount, or out of the tabernacle with the law and commands now given, for these he had already declared; but after times, and all such times when he went in to the Lord to inquire of him his mind and will concerning certain things, in which the people wanted information, when, upon his return, he acquainted them with whatsoever the Lord ordered to be done.

**Ver. 35.** *And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses's face shone,* etc.] That is, not only when he came down from the mount, but whenever he came out of the tabernacle, where he had been inquiring of God, and conversing with him:

*and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him;* this he did from time to time, when he came out from the Lord he put on his vail, and when he went in again, he put it off. How long this brightness on his countenance remained, cannot be said with any certainty; Saadiah Gaon says, it did not remove from him to the day of his death: hence it is said,

*“his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated”,*

<sup><6341></sup>Deuteronomy 34:7 and Aben Ezra seems to approve of it; and it is the opinion of many great and learned men, that it continued as long as he lived.