

YAHWEH AND MOSES

EXODUS 33:1-16

Before we continue in Exodus 33, I wanted to address the issue of Yahweh's book mentioned in Exodus 32:32-33.

Exodus 32:32–35 “But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!” The LORD said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. “But go now, lead the people where I told you. Behold, My angel shall go before you; nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin.” Then the LORD smote the people, because of what they did with the calf which Aaron had made.

Many theologians assume Moses is referring to the Book of Life as we know it from New Testament revelation, but is that presupposition correct? The historical context and the analogy of Scripture both argue against assuming this reference is to the Book of Life as it is revealed in the New Testament.

Some theologians do equate this book with the Book of Life. Matthew Poole believed it referred to “the book of life”¹ as did Fee and Hubbard.² The only commentary written by dispensationalists I could find that agreed with this understanding of the book was *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary* which reads, “My book [God's book] is the Book of Life.”³ *Nelson's Bible Dictionary* ar-

¹ Matthew Poole, *Annotations upon the Holy Bible*, vol. 1, Logos electronic ed. (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1853), 190.

² Gordon D. Fee and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., eds., *The Eerdmans Companion to the Bible*, Logos electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 121.

³ Earl Radmacher, Ronald B. Allen, and H. Wayne House, eds., *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 142.

gues this is “a heavenly book in which the names of the righteous (the redeemed or saved) are written.”⁴

The only way this position can only be considered is by reading the New Testament back into the Old Testament and that is not the way we interpret the Bible. The Old Testament must be interpreted in its own right according to its own historical context and literal hermeneutics.

Keeping lists of who was a member of the community and who was not a member was apparently a very important facet of life in ancient times and this affects how this book should be understood. When people were removed from the community either through death or through expulsion, their name was removed from the community book. This is a fact recognized by theologians representing many positions across the theological, doctrinal spectrum. For example, Calvinists Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown wrote this book was “an allusion to the registering of the living, and erasing the names of those who die.”⁵ Calvinist and pseudo-dispensationalist John MacArthur wrote, “Untimely or premature death would constitute being blotted out of the book.”⁶ Unger thought it referred to citizens who died in a time of judgment, but I think that is erroneously reading the particulars of this Mt. Sinai incident into the historical record and making it the governing principle. He wrote, “The expression comes from the

⁴ Ronald F. Youngblood, gen. ed., s.v. “book of life,” *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2014), 200.

⁵ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1, Logos electronic ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 69.

⁶ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 129.

practice of keeping registers of citizens and removing the names of those who die in a time of judgment.”⁷ The removal of a name cannot be restricted to death resulting from judgment. God's judgment certainly was not a consideration for the pagans maintaining these books. In that time, death for any reason would remove a person's name from the book; it wasn't just about judgment. This Exodus pericope is about judgment, but the concept of the book transcends this pericope; therefore, one cannot make judgment the only criteria for removal from the book beyond this pericope. John Hannah, a historical theologian, believed the book was related to a census of the people. “Some say this was the book of life that lists believers' names but, more likely, it was the census of the people. Moses' statement probably indicated he was willing to die a premature death (but not suffer eternal torment in hell).”⁸

Dillow had a good explanation of this concept. “In the ancient Near East the book of life was a list of the members of a community. Apparently, in all Greek and Roman cities of the time, a list of citizens was maintained according to their class or tribe. Those unworthy of the city were removed from the book, and new citizens were continually added. When a criminal's name was removed from this book, he lost his citizenship. In ancient Israel the book of life was the legal register of citizens, not a list of those who would go to heaven when they die. To ‘erase his name’ meant either (1) physical death or (2) removal of

⁷ Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 2002), 142.

⁸ John D. Hannah, “Exodus” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2000), 156.

the memory of a person. It never referred to the loss of salvation. In Exodus 32:32, Moses asked to be blotted out of the book that God had written if God would not forgive Israel. This is an emotional outburst expressing his deep love for his people. He was asking that God take his physical life, not that he forfeit his eternal destiny.”⁹

In general, any references in the Old Testament to removing a person from the book is a reference to their death, however it happened and for whatever reason, whether they are saved or unsaved people. In Exodus, Moses was telling God he would rather die with the people of Israel if God was not going to forgive them for their sin at Mt. Sinai. He was not offering to give up his salvation and eternal life on behalf of the Israelites.

At this point in the narrative, twenty-three thousand Israelites have just been killed in the judgment inflicted on them by Moses and the Levites and by Yahweh. The text does not say how God judged the people. The text, Exodus 32:35, simply says He “smote” them, but it doesn't reveal the means used. By reminding Moses there was a purpose for the Exodus which involved placing them in a land of their own, the page is beginning to be turned on this episode. The implication is God's purposes for Israel will be fulfilled. This should be a reassuring message for Moses and the people after the imposition of this judgment that killed so many of them. That doesn't mean Yahweh isn't realistic about who he is dealing with which is a stubborn, obstinate, stiff-necked people who are

⁹ Joseph Dillow, *Final Destiny: The Future Reign of the Servant Kings* (The Woodlands, TX: Grace Theology Press, 2013), 684-685.

prone to rebellion. That doesn't mean He isn't going to discipline them as necessary or forget about the pagan mindset that brought it about in the first place. We know this will be a continual problem throughout the history of the nation.

Restoration has yet to take place. Moses needed to intercede for the people as he said he would in Exodus 32:30. Yahweh suggested He would not accompany the Israelites on the journey and would instead send an angel to lead them along the way. Once again, this seems to be an invitation for Moses to intercede so God will change His mind and that is what eventually happened. The text does not specifically say He changed His mind, but He indicated it when He told Moses His presence would go with them. Yahweh just said He was going to fulfill His promise to get them into the land that was at that time occupied by people who certainly weren't going to just get up and leave so the Israelites could have it. They needed God's help to possess the land.

Exodus 33:1–3 ¹Then the LORD spoke to Moses, “Depart [הֵלֵךְ], go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘To your descendants I will give it.’ ²“I will send an angel before you and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. ³“Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, because you are an obstinate [עָרִיב קָשָׁה] people, and I might destroy you on the way.”

Depart, הֵלֵךְ, means to go; it refers to movement. God was reminding Moses this camp at the base of Mt. Sinai was not permanent even though they had been encamped there for some time. Yahweh had a better place for them and that was where they were to go. The land promise was reiterated and an angel

was promised to Israel to lead them there. Even though the promise was being reiterated, it probably sounded like some sort of demotion since an angel was going to lead them rather than Yahweh.

This was to be meant as encouragement and a sign of restoration because they won't leave the wilderness of Sinai for some time to come. This is a repeat of the promise; it is not a command to leave at that moment. The Tabernacle had to be built, the priests consecrated, and more laws given before they left the area. The departure is recorded in Numbers 10:11-12.

Numbers 10:11–12 Now in the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth of the month, the cloud was lifted from over the tabernacle of the testimony; and the sons of Israel set out on their journeys from the wilderness of Sinai. Then the cloud settled down in the wilderness of Paran.

Yahweh suggested removing Himself from them at that point was a merciful gesture because He knew how difficult the Israelites were and He just might destroy them along the way if they acted up again. God can't tolerate sin. The NASB is the only major English translation that translates עָרָר קָשָׁה as obstinate; every other translation including the TANAKH translates it "stiff-necked" which is the most literal translation. The Lord obviously didn't want to destroy them; He'd already changed His mind about that after Moses interceded for the people the first time. He was saying His role would change and He would withdraw from them to a certain extent and allow an angel to lead them on their journey to Canaan. It is also interesting to note that Yahweh said He would be the One who would drive the Canaanites out of the land before them. He didn't say He

was going to use the angel to drive them out; He said He was going to drive them out.

The Israelites were chagrined to hear this.

Exodus 33:4–6 ⁴When the people heard this sad word, they went into mourning [אָבֵל], and none of them put on his ornaments [עֲדֵי]. ⁵For the LORD had said to Moses, “Say to the sons of Israel, ‘You are an obstinate [עֲרִיר קָשָׁה] people; should I go up in your midst for one moment, I would destroy you. Now therefore, put off your ornaments from you, that I may know what I shall do with you.’” ⁶So the sons of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward.

Ornaments, עֲדֵי, refers to jewelry, articles of gold, silver, and precious stones. Removing their jewelry and not wearing it all was a sign of mourning. Not only did they take their jewelry off on their own initiative, but Yahweh, through Moses, told them to remove it. The people of the Middle East are very expressive when it comes to mourning; it is a very public, audible, and visible expression of grief. It isn't simply a private sort of grieving, it is very public in that the outward expression of grief is an important factor. Mourning, אָבֵל, means to have an emotional reaction to a sad situation. In this situation, their reaction apparently stemmed from several factors. One was the fact Yahweh was withdrawing His intimately close connection with them in order to maintain some distance from them. I don't think we can overstate the seriousness of Yahweh's removal of Himself from the Israelites no matter how small the degree of separation. The second fact was they could still be destroyed for sin and rebellion and they could face further punishment for their rebellion because Yahweh was deciding what He was going to do with them. Third, they knew they needed some sort of god

to be with them, but when they thought Yahweh was gone because Moses was gone and even though they could see His glory on Mt. Sinai they turned to paganism. After that, they didn't have the visible reminder paganism gave them and Yahweh was distancing Himself from them as well. Now they didn't have the God who was speaking to not only Moses but to them and instead, they had a lesser being, an angel to lead them in place of Yahweh. They had less of a God presence now than they had before the rebellion and that was something to mourn over.

There is another aspect to this jewelry that could have played a role in its removal. The Egyptians, like all pagans, wore jewelry as amulets to ward off evil spirits and to represent their pagan gods. The Israelites may have been wearing some of that type of jewelry they received from the Egyptians. We've already discussed the fact they never could completely shed themselves of the gods Egypt and this could well have been a reason they would be wearing this type of jewelry. After the rebellion, this may have been a reason to tell them to remove it. We would like to think they wouldn't be wearing that kind of jewelry after all they had seen God do on their behalf, but we know that never stopped their idolatry. Given the fact they just built and worshiped an idol, it wouldn't be out of line to suspect they were wearing pagan jewelry from Egypt. Perhaps both concepts, mourning and paganism, were in play. The text suggests mourning was the reason for taking it off.

What the Israelites gladly took off in order to create an idol, their jewelry, now they took off in shame. They would no longer wear any jewelry for the remainder of the wilderness journey as though they were in a state of mourning over this rebellion until they entered the land. We know from subsequent events the people who engaged in the rebellion, if they weren't killed right there at Mt. Sinai, never lived to see the land. They all died in the wilderness one way or another. Perhaps they remained in mourning because there was always the threat, "that I may know what I shall do with you" was ever before them. They may not have liked it, but they learned something about the righteous justice Yahweh could impose on them for disobedience.

This incident wouldn't be the last time the Israelites would surrender some gold jewelry in order to create an idolatrous object of worship. Gideon took some gold jewelry and made an ephod the Israelites worshiped.

Judges 8:24–27 ²⁴Yet Gideon said to them, "I would request of you, that each of you give me an earring from his spoil." (For they had gold earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) ²⁵They said, "We will surely give *them*." So they spread out a garment, and every one of them threw an earring there from his spoil. ²⁶The weight of the gold earrings that he requested was 1,700 *shekels* of gold, besides the crescent ornaments and the pendants and the purple robes which were on the kings of Midian, and besides the neck bands that were on their camels' necks. ²⁷Gideon made it into an ephod, and placed it in his city, Ophrah, and all Israel played the harlot with it there, so that it became a snare to Gideon and his household.

Throughout their history, the Israelites displayed an amazing capacity to disregard Yahweh and His commands. I don't think we should be too hard on them for that attitude. An examination of the state of churchianity in Western

Civilization will reveal believers in this age aren't so good at learning and living as they should either. The human sin nature hasn't changed from then to now. People today aren't so good at sanctification just like the Israelites weren't very good at it. We may have different temptations and different idols, but we still have them.

The Israelites did not yet have the Tabernacle and Moses pitched a tent outside the camp. This was probably part of God's program to distance Himself from the people. The people could access God through Moses at this tent so He wasn't completely abandoning them, but the distance from the camp may be part of what He meant when He said, "I will not go up in your midst." Once the Tabernacle was constructed, it was set up in the middle of the camp and not outside it.

Exodus 33:7 ⁷Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance [רְחֵק] from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp.

This tent was not in proximity to the Israelite camp; it was a good distance from the camp. Good distance, רְחֵק, means to be far off or far away; it indicates something is or becomes a long way off or distant. Most translations have "far off" or "far away from" the camp. The people had to make an effort to seek out Moses and the Lord. This also singled them out as individuals who were affirming their faith in Yahweh as opposed to being one of a crowd when the people responded in unison that they would obey the Lord (Ex. 24:7) some of whom

would be obedient and some would not. In comparison with the Tabernacle, this tent was quite simple. No sacrifices were conducted at this tent and it was not furnished to be the place of worship the Tabernacle was meant to be. It was a meeting place between Yahweh and Moses. The Tabernacle was meant to be the permanent dwelling place of Yahweh with the Israelites, but this tent was only temporary. Yahweh only showed up to meet with Moses and the people as needed.

Cassuto certainly thought this was part of God's program to create some distance between Himself and the Israelites. According to him, Moses realized it would not be possible to have Yahweh's presence in the midst of the camp until His anger subsided. The tent placed far off from the camp was in contrast to what was meant to be the proper location of the Tabernacle where God would dwell which was in the center of the camp (Num. 2:2). The camp had been defiled by the people's idolatry; therefore, the temporary tent of meeting should not be erected in it. Moses could meet with Yahweh in this tent some distance from the site of the sin.¹⁰

Numbers 2:2 "The sons of Israel shall camp, each by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers' households; they shall camp around the tent of meeting at a distance.

Even once the Tabernacle was completed and erected in the camp, the Israelites still had to keep some distance from it.

¹⁰ U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, the Hebrew University, 1967), 429.

This tent was a temporary meeting place between Yahweh and Moses until the Tabernacle could be erected. It wouldn't be long before construction was to begin on the Tabernacle where God would dwell among them which means this tent wasn't in operation for a long period of time. The people were not prohibited from seeking the Lord there, but it involved effort on their part to do so. The people were actually seeking Moses in order to present their concerns to him and through him they could hear the Word of the Lord pertaining to their situation. The people were not actually going to have their own meeting with God apart from the mediation of the prophet of God. God hadn't abandoned the Israelites, but His presence among them was mitigated somewhat in terms of keeping a significant distance between Himself and the Israelites. Yahweh was going to insure the people noticed the difference.

The next verses indicate the change of heart the people experienced after being subjected to divine discipline for their rebellion. They had a renewed reverence for Yahweh and a rediscovered sense of respect for Moses. Not to mention that after seeing twenty-three thousand of their brethren die, they were probably scared silly. The Bible would reveal this newfound sense of reverence and respect didn't last very long, but at this moment in Israel's history it was fact.

Exodus 33:8–10 ⁸And it came about, whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people would arise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent. ⁹Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the LORD would speak with Moses. ¹⁰When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent.

When the people saw Moses heading out to the tent, they would stand at their own tent and watch him go to meet with the Lord. Rising and standing were signs of respect. For example, we still do that today in courtrooms as a sign of respect to the authority of the court when the judge enters the room. Once Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance to this tent of meeting. This is a different situation than the glory of the Lord appearing on the mountain which was continually visible for forty days. Moses went up the mountain the second time and disappeared into the cloud of glory, but the mountain was large and it had a far side the people could not see. Once Moses went up into the cloud of glory, they didn't know where he went from there. Now they could see him enter and leave the tent and he could not be anywhere else. They knew God was present every time Moses went into the tent because the pillar of cloud came down and it went back up when Moses came out. There wasn't as much doubt about exactly what was taking place as there could have been when Moses went up the mountain. They couldn't think Moses disappeared as they thought he did on the mountain because he was coming and going from the camp to the tent probably on a daily basis.

The reverence they had for Yahweh at that moment was exhibited in the worship they gave Him when He joined Moses in the tent of meeting.

Joshua, who was of the tribe of Ephraim, was appointed custodian of the tent of meeting. He wasn't a Levite; they had yet to appointed to their divine service in connection with the Tabernacle.

Exodus 33:11 ¹¹Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man [בְּנֵי־נֹחַ], would not depart [מִיֹּשֻׁעַ] from the tent.

Moses had a very intimate relationship with God who spoke to Him directly and revealed His will to the prophet. This is not something that happened in this tent for the first time. This has been happening between Moses and Yahweh since the burning bush and especially here at Mt. Sinai. Face to face is figurative language describing this relationship. It does not mean Moses saw God's face as they conversed facing one another. Moses was not having a vision either, but He was hearing directly from God. This is some sort of theophany, that is, an appearance of God in some sort of visible display, but exactly what form that took and just what Moses could actually see, we aren't informed. No man can see the full glory of God; therefore, this was something less, probably much less, than that. In just a few verses later, God told Moses that no one can see His face and live.

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

Whether or not Joshua actually lived in the tent of meeting or in a tent next to it is unclear. The name, tent of meeting, makes it sound as though it was specifically used for Moses to meet with Yahweh and that was its dedicated

purpose. If Joshua lived in it, would that violate its sanctified purpose? Joshua could live in a tent next to it where he could maintain it and guard it. The text does say he “would not depart from the tent.” Depart, *גויש*, means to depart or to remove which seems to suggest Joshua lived in it. Does that preclude living right next to it? Probably not; the verse could refer to the immediate area, or curtilage, of the tent. Was Joshua allowed in the tent when Yahweh was meeting Moses there? We know he couldn't accompany Moses to the top of the mountain when the prophet met with Yahweh there; he had to wait down below. We aren't told whether or not the same situation existed at the tent of meeting, but consistency demands we view it as at least very likely.

Joshua was born in Egypt of the tribe of Ephraim (Num. 13:8). He was one of the spies sent into Canaan to reconnoiter and bring a report back to Moses and the people. Joshua and Caleb were the only two men who supported invading Canaan and therefore, they were the only two adult people who were allowed to go into Canaan (Num. 14:22-23, 30, 38).

Joshua was described as a young man, but he was probably at least forty years old. He spent the next forty years in the wilderness before entering Canaan, conquering much of it, and dying at the age of 110 (Joshua 24:29). The word translated young man, *בְּנֵי־אִדָּמָה*, means a boy or male child; it may also refer to a young male servant, attendant, or steward, or one old enough to serve in the army. Boyhood isn't necessarily the focus of the word. It may a relative term

comparing Joshua's age to Moses' age; Joshua was obviously much younger. He was a young man in comparison with Moses.

After the Tabernacle was built, Moses asked Yahweh to appoint his successor and the Lord chose Joshua (Num. 27:15-23).

Numbers 27:15–23 ¹⁵Then Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, ¹⁶“May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, ¹⁷who will go out and come in before them, and who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the LORD will not be like sheep which have no shepherd.” ¹⁸So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; ¹⁹and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. ²⁰“You shall put some of your authority on him, in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey *him*. ²¹“Moreover, he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. At his command they shall go out and at his command they shall come in, *both* he and the sons of Israel with him, even all the congregation.” ²²Moses did just as the LORD commanded him; and he took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation. ²³Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses.

Moses again interceded for the Israelites, but he also implored Yahweh to allow him to get to know Him better and on an even more intimate basis. This bore fruit in two ways. Yahweh agreed to go with Moses and the people on their journey, and He would reveal Himself to Moses in a way that went beyond the revelation He already provided His prophet. It is worth noting Moses reminded Yahweh the Israelites were “Your people.” We also have to remember God didn't simply choose Israel as His nation, He created Israel to be His choice nation.

Moses seemed to want assurance from Yahweh that He was going to help him complete the assignment he was given to lead the people into Canaan.

Exodus 33:12–14 ¹²Then Moses said to the LORD, “See, You say to me, ‘Bring up this people!’ But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, ‘I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.’ ¹³“Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people.” ¹⁴And He said, “My presence [פָּנָי] shall go *with* you, and I will give you rest [מְנוּחָ].”

Moses knew an angel was supposed to go “before” them, but Moses wanted Yahweh to be “with” them on this journey. Moses knew there was a difference between the two. An angel certainly was not God and Moses had a relationship with Yahweh and not with an angel. An angel simply leading them to the land could not provide the things God could provide by being with them. The concept that God is “with” someone implies guidance, sustenance, and protection. Moses had already seen God provide those things for him and the Israelites and he didn't want to lose that presence and the things God provided by being with them.

Moses was Yahweh's choice vessel through whom the people were delivered from slavery and led to the land they were promised. Moses wanted to know Yahweh fully so he could understand the Lord's relationship with the Israelites. Cassuto believed this was a way for Moses to “know the principles by which Thy Court of Justice is guided, what criteria Thou dost employ in the bestowal of reward and punishment to people, and in what way man can obtain for-

givenness from Thee for his sins, that I may be privileged *to know Thee*; and when I know Thy ways I shall know how to act and on what basis I may prevail on Thee to forgive my people and allow Thy Presence to dwell in their midst, *to the end that I may find real favour in Thy sight*, and behold practical benefit, in this grace that I find, for the good of my people.”¹¹ This also confirmed Moses’ real concern for his people. He didn’t want to know God better just for his own edification; he wanted to know God better in order to understand God’s relationship with the people. This is somewhat reminiscent of Solomon’s request for wisdom rather than riches in order to properly lead God’s people (1 Kings 3:9).

There is a very pertinent application for the church today. Moses wanted to know the ways of God. Churchianity, on the other hand, is consumed with emotion and feelings rather than with knowing the ways of God. These things are self-centered and not God-centered. We know Him by means of revelation, general and special, and not by means of emotional, spiritual titillation. “What is especially instructive to us is Moses’ understanding of how that would be accomplished: by being ‘taught’ God’s ‘ways.’ ... There is little room for mysticism in biblical religion; we do not know God by having some sort of inexplicable ethereal communion with him, in which our feelings are used as the evidence for our closeness to him. We know him by learning his ways (i.e., his revealed standards, revealed methods, and revealed benefits)—in other words by objec-

¹¹ U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, the Hebrew University, 1967), 433-434 (emphasis in the original).

five, rather than subjective, emotional, means."¹² That was true during the time of Moses, that is true for those living since Moses, and that is still true today.

Other commentators believe Moses' request to "know Your ways" is simply a statement by Moses that he is confused about what is going on and he wants God to enlighten Moses about His plans to deal with Israel. It seems to be more than that to me; therefore, I would be more in line with Cassuto's thinking.

God relented and promised Moses He would, in fact, personally lead the people into Canaan. Presence, פָּנָה, literally means face. Rest, מָנוּחַ, means to rest, to settle down. Rest will be the result when God's promise to settle the Israelites in Canaan is fulfilled.

Deuteronomy 12:10 ¹⁰"When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you so that you live in security,

Joshua 23:1 ¹Now it came about after many days, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies on every side ...

Moses pressed on as though the Lord hadn't just relented and he continued speaking to the Lord presenting the reasons why God should lead them. It almost sounds like Moses doesn't want to take "yes" for an answer, but it isn't what it seems to be. Moses was concerned about the Israelites' welfare. If Yahweh wouldn't go with them and lead them to Canaan, they might as well stay where they were in the desert.

¹² Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Exodus* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 701.

Exodus 33:15–16 ¹⁵Then he said to Him, “If Your presence does not go *with us*, do not lead us up from here. ¹⁶“For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the *other* people who are upon the face of the earth?”

Moses revealed he knew the Israelites were set apart from all the other people of the world not because they were so special but because their God was so special. No other people group enjoyed this kind of relationship with the Creator God. If God wasn't with them during the Exodus, the world would not know His goodness, His graciousness, and His compassion (Ex. 33:19). The world would not know how much God favored Moses and the Israelites. If Israel failed to reach and settle Canaan, God's reputation would suffer. Moses believed all the work Yahweh performed in Egypt would be for naught if He didn't complete the mission for which He brought them out of Egypt. That meant leading them to and settling them in Canaan.