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Introduction

Moses is commanded to hew two tables similar to the first, and bring them up to the mount, to get the covenant renewed, Exodus 34:1-3. He prepares the tables and goes up to meet the Lord, Exodus 34:4. The Lord descends, and proclaims his name Jehovah, Exodus 34:5. What this name signifies, Exodus 34:6, Exodus 34:7. Moses worships and intercedes, Exodus 34:8, Exodus 34:9. The Lord promises to renew the covenant, work miracles among the people, and drive out the Canaanites, etc., Exodus 34:10, Exodus 34:11. No covenant to be made with the idolatrous nations, but their altars and images to be destroyed, Exodus 34:12-15. No matrimonial alliances to be contracted with them, Exodus 34:16. The Israelites must have no molten gods, Exodus 34:17. The commandment of the feast of unleavened bread, and of the sanctification of the first-born, renewed, Exodus 34:18-29; as also that of the Sabbath, and the three great annual feasts, Exodus 34:21-23. The promise that the surrounding nations shall not invade their territories, while all the males were at Jerusalem celebrating the annual feasts, Exodus 34:24. Directions concerning the passover, Exodus 34:25; and the first-fruits, Exodus 34:26. Moses is commanded to write all these words, as containing the covenant which God had now renewed with the Israelites, Exodus 34:27. Moses, being forty days with God without eating or drinking, writes the words of the covenant; and the Lord writes the ten commandments upon the tables of stone, Exodus 34:28. Moses descends with the tables; his face shines, Exodus 34:29. Aaron and the people are afraid to approach him, because of his glorious appearance, Exodus 34:30. Moses delivers to them the covenant and commandments of the Lord; and puts a veil over his face while he is speaking, Exodus 34:31-33, but takes it off when he goes to minister before the Lord, Exodus 34:34, Exodus 34:35.

Verse 1

Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first - In Exodus 32:16 we are told that the two first tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God; but here Moses is commanded to provide tables of his own workmanship, and God promises to write on them the words which were on the first. That God wrote the first tables himself, see proved by different passages of Scripture at the end of Exodus 32 (Exodus 32:35 (note)). But here, in Exodus 34:27, it seems as if Moses was commanded to write these words, and in Exodus 34:28 it is said, And he wrote upon the tables; but in Deuteronomy 10:1-4 it is expressly said that God wrote the second tables as well as the first.

In order to reconcile these accounts let us suppose that the ten words, or ten commandments, were written on both tables by the hand of God himself, and that what Moses wrote, Exodus 34:27, was a copy of these to be delivered to the people, while the tables themselves were laid up in the ark before the testimony, whither the people could not go to consult them, and therefore a copy was necessary for the use of the congregation; this copy, being taken off under the direction of God, was authenticated equally with the original, and the original itself was laid up as a record to which all succeeding copies might be continually referred, in order to prevent corruption. This supposition removes the apparent contradiction; and thus both God and Moses may be said to have written the covenant and the ten commandments: the former, the original; the latter, the copy. This supposition is rendered still more probable by Exodus 34:27 itself: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words (that is, as I understand it, a copy of the words which God had already written); for After The Tenor (αφ' ομοιουτης (al pi) According To The Mouth) of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel." Here the original writing is represented by an elegant prosopopoesia, or personification, as speaking and giving out from its own mouth a copy of itself. It may be supposed that this mode of interpretation is contradicted by Exodus 34:28: And He wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant; but that the pronoun He refers to the Lord, and not to Moses, is sufficiently proved by the parallel place, Deuteronomy 10:1-4: At that time the Lord said unto me, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first - and I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables - and I hewed two tables of stone as at the first - And He wrote on the tables according to the first writing. This determines the business, and proves that God wrote the second as well as the first tables, and that the pronoun in Exodus 34:28 refers to the Lord, and not to Moses. By this mode of interpretation all contradiction is removed. Houbigant imagines that the difficulty may be removed by supposing that God wrote the ten commandments, and that Moses wrote the other parts of the covenant from Exodus 34:11 to Exodus 34:26, and thus it might be said that both God and Moses wrote on the same tables. This is not an improbable case, and is left to the reader's consideration. See Clarke's note on Exodus 34:27.

There still remains a controversy whether what are called the ten commandments were at all written on the first tables, those tables containing, according to some, only the terms of the covenant without the ten words, which are supposed to be added here for the first time. The following is a general view of this subject. In Exodus 20 the ten commandments are given; and at the same time various political and ecclesiastical statutes, which are detailed in chapters 21, 22, and 23. To receive these, Moses had drawn near unto the thick darkness where God was, Exodus 20:21, and having received them he came again with them to the people, according to their

request before expressed, Exodus 20:19: Speak thou with us - but let not the Lord speak with us, lest we die, for they had been terrified by the manner in which God had uttered the ten commandments; see Exodus 20:18. After this Moses, with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and the seventy elders, went up to the mountain; and on his return he announced all these laws unto the people, Exodus 24:1-3, etc., and they promised obedience. Still there is no word of the tables of stone. Then he wrote all in a book, Exodus 24:4, which was called the book of the covenant, Exodus 24:7. After this there was a second going up of Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders, Exodus 24:9, when that glorious discovery of God mentioned in Exodus 24:10, Exodus 24:11 took place. After their coming down Moses is again commanded to go up; and God promises to give him tables of stone, containing a law and precepts, Exodus 24:12. This is the first place these tables of stone are mentioned; and thus it appears that the ten commandments, and several other precepts, were given to and accepted by the people, and the covenant sacrifice offered, Exodus 24:5, before the tables of stone were either written or mentioned. It is very likely that the commandments, laws, etc., were first published by the Lord in the hearing of the people; repeated afterwards by Moses; and the ten words or commandments, containing the sum and substance of the whole, afterwards written on the first tables of stone, to be kept for a record in the ark. These being broken, as is related Exodus 32:19, Moses is commanded to hew out two tables like to the first, and bring them up to the mountain, that God might write upon them what he had written on the former, Exodus 34:1. And that this was accordingly done, see the preceding part of this note.

Verse 6

And the Lord passed by - and proclaimed, The Lord, etc. - It would be much better to read this verse thus: "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed Jehovah," that is, showed Moses fully what was implied in this august name. Moses had requested God to show him his glory, (see the preceding chapter, Exodus 33:18 (note)), and God promised to proclaim or fully declare the name Jehovah, (Exodus 33:19); by which proclamation or interpretation Moses should see how God would be gracious to whom he would be gracious, and how he would be merciful to those to whom he would show mercy. Here therefore God fulfils that promise by proclaiming this name. It has long been a question, what is the meaning of the word $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}''\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}''$ (Jehovah), Yehovah, Yehue, Yehveh, or Yeve, Jeue, Jao, lao, Jhueh, and Jove; for it has been as variously pronounced as it has been differently interpreted. Some have maintained that it is utterly inexplicable; these of course have offered no mode of interpretation. Others say that it implies the essence of the Divine nature. Others, that it expresses the doctrine of the Trinity connected with the incarnation; the letter x^{TM} (yod) standing for the Father, x'' (he) for the Son, and xo (vau) (the connecting particle) for the Holy Spirit: and they add that the x'' (he) being repeated in the word, signifies the human nature united to the Divine in the incarnation. These speculations are calculated to give very little satisfaction. How strange is it that none of these learned men have discovered that God himself interprets this name in Exodus 34:6, "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}''\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}''$ (Yehovah) the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." These words contain the proper interpretation of the venerable and glorious name Jehovah. But it will be necessary to consider them in detail. The different names in this and the following verse have been considered as so many attributes of the Divine nature. Commentators divide them into eleven, thus: -

1. $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}''\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}''$ (Jehovah).

2. $\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}\text{o}$ (EL), the strong or mighty God.

3. $\text{x}''\text{x}—\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}\text{o}$ (Rachum), the merciful Being, who is full of tenderness and compassion.

4. $\text{x}—\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}\text{Y}$ (Channun), the gracious One; he whose nature is goodness itself; the loving God.

5. $\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}''\text{x}\text{S}\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}\text{TM}\text{x}\text{o}$ (Erech Appayim), long-suffering; the Being who, because of his goodness and tenderness, is not easily irritated, but suffers long and is kind.

6. $\text{x}''\text{x}'$ (Rab), the great or mighty One.

7. $\text{x}—\text{x}\text{j}\text{x}''$ (Chesed), the bountiful Being; he who is exuberant in his beneficence.

8. $\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}\text{Z}\text{x}^{\text{a}}$ (Emeth), the truth or true One; he alone who can neither deceive nor be deceived, who is the fountain of truth, and from whom all wisdom and knowledge must be derived.

9. $\text{x}\text{x}\text{j}\text{x}''\text{x}—\text{x}\text{j}\text{x}''$ (Notser Chesed), the preserver of bountifulness; he whose beneficence never ends, keeping mercy for thousands of generations, showing compassion and mercy while the world endures.

10. $\text{x}\text{x}\text{O}\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}\text{Y}\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}\text{TM}\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}\text{Y}\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}\text{Y}\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}\text{Y}$ (Nose avon vaphesha vechattaah), he who bears away iniquity and transgression and sin: properly, the Redeemer, the Pardoner, the Forgiver; the Being whose prerogative alone it is to forgive sin and save the soul. $\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}\text{x}\text{S}\text{x}''$ ($\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}\text{o}$) $\text{x}\text{x}\text{S}\text{x}''$ $\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}\text{o}$ (Nakkeh lo yenakkeh), the righteous Judge, who distributes justice with an impartial hand, with whom no innocent person can ever be condemned.

11. $\text{x}\text{TM}\text{x}\text{S}\text{x}''\text{x}\text{Y}\text{x}\text{o}\text{x}\text{Y}$ (Poked avon), etc.; he who visits iniquity, who punishes transgressors, and from whose justice no sinner can escape. The God of retributive and vindictive justice.

These eleven attributes, as they have been termed, are all included in the name Jehovah, and are, as we have before seen, the proper interpretation of it; but the meaning of several of these words has been variously understood.

Verse 7

That will by no means clear the guilty - This last clause is rather difficult; literally translated it signifies, in clearing he will not clear. But the Samaritan, reading xœx^{\bullet} (lo), to him, instead of the negative xœx^{\bullet} (lo), not, renders the clause thus: With whom the innocent shall be innocent; i.e., an innocent or holy person shall never be treated as if he were a transgressor, by this just and holy God. The Arabic version has it, He justifies and is not justified; and the Septuagint is nearly as our English text, $\text{ἰὸς αἱ} \dots \text{ἰὸς αἱ} \text{ἰὸς αἱ} \text{ἰὸς αἱ}$, and he doth not purify the guilty. The Alexandrian copy of the Septuagint, edited by Dr. Grabe, has $\text{ἰὸς αἱ} \text{ἰὸς αἱ} \text{ἰὸς αἱ} \text{ἰὸς αἱ}$, and the guilty he will not cleanse with a purification-offering. The Coptic is to the same purpose. The Vulgate is a paraphrase: nullusque apud te per se innocens est, âœ and no person is innocent by or of himself before thee. âœ^{\bullet} This gives a sound theological sense, stating a great truth, That no man can make an atonement for his own sins, or purify his own heart; and that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Verse 9

O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us - The original is not $x^{TM}x^{TM}x^{TM}$ (Jehovah), but $x^{TM}x^{TM}x^{TM}$ (Adonai) in both these places, and seems to refer particularly to the Angel of the Covenant, the Messiah. See Clarke's note on Genesis 15:8.

Verse 10

I will do marvels - This seems to refer to what God did in putting them in possession of the land of Canaan, causing the walls of Jericho to fall down; making the sun and moon to stand still, etc. And thus God made his covenant with them; binding himself to put them in possession of the promised land, and binding them to observe the precepts laid down in the following verses, from Exodus 34:11-26 inclusive.

Verse 13

Ye shall destroy their images - See the subjects of this and all the following verses, to Exodus 34:28, treated at large in the notes on Exodus 23 (note).

Verse 21

In earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest - This commandment is worthy of especial note; many break the Sabbath on the pretense of absolute necessity, because, if in harvest time the weather happens to be what is called bad, and the Sabbath day be fair and fine, they judge it perfectly lawful to employ that day in endeavoring to save the fruits of the field, and think that the goodness of the day beyond the preceding, is an indication from Providence that it should be thus employed. But is not the above command pointed directly against this? I have known this law often broken on this pretense, and have never been able to discover a single instance where the persons who acted thus succeeded one whit better than their more conscientious neighbors, who availed themselves of no such favorable circumstances, being determined to keep God's law, even to the prejudice of their secular interests; but no man ever yet ultimately suffered loss by a conscientious attachment to his duty to God. He who is willing and obedient, shall eat the good of the land; but God will ever distinguish those in his providence who respect his commandments.

Verse 24

Neither shall any man desire thy land - What a manifest proof was this of the power and particular providence of God! How easy would it have been for the surrounding nations to have taken possession of the whole Israelitish land, with all their fenced cities, when there were none left to protect them but women and children! Was not this a standing proof of the Divine origin of their religion, and a barrier which no deistical mind could possibly surmount! Thrice every year did God work an especial miracle for the protection of his people; controlling even the very desires of their enemies, that they might not so much as meditate evil against them. They who have God for their protector have a sure refuge; and how true is the proverb, The path of duty is the way of safety! While these people went up to Jerusalem to keep the Lord's ordinances, he kept their families in peace, and their land in safety.

Verse 25

The blood of my sacrifice - That is, the paschal lamb. See Clarke on Exodus 23:18 (note).

Verse 26

Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk - See this amply considered Exodus 23:19 (note).

Verse 27

Write thou these words - Either a transcript of the whole law now delivered, or the words included from Exodus 34:11 to Exodus 34:26. God certainly wrote the ten words on both sets of tables. Moses either wrote a transcript of these and the accompanying precepts for the use of the people, or he wrote the precepts themselves in addition to the ten commandments which were written by the finger of God. See Clarke on Exodus 34:1 (note). Allowing this mode of interpretation, the accompanying precepts were, probably, what was written on the back side of the tables by Moses; the ten commandments, what were written on the front by the finger of Jehovah: for we must pay but little attention to the supposition of the rabbins, that the letters on each table were cut through the stone, so as to be legible on each side. See Clarke on Exodus 32:15 (note).

Verse 28

Forty days and forty nights - See Clarke's note on Exodus 24:18.

Verse 29

The skin of his face shone - קָרָן (karan), was horned: having been long in familiar intercourse with his Maker, his flesh, as well as his soul, was penetrated with the effulgence of the Divine glory, and his looks expressed the light and life which dwelt within. Probably Moses appeared now as he did when, in our Lord's transfiguration, he was seen with Elijah on the mount, Matthew 17. As the original word קָרָן (karan) signifies to shine out, to dart forth, as horns on the head of an animal, or rays of light reflected from a polished surface, we may suppose that the heavenly glory which filled the soul of this holy man darted out from his face in coruscations, in that manner in which light is generally represented. The Vulgate renders the passage, et ignorabat quod cornuta esset facies sua, and he did not know that his face was horned; which version, misunderstood, has induced painters in general to represent Moses with two very large horns, one proceeding from each temple. But we might naturally ask, while they were indulging themselves in such fancies, why only two horns? for it is very likely that there were hundreds of these radiations, proceeding at once from the face of Moses. It was no doubt from this very circumstance that almost all the nations of the world who have heard of this transaction, have agreed in representing those men to whom they attributed extraordinary sanctity, and whom they supposed to have had familiar intercourse with the Deity, with a lucid nimbus or glory round their heads. This has prevailed both in the east and in the west; not only the Greek and Roman saints, or eminent persons, are thus represented, but those also among the Mohammedans, Hindoos, and Chinese.

Verse 30

They were afraid to come nigh him - A sight of his face alarmed them; their consciences were still guilty from their late transgression, and they had not yet received the atonement. The very appearance of superior sanctity often awes the guilty into respect.

Verse 33

And till Moses had done speaking - The meaning of the verse appears to be this: As often as Moses spoke in public to the people, he put the veil on his face, because they could not bear to look on the brightness of his countenance; but when he entered into the tabernacle to converse with the Lord, he removed this veil, Exodus 34:34. St. Paul, 2 Corinthians 3:7, etc., makes a very important use of the transactions recorded in this place. He represents the brightness of the face of Moses as emblematical of the glory or excellence of that dispensation; but he shows that however glorious or excellent that was, it had no glory when compared with the superior excellence of the Gospel. As Moses was glorious in the eyes of the Israelites, but that glory was absorbed and lost in the splendor of God when he entered into the tabernacle, or went to meet the Lord upon the mount; so the brightness and excellence of the Mosaic dispensation are eclipsed and absorbed in the transcendent brightness or excellence of the Gospel of Christ. One was the shadow, the other is the substance. One showed Sin in its exceeding sinfulness, together with the justice and immaculate purity of God; but, in and of itself, made no provision for pardon or sanctification. The other exhibits Jesus, the Lamb of God, typified by all the sacrifices under the law, putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself, reconciling God to man and man to God, diffusing his Spirit through the souls of believers, and cleansing the very thoughts of their hearts by his inspiration, and causing them to perfect holiness in the fear of God. The one seems to shut heaven against mankind, because by the law was the knowledge, not the cure, of Sin; the other opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The former was a ministration of death, the latter a dispensation of life. The former ministered terror, so that even the high priest was afraid to approach, the people withdrew and stood afar off, and even Moses, the mediator of it, exceedingly feared and trembled; by the latter we have boldness to enter into the holiest through the blood of Jesus, who is the end of the law for righteousness - justification, to every one that believeth. The former gives a partial view of the Divine nature; the latter shows God as he is, Full orb'd, in his whole round of rays complete.

The apostle farther considers the veil on the face of Moses, as being emblematical of the metaphorical nature of the different rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation, each covering some spiritual meaning or a spiritual subject; and that the Jews did not lift the veil to penetrate the spiritual sense, and did not look to the end of the commandment, which was to be abolished, but rested in the letter or literal meaning, which conferred neither light nor life.

He considers the veil also as being emblematical of that state of intellectual darkness into which the Jewish people, by their rejection of the Gospel, were plunged, and from which they have never yet been recovered. When a Jew, even at the present day, reads the law in the synagogue, he puts over his head an oblong woolen veil, with four tassels at the four corners, which is called the *taled* or *thaled*. This is a very remarkable circumstance, as it appears to be an emblem of the intellectual veil referred to by the apostle, which is still upon their hearts when Moses is read, and which prevents them from looking to the end of that which God designed should be abrogated, and which has been abolished by the introduction of the Gospel. The veil is upon their hearts, and prevents the light of the glory of God from shining into them; but we all, says the apostle, speaking of believers in Christ, with open face, without any veil, beholding as in a glass the glory of God, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord; 2 Corinthians 3:18. Reader, dost thou know this excellence of the religion of Christ? Once thou wert darkness; art thou now light in the Lord? Art thou still under the letter that killeth, or under the Spirit that giveth life? Art thou a slave to sin or a servant of Christ? Is the veil on thy heart, or hast thou found redemption in his blood, the remission of sins? Knowest thou not these things? Then may God pity, enlighten, and save thee!