

<b>Yitro</b>	<b>Jethro (Abundance)</b>	<b>The Trembling, Fiery, Loud Mountain</b>
<b>Torah:</b>	Exodus 18:1-20:26 (23)*	Getting Ready to seal the Covenant
<b>Haftarah:</b>	Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:6,7 (5,6)*	Heavenly Glory and Coming Kingdom
<b>Brit Chadashah:</b>	Matthew 5:8-20	No Change, Only Fulfilment
<b>Reading:</b>	Margaret pp. 111, 113 and Ps. 19. Jewish hero: Mordecai. Torah carrier: Betty	

At some point in Egypt, Moses had sent his family back to the safety of his father-in-law's camp. When Moses arrives at the mountain, his father-in-law, Jethro (also called Reuel) brings his family back and is astounded to hear all the ways G-d has blessed Israel. He offers sacrifices and burnt offerings with Moses and then invites Aaron and the elders to their first ritual meal with G-d – this was before they climbed the trembling, fiery, loud mountain with Moses.

He helps Moses order the camp into groups of 1,000, 100, 50 and 10, so that the people did not all come to Moses when they had a question regarding how to walk with G-d as free people, instead of as slaves. If a question made it all the way up to a leader of 1,000 and he could not answer it, it was brought to Moses and the answer went down the chain, so that his decision was communicated to the whole people and not just heard by the one asking the question.

Jethro goes on his way and Moses begins a series of at least seven climbs up what was to become the trembling, fiery, loud mountain. The first part of the covenant is the general commitment to hear and obey all and any covenant stipulations which the L-rd shall require from them. All the people agree to hear and to obey and then Moses goes up a second time to give G-d their answer and to receive the command for all the people to gather at the foot of the mountain on the third day and hear the ten covenant stipulations personally given by the voice of G-d from the trembling, fiery, loud mountain. They wash their clothes and Moses leads them to the foot of the mountain, warning them not to try and climb it to get a closer look at G-d. Moses goes up a third time and the people are warned again not to come too close to the mountain.

The fire that lit their camp by night and the cloud which covered them by day went to the top of the mountain and the people prepare to hear the stipulations they have already agreed to follow. They are warned not to try and go up the mountain and a curious pre-Aaronic group of priests is mentioned without really identifying who they are. This was likely an established group who offered sacrifices during the people's time in Egypt and will soon be superseded by the Aaronic priesthood and the levitical teachers of the Law.

Moses stood with the people as the L-RD spoke the Ten Covenant Words from out of the fiery cloud which covered the top of the trembling mountain. His voice sounded like blasts of a trumpet and during this spectacle, the people either ran or backed away from the trembling, fiery, loud mountain. They asked Moses to have G-d speak to him and let him speak to them on G-d's behalf. Moses goes up the mountain a fourth time and our portion ends with three ritual stipulations sacrifices just before the lengthy jurisprudence of the next portion, where the initial practical applications of the ten covenant stipulations are made.

The ten covenant stipulations are also called the ten holy words and they break down neatly into three sections. The first four deal with how we are to serve the L-rd and the Sabbath is enshrined as the fourth commandment. Next we have one stipulation which commands us to

honour our father and mother and the last five commandments stipulate how we are to treat our neighbours. All the subsequent laws and ordinances are based on these ten and they form the bedrock foundation of the rest of what the Torah says.

In the New Testament portion, Yeshua stipulates that none of these covenant stipulations of the Law is to be removed and the ones who do so and who teach others to do the same, will be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven. He mentions that the scribes and Pharisees are guilty of fabricating exceptions to these stipulations and that this kind of flawed spirituality will prevent people from entering into the Kingdom of Heaven. They have not been abridged or replaced or cancelled and will remain in effect until all is fulfilled and the Kingdom finally comes. They are in fact kingdom stipulations which our Messiah fully endorsed.

What was spoken from that trembling, fiery, loud mountain still applies today and the only way to change anything or to add anything or to delete anything, would be for the same mighty Presence who spoke the first time, to gather all of the people back to foot of the trembling, fiery loud mountain and identify any modifications to that which G-d has already said.

In Isaiah, we have a vision of the heavenly glory of G-d and we see that just the edge of G-d's robe fills the temple. We have one of the first mentions of the captivity and one of the first promises of the return of a righteous remnant. The House of David will not be overthrown or replaced, it will be taken into captivity and from the descendents of this House, one day a child will be born who is G-d incarnate, tabernacling among us. He is called five things and they are all titles of divinity which can only be applied to G-d.

Instead of speaking to us from the trembling, fiery, loud mountain from inside a cloud, David's greater Son and our Messiah will be born among us and there shall be no end to His Kingdom's reign – first in our hearts and lives and then over all the nations and generations of mankind. If we do not listen to what was said from the trembling, fiery, loud mountain, then we will be unable to hear the words of the Messiah, who came not to abolish or addend or even extend, but to fulfil and to keep fulfilling until all is fulfilled and His kingdom is finally established forever over all the nations and generations of this fading world.

G-d does not do and undo, nor say and unsay. Those who hear what was said from the trembling, fiery, loud mountain and who give heed to what our Messiah said about walking with Him according to the Word of G-d, will build their faith upon the rock of His Word. They will also not be swept away by the storms of life, even if they get a little shaken up.

It was an awesome, even terrifying spectacle that probably shook Moses up as much as it shook up the people. But the people and Moses had to see how singularly awesome the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is. Even the edge of His glory more than filled the temple and we realize that the entire is cosmos is too small to contain His full glory and merely acts as His foot stool. The trembling, fiery loud, mountain was a tame taste of what G-d could do and say if He really let go and showed us who He really is, as He will do one day when our Messiah returns in glory. The heavens will melt and everything shall burn, including that old mountain. Anything which is not worthy of the coming kingdom will also perish by fire.

Sermon: **Confidence in the Kingdom: The Pre-law Written In Our Hearts.**

**Passage: *All those who have sinned without the Law, shall perish without the Law and all those who have sinned with the Law, will be judged by the Law. For it is not the hearers of the Law who are righteous in G-d's sight, but it is those who put it into practice who will be justified. When the pagans who do not have the Law, do naturally that which***

***the Law prescribes, those who do not have the Law are a Law unto themselves. They demonstrate that what the Law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience bears witness and their thoughts will sometimes accuse them and sometimes defend them. This is what will be made clear on the day when, according to my Gospel, G-d will judge the secret actions of men by Yeshua HaMashiach.*** (Romans 2:12-16)

When I first came to faith over 45 years ago, I kept worrying about all those unbelievers who either had not heard the Good News of our Messiah, or lived their lives under the influence of any number of other faiths. They were wrongly convinced that the religions they followed contained the truth they needed in order to live meaningful lives and prepare themselves for the next life. The guy who led me to faith, wisely said that what was going to happen to them was none of my business and that I needed to trust G-d to handle their cases, just as I was learning to let Him handle my case.

But even in the midst of our growing world weariness, our confidence in the Kingdom needs to be able to address this issue, so that we do not come up with positions which the Bible does not support. During the Protestant Reformation, people began to challenge the dogma and traditions of the Roman Catholic church and they sought to find new answers to age old questions. They wanted to get their answers solely from the Bible and way back then, there were even some groups who began to observe the Sabbath and their descendents still live among us.

However, the Reformers answered the age old question about what is going to happen to the unbelievers who have not heard of the Gospel and those millions of people who have no desire to search for G-d through His Word. They formulated a position which set back the progress of the Gospel for several centuries.

They believed that when our L-rd rose from the dead, He appeared to all the nations around the globe and only the Europeans received His message and left their pagan darkness to embrace the message of G-d's Kingdom in His resurrected Son. They believed that all other peoples had rejected the Gospel and that European believers had no obligation to reach out to those who preferred their darkness to the truth of G-d's Word.

The Catholic church continued to send missionaries across the globe, while the Protestants just stayed home to perfect their holiness and walk a life free from sin and any of the influences of the world. Now I am all for promoting holiness and for walking with the L-rd in faithful obedience, as we shine as salty lights before a fading and dying world, but the supposed rejection of the Gospel by all the non-European nations is nowhere taught in the Bible.

Our portion in Romans sheds a great deal of light on what happens to those who have either never heard the Good News of the Kingdom, or continue to walk by their own lights without referencing the teachings of G-d's Law. I want to deal with the passage backwards so that there is no misunderstanding about what I am teaching. And if people have any questions about what comes from this pulpit, I do not bite and I am willing to discuss and study with anyone about anything concerning the wonder of G-d's Word and G-d's Son.

First of all, let me say that all unanswered questions will one day have the light of G-d's Word shine on the darkness in which the secret actions of men now hide. And the answers we cannot

get in this life, we will get on the Day when all of mankind will be judged by the Messiah. It will not all be bad news and many who call themselves believers, but whose house of faith is not built on the rock of faithful obedience and whose foundation is cluttered with flammable hay, wood and stubble, will see anything and everything in their hearts which is not worthy of the kingdom consumed by the fire of His return. How flammable is your life?

But what about all the nations and generations of mankind who have lived and died in our world, without ever hearing about the Kingdom and the wonder of G-d's Holy Law? When our Messiah said that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, it is true that no man comes to the Father except through Him. He will personally decide the eternal destiny of all mankind, from the most sincere and humble believer, to the greatest sinners who have ever lived.

Ps. 19 and other passages indicate that we are all born with a pre-law written in our hearts as part of what I have called the five C's or witnesses to the truth of G-d and His Word. There is first (1) the **cosmos** which declares the glory of G-d. Next, there is (2) **conscience** where we either build our lives obeying the pre-law, which G-d has written on every human heart, or we spend our lives running away from it.

Then there is (3) **culture**, because G-d has built redemptive analogies into every culture that was created when He divided mankind into nations and tongues in response to the tower of Babel. When Wycliffe Bible translators go into a new, unreached people group, they look for these redemptive analogies in the people's culture and religion and present the Gospel as the answer to all the questions their analogies asked.

The fourth (4) **circumstances**, speaks of the individual working of G-d's Spirit in the lives of all mankind – and even of the many angelic interventions which guide and direct and also protect us as we wander through this life, whether we are aware of them or not. The last and greatest of these witnesses to the truth of G-d is in fact (5) the **Canon** of the Scriptures where all these witnesses can be found. The Scriptures are a clear presentation of the message of G-d's mighty Kingdom through His Son and which is based on His Holy Law.

Yeshua HaMashiach will personally judge everyone who has ever lived and He alone will determine their destiny, based on both the pre-law which He has written into each of our hearts and on the truth of His Word which His Spirit has provided countless witnesses to. Nothing which is built upon the folly of this darkening world will survive the scrutiny of G-d through His Word and our Messiah will give no one a second chance, once the awesome, full truth of G-d's Word is finally revealed to all the nations and generations of mankind.

He will examine all the decisions people have made in secret and in public. And those sought to conduct their lives according to the pre-law which G-d has written on every heart, will be justified by the defence of their conscience which they did their best to listen to. You see along with pre-law, there is also a kind of "pre-faith", which can be seen as a life long journey to find the truth they never really find, as they spend their lives feeling around in the dark, as blind men, looking for something they can sense, but cannot quite see.

G-d is actively working in the hearts and lives of all mankind and He has given our resurrected Messiah the right to judge all the nations and generations of mankind. And it is our mandate to go to the ends of the earth and make disciples of all mankind, teaching them to observe everything which He has told us.

Those we don't get to, are not immediately condemned because we did not get to them, but they come under the personal, thorough scrutiny of our Messiah and I have often said it like this.

Before I came to faith, I was stumbling around in the dark, as a hungry soul for whom every bitter thing was sweet and I was slowly and steadily being drawn to the light, no matter how hard I wiggled and no matter how big a fight I put up, as He reeled me in. I was even considering other religious options like Buddhism and Islam and, for a while, also the Hari Krishna. If I had died before I gave my life to the Messiah, wouldn't my search have counted for something? What are you searching for in your life?

I am greatly saddened for all those who spend their lives wallowing in sin and I feel great compassion for those who are caught up in the hordes of false religions, that have twisted the truth and caused people to believe a lie. And along the way, from the time of Adam and Eve and especially since the days of Noah, in every generation, there have been truth seekers trying to find meaning and purpose in life, without ever finding what they were looking for. What is to become of them? It will be up to our Messiah to determine their fate.

There are two levels of judgment which everyone will face, just as there are two separate books from which people will be judged. There is the Book of Life and there is the Book of Works. Messiah will decide how many of those who would have if they could have, will be treated as if they had. He will also decide how many of those who came to faith, but who never grew or learned the wonder of faithful obedience, will be treated as if they never had.

I do not claim to be able to discover the exact criteria which will be used by our Messiah on Judgment day, but they will be some version of pre-law and pre-faith, along with how those being judged have responded to the witness of the five C's. I will greet those who would have, if they could have and rejoice that they were snatched from the jaws of eternal death, even as they watch so much of what they gave their lives to, go up in flames in front of them.

I will also mourn for those unfruitful believers whose faith did not translate into works and who will only be saved as if through fire. Some may even have had their names erased from the Book of Life because their hearts and lives slipped into a spiritual coma and they ceased to know the L-rd and became strangers to Him and to His Word.

All of this will be made known when all of mankind stands before the Messiah's throne and where pre-believers finally come to the light they have been searching for their whole lives Believer's will also receive their rewards according to the level of faithful obedience which they exercised in their lives. Some may suffer great loss because they ceased to forgive those who sinned against them and became so full of bitterness and anger that their hearts and lives had no room for the love and joy and peace which the L-rd wants to bestow on His children. How much room do you have in your heart and life for the things of G-d?

Here is a thought. All of us have the pre-law of G-d personally written on our hearts, which our conscience uses to condemn or defend us. If we ever cease listening to the inner voice of our conscience, we also cease listening to the Word of G-d which came into our hearts and lives when we came to faith. Which voices are you listening to in your heart and life?

If you do not listen to the voice of your inner man, you will not be able to listen to the voice of G-d's Spirit as He speaks the Word of G-d to you. How are the five C's doing in your life?

Has your pre-law embraced the wonder and glory of G-d's Law and are you growing in grace and peace? Or are you wallowing in the darkness of sin and have the works of the flesh crowded out the fruit of the Spirit in how you live your life?

I do not want a whole bunch of bad surprises to spring out at me when it is my turn to be scrutinized by our Messiah's Kingdom stipulations. I believe that I am saved by grace because of the faith I have put in the Word of G-d and because of the blood of the Lamb which was shed for me on Calvary. I have a solid foundation and I want to build on it with the fire proof materials of His Word and not see what I have given my life to, go up in smoke.

I want to keep on reaching out to those who are wallowing in pagan darkness, as well as to those believers who are building their house upon the sand because they have succumbed to doubts and temptations, and are choked by the cares, the pleasures and the riches of this fading life. I proclaim fearlessly that our Messiah is the only Way, the only Truth and the only Life and that no man comes to the Father except by Him. With Paul, I also proclaim that those who would have, if they could have will be treated by our Messiah as if they had.

I will also affirm by the testimony of G-d's Word that some who call themselves believers and who are defeated and overcome by the flesh, the world and the enemy, will be treated as if they never did come to faith. This is because as the body without breath is dead, so faith without works is also dead. I will pronounce final judgment on no one, but I will proclaim to everyone that final judgment is coming and that it is our duty to listen to the pre-law written on our hearts and to the pre-faith which drew us out of darkness and into His glorious light.

All the secret actions of men will be revealed when we all stand before the majestic glory of our resurrected Messiah and He speaks the "true" truth which we should have either spent our lives seeking for or spent our lives living. We can either be salty light, filling our lives with faithful obedience as we wait for our beloved Messiah's kingdom to be set up over all the nations and generations of mankind, or we can rebel against both the pre-law which He has written on our hearts and the written Law which we should be cherishing in our hearts and lives. What will be revealed about you, when all of your secrets come to light?

As your confidence in the Kingdom grows, what else is growing in your heart and in your life? All the nations and generations of mankind will one day be subject to His judgment and to His mercy, so we should be greatly troubled about those who have never heard and who died without coming to the light of our blessed Messiah. There is not another Gospel where they will judged by a different set of standards for there is only One G-d and One Mediator between G-d and men and His name is Yeshua HaMashiach. Is He your Mediator?

He took the form of a man to die on the cross for the sins of the world and He rose in victory over death and the grave, and He has ascended into heaven to make intercession for us. One day He will return and both the heavens and the earth will flee from Him and be dissolved, along with all the darkness and pain and folly that has been lurking far too long in our sad and dying world. Release it to Him in this life and it will not haunt you in the next life.

One day, all mankind from Adam and Eve, down to the last baby which is conceived, will stand before the throne of His glory and receive all the mercy and justice they are due, as the secret

actions and hidden contents of their hearts are brought to light and they are judged according to the Gospel of Yeshua HaMashiach.

This is what is waiting for us all, sooner or later. We need to live daily, anxiously waiting for the Kingdom of G-d to be established in our days and in the days of all the House of Israel and in the days of all the nations and generations of mankind, speedily, yes speedily soon.

All the groups which I have discussed with you this morning will finally find justice. Those who would have, if they could have and who diligently followed the dictates of their conscience, according to the pre-law which was written in their hearts, will be welcomed home by our Messiah, whether they knew Him in this life or not.

Those who came to faith in this life but who let it get choked and plugged up with unforgiveness, hate and bitterness and all sorts of works of the flesh, under the influence of the world and the enemy, will see their lives go up in flames. And if any of their original faith remains, they shall be saved as if through fire, because it is infinitely better to be an amoeba in Heaven, than a whale in hell. The only difference between a coma and a corpse is time and the spark of life will either eventually revive or slowly die and when this happens, the last condition of the person is worse than the first. What condition are you in?

Mishpocah, this is not our calling and does not need to be our destiny. Let us always allow our pre-law and our pre-faith to join hands with G-d's Word so that we may grow up in all things into the mature measure of our beloved Messiah. He will take care of all the rest with the same tenacity and thoroughness that He has at His disposal to deal with each of us and with all of us. What is His tenacity and thoroughness dealing with in your life?

How do we want Him to deal with us? We can either get things sorted out in this life as we wait for His inevitable return or we can wait for the next life and see so much of what we have done in this life go up in fire and smoke. The truth is going to come out eventually and we can either live for it in our blessed Messiah, or wait for it to be revealed and be judged by it, also in our beloved Messiah. How is your confidence in the kingdom coming? Do you listen to both His pre-law in your heart and His written Law in your life? Shabbat shalom.