

**January 21, 2018 - Ex. 19:6 – 20:26 - Approaching Mt. Sinai, Ten Commandments  
Torah Reading: Exodus 19:6 – 20:26 - Approaching Mt. Sinai, Ten Commandments  
Psalm 56  
Haftarah: Isaiah 61:6 – 62:4**

The Ten Commandments were given 50 days after leaving Egypt on Passover, this became the Pentecost festival.

God has charged Israel to "obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant" (verse 5). The covenant is different from the covenant with Abraham made in Genesis 15. In that "horror of great darkness" Abraham was asleep, and only God promised to bring him into the land.

The Exodus from Egypt was fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham.

The last incident before arriving at Sinai was Moses smiting the rock.

"He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out: they ran in the dry places like a river. For He remembered His holy promise to Abraham His servant" (**Psalm 105:41,42**)

Now at Sinai, this would be a different covenant, in which the people would promise their part.

Israel actually had been under the Law from their departure from Egypt, because God mentions his laws and statutes in **Exodus 15:25-26** at the waters of Marah and at the giving of manna, to "prove them, whether they will walk in My law, or no" referring to gathering on the Sabbath.

What we see in Exodus 19 is the actual "cutting" of the covenant between the Children of Israel and God. Until this point, when they murmured and complained, God had dealt with them as son who has not yet reached the age of being a "child of the law."

The process though was still like that of Abraham in **Genesis 15**. Blood had to be spilled.

This is referred to when God requires Israel to re-certify the covenant in Jeremiah's day:

**Jeremiah 34:18-19** - "And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof. The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf."

The covenant they agreed to was The Ten Commandments, relayed by Moses to the people and later engraved on the stone tablets by God himself:

**Exodus 34:28** - "And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, The Ten Commandments."

Forty years later, Moses reminded Israel, "And He declared unto you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, ten commandments; and He wrote them upon two tables of stone" (**Deuteronomy 4:13**).

The people agreed initially,

**Exodus 19:8** - "All the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do"

And again later, when Moses explained all the details:

**Exodus 24:3** - "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do"

Then the covenant was solemnly ratified by blood - **Exodus 24:4-8**.

Almost immediately, and many times later as a nation Israel, broke this covenant; therefore the Lord declared that he would make a new covenant with Israel, writing his law, not upon tables of stone, but in their hearts, **Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:7-10**.

### The Manifestation of the Lord

**Exodus 19:9** - "And the LORD said to Moses, See, I come to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you for ever. And Moses told the words of the people to the LORD."

Rashi - "in a thick cloud" - that is the opaque darkness.

"believe thee forever" - *olam* - eternally, the vanishing point, timelessness. Israel's faith would be based outside of time, not within their own frame of existence.

Rashi - And also in the prophets who will follow you.

Though God is light - really *because* He is light - clouds and darkness are round about Him (**Psalm 97:2**). Even when He reveals Himself, He still "dwells in the thick darkness" (**2 Chronicles 6:1**). It is absolutely necessary that He should be closely veiled when He draws near to men, for otherwise they could not endure for a moment "the brightness of His presence." (See **Exodus 40:35 :2 Chronicles 5:14; 2 Chronicles 7:2**.)

God's manifestation is awesome and scary. The cloud is different from the pillar of cloud and fire, although the idea of God dwelling within the cloud is the same.

Visions of God emphasize his brightness:

**Exodus 40:35** - "And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle."

**Ezekiel 1:26-28** -

"And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

"And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

"As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake."

"Sanctify them" - call them off from their worldly business and concerns, and set them apart for God's purpose.

**Purity** -

(1) Washing of the person; (2) washing of clothes; and (3) abstinence from sexual intercourse (Exodus 19:15). Outward purity pointed to inward purification from moral defilement as its counterpart.

Abstinence from sex was to reflect they were living as angelic beings, according to the Talmud, as Israel later would do on the fast of Yom Kippur.

Rashi - If they have intercourse within the three days, the woman could [involuntarily] emit semen after her immersion and become unclean again. After three days have elapsed [since intercourse], however, the semen has already become putrid and is no longer capable of fertilization, so it is pure from contaminating the [woman] who emits it. — [from Shab. 86a]

Menstrual blood and semen - meant to create and nourish life within the body - outside the body were causes of uncleanness.

**Exodus 19:11** - "And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people on mount Sinai."

The third day corresponds to Christ's resurrection.

**Exodus 19:12-13** - "And you shall set bounds to the people round about, saying, Take

heed to yourselves, that you go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whoever touches the mount shall be surely put to death: There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet sounds long, they shall come up to the mount."

Jewish tradition says the trumpet was one of the ram's horns from the ram that became the substitute for Isaac (Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 31). No person is said to actually blow a shofar here, just that the sound would be heard.

**Exodus 19:17** - "And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount."

Rashi - "toward God": [This expression] tells [us] that the Shechinah came out toward them like a bridegroom going out toward a bride. Moses acted like the friend of the bridegroom.

"at the nether part of the mountain" - The midrashic interpretation is that the mountain was uprooted from its place and turned over them like a vat. — [from Shab. 88a]

**Exodus 19:18** - "And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly."

The Targum says God descended in "flaming fire."

**Psalm 68:8**, "The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God."

**Deuteronomy 4:11** - "You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud and thick gloom."

**Deuteronomy 33:2** - "Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the sons of Israel before his death. He said, "The LORD came from Sinai, And dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; At His right hand there was flashing lightning for them."

At Abraham's Horror of Great Darkness "behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces." (**Genesis 15:17**)

If he, who is a consuming fire, touches the hills and mountains, they smoke (**Psalm 104:32**)

At the destruction of Babylon:

**Revelation 16:18** - "And there were flashes of lightning, and rumblings, and rolls of thunder, and a great earthquake, the likes of which had not occurred since men were

upon the earth — so mighty was the great quake."

The thick smoke and darkness is also an emblem of the darkness of the legal dispensation, which was full of obscure types and figures, of dark shadows and smoky sacrifices, to which the clear day and "plainness of speech" of the Gospel dispensation is opposed, see

**2 Corinthians 3:12.**

This scene is in contrast to the New Covenant:

**Hebrews 12:18-29 -**

18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

**Exodus 19:19** - "And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice."

Rashi - It is customary for mortals that the longer one blows long notes [on a shofar], the weaker and fainter its sound becomes. Here, however, it constantly grew stronger. Now why at the beginning was this so [i.e., a weak sound]? In order to let their ears hear what they were able to hear [and not shock them suddenly]. — [from Mechilta]

**Exodus 19:20** - "And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up."

Rashi - I may think that He actually descended upon it. Therefore, Scripture says: "You have seen that from the heavens I have spoken with you" (**Exod. 20:19**). This teaches that [He did descend although still in the heavens,] He bent down the upper heavens

and the lower heavens and spread them upon the mountain like a spread on a bed, and the Throne of Glory descended upon them [the upper heavens and the lower heavens]. — [from Mechilta]

**Exodus 19:21** - "And the LORD said to Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through to the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish."

God takes seriously his sanctity: See when the men of Beth-shemesh looked into the Ark of the Covenant:

**1 Samuel 6:19** - "He struck down some of the men of Beth-shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the LORD. He struck down of all the people, 50,070 men, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter"

### The Ten Commandments

**Exodus 20:3** - "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Rashi - Why was this said? Since it says, "You shall not make for yourself, etc." I know only that one may not make [graven idols, etc.] How do I know that one may not keep what was already made? Therefore, Scripture states: "You shall not have." -[Mechilta]

You = second person plural. Not "y'all." Each individual in the nation was addressed in particular, in his individual conscience.

Rashi - "in My presence": Heb. עַל-פְּנֵי [This means] as long as I exist [signifying forever. God states this so] that you should not say that only that generation was commanded [prohibited] concerning idolatry. — [from Mechilta]

Before me = "side by side with me." God forbids Israel from adding gods, not just replacing God with another. We say we worship God, but put our trust in other idols, alongside Him.

The Septuagint version is, "besides me."

**Exodus 20:5-6** - "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

Rashi - As the Targum [Onkelos paraphrases: when the sons continue to sin following their fathers, i.e.], when they cling to their fathers' deeds. — [from Sanh. 27b]

**Ezekiel 18:20** - "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him"

Rashi - "shewing mercy": It is thus found that the measure of reward [from God] exceeds the measure of [His] retribution by [the ratio of] one to five hundred, for this one is for four generations, and that one is for two thousand [generations]. -[from Tosefta Sotah 4:1]

**Exodus 20:7** - "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

Rashi - [This word appears twice in this verse.] (The second [mention of  $\text{אִשָּׁרָא}$  is an expression of falsehood, as the Targum [Onkelos] renders:  $\text{אִשְׁרֵי קִשְׁרָא}$ , as it says [in Shavuos 21a]: "What constitutes a vain oath? If one swears contrary to what is known, [for example, saying] about a stone pillar that it is [made of] gold. (The first [mention of  $\text{אִשָּׁרָא}$  is an expression of vanity, as the Targum [Onkelos] renders:  $\text{אִשְׁרֵי מְגָרָא}$ .) This [refers to] one who swears for no reason and in vain, [for example making an oath] concerning [a pillar] of wood, [saying] that it is wood, and concerning [a pillar] of stone, [saying] that it is stone. — [from Shevuoth 29a, Mechilta]

Spiritually, to ascribe God's name to our own plans and idols.

See **Genesis 4:26b** - "then began men to call upon the name of the LORD."

In Hebrew, "*chala*" which is translated in English as "began" had a more common meaning of "to profane, defile, pollute, desecrate."

The Targum of Jonathan - "That was the generation in whose days they began to err, and to make themselves idols, and surnamed their idols by the name of the Word of the Lord."

Rashi defines "to call on the name of God" as "calling the names of men and the names of idols after the name of the Holy One, blessed be He--making them the objects of idolatrous worship and calling them deities."

**Exodus 20:8** - "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Rashi - Pay attention to always remember the Sabbath day, so that if you chance upon a beautiful thing, you shall prepare it for the Sabbath (Mechilta).

**Mark 2:27-28** - "Then Jesus told them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Therefore, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

**Exodus 20:9-10** - "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:"

Rashi - When the Sabbath arrives, it shall seem to you as if all your work is done, that you shall not think about work.

If a young child comes to extinguish [a fire on the Sabbath], you may not allow him [to do so] since you are responsible for his resting [from work] (Shab. 121a).

**Exodus 20:11** - "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

Rashi - If God, Whose work is accomplished without any toil or fatigue, rested on the Sabbath, surely people, whose work is accomplished only with hard work and fatigue, must rest on the Sabbath.]-[from Mechilta]

Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath by keeping it perfectly in the grave.

**Exodus 20:12** - "Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."

**Ephesians 6:1-3** - "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (which is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may be long-lived on the earth."

**Exodus 20:13** - "Thou shalt not kill."

Murder = *ratsach* - murder, or to kill as a freelance avenger of a crime against a kinsman in a vendetta outside the law

**Exodus 20:14** - "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

Rashi - Adultery applies only [to relations] of a man with a married woman, or the extramarital relations of a married woman.

**Exodus 20:15** - "Thou shalt not steal."

Rashi is unsure whether this verse refers to kidnapping, and **Leviticus 19:11** refers to stealing money or property, or vice-versa. Since it is in the context of death penalty offenses, it may refer to kidnapping.

**Exodus 20:16** - "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."

**Exodus 20:17** - "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."

Covet = *chamad* - to delight yourself in, to desire, to lust after

Eve saw the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and it was "a tree to be desired "*chamad*" to make one wise"

Covetousness was the root of the original sin in the Garden.

**Exodus 20:18** - "And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off."

Rashi - The ministering angels came and assisted them [in order] to bring them back. [from Shab. 88b]

**Exodus 20:20** - "And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not."

Prove = *nacah* - prove, test, assay

But Rashi and Jewish translators read it "exalt," because the root can signify "to lift up"

Rashi - to exalt: נָסַח, an expression of exaltation and greatness, similar to "lift up a banner (נִסֵּי)" (Isa. 62:10); "will I raise My standard (יִסְּחֵ)" (Isa. 49:22); "and like a flagpole (נִסְּחֵ) on a hill" (Isa. 30:17), which is upright. [Thus all these words signify "raising up."]

Ultimately, the Law "proves" us by revealing our inability to fulfill it, forcing us to repent and therefore "sin not" by putting on the righteousness of Christ, who fulfilled the Law.

**Exodus 20:23** - "Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold."

Jewish translation: You shall not make [images of anything that is] with Me, referring to the cherubim, of which two figures were made for the cover of the Ark. "For if you make four [cherubim], they are to Me as gods of gold." — [from Mechilta]

Moses himself sanctioned the cherubic forms above the mercy-seat, the brazen serpent, and the lilies and pomegranates of the golden candlestick. Solomon had lions on the steps of his throne, oxen under his "molten sea," and palm-trees, flowers, and cherubim on the walls of the Temple, "within and without" (1Kings 6:29). What the second commandment forbade was the worship of God under a material form. - *Ellicott's Commentary*

**Acts 17:29** - "Therefore, being offspring of God, we should not think that the Divine Being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by man's skill and imagination."

Clemens of Alexandria (Stromat. I. 1. p. 304.) observes, that Numa, ancient king of the Romans, took this from Moses, and forbid the Romans to make any image of God, like to man or beast.

This command was broken when Israel made a golden calf while Moses was in the Mount.

## Sacrifices

**Exodus 20:24** - "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."

Name = the sacred Tetragrammaton. From here you learn that permission was given to mention the Explicit Name only in the place to which the Shechinah comes, and that is in the Temple in Jerusalem. There permission was given to the priests to mention the Explicit Name when they raise their hands to bless the people. — [from Mechilta, Sifrei, Num. 6:23, Sotah 38a]

**Exodus 20:25** - "And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it."

"tool" is interpreted as "sword" in Jewish translations.

Rashi - the altar was created to lengthen man's days, and iron was created to shorten man's days [because it is used to make swords]. It is improper that the "shortener" be wielded over the "lengthener" (Middoth 3:4). Moreover, the altar makes peace between Israel and their Father in heaven. Therefore, the cutter and destroyer shall not come upon it.

**Exodus 20:26** - "Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon."

Probably because the Canaanite worship of Baal, Ashtoreth, Moloch, Chemosh, Remphan, etc. included sexual activity on and around their altars and temples meant to induce fertility. For this reason, Jewish priests were to wear "linen pants" (**Exodus 28:42**).

Sexuality is made sacred, to typify the relationship between God and his people, His Bride.

But Jewish commentators have a further explanation:

Rashi - These stones have no intelligence to object to their humiliation (of seeing the priests' nakedness) The Torah said that because they are necessary, you shall not behave toward them in a humiliating manner. [In contrast,] your friend, who is [created] in the likeness of your Creator and who does object to being humiliated, how much more [must you be careful not to embarrass him!]