



*G-d prepares to reveal Himself to the Jews at Mount Sinai.*

## The Text:

G-d said to [Moses], "Go to the people [and instruct them in preparation for the Revelation]."

[Exodus 19:24]

G-d wanted to give the Ten Commandments. Moses was standing [atop Mount Sinai]. G-d said, "[If I say], 'I am the L-rd your G-d,' [the Jewish People] will say, 'Who said it – G-d or Moses?' Rather, let Moses descend, and then I shall say, 'I am the L-rd your G-d.'" So G-d said to Moses, "Go to the people [and instruct them]..."

[Midrash, Ibid.]

[G-d's message to the people was a pretext; G-d hoped that Moses] would realize that He wants him to leave.... He did not want to tell [Moses] explicitly to leave, because He did not want to hurt his feelings.

[Commentary of Maharzu on Midrash]

## Question:

1. Why would Moses be insulted if G-d told him to leave? He had done nothing wrong! G-d simply wanted to make it clear that *He* was uttering the commandments, and not Moses. Couldn't G-d have explained to him this simple rationale?
2. If there was no way to prevent Moses from feeling hurt, why did G-d sent him on a mission so that Moses "would realize that He wants him to leave" – isn't that just telling him to leave in different words?

## Answer:

The words "You do not belong here" have an inherently hurtful connotation. Instead, G-d *implied* it, without actually *saying* it. Human beings are sensitive to nuances of speech, even when there is no logical difference in the meaning.

## Message:

Sensitivity is not a sign of weakness; it is one of the essential qualities of being human. Moses, the greatest prophet of all time, was incomparably rational; he was also "the humblest of all men."<sup>1</sup> Yet even Moses could be affected by the choice of words, and G-d devised a strategy to avoid slighting him. We, too, must invest effort to ensure that our speech is always refined, sensitive and tactful.

<sup>1</sup> Numbers 12:3

*Please see other side...*



*The Jews have successfully defended themselves against the Amalekite attack.*

Moses' father-in-law Jethro [*Yisro* or *Yitro*] hears reports of the Exodus and subsequent miracles. He travels to meet Moses in the desert, bringing along Moses' wife and children.<sup>1</sup> Moses arranges a special feast in honor of his father-in-law, to whom he recounts the amazing events that have befallen the Jews.

Jethro, observing Moses' exhausting efforts to guide and instruct the Jews, suggests that Moses appoint assistants to help shoulder the burden. Moses accepts his advice, appointing a hierarchy of leaders to govern groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.

The Jews arrive at Sinai. G-d sends Moses with a message to the People: "You have seen what I did to Egypt; I bore you on the wings of eagles,<sup>1</sup> and brought you to Me. And now, if you heed My voice and observe My covenant...you shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy People." G-d offers the Jews His Torah; they respond as one, "All that G-d has spoken we shall fulfill!"

G-d commands the Jews to purify themselves in preparation for receiving the Torah. On the sixth of Sivan – fifty days after the Exodus – the Jews wake to thunder and lightning. Mount Sinai is aflame and billowing smoke, and the sound of a Shofar resounds through the camp.

G-d "descends" upon Mount Sinai; for the first and last time in history, an entire nation hears Him speak: "I am the Lord your G-d, who has delivered you from Egypt." Thus begin the ten commandments.

<p>The first five govern our relationship with the Creator:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accept one G-d</li> <li>2. Reject idolatry</li> <li>3. Do not invoke G-d's name falsely or purposelessly</li> <li>4. Honor your parents<sup>1</sup></li> <li>5. Observe the Sabbath</li> </ol>	<p>The second five govern our interaction with human beings.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Do not murder</li> <li>7. Do not commit adultery</li> <li>8. Do not kidnap</li> <li>9. Do not bear false witness</li> <li>10. Do not covet that which belongs to another</li> </ol>
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The Jews beg Moses to speak with them, "and let G-d not speak with us, lest we die!"

"Do not fear," replies Moses. G-d has revealed Himself, not to terrify the Jews, but to uplift them and inspire them with awe. The rest of the Torah will be taught by G-d to Moses, who will communicate it to the people. Moses enters the thick cloud covering the mountaintop; he will spend forty days in Heaven, studying the rest of the Torah.

<sup>1</sup> Moses had left his family in Midian, not wishing to expose them to the suffering of the enslaved Jews.

<sup>2</sup> According to popular translation; the bird *nesher* is actually *not* an eagle, and its precise identity is unknown.

<sup>3</sup> The debt of children to their parents reflects the gratitude every human being owes to God.

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