

I. Arrival at Sinai (Exodus 19)

- The Israelites arrive at Sinai on the first day of the third month of the year (first month was the one they left Egypt in).
- The message from God to Israel is:
 - You have seen my power over the Egyptians
 - You have seen me free you from slavery
 - I have brought you to Me.
- God offers up the deal In 19:5, 6.
- The people seem to respond to the deal positively, affirming that they will obey.
- God tells them to consecrate themselves over the next two days before He appears to them on the third day. He has Moses tell them to stay away from the mountain and not touch it. No peeking is allowed either (v.21)
- The Lord comes with lightning, thunder, earthquakes and fire and surrounds Sinai with a great cloud and smoke.
- A confusing conversation happens in verses 21-24, like God had forgotten His instruction and Moses had to remind Him. This cannot be the case and it remains confusing.

II. The “Ten” Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17)

- The first 4 commandments deal with our relationship with God, the 5th bridges the gap and the last 4 deal with how we relate to our fellow man.
- The First Commandment (v. 2, 3):
 - Does it begin in verse 2 or 3? Jewish numeration starts at verse 2 and combines it with 3. Interesting that if we do not take verse 2 as a commandment, we will not respect the other commands God gives.
 - The word rendered “before” or “besides” in verse 3 comes from the Hebrew meaning “face”. We are to have no other gods in God’s sight, period.
 - See Matthew 6:24. What gods do people serve today?
- The Second Commandment (v. 4-6):
 - This commandment has many conditions.
 - No idol in the likeness of any created or imagined thing can be made by His people. Compare Romans 1:20-25.
 - They are not to worship or serve any idols (even those made by others).
 - Why? Because God is a jealous God and will visit iniquity of the fathers on their children and the next two generations. Compare Exodus 34:6, 7; Numbers 14:18. Does this make sense? Do the words “who hate me” change the equation? There are examples of people whose fathers have been evil, but they have been righteous and blessed (Josiah, Hezekiah, Korah’s family). It also contrasts Deuteronomy 24:16.
 - The positive is to those who love Him and keep His statutes—a thousand fold the punishment for those who sin. See also Deuteronomy 7:9
- The Third Commandment (v. 7):
 - They were not to “carry” the name of the Lord in vain (Hebrew is vanity, emptiness, falsehood).
 - Some take this commandment to prohibit irreverent or flippant use of the term “God” and obviously referring to the God of the Bible.
 - Some even go so far as to not allow the writing of His name, “God”, in any form. Adonai (Lord), YHWH (LORD), Elohim (God) and El Shaddai (God Almighty) are not written or spoken in casual conversation. If it is written, defacing or erasing His name is forbidden.
 - Most likely, the context here is using the Lord’s name in a false vow. See Leviticus 19:12; Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:20.
 - Certainly, we should show reverence towards our Lord during any discussion or writing where His name is used or He is the subject of discussion.
- The Fourth Commandment (v. 8-11):
 - They are commanded to remember the Sabbath day (already existed, see Exodus 16:23-29) and keep it holy. The seventh day of the week shall be a day where no work is done, so that God can be remembered.

- In Exodus, the reason for the observance on the seventh day is to remember that the Lord created the universe in six days, but set aside the seventh as a sanctified day (Genesis 2:3). In Deuteronomy, it is to remember that they were slaves in Egypt and rescued by God (Deuteronomy 5:14, 15). It is interesting in Deuteronomy that the male and female servant are also to be given rest BECAUSE the Israelites were once slaves and knew hard and ceaseless work.
- It is not simply a cessation from work. Rabbi Saul Berman has stated “There is more to the Sabbath than not working just as there is more to peace than not fighting.” Both reasons given by God for observing the Sabbath involve remembering His works.
- The word translated Sabbath is “shabbath” in Hebrew and means “intermission”. In Matthew 28:1, Mary Magdalene and Mary visit the empty tomb in the morning on the “mia sabbaton”, the first day of the seven, or week. The language is the same in I Corinthians 16:2, discussing collections.
- The definition of “work” prohibited on the Sabbath has long been a source of discussions. Several verses in the Torah deal with activity on the Sabbath day:
 1. Exodus 16:5: There will be no manna sent because God does not want them gathering food that day.
 2. Exodus 16:29, 30: Do not leave your “place”, a word that can mean a room, house or locality.
 3. Exodus 34:21: No plowing or harvesting.
 4. Exodus 35:3: Cannot start a fire, which in that day meant no cooking by default!
- The rabbis of the Talmud (Mishnah Shabbat 7:2) defined 39 forbidden acts on the Sabbath day. The buying and selling of goods appears to be prohibited in Nehemiah 13:15-22.
- God intends this day to be very special and expands on it in Exodus 31:13-17. It is to be observed so that they will know He is the Lord, the one who makes them holy.
- The Fifth Commandment (v. 12):
 - It is interesting that children are commanded to honor their parents, but not love them. Is love for parents assumed? Is honor demanded even if love for the parents has vanished? The Torah instructs people to love God (Deuteronomy 6:5), their neighbor (Leviticus 19:18) and strangers (Leviticus 19:34).
 - “A society in which children do not honor their parents will rapidly lose the means through which the society’s culture, religion and ethics can be transmitted, and thus will soon disintegrate.”-Rabbi Joseph Telushkin
 - Will the person live long or will the society?
 - The Torah continues to enforce the child’s respect for the parent by placing dire consequences on those who commit certain acts against their parents. Exodus 21:15 and 17 prescribe death for a child who strikes or curses their mother or father. Deuteronomy 27:16 says a person is cursed who treats their parent(s) with contempt (disgrace or dishonor). The other “cursed” in the same list are pretty vile people.
 - God continues to demand respect under the New Covenant (Ephesians 6:1-3).
- The Sixth Commandment (v. 13):
 - The Hebrew word here is mistranslated in the KJV as “kill” and misunderstood to mean all taking of human life is prohibited. This is incongruent with other commandments in the Torah regarding crimes requiring capital punishment (Exodus 21:12, 14, 15, 17; 22:18, -20; Leviticus 20:2; 24:17; Numbers 35:16-21, 31, 33; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:11-13,; 24:7). Exodus 22:1 & 2 allow for a thief to be killed if caught breaking in during the night (but not in the morning).
 - It also disagrees with God’s direction to conquer the Promised Land by war.
- The Seventh Commandment (v. 14): Adultery is prohibited throughout the Torah (Genesis 20:6; 39:9; Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22-27) and punishable by death. Interestingly enough, a man is permitted to have more than one wife (Deuteronomy 21:15-17). Biblical narrative in the Hebrew Scriptures, however, shows time and time again that a man having multiple wives causes misery and problems.
- The Eighth Commandment (v. 15): Pretty straightforward, see also Exodus 21:37; 22:3; Leviticus 19:11, 13.
- The Ninth Commandment (v. 16): The ability to trust the testimony of a witness is critical (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15) and false witness are to be punished with the punishment that the person they testified about would be due (Deuteronomy 19:16-19)
- The Tenth Commandment (v. 17): The only commandment related to thoughts, not deeds. The Lord tells Christians that a covetous person will not inherit heaven (Ephesians 5:5). Do the thoughts we dwell on govern our actions?