



#17 Yitro Exodus 18:1-20:26

Torah Teaching and Teaching, Be Connected to God

By Moshe Schwab

Names

Kefa – Peter
Messiah – English for Mashiach; anointed one; Christ
in the Greek means to be smudged
Moshe – Moses
Shaul – Paul
Yeshua – Jesus' real name
Yĕhōvâh – God's real name forever (Ex. 3:15)
Yitro – Jethro
Yochanan – John

Terms

Haftarah – reading from the prophets
Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible
Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible
Torah portion – there are 54 portions of the
Torah
Yitro – the 17th Torah portion

(We also use transliterations from Hebrew)

In this portion, Yitro becomes a believer in the true God. Just like others who were part of a mixed group that accepted the true God when they left Egypt (Exodus 12:38). Yitro who is not Jewish is accepted among the believers based on his confession. God begins giving the people laws in this portion with the giving of the 10 Commandments. There are more commandments than just the 10 Commandments. God's laws are not archaic as some say; when God gives us something that is good for us, why would that change? He is an all-knowing God, isn't He?

God's laws are still good for us. Deuteronomy 4:6-8 NKJV says, "Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a **wise and understanding people.**' For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has **such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?**"

People are being misguided by those who want to make sin okay. In some cases, they may not believe that is what they are doing, but nonetheless, that is what they are doing. They may say God's commandments are legalism. They use this as a negative term. Without law, we would have chaos. God gave us laws that were good for all of time; some are only meant for the priests. It is not true what some are teaching. God is not a liar; God said His laws were good. "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" Numbers 23:19 NKJV.

Torah Teaching

The name of this portion is Yitro. Yitro means, "Jethro." This portion begins by saying that Yitro, the father-in-law of Moshe (Moses), heard about what God had done and He brings Moshe's sons and wife to him. Yitro confesses that the God of Israel is over all. He becomes a believer. Moshe, the leaders of Israel, and Yitro make a sacrifice to God and eat together. Yitro sees Moshe administering all the judgments and he tells Moshe that he needs to set up a justice system and hear only the difficult cases. Moshe listened to Yitro and then Yitro goes back home.

Moshe then goes up to the mountain and God calls to him and God tells him what he is to say to Israel. If they keep His commandments, they will be a kingdom of priests for God. "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation;" Exodus 19:5-6 NKJV. God did not give them a caste system where only some were to be the privileged.

Moshe tells the people, and the people agree to obey God. Kefa refers to this verse from Exodus in 1 Peter 2:9 NKJV, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." God has not changed; His people can still be God's holy people. Isn't that great! If you want to be close to God, believe in Him and the Messiah Yeshua.

God tells Moshe that God will speak to him and the people. The people were not to touch the mountain until the shofar sounds and they were to prepare for their meeting with God by washing their clothes. God then give them the 10 commandments. The people prepared to meet with God. As believers in Yeshua, we can meet with God every day because we have the Holy Spirit.

Some people are very lax about their relationship with God and do not keep God's commandments. The Bible says we are to take God's commandments seriously. Hebrews 10:29-30 NKJV says, "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. And again, 'The LORD will judge His people.'"

Decide you will honor God and keep His commandments; it is not hard. Deuteronomy 30:11 NKJV says, "For this mitzvah which I am giving you today is not too hard for you, it is not beyond your reach." Those that say it is too hard are not telling the truth. The Bible says it is not hard. The thousands of extra man-made laws that we **do not** have to keep are too hard to keep. Some of these man-made laws are against God's commandments.

On the third day Moshe brought the people to the mountain and there was thunder and lighting, a thick smoke, and a shofar kept blasting louder and louder. God called Moshe up the mountain and God also told Moshe to tell the people that no one was to go up the mountain after Moshe and Aharon.

Then God, Yēhōvāh, gives the people the ten words (Ten Commandments). Yēhōvāh is God's name as seen pointed in over 2,363 manuscripts. Yēhōvāh is used over 6,000 times in the Bible. Exodus 3:15 NKJV says, "The **LORD** God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. **This is My name forever**, and this is My memorial to all generations." **LORD** in all caps is the Hebrew word Yēhōvāh. If someone gave you their name, would you purposely never use their name?

Let's take the time to read Exodus 20:3-17 NKJV; the Ten Commandments:

1st Commandment

Verse 3, "You shall have no other gods before Me."

2nd Commandment

Verses 4-6, "You shall not make for yourself a carved image —any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity

of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."

3rd Commandment

Verse 7, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."

4th Commandment

Verses 8-11, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."

5th Commandment

Verse 12, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you."

6th Commandment

Verse 13, "You shall not murder."

7th Commandment

Verse 14, "You shall not commit adultery."

8th Commandment

Verse 15, "You shall not steal."

9th Commandment

Verse 16, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

10th Commandment

Verse 17, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

Perhaps take some time to think about how you could apply these commandments. For example, the 2nd commandment tells us not to bow down to anything made. Some people actually set up statues or pictures and kneel before them. It says we are not to make anything and bow down to it; that obviously includes praying before anything that is made. Some people tell me that they are praying to God when they do this. God says not to do it. Some denominations change this commandment to reflect their wrong beliefs.

How do you honor your parents? I would listen to them even and respect them even as an adult. You can always weigh what they have to say. When I was in Jewish neighborhoods, sometimes an elderly man would walk up to me and give me advice. I would respectfully listen to them. That is something that Jewish people do for their young generation. They were someone's parent. I gave them honor and respect. Even though these laws seem self-explanatory, in Jewish thought, there are many valid ways that we can apply God's commandments.

Not using God's name in vain has to do with not using God's name inappropriately. *Hashem* means, "the name; that's how some people address God. Would you call someone you respect, "the name?" That is inappropriate. Saying God's name honors Him. Do not steal; I will not even take a pen that is not mine. Didn't Yeshua says that those who are faithful in the little things are also faithful in much (Luke 16:10)? Look for ways you can be faithful. Notice how the commandment to keep the Sabbath quotes Genesis 2:2-3 so people who say God's commandments are just for Israel are wrong. They are God's commandments. Why would something that God gave us not be good for us in our time. Those who say

God's commandments are done away with are deluded. I would not want to stand before God and tell God I did not agree with Him. I do not think you will win that debate.

The people experienced all that was going on at the foot of Mt. Sinai and they were afraid, so they asked Moshe to speak to God for them. Moshe approaches the thick darkness while the people stood back. God tells Moshe that the people are not to make any idols and that they are to make an altar of earth or of uncut stone and not build steps up to the altar so no one will be indecent. They are to make their offerings at the place where God chooses.

This portion begins with Yitro, Moshe's father-in-law, coming to see Moshe. He was a gentile priest of Midian where they practiced idolatry and some despicable practices associated with idolatry. Yitro believes in the God of Israel and is fully accepted among the Israeli leadership. We should remember that it was always God's intention that the nations should believe in the true God through Israel. Israel was unable to accomplish that until the coming of the Jewish Messiah Yeshua who has spread the message of the true God around the world.

In this portion, God promises that He will make Israel a holy nation and the people respond that they will do what God tells them to do. We could liken the account to a marriage ceremony between God and Israel where God enters into a relationship with them as their husband (see Isaiah 54:5). Mount Sinai acted as the chuppah (canopy) and the Ten Commands as the ketuvah (marriage contract). The Jewish writings say that it had rained so that the dessert was in bloom and Israel was surrounded by flowers. The giving of the Ten Commandments occurred on Shavuot and the giving of the Holy Spirit also occurred on Shavuot.

There is thunder and lightning, a thick smoke, and a shofar that kept getting louder and louder. Perhaps Yeshua was blowing the shofar. The people were afraid and so God allows Moshe to speak for the people. Moshe becomes an advocate who speaks on behalf of the people just like the Messiah Yeshua is our advocate that speaks on our behalf (1 John 2:10). Although the Ten Commandments are important, it should be remembered there are other commandments that are also important that we should keep.

The Haftarah for Yitro is Isaiah 6:1 to 7:6, 9:5-6. Isaiah had just written a prophetic song about Israel's demise. This portion begins with Yēhōvāh Tsava'ot (the "Lord of Hosts" which is implying warfare) sitting on His throne with seraphs worshipping God and saying, "holy, holy, holy," that is "kadosh, kadosh, kadosh." It says that the door posts shook, and the House (referring to the heavenly Temple) kept filling with smoke. The heavenly vision reminds us of Israel's encounter with God at Mt. Sinai. In this portion, God is sitting which is an attribute of a man and so Isaiah probably sees God in the shape of a man just like Ezekiel did in one of his visions. Isaiah is sent to Israel even though they will not hear Isaiah and will not repent. Isaiah is told by God to say to Ahaz to not be afraid; the invaders this time will not succeed against Judah.

Also, Isaiah 9:5-6 is part of this portion which prophetically talks about the coming of God as King. **The attributes in these scriptures can only be attributed to God.** Israel's mission was to bring the true God to the entire world. That has been accomplished in part through God coming as a man in the person of the Jewish Messiah Yeshua. Someday Yeshua will return and complete His mission and establish peace and His kingdom forever. In the present, Yeshua gives those who believe in Him personal peace through the Holy Spirit. All the millions of those who have the Holy Spirit can have the peace Yeshua gives.

Isaiah 9:5-6 CJB is about the Messiah:

"For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; dominion will rest on his shoulders, and he will be given the name Pele-Yo'etz El Gibbor Avi-'Ad Sar-Shalom [Wonder of a Counselor, Mighty God, Father of

Eternity, Prince of Peace], in order to extend the dominion and perpetuate the peace of the throne and kingdom of David, to secure it and sustain it through justice and righteousness henceforth and forever. The zeal of ADONAI-Tzva'ot (Yĕhōvâh of Hosts) will accomplish this." ADONAI in all caps is Yĕhōvâh, God's real name.

Our ancestors experienced the awesome power of God at Mount Sinai so that they trembled. Through our Messiah Yeshua we have been made part of a heavenly community and as we talked about earlier, we need to take that seriously. Hebrews 12:22-25 CJB says:

"You have come to Mount Tziyon, that is, the city of the living God, heavenly Yerushalayim; to myriads of angels in festive assembly; to a community of the firstborn whose names have been recorded in heaven; to a Judge who is God of everyone; to spirits of righteous people who have been brought to the goal; to the mediator of a new covenant, Yeshua; and to the sprinkled blood that speaks better things than that of Hevel (Abel). See that you don't reject the One speaking! For if those did not escape who rejected him when he gave divine warning on earth, think how much less we will escape if we turn away from him when he warns from heaven."

Be Connected to God (Teaching to accompany the Torah portion Yitro)

There is a standard way to understand how God is at work in our lives in these Messianic times.

It should be understood that the very first thing we need to do as believers is to do what God tells us. In this portion, God gives Israel the 10 Commandments, but that is not all the commandments that God gives us. We are to keep all of God's commands. Remember, Yeshua is God so He gave us the commandments in both in the Old Testament and the New Testament portions of the Bible. Many of the commandments in the New Testament portion are interpretations of the Old Testament portion. Yeshua said, "If you love me, you will keep my commands;" John 14:15 NKJV.

Yeshua was referring to the commandments at Mount Sinai because He is God. Jeremiah 23:5-6 says that Yĕhōvâh will come from the line of Dave; the Messiah Yeshua is God. "Behold, the days are coming, 'says the LORD,' that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Jeremiah 23:5-6 NKJV. The Bible says Yeshua will come again some day and fulfill this scripture. Do not wait until it is too late for you.

Kefa (Peter) addresses the problem with those who think it is okay to dismiss God's commandments. He says in 2 Peter 2:4-5 NKJV:

For if God did not spare the angels who sinned but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly."

I often say that Noah was righteous and did what was right and he saved himself and the world. Those who sinned were destroyed.

So, do not be fooled by those who say it is okay to sin. God did not spare the angels Kefa says. The Bible says the devils believe in God and they are destined for the lake of fire. James 2:19 NKJV says, "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble!"

In this portion, we see how powerful and amazing God is. We need to remember how important it is to follow God's commandments. We are to follow God's commandments, but we are also listen to the Holy Spirit in this Messianic age. Just as Israel experienced God every day in the desert, we can experience God through the Holy Spirit every day.

How do we experience the Holy Spirit?

- * Often the Holy Spirit will remind us to do what is right. The Holy Spirit is our helper (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit does not tell us to sin or do what is wrong.
- * The Holy Spirit can work in our minds to be kind, caring, patient. Shaul talks about the fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.
- * The Holy Spirit may lead us to do something at times during the day.
- * The Holy Spirit may call us for a specific purpose like serving the poor or other acts of service.
- * The Holy Spirit gives us gifts. These are supernatural gifts. For example, a person who gives a prophetic word speaks words from God and not simply their own thoughts. It is wrong to say we speak from God when we are simply telling others what we have been thinking about. God can give believers many spiritual gifts. In the Old Testament, God even gave gifting for building and making the Tent of Meeting in the desert. There are lists of gifts in Romans 12:4-8, Ephesians 4:11-13, and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Jewish lists are short lists rather than listing everything. For example, Shaul (Paul) does not list all possible sins every time he talks about sins.
- * We can experience the peace of the Holy Spirit and God can work in many other ways. We may even feel a peace that seems to make 30 minutes like 5 minutes.

Our spiritual life is **not** just a calling by God for us to do something or a just a thrilling experience.

There have been some movements where people go to church just to experience God. It is true that we can experience God, but that is not all that God wants us to do. This one person I know who was part of a prophetic movement at one time told me that everyone just went to church just to hear prophetic words or be thrilled by the presence of God. In 1 Corinthians 14:26, 40 NKJV says, "How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." ... "Let all things be done decently and in order."

Our meetings need to be conducted so we are built up spiritually. So, we also need good biblical exposition and order in our weekly meetings. Shaul told us to have orderly meetings and those who think they know better are wrong (1 Corinthians 14:40). If you want to experience the peace of God, you can do that at any time, and not just when we get together. Some think their meetings need to be long and drawn out with a lot of singing.

I am not against experiencing the Holy Spirit. I will sit and pray at times and just welcome God's peace while at home. It is very uplifting! When we get together, it is not just to experience God's presence it says in 1 Corinthians 14:26; Shaul says these things were to be done decently and in order. Our spiritual life is about living out our lives every day with God and the Holy Spirit, and we need biblical encouragement for this, and we need to grow up spiritually. We can have other types of meetings for extended prayer or for an extended time to sing and experience God's presence. I think that is a great idea and I participate in those types of meetings as well.

Being connected to the power of God through the Holy Spirit is the best way to live.

Like I said, the Holy Spirit helps us to do what is right. We also receive the fruit (result) of the Holy Spirit; we can receive special callings; and we can receive spiritual gifts. When I say we are to keep order in our meetings, I am not saying we are not to allow the work of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. The Holy Spirit was intended for our daily use and not just at congregation. The disconnect between our

spiritual life and putting our 1 hour in a week bothered me years ago. I thought there has got to be something better than this. We are to be connected to God every day and not just for 1 hour a week!

Do not be trapped by only what you can see; do not be trapped by living a worldly life.

Just putting in your 1 hour a week is a worldly life. God never intended for His Messianic people to be holy for 1 hour a week and then live like hell. Doing that makes no sense at all. It says in 1 John 2:15-17 NKJV, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."

It is not a bad idea to understand that worldly things are going to pass away. So, do not let anything come between you and God. I remember when Yugoslavia was a single nation and then war broke out between various factions and many lost their lives. Their country became divided and still is divided today. This must have come as a surprise to some. Perhaps we can put all our life into worldly things. We can get fooled into thinking that this is all there is, but that is not true. The opposite is true. This is a time of testing and when we believe in the Messiah Yeshua and live how God wants us to live, our future life with God will not pass away; we can have eternal life.

2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1 NKJV:

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Be faithful in God's ways. That is the best way to live.

What an amazing God we have. He has told us how to live; He is a loving God who cares about us. He gave us the Holy Spirit in this Messianic age to help us live right. God continues to reach down to mankind through the ages to help us. Sometimes we think of God calling us to do something or an experience of God as important spiritual moments, but that is not all of life with God is about. Keep God's commandments, but also be connected to God's power through the Holy Spirit every day. Do not be trapped into thinking that this life is all there is. This world is passing away. Believers can look forward to a wonderful eternal life someday. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;" Hebrews 10:23 NKJV.¹

¹ The context of this verse includes: "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, " Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The Lord will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;" Hebrews 10:29-31 NKJV. God is for us, but we must also honor Yēhōvāh.