

The Torah Of My Servant Moses

This is a Yiddish folktale from the Vilna Archive and collected by YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. It is based upon the retelling of a Talmudic tale, Shabbat 89a. The folktale is called "The Torah Of My Servant Moses".

This is the story that Reb Joshua ben Levi tells concerning the time when the Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Torah to Moshe, peace to his memory.

As Moshe was descending again from Heaven, Satan came to the Holy One, blessed be He, and said, "Lord of the Universe, where have You hidden the Torah?"

The Holy One, blessed be He, replied, "I gave it to the Earth."

Satan went to the Earth and said, "Earth, where did you hide God's Torah?"

The Earth replied, "God knows everything. But as for me, I don't have the Torah."

So Satan went to the Sea and said, "Sea, where have you hidden the Torah?"

The Sea replied, "I don't have it."

So Satan went to the Abyss and said, "Where have you hidden the Torah that God gave you?"

The Abyss replied, "It's not in my depths."

Then Satan went to the dead and to those who are lost and asked them, "Where have you hidden the Torah?"

They replied, "It's true that we have heard of it, but we don't know where it is."

So Satan went to God and said, "I've searched the entire world over and have not found the Torah."

The Holy One, blessed be He, said, "Go to Ben Amram—to Moshe, son of Amram. I gave it to him."

So Satan went to Moshe and said, "Moshe, where is the Torah that God gave you?"

Moshe replied, "Who or what am I that the Holy One, blessed be He, should have given the Torah to me?"

When God heard about this, He said, "Moshe, why did you deny that I gave you the Torah?"

Moshe replied, "Lord of the Universe, how can I take it upon myself to boast that it is I who have received the Torah, an instrument which produces such joy that studying it makes all humankind happy every day?"

God said, "Moshe, Moshe, it is not well to belittle oneself. Still, because you would not boast of having the Torah, let your reward be that it will henceforth be named after you."

And so it is written, "Remember the Torah of My servant, Moshe.

Which is why today we say:

"This is the Torah that Moses set before the people Israel; the Torah, given by God, through Moses".

V'zos ha-To-ro a-sher som Mo-sheh li-f' nay b'nay Yis-ro-ayl al-pee Ado-noy b'yad Mo-sheh

Submitted by: Stephen Bernstein