

## **The Face of a Friend**

*An inquiry into Moses' conversation with God "face to face, as a man speaks with his friend" in  
Exodus 33:11*

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In this paper I will look at Exodus 33:11 and will investigate some of the theories of what Moses was faced with in his tent. It is my suggestion that the way in which God spoke with Moses on the mountain is different than in Moses' tent. I propose that the conversations Moses had in his tent were with a physical manifestation of God, i.e. the pre-incarnate image of Yeshua.

From the beginning of time God has desired to dwell with mankind. In the garden of Eden Adam and Eve enjoyed the paradise of peace and harmony between nature and the animals. More importantly they had the most sublime honor of dwelling with God. We all know the story of the fall of man, Adam being a representative for all mankind brought the wedge of sin between humans and the divine. The mark of sin that was now stamped on man was at odds with God's infinite holiness, man was forced out of the garden, and out of communion with God. Yet this was not the end of the story. God would give us a way to come back into the presence of his holiness, thus we are given the gospel. Throughout the scriptures God continually shows us the way back to communion with Him. The blood of the Messiah is the only way for the mark of sin to be lifted off mankind, and restoration to be made for us to dwell once again in the presence of his holiness. The scriptures give us the clear affirmation that in the end God will once again dwell amongst his people. But even before this work is completed, and His full presence dwells with us eternally, God is seen with human attributes throughout the Tanach. Abraham serves Hashem who shows up in human form in Gen. 18. The elders of Israel see the God of Israel in Ex. 24:10, and of course we are given the Messiah, Immanuel, God with us. Although the full

restoration of God's chosen people to the presence of the Holy One has not yet been realized<sup>1</sup>, the Bible seems to show his physical presence dwelling with mankind at certain points in time.<sup>2</sup>

### *Context*

In my opinion Moses has placed the narrative of Ex. 33 in a specific order, so we are to understand that there is something different about Moses' dealings with God on the mountain and in the tent. The setting of this passage is presented with Moses on Mt. Sinai for a second time. In chapter 32 Moses comes down from the mountain with the two tablets only to find much of Israel worshipping the golden calf. Moses destroys the first set of tablets and once again ascends the mountain. In 33:1-7 God explains to Moses that He will send an angel before him to drive out the people in the land that God has promised to Israel instead of His own presence. Verse 8 breaks from the story and seems to transport Moses back to the camp. We are told that Moses takes his own tent outside the designated borders of Israel's encampment to speak with God. In verse 12 Moses returns to the narration of his time on Mt. Sinai and pleads with God to go with His people. Here Moses seems to be arguing against an angel going up with the people as opposed to God Himself (V. 12-13). God agrees that His presence will go with Israel (V. 14-16), at which point Moses asks to see God's glory. The narrative break from verse 7-11 seems out of place for several reasons. The tent in which Moses speaks face to face with God is placed outside the camp and is different than the tent of meeting. But why was this temporary tent needed at all? If God was not willing to enter the camp until the tabernacle was prepared and ready, then why would Moses need a separate tent? God had already sectioned off the entire mountain for Moses to speak with Him (Ex. 24:2). More importantly, the text that seems to bookend this break has God first saying that He will not go with the people of Israel, and then He hears Moses' argument and agrees to have פָּנָי "His face" go with them. The Hebrew word for

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1. God's full presents was realized in the Messiah when he was here on earth, but my point here is that the people of God will not dwell in God's full physical presents until He sits on his throne and rules in His kingdom in the world to come.

2. I will not attempt to broach the subject of Yeshua's deity in this paper. I do hold to the same view as Tim Hegg on this subject. For a full understanding of this theology please see *The Deity of Yeshua* by Tim Hegg, (TorahResource 2011). It should be understood, however, that I do believe the Messiah to be divine, and that I do believe that Yeshua did present Himself as a pre-incarnate manifestation of Himself before his life on earth. Note the passages given above.

face here can also mean presence, and this is how every major English translation interprets it.<sup>3</sup> However, in the Hebrew it calls our minds back to verse 11 where the phrase פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנִים “face to face” is used. God is asked and agrees that His presence (face), and not an angel, will go with the children of Israel. Moses now asks to see God’s face (again the same word is used here פָּנַי). This part of the story seems to be placed perfectly in the text and the overall theme of this passage. Moses is on the mountain, and although Moses has just told us that he speaks with God in his tent face to face, and that God’s presence will go up with Israel, we see that no one can see God’s face and live. Perhaps in this we are given the reason for the temporary tent outside the camp. God’s presence on the mountain is greater and more pronounced than what it will be when Moses descends the mountain. Even if this is not the reason for the order of this chapter, we know that there is something different between the way God presents Himself to Moses on the Mountain and in the temporary tent.

The rabbis give several reasons for this break in the text. One view is that the placement of this tent outside the camp was done as retribution for the golden calf incident, and that this was to be the meeting place for Moses and God from Yom Kippur until the time that the tabernacle was erected.<sup>4</sup> This view is valid, but there is no explanation of why Moses would put this notice in the middle of the text, and not explain this point once he was done on the mountain. A second view tries to deal with the break in this way:

From *Devarim* 9 and 10 we learn that Moshe spent three periods of forty days before God, twice to receive Tablets (ibid. 9:9 and 10:10) and once in the interim between the two, to plead for pardon for the sin of the golden calf (ibid. 9:18). Regarding the middle forty days, it does not say that he spent them on the mountain; rather, it says ואתנפל לפני יהוה - he spent forty days fasting and praying.

Hence, in our opinion, during the middle forty days, Moshe stayed in his tent outside the camp. Accordingly, the chronological order of the narrative is preserved.<sup>5</sup>

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3. I say major translations such as ESV, NASB, NKJV, NIV ect. However, even in other translations that don’t have “Presents” in the text, the word face is left out, and it is translated as “I will go with you” or some variation of this wording.

4. Michael Carasik, ed. *The Commentators’ Bible* Vol. 2 “JPS, 2005” p. 294-295. I reference this book because there are several different rabbinical views represented, and they all seem to agree on this point.

5. Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Hirsch Chumash, Sefer Shemos* (Feldheim Publishers, 2008) p. 787-788

Hirsch makes the argument that Moses erected the tent outside the camp between the first ascension of Mt. Sinai and the second. Even if this is the case it does not explain why Moses would put this information in the section he did. Why wouldn't Moses explain this in Exodus 32:30? Moses returns to God seemingly on the mountain. If Moses placed his tent outside the camp at this point, why wouldn't he tell us this now? Instead Moses gives us the knowledge of his placing his tent outside the camp right before God agrees to place His presence with the children of Israel.

### ***Face to Face***

At first glance there seems to be a contradiction in our text. Moses tells us in verse 11 that he speaks with God face to face, yet in verse 20 when Moses is on the mountain God says that no one can see His face and live. Likewise we are told in Acts 7:48 “the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands”. The apostle John also says that “No one has seen God at any time,” (John 1:18) but in the same breath explains this seeming contradiction, “the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.” It seems that Moses wants us to understand the same concept, that God's presence can not be fully seen by man, but that He is manifested through different means.

In my research I have found that the majority of rabbinical comments on Ex. 33:11 deal primarily with the phrase יהושע בן־נון נער “his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man” and says almost nothing about the phrase פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים “face to face”. The subject of Joshua is important to this study and will be touched on below, but the absence of more commentary on this issue of Moses speaking “face to face” with God in the rabbinical literature is interesting in and of itself. Rashi, Nahmanides, Ibn Ezra, and Ramban say nothing about this phrase at all, yet turn their attention to Moses' servant. Maimonides takes notice of this passage. He begins by looking at how the word “face” can be used in Hebrew. He first cites 15 references in the Hebrew Bible that uses the word “face” [*panim*] to establish that the Hebrew uses this word as “an equivocal term, its equivocality being mostly with respect to its figurative use. It is the term des-

ignating the face of all living beings.”<sup>6</sup> Maimonides lays out his view of what the phrase “face to face” means in this passage. He states:

*and the Lord spoke unto Moses face to face* - which means, as a presence to another presence without an intermediary, as is said: *come, let us look one another in the face* (2 Kings 14:8). Thus scripture says: *The Lord spoke with you face to face* (Deut. 5:4). In another passage it explains, saying: *Ye heard the voice of words, but ye saw no figure, only a voice* (Deut. 4:12). Hence this kind of speaking and hearing are described as being *face to face*. Similarly the words, *And the Lord spoke unto Moses face to face*, describe His speaking as being in the form of an address (an address to Moses). Accordingly it is said: *Then he heard the voice speaking to him* (Num. 7:89). It has accordingly been made clear to you that the hearing of a speech without the intermediary of an angel is described as being *face to face*.<sup>7</sup>

Maimonides is making the point that since God tells Moses that His face will go with Israel, and not an angel, that this means that there is not a intermediary between Moses and God, but that God is speaking with him “face to face”. Maimonides then brings Deut. 4:12 as proof that this passage could not be speaking of a physical form: “Then the Lord spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you hear the sound of words, but you saw no form - only a voice.” But this passage is taken out of context. The text of Deut. 4 is speaking directly to the children of Israel, not Moses. At this point Maimonides does not consider that Moses, Joshua and the 70 elders “saw the God of Israel” in Ex. 24, one chapter before our passage. Even without considering Ex. 24:10, Maimonides makes a good point. Since God agrees to go with Israel instead of sending an angel, this phrase “face to face” takes on new meaning. Even if it is simply a difference in relationship, Maimonides makes it clear that this phrase does denote something new and special vis-a-vis God speaking on the mountain and His “face to face” in the tent.

*Sifre* also deals with the phrase “face to face” speaking in Deut. 34:10, and specifically references Ex. 33:11 in praising Moses as a great prophet:

“...whom the Lord knew face to face”: Why is this stated? Because it is said, “He said, ‘Show me your glory’” (Ex. 33:18). He said to him, “In this world you will not see it. For [this world] is compared to ‘face,’ as it is said, ‘You will not be able to see my face’ (Ex.

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6. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed* (University of Chicago Press, 1963) p. 85

7. *Ibid.* p. 86

33:20). But you will see it in the world to come, which is symbolized by ‘back,’ as it is said, ‘But I shall remove my hand, and you shall see my back’ (Ex. 33:23).” When did he show it to him? When he was close to death. Thus you see that the dead can see.<sup>8</sup>

Although this might be one way to try and deal with this phrase, it hardly stands up to the Torah as a whole. Once again it seems that there is no consideration of Ex. 24:10 where Moses, Joshua and the 70 elders of Israel already “saw the God of Israel”. This view would also have significant problems with Abraham speaking to YHVH in the door to his tent in Gen. 18. Therefore the argument that Moses did not see the face of God until his death has drastic flaws when considering the rest of scripture.

The phrase “face to face” is found five other times in the Tanach outside of our passage.<sup>9</sup> Of these five passages, two deal with our text directly (Deut. 5:4, 34:10) while one speaks in prophetic language (Ezek. 20:35) and seems to be speaking of the exile of Israel. This passage deals more with a relationship status that God has with his people as apposed to a physical presence.

<p>Gen. 32:30</p> <p>So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said “have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved.”</p>	<p>וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם פְּנֵי אֵל בִּירְאֵתִי אֱלֹהִים פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנִים וַתִּנָּצַל נַפְשִׁי:</p>
<p>Deut 5:4</p> <p>“The Lord spoke to you face to face at the mountain from the midst of the fire,</p>	<p>פָּנִים בְּפָנִים דִּבֶּר יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם בְּהָר מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ:</p>
<p>Deut 34:10</p> <p>Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face,</p>	<p>וְלֹא-קָם נָבִיא עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר יָדָעוּ יְהוָה פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנִים:</p>

8. Jacob Neusner, *Sifre to Deuteronomy*, Vol. 2 (Scholars Press 1974) p. 461

9. Jeremiah 32:4, 34:3 in the English uses the phrase “face to face” but the Hebrew is actually פִּי עַם-פִּי “Mouth to Mouth.” This does not effect my argument here because the text of Jer. uses this term in the same way as the texts that I am looking at.

<p>Judges 6:22</p> <p>When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the Lord, he said, “Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face.”</p>	<p>וַיֵּרָא גִדְעוֹן בֵּי-מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה הוּא ס וַיֹּאמֶר  גִדְעוֹן אָהָה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה בֵּי-עַלְבֵּינִי רָאִיתִי מַלְאָךְ  יְהוָה פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנִים:</p>
<p>Ezek. 20:35</p> <p>and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face.</p>	<p>וְהֵבֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-מִדְבַּר הָעַמִּים וְנִשְׁפָּטִיתִי  אֶתְכֶם שָׁם פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנִים:</p>

From the above 5 texts we can see that Gen. 32:30 and Judges 6:22 use this phrase when dealing with a physical image that we are told is in fact God. Jacob wrestles with the angel of the Lord, and proclaims that he has seen God face to face. Likewise, Gideon also states that he has seen God face to face. It could be argued that the phrase “face to face” in our text is that of a relationship status as presented in Ezek. 20:35, yet no real reason is given for this view. Interestingly, Adam Clarke, a Christian commentator, also takes the view that this communication from God was not done by a physical manifestation:

That there was no personal appearance here we may readily conceive; and that the communications made by God to Moses were not by *visions, ecstasies, dreams, inward inspirations*, or the *mediation of angels*, is sufficiently evident: we may therefore consider the passage as implying that *familiarity* and *confidence* with which the Divine Being treated his servant, and that he spake with him by articulate sounds in his own language though no *shape* or *similitude* was then to be seen<sup>10</sup>.

The major problem with Clarke’s statement is that he gives no reason why this view should be “readily conceive[d].” Instead he states this view and assumes that the reader will agree. One would expect this from a non-corporeal viewpoint, and the Targums go to great length to support

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10. Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s commentary*, Vol. 1 (Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, ND) p. 471

such a standpoint, going as far as changing the biblical text to erase any idea of God having physical form<sup>11</sup>. Thus the Targum in Ex. 33:11 reads:

<p>And the Lord would speak with Moses speech with speech, as a man would speak with his friend...</p>	<p>וּמִמְלִיל יוֹי עִם מֹשֶׁה מִמְלַל עִם מְמַלֵּל כְּמָא דִּימְלִיל גְּבָרָא עִם חֲבֵרִיהּ</p>
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This non-corporeal way of interpretation goes against the original texts, and therefore can not be used to build an argument against the original language of the Torah that supports physical attributes pertaining to God. But in Clarke’s case the Targum is not a factor because Clarke quotes directly from the Hebrew text and not the Aramaic. Thus Clarke’s assumption that the Hebrew text could not be dealing with a physical form here is unfounded. But Clarke is not the only Christian commentator to hold this view:

The reference to the intimacy of YHVH’s communion with Moses is almost certainly to be considered a reflection of the traditions represented by the narratives of 33:12-17 and 33:18-34:9. As the second of these narratives makes clear, “face to face” is here to be understood as an idiom for intimacy, not as a reference to theophany.<sup>12</sup>

Durham makes the case that the communication signaled by the phrase “face to face” is that of relationship status which Moses has with God on the mountain in the following chapters. However, as stated above, the placement of verse 7-11 seems to alert us to a different kind of communication that takes place in the tent, as opposed to on the mountain. This could be argued in light of the passage 8 verses later where God says no one can see His face and live. In making his

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11. Martin McNamara, *Targum and Testament* (Irish University Press, 1972) p. 93. McNamara describes the targumists writings this way, “The reverential attitude in speaking about God, already noticeable in the later writings of the Old Testament, is very much in evidence in the Aramaic paraphrases. When speaking of God’s relations with the external world, the targumists shy away from making deity the direct subject or object of an action. To effect this, active verbs of the biblical text become passive in the Aramaic renderings, sometimes with a certain amount of violence being done to the Aramaic language.” McNamara goes on to give numerous examples of the Aramaic being changed so that things such as God “seeing” becomes “it was manifested to God as”.

12. John I Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol 3. (Word Books, 1987) p. 443 - YHVH substituted for Durham’s original translation of “The Name.”

statement Durham suggests that there is nothing different between God's dealings with Moses on the mountain and in his tent.<sup>13</sup>

Although Clarke, Durham and other Christian commentators<sup>14</sup> might agree that there was not a physical presence manifested to Moses in the tent, John Calvin takes exception to this. In his commentary on Ex. 33:11 Calvin writes:

Familiar intercourse is therefore described in this phrase, as if it were said that God appeared to Moses by an extraordinary mode of revelation. If any object that there is a contradiction between this statement and what we shall presently see, "Thou canst not see my face," the solution is easy, viz., that although God revealed Himself to Moses in a peculiar manner, still He never appeared in the fullness of His glory, but only so far as man's infirmity could endure.<sup>15</sup>

Calvin does not specifically say that God used a physical manifestation to speak with Moses in the tent, but an "extraordinary mode of revelation." Calvin also deals with the contrast between God speaking with Moses "face to face" yet telling Moses that he can not see His face and live. Although Moses did perceive God in the tent, it was not God in His entirety that was beheld.<sup>16</sup>

Of the 6 times that the phrase "face to face" is used in the Tanach, only three are not directly associated with our text (one of which is our text). First, Deut. 34:10 specifically quotes Ex. 33:11, and admonishes Moses as the only prophet in Israel (to date) that had such a relationship with God. But since this is a direct quote from our text, we can not glean any additional information on the nature of this relationship. But in Deut 5:4 our text tells us that God spoke face to face with Moses "from the midst of the fire". There are two points that should be noted here. First, God's dealing with Moses on the mountain seems to be different then His dealings with Moses in the tent. It is very possible that the use of face to face in this passage could denote a re-

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13. John Wesley also takes this view and goes further to say that the phrase "as a man speaks to his friend" (a phrase I will look at below) is one that "intimates not only that God revealed Himself to Moses with greater clearness then to any other of the prophets, but also with greater expressions of particular kindness then to any other. He spake not as a prince to a subject, but as a man to his friend, whom he loves, and with whom he takes sweet counsel." *John Wesley's Notes on the Whole Bible*, (Accordance Bible Software, 2013), on Ex. 33:11.

14. Others that take the wording of Ex. 33:11 to be a relationship status as opposed to a physical form include, IVP-OT Commentary and Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible.

15. John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentary's* Vol. 3 (Baker Book House. ND), p. 372

16. Keil and Delitzsch seem to agree with Calvin on this matter, they quote this reference in their commentary *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 2 (Eerdmans Publishing, 1971) p. 234

relationship status with Moses as opposed to a physical manifestation. However this would not be the only time that God's physical presence is viewed in fire.

He said, "Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods! (Dan. 3:25)

The second thing that should be noted is that the text in Deut 5:4 is speaking of Moses on the mountain. Moses is told to set bounds around the mountain and that no one is to touch it. We are reminded here of Moses being told to remove his shoes because he is on Holy ground, and then speaking with God through fire in Ex. 3:5. Yet there is something very different about these two separate encounters. Even if the use of the phrase "face to face" in Deut 5:4 is being used as a relationship marker, why is it that Moses needs to place his tent outside the camp, and not continue to have this relationship with God on the Mountain? Once again I propose that this signals a change in the way God spoke with Moses on the mountain and in the tent.

כְּאִשׁר יְדַבֵּר אִישׁ אֶל-רֵעֵהוּ "As a man speaks with his friend" It is my belief that this marks a difference from the style of communication that was conducted on the mountain, and the way it is now carried out in the tent. This is the most striking differences between the other 5 instances "face to face" is used in the Tanach. This is the only time in the entire Hebrew bible that this phrase appears.<sup>17</sup> The addition of such a phrase in this text is significant, but once again the rabbis' silence on this phrase is deafening. It could be argued that the rabbis do not deal with this phrase because it is simply expanding on a relationship status that was already covered by "face to face" However, since the rabbis are often thorough with most phrases in the Torah, it seems out of place not to expand on this expression more thoroughly, especially since this is the only place it is found. Thus the lack of more rabbinical commentary on this additional statement is interesting. The lack of elaboration from the rabbis on this phrase seems most likely to result from their hesitation to ascribe physicality to God. From this I can only surmise that "as a man speaks to his friend" following "face to face" is a marker of significance for the way God and Moses are now communicating.

Above I cited Maimonides as giving 15 references to the word "face" in the Tanach. He used these to see how the Hebrew Bible dealt with this word and then built upon this to interpret

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17. I have also searched for similar phrases that might appear in the Tanach, and have found nothing that resembles this phrase.

our text. Interestingly, Maimonides does not deal with Is. 63:9 in this list. Is. 63 speaks of God saving his people, and recounts the story of the Exodus. Isaiah brings our minds back to the wilderness, and to the wandering of Israel. But what is most interesting for our study is Is. 63:9:

<p>In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, and He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.</p>	<p>בְּכָל-צָרָתָם לֹא [לֹ] צָר וּמְלֹאךְ פָּנָיו הוֹשִׁיעֵם  בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ וּבְחַמְלָתוֹ הוּא גָאֵלָם וַיִּנְטֹלֵם  וַיִּנְשָׂאֵם כָּל-יְמֵי עוֹלָם:</p>
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Once again, the word translated “presence” by the NASB here is פָּנָיו (face). The use of this word associated with the angel of the Lord speaks directly to our inquiry. The argument could be made that this passage is speaking of the angel of the Lord before the time of Moses placing his tent outside the camp. However, the use of פָּנָיו could give rise to a different interpretation. There is no doubt that even the rabbinical view of the presence was in fact God:

And Hashem brought us out from Egypt - not through an angel, not through a seraph, and not through a messenger. But it was the Holy One, Blessed be He, Himself in all His glory.<sup>18</sup>

Although the rabbinical view might be that it was not an angel or messenger, it leaves little option for interpretation. Thus one might conclude that the angel of the Lord, or in this case, the angel of His face is not a normal celestial being, but rather is in fact God and that it is this physical manifestation that was with Israel in the desert. Gen. 9:27 gives a prophecy of the coming Messiah, saying that God would dwell in the tents of Shem **וַיִּשְׁכֵּן בְּאַהֲלֵי-שֵׁם** “May God enlarge Japheth, and let Him dwell in the tents of Shem.”<sup>19</sup> This prophecy may very well be a telescope of the final reign of the Messiah on His throne, but speaks to the very presence of God with His people throughout the ages. What is more, the apostle Paul may elude to such a concept in 1 Cor. 10:1-4.

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18. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Haggadah* (Feldheim Publishers, 1989) p. 109

19. Tim Hegg shows that even the rabbis find this passage to be a prophecy of the coming Messiah, showing the article in the word **וַיִּשְׁכֵּן** “He will dwell” to apply to God, and not Shem. Tim Hegg, *The Messiah in the Tanach*, (TorahResource, 2003) p. 18

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Messiah.

Perhaps Paul has the words of the Messiah in mind, when He speaks to the woman at the well<sup>20</sup> in John 4:10-14 and tells her:

Yeshua answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” She said to Him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? You are not greater than our father Jacob, are you, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?” Yeshua answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drink of the water that I will give him shall never thirst but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

Paul could be using this metaphor to say that the saving grace of the Messiah was revealed in the Torah, and that the means of salvation was with them in the wilderness. Even if this is the case, Paul gives us the perception of a physical manifestation of God with Israel in the wilderness.<sup>21</sup>

Exodus 33:11 ends by telling us that Joshua, Moses’ servant, would stay with the tent that was placed outside the camp. In describing Joshua, Moses writes **וּמִשְׁרָתוֹ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון נֶעַר** “his [Moses] servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man...” The rabbis show more interest in this statement than in the rest of the verse. Nahmanides points out the abnormal spelling of the word **בֶּן** (son) and hypothesizes that the text does this because of a honorific nickname given to Joshua.<sup>22</sup> Ibn Ezra looks at the word **נֶעַר** (young man) and makes the case that Joshua was 56 years old at this time, thus this phrase in the Hebrew should be translated “Joshua son of Nun, at-

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20. Yeshua also references the manna given to the children of Israel, and proclaims that He is the bread from heaven in John 6:31-34.

21. Tim Hegg gives an interesting view of the veil that Moses placed on his head, which Paul speaks to in 2 Cor. 3:13. Hegg suggests that this veil was placed on Moses’ head so that the true knowledge of the Messiah, and thus the gospel would be hidden from the generation present at the golden calf incident (*The New Covenant*, TorahResource 2012). I am not sure what benefit his view would give to my research but I believe it might correspond in some way to this study. Yet this is to large a hypothesis for the scope of this paper.

22. Michael Carasik, ed. *The Commentators’ Bible* Vol. 2 “JPS, 2005” p. 295-296

tending him as a servant.<sup>23</sup> The word נֶעֱר is used 4 other times in the Torah to be translated “servant”.<sup>24</sup> Others simply speak to Joshua’s role in staying behind with the tent and believe he was placed there to guard the tent.<sup>25</sup> This could very well be, however, as a tent that was erected for communication with God before the tabernacle was placed inside the camp, I suggest that Joshua takes on the role of a priest that served continually in the tabernacle and temple,<sup>26</sup> while Moses was the high priest. No matter the specific reason Joshua was left behind when Moses went into the camp, the narrative once again places this information in our text to alert us to the significance of the tent.

### ***Conclusion***

It is my suggestion that the way in which Moses spoke with God in his tent is different than the way he spoke with Him on the mountain. I believe this is seen by the tension given in our text between the phrase “face to face” and God saying “no one can see My face and live”. I propose that the addition of “as a man speaks with his friend” directly addresses the change that was made in this communication, and that this change was in fact the physical manifestation of God in the tent with Moses. We can also see that besides our text there are only 3 times in the Tanach that use the phrase “face to face” that are not directly referencing out text. In these three instances, two are situations where men are confronted with a physical manifestation, and proclaim this image to be God. I am not suggesting that this form was the exact body of Yeshua as He appeared in His ministry in the Apostolic Scriptures, but that the physical form that appeared to Moses in his tent was fully the pre-incarnate Messiah Yeshua who spoke with Moses. This pre-incarnation was also the form that appeared to Jacob in Gen. 32 and to Gideon in Judges 6. Whether this physical presence continued to be present once the tabernacle was erected inside the camp of Israel is outside the scope of this study. I believe Calvin to be correct in his interpre-

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23. *ibid*

24. Gen. 18:7, 22:3 22:5, 22:19 - in Gen. 22 it refers to Abrahams servants or “young men”, but the text makes clear that the men in question are servants of Abraham.

25. Michael Carasik, ed. *The Commentators’ Bible* Vol. 2 “JPS, 2005” p. 295

26. Rev. 7:15

tation of the tension that is presented between the Ex. 33:11 and Ex. 33:20, that the glory of the Lord can not be beheld by any human, and therefore the way in which Moses spoke with God face to face in the tent was by “extraordinary mode of revelation” i.e. a pre-incarnate Yeshua. Furthermore, God’s presence was already with Israel as they left Egypt, and would continue to go with Israel. Yet the Lord says that He will not go with them into the land, but that a physical presence of an angel will be sent in His place. Moses pleads against this. But why? Even if an angel were going with them, the omnipresence of the Lord would have surely been among the people. Yet God agrees that the physical presence of the angel would not go with Israel, but that God Himself would be with them. I suggest that these two phrases present the answer, and that Moses is signaling God’s agreement to send His physical presence with the children of Israel.

I have given reference to the rabbinic and Christian view that the phrase “face to face, as a man speaks with his friend” denotes a relationship status between God and Moses. But this does not fully explain the reason for Moses to erect a tent outside the camp, instead of continuing to conduct this relationship on the mountain. Moses speaks quite freely with God on the mountain, he even makes such a good argument to God that the Lord changes His mind. God implies that this decision is because of His relationship with Moses, saying “I have known you by name” (Ex. 33:17). By this point in the text Moses has already established that he has a relationship with God that is different than anyone else in all of Israel. Thus it is my perspective that Moses places the tent outside the camp to show more than just a relationship status. I believe this is also supported by the placement of verses 7-11, that are given to us at the specific time that God agrees to go with Israel instead of the physical form of an angel, and as a precursor to Moses’ request to see the face of God.

The appearance of God in a physical form is not a new idea. Jacob and Gideon both saw God, but were both fearful and amazed to be alive, while Abraham spoke with God in the doorway to his tent. Therefore it is my opinion that Moses did have a unique relationship with God in the tent set outside the camp, that unlike Jacob or Gideon, Moses spoke to this figure on familiar terms. And unlike Abraham, this form was not one that was passing, a special visit from the God he served, but rather, the continued dialogue between Moses and the friend of Yeshua that guided him in the words of Torah, and who showed him the way in which to lead His people.

For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Messiah.  
(2Cor. 4:6)