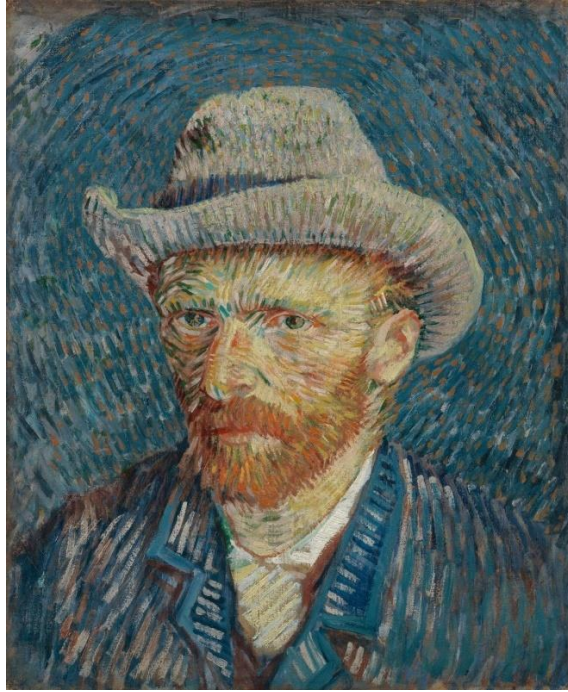


PARSHAT YITRO  
EXODUS 18:1-20:23  
HAFTARAH ISAIAH 6:1-7:6, 9:5-6  
18 SHEVAT 5783/09 FEBRUARY 2023



*Self-Portrait with Grey Felt Hat*  
Oil on cotton by Vincent Van Gogh

TO BE PRESENT

1. Yitro, priest of Midian, father-in-law of Moses, heard all that God had done for Moses and for Israel... (Exodus 18:1)

So shall you say to the House of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel: “You have seen what I did to Egypt, how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Me.” (Exodus 19:3-4)

“You have seen.” It is not a tradition that you have. I do not send to you a verbal account. I do not have testimony presented to you by witnesses. Rather, you yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt.

“You have seen.” There is a difference between that which a person sees and that which others tell him; for regarding that which others tell him, there are times that he hesitates to believe. (Rashi to 19:4 and to 20:19)

2. “And God spoke all these words, saying...” (Exodus 20:1). Rabbi Yitzhak said, What the prophets were to prophesy in the future in each generation, they received from Mount Sinai.

As Moses said to Israel (Deuteronomy 29:14), "But with those here with us standing today and with those not here with us today." "With us today"; these are the souls that will be created in the future, who do not have yet substance. (Shemot Rabbah 28; tradition of *ma'amad har Sinai*)

3. Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, for God has come only in order to test (*nasot*) you." (Exodus 20:17)

*Nasot* is an expression of elevation and greatness. (Rashi to 20:17)

It is human spiritual greatness that is God's purpose in revealing Godself. (HaAmeck Davar)

A human being is not a mere receiver of sublime messages. A human being is, at the same time, the person to whom the word is said, and the one through whom there is Revelation. A human being is the site of transcendence. (Emmanuel Levinas, "Revelation")

4. The sun has entered me.

The sun has entered me together with the cloud and the river.

I myself have entered the river,

and I have entered the sun

with the cloud and the river.

There has not been a moment

when we do not interpenetrate.

But before the sun entered me,

the sun was in me—

also the cloud and the river.

Before I entered the river,

I was already in it.

There has not been a moment

when we have not inter-been.

Therefore you know

that as long as you continue to breathe,

I continue to be in you.

("Interbeing" by Thich Nhat Hahn)

5. Are we not of interest to each other? (concluding line, poem "Ars Poetica #100: I Believe" by Elizabeth Alexander)

Worlds await when we are present to one another. (Krista Tippett on "Ars Poetica #100")