

# פרשת יתרו / Parashat Yitro

Shabbat Shevat 20, 5769, February 14, 2009  
32:1-32:52 MATSATI.COM / Rightly Dividing The Word of G-d  
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## The Ten Commandments and the negative particle

### השבועות הזה קוראים / This Week's Reading

תורה: Exodus 18:1-20:23  
הפטרה: Isaiah 6:1-7:6 9:5-9:6  
הברית: Matthew 5:8-20  
החדשה

10 While reading through this week's parsha I was reminded of a form of writing  
in which a phrase has the property of reading the same in either direction. A word  
that reads the same forward and backwards is called a palindrome. The word  
"palindrome" was coined from the Greek roots "palin" meaning "back" and  
15 "dromos" meaning "way, direction." There are some Palindromic words that  
occur in the Hebrew bible:

### Hebrew Palindromic Words

לאיתאל "to Ithiel" (longest palindromic word in the Bible, *Proverbs 30:1*)  
סוס horse (*Genesis 49:17*)  
20 ישי Yishai, David's father (*Ruth 4:17*)  
דוד David, Yishai's son (*Ruth 4:17*)  
נתן Nathan or Natan, David's son (*1Kings 1:8*)  
אבא Father (Dad is a palindrome as well pronounced in Hebrew  
"Abba," *Mark 14:36*)

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I thought that would be an interesting way to start this week's discussion on  
the Torah Portion. This week's Portion covers *Shmot / Exodus 20* and as you  
know this is the account of the reading of the Ten Commandments before Beni  
Yisrael (The children of Israel). The words I want to look at are not palindromic  
30 words however as I mentioned earlier they reminded me of them, the words I  
want to talk about are the negation particles of the Hebrew imperfect: the particles  
לא and אל. Note in either direction the word reads as a negation particle.



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Perfect and imperfect verbs are negated with the particle לא, usually translated  
"not." The full spelling of the particle may also be spelled לוֹא. The negative  
particle is always placed immediately before the verb. The negative particle לא  
occurs 5,193 times in the Hebrew Bible. It appears in the full spelling לוֹא 188  
40 times. The negation particles are put to use in *Shmot / Exodus 20:1-17* as you can  
see in the following snapshot of the Hebrew text.

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אלהים את כל־הדְבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה לֵאמֹר:

2 אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ

3 מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים: לֹא־יְהִיֶּה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים

4 עַל־פָּנָי: לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה לְךָ פֶסֶל וְכָל־תְּמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר

בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת וְאֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם

5 מִתַּחַת לָאָרֶץ: לֹא־תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָהֶם וְלֹא תַעֲבֹדֵם כִּי

אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵל קַנָּא פֹקֵד עֵוֹן אָבֹת עַל־בְּנֵים

6 עַל־שְׁלֵשִׁים וְעַל־רְבָעִים לְשָׁנָאִי: וְעָשָׂה הַסֹּד לְאֲלֹפִים

7 לְאַהֲבֵי וּלְשֹׂמְרֵי מִצְוֹתַי: לֹא תִשָּׂא

אֶת־שֵׁם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׂוֹא כִּי לֹא יִנְקֶה יְהוָה אֶת־אִשְׁרֵי־

8 יִשָּׂא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ לְשׂוֹא:

9 זְכוֹר אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ: שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ

10 כָּל־מְלֶאכֶתֶךָ: וְיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא־

תַּעֲשֶׂה כָּל־מְלֶאכֶתְךָ אֲתֶה וּבִנְךָ וּבִתֶּךָ עַבְדְּךָ וְאַמְתֶּךָ

11 וּבַהֲמֹתֶיךָ וּגְרֶךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ: כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת־יָמִים עָשָׂה

יְהוָה אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־

בָּם וַיָּנַח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עַל־כֵּן בִּרְךָ יְהוָה אֶת־יוֹם

12 הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשׁוּהוּ: כִּכְרֵךְ אֶת־אֲבִיךָ

וְאֶת־אִמֶּךָ לְמַעַן יֵאָרְכוּן יְמֵיךָ עַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה

13 אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ: לֹא תִרְצַח: לֹא

תִּנְאָף: לֹא תִגְזֹב: לֹא תִגְנֹב: לֹא תִשָּׂא

14 בְּרֵעֶךָ עֵד שָׁקֵר: לֹא תִחַמְדַּם בֵּית רֵעֶךָ

לֹא תִחַמְדַּם אִשְׁתֵּי רֵעֶךָ וְעַבְדּוֹ וְאַמְתּוֹ וְשׂוֹרְוֵי

וְחַמְרוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֶךָ:

15 וְכָל־הָעַם רֵאִים אֶת־הַקּוֹלֹת וְאֶת־הַלְּפִידִם וְאֵת קוֹל

הַשֹּׁפָר וְאֶת־הַהָר עָשָׂן וַיֵּרָא הָעָם וַיָּנֻעוּ וַיַּעֲמֵדוּ מֵרָחֵק:

16 וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר־אַתָּה עִמָּנוּ וְנִשְׁמָעָה וְאַל־יִדְבֹר

17 עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים פֶּן־נִמּוֹת: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֱלֹהִים אֶל־חֵירָאוֹ

כִּי לִבְעֵבוֹר נַפְוֹת אֶתְכֶם בָּא הָאֱלֹהִים וּבַעֲבוֹר תַּהֲיֶה

18 יְרֵאתוֹ עַל־פָּנֵיכֶם לְבַלְתִּי תַחֲטְאוּ: וַיַּעֲמֵד הָעָם מֵרָחֵק

Shmot / Exodus 20:1-17  
20:1 Then God spoke all these words, saying, 20:2 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 20:3 'You shall have no other gods before Me. 20:4 '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. 20:5 '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, 20:6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. 20:7 '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. 20:8 'Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 20:9 'Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 20:10 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. 20:11 '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. 20:12 'Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you. 20:13 'You shall not murder. 20:14 'You shall not commit adultery. 20:15 'You shall not steal. 20:16 'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 20:17 '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.' (NASB)

## Negation of the imperfect: the particles לֹא and אַל.

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As mentioned earlier, the perfect verbs are negated with the particle לֹא which is usually translated as “not” and is always placed immediately before the verb. Like the perfect, the imperfect is also negated with לֹא. This negative particle is always placed immediately before the imperfect verb. In addition to the use of the negative particle, to simply negate the verb, there is a special use of לֹא before an imperfect. In the Ten Commandments the combination of לֹא plus the imperfect is used for an absolute or permanent prohibition.

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The negative particle אַל is also used with an imperfect verb to express an immediate, specific and non-durative prohibition. In other words, prohibitions with לֹא are permanent and absolute; prohibitions with אַל are immediate and specific. Note, the particle אַל is often prefixed to the verb with a Maqqef (-אַל)

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אַל-תכתב בספר

Do not write in the book!

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אַל-תירא

Do not fear! (*Bereshit / Genesis 15:1*)

אַל-תשמעו אל-דברי נביאיכם

Do not listen to the words of your prophets  
(*Yeremiahu / Jeremiah 27:14*)

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As mentioned earlier the negative particle לֹא may be used before an imperfect verb to express an absolute or permanent prohibition such as in *Shmot / Exodus 20*, and the negative particle אַל before an imperfect is used to express an immediate and specific prohibition. Additionally, prohibitions (or negative commands) the constructions with jussive vs. imperfect seem to indicate a difference in aspect. The construction אַל + jussive is used for perfective prohibitions, while לֹא + imperfect is used for imperfective prohibitions. The latter construction is used for situations seen as unbounded by the speaker, as in perpetual commands or legal prohibitions (consistently in apodictic law), while the former is used to prohibit specific, punctual events.

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So, what can we learn from the use of the negation particles in this week's portion of scripture? The use of the negation particles here in *Shmot / Exodus 20* establishes this portion of text as what is called apodictic law in the Torah. There is a distinction between casuistic and apodictic law in the Torah. Apodictic law are those laws which are clearly established and beyond dispute. The division of the text in the Torah into apodictic and casuistic Law is based upon a combination of stylistic markers and content. Case Law is introduced by an objective conditional clause beginning “If...” and all those who are concerned in the case under discussion are spoken of in the third person. Like for example in *Shmot / Exo21:26* ‘If a man strikes the eye of his male or female slave, and destroys it, he shall let him go free on account of his eye. (NASB). This example of case law illustrates how there is a legal case or situation which may have a component of inflection for argument and lends itself to prior legal judgments in legal proceedings.

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### Perfect

(Grammar) the perfect tense give the idea that one event happens before another time or event.

### Imperfect

(Grammar) imperfect tense, form which expresses an ongoing action

### Jussive

(adjective) of or pertaining to the imperative form, of a form or word which expresses a command (Grammar)

(noun) form or word which expresses a command (Grammar)

### Apodictic

Clearly established or beyond dispute.

90 In *Shmot / Exodus 20* we find the use of the negation particles in declaring  
apodictic law which are clearly established and beyond dispute. In the bible G-d  
is declared as a sovereign G-d who works all things after the counsel of His own  
will and who has done whatsoever He is pleased to do (See Ephesians 1:11 and  
Psalms 115:3). G-d's purpose and plan will be accomplished without fail as it  
says in Isaiah:

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***Isaiah 46:10-11***

*46:10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times  
things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established,  
And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; (20:39) <ohv> Isa46:11  
100 Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far  
country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned  
it, surely I will do it. (NASB)*

105 Within these verses G-d permits His creatures a freedom of will which will  
ultimately bring glory to his Holy Name. G-d accomplishes His overall purpose  
of bringing glory to Himself by allowing His creatures to operate in the freedom  
of choice including even choices that are contrary to His revealed will. Take for  
example Pharaoh hardening his heart and not letting the people go. In the process  
of Pharaoh hardening his heart G-d worked His miracles in the land of Egypt. So  
110 in light of the negation particles which declare G-d's unconditional laws in the  
Torah we are still allowed to act in ways that are contrary to the desire and wish  
of the creator.

The Torah can be summarized by the following three points:

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1. The laws in the Torah are representative, not exhaustive. As detailed as the  
laws appear to be in the Torah they number 613 in all. They did not cover  
every conceivable moral, religious, social, or civil issue. Instead, they  
provided a representative sample of the kinds of principles that were to  
120 guide Yisrael.
2. The laws in the Torah are instructional, rather than strict judicial or  
legalistic, codes. Their purpose is to teach fundamental values from which  
other principles could be extrapolated when necessary. Even the original  
125 Hebrew word for law is "Torah" and literally means "instruction."
3. The laws in the Torah are relational, not abstract or arbitrary. They are  
best understood within the context of God's covenant or agreement with  
Yisrael. As an act of grace, G-d promised to protect and bless Israel and  
out of gratitude for these blessings, Yisrael promised to follow G-d's  
130 stipulations. Thus, the giving of the Torah was predicated on this mutual  
relationship of grace and gratitude. It was not an abstract system of  
morality or an arbitrary legal code forced upon the people of Yisrael.  
Therefore the Torah should be interpreted relationally as guiding  
135 principles for Yisrael's ongoing relationship with the Lord.

Now, let's examine a few of the apodictic laws of the Ten Commandments to see how they can be instructional and are very rational for our lives:

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**I. *Shmot / Exodus 20:2***

*I am ADONAI your G-d, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the abode of slavery. 20:3 You are to have no other G-ds before me. (CJB)*

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Yeshua said that we should love Adonai so much, that there would be no other gods before the one true G-d. Have you placed anything in life above your relationship with Adonai? Do you trust in something more than you do Adonai? How about money, your job, or something else?

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**II. *Shmot / Exodus 20:4-6***

*You are not to make for yourselves a carved image or any kind of representation of anything in heaven above, on the earth beneath or in the water below the shoreline. 20:5 You are not to bow down to them or serve them; for I, ADONAI your G-d, am a jealous G-d, punishing the children for the sins of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 20:6 but displaying grace to the thousandth generation of those who love me and obey my mitzvot. (CJB)*

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Examining these verses one could make a false god with his/her hands, or one could make a false god with his/her mind. Think about this for a second. Have you ever said this before? My god is a god of love and mercy, He is not a god of judgment and he would never send someone to Hell. Well if you have said that before then you are correct! Your god would never send someone to hell because he couldn't, because that god does not exist. He is a figment of your imagination, you have created a god in your own mind that you are more comfortable with, to suite your sins. This is called idolatry. Some people call this their own belief however this fits the pattern of idol making according to the second commandment in the Torah. Remember, it is written that those who are found in idolatry will not enter the kingdom of Heaven. Can you see the danger of creating an idol in your mind? How important is it now to understand who G-d is according to the scriptures so that you do not break this commandment?

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**III. *Shmot / Exodus 20:7***

*"You are not to use lightly the name of ADONAI your G-d, because ADONAI will not leave unpunished someone who uses his name lightly. (CJB)*

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185 Have you ever used G-d's name as a swear word in a manner of  
disgust? Yeshua warned that every idol word that we use will be  
judged and we will have to give an account for in the Day of  
Judgment. The scriptures say the Lord will not hold him guiltless for  
those who have taken His name in vain.

190 **IV. *Shmot / Exodus 20:8***

190 *Remember the day, Shabbat, to set it apart for G-d. 20:9 You have six  
days to labor and do all your work, 20:10 but the seventh day is a  
Shabbat for ADONAI your G-d. On it, you are not to do any kind of  
work -not you, your son or your daughter, not your male or female  
slave, not your livestock, and not the foreigner staying with you inside  
195 the gates to your property. 20:11 For in six days, ADONAI made  
heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them; but on the seventh  
day he rested. This is why ADONAI blessed the day, Shabbat, and  
separated it for himself. (CJB)*

200 Have you ever said and thanked G-d for creating you? Have you  
ever taken the time out to honor G-d on his Shabbat to say to Adonai  
thank you for giving me life and giving me the opportunity to have  
fellowship and an intimate relationship with you Adonai? I know that I  
have violated this commandment, and I think everyone has to one  
205 extent or another.

210 **V. *Shmot / Exodus 20:12***

*Honor your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land  
which ADONAI your G-d is giving you. (CJB)*

210 Have you always honored your parents explicitly in a way that is  
pleasing to Adonai? I know that I have said and done things that did  
not bring honor to my parents in the past. If you think hard enough I  
am certain you can remember doing something that was less than  
215 honorable to your parents.

220 **VI. *Shmot / Exodus 20:13***

*Do not murder. (CJB)*

220 Most of us think that we are innocent of this one. However, Yeshua  
told us that anyone who is angry with his brother is in danger of the  
judgment. And the bible says that he who hates his brother is a  
murderer.

225 **VII. *Shmot / Exodus 20:14***

*Do not commit adultery. (CJB)*

Yeshua said that if you have even looked upon a woman and lusted  
after her you have committed adultery.

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**VIII. *Shmot / Exodus 20:15***  
*Do not steal. (CJB)*

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Have you ever stolen anything? When I was young I had stolen a few quarters from a video arcade machine. I got caught of course and paid the price. I believe that it is possible to even steal someone else's joy by being mean and hard hearted towards others. There are no man made laws which require us to be kind to others but G-d sees our actions and motives. One day we will be held accountable for these things ... what do you think?

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**IX. *Shmot / Exodus 20:16***  
*Do not give false evidence against your neighbor. (CJB)*

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Have you ever lied? I guess that goes without saying!

**X. *Shmot / Exodus 20:17***  
*Do not covet your neighbor's house; do not covet your neighbor's wife, his male or female slave, his ox, his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor. (CJB)*

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Coveting, being jealous for things, desiring what your neighbor has or to be and have things like your neighbor. Remember, G-d even sees our thought life and sees the evil things we do in darkness and especially in the darkness of our hearts.

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## Conclusion

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The promises and prohibition mitzvot (commandments) in the torah are essential for us in that they not only protect us but further point us in the direction of G-d's redemptive plan. It is obvious the Ten Commandments prelude us to look for the promise of the redeemer. I would like to summarize the thoughts thus far expounded. This study is a brief and not exhaustive one but rather it is designed to bring out the straight forward meaning of the text. The Ten Commandments are G-d's summation of the Torah and ought to be our focus in applying ourselves to keep the Torah. Aspects of the Torah which because of G-d's providence are impossible for us to keep, may be suspended (such as the Temple ministry which will be reinstated in the millennial reign of Yeshua). This is not annulling of the commandment but a suspending of it for G-d's purposes. In some cases laws pertain to specific issues which are temporary such as the laws regarding the dismantling and transporting of the Tabernacle. Once the temple was built, these laws no longer had a meaningful function. Theoretically speaking if G-d were to reinstate the moveable Tabernacle these laws would once again become pertinent wouldn't they?

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280 It is pretty obvious to me the Torah is G-d's will for us as we strive to walk in  
the footsteps of the Messiah. The centrality of the person and work of the  
Messiah Yeshua is at the core of who we are. Clearly our primary confession of  
faith centers in the historical person we call Yeshua. The question then is  
285 presented to us in this generation of believers as in every generation of believers  
before us; will we receive the inspired message of the Most High G-d regarding  
His Messiah? Will we affirm the mystery of His person and work and accept the  
pure and lasting faith that without Him we are nothing? Will we have the same  
pure and lasting faith while we await His return, even if he tarries? Will we strive  
to walk according to His will and purpose for our lives according to His Holy  
instruction, His Holy Torah?

290 Heavenly Father,

Sometimes I sing praises to you with my lips and not with my heart. Today  
Lord I want to worship you with all my heart and all my soul. Humbly you came  
to earth Lord and humbly I come before you and ask for your forgiveness. Please  
295 have mercy upon my soul. Today I place my life and all my heartfelt faith in  
Yeshua the Messiah and His shed blood for the forgiveness of my sins. Please  
Lord come into my heart and renew my life, my walk, and my soul and restore to  
me the joy of your salvation Lord. Thank you Lord. I pray all of these things in  
the name of Yeshua the Messiah.

300 Amen.

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315 **Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!**

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הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:  
Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,  
"Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever