

המוסד למען קדושת חיי אדם



TORAH READING:

Yitro: Exodus 18:1-20:23

Shevat 20, 5776

January 30, 2016

In this week's Torah portion, Yitro: Exodus 18:1-20:23, the people of Israel receive the Ten Commandments at Mt Sinai, seven weeks after leaving Egypt. The portion is named after Jethro, a pagan priest who had left Egypt after disagreeing with Pharaoh's enslavement of the Jews. He'd settled in Midian and his daughter, Zipporah, married Moses. Jethro travels to Mt Sinai to learn firsthand of the Exodus. He denounces idol worship and converts to Judaism after he is convinced of The One G-d's supremacy over all other gods.

If he could become a believer, anyone could!

At the appointed hour, G-d orchestrates the impressive and terrifying scene - the thunder, lightening, sounds of the shofar, and a thick cloud of smoke. The mountain is aflame with G-d's presence as He speaks the Commandments.

Let's take a look at the first two, which according to Jewish tradition, embody the meaning of all ten.

1. "I am the Lord your G-d, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
2. "You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, nor any manner of likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them, nor serve them. For I the Lord your G-d am a jealous G-d, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children of the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto the thousandth generation of them that love Me and keep My commandments.

Jewish tradition is all about the existence of a Supreme Being, L-rd of Heaven and Earth, Creator of all Life, Giver of all Blessings, with Whom we have a holy covenant, and to Whom we sacrifice all else in our pursuit of a holy life. To one degree or another, every Jew is on this spiritual path towards an everlasting relationship with Him. What was begun at Sinai is ever unfolding as a wave of spiritual realization of this eternal reality, and will some day be manifest as an earthy presence of a Nation of Israel dedicated to the sanctity of all G-d's creation.