

# Stollen Moments – Sukkot III – October 19, 2024

## PARASHA SUMMARY FROM WWW. REFORMJUDAISM.ORG

On the Shabbat during Sukkot, we are reminded of the age-old desire to know God. Moses implores God to let him see God. While God will not allow Moses to see God's face, God tells Moses, "I will make My goodness pass before you..." Perhaps we experience the divine presence through the goodness we create in the world. The Torah then sets forth the thirteen attributes of God, among them that God is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger and abounding in kindness. By emulating these very attributes, we create the goodness which allows us to know God.

### Exodus 33

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה רְאֵה אֶתֶּה אֵמַר אֵלַי הַעַל אֶת־הַעַם הַזֶּה וְאַתָּה לֹא הוֹדַעְתָּנִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר־תִּשְׁלַח עִמִּי וְאַתָּה אֲמַרְתָּ יִדְעִיתִיךָ בְּשֵׁם וְגַם־מִצְאָתְךָ חֵן בְּעֵינָי: וְעַתָּה אִם־נָא מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הוֹדַעְנִי נָא אֶת־דַּרְכְּךָ וְאַדְעֶךָ לְמַעַן אֲמַצְאֶנְךָ וְרֵאֶה כִּי עִמָּךְ הֵנּוּי הַזֶּה: וַיֹּאמֶר פָּנֶי יִלְכוּ וְהִנַּחְתִּי לְךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אִם־אֵין פָּנֶיךָ הַלְכִים אֶל־תַּעֲלֶנּוּ מִזֶּה: וּבַמָּה | וַיִּדַע אֲפֹא כִי־מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲנִי וְעַמָּךְ הֲלוֹא בְּלִכְתָּךְ עִמָּנוּ וְנִפְלִינוּ אֲנִי וְעַמָּךְ מִכָּל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר עִלְפָנֶי הָאֲדָמָה: {פ} וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה גַם אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אֲנִישׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ אֲעִשֶׂה כִּי־מִצְאָתְךָ חֵן בְּעֵינֶי וְאַדְעֶךָ בְּשֵׁם: וַיֹּאמֶר הֲרָאֲנִי נָא אֶת־כְּבֹדְךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי אֲעֲבִיר כָּל־טוֹבֵי עַל־פָּנֶיךָ וְקָרָאתִי בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה לְפָנֶיךָ וְחִנַּתִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֲחֹן וְרַחֲמֹתִי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם: וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תוּכַל לָרֶאֶת אֶת־פָּנָי כִּי לֹא־יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחִי: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה הִנֵּה מְקוֹם אֲתִי וְנִצַּבְתָּ עַל־הַצּוּר: וְהִיָּה בַעֲבֹר כְּבֹדִי וְשִׁמְתִיךָ בְּנוֹקְרַת הַצּוּר וְשַׁכַּתִּי כַּפִּי עָלֶיךָ עַד־עֲבָרֶי: וְהִסַּרְתִּי אֶת־כַּפִּי וְרֵאִיתָ אֶת־אַחֲרַי וּפָנָי לֹא יִרְאוּ: {פ}

12 Moses said to יהוה, "See, You say to me, 'Lead this people forward,' but You have not made known to me whom You will send with me. Further, You have said, 'I have singled you out by name, and you have, indeed, gained My favor.' 13 Now, if I have truly gained Your favor, pray let me know Your ways, that I may know You and continue in Your favor. Consider, too, that this nation is Your people." 14 And [God] said, "I will go in the lead and will lighten your burden." 15 And he replied, "Unless You go in the lead, do not make us leave this place. 16 For how shall it be known that Your people have gained Your favor unless You go with us, so that we may be distinguished, Your people and I, from every people on the face of the earth?" 17 And יהוה said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have asked; for you have truly gained My favor and I have singled you out by name." 18 He said, "Oh, let me behold Your Presence!" 19 And [God] answered, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim before you the name יהוה, and the grace that I grant and the compassion that I show," 20 continuing, "But you cannot see My face, for a human being may not see Me and live." 21 And יהוה said, "See, there is a place near Me. Station yourself on the rock 22 and, as My Presence passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and shield you with My hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will take My hand away and you will see My back; but My face must not be seen."

## Questions for Discussion

- Why can people not see the face of God?
- Why did Moses merit seeing God's goodness pass before him?

## Commentaries

### Sforno on Exodus 33:20

(1) ויאמר לא תוכל לראות, your inability to see what you would like to see is not due to My depriving you, personally, of such an experience, but is rooted in man's inability to "see" such things unless you had died first, as an eye of flesh and blood cannot "see" such things. You would be fatally blinded before understanding anything you would "see."

### Chizkuni, Exodus 33:20

(1) כי לא יראני האדם וחי, "for as long as a human being is alive, he cannot experience My essence visually." According to Rabbi Shimon the Yemenite," the definition of a human being is that he is alive. But even celestial creatures named היות are named thus to remind us that though they "live" forever, they too are not able to have a visual experience of G-d's essence (Torah Shleymah 131 on our verse.) If you were to counter that Isaiah 6,2 claimed to have experienced such a visual revelation when he said: ואראה את ה'אדוני יושב על כסא, "I have seen G-d seated on a throne," this did not describe what is known as a clear vision, but as something at best like a reflection from a mirror; he had been screened by a partition at the time.

### Bekhor Shor, Exodus 33:23:2

"But you may not see My face" for you will not see in a clear perspective as a man who see his friend from the front and observes him well.