

Parashah One Hundred Thirty

Deuteronomy 5:1–6:3; Joshua 1:1–9; Matthew 5:17–20

notes by Tim Hegg

Exodus 20	Deuteronomy 5
<p>2 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.</p> <p>3 You shall have no other gods before Me.</p> <p>4 You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.</p> <p>5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,</p> <p>6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.</p> <p>7 You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.</p> <p>8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.</p> <p>9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,</p> <p>10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.</p>	<p>6 I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.</p> <p>7 You shall have no other gods before Me.</p> <p>8 You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.</p> <p>9 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,</p> <p>10 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.</p> <p>11 You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.</p> <p>12 <i>Observe</i> the sabbath day to keep it holy, <i>as the LORD your God commanded you.</i></p> <p>13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,</p> <p>14 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your <i>ox or your donkey or any of your</i> cattle or your sojourner who stays with you, <i>so that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.</i></p>

Exodus 20	Deuteronomy 5
11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.	15 <i>You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day.</i>
12 Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.	16 Honor your father and your mother, <i>as the LORD your God has commanded you</i> , that your days may be prolonged <i>and that it may go well with you</i> on the land which the LORD your God gives you.
13 You shall not murder.	17 You shall not murder.
14 You shall not commit adultery.	18 You shall not commit adultery.
15 You shall not steal.	19 You shall not steal.
16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.	20 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
17 You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."	21 You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, <i>his field</i> or his male servant or his female servant, his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

(Differences in the Deuteronomy text, when compared with the Exodus text, are highlighted in bold type.)

The section for this Shabbat is obviously a reiteration of the 10 words (*asseret hadevarim* in the Torah; *asseret hadevarot* in Rabbinic Literature). Whenever the Ruach HaKodesh repeats the same material, it is always instructive to compare what has been written before, and to note what changes or amplifications have occurred. I have put the two sections in parallel columns for this very reason.

Before comparing the two texts, however, we ought to give full weight to the opening paragraph of our *parashah*. Moses makes it clear to the people that the words which he is about to reiterate are actually a *covenant* that God made between Himself and Israel. Furthermore, 5:3 makes it clear that the covenant was being confirmed to the generation of Israel that would enter the Land. The Sages offered different interpretations of the phrase **לֹא אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ** בְּרַת יְהוָה אֶת־הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת, "Not with our fathers did Adonai make this covenant." It is clear that the initial giving of the Torah was, indeed, a covenant (Ex 24:8) made with those who stood at Sinai. Ibn Ezra understands the phrase, then, to mean: "Not *only* with our fathers did Adonai make this covenant, but with us who are alive today." Still others interpreted the phrase to mean that

God knew the generation who stood at Sinai would not enter the Land because of their disobedience, and thus the meaning is that they would not realize the blessings of the covenant summed primarily in the inheritance of the Land. Others understand the statement to mean that God did not make the covenant of Torah explicit to the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) but to the generation that came out of Egypt. Regardless of how the phrase is interpreted, the primary thrust is that God remained faithful to His promise. The covenant is established with the next generation of Israel even as it was made with those who stood at Sinai. In spite of their disobedience, the covenant remained in force because it is established and maintained from generation to generation by God Himself. Whether any given generation enjoys the blessings of the covenant is dependent upon their obedience to it, but one generation cannot annul the covenant for future generations.

Who are these people who comprise the congregation of Israel to which the covenant is established in our text? All the men of military age had died in the wilderness, save Joshua and Caleb and their clans. Thus, the congregation to which Moses addressed these remarks is made up of young men, women of all ages, and the elderly. This reminds us that it is not the outwardly mighty or strong whom God often uses to carry forth His plans, but the weak who are strong in spirit. And, the reiteration of the Ten Words is appropriate here if, indeed, it is being addressed primarily to women, for who is in a better position to see that the Torah is taught and carried out than mothers! Indeed, the training of the next generation is in the hands of all those Moses addresses, fathers, mothers, grandparents, and the whole of the community of Israel.

The opening verse of our *parashah* reiterates an important concept: “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I am speaking today in your hearing, that you may learn them and observe them carefully” (וּלְמַדְתֶּם אֹתָם (וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם לַעֲשׂוֹתָם). Literally, it reads “that you may learn them and guard to do them.” Here, as always in the Scriptures, learning has doing as its goal. Learning is not an end in itself. We learn in order that we might do, and this also impacts the way we learn. As the Sages say, גָּדוֹל תִּלְמוּד שֶׁמְבִיא לְיָדֵי מַעֲשֵׂה, “Great is learning that brings deeds to my hands” (b.*Ketuvot* 40b). In contrast, learning for learning’s sake alone is a Greek perspective, and is what the Apostle Paul warns us about when he writes, “Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies” (1Cor 8:1).

In comparing the two texts which reiterate the Ten Words, it is obvious that our *parashah* essentially duplicates the earlier Exodus statement of the Ten Words, most often using identical vocabulary. There are, however, some differences (note the bold italic type in the tables above). Primarily these differences exist in the 4th and 5th commandments.

In the 4th commandment, the Ex 20 passage bases the Sabbath rest on the fact that God rested after the six days of creation. The logic is straightforward—God worked for six days during the creation of the world, and then

ceased from His labors on the seventh day and was refreshed (נָפַח, *naphash*). What does it mean that He was “refreshed?” The Hebrew verb *nāphash* (in the nifal stem) literally means “to breath freely, recover” and thus can be understood to mean “be satisfied.” Surely this is an anthropomorphism, that is, expressing in human terms the pleasure and satisfaction God had, having completed the creation of the universe. As one commentator remarks:

The “refreshment” must be understood in a sense worthy of him who “fainteth not neither is weary.” It includes, at all events, the pure delight arising from the consciousness of a design accomplished, and from the contemplation of the intrinsic excellence of the work.”

(J. G. Murphy, *Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (1868), pp. 341-2)

Thus, when God completed His work of creation in six days and ceased created on the seventh day, He was fully satisfied with His work, for it was all good. Further, it is clear that God Himself delighted in His work, having ceased creating on the seventh day, it follows that since mankind is created in God’s image, we ought also to follow His example, working during six days, ceasing our work on the seventh, and rejoicing in the goodness of God.

The 4th commandment reads differently, however, in the Deuteronomy text. Here, the reason given for observing the Sabbath is not the pattern which God laid down in the creation week, but the actual redemption of Israel from the tyranny of Egypt. In fact, there is no hint in our text that the creation week in any way attaches to the Sabbath observance. What are we to make of this?

It was this difference (among other things) which provided the Reformation theologians with an explanation for the first day of the week as “the Lord’s Day.” While Saturday, they argued, hearkened back to creation, Sunday was symbolic of redemption. Since they reasoned that Yeshua arose from the dead on Sunday, this marked the 1st day as the day of redemption. Noting the shift from creation to redemption in Deuteronomy’s reiteration of the 10 words gave the reformers grounds for finding such a shift in the scope of ecclesiastical history. The ancient “church” observed the seventh day as a remembrance of creation, but the “new covenant” church celebrates Sunday as a remembrance of our redemption. The biblical basis for such a shift was thus the very text we are studying this Shabbat.

The obvious question is how they so easily replaced what is said in Exodus with what is written in Deuteronomy. On what grounds? Does the expansion or further explanation of a given biblical statement replace what is said before, or further elucidate it? Throughout the book of Exodus, for example, material is repeated. Instructions are given for the building of the Tabernacle and the articles it contained, and then the actual building is narrated. Often the texts agree verbatim, but not always. Yet no one would take the position that what was reiterated later, nullifies what was said initially. In fact, the

very notion that what is said in later years negates what was said before is exactly opposite of what the Torah itself teaches. In Deut 5:22, it states that God “added no more.” From this the Sages ultimately teach that all of God’s truth for us is contained in the Torah, and that the words of the prophets are commentary upon it. This phrase, however, created a controversy among the Sages, some of whom reasoned that only the Ten Words were given at Sinai, and the remainder of the Torah was subsequently given to Israel in the desert. Others understood the phrase to mean that the whole Torah was given at Sinai, and that the later words of the Prophets were not to be considered as part of the Torah. But the overall import is clear: the inspired words of the Prophets cannot replace or change the words of the Torah, nor does the Torah negate itself!

Rather than finding a replacement of “rest” (creation order) with “redemption” (exodus motif), the reformers should have recognized what is obvious, namely, that the rest demonstrated by God in the creation week was ultimately to illustrate what it means to rest in the redemption He would provide, and ultimately the redemption from the condemnation of sin made for us by His Messiah, Yeshua. The rest given first in the creation week finds its fuller development in the picture of redemption as Israel is taken out of Egypt. Indeed, the Exodus itself may be considered a kind of “creation,” for it is at the time of the exodus that Israel is first “created” as a nation. Thus “creation” and “redemption” are two sides of a single coin. Even as God “works” in the creation of the physical universe and then “rests,” so God “works” in spiritual recreation and those He redeems enter into His “rest.” The one does not replace the other but builds upon it and brings it to its completion.

Furthermore, as the creation week stands as a paradigm for God’s plan for the ages, so the Shabbat foreshadows the time of our complete redemption when an eternal rest is given to us. This, of course, is the point of the writer to the Hebrews (4:9). God works in order that we might rest. He is working now for our redemption, for the whole creation groans and awaits its final redemption under the reign of the Messiah (cf. Rom 8:20–22). The final rest in the world to come, the fruit of God’s almighty work, is what we celebrate every Shabbat in anticipation of His ultimate victory for us. And we rest, not because we have completed our work (which we seem never able to do), but because He has completed His work. We rest in what He has accomplished.

Our *parashah* also includes a wonderful passage revealing God’s own heart-cry: v. 29ff. It begins with an interesting Hebrew idiom, מִי-יִתֵּן, *mi yitein*, literally, “who will give?” It is a Hebrew way of saying “Oh, would that....”¹ Note how often it is found in Job! This Hebrew idiom signals a “heart-cry,” one’s inner, deep desire. Here, in our text, it is found in the words

1 cf. Ex 16:3; Num 11:29; Deut 5:29; 28:67; Judg 9:29; 2Sam. 19:1; Is 27:4; 42:24; Jer 8:23-9:1; Psa. 14:7; 53:7; 55:7; Job 6:8; 11:5; 13:5; 14:4,13; 19:23; 23:3; 29:2; 31:31,35; 38:36; Song 8:1).

of the Almighty: “Oh that they had such a mind as this always, to fear Me and to keep all My commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!” Here is our Father’s greatest desire, that we should have a heart to obey Him, that He might pour upon us the blessings He has reserved for those who love Him!

The final verses of our *parashah* make clear that the covenant of the Torah has the Land as its focal point. The keeping of God’s commandments is so “that you may prolong your days in the land which you will possess” (5:33); “that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it” (6:1); that it may be well with you... in a land flowing with milk and honey” (6:3). The Torah was never given with the idea that Israel would exist outside of the Land. The diaspora is the result of our disobedience (cf. Ezek 36:16ff), and thus we await the return of the Messiah when the Land will once again become the dwelling place of His glory, and the rule of His kingship will bring about the full regathering of His people. As we seek to live out the Torah in the diaspora, our hearts are more and more turned to the Land, for it is from Zion that the Torah will go forth and the word of Adonai from Jerusalem (Is 2:3).

Our *haftarah* portion is an obvious (though summary) reiteration of the repeated appeal of Moses in the Torah *parashah*, that Israel should carefully learn, guard, and do the commandments graciously given to us by HaShem. God instructs Joshua, now the chosen leader of Israel following the death of Moses, “the servant of Adonai” (עֶבֶד יְהוָה), to lead the people of Israel into the Land, and to do so with the Torah as his guide. At first, it may appear that HaShem is addressing only Joshua. Yet a close reading would indicate otherwise. Note v. 3: “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.” Here, however, all of the second person pronouns are plural (though the verb תִּדְרֹךְ is singular noting the collective singular of the nation), showing that the message of God given directly to Joshua is likewise applicable to the whole nation.

The boundaries of the Land given in this text are expansive: “From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory” (v. 4). The Hittites are referred to in Hebron (Gen 23), Beersheba (Gen 26:34), Bethel (Jud 1:22–26), Jerusalem (Ezek 16:3, 45), among David’s confederates (1Sam 26:6). The Hittites were therefore scattered sufficiently to warrant using “the land of the Hittites” in a very general sense to mean Canaan.

The Torah is called סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה (*sefer hatorah*), the “Book of the Torah.” This same designation is found four times in Deuteronomy (28:61; 29:20; 30:10; 31:26). In the Ancient Near East, *sefer* (and cognate terms) was used of a “written document” or a “treaty.” While later the word *sefer* came to mean a “parchment” or “scroll,” it did not necessarily have this connotation in more ancient times. The important point for our consideration, however, is that the

Torah was a written document, and we should presume that what was in the possession of Joshua at this point was the essential core of the Torah as we now have it. Undoubtedly there occurred in the years following the death of Moses a compiling process, as well as updating of the language and terms. But all of this, we believe, was under the careful supervision of the Ruach.

Three times in our *haftarah* the admonition is given: “be strong and courageous” (וַיִּזְק וְאַמֵּץ, vv. 6 & 9; וַיִּזְק וְאַמֵּץ מָאֵד, v. 7). Joshua, as the leader, faced a major challenge, to lead the people into the Land that contained fortified cities and significant fighting forces. The strength and courage that Joshua and the people were to muster was based upon their faith in God’s promise and power. As long as they faithfully relied upon God (shown by their willingness to obey His commandments), the victory would be theirs. This speaks to us as well: facing the future with strength and courage is dependent upon our growing faith in God’s ability to accomplish in us all that He has promised.

Thus, the Torah was to be the constant focus of attention: “This book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night...” (v. 8). Here, the ability to “meditate” (הִגָּה, *hagah*) inevitably involved the wider community, for the Torah was to be discussed as the means for meditation (“shall not depart from you mouth”). Yet all of the second person pronouns and verbs in this verse are in the singular. This does not imply “talking to oneself,” but that each individual should take up the personal responsibility of having the Torah upon their tongues—speaking, discussing, exhorting, and encouraging each other with the inspired words of God, and seeking to understand and implement them into the life of the community. It is by this that we will make our way prosperous and have good success.

The Apostolic portion was chosen for obvious reasons. Our LORD and Master makes a very clear and emphatic teaching regarding the value and eternal nature of the Torah. He came to establish the Torah in the lives of His followers, not to abolish it, that is, render it ineffective. Had He taught the cessation of the Torah, He would have properly been labelled as a false prophet, for the Torah is the eternal and abiding word of God to His people.

The basic structure of Matt 5:17–20 speaks clearly to this. Yeshua begins by affirming His mission to establish the Torah in the lives of His followers: “I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.” The idea of “fulfill” cannot mean to “finish” the Torah so as to render it no longer needful. We know this because the subsequent words of our Master are given to explain His opening affirmation. If by “fulfill” he had meant that He would complete the Torah so that no one else would need to be concerned about it, why then would He have said that those who “do (ποιέω, *poieō*) and teach the Torah” would be called great in the kingdom? It is clear that He

intends the Torah both to be obeyed and to be taught as that which is to be obeyed. Moreover, His concluding words in this paragraph affirm that He expected His talmidim to live in accordance with the Torah, for by “righteousness” He surely means conduct that conforms to the standards of God. And it is for this reason that He uses the scribes and Pharisees as the benchmark: “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.” The scribes and Pharisees were, of all the major sects within Judaism of that day, those who (at least outwardly) paid the closest attention to the details of the Torah in terms of practical *halachah*. To exceed their high watermark of obedience would therefore require both a proper motivation (characterized by love for God and for one’s neighbor which is the fruit of the Ruach) as well as carefully *doing* the *mitzvot*.

We must reason likewise, that the Apostles of Yeshua would not have overturned such a clear and strong teaching of their Master. Paul could not have consistently claimed authority as the “Apostle of Messiah Yeshua” while at the same time disregarding what His Master had taught, unless he was a false Apostle (and he was not!). Those who have interpreted the message of the Apostles in their epistles as teaching the abolition of the Torah have therefore missed an essential truth: genuine Apostles are commissioned to take the message of their Master to others, not to change that message.