

Project Paper

Exodus 34:1-8

A Paper Presented to

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of the requirements for the course
BLS 501, Genesis through the Song of Solomon

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Introduction:

Mr. Abrahamsen has just been hired to fix a business that has been failing to meet the objectives of the corporate CEO and president. He knows his success in this task is going to be totally dependant on how well he is able to motivate the company workers and properly represent the goals of the CEO. The first thing Mr. Abrahamsen does is to find out what it is that the CEO expects. Mr. Abrahamsen listens to him so that as he interacts with the workers he can lead them in the right direction to turn this business around.

Mr. Abrahamsen is a mediator between the workers, and the corporate CEO. That is the role we see Moses taking. Moses is mediating between the people of God, and God Himself. Moses has just completed mediating with God, in chapters 32 and 33 of Exodus following Israel's total failure to keep the covenant of God. He has taken the position of a mediator between God and the people and Moses asks God to show him his glory, to reveal His real self. God responded positively and told Moses to go up to the mountain and to wait for him there.

In Exodus 34 we see God, in a unique revelation of himself. God is speaking – sharing with us His view of Himself and His attributes. Our God is a god that is gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness and forgiveness. We can know Him better by this His direct revelation to Moses

As you read this paper I hope that you will draw closer to God as you discover the rich blessings we have because of God's longsuffering, His mercy, His graciousness, His "cheeced" love. All these we get to observe as God shares His attributes with Moses and the people of Israel.

Biblical Text (Various Versions)

NASB	NIV
<p>¹Now the LORD said to Moses, “Cut out for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered.</p> <p>²“So be ready by morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to Me on the top of the mountain.</p> <p>³“No man is to come up with you, nor let any man be seen anywhere on the mountain; even the flocks and the herds may not graze in front of that mountain.”</p> <p>⁴So he cut out two stone tablets like the former ones, and Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and he took two stone tablets in his hand.</p> <p>⁵The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD.</p> <p>⁶Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness and truth;</p> <p>⁷who keeps loving kindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”</p> <p>⁸Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship.</p> <p>⁹He said, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own possession.”</p>	<p>¹The LORD said to Moses, “Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.</p> <p>²Be ready in the morning, and then come up on Mount Sinai. Present yourself to me there on top of the mountain.</p> <p>³No one is to come with you or be seen anywhere on the mountain; not even the flocks and herds may graze in front of the mountain.”</p> <p>⁴So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the LORD had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands.</p> <p>⁵Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD.</p> <p>⁶And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,</p> <p>⁷maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”</p> <p>⁸Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">NLT</p> <p>¹The LORD told Moses, “Prepare two stone tablets like the first ones. I will write on them the same words that were on the tablets you smashed.</p> <p>²Be ready in the morning to come up Mount Sinai and present yourself to me there on the top of the mountain.</p> <p>³No one else may come with you. In fact, no one is allowed anywhere on the mountain. Do not even let the flocks or herds graze near the mountain.”</p> <p>⁴So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first ones. Early in the morning he climbed Mount Sinai as the LORD had told him, carrying the two stone tablets in his hands.</p> <p>⁵Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud and called out his own name, “the LORD,” as Moses stood there in his presence.</p> <p>⁶He passed in front of Moses and said, “I am the LORD, I am the LORD, the merciful and gracious God. I am slow to anger and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness.</p> <p>⁷I show this unfailing love to many thousands by forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. Even so I do not leave sin unpunished, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations.”</p> <p>⁸Moses immediately fell to the ground and worshiped.</p>	

Outline of Exodus 34:1-8:

- I) The Lord says to Moses (vs. 1-3)
 - A) Cut out two tablets (vs. 1)
 - 1) Like the former ones that you shattered (vs. 1)
 - 2) I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former ones (vs. 1)
 - B) Prepare to meet me (vs. 2-3)
 - 1) Come in the morning (vs. 2)
 - 2) Come to the top of Mt Sinai (vs. 2)
 - 3) Come alone – let no man be seen anywhere on the mountain (vs. 3)
 - 4) Let not even the flocks be on the front of the mountain (vs. 3)
- II) Moses prepares (vs. 4,
 - A) He cut out two tablets (vs. 4)
 - B) He rose early in the morning (vs. 4)
 - 1) He took up the stone tablets he had cut (vs. 4)
 - 2) Went up to the top of Mt Sinai (vs. 4)
- III) The Lord Comes (vs. 5-7)
 - A) He descended in a cloud (vs. 5)
 - 1) And stood with Moses (vs. 5)
 - 2) And proclaimed His Name (vs. 5 – NIV)¹
 - B) He moves to the front, and tells of Himself (vs. 6-7)
 - 1) The Lord (vs. 6)
 - 2) The Lord God (vs. 6)
 - 3) Compassionate and gracious (vs. 6)
 - 4) Slow to Anger (vs. 6)
 - 5) Abounding (vs. 6)
 - a) In loving kindness (vs. 6)
 - b) And truth (vs. 6)
 - 6) Keeps loving kindness for thousands (vs. 7)
 - 7) Forgives (vs. 7)
 - a) Iniquity (vs. 7)
 - b) Transgression (vs. 7)
 - c) Sin (vs. 7)
 - 8) Never leaves the guilty unpunished (vs. 7)
 - a) Visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and grand-children (vs. 7)
 - b) On the 3rd and 4th generations (vs. 7)
- IV) Moses responds (vs. 8)
 - A) With haste (vs. 8)
 - B) Bowed low to the earth (vs. 8)
 - C) Worshiped (vs. 8)

¹ Note: Vs. 5 in the NASB presents Moses as calling unto God.

Background Context

Following the failure of the people to meet the demands of the covenant (Ex. 32.1-6)

Moses enters into 4 intercessions with God. During the first, Moses pleaded with God to not destroy the people for their transgression. HE asked God to remember his relationships with Abraham, Issacc and Jacob. He asks, “Had God redeemed the people from Egypt just to destroy them in the dessert?” Following Moses’s petition God did relent and He sent Moses down the mountain to deal with the people.

Following Moses judgment and repentance of the people, Moses returned to God for the second intercession. He pleaded for the people, that God would forgive them. Moses even offered to have God blot himself out of God’s book of life if it would help the people. God replies that who ever has sinned, they will be blotted out and that the time is coming when He will punish the people for their sin. Moses was to go back to the people and to lead them to the new land . However God would not be with them. God was going to send an angle to lead the people.

Later, Moses intercedes for the third time. Moses tells God that these are His people and that if God were not leading them how would any one know that they were indeed His, and different from all the other nations. At this point God says to Moses, “I will do just as you have asked because I know you very well and I am pleased with you”.

Moses must have been ecstatic. God was going to still be with them, He was going to lead them to the promised land, and be there with them. Now Moses made one more request. He asked God if he could see God’s Glory. To really know Him. Moses had seen Him in the burning bush, heard him convey his name, the “I Am”. He has spent much time with him since Egypt but he wanted to see His glory. God in a response of grace tells Moses that no one can

look into His face and live but that God would cover Moses eyes as he passed by and let Moses see His back. This is where Exodus 34:1 begins and we learn the rest of the story.

The Lord said to Moses (vs. 34:1-3)

This verse begins with a conjunction “AND” so that it does not indicate the starting of a new dialog, but rather it is the continuation of the dialog begun in Exodus 33. Moses has been interceding in prayer with God at the “Tent of Meeting” outside of the camp. God has agreed to reinstate the covenant and that he will “pass by” Moses and let him see His back, God is now telling Moses what he will need to do to prepare to meet Him to receive the new covenant documents and to see God’s Glory..

The Lord said to Moses (vs. 1):

Moses is at the “Tent of Meeting” outside the camp of the Israelites. God has come down to the meeting place and the pillar of cloud is at the door. God is present with Moses and following his request to see God’s glory God has agreed to let Moses see His afterglow. Now God turns back to the renewal of the covenant.

Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones(vs. 1):

The first covenant was written on 2 tables (tablets) of stone which Moses smashed (Ex. 32:19) upon seeing the people of Israel sinning such a great sin. God provided these first tables (Ex. 32:16). Now He has directed Moses to hew or cut out 2 tables of stones as replacements. This is symbolic of Moses role as mediator between the people and God. Moses would make the new stones upon which the covenant of God would be written.

In commanding Moses to cut the two tables of stones the Lord has in the deepest sense already connected the shattered pieces of the broken covenant, renewed it and made it whole. God is allowing Israel to start all over again.

In looking forward to Jesus Christ. He is the perfect mediator, like Moses was for the people. Moses provided new tables of stone for the covenant to be rewritten on. Jesus Christ takes away our hearts of stone gives people a new pure heart of flesh. (Ezek. 36:26)

I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets(vs. 1):

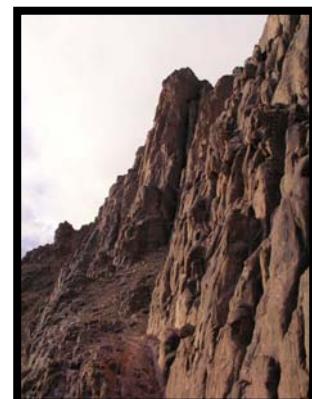
God wrote the words on the first tables. Here He is telling Moses that He will also write the words on this new set of tables. The new tablets are to receive the same words as the original. The sin of Israel has not caused God to change the commandments & promises for the people. The old covenant is restored.

Be ready in the morning (vs. 2):

Much like the earlier trip to the top of Mt Sinai (Ex. 19:15-25) , God instructed Moses to come in the morning. Moses was to start preparing now so that he would be ready.

And present yourself to me (vs. 2):

This time Moses was to go to a certain spot (Ex. 33:21-22), a cleft in the rock. Moses was to go there and wait until the Lord comes. By obeying God, Moses would be able to see God pass by him and God would reveal His glory in passing.



No one is to come with you (vs. 3):

Unlike the first time that Moses received the tables from God, Moses was to come up to Mt Sinai alone. No priests, and no Aaron. All the people are to stay off the mountain and to treat it in reverence and awe and fear as God is there.

Let no flocks or herds feed (vs. 3):

Not only are the people directed to stay off the mountain, but they are directed that all their animals – goats, lambs et al. This

Moses did as the Lord commanded (vs. 34:4)

Moses chiseled out two stone tablets (vs. 4):

Moses prepared to go and meet the Lord and receive the renewed covenant. He carved out, is the Hebrew word “pasal” which is the verb form of “pesel” which refers a to graven image. He shaped the stones into the form they were to have, tablets to receive the covenant of God.

He rose early in the morning as the Lord had commanded (vs. 4):

As God had commanded, he arose early In the morning and started the ascent of Mt Sinai. Moses must have had his heart pounding as he is considering what the Lord is going to reveal to him as he passes by.



He carried the two stone tablets (vs. 4):

As he ascended, he carried a burden, the new tablets of stone to receive the renewed covenant. Jesus Christ carried a burden for us to the cross and there He instituted the new covenant for us..

The Lord came and met Moses (vs. 34:5-7)

At the burning bush (Ex. 3:13-14) God identified himself to Moses as YHWH. It revealed what He is in Himself. He is the great “I AM”. He is the self subsisting and self sufficient one in whom there is no of variableness or shadow of turning (James 1:17). As Moses was preparing to be God’s ambassador to the people and then to Pharaoh this was most appropriate. Now, as Moses is preparing to meet God and assume the role of mediator between God and God’s people God is preparing to share His essence and His attributes.

The Lord came down in a cloud and stood there with him (vs. 5):

God came down in a cloud. It is not clear whether it is the same pillar of cloud (Ex. 33:10) that had been leading the people by day or the thick cloud described in Ex. 19:9-10 but he came. Beyond the cloud, we don’t know if Moses saw anything because he didn’t tell us anything of what he saw. With all the anthropomorphisms here to describe God’s plan on the mountain top, God using his hand to shield Moses from the His face and only removing His hand after His back is towards Moses, Moses tells us nothing of what he saw. If I were there I would probably have written at least three or four chapters describing what I saw. BUT not Moses. God comes down in a cloud and then stands there next to him and all Moses does is to tell us about what he heard.

And (God) proclaimed His name (vs. 5):

The last part of verse 5 is slightly ambiguous in it's Hebrew construction and leads us to two possible translations which are seen in present day translations.

- NASB – translates this clause as “and he called upon the name of the Lord” where the “he” is presumed to be Moses.
- NIV – translates this clause as “and proclaimed his name the Lord: where the “he” is presumed to be GOD, the subject of the first clause.

Based on the preponderance of translations using the second option and various commentators supporting the second option I am presenting this as the probably correct translation.

The Lord passed by proclaiming (vs. 6):

Regularly when God manifests Himself, He is featured as one who moves or passes by (Gen 1:2, Ex. 33:19,22; 34:6) revealing an active, dynamic essence. Because of this imagery Israel used imagery of motion to describe His presence (Ex. 12:12; 1 Ki. 19:11; Ezek. 1:4-21; Ps. 18) They believed in God, as a God who acts and makes Himself known by His actions. This is contrastable with the impotent gods of the nations who could not move unless carried by men.

Moses and the people may have thought they needed to know about God. But He says they really need to know him. That's the most practical thing that they could ever learn – to know God. These next two verses are central to Jewish tradition and they could almost be compared to certain summaries of the Gospel among Christians such as John 3:16.

The Lord, The Lord God: (vs. 6)

³⁰⁶⁸ יְהוָה Yahweh, ³⁰⁶⁸ יְהוָה Yahweh ⁰⁴¹⁰ אֱלֹהִים 'el

Yahweh - "the existing One" 1) the proper name of the one true God 1a) unpronounced except with the vowel pointings

'el - 1) god, god-like one, mighty one 1a) mighty men, men of rank, mighty heroes 1b) angels 1c) god, false god, (demons, imaginations) 1d) God, the one true God, Jehovah 2) mighty things in nature 3) strength, power

God first proclaims His name, TWICE. God takes this first step and confirms to His people the immutability and the reality of His being. He would/will always be the same. This covenant renewal was not needed because God changed. Rather it was because of the failure of fickle and changing people to uphold the covenant they accepted. Israel's whole history is wrapped up in the "God that IS". God began Israel, He sustained her, and has brought her here to this place by His power and for His Glory and He is the mighty God

The compassionate and gracious (vs. 6):

⁷³⁴⁹ רָחוּם rachuwm ⁵⁸⁷ חָנָן channuwn

rachuwm - 1) compassionate 1a) always of God with one possible exception
channuwn - 1) gracious

God is compassionate. The root word for rachuwm refers to the mothers womb, nourishing, and protective. Consider the relationship between a mother, and her child. Channuwn carries with it the context of undeserved or unearned graciousness. A graciousness like that was displayed by the care of the good Samaritan for the poor beat up & robbed person on the roadside. He had little expectation of reward, but he still stopped, cared for the immediate needs of the person and then took him to an inn to recover and told the inn owner to put it on the Samaritans tab. We see this grace evidenced in God sending His son while we were yet sinners, to die for us (Rom 5:8)

Slow to anger (vs. 6):

⁰⁷⁵⁰ אַרְקֵךְ 'arek ⁰⁶³⁹ אֲפֵךְ aph

'arek - 1) long (pinions) 2) patient, slow to anger

aph - 1) nostril, nose, face 2) anger

God is slow to anger, literally, long nosed. God is slow to let His nostril flare in anger.

History clearly shows God's anger is a reality and it plays a real role with the prophets.

However it may be God's slowness in history that causes many to not take God's anger seriously. It is however because he is slow in anger that we are able to see His compassion and graciousness and mercy.

Abounding in love and faithfulness (vs. 6):

⁷²²⁷ רָבְּ rab ²⁶¹⁷ רַכֵּד checed ⁰⁵⁷¹ אֶמֶת 'emeth

rab - adj 1) much, many, great 1a) much 1b) many 1c) abounding in 1d) more numerous than 1e) abundant, enough 1f) great 1g) strong 1h) greater than adv 1i) much, exceedingly n m 2) captain, chief

checed - 1) goodness, kindness, faithfulness 2) a reproach, shame

'emeth - n f 1) firmness, faithfulness, truth 1a) sureness, reliability 1b) stability, continuance 1c) faithfulness, reliability 1d) truth 1d1) as spoken 1d2) of testimony and judgment 1d3) of divine instruction 1d4) truth as a body of ethical or religious knowledge 1d5) true doctrine adv 2) in truth, truly

The literal definitions here do little to expand the meanings. "Checed" has a concrete meaning – it is that part of an overfull and crammed measure that is on the top of the measure itself. It is the portion that you receive for free. If it is measured, and charged for then it is no longer "checed". One cannot pay for it, because then it ceases to be "checed" and becomes part of the measure itself. In contrast, the Hebrew word for righteousness has the basic meaning of the exact leveled measure. God's grace can never be bought. Because of divine grace our cup runs over (Ps 23:5). In Luke 6:38 we are admonished to give generously, and you will receive a good measure, pressed down, shaken, and running over – you will receive "checed".

'Emeth is not just truth, but includes a faithfulness and trust worthiness. The Bible places more weight on faithfulness and trust worthiness because they will produce truth.

We can trust God because he is faithful, and has checed for us. What more could be ask for?

Maintaining love to thousands (vs. 7):

5341 נְצָר natsar 2617 צַדֵּךְ checed 0505 אֶלְף 'eleph

natsar - 1) to guard, watch, watch over, keep 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to watch, guard, keep 1a2) to preserve, guard from dangers 1a3) to keep, observe, guard with fidelity 1a4) to guard, keep secret 1a5) to be kept close, be blockaded 1a6) watchman (participle)

cheded - 1) goodness, kindness, faithfulness 2) a reproach, shame

'eleph - 1) a thousand 1a) as numeral 2) a thousand, company 2a) as a company of men under one leader, troops

The word 'eleph has a meaning that encompasses a broader range, and can include multitudes, or nations in general. Thus we see that while God is renewing the covenant with His chosen people he is also preserving His love and grace to the future generations and nations. Even as we see God making His original covenant with Abraham (Gen 12:3) he promises a land, a people, and that they were to be a blessing for the nations. God's love for Israel continues to be motivated by a love, a checed love for all the peoples of the earth.

Forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin (vs. 7):

5375 נִשְׁאַר nasa' 5771 עֲוֹנוֹת `avon 6588 עַבְדָּה pesha` 2403 חַטָּאת chatta'ah

nasa' - 1) to lift, bear up, carry, take 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to lift, lift up 1a2) to bear, carry, support, sustain, endure 1a3) to take, take away, carry off, forgive 1b) (Niphal) 1b1) to be lifted up, be exalted 1b2) to lift oneself up, rise up 1b3) to be borne, be carried 1b4) to be taken away, be carried off, be swept away 1c) (Piel) 1c1) to lift up, exalt, support, aid, assist 1c2) to desire, long (fig.) 1c3) to carry, bear continuously 1c4) to take, take away 1d) (Hithpael) to lift oneself up, exalt oneself 1e) (Hiphil) 1e1) to cause one to bear (iniquity) 1e2) to cause to bring, have brought

`avon - 1) perversity, depravity, iniquity, guilt or punishment of iniquity 1a) iniquity 1b) guilt of iniquity, guilt (as great), guilt (of condition) 1c) consequence of or punishment for iniquity

pesha` - transgression

chatta'ah - 1) sin, sinful 2) sin, sin offering 2a) sin 2b) condition of sin, guilt of sin 2c) punishment for sin 2d) sin-offering 2e) purification from sins of ceremonial uncleanness

God here states that HE is a forgiving God. Nasa', the word used for forgiving means to lift up, or raise: to take away the guilt or consequences . God wants to restore people who come to Him in repentance. Just to be sure that no person thinks that their sin is too bad, we see here a trio of words describing sin of all types. ‘Avon, describes depravity, or crooked activity. Pesha describes rebellion, or defiance of the law. Chatta’ah describes a failure to meet the mark, moral wrong doing. No man can come before God claiming that God will not forgive them. God has already gone on record as being willing to forgive all that come to Him in repentance.

Not leaving the guilty unpunished (vs. 7):

However loving God is, and He has focused on this at much length, there is something in our being made in the image of God, and His character that requires, it even demands justice. For those that have not turned to God and accepted His propitiation for sin, then they are guilty before Him and He will punish them. Additionally, as mentioned before, without the threat of wrath, his mercy and grace are shallow offerings. But because of God’s promise of wrath His mercy and grace are lights in a dark place drawing us to Him.

Punishing the children and their children (vs. 7):

God’s word is clear that God does not punish children for the sins of their fathers. However, children usually follow in their fathers footsteps and if the father did not submit to God, the children will usually also not submit to God and follow their father to destruction. Ezek. 18:4 states “All souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die”. God will punish the guilty for their own sins. As fathers, we should be extra

diligent in the lives we lead because our children are watching us and will follow in all our footsteps. As a child, we need to be cognizant of what we are doing and our need to face God on His terms. If we have sin, God will judge us for what we do.

Moses bows down and worships (vs. 34:8):

Moses, having just seen God pass by and heard His self revelation proceeds to do the only thing that a person in this position can do. He falls on his knees, and drops his head to the ground and praises Yahweh. How earnest his response was, and what a model for us. When we are in prayer, we are at His throne, talking to God. We need to always be aware of the privilege we have and approach God in love, but also need to maintain a Holy reverence.

Summary:

In God's first giving of the Law to Moses (Ex. 20:5-6) God presents His character but in this first giving of the law He describes Himself not as a loving, longsuffering, merciful forgiving god but as a jealous god. He emphasizes the covenant jealousy of God and the punishment for violation of the covenant terms. In contrast, in Ex. 34, God is emphasizing His Grace in the restatement of the covenant. He states:

I am merciful, compassionate, slow to anger.

Yes, he visits the sins of the fathers to the 3rd and 4th generation but the entire emphasis here is God's grace. The people of Israel were aware that they deserved to be blasted into oblivion and it is in this context that God says:

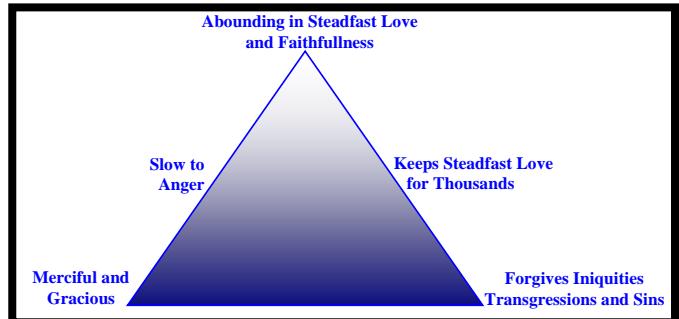
Now you are ready because of what you know about your self,
because of what you know about deserving judgment.

Now you are ready to learn something else about me.

Before anyone joins in the popular criticism of the God of the Old Testament, they ought to read and reread this expression of God's Glory His mercy, His grace, and His love. and ask what is missing. Nothing except the revelation of God incarnate, Jesus Christ.

If we take the 5 primary proclamations, they can be modeled as shown to the right:

At the top, is "God's abounding steadfast love and faithfulness". Like the source of a spring, bubbling with life giving water is



God's steadfast love and faithfulness. At the second level is "Slow to anger", and "Keeps steadfast love for thousands". Love cannot last when there is a hair trigger. At the third level is "Merciful and Gracious" and "Forgives Iniquities , transgressions and Sins". God is merciful and gracious and because of that he forgives sin. When God is slow to anger, it is because he is merciful and gracious. He is merciful and gracious because he forgives sin. The only sin that is unforgivable is the sin that is unrepented. If you can repent, you can be forgiven.

If someone asks, "How do you know the way God is?",

you tell them "**God told us, just look at Ex. 34:6-7**".

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