

When I went up the mountain to take the stone tablets of the covenant that God had established with you, I sat on the mountain for forty days and forty nights. I didn't eat bread and I didn't drink water. --- Deut. 9:9

Rabbi Tarfon said: The Blessed Holy One rose and came from Mt. Sinai and was revealed unto the sons of Esau, as it is said: *And he said, the Lord came from Sinai and rose from Seir unto them* (Deut. 33:2). Seir refers only to the sons of Esau, as it is said: *And Esau dwelled in Mt. Seir* (Gen. 36:8). The Blessed Holy One said to them: Will you accept upon yourselves the Torah? They said to Him: What is written in it? He answered: *You shall not murder* (Exod. 20:13). They replied to Him: We are unable to abandon the blessing with which Isaac blessed Esau, for he said to him, *By your sword you shall live* (Gen. 27:40). So He turned and was revealed to the Ishmaelites, as it is said, *He shined forth from Mt. Paran* (Deut. 33:2). Paran refers only to the Ishmaelites, as it is said, *And he dwelled in the wilderness of Paran* (Gen. 21:21). The Blessed Holy One said to them: Will you accept upon yourselves the Torah? They said to Him: What is written in it? He answered: *You shall not steal* (Exod. 20:15). They replied to Him: We are unable to abandon the usage our fathers observed, for they brought Joseph down into Egypt, as it is said, *For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews* (Gen. 40:15). Then He sent messengers to all the nations of the world. He said to them: Will you accept upon yourselves the Torah? They said to Him: What is written in it? He answered: *You shall have no other gods before Me* (Exod. 20:3). They replied to Him: We have no delight in the Torah, therefore let Him give His Torah to His people, as it is said: *The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace* (Ps. 29:11). Then He returned and was revealed to the Israelites, as it is said, *And he came from the ten thousands of holy ones* (Deut. 33:2), and the expression “ten thousands” means the Israelites, as it is said, *And when it rested, he said, return O Lord unto the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel* (Numb. 10:36). With Him were thousands and thousands of chariots, even twenty thousand holy angels, and His right hand was holding the Torah, as it is said: *At His right hand was a fiery law unto them* (Deut. 33:2). --- **Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer 41**

And R. Yehoshua ben Levi further said: When Moses ascended to the heavens, the ministering angels said [to] the Holy Blessed One, “Master of the Universe! What is one born of woman doing among us?!” [God] said to them, “He came to receive the Torah.” They said back to Him, “A beloved treasure that has been stored for You for 974 generations before the world was created and You want to give it to a person of flesh and blood?! What is a person that You should remember him, a human being that You should take him into account? *Our master, God, what glory could be brought to Your name in the earth? You should place Your splendor [in] heaven!*” (Ps. 8:2. The NJV translation reads: *O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name throughout the earth, You who have covered the heavens with Your splendor!*)

The Holy Blessed One said to Moses, “Respond to them!” [Moses] said [to God], “Master of the Universe! The Torah that You are giving to me, what is written in it?” *I am the Lord your God who has taken you out of the land of Egypt.* [Moses said to the angels], “Did you go down to Egypt? Were you enslaved by Pharaoh? Why would the Torah be for you?!... Further, what is written in it? *Remember the day of Shabbat to sanctify it.* Do you do any labor that you would need a rest?!... Further, what is written in it? *Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal.* Is there jealousy among you? Is there an evil inclination among you?” Immediately they agreed with God (in His decision to give humans the Torah) as it says, *Our Master, God, what glory could be brought to Your name in the earth!* --- Talmud, **Shabbat** 88b-89a

From what did [Moses] eat? From the Torah. As it says: *Human being, eat what you will find...and I ate it and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey* (Ezek. 3:1,3). Why? Because the Torah is sweet. As it says, *and they are sweeter than honey and the drippings of [honey]combs* (Ps. 19:11). --- **Midrash Shemot Rabbah** 47:7

Moses was there with God... (Exod. 34:20). And is it possible for a person to last for forty days without eating and drinking? R. Tanhuma in the name of R. Elazar son of R. Abin said in the name of R. Meir: The saying goes—if you go to a city, abide by its norms! Above, where there is no eating or drinking, Moses ascended and he made himself like them. Below, where there is eating and drinking, the ministering angels descended and they ate and drank, as it says, *And (Abraham) was standing by them (the angels) beneath the tree and they ate* (Gen. 18:8). --- **Midrash Shemot Rabbah** 47:5

As R. Yishmael son of Rav Nahman said: Good manners (**derekh erez**) preceded the Torah by twenty six generations. In line with what is written: *to guard the way (derekh) of the tree of life* (Gen. 3:24). The way, **derekh**, is **derekh erez**, good manners, and only subsequently the tree of life, which is Torah. --- **Midrash Vayikra Rabbah** 9:3

Pay attention (hasket, Deut. 27:9). Divide yourselves into groups (katot) and engage in the Torah, since the Torah is only acquired through fellowship. Like R. Yosi son of R. Hanina, who said: ...What does the verse teach as written: a sword on the diviners (badim) and they will be found foolish (Jer. 50:36)? A sword against “the enemies of” Torah scholars (that is, Torah scholars themselves) who sit in isolation (**bad b’vad**) and engage in Torah. And not only that, but they become foolish! As it says here *and they will be found foolish*, and it is written there *that we have acted foolishly* (Numb. 12:11). And not only that, but they will sin, as it says [in the continuation of the verse], *and we have sinned*. --- Talmud, **Berakhot** 63

God gave me the two tablets of stone, written by God’s finger. And upon them were all of the things that God spoke to you on the mountain from inside the fire on the day of congregation. --- Deut. 9:10