

## **#17 Yitro Exodus 18:1-20:26**

By Moshe Schwab

While Praying:

\*We can enjoy the goodness of God. It is different than what the world gives us – it come from God's gifts (the Torah and the Holy Spirit) and demonstrates God's goodness.

\*God wants us to accept what He's given us – we need to open our ears.

\*There is a right way to do things. Lock on to the right ways in all areas of our life.

\*Stay with the things of God in all we do; it empowers us.

In this portion, Moshe's father-in-law, Yitro, (Jethro) shows up. The Israelites were in Midian and that's where Yitro lived. The people of Midian were cousins of Jacob (Genesis 25:1-2). After Moshe tells Yitro all that has happened, Yitro says, "Now I know that ADONAI is greater than all other gods;" Exodus 18:11CJB. He is fully accepted as a believer and even is allowed to eat with the leaders of Israel. Yitro was not Jewish. We should remember that it was always God's intention that the nations should believe in the true God through Israel. Israel was unable to accomplish that until the coming of the Jewish Messiah Yeshua who has spread the message of the true God around the world.

Moshe then goes up to the mountain and God calls to him and tells him what he is to say to Israel. If the people keep His commandments, they will be a kingdom of priests for God. "And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation;" Exodus 19:6 NKJV. The people all agree.<sup>1</sup>

God tells Moshe that he will speak to him and the people. The people were not to touch the mountain and they were to prepare for their meeting by washing their clothes. On the third day Moshe brought the people to the mountain and there was thunder and lighting, a thick smoke, and a shofar kept blasting louder and louder. God called Moshe up the mountain and God also told Moshe to tell the people that no one was to go up the mountain after Moshe and Aharon. Then God gives the people the ten Commandments out loud; they heard God speak; but didn't see any shape (Deuteronomy 4:11-12).

The people experienced all that was going and they were afraid so they asked Moshe to speak to God for them. Moshe approaches the thick darkness while the people stood back. God tells Moshe that the people are not to make any idols and that they are to make an altar of earth and of uncut stone and not build steps up to the altar (so no one will be indecent). They are to make their offerings at the place where God chooses.

God promises that He will make Israel a holy nation and the people respond that they will do what God tells them to do. We could liken the account to a marriage ceremony between God and Israel where God enters into relationship with them as their husband (see Isaiah 54:5). Mount Sinai acted as the chuppah (canopy) and the ten commands as the ketuvah (marriage contract). The Jewish writings say that it had rained so that the dessert was in bloom and Israel was surrounded by flowers. The giving of the ten commands occurred on Shavuot and the giving of the Holy Spirit also occurred on Shavuot.

If you think about it, the ark carried the tablets with the 10 Commandments on them. So wherever Israel went, they carried their agreement with them. Some of the ancient rabbis believed all 10 Commandments were written on each tablet. One tablet was for Israel and one was for God. I have read that the tablets were made of blue sapphire and that the tablets carried themselves (Can you imagine Moshe carrying

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<sup>1</sup> Kefa (Peter) tells us that believers in the Messiah are the same, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation;" 1 Peter 2:9 NKJV. How God thinks of His people has not changed. Believers are no less to God than they were thousands of years ago.

heavy stone tablets down a mountain?).<sup>2</sup> Most think thought the tablets were thin and could be easily carried.

The first set of tablets were made by the finger of God (Exodus 31:18). Moshe made the second set of tablets on the mountain and arrived back in the camp on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The first time Israel was committing sin with the golden calf, the second time they remained faithful. The first set of tablets was given on Shavuot and also the Holy Spirit was given on Shavuot. Moshe went up to the thick darkness to talk to God for the people of Israel, Yeshua (Jesus) went up to heaven to be our advocate before God. Yeshua is that prophet that Moshe said would come (Deuteronomy 18:15).

There is thunder and lightning, a thick smoke, and a shofar that kept getting louder and louder. Perhaps Yeshua was blowing the shofar. The people were afraid so God allows Moshe to speak for the people. Moshe becomes an advocate who speaks on behalf of the people just like the Messiah Yeshua is our advocate (in heaven) who speaks on our behalf for us. Although the 10 Commandments are important, it should be remembered there are other commandments which are also important too.

We are given laws by God and we call God good. I remember as a child I was told not to put my finger in a light socket. I wonder how many of us had to try it out and see why. God is God, and He is the creator and knows what is best for us. We can enjoy the goodness of God through His commandments. It is different than what the world gives us - it is a gift that shows God's goodness. All of God's commandments are important. They help us to live good lives. If only the world did what God tells us, we wouldn't have so much pain and destruction in the world. Yeshua said love one another – what could be so bad about that. The world's values are different than what God teaches us (and often, the worldly want nothing to get in their way of what they want to do).

God wants us to accept what He's given us – we need to open our ears to His commandments. Yeshua said we need to open our ears and do what is right, "Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let him hear!" Matthew 13:43 CJB. He says this in the middle of parables that He is teaching about accepting God. In the next verse He says, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. A man found it, hid it again, then in great joy went and sold everything he owned, and bought that field;" Matthew 13:44 CJB. God's ways and His commandments are a treasure, a wonderful gift.

Israel was willing to accept God's commandments perhaps more so than all the people in the world. They were chosen by God to be holy in His foreknowledge because He knew they would accept Him. We who believe in the Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) are also chosen to be holy by God in His foreknowledge because He knew we would accept Him. We are not chosen to be Christian; we are chosen to be holy. The people of Israel committed themselves in covenant to God; they said, "Everything that ADONAI has spoken, we will do and obey." Believers in Messiah commit themselves to God through the Messiah Yeshua.

There is a right way to do things. Lock on to doing what is right in all areas of our life. Everywhere we go we have the opportunity to apply what God wants us to do and do what is right. We have the 10 Commandments and many more laws that God gave us to help us including the Holy Spirit in this Messianic age. In Malachi we find an interesting verse. The prophet says that they were acting without faith towards each other. They were also acting without faith towards God. "Have we not all one Father?

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.hebrew4christians.com/Scripture/Torah/Ten\\_Cmds/ten\\_cmds.html](https://www.hebrew4christians.com/Scripture/Torah/Ten_Cmds/ten_cmds.html)

Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another?" Malachi 2:10 CJB.<sup>3</sup> Not keeping God's commandments means we are acting faithless toward each other and faithless towards God. I want to have faith in God and I want to live out my faith.

God doesn't want us to fail in life. He wants to be there for us. "God himself has said, 'I will never fail you or abandon you.' Therefore, we say with confidence, 'ADONAI is my helper; I will not be afraid - what can a human being do to me?'" Hebrews 13:5-6 CJB. I remember years ago unknowingly I was standing next to someone who wanted to do me harm. They didn't like me because I loved God. In that case God protected me. Perhaps we forget keeping God's commandments is a way that God is with us as well. He gave us commandments to help us and protect us.

God intends good for us and since he is God, He knows what is best. When we don't follow His commandments, He sees us inflicting pain on us and others. Remember, it's not simply a matter of the here and now. Shaul (Paul) said, "For he will pay back each one according to his deeds. To those who seek glory, honor and immortality by perseverance in doing good, he will pay back eternal life. But to those who are self-seeking, who disobey the truth and obey evil, he will pay back wrath and anger;" Romans 2:6-8 CJB.

I want to do what is good; is there anything wrong with wanting to do what is good? Those who have experienced evil know what it is like to have been wronged. If you live long enough, you will experience the pain of sin and evil in some way. God protect us from the evil of this world. It says God will not forget those who do what is right and good. That is good news. He will also pay back those who do evil, because He is a just God.

Stay with the things of God in all we do; it empowers us. The God of the universe has given us special technology; a way to live that brings peace and blessings. I put it that way to make a point. In our society, some of us value technology. Some even think that technology is the savior of mankind. Living right is better than any physical thing that we think we need or want. We have needs; Taking care of our needs is important.

Through knowing the Messiah, we have our most important need met. "God's power has given us everything we need for life and godliness, through our knowing the One who called us to his own glory and goodness;" 2 Peter 1:3 CJB. Kefa (Peter) says in the next verse this is so because God wants us to escape evil and the evil desires which are behind those acts. "And escape the corruption which evil desires have brought into the world;" 2 Peter 1:4 CJB. Kefa goes on to talk about godly characteristics and not the latest design for roads or buildings. "Try your hardest to furnish your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with perseverance, perseverance with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love;" 2 Peter 1:5-7 CJB.

We get the best of both worlds with God; we get a better life in the present and in eternity. What could be better than that? Yeshua said, "I have come so that they may have life, life in its fullest measure;" John 10:10 CJB. It's not all about what we have, but about our relationship with God. He has empowered us to live a better life, "life in its fullest measure." We can have a full life through God.

It says in Hebrews, "We are confident that you have the better things that come with being delivered. For God is not so unfair as to forget your work and the love you showed for him in your past service to his

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<sup>3</sup> Jews say that calling God Father is a Christian invention, but that is not true. In Malachi it said, "Have we not all one Father?"

people - and in your present service too;" Hebrews 6:9-10 CJB. God has given us a lot; He didn't have to do anything, but because He is a loving God, He wants to help us. We can have something better than just things. God wants us to enjoy life and be prosperous. God promises a future glorious eternal life to those who love Him. True joy in life comes from following God's commandments and living a new life in the Messiah with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Let's look at the 10 Commandments:

Exodus 20:1-14 CJB: "Then God said all these words:"

#1

א "I am ADONAI your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the abode of slavery."

#2

ב You are to have no other gods before me. You are not to make for yourselves a carved image or any kind of representation of anything in heaven above, on the earth beneath or in the water below the shoreline. You are not to bow down to them or serve them; for I, ADONAI your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sins of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but displaying grace to the thousandth generation of those who love me and obey my mitzvot."

#3

ג "You are not to use lightly the name of ADONAI your God, because ADONAI will not leave unpunished someone who uses his name lightly."

#4

ד "Remember the day, Shabbat, to set it apart for God. You have six days to labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Shabbat for ADONAI your God. On it, you are not to do any kind of work - not you, your son or your daughter, not your male or female slave, not your livestock, and not the foreigner staying with you inside the gates to your property. For in six days, ADONAI made heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. This is why ADONAI blessed the day, Shabbat, and separated it for himself."

#5

ה "Honor your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land which ADONAI your God is giving you."

#6

ו "Do not murder."

#7

ז "Do not commit adultery."

#8

ח "Do not steal."

#9

ט "Do not give false evidence against your neighbor."

#10

י "Do not covet your neighbor's house; do not covet your neighbor's wife, his male or female slave, his ox, his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Perhaps we can memorize a short version of the 10 Commandments to help us remember what the commandments say. Take some time to think about how we can apply the 10 Commandments. Also, note that Catholics and Protestants changed the 10 Commandments from what is actually in the Bible.

Here is my short version that I used to think about the commandments. Perhaps you could Take some time to think about the 10 Commandments as I have done.

1) The true God is Yehovah.

This is just a statement of fact. The first commandment tells us who the true God is. Exodus 3:15 says that Yehovah will be God's name forever. Hardly anyone keeps this commandment. Yehovah wants to be called by His real name. He said this would be his name forever. We are dishonoring God by not respectfully referring to Him as Yehovah at times and teaching His name.

2) We are to put no gods before the true God.

No idol, no thing or ideals, no job or hobby, not money or fame, God is first.

3) We are to use the name of Yehovah with reverence or respect.

I purposely use God to refer to Yehovah to not overuse God's name. It is appropriate to use Yehovah's real name at times in prayer and songs or anytime we feel led to, but do not to overuse His name or use His name frivolously.

4) Keep Shabbat; you have 6 days to work; Shabbat is a day of rest.

If you think about, this is another commandment that is ignored by many. Instead of the right day, people observe Sunday and it seems most people don't observe any day at present.

5) Show respect for your father and mother.

They know what is best and try to protect us and help us. They deserve respect. Even in their old age we need to take care of them, respect them, and value them. If we don't listen to their godly advice, there could be consequences.

6) Do not murder anyone.

Also, do not do anything to hurt others emotionally, physically, or spiritually. Yeshua said we should especially be aware of those who may mess up our spiritual life than someone who would kill us. We could also think of not doing something that could cause others to be hurt or killed like a riot or violent protest. Some people engage in getting drunk together only to find out their friend died as a result. Being complicit with activities that can cause injury or death is also wrong.

7) Do not commit any inappropriate sexual acts.

The Bible lists a lot of sexual acts that are wrong and God calls them disgusting (see Leviticus 18). I've heard that 25% of homosexual men have the deadly disease AIDS. God didn't want them to have AIDS. God wants them to turn their lives around and start thinking right. Anyone can think wrong thoughts and commit inappropriate sexual acts; it takes a strong person of conviction to think and do the right thing. People who commit these wrong sexual acts are hurting themselves and others.

8) Do not take anything that does not belong to you.

Sin starts in our mind. We think about wanting to have something and we decide we must have it. Perhaps we think that we can't control ourselves. We need to turn our thoughts around and say, "I am not going to take anything that belongs to someone else, even the smallest of things like perhaps a button."

9) Do not make up false stories about anyone (including yourself).

We can hurt others very badly by making up false stories. Even passing on gossip can be a bad thing. Saying something bad about someone can destroy their character and their life; be careful what you say.

10) Don't be jealous of your neighbor and want to take their home, spouse, or anything they own.

If someone has something nice, compliment them, encourage them, and be glad for them. Have a pure heart and do not desire to take what they have.

Again, perhaps you can add your own thoughts. We can add commandments appropriately, but be careful. Test the idea by asking, "Does this make us closer to God?" Is it just a ritual act that is not commanded by

the Bible? For example, what does putting your right shoe on first have to do with God? Some people actually believe they need to do that. They are being taught commandments of men.

Is our idea taking the scripture out of context? For example, when they were putting together the items for the Tent of Meeting in the Torah, this required smelting. Just before this, is the verse about kindling a fire. So, the context of the verse that talks about not kindling a fire actual means that not even work like smelting is to be done for the Tent of Meeting on Shabbat. People have taken this verse out of context to mean not even a switch can be turned on because it causes a spark. That was not the intention of the scripture. The context was about work on the Tent of Meeting. No unnecessary work is to be done on Shabbat, not even on our meeting places.

In the Haftarah, a coming king is promised. "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; dominion will rest on his shoulders, and he will be given the name Pele-Yo'etz El Gibbor Avi- 'Ad Sar- Shalom [Wonder of a Counselor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace], in order to extend the dominion and perpetuate the peace of the throne and kingdom of David, to secure it and sustain it through justice and righteousness henceforth and forever. The zeal of ADONAI- Tzva'ot will accomplish this." Isaiah 9:5-6 CJB.<sup>4</sup>

Just as a multitude of Israel came before God at the holy mountain and was to live in unity, the believers in the Messiah are to live in unity, both Jew and Gentile believers. Moshe sprinkled blood on the people as a sign of covenant and Yeshua gave His blood for us so that we could be in covenant with God. "He was wounded because of our crimes, crushed because of our sins; the disciplining that makes us whole fell on him, and by his bruises we are healed. We all, like sheep, went astray; we turned, each one, to his own way; yet ADONAI laid on him the guilt of all of us. Though mistreated, he was submissive - he did not open his mouth. Like a lamb led to be slaughtered, like a sheep silent before its shearers, he did not open his mouth;" Isaiah 53:5-7 CJB. This is what Yeshua the Messiah did for us.

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<sup>4</sup> This is in the Ashkenazi Haftarah.