

“Will the Real Story of the Revelation Please Come Forward!”

The Different Narratives of Matan Torah

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Revelation lasts a moment; acceptance continues... AJ Heschel

1. What is the classic “Revelation” story of *Matan Torah*?
 - a. What did Moshe “receive?”
 - b. Is there more than one story?
 - c. Shattering the myth!

2. The Documentary Hypothesis Theory
 - a. **J** = Land of Judah--Southern writer God’s proper name of YHWH,
 - i. Exp. Stories: Eden, Cain & Abel, Part of Noah story, Abe, Isaac, Jacob and lots of Moses stories
 - b. **E** = Land of Israel –Northern Priest/writer. Calls Devine simply as “God.” Until made God’s name known with Moses then YHWH, God.
 - c. Moses and the plagues
 - d. **JE** or **RJE**: post destruction of Northern Kingdom, scribes fled south into Judah. Merger of J and E stories by scribe/historian.
 - e. **P** = Priest writer, Central theme of priesthood and sacrifices. Maybe 5th or 6th Century. Probably latest authorship. P // JE storylines.
 - f. **D** = Deuteronomy, most of it, late first temple work, maybe scribe under King Josiah of Judah, circa 622 CE.
 - g. **R** = Redactor, editor who put all the books/storylines together. Not always a great proofreader.

3. Let’s start shattering the Myth...

19 P On the third new moon after the Israelites had gone forth from the land of Egypt, on that very day, they entered the wilderness of Sinai.

R²Having journeyed from Rephidim, they entered the wilderness of Sinai and

E Israel encamped there in front of the mountain,³ and Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel: ⁴‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Me. ⁵Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine,⁶ but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

⁷Moses came and summoned the elders of the people and put before them all that the LORD had commanded him. ⁸All the people answered as one, saying, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do!” And Moses brought

back the people's words to the LORD. ⁹And the LORD said to Moses, "I will come to you in a thick cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you and so trust you ever after." Then Moses reported the people's words to the LORD,

J or ? ¹⁰and the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and warn them to stay pure today and tomorrow. Let them wash their clothes.

J ¹¹Let them be ready for the third day; for on the third day the LORD will come down, in the sight of all the people, on Mount Sinai. ¹²You shall set bounds for the people round about, saying, 'Beware of going up the mountain or touching the border of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death: ¹³no hand shall touch him, but he shall be either stoned or shot; beast or man, he shall not live.' When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they may go up on the mountain."

¹⁴Moses came down from the mountain to the people and warned the people to stay pure, and they washed their clothes. ¹⁵And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day: do not go near a woman."

¹⁶On the third day, as morning dawned...

E ...there was thunder, and lightning, and a dense cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud blast of the horn; and all the people who were in the camp trembled. ¹⁷Moses led the people out of the camp toward God, and they took their places at the foot of the mountain.

J ¹⁸Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke, for the LORD had come down upon it in fire; the smoke rose like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled violently.

E ¹⁹The blare of the horn grew louder and louder. As Moses spoke, God answered him in thunder.

J ²⁰The LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain, and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain and Moses went up. ²¹The LORD said to Moses, "Go down, warn the people not to break through to the LORD to gaze, lest many of them perish. ²²The priests also, who come near the LORD, must stay pure, lest the LORD break out against them." ²³But Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for You warned us saying, 'Set bounds about the mountain and sanctify it.'" ²⁴So the LORD said to him, "Go down, and come back

RJE together with Aaron;

E but let not the priests or the people break through to come up to the LORD, lest He break out against them."
²⁵And Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.

E? or REJ or Independent: Ch20 God spoke all these words, saying: The Ten Commandments



J Ch.24 Then He said to Moses, “Come up to the LORD, with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel, and bow low from afar. ²Moses alone shall come near the LORD; but the others shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him.”

E³Moses went and repeated to the people all the commands of the LORD and all the rules; and all the people answered with one voice, saying, “All the things that the LORD has commanded we will do!” ⁴Moses then wrote down all the commands of the LORD.

Early in the morning, he set up an altar at the foot of the mountain, with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵He designated some young men among the Israelites, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed bulls as offerings of well-being to the LORD. ⁶Moses took one part of the blood and put it in basins, and the other part of the blood he dashed against the altar. ⁷Then he took the record of the covenant and read it aloud to the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will faithfully do!” ⁸Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD now makes with you concerning all these commands.”

J or E ⁹Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel ascended; ¹⁰and they **saw the God of Israel**: under His feet there was the likeness of a pavement of sapphire, like the very sky for purity. ¹¹Yet He did not raise His hand against the leaders of the Israelites; they beheld God, and they ate and drank.

E¹²The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and wait there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the teachings and commandments which I have inscribed to instruct them.” ¹³So Moses and his attendant Joshua arose, and Moses ascended the mountain of God. ¹⁴To the elders he had said, “Wait here for us until we return to you. You have Aaron and Hur with you; let anyone who has a legal matter approach them.” ¹⁵When Moses had ascended the mountain,

P the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶The Presence of the LORD abode on Mount Sinai, and the cloud hid it for six days. On the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷Now the Presence of the LORD appeared in the sight of the Israelites as a consuming fire on the top of the mountain.

E¹⁸Moses went inside the cloud

R and ascended the mountain;

P24:15b-18a ...the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶The Presence of the Lord abode on Mount Sinai, and the cloud hid it for six days. On the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷Now the Presence of the Lord appeared in the sight of the Israelites as a consuming fire on the top of the mountain. ¹⁸Moses went inside the cloud and ascended the mountain; and Moses remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

תְּרוּמָה

P 25 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²Tell the Israelite people to bring Me gifts; you shall accept gifts for Me from every person whose heart so moves him.

P 31:18 ¹⁸When He finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the Pact, stone tablets inscribed with the finger of God.

P's Revelation! ch.34 ²⁹So Moses came down from Mount Sinai. And as Moses came down from the mountain bearing the two tablets of the Pact, Moses was not aware that the skin of his face was radiant, since he had spoken with Him. ³⁰Aaron and all the Israelites saw that the skin of Moses' face was radiant; and they shrank from coming near him. ³¹But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the chieftains in the assembly returned to him, and Moses spoke to them. ³²Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he instructed them concerning all that the LORD had imparted to him on Mount Sinai. ³³And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.

³⁴Whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would leave the veil off until he came out; and when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, ³⁵the Israelites would see how radiant the skin of Moses' face was. Moses would then put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with Him.

J's Theophany to Moses and Giving of Torah

34 The Lord said to Moses: "Carve two tablets of stone --- ²Be ready by morning, and in the morning come up to Mount Sinai and present yourself there to Me, on the top of the mountain. ³No one else shall come up with you, and no one else shall be seen anywhere on the mountain; neither shall the flocks and the herds graze at the foot of this mountain."

⁴So Moses carved two tablets of stone, like the first, and early in the morning he went up on Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, taking the two stone tablets with him. ⁵The Lord came down in a cloud; He stood with him there, and proclaimed the name Lord. ⁶The Lord passed before him and proclaimed: "The Lord! the Lord! a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, ⁷extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He does not remit all punishment, but visits the iniquity of parents upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generations."

⁸Moses hastened to bow low to the ground in homage, ⁹and said, “If I have gained Your favor, O Lord, pray, let the Lord go in our midst, even though this is a stiffnecked people. Pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Your own!”

¹⁰He said: I hereby make a covenant. Before all your people I will work such wonders as have not been wrought on all the earth or in any nation; and all the people who are with you shall see how awesome are the Lord’s deeds which I will perform for you. ¹¹Mark well what I command you this day. I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ¹²Beware of making a covenant with the inhabitants of the land against which you are advancing, lest they be a snare in your midst. ¹³No, you must tear down their altars, smash their pillars, and cut down their sacred posts;

¹⁴for you must not worship any other god, because the Lord, whose name is Impassioned, is an impassioned God. ¹⁵You must not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, for they will lust after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and invite you, and you will eat of their sacrifices. ¹⁶And when you take wives from among their daughters for your sons, their daughters will lust after their gods and will cause your sons to lust after their gods.

¹⁷You shall not make molten gods for yourselves.

¹⁸You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread—eating unleavened bread for seven days, as I have commanded you—at the set time of the month of Abib, for in the month of Abib you went forth from Egypt.

¹⁹Every first issue of the womb is Mine, from all your livestock that drop a male as firstling, whether cattle or sheep. ²⁰But the firstling of an ass you shall redeem with a sheep; if you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. And you must redeem every first-born among your sons.

None shall appear before Me empty-handed.

²¹Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor; you shall cease from labor even at plowing time and harvest time.

²²You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the first fruits of the wheat harvest; and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year. ²³Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Sovereign Lord, the God of Israel.

²⁴I will drive out nations from your path and enlarge your territory; no one will covet your land when you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times a year.

²⁵You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with anything leavened; and the sacrifice of the Feast of Passover shall not be left lying until morning.

²⁶The choice first fruits of your soil you shall bring to the house of the Lord your God.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother’s milk.

²⁷And the Lord said to Moses: Write down these commandments, for in accordance with these commandments I make a covenant with you and with Israel.

²⁸And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he ate no bread and drank no water; and he wrote down on the tablets the terms of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

And D’s Revelation

5 Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them: Hear, O Israel, the laws and rules that I proclaim to you this day! Study them and observe them faithfully!

²The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. ³It was not with our fathers that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, the living, every one of us who is here today. ⁴Face to face the LORD spoke to you on the mountain out of the fire—⁵I stood between the LORD and you at that time to convey the LORD’s words to you, for you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain—saying:

⁶ I the LORD am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage:
⁷You shall have no other gods beside Me.

⁸You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters below the earth. ⁹You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I the LORD your God am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me, ¹⁰but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

⁹You stand this day, all of you, before the LORD your God—your tribal heads, your elders and your officials, all the men of Israel, ¹⁰your children, your wives, even the stranger within your camp, from woodchopper to waterdrawer—¹¹to enter into the covenant of the LORD your God, which the LORD your God is concluding with you this day, with its sanctions; ¹²to the end that He may establish you this day as His people and be your God, as He promised you and as He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ¹³I make this covenant, with its sanctions, not with you alone, ¹⁴but both with those who are standing here with us this day before the LORD our God and with those who are not with us here this day.

4. Putting the Myth of *Matan Torah* back together....

AJ Heschel: God in Search of Man: A philosophy of Judaism (1955) pg. 213

*Revelation lasts a moment; acceptance continues...Here was an expression that puzzled the ancient rabbis: **on this day**. It should have said, on that day. This can only mean that the day of giving the Torah can never become past; that day is **this day**, every day. The Torah, whenever we study it, must be to us “as if it were given us today.”*

AJ Heschel: The Prophets (2001), pg. 551

Whatever the motive or content, and whatever be the mode in which inspiration is apprehended, there remains always its character as an event, not a process. What is the difference between a process and an event? A process happens regularly, following a relatively permanent pattern; and event is extraordinary, irregular...the term “continuous revelation” is, therefore, as proper as a “square circle.”

All Torah texts from: Jewish Publication Society. (1985). Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures (Ex 34). Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.