

Opening Scripture Reading/Prayer:

Exodus 31:12-17

The Sabbath

¹²And the Lord said to Moses, ¹³“You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. . . .’ ¹⁶Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. ¹⁷It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.”

Isaiah 58:13-14

¹³“If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath,
from doing your pleasure on my holy day,
and call the Sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the Lord honorable;
if you honor it, not going your own ways,
or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;
¹⁴then you shall take delight in the Lord,
and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Isaiah 66:22-23

²²“For as the new heavens and the new earth
that I make
shall remain before me, says the LORD,
so shall your offspring and your name remain.
²³From new moon to new moon,
and from Sabbath to Sabbath,
all flesh shall come to worship before me,
declares the LORD.

Opening Message:

This Week’s Reading

Mishpatim (Judgments/Laws)

Exodus 21:1–24:18; Jeremiah 34:8–22, 33:25–26; Colossians 3:1–25

“I will Never Leave You Nor Forsake You”

“These are the ordinances [mishpatim מִשְׁפָּטִים] that you are to set before them.” Exodus 21:1

In last week’s portion of Scripture, Israel received the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai.

This week, God gives specific legislation – laws called *judgments* or *decision on a case* (mishpatim). These are intended to guide the daily lives of His holy nation in justice and righteousness.

mishpatim מִשְׁפָּטִים (judgments or decision) meaning: decision of the מִשְׁפָּט in a case of law (see Br^{Hexateuch 252 sq.}): singular of particular decision of a case Exodus 21:31 (E); plural of series of decisions Exodus 21:1

Although Jesus does not want His disciples to judge other people (as that is the Father’s job – i.e. ³⁰For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,” Hebrews 10:30-31), he does expect them to **discern spiritual truths and make decisions between good and evil** (John 3:17, he says, “God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” And in John 12:47, he says, “I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.” “The mission of Jesus was not to condemn. It was to save” – which is what God is calling His own people to do too.). The three words: judge, discern and decision are very similar. In fact **the word judge is used many times in place of discern and decision** throughout Scripture and it is only by its use in the context that it’s true meaning can be arrived at.

An illustration of this point comes from the Gospel of Luke 7:41-43 when Jesus tells a parable to a man named, Simon. “A certain moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him more? Simon answered and said, ‘I suppose the one whom he forgave more.’ And He said to him, ‘You have judged correctly.’” In this case Simon did not directly judge another person but correctly discerned a spiritual truth.

The meaning of the word **discern** is: **to perceive or recognize or to make out clearly. It is a discovery of the truth** about something or someone in which a personal opinion can be formed. **Once the truth is known, an individual may take action regarding the matter. However, the action does not have to be the judgment of another, which requires issuing a decree or passing a sentence upon them.** Jesus summarizes the concept in a statement He makes to His disciples at a later time. “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents (discerning), and innocent as doves (without passing judgment) – Matthew 10:16”.

Throughout Scripture disciples are encouraged to be discerning. In fact, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the discerning of spirits, which is to assist the Church in determining what is good and what is evil. **Discerning good and evil according to the writer of the book of Hebrews requires training the senses** (“But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil,”

Hebrews 5:14. Through training and practice, maturity in discernment comes. In trials, two or more witnesses were required before a judgment could be rendered. To accurately discern between good and evil, three factors need to be considered before an opinion is formed. All three are to be in agreement. They are:

1. The individual's actions.
2. The individual's words.
3. The Word of God.

In the first part of Jesus' teaching on **discernment** He issues a pair of commands to His disciples that require discerning good and evil and then taking the appropriate action. *“Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”* **Matthew 7:6.** These commands test the disciple's ability to understand the Scriptures and accurately apply them (**first command** is to not give God's word to those who have already rejected God, and the **second command** is to not give Biblical counsel to those who do not use the Word of God to direct their lives, why, because they will not hear or receive the message, God's Instruction – i.e. *“Do not rebuke a mocker, or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you. Instruct a wise man, and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man, and he will increase his learning. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”* **Proverbs 9:8-10**).

In total, the Reading of the *“Judgments or Decisions”* (Mishpatim) contains 53 commands (mitzvot) 23 essential/important/necessary commandments and 30 prohibitions/exclusions.

This series of laws/judgments/decisions, also called “The Covenant Code” by some Bible scholars, specify penalties for various violent crimes such as murder, kidnapping, and assault. Pre-meditated murder, kidnapping, and striking or even cursing a parent all carry the death penalty.

“And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.” **Exodus 21:17**

Laws were also given regarding how to make *reimbursement* for assault and injuries caused by animals, as well as damage to crops or livestock. They prohibit seduction of virgins, the practice of sorcery, bestiality, idolatry, and mistreating the disadvantaged of society.

Infractions of these laws often carry the severest of penalties – **death** (which was the penalty that Jesus died on the cross for, although, did not completely exclude from God's judgment, ultimately restoring His followers back in right relationship with their Heavenly Father and empowering them to extend the same restoration to others towards their own restored relationship with God and others.) by stoning – since God wanted to keep peace and order within the camp.

But it is more than that. **God has genuine concern for justice and the well-being of the individual.**

For instance, if a widow or fatherless child is to cry out to God because of someone's ill treatment of them, God promises He will pour out His fierce wrath upon their oppressor and kill them so that their wives would be widows and their children fatherless (*Exodus 22:22–24*) – i.e. **“But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries,”** *Exodus 23:22.*

G-d promises to bring the people of Israel to the Holy Land and warns them against assuming the pagan ways of its current inhabitants.

The people of Israel proclaim, “We will do and we will hear” all that G-d commands us. Leaving Aaron and Hur in charge in the Israelite camp, Moses ascends Mount Sinai and remains there for forty days and forty nights to receive the Torah from G-d.

Following the revelation at Sinai, at which the people of Israel committed themselves to uphold the Torah and received the Ten Commandments, G-d proceeds to communicate to Moses the rest of the commandments (mitzvot) of the Torah. The greater part of the Reading of Judgments/Decisions (Mishpatim) consists of this communication, containing 53 of the 613 commandments.

(Messianic Bible - Bibles For Israel)

Let's Review the Conclusion of Last Week's Reading, “The Ten Commandments”:

Exodus 20:1-2

The Ten Commandments

¹And God spoke all these words, saying, 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)

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**

⁹Is 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). ¹⁰How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. ¹¹He 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.

John 15:1-11. ¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴**Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.** ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. **Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.** ⁶**If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.** ⁷**If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.** ⁸**By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.** ⁹**As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.** ¹⁰**If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.** ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

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. ⁴Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶whoever 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. ¹⁴John would have prevented him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ ¹⁵But 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, 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).

John 2 Children of God

²⁸And 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. ²⁹If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that **everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.**

1 John 3

¹See 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. ²Beloved, **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.**

⁴Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵You 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 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.

Righteousness – (STRONGS NT 1343 - dikaiosuné: 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 - dikaiosuné: righteousness, justice): universally - **the doctrine concerning the way in which man may attain to a state approved of God:**

Exodus 20:3-12

The Ten Commandments

³“You shall have no other gods before 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 of those who love me and keep my commandments.

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.

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.

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

The Two Great Commandments:

Matthew 22:36-40 “Master, which is the great Commandment in the law? ³⁷ Jesus said unto him, *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.* ³⁸ *This is the first and great commandment. (the first 5 Commandments is this Commandment Defined)* ³⁹ *And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself. (the last 5 Commandments is this Commandment Defined)* ⁴⁰ *On these two commandments hang ALL the law and the prophets.”*

- Deuteronomy 6:5 “*And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.*”
- Leviticus 19:18 “*You shall not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD.*”

Exodus 20:3-6

³“You shall have no other gods before 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 of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Here are the Catholic Ten Commandments:

1. I am the LORD your God. You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.
(2) You shall make no idols. – Missing from the Biblical Ten Commandments
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not **kill**.
(5) The Commandment to not murder has been changed to “not kill”; the difference is that murder is a pre-meditated act, not a command to mean just not to kill. Also, here the 6th Commandment is now the 5th Commandment, putting “not killing” as an instruction as to how we are to demonstrate the first of the “Two Great Commandments” as to how we are to show our “Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul and strength”, instead of God’s instructions to how we are to fulfill the Second of the Great Commandments, to “Love our neighbor as ourselves”.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.
(9) You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife – Not even a Commandment in the Biblical Ten Commandments
10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.

Here are the Bible’s Ten Commandments:

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall make no idols.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Keep the Sabbath day holy.
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.
5. Honor your father and your mother.

6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

Exodus 20:3 – Commandment #1

³“You shall have no other 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.

Exodus 20:4-6

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 of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

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.”

* (vain: using His name to commit evil, or to pretend to serve in His name while in fact, failing to do so – Isaiah 29:13, “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” – Leviticus 21:6, “They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their 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.)**

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. i.e. Using the Lord’s Name in Vain – Jeremiah 34:13-16** reads:

¹³“Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I myself made a covenant with your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, saying, ¹⁴‘At the end of seven years each of you must set free the fellow Hebrew who has been sold to you and has served you six years; you must set him free from your service.’ But your fathers did not listen to me or incline their ears to me. ¹⁵You recently repented and did what was right in my eyes by proclaiming liberty, each to his neighbor, and you made a covenant before me in the house that is called by my name, ¹⁶but then you turned around and profaned my name when each of you took back his male and female slaves, whom you had set free according to their desire, and you brought them into subjection to be your slaves. **Jeremiah 34:13-16**

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”) 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, **YHWH**, 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, **YHWH**:



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**, *"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

¹ Are 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.** ³ And 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.

⁴ Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who 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

The Lord's Concern for His Holy Name

¹⁶ *The 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. ¹⁸ So 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. ¹⁹ I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries. In accordance with their ways and their deeds I judged them. ²⁰ But 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.' ²¹ But 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. ²³ And 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. ²⁴ I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. 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.

Exodus 20:8-11

⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ but 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. ¹¹ For 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.

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.

Everlasting Covenant

The Sabbath

¹² Then 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. ¹⁵ For 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. ¹⁶ The 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

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

²³ From 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

"⁶ Whoever 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.

Catholic Church Admits They Made the Change

Was the Sabbath changed from the seventh day of the week to the first day? Well, yes and no. Let’s deal with the “no” first.

God, “with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (**James 1:17**), does not change (**Malachi 3:6**). The Israelites received two laws from Moses: the law of Moses, that of ordinances and ceremonies; and the Law of God, embodied in the Ten Commandments, which is an expression of God’s character. If God does not change, neither will His Law. “My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips” (**Psalms 89:34**). “I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it” (**Ecclesiastes 3:14**). “The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy. They are steadfast for ever and ever, done in faithfulness and uprightness” (**Psalms 111:7, 8**).

God gave His Law to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. Amid thunder and lightning, a thick cloud covered the mountain, and a trumpet blasted. Smoke billowed up as from a furnace and the whole mountain shook as the trumpet grew louder and louder. Moses led the Israelites out of their camp to meet with God, and every one of them trembled. Then God spoke (**Exodus 19:16-19, 20:1**). If this Law were to be changed, it would be reasonable to expect God Himself to announce it, and give reasons for its alteration, amid the same amount of ceremony. Yet there is no indication in Scripture of such an announcement.

What About the New Testament?

In the New Testament, the seventh day of the week is called the Sabbath; it is mentioned 58 times. The first day of the week is mentioned eight times. It is simply called the first day of the week, and it is always differentiated from the Sabbath. This in itself is evidence for the continued validity of the seventh-day Sabbath.

The gospel writers record Jesus and the apostles going to the synagogue on Sabbath as their “custom” (**Luke 4:16**). Jesus said, “I have kept My Father’s commandments” (**John 15:10**). The women who went to anoint His body after his death “rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment” (**Luke 23:56**). Nearly all of the incidents reported of the apostles’ preaching occurred on the seventh-day Sabbath. Of all the accusations the Jews made against the apostles, never once did they accuse the apostles of breaking the Sabbath.

Some teach that after Christ’s death and resurrection, the Old Testament law was done away with and a new covenant took its place. But Jesus Himself said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (**Matthew 5:17, 18**). The law of Moses, which foreshadowed Christ’s sacrifice, was indeed made irrelevant, but Paul maintains that the Law of God is to be kept, though we now be under grace. “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law” (**Romans 3:31**).

How It Happened...

Yet for nearly 2,000 years now, millions of Christians have worshiped on Sunday. So was the Sabbath changed from the seventh to the first day of the week? Let’s look at the “yes” now.

“The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath” (**Luke 6:5**). Here Jesus staked His claim and forbade anyone to meddle with the Sabbath. Yet He knew there would be those who would claim the power to change God’s Law. Through Daniel he warned of just such a man. Describing a “little horn power” (**Daniel 7:8**), Daniel says, “He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws” (**Daniel 7:25**). Paul made a similar prediction: “Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God, or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God” (**2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, 7**).

Paul warned that this blasphemy was already at work, and that it would come not from an outside influence, but from *within* the church (**2 Thessalonians 2:7, Acts 20:28-30**). Sure enough, not long after Paul’s day, apostasy appeared in the church.

About 100 years before Christianity, Egyptian Mithraists introduced the festival of Sunday, dedicated to worshiping the sun, into the Roman Empire. Later, as Christianity grew, church leaders wished to increase the numbers of the church. In order to make the gospel more attractive to non-Christians, pagan customs were incorporated into the church's ceremonies. The custom of Sunday worship was welcomed by Christians who desired to differentiate themselves from the Jews, whom they hated because of the Jews' rejection of the Savior. The first day of the week began to be recognized as both a religious and civil holiday. By the end of the second century, Christians considered it sinful to work on Sunday.

The Roman emperor Constantine, a former sun-worshiper, professed conversion to Christianity, though his subsequent actions suggest the “conversion” was more of a political move than a genuine heart change. Constantine named himself Bishop of the Catholic Church and enacted the first civil law regarding Sunday observance in A.D. 321.

On the venerable day of the sun let the magistrate and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country however, persons engaged in agricultural work may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain growing or for vine planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost. —Schaff's History of the Christian Church, vol. III, chap. 75.

Note that Constantine's law did not even mention Sabbath but referred to the mandated rest day as a “the venerable day of the sun.” And how kind he was to allow people to observe it as it was convenient. Contrast this with God's command to observe the Sabbath “even during the plowing season and harvest” ([Exodus 34:21](#))! Perhaps the church leaders noticed this laxity as well, for just four years later, in A.D. 325, Pope Sylvester officially named Sunday “the Lord's Day,” and in A.D. 338, Eusebius, the court bishop of Constantine, wrote, “All things whatsoever that it was the duty to do on the Sabbath (the seventh day of the week) we (Constantine, Eusebius, and other bishops) have transferred to the Lord's Day (the first day of the week) as more appropriately belonging to it.”

Instead of the humble lives of persecution and self-sacrifice led by the apostles, church leaders now exalted themselves to the place of God. “This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world” ([1 John 4:3](#)).

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.

In *An Abridgment of the Christian Doctrine*,

Q. How prove you that the church hath power to command feasts and holy days?

A. By the very act of changing the Sabbath into Sunday, which Protestants allow of; and therefore they fondly contradict themselves, by keeping Sunday strictly, and breaking most other feasts commanded by the same church.

Q. How prove you that?

A. Because by keeping Sunday, they acknowledge the church's power to ordain feasts, and to command them under sin; and by not keeping the rest [of the feasts] by her commanded, they again deny, in fact, the same power.

—Rev. Henry Tuberville, D.D. (R.C.), (1833), page 58.

In *A Doctrinal Catechism*,

Q. Have you any other way of proving that the Church has power to institute festivals of precept?

A. Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her. She could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority.

—Rev. Stephen Keenan, (1851), p. 174.

God warned that a blasphemous power would “seek to change times and laws,” and the Catholic Church openly admits doing it, even boasts about it “The Church of God has thought it well to transfer the celebration and observance of the Sabbath to Sunday!”. In a sermon at the Council of Trent in 1562, the Archbishop of Reggia, Caspar del Fossa, claimed that the Catholic Church's whole authority is based upon the

fact that they changed the Sabbath to Sunday. Does this not fulfill the prophecies of Daniel and Paul?

“For centuries millions of Christians have gathered to worship God on the first day of the week. Graciously He has accepted this worship. He has poured out His blessings upon Christian people as they have sought to serve Him. However, as one searches the Scriptures, he is forced to recognize that Sunday is not a day of God’s appointment... It has no foundation in Scripture, but has arisen entirely as a result of custom,” says Frank H. Yost, Ph.D. in *The Early Christian Sabbath*.

Let us ask the question again: Was the Sabbath changed from the seventh day of the week to the first? The Bible is clear: “And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy” (Genesis 2:3). “Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Exodus 20:11). If God intended for another day to become the Sabbath, He must have removed the blessing from the seventh day and placed it on the day which was to replace it. But when God bestows a blessing, it is forever. “...You, O Lord, have blessed it, and it will be blessed forever” (1 Chronicles 17:27). “I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot change it” (Numbers 23:20). Your birthday, a memorial of your birth, can’t be changed, though you may celebrate it on a different day. Neither can the Sabbath, a memorial of creation (Exodus 20:11), be changed, though some may celebrate it on a different day.

God instructed Moses to construct the earthly sanctuary, all its furniture, and the ark according to “the pattern” he was shown. (Exodus 25:9, 40) The ark was called the “ark of the covenant” (Numbers 10:33, Deuteronomy 10:8, Hebrews 9:4), and the “ark of the testimony” (Exodus 25:22), because in it Moses placed the tablets of stone on which God wrote His Law. (Exodus 25:16, 31:18) John, in Revelation 11:19, describes the scene before him when “the temple of God was opened in Heaven.” John saw the ark of the covenant in the heavenly sanctuary. David wrote, “Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens” (Psalms 119:89). It is safe to assume that God’s Law remains, contained within the ark of the covenant in the heavenly sanctuary.

When God says, “The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God” (Exodus 20:10), that ends all controversy. We cannot change God’s Word for our own convenience. “But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve” (Joshua 24:15).

<https://www.sabbathtruth.com/free-resources/article-library/id/916/catholic-church-admits-they-made-the-change>

Exodus 20:12

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

How do we Honor our Father and Mother:

Matthew 5:43-48 & Luke 6:27-36

1. Love them.
2. Do good to them.
3. Bless them.
4. Pray for them.
5. Lend to them expecting nothing in return.

Exodus 20:13-18

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**

¹³ “You shall not murder. (not kill, but a premeditated act to kill, called murder – the spirit of the law is “do not be angry”)

¹⁴ “You shall not commit adultery. (not sexual immorality, but rather a breaking of a covenant and the establishment of a new covenant with someone other than ones spouse – i.e. **Matthew 19:3-9**):

³ And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” ⁴ He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’ ⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” ⁷ They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” ⁸ He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹ And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

1 Corinthians 7:10-11, ¹⁰ To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband ¹¹ (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

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.”

¹⁸ Now 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 and trembled, and they stood far off ¹⁹ and 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]*)

Exodus 20:20-23

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.

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.

“*If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*” (*John 14:15*)

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

“*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.*” (*1 John 2:4-6*)

“*If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.*” (*1 John 2:4-6*)

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.

This Weeks Reading Begins with:

Exodus 21:1

Laws About Slaves

¹ “Now **these** are the rules that you shall set before them.

AND THESE ARE THE LAWS WHICH YOU SHALL SET BEFORE THEM (EXODUS 21:1)

The phrase “and these” (ve’eileh) implies that they are a continuation of what is written before. This is to teach us that just as the laws written above (the Ten Commandment) are from Sinai, these, too, are from Sinai.

(*Mechilta; Rashi*)

Since the majority of laws set forth in the Parshah of Mishpatim are logical laws, the Torah wishes to emphasize that these, too, are divinely ordained.

(*The Commentaries*)

Exodus 21:2

² When you buy a Hebrew slave, ^[a]he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing.

Once We Were Slaves

“*When you acquire a Jewish bondsman, for six years he shall work and in the seventh year he shall go free.*” **Exodus 21:2**

Since the Israelites had just been released from slavery, the first of God’s mishpatim (laws) deals with servants and slaves.

According to the rabbis, the six years that a slave is obligated to work represent the 6,000 years that we will work to serve the Lord. The seventh year of freedom represents the Messianic age—the thousand years when we will rule and reign from Jerusalem with Messiah, who will sit on the Throne of His earthly father David.

(Messianic Bible - Bibles For Israel)

IF YOU PURCHASE A HEBREW SLAVE... (21:2)

There is nothing more difficult for a person than to be subjugated to another person. This is why the Reading begins with the laws on how the Hebrew slave is to be treated.

(Ibn Ezra)

The law that the Hebrew slave must be set free on the seventh year is reminiscent of the Exodus from Egypt referred to in the first of the Ten Commandments. As the Torah says regarding the Hebrew slave: “And you shall remember that you were a slave in the Land of Egypt, and G-d redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today” **Deuteronomy 15:15**. It is also reminiscent of the work of creation, because, like the Shabbat, the Hebrew slave gains respite from serving his master on the seventh year... All time cycles are ordained as cycles of seven—to refer to the seven day cycle of creation. Thus it is fitting that this mitzvah should come first in our Reading this week.

(Rashi)

Exodus 21:3-6

³ If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. ⁴ If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out alone. ⁵ But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ ⁶ then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever.

And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl (21:6)

Why the ear? The ear that heard at Mount Sinai “For the children of Israel are My servants” -yet this person went and acquired a [human] master for himself—that ear should be pierced.

(Rashi)

And he shall be his slave forever (21:6)

But even this “forever” is interpreted by the Sages as extending only until the Jubilee which occurs every 50th year, at which time all Hebrew slaves go free, regardless of their desire to remain indentured. – **Jesus will Return on a Jubilee Year to Fulfill this Passage**

Exodus 21:7-25

⁷ “When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. ⁸ If she does not please her master, who has designated her^[b] for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has broken faith with her. ⁹ If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her as with a daughter. ¹⁰ If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights. ¹¹ And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.

¹² “Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death. ¹³ But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee. ¹⁴ But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him by cunning, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die.

¹⁵ “Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death.

¹⁶ “Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death.

¹⁷ “Whoever curses^[c] his father or his mother shall be put to death.

¹⁸ “When men quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist and the man does not die but takes to his bed, ¹⁹ then if the man rises again and walks outdoors with his staff, he who struck him shall be clear; only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall have him thoroughly healed.

HE SHALL PAY FOR THE LOSS OF HIS WORK, AND HEAL SHALL HE HEAL (21:19)

From here is derived that a physician is allowed to heal (and we do not say that since G-d afflicted the person, it is forbidden to cure him).

(Talmud, Bava Kama 85a)

Exodus 21:20-25

²⁰ “When a man strikes his slave, male or female, with a rod and the slave dies under his hand, he shall be avenged. (i.e. Martyred – Revelation 6:9-11. “⁹ When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. ¹⁰ They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” ¹¹ Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers^[c] should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.”; ²¹ But if the slave survives a day or two, he is not to be avenged, for the slave is his money.

²²“When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. ²³But if there is harm, then **you shall pay life for life, ²⁴eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.**

An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot; a burn for a burn, a wound for a wound, a bruise for a bruise (22:24)

According to the traditional interpretation of Torah (handed down by Moses from Sinai together with the “Written Torah”) these words are not to be understood in the literal sense, but as a judgment of monetary compensation that must be made by the perpetrator to the victim in five areas: (a) actual damage inflicted on the victim; (b) pain and suffering; (c) medical expenses; (d) lost workdays and productivity; (e) redress for the insult and humiliation involved.

Exodus 21:26-37

²⁶“When a man strikes the eye of his slave, male or female, and destroys it, he shall let the slave go free because of his eye. ²⁷If he knocks out the tooth of his slave, male or female, he shall let the slave go free because of his tooth.

²⁸“When an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten, but the owner of the ox shall not be liable. ²⁹But if the ox has been accustomed to gore in the past, and its owner has been warned but has not kept it in, and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned, and its owner also shall be put to death. ³⁰If a ransom is imposed on him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is imposed on him. ³¹If it gores a man's son or daughter, he shall be dealt with according to this same rule. ³²If the ox gores a slave, male or female, the owner shall give to their master thirty shekels^[e] of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

Laws About Restitution

³³“When a man opens a pit, or when a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, ³⁴the owner of the pit shall make restoration. He shall give money to its owner, and the dead beast shall be his.

³⁵“When one man's ox butts another's, so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and share its price, and the dead beast also they shall share. ³⁶Or if it is known that the ox has been accustomed to gore in the past, and its owner has not kept it in, he shall repay ox for ox, and the dead beast shall be his.

He shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep (21:37)

See how valuable work is. For an ox, whose theft deprived the owner of its labor, the thief pays fivefold. For the theft of a sheep, . . . he pays but four times.

Exodus 22:1-20

²²“If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. ^{2[g]}If a thief is found breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no bloodguilt for him, ³but if the sun has risen on him, there shall be bloodguilt for him. He^[b] shall surely pay. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. ⁴If the stolen beast is found alive in his possession, whether it is an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double.

⁵“If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed over, or lets his beast loose and it feeds in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best in his own field and in his own vineyard.

⁶“If fire breaks out and catches in thorns so that the stacked grain or the standing grain or the field is consumed, he who started the fire shall make full restitution.

⁷“If a man gives to his neighbor money or goods to keep safe, and it is stolen from the man's house, then, if the thief is found, he shall pay double. ⁸If the thief is not found, the owner of the house shall come near to God to show whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor's property. ⁹For every breach of trust, whether it is for an ox, for a donkey, for a sheep, for a cloak, or for any kind of lost thing, of which one says, ‘This is it,’ the case of both parties shall come before God. The one whom God condemns shall pay double to his neighbor.

¹⁰“If a man gives to his neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any beast to keep safe, and it dies or is injured or is driven away, without anyone seeing it, ¹¹an oath by the Lord shall be between them both to see whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor's property. The owner shall accept the oath, and he shall not make restitution. ¹²But if it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. ¹³If it is torn by beasts, let him bring it as evidence. He shall not make restitution for what has been torn.

¹⁴“If a man borrows anything of his neighbor, and it is injured or dies, the owner not being with it, he shall make full restitution. ¹⁵If the owner was with it, he shall not make restitution; if it was hired, it came for its hiring fee.

Laws About Social Justice

¹⁶“If a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed and lies with her, he shall give the bride-price for her and make her his wife. ¹⁷If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the bride-price for virgins.

¹⁸ “You shall not permit a sorceress to live.

¹⁹ “Whoever lies with an animal shall be put to death.

²⁰ “Whoever sacrifices to any god, other than the Lord alone, shall be devoted to destruction

Exodus 22:21-25

In the next passage, the painful experiences of the Israelites in Egypt are highlighted again, this time to **elicit empathy for the foreigner**. God commands the Israelites that foreigners be treated with kindness and respect.

(Messianic Bible - Bibles For Israel)

²¹ “You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. ²² You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. ²³ If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, ²⁴ and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

²⁵ “If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him.

WHEN YOU LEND MONEY TO ANY OF MY PEOPLE (22:25)

Wherever the Torah says the word im (“if” or “when”), the implication is that we are speaking of an action that is optional, except in three instances, where the spoken action is obligatory; this is one of them. **(In other words, a person is obligated to loan money to a fellow in need of a loan).**

(Mechilta; Rashi)

YOU SHALL NOT ACT TOWARD HIM AS A CREDITOR (22:25)

Do not show yourself constantly to him... Do not press him for payment when you know that he is unable to pay.

(Mechilta; Rashi)

When you lend money to any of My people that is poor by you, you shall not act toward him as a creditor; neither shall you lay upon him interest.

(The Chassidic Masters)

Exodus 22:26-23:5

²⁶ If ever you take your neighbor's cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, ²⁷ for that is his only covering, and it is his cloak for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

²⁸ “You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

²⁹ “You shall not delay to offer from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to me. ³⁰ You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep: seven days it shall be with its mother; **on the eighth day you shall give it to me.**

³¹ “You shall be consecrated to me. Therefore you shall not eat any flesh that is torn by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.

The Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5:38-42 & Luke 6:29-30

*(Gospels forged together into one seamless story, in collaboration with New American Standard Bible,
authored by Michael Gibson, Founder of Spirit & Truth, dba Key 2 Changes: “Follow Me: A Message from God”, a Journey with Jesus)*

You have heard that it was said, **AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.** But I say to you who hear, **love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.** Whoever hits you on the cheek, **offer him the other also;** and whoever takes away your coat, **do not withhold your shirt from him either.** And whoever shall force you to go one mile, **go with him two.** Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, **do not demand it back, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.**

In His next subject, in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus opens the topic of just compensation for personal injury with a statement concerning physical injury, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (Lev 24:20). Then He challenges His disciples to take a different view. By using four cases of personal injury Jesus demonstrates that He wants them to **be generous people, those who do not demand their rights.**

The first case involves mental and emotional injuries received by a disciple. Jesus said, *“But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.”* A clenched fist indicates that a fight is occurring. A slap is done with an open hand. It conveys the idea of an insult. It is used to humiliate someone or provoke a fight.

Turning the cheek is an Aramaic idiom meaning “don’t start a fight or quarrel.” It takes two people to fight or have a quarrel. If the injured person does not retaliate then there is no fight or quarrel. **Jesus wants His disciples to give up their right to be right. God will vindicate the righteous.**

The second case involves harm caused by a disciple. Jesus said, *“And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.”* In this case the injured party is seeking a stated compensation for injury but has not gone to court yet to collect it. **Jesus tells the**

disciples to meet the demand and give even more. The reason for it is to produce friendship with the injured person. Jesus wants His disciples to give up the right to personal legal protection when they have wronged someone. God will see that justice is done.

The third case involves lack of compensation for services rendered by a disciple. Jesus said, “And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two.” Going the second mile means doing more than what is required. Jesus wants His disciples to give up the right to compensation for use of their time and talents. God will reward.

Loaning something the disciple has, to someone who asks for it is the fourth case. On the surface this appears rather easy. It is Luke 6:30 that declares the truth of the matter. “Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.” It involves the loss of the disciple’s property. Jesus wants His disciples to give up the right of return of their property. God is the owner of all things.

In each case, Jesus asked His disciples to do more than was required. In other words, they were to give gifts or bless others. Jesus wants his disciples to be like their Father in heaven, generous, people of an open hand. They should not grasp the things of this world or hold onto their rights, for their Father in heaven shall reward them.

The point of the lesson, and the answer to the proposed question, “How are friendships formed?, is to do more than is required.

Exodus 23:1-5

¹ “You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. ² You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, ³ nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit.

⁴ “If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. ⁵ If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him.

IF YOU SEE THE DONKEY OF YOUR ENEMY COLLAPSING UNDER ITS BURDEN, AND ARE INCLINED TO DESIST FROM HELPING HIM, YOU SHALL SURELY HELP ALONG WITH HIM (23:5)

The Hebrew for “donkey,” chamor, also means “material.” Thus, this verse also instructs us as to the proper attitude toward the body and physicality:

“When you will see the chamor of your enemy” - initially, you will see your material self as your enemy, as something that obstructs and hinders your spiritual growth.

“collapsing under its burden” - in such a state of animosity between body and soul, the body resists *the Scripture (Torah)* and its commandments, making them an unbearable burden for it.

One’s first inclination may be “to desist from helping him” - to shun the body, suppress its instincts and deny it its wants. Says *the Scripture (Torah)*: “you shall surely help along with him.” Aid the material self with its “burden” by training it to recognize that *the Scripture (Torah)* is the vehicle for its own refinement and elevation.

(Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov)

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.”

Exodus 23:6-12

⁶ “You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit. ⁷ Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked. ⁸ And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

⁹ “You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.
Laws About the Sabbath and Festivals

¹⁰ “For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, ¹¹ but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat. You shall do likewise with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard.

¹² “Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your servant woman, and the alien, may be refreshed.

Remember the Sabbath

This Reading also reveals the law of the Sabbath, which is more than a Sabbath rest every seventh day.

Every seven years, the land is to enjoy a Sabbath rest called the Shemitah. Israel ended its seventh year of letting the land lie fallow in September 2015.

(Messianic Bible - Bibles For Israel)

Exodus 23:13-17

¹³ “Pay attention to all that I have said to you, and make no mention of the names of other gods, nor let it be heard on your lips.
¹⁴ “Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me.” ¹⁵ You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed. ¹⁶ You shall keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep the **Feast of Ingathering (Feast of Tabernacles)** at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor. ¹⁷ **Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord God.**

Remember the Appointed Times

As well, the three pilgrimage festivals are mentioned as a time when all adult Jewish males are to appear before the Lord: Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Pentecost), and Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles).

(Messianic Bible - Bibles For Israel)

It is here that we must recognize, just like we did at the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, that the next Appointed Time that God asked His people to write down, just seven weeks following their Deliverance out of Egypt, in addition to the writing down of Passover, just two months earlier, was the “Feast of Weeks”, or as you may know it, “Pentecost”, fifty days following “Passover”, and more specifically “The Feast of First Fruits”, would not only be the Giving of the Law on Mount Sinai (one of the soul purposes of the Exodus), but on that same day nearly 1,500 years later, in fulfillment of God’s Appointed Time, when God would reveal another step in the Redemption of Mankind, Jesus pours out the Promised “Holy Spirit” to equip and empower all Followers of God to walk out this Life as God has intended us, that all man might see God, that none should Perish. It would be with this second fulfillment of God’s Appointed Times, that sets up God’s Final Appointed Time, in a two-fer fulfillment, and the Third and Final step in the Redemption of Mankind, The Return of the Messiah, His Millennial Reign on Earth, and Final Judgement.

As I was sharing with a Brother earlier this week, unfortunately, many in the Church when teaching on End-times speak of those times only in the context of Paul’s teaching, but should be correctly taught in the context of Jesus’s End-times teaching during His Olivet Discourse and later, Revelation with the Apostle John. But we can not stop there, because Jesus taught in the context of the prophecies of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zachariah, to name just a-few; which for good End-times teaches, you may think they have arrived, but the totality of End-times teachings must be ultimately taught in the context of the these Appointed Times of the Lord, which were originally given during the 4th Day of God’s Creation Week, and then eluted to throughout all of Scripture, which again in context, speaks of the complete End-times timeline of End-time Events. Without which any alternative Interpretation fall short of and incomplete of the total Biblical End-time Timeline of events towards God’s Redemption of Mankind, in the spirit and desire that all man might see God, and that none should Perish.

Exodus 23:18-25

¹⁸ “You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the fat of my feast remain until the morning.
¹⁹ “The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God.

“You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

Conquest of Canaan Promised

²⁰ “Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. ²¹ Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him.

²² “**But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.**

²³ “When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, ²⁴ you shall not bow down to their gods nor serve them, nor do as they do, but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their pillars in pieces. ²⁵ **You shall serve the Lord your God, and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you.**

AND YOU SHALL SERVE THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND HE SHALL BLESS YOUR BREAD, AND YOUR WATER (23:25)

In Hebrew, the pronoun “you” has both a singular and a plural form. The above verse, as written in the Torah, is a grammatical abnormality: the words “your bread and your water” (et lachmecha v’et meimecha) are in the singular form, while the “you” in “you shall serve” (va’avadetem) is plural.

Explained the Rebbe of Kotzk: **A Jew praying, even a single Jew praying alone, is nevertheless praying for, and together with, the entire community of Israel.**

Exodus 23:26-24:1

²⁶ None shall miscarry or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. ²⁷ I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. ²⁸ And I will send hornets^[a] before you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you. ²⁹ I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply against you. ³⁰ **Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and possess the land.** ³¹ And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates,^[a] for I will give the

inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. ³² You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. ³³ They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”

Exodus 24:1

The Covenant Confirmed

¹ Then he said to Moses, “Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar.”

AND TO MOSES HE SAID, “GO UP TO G-D...” (24:1-18)

The commentaries differ as to the timing of the events described in the closing verses (Exodus 24:1-18) of Mishpatim.

According to Rashi, the Torah now returns to fill us in on the events that occurred before the revelation at Sinai and the speaking of the Ten commandments (recounted in chapters 19-20 above). Moses’ summons to the top of the mountain mentioned here is that of the 4th of Sivan—two days before the Giving of the Torah. On that day he relayed (as mentioned in verse 3) “the words of G-d” to the people of Israel commanded in chapter 19 above (to fence in the mountain and sanctify themselves in preparation for the Giving of the Torah), as well as the “laws” which they had already received in Marah; he also “wrote all the words of G-d” (v. 4)—i.e., from the beginning of Genesis until the middle of Exodus, bringing the Torah “up to date” until the Revelation. The altar and the sacrifices mentioned here (verses 4-8) was built and were offered on the 5th of Sivan, which is also the day on which the people of Israel made the famous proclamation: “We will do and we will hear” (verse 7). Then the Torah describes how they “saw the G-d of Israel” at the Giving of the Torah on Sivan 6th. Finally, we read how, following the (general) Giving of Torah, Moses is summoned to the top of the mountain for 40 days to receive the detailed communication from G-d (including the laws we just read in the first chapters of Mishpatim). This is consistent with the rule that “There is no earlier and later in Torah” - i.e., that the Torah does not necessarily relate events in the order in which they occurred.

According to Nachmanides, the Torah is following chronological order. All the laws that we read in the first chapters of *this weeks reading (Mishpatim)* were communicated to Moses immediately after the Giving of the Torah on Sivan 6th—before the events related in chapter 24, which occurred on the 7th of Sivan, the day after the Revelation. Hence, “the words of G-d” and the “laws” which Moses related to the people (v. 3), and the divine words which Moses transcribed (v. 4) are the Ten Commandments and the laws we just read in the first part of *this weeks reading (Mishpatim)*. Following that, Moses ascended the mountain for 40 days to receive the rest of the Torah.

Exodus 24:2-7

² Moses alone shall come near to the Lord, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him.”

³ Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the rules.^[a] And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do.”⁴ And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.⁵ And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. ⁶ And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. ⁷ Then 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 be obedient.”

The Sacrificial Offering System

Two offerings restored communion with God.

- Sin – for offenses against God through ignorance (There is no offering for sins committed intentionally (willful wrongdoing). This type of sin requires repentance and a change of the attitudes that made it possible for the transgressor to flout God’s will - Hebrews 10:26. Jesus our high priest made the only permanent sin offering for mankind.
- Trespass – for offenses against others. Restitution has to be made.

Five offerings were taken in communion with God.

- Burnt – This is the sacrifice of devotion or service and was performed twice each day, once in the morning and once in the evening.
- Peace – This is the sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise and the offering could be brought anytime.
- Meat – Although this offering is called the meat offering it is actually a grain offering and consists of partaking of bread, usually unleavened. It was brought in conjunction with burnt and peace offerings.
- Drink – It concerns the pouring out of wine as an offering. It was brought in conjunction with burnt and peace offerings.
- Incense – This is the sacrifice of prayer and was performed twice each day, once in the morning and once in the evening.

AND [MOSES] TOOK THE BOOK OF THE COVENANT, AND READ IN THE HEARING OF THE PEOPLE; AND THEY SAID: “ALL THAT G-D HAS SPOKEN, WE WILL DO, AND WE WILL HEAR” (24:7) When the people of Israel gave precedence to “we will do” over “we will hear,” a heavenly voice issued forth and exclaimed to them: “Who revealed to My children this secret, which is employed by the angels?” As it is written (Psalms 103:20), “Bless the L-rd His angels, those mighty in strength, who fulfill His word, who hear the voice of His word”—first they fulfill and then they hear....

There was a certain Sadducee who saw Rava engrossed in his studies while the fingers of his hand were under his feet, and he ground them down, so that his fingers spurted blood. “You rash people,” he exclaimed, “who gave precedence to your mouth over your ears, still persist in your rashness! First you should have listened, and if it is within your powers, accept; if not, you should not have accepted!”
(Talmud, Shabbat 88a-b)

The greatness of the people of Israel was not that they were prepared to “blindly” do G-d’s bidding without understanding (in which case they would have said only, “We will do”), but that they placed their doing before their understanding. G-d desires that we should do as well as “hear” and comprehend His will, so that we serve Him not only with our hands and feet, but also with our minds and hearts. **But our doing should serve as the basis of our understanding, rather than the other as way around.**

(The Chassidic Masters)

Exodus 24:8

8 And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

It is here that we find, Moses reads before all the people the Book of the Covenant that God has given Israel. After the people commit to keeping God’s law, Moses sprinkles blood upon the altar and on the people as well, since **all covenants are formally ratified and are usually sealed with blood.**

“Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, ‘All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.’ And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words.’” *(Exodus 24:7–8)*

Likewise, the New Covenant was sealed with the blood of Messiah, Yeshua, the Lamb of God. **At the Passover meal with His disciples, Yeshua held up the cup of redemption** and said, **“This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.”** *(Luke 22:20)*

The most righteous of all men, Yeshua HaMashiach, became the final atonement for all generations who accept His sacrifice on their behalf.

“I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. **I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,** to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.” *(Isaiah 42:6–7)*

(Messianic Bible - Bibles For Israel)

Exodus 24:9-18

9 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up,¹⁰ and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. **11** And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.

12 The Lord said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.” **13** So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. **14** And he said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever has a dispute, let him go to them.”

15 Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. **16** The glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. **17** Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. **18** Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

This Weeks Story:

To your question of “can one lose their salvation”, there is much debate about this. The majority of the Church (meaning the worldwide, universal Church) believes that the answer is “no”. This is partly evident in why the Catholic Church began centuries ago baptizing infants so that they could “secure” the salvation of everyone possible. As for Protestants, the belief really didn’t come about until around 1600 AD with John Calvin (the “founding father” of the Presbyterian denomination) who developed a system of theology known as Calvinism that has been condensed to a single statement used by many evangelical Christians today - “once saved, always saved.” Unfortunately, there are many doctrines that the Church has come to believe in wholeheartedly and fully embrace as Gospel-truth that never came into existence until centuries and centuries after Jesus walked on the earth. Jesus warned us to beware of false teachers. So in order to get the Truth, we must go back to the Word of Truth and not base our beliefs on the opinions of mere men. We must always be like the Bereans in the Book of Acts and examine what is being taught against the authority of God’s Word. While there is Scripture used to support both sides of the once saved, always saved debate, let’s go back to Jesus’ words.

In a few different instances, but most prominently in Matthew 24, when asked about the end of the world by his disciples, the very first words Jesus says are “Do not be misled.” If our salvation is so secure that we cannot lose it, then why would Jesus be concerned about us being misled?

In verse 24 of Matthew 24, Jesus says that the signs and wonders performed by false messiahs and false prophets will even deceive the “very elect.” This phrase used by Jesus literally means God’s “chosen ones.”

As Jesus continues to describe the last days to his disciples, He then mentions that many will "fall away." Literally, the Greek word used here is the word "apostatize," which means to renounce one's beliefs. If we can't lose our salvation, then who are these that will fall away? And how can one apostatize if they never believed in the first place?

One of the arguments of the once saved, always saved doctrine is that those who fall away were never fully Christians, to begin with. If that's the case, then what are these so-called non-Christians falling away from? You can't fall away from something if you don't first stand firmly in it. In fact, looking at the disciple Peter's own words in 2 Peter 3:17: *Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position.* Peter is writing to Christians here ("dear friends"), not non-believers. He is thus indicating that believers can be "carried away" and even "fall away" from their secure position! Secure position in what? In their salvation and status in eternity. Any time something along the lines of secure position in relation to our faith is mentioned in Scripture, it is always in the context of our eternal salvation (i.e. whether our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life), not just a position such as James and John argued about who will sit on Jesus' right or left hand in His Kingdom.

While proponents of the once saved, always saved belief lean on Jesus' words that "none of them is lost" and "no one can take them from me", what they fail to recognize is the foundational belief to our faith of free will. If I have the free will to accept and receive Christ, then I must also have the freedom to reject Him, even if that means doing so after having first received Him.

Here is a critical part of this debate - finding the answer in the entirety of our faith in its original context. In Jude 11, it says - Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. Here are three Old Testament examples of those that once had a relationship and even intimacy with God, yet were led astray, rebelled, and fell away from their secure position...and perished! And it is Jude in the New Testament, after Jesus' resurrection, who states that false teachers and those that follow them will face the same fate. Korah was one of the leaders of the Levites. This was no ordinary man who was just amongst the tribes of Israel. This was a leader in leading the nation of Israel in worshipping God. Yet due to his rebellion, as well as all of those that followed him, they all perished and were killed by God. This is a clear example of a follower of God, a believer, losing their salvation. And Jude states that even after Jesus establishes the New Covenant, this is still possible.

Here's another thing to consider, from the very words of Jesus once again:

Mark 3:28-29

²⁸ "Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; ²⁹ but whoever **blasphemes*** against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"—

Matthew 12:31-32

³¹ Therefore I tell you, people will be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy, but **blasphemy*** against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³² Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

Luke 12:10

¹⁰ And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever **blasphemes*** against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

Blasphemes (STRONG'S NO. 988 – blasphemía): "switches" right for wrong (wrong for right), i.e. calls what God *disapproves*, "right" which "exchanges the truth of God for a lie" (Ro 1:25 - "because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie"; Isa 5:20 - "you who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness,"). Literally, slow (sluggish) to call something *good* (that *really is good*) – and slow to identify what is truly bad (that really is evil). (THAYER'S GREEK LEXICON): *a.* universally, slander, detraction, speech injurious to another's good name.

I will end with this, a parable from Jesus Himself in Matthew 25 of the Ten Virgins. In this parable, Jesus is returning for His Bride, but five are prepared with enough wick and oil and are awake and alert for when he returns, while the other five are not. To those who are prepared, He welcomes them into His glorious Kingdom; to those who are not, He casts out and states "I never knew you." Now all throughout Scripture, virgins always represent God's people (i.e. Israel, the Church, believers). By Jesus' own words, He is stating that there will be those who were part of the family of God but because of their own choices in not being obedient and prepared as He instructed, they will lose their secure positions (of being virgin brides prepared to meet their bridegroom).

We hope this answer helps and we certainly encourage you to continue searching the Scriptures as the Bereans did.

Blessings,

Brandon Shirkey
Co-Pastor
Springs of Living Water

Next Week's Reading:

Week 19 - TERUMAH (Offering)
Exodus 25:1–27:19; 1 Kings 5:26–6:13; Hebrews 9:1–28