



**Shavuot begins
at sundown
on June 1, 2006**

Blessings in the Blesser!,

Happy Birthday!

"Judaism"

"Messiah's Body"

"Neil A. Lash"

June is special for us this year because we will share in three birthday celebrations.

We will gather together as a New Covenant Community of Faith to observe one of the Feasts of the Lord – Shavuot, literally "weeks" in Hebrew. This holiday occurs 7 weeks plus one day (fifty days) after Pesach (Passover). The Children of Israel, delivered from Egyptian bondage by the blood of the Passover lambs, arrived at Mt. Sinai where the God of Israel gave them the Law, and entered into covenant (Mosaic) with them. Judaism was **born that day** with great fanfare – shofarot and firecrackers (actually lightnings, smoke, fire and thunderings (Exodus 19:16-18). Quite a spectacle!

Not to be outdone, was the **birthday** of the "Church," the New Covenant Body of Yeshua, born some 1500 years later on that very same day and now called Pentecost (count 50). This birth took place in an Upper Room in Jerusalem. Instead of 120 Hebrew words written on tablets of stone by the finger of God, there were 120 "living epistles," crowned with tongues of fire, overwhelmed by a rushing mighty wind, each speaking supernatural words that they had never learned (Read Acts Chapter 2). Not your usual birthday party!

Seventy years ago, on June 10, 1936, Pauline Lash, a sweet yiddishe mama from Poland, found herself in a hospital delivery room with a few other women. The woman in labor next to her was not Jewish, but very warm and friendly. In fact, she asked Pauline if she could pray for her and for the baby about to be **born**. Neil Abraham Lash entered the world bathed in believing prayer. Great rejoicing accompanied the birth of this late in life baby whose big sister, Phyllis was ten and big brother Al was twelve when Neil entered the world.

God's Gift at Sinai

According to Jewish tradition and thought, Shavuot is **an anniversary** as well as **a birthday** celebration. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob married Israel at the Exodus, brought her through a bridal mikvah at the Red Sea and gave her a "Ketubah" (marriage contract) at Mount Sinai. God entered into a marriage covenant with His people Israel which she gave her consent

to when she collectively proclaimed: "All that the Lord has spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8). That is when Israel said, "I do" to her Heavenly Bridegroom, agreeing to obey His voice, keep His covenant and become His "peculiar treasure" (Exodus 19:5).

God used a mediator, Moses, to give His instructions, His teachings, to His beloved Israel at this time. The words that God Himself wrote (Exodus 31:18) on two stone tablets and then gave to His servant Moses have come to be known as the "Ten Commandments." No religious document has had a greater influence on the moral, ethical and social life of mankind than this divine summary of human duty.

In the Torah, these universally famous words are never referred to as "The Ten Commandments." Instead, they are called "*Aseret ha-D'vareem*" (Exodus 34:28, Deuteronomy 4:13, Deuteronomy 10:4). The word *d'vareem* comes from the Hebrew root *dalet-bet-resh*, meaning "word," "speak" or "thing." Thus, the biblical phrase is actually translated as the Ten Sayings, the Ten Statements, the Ten Declarations, or the Ten Words but not as The Ten Commandments – which in Hebrew would be "*Aseret ha-Mitzvot*."

Traditional Jewish theology sees the "Ten" as the ideological basis for the rest of the 613 commandments. In fact, each of the Ten Declarations is considered a category which includes some of the 613 mitzvot (commandments) found in the Torah. The ten categories are as follows:

1) Belief in God, 2) Prohibition of Improper Worship, 3) Prohibition of Oaths, 4) Shabbat, 5) Respect for Parents and Teachers, 6) Prohibition of Murder, 7) Prohibition of Adultery, 8) Prohibition of Theft, 9) Prohibition of False Witness and 10) Prohibition of Coveting.

What Moses received from the God of Israel on Mt. Sinai were not rules to follow to be made right with God. Redemption had already occurred, by grace through faith, when the Israelites trusted in the blood of the Passover lambs to deliver them from death. Rather, God was teaching His people how to live a life of blessing, and what He expected of them! His redeemed people were being set apart to walk with God. The Ten Declarations were stipulations of a covenant relationship rooted in grace. They were a set of instructions for a people called to be separate and holy, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6). God wanted His people to know how to relate to Him first, and then to one another, hence two tablets: tablet #1 gave instructions concerning a relationship with God; tablet #2 gave instructions concerning relationships with one another.

The "Perfect Ten"

"And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18). Any instructions written by God's own finger must be perfect, and of utmost importance yesterday, today and forever. Each Shavuot in synagogues throughout the world, the "Decalogue" (derived from the Greek name "dekalogos" – ten statements) is solemnly read. The biblical passages include Exodus 20:2-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21 (which are broadly identical).

While all agree that there are "10" Declarations, there is lack of agreement on the division of the statements, as well as the number of statements on each of the two tablets of the Law. In the Jewish tradition the verse, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt..." is regarded as the first commandment. Christians, however, generally regard this as a prologue. Most Protestants and Eastern Orthodox consider "you shall have no other gods before me" as the first commandment. For Jews, the second commandment includes both "you shall have no

other gods..." and the prohibition against graven images. Lutherans and Roman Catholics also regard "you shall have no other gods..." and the prohibition against graven images as constituting a single declaration. However, they separate the two kinds of coveting (of goods and of the flesh) into two commandments. So... in the continued raging debate concerning the posting of the "Ten Commandments" in government buildings, schools and public institutions, which version do we choose? Something to think about...

Traditional Jewish Version of the "10"

1. "I am the LORD your God,
who brought you out of the land of Egypt,
out of the house of bondage."
2. "Thou shall have no other gods besides Me...
Do not make a sculpted image or any likeness
of what is in the heavens above..."
3. "Thou shall not swear falsely by the name of the LORD..."
4. "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy..."
5. "Thou shall honour your father and your mother..."
6. "Thou shall not murder."
7. "Thou shall not commit adultery."
8. "Thou shall not steal."
9. "Thou shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."
10. "Thou shall not covet your neighbor's house..."

Some Questions to Ponder

Why do traditional Jews have Exodus 20:2 as Declaration #1? Hebrew thinking. God is a God of action and relationships. He is known by what He does and who He is related to. He is their God, and He delivered them from slavery.

Why is the instruction to honor father and mother on the "Vertical Relationship" tablet? In Jewish thought, to honor father and mother is like honoring God. When children are young, parents are in a sense in God's place. Respect for parents is extremely critical for one's peace, prosperity and happiness. In studying the *B'rakhot* or Blessings last month, we were also led to study the curses that parallel them. In this area of honoring parents, we have seen that disrespect for parents brings God's curse upon a person. (*"Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt" Deuteronomy 27:16*). This same thought is reemphasized in the B'rit HaDasha: *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth'" (Ephesians 6:1-3)*.

Ask the Lord, this month, especially as Father's Day approaches, if you are guilty of dishonoring your father or mother. If He shows you that you have sinned in this regard, it may well explain why things have not gone well with you! Repent. Make the necessary changes. Even if your parents are deceased, you can still ask forgiveness and be healed. Blessings and victory – and long life will follow!

Why was Declaration #4 concerning the Sabbath a revolutionary concept? The prohibition of any manner of work on the Sabbath was the first prohibition of work in the history of the world, and remained unique for many centuries. Aron Barth, a religious Zionist leader born in 1890 said of the Sabbath prohibition: "It applies alike to masters and servants, male and female, man and beast. There is one law equal for all; that all shall free themselves on one day of the week, on that day which the Lord blessed and hallowed, that all shall be free from all manner of work and from dependence on their fellows, to be as they were at the time they were created."

How does "Thou shall have no other gods besides me" apply to people today? According to Derek Prince in His book, **Blessing or Curse**, the form of disobedience that most surely and inevitably provokes God's curse is breaking Declarations (Commandments) #2 and #3. The first sin is acknowledging any other god before – or besides – the Lord. He is the only true God. The second sin is making an artificial representation of God and worshipping it. While you may not have done this, your ancestors might have. Curses can go back to the fourth generation. Many are "occult" (hidden). All who become involved in the "occult" are exposing themselves to the curse pronounced on those who break these first declarations. If this includes you, please repent of what the Bible calls "spiritual adultery." Renounce all contact with occult practices, and destroy all books, objects, etc. that link you to these false gods, even "lucky" objects, horoscopes, kabbala, tarot cards, etc.

A simple prayer for forgiveness and cleansing can open your life to the blessings that God has longed for you to walk in! Possible curses from your ancestors? Ask the Lord to release you from the consequences of your ancestors' sins. Remember: *"Messiah (Christ) has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us..." (Galatians 3:13).*

What is the "curse of the law"? The law offered the people of God two alternatives: blessing for obedience or cursing for disobedience. Deuteronomy 27:26 says: *"Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law."* Again in Deuteronomy 28:15 we read: *"But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you..."*

Breaking one part of the law meant breaking all of it (James 2:10). Truly no one could be made righteous by keeping the law. The "law" itself is not cursed, but the person who tries to keep it legalistically is. As Dr. David Stern points out in his Jewish New Testament Commentary, legalistic obedience to Torah commands is disobedience to Torah. *"The heresy of legalism, when applied to the Torah, says that anyone who does these things, that is anyone who mechanically follows the rules for Shabbat, Kashrut, etc. will attain life through them... no need to trust God, just obey the rules!"* Outward obedience without inward trust, is hateful to God (Isaiah 1:14) and brings one under a curse.

Yeshua and the "Law"

The Brit HaDasha makes it very clear that Yeshua came to fulfill (make the meaning full; complete the understanding of) the law, not to destroy it (Matthew 5:17). As the mediator of the

New Covenant prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31, Yeshua made it possible for God's law to go from the outside (on tablets of stone) to the inside (the human heart). Changes take place, for both Jews and Gentiles, when the law of God is written on our hearts. It becomes second nature to us. It is no longer an external standard that we strive to attain, but a life that proceeds from the Spirit of God within us. The law on our hearts requires more from us. Yeshua explained that when 'You shall not murder' is written on our hearts, we are also forbidden to hate. Even more than that, He said, *'I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment'...*" (**Torah and The New Covenant by Daniel Gruber**).

Declaration #7, prohibiting adultery, was redefined by Yeshua to include looking at a woman with lust. The Messiah took the "Perfect 10" to an even higher level of perfection! **His focus was always on the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

Dan Gruber has some other perceptive insights concerning the New Covenant sealed in Yeshua's blood and the Covenant at Sinai. In the latter, God gave Israel certain symbolic practices to remind His people to think about and obey His law, i.e. the *mezuzah*, *tefilin* and *tzitzit* (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). While these symbols remind us, they can not give us the power to keep God's law. On the other hand, through the New Covenant, the power of the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit, dwells within us. By this Spirit, we are able to keep the "Perfect 10," as well as the "Special 2" that Yeshua said summed up the entire law:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40). Amen!

May every **father** who reads this letter experience a life-changing circumcision of the heart, and be empowered by the Ruach HaKodesh to love God, his family and others as never before.

May all of us have the "Perfect Ten" written on our hearts so that we are able to fulfill Yeshua's admonition of John 14:15: *"If you love me, keep my commandments." "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome (1John 5:3)."*

In His Love,

Neil and Jamie