

יתרו

YITRO/JETHRO

Shemot/Exodus 18:1-20:23

There are many questions as to why a Torah parasha so important to contain the “**Ten Commandments**” should be named after a man outside of the camp of Israel. As I sought out answers this week to that question, I gained more respect for “**Yitro**.” Moshe obviously displayed honor for this man who I believe was sent by יהוה for the Almighty’s own great purposes.

This week will take us to a moment of great revelation at Mt. Sinai. But in preparation for this significant event, Moshe will be visited by **Yitro**, his father-in-law, who is also a teacher of the mysteries of the wilderness. The giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai was in “**Midian**,” which is not at all incidental. It was on the soil of Yitro’s own country that Moshe, “**shepherding the sheep of Yitro**,” encountered יהוה at the burning bush:

Shemot/Exodus 3:1 Now Moshe was tending the flock of Yitro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of Elohim.

² And the Angel of יהוה appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So, he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush *was* not consumed.

That this large group of runaway slaves was here on this same mountain of the burning bush was a great testimony to the power of the Almighty to keep His promises. Had Moshe shared with **Yitro** what he had previously heard on that mountain?

Shemot 3:12 So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve Elohim on this mountain."

Well to this very mountain Moshe brought the Israelites, into the territory of **Yitro**, and after hearing what “**Elohim had done for Moshe and for Israel His people**,” **Yitro** comes for a visit:



Shemot 18:1 And Yitro, the priest of Midian, Moshe's father-in-law, heard of all that Elohim had done for Moshe and for Israel His people -- that יהוה had brought Israel out of Egypt... ⁵ and Yitro, Moshe’s father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moshe in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of Elohim. ⁶ Now he had said to Moshe, "I, your father-in-law Yitro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her."

Moshe shows his respect:

Shemot 18:7 So Moshe went out to meet his father-in-law, **bowed down, and kissed him.** And they asked each other about *their* well-being, and they went into the tent.

There is a common phrase among the sages: “**Who is wise? One who learns from every person.**” A humble man sees a teachable moment in every conversation he is a part of. Every person he encounters, every situation in life he finds himself in, has the potential of revealing something about himself and the world he lives in. Every human being can express another face of the infinite Faces of our Creator. The Creator is capable of speaking to us through every person He puts in our path.

And so the elder priest of Midian, Moshe’s father-in-law, will offer Moshe some good advice for sharing the burden of leadership. And Moshe, who knows he himself has been empowered by the sovereign of the universe, is humble enough to recognize that יהוה is speaking a word to him through **Yitro**. Seeing Moshe overburdened from daybreak until sunset by those seeking the ear of their leader, **Yitro** advises him to create a multi-tiered human justice system which can transmit יהוה’s word to the people without overburdening the sole prophet. **Yitro** instructs Moshe to look for the qualities of leadership in others:

Shemot 18:17 So Moshe’ father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do *is* not good. ¹⁸ "Both you and these people who *are* with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing *is* too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. ¹⁹ "Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and Elohim will be with you: Stand before Elohim for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to Elohim. ²⁰ "And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. ²¹ "Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear Elohim, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* **rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.** ²² "And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be *that* every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear *the burden* with you. ²³ "If you do this thing, and Elohim *so* commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace."

Moshe is dealing with an efficiency problem. He’s overburdened and needs to share the task with others. He has all the power, which can be a recipe for disaster. Partners who share power keep each other accountable and honest. Moshe agrees to the idea and chooses judges. This is no small task. We know that the population had about 600,000 men. Assigning judges for every 10, 50, 100, and 1,000 people, would add up to around 78,600 leaders!

After helping Moshe, **Yitro** has been faithful to his calling and he “**returns home**”:

Shemot 18:27 Then Moshe let his father-in-law depart, and **he went his way to his own land.**

Let’s skip over now to the giving of the “**Ten Commandments.**” Actually, the “**Ten Commandments**” is a manmade title and is nowhere to be found in Scripture. Literally translated, they are the “**Ten Words**” or the “**Ten Utterances.**” From here on out, instead of saying the “**Ten Commandments,**” I will refer to them as the more accurately stated, “**Ten Words.**”

Shemot 34:28 ... And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the **Ten Words** (aseret hadevarim - עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרִים).

The Ten Commandments Compared

	Jewish	Catholic	Protestant
I	I am the Lord your G-d who has taken you out of the land of Egypt.	I, the Lord, am your God. You shall not have other gods besides me.	You shall have no other gods but me.
II	You shall have no other gods but me.	You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.	You shall not make unto you any graven images.
III	You shall not take the name of the Lord your G-d in vain.	Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.	You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
IV	You shall remember the Sabbath and keep it Holy.	Honor your father and your mother.	You shall remember the Sabbath and keep it Holy.
V	Honor your mother and father.	You shall not kill.	Honor your mother and father.
VI	You shall not murder.	You shall not commit adultery.	You shall not murder.
VII	You shall not commit adultery.	You shall not steal.	You shall not commit adultery.
VIII	You shall not steal.	You shall not bear false witness.	You shall not steal.
IX	You shall not bear false witness.	You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.	You shall not bear false witness.
X	You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.	You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.	You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

If you didn't learn from a Jewish perspective, you've probably been taught a different "**Word**" for the "**First**." This chart gives a comparison. While I do understand that there may be some variations among Protestant churches, what is consistent is that churches tend to leave out the very important phrase...

Shemot 20:2 " I am יהוה your Elohim, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Is that phrase important? I would say so!

In the Hebrew scrolls, each "**Word**" of the "**Ten Words**" is numbered. When you look in the left-hand margin before each "**Word**," there is a single Hebrew letter, beginning with aleph (א). In Hebrew, letters also represent numbers. So right next to **Shemot 20:2**, is the Hebrew letter aleph (א), and next to **Shemot 20:3** is the Hebrew letter bet (ב), which stands for the number 2. This pattern continues until we arrive at the Hebrew letter Yud (י), which points to the "**Tenth Word**."

So why would the Christian church, early on, leave out the important phrase, "**who took you out of the land of Egypt**," in the very "**First Word**?" This is a long story which most of you probably are already aware of. To summarize very quickly, what is known today as Christianity began as a strictly Jewish movement. It was the Jews who were waiting for a Mighty Deliverer who did finally arrive as Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah. But after His death, resurrection, and ascension, non-Jews started to be included in increasing numbers. Around 100 A.D., the number of non-Jews exceeded the number of Jewish believers and in a few decades, they occupied powerful positions within. Combined with Jewish anti-Semitism, by the early 300's, Constantine stepped up as the ruling Emperor of Rome. The central city of believing faith switched from Jerusalem to Rome. Sadly, Jews were by civil law, forbidden to participate in Christianity unless they renounced their Jewish heritage and its Biblical, Torah practices. Along with their anti-Semitism, Roman Christians got rid of that Elohim... that Elohim who, as the true **First Word** indicates, "**took them out of the Land of Egypt**." Sadly, the bias of the early Christians has continued to this day.

Why is the phrase, "**took you out of Egypt**," so important? The Bible itself makes that clear by the multiple times it makes reference to "**remember יהוה who brought them out of Egypt**." Following are just a few of the verses:

Shemot 13:3 And Moshe said to the people: "**Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt**, out of the house of bondage; for **by strength of hand יהוה** brought you out...

Vayikra/Leviticus 11:45 'For I **יהוה** **who brings you up out of the land of Egypt**, to be your Elohim. You shall therefore be holy, for I *am* holy.

Vayikra 26:13 **I יהוה** **your Elohim, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt**, that *you* should not be their slaves; I have broken the bands of your yoke and made you walk upright.

Psalm 81:10 **I יהוה** **your Elohim, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt**; Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.

Amos 2:10 Also *it was* **I who brought you up from the land of Egypt**, and led you forty years through the wilderness, To possess the land of the Amorite.

The **Elohim** we serve today, He is still **“that Elohim that brought us up from the land of Egypt.”** He is the **Elohim** that is the same **“yesterday, today, and forever.”** He never changes and He doesn't want us to forget that place of bondage from where He delivered us.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 16:3 "You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, *that is*, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), **that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life.**

And now just one more thing that I found quite interesting about the **“First Word.”** The **“First Word”** of the **“First Word”** is **“Anochi (אָנֹכִי)”**:

Shemot 20:2 " **I (אָנֹכִי)** יהוה your Elohim, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

“Anochi (אָנֹכִי)” does mean **“I,”** but **“ani (אֲנִי)”** is the more commonly used Hebrew pronoun for **“I.”** The Talmud explains that **“anochi”** is an acronym for **“Ana Nafshi Ketovit Yehovit,”** which literally translates as **“I wrote down my very soul and gave it to you.”** Or more poetically – **“My Soul is inscribed in these words that I gave you.”** So as you see, **“Anochi (אָנֹכִי)”** carries profound significance, which sets the tone and captures the essence of all the commandments, and in fact, the entire Torah. **“Anochi (אָנֹכִי)”** which comes from the heart of the Almighty is meant to bring about right relationship through obedience to His Words.

Rabbi David Fohrman's video study, [Alephbeta - Ten Commandments in the Burning Bush](#) has some further insights on the word **“anochi.”** First, Rabbi Fohrman looks at the way יהוה introduces Himself in the **“Ten Words”** – **“Anochi Yehovah Elohecha.”** Where else did יהוה introduce Himself with the Hebrew word, **“Anochi?”** It was at the **“burning bush”**:

Shemot 3:6 Moreover He said, "**I (Anochi - אֲנֹכִי) the Elohim of your father -- the Elohim of Avraham, the Elohim of Yitzchak, and the Elohim of Ya'acov.**"

Now notice the contrast. At the burning bush, יהוה introduces Himself not as “**your**” Elohim, but as the **Elohim of “your fathers”** – of “**Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’acov.**” In the giving of the “**Ten Words,**” He says to **all of Israel** – “**Anochi יהוה Elohecha**” – “**I am יהוה, YOUR Elohim.**” When does He become “**your Elohim?**” **WHEN HE HAS TAKEN YOU OUT OF EGYPT.** Back at the burning bush, He told Moshe “**He saw their pain**” and committed Himself “**to take them out.**”

Shemot 3:7 And יהוה said: "**I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt,** and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. ⁸ "**So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians,** and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land..."

But now, at **Mt. Sinai, He already HAS taken them out.** At the **burning bush, יהוה** could not claim that He was “**their**” Elohim, because He hadn’t done anything for them. He had made promises to their forefathers, but that was it. He was only the “**Elohim of their forefathers.**” But now, at **Mt. Sinai,** He becomes “**their**” Elohim, because He had done what He said. He saw their pain and He responded. **He took them “out of Egypt!”**

Shemot 20:2 " **I (Anochi - אֲנֹכִי) יהוה** your Elohim, who **brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.**

Rabbi Fohrman then points to an even deeper spiritual parallel between the **burning bush** and the **Ten Words.** Quoting from **Rabbi Fohrman’s** video [Alephbeta - Ten Commandments in the Burning Bush:](#)

Moses says to God, ‘who am I, how can I even go to pharaoh, I feel completely not up to this’. If you listen carefully to the Hebrew of Moses’ declaration, **mi anochi (אֲנֹכִי)**, ‘Who am I,’ you’ll notice a play off of God’s introduction, **anochi**, ‘I am’. It is almost as if Moses is saying to God, ‘God, if you are **anochi**, you are the Master of the universe who has this great relationship with our forefathers. **Mi anochi?** Who am I? I am a nothing, how can I make this happen?’ To which God responds, ‘**ki eheyeh imach,**’ ‘because I am going to be with you’, that’s how you are going to do it. I will be with you every step of the way. Now turn to the Ten commandments, what does ‘**ki eheyeh imach**’ become in the Ten Commandments? It becomes ‘**lo yihyeh elecha,**’ ‘there shall not be for you other Gods’. Do not have allegiance to other gods, only to the one God. What’s the rationale to be fiercely loyal to the one God and not introduce an allegiance to any other? Because God was there for you when you were down, God was there for the entire people when they were down at their lowest of the low in Egypt and He was even there for one person, when Moses was down and said, **mi anochi**, ‘I am a nothing’. God said you are never a nothing, I am with you and you are a something. You don’t turn your back on a God like that. (end of quote)

Our Elohim is the One who delivered us from Egypt. Daily we encounter “**Egypt**,” otherwise known as the workplace, the market, the street, or any place we go that isn’t set apart and holy to Him. It’s our task to remember that it was “**Anochi our Elohim, who brought us up out of the land of Egypt.**” That “**First Word**” is enough to see us through any situation. He is always there for us and through the deliverance of our bondage in Egypt, He has become “**our Elohim.**” He is so powerful that He can bring light, direction, and inspiration to even the lowest, darkest Egypt. We shall have “**no other Elohim before Him!**”

There’s an interesting verse in the book of **John** that may point to **Yeshua** claiming to be the great “**Anochi.**” I cannot be sure of saying this because I wasn’t there to hear exactly what Yeshua said. If He was using Hebrew, and I do believe that He was, then He may have said this:

John 8:58 Yeshua said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, **I** (Anochi - אֲנֹכִי)."

His Jewish hearers would have connected “**Anochi**” with **Shemot 3:6** and with **Shemot 20:2** (and therefore a claim to deity), and that would explain their response:

John 8:59 Then **they took up stones to throw at Him**; but Yeshua hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

There are many other “**I am**” statements that Yeshua used. “**I am**:

- the bread of life
- the light of the world
- the gate for the sheep
- the true vine
- the resurrection
- the way, the truth, the life
- the Son of Elohim
- the aleph and the tav
- the root and the offspring of David.

We do not know if Yeshua used the word Anochi – אֲנֹכִי for “**I**”. Without having reliable Hebrew documents for the Gospels, we are in the dark as to His exact words. We have seen that when יהוה used the word “**Anochi**,” He was speaking with a lot of weight and purpose. Would not that have made sense in the context of Yeshua’s “**I am**” statements? Something to think about.

Shabbat Shalom!

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