

יז) וַיֹּאמֶר יי אֱלֹהֵי מֹשֶׁה גַם אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ אֵעֲשֶׂה כִּי־מִצַּאת חוֹן בְּעֵינַי וְאֲדַעֶה בְּשֵׁם: (יח) וַיֹּאמֶר הָרְאֵנִי גַם אֶת־כְּבוֹדְךָ: (יט) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי אֶעְבִּיר כָּל־טוֹבִי עַל־פְּנֶיךָ וְקִרְאתִי בְּשֵׁם יי לְפָנֶיךָ וְחִנַּתִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אָחֹן וְרַחֲמֹתַי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם: (כ) וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תוּכַל לִרְאֹת אֶת־פְּנֵי כִּי לֹא־יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחַי: (כא) וַיֹּאמֶר יי הִנֵּה מְקוֹם אֲתִי וְנִצַּבְתָּ עַל־הַצּוּר: (כב) וְהָיָה בְּעֵבֶר כְּבֹדִי וְשָׁמַתִּיךָ בְּנִקְרַת הַצּוּר וְשַׁכַּתִּי כָפִי עָלֶיךָ עַד־עֲבָרִי: (כג) וְהִסַּרְתִּי אֶת־כְּפִי וְרָאִיתָ אֶת־אֲחֵרָי וּפְנֵי לֹא יִרְאוּ:

Exodus 33:17-23

(17) And the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have asked; for you have truly gained My favor and I have singled you out by name." (18) He said, "Oh, let me behold Your Presence!" (19) And He answered, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim before you the name LORD, and the grace that I grant and the compassion that I show. (20) But," He said, "you cannot see My face, for man may not see Me and live." (21) And the LORD said, "See, there is a place near Me. Station yourself on the rock (22) and, as My Presence passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and shield you with My hand until I have passed by. (23) Then I will take My hand away and you will see My back; but My face must not be seen."

Exodus 3:6

And Moses hid his face, because he was afraid of looking at God.

And That is Your Glory (God Lies On His Back)

God lies on his back under the world

Always busy with repairs, always something
going wrong.

I wanted to see all of him, but all I can see
are the soles of his shoes - hence my tears.

And this is his praise.

By Yehuda Amichai, excerpt. Quoted in Mishkan HaNefesh, p. 221. "Note: Playing with conventional imagery of God dwelling above, the poet imagines God as a mechanic stretched out under a car, forever tinkering with the works - an image both humble and celebratory, since this God is continually trying to set things right. The mechanic's operations are mysterious, however, since (As Exodus 33:20 says) human beings may not see God's face and live."

"Lu Echezeh fanav b'libi vay'tah" - "Vision of God"

by Yehuda Halevi (ca. 1075-1141)

In Selected Poems of Jehudah Halevi (edited by Heinrich Brody: JPS, 1974, p. 115 - bilingual edition). Translated by Nina Salaman. Excerpted in Mishkan HaNefesh p. 311, verse translated by Rabbi Shelly Marder: "If I could see God's face within my heart.."

To meet the fountain of the life of truth I run,

For I weary of a life of vanity and emptiness.

To see the face of my King is mine only aim;

I will fear none but Him, nor set up any other

to be feared.

Would that it were mine to see Him in a dream!

I would sleep an everlasting sleep and never

Wake.

My eyes would never ask to look beyond!

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לו אחזה פניו

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לקראת מקור חיי אמת ארוצה
על-כן בחיי שוא וריק אקצה
לראות פני מלכי מגמתי לבד
לא אערץ בלתו ולא אעריצה
מי-יתגני לחזותו בחלום
אישן שנת-עולם ולא אקיצה
לו אחזה פניו בלבי ביתה
לא שאלו עיני להביט חוצה:

With thanks to Rabbi Shelly Marder for the reference and text.

Somewhere in Samaria

By Lea Goldberg trans. Rachel Tzvia Black - Exodus 33

I picked a wildflower and tossed it away.

I waited

two days in the rain at a forgotten station.

My God, you'll never believe in me again!

I passed by

so close and didn't recognize you.

In The Torah: A Women's Commentary, p. 519.

Source sheet prepared by Rabbi Ellen Lewis, Simchat Shabbat, Hol HaMoed
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