

BELIEF IN GOD – MITZVAH 25

The Ten Commandments v. The Ten Utterances

- (1) Sefer HaChinuch's Counting
25. The mitzvah of belief in the existence of the Eternal Lord, be He blessed
  26. That we should not believe in any divinity but the Eternal Lord alone. 27. Not to make a graven image, 28. Not to prostrate oneself in idol-worship, 29. Not to worship an idol in the way it is customarily worshipped
  30. Not to swear in vain
  31. The precept of hallowing the Sabbath in words, 32. Not to do any work on the Sabbath
  33. The precept of honoring one's father and mother
  34. Not to murder an innocent man
  35. Not to uncover the nakedness of another's wife
  36. Not to kidnap any Jewish person
  37. Not to bear false witness
  38. Not to covet what belongs to another

(2) The Mekhilla, Yitro

In what form were the Ten Commandments given? With five on the first tablet and five on the second. It is written [on the first tablet], "I am the Lord your God..." corresponding to which [we find on the second tablet], "You shall not murder." The Torah is teaching us that anyone who spills blood is considered as though he detracts from the image of the King... It is written [on the first tablet], "You shall not have..." and correspondingly [on the second tablet], "You shall not commit adultery." The Torah is teaching us... It is written, "You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain," and correspondingly, "You shall not steal." The Torah is teaching us that stealing will lead to a false oath... the Sabbath violator attests falsely that God did not create the world in six days and rest on the seventh, and the person who covets his fellow person's wife will end by fathering a child who rejects his true parent and honors another.

(3) Ibn Ezra, According to Nechama Leibowitz

- Thought – Speech – Action

- A: Noah and his sons (Gen 6:10)  
 B: All life on earth (6:13.a)  
 C: Curse on earth (6:13.b)  
 D: Flood announced (6:7)

E: Ark (6:14-16)

- F: All living creatures (6:17-20)  
 G: Food (6:21)  
 H: Animals in man's hands (7:2-3)  
 I: Entering the Ark (7:13-16)  
 J: Waters increase (7:17-20)  
 X: God remembers Noah (8:1)  
 Y: Waters decrease (8:13-14)  
 Z: Exiting the Ark (8:15-19)  
 H: Animals (9:2,3)  
 G: Food (9:3,4)  
 F: All living creatures (9:10a)  
 E: Ark (9:10b)  
 D: No flood in future (9:11)  
 C: Blessing on earth (9:12-17)  
 B: All life on earth (9:16)  
 A: Noah and his sons (9:18,19a)

Chiasm of the numbers 7, 40, and 150

- a: Seven days waiting to enter Ark (7:4)  
 b: Second mention of seven days waiting (7:10)  
 γ: 40 days (7:17)  
 δ: 150 days (7:24)  
 ζ: God remembers Noah (8:1)  
 ε: 150 days (8:3)  
 γ: 40 days (8:6)  
 β: Seven days waiting for dove (8:10)  
 α: Second seven days waiting for dove (8:12)

Before these ancient literary conventions were recognized, followers of the Documentary Hypothesis explained the repetition by hypothesizing two different authors or redactors. The repetition shows the literary artistry of a single author.

(4) Ten Commandments = 613 Commandments

אכי אש אוכל ונודר מכל הנודרות  
דברי כאש וניצוזה ודבר משות בכל ייבנר וזרת  
בזמתי כליתו בעשרת דברות יש מאת ושלש עשרה מצוות לדורות  
[נמוס קצין בצילום מסודור רס"ג]. אגרות ה' אגרות שדורות

Sefer HaChinuch 416

And do not wonder to say, "And how is it in the hand of a man to prevent his heart from desiring the storehouse of every delightful vessel that he sees in the hand of his fellow, whereas he is totally empty of them, and how does the Torah bring a prevention about that which is impossible for a man to uphold?" As the thing is not like this, and only silly evildoers and those that sin with their souls say it. As truly, it is in the hand of a man to prevent himself and his thoughts and his desires from anything that he wants. And [it is] within his control and his cognizance to distance and to bring close his want for all things according to his will. And his heart is given into his hand; to anything that he wants can he incline it. And God - in front of Whom are all hidden things - 'searches all the rooms of the belly, sees the kidney and the heart.' There is not one from all of the thoughts of man - little or big, good or bad - that is hidden from Him; and it is not covered from His eyes. [Hence] He will bring vengeance upon those that transgress His will in their hearts, and 'safeguards kindness for the thousands [of generations] for those that love Him,' who dedicate their thoughts to His service. As there is nothing as good for a man as good and pure thought, as it is the beginning of all actions, and their end. And this is apparently the matter of the 'good heart,' that the Sages praised in Tractate Avot 2:9.

And the proof that these two negative commandments are different in their content and considered two [distinct commandments] is that which they said in the Mekhilta DeRabbi Shimon bar Yochai 20:14, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house" (Exodus 20:14), and later it states, 'and you shall not desire,' to make liable for the desire on its own and for the coveting on its own." And there, it [also] says, "From where [do I know] that if he desires, his end will be to covet? [Hence,] we learn to say 'you shall not desire' and you shall not covet. From where [do I know] that if a man coveted, his end will be to steal? [Hence,] we learn to say 'They covet fields, and steal' (Mitzvah 2:2)."

And it is practiced in every place and at all times by males and females. All people of the world are also obligated about it, since it is a branch of the commandment [against] theft, which is one of the seven commandments that all people of the world were commanded. And do not err, my son, with this well-known tally of the seven commandments of the Noachides mentioned in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 56b); as truthfully these seven are [only] like general principles, but they have many details. So you will find that the prohibition of sexual immorality is considered for them to be one commandment as a general principle, but there are details in it; such as the prohibition of the mother, and the prohibition of the sister from the mother's side, and the prohibition of a married woman, and the wife of the father, and the male, and the animal (Sanhedrin 58a). And so [too,] the matter of idolatry is all considered one commandment for them, but there are many, many details; as behold, they are the same regarding it as Israel, since they are liable for everything that an Israelite court would kill about (Sanhedrin 56b).

Commandment: Belief

(1) Ramban (and 7 Mitzvoth B'nei Noach)

"In order that you may know that there is none like Me in all the land." And this is the reason for the clause, "Who brought you out..." - for they knew and were witnesses to all of this. (Shemot 20:2)

(2) Sefer HaChinuch 25 (and 416)

**The commandment of belief in God:** To believe that the world has one God that caused all that exists, and that all that is, and was, and will be forever and ever, is from His power and His will; and that He took us out of Egypt and gave us the Torah - as it is stated (Exodus 20:2), "I am the Lord, your God, who took you out of the land of Egypt, etc." And its explanation is that it is as if it said, "Know and believe that there is one God" - since the word, I, indicates existence. And that which it stated, "who took you out, etc.," is to say that your hearts not seduce you to take the matter of your leaving the slavery of Egypt and the plagues of Egypt as the way of happenstance, but rather you should know that I am the One who took you out with will and providence - as He promised our forefathers, Avraham, Yitschak and Yaakov.

The root of this commandment does not need elucidation. The matter is known and revealed to all that this belief is the foundation of the religion, and that one who does not believe in it denies a fundamental principle and has no share and merit with Israel. And the content of the belief is that he fix in his soul that such is the truth and that a change of this in any way be impossible. And if he be asked about it, he will respond to any enquirer that his heart believes this and he will not assent to a change in it, even if they say they will kill him [as a result]. As all of this - when he takes the thing from the potential to actuality, by which I mean to say when he puts into the words of his mouth what his heart decides - strengthens and fixes the belief of the heart.

(3) Ibn Ezra: Love, Fear and Closeness / 418. The precept of love for G-d

(4) Ramban

The most fundamental of foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to know that there is a Primary Being Who brought into being all of existence, and that all that exists in the heavens and the earth and what is between them, came into existence only by virtue of the truth of His Being... This entity is the God of the world, master of the entire earth... And the knowledge of this concept is a positive commandment, as it is written, "I am the Lord your God." (Ramban, Hilkhot Yesodei Ha-Torah 1:1-6)

In Sefer HaMitzvoth, Ramban ignores the latter part of the verse - "Who brought you out of the land of Egypt" - and does not count faith in the exodus from Egypt as one of the principles of faith.

In contrast, R. Yehuda Ha-Levi, in answering question of "why not Creation" notes that "faith is not primarily intellectual, but rather an inner state ... that can be attained only by virtue of the collective national memory that is passed from generation to generation: the memory of the exodus.

(5) Rabeynu B'chaya and the Chazon Ish

Healing & Holocaust

"There is an error in understanding for many people about the true meaning of trust in Hashem. For these people, they believe that in every situation there is a good and bad, and since Hashem is good, so long as they believe and trust in Hashem the good will prevail, and if the bad prevails, it is only due to their failure to have genuine trust in Hashem. That is not the case. *Bitachon* is matter of trust that there is no coincidence in the world; everything that transpires under the sun results from an announcement from Him, may He be blessed" (*Emanah U'Bitachon*, beginning of chapter 2).

(6) Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman