

THE TEXT OF EXODUS
TRANSLATION

34 And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon the tables the words that were on the first tables, which thou brakest. (2) And be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Si-nai, and present thyself there to me on the top of the mount. (3) And no man shall come up with thee; neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount. (4) And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Mo-ses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Si-nai, as Je-ho-vah had commanded him, and took in his hand two tables of stone. (5) And Je-ho-vah descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of Je-ho-vah. (6) And Je-ho-vah passed by before him, and proclaimed, Je-ho-vah, Je-ho-vah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; (7) keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation. (8) And Mo-ses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. (9) And he said, If now I have found favor in thy sight, O Lord, let the Lord, I pray thee, go in the midst of us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.

(10) And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been wrought in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of Je-ho-vah; for it is a terrible thing that I do with thee. (11) Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amor-ite, and the Ca-naan-ite, and the Hit-tite, and the Per-iz-zite, and the Hi-vite, and the Jeb-u-site. (12) Take heed to thyself,

lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: (13) but ye shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and ye shall cut down their A-she-rim (14) (for thou shalt worship no other god: for Je-ho-vah, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God); (15) lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot after their gods, and sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee and thou eat of his sacrifice; (16) and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters play the harlot after their gods, and make thy sons play the harlot after their gods. (17) Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.

(18) The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, at the time appointed in the month A-bib; for in the month A-bib thou camest out from E-gypt. (19) All that openeth the womb is mine; and all thy cattle that is male, the firstlings of cow and sheep. (20) And the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break its neck. All the first-born of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty.

(21) Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in plowing time and in harvest thou shalt rest. (22) And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, *even* of the first-fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end. (23) Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord Je-ho-vah, the God of Is-ra-el. (24) For I will cast out nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou goest up to appear before Je-ho-vah thy God three times in the year.

(25) Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning. (26) The first of the first-fruits of thy ground thou shalt bring unto the house of Je-ho-vah thy God. Thou shalt not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

(27) And Je-ho-vah said unto Mo-ses, Write thou these

words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Is-ra-el. (28) And he was there with Je-ho-vah forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

(29) And it came to pass, when Mo-ses came down from mount Si-nai with the two tables of the testimony in Mo-ses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Mo-ses knew not that the skin of his face shone by reason of his speaking with him. (30) And when Aar-on and all the children of Is-ra-el saw Mo-ses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. (31) And Mo-ses called unto them; and Aar-on and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Mo-ses spake to them. (32) And afterward all the children of Is-ra-el came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that Je-ho-vah had spoken with him in mount Si-nai. (33) And when Mo-ses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. (34) But when Mo-ses went in before Je-ho-vah to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and he came out, and spake unto the children of Is-ra-el that which he was commanded. (35) And the children of Is-ra-el saw the face of Mo-ses, that the skin of Mo-ses' face shone; and Mo-ses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR
QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading, propose a brief title or topic for the chapter.
2. What was Moses to hew out? (34:1, 4)
3. Who would write the words on the tablets? (34:1; Deut. 10:2, 4)
4. Is a little blame laid upon Moses for breaking the first tablets? (34:1)

5. Who was to come up into Mt. Sinai with Moses? (34:2-3)
6. Had anyone gone with Moses up on the mount during the first stay there? (24:13)
7. To what part of the mount was Moses to come? (34:3)
8. In what did Jehovah descend onto the mount? (34:5; Compare 19:18; 24:15-16.)
9. What did Jehovah proclaim? (34:5)
10. List the characteristics which Jehovah proclaimed about himself. (34:6-7)
11. Why should God visit the iniquity of fathers upon the children? (36:7; Compare 20:5-6.)
12. What three things did Moses ask God to do for the people? (34:9)
13. What did God declare he would make? (34:10, 27)
14. How impressive would God's marvels be before the people? (34:10)
15. What was to be done with the Amorites, Canaanites, etc. (34:11)
16. What was to be done with Canaanite religious objects? (34:13)
17. What could making a covenant with the inhabitants of the land lead to? (34:12, 15-16)
18. What are "molten gods"? (34:17; 32:4, 8, 24)
19. What was to be done or not done during the feast of Unleavened Bread? (34:18)
20. What animals did God claim as his? (34:19)
21. What things were to be redeemed? (34:20; 13:12-13; Num. 18:15-16)
22. At what particular times were the people to be sure to rest on the seventh (Sabbath) days? (34:21)
23. How many compulsory feasts were to be attended by male Israelites each year? (34:22-23)
24. Why should the enlargement of the Israelites' borders strengthen their obligation to keep the three annual feasts? (34:24)
25. What was not to be offered with the blood of the sacrifices? (34:25)

26. How many of the covenant laws of 34:10-26 have parallels in the "covenant book" of Ex. chs. 20-23? (This will require some research.)
 27. What was Moses to do with the words that God spoke? (34:27)
 28. What did Moses not do during the time he was with Jehovah? (34:28)
 29. What words are called the "words of the covenant"? (34:28) Were these words an eternal covenant? (Jer. 31:31-32; II Cor. 3:6-11)
 30. What was unusual about Moses' appearance when he came down from the mount? (34:29) What had caused this?
 31. How did the people react to Moses' appearance? (34:30)
 32. Could the people look at Moses without being blinded? (34:30-31, 35)
 33. To whom did Moses speak the words of the commandment which Jehovah spoke with him? (34:32)
 34. When did Moses put on a veil? (34:33)
 35. Why did Paul say that Moses put on the veil? (II Cor. 3:13)
 36. Did Moses wear the veil when he came in before Jehovah (in the tent of meeting)? (34:34-35)
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EXODUS THIRTY-FOUR: THE COVENANT RENEWED

1. The tablets restored; 34:1-4.
 2. God's name proclaimed; 34:5-9.
 3. God's covenant pledged; 34:10.
 4. God's ordinances commanded; 34:11-26.
 5. God's words written; 34:27-28.
 6. God's commandments reported; 34:31-32.
 7. Moses' face shines; 34:29-30, 33-35.
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SERMON ON THE NAME OF GOD (Ex. 34:5-7)

- I. An introduction by the Infinite God; 34:5.
 - II. A theme beyond compare (THE NAME!); 34:5.
 - III. An exposition (development) in detail; 34:6-7.
 1. Jehovah, Jehovah (A name doubly-declared).
 2. God (Mighty one!)
 3. Merciful!
 4. Gracious!
 5. Slow to anger!
 6. Abundant in lovingkindness!
 7. Abundant in truth!
 8. Keeping lovingkindness for thousands!
 9. Forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.
 10. Will by no means clear the guilty!
 11. Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children!
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RENEWING THE COVENANT (34:10-26)

1. Promise of the covenant; 34:10.
 2. Prohibitions in the covenant; 34:11-17, 25.
 3. Practices (or precepts) in the covenant; 34:18-24.
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GOD'S REQUIREMENTS OF HIS PEOPLE (34:18-24)

1. Keep the feasts; 34:18, 22-23.
 2. Present your firstborn; 34:20.
 3. Come before me with an offering; 34:20.
 4. Keep the day of rest; 34:21.
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THE GLOW FROM GOD'S PRESENCE (34:29-35)

1. Comes from speaking with God; (34:29).
2. Comes upon a man unawares; (34:29).

3. Frightens sinful men; (34:30).
4. Veiled in men's presence; (34:33).
5. Unveiled in God's presence; (34:34-35).

THE FADING AND UNFADING GLORY
(Ex. 34:33; II Cor. 3:13-18)

1. The fading old covenant glory was veiled.
 2. The unfading new covenant glory is unveiled.
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EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

1. *What is in Exodus thirty-four?*

The chapter tells of God's making a covenant anew with Moses and Israel. The broken tablets of the ten commandments were replaced (34:1-4, 28). God proclaimed to Moses His basic nature (34:5-9). God set forth some of the laws He required the people to keep under the renewed covenant (34:10-26). (Nearly all of these laws are repeated from the decalogue and the covenant book of chs. 21-23.) Again, as at the ratification of the covenant the first time (24:4-8), Moses *wrote* the words of God and told them to the people (34:27-35). When Moses came down to the people with the covenant words, his face shone. Moses veiled his face after uttering God's words to the people.

"The whole chapter is a magnificent witness to Moses' power of intercession before God." (Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 193)

2. *What are the critical theories about Exodus thirty-four?*

Many critics have held that Exodus 34 is a separate account of the giving of the Sinai covenant by a different author. Chapters 19-24 have been attributed to *E* (an eighth century Northern Kingdom Elohist writer), and chapter 34 to *J* (tenth century Jehovistic writer), who adapted old Canaanite rituals. Many critics have followed

the conjecture of the German poet Goethe, who in 1773 said that the regulations of 34:14-26 could be grouped into *ten* laws, and that these laws were actually the original ten commandments! Chapter 20 has been entitled the "ethical" (or moral) decalogue and chapter 34 the "ritual" (or cultic) decalogue. M. Noth says that these titles "express quite pertinently, though in somewhat unhappy terminology, a difference in the predominant interest [of the authors of chs. 20 and 34], but we cannot speak of a fundamental opposition."¹ Supposedly chapter 34 was written by a man predominantly interested in religious rituals, and came from an agricultural society; whereas chapter 20 was written by one primarily concerned with ethics, whose cultural and social setting cannot be identified. Such nonsense!

Only by assuming that Exodus 34 has a corrupt, jumbled-up text can Exodus 34:14-26 be arranged into ten commandments. Noth admits that the passage (34:10-26) now offers more than ten commandments, but he regards it as being full of later "deuteronomistic" insertions.² Goethe himself in his later and riper years spoke of his alleged discovery of ten commandments in Ex. 34:14-26 as a "freakish notion" due to insufficient knowledge.³

Actually Ex. 34:1 makes it perfectly clear that chapter 34 is a RENEWAL of the original covenant and not a distinct version of the covenant by another author. Also Deut. 9:9-20, 25-29; 10:1-5, 10-11 indicates that Exodus was a renewal of the covenant.

Almost all of the laws in 34:11-26 are like laws in chapters 20-23. This is easily understandable if chapter 34 is a renewal of the covenant of 20-23; but it is hard to explain if chapter 34 was a separate covenant document by a different author and two centuries older than chapter 20.

We should shun the terms "ethical decalogue" and

¹*Op. cit.*, p. 265.

²*Op. cit.*, p. 262.

³Quoted in J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, p. 368.

“ritual decalogue.”

3. *What was Moses to bring up into the mount?* (34:1-4; Deut. 10:1-2)

He was to bring two new tablets of stone. Moses was to hew these out and then God would write upon them the words that were on the first tablets.

The first set of tablets had been completely the work of God, both the hewing out of the tablets and the writing (32:16).

God's comment to Moses concerning the first tablets “which you broke” seems to us a gentle reprimand to Moses. “You broke them; you replace them.” Keil and Delitzsch suggest that God had Moses remake the tablets to show the same zeal that he showed in breaking them.

Moses was to be “ready” when he came up to God. Perhaps the “readiness” was similar to that commanded in 19:10-11, 14-15.

The “top of the mount” was the “place by me” of 33:21.

Moses was to go up completely alone this time. Not even Joshua was to go along. Compare 24:13.

No flocks nor herds were to feed before the mount while Moses was up in it. This restriction is similar to that imposed when the commandments were first given (19:12-13). Compare Hebrews 12:20.

God seems to have wanted His covenant WRITTEN. See 33:27; 24:4.

4. *What did the LORD proclaim about himself?* (34:5-7)

He proclaimed the name of Jehovah. The NAME of Jehovah expresses all that Jehovah is and does. Compare Ex. 6:3. God proclaims His saving ways; He proclaims Himself.

Luther called 34:6-7 the “Sermon on the name of the Lord.” It reveals the most hidden nature of Jehovah. It is impossible to express the Lord's nature better than by His name.

The proclamation of the name of the Lord is a fulfillment of the promise in 33:19.

The statement that Jehovah descended in the cloud is somewhat similar to 19:20. We suppose that it was at this time that Jehovah covered Moses in the cleft of the rock as He passed by (33:22). What Moses saw of God is not stated.

Some interpreters have translated 34:5b, "He (Moses) stood with him (God) there, and called upon the name." This is a grammatically possible translation, but is surely not the preferred one.

Exodus 34:5-7 is the second revelation of the NAME of the LORD. The first revelation (in 3:14-15) was of Yahweh as the self-existent savior. This revelation of the name is of a loving, forgiving, but NOT overindulgent savior.

Jewish interpreters (quite justly!) make much of 34:6-7, calling it The Thirteen Attributes of the Divine Nature.⁴ Jewish interpreters have some variations among themselves in the way they divide 34:6-7 into thirteen attributes, but this is one such analysis:

(1) The LORD; (2) The LORD. (The Talmud explains the repetition of God's name as indicating that God is merciful to a man both before he sins and after he sins. Whatever change has to be wrought must be in the heart of the sinner, not in the nature of deity.⁵); (3) God (or Mighty one); (4) merciful; (5) gracious; (6) longsuffering; (7) abundant in lovingkindness (Heb., *hesed*); (8) abundant in truth; (9) keeping mercy to thousands; (10) forgiving iniquity (or guilt); (11) forgiving transgression; (12) forgiving sin; (13) will by no means clear the guilty.

We do not regard the division of these descriptions of God into thirteen points as a divine revelation. But we thank God for providing us this description of his glorious "name," and we worship Him!

Similar descriptions of God are in Psalm 103:8; 86:15; Num. 14:18; Deut. 5:9-10.

⁴J. H. Hertz, *op. cit.*, pp. 362, 364.

⁵*Ibid.*

Some of the very FIRST things God says about Himself are that He is merciful and gracious. Compare 33:19!

To “clear” (34:7) means to declare innocent, to let go unpunished.

Observe the balance between love and justice, grace and firmness in God’s nature.

Concerning “visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children,” see notes on 20:5.

Some interpreters interpret 34:7a to mean “thousands of generations.” The word *generations* is not actually in the text at that point. There have been barely two hundred generations of men since creation.

The synonyms for *sin* in 33:7 are hard to distinguish precisely. Possibly *iniquity* refers to turning from the right course; *transgression* is rebellion; and *sin* is an act of missing the desired mark.⁶

5. *What was Moses’ response to God’s self-proclamation? (34:8-9)*

He responded by worship and by asking for acceptance of the people. He took advantage of God’s description of Himself as merciful and gracious to ask a favor.

Anyone who becomes aware of God as He described Himself in 34:6-7 will hurry, and bow, and worship. What is worship other than a heartfelt acknowledgement of the greatness of the Lord?

The request that the Lord (Heb., *Adonay*) would go with them is repeated from 33:15-16. God had already accepted this request in 33:14, 17; but seemingly Moses was still uneasy about the matter, not because he did not trust God, but because the people were “stiffnecked.” Note that Ex. 34:9 uses the name *Adonay* (meaning “my Lord”) as God’s title.

Moses did not pray for God to give them an inheritance, but to *take* them as His inheritance. Compare Zech. 2:12.

⁶Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 440.

6. *What did God promise to make and do before the people?*
(34:10)

God promised to make a *covenant*, and to do *marvels*. Thus the request of 34:9 was answered and accepted by the promise of 34:10.

The first and the last *I* in 34:10 are emphatic personal pronouns.

The verb "make" is a participle, indicating in some way a continuous action.

God's covenant would be like certain treaties and covenants called suzerainty treaties. Ancient kings (such as the Hittites) would make such covenants with their people. As covenants proclaimed by a superior to vassals, their effectiveness and force depended not on compliance by both parties to specified terms, but on the unilateral declaration and determination of the covenant-maker.⁷

God spoke to Moses (in 34:10) of "thy" people. But this expression no longer carried the idea of alienation that it carried right after the golden calf was made (32:7).

God promised to do "marvels" before "thy people." "Marvels" is a term referring to anything wondrous, or of which men stand in awe. The term was used in 3:20 to refer to the plagues sent upon Egypt. See also Judges 6:13; Psalm 26:7.

The marvels are spoken of (literally) as being "created." This term suggests that the likes of these marvels was never known before. Probably the marvels are the deliverances during future desert wanderings and the conquest of Canaan. The "covenant" was to include a host of miracles, such as driving out the Canaanites. See Deut. 4:38. God is a God of miracles, not a subject for theological speculation.

"Terrible" means fearsome, fearful, dreadful, wonderful, astonishing. Compare Deut. 10:21; Psalm 145:6.

⁷Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 228, 229.

Probably 34:10 is the preamble to the covenant, and we should regard 34:11 as starting a new paragraph (as in R.S.V.). Cole feels we should take verses 10-11 as closely joined together, and together forming the covenant preamble.

The terms of the covenant in Ex. 34:11-26 are in NO way to be considered the complete covenant requirements. They are only a sampler of the full requirements set forth in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The same thing was true of the longer set of ordinances in Exodus 20-23, as explained in our notes before. The very absence of the ten commandments in Ex. 34 shows that it was not a full statement of the covenant.

7. *What did God command about the Canaanites?* (34:11-16; Compare 23:23-24, 32-33; Deut. 7:1-5; 12:2-3.)

Israel was to make no covenant with them, and was to destroy their religious objects utterly. Sadly, Israel later violated this command repeatedly. See Judges 2:1-2, 11-13; Josh. 9:3-27; Psalm 106:34-39.

It was GOD who would drive out the Canaanites, and not actually Israel. The verb translated "I drive out" expresses continuous action: "I am driving out" or "I am about to drive out." Compare 23:27-30. God was already softening up the Canaanites, even before Israel arrived.

Regarding the various Canaanite peoples, see 3:17.

Regarding the "pillars" (K.J.V., "images"), see 23:24.

"Asherim" (K.J.V., "grooves") were sacred trees or wooden poles dedicated to Asherah, a goddess of fertility often associated with Baal or with Baal's father El. Asherim are mentioned here for the first time. See Deut. 16:21; Judges 6:25; II Kings 18:4; 21:3.

In the common Hebrew Bible the word for "other" in 34:14 is printed with an enlarged *R* (*resh*) (*'achaR*) so no one could possibly confuse it with the quite similar-looking word meaning *one* (*'echad*).

The word for "jealous" in 34:14 is a very strong word. It is used only of God in the Old Testament. It expresses

none of the pettiness that is sometimes associated with jealousy, but means to burn with zeal, or be provoked to wrath. See Deut. 4:24; 6:15; Ex. 20:3-5.

Baal worship involved "playing the harlot" quite literally. See Num. 25:1-5; Hosea 4:13-14. Certainly it also constituted a spiritual immorality, and it is thus spoken of here for the first time. Compare Deut. 31:16.

Even the patriarchs Abraham and Isaac had recognized the dangers of intermarriages with Canaanites. See Gen. 24:3; 28:6; Joshua 23:12.

The commands against the Canaanites are sterner in 34:11-16 than in 23:23ff, possibly because of the golden calf incident.

8. *What law was given about molten gods? (34:17)*

They were not to be made "unto thee" (same phrase as in 20:4). "Molten" means melted and cast. The golden calf was molten (32:4), and therefore this command was a very live matter. The specific prohibition against molten images should have been needless after the very comprehensive law against idols of all types in 20:4-5; but the people had failed to heed it.

9. *What was the commandment about the feast of unleavened bread? (34:18)*

It was to be observed annually. Compare 12:14, 15-20; 23:15. (Ex. 34:18 and 23:15 are almost identical verses.) The feast of Unleavened Bread originated with the exodus rather than from events associated with an agricultural season, as some critics have alleged.

The Passover is not mentioned among the feasts in 34:18-23, probably because it was not one of the national feasts to which everyone journeyed, but was a feast observed in each home. It was very closely associated with the feast of Unleavened Bread.

Concerning the month Abib, see 13:4; 12:2.

10. *What was to be done with the firstborn? (34:19-20)*

They were given to the LORD or redeemed. See 13:2, 12-13; 22:29-30.

See 23:15 concerning the instruction "None shall appear before me empty."

The R.S.V. renders 34:19, "All that opens the womb is mine, all your male cattle, the firstlings," A footnote by the word "male" says "Gk., Theodotian, Vg., Tg.: Heb. uncertain." It is simply not true that the Hebrew is uncertain. It differs hardly at all from the Greek. The Hebrew lacks a relative pronoun that we include in English, but it is quite clear. It reads, "Every firstborn of the womb (is) mine, and (or even) all thy cattle (that is) born a male, (the) firstborn of ox and sheep."

11. *What days and feasts was Israel to observe? (34:21-26)*

The seventh day (Sabbath) was to be a day of rest. Compare 20:8-10; 23:12.

The instruction to keep the seventh day as a day of rest during plowing time (K.J.V., "earing time") and harvest time is stated only in this verse. This was a faith-testing command. Rest days were to be strictly observed even at the times when the farmer was busiest and in greatest danger of losing his crop. The Sabbath day was a test of faith from its very first observance (16:4), and it always kept this character about it. God's people still must seek first the kingdom of God in all their activities. (Matt. 6:33)

The feast of weeks (also called the "feast of harvest" and the "feast of firstfruits") came annually in June, after the harvest. See 23:16; Deut. 16:10.

The feast of ingathering (also called "Tabernacles" or "Booths") came at the "year's end," literally at the "revolution" (or "circuit") of the year, in September/October. See 23:16.

Exodus 34:23 is almost identical to 23:17. Compare 23:14.

Exodus 34:23-24 alludes to a central sanctuary, which the Israelites would set up and go to after conquering the land. Critics take this as evidence of a post-Mosaic date for the passage. But those who believe that God can prophesy about events and places that are yet in the future

will accept the words as they stand. See Isa. 41:4, 23; 44:8.

Some Israelites feared that squatters and land thieves would claim and occupy their lands while they were away attending God's feasts. This was probably more of an excuse for neglect of worship than any real danger. But God reassured them that while they were at the feasts, no one would even covet (desire) their land, much less try to seize it. Furthermore, He would enlarge their national borders until there was such an abundance of land that no one would have any cause to covet his neighbor's land.

Exodus 34:25 resembles 23:18. Concerning the matter of not leaving Passover sacrifices uneaten till morning, see 12:10. Ex. 34:26 is similar to 23:19.

Observe the reference to "my sacrifice" in 34:25.

12. *What covenant words were written down? (34:27-28)*

The covenant commands of 34:10-26 were to be written by Moses. The ten commandments themselves were written by God. Compare 34:1. "These words" referred to in 34:27 seem to be the covenant words in 34:10-26.

From 34:27-28 alone it might be assumed that "he" who wrote the words of the ten commandments was Moses. However, this is not definitely asserted here. And the words of 34:1 and Deut. 10:2, 4 are conclusive in asserting that the writing of the ten commandments was the work of God.

In the same manner that Moses wrote the covenant ordinances of chapters 21-23, he also wrote the words of this covenant. (24:4, 7) It appears definite that God wanted His covenant in written form.

"Tenor" in 34:27 is literally "face." It is probably best to translate the expression simply "according to these words." (Harkavy's *Lexicon*; R.S.V.)

Deut. 10:10 repeats a fact asserted here, that Moses fasted during this second stay in the mount. He had also fasted during the first prolonged stay on the mount. (Deut. 9:9)

Deut. 10:1-5 tells that Moses made an ark of acacia wood for the ten commandments when he came down from

the mount, and this simple ark became the predecessor of the ark of the covenant described in 25:10ff.

The ten commandments are specifically identified as the "words of the covenant" in 34:28. This passage makes clear to us what words are referred to as the "covenant" when contrasts are made in the scripture between the "old covenant" and the "new covenant." (II Cor. 3:6-13; Jer. 31:31-32; Heb. 8:7-13).

13. *What was amazing about Moses' appearance when he came down from the mount? (34:29-30)*

His face shone, so that both Aaron and the children of Israel were afraid to come near him. The fear of Israel when Moses came among them with a glowing face is understandable after their recent experience with idolatry and the wrath of Moses!

Moses was unaware that his face was shining. He was not fully conscious of his own spiritual stature and privileges. Numbers 12:13 rightly describes him as the meekest of men. The glow surely proved that Moses had been with God.

The Hebrew verb translated "shone" ("shot forth beams") has a related noun often meaning "horns." Therefore the Latin Bible translated Ex. 34:29 as "having horns." From this rather bizarre translation, medieval art works, such as Michaelangelo's statue at Rome, represent Moses as having a pair of horns from his head!

The K.J.V. translation of 34:29, "while he talked with him," is translated more properly "because he had been talking with God." (R.S.V.)

Things exposed to light and radiation sometimes glow even after being removed from the light. Thus Moses, having been with God who dwells in light unapproachable (I Tim. 6:16), had acquired some of the glow of God (Rev. 21:23), even though he had seen only the "back part" of God (33:23). How he would have shone if he had stood before God in all His glory! God's glowing glory was manifested by Christ Jesus at His transfiguration. (Matt. 17:2; Compare

Rev. 1:16.)

The countenance of Moses did not shine after his first stay on the mount. Probably this happened because the divine presence was then withdrawn from Israel.

14. *What did Moses tell the people after he came down from the mount? (34:31-32)*

Moses spoke (unveiled!) to Aaron and all the rulers of Israel, giving them in commandment all which the Lord had told him in Mt. Sinai. Compare 24:3.

The word "returned" in 34:31 suggests that Aaron and Israel had at first fled in terror from Moses with his shining face.

The acts of sprinkling the blood and public declaration of acceptance of the covenant were not done this time, as they had been done when the covenant was first accepted (24:3-8). Possibly the reason for this was that this time the covenant was less based on the people's compliance and more on God's oath and His grace. Note in Judges 2:1 that God declared, "I said, I will never break my covenant with you."

Ramm remarks that it is proverbial that second weddings are very short. And thus at this second making of the covenant Moses merely assembled the people and announced the covenant with a minimal statement or two of what was involved.⁸

15. *When did Moses put on a veil? (34:33-35)*

He put it on *after* he finished speaking with them. He removed the veil when he went in to speak with Jehovah (presumably in the tent of meeting). Upon coming out, he spoke with the children of Israel that which was commanded by God. They saw his face shining and unveiled. Then he put the veil upon his face again, until he went in again to speak with God.

The Hebrew word for veil (*masweh*) is used only in this

⁸Ramm, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

passage; but its meaning seems obvious from the story. Some interpreters have speculated that the "veil" was actually a priestly mask, such as priests in Egypt wore. But there is no real evidence for this idea, and it is contrary to the New Testament explanation of the veil.

Paul in II Cor. 3:7-18 says that Moses put the veil on his face so the Israelites would not see the "end" of the glory that was fading away (II Cor. 3:13). The Exodus narrative does not tell us why Moses wore the veil. It surely was not because the Israelites were not allowed to see the glow, or because it was so bright it blinded them. We believe Paul was an inspired interpreter, not just another speculative rabbinic interpreter.

Paul used the fading glory of Moses' face as a symbol of the fading glory of the old covenant that God made with Moses. That covenant has passed away, like the glow of Moses' face.

The veil also was a symbol of the hardening of the minds of the Israelites in rejecting Christ (II Cor. 3:14-15). For to this day, whenever Moses (that is, the writings of Moses, or the law) is read, a veil lieth upon their heart. This veil is removed when they turn to the Lord.

Somewhat as Moses had an unveiled association with the LORD, so believers in Christ, by the Spirit of the Lord, view with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, though beholding it as in a mirror. In the presence of that glory we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory. We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (I John 3:2).
