

How can we prove the divine nature of the Torah?

God gifted us the Torah, charging us with a large number of duties and responsibilities. All branches of Orthodox Judaism agree that the Torah is divine, given to us at Har Sinai. How do we know this; is there any proof for this?

The main source for the Revelation is in Parshas Yisro. In 19:10-1 it says *Hashem said to Moshe 'Go to the people and sanctify them, today and tomorrow, and they shall wash their garments* (and they should go to the mikveh - this is one of the sources for mikveh as part of conversion). *Let them be prepared for the third day because on that day God will come down and appear before the entire people.* In 19:17 *Moshe brought the people forth from the camp to greet God, and they stood at the bottom of the mountain* (perhaps under the mountain). God is making His presence felt in very physical ways with spectacular phenomenon. In 19:19 there is a tremendously loud sound of a shofar. This is followed by the giving of the Ten Commandments. So God Himself comes down to the mountain for the entire people to hear Him - this is the only time an entire nation was able to encounter God in such an open manner. There were 2-3 million people who were involved with this, experiencing this Revelation.

The Torah revisits this in Devarim 4:7-10 *For which is a great nation that has a God Who is close to it, as is Hashem, our God, whenever we call to Him? And which is a great nation that has righteous decrees and ordinances, such as this entire Torah that I place before you this day?* Moshe warns the people to guard their lives carefully and not to forget the things that they saw with their own eyes at Sinai; they must pass this down to their children and their children. They must pass on when God gathered them all to hear His words.

So, from these sources, clearly the Torah is a divine book. The Torah is given to the Jews in a grandiose manner - God took us out of Egypt and is now giving us the Torah to guide us - it is a collection of laws, but also a guide to the proper way of life. It was a National Revelation. Many people of other religions have claimed Revelation on a personal level - this is the only claim that an entire people heard God. However, this still does not prove anything about its authenticity to those outside the religion.

According to traditional Jewish thought, there is another Torah - the Oral Torah, which is as vital as the written Torah. There is a massive amount of detail missing from the written Torah, and you need this practical information to perform any mitzvah. For example, we are commanded to live for seven days in a Sukkah - but we don't have details in the written Torah of how it is made, what is its size, what material can be used to build it, how to construct the roof. We have the same issue with Tefillin - there are no details of how to make it, what to make of it, what to include within - all we have is a command to place Totafot - whatever they are - between our eyes. How do we know that this is what God wanted us to construct or what He wanted us to wear? All of the mitzvos lack the clarity of how to perform the them; we therefore have the tradition of the Oral Torah that was handed down from Sinai on how to understand the Torah - it was communicated orally to Moshe, whose job was to transmit this vast amount of knowledge to the people over the 40 year period in the midbar. This can also be highly suspicious to outsiders, placing the entire faith in one person, Moshe, who supposedly transmitted all of God's commands with all of their details.

Rambam: several of his 13 principles of faith is in regards to the divine nature of the Torah. One of these principles is that Moshe was the greatest of all of the prophets, and his prophecy is true; he was a unique prophet - he was the master prophet because he was the only prophet whose credentials remain unchallenged because the entire nation heard God speak

directly to him. In Shmos 19:9 *God said to Moshe 'Behold! I come to you in a thick cloud so that the people will hear as I speak to you, and they will also believe in you forever.'* In this manner, no one would question him; Moshe was to be given the entire Torah, and if he was going to be the teacher of all of God's words, He had to establish Moshe's impeccable credentials - the Ten Commandments are formulated in the singular rather than plural, because He is talking only to Moshe while the rest of the nation hears His words. The Rambam adds two more principles: that the entire Torah found in our hands is exactly the same Torah that was given to Moshe at Har Sinai. Finally, there is the principle that we believe that this Torah will not be exchanged or replaced by God in the future - it is the authentic version and there will be no edited version - God's truths are eternal and unchanging - it is heretical to say that God's Torah or that God Himself will improve - God is immutable, He is constant - He does not grow spiritually or intellectually - He cannot grow better, He cannot be more perfect - therefore, there are no corrections necessary for the Torah. The Torah must be the same Torah that God gave, and it will be the same one that all of our descendants will have. So the Rambam gives several principles that attest to the divine nature of Torah, assuming you accept the traditional thoughts of Judaism.

Aish Torah: there are a number of things predicted in the Torah that would suggest its divine nature. For example, there is the issue of kosher animals. The **Rambam** says that there are two identifying features for kashrus - a cloven hoof and a ruminant - in addition, they cannot have incisor teeth, the mark of predators. All ruminators have cloven hooves, except the camel. All animals with cloven hooves are ruminants, except the pig. If you find an animal with one of these features, and it is not a pig or camel, then it must be kosher. The Gemorah's conclusion about this in Chulin is that since Moshe was not a hunter or archer - this principle refutes those who say the Torah is not divine. Moshe did not know all the animals in the world; this statement about only these two animals having one sign has never been refuted - no additional animals exist that have only one of the signs of kashrus. The Torah therefore had to be given by God. This has nothing to do with the Revelation - this is about science and nature, the facts on the ground. No one has been able to refute this point.

In Devarim 7:6-7: *You are the holy people to God; you are the ones that God chose to be His treasured people from amongst all of the nations on the world; not because you are more numerous than all the peoples did Hashem desire you and choose you, for you are the fewest of all the people.* Despite being the smallest of nations, we have always been the target of all other nations; and yet throughout history they have not been able to exterminate us. Despite all of the best efforts of all major empires, they cannot finish us off. We were chosen to light up the world, serving as role models for all others.

John Adams: sent a letter in 1808 criticizing the depiction of Jews by the French Enlightenment philosopher Voltaire; Adams expressed his respect for ancient Jewry. Adams wrote of Voltaire, "How is it possible [that he] should represent the Hebrews in such a contemptible light? They are the most glorious nation that ever inhabited this Earth. The Romans and their Empire were but a Bauble in comparison of the Jews. They have given religion to three quarters of the Globe and have influenced the affairs of Mankind more, and more happily, than any other Nation ancient or modern."

Leo Tolstoy: "What is a Jew? Let's examine this free creature that was insulated and oppressed, trampled on and pursued, burned and drowned by all the rulers and the nations, but is nevertheless living and thriving in spite of the whole world. A Jew is a sacred being who procured an eternal fire from the heavens and with it illuminated the earth and those who live on

it. He is the spring and the source from which the rest of the nations drew their religions and beliefs. A Jew is a pioneer of culture. From time immemorial, ignorance was impossible in the Holy Land, even more so than nowadays in civilized Europe. A Jew is a pioneer of freedom. Back in primitive times, when the nation was divided into two classes, masters and slaves, Moses' teaching forbid holding a person as a slave for more than six years. A Jew is a symbol of civil and religious tolerance, "So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." These words were uttered during distant, barbarian times when it was commonly acceptable among the nations to enslave each other. A Jew is a symbol of eternity. The nation which neither slaughter nor torture could exterminate, which neither fire nor sword of civilizations were able to erase from the face of earth, the nation which first proclaimed the word of Lord, the nation which preserved the prophecy for so long and passed it on to the rest of humanity, such a nation cannot vanish."

Mark Twain: "Sampson was a Jew – therefore not a fool. The Jews have the best average brain of any people in the world. The Jews are the only race who work wholly with their brains and never with their hands. There are no Jewish beggars, no Jewish tramps, no Jewish ditch diggers, hod-carriers, day laborers or followers of toilsome, mechanical trades. They are peculiarly and conspicuously the world's intellectual aristocracy. The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then . . . passed away. The Greek and the Roman followed. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts. . . . All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

The first Toichachah: 26:44-5: *But despite all of this, while they will dwell in the land of their enemies, I will not have been revolted by them, nor will I have rejected them to obliterate them, to annul My covenant with them, for I am Hashem, their God. I will remember for them the covenant of the ancients, those whom I have taken out of the land of Egypt before the eyes of the nations, to be God unto them.* We are eternal, and cannot be destroyed, no matter how badly we stray.

Devarim: 30:1-5: *It will be that when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse that I have presented before you - then you will take it to your heart among all the nations where Hashem, your God, has dispersed you. Any you will return unto Hashem, your God, and listen to His voice, according to everything that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and all your soul. Then Hashem, your God, will bring back your captivity and have mercy upon you, and He will gather you in from all the peoples to which Hashem, your God, has scattered you. If your dispersed will be at the ends of heaven, from there Hashem, your God, will gather you in and from there He will take you. Hashem, your God, will bring you to the Land that your forefathers possessed and you shall possess it; He will do good to you and make you more numerous than your forefathers.* This prophecy is telling us that after we have reneged on the covenant and distanced ourselves from God, we were be punished and went through much misery and horror; but in the end, we will return home to our land; it will end well; the Jews will be gathered back from the four corners of the earth. **Rabbi Abbah** was asked in Sanhedrin, how do we know that the end of days is near? In Yechezkal 36:8 Hashem commands the mountains of Israel to once again produce their fruit because the Jews will be coming home to them soon. This is a reference to one of the curses in the Toichachah 26:32 - *I will make the land desolate, and your foes who dwell upon it will be desolate.* **Rashi:** this is actually a good thing for the Jews, a blessing, that no conqueror will find any pleasure in the land - it will remain totally unresponsive to them - they will have no success cultivating the land; it will remain desolate no matter what

they do; it is holy land that has a soul, a connection to God and the Jewish people; it will only release its produce to the people who belong there - only the Jews will make it green and fertile. It has come true in our time - the land was desolate for thousands of years, and when the Jews returned it brought forth fruit. Rabbi Abbah says when we are able to grow things again in the land, it means God's anger will have abated and the Jews can return home - the ground will again give forth its fruits. God would not allow any other nation to take hold of the land.

The divine nature of the land is spelled out in the Torah, but we also have the benefit of hindsight - we can look back at 3000 years of history, and we have seen what can be done in just 65 years since the founding of the state of Israel. It is breathtaking to see the vitality of this land - the amount of Torah, science, etc that is coming out of the land is unprecedented. The prophecy of Yechezkel read during Pesach about the valley of the dry bones is what we are seeing in our time - the revitalization of the Jewish nation, the Jewish people rising from the grave. The **Vilna Gaon** was convinced in his time that we were at the end of the long period of exile; he said that we would soon see the beginnings of the end of days, beginning with the dramatic uncovering of secrets of science; there would be an invention that will allow the Jews to fly to Israel on the "wings of eagles" - and indeed, the airplane has enabled the ingathering of Jews from all over the world. We are privileged to see this unfolding before our eyes. The Torah must be divine.