

What does the revelation of God's name in Ex. 34:6-7 have to do with the golden calf incident in chapter 32?

My dear grandmother has always called me “My Christopher”, while buddies routinely call me “Kinner”. They are certainly referring to the same person, although the phrasing of my name and tone of its usage can be drastically different in just these two examples. In Exodus 3:14 God provides Moses with a ‘name’ for Pharaoh, “I am”, while in Exodus 34:6-7 God provides his name to His friend Moses. The name is followed by a definition, a definition that helps Moses and the readers of the book of Moses to better understand who God is. Just as one can learn a little about me from taking a look at how others refer to me, the question at hand helps us to learn more about the character of God.

The path to the name giving interaction between God and Moses is paved by a disturbing event in Exodus 32 when the Israelites melt down gold jewelry to create a god; they worship this golden calf and even revere it as the god that brought them out of Egypt! The golden jewelry used to create this idol was even brought out of Egypt via the direction of God. All this done while Moses was receiving word from God on how his people were to live. An amazing slap in the face on many levels to a God that had delivered his people from slavery.

The provision of God's divine name in Ex. 34:6-7 displays the grace and mercy that God's love seeks to lavish on his creation; it also separates the holy and righteous aspect of God's inability to leave the guilty unpunished. The goodness of a God who gives his love, compassion and favor to beings that are entirely undeserving is highly evident in a discourse on these passages. Thus a view of man's true nature set next to God's along with a clear declaration of the name of the LORD allows us the ability to see firsthand how differently these two groups are to be viewed.

I am so pleased to serve a God who gives favor to those that have absolutely no claim to it. It is also an honor to serve a God who we know will right all wrongs and whose righteousness does not ignore our sin. We should take care to carry the name of our God reverently and seek to serve him well.