

Abbas Embarrassed: Trump Admin Secures Key Victory At Hostile United Nations

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The Trump administration secured a key victory yesterday at the hostile United Nations, as Holocaust-denying, kleptocratic, jihad-subsidizing Palestinian Authority (PA) chieftain Mahmoud Abbas failed to rally sufficient support to merely force a U.N. Security Council vote on a Palestinian draft resolution that would have rejected the Trump administration’s recently unveiled “deal of the century” peace plan.

The Security Council vote assuredly would have been vetoed by the United States, a permanent member, but the failure to even successfully garner support to stage a symbolic vote represents a monumental embarrassment for Abbas, the PA successor to unrepentant terrorist Yasser Arafat — himself a mentee of Hitler ally Haj Amin al-Husseini, the former grand mufti of Jerusalem. The diplomatic effort to stymie the symbolic vote, halting it dead in its tracks, thus also represents a clear win for the Trump administration’s United Nations diplomatic team. The United Nations, of course, is a body infamously hostile to the Jewish state and infamously mollicoddling of the Palestinian-Arab cause.

Abbas is speaking today at a special meeting of the U.N. Security Council. He had initially hoped to stage a Security Council vote on the “deal of the century” to follow his speech.

“This is a significant setback for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas,” Barak Ravid opined yesterday for Axios. “The postponement follows efforts from Jared Kushner and other administration officials over the last few days to dilute the text of the resolution and prevent a vote.”

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Week 17: Yitro (Jethro) Exodus 18:1–20:23; Isaiah 6:1–7:6; 9:5–6; 1 John 5:1–11

Overview/Summary of Last Week

In last week’s Torah study, God brought Israel out of Egypt and parted the Red Sea to save them from Pharaoh and the Egyptians. God provided for the needs of His people in the wilderness by raining down manna from heaven and bringing forth water from a rock.

This week, in Reading Yitro, Moses’ father-in-law, Yitro (Jethro), comes from Midian along with Moses’ wife and two sons to meet him at the Israelites’ camp **after hearing of all the great miracles that God had performed to deliver His people.**

Yitro (Jethro):

“Now **Jethro**, the priest of Midian and father-in-law of Moses, heard of everything God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, and how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt.” **Exodus 18:1**

The purpose of the Exodus is achieved when, seven weeks after their liberation from Egypt, the people of Israel gather at the foot of Mount Sinai to receive the Torah from G-d.

But first the Reading describes the arrival in the Israelite camp of Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro the priest of Midian, who has heard of the miracles of the Exodus. Jethro brings with him Moses’ wife, Zipporah, and Moses’ two sons, Gershom and Eliezer (whom Moses had earlier sent back to Midian), and proclaims:

“Now I know that G-d is greater than all gods...”

“God intended that they (mankind) would **seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him**, though He is not far from each one of us.” **Acts 17:27**

God desires relationship with us so much that He made the entire universe for this purpose.

As we lift our eyes, His vastness is beyond our comprehension; His glory and weightiness filling everything.

He sustains all things by His powerful Word.” **Hebrews 1:3**

Exodus 18:1-20:23

Exodus 18:1-2

Jethro's Advice

18 Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. ² Now Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her home,

JETHRO TOOK ZIPPORAH, MOSES' WIFE, AFTER HE HAD SENT HER BACK (18:2)

When G-d said to Moses in Midian, “Go, return to Egypt” **Exodus 4:19**, “Moses took his wife and sons...” (ibid., v. 20). When Aaron later met with him “at the mountain of G-d” (v. 27), he said to him: “Who are these?” Said Moses: “This is my wife whom I married in Midian and these are my children” “Where are you taking them?” asked Aaron. “To Egypt,” said Moses. Said Aaron to Moses: “We are grieving over the ones already in Egypt, and you propose to add to their number!” So Moses said to Zipporah, “Return to your father’s house,” and she took her two sons and went away.

Mechilta; Rashi

Exodus 18:3-11

³ along with her two sons. The name of the one was Gershom (for he said, “I have been a sojourner^[d] in a foreign land”), ⁴ and the name of the other, Eliezer^[b] (for he said, “The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh”). ⁵ Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was encamped at the mountain of God. ⁶ And when he sent word to Moses, “I,^[c] your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her,” ⁷ Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. And they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent. ⁸ Then Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them in the way, and how the Lord had delivered them. ⁹ And Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the Lord had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians.

¹⁰ Jethro said, “Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. ¹¹ Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods, because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people.”^[d]

NOW I KNOW THAT G-D IS GREATER THAN ALL GODS (18:11)

This tells us that he had full knowledge of every idol in the world, for he had worshipped them all.

Mechilta; Rashi

The Torah could not be given to Israel until Jethro, **the great and supreme priest of the all pagan world**, (*had*) confessed his faith in the Holy One, saying, “Now I know that G-d is greater than all the gods.”

Zohar

Exodus 18:12-13

¹² And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.

¹³ The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening.

AND IT CAME TO PASS ON THE MORROW, THAT MOSES SAT TO JUDGE THE PEOPLE... FROM THE MORNING TO THE EVENING (18:13)

Every judge who judges with utter truthfulness even for a single hour, the Torah regards it as though he had become a partner with G-d in the work of creation.

Talmud, Shabbat 10a

Exodus 18:14-19:1

¹⁴ When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, “What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?” ¹⁵ And Moses said to his father-in-law, “Because the people come to me to inquire of God; ¹⁶ when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws.” ¹⁷ Moses' father-in-law said to him, “What you are doing is not good. ¹⁸ You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. ¹⁹ Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, ²⁰ and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. ²¹ Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. ²² And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. ²³ If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace.”

²⁴ So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. ²⁵ Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. ²⁶ And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves. ²⁷ Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went away to his own country.

Israel at Mount Sinai

19 On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai.

IN THE THIRD MONTH... THAT SAME DAY THEY CAME INTO THE WILDERNESS OF SINAI (19:1)

On the first of the month [of Sivan] they arrived in the Sinai... and on that day Moses did not say anything at all to them, on account of their exhaustion from the journey.

On the second day, he said to them, *“And you shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests...”*

On the third day, he informed them of G-d’s command to set boundaries [around Mount Sinai]...

On the fourth day, he commanded them to *“Sanctify yourselves today and tomorrow”* **Exodus 19:10**; following which the Torah was given on the sixth day of Sivan.

Rabbi Jose says that *the Torah was given on the seventh day* of the month... Moses having added a third day of sanctification out of his own understanding.

All agree that the Torah was given on Shabbat. They differ only in that Rabbi Jose says that the first of the month was a Sunday, while the other rabbis hold that the first of the month was a Monday.

Talmud, Shabbat 86b

A most puzzling thing in the Talmud’s account is the fact that on the first day of Sivan—the day on which the people of Israel arrived at the place where they would receive the Torah - *“Moses did not say anything at all to them, on account of their exhaustion from the journey.”* **For six weeks** the children of Israel had been eagerly awaiting the most important event in their history - their receiving of the Torah from G-d. Our sages tell us that they literally counted the days (hence our annual practice of “counting the omer” during the weeks that connect Passover to Shavuot). Does it make sense that on the very day they arrived at Mount Sinai they would do nothing at all in preparation for the great day?

At Sinai, the divine wisdom was revealed to man. Obviously, the human mind cannot attain the divine wisdom on its own - it must be given to (*them*) by G-d Himself. So although G-d instructed us to study His Torah, desiring that human intellect should serve as the vehicle by which we apprehend His truth, a crucial prerequisite to Torah study is the mind’s total abnegation (the act of renouncing or rejecting something; self-denial) of its ego. Only after it has voided itself of all pretension that it is capable of attaining the truth of truths on its own, can the mind become a “fit vessel” to receive it. In the words of the Sages, *“An empty vessel can receive; a full vessel cannot receive.”*

So the day on which *“Moses did not say anything at all to them”* was an integral part of their preparations for receiving the Torah. **This was the day on which they undertook the most “exhausting journey” of emptying their souls of intellectual vanity and make themselves fit receptacles of the divine truth.**

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

“God intended that they (mankind) would **seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him**, though He is not far from each one of us.” **Acts 17:27**

God desires relationship with us so much that He made the entire universe for this purpose.

As we lift our eyes, His vastness is beyond our comprehension; His glory and weightiness filling everything.
“He sustains all things by His powerful Word.” Hebrews 1:3

When they have a matter, they come to me and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the decrees of G-d and His instructions.”

Says Jethro:

“It is not good, this what you are doing. **You will surely wear away, both you and this people that is with you;** for this thing is too heavy for you—you are not able to perform it yourself alone.””

Jethro advises Moses to appoint a hierarchy of magistrates to share the burden:

“You be the link between the people and G-d... You shall show them the way in which they must walk, and the work that they must do.

“But you must also seek out, from amongst all the people, able, G-d fearing men, men of truth, hating unjust gain; and appoint them over the [people] to be leaders of thousands, and leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, and leaders of tens.

“Let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they shall judge themselves... and they shall bear the burden with you.”

Moses accepts Jethro’s advice and does as he suggests, following which “Moses sent off his father-in-law, and he went his way to his own land.”

Moses Learns How to Delegate

Moses’ father-in-law wisely advised him to appoint other men to occupy positions of leadership to help carry the burden, lest Moses wear himself out.

We must also be careful not to allow our work, no matter how demanding, to occupy so much of our time that our well-being and relationships suffer as a result.

We must find others to whom we can **delegate some of our duties** in order to **give more balance to our life**.

The Word of God tells us which **qualities to look for in choosing potential leaders**: **capable, God-fearing, honest people**.

“Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.” **Exodus 18:21**

Life is not designed to be a “quick sprint”; it is a marathon. If we are to endure to the end (just as Jethro advised Moses), we must not overwork ourselves.

“**Do not overwork to be rich**; Because of your own understanding, **cease!** Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven.” Proverbs 23:4–5

Thankfully, Moses listened to his father-in-law, which reveals Moses’ beautiful character trait of humility. We should be grateful, and not defensive, when God sends someone into our lives to give us necessary correction for our own good and the good of others.

Exodus 19:2

²They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There Israel encamped before the mountain,

AND THEY CAMPED IN THE DESERT (19:2)

In the ownerless wilderness was the Torah given to the people of Israel. For if it were given in the Land of Israel, the residents of the Land of Israel would say, “It is ours”; and if it were given in some other place, the residents of that place would say, “It is ours.” Therefore it was given in the wilderness, so that anyone who wishes to acquire it may acquire it.

Mechilta D’Rashbi

Why was the Torah given in the desert? To teach us that if a person does not surrender himself to it like the desert, he cannot merit the words of Torah. And to teach us that just as the desert is endless, so is the Torah without end.

(Pesikta D’Rav Kahana)

AND THERE ISRAEL CAMPED OPPOSITE THE MOUNTAIN (19:2)

At all their other encampments, the verse says vayachanu (“and they camped,” in the plural); here it says vayichan (“and he camped,” in the singular). For all other encampments were in argument and dissent, whereas here they camped as one man, with one heart.

(Mechilta; Rashi)

A People are Chosen

In the third month following the children of Israel’s exodus from the land of Egypt; that same day they came into the wilderness of Sinai... and there Israel camped opposite the mountain.

Moses is summoned to the top of Mount Sinai, where G-d tells him that He is taking the children of Israel as His own chosen nation:



“You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I **carried you on eagles’** [nesharim] wings and brought you to Myself.” (*Exodus 19:4*)

The word **neshar** can be translated, in some cases, as the Griffon vulture, that still populates Israel in the Golan Heights and Negev desert.

Though its name is not naturally poetic, this bird of prey can fly as high as a commercial airliner at 37,000 feet, much higher than the eagle at 10,000 feet, and is wonderfully graceful in the air.

Furthermore, “I carried you” [va’**esa etchem**] is sometimes translated as I elevated you.

This alternate translation helps us understand that God elevated the Jewish People as a nation to spiritual heights that were abundantly above anything the natural world could do for them.

“You have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I bore you on **eagles’ wings**, and brought you to Myself. **Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice, and keep My covenant, you shall be My own treasure from among all peoples, for all the earth is Mine.**

“**And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.**”

Exodus 19:3

³ while Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel:

THUS SHALL YOU SAY TO THE HOUSE OF JACOB, AND TELL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL (19:3)

“The house of Jacob” are the women; the “children of Israel” are the men.

Why did He command the women first? Because they are the more diligent in the fulfillment of the commandments. Another explanation is: So that they should introduce their children to the study of the Torah.

Rabbi Tachlifa of Caesarea says: G-d said, “When I created the world, I commanded Adam first, and only then Eve was commanded, with the result that she transgressed and upset the world. If I do not now call upon the women first, they will nullify the Torah.”

(Midrash Rabbah)

A People are Chosen

Moses descends from the mountain and “called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which G-d had commanded him.”

And all the people answered together, and said: **“All that G-d has spoken we will do.”** And Moses reported the words of the people to G-d.

G-d instructs that the people should purify and sanctify themselves for two days, “Because on the third day G-d shall descend upon Mount Sinai before the eyes of the entire people.” The mountain itself should be fenced in, and all should be warned against ascending the mountain or even “touching its edge.”

The Voice of the Lord

“Give these instructions to the family of Jacob; **announce it to the descendants of Israel** ... ‘Now if you will obey Me and keep My covenant, you will be My own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to Me.’” *(Exodus 19:3, 5)*

In this Reading, the children of Israel camp opposite Mount Sinai, and Moses goes up the mountain to meet with God.

On the mountain, the Lord instructs Moses to tell the “House of Jacob” and the “Children of Israel” that **He is making a special promise to the people: they are to be His own special nation — a kingdom of priests** (a movement from service to servitude – “Slavery to Freedom – A priest is not a priest but a servant) **and a holy nation.**

If the people of Israel listen to God’s voice and keep covenant with Him, then God will embrace them as His special treasure. In Hebrew, the word used is **segulah**, which comes from the word **sagol**, meaning **purple — the color of royalty.**

In the New Covenant, all Believers in Jesus are sons and daughters of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; therefore, we are all royalty — kings and priests unto the Lord.

“He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father — to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” **Revelation 1:6**

The people of Israel do agree to keep God’s commandments and to obey Him: “Then all the people answered together and said, ‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do.’” *(Exodus 19:8) – Wedding Ceremony Vows – To God*

Moses consecrates the people of Israel and prepares them to meet with God to receive the law at Mount Sinai.

This was the WHOLE PURPOSE of the exodus from Egypt — FOR ISRAEL TO RECEIVE GOD’S TORAH (instruction).

“When you will have brought the people out from Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain.” *(Exodus 3:12)*

A Special Place for Women

Because verse three of Exodus 19 uses the two terms the “House of Jacob” and the “Children of Israel,” Jewish sages believe that **the first term refers to the women of Israel and the second term to the men.**

It is believed that when God gave Israel the Torah, He told Moses to approach the women first.

The Midrash (Oral Law) states that that Messianic redemption will come through the merit of righteous women of Israel: “All generations are redeemed by virtue of the **pious women** of their generation” *(Yalkut Shimoni, Ruth: 606).*

Perhaps, this points to Miryam’s role as mother of Yeshua (Jesus), which is prophesied by Isaiah:

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin (pious woman) shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” *(Isaiah 7:14)*

Sadly, chapter seven of Isaiah is not read during the regular Shabbat readings. But we do read this about the Messiah in the Haftarah (prophetic portion) for this Shabbat:

“To us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” *(Isaiah 9:6)*

Jewish sages also believed that women would first receive the teachings of the Messiah.

While Yeshua taught many women, we know from Scripture that **another Miryam** became the first eye-witness to Yeshua’s resurrection from the dead—the absolute sign of Yeshua’s Messiahship and victory over sin.

“Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Miryam of Magdala, from whom He had cast out seven demons.” (Mark 16:9)

In a culture where women witnesses were not thought to possess credibility, this is an extraordinary event that the Holy Spirit wanted us all to know.

Exodus 19:4-8

⁴ ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine;⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

⁷ So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. ⁸ All the people answered together and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord.

AND ALL THE PEOPLE ANSWERED TOGETHER, AND SAID: “ALL THAT G-D HAS SPOKEN WE WILL DO” (19:8)
Wedding Vows Spoken and Sealed.

The Revelation

And it came to pass on the third day when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and the sound of a shofar exceeding loud; so that all the people in the camp trembled.

Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with G-d; and they stood under the mountain.

And Mount Sinai smoked in every part, because G-d descended upon it in fire: and the smoke of it ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.

The voice of the shofar sounded louder and louder; Moses speaks, and G-d answers him by a voice.

And G-d came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And G-d called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up....

Exodus 19:9-16

⁹ And the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.”

When Moses told the words of the people to the Lord, ¹⁰ the Lord said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments ¹¹ and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. ¹² And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, ‘Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death. ¹³ No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot;^[E] whether beast or man, he shall not live.’ When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain.” ¹⁴ So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments. ¹⁵ And he said to the people, “Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman.”

¹⁶ On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.

AND IT CAME TO PASS ON THE THIRD DAY (19:16)

A Galilean scholar lectured before Rabbi Chisda: “Blessed be the Merciful One who gave a three-fold Torah (consisting of Torah, Prophets and Scriptures) . . .

(Talmud, Shabbat 88a)

The Torah is associated with the number “3” because the ultimate function of Torah is “to make peace in the world” and “3” represents the concept of peace.

Peace is unity in diversity. The number “1” implies exclusivity and singularity; the number “2” connotes diversity and plurality; the number “3” represents a state in which the diversity of “2” is superceded by a third, encompassing “truth”, within whose context differences no longer divide but rather unite diverse components into a harmonious whole.

This is the function to Torah: to introduce a unity of purpose to the diverse objects, forces and peoples of creation, uniting them all in the harmonious endeavor of serving the divine objective in creation.

The Chassidic Masters

At the Torah’s conclusion of its account of the creation of the world, it is written, **Genesis 1:31:** “*And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*” What is the purpose of the additional “the” (hashishi)?

(Regarding the other days of creation, the Torah simply says, “And it was evening and it was morning, one day... a second day.. a third day, etc.”; “the sixth day” implies that the verse is referring to a certain famous “sixth day”).

This teaches that G-d stipulated with the works of creation and said to them: “If Israel accepts the Torah (on the sixth of Sivan), you shall exist; but if not, I will turn you back into emptiness and formlessness.”

(Talmud, Shabbat 88a)

Exodus 19:17-19

¹⁷ Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. ¹⁹ And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder.

MOSES SPEAKS, AND G-D ANSWERS HIM BY A VOICE (19:19)

“The voice of G-d is in power” **Psalms 29:4**. If it would have said, “The voice of G-d is in His power,” the world could not survive it; rather it says, “The voice of G-d is in power” - in accordance to the individual strength of each and every one of them. To the old, according to their strength, and to the young, according to theirs; to the children, to the babes and to the women, according to their strength; and even to Moses according to his strength, as it is said: “Moses spoke, and G-d answered him by a voice.”

(Midrash Rabbah)

Exodus 19:20

²⁰ The Lord came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

AND G-D CAME DOWN ON MOUNT SINAI... AND G-D CALLED TO MOSES TO THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN, AND MOSES WENT UP (19:20)

Once there was a king who decreed: “The people of Rome are forbidden to go down to Syria, and the people of Syria are forbidden to go up to Rome.” Likewise, when G-d created the world, He decreed and said: “The heavens are G-d’s, and the earth is given to man” (Psalms 115:16). But when He wished to give the Torah to Israel, He rescinded His original decree, and declared: “The lower realms may ascend to the higher realms, and the higher realms may descend to the lower realms. And I, Myself, will begin” as it is written, “And G-d descended on Mount Sinai,” and then it says, “And to Moses He said: Go up to G-d.”

(Midrash Tanchuma)

Our Sages tell us that the Patriarchs studied the Torah and fulfilled its precepts many centuries before the Torah was “officially” given at Sinai. Since no “new information” was revealed on the sixth of Sivan, what is the significance of the “giving of the Torah” on that occasion?

The answer lies in the above-quoted Midrash: at Sinai G-d abolished the decree which had consigned the physical and the spiritual to two separate domains. Thus, at Sinai was introduced a new phenomenon—the cheftza shel kedushah or “holy object.” After Sinai, when physical man takes a physical coin, earned by his physical toil and talents, and gives it to charity; or when he forms a piece of leather to a specified shape and dimensions and binds them to his head and arm as tefillin—the object with which he has performed his “mitzvah” is transformed. A finite, physical thing becomes “holy,” as its very substance and form become the actualization of a divine desire and command.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Exodus 19:21-25

²¹ And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to the Lord to look and many of them perish. ²² Also let the priests who come near to the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them.” ²³ And Moses said to the Lord, “The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for you yourself warned us, saying, ‘Set limits around the mountain and consecrate it.’” ²⁴ And the Lord said to him, “Go down, and come up bringing Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord, lest he break out against them.” ²⁵ So Moses went down to the people and told them.

Exodus 20:1

The Ten Commandments

Galatians 5

Christ Has Set Us Free

5 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take **my yoke** upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

² Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. ³ I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. ⁴ You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified^[a] by the law; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

⁷ You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion is not from him who calls you. ⁹ A little leaven leavens the whole lump. ¹⁰ I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. ¹¹ But if I, brothers,^[b] still preach^[a] circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. ¹² I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

Keep in Step with the Spirit

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ **But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law (law of Circumcision – Galatians 5:2).** ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy,^[d] drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do^[e] such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Context to Paul’s Teaching on the Law

Romans 2:13

¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

Romans 3:31

³¹ Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Romans 6:12-23

Slaves to Righteousness

¹⁵ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,^[e] you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Context to God’s Teaching on the Law of Circumcision

Deuteronomy 10

Circumcise Your Heart

¹² “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³ and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good? ¹⁴ Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. ¹⁵ Yet the Lord set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day.¹⁶ **Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.** ¹⁷ For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. ¹⁸ He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. ¹⁹ Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. ²⁰ You shall fear the Lord your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear. ²¹ He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen. ²² Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.

Deuteronomy 30

Repentance and Forgiveness

³⁰ “And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, ² and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, ³ then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. ⁴ If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there he will take you.⁵ And the Lord your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. ⁶ **And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.** ⁷ And the Lord your God will put all these curses on your foes and enemies who persecuted you. ⁸ And you shall again obey the voice of the Lord and keep all his commandments that I command you today. ⁹ The Lord your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground. For the Lord will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers, ¹⁰ when you obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, when you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

The Choice of Life and Death

¹¹ “For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. ¹² It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹³ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ ¹⁴ But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.

¹⁵ “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God^[a] that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules,^[b] then you shall

live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish.

Jeremiah 31:31-34
The New Covenant

³¹ “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: **I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.** And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Ezekiel 36

I Will Put My Spirit Within You

²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ **And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.** ²⁷ **And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.**

The Sermon on the Mount
Matthew 5:17-20

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that **unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.**

*** Romans 4:9-12**

⁹ Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness (**Genesis 15 – God’s Covenant with Abram**). ¹⁰ How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹ He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, ¹² and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

Torah law (*G-d’s teaching and instruction*) - is more than a divinely ordained behavior pattern for life on earth: it also describes G-d’s own “behavior pattern,” the manner in which He chooses to relate to His creation. When we order our lives after Torah’s directives, we are not only fulfilling G-d’s will—we are also emulating His “behavior,” translating the divine relationship with creation into human/physical terms. In the words of the Midrash, “G-d’s manner is not like the manner of flesh and blood. The manner of flesh and blood is that he instructs others to do, but does not do himself; G-d, however, what He Himself does, that is what He tells *his people* to do and observe.” (ex. 1 John 1:3-6, “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵ but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”)

Fulfill - to be obeyed as it should be (ex. Matthew 3:13-15, “Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he consented.”).

Abolish - (*I did not*) loosen thoroughly, (*I did not*) break up, (*I did not*) overthrow, (*I did not*) destroy (both literally and metaphorically), (*I did not*) unyoke, unharness a carriage horse or pack animal. Nor did I metaphorically **overthrow, render vain, deprive of success, bring to naught** God’s institutions, forms of government, laws. (*Synonyms: deprive of force, annul, abrogate, discard.*)

Annul (abrogate, relaxes) - declare invalid (an official agreement, decision, or result), to “loosen” (literally or figuratively). (*Synonyms: subvert (undermine the power and authority of (an established system or institution) – i.e. declare (a marriage) to have had no legal existence).*) (**Abrogate**) repeal or do away with (a law, right, or formal agreement) or evade (a responsibility or duty). (*Synonyms: repudiate, revoke, repeal, rescind, overturn, overrule, override, do away with, annul, break off, invalidate, nullify, void, negate, dissolve, veto, declare null and void, discontinue.*)

Keeps (does, to do) - to make or do (I make, manufacture, construct; I do, act, cause.). (**To Do**) to follow some method in expressing by deeds the feelings and thoughts of the mind; universally, describing the mode of action: to act rightly, to do the law, meet its demands, (to do) the things which the law commands. (*Synonyms: abide, agree, appoint, be, bear, cause, commit without any delay, exercise, fulfill, gain, hold, keep, observe, perform, provide, purpose, secure, tarry, work, yield.*)

Parallel Biblical Law definitions - ex. Matthew 28:20, “teaching them to **observe** all the **I have commanded** you.” **observe:** I keep, guard, observe, keep watch over, continue keeping guard over, preserve, and **I have commanded:** to order, command to be done, enjoin (to direct or impose by authoritative order or with urgent admonition (gentle or friendly reproof, counsel or warning against fault or oversight)); ex. Deuteronomy 30:11-20, “If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his **statutes** and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you,”

statutes: Divine law was first given to us encapsulated in the Ten Commandments, which were etched by the hand of God in two tablets of stone . . . When something is written, the substance of the letters that express it – the ink – remains a separate entity from the substance upon which they have been set – the parchment. On the other hand, letters engraved in stone are forged in it: the words are stone and the stone is words . . . By the same token, there is an aspect of Torah that is “inked” on our soul; we understand it, our emotions are roused by it; it becomes our “lifestyle” or even our “personality”; but it remains something additional to ourselves. But there is a dimension of Torah

that is **statutes**, engrave in our being. There is a dimension of Torah which expresses a bond with G-d that is the very essence of a believers soul (ex. Exodus 31:18, Exodus 32:16, Jeremiah 31:33, 2 Corinthians 3:3-9).

1 John 2 Children of God

²⁸ And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. ²⁹ If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

1 John 3

¹ See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears^[a] we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

⁴ Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵ You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶ No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. ⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness (hitting the mark) is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸ Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ No one born of God makes a practice of sinning (missing the mark), for God's^[b] seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. ¹⁰ By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

^a **Righteousness** – (STRONGS NT 1343 - δικαιοσύνη: righteousness, justice): Usage - **righteousness of which God is the source or author**, but practically: a divine righteousness. "Divine Approval" is the regular NT term used for *righteousness* ("the approval of God") refers to **what is deemed right by the Lord** (after His examination), i.e. **what is approved in His eyes**. (THAYER'S GREEK LEXICON - δικαιοσύνη: righteousness, justice): universally - **the doctrine concerning the way in which man may attain to a state approved of God:**

Hebrews 5:13

Warning Against Apostasy

¹¹ About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, ¹³ for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴ **But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.**

Matthew 5:6

⁶ "Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst for righteousness**, for they shall be satisfied.

Matthew 6:1

Giving to the Needy

"Beware of **practicing your righteousness** before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

Acts 13:10

¹⁰ and said, "You son of the devil, you **enemy of all righteousness**, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?"

Romans 6:13

¹³ Do not present your members to sin as **instruments for unrighteousness**, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as **instruments for righteousness**.

Romans 6:16

¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,^[a] you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Romans 6:18-20

¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have **become slaves of righteousness**. ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as **slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification**.

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

Romans 8:10

¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, **the Spirit is life because of righteousness**.

Romans 14:17

¹⁷ For **the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness** and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 6:14

The Temple of the Living God

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. **For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?** Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 12-15

³ But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. ⁴ For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

¹² And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. ¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ So it is no surprise if his servants, also, **disguise themselves as servants of righteousness**. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

Revelation 22:14-15

¹⁴ Blessed are they that **do his commandments**, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

¹⁵For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

1 Timothy 6:11

Fight the Good Fight of Faith

¹¹But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. **Pursue righteousness**, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

2 Timothy 2:22

²²So flee youthful passions and **pursue righteousness**, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

2 Timothy 3:16

¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for **training in righteousness**.

Luke 3:7–8

“John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.’”

Hebrews 1:9

⁹**You have loved righteousness** and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”

John 14:15

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

¹⁵“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

Hebrews 12:11

¹¹For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been **trained by it**.

James 3:18

¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

2 Peter 2:1-3, 17-22

False Prophets and Teachers

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. ²And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep . . .

¹⁷These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. ¹⁸For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. ¹⁹They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves^[h] of corruption. **For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.** ²⁰For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.²¹For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to **turn back from the holy commandment** delivered to them.

Revelation 2:14

¹⁴But I have a few things against you: you have some people there who follow **the teaching of Balaam (Numbers 22:12, 31:16), who instructed Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel so they would eat food sacrificed to idols and commit sexual immorality.**

<https://biblehub.com/greek/1343.htm>

Exodus 20:1

20 And God spoke all these words, saying,

AND G-D SPOKE ALL THESE WORDS (20:1)

When G-d gave the Torah no bird twittered, no fowl flew, no ox lowed, none of the angels stirred a wing, the seraphim did not say “Holy, Holy,” the sea did not roar, the creatures spoke not, the whole world was hushed into breathless silence and the voice went forth: “I am G-d your G-d.”

(Midrash Rabbah)

Exodus 20:2

²“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

I AM G-D YOUR G-D, WHO HAS BROUGHT YOU OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT (20:2)

Would it not have been more appropriate for G-d to say, “I am G-d... who created the heavens and the earth”?

But G-d the creator is the G-d that Israel shares with the rest of creation. At Sinai, G-d did not speak to us as the author of nature, but as the executor of the miraculous Exodus. For at Sinai we forged a covenant with G-d in which we pledged to surpass all bounds of nature and convention in our commitment to Him, and He pledged to supercede all laws of nature and convention in His providence over us.

(The Chassidic Masters)

Exodus 20:3-6

³“You shall have no other gods before^[f] me.

⁴“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to thousands^[g] of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Catholicism and the Ten Commandments

1. “I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have any strange gods before Me.”

This commandment forbids *idolatry*, the worship of false gods and goddesses, and it excludes *polytheism*, the belief in many gods, insisting instead on *monotheism*, the belief in one God. This commandment forbids making golden calves, building temples to Isis, and worshipping statues of Caesar, for example.

No Second Commandment of Idol Worship, as spoken by God in His 10 Commandments

2. “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”

The faithful are required to honor the name of God. It makes sense that if you’re to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, then you’re naturally to respect the name of God with equal passion and vigor.

Jealousy and Faithfulness

We see from the second commandment that **anything we place first in our lives other than God is idolatry**. God is, by His own admission, a jealous God. The Hebrew root of **kanna** (jealous) means the just indignation of one injured.

When we choose another over God, He is injured, as a husband or wife is injured by an unfaithful spouse.

Today the world is filled with idols: wealth, fame, power, position, money, work, sexual relations, celebrities, sports, even relationships. We so often make these desires our priority, tending to put our trust and confidence in other things or people to help us meet those desires; however, **only God is absolutely trustworthy and His desires for us are pure and holy.**

God’s prophetic word promises that one day His people will no longer tolerate any idolatry in their lives, but the day will come when the Lord shall say, “*What have I to do with idols?*” **It is I who answer and look after you.**” Hosea 14:8

May this be the generation that seeks the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and may we become united in the love of Messiah, worshipping the One True God in Spirit and Truth.

“It is too small a thing for you to be My servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.” (Isaiah 49:6)

Exodus 20:7

7 “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain* , for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

***Righteousness – (STRONGS NT 1343 - dikaiosunē: righteousness, justice): Usage - righteousness of which God is the source or author**, but practically: a divine righteousness. "Divine Approval" is the regular NT term used for *righteousness* ("the approval of God") refers to **what is deemed right by the Lord** (after His examination), i.e. **what is approved in His eyes**. (THAYER’S GREEK LEXICON - dikaiosunē: righteousness, justice): universally - **the doctrine concerning the way in which man may attain to a state approved of God:**

***Vain – (STRONGS NT 7723 – shav: emptiness, vanity): (BROWN-DRIVER-BRINGS - (EXODUS 20:7) take up name of God in vain** (to no good purpose); (STRONG’S EXHAUSTIVE CONCORDANCE -Or shav {shav}; from the same as *show*’ in the sense of desolating (make (a place) bleakly and depressingly empty or bare); evil (as destructive), literally (ruin) or **morally** (especially guile (ly or cunning intelligence)); **figuratively idolatry** (as false, subjective), uselessness (as **deceptive**, objective; also adverbially, in vain) -- **false**(-ly), lie, lying, vain, vanity.)

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (Hebrew: לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת־שֵׁם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, לְבַטֵּל (KJV); also "You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God" (NRSV) and variants) is the second or third (depending on numbering) of God’s **Ten Commandments** to man in the **Abrahamic religions**.

It is a prohibition of **blasphemy**, specifically, the misuse or "taking in vain" of the **name of the God of Israel**, or using His name to commit evil, or to pretend to serve in His name while in fact, failing to do so. **Exodus 20:7** reads:

Based on this commandment, **Second Temple Judaism** by the **Hellenistic period** developed a **taboo** of pronouncing the name of God at all, resulting in the replacement of the **Tetragrammaton** by "Adonai" (literally "my lords" – see **Adonai**) in pronunciation.

In the Hebrew Bible itself, the commandment is directed against abuse of the name of God, not against any use . . . The Hebrew is translated as “thou shalt not take in vain”, but is better understood to mean “thou shalt not carry/bear in vain the name of God”.

Hebrew Bible passages also refer to God's name being profaned by hypocritical behavior of people and false representation of God's words or character. Many scholars also believe the commandment applies to the casual use of God's name in interjections and curses (blasphemy).

In practice

To avoid coming under guilt by accidentally misusing God's name, Jewish scholars do not write or pronounce the proper name in most circumstances, but use substitutes such as "Adonai (the Lord)," or "**HaShem** (the Name)." In English translations of the Bible, the name Adonai is often translated "Lord," while the proper name Yahweh represented by the **tetragrammaton** is often indicated by the use of capital and small capital letters, LORD.^[17]

**“Behold the Man with Nail Pierced Hands”
The Great Name of God**

Our Bibles start at **Genesis 1:1** with this statement, "*In the beginning God.*" The Hebrew the word for the book of Genesis is B'reshite and means, "In the Beginning." The word for God used in this opening statement is . . . Elohim, a plural word indicating that God, although one exists in parts or aspects. We have come to know the three parts or aspects of God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And since every man was created in the image of God we too are each individuals having three parts . . . a spirit, a soul and a body.

God also has an actual name and it is revealed for the first time in **Genesis 2:4** and is used over **7,000 times** in the Old Testament.

However, our Bibles don't use the name but insert a special designation for it such as ... "Lord God" when the name is being used. This happened when the Hebrew people were taken captive to Babylon around 600 BC. Their leaders purposely hid the name of God so it would not be profaned among the nations.

The Hebrew people now refer to God's name as Ha Shem, meaning "The Name". They do not speak His name but are taught to say Adonai, meaning "Lord" in its place. They do not write God's name but instead substitute the tetragrammaton, **YHVH**, the four Hebrew letters that make up the name. God's name is "Yah-u-wah", which basically means "**I AM THAT I AM**".

Let's take a look at something very special about His name by just using the tetragrammaton, **YHVH**:



Pronunciation of the Letters

(yad)

(hey)

(vaw)

(hey)

Ancient Hebrew Symbols for the Letters of the Tetragrammaton



Interpretation of the Symbols

"Hand"

Man with raised hands means "**Behold**"

"Nail"

Man with raised hands means "**Behold**"

As we see here, *the very name of God that was hidden over 2,500 years ago*, to prevent it from being profaned among the nations, has consequently also hidden its "True Meaning" of God's name, as read above, "**Behold the Hands of the Man with Raised Hands, Behold the Nail Pierced Hands of the Man with Raised Hands**", who will one day be identified by his "Raised Nail Pierced Hands" our Messiah, our Lord, our Savior, our Redeemer, our Hope.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

"¹⁹On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."²⁰When he had said this, **he showed them his hands** (declaring *his* hidden name of nearly 600 years, the "True Meaning" of God's name, as read above, "**Behold the Hands of the Man with Raised Hands, Behold the Nail Pierced Hands of the Man with Raised Hands**") and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."²²And when he had said this, he **breathed** on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." **John 20:19-31**

* "**breathed**": The very name of God is "Yahweh", the proper name of "God" as read in **Exodus 6:3**, "*God said, 'I used to appear to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai, but I did not make myself know to them by my name YHWH (Yahweh),'*" which is pronounced as the sound of one breathing, "Yah – Weh", as we also see identified in the name change and destiny of Abram ("Exulted Father") and Sarai ("my princess"), when God gave them his own name, and changed their names to Abra"ha"m ("Father of Many Nations") and Sara"h" ("Mother of Nations"), the very Breath of God, "Yah – Weh", as read in **Genesis 2:7**, "*then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*" It is here, in like manner, that Jesus too, **breathes** on his disciples and changes not only their names from "Fishermen"/"Followers" to "Fishers of Men"/"Apostles" (*sent ones*), but their destinies too, from "Disciples" to "Disciple Makers". "**Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!**" Psalm 150:6

Zechariah 12:10

Him Whom They Have Pierced

¹⁰"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

Rabbi Joseph Telushkin wrote that the commandment is much more than a prohibition against casual interjections using God's name. He pointed out that the more literal translation of Lo tissa is "you shall not carry" rather than "you shall not take", and that understanding this helps one understand why the commandment ranks with such as "You shall not murder" and "You shall not commit adultery".^[4]
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thou_shalt_not_take_the_name_of_the_Lord_thy_God_in_vain

2 Corinthians 3

Ministers of the New Covenant

¹Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? ²**You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all.** ³And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

⁴Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Ezekiel 36

Prophecy to the Mountains of Israel

⁸“But you, *O mountains of Israel*, shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to my people Israel, for they will soon come home. ⁹For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and **you shall be tilled and sown**. ¹⁰And I will multiply people on you, the whole house of Israel, all of it. *The cities shall be inhabited and the waste places rebuilt*. ¹¹And I will multiply on you man and beast, and they shall multiply and be fruitful. And I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before. Then you will know that I am the Lord. ¹²I will let people walk on you, even my people Israel. And they shall possess you, and you shall be their inheritance, and you shall no longer bereave them of children. ¹³Thus says the Lord God: Because they say to you, ‘You devour people, and you bereave your nation of children,’ ¹⁴therefore you shall no longer devour people and no longer bereave your nation of children, declares the Lord God. ¹⁵And I will not let you hear anymore the reproach of the nations, and you shall no longer bear the disgrace of the peoples and no longer cause your nation to stumble, declares the Lord God.”

The Lord's Concern for His Holy Name

¹⁶The word of the Lord came to me: ¹⁷“Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, **they defiled it by their ways and their deeds. Their ways before me were like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity**. ¹⁸So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it. ¹⁹I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries. In accordance with their ways and their deeds I judged them. ²⁰But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, **they profaned my holy name**, in that people said of them, ‘These are the people of the Lord, and yet they had to go out of his land.’ ²¹But I had concern for **my holy name**, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came.

I Will Put My Spirit Within You

²²“Therefore say to the house of Israel, *Thus says the Lord God*: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my **holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came**. ²³And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when **through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes**. ²⁴I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. ²⁵I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶**And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh**. ²⁷And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Exodus 20:8-11

⁸“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Sabbath

Secular Weekday Name: **Saturday**

Hebrew "Name": **Shabbat**

Hebrew Meaning: **Rest**

Secular Weekday Name, Hebrew “Name”, Hebrew Meaning: Sunday, Yom Reeshone, First Day; Monday, Yom Shavnee, Second Day; Tuesday, Yom Shlee shee, Third Day; Wednesday, Yom Revee ee, Fourth Day; Thursday, Yom Khah mee shee, Fifth Day; Friday, Yom Ha shee shee, Sixth Day; Saturday, Shabbat, Rest.

Everlasting Covenant

The Sabbath

¹²Then the LORD said to Moses, ¹³“Say to the Israelites, ‘**You must observe my Sabbaths**. This will be *a sign between me and you for the generations (everlasting covenant) to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy*.

¹⁴“Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it is to be put to death; those who do any work on that day must be cut off from their people. ¹⁵For six days work is to be done, *but the seventh day is a day of sabbath rest, holy to the LORD*. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day is to be put to death. ¹⁶The Israelites (striven with **God** and with **men** and have **prevailed** – one who **crosses over** from this world to the next) are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. ¹⁷*It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever (everlasting covenant)*, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the *seventh day he rested and was refreshed*.” Exodus 31:12-17

New Heaven Sabbath

²²As the new heavens and the new earth that *I make will endure before me*,’ declares the LORD, ‘so will your name and descendants endure.

²³From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, **all mankind will come and bow down before me**,’ says the LORD.” Isaiah 66:22-23

Walk as Jesus Walked

⁶Whoever claims to live in him **must live as Jesus did**.” 1 John 2:6

“When the **Sabbath** came, he began to teach in the **synagogue**, and many who heard him were amazed. ‘Where did this man get these things?’ they asked. ‘What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?’” Mark 6:2

“He (*Jesus*) went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the **Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom** (as is his wont). He stood up to read,” Luke 4:16

“*[Jesus Drives Out an Impure Spirit]* Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the **Sabbath** he taught the people.” **Luke 4:31**

“And **beginning with Moses** and all the Prophets, **he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.** ²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.’ So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, ‘**Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?**’” **Luke 24:27**

“For if you believed Moses, **you would believe me; for he wrote of me.**” **John 5:46**

Jesus Lord of the Sabbath

“For the **Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.**” **Matthew 12:8**

And if Christ be the *Lord of the sabbath*, it is fit the day and all the work of it should be dedicated to him. By virtue of this power Christ here enacts, that works of necessity, if they be really such, and not a pretended and self-created necessity, are lawful on the sabbath day; and this explication of the law plainly shows that it was to be perpetual.

The Catechism

Recall the ceremony with which God made known His Law, containing the blessing of the seventh-day Sabbath, by which all humanity is to be judged. Contrast this with the unannounced, unnoticed anticlimax with which the church gradually adopted Sunday at the command of “Christian” emperors and Roman bishops. And these freely admit that they made the change from Sabbath to Sunday.

In the *Convert’s Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, we read:

Q. Which is the Sabbath day?

A. Saturday is the Sabbath day.

Q. Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

A. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church, in the Council of Laodicea, (AD 336) transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday...

Q. Why did the Catholic Church substitute Sunday for Saturday?

A. The Church substituted Sunday for Saturday, because Christ rose from the dead on a Sunday, and the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles on a Sunday.

Q. By what authority did the Church substitute Sunday for Saturday?

A. The Church substituted Sunday for Saturday by the plenitude of that divine power which Jesus Christ bestowed upon her!

—Rev. Peter Geiermann, C.S.S.R., (1946), p. 50.

In *Catholic Christian Instructed*,

Q. Has the [Catholic] church power to make any alterations in the commandments of God?

A. ...Instead of the seventh day, and other festivals appointed by the old law, the church has prescribed the Sundays and holy days to be set apart for God’s worship; and these we are now obliged to keep in consequence of God’s commandment, instead of the ancient Sabbath.

—The Catholic Christian Instructed in the Sacraments, Sacrifices, Ceremonies, and Observances of the Church By Way of Question and Answer, RT Rev. Dr. Challoner, p. 204.

Catholicism and the Ten Commandments

3. “Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.”

The Jewish celebration of Sabbath (*Shabbat*) begins at sundown on Friday evening and lasts until sundown on Saturday. Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Christians go to church on Sunday, treating it as the Lord’s Day instead of Saturday to honor the day Christ rose from the dead.

Exodus 20:12-18

²¹“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ ²²*But I say to you (the Spirit of the Law)* . . . **Matthew 5**

¹²“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

¹³“You shall not murder.

¹⁴“You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵“You shall not steal.

¹⁶“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

¹⁸Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid^[i] and trembled, and they stood far off ¹⁹and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.”

AND MOSES DREW NEAR TO THE THICK DARKNESS WHERE G-D WAS (20:18)

There are three types of darkness: the “heavy darkness” of the Covenant Between the Pieces (Genesis 15:17); the “tangible darkness” of the ninth plague in Egypt (Exodus 10:22); and the “thick darkness” at the giving of the Torah.

(Rabbeinu Bechayei)

Meeting with God at the Foot of the Mountain

Standing at the foot of the mountain on the third day, the people of Israel met with God, as He descended with thunder, lightening, thick clouds, and the loud sound of the **shofar** (ram’s horn).

The whole mountain was covered with smoke, since God came with fire, as it is written, “The Lord is a consuming fire.” (*Deuteronomy 4:24*)

It was such a fearsome sight that the people trembled and told Moses,

“You, speak with us, and we will listen. *But don’t let God speak with us, or we will die.*” (*Exodus 20:19 [16]*)

²⁰ Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.” ²¹ The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

Laws About Altars

²² And the Lord said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the people of Israel: ‘You have seen for yourselves that I have talked with you from heaven. ²³ You shall not make gods of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold.’”

AND WHEN YOU MAKE ME AN ALTAR OF STONE, YOU SHALL NOT BUILD IT OF HEWN STONE: FOR IF YOU LIFT UP YOUR SWORD UPON IT, YOU HAVE DEFILED IT (20:22)

Iron was created to shorten the life of man, and the Altar was created to lengthen the life of man; so it is not fitting that that which shortens should be lifted upon that which lengthens.

(Talmud, Middot 3:4)

Exodus 20:24

²⁴ An altar of earth you shall make for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. **In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless (more of – be fruitful and multiply – an opening for more) you.**

Keeping His commandments is how we show our love for God. His commandments provide a guide for a healthy, happy, productive, and harmonious life in relationship with God and with other people.

“For this is love for God, to keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:3)

Jesus has not set us free from sin so that we can live lawless lives. The Word of God even warns that our prayers may not be heard if we are walking in blatant disobedience to God’s laws.

“One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.” (*Proverbs 28:9*)

The law of God guards our relationships. The first tablet containing the first five of the Ten Commandments deals with our relationship to God. The second set of five commandments deals with our relations with our neighbor. That is why Jesus said that loving God and loving our neighbor sum up the commandments. (*Matthew 22:37–40*)

The God of Israel is not an impersonal “force,” but a God of love who becomes intimately involved with the affairs of mankind to save, rescue, redeem and deliver. This is the God who is worthy of our love and devotion, and no one else.

Next Week’s Reading:

Week 18 - Mishpatim (Laws)
Exodus 21:1–24:18; Jeremiah 34:8–22, 33:25–26; Colossians 3:1–25