

Was OT YHWH really SATAN? – Part 5

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Originally, I had planned to adduce a ton more data from the NT, showing that Jesus and His students were dependent, confident, and submitted to the YHWH of the OT—as promising Jesus the Savior, promising a New future with righteousness, and as warning of the judgement to come (by Jesus and the Father).

But since I know how disturbing SPECIFIC ISSUES can be—stopping one from being honest with the scriptures—I thought it might be best just to show that some of these issues you friend mentions are truly non-issues. The text itself explains and illuminates them, if the reader is honest and thorough enough to consult them.

The Bereans were more ‘noble’ than the Thessalonians since they ‘searched the scriptures daily to see if what Paul said was true’.

So, with this challenge to your young friend—to be open to what the word of God actually says IN CONTEXT and in ITS ENTIRETY—I want to just do that with some of his comments below.

Mr. [Glenn’s Friend],

I want to know who the real Father is, and who He is, and the truth much much much more than I want to defend a set of OT books where problems and inconsistencies abounding.

Well, ‘wanting’ to defend something is completely different than HAVING to ACCEPT something (because Jesus the disciples taught that). Truth is truth, whether we/you like it or not, want to defend it or not, and even whether we/you UNDERSTAND IT or NOT.

Whatever ‘problems and inconsistencies’ you think are in there, they did not stop Jesus from embracing it, attributing it to the God who Sent Him, ascribing supreme authority to it, honoring it, and using it as validation for His calling and a guide to the humble worshipper of the true God.

There is no good reason to exalt one’s moral sensitivity above Jesus’ heart, but—at the same time—that is no good reason to avoid doing the work to UNDERSTAND the situation.

You would be wise to accept the testimony of Jesus and His students that the OT was NOT written by Satan but by the ONLY true God. And therefore to accept that the passages that shred your soul (to the point of hating / rejecting the God you see in them—according to your reading) as being ‘of God’.

However, you would also be wise to NOT let that acceptance and trust in the teaching of Jesus put you to emotional numbness! There are those who accept the truthfulness of the message in those texts BUT WHO ALSO ARE NOT BOTHERED BY THEM. They have frozen their hearts or conscience so that they are not even 'alive' or 'human' or 'Jesus-like' enough to be disturbed.

So, I don't want to encourage you to anesthesia and denial of what in is the text, but rather that you keep that sensitivity OPEN TO THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT – to bring you to enough peace (via true understanding) with a passage to see how it fits with the work of God in the work.

At the surface level, there are a gazillion 'problems and inconsistencies' in even the Gospels, but they generally evaporate when we open our eyes and look closer.

Sometimes is a matter of understanding the ancient languages better. Sometimes it's a matter of understanding the historical situation better. Sometimes it's a matter of saying 'I don't know—but I will trust you Lord to not mislead me'. That is, suspension of judgment (not 'defending something against your conscience') is what the believer must accept and make peace with—until He explains it all to us some day...

I want the truth, and I believe if I seek I will find, as this is the promise.

You will, but you must seek it WITHOUT pre-commitments and pre-suppositions as to what CAN or MUST be true.

Paul said that his fellow Jews were zealous in seeking, but:

For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. (Rom 10.2-3)

In this case the Jewish seeker had a pre-existing commitment – to wanting to prove themselves morally excellent. They were not willing to submit to God's way of arriving at truth and peace.

Be sure you are not tempted with a similar motif—one of trying to establish YOUR moral standards as higher than God's. Seek – with zeal – this attitude of David in Psalm 119.18 in his prayer to YHWH:

Open my eyes that I may behold
Wonderful things from your law.

Answers come from the Word FIRST, and then from knowledge of the language, history, and religion/culture of the times.

But at this point, there are too many verses on Yahweh that don't stack up to a good god. Too many to ignore, and too many to excuse. Here is just a small sampling as not to overwhelm you, there are that many to share...I can keep sending, but these are a good starters. There are so many verses of Yaweh that are just pure cruelty, totally opposed to how Jesus says to treat others or as the the nature of the Father.

It's very cut and dry here in the verses below. There just is NO way to spin that no one has heard of (sic... probably 'or'?) seen God, and then Moses walked and talked to yahweh.

There is no need to 'spin' anything here, friend—and especially nothing to ignore. The texts are very clear that NO ONE saw some kind of actual PHYSICAL FACE of YHWH Himself, and it never affirms that anyone DID. YHWH was present 'inside' various physical manifestations ("theophanies") such as the bush, the cloud, the Angel of Yahweh, the tabernacle and the temple, but never without some optical barrier.

Look closely at what the texts **SAY**:

FIRST—Exodus 3: Moses goes over to see the burning bush, curious. He sees the fire, noticing that it is not burning the bush. Inside the fire inside bush is the Angel of YHWH. And also inside the bush is YHWH. [YHWH could also be inside the Angel—as it appears in the Wanderings—or YHWH could BE the angel—as the pre-incarnate Christ, as perhaps noted in Jude 5.]

But once the voice identifies itself as GOD, Moses hides his face—he knows NOT to look at God.

The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."

When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid **to look at God.**" [Ex 3:2-6; Acts 7:31 "Moses shook with fear and would not venture to look"]

Notice-btw—that God is inside the bush, but not 'dwelling in darkness'. He is 'him who dwells in the bush'—in a poetic form, Deut 33.16.

Notice that the verb there is a VISUAL one—"LOOK". He is afraid to LOOK.

SECOND—Exodus 13: Here we see the basic way Israel will ‘see’ God—in the Cloud:

The LORD was going before them **in a pillar of cloud** by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

This pillar/cloud is connected throughout the Scriptures as being the pre-Incarnate Christ, the ‘messenger of the (new) covenant’, promised by YAHWEH:

“The pillar of the cloud and fire is another name for “the angel of God,” for 14:19 equates the two (see also 23:20–23). In fact, God’s Name is “in” this angel who goes before his people to bring them into Canaan (23:20–23). He is the “angel of his presence” (Isa 63:8–9). According to Malachi 3:1, this angel is the “messenger of the covenant,” who is the Lord, the owner of the temple. Obviously, then, the Christ of the NT is the *shekinah* glory, or Yahweh of the OT. **Through this cloudy pillar the Lord speaks to Moses (33:9–11) and to the people (Ps 99:6–7).** We have seen such easy movement from the pillar of cloud and fire to the angel and back to the Lord himself in the interchange between the burning bush, the angel, and the Lord in ch. 3 (see Notes on 3:2).” [EBC2, in loc]

This is part of the mystery of the God who is beyond and yet near, one and yet a trinity, the Message, the Sender of the Message, and the Messenger. We MUST respect the ambiguity in these texts because they are PRESENTED THAT WAY—as the closest we can come (in this life) to beholding the actually ESSENCE of the Living God.

THIRD—Exodus 16: This is the giving of the manna to an ungrateful, grumbling Israel.

So Moses and Aaron said to all the sons of Israel, “At evening you will know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt; and in the morning **you will see the glory of the LORD**, for He hears your grumblings against the LORD --- Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, ‘Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your grumblings.’ ” It came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they **looked toward** [literally, ‘faced’] **the wilderness**, and behold, **the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.**

They see the glory (kabod) with their eyes, and the presence of God inside the cloud-BUT NO MENTION OF HIS ‘Face’.

“Kabod (‘glory’) is the sheer weight, gravity (kābēd, “to be heavy,” then “to glorify”) of his divine presence. The presence of the Lord is so central and significant in the Mosaic era that four other forms speak of it besides the glory of the Lord: the **face** (pānîm) of the Lord, the **angel** (mal’ak) of the Lord, the **name** (šēm) of the Lord, and the **tabernacle** in which God will dwell (šākan) among them. [EBC2]

FOURTH—Exodus 18/20: The next appearance of God is at Sinai, the 3rd month immediately after the Exodus, and before the first rebellions in the wilderness (pre-Kadesh Barnea).

Moses went up to God, and the LORD **called** to him from the mountain, **saying**, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel... You yourselves have **seen what I did** to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My **voice** and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the **words** that you shall **speak** to the sons of Israel.” So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these **words** which the LORD had **commanded** him. All the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has **spoken** we will do!” And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD. The LORD **said** to Moses, “Behold, I will come to you **in a thick cloud**, so that the people may **hear when I speak with you** and may also believe in you forever.” Then Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.

The LORD also said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day the **LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people**.

So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were **thunder** and **lightning** flashes and **a thick cloud upon** the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to **meet** God, and **they stood at the foot** of the mountain.

Now Mount Sinai was **all in smoke** because the LORD descended upon it **in fire**; and its **smoke** ascended like the **smoke** of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and **God answered him with thunder**. The LORD **came down** on Mount Sinai, to the **top** of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. Then God **spoke** all these words, saying... *[10 commandments here]*

All the people **saw** the **thunder** and the **lightning** flashes and the **sound** of the trumpet and the mountain **smoking**; and when the people **saw** it, they trembled and stood at a distance. Then they said to Moses, “**Speak** to us yourself and we will **listen**; but **let not God speak to us**, or we will die.” Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.” So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached **the thick cloud where God was**.

Then the LORD **said** to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘You yourselves have **seen that I have spoken to you from heaven**.’”

Notice that all of these phrases are AUDITORY. Even the visual ones (“saw”) refer to the meteorological phenomena or the actions upon the Egyptians. Nobody is said to physically SEE God who is inside the fire and smoke. Even one of the times God ‘spoke’ to Moses, it was with ‘thunder’.

The people ‘saw’ that God SPOKE. They saw Him descend, but only actually saw the fire and smoke and storm-stuff.

God’s interactions are all AUDITORY – ‘words’—given in the context of God’s presence as ‘shielded’ by surrounding elements (fire, smoke).

FIFTH—Exodus 24: In this story, we get more description of the fire that encloses the ‘form’ of God. Sinai is divided into three ‘zones’: the top where only Moses can go; the middle part where this covenant ‘signing’ delegation goes; and the bottom where the people have to stay.

This delegation which expresses Israel’s ‘signing’ of the treaty with YHWH is only allow to sit at a distance from God. They are NOT UP CLOSE as Moses is allowed. They build an altar at the foot of the mountain for the ceremony, and the delegation goes up a ways to have the ‘covenant meal’ (the way treaties were concluded back then).

Then He said to Moses, “**Come up** to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel, and you shall worship **at a distance**. Moses alone, however, shall come near to the LORD, but **they shall not come near**, nor shall the people come up with him.”

Then Moses **went up** with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw [khazah, ‘gazed at’] God, and they ate and drank.

It is difficult to know from the text what exactly it MEANS by ‘seeing God’. It doesn’t use the word ‘face’, it doesn’t describe anything physical/visual but only some kind of pavement, and **one of the words it uses for ‘saw’ is used for ‘seeing visions’**.

Verse 11 (“they gazed at God”) has a different word for ‘seeing’:

“The Hebrew is khazah [TH2372, ZH2600] (to stare at, to peer at). This verb is often used of the **prophetic** vision. It involves seeing beyond the surface.” [CBC]

“Verse 11 uses a different word from that in v. 10; here it **stresses inward, spiritual, or prophetic vision**. “They ate and drank” describes a covenantal meal celebrating the sealing of the covenant described in vv. 3–8. But there is no mention of God’s participating in the eating or drinking as a human partner!” [EBC2]

The reference to the **pavement** material makes it a bit fuzzy too, since that is seen in the Visions of Ezekiel as being the substance of God's throne:

- Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man. (1.26)
- Then I looked, and behold, in the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim something like a sapphire stone, in appearance resembling a throne, appeared above them. (10.1)

The net effect of this is that we basically DO NOT KNOW what they saw—so we cannot assume they saw some 'physical face' of God:

"Commentators since the earliest days have attempted to determine what Moses and the others actually saw, especially since Exodus 33:20 says that no one can see God and live. [footnote here cites Cassuto as pointing out that they saw 'elohim' not YHWH.] Most conclude that what took place was a visionary experience like that of Isaiah (Isa 6) or Ezekiel (Ezek 1). These people were gifted with a visual experience of God. But like Isaiah, the report of what was actually seen is decidedly limited. Just as Isaiah could only report that the hem of God's royal robe filled the Temple (Isa 6:1), so here the elders have left only a description of the gorgeous blue pavement under his feet (24:10). It is also interesting that like the descriptions found in Ezekiel, the one here is qualified. "There seemed to be a surface," we are told (24:10), just as Ezekiel said he saw "something that looked like a throne" (Ezek 1:26). Clearly, words could only approximate what was seen, and even those approximations can only reach the very outer edges of the experience itself." [CBC]

And the next visual we get—in the very next verse AFTER this meal—we are back to the cloud again:

Now the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction." So Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. But to the **elders he said, "Wait here** for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them. Then Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The **glory of the LORD** rested on Mount Sinai, and the **cloud covered** it for six days; and on the seventh day He **called** to Moses **from the midst of the cloud**. And to the **eyes** of the sons of Israel the **appearance** of the **glory of the LORD** was like a **consuming fire on the mountain top**. Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Again, it looks just like what they saw was the ‘glory’, the ‘fire’, and the cloud—that had protected them so far, and would yet for 40 years. The elders might have had a more distinct prophetic vision (like Isaiah did in

SIXTH—Exodus 33: After the giving of the law and the failure of the Golden Calf—the journey resumes:

(33:7) Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp. And it came about, whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people would arise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent. Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the LORD [unlike verse 11, there actually is no YHWH here in the text—it is just literally ‘it would speak’ or ‘he would speak’.] would speak with Moses. When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent. Thus the LORD used to **speak** to Moses face to face, just as a man **speaks** to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

Notice again that it is all AUDITORY (speaking) and not VISUAL (seeing). The ‘face to face’ is a simple idiom for ‘directness’ as opposed to mediated through dreams. The alternative phrase ‘mouth to mouth’ is used, which is clearly just ‘intimacy’ or ‘directness’ and NOTHING visual – they were not joined at the lips!

face to face The same expression is used in Deuteronomy 34:10, whereas in Numbers 12:6–8 it is said that God communicated with Moses “mouth to mouth.” This figurative language is intended to convey the preeminence and uniqueness of Moses as a prophetic figure who experiences a special mode of revelation. The experience is personal and direct, not mediated through visions or dreams, and the message is always plain and straightforward, free of cryptic utterances.” [JPS]

The contrast is made clear in the Numbers passage—it is between directness and indirectness, even though we get our first VISUAL reference:

He said “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household; With him I speak mouth to mouth, Even openly, and not in dark sayings, And he **beholds the form [themunah] of the LORD**.

So the opposite of ‘mouth to mouth’ and ‘face to face’ is in dreams, not ‘from only the inside of a cloud’.

And the concluding observation of Deuteronomy (34:10) uses the same idiom, but not in the context of communication but of direct relationship:

Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face

We also have to remember that—generally speaking—‘Face’ rarely means the ‘skin on our face’. It normally—in the Bible—means ‘presence’ or ‘self’. The Aaronic benediction says ‘May YHWH make His face shine upon you’ (==blessing), which would KILL THEM if taken in the sense of PHYSICAL FACE.

FACE. The face is an ever-changing billboard signaling our own attitudes and reactions. In turn, we read the faces of others. The face contains most of the clues we seek as to the mental state of another person. Much of what we know about others we learn from their faces before they even speak. It offers no surprise then, that in the Bible the face is often described as indicating emotions and attitudes.

Face as Self. One’s face is one’s true self. To honor the face is to honor the person (Lev 19:32). The king’s question “Why is your face sad?” means “Why are you sad?” (Neh 2:2). The face is so much one’s self that the word for face functions almost as a reflexive pronoun; for example, Job’s leanness testifies to his face (Job 16:8). With childlike simplicity we instinctively attempt to hide our whole selves by covering only our face (Ex 3:6). Since the face is the essence of the person, abuse is directed at the face (Mk 14:65; cf. Deut 25:9).

Literature employs the symbolism of the face to expose nature and character. Just as the face of Moses showed that he had been with God (Ex 34:29), so also the company of the divine transfigures the appearance of Jesus (Mt 17:2). The true character of the martyr Stephen flashes on his visage—a combination of innocence, power and grace that Luke describes as the “face of an angel” (Acts 6:15). A “face like lightning” along with other attributes suggests that the man in Daniel’s vision is no mortal (Dan 10:6; cf. Lk 24:4). John’s vision of one like the son of man describes him with a “face like the sun” (Rev 1:16). The creatures that surround the throne of God and worship him portray elements of creation. The third animal represents humanity and so has the “face of a man” (Rev 4:7; cf. Ex 25:20; Is 6:2; Ezek 1:10; 10:14).

Face as Presence. The Hebrew expression “to (his) face” means simply “before,” or “in front of,” and appears in many NT citations of the OT (e.g., Mt 11:10; Mk 1:2). To “see the face” is to gain acceptance to one’s presence (Gen 32:20; Esther 1:14; Acts 20:25). The face of Moses, because he had been in the presence (before the face) of God, shone (Ex 34:29; 2 Cor 3:7). The devout live as if in the presence of God, obeying his command “Seek my face” (Ps 27:8). The believer’s current understanding of God is as “in a mirror dimly, but then face to face” (1 Cor 13:12 RSV; cf. 2 Cor 10:1; 1 Thess 2:17; 3:10; 2 Jn 12; 3 Jn 14).

Face as Intent. Simply because the front is not the back, a face implies direction and intent. Intent extends to resolve and purpose (Num 24:1; Prov 17:24). To set one’s face

toward or against evokes resolve and determination (Lev 17:10; 20:3; 2 Kings 12:17; Lk 9:51, 53). “I have set my face against this city for evil and not for good” (Jer 21:10 RSV; cf. 44:11). Even inanimate objects may be said to face one direction or another. Paul’s ship “could not face the wind” (Acts 27:15).

Face as False or Deceitful. The face so transparently manifests one’s attitude and mood that the best way to disguise feelings is to alter one’s visage, to be a hypocrite (Grk *hypokritēs*, “a play-actor,” Mt 6:16). The difficulty of maintaining such a ruse prompts the accused to request an audience with their accusers “face to face” (Acts 25:16). Disguising the face is an attempt to hide the truth from others or to hide from the truth oneself (Job 24:15).

A changed visage, however, need not reflect dishonesty. A washed face, like washed hands, represents a fresh start (Gen 43:31; Mt 6:17) and a wiping away or hiding of a former state.

Face as Light and Dark. The metaphor of light emerging on the face is common. Faces beam. Faces glow. Understanding dawns on the face. Faces break out in a grin. Smiles flash across the face. The bloom of youth appears there too. A shining human face stems from healthy skin, cared for with oil (Ps 104:15), in contrast to the starving whose “visage is blacker than soot” (Lam 4:8 RSV).

The ultimate blessing is to have the Lord’s face shine upon you (Num 6:25; Pss 31:16; 67:1). “Restore us, O God; let thy face shine that we may be saved” (Ps 80:3, 7 RSV). This shining face of God is linked to teaching his statutes and keeping the law (Ps 119:135). Outside the canon we find in 4 Ezra a statement of sharp contrasts: “The faces of those who practiced self-control shall shine more than the stars, but our faces shall be blacker than darkness” (4 Ezra 7:55).

Face as Hidden or Covered. A hidden face not only denies what it refuses to see but refuses to admit that it is present: “You shall cover your face, that you may not see the land; for I have made you a sign for the house of Israel” (Ezek 12:6 RSV).

“Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities” (Ps 51:9 RSV), the psalmist prays. The second of the two parallel units raises the ante by asking that God not only deny the sins’ existence but actually wipe them out. While God may anthropomorphically hide his face, humans do so literally. To our own detriment we have found God’s chosen one repulsive and deplorable and so have hidden our faces from him (Is 53:3). To see the face of God is linked to worship (Rev 22:3–4), hinting that when God hides his face, he not only withdraws his presence and benevolent guardianship but also shuns the human offerings of worship and prayer. To hide the face is to break off communication (Deut 31:17–18; 32:20), often implying revulsion and abhorrence. A hidden face ignores requests for help (Ps 13:1; 69:17) and refuses to answer (Ps 102:2). The poets equate this lack of divine oversight with the absence of God’s spirit (Ezek 39:29), even comparing it to death and the pit (Ps 143:7).

Among humans, to look another in the face is to ask for equal standing, recognition between peers (2 Chron 25:17). As a gesture of humility, to bow the face is to hide it in symbolic self-denial and deference or respect (Josh 5:14; 1 Chron 21:21). At the sound of the “still small voice” of God, Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle (1 Kings 19:13). In the new covenant, worshipers will be able to stand before God with unveiled face (2 Cor

3:18), and in the remade world they will see the face of God (Rev 22:4). In the great day of wrath, people will scramble to hide from the face of the one seated on the throne (Rev 6:16).” [DictBiblImagery]

And, oddly enough, the only **VISUAL** image given in Numbers 12:8 of Moses/God’s interaction **still avoids creating a contradiction**. Notice what it says (“beholds a FORM of YHWH”) and what it does NOT say (“beholds YHWH”). Moses sees some kind of manifestation, image, form, or representation (from the Hebrew lexicons). It might be more distinct that ‘just a cloud’, but it is not YHWH Himself.

The word’s meaning can be seen from passages that connect it with Israel’s tendency to create idols and Moses’ rehearsal of the Sinai experiences at the end of his life (Deut 4:10-18, 36):

“Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, ‘Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them **hear** My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.’ “You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the **mountain burned with fire** to the very heart of the heavens: **darkness, cloud and thick gloom**. “Then the LORD **spoke** to you from the midst of the fire; you **heard** the sound of words, but **you saw no form** [our word, *themunah*]**—only a voice**. “So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. “The LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might perform them in the land where you are going over to possess it. “So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any **form** [our word, *themunah*]on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the **form** [our word, *themunah*] **of any figure**, the **likeness** [our word, *themunah*] of male or female, the **likeness** [our word, *themunah*] of any animal that is on the earth, the **likeness** [our word, *themunah*] of any winged bird that flies in the sky, the **likeness** [our word, *themunah*] of anything that creeps on the ground, the **likeness** [our word, *themunah*] of any fish that is in the water below the earth. ---
(36) Out of the heavens **He let you hear His voice** to discipline you; and on earth He let you **see His great fire**, and **you heard His words** from the midst of the fire.

Our word (“form”) means ‘likeness’ or ‘representation’ of something and NOT the something itself.

So the passage above still maintains that gap between visual perception and the essence of God himself.

Finally—Exodus 33:18: This is the explicit statement that God’s ‘face’ cannot be seen.

Then Moses said, “I pray You, show me Your **glory!**” And He said, “I Myself will make all My **goodness** pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.” But He said, “You cannot see My **face**, for no man can see Me and live!”

Then the LORD said, “Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. “Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My **face** shall not be seen.”

This is the only other VISUAL reference to perceiving God—everything else has been AUDITORY. Moses starts with being ‘afraid to look at God’ at the bush; then—perhaps from the growing directness with God—he is emboldened to see God’s very face/essence/glory.

The implication of both the request and the refusal is that Moses had not seen the ‘face’ of God in all his dealings with Him up to that point.

(And, if would be very odd if the author of the ‘face to face’ passage contradicts his own statement in only 7 verses later!!!)

There is a beauty in this passage that can be seen only when looking “up close”:

“The recurring phrase, “look favorably on” (33:12, 13, 16, 17) is very significant here, especially when it is twice coupled with “I know you by name” (33:12, 17). The phrase does not say that God had “grace” upon Moses, as we might expect (or upon Noah of whom this phrase is first used; Gen 6:8). Rather, it says that Moses (and Noah) “found grace in God’s eyes”. What this is saying is that God looked at these men, and they appeared lovely to him. This is not speaking of performance as much as it is desirability. These men, compared to the masses around them, had seriously set their sights on what is right and good and true, and it was a beautiful thing in God’s eyes. Thus, **this is the language of a lover**, someone who cannot get enough of the sight of his beloved. Others, looking on, might wonder what she sees in him, or he in her, but love can see things that others cannot. **Moses, as a lover, longed to know God better and better; Yahweh, as a lover, found his beloved delightful.** This, of course, speaks to the grace of God, the one who can see incredible and beautiful potential in the feeblest of sincere efforts, where others see only ridiculous failure. **And that speaks to the importance of “name”** (33:12, 17). There is no such thing as generic love. We love unique, irreplaceable individuals; those in love can spend long hours writing and ornamenting their beloved’s name. God loves us by name.

“Clearly God’s enthusiastic, delighted response spurred a deeper response in Moses, as reported in 33:18–23. His longing for God expressed itself in a **desire for a more tangible experience of God**—to see his “glory” (“glorious presence,” 33:18, NLT). In some manner, Moses had “seen” God with the elders when they celebrated the covenant meal in God’s presence (24:10–11). And surely it must have been an incredible experience to be “in” Yahweh’s glory on the mountaintop for 40 days (24:15–18). So we may wonder what accounts for this new desire. It may well be that Moses needed some reassurance after the shattering experience of the golden calf. Was the covenant Lord really committed to going ahead with some sort of a relationship after this devastating repudiation of the covenant? Would he reveal himself to Moses again as proof of that intention? But it may also be that Moses had become thirsty for new experiences. We humans are so made that we can never get the same stimulation again from the same experience. This is, of course, what leads to addiction. And that may be the case here.

“There are a couple of possible signals that this may be the case. The first is Yahweh’s response. He says he will show Moses his “goodness” (33:19). When he says a few verses later that his “glory” (“glorious presence,” 33:22, NLT) will indeed pass by, we are given a hint that Moses may need to understand better what God’s true glory consists of. “Glory” might refer to God’s transcendent essence, and that may be what Moses was thinking of. But **God may be suggesting that his true glory is found in his character**. In the context of creation (see Gen 1), that which is “good” is in keeping with the true nature and order of creation. Theoretically, the creator does not have to be “good.” That being might find pleasure in frustrating and contravening the things he has made. Many of the pagan gods were like this, but Yahweh is not so. His desires for his creation are for its fulfillment, not its frustration, for the realization of all its potential, not for the contravention of that potential. He is good (cf. Ps 136:1)! But his essential goodness goes even farther than that. He is not merely a gardener calmly helping his plants come to their full flower. He is the Shepherd who carries the lambs in his bosom and tenderly leads the pregnant ewes (Isa 40:11). He has compassion on people not because they deserve it but simply because he chooses to (33:19).⁵ It was more important for Moses to have this understanding of the nature of God driven deep within him than that he have another experience of God’s awesome transcendence.

“The second possible signal that Moses was in danger of developing a thirst for new religious sensations is the limited nature of the physical experience that was actually given to him. **He who had been speaking to God face to face was not to be allowed to see the face of God (33:20)**. No matter how close a human (see note on 33:20) can come to God in personal experience, there is still an uncrossable barrier between the essence of the Transcendent One and that of his creatures, a barrier not even a Moses could cross.” [CBC]

I realize that this is a lot of material, but I wanted to show how a close reading of the text—and the related texts—show that there is no contradiction here. Noting the visual words from the auditory words, noting the contrasts between direct and dreams, and observing the use of the

word 'form' of something to mean something different than the thing itself should be enough to help one soften and modify any earlier understanding that might construct a 'case against the God of Jesus'.

This is not 'spin ninja' work, but humbly listening to the Word and to the 'opinions' of other God-lovers in History.

We are called to '*critically examine everything—hold on to the best*' (I Thess 5.21). This applies to our OWN positions, the positions of our teachers, but NOT to the word of God, nor the teachings of our Lord and Savior.

I hope this helps—even though it is VERY wordy—and I can assure you that we will find the same grace and peace in the other questions that shred your heart about the OT.

(I should stop here, but I want to just do the 'horns' thing, since it is very simple.)

Not to mention Moses came down from the mount with horns on his head. And the Hebrew word is - well - horns, like animal horns, and the people were afraid.

This is often assumed, but is inaccurate, actually. The word used in this passage is not the NORMAL word used for animal horns.

This was the word used for RAYS OF LIGHT from something. It sounds CLOSE to one of the words for horn, but is simply not that. It is a **UNIQUE** word:

“was radiant A unique phenomenon conveyed by a unique Hebrew verb, *karan*. The traditional meaning given here is favored by the context and by **Habakkuk 3:4** in which *karnayim*, **“rays of light,” appears in parallelism with “a brilliant light.”** This reference relates to God, and numerous biblical passages bear witness to a widespread, poetic notion of God being enveloped in light. Moses' radiance is a reflection of the divine radiance.

“The peculiar threefold use of **karan** rather than the regular verb 'w-r is probably a pointed allusion to the golden calf, for **keren** is the usual word for a horn. It subtly emphasizes that the true mediator between God and Israel was not the fabricated, lifeless image of the horned animal, as the people thought, but the living Moses.

“The association of **karan** with **keren** gave rise to the mistaken notion that Moses grew horns—even though the **text speaks not of his head but of “the skin of his face.”** The rendering of *karan* by *cornuta* in the Vulgate translation, based on the commentaries of Jerome (ca. 347–ca. 419), helped foster the error, and a horned Moses later became a familiar figure in art from the eleventh century on.²⁶ The most famous such portrayal is, of course, Michelangelo's at San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome. [JPS]

And

“Spending an extended period of time in the Lord’s presence has a telling effect on Moses: “his face was radiant” (v. 29). The verb **qāran** (lit., “he radiated”) is sometimes related to the noun **qeren** (“horn”). The Vulgate confused these two, which thus led to the representation in medieval art of Moses wearing two horns! Moses’ radiant countenance is referred to three times” [EBC]

The passage literally reads “He did not know that the SKIN of his FACE shone”. Not his head, but the SKIN on his face.

[Of course, it makes sense to hide a ‘glow’ behind a veil, but horns sticking out from ones face— not knowing how MANY horns would be on these face in this case-- would be fairly obvious from how the veil would be sticking out in points.]

The parallel in Habakkuk 3.4 make this even clearer, because the ‘rays’ shoot from the hands (although this uses the qeren word and not qaran—our word form):

His brightness was like the light; rays **flashed from his hand**;

“The final lines of v. 4 are to be interpreted against this background. The “**rays**” (lit., “twin-rays,” i.e., forked lightning) are flashes of light manifested at the Lord’s presence. The “hand” is repeatedly a symbol of the Lord’s power (e.g., Ex 13:14, 16; 14:31; Dt 3:24; 4:34; 32:41), to which the following line refers explicitly—a “power” manifested conspicuously in the forces of nature (e.g., Pss 68:33–35; 74:13; 77:14; 78:26; 150:1), which are “hidden” in his storehouses (cf. Dt 28:12; Job 38:22; Ps 135:7; Jer 10:13; 51:16; Sir 43:14). This imagery is clarified in the corresponding content of vv. 9 and 11, **where “lightning” serves the Lord** as the “arrows” and “spear” in his hand (cf. Dt 33:2, “flaming fire at his right hand,” RSV). [EBC]

It would be easy enough for somebody to make this mistake – since some of the ancient interpreters did too—but a closer understanding of the language removes the problem.

[Plus, in case you were somehow connecting these ‘horns’ with the modern depiction of the devil as having horns, that is just a chronological misunderstanding. HORNS were symbols of power and strength (often royal strength) and were not associated with evil (or good) back then.

“Figuratively, a symbol of **power** (1 Kgs 22:11) expressing dominance over the weak (Ez 34:21), forces of destruction (Zec 1:18–21), and deliverance from oppression (1 Kgs 22:11; 2 Chr 18:10). Thus the horn has two aspects, to **succour and to denote force** (2 Sm 22:3; Ps 18:2). The succession of horns could mean the continuation of the kingly line (Ps 132:17). Psalm 75:10 declares that the horns of the wicked shall be cut off but **those of the righteous exalted**. The symbolic imagery in Daniel and Revelation reinforces the use of the horn to represent power and authority (Dn 7; 8; Rv 13; 17).” [BEB]

and

"In general, horn represents **power or status in a social context**. In Deuteronomy 33:17 Moses compares the tribes of Joseph to "a firstborn bull, [whose] horns are the horns of a wild ox" because Ephraim and Manasseh were large and powerful. Therefore, "lifting up the horn" of someone means bestowing power, joy, health and prestige (Ps 92:10; 1 Sam 2:1). Conversely, "cutting off the horn" is the removal of one's power or influence (Ps 75:10; Jer 48:25). Since **God is the source of strength** to those who trust in him, David declares, "The LORD is ... the horn of my salvation, my stronghold" (Ps 18:2 NIV par. 2 Sam 22:3). In Revelation 5:6 **the lamb has seven horns**-his **kingly** power is perfect. By metonymy, horn came to symbolize those who had power: political or military. --- Since horn is a symbol of power, particularly kingly power, it is not unnatural that it represent God's anointed one (Messiah). Psalm 148:14 and Ezekiel 29:21 possibly use "horn" as a metonym for the expected Messiah. -- Horns also became a symbol for radiance. In Habakkuk 3:4 the Lord's splendor is like the light: "rays flash from his hand" (NIV, lit. "horns are from his hand," cf. KJV). Psalm 132:17 parallels "horn" and "lamp"-"I will make a horn sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed" (RSV). **Thus the Hebrew verb qāran, which may have originally been a verbal form of qeren**, the word for horn (cf. Ps 69:31 [69:32 in Heb]), in Exodus 34:29–30 means "to shine." (This is the source of the medieval idea that Moses had horns.) --- [DictBibImagry]

The 'horns' of the Beast in Revelation are not to represent evil but power and/or royalty (like in the Hebrew Bible).

So, that's why Mickey-angelo could depict Moses with horns, without it being understood as being 'evil'.

Okay—I gotta stop here for the night--

NOTE: One doesn't get to go back and spin sell (the Theologians) the verses that don't match each other with complex and confusing history, but then take the ones that match their views and leave them alone as is. If you spin one verse to say something or mean something other than what it says, you get to - and should in due diligence - find alternate meanings to all verses.

Last comment—I promise—smile:

Understanding the revelation of God in the scriptures is not a superficial exercise. It is not a matter of just taking the words on the surface and contrasting with other passages—at the surface.

If it were that simple, I could prove – on the basis of the Hebrew words being identical—that the chest that Moses was placed in as an infant (tevah) also was large enough to accommodate all the animals in Noah's time that went into the tevah (ark).

Or that the ark that was carried by 4 priests through the wilderness (aron) also contained the dead body of Joseph—who was interred in an 'aron'...

Or that the Herod who tried to kill Jesus and died when he was a baby in Egypt apparently rose from the dead so he could behead John the Baptist during Jesus' adulthood.

WITHOUT knowing history (multiple Herods in the New Testament) and without considering BIBLICAL history (the two arks are separated by a LONG time), you cannot resolve these—and you can be faulted for faulting the Word...

Spinning verses is DEFINITELY a problem—we ALL do this, especially when it impedes our progress in pleasurable sin (sigh/smile)—but that possibility is not warrant enough to avoid facing the complexities and difficulties and unknowns of the message of God to us.

Some spinning is very obvious—we will see some other cases as we get further into the questions of:

- The revelation of the name of Yahweh
- Oath taking
- Lying spirits
- Satan as ruler
- Angel of YHWH
- God dwelling in darkness not light
- Curses

You might not be even working through this long-winded exploration of the text—assuming Norm even sends it to you—but at least I AM ENJOYING writing these thoughts and logic down—smile.

Warmly, and praying for your quest to know the precious Father—

gm