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The Radiant Face of Moses

34: 29-35

The radiant face of Moses DIG: Why did the face of Moses shine? Why was that a cause for fear? What must Moses have said to bring the people back? For whose sake was Moses' face veiled? His own? The people's? God's? Why was the veil lifted when Moses spoke to God? What did that say about his relationship with God? With the people?

REFLECT: Why do believers not have to wear a veil? In what ways are you being *transformed* into His likeness? How should we live our lives as a result of Paul's application to us today (see Second Corinthians 4:1-18)? How will you feel when you finally see God face to face?

Moses came down from Mount Sinai the second time **with the Ten Commandments in his hands**. In contrast with the anger and holy indignation that **Moses** showed when **he** returned with the first set of **tablets (32:19)**, the second time **he came down his face radiated as a result of his talking with ADONAI (Second Corinthians 3:7)**. **His face** was shining because **he** had been in the very presence of **God**. But **he was not aware** of it. That made **Aaron and all the Israelites afraid of him**. **They** were so filled with awe that not only did they not approach **Moses**, **but** they also apparently fled from **him**. However, **Moses** encouraged **them** to listen as he **spoke to them** of the stipulations of the New Covenant (**34:29-32**). **His radiant face** would serve to authenticate **his** message and **his** person.

The tablets of stone foreshadowed a **new covenant** that **God** would make with Isra'el. "**Here, the days are coming,**" says **ADONAI**, "**when I will make a new covenant with the house of Isra'el and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day I took them by their hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt; because they, for their part, violated My covenant, even though I, for my part, was a husband to them,**" says **ADONAI**. "**For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Isra'el after those days,**" says **ADONAI**: "**I will put my Torah**

within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will any of them teach his fellow community member or his brother, saying, 'Know ADONAI;' for all will know Me, from the least of them to the greatest; because I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34 CJB).

When we read that **a radiant** brightness glowed from **the face** of **Moses**, we need to understand where the word **radiant** comes from. The verbal form for *sent out rays*, is a denominative of the Hebrew noun *qaran*, which literally means *horn*. The Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible, and the Church father Jerome (in his commentaries) took the word literally and understood it to mean that **Moses** actually come down from **Mount Sinai** with horns on **his** head. Because of the Vulgate translation, many depictions of **Moses** in art, from medieval times onward, portray him with horns. The most famous is Michelangelo's painting of him at Saint Peter in Chains in Rome. On the contrary, it is clear that the term *qaran* can have the meaning of radiating beams. For example, **Habakkuk**, when describing the mighty acts of **God** said: **His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth. His splendor was like the sunrise. Rays flashed from His hand where His power was hidden (Habakkuk 3:3b-4).**⁷²²



We are introduced to the veiling procedure of **Moses**. The verbs indicate that they were repetitive or habitual. The procedure can be divided into two parts. First, when **Moses** was with **God**, or when he was reading aloud to the people any of **God's** newly given commandments, he was unveiled. **Whenever he entered God's presence** in the Tent of Meeting **to speak with Him, he removed the veil until**

he came out. There was no reason for veiling when **he** appeared before **God (Hebrews 4:13)**, and there the radiance of **his** face was recharged, as it were. **And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant.** Secondly, when **Moses** finished reading to **the Israelites, he put the veil back over his face until he went into speak with ADONAI** again **(34:33-35)**. Why would he cover **his face** back up? Certainly it was out of humility. But it was also to accommodate the weakness of the people. The Bible gives us the impression that the radiance slowly faded, until it was recharged in the presence of **God**.⁷²³ If **his face** had faded too quickly, the implication is that it would have led to unbelief. After all, it didn't take much for that group to lose faith.

Haftarah Ki Tissa: M'lakhim Alef (First Kings) 18:20-39 (A) 18:20-39 (S)

(See the commentary on Deuteronomy, to see link click [Af](#) - Parashah)

Elijah builds **an altar** in a place **God** chooses to make **His** name known **(20:24)**. This privilege was permitted of any **firstborn** in **Isra'el** prior to **the golden calf (to see link click [Gq](#) - The Golden Calf Incident)**. **Elijah** is called by **ADONAI** to confront the northern kingdom of **Isra'el's** headlong plunge into idolatry. **Ahab**, the eighth idolatrous king to follow in the footsteps of **Jeroboam**, who set up **two golden calves, one in Bethel and the other in Dan (First Kings 12:28-32)**. Now **Ahab** accelerated the **wickedness** by building a temple and altar to the Phoenician god **Ba'al (First Kings 16:30-32)**. As a result, **Elijah** shut up the sky for **three years (First Kings 17:1, 18:1; Revelation 11:3-6)**. Then **ADONAI** sent **him** to confront **Ahab**. The nation was desperate for **rain! Ba'al** was the storm god, and he controlled fire as well. So **Elijah** called for a showdown. **He** called for **an altar** to be built, **a sacrifice** to be made, and a contest to see who could send down **fire** to consume **the sacrifice** and rain to end the drought. But by the end, **YHVH** not only demonstrated **His** power and superiority over **Ba'al** and **his** worshipers, but **he** also humiliated the vindictive **Queen Jezebel (First Kings 18:20-39)**.

B'rit Chadashah suggested reading for Parashah Ki Tissa: Luke 11:14-20; Acts 7:35-8:1; First Corinthians 10:1-13; Second

Corinthians 3:1-18

In **Second Corinthians 3:7-18**, Paul makes a comparison between the Torah under **Moses** and the New Covenant under **Christ**. The most relevant section begins when **he** says: **Therefore, with a hope like this, we are very open (Second Corinthians 3:12 CJB)**. Moses' ministry was fading but was accompanied by **glory**. The gospel, however, has **surpassing glory (Second Corinthians 3:9-11)**. It is what believers have access to that causes us to be **open**. Why? Because we do **not put a veil over** our faces. **Unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face, so that the people of Isra'el would not see the fading glory come to an end. (Second Corinthians 3:13 CJB)**.

Then Paul contrasts **Moses** and believers today. **What is more, their minds were made stonelike; for to this day the same veil remains over them when they read the TaNaKh; it has not been unveiled, because only by Messiah is the veil taken away. Yes, still today, whenever the Torah is read, a veil lies over their heart. "But," says the Torah, "whenever someone turns to ADONAI, the veil is taken away" (Second Corinthians 3:14-16 CJB)**.

The heart of the matter is found in the last verse of Rabbi Sha'ul's argument. Believers reflect **Messiah's glory** because **the veil is taken away**. We like **Moses**, see **God's glory**. This is why we, too, reflect **the glory**. The difference is that **the glory** that we reflect does not fade away, so that we do not need to wear **a veil**. And our **glory** does not fade away because, **unlike Moses, we are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from ADONAI, who is the Spirit (Second Corinthians 3:18)**. **Moses** had to keep going back to **God** for repeated exposure to **His glory**. One shot was not good enough. Eventually, **Moses** had to go back again and again for another "dose" of **God's glory**. But we are not like that. For us the **veil is taken away** and need not be worn, because our **glory** does not fade - for we are in **Messiah**.⁷²⁴