

# יתרו

## YITRO/JETHRO

### Shemot/Exodus 18:1-20:23

This week our parasha contains the giving of what is commonly known as the “**Ten Commandments**.” We frequently see these **instructions split into two lists**, enumerated on “*two tablets of stone*”:

*Devarim 5:22* "These words **יהוה** spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And **He wrote them on two tablets of stone** and gave them to me.

In the split, we find some **notable differences**. The **1<sup>st</sup> five commands** take up **12, often lengthy verses in Shemot 20**; whereas the **2<sup>nd</sup> five** are written **succinctly**. Following are the **themes of the commandments**:

1. **Belief in יהוה**
2. **Exclusion of belief in other gods**
3. **Sacred use of the divine Name**
4. **Shabbat**
5. **Respect for parents**
6. **Not to murder**
7. **Not to commit adultery**
8. **Not to steal**
9. **False testimony in court**
10. **Not to covet the property of another person**



Many teach that the **1<sup>st</sup> five** focus on **man’s relationship with יהוה**, and the **2<sup>nd</sup> five** address **relationships between people**. **Yeshua** also spoke of these **two categories**:

*Mark 12:29* **Yeshua** answered him, "The **first of all the commandments** is: 'Hear, O Israel, **יהוה** Eloheinu, **יהוה** is one.<sup>30</sup> 'And you shall love **יהוה** **אלהיך** (**יהוה** your Elohim - **אלהיך**) with **all your heart**, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.<sup>31</sup> "And the **second**, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

The **1<sup>st</sup> five commandments** each contain the **same name of the Almighty**, “**יהוה** your Elohim” (notice **Yeshua** also used this name in *Mark 12:29*):

1. *Shemot 20:2* " I am **יהוה** **אלהיך**, who brought you out of the land of Egypt...
2. *Shemot 20:3* " You shall have no other gods before Me... For I, **יהוה** **אלהיך**, am a jealous Elohim...
3. *Shemot 20:7* " You shall not take the name of **יהוה** **אלהיך** in vain...
4. *Shemot 20:8* " Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.<sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work,<sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is the Sabbath of **יהוה** **אלהיך**. ...

5. *Shemot 20:12* "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which **יהוה אלהיך** is giving you.

“**יהוה אלהיך**” is not present in the **final five commandments**. These commands are all **negative commands**. Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch writes (emphasis mine):

“The **demand for the recognition of GOD begins with a demand for the mind (Commandments 1 and 2 – Belief)** but it is not satisfied with mere **spirit**; it demands the expression of **this spirit in letter, in control of the word (#3 – not taking God’s name in vain), of activities (#4 – Shabbat) and of the family (#5)**. The **SOCIAL LAWS control deeds and words (murder, adultery, stealing, false witness)**, and also demand **control of spirit and feeling (#10 – do not covet)**.”

This expresses the **important idea: all ‘religion,’ also 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 as long as it aims at outward correctness, at being considered righteous and honest in the eyes of fellow men, and does not depend on...that pure inner conscience that only God sees and God judges**.

All **spirit must be developed into action**. 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**.”

Rav Sha’ul “*sums up*” the second tablet of commandments as he mentions **loving others**:

*Romans 13:9* For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all **summed up** in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>10</sup> Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

And just one more thought...why is the **command to “honor” one’s parents placed among those commandments that deal with man’s relationship with יהוה?**

Quoting from the **Sefer Ha-chinukh** (Book of Education) from 13<sup>th</sup> century Spain:

“It is **correct for a person to recognize and repay in some measure, the good which has been offered to him...A person should realize that his father and mother are the cause of his existence in this world; therefore it is appropriate that he render them all the honor and do them all the service he can. For they brought him into the world and labored greatly on his behalf...Once a person has adopted and internalized this trait, he will rise higher to a recognition and appreciation of the goodness of God. It is He who is the cause of one’s existence and the cause of all one’s ancestors all the way back to Adam. Thus, a person will understand the significance of serving Him.**”



**Honoring our parents is a command which leads to honoring אלהים יהוה. If we owe our parents an enormous, unrepayable debt for bringing us into this world and for caring for us, then we owe our Creator an even greater debt!**

**Shabbat Shalom!**

***Ardelle***