

1. Awakening from Above/Awakening from Below:¹

- Redemption is a two-step process.
 - Israelites are not magically transformed b/c God delivered them.
 - Israelites are not magically transformed b/c God gave them the Torah.
 - Transformation comes from participation with God to manifest his kingdom on earth. See Matthew 6:10.

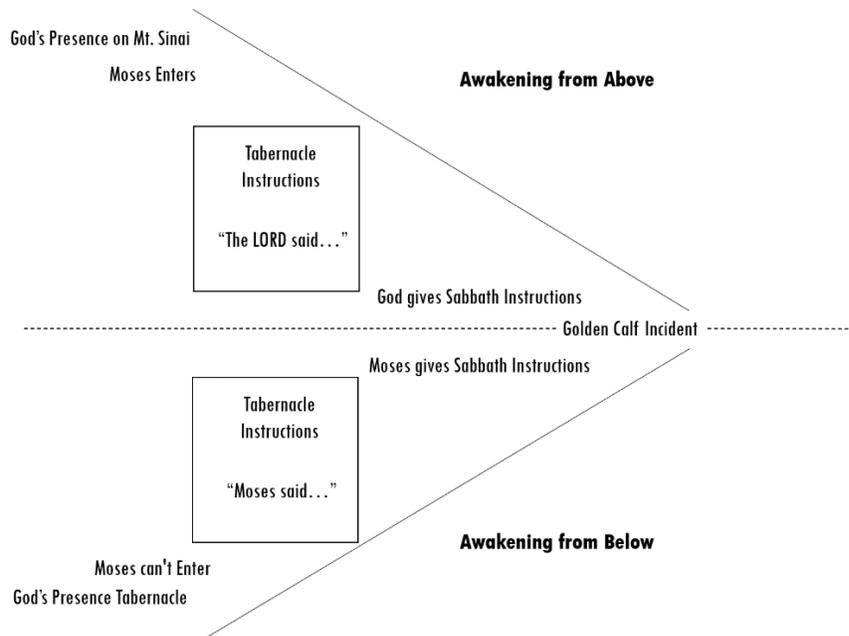
Awakening from Above	Awakening from Below
- God breaks through the (apparent) bounds of nature (Ten Plagues, divide the Red Sea, Mt. Sinai).	- the revelation/transformation comes through the action of doing. As we “do,” we internalize/realize and transform.
- A revealing of God’s nature or will through His actions (God’s instructions for the Tabernacle).	- A revealing of God’s nature of will through our participation in the divine plan (Moses and Israelites building the Tabernacle).
- Awe, awakening, revelation.	- insight, self-reflection, participatory knowing.
- limited in ability to transform humanity (Golden calf).	- solidifies and makes the transformation process permanent (Exodus 40:34-35).

2. New Testament reflection:

- Matthew 7:24 “whoever hears these words **AND** puts them into practice.”
- James 1:22-25 – “do not merely listen...do what it says.”
 - James wants us to be a doer of the word, not just a hearer of the word.
 - God’s will (word) is made manifest here on earth through our actions.

¹ Jonathan Sacks (2010). Covenant and Conversation, Exodus: The Book of Redemption. London (Maggid Books), pp. 271-276.

3. Exodus 25 - 40:



4. Exodus 24:7:

“He took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people, and they said,
“All that the LORD has spoken **we will do**, and **we will “hear”** (Hebrew – *Shema*)

- Hebrew *Shema* – is the word to hear. The same word is translated as obey/obedience.
- Hebrew has no singular word for “obey.” To “hear” God implies the action of obedience.

5. Why do the Israelites respond in this order – “to do” and then “to hear?”

- A Midrash found in **Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezar** and elsewhere (see below)
- “Doing” the commandment leads to a deeper understanding of God’s will and makes the commandment your own.

“Some actions simply cannot be understood (or heard) until they are performed (or done). By doing, we understand... In this way, performing a *mitzvah* (commandment) **changes us** and **brings us closer** to God.”²

² Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, (2001). *Jewish Spirituality: A Brief Introduction for Christians*. Nashville (Jewish Lights Publishing), pp. 55-58.

A midrash on Exodus 24:7 as recorded in *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*: Chapter 41.

God offers the Torah to the Edomites (descendants of Esau):

Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: Will ye accept for yourselves the Torah? They said to Him: What is written therein? He answered them: It is written therein, “**Thou shalt do no murder**” (Ex. xx. 13). They replied to Him: We are unable to abandon the blessing with which Isaac blessed Esau, for he said to him, “By thy sword shalt thou live” (Gen. xxvii. 40).

God offers the Torah to the descendants of Ishmael:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: Will ye accept for yourselves the Torah? They said to Him: What is written therein? He answered them: “**Thou shalt not steal**” (Ex. xx. 15) is written therein. They said to Him: We are not able to abandon the usage which our fathers observed, for they brought Joseph down into Egypt, as it is said, “For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews” (Gen. xl. 15).

God offers the Torah to all the nations of the world:

Thence He sent messengers to all the nations of the world. He said unto them: Will ye receive for yourselves the Torah? They said to Him: What is written therein? He said to them: “**Thou shalt have no other gods before me**” (Ex. xx. 3). They said to Him: We have no delight in the Torah, therefore let Him give His Torah to His people, as it is said, “The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace” (Ps. 29:11).

God offers the Torah to Israel:

While the Torah had not yet been heard, they said to Him: We will keep and observe all the precepts which are in the Torah, as it is said, “And they said, All that the Lord hath spoken **will we do, and be obedient.**”³

³ Friedlander, Gerald. *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*: Chapter 41. Varda Books. Kindle Edition.