**Exodus 34:29-35**

[*https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-34/exodus-3429-35/*](https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-34/exodus-3429-35/)

*After being in the LORD’s presence for such a long time, Moses returned to the Israelites with the two tablets in hand. When the Israelites saw him, they were afraid because his face radiated light. So, when Moses was not speaking the words of the LORD to the people, he put a veil over his face. He removed the veil when he was in the LORD’s presence or when he was proclaiming the LORD’s words to the people.*

The covenant was now renewed by the LORD. Therefore, it was time for Moses to come *down from Mount Sinai*. When he descended the mountain, *the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses’ hand*. He was unaware *that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him*. In a sense, the radiance of the LORD had a visible effect on Moses. He did not know that his face shined until *Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses*(v. 30). Apparently, they observed that *the skin of his face shone*, and understandably *they were afraid to come near him*.

They were probably standing at a distance or walking away from Moses. But *Moses called to them*, which might have made them less afraid. So, *Aaron and all the rulers in the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them*. Next, *afterward* (that is, after speaking to the rulers), *all the sons of Israel came near, and he commanded them to do everything that the Lord had spoken to him on Mount Sinai*. All of the Israelites heard (just as they heard before in [Exodus 24:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+24.7&t=NASB95)) that they were again in a covenant relationship with the LORD and that they needed to obey its statutes.

Then, *when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face*. The word for *veil*in verses 33 – 35 (Heb. “masveh”) is used only here in the Old Testament, so the precise nature of the *veil* is unknown. It presumably was large enough to cover the shining skin on Moses’ face.

Moses’ use of the *veil* is explained in verses 34 – 35. First, *whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out*. Moses uncovered his face when in the LORD’s presence. Even when *he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone*. The LORD might have given this as a gift to Moses and the people, so the people would know that what Moses was saying was direct from the LORD and should be obeyed.

After speaking the word of the LORD to the people,*Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him*. This might have been done to soothe the people’s fear.

Paul comments on this episode in 2 Corinthians:

“Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech, and are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away. But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit”  
([2 Corinthians 3:12-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+3.12-18&t=NASB95))

Paul’s take seems to be that Moses’ *veil*is a symbol of the hardening over Israel’s heart; their inability to see God’s truth behind the Law. The spirit of the Law was its intent for each person to love and serve their neighbor. That would certainly fit Jesus’ message to the Jewish leaders in [Matthew 23:27](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+23.27&t=NASB95), where He called them “whitewashed tombs full of dead men’s bones” because they said what was right but they did what was evil. Encouragingly, Paul states that each of us has the opportunity to remove the veil of our hearts and see Jesus’ glory by coming to know Him by faith. In this way we can walk in the path of Moses, to know God. As Jesus taught us, knowing God is the ultimate fulfillment of the human experience ([John 17:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+17.3&t=NASB95)).

It is also worth considering the possibility that Moses’ stay on the mountain for forty days and nights without food or water while apparently absorbing the radiant energy of God might provide a hint of what is to come. In the New Earth, there will be no temple or tabernacle that represents God’s presence among men. This is because heaven will come to earth, and God will dwell among humans, somewhat like Moses and God together on the mountain. And they will be His people ([Revelation 21:1-4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.1-4&t=NASB95), [22](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.22&t=NASB95)). There is no need of a representation (such as a Tabernacle) when the real thing is present. During this time, Jesus will dwell on the earth, and His countenance/presence will be so bright that it will light the world with sufficient light to make the sun unnecessary ([Revelation 21:23-24](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+21.23-24&t=NASB95)).

Any earthly human in the presence of the glorified Jesus who is a bright as the sun would presumably combust and turn into ash, as though they stood on the face of the sun. This might be consistent with God telling Moses no man can see His face and live ([Exodus 33:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+33.20&t=NASB95)). Perhaps those with resurrected bodies will be able to absorb the radiance of Jesus. Instead of gaining nourishment from the sun through the agency of eaten plants, perhaps resurrected saints, who have what Paul calls a “spiritual body” ([1 Corinthians 15:44](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.44&t=NASB95)) will be able to absorb God’s energy directly. It could also be that the picture in Daniel of God’s three faithful servants unhurt by the fire in the presence of one who was “like the Son of God” is also a picture of a time when His people will dwell in the presence of His glory ([Daniel 3:24-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Daniel+3.24-26&t=NASB95)).

**Biblical Text:**

**29It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony *were* in Moses’ hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him. 30So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. 31Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers in the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them. 32Afterward all the sons of Israel came near, and he commanded them *to do* everything that the Lord had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. 33When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. 34But whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, 35the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone. So Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him.**