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Torah min haaretz

Tikkun Leil Shavuot, 2012

1. RABBI IN A BOX

Talmud Bavli – Ketubot 106a

Eliyahu used to come to Rabbi Anan, upon which occasions the prophet recited the Seder Eliyahu to him. When, however, Rabbi Anan had given this decision, the prophet came no more. Rabbi Anan fasted in consequence, and begged forgiveness, whereupon the prophet came again; but Rabbi Anan had such great fear of Eliyahu that, in order to avoid seeing him, he made a box and sat in it until the recitation was over.

בבלי כתובות קו.א

רב ענן, הוה רגיל אליהו דאתי גביה, דהוה מתני ליה סדר דאליהו, כיון דעבד הכי איסתלק. יתיב בתעניתא ובעא רחמי ואתא. כי אתא הוה מבעית ליה בעותי, ועבד תיבותא ויתיב קמיה, עד דאפיק ליה סידריה.

2. REVELATION: A LOVE STORY

Sefer Iyov (Job) 42:5

By the hearing of the ear I heard You,
But now mine eye has seen You.

איוב מב

לשמע אזן שמעתיך
ועתה עיני ראתך.

Shemot (Exodus) 2:23-24

A long time after that, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites were groaning under the bondage and cried out: their cry for help rose up to God. God heard their moaning, and God remembered God's covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.

שמות ב כג-כה

ויהי בימים הרבים ההם וימת מלך מצרים ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבדה ויזעקו ותעל שועתם אל האלהים מן העבדה. וישמע אלהים את נאקתם ויזכר אלהים את בריתו את אברהם את יצחק ואת יעקב. וירא אלהים את בני ישראל וידע אלהים.

Shemot (Exodus) 19:5-6

If therefore you will hear my voice, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

שמות יט ה-ו

ועתה אם שמוע תשמעו בקלי. ושמרתם את בריתי והייתם לי סגולה מכל העמים כי לי כל הארץ ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדש.

3. TORAH MIN HAARETZ

– an *encounter* that leads to a *partnership*, which is *transformative*.

Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929)

“Revelation is not law-giving. It is only this: Revelation. The primary content of revelation is revelation itself. “He came down [on Sinai] – this already concludes the revelation; “God spoke” is the beginning of interpretation.”

Emil Fackenheim (1916-2003)

“The Torah reflects actual events of divine revelation, or incursions into human history, not a mistaken human belief in such incursions. But it is a human reflection of these events, the reception is shot through with appropriation and interpretation... Our modern appropriating is both possible and necessary because Sinai is not an ancient event only: the Torah is given whenever Israel receives it.”

Eugene Borowitz (1924-)

“The intense personal reality of a relationship demands that we express and fulfil it in action... Human beings fill the content of the law – that is our honourable role – but we do so in response to the living presence of God who is the source and the criterion of the appropriateness of the action. In the case of the Jew, because the covenant relationship is historical and communal, the decision cannot be made in terms of what is purely personal and momentary. Tradition will play as much of a role as innovation.”

Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972)

“The Karaites claimed to adhere to a purely Biblical religion. However, Judaism is not purely a Biblical religion. Moses was not the founder of Judaism. Long before he was born the children of Israel cherished traditions that dated back to the days of Abraham. The oral Torah is, in parts, older than the written Torah. The Shabbat, we are told, was known to Israel before the event at Sinai took place.”

“We approach the laws of the Bible through the interpretation and the wisdom of the Rabbis. Without their interpretation the text of the laws is often unintelligible. Thus Judaism is based on a minimum of revelation and a maximum of interpretation, upon the will of God and upon the understanding of Israel... There is a partnership of God and Israel in regard to both the world and the Torah: God created the earth and we till the soil; God gave us the text and we refine and complete it.”

“The Bible is a seed, God is the sun, but we are the soil. Every generation is expected to bring forth new understanding and new realisation. The word is the word of God, and its understanding God gave unto humanity. The source of authority is not the word as given in the text but Israel's understanding of the text. At Sinai we received both the word and the spirit to understand the word.”

Seder Eliyahu Zuta 2

The Holy Blessed One, gave the Torah unto Israel like wheat from which to derive fine flour, or like flax from which to make a garment.

אליהו זוטא ב

וכשנתן הקב"ה תורה לישראל, לא נתנה להן
אלא כחיטים להוציא מהן סולת, וכפשתן
להוציא ממנו בגד.

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