

Exodus 33:19 HCSB He said, "I will cause all My goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim the name Yahweh before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

All my goodness. The word "goodness" (Strong's #2898) refers to the divine appearance in summary fashion.¹ It is used in the sense of beauty in Genesis 6:2 and 1 Samuel 9:2.

Pass in front of you. The difference between Moses' request and God's reply lies not so much in contrasting "glory" and "goodness" but in Moses' request to be "shown" (i.e. allow me to gaze fully and continually till I comprehend) and God's provision that His goodness would merely "pass" (i.e. a sudden and transitory vision). The sin-laden spirit can apparently not bear the burden of a full vision of God's goodness.²

Proclaim the name Yahweh.³

Proclaim the name Yahweh before you. The expression "make proclamation in the name of Yahweh" (here a perfect tense with vav [י] consecutive for future) means to declare, reveal, or otherwise make proclamation of who Yahweh is.

Names hold power in the Bible.⁴ They come with inherent promises.⁵ The idea is that to know someone's true name is to hold some influence with them.⁶ This is why it is so crucial that we carry the Name well and that we proclaim it to all people.⁷ The "name of Yahweh" refers to His divine attributes revealed to His people, either in word or deed. What will be focused on first will be his grace and compassion.

I will be gracious...I will have compassion. Obviously, in this passage, the recipients of that favor are the penitent Israelites who were forgiven through Moses' intercession. God declares His mercy and grace in similar terms to His earlier self-revelation ("I am that I am"): In other words, the grace and mercy of God are bound up in His own will. God cannot be manipulated. He will do what He wants, when He wants, and in the method of His choosing. He is acceding to Moses' request, not because of some intrinsic merit within Moses, but simply because of His own desire to be merciful. Because Adonai's intent is always beneficent⁸, no one can ever say that He is unfair.⁹

Adonai is also ensuring that Moses (and the people) understand that His graciousness will not be extended universally or promiscuously. Not everyone who calls "Lord, Lord" will end up in heaven.¹⁰ Not all Jews are true Jews.¹¹ Not all individuals in the congregation will find their sins forgiven because not all will humbly yield to the entreaties of their rightful king but will continue in tier rebellion. He will separate the wheat from the tares, bringing the wheat into His barns and burning the tares.¹²

The two words are at the heart of God's dealings with people. The first is כַּנָּן (khanan, "to be gracious, show favor"). It means to grant favor or grace to someone, grace meaning unmerited favor. All of God's dealings are gracious, but especially in forgiving sins and granting salvation it is critical.

¹ Exodus 34:7

² Isaiah 6:1-5; Revelation 1:16-17

³ Exodus 34:5-6; Matthew 21:9 (cp Mark 11:9; John 12:13); 23:39 (Luke 13:35)

⁴ Malachi 1:11, 14; 2:2

⁵ Genesis 12:2; 17:5, 15; 32:28; Isaiah 62:2, 12; Revelation 2:17

⁶ Genesis 32:29; Psalm 91:14-16; Romans 10:13; 1 Corinthians 6:11

⁷ Acts 9:15; Matthew 28:19

⁸ Jeremiah 29:11; Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11; 2 Peter 3:9

⁹ Romans 9:14-15

¹⁰ Matthew 7:21-23

¹¹ Romans 2:28-29

¹² Matthew 13:30

Parallel to this is רָחַם (rakham), a word that means “show compassion, tender mercy.” It is a word that is related to the noun “womb,” the connection being in providing care and protection for that which is helpless and dependent – a motherly quality.

However, both of these verb constructions simply express what God will do, without explaining why.