

PARSHAT YITRO  
EXODUS 18:1-20:23  
HAFTARAH ISAIAH 6:1-7:6, 9:5-6  
22 SHEVAT 5784/01 FEBRUARY 2024



*The Luncheon on the Grass*  
Oil on canvass by Édouard Manet

## SITE OF TRANSCENDENCE

1. God spoke (*daber*) all these words (*devarim*)... (Exodus 20:1)

...he wrote down on the tablets the terms of the covenant, the Ten Commandments (*aseret hadvarim*). (Exodus 34:28)

2. With ten utterances (*ma'ahmarot*) was the world created:

God said, "Let there be light." (Gen. 1:3)

God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water." (Gen. 1:6)

God said, "Let the water below the sky be gathered into one area" (Gen. 1:9)

God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation" (Gen. 1:11)

God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky" (Gen 1:14)

God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures" (Gen. 1:20)

God said, "Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature" (Gen. 1:24)

God said, "Let us make adam in our image" (Gen. 1:26)

God said, "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant" (Gen 1:29)

God said, "It is not good for the adam to be alone; God said, "I will make a fitting helper" (Gen. 2:18)

3. All the people saw the thunder and lightning, the blare of the horn and the mountain smoking. The people saw and they trembled... (Exodus 20: 15)
4. 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. [God has come] in order to exalt you. (Rashi to 20:17)

5. It is human spiritual greatness that is God's purpose in revealing Godself, the ability to endure hardship through the immense amplification of inner resources. (Avivah Zornberg on Haamek Davar)
6. The Talmud affirms the prophetic and verbal origin of the Revelation, but lays more emphasis on *the voice of the person listening*...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 a Revelation. A human being is the site of transcendence. (Emmanuel Levinas, "Revelation" emphasis added)