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Obeying God's Law

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Exodus 20:18-26

Introduction: All things being prepared for the solemn promulgation (declaration) of the divine LAW, we have, in this chapter, **I. The ten commandments**, as God himself spoke them upon **mount Sinai** (Exodus 20:1-17), as remarkable a portion of scripture as any in the Old Testament. **II.** The impressions made upon the people thereby, Exodus 20:18-21. **III.** Some particular instructions which God gave **privately to Moses**, to be by him communicated to the people, relating to his worship, Exodus 20:22-26, &c.

(Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mhm/exodus-20.html>)

Exodus 20:18, And **ALL** the **people SAW** the **thunderings**, and the **lightnings**, and the noise of the trumpet, and the **mountain smoking**: and when the people **SAW it, they removed**, and **stood afar off**.

NOTE: I. The extraordinary **terror** with which the law was given. Never was any thing delivered with such **AWFUL** pomp **every WORD was accented**, and **every sentence** paused, with **thunder** and **lightning**, much louder and brighter, no doubt, than ordinary.
(Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mhm/exodus-20.html>)

NOTE: ... the people **SAW the thunderings, and the lightnings**,.... That is, they HEARD the one, and SAW the other; they heard the DREADFUL volleys of thunder, and **saw** the amazing flashes of lightning, which were like lamps and torches, as the word used signifies; by a communication of senses, one sense is put for another, and the sense of sight being the principal, as Ben Melech observes, it is put for the rest, and so in the following. It is an observation of Austin's^{F15}Confess. 1. 10. c. 35. that to **"SEE"** is used of all of the **five senses**, SEEING, HEARING, TASTING, SMELLING, and FEELING: **and the noise the trumpet, and the mountain smoking**: they heard the sound of the trumpet, which made them tremble and saw the mountain all in a smoke, which made it look very terrible. Though the words may be rendered, as they are by some, "they perceived the **thunders**", &c..."; so some in Drusius. ; had a sensible perception of them with their eyes, ears, which greatly affected them, and made strong impressions upon their **MINDS**, and **filled them with FEAR and DREAD...**

(Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/geb/exodus-20.html>)

NOTE: The impression which this made, for the present, upon the people they must have had **stupid hearts** indeed, if this had NOT affected them. 1. They **removed**, and stood **afar off**, Exodus 20:18. Before God began to speak, they were thrusting forward to gaze (Exodus 19:21) but now they were effectually cured of their **presumption** (arrogance, unreasonable adventurousness), and taught to keep their distance.

(Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mhm/exodus-20.html>)

Exodus 20:19, And they said unto **Moses**, *Speak thou with us, and we **will hear**: but let NOT **God** speak with us, lest we **DIE**.*

NOTE: And they said unto Moses,.... Who was now come down from the mountain, and to whom the heads of the tribes and elders of the people came from the camp, and out of their tents, by whom the people said to him, as follows, see Deuteronomy 5:23, **speak thou with us**, and we will HEAR; their request is, that whatsoever it was the will and pleasure of God to declare to them, that **he would communicate it to Moses**, and he deliver it to them, promising that they would HEARKEN to it, and OBEY it, as if they had heard it from the mouth of God himself:

but let not God speak with us, lest we die; pray to him, that he would NOT speak immediately, but by **a MEDIATOR**, which they now saw the need of; that there was NO drawing nigh to God, nor hearing, nor receiving anything from him without one; that **his LAW**, as it came from him to them **sinful creatures**, was a **killing letter**, and the ministration of condemnation and DEATH, and injected such terror into their **MINDS**, that if it was continued they must die under it: thus, as the apostle observes, when "they heard the voice of words, entreated that the word should NOT be spoken to them any more, for they could NOT endure that which was commanded", Hebrews 12:19.

(Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/geb/exodus-20.html>)

Hebrews 12:19, 22-24, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should **NOT be spoken** to them any more... ..But ye are come unto **mount Sion**, and unto the city of the **living God**, the **heavenly Jerusalem**, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the **firstborn**, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to **Jesus** (Yahshua) **the MEDIATOR** of the **New Covenant**...

Thought 1. Even though the Law of Moses is NO LONGER in use, we are "NOT Lawless." We're under the "Law of Faith", in which LOVE fulfills the righteousness of the Old Law.

Romans 3:24-31, Being **justified** freely by **his GRACE** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath SET FORTH to be a **propitiation (an expiator** [the one that makes amend]) **through FAITH** in **his blood**, to declare HIS righteousness for the **remission** (forgiveness) of sins that are past, through the **forbearance** of God; To declare, I say, at this time HIS righteousness: that he might be JUST, and the JUSTIFIER of him which BELIEVETH in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. **By what LAW?** of **WORKS?** Nay: but by the **LAW of FAITH**.

Therefore we conclude that a man is **justified by FAITH** WITHOUT the DEEDS of the LAW. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is ONE God, which shall JUSTIFY the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then **make VOID the law through faith?** God forbid: yea, **we establish (STAND UP, present** [exhibit to VIEW]) **the Law**.

Galatians 3:11, But that **no man** is **justified by the LAW** in the sight of God, it is evident: for, THE **JUST SHALL LIVE** (be ALIVE: having LIFE) **by FAITH**.

Ephesians 2:8-10, For by **GRACE** are ye **SAVED through FAITH**; and that NOT of yourselves: it is the **GIFT** of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, CREATED IN Christ Jesus unto **good WORKS**, which God hath before ordained that we should **walk** IN them.

Romans 13:8-10, Owe no man any thing, but to **LOVE** one another: for he that **Loveth** another HATH fulfilled (satisfy [MEET requirements], **complete**; performed) the **LAW**. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, and IF there be any other

commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, **Thou shalt LOVE thy neighbour as** (just like) **THYSELF. LOVE worketh NO ill** to his neighbour: therefore **LOVE** is the **fulfilling (completion** [execution: performance]) **of the law.**

Thought 2. So, the MORALS of BOTH Covenants are the SAME! Even though God (Yahweh) made a New Covenant, he did NOT make NEW morals for it. Speaking by the Holy Spirit, John made clear the Commandments we NOW have.

1 John 3:23, And THIS is **HIS COMMANDMENT,** That we should **BELIEVE on** the **name (authority)** of his son Jesus Christ **AND LOVE one another,** AS he gave us commandment.

John 13:34, A new commandment I give unto you, That ye **LOVE** one another; **AS** (like) **I have LOVED you,** that ye also **LOVE** one another.

Exodus 20:20, And Moses said unto the people, **FEAR NOT...**

NOTE: The leader himself, with all his experience and privileges, was equally **panic-stricken** with the rest of the people. It is said (Exodus 19:19) that God answered him with a voice; but what **communication** was made to him has NOT been put on record. Doubtless it tended to reassure his agitated feelings and RESTORE him to that state of mental equilibrium (balance, REST) necessary for the right discharge of his important ministry; because when the deputies arrived they found him **CALM, STEADFAST,** and **encouraging.** (Source: <https://www.studyight.org/commentaries/jfu/exodus-20.html>)

NOTE: fear not; be NOT afraid of God with a **slavish fear;** be NOT afraid of the thunders and lightnings, as if they were LIKE one of the plagues of Egypt, which terrified Pharaoh and his people; be NOT afraid of being consumed by them, they will do you NO HURT; be NOT afraid of dying by the hand of God, at his presence, and through the **voice** of **HIS WORDS** spoken to you; be of good courage, for the design of God is NOT to destroy you, but to **instruct you,** and **do you good...**

(Source: <https://www.studyight.org/commentaries/geb/exodus-20.html>)

Exodus 20:20 ...for God is come to PROVE you, and that HIS FEAR may be before your faces, that ye SIN not.

Prove defined 5254, to test; by imply., to attempt [to subdue: to render SUBMISSIVE [HUMBLE]; to bring under command; to reduce to MILDNESS or OBEDIENCE; to tame; as, to subdue a STUBBORN child].

Fear defined 3374, moral reverence (profound **DEEP down**) RESPECT and ESTEEM (high value) mingled with FEAR and affection (LOVE), as FOR a holy being or place; the disposition (inclination; frame of MIND) to revere.

RESPECT, **1.** consideration (APPRECIATION; gratitude) **2.** HONOR.
Deference (SUBMISSION)

The FEAR acceptable to God, is a FILIAL [child in relation to his parents] FEAR, an **AWFUL** reverence of the divine nature, proceeding from a JUST esteem [high value] of his PERFECTIONS [infinite power, holiness, justice, benevolence and wisdom], which **produces IN us** an inclination (LEANING of the MIND or WILL) TO his service and an UNWILLINGNESS to offend him.

AWFUL, inspiring awe (DREAD, **1.** Great fear, or apprehension of evil or danger. It expresses more than FEAR, and less than terror or fright. It is an uneasiness or ALARM excited by expected PAIN, LOSS or other evil. We speak of the *dread* of

evil; the *dread* of suffering; the **dread of the divine displeasure**. It differs from terror also in being less sudden or more continued.

2. AWE; FEAR united with RESPECT.)

NOTE: To **KEEP** them to **their duty**, and **prevent their sinning** against God. He encourages them, saying, Fear not, and yet tells them that God thus spoke to them, that **HIS FEAR** might be before their FACE. We must NOT fear with amazement--with that fear which has **torment**, which only works upon the fancy for the present, sets us a trembling, genders to bondage, betrays us to Satan, and alienates us from God but we must always have in our **MINDS** a **REVERENCE** of God's majesty, a **dread of his displeasure**, and an obedient regard to his sovereign (supreme [highest]) authority over us: this FEAR will quicken us TO our duty and make us circumspect (CAUTIOUS) in our walking. Thus stand in **awe**, and **SIN NOT**, Psalm 4:4.

(Source: <https://www.studyight.org/commentaries/mhm/exodus-20.html>)

Psalm 4:4, Stand in **AWE** (reverential fear), and **SIN NOT**...

Psalms 111:10, The **FEAR** of the Lord (Yahweh) is the **beginning** of wisdom: a GOOD understanding have ALL they that **DO** his **commandment**...

Proverbs 14:2, He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord (Yahweh): but he that is **perverse (to turn aside)** in his ways **DESPISETH** him.

Despiseth defined 959, to disesteem (to slight [to neglect: 1. to omit by carelessness or design {a scheme or plan in the mind} 2. to forbear {stop, **PAUSE**, refuse} to treat with attention or **RESPECT**]).

Thought 1. It takes, at the least, ONE of FOUR things to produce the fear (reverence) of God (Yahweh)! It takes the POWER of God, or the AUTHORITY of God, or the SACREDNESS of God, or it takes the SUBLIME (elevated character, the outstanding: on another LEVEL things) of God experienced, seen, heard of, or read about.

Exodus 20:21, And the **people** stood afar off, and **Moses** drew near unto the thick darkness where God WAS.

NOTE: And the people stood afar off,.... Still kept their distance in their camp and tents; or the heads and elders of the people having had this conversation with Moses, returned to their tents as they were bid, Deuteronomy 5:30 and to the people in the camp, and there they continued while Moses went up to God with their request: **and Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was**; the thick cloud, Ex. 19:9 as Jarchi interprets it, and who observes from their doctors that there were THREE enclosures about the **divine Majesty**, DARKNESS, a CLOUD, and thick DARKNESS; and so Moses passed through the **darkness**, and the **cloud**, **TO** the **thick darkness** where **Jehovah** (Yahweh) was, and where he is said to dwell when the temple was built, 1 Kings 8:8 and they have an observation that the word rendered "DREW NEAR" is transitive, and should be translated, **"he was brought near"** or, **"made to draw nigh"**; Michael and Gabriel being sent to him, took hold of his hands and brought him against his will unto the thick darkness^{F18}Pirke Eliezer, c. 41. ; but IF the word will admit of such a version, the sense is either that he was **CAUSED to draw near** through the importunity (urgent request) of the people; or rather through the call of God to him, or an **IMPULSE** of his **upon his MIND**, which obliged him to it.

(Source: <https://www.studyight.org/commentaries/geb/exodus-20.html>)

Jeremiah 30:21, And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and **I will CAUSE him to draw near**, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged HIS heart to approach unto me? saith the LORD (Yahweh).

Exodus 20:22, And **the LORD** (Yahweh) said unto **Moses**, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have **SEEN** that **I have talked with you FROM heaven**.

NOTE: Though God manifested himself by the fire, the lightning, the earthquake, the thick darkness, etc., yet the ten words, or **commandments** were probably uttered from the **higher regions** of the **AIR**, which would be an additional proof to the people that there was NO imposture (the act or conduct of an impostor, trick) in this case; for though strange appearances and voices might be **counterfeited on earth**, as was often, no doubt, done by the magicians of Egypt; yet it would be utterly impossible to represent a voice, in a **long continued series** of **instruction**, as proceeding from heaven itself, or the higher regions of the atmosphere. This, with the earthquake and repeated thunders, (see on Exodus 20:18; (note)), would put the **reality** of this whole procedure beyond all doubt; and this enabled Moses, Deuteronomy 5:26, to make such an appeal to the people on a fact incontrovertible (undeniable) and of infinite importance, that God had indeed talked with them **face to face**. (Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/acc/exodus-20.html>)

Deuteronomy 5:26, For who is there of all flesh, that hath **HEARD the voice** of the living God **SPEAKING** out of the midst of the **fire**, as we have, and **lived?**

Exodus 20:23, Ye shall **NOT make** with me **gods** of **SILVER**, neither shall ye make unto you gods of **GOLD**.

NOTE: The expressions here are very remarkable. Before it was said, Ye shall have NO other gods **BEFORE ME**, אל פני al panai, Exodus 20:3. Here they are commanded, ye shall **NOT MAKE** gods of silver or gold אתי itti With me, **as emblems or representatives of God**, in order, as might be pretended, to keep these displays of his magnificence in memory; on the contrary, he would have only an altar of earth - of plain turf, on which they should offer those sacrifices by which they should commemorate their own guilt and the necessity of an atonement to reconcile themselves to God. See Clarke's note on Exodus 20:4. (Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/acc/exodus-20.html>)

Exodus 20:24, An **altar of earth** thou shalt make unto me, and shalt **sacrifice** thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy **peace offerings**, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I **record (remember, mention) my NAME** **I will come unto thee**, and **I will bless thee**.

NOTE: An altar of earth thou shall make unto me,... This was a temporary precept, and only in force until the tabernacle was built, and respects occasional altars, erected while on their travels, and were to be made of **turfs of earth**, and so easily and quickly thrown up, as their case and circumstances required, and as easily thrown down, as it was proper they should, after they had no more use for them, lest they should be abused to superstitious uses; for afterwards the altar for burnt offerings was made of **Shittim wood covered with brass**, and that in the temple was wholly a **brazen one**, Exodus 27:1

Exodus 27:1-2, And thou shalt make an altar of **shittim wood**, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the **ALTAR** shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits. And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt **overlay it** with **BRASS**.

This precept seems to suggest the **plainness and simplicity** in which God would be **WORSHIPPED**, in opposition to the **POMP** and **GAUDY SHOW** of idolaters intimated (hinted) in the preceding verse...

and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen; which were the creatures offered in the said sacrifices, as also in the **SIN offerings** and **TRESPASS offerings**, which, though **NOT mentioned**, are included: **in all places where I record my name;** or, "cause it to be mentioned", or "remembered", ... Piscator. ; where he **MANIFESTED** himself, **displayed** the **glory** of his

Nature and perfection; or, as the Targum of Jonathan expresses it, caused his Shechinah (the visible majesty of the Divine Presence) or divine Majesty to dwell, or gave any intimations of his presence, as at the altar now erected to him, and at the sacrifices offered up thereon, and afterwards in the tabernacle, between the cherubim over the mercy seat, and ark of the testimony; which was removed to various places before the temple was built at Jerusalem, where he took up his residence, and his **name** was **called upon, made mention of**, and recorded for many generations: but that being destroyed and worship there at an end, men may NOW WORSHIP God in any place, so be it they do it **in spirit and in truth...**

(Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/geb/exodus-20.html>)

John 4:23-24, But the hour cometh, and now is, when the **TRUE worshippers (adorer)** shall WORSHIP the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that **WORSHIP** him **must** worship him in **SPIRIT** and and in **TRUTH** (the quality of being TRUE [not counterfeit, adulterated, or pretended; pure] or **REAL**).

Real, NOT artificial, or **FACTITIOUS** (worked up by effort; as factitious excitement).

Exodus 20:25, And **IF** thou wilt make me an **altar of stone**, thou shalt **NOT** build it of **hewn stone**: for if thou lift up thy **tool** upon it, thou hast **polluted (defile) it**.

NOTE: And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone,... If they chose instead of an earthen one to make one of stone, as they might in rocky places, where they came, and in such an one where they now were, Mount Sinai, under which hill an altar was built, Exodus 24:4, **thou shall NOT build it of hewn stone**; which would require time and occasion expense, to HEW and POLISH them in an ARTIFICIAL WAY; but it was to be **built of rude and unpolished stones**, just as they were taken out of the quarry, or found lying by the way, and which were laid up in an heap one upon another, and was done with little trouble, and without any ornament, and easily separated and thrown down, when become useless: the reason of this law, as given by Maimonides Moreh Nevochim, par. 3.c. 45., is this, "because the **idolaters** of that time **built their altars of hewn stones**, therefore God forbid it, lest we should be like them, and that we might shun it in all things, he commanded the altar to be made of earth, as it is said, an altar of earth shalt thou make unto me; and if it could NOT be made without stones, that the stones should remain in their own natural form...

for if thou lift up thy tool upon it; or, thy sword ...; it signifies **any tool** or **instrument** made of IRON as a sword is, and here such an one as is used in hewing of stone...

thou hast polluted it; and so **made it unfit for use**: how this should be done hereby is NOT easy to say, no good reason seems to be assignable for it but the **will** and **pleasure** of God; who so appointed it, and reckoned that a pollution, and would have it so thought by others, which with men is **accounted ornamental**...

...'but Maimonides gives a better reason of it, as Abarbinel understands him, which was to prevent persons making images in stones^{F26}Apud L'Empereur in Middot, ib. , which image making is the thing guarded against and forbidden in the context; but **still better** is that of Isaac Arama^{F1}Apud Rivet in loc. , that the hands of the artificer were to abstain from the stones of the altar, **lest that good** which **men obtain** of (from) God **at the altar** should **be attributed** to **any work of theirs...**

(Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/geb/exodus-20.html>)

Exodus 20:26, **Neither** shalt thou **go up by steps** unto **mine altar**, that **thy nakedness** be **NOT** discovered thereon.

NOTE: This precaution was taken for the preservation of decorum (decency), in consequence of the loose, wide, and flowing garments of the **priests** while discharging their sacred functions. (Source: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jfu/exodus-20.html>)