



SoulSpa 3.21 • P. Ki Tisa
March 7, 2026 • 18 Adar 5786

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסוֹק בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה:

*Barukh Atah Adonai
eloheinu melekh ha'olam
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu la'asok b'divrei Torah.*

Blessed are You, YHVH, our God,
eternal sovereign, who sanctified us
in God's *mitzvot* and commanded us
to busy ourselves in words of Torah.

“Gaze,” R. Barenblat
Texts to the Holy (2018)

I want to gaze at you
not through lowered lashes
protecting my tender places,

but heart splayed wide
to everything I learn
when I let myself be seen.

I want to gaze at you
without flinching, knowing
what you'll find in my eyes:

my aches and imperfections,
the cracks in my clay heart,
the tarnish clouding my silver.

I want to see all of you
even if your pure light
would burn out my circuits,

even if all I can glimpse
is your shadowed silhouette
through my sheerest *tallit*.

If I bring my whole self
to yearning for you, if I seek
to see and to be seen wholly

can I call forth
the you who would be
in relationship with me?

Rick Lupert, “God’s Face”

What is it about God’s face
that would end it all for us if we saw it?

And, whatever it is,
has it stopped anyone from looking?

I’ll tell you where I see It. There is the obvious:
the faces of children, and kittens, of course,
which I only mention to improve the metrics.

How about the rain or, the lack of rain
if that’s your thing?

There’s a new flavor of ice cream with
pancakes in it. I’m pretty sure God is in there.

Or at least on the face of someone eating it.
(I may never know, they don’t deliver it to my
house.) God’s face may be in my
Amazon deliveries.

I still remember when getting a package was
like a treasure arriving at my house.

God’s face is in poetry. Look at the spaces
between these lines. Do you see It?

God’s face is in the lines of
this poem that you write when
you’re finished reading mine.

Go on now.

Exodus 33:12-34:7

Goal: yearning, versus "achievement"

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה רְאֵה אֶת־הָאָרֶץ
אֲמַר אֵלַי הֲעַל אֶת־הָעַם הַזֶּה וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ
לֹא הוֹדַעְתָּנִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁלַח עִמִּי
וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲמַרְתָּ דַעְתִּידָהּ בְּשֵׁם וְגַם־
מִצָּאתָ חוֹן בְּעֵינַי: וְעַתָּה אִם־נָא
מִצָּאתִי חוֹן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הוֹדַעְנִי נָא
אֶת־דַּרְכְּךָ וְאֶדְעָה לְמַעַן אֲמַצְאֶחֶן
בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְיֵרָאֶה כִּי עַמְּךָ הִנְּהוּ:

12-13. Moshe said to YHVH, "See, You say to me, 'Raise this people,' but You did not made known to me whom You will send with me. And You said, 'I knew you by name, and you found grace in My eyes.' Now, if I found grace in Your eyes, please make known to me Your ways, so I will know You and so I will find grace in Your eyes. See that this nation is Your people."

Is Torah really anthropomorphizing God?

וַיֹּאמֶר פָּנֵי יִלְכוּ וְהִנַּחְתִּי לָךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר
אֵלָיו אִם־אֵין פָּנֶיךָ הַלְכִים אֶל־
תִּעְלֶנּוּ מִזֶּה: וּבַמָּה וְיָדַע אֲפּוֹא כִּי־
מִצָּאתִי חוֹן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲנִי וְעַמְּךָ הַלּוֹא
בְּלִקְתָּהּ עִמָּנוּ וְנִפְלִינוּ אֲנִי וְעַמְּךָ
מִכָּל־הָעַם אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה:

14-16. And [God] said, "My face will go [before you] and comfort you." [Moshe] said, "If Your face does not go, do not leave us here. For how will it be known that Your people found grace in Your eyes unless You go with us, so that we may be distinguished - I and Your people - from all the nations on the face of the earth?"

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה גַם אֶת־
הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ אֲעֹשֶׂה כִּי־
מִצָּאתָ חוֹן בְּעֵינֶי וְאֶדְעָה בְּשֵׁם:
וַיֹּאמֶר הֲרֵאֵנִי נָא אֶת־כְּבוֹדְךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר
אֲנִי אֲעֵבִיר כָּל־טוֹבִי עִל־פָּנֶיךָ וְקִרְאתִי
בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה לְפָנֶיךָ וְחִנַּתִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר
אֲחוֹן וְרַחֲמֹתַי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם:

17-19. YHVH said to Moshe, "I will also do this thing that you asked; for you truly found grace with Me and I know you out by name." [Moshe] said, "Please show me your glory!" [God] said, "I will cause all My goodness to pass before you, and I will call before you the Name YHVH, My grace and My compassion."

not "FACE": Moshe never asks to see God's 'face'!

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תוּכַל לִרְאֹת אֶת־פָּנַי כִּי
לֹא־יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחִי: וַיֹּאמֶר
יְהוָה הִנֵּה מְקוֹם אֲתִי וְנִצַּבְתָּ
עַל־הַצּוּר: וְהָיָה בְּעֵבֶר כְּבִדִּי וְשַׁמְתִּידָךְ
בְּנִקְרַת הַצּוּר וְשַׁכַּתִּי כְּפִי עָלֶיךָ
עַד־עֲבָרִי: וְהִסַּרְתִּי אֶת־כְּפִי וְרֵאִיתָ
אֶת־אַחֲרַי וּפָנַי לֹא יִרְאוּ...:

20-23. [God] said: "You cannot see My face, for no human can see Me and live." YHVH said, "Here is a place with Me: stand at [this] rock. It will be in My glory passing that I will put you in a cleft of the rock and My palm will screen you until My passing. Then I will remove My palm and you will see My back: but My face will not be seen."
?!?! THIS DOES NOT HAPPEN >> MIDRASH

we've seen it before - Yaakov "at the hand of God"

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה פֶּסֶל־לָךְ
שְׁנֵי־לַחַת אֲבָנִים כְּרֵאשֹׁנִים וְכַתְּבֹתֶי
עַל־הַלַּחַת אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ
עַל־הַלַּחַת הָרֵאשֹׁנִים אֲשֶׁר שִׁבַּרְתָּ:
וְהָיָה נְכוֹן לְבַקֵּר וְעָלִיתָ בְּבֹקֶר אֶל־
הַר סִינַי וְנִצַּבְתָּ לִּי שָׁם עַל־רֹאשׁ
הַהָר: ... וַיִּפְסַל שְׁנֵי־לַחַת אֲבָנִים
כְּרֵאשֹׁנִים וַיִּשְׁכֵם מֹשֶׁה בְּבֹקֶר וַיַּעַל
אֶל־הַר סִינַי כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֹתוֹ
וַיִּקַּח בְּיָדוֹ שְׁנֵי לַחַת אֲבָנִים:

1-4. YHVH said to Moshe, "Carve for yourself two stone tablets like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets that you shattered. Be prepared by morning: ascend Mount Sinai in the morning and stand there before Me atop the mountain..." [Moshe] carved two stone tablets as the first; Moshe woke in the morning, ascended Mount Sinai as YHVH commanded him, and took in his hands the two stone tablets.

reward for shattering? (development) metaphor for responsibility after defiance

ascending with tablets – heavy – so angry first time (smashed)

וַיֵּרֵד יְהוָה בְּעָנָן וַיִּתְנַצֵּב עִמּוֹ שָׁם
וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה: וַיַּעֲבֹר יְהוָה
עַל־פָּנָיו וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה יְהוָה אֵל
רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן אֶרְךָ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חֶסֶד
וְאֱמֶת: נָצַר חֶסֶד לְאֲלֹפִים נִשְׂא עוֹן
וְנָשַׁע וְחִטָּאָה וְנִקָּה...:

5-7. YHVH descended in a cloud, stood before him there and called the Name of YHVH. YHVH passed before him and called: "YHVH! YHVH! God! compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in *hesed* and truth, extending *hesed* to the thousands, lifting iniquity and transgression, and cleansing sin..."

Is God also developing?

All of this is YK: teshuvah created second chances = second tablets "repair" after the "breaking"

explanation of qualities - why? Thirteen Attributes (RH, YK)

RELATIONAL RESILIENCE = VULNERABILITY • DEPTH

PLEASE SHOW ME YOUR GLORY!

Or HaHayim, Ex. 33:18

הָרָאֵנִי נָא אֶת כְּבוֹדְךָ. וְהִגַּם שָׂרָאֵל שְׂרָאוּהוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל שְׂפַת הַיָּם, וַיִּכְתִּיב "וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה פָּנִים אֶל פָּנִים", אֵין זֶה אֱלֹהֵי רְאוּת אִשׁ אוֹכְלָה ... וַתְּמוֹנַת ... אוֹר עֲלִיוֹן, וּמֹשֶׁה רָצָה שֶׁתִּהְיֶה לוֹ הַכָּרָה בּוֹ יַתְבָּרֵךְ יְדִיעָה פְּרָטִית כְּדֵי שְׂיוּכַל שֶׁכֵּלּוּ יִשְׁכִּיל בְּחִינַת הָאֱלֹהוּת.

Please show me Your glory – [Moshe asks for more, though] our sages said that Israel at the shore of the Sea [saw visions not granted even to Ezekiel]. It is written (Ex. 33:11), “God spoke with Moshe face to face” – in visions that were only a consuming fire ... and an image of supernal light. Even this level was below the level that Moshe now aspired when he asked to see God's glory itself – the level of divinity itself.

Ramban, Ex. 33:18

וַיֹּאמֶר הָרָאֵנִי נָא אֶת כְּבוֹדְךָ בְּקֹשׁ שִׁיחִיָּה רוֹאֶה בְּמַרְאֵה מִמֶּשׁ אֶת כְּבוֹד הַשֵּׁם. וַיִּתְּכֵן כִּי יִהְיֶה כְבוֹדְךָ בְּכֵאֵן הַכְּבוֹד הַגָּדוֹל אֲסֻפְּקֻלְרֵיָא הַמְּאִירָה. וְהִ' עֵנָה אוֹתוֹ אֵין אֲעֵבִיר מִדַּת כָּל טוֹבֵי עַל פְּגִיָּדָה, שֶׁתְּשִׁיגֵנּוּ וְתִתְבַּוְּנוּ בְּכָל טוֹבֵי יוֹתֵר מִכָּל הָאָדָם, כִּי מַרְאֵה הַפָּנִים שֶׁשָּׂאֵלֶת לֹא תוּכַל לְרְאוֹתָם.

[Moshe] said, “Please show me Your glory!” – Desiring that he actually see in clear sight the Glory of God. “Your Glory” means the Great Glory – the *aspaklaria ha-meirah* [=shining speculum]. God answered him: “I will cause” the measure of “all My goodness to pass before you,” so you will touch and understand all My goodness more than all others, yet the vision you have asked for, you will not be able to see.

Shemot Rabbah 45:5

כְּשֶׁנִּגְלָה עָלָיו הַקַּב"ה בְּסִינַי ... א"ר הַהוֹדָה בְּרַחֲמֵיָה טִירוֹן הִזָּה מִשָּׁה לְנִבְיָאָה, אָמַר הַקַּב"ה אִם נִגְלָה אֵין עָלָיו בְּקוֹל גְּבוּהָ אֵין מִבְּעֵתוֹ וְאִם בְּקוֹל נְמוּדָה בּוֹסֵר הוּא עַל הַנְּבִיָּאָה, מָה עָשָׂה הַקַּב"ה, נִגְלָה עָלָיו בְּקוֹלוֹ שֶׁל אָבִיו, אָמַר בָּא אָבִי מִמִּצְרַיִם, א"ל אֵין אָבִיךָ אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ. וַיִּסְתֵּר מֹשֶׁה פָּנָיו כִּי יָרָא מִהִבֵּית אֵל הָאֱלֹהִים. א"ר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן קֹרְחָה לֹא עָשָׂה מִשָּׁה יָפָה שֶׁהִסְתִּיר פָּנָיו, שֶׁאֵלּוּלֵי שֶׁהִסְתִּיר פָּנָיו הִזָּה מִגְּלָה לוֹ הַקַּב"ה מִה לְמַעַלָּן וּמִה לְמַטָּן וּמִה שֶׁהִזָּה וּמִה עֲתִיד לִהְיוֹת וּבְאַחֲרוֹנָה בְּקֹשׁ לְרְאוּת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: הָרָאֵנִי נָא אֶת כְּבוֹדְךָ, אָמַר הַקַּב"ה כְּשֶׁבִקְשָׁתִי לֹא בִקְשָׁתְךָ עֲכָשׁוּ שֶׁבִקְשָׁתְךָ אֵין מִבְּקֹשׁ.

When God revealed in the bush... R. Yehudah bar Nehemyah said: Moshe was a **novice at prophesy**. God said: “If I reveal to him in a loud noise I will frighten him. If in a low voice, he will scorn prophecy.” What did God do? God revealed to him in his father’s voice. [Moshe] said: “My father comes from Egypt!” God said to him: “I am not your father but (Ex. 3:6) “God of your father.” Then (Ex. 3:6), “Moshe hid his face, for he feared to gaze at God.” R. Yehoshua ben Korhah said: Moshe did not do right by hiding his face. Had he not hid his face, God would have revealed to him what is above, what is below and what is to be. Later [Moshe] sought to see, as in (Ex. 33:18), “Please show me Your glory!” **The Holy Blessed One said, “When I sought you did not seek, now that you seek, I do not seek [the way you seek].”**... **who’s timing: ours or God’s**
... **theology: *Ehyeh* = Mystery**

Ellen Frankel, The Women’s Torah Commentary

ESTHER THE HIDDEN ONE RESPONDS: But if we grant that God is infinite and incalculably ingenious, we might imagine, as we look in our mirrors, God’s face behind our own. After all, we are each created *b’tzelem Elohim*, in the likeness of God. We should daily recognize God within our own features. For if we did so, we would recognize God’s face in each person we meet – and act accordingly.

RABBI ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL TEACHES: “We live and act according to the image of humanity we cherish.”

Rabbeinu Bahya, Ex. 33:18

ויש לדקדק אם היה זה מן הנמנע
שיראה האדם בכבוד בעודו בחומר
איך חשב להשיגו, אבל משה
הגדול בנבואה מפני שכבר תשש
ונתדלדל חומרו בארבעים יום
שהתענה חשב בעצמו שלא יפסיד
חומרו השגתו אלא שיהיה כמי
שאינו ושישיג עתה מה שישיג אחר
הפרדו מן החומר, והשיב לו ה'
יתברך כי לא יראני האדם וחי
כלומר אדם שהוא מחובר מגוף
ונפש אי אפשר ששיג זה בעודו
בחומר אלא אחר ההפרד וכענין
שכתוב ואחר כבוד תקחני.

We must be precise: how did Moses think he could transcend inherent limit of human perception while corporeal. The greatest of prophets, Moshe's physicality receded by his 40 days of self-denial [on Sinai] and he thought that he thereby would not lose himself but rather, as it were, transcend himself while still in body – attaining what he [and all] will attain after fully separating from the material world. But the Holy Blessed One answered him, "*None can see Me and live*," meaning that one who is still connected to body and spirit cannot attain this level in oneself while corporeal, only after separating [from body], as in (Ps. 73:24), "[By Your counsel you led me], and **after** Your glory You took me."

NONE CAN SEE MY FACE AND LIVE

Ramban, Ex. 33:18

ואין טעם כי לא יראני האדם וחי
שיראה אותו וימות, אבל כי טרם
שישיג לראיה תפרד נפשו מעליו,
כי אפילו במראות המלאכים נאמר
"במראה נהפכו צירי עלי."

None can see Me and live – Not because one can see [God] and then die. Rather, before one can grasp the sight, the soul would separate from them, because even of the vision of the angels (Dan. 10:16), "By [this] vision my pain overcame me."

Or HaHayim, Ex 33:18

ויאמר לא תוכל וגו'. פרוש, לא
שאני מונע הדבר ממך, אלא לצד
שאין בך זכלת המשיג כי לא יראני
האדם, ואמרו וחי פרוש וישאר
חי, ואני חושש לחיידך, על דרך
אמרו "כי טוב יום בחצריתך מאלף".

[God] said, '*None can [see Me and live]*' – Meaning, it is not I (God) restraining this thing from you, but it's not possible for you to 'get' Me. This is why God added, "and live," meaning "remain alive" – because I (God) want you to live. Thus it is said (Ps. 84:11), "Better a day in Your [mere] courtyard than a thousand [anywhere else]."

Psalms 84:12-13

כי שמש ומגן יהו"ה אלהים
חן וכבוד יתן יהו"ה
לא ימנע טוב להלכים בתמים:
יהו"ה צבאות אשרי אדם בטח בך:

For YHVH [our] God is sun and shield.
YHVH gives grace and glory, [and]
Does not restrain goodness from those who walk blameless.
YHVH of Hosts! Happy is the one who trusts in You.

Sforno, Ex 33:18

וראית את אחרי. תראה איך
תהיה פגלת כל מה שלמטה ממני.
ופני לא יראו. אבל לא יהיה נראה
אצל זולתי איך ממציאותי ישפע
מציאות כל נמצא, כמו ששאלת.

And you will see My back – You will see the actualization of all that is below Me. *But My face will not be seen* – it will not appear as Me, how from My existence can flow the existence of all that exists, as you asked.

Bekhor Shor, Ex. 33:23

אחורי קורא מה שעבר ואע"פ שאין שם עורף דומיא דבני אדם שמניחין אחריהם מה שעוברים הכי נראה לי עיקר שלא ראה משה בשכינה כלל אלא ראה זהרורי אורו שהוא מזהיר במקום שעבר משם דומיא דשמש כשהוא מעריב ונכנס במערב תחת הארץ ואין גוף השמש נראה אבל עדיין הזהרורים נראים שמעריבים והולכים לפי שהשמש מתרחק, **ופני לא יראו** כגון בבוקר שעדיין לא עלה גוף השמש והזהרורין כבר באים ומתגברים והולכים לפי שהשמש מתקרב כלומר זהרורים הנשארים כשעברתי משם תוכל לראות

My back – evokes what *happened*. There is no back of the neck comparable to humans who leave behind them what they do. This seems to me the point: Moshe did not see Shekhinah at all. Rather he saw rays of God's light that God radiates from a place after "passing," like the sun when it sets, moving west under the earth so the disc of the sun is not seen, yet even so the shining is visible in the west as the sun distances at night. "**But My face may not be seen**" like in the morning: before the sun's disc rises, and shines [=warns] that it is approaching, growing continuously stronger. The sun's approach is like the radiance left over after it passes, whose diminished quality can be seen [before the sun actually rises and at full light we cannot look on it directly].

HERE'S SOME OF WHAT WE CAN SEE

Rashi, Ex. 34:6

יהו"ה יהו"ה. מדת רחמים היא, אחת קודם שיחטא, ואחת אחר שיחטא וישוב (ראש השנה י"ז):

YHVH, YHVH – **She** is the attribute of compassion. The first alludes to mercy before one sins, and the other after one sins and repents (B.T. Rosh Hashanah 17b).

Rosh Hashanah 17b

"ויעבור ה' על פניו ויקרא". אמר רבי יוחנן: אלמלא מקרא פתוב, אי אפשר לאומר. מלמד שנתעטף הקדוש ברוך הוא כשליח צבור, והראה לו למשה סדר תפלה. אמר לו: כל זמן שישראל חוטאין – יעשו לפני כסדר הזה ואני מוחל להם. "ה' ה'" – אני הוא קודם שיחטא האדם, ואני הוא לאחר שיחטא האדם ויעשה תשובה – אל רחום וחנון.

YHVH passed before his face, and called (Ex. 34:6) – R. Yohanan said: Were it not explicitly written, it would be impossible to say. The Holy Blessed One wrapped in a prayer shawl like a prayer leader and showed Moses this order of prayer. God said: Whenever Israel sins, let them act before Me in accordance with this order of prayer, and I will forgive. The verse continues: "YHVH, YHVH" – I am YHVH before one sins, and I am YHVH after one sins and makes teshuvah – "*God, merciful and gracious*" (Ex. 34:6) ...

NOT SEEING, BUT SEEKING

Psalm 27:8, 11-14

לך אמר לבי בקשו פני
את־פניך יהוה אבקש...
הורני יהוה דרכך ונחני בארץ
מישור למען שוררי:
אל־תתנני בנפש צרי כי קמו־בי
עדי־שקר ויפח חמס:
ולא האמנתי לראות
בטוב־יהוה בארץ חיים:
קנה אל־יהוה חזק ונאמץ לבך
וקנה אל־יהוה:

You call to my heart: "Come seek My face. Come seek My face."

For Your love [lit. face], Source of All, I will seek...

Show me Your path. Teach me Your ways and guide me on the right path.

Turn me from narrowness of soul, false witnesses, violence and enmity.

What if I fully believed to see the goodness of God, to live my fullest life!

Keep hope, keep hope! Keep hoping in the One!

Be strong and open your heart wide, and keep hoping in the One.

Psalm 119:45-48

ואתהלכה ברחבה כי פקדתיך יְרֻשָׁתִי:
ואדברה בעדתיך נגד מלכים ולא
אבוש:
ואשתעשע במצותיך אשר אהבתי:
ואשא־כפי אל־מצותיך אשר אהבתי
ואשיחה בחקיך:

I will walk with spaciousness, for I have turned to Your precepts.

I will speak of Your decrees without shame in the presence of kings.

I will delight in Your commandments, which I love.

I reach out for Your commandments, which I love; I study Your laws.

Prof. Shalom E. Holtz, "Seeking Torah, Seeking God"

In the Bible, "seeking" is more than just a means to an end. It is integral to how one ought to approach God. Thus, Amos declares on God's behalf, "Seek Me (*dirshuni*) and live" (5:4), which one interpreter in the Babylonian Talmud sees as the sum-total of all commandments (Makkot 21a).

R. Sari Laufer, "Playing Hide and Seek With God"

There is a Hasidic teaching from Dov Ber of Mezeritch, telling of a time he once found a young child crying. "I was playing hide-and-seek with my friends," the child explained, "and I hid so well that they stopped looking for me and went away."

Dov Ber mused, "This must be how God feels, hiding the Divine countenance from us to the point where some of us stop looking and start living our lives without God." I ...see it as an invitation, a crack in the door.