

Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 22a

<p>We have learnt, 'You shall make them [i.e. words of Torah] known to your children and to your children's children' (Deuteronomy 4, v. 9), after which it states 'the day upon which you stood before Hashem your G-d at Horeb' (ibid. v. 10). Just as [the revelation of the Torah at Horeb] was with awe, fear, quaking, and trembling, so too in our present state [our engaging with Torah should be] with awe, fear, quaking, and trembling.</p>	<p>דַּתְנִיָּא וְהוֹדַעְתֶּם לְבָנֶיךָ וּלְבְנֵי בְנֵיךָ וְכַתִּיב בְּתַרְיֵיהּ יּוֹם אֲשֶׁר עֲמַדְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּחֹרֵב מַה לְהֵלֵךְ בְּאִימָה וּבִירָאָה וּבְרַתָּת וּבְזִיעַ אָף כְּאֵן בְּאִימָה וּבִירָאָה וּבְרַתָּת וּבְזִיעַ</p>
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Awe and trembling at Horeb: (Exodus 19:16, 18)

<p>There was thunder and lightning, a heavy cloud upon the mountain, a very strong shofar-sound, and all the people who were in the camp quivered ... Mt Sinai smoked in its entirety, for Hashem had descended upon it in a fire. Its smoke rose like the smoke of a furnace, and the entire mountain quivered excessively.</p>	<p>וַיְהִי קֹלֶת וּבְרָקִים וְעָנָן כָּבֵד עַל- הָהָר וְקוֹל שֹׁפָר חָזֵק מְאֹד וַיִּחַרְדּוּ כָּל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בְּמַחֲנֵה ... וְהָר סִינַי עָשָׂן כְּלוֹ מִפְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר יָרַד עָלָיו יְהוָה בְּאֵשׁ וַיַּעַל עָשָׁנוּ כְּעָשָׂן הַכֹּבֵשׂוֹן וַיִּחַרְדּוּ כָּל-הָהָר מְאֹד</p>
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Why Awe and Trembling?

3 Stages: 1) Becoming Ourselves, Separate from G-d; 2) Letting Go of Self: Awe & Trembling; 3) Transformation of Self, Receiving G-d's Infinity / Union with G-d in the Finite Realm

Stage 1. G-d hid Himself in order to allow us to become our finite, individuated selves.

Stage 3. However, G-d's goal is not to remain hidden, but rather to connect His Infinite Self with our finite selves, to bridge the infinite gap. G-d initiated this at Sinai:

Exodus 19:20:

<p>The L-rd <u>descended</u> upon Mt Sinai</p>	<p>וַיֵּרַד ה' עַל-הָר סִינַי</p>
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Cf. Psalm 68:18

<p>G-d's chariot consists of two myriads, two thousand; G-d is among them at Sinai in holiness</p>	<p>רָכַב אֱלֹקִים רִבְתַּיִם אֲלֵפֵי שְׁנָאָן אֲ-דָנִי בָם סִינַי בְּקֹדֶשׁ</p>
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Oft-cited Rabbinic tradition associated with the above verse: At the giving of the Torah, G-d Himself came down to Mt Sinai with His angelic entourage.

In (some of) the 10 Commandments, G-d address our base selves ('You shall not murder', 'You shall not steal', etc.), because G-d wants to connect with us even on our basest level.

Intro to & opening of Sinaitic theophany & 10 Commandments (Exodus 20:1-2):

<p><u>Eloqim</u> (= G-d Who hides) spoke all of <u>these</u> things, <u>to say</u>: I am [the Tetragrammaton] your Eloqim ...</p>	<p>וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹקִים אֶת כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה לְאָמֹר אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ</p>
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Deeper meaning: that which G-d made via hiding = 'Eloqim', must be revealed = 'spoke all these things', and proclaim the revelation of G-d's essence = 'to say [a] I, [b]

Tetragrammaton, [c] your 'Eloqim'. The purpose of the divine hiding, which enables man's separateness, is for that hiddenness itself to progressively reveal and integrate divinity.

Stage 2. The prerequisite: In order for the finite (Stage 1) to transform by receiving and unifying with the Infinite (Stage 3), the finite must undergo undoing (Stage 2). The first time around, the entire process was initiated by G-d, via Egyptian slavery and His overawing us at Sinai, then disclosing Himself to us in the Torah.

However, this transformation is an ongoing, incremental process, in which we induce 'awe and trembling' by appreciating our distance from seeing divine Self-disclosure in Torah, despite our ethical and intellectual attainments in that direction. It is the process of redemption, beginning with the Exodus from Mitzrayim = finitude ('Egypt') leading to the ultimate integration with G-d in the Messianic Era.