

DISCOVERING THE BIBLE & OUR BIBLICAL HERITAGES

Learning about the histories of Bibles, beliefs, movements, institutions, events, and leaders of our Judeo-Christian Biblical Heritages.

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What You Have Been Taught about the Ten Commandments is Probably Wrong!

By Jim Myers

What was written on the two tablets Moses brought down from Mt. Sinai? Chances are, what you believe or have been taught about what was written on them is wrong. *Get your Bible and follow along so you can see exactly what was written in your own Bible.* Let's follow Moses up and down Mt. Sinai.

On the first day of the third month after the sons of Israel left Egypt — on that very day — they came to the Desert of Sinai . . . they camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. (Exodus 19:1-2)

They arrived after following Moses around the desert for three months after leaving Egypt. Now they were camped at the base of Mt. Sinai.

Then **Moses went up** to **the ELOHIYM**, and **YAHWEH** called to him from the mountain And **Moses went back** and summoned the elders. (Exodus 19:3, 7)

FIRST TRIP -- *Moses has completed his first round trip up and down Mt. Sinai and he returns without the two tablets of stone on this trip.*

Quick Note: One of the great disservices translators have done to people who treasure the words of the English translations of the Bible - *and who do not know how to check their translations* - is the translators' failure to transliterate the Hebrew words I transliterated **YAHWEH** and **ELOHIYM** above. **YAHWEH** is the name of **the ELOHIYM of Israel**. **ELOHIYM** is the Hebrew word that is usually translated "**god** or **gods**." **ELOHIYM** is not a name, as English translations imply when they capitalize it - "**God**." *In most cases, translators insert a word that is not even in the ancient Hebrew text instead of transliterating the word that is in the ancient manuscripts -- YAHWEH.* The word they insert is either "**LORD**" or "**Lord**." This creates a tremendous amount of confusion, especially for Christians, when they read "Lord" or "lord" in the New Testament. *Is it a reference to the same "Lord" as the one above?*

Now, let's return to our search for the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments. As we saw above, Moses completed his first round trip up Mt. Sinai and back. When he returned, he summoned the Israelite leaders and relayed the instructions he had received from YAHWEH. They agreed to do follow them and do everything YAHWEH commanded.

Moshe reported the words of the people to YAHWEH. YAHWEH said to Moses, "See, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, so that the people will be able to hear when I speak with you . . . YAHWEH said to Moshe, "Go to the people . . . For on the third day, YAHWEH will come down on Mount Sinai before the eyes of all the people . . . **Moses went down from the mountain** to the people. (Exodus 19:8-14)

SECOND TRIP – *The text doesn't record that Moses went back up the mountain, only that he came back down. So, Moses completes his second round trip up on the mountain, but doesn't bring the stone tablets back with him.*

On the morning of the third day, there was thunder, lightning and a thick cloud on the mountain . . . Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet **the** ELOHIYM; they stood near the base of the mountain. Mount Sinai was enveloped in smoke, because YAHWEH descended onto it in fire . . . **YAHWEH came down onto Mount Sinai**, to the top of the mountain; then YAHWEH called Moses to the top of the mountain; and **Moses went up**. YAHWEH said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people not to force their way through to YAHWEH to see him . . . **Moses went down** to the people and told them. (Exodus 19:16-25)

THIRD TRIP -- *Moses now completes his third round trip up the mountain and back again without bringing back the tablets of stone.*

This is the section that contains the traditional account of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). The words in this section have been arranged into three sets of Ten Commandments, which are not the same – Jewish, Catholic and Protestant. The big surprise is that none of them are the actual Ten Commandments – as your own Bible will prove. Take another look at where Moses was when YAHWEH spoke the words in that section – **Moses was at the base of the mountain with the rest of the Israelites**. The Israelites decided they did not want to hear any more directly from YAHWEH, so they told Moses they wanted him to be the one that communicates with YAHWEH (Ex. 20:18-19).

So the people stood at a distance, but **Moses approached the thick darkness** where the ELOHIYM was. YAHWEH said to Moses. . . (Exodus 20:21b-22a).

The next words YAHWEH spoke to Moses are recorded in Exodus 20:22-23:33. They are called the **MISHPATIM**, plural of the root word **MISHPAT** which means **BIBLICAL HERITAGE CENTER, INC. • PO BOX 79 • CLEBURNE TX 76033-0079** Page 2
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“to judge.” Again, the text doesn’t specifically say Moses went back down the mountain, but in verse after the MISHPATIM **we find Moses back at the base of the mountain** with the people.

And to Moses he said, “Come up to YAHWEH, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel . . . but Moses alone is to approach YAHWEH . . . Moses came and told the people everything YAHWEH had said, including the MISHPATIM . . . **Moses wrote down all the words of YAHWEH** (Exodus 24:1-4).

FOURTH TRIP -- *Moses has now completed his fourth round trip on the mountain without bringing any tablets of stone back with him. This time, however, after Moses returns, he writes down the **MISHPATIM**.*

Moses, Aharon, Nadav, Avihu and seventy of the leaders **went up**; and they saw the ELOHIYM of Israel. (Exodus 24:9-10)

They went up on the mountain, but did not go all the way to the top where YAHWEH was. However, they went far enough to see him. Moses also brought Joshua up on the mountain, but not all of the way to the top.

YAHWEH said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain, and stay there. **I will give you tablets of stone and the TORAH and the MITZVAH** I have written on them, **that you may teach them**” . . . **Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain**; he was on the mountain forty days and nights. (Exodus 24:9-18)

This is the first time the tablets of stone are mentioned. When Moses went up the mountain this time, YAHWEH gave him instructions for building and operating the tabernacle (Exodus 25-31).

When he had finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, YAHWEH gave him the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of ELOHIYM. Moses turned and **went down from the mountain with the two tablets** of the testimony in his hand, tablets inscribed on both sides, on the front and on the back. The tablets were the work of ELOHIYM; and the writing was the writing of ELOHIYM, engraved on the tablets. (Exodus 31:18; 32:15-16)

FIFTH TRIP -- *Moses has completed his fifth round trip up the mountain, but this time he brought back the two tablets of stone with him. However, when he saw what had been happening during the forty days he had been gone, the making and worship of the golden idol, Moses doesn’t gather the Israelites together, hold his first class and teach them what was on the stone tablets YAHWEH had written and given him. Instead, he does something else:*

His anger blazed up. **He threw down the tablets** he had been holding **and shattered them** at the base of the mountain. (Exodus 32:19)

Moses was back at the base of the mountain and the broken pieces of the tablets were lying on the ground. This sets the stage for his next trip up the mountain.

Moses went back to YAHWEH and YAHWEH said to Moses, "Leave, you and the people you brought up from the land of Egypt; and move on from here toward the land of which I swore to Avraham, Yitz'chak and Ya'akov, 'I will give it to your descendants.'" (32:31-33:1)

Once again the text doesn't say he went down the mountain, but we find him back with the people in chapter 33. Moses once again tells the Israelites what YAHWEH said.

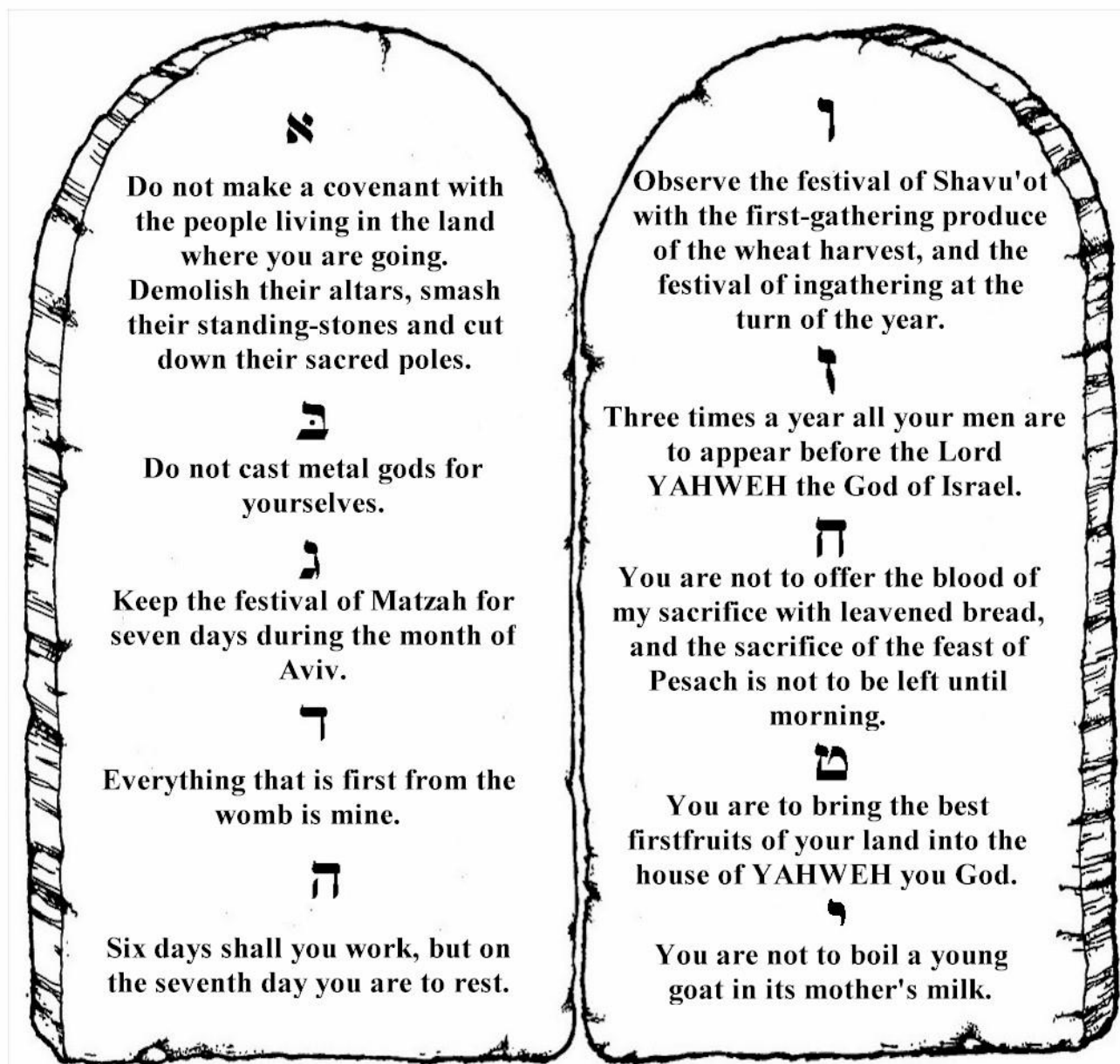
SIXTH TRIP -- *Moses has completed his sixth round trip up the mountain and back again. He does not bring tablets of stone back.*

YAHWEH said to Moses, "You cut two tablets of stone like the first ones; and I will inscribe on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Be ready by morning; **in the morning you are to ascend Mount Sinai** and present yourself to me on the top of the mountain . . . **Moses cut two stone tablets like the first.** Then he got up early in the morning and, with the two stone tablets in his hands, **ascended Mount Sinai**, as YAHWEH had ordered him to do. (Exodus 34:1-2, 4)

Instead of bringing two tablets written by YAHWEH down the mountain, Moses takes two blank stone tablets up the mountain to him. YAHWEH informs Moses that he is making a covenant with the Israelites. Take a moment to read Exodus 34:10-26. This is where the real **Ten Words, Ten Things** or **Ten Commandments**, depending on how you translate it, are found. -- which is exactly what the texts says:

YAHWEH said to Moses, "Write these words down, because **they are the terms of the covenant** I have made with you and with Israel" . . . (YAHWEH) **wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Words.** When **Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets** of the testimony in his hand. (Exodus 34:27, 28b-29a)

SEVENTH TRIP – *It is on the seventh trip that Moses returned from the top of Mt. Sinai with the two tablets of stone that contain the Ten Commandments. The writing material they are inscribed on was the work of a man, but the words that were inscribed on it were the written by YAHWEH. This is what YAHWEH wrote on the two tablet of stone that Moses brought down to the Israelites – The Ten Commandments.*



Many law suits have been filed over issues related to the Ten Commandments. **Van Orden v. Perry**, 545 U.S. 677 (2005), was a US Supreme Court case involving whether a display of the Ten Commandments on a monument given to the government at the Texas State Capitol violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. The Supreme Court ruled on June 27, 2005, by a vote of 5 to 4, that the display was constitutional (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Van_Orden_v._Perry). The next time you are in Austin, drop by the capital and see if the real Ten Commandments are written on the granite stones. *It will be a reminder of exactly how powerful the "traditions of men" can be – even when the words of the our Bibles testify that the traditions are wrong!*

BHC

September Memorials

In Their Remembrance

In Loving Memory

**KAREN
LEYNOR**

March 31, 1966
September 9, 2004

*May you dwell under His
wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*

*May their memories inspire us to seek those
qualities of mind and heart which we shared
as we walked life's journey together.*

*May we help to bring closer to fulfillment
their highest ideals and noblest strivings.*

*May their memories deepen our loyalty to
those things which we valued -- kindness,
faith,
love and peace.*

*As long as we live, they too will live; for
they are now part of us.
It is an honor to speak their names and
remember their lives again.*

In Loving Memory

**JAMES
EDGAR
MYERS, SR.**

September 13, 1913
September 19, 1999

*May you dwell under His
wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*

(Inspired from prayers found in Yitzhor Reflections -
The New Mahzor - The Prayer Book Press)

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*When was the last time you heard about
the real Ten Commandments at the place where
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*Our belief systems must be large enough to include all the facts;
be open enough to be tested;
and,
be flexible enough to change when errors or new gacts are discovered.*