

## Rabbi's Article II

*The Torah: Building a Home for G-d*

Concerning *Shavout* (-[Link](#)), the time of G-d giving us the Torah, the Talmud (-Shabbat 88b) shares a debate that Moses had to win, before he could receive the Torah:

"When Moses ascended on High (to receive the Torah), the ministering angels said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: 'Master of the Universe, what is one born of a woman (doing here) among us?' (The Holy One, Blessed be He), said to them: 'He came to receive the Torah.' (The angels) said before Him: '(The Torah is a) hidden treasure... (and) you seek to give it to flesh and blood? (-Psalms 8:5,) 'What is man that You are mindful of him and the son of man that You think of him?'" (Rather (-Psalms 8:2),) 'G-d our L-rd, how glorious is Your name in all the earth that Your majesty is placed above the heavens.' (The rightful place of G-d's majesty, the Torah, is in the heavens.)"

"The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses: Provide them with an answer (as to why the Torah should be given to the people). (Moses) said before Him: '...Master of the Universe, the Torah that You are giving me, what is written in it?' (G-d said to him (-Exodus 20:2):) 'I am the L-rd your G-d Who brought you out of Egypt.' Moses said (to the angels:) 'Did you descend to Egypt? Were you enslaved to Pharaoh? Why should the Torah be yours?' Again Moses asked: 'What (else) is written in it?' (G-d said to him (Exodus 20:3):) 'You shall have no other gods.' (Moses said to the angels:) 'Do you dwell among the nations who worship idols (that you require this special warning)?' ...Again (Moses asked:) 'What (else) is written in it?' (The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him (Exodus 20:12):) 'Honor your father and your mother.' (Moses asked the angels:) 'Do you have a father or a mother?' Again (Moses asked:) 'What (else) is written in it?' (G-d said to him (-Exodus 20:13):) 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal.' (Moses asked the angels:) 'Is there jealousy among you, (or) is there an evil inclination within you (that would render these commandments relevant)? Immediately they agreed with the Holy One, Blessed be He, (that He made the right decision to give the Torah to the people, and) as it is stated (Psalms 8:10): 'G-d our L-rd, how glorious is Your name in all the earth,' while, 'that Your majesty is placed above the heavens' is not written (because the angels agreed with God that it is appropriate to give the Torah to the people on earth)."

Our sages explain that the angels were using a the law of *Baal Metzra* (border; neighbor) to demand that G-d must legally give them the Torah, and not to the Jewish nation. The law is (-Rambam, Laws of Neighbors, Chapter 12, Law 5): "When a person sells property which he owns to another person, his colleague, the owner of the property neighboring his, has the right to pay the purchase price to the buyer and remove him from his purchase... This practice stems from the charge (-Deuteronomy 6:18): 'And you shall do what is just and good.' Our Sages said (-Baba Metziah 108a): 'Since the sale is fundamentally the same, it is 'just and good,' that the property should be acquired by the neighbor, instead of the person living further away.'" The sages give different answers to this demand, and while the Rebbe disputes each of them<sup>1</sup>, the Rebbe's ultimate dispute is, that none of these answers are found in the words of Moses' reply to the angels?! Hence, what was Moses' reply to the legal demands of the angels, to the point that the angels then agreed with Moses?

The law of *Baal Metzra* doesn't apply when the neighbor is looking to use the land for profiting, while the purchaser is looking to use the land for building a home. Hence, Moses was answering the angels that the purpose of the Jewish people receiving the Torah is not for the sake of planting and reaping great harvests of the revelation of the *Infinite Light*, but rather, (-Tanchuma, Naso 15. Quoted in Tanya, chapter 36), "To make a dwelling place for Him, blessed be He." Hence, Moses is pointing out that the angels have no connection with the physical world, and hence, cannot, even through Torah, transform the world into a home for G-d. Even more so, the angels in heaven receive their elevation through our service here below, for when one uses a lever to lift, it is through placing the lever beneath the *lowest* layer (earth), that the *entire* object is lifted (including heaven).

But, one might ask, aren't the angels also interested in making a home for G-d, albeit in heaven? Hence, the law of *Baal Metzra* should apply? The answer is that the angels, in their spiritual realm, with their spiritual form of Torah and Mitzvot, cannot build a home for G-d *Himself*, the *Essence* of G-d, but only for the *Light* (revelation; spirituality) of G-d. The *Essence* of G-d is drawn only through the subduing and transformation of darkness into light, and evil into goodness. This service --which is only here in the physical realm with its darkness and evil-- is the omnipotent service of *creatio ex nihilo*, of which only the *Essence* of G-d has the power to perform. The physical (true *creatio ex nihilo*) could only be created by the *Essence* of G-d, and not by His *Infinite Light*. And hence, Moses speaks of the angels not having a father and a mother, meaning that they do not live in the realm of true *creatio ex nihilo* procreation, in which the *Essence* of G-d is experienced.

1. The law only applies to (i) land and not movable property, (ii) to a sale, not a gift, (iii) doesn't apply to relatives, and the Jews are called, "relatives unto Him," and "Children to G-d," (iv) Moses was a, "Man of G-d," and hence, we are taught that from half and below he was 'man', and from half and above he was, 'of G-d,' and hence, Moses too, was a *neighbor* to heaven, (v) doesn't apply to a partner, and Moses, through being an honest judge in matters of Torah law, becomes a partner in Torah.

Disputes: (i) The law is based upon the purchaser being able to buy land elsewhere, hence, the *right thing* is to let the neighbor buy the land to make easy the agriculture, and this doesn't apply to movable property, which can be purchased anywhere. However, once the Torah is giving to earth, the law is, "Torah is not in heaven," and hence, here, the distinction of movable property is not applicable. (ii) Torah was not just a gift, but also an inheritance and a purchase. (iii, iv and v) These answers are specifically against what Moses was saying, in which he was pointing out how distant the Jewish people were (-descended to Egypt, have jealousy, evil inclination, etc.) from heaven.

Other answers: (vi) The angels were only arguing over the *Esoteric* part of the Torah, but not the revealed and legal aspects of the Torah, and hence, if the neighbor is demanding to purchase only part of the land, while the purchaser is purchasing *all* the land, the entire land goes to the purchaser --but here too, Moses' answer is the opposite, in pointing out that the laws of the Torah don't apply to the angels. Hence, the angels must have been demanding the revealed laws of the Torah, as well. (vii) The law doesn't apply when the neighbor is purchasing in order to gain wealth, while the purchaser is purchasing for survival. The Torah is necessary for the survival of the Jew in times of combat against his *Evil Inclination* -however, Moses' reply isn't speaking of a specific situation of the Jews being under attack by evil, but a general statement that the Torah belongs down here.