

Writing Towards Revelation

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All Night at Sinai—Shavuot 5780

Mekhilta d’Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai on Exodus 19:2

The Torah was given in public, in a place free to all; for if it had been given in the land of Israel, the inhabitants of the land would have said “It is ours!” and had it been given somewhere else the inhabitants of that place would have said “It is ours!” Therefore it was given in the wilderness, in a place free to all, so that anyone wishing to acquire it could come and do so.

Prompt:

Where else might you imagine the Torah being given? [ie: in Oakland, in the redwoods, in a dream, etc.]

Then ask: “Why was the Torah given _____?”

Now write your own answer.

Midrash Shemot Rabbah on Exodus 19:19

Moses speaks and God answers him by a voice (19:19). “The voice of God is in power” (Psalms 29:4). If it would have said, “The voice of God is in God’s power,” the world could not survive it; rather it says, “The voice of God is in power”—in accordance to the individual power of each and every one of them. To the old according to their capacity, and to the young according to theirs; to the children, to the babes and to the women according to their capacity; and even to Moses according to his capacity, as it is said: “Moses speaks, and God answers him by a voice.”

Prompt:

How do you imagine you would have heard the voice of God at Sinai?

What kind of voice do you think God would need to speak with to be heard today?

If you want, begin with the form “the voice of God is in _____.”

Midrash Shemot Rabbah on Exodus 20:1

God spoke all these words (20:1). When God gave the Torah no bird twittered, no fowl flew, no ox lowed, none of the angels stirred a wing, the seraphim did not say “Holy, Holy,” the sea did not roar, the creatures did not speak. The whole world was hushed into breathless silence, and the voice went forth: “I am Adonai your God.”

Prompt:

Write your own telling of the silent anticipation of Revelation—and the declaration that emerges from that silence. You can set it at Sinai, in the present moment, or at another time/place.