

## **Ki Tisa: Exodus 33:1 – 34:8**

### *All I want for my birthday is to see the face of God*

Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of Rabbi Yosi – There were three things that Moses sought from the Holy One, blessed be he, and he gave them to him:

1. He asked that the Presence of God should come to rest on Israel, and he gave him his request, as it is said, ‘Is it not in that you go with us...’ (Exodus 33:16).
2. He asked that the Presence of God not come to rest on idolaters, and he gave him his request, as it is said, ‘So we are distinguished, I and your people’ (Exodus 33:16).
3. He asked that he teach him the ways of the Holy One, blessed be he, and he gave him his request, as it is said, ‘Show me now your ways’ (Exodus 33:13).

He said before him, ‘Lord of the world, on what account can there be a righteous man who has it good, a righteous man who has it bad, a wicked man who has it good, and a wicked man who has it bad?’

He said to him, ‘Moses, in the case of a righteous man who has it good, it is a righteous man, son of a righteous man, a righteous man who has it bad is a righteous man, son of a wicked man, a wicked man who has it good is a wicked man, son of a righteous man, and a wicked man who has it bad is a wicked man, son of a wicked man.’”

But is this so? And lo, it is written, “Visiting the wickedness of the fathers upon the children” (Exodus 34: 7), and it also is written, “Neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers” (Deuteronomy 24:16).

These two verses were set into contrast with one another, and we learned, “It is not a contradiction. The one verse speaks of a case

in which the sons take hold of the deeds of the fathers and do them, and the other speaks of a case in which the sons do not take hold of the deeds of the fathers and do them.”

Rather, this is what he said to him, “A righteous man who has it good is a totally righteous man. A righteous man who has it bad is a righteous man who is not totally righteous. A wicked man who has it good is a wicked man who is not totally wicked. A wicked man who has it bad is a totally wicked man.”

Rabbi Meir said, two requests were granted to him, and one was not. For it is said, ‘For I shall be gracious to whom I shall be gracious’ (Exodus 33:19), even though he may not be worthy of it, ‘And I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy’ (Exodus 33:19), even though he may not be worthy of it.”

And he said, ‘You cannot see my face’” (Exodus 33:20). It was taught on Tannaite authority in the name of Rabbi Joshua b. Korha, “This is what the Holy One, blessed be he, said to Moses: ‘When I wanted [you to see my face], you did not want to, now that you want to see my face, I do not want you to.’”

