

Lunchtime Torah Express - Yitro

Exodus 20:1-14

(1) God spoke all these words, saying: (2) I the Eternal am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage: (3) You shall have no other gods besides Me. (4) You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. (5) You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I the Eternal your God am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me, (6) but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments. (7) You shall not swear falsely by the name of the Eternal your God; for the Eternal will not clear one who swears falsely by God's name. (8) Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. (9) Six days you shall labor and do all your work, (10) but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Eternal your God: you shall not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements. (11) For in six days the Eternal made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; therefore the Eternal blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it. (12) Honor your father and your mother, that you may long endure on the land that the Eternal your God is assigning to you. (13) You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You

שמות כ':א'-י"ד

(א) וידבר אלקים את
כל־הדברים האלה לאמר: (ב)
(ב) אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר
הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים מבית
עבדים: (ג) לא יהיה לך
אלקים אחרים על־פני (ד) לא
תעשה־לך פסל | וכל־תמונה
אשר בשמים | ממעל ואשר
בארץ מתחת ואשר במים |
מתחת לארץ (ה)
לא־תשתחוה להם ולא
תעבדם כִּי אנכי ה' אלקיך אל
קנא פקד עון אבת על־בנים
על־שלישים ועל־רבעים
לשנאי: (ו) ועשה חסד
לא־לפים לאהבי ולשמרי
מצותי: (ז) לא תשא
את־שם־ה' אלקיך לשוא כִּי
לא ינקה ה' את אשר־ישא
את־שמו לשוא: (ח) זכור
את־יום השבת לקדשו (ט)
ששת ימים תעבד ועשית
כל־מלאכתך (י) ויום השביעי
שבת | לה' אלקיך לא־תעשה
כל־מלאכה אתה | ובנד־ובתך
עבדך ואמתך ובהמתך וגרך
אשר בשעריך (יא) כִּי
ששת־ימים עשה ה'
את־השמים ואת־הארץ
את־הים ואת־כל־אשר־בם
וינח ביום השביעי על־כֹּן ברוך
ה' את־יום השבת ויקדשהו:
(יב) כבד את־אביך
ואת־אמך למען יארכון ימך
על האדמה אשר־ה' אלקיך

shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (14) You shall not covet your neighbor's house: you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female slave, or his ox or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

נִתֵּן לָךְ: (ט) לֹא תִרְצֹחַ:
 (ס) לֹא תִנְאַף: (ס) לֹא תִגְנֹב:
 (ס) לֹא־תַעֲנֶה בְרֵעֶךָ עַד שֶׁקֶר:
 (יד) לֹא תַחְמַד בֵּית רֵעֶךָ
 לֹא־תַחְמַד אִשְׁתִּי רֵעֶךָ וְעַבְדּוֹ
 וְאִמְתּוֹ וְשׂוֹרוֹ וְחֹמְרוֹ וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר
 לְרֵעֶךָ: (פ)

Or HaChaim on Exodus 20:1:3

When the Torah writes: *את כל הדברים*, this is a reminder that one cannot accept Torah piecemeal. Anyone who accepts all of the Torah's commandments bar one is considered as having rejected the whole Torah (*Bechorot* 30).

Berakhot 12a:4-8

The priests in the Temple read the Ten Commandments, along with the sections of *Shema*, *VeHaya im Shamo'a*, *VaYomer*, True and Firm, *Avoda*, and the priestly benediction. Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: Even in the outlying areas, outside the Temple, they sought to recite the Ten Commandments in this manner every day, as they are the basis of the Torah, but they had already abolished recitation of the Ten Commandments due to the grievance of the heretics, who argued that the entire Torah, with the exception of the Ten Commandments, did not emanate from God. (If the Ten Commandments were recited daily, that would lend credence to their claim, so their recitation was expunged from the daily prayers.)

Responsa of Maimonides, Blau Edition, Jerusalem, 1960, § 263

From the Query: In one community they were accustomed to stand during the reading, until a wise rabbi came there and annulled that custom, instructing them to sit when it was read and preventing them from standing ... and he [the rabbi] included in his reply that anyone who wishes to stand when the Ten Commandments are read from the Torah scroll should be reproached, because to

do so is the way of heretics who believe that the Ten Commandments have more importance than the rest of the Torah, and whenever the heretics believe differently from our Rabbis, of blessed memory, we must distance ourselves from them.

Maimonides' reply: That which the late rabbi instituted, to sit, is proper and his proofs are correct... and there is nothing to add to them. And it would be proper to do this in every place where they are accustomed to stand; one should prevent them from doing so because of the possible damage to belief, as some people may imagine that there are various levels of Torah and that only some parts are exalted, and that is a very bad thing... The claim of the opposing sage that in Bagdad and several other cities they did this [i.e. stood for the Ten Commandments], is by no means a proof. For if there are sick people, we do not make the healthy sick in order to render them all equal, rather we would try to cure each sick person... The Rabbis have already taught us that there is no difference between one who denies the Divine nature of the entire Torah and one who claims that a single verse 'Moses authored on his own'. There were among the heretics (*minim*) those who believed that only the Ten Commandments were given from Heaven and the remainder of the Torah was said by Moses himself, therefore the daily reading of the Ten Commandments was eliminated. And it is strictly forbidden to treat part of the Torah as if more exalted than another part.

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l, Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and the British Commonwealth, "Yitro (5772)- The Custom That Refused to Die"

“Leave Israel alone,” said Hillel, “for even if they are not prophets, they are still the children of prophets.” Ordinary Jews had a passion for the Ten Commandments. They were the distilled essence of Judaism. They were heard directly by the people from the mouth of God himself. They were the basis of the covenant they made with G-d at Mount Sinai, calling on them to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation...Jews kept searching for ways of recreating that scene, by standing when they listened to it from the Torah, and by saying it privately after the end of the morning prayers. Despite the fact that they knew their acts could be misconstrued by heretics, they were too attached to that great epiphany—the only time in history God spoke to an entire people—to treat it like

any other passage in the Torah. The honor given to the Ten Commandments was the custom that refused to die.

Rav Alex Israel on Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch - The Ten Commandments

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch has even stronger words to say as regards the thematic unity of this division of the Ten Commandments. He explains and gives meaning to the contents of each section by describing a flow of ideas which pulses throughout these two lists, uniting them in a single idea.

He writes: “The demand for the recognition of God begins with a demand for the mind (Command #1&2: Belief etc.) but it is not satisfied with mere spirit; it demands the expression of this spirit in letter, in control of the word (#3 taking God’s name in vain), of activities (#4 Shabbat) and of the family (#5). The social laws begin with a demand for letter, for control of deeds and words (murder, adultery, stealing, false witness), but are not satisfied with letter only, but demand control of spirit and feeling (#10 Do not covet). This expresses the important idea: All “religion”, all so called “honoring God in spirit” is worthless if the thought, the idea of God, is not strong enough to exercise its power practically in the control of our words and doings of our family and social life. Our deeds, our way of life must first prove that our “religion”, our “honoring of God” is genuine. And on the other hand all social virtue is worthless and crumbles at the first test, as long as it aims at letter, at outward correctness, is satisfied with being considered righteous and honest in the eyes of fellow men, but refuses inner loyalty, does not depend on ... that pure inner conscience that only God sees and God judges, and which has its root and ... nourishment only in quiet but constant looking up to God. All spirit must be developed into letter, into act. All letter, all acts, must have their source in spirit. That is the inspiration that hovers over these fundamental ideas of God’s Torah and fuses the two tablets; the “religious” and the “social”, into one inseparable whole.”