

A Literary Perspective on Moses' Shining Face in Exodus 34:29-35

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Abstract

The unity of Moses' shining face in Exodus 34:29-35 and its interpretation have been debated. This study argues that vv. 29-35 is literarily cohesive in chap. 34 and in the golden calf narrative (chaps. 32-34). The frequent mention of the verb *dibêr* and the name *mōšeh* indicate unity of the pericope in 34:29-35. The chiasm in chap. 34 shows that vv. 29-35 is inseparable from the chapter. The logical flow of Moses' intercessions and God's responses in the golden calf episode suggests the unity of chaps. 32-34. As to the interpretation of Moses' shining face, the impact of the covenant renewal to Moses' shining face, the semantic links between *bōqer* (concept of light) in vv. 1-4 and *qāran* (shine) in vv. 29-35, and the need of the divine presence after the golden calf incident, are the key points to consider the reading of *qāran* as light in vv. 29-35.

Keywords: shining face, light, covenant, literary unity, golden calf.

Introduction

Exodus 34:29-35 is the closing section of the golden calf episode (Exodus 32-34).¹ Here the author² described that the

¹ R. W. L. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34* (JSOTSupp 22; Sheffield, ENG: JSOT Press, 1983), 44-111, especially 106-9.

² This study assumes the authorship of Moses. See Jacques B. Doukhan, *Genesis*, SDAIBC, ed. Jacques B. Doukhan (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press;

skin of Moses' face shone (*qāran*) while he talked with God (34:29). This unusual visage brought fear to the people (v. 30) and prompted Moses to put a veil on his face until he would talk with God (vv. 33, 35). There are two big problems in the passage. The first is the unity of the text. Source critics assign vv. 29-35 to the different sources of the Pentateuch. The second is the interpretive diversity. Scholars have different opinions on the shining face of Moses.

In regard to the issue of the unity of the text, the study of Julian Morgenstern is very insightful.³ On a micro level, source critics such as Bacon, Addis, and Kent argue that vv. 29-35 comes from the P source.⁴ Contrarily, Carpenter and Hartford challenge the common source trend of their fellow critics and contend for an E source for vv. 29-33 and v. 34 as well,⁵ but v. 35 is assigned to RJE.⁶ Categorically, North denies all the alleged sources and argues for a special tradition in vv. 29-35, which is akin to 33:7-11, a section he allegedly claims to have come from the J source.⁷ On a macro level, the connection of 34:29-35 to the golden calf narrative (chaps. 32-34) has been questioned. Philpot mentions that some scholars considered the passage as a derivative from an older tradition and was appended to the end of chap. 34, so as

Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 2016), 22-7. For an overview discussion on the authorship, see Thomas B. Dozeman, *The Pentateuch: Introducing the Torah* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 33-77.

³ Julian Morgenstern, "Moses with the Shining Face," *HUCA* 2 (1925): 1-27.

⁴ Benjamin W. Bacon, *The Triple Tradition of Exodus: A Study of the Structure of the Later Pentateuchal Books, Reproducing the Sources of the Narrative, and Further Illustrating the Presence of Bibles Within the Bible* (Hartford, CT: The Student Publishing Company, 1894), 370; William E. Addis, *The Documents of the Hexateuch: The Deuteronomical Writers and the Priestly Documents* (vol. 2; London: Nutt, 1898), 275; Charles F. Kent, *Narrative of the Beginning of Hebrew History: From the Creation to the Establishment of the Hebrew Kingdom* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1925, c. 1904), 184.

⁵ J. Estlin Carpenter and George Hartford, *The Composition of the Hexateuch* (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1902), 517-8.

⁶ Morgenstern, "Moses with the Shining Face," 2.

⁷ Martin North, *Exodus: A Commentary, OTL*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1962), 267.

to mark the end of the Sinai episode.⁸ The advocates of this idea based their supposition on the ANE tradition of the priestly masks, and they use it as well to explain Moses' shining face.⁹

As to the problem of the interpretation, the study of Propp on this subject is paramount.¹⁰ He categorizes the interpretations into three major views. The first view argues that Moses' face was radiant or glorified. This interpretation is discernible from the texts of some ancient manuscripts (LXX, *Peshitta*, and Targums)¹¹ and is advocated by some modern scholars, such as; Morgenstern, Cassuto, Childs, Durham, Garret, and Philpot.¹² The second view contends that Moses' face is "horned." This reading is reflected in some ancient manuscripts (Aquila's Greek translation of the OT and Jerome's Latin Vulgate),¹³ depicted in some iconographies of the medieval period,¹⁴ and is supported by other modern interpreters, such as; Sasson, Hauge, Hamilton, Koosed, Gressmann, and Dozeman.¹⁵ The third view claims that

⁸ Joshua M. Philpot, "The Shining Face of Moses: The Interpretation of Exodus 34:29-35 and Its Uses in the Old and New Testaments" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 8.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ William H. Propp, "The Skin of Moses—Transfigured or Disfigured," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49 (1987): 375-86.

¹¹ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT)* (2000), s. v. "qāran."

¹² See Morgenstern, "Moses with the Shining Face," 1-27; Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary of the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967 [original in Hebrew 1951]), 448-9; Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974) 617-9; John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC 3 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1998), 466-7; Duane A. Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2013); 664; Philpot, "The Shining Face of Moses: The Interpretation of Exodus 34:29-35 and Its Uses in the Old and New Testaments," 195-6; *idem*, "Exodus 34:29-35 and Moses' Shining Face," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 23.1 (2013): 10-11.

¹³ *HALOT*, s. v. "qāran."

¹⁴ Ruth Mellinkoff, *The Horned Moses in Medieval Art and Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1970) 13-17, 23-27, 61-75, 81-82.

¹⁵ Scholar in this camp can be grouped into two. The first group reasons from the calf-god tradition of ANE. See Jason Sasson, "Bovine Symbolism and the Exodus Narrative," *Vetus Testamentum* 18 (1968):

Moses' face was toughened or disfigured. The adherents of this view, such as; Al-Balkhi, Eerdmans, Albright, and Propp, postulate that the natural circumstances had disfigured Moses' face.¹⁶

From a critical perspective, the first view is commended for stressing the force of the verb *qāran* in *Qal stem* which the lexicographers translate as “shine,” “radiant,” or “display light.”¹⁷ To move away from the given gloss is to devalue the rules of language. Nonetheless, its appeal to the reading of *qāran* in the LXX, *Peshitta*, and Targums, and in Hab 3:4, seems not certain. It is not fairly clear whether the equivalent of *qāran* in the above-mentioned manuscripts really connote radiance. Moreover, for Propp, to enforce the reading of *qāran* in Hab 3:4 into Exodus 34:29-35 borders on proof-texting.¹⁸

The second view is valued for providing a modest ANE background to the golden calf narrative and for emphasizing

387; Martin R. Hauge, *The Descent from the Mountain: Narrative Patterns in Exodus 19-40* (JSOTSupp 323; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 167-9; Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 589-91; Jennifer L. Koosed, “Moses: The Face of Fear,” *Biblical Interpretation* 22 (2014): 414-29. The second group argues from the priestly ritual mask of ANE. See Thomas B. Dozeman, “Masking Moses and Mosaic Authority in Torah,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119.1 (2000): 21-45. Propp (“The Skin of Moses—Transfigured or Disfigured,” 382) also mentions of Hugo Gressmann, Karl Jaroš, Anton Jirku, and Elias Auerbach.

¹⁶ See Judah Rosenthal, *Hiwi Al-Balkhi: A Comparative Study* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1939), 19; Bernardus D. Eerdmans, *The Covenant at Mount Sinai: Viewed in the Light of Antique Thought* (Leiden: Burgersdijk & Niermans, 1939), 20-22; W. F. Albright, “The Psalm of Habakkuk,” in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy, Presented to Professor Theodore H. Robinson by the Society of Old Testament Study on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday, August 9th, 1946*, ed. H. H. Rowley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1950), note 1 in 14; Propp, “The Skin of Moses—Transfigured or Disfigured,” 385, especially notes 48, 49, and 50.

¹⁷ *HOL*, s. v. “*qāran*,” BDB, s. v. “*qāran*,” Martin J. Selman, “*qāran*,” *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 3: 989; Leonard J. Coppes, “*qāran*,” *TWOT*, ed. R. Laird Harris et al (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), 815-6.

¹⁸ Propp, “The Skin of Moses—Transfigured or Disfigured,” 380-1.

the dominant meaning of the root *qāran* (“horn”). On the one hand, it is true that the golden calf incident in Exodus 32 finds connection to the calf-god tradition of ANE, but to project Moses as a horned individual would make him beyond a normal being and would make God endorsed the practice which he had displeasure on in chap. 32.¹⁹ On the other hand, it is beyond dispute that the noun *qrm* (73 of 77 occurrences) means “horn,” but to overstate its nominal form would leave no room for its force in the denominative.²⁰

The third view is appreciated for exploring the natural incident to explain Moses’ horned face. However, the reconstruction that Moses’ face was disfigured like horn because he did not eat while on the mountain,²¹ or he went so close to the fire burning on the mountain,²² are hypothetical. The same can be said of the glory that settled on the mountain which burned Moses’ face.²³ It presupposes the glory of God as associated with fire. Can fire be associated or equated with glory? If not, the skin of Moses’ face could not have been disfigured. If it is, why only Moses was affected, while the tent and temple where the glory of God, were not?

On the whole, Exodus 34:29-35 is a difficult passage. Although the views of the scholars who have contributed ideas to this topic are insightful, still, this study re-examines the text from a literary viewpoint for two reasons. First, the study proposes literary hints which suggest the cohesiveness of the text in vv. 29-35 in particular, and to the golden calf narrative in general. Second, the study proposes that the usage of *bōqer* (concept of light) which appears three times in vv. 1-4 and

¹⁹ See also Philpot, *Exodus 34:29–35 and Moses’ Shining Face*, 3-4.

²⁰ The 94.8% of the total occurrences of *qrm* in the OT is translated “horn,” but its verbal form (*qāran*) in Exod 34:29-35 should be translated “shine.”

²¹ Rosenthal, *Hiwi Al-Balkhi*, 19.

²² Eerdmans, *The Covenant at Mount Sinai*, 20-22; Albright, “The Psalm of Habakkuk,” 14, note 1.

²³ Propp, “The Skin of Moses—Transfigured or Disfigured,” 385, notes 48, 49, 50.

qāran (shine) which recurs also three times in vv. 29-35, argue for the *qāran* of Moses' face as light, instead of being horned.

Unity of the Passage

Unity of Exodus 34:29-35

The pericope of the shining face of Moses is clear-cut. Many scholars limit the pericope within 34:29-35,²⁴ though a few prefer vv. 27-35.²⁵ Between the two delimitations, the previous is more likely than the latter, especially if the major movements in chap. 34 would be considered: Moses went up to the mountain (vv. 1-4), God came down to the mountain (vv. 5-28), and Moses went down from the mountain (29-35). Kaiser divides the passage into two sections: vv. 29-32 and vv. 33-35.²⁶ Nonetheless, it is very hard to find distinguishing elements in vv. 29-32, except the mention of the name Aaron in vv. 30, 31 and the mention of the verb *nāgash* ("draw near") in vv. 30, 32. The same is true with the vv. 33-35, the only unifying element is the use of *masweh* ("veil"²⁷) which appears three times, one in each verse. For this reason, this study

²⁴ For examples, John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 317; Henry Leopold Ellison, *Exodus*, The Daily Study Bible Series (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 183; John Oswalt, *Exodus*, in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, vol. 1 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2008), 541; Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Book of Exodus: A Complete Analysis of Exodus with Annotations* (New York, Our Hope Publication Office, 1912), 70.

²⁵ Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, The JPS Torah Commentary, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 220; Joseph T. Lienhard and Ronnie J. Rombs, *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, ACCS: Old Testament, vol. 3; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 155.

²⁶ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "Exodus," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 2:487

²⁷ The function of the veil (*masweh*) is ambiguous (compare v. 33 with vv. 34-35). It is better to stress only on what is clear, in this case, the veil conceals Moses face. See also Philpot, "The Shining Face of Moses," 93-95. The speculation of the veil as the foretaste or an echo of the veil in the tabernacle that divides the holy and most holy place is a good idea, but it remains a conjecture. See, *Ibid.*

holds reservation in dividing the entire section for two reasons, which in turn, substantiate the unity of the pericope.

First, in chap. 34, the verb *dibêr* (“speak”) appears seven times in vv. 29-35 (vv. 29, 31, 32, 33, 34 [2x], 35). The main grammatical subject of the verb *dibêr* is Moses, except in v. 32, which takes God as the speaker. In vv. 29-35, Moses spoke to God (vv. 29, 34a, 35), God spoke to Moses (v. 32), then Moses spoke to the people (vv. 31, 33, 34b). Note that the frequent mentioned of *dibêr* with Moses as the subject is not found elsewhere in the entire golden calf episode apart from vv. 29-35.²⁸ The author mentioned this only after the renewal of the covenant. Prior to the covenant renewal, *dibêr* is used nine times and it takes God as the main grammatical subject (32:7, 13, 14, 34; 33:1, 9, 11 [2x]), with the exception in 33:17, which takes Moses (implied in pronoun “you”) as the grammatical subject in the speech of God. Impliedly, the golden calf incident obscures the communication between God and the people. Thus, God initiated to speak with the Israelites through Moses (32:7, 34; 33:1, 9, 11), and Moses to God (3:17). However, after the renewal of the covenant, the reverse takes place. Moses spoke to God (34:29, 34a, 35) and to the people (vv. 31, 33, 34b), and God spoke to Moses (v. 32). The *dibêr* communication can be arranged as follows.

Verses	Subject	Object
A vv. 29-30	Moses	God
B v. 31	Moses	People
C v. 32	God	Moses
D v. 33	Moses	People
C' v. 34a	Moses	God
B' v. 34b	Moses	People
A' v. 35	Moses	God

²⁸ Other texts in the Pentateuch that come close to the passage under study are Exod 6:1-13 (the said verb and its objects appears in vv. 2, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13) and Lev 10:1-20 (the said verb and its objects recurs in vv. 8, 11, 12, 19).

In the structure of *dibêr* communication, Moses appears to do the role of a mediator.²⁹ On the one hand, Moses spoke to God (vv. 29, 34a, 35) and God also spoke to him (v. 32). The author had carefully crafted the communication between God and Moses in that he used *dibêr* and *'ittôw* (“with him”) combination in the pericope (ACC'A).³⁰ The first and the last occurrences of the said combination appear both at the end of v. 29 and v. 35, forming like an *inclusio*³¹ in the pericope, while the second and third combination have their respective linguistic constituents: the terms *Yahweh* (“Lord”) and *šāwāh* (“command”) are used only in v. 32 and v. 34. On the other hand, Moses spoke to the people (vv. 31, 33, 34b), and in the context, it is what he received from God which he spoke to them. Correctly understood, the idea of continued or restored communication between God and the people is in view in vv. 29-35, with Moses as the mediator between God and man, but all the way through in chaps. 32-34, he had been an intercessor between God and the people of Israel (e.g., Exodus 32:11-14; 30-34; 34:9).

Second, the name *mōšeh* (“Moses”) is mentioned eleven times in the pericope. Of these, the most important mention is the

²⁹ See also Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 317; Jon L. Dybdahl, *Exodus*, *The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier: Practical Guide to Abundant Christian Living*, ed. George R. Knight (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1994), 262; Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*, 589-91.

³⁰ The *dibêr* and *'ittôw* combination never appears in the occurrences of *dibêr* communication between God and Moses in chaps. 32-33, only in vv. 29-35.

³¹ Both in v. 29 and v. 35, *dibêr* is in the infinitive construct. The first takes the prefix *bə* (“in, by, with”) with third person suffix (*w*), while the second takes the usual prefix *lə* (“to or for”). See the verses below in ESV.

²⁹ “When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God” (*bəḏabbərow 'ittôw*).

³⁵ “The people of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him” (*ləḏabbēr 'ittôw*).

occurrence of the name three times both in v. 29 and v. 35.³² The triple repetition of *mōšeh* in both ends of the passage forms like an *inclusio*.³³ It is not certain whether the author had or had not crafted it intentionally. However, from a literary perspective, it can be a possible indicator for the unity of the pericope. Against Wellhausen and his likes, who argue that vv. 29-32 is from Pg and vv. 33-35 is from P2,³⁴ the placement of triple *mōšeh* both in the opening of the first halve (vv. 29-32) and in the closing of the second halve (vv. 33-35) requires more than a coincidence to piece together the portions from two different alleged sources that correspondingly contain a triple repetition of Moses's name, yet the blended materials are still coherent in the narrative level. The same coincidence is expected for Carpenter's and Hartford's E source for vv. 29-34 and RJE source for v. 35. The only other triple usage of the name *mōšeh* in a single text in the Pentateuch is in Lev 8:29. Thus, the rare use of the said triple can hardly be coincidental, rather a deliberate employment of the name, which indicate a coherent passage.

Unity of Exodus 34:29-35 to the Chapter

Exodus 34 deals with the covenant renewal which can be divided into three sections based on the movement of God and Moses to the mountain: Moses came up (*'ālāh*) to the mountain (vv. 1-4), God descended (*yārad*) on the mountain

³² The MT mentions *mōšeh* three times both in v. 29 and v. 35. The SP contains only dual mention of the name in two separate verses. The LXX contains three mention of the said name in v. 29 and two in v. 35. The last two manuscripts might have reduced the repeated mention of *mōšeh* in both verses; perhaps, to avoid redundancy.

³³ See the name *mōšeh* in the literal translation of vv. 29 and 35 in Hebrew.

²⁹ "When Moses (*mōšeh*) came from the mountain of Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony were in the hand of Moses (*mōšeh*), but Moses (*ūmōšeh*) did not know that the skin of his face shone while he spoke with him with him (God)."

³⁵ "The people of Israel saw Moses' (*mōšeh*) face that the skin of Moses' face shone (*mōšeh*), then Mose (*mōšeh*)s put back the veil upon his face until he came to speak with him (God)."

³⁴ Morgenstern, "Moses with the Shining Face," 1, note 2.

(vv. 5-28), and Moses came down (*yāraḏ*) from the mountain (vv. 29-35). Noticeably, the verbs *‘ālāh* and *yāraḏ* navigate the movements of the narrative.³⁵ In the first section (1-4), God instructed Moses to prepare two tablets (*šānē-luḥōt*) of stone and to go up (*‘ālāh*) to Mount Sinai (*har sīnay*) in the morning with the tablets in his hand (*bəyāḏ*) (vv. 1-2). Moses did this instruction and went up at early morning to meet God on the mountain (v. 4).

In the second section (vv. 5-28), God descended (*yāraḏ*) in the cloud to meet Moses on the mountain (v. 5). As He passed before Moses, He declared His name to him (vv. 6-7). What follows is Moses’ final intercession, which focuses on God’s forgiveness for the people (vv. 8-9). After this, God renewed the covenant (vv. 10-28).³⁶

In the third section (vv. 29-35), Moses came down (*yāraḏ*) from Mount Sinai (*har sīnay*) with the two tablets (*šānē-luḥōt*) in his hand (*bəyāḏ*), but at this time, the skin of his face shone (vv. 29). Consequently, Aaron and the people marvelled at the new

³⁵ Cornelis Houtman comments that the two-time occurrences of “come down” (*yāraḏ*) and “from the mountain” suggest poetic eloquence of the verse. Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus*, 3 vols., Historical Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. Cornelis Houtman et al, trans. Sierd Woudstra (Belgium: Peeters, 2000), 727. On the other hand, the verb *ālāh* appears in 34: 2, 3, 4, 24 and it takes Moses as the grammatical subject.

³⁶ Exodus 34:10-38 is understood by some scholars as a piece woven into the golden calf narrative (chaps. 32-34) to make it appear that there is a covenant restoration between God and Israel when this covenant was broken through the golden calf incident. See for example, Durham, *Exodus*, 459. On the other hand, Fretheim mentions that 34:10-26 in particular is perhaps taken from “another covenant-making tradition” which now appear as “a restatement of the law of chapters 20-23 in summary form as an accompaniment to the making of a new covenant.” Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 308. While it is true that the literary development and origin of 34:10-28 is difficult to be ascertained, from canonical perspective, one may agree with Sailhamer that it is beyond question that the passage talks about the establishment of covenant based on the original “Ten Words,” which God Himself wrote (v. 1), but with addition based on what God had command Moses to write when they meet on the mountain (v. 27). Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 315-6.

visage of Moses and they were afraid of him (v. 30). Their fear might have reached to some extent. The use of the term *šub* (“turn” or “return”)³⁷ in the next verse (v. 31) seems to imply that they distanced from Moses. However, Moses called them and spoke with them about all that God had commanded him (vv. 31-32). While he spoke to the people (v. 33), he also spoke to God (vv. 34-35).

The given sections of the chap. 34 may not concur with the various structures advocated by majority of the scholars,³⁸ yet there are linguistic constituents that explain why the structure has to be seen based on the chiasm below. It is worth noting that linguistic elements, such as *šānê-luḥōt* (“two tablets”), *bəyāḏ* (“in hand”), and *har sīnay* “Mount Sinai,” appear only in vv. 1-4 and vv. 29-35, but no occurrence of any of these are found in vv. 5-28. (See the chiasm below).

- A Moses with the two tablets (*šānê-luḥōt*) of stone in his hand (*bəyāḏ*) went up (*ālāh*) to meet God on Mount Sinai (*har sīnay*) (vv. 1-4)
- B God descended (*yāraḏ*) in the cloud to meet Moses at the mountain and renewed the covenant (vv. 5-28)
- A’ Moses with the two tablets (*šānê-luḥōt*) of the testimony in his hand (*bəyāḏ*) come down (*yāraḏ*) from Mount Sinai (*har sīnay*) and his face was shining (vv. 29-35).

³⁷ The term *šub* describes Israel’s moving away from Moses. See Houtman, *Exodus*, 738; George Rawlinson, *Exodus*, Pulpit Commentary, vol. 2, eds. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), 372.

³⁸ The following are examples of the chapter division of chap. 34 suggested by some scholars. For vv. 1-28, 29-35, see Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC 2 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 710, 735. For vv. 1-3, 4-9, 10-26, 27-35, see Sarna, *Exodus*, 215-20. For vv. 1-10, 11-26, 27-35; see Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 1:477-80. And for vv. 1-10, 11-26, 27-28, 29-35, see Cassuto, *A Commentary of the Book of Exodus*, 437-48.

The structure has implication on the unity of the vv. 29-35 to the chapter. First, the cohesiveness of vv. 29-35 to chap. 34 is evident in the up-down play of Moses' movements on the mountain (*went up* to [A] and *came down* from the mountain [A']). The above mentioned linguistic hints between the two sections are very coherent and argue against the idea of derivation of vv. 29-35 from the different sources³⁹ or from a special tradition,⁴⁰ which is just pieced together into the narrative. Second, the cohesiveness of vv. 29-35 is also noticeable in the link between the covenant renewal (vv. 5-28) and the shining face of Moses (vv. 29-35). As can be seen in the structure, segment A narrates Moses' ascent to meet God on the mountain (v. 4), while segment A' recounts Moses' descent from the mountain (v. 29), but at this time, Moses' face shone. What makes the difference between the two segments is the event highlighted in segment B. The restoration of the covenant, which is the focus of the chiasm, appears to have a transformational effect on the face of Moses, as there is now light glowing on his face.

The temporality of Moses' shining face coincides with the event on the mountain. In the clause *qāran 'ōwr pānāw bədabbərow 'ittōw* translated "the skin of his face shone while he talked with God" (v. 29), the infinitival phrase *bədabbərow 'ittōw*⁴¹

³⁹ Walter Beyerlin and Frank Moore are representative of the above view.

Walter Beyerlin, *Origin and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Tradition, Origin and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Tradition*, trans. S. Rudman (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961), 3-4; and Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 314.

⁴⁰ E.g. Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary*, 267.

⁴¹ There is a question as to who is the actual speaker and the object spoken with in the phrase *bədabbərow 'ittōw*. Cornelis Houtman and Nechama Leibowitz seem to argue that God is the speaker implied in *bədabbərow*, while Moses is the implied person in the prepositional *'ittōw*. See Houtman, *Exodus*, 727; and Nechama Leibowitz, *Studies in Shemot*, vols. 2 (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1976), 630ff. Houtman's idea is not possible for three reasons. First, the immediate antecedent subject of *bədabbərow* in the pericope of 34:29-35 is Moses; it would require looking back in the previous pericope (v. 27 within the section of vv. 5-28) to argue for the Lord as the antecedent subject of the said verb. Second, *'ittōw* after the infinitive *bədabbərow* both in vv. 34, 35

should be seen as a temporal infinitive.⁴² The reference event of “while he talked with God” (Moses’ was talking with God) is the encounter between Moses and God on the mountain. Thus, vv. 29-35 is strongly coherent in the events of chap. 34.

Unity of Exodus 34:29-3 to Chapters 32-34

Exodus 32-34 narrates the golden calf narrative which can be divided into three sections:⁴³ the golden calf worship (chap. 32), the need for divine presence (chap. 33), and the renewal of the covenant (chap. 34). For source-critics though, the golden calf episode is full of complexity because it contains a labyrinth of seams and separated paths.⁴⁴ This includes the alleged addition of the shining face of Moses (34:29-35) at the end of the narrative. However, as had been argued above, there are cogent literary constituents which argue for the unity of vv. 29-35 to chap. 34. Its unity to the chapter in turn

logically refers to the Lord. Third, there is an apparent reference in vv. 31, 33 that Moses was the grammatical subject of the verb *dibēr* when he spoke to the people.

⁴² See the translations of (e.g.) GNV, JPS, KJV, NAB. Others read *bəḏabbərow ʾittōw* as a causal infinitive, see (e.g.) ASV, CEB, NIV, RSV). This reading is not very likely because it is not consistent with the morpho-syntax of the said phrase. Moses’ meeting with God in chap. 34 is not the only instance of his encounter with God. He had been privileged of having talk with God prior to the culmination of the golden calf event (chaps. 32-34) and even before the golden calf incident (e.g. 3:1-12; 19:1-25; and chaps. 24-31), yet his face did not shine. Moreover, there are other biblical characters in the Pentateuch who have also talked with God, yet their face did not shine (e.g. Abram/Abraham and Jacob).

⁴³ E.g., Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 317; Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991), 129; and Benno Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus*, trans. Walter Jacob (New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, 1992), 935.

⁴⁴ Durham, *Exodus*, 417. There are those who argue for the unity of the text of chaps. 32-34. See Herbert C. Brichto, “The Worship of the Golden Calf: A Literary Analysis of a Fable on Idolatry,” *HUCA* 54 (1983): 1-44; Dale Ralph Davis, “Rebellion, Presence, and Covenant: A Study in Exodus 32-34,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 44 (1982): 71-87. Others propose different sources of chaps. 32-34, see Dozeman, *The Pentateuch: Introducing the Torah* 355-57; Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary*, 243-46; Beyerlin, *Origin and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Tradition*, 18-22.

can be an indicator for its coherency to the golden calf narrative in general, unless the harmony of chap. 34 to the golden calf episode is questionable. The result of the golden calf worship (32:1-6) moves to the renewal of the covenant (32:7-34:28).

The dramatic consequences of the Israelites' rebellion against God which they have committed through the worship of the golden calf are death of the rebellious and the absence of God's presence to the people in their journey to Canaan. These problems have prompted Moses to intercede before God. His intercession appears in every chapter of the narrative: two intercessions in chap. 3 (vv. 11-13, 31), and one each in chap. 33 (vv. 13-14) and chap. 34 (v. 9). In response to Moses' intercession, there are also responses of God (32:14, 33-34; 33:14; 34:10) that follow after each intercession.

Moses made the first intercession when God planned to blot out the rebellious people and resolved to make Moses into a great nation as a consequence of their rebellion against Him (32:7-10). To this, Moses interceded by reminding God that Israel is His own people by virtue of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (an allusion to the covenant, vv. 11-14, cf. Gen 15:5-6; 22:17). In response, God relented (*nḥm*)⁴⁵ from the disaster that He had conceived to bring upon the rebellious people (Exodus 32:14). Thus, here, one can find the expression of God's wrath, and at the same time, His mercy.

Despite God's positive response to Moses' first intercession, the Israelites were still punished (v. 28).⁴⁶ Surprisingly, Moses

⁴⁵ For other references of God relenting from his anger/judgment, see Exod 34:12; Deut 32:36; Judg 2:12; 1 Chro 21:15; Jer 18:8; Amos 7:3; Jon 3:30.

⁴⁶ The dominant theme of Exod 32:15-35 is judgment. Based on this theme, the passage can be divided into three subsections, which forms a chiasmic structure.

A Moses as agent of God's judgment upon the people (vv. 15-29)

B Moses intercedes for God's forgiveness to the people (vv. 30-34)

A' God's judgment upon the people through the plague (v. 35)

is the agent of God's judgment on the people, and by extension the Levites who killed the three thousand people by the command of Moses (vv. 15-29). In the next verses (vv. 30-34), Moses made the second intercession, and he asked God to forgive the sins of the people, or blot him out from the record if God's mercy is withheld (v. 32).⁴⁷ God answered that He would blot out from His book only those who have sinned (v. 33). Then he commanded Moses to lead the people to Canaan, and assured him of His accompanying angel before him (v. 34). Nonetheless, God sent the plague upon the people after his positive response (v. 35). This leads to the third intercession.

Moses made again another intercession, because on the one hand, God had still sent the plague upon the people even after His second positive response (v. 35). And on the other hand, the prospect of angelic presence had displeased the people of Israel as evident by their mourning and stripping⁴⁸ of their ornaments (33:1-6).⁴⁹ It is not clear as to why the people repulsed to the prospect of the angelic being, perhaps their understanding had been affected by the polytheistic religion of Egypt, which accepts the hierarchy of gods.⁵⁰ If so, no wonder, for them, an angelic being is not sufficient in comparison with God himself.

For this reason, Moses interceded for God's presence. He requested God to show His ways (*derek*) so that he may know

⁴⁷ The second intercession is about forgiveness. The author employed the conjunction *'im* ("if") here (32:32), and he did so in the next two intercessions (33:13, 15; 34:9). For the usage of conjunction *'im*, see Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2033), 143-6.

⁴⁸ For the connection between ornaments, golden calf, and sin, see Cassuto, *A Commentary of the Book of Exodus*, 427.

⁴⁹ Verses 3-6 present an alternate information: v. 3 and v. 5 about God's hesitation to journey with the people, lest he destroys them on the way, while v. 4 and v. 6 deal with the peoples' response of mourning and stripping their ornaments.

⁵⁰ See E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians or Studies in Egyptian Mythology*, vol. 1(London: Methuen & Co., 1904).

he has found favor in His eyes⁵¹ (vv. 12-13). Here the use of *dereḵ* (“way” or “road”) may not only mean God’s ways, but in particular His ways concerning the journey of the Israelites. This idea is picked up in God’s response to Moses’ request (v. 14). He assured him of His presence: “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (v. 14). When Moses articulated the same need of presence (vv. 15-17), God responded that He will do what he had asked for (v. 17).

In vv. 18-23,⁵² Moses continued to make his request, and at this time, he asked God to show (root *rā’āh*) him His glory (v. 18). Perhaps, he did this to know God’s character, which is anticipated in v. 19: “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.” Enns⁵³ following Sarna⁵⁴ says that the statement about God’s character and goodness (root *tūb*) in v. 19 insinuates the reestablishment of the covenant between Israel and God. However, the “show (root *rā’āh*) your glory” in v. 18 also interacts well with “you cannot see (root *rā’āh*) my face,” “man shall not see (root *rā’āh*) me (God) and live” in v. 20, and “you shall see (root *rā’āh*) my back, but my face shall not be seen (root *rā’āh*)” in v. 23. The presence of God then is not out of picture, for it makes them

⁵¹ The expression “find favor in the eyes/sight” appears six times in the golden calf episode: five times in chap. 33 (vv. 12, 13 [2x], 16, 17), and one time in 34:9. The repeated mention of the expression underscores Moses’ role as the mediator of the people of Israel, not just a leader.

⁵² For the structure of the sequence of events in chaps. 33, see Mark S. Smith, *The Pilgrimage Pattern in Exodus*, JSOTSupp 239 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 252. The structure here includes the flow of chap. 34. Mark Smith makes a chiasmic structure which centers on Moses’ request to see the Lord (33:18-23) and Moses’ seeing the Lord (34: 1-8).

⁵³ Peter Enns, *Exodus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 352.

⁵⁴ Arguing based on the mention of goodness (*tūb*) in v. 19, Sarna (*Exodus*, 214) comments, “In ancient Near Eastern treaties and in several biblical texts, a term *tov* bears the technical, legal meaning of covenantal friendship, that is, amity established by the conclusion of a pact. In light of this, it is possible that the present verse also contains an intimation of the renewal of the covenant between God and Israel.”

distinct from the rest of the nations, at least from Moses’ point of view (v. 16).⁵⁵

Finally, Moses made the fourth intercession to God during his encounter with Him on the mountain. After God passed before Moses and declared His name to him (34:6-7), Moses worshiped Him and presented his final intercession. He asked God to forgive his people and to take them as His inheritance (vv. 8-9). Subsequently, God renewed the covenant (vv. 10-28). What might have prompted God to restore the covenant is His gracious and forgiving character, which is already stated in vv. 6-7. In

Chap. 32	Chap. 32	Chap. 33	Chap. 34
Intercession Moses implored God to avert His anger and disaster that He planned to bring upon the people (vv. 11-13)	Intercession Moses mediated for God’s forgiveness to the people, or else blot him out (v. 31)	Intercession Moses entreated for God’s favor (likely His presence) (vv. 13-14)	Intercession Moses interceded for God’s forgiveness and asked God to possess them as His inheritance (v. 9)
Response God relented from His anger (v. 14).	Response God will blot out only the guilty; He will send His angel in their journey (vv. 33-34).	Response God’s presence will go with Moses (v. 14)	Response He restores the covenant (v. 10)

Table 1 : Moses’ Intercessions and God’s Responses⁵⁶

⁵⁵ See also Carol Meyers, *Exodus*, NCBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 263. She significantly notes that the divine presence for Moses and the people is not so much “a matter of the power of God’s presence to provide sustenance and protection,” but of identity. His presence makes the Israelites separate from all the nations (Exod 33:16).

fact, in the golden calf narrative, God had been merciful to Moses and to the people as evident in the interaction between Moses' intercessions and God's responses. (See the Table above). One may agree with Enns that the golden calf episode is not so much about the rebellion, but about God mercy and forgiveness with Moses as the mediator of the covenant.⁵⁷

There are at least two remarks on the Table. First, each chapter of the golden calf episode (chaps. 32-34) contains Moses' intercession and God's responses. This can possibly be stressed as literary element that binds the unity of the chaps. 32-34. Second, the table shows an idea of progression of God's responses to Moses' intercessions: God relented from His anger (32:14); God promised to send His angel (v. 34); God assured Moses of His presence (33:14); God restored the covenant (34:10). Rightly understood, the restoration of the covenant is the high point of God's responses to Moses' intercessions.⁵⁸ If 34:29-35 is an integral component of chap. 34 as argued above, then it seems odd to put this section out of hand and to consider it simply as an add-on.

Moreover, the unity of 34:29-35 to the golden calf narrative is also noticeable if the role of Moses as the mediator be seen

⁵⁶ The Table above shows four intercessions of Moses (32:7-14, 30-34; 33:12-17; 34:5-9). Philpot (*The Shining Face of Moses: The Interpretation of Exodus 34:29-35 and Its Uses in the Old and New Testaments*, iv), however, sees only three intercessions (32:7-14; 30-15; 33:12-34:9). He combines the intercessions in 33:12-17 and 34:5-9 into one by treating 33:12-34:9 as one long section with three subsections (33:12-17, 18-23; 34:1-9). Nevertheless, 34:4 introduces a discourse time which implies real time though unmeasured, and this must be considered.

⁵⁷ Enns, *Exodus*, 588.

⁵⁸ A key point to note in covenant restoration (34:10-28), is that, it ensues after the final intercession of Moses (vv. 8-9). From a literary perspective, it can be considered as a response to that intercession (God's speech [v. 6-7], Moses' speech [v. 9], God's speech [vv. 10-27]). What prompts God to restore the covenant, though, is His gracious and forgiving character, which is stated earlier in vv. 6-7. In fact, in the golden calf narrative, God had been merciful to Moses and the people as evident in the interaction between Moses' intercessions and God's responses.

along with the flow of the sections of intercessions. Note that the communication in vv. 29-35 resembles like the communication in 33:7-11. The previous mentions of Moses, God, and the people, and designates Aaron as another notable leader (vv. 29-35). Also it mentions of the shining face of Moses as the spectacle before the people (v. 30). The latter on the other hand, mentions of Moses, God, and the people (33:7-11), and designates Joshua as the other distinguished leader (v. 11). It also mentions the pillar of cloud (vv. 9-10) as the spectacle before the eyes of the Israelites. Noth concurs that the two separate sections are related in some sense, but he assigns both from a tradition: the previous to pre-P tradition and the latter to an older tradition.⁵⁹

However, a consideration of the intercession and God's response sections (32:11-14, 30-34; 33:12-17; 34:5-9) along with the Moses' at the tent sections (33:7-11; 34:29-35) suggests that there is intentionality in the placement of these sections in the entire golden calf narrative. In the outline below, the first two intercession sections, A and A' (32:11-14; 30-34), precede the section of Moses at the tent, X (33:7-11); while the last two intercession sections, A'' and A''' (vv. 12-17 and 34:5-9) precede the other section of Moses at the tent (implied), X' (vv. 29-35). If this is so, the arrangement of the intercession sections and Moses at the tent sections support the unity vv. 29-35 to the golden calf narrative.

- A Intercession to avert God's anger (32:11-14)
- A' Intercession for God's forgiveness (vv. 30-34)
- X Moses at the tent: Moses, God, and people (33:7-11)
- A'' Intercession for God's presence (vv. 12-17)
- A''' Intercession for God's forgiveness (34:5-9)
- X' Moses at the tent (implied): Moses, God, and people (vv. 29-35)

⁵⁹ Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary*, 254-55, 267.

The Shining Face of Moses

As argued above, the renewal of the covenant (34:5-28) seems to have a transformational effect on Moses' shining face (vv. 28-29).⁶⁰ However, it remains a question as to what it is.⁶¹ Philpot offers four reasons why the shining (*qāran*) face of Moses should be viewed within the category of "light" instead of "horn."⁶² This study explores the linguistic constituents and proposes that *bōqer* (morning) in vv. 1-4 and *qāran* (shine) in vv. 29-35 appears to have interplay as far as the concept of light is concerned.

Literary Constituents

The actual text for the renewal of the covenant provides some literary constituents that point to the shining face of Moses. The text reads, "And he said, 'Behold! I am making a covenant before your people; I will do marvels which have not been created in all the earth and in all the nations. And all the people whom you are in its midst will see the work of the Lord, for it is a fearing thing that I am doing with you'" (34:10, my

⁶⁰ See also Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodu*, 664-65. The Lord's mercy and compassion to Israel is the main point in the covenant renewal. This compassion is manifested on Moses' countenance when God and Moses met on the mountain. Garrett argues that the light glowing on Moses' face "was not a reflection of the raw of power, much less of the wrath, of YHWH. Nor was it meant to give new credentials to Moses." *Ibid.*, 665.

⁶¹ The difficulty in interpreting the shining face of Moses is due to the lack of clarity as to what the Israelites really saw in Moses Seth L. Sanders, "Old Light on Moses' Shining Face," *Vestus Testamentum* 52/3 (2002): 400-6.

⁶² The following are Philpot's arguments. First, the phrase *ʿōwr pānāw* ("the skin of his face") in front of the verb *qāran* is the grammatical subject, not the head of Moses. He could have noticed it if the horn come out from the skin of his face. Second, a symbol of an idol image such as an ox's horns does not make sense in the flow of narrative because God had just indicted his people. Third, Hab 3:4 serves as an instance in which the noun *qrn* takes a developed gloss ("rays flash"), not the meaning "send out horns." Fourth, nearly all of the major versions translate the term as "shine" or "radiant," except the Latin Vulgate. Philpot, *Exodus 34:29-35 and Moses' Shining Face*, 3-4.

translation). The text can be arranged according to the structure below.

- X “And he said,
 A ‘Behold! I am making a covenant before all your people,
 B I will do (*’e’ēšeh*) marvels that have not been created in all the earth and in all the nations.
 B’ And all the people whom you are in the midst will see the work (*ma’āšēh*) of the Lord,
 B” for it is a fearing thing that I am doing (*’ōšeh*) with you.”

Based on the structure, X serves as the opening statement of God which is followed by a direct speech. The direct speech forms ABB’B”, where all “B” segments contain the root *’āšāh* (“do or make” in basic sense).⁶³ Segment A contains the statement: “Behold (*hinnēh*) I am making (participle of *kāraṭ*)⁶⁴ a covenant before all your people.” Here the author used *hinnēh* (“behold”) to draw attention to what follows next, i.e., “I am making a covenant before all your people.” This covenant is not between God and Moses, rather between God and Israel (*neḡeḏ kāl-’ammakā*). The translation “making a covenant” (*kōrēt bə·rīt*) is based on the force of the participle of the root *kāraṭ*, which allows an idea of an ongoing action, not a new action. Thus, the covenant in view of the passage is not a different covenant, rather the same with the previous (19:4-6).⁶⁵ It is continued here in the sense of restoration because the covenant has been breached by the incident of the golden calf.

⁶³ B has *’e’ēšeh*, B’ *ma’āšēh*, B” *’ōšeh*. Both B and B” contain the verb form of *’āšāh*, the B’ contains the noun form of the said verb.

⁶⁴ The particle *hinnēh* emphasizes the information that follows it. This particle followed by a participle is common in the OT. In most of this case, 94 percent uses God as the subject. See Allan Harman, “Participles,” *NIDOTTE*, 4:1032.

⁶⁵ See Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 580; Stuart, *Exodus*, 719; Durham, *Exodus*, 460.

Segment B contains the statement that God will do marvels (*nīplā'ōt*) which have not been created in all the earth and in all the nations. In the MT of the B segment, God is the implied subject of the verb 'e'ēšeh, and 'e'ēšeh takes the participle *nīplā'ōt*⁶⁶ as its object. God as the doer of *nīplā'ōt* is also evident in the statement of the B' segment: "And all the people whom you are in the midst will see *the work of the Lord (ma'āsēh Yahweh)*" (emphasis supplied). Clearly, *nīplā'ōt* in the B segment finds connection with "the work of the Lord" in the B' segment. Within segments B and B', *nīplā'ōt* serves as a spectacle that Moses' own people will see. What is not clear in the present segments is that there is no mention as to what kind of *nīplā'ōt* it is. Segment B" seems to elucidate this lack of clarity: "For (*kī*) it is a fearing thing (*nōwrā*) that I am doing ('ōšeh) with you (*immāk*)." Based on the logical flow, it seems that Moses is the direct recipient of the *nīplā'ōt* as implied in the adjectival participle *nōwrā*⁶⁷ (fearing thing from the root *yārē* ["fear or be afraid"]) that God will do upon him.

Establishing the connection between *nīplā'ōt* and *nōwrā* entails a supposition that the *nōwrā* in the B" segment, is linked to B and B' segments, where the concept of *nīplā'ōt* is discernible. The B" segment begins with a conjunction *kī* ("for" or "because"), which syntactically functions as causative, making the statement a causal clause. This clausal clause must be understood in light of the segments in BB'. In this sense, the fearing thing (*nōwrā*) in the B" segment finds a link to *nīplā'ōt* (marvels) in the B segment, which is the work of the Lord (*ma'āsēh Yahweh*) in the B' segment. Hence, this study argues that *nīplā'ōt* and *nōwrā* are connected for two reasons. First, the author rendered both terms in *Niphal* participle, the previous is plural and the latter is singular. The singularity of the latter does not minimize the connection, as the latter is understood as one of the manifestations of *nīplā'ōt*. Second, both terms are connected to the verb 'ōšeh, which takes the

⁶⁶ The participle *nīplā'ōt* in Exod 34:10 functions as a substantival adjective.

⁶⁷ The participle *nōwrā* syntactically functions as a predicate adjective.

Lord as the implied grammatical subject. If the connection between the two terms makes sense, then this *nīplā'ōt* (marvels) finds manifestation in the *nōwrā* that the Lord will do with Moses, who is the implied recipient in the prepositional object *'immāk* (with you). To illustrate the point of the connection between *nīplā'ōt* and *nōwrā*, see the sequence of the participles used in v. 10.

- A *kōrēt* – *Qal* participle (“I am making” a covenant)
- B *nīplā'ōt* – *Niphal* participle (marvellous things)
- B' *nōwrā* – *Niphal* participle (fearing thing)
- A' *'ōseh* – *Qal* participle (“I am doing” with you)

From the given sequence of the participles in 34:10, God's making of the covenant before all the people (A) parallels to His doing on Moses (A'), while the marvelous things (*nīplā'ōt*) that God will do before the people (B) juxtaposes to the fearing thing (*nōwrā*) that He will do on Moses (B'). Here in v. 10, there are things that God will do before the people, i.e, the restoration of the covenant and the marvels (*nīplā'ōt*) which will be seen by the people. There is also something that He does specifically on Moses, i.e, the fearing thing.⁶⁸ In chap. 34 in particular and in the golden calf narrative in general (chaps. 32-34), the immediate manifestation of the “fearing thing” (*nōwrā* from *yārē'*) that God had acted on Moses is the shining face of Moses (34:29-35). Exodus 34:29-35 mentions that shining face of Moses brings fear (*yārē'*) to the people (vv. 29-30). In this sense, vv. 29-30 picks up the root *yārē'* in v. 10, which describes the fearing (*nōwrā*) thing that God will do on Moses.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Myers states that the mentions of “wonders” (*nīplā'ōt*) in Exod 34:10 makes an echo to the past marvels that God performed in Egypt, but it also anticipates to the future marvels that God will perform before the eyes of His people. Myers, *Exodus*, 264.

⁶⁹ The above idea finds support from Sarna, who says that the marvels in Exod 34:10 finds application in the shining face of Moses, while it connects to the future marvels in the journey and conquest of Israel. Sarna, *Exodus*, 217. Though Sarna's idea is sound, he missed to make a link between the predicate participle “fearing thing” in v. 10 to the verb

In the entire golden calf episode, only 34:10 and v. 30 use the root *yārē'* ("fear or be afraid"). Also, the text seems to indicate that the face of Moses did not shine at Moses' descent from the mountain, but at the time while he talked with God (*bādabbārow*). The linguistic connection of the fearing thing that God will do on Moses in the renewal of the covenant (v. 10) and the shining face of Moses that brought fear to the people (vv. 29-30) after the covenant renewal possibly serves as an indication of the covenant restoration,⁷⁰ especially when the divine presence will be linked to the radiant face of Moses (broken covenant—no divine presence, restored covenant—with divine presence).

Concept of Light in Exodus 34?

As mentioned above, there is a chiasmic structure in Exodus 34 (ABA') based on the movements of God and Moses and based on the linguistic parallelism, especially between the A segment (vv. 1-4) and the A' segment (vv. 29-35), with the B segment at the center of the chiasm. Additionally, there appears to have emphasis that the author had put on the term *bōqer* ("morning" or the breaking of light)⁷¹ which is repeated three times in vv. 1-4 and the term *qāran* ("shine") which also recurs three times in vv. 29-35. Semantically, the two terms can accommodate the concept of light. On the one hand, *bōqer* primarily means "morning," but originally, it comes from the idea of the breaking of the day, the first light.⁷² On the other hand, *qāran* means "display horns" in *Hiphil*, but it can take

"afraid" in v. 30 that describes the fear of the people when they have seen the radiant face of Moses.

⁷⁰ See also Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, 664-65.

⁷¹ We are indebted to Jounaid Sabri for pointing the possible connection between *bōqer* and *qāran* which appear respectively in vv. 1-4 (3x) and vv. 29-35 (3x).

⁷² HALOT, s. v. "*bōqer*"; Elmer A. Martens, "*bōqer*," *TWOT*, 125.

the meaning “shine” with the sense of light in *Qal*,⁷³ which is the case in vv. 29-35.

In segment A (vv. 1-4), Oswalt sees *bōqer* mainly as a temporal indicator.⁷⁴ The prepositions *lā* and *bā* (vv. 2, 3) which are attached to *bōqer* solidify its temporal use. While in segment A' (vv. 29-35), the verb *qāran* consistently provides description for the skin of Moses' face. However, if the segments are meant to be parallel, it is not difficult to suppose that the author's balance use of *bōqer* (3x) and *qāran* (3x) in the respective segments, appears to be semantically parallel as well. After all, both can accommodate well the concept of light.

In this sense, the mention of *bōqer* in vv. 1-4 transcends its temporal use to encompass the concept of light. This means that in vv. 1-4, Moses went up to the mountain when the daylight (*bōqer*) rises. In vv. 29-35 though, when Moses came down from the mountain there is no more mention of daylight, but there is a light glowing (*qāran*) on the skin of Moses's face. The concept of light is the point of connection between the terms *bōqer* in vv. 1-4 and *qāran* in vv. 29-35. Thus, the reading of *qāran* in vv. 29-35 in the *Qal* stem should be upheld. Simply put, “the skin of Moses's face shone” instead of protruding horn.

Promise of the Divine Presence

The promise of the divine presence is important in the Israelites' journey to Canaan. The author mentioned the prospect of a divine presence through an angelic being in Exodus 23:20-23. Its presence implies God's blessing and victory. However, the angelic prospect was obscured when the

⁷³ BDB, s. v. “*qāran*”; *HOL*, s. v. “*qāran*”; *HALOT*, s. v. “*qāran*.”

⁷⁴ For Oswalt (*Exodus*, 535), the emphasis on “morning” (*bōqer*) has something to do with the time of the previous covenant and the time when the golden calf incident happened. He puts it: “Perhaps the emphasis is made in view of the morning times of both the original giving of the covenant (24:4) and of the worship of the golden calf (32:6).”

golden calf incident happened (32:1-6). God's initial response to people's sin was to destroy them, but through Moses' intercession the punishment God conceived was averted (vv. 7-14). Nonetheless, the judgment had fallen on the people (vv. 15-29, 35) in spite of God's positive response to Moses' plea. Moses continued to intercede for God's forgiveness, and at this time, God resolved to put an end only those who have sinned, then He promised Moses that His angel would walk before him in their journey (vv. 30-34).

After this, God reiterated His promise of an angelic presence to be sent before Moses as he would lead the people to Canaan (33:2). God's presence though would not go with them, lest it would end up destroying the people (vv. 3, 5). With such proposal, Moses continued to intercede for God's very presence so that he would know that he had found favor in His sight (vv. 12-13). And at this time, God promised him with his very own presence: "My presence will go with you and give you rest (v. 14).

It is interesting to note that the going of God's angel or the going of God's presence is not primarily with the Israelites in general, rather with Moses in particular. The author carefully used the second person masculine singular (2MS) pronominal suffix *k* ("you") to the prepositional noun *l̄pāneh* (lit. "before face" or simply "before") in 32:34 and 33:2, and to the inseparable preposition *l̄* ("to" or "for") in 33:14. In the context of each divine promise passage, Moses is the implicit object pointed to by the 2MS pronominal suffix *k* ("you"). Hence, Moses' concern for God's presence is not just about the Israelites but about himself as well, who is the leader of the designated leader of the people of Israel. Without the divine presence on Moses, it seemingly means that God has still had rejected His people.

The need of the divine presence on Moses is developed further in 33:18-23. Moses requested God to show him His glory, and in response to this, God consented and arranged an encounter

with Moses (vv. 18-23). In the present passage, the concept of God's glory reinforced the concept of God's presence mentioned earlier in v. 14. The passage is not clear as to what reason Moses made such a request, the least that can be inferred is that he need more confirmation of God's presence. Thus, God arranged an encounter with Moses (vv. 20-23). In the next chapter, Moses met God on the mountain (34:1-4), God passed before Moses, proclaimed His character, and he renewed the covenant (vv. 5-28). Subsequently, Moses came down from the mountain, and this time, with a shining face (vv. 29-35).

From the narrative context of the golden calf episode, the possible fulfilment that indicates God's manifest presence on Moses is Moses' shining face. In this sense, the divine presence which God had promised to Moses is manifested in a form of glow of light that shines on the skin of Moses' face (vv. 29, 35).⁷⁵

Conclusion

On the question of the unity of the text in Exodus 34:29-35 in particular and the golden calf episode in general (chaps. 32-34), there are some literary hints that uphold the unity of the text. This study sees 34:29-35 as a coherent pericope for two reasons. First, the verb *dibêr* appears seven times in this passage, except in v. 30. In v. 29 and v. 35, the combination of the infinitive construct of *dibêr* and its object *'ittôw* appears at the end of both texts, forming look like an *inclusio*. Second, the name *môšeh* appears eleven times in the pericope. The triple mention of this name recurs respectively at the

⁷⁵ Sarna (*Exodus*, 221) says that if we are to view the glow on Moses' face from the perspective of the ANE, it can be characterized as the radiance of deities. However, Enns argues that glow on the face of Moses is "actually an afterglow from being in God's presence." Note that Moses was on the mountain for forty days just as before (Exod 24:18). In this sense, his exposure to the divine presence became evident by the glow that now shines on his face Enns, *Exodus*, 587. Garrett, in the same vein, mentions that the glow on Moses' face is "a reflection of the glory of YHWH." Garrett, *A commentary on Exodus*, 664.

beginning (v. 29) and end (v. 35) of the section, which also form like an *inclusio*. The occurrence of these literary hints in the opening and closing of the section can hardly be coincidental, but a highly crafted work of an author. The frequent mention of the verb *dibêr* and the name *mōšeh* indicate that Moses is the intercessor between God and the people.

Moreover, the chiasmic structure of chap. 34 suggests that vv. 29-35 is cohesive to the chapter. The cohesiveness of vv. 29-35 to chap. 34 in turn implies its unity to the golden calf episode (chaps. 32-34). In addition, there is also a logical order in the literary arrangement of the sections of intercessions and Moses at the tent sections. The author placed the sections Moses at the tent every after two intercession sections.

On the question about Moses' shining face, the literary perspective suggests that the covenant renewal in 34:5-28 has a transformational effect on Moses' shining face (vv. 29-35). As pointed out above, Moses' shining face which brought fear (*yārê'*) to the people (vv. 29-30) linguistically connects to the fearing thing (*yārê'*) that God had done on Moses (v. 10). Moreover, based on the semantic links between *bōqer* (3x) in vv. 1-4 and *qāran* (3x) in vv. 29-35 in the up-down play of Moses' movements in chap. 34, it seems cogent to read *qāran* in vv. 29-35 with a meaning that touches the concept of light, since both terms can accommodate well the concept of light. Further, the shining face of Moses (vv. 29-35) resonates with the need of the divine presence in the narrative context of chaps. 32-34 (32:30-34; 33:12-23; 34:5-9). For this reason, the light that glows on the skin of Moses' face plausibly be associated with the manifestation of God's presence/glory on Moses.

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