

# Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Lecture 11, Treaties, Torah, 10 Commandments

© 2024 Elaine Phillips and Ted Hildebrandt

Well, I think the word for today is Boker Tov. Thank you. That sounds good.

You know, as I've been sitting here watching you as we're starting, I've been kind of counting numbers of people, and that makes me want to thank you for being here, but then also challenge you to be your brothers and sisters keepers because we're missing at least 15 to 20 folks that ought to be here. I know, isn't that shocking? There are really 45 students registered for this class, and there ain't 45 people here right now. So, you know, take it upon yourselves to help those who might be enjoying sleeping, that even though the chairs here aren't as comfortable as their bed, nevertheless, there might be some value in being here.

I also am well aware that there are a number of people who are ill too, and that's a thing we want to pray about. We're going to sing, however, before we do anything else. It's Friday after all.

So, let's review this one. By the way, we're going to get on to some new music later on. But let's see if we remember how Ki Tov goes.

Here it is.

Ki Tov Adonai leolam hasdo. Ki Tov Adonai leolam hasdo.

Ve'ad dor, ve'ador, ve'ad dor, ve'ador, emunato.

Ki Tov Adonai leolam hasdo. Ki Tov Adonai leolam hasdo.

Ve'ad dor, ve'ador, ve'ad dor, ve'ador, emunato.

Do you know how that psalm starts, by the way? This is, of course, verse 5 of Psalm 100. How does it start? It's fitting that we sing it because it starts with making a joyful noise unto the Lord.

So here we are on Friday morning making a, I hope, joyful noise to the Lord. As we begin, let's pray together. Our gracious Father in heaven, as we, again, begin this day together in prayer, help us not to just take it as a form or a ritual, but to realize that we're talking to the master of the universe, and that's you.

So, we pray that by your spirit, you would enliven our hearts, make them burn with love for you, we pray. And love for one another, and love for one another. And love for your word.

Father, we do pray for those who are ill. We ask that you would quickly bring restoration and full health to them. Help them not to be discouraged at the amount of work that they may see piling up.

And help us to be gracious to help one another in this way as well. We pray as we study together that you would teach us. Father, we really do need to learn to know you, and to know you better.

And so we would ask that you would help us along those lines, particularly in regard to teaching us what you have to say in the Ten Commandments. Father, help us to take it to heart. And we ask all these things in Christ's name, with thanksgiving, amen.

Well, we are going to talk about the Torah today. And it doesn't hurt to remind ourselves of what Psalm 119 says. Of course, you may know that Psalm 119 is a long, long, long psalm about the value, beauty, and efficacy of God's instruction to us.

We'll discuss that when we discuss the Psalms. But this verse is kind of nice as we start discussing the concept of Torah. I'll say more about our transition from narrative to Torah in a moment.

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your Torah. Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your Torah. Now, we're going to talk in a minute about what that might involve in terms of the contents of Torah, but may that be our prayer as well as we move into our discussion today and actually in the next couple of days.

I did say, since we weren't able to do this last time, that we would just take a brief visual tour from Egypt and leave Egypt and the Sea of Reeds and all that right on to where traditional Mount Sinai is located. You'll remember that when we looked at the map last time, I indicated that there are multiple suggestions for the location of Mount Sinai. So, I'm just going to make sort of a, well, I'm going along with the traditional one, all right? Here we go.

We've come across the Sea of Reeds, and we're moving down the southwestern, actually, the western side, which has some southerly stuff to it as well, of the Sinai Peninsula. And you can see a small oasis here. It's the Oasis of Attur, but otherwise, it's a very barren area.

Again, keep in mind this challenge that the Israelites faced right from the get-go in terms of water. When they found water, initially, it was bitter water. Here, we turn from that area along the coast of the Sinai Peninsula and begin moving inland a little bit, following these broad swaths of valley and wadi area.

And then finally make our way, following a pilgrim's path, to what is traditionally Mount Sinai. And, of course, the fun part is to get up there at sunrise. Here we are.

The ascent to Mount Sinai is not an easy one. Here you can see it's pretty rugged. Sun has now come up.

And so is a Greek Orthodox priest coming up the mountain. I like this picture for a lot of reasons, but not least of which is that this guy, if you look very carefully, has a long white beard. So, he's in his 70s or his 80s.

Here, he is climbing up to the top of Mount Sinai in the morning. And if you read the narrative carefully, that's what Moses is doing as well. Exodus 19 is stunning in the number of times that Moses is up and down and up and down and up and down the mountain.

Because God gives him instructions, he goes to tell the Israelites. Then he has to go back up and bring the Israelites' reply. Moses, as we know from reading the text, was 80 years old at that point.

So, this is kind of a fun thing to see. As we continue to look down towards the bottom, you see an area through the cleft there. And that, of course, is St. Catherine's Monastery.

Those of you who are doing anything with art history, and I hope there are some of you who are art historians here, may know that St. Catherine's or Santa Catarina has one of the best collections of icons, Greek Orthodox icons in the world. One of the reasons for that is that it was located in the southern part of the Sinai Peninsula, which is very isolated. Therefore, when the iconoclastic movements were going around, iconoclastic meant breaking up the icons because you didn't think it was the right thing to have icons.

They missed Santa Catarina, because it was just out of the way. And so, a phenomenal collection of icons there. This is the library, this whole swath along here.

There have also been some wonderful manuscripts found in that library. Probably the most famous one is the Sinaiticus manuscript, which has a long story behind its finding, where it is now, and the fact that the monks want it back.

The sad thing is you can no longer get into the library at all. We used to be able to at least get into the first floor of the library, but that's closed. Nevertheless, you can still visit Santa Catarina, and it is a great experience for those who are hoping at some point to go to Sinai as part of your Middle Eastern studies, whatever that might happen to be.

Well, there we are. Now let's get on to some things in the text. As I said, Exodus 19 does indeed set the stage for us.

And what's interesting is that when you stop and think about the structure of Exodus, we've had God's remarkable deliverance, right? Chapters 1, especially through 15, and then trekking from the sea all the way to the base of Mount Sinai. God has been with them, providing for them every step of the way. And after that, then we're going to have the switch to the Torah itself.

Notice what it says here, and I'm going to start reading from verse 4 of chapter 19. You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. Now, all right, so with that in mind, now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, which is forthcoming, then out of all the nations, you will be my treasured possession, okay, my treasured possession.

Although the whole Earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Those are remarkable promises: a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. And as I've indicated to you here, Peter is going to refer to that in chapter 2 as he's talking about the blessed nature of God's people.

So, God makes some wonderful promises here and also reminds them of what he has done for them on their behalf. And it's on that basis, as their sovereign who has rescued them, redeemed them, and delivered them, that he is now going to establish that sovereign covenant, suzerain covenant with them, suzerainty treaty. Moses is told in one of these trips down the mountain and then back up again to prepare the people and set boundaries around the mountain.

They're supposed to be clean. They're supposed to be pure. They are to abstain from sexual relations.

That's not to say that sexuality and sexual expression is wrong. But when you read Leviticus chapter 15, particularly 18, it makes someone unclean. It's not a matter of sin, but it makes somebody unclean for that day.

And so, therefore, they are to abstain from that so that there is a state of purity when God's presence descends on the mountain. As I've indicated already, we've got Moses as mediator, up and down and up and down, and we'll see that all the way through the end of chapter 20. And then, just let me make a little bit of a comment here.

Most people, when they're reading, and not just students, but most people when they're reading the Old Testament, have a grand time with Genesis. Boy, it's full of great stories. And we have a remarkably good time with Exodus through chapter 19, and then starting with 20, if we're not careful, our eyes glaze over a little bit.

And they get really glazed over when we get to Leviticus. Don't let that happen to you, all right? Don't let that happen to you. We'll try and make some of this stuff come alive a little bit, but try and think in terms of all of these things being part of what God indicates that his covenant people need to do to be pleasing to him.

I'll have more to say about that in a moment. Certainly, as I indicate to you up here, the narrative that we've just been through demonstrates how desperately they need the Torah, the covenant, and the stipulations. Some of you have mentioned to me that it seems like every time you turn around in Genesis, somebody's sleeping with somebody else that they shouldn't be sleeping with.

Yeah, that's right. As we read Genesis, we see how important it is to have Torah, because things go awry over and over and over again in Genesis. And so we learn how necessary that is.

Another thing I do want to indicate, in what's called the Torah, broadly speaking, we're going to talk about Torah now in terms of its meaning instructions. But the Torah of Moses encompasses all the way from Genesis through Deuteronomy. And that Torah is actually unique in the wider ancient Near Eastern culture in that it combines both instructions and laws along with narrative.

You don't see that in the rest of these documents from the wider culture. All right, so far so good? Questions? How are we doing? It's a chilly Friday, right? Let's carry on a little bit. Some definitions.

These are sort of reminding you of some stuff we've already talked about on one hand, and secondly, picking up on what young blood has to say. So, if you need to go back and review young blood, do that. First of all, covenant.

We've been here before, but now we're going to talk about the covenant from Sinai. So, an arrangement between two parties. If you haven't memorized this definition yet, you're going to want to.

An arrangement between two parties establishes a relationship. That's important. It involves obligations on both sides.

And as we've said before, God's obligation is to keep his word, right? Our obligations are going to be spelled out in the Torah, or the covenant, sorry, the Torah. And then, of course, it establishes sanctions as well, and we'll have more to say about the sanctions later on. I think I've said this before, but I'll repeat myself.

The Hebrew word Torah comes from a verb that means to teach. And so, most properly, Torah means instruction. Yes, it's often translated law, but we want to think of it broadly as instruction.

In this case, in the covenant context, we're going to talk about the Torah as being the statement of obligations for the humans who receive the covenant. Two terms from young blood that you'll want to know. Epidictic is the first one, which simply means absolute imperatives.

Now, your classic example of the Apodictic Torah is what? The Ten Commandments, right? And we're going to look at those today. But don't ever think that that's the only Apodictic Torah that we have in these books.

Certainly, as we get on towards the latter part of Exodus 21, 22, and 23, especially in 23, there's lots of Epidictic Torah in there. And Leviticus has it as well. Where does love your neighbor as yourself come from? Leviticus 19, that's Epidictic Torah, all right? So, absolute imperatives.

By way of contrast, or maybe another perspective on this, is Casuistic Torah, which is specifically, as I've just said here in front of you, indicating that this is case law. It's conditional. If certain conditions are the case, then this is going to be the resulting punishments.

If someone creates an infraction in this particular set of circumstances, then this is what he or she might expect. A classic example of this is if two men are fighting, and as they're fighting, they strike a woman who's pregnant, and her children come out. That's a plural term there, by the way.

Then there's going to be fine, and if there's been particular damage, you've heard this before, eye for eye, life for life, so forth and so on. We're going to come back to that measure-for-measure punishment, Lord willing, on Monday. But at any rate, that's a case of case law, Casuistic Torah.

Those are the conditions; here's what the results are, so, therefore,, you have certain punishments. Again, picking up on some of the things that you've been reading right along with this, not only Youngblood but there are some things in Old Testament parallels that we want to make a note of as well. And I'm only going to mention them just to kind of direct your attention to them.

We have some very early law codes. Shulgi, also called Ur-Namu Code, is our third millennium BC, way back there. All right, and then, of course, we have the Code of Hammurabi, or as some spellings, Hammurabi, with a P in there, BP being interchangeable on occasion.

That's coming from the 18th century BC. Both of those are before our Exodus, giving the Torah at Sinai events. All right, so those are going to be predecessors.

What's next, of course, is relatively contemporaneous with the covenant at Sinai. Hittite treaties, about three dozen of them have been found. The Hittite Empire, of course, is that whole area that's modern-day Turkey now.

And the Hittite Empire was fairly aggressive at certain points. As a result of some of these battles, they made treaties with other groups of people, ethnicities, and nationalities. And in these treaties, we have a certain pattern.

And as I've indicated for you in the yellow, the form parallels that of the covenant in the biblical text. Exodus 21 through 24 is a classic form parallel to what we have in the Hittite treaties, and so is the entirety of the book of Deuteronomy. Now, you're just going to want to know some of these things.

Preamble, I'm the Lord your God, is what you read in Exodus. Very short, Exodus 20. Historical prologue: in the Hittite treaties, they go on at length about what the suzerain, the sovereign, or the king has done on behalf of these people with whom he's offering a treaty.

I've done this, I've done this, I've done this, and I've done this, and therefore, you ought to be grateful and obey me, all right? Now, in Exodus 19, we read that as well. I carried you on eagle's wings; therefore, obey my covenant. Now, when you get into the actual expression in Exodus 20, it is I'm the Lord your God who brought you out of the house of bondage, out of Egypt.

That is the historical prologue, which is very short, but it is supposed to engender a spirit of gratitude on the part of the people. God has done this remarkable thing for them. They ought, indeed, to be obedient.

And then, of course, you have general stipulations, specific stipulations. In the Exodus 20 through 24 scene, the ten commandments that are in Exodus 20 are the general stipulations. The moral Torah, if you will, and we're going to come back to them a little bit later on today.

Specific stipulations, well, starting with Exodus 21, there are laws about how to treat slaves, and some gender issues with regard to slavery. There are laws about property. There are, as you move along, strong admonitions not to engage in any kind of practices that are idolatrous or like the pagan cultures roundabout.

So, lots of specific stipulations, even to the point of, don't boil a kid in its mother's milk. That's pretty specific, right? After that, you have witnesses. Now, in the Hittite treaties, lots of gods are evoked as witnesses.

Since we obviously don't have any polytheistic backgrounds to this, who, what is evoked as witness in this covenant form that we see in the biblical text? Do you remember from your reading? It's going to be a really important point as we move, not only through the covenant, but into all the prophets as well later on. Heaven and earth, heaven and earth are called on to be witness. That's why when you read the prophets and look for it, next time you start reading the prophets, the prophet is going to say, I call heaven and earth as my witnesses.

The Lord has a case against you. He's got a lawsuit against you, and heaven and earth are the witnesses. See, this is a covenant.

It's a legally binding thing. And therefore, if the people have broken the covenant, God has a case. He's got a lawsuit.

So those are the witnesses. Curses and blessings. If they don't keep the covenant, well, there are some bad things to come.

If they do, there are wonderful things to come. And most of them unfold in the context of the land, interestingly. You remember, the land is a kind of land grant.

These people are given this land by God. And then finally, there's provision for keeping this Torah, covenant, I should say, putting it somewhere so that every seven years, Deuteronomy 31, every seven years at the Feast of Tabernacles, they can take it out and they read it to the people, okay? And all of those things are found in the Hittite treaty form as well. Are you with me on that? Important parallel.

I know Youngblood talks about it, but it's so important. I'm just reiterating it for you. A couple more things to keep in mind in terms of this whole covenant business, treaty business, and I think we say this in the Old Testament parallel study guide, but I just want a kind of hammer it home right here as well. God didn't drop something out of the sky they'd never seen before.

God chose to use a form that was familiar to them, but he infuses it with lots of meaning, profound meaning, eternally relevant meaning. Here's another reason, by the way, why it was kind of interesting that Moses grows up in the court of Pharaoh. He would have been familiar with all these political things and documents and so forth.

Moses isn't a dumb shepherd who only gets some revelation. God is using all the things that are part and parcel of his background. And therefore, someone who had spent his first 40 years in the Egyptian context would have been well prepared to do this sort of writing.



I want to make a note of one other thing because if you continue in this field, one of the things you're going to encounter is a whole set of scholarship that says, well, Moses didn't write any of this stuff. It was written later on, in the first millennium, which means somewhere after 900 BC, and they say, look, there are Assyrian treaties as well.

And actually, when you read the Assyrian treaties, they're kind of like what you see in the Bible. Well, they are kind of like what you see in the Bible, but there's a distinct difference, and that's what I'm trying to note for you here. That historical prologue, which is why I highlighted in the preceding thing, the historical prologue, what the gods have done for, sorry, not what the gods, what the rulers have done for these people is the historical prologue, and it's supposed to engender some gratitude, right? That shows up in the second-millennium Hittite treaties, the ones we've just been talking about.

It's not in the Assyrian treaties, and there's a good reason why, and I articulate it for you. The Assyrians, as we're going to see when we start studying the Assyrian empire's impact on our people of God, were brutal. They flayed people.

They impaled them on stakes. They did all sorts of stuff like this. That doesn't engender a spirit of gratitude on the part of the underlings.

At least you can't imagine that it would. Therefore, this is just a suggestion that we have yet another reason why it's likely that this Pentateuch got itself written. Maybe even by Moses.

What a troglodyte idea, right? I think it's very likely. At any rate, let's carry on. We've got some other things to do.

Purposes of the Torah. These are not at all an exhaustive listing of the purposes. Major purposes here.

You can obviously, as you think about this, expand them, flesh them out, and come out with some others as well. The first three go together, so let's get them all out there. Here we go.

Let's not do four yet. When you start reading the Torah, you have a good sense of the holiness of God, or at least you should. Now, how do you get that sense of the holiness of God from reading the Torah? I'm saying it reveals God's holiness and character of justice and mercy.

How do you get any kind of a sense of God's holiness from reading Torah? Can you dredge up some Dr. Wilson at this point? Or Father Abraham? Or dredge up a sermon somewhere? Does anybody have any ideas? Couple things we could say in

this regard. Or isn't he holy? Or is that something we just don't get out of this book? Ooh, it's a bad morning. Yeah, Christian.

Mary, sorry. Okay, so you're saying the power that he has and control, sovereign control, and so you're going to kind of embed into those characteristics holiness as well. Not a bad idea, but can we even get something more specific? That's a start.

That's a good start. Kaelin. Yeah, the very fact that there are so many stipulations in here sets the bar pretty high, doesn't it? 613, according to traditional rabbinic Judaism, 613 laws.

Now, I'm going to make a very bad analogy at this point, all right? So, you can take or leave it. But when you have an instructor, a teacher, a professor, whatever you want to call it, who has all sorts of demands that he or she imposes upon you, that says something about the character of that instructor, as opposed to someone who gives easy A's and lets you get by with no work, right? So, the very fact that we have an overwhelming number of laws, and as a matter of fact, that brings us to items two and three. It reveals how desperately needy we are, how sunken sin, because every time we turn around, you're looking at that mirror of Torah, and it's shining right back at you, and you're finding out, brother, have I fallen short yet again? And then as Paul says, it's a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ.

There's another thing that goes on here, too, in terms of this Torah revealing the holiness of God. It says over and over and over and over and over again, especially in Leviticus, be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy. It's as simple as that.

God declares that he is holy. He's set apart, and therefore, that's part and parcel of what's going on. Well, as I said, Paul makes it very clear in Romans that the Torah does have this function for us.

And then the glory and the beauty of that is it leads us to Christ. A schoolmaster is the term that Paul uses. The Torah is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ because we are desperately needy.

Now I know you've heard this if you've grown up in the church. This is probably something that you kind of take for granted but don't. We tend to take way too much for granted.

We need to rethink these things from time to time. Well, the Torah does other things as well. Presents guidelines for God's people to be set apart.

You know, one of the interesting things about Judaism through the centuries is that they were recognized by the cultures around them, most notably because they kept

the Sabbath. That was something that set them apart. There were other things as well, their kosher laws, etc.

But these are things that set them apart and set them apart not just to be different and odd and weird, but set apart so that they could appropriately love God. The Sabbath has built into it a day so that you focus on God. That was Jesus' point.

The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. That has profound implications for us, okay? So set apart, and it's not only Sabbath that does that; all these other things do, too. If they were obedient, they really were distinct.

Now, of course, as you know, most of the time the Israelites were not particularly obedient, and they were sinking to the level of the culture round about them. Of course, that's instructive for us as well, and so often we sink to the level of the culture round about us. There's also a very pragmatic function, if you don't like those first four too much, depending on where you are.

You know, Torah's necessary, laws are necessary. Just to make sure that social systems function appropriately. There are rules at Gordon.

I know there's not a lot, well, it depends on where you're coming from. But there are rules at Gordon, so that indeed, we function appropriately and don't all end up getting into each other's hair all the time. There are rules for driving, there's rules for everything.

And then, obviously, those standards are broken. There are ways of dealing with those. And then a very interesting passage, and I'm actually going to read Hebrews 10, verse 1 to you.

Because Torah is not only dealing with the here and now but let me suggest to you, going off of something that the author of Hebrews says. And this isn't the only place he says it, but I'm just picking up on 10:1, because it's kind of right there. The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming, okay? The law is a shadow of the good things that are coming.

The writer of Hebrews uses that idea of shadow quite a bit, and I probably got into it when you took New Testament with Dr. Green. But my point here is that as we see the system that God has instituted for the way his people are to get on here on Earth, justice, how to effect justice, how to deal with those things, how to be merciful, that just sets our sights on what's coming, on what's coming in the future.

When all things will indeed be set right. I've got shalom highlighted there. And one of the reasons for doing that is that the Hebrew verb form behind this word that gets overworked.

I mean, we throw shalom around a lot now. It's the Christian buzzword, and it's the evangelical buzzword. But here's the thing.

Behind that is a Hebrew verb that means to pay, okay, to pay. Sometimes to pay back. Sometimes it's involved in the whole idea of making restitution.

So, there are some things that need to be set right in the eternal sphere as well, and shalom has to do with those things. Now, again, there's a lot more to say about that, too, but we need to go on. Do you have any questions about that? Well, let's charge on to our next set of material.

I know when you take other classes elsewhere, you're going to have someone say, nobody divides the Torah into three categories anymore. Well, I still do. And the reason I do it is because it's easy to help us think through this stuff.

If you read again, I'm using Exodus 20 through 23 as sort of our paradigm. If you simply read through that without some sense of conceptual categories, we can get lost in the morass, right? And you did, if you've read it for today, you kind of see that happening. So, I'm going to propose these categories as ways of thinking conceptually about this whole thing, which is God's Torah.

That's not to say there aren't overlaps. There are, we're going to see them. That's not to say there are not some porous boundaries here and there.

There are, we're going to see them. But still, it's helpful, I think, to think of some of these categories. So, first of all, as we're talking about the moral Torah, I throw ethical in there, too, simply because some people like that word just as much.

And so, we're going to call it the moral slash ethical Torah. We're talking about those instructions that make demands on our hearts, on our wills, on our very being. Sometimes, those never get into a court system.

Sometimes, nobody except you and God knows that they've been broken. But you know, and your conscience tells you, the first of the ten commandments, first two of the ten commandments in some cases. Never bring him into a court system, but thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Ouch, that's moral Torah. Now, I'll say more about the Ten Commandments and how they represent various aspects of the moral Torah in a moment. Let's talk about our second category, civil slash social.

And again, this is picking up on that purpose. I think it was the fourth purpose that we articulated, or the fifth one, I guess, come to think of it, that says that we need to

have guidelines for helping us function in community. We just do, and so civil social Torah's going to do that.

Structure societal conduct, for one thing: here's how you're going to deal with gender issues, here's how you're going to deal with those who are slaves. Here's how you're going to deal with justice, don't take bribes, and so forth, and so on, all right? Structure societal conduct and, here's the key, provides for the proper administration of justice. So that, if someone indeed does commit murder, or let's do it a little differently if someone indeed does kill somebody, then you have to go to your civil social Torah structures to try and figure out, well, was this outright murder, in which case we have a life-for-life punishment, or is it manslaughter, in which case the person could flee to the city of refuge? There are ways of addressing these things, so that's all part of our civil social broad category.

But as I note for you, the boundaries are a little porous because, obviously, the moral Torah is going to overlap with civil society. Here, however, we have this proper administration of justice issue that's important. Then finally, ritual Torah, ceremonial Torah, two things are eminently important here, and make sure we've got both of them.

First of all, it directs our attention to God, and as we're going to flesh that out, it's going to be the avenue for helping us worship God. Ritual Torah has everything to do with one of these aspects of coming into God's presence. How do we come into God's presence? Next time, no, I'm sorry, Wednesday, Lord willing, we're going to have a lot to say, quite frankly, about what happens in chapel.

Now, I'm not going to address it directly, but if you don't make the connections, something's wrong with you, all right? So, the ritual Torah addresses that whole thing of when there are designated times and sacred spaces for worshiping God, God's people are supposed to conduct themselves in a certain way. That was true back then when they had priests and tabernacles and sacrificial animals. The principles are still true today.

End of the sermon for now. I'll get back on my soapbox on Wednesday. All right, second thing it does, however, if you want to think ritual ceremonial, not only are there sacred spaces and sacred times, and those, by the way, are gifts to us, but ritual ceremonial Torah reminds us that all of life is lived in the presence of God.

All of life is lived in the presence of God. And therefore, when you read Leviticus 11 through 15, and you're reading about mildew and mold and bodily emissions, and you're thinking, my goodness, well, that's a reminder that all of life is lived in the presence of God. Nothing is outside of his purview.

You've read this probably in Our Father Abraham, if you've had Dr. Wilson at some point. You know that there is, in Judaism, a blessing for everything. Do you know that? There's a blessing for everything.

Everything you do, there's a blessing for it. There's even a blessing for going to the bathroom. All of life is lived in the presence of God.

And when the human body functions properly, even in that capacity, that's important. One blesses God along those lines. All right, so again, these are three categories to help us think conceptually about this whole very complicated issue of Torah.

Now, before we move on, questions and comments? So far, so good? All right, we're going to spend the rest of today, which gives us about 25 minutes, talking about the Ten Commandments. Memorize them. Memorize them.

I can tell you two stories in this regard, and then we'll get on to the subject at hand. My husband, who was an undergraduate, went to Beloit College, which is a fairly decent college in Wisconsin, and I realized this was eons ago. I know he's old enough to be your grandfather, but this is all right.

He went to Beloit College, and it's not a Christian college. But in his English literature class, his professor made the students memorize the Ten Commandments. Why? Because they're so foundational to who we are as a people.

The laws that are there are universal, okay? So, they had to memorize the Ten Commandments. Well, that's all well and good, and that's back in the 1960s sometime. I attend Park Street Church, as some of you know.

And about two years ago, the senior minister began giving a series of sermons on the Ten Commandments. Excellent sermons. You can probably download them if you're interested.

There's lots to say. But in introducing his series, he said that he was telling some interesting stories, and one of them was that he decided to make his rounds through the ministerial staff at Park Street. There are about ten people on the ministerial staff at Park Street.

And so he went to every door, knock, knock, knock, door opens. Can you recite the Ten Commandments from memory? And do you know that not one of them could? Not one of them could. They still refer to that.

In fact, two Sundays ago, the person who was giving the sermon, who was on the ministerial staff, with chagrin, referred back to that embarrassing experience when

Gordon Hugenberger knocked on his door, and he could not even recite the Ten Commandments from memory. So, here's your chance. Take in something that is really foundationally important for you.

And hang on to it. You couldn't memorize anything better unless you picked up all the Psalms or the Gospels or something. Is that enough of a, whatever, it's Friday, right? Ten Commandments are apodictic Torah.

Based on the absolute authority of God as sovereign king. We've said that kind of thing already. Notice, as you read the Ten Commandments in conjunction with the wider material that shows up in Exodus 21 through 23, that the punishment for many of these things ended up being the death penalty.

That's how important they were. Notice what Jesus had to say about them as well. When he was asked, and I've given you one of the references here, you can look at the parallels as well, but the Mark 12 one's kind of good.

What was the greatest law? What's the most important law? Well, you know, you're dealing with 613 commandments. What are you going to say? Jesus very wisely says, love the Lord your God with all your heart. Love your neighbor as yourself.

He didn't give him one, he gave him two. And then he said, on all these, on these hang all the law and the prophets. So, two complementary aspects of human responsibility are loving God with every aspect of our being and loving our neighbor as ourselves.

Jesus summarized those in a very good way. All right, are we ready to go on? Oftentimes, you know, we have this thing as we read in scripture, it says there are two tablets to the testimony, right? Two tablets to the testimony. Well, usually, we have a picture sort of like this.

That's Moses. Rembrandt should have had the identification there; they didn't put it there. Coming down the mountain, and here's one of his tablets, and it's got the last five commandments on it. I may not be able to read this, but it says don't murder, don't commit adultery, and so forth and so on.

Most of us think, and most of our works of art, have these two tablets. You know, one here, one here. The first five commandments are on this one, and the second five commandments are on that one.

What's wrong with that picture? Anybody know? Go ahead, Becca. Okay, there isn't a lot of extra stuff, that's right. And of course, one of the interesting questions is how much is written there.

But even if we're just saying the ten words that were said initially to Moses on Sinai before the people at the end of Exodus 20 get all scared and say, don't let him talk to us anymore, you talk to him. Yeah, Kate, excellent, excellent. What we've got here, no doubt, is in keeping with this whole Hittite treaty thing, two copies being made.

So, when it's talking about the two tablets of the Torah, there's the whole thing on one tablet and the whole thing on another. And one is kept for the people, and one's kept in the sanctuary, actually. Ark of the Covenant is where it's kept, one for God.

All right, we're going to look at the rest of the commandments, or all the commandments, excuse me, kind of in succession. I know, by the way, that those of you who come out of a Roman Catholic background have a different system for numbering your commandments. Please memorize them as I have them here.

I'll explain why that's important in just a minute. So please, if you've had that in your background, just adjust it a little bit.

Our first one is, let me read it, Exodus chapter 20, verse 3. You shall have no other gods before me. Okay, you shall have no other gods before me. By the way, these are also found in Deuteronomy 5. Just so you know, there are two locations.

This is for a people who have come out of Egypt, where polytheism has been just rampant, and God is saying no other gods. Reset your worldview. Get rid of all that stuff that tugs at your heart.

No other gods before me. Now, let's read the second one too; it gets a little bit longer. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the waters below.

You shall not bow down to them or worship them. This is not precluding artistic work. It's saying don't make it to bow down to it, don't make an idol out of it.

That's the distinction there. Now, here's the one where, again, if you're coming out of a Roman Catholic background, this is not a separate commandment. But I want you to see it as a separate commandment.

It's a separate commandment not to make idols, not to bow down to them. And then notice what it goes on to say. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.

Ooh, what's the problem with that? Do you like the prospect of God being jealous? And then let me read on. Visiting the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to thousands who love me and keep my commandments. What's this business about gods being



jealous? Got a sermon in your back pocket on that one that you've heard somewhere? Chelsea, you were going to say something.

Good, and let me flesh that out just a little bit more. Don't lose sight of the fact that this is a covenant. And God actually, through the prophets later on, will even present it as a marriage covenant.

And let me just suggest to you that once you get married, if you're not jealous, if your spouse goes out with somebody else of the opposite gender from them and is starting to mess around, if you're not jealous, something is wrong with you. Something is radically wrong with you. This is a covenant, and God has every right to be jealous when his people are dabbling with other people, sorry, other gods, excuse me.

His people are dabbling with other gods, and those gods are enticing them away to break that covenant bond. Jealousy fits. Idolatry, we could spend a lot of time on this.

Attributing the power of God to created objects. Basically, you make something, and you presume that if you manipulate that just the right way, it's going to do what you want it to do. We no longer make our idols. We really buy them.

That's what we're doing, we're buying them. They're made for us by somebody else. Colossians chapter 3 tells us that greed is idolatry, and we all fall prey to that.

Greed is idolatry, wanting so much to give us some kind of power or whatever trappings go along with that. Now, let me suggest as well that when we see this cross-generational punishment, visiting the iniquity to the children, to the third and the fourth generation. That's a little troubling too, until we recognize that in effect, when fathers and mothers, parents get into patterns that are really deleterious, those things carry on across generations.

And you know as well as I do, that breaking those patterns of family dysfunctionality, especially in areas that are really critical areas, goes on. Goes on. Of course, the antidote to that is being very concerned not to have idols and to put God first.

And then, that brings out the counterpart, showing love to thousands, to those who love me and keep my commandments, right? So, the commandment against idolatry is an extremely important commandment. We're going to do a little more with Exodus 32; that's the golden calf situation. Keeping in mind that right after this giving of the ten commandments, when Moses goes up to Mount Sinai by himself, he's receiving the instructions for how to build a tabernacle and how to have Aaron function as high priest.

What's Aaron doing? He's down at the base of the mountain building the calf at the instigation of the people, so horrible, horrifying, odious expression of idolatry right there in that context. But we'll come back to that when we have that narrative. This is a tough one too.

Let me read it for you. I'm reading verse seven and I'm giving you a painfully literal translation, all right? This is not what your NIV says, so get the painfully literal translation. You shall not lift up the name of the Lord your God to emptiness.

You want that again? You shall not lift up the name of the Lord your God to emptiness. For the Lord will not hold guiltless anyone who does that. Now what does that mean? It doesn't mean to lift up the name of the Lord our God to emptiness forever.

Okay, that's the way the King James says it. What does take the Lord's name in vain mean? Okay, to carelessly use the name of the Lord or blaspheme, those are two very different things, by the way. But we'll come back to that in a moment.

Good, I think both of those are involved, I'm going to mention them. Anything else here? Anything your reading tells you, Kaylin? Okay, so certainly there's going to be some intentionality, although is your suggestion that people pray, even in their prayers, they're misusing God's name? Well, let me suggest, I mean, I may be stepping on tons of toes at this point. But it could be, and I'm not sure how far to push this one, that when the name of the Lord or God becomes a comma in your prayers, we might be verging, you know what I'm saying? Sometimes, when you listen to people pray, they come to a pause and put the Lord in there, and it becomes a comma more than anything else.

Now, of course, I'm not here to critique that. I am actually on something a little bit more substantial. Becca? Okay, so the idea that the name of God does indeed have power, and therefore any careless use of it is going to be an abuse of that power, true.

Let me make two additional suggestions, if I may. First of all, and again, I think Youngblood does mention this at some point, part of this may be viewed within a legal context. And Jesus may be referring to that when he talks about, let your yes be yes and your no be no, and not taking oaths by the gold of the temple and oaths by this.

Part of it may have to do with taking oaths in contexts and taking them lightly, which might be part of it. But I'm going to go back to something that was said earlier, which I think is equally and perhaps even more important because it hits home to every one of us here. And in saying this, I'm just going to, again, direct your attention to contemporary Judaism.

If you have Jewish friends who are orthodox and observant, they will be very careful not to pronounce the name of God. And as they write it, they're going to put G slash D. And if you go back and read the Gospel of Matthew, what does he say over and over, the kingdom of heaven, because he's not going to say the kingdom of God. It's that profound concern not to ever be in a position where we're saying the name of God frivolously, lightly, without profound thought for the power and the person behind that power.

Now, all you need to do is walk around Gordon College for ten minutes, and we're all guilty of this. You hear very light and flippant allusions to the man upstairs. God's going to get you.

Those kinds of things, I would suggest, maybe verging on abuse of this particular commandment. Now, I'm not telling you to go out and start beating up on all your people in the dorm. We need to watch ourselves in this regard.

I need to watch myself. It's a very easy thing to get into. And so we can't just say, this has to do with legal situations.

I don't need to worry about that. Or this has to do with using blasphemous language. I don't do that.

No, we're all in the boat of perhaps abusing this particular commandment. The fourth one is the Sabbath command. I'm going to have a lot more to say about the Sabbath command when we talk about ritual Torah, because this is one of those remarkable boundaries crossers.

And not only rituals but also civil society. But for now, it's important to note that as you read Exodus 20, in conjunction with Deuteronomy 25, sorry, Deuteronomy 5. I'll get my references right. There's a little bit of a difference in the reasons given.

In Exodus, remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Now I'm reading verse 11. In six days, the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that's in them.

He rested on the seventh. Therefore, he blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. If you go over to chapter five of Deuteronomy, the reason, as I said, focuses on not creation but redemption.

Let me read it. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

Do you get the picture here? Even in the Ten Commandments, we have two very profound reasons for keeping the Sabbath. One is the creation, harking all the way back to the creative process. And the second is, God has redeemed you.

That's a pretty good reason for keeping the Sabbath. Now we're going to pack that on top of what we talked about last time in conjunction with Exodus 16. That was a pack of slaves who had been enslaved for generations, to whom a day in seven was a gift from God.

So put all this stuff together, and we're going to be talking about Sabbath more, Lord willing, next week. Those first are the love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. Now as we pick up the rest of them, this is going to be in the category of love your neighbor as yourself.

The first one has to do with honoring your parents. Some people, by the way, see this as a bit of a swing position between loving God and loving neighbor. Of course, God has established parents to be, in some ways, his representatives for the family.

At any rate, honoring parents. Well, this brings up another issue because you and I probably all know of situations where parents are not exactly, well, they're not exactly admirable. And how do you tell somebody to honor a father or a mother who has been abusive, neglectful, or just completely off the scene? How do you tell somebody to do that? It's not an easy issue, but let me make a suggestion here.

The word for honor in this text, the Hebrew word for honor, has built into it to be weighty, to be heavy, to have substance. And perhaps part of this honoring thing is simply a matter of providing for your parents. If we can't emotionally love them, and there are lots of reasons in a dysfunctional, fallen world why that's true, we can still provide for parents.

Especially when they reach their old age. So again, built into that idea of honor in the Hebrew word, I'm just repeating myself because it's important. Built into that is the idea of making provision for, giving them the substance and the weight of provisions.

In Hebrew culture, that's how you'd think of it. It doesn't give them \$10,000 so they can go stay in the nursing home. It would give them the substance so that they can indeed continue to survive.

And I would suggest that when Jesus is challenging some rather hypocritical folks in his presence, and he says, you're sitting there saying, I'm going to give all this stuff to the temple, korban, he says. And you're ignoring your parents. Go look it up in Mark chapter seven.

I think he's referring to the particular commandment and the implications of that commandment. He says instead, you should be providing for your parents. Okay, and you can move along rather quickly here.

Again, the Hebrew word here is not killed. There's a garden variety Hebrew word for kill. This one is you shall not murder.

It's a different word. So, it raises all sorts of interesting issues with regard to, well, the two hot button ones are death penalty and war. But just keep in mind that the word here is thou shalt not kill.

Sorry, thou shalt not murder, I don't get it right. Which is the intentional, deliberate taking of human life, therefore obliterating a particular person who bears the image of God. Of course, that's directing us all the way back to Genesis nine.

Do you remember after the flood, the Lord says, someone who sheds the blood of human beings, by human beings that blood will be shed because that person bears the image of God.

Next one is adultery. An offense against the marriage covenant. And as I said about 20 minutes ago, this is significant because it's a reflection. Our marriage covenant is a reflection of God's covenant with his people. So again, there's some interesting interlacing here.

Theft, well, it's kind of a general statement. It simply says you shall not steal. That's going to be unpacked in other contexts, but here's the interesting thing.

If somebody stole people, i.e., kidnapping, that warranted a death penalty too. By the way, murder was death penalty, adultery was death penalty. If you stole a person, again, taking that person and removing that person from his or her ability to be a bearer of the image of God, the death penalty resulted.

And of course, other kinds of theft, as we're going to see, had other kinds of punishment associated with it. False testimony. Well, here it clearly bears false witness.

But I would suggest to you that this declaration, which has to do with courts, no question about it, has to do with court system. But it's probably representative of lying in general. Because as we look through the rest of the Bible, lying is right up there in terms of the things that God considers absolutely detestable.

Absolutely detestable. In the book of Proverbs, over and over and over again, there are admonitions against lying. Where do people who are liars in the book of Revelation go? The lake of fire.

Lying is pretty reprehensible, as well. And then, finally, the root cause of a lot of this other stuff is coveting. Shall not desire.

An overpowering desire that makes us clutch and grasp at things that don't belong to us. Thou shalt not covet. Well, ten past ten, we've done this last bit a little bit quickly.

But time to stop. Shabbat shalom. See you Monday.