



# Carnegie Shul Chatter

May 25, 2023



## Judaism's Greatest Gift

Our great Jewish religion has given many gifts to the world, but is any gift more important to mankind than the Ten Commandments?

Hillel is often quoted as saying that the most important thing in the Torah is the Golden Rule and all the rest of Torah is commentary, but I beg to differ. To me the Ten commandments are the most basic part of Judaism and all the rest is commentary. And although each and every commandment is important, I don't think that there is any more basic and essential to our faith than the Second Commandment, "You shall have no other gods beside Me. You shall not make for yourself any graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of any thing that is in heaven above, or 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 God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation."

Yes, the oneness of Hashem is, to me, what Judaism is all about. It started with Abraham who recognized that there is but one true God, and it continued with the Covenant that Hashem made with Abraham and the Jewish people. It is also the first line of our most important prayer, the Shema, in which we say,

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## Shabbat Services

Join us in the sanctuary, providing you have been vaccinated for Covid 19, or attend virtually. Watch your email for a Zoom link or contact Rosalyn Hoffman at [rjlynman@yahoo.com](mailto:rjlynman@yahoo.com). The complete Torah reading, in Hebrew and English, can be found at <https://www.chabad.org/parshah/torahreading>.

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**“Hear, O Israel the Lord is our God, the Lord is one.”**

The Ten Commandments are read on the first day of Shavuos, but since we do not have services on the first day, you can hear more about the Commandments in my D’Var Torah this Shabbos, the second day of Shavuos.

The Ten Commandments are included in the parshah that is read on the first day of Shavuos. Here they are, The Ten Commandments.

## **The Ten Commandments from my jewishlearning.com**

**First Commandment (Exodus 20:2):** I am the Lord Your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

**Second Commandment (Exodus 20:3-6):** You shall have no other gods beside Me. You shall not make for yourself any graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of any thing that is heaven above, or 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 God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.



**Third Commandment (Exodus 20:7):** You shall not take the name of the Lord Your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.

**Fourth Commandment (Exodus 20:8-11):** Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the Lord Your God, in it you shall not do any manner of work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your man-servant, nor your maid-servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day. Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and made it holy.

**Fifth Commandment (Exodus 20:12):** Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord God gives you.

**Sixth Commandment (Exodus 20:13):** You shall not murder.

**Seventh Commandment (Exodus 20:13):** You shall not commit adultery.

**Eighth Commandment (Exodus 20:13):** You shall not steal.

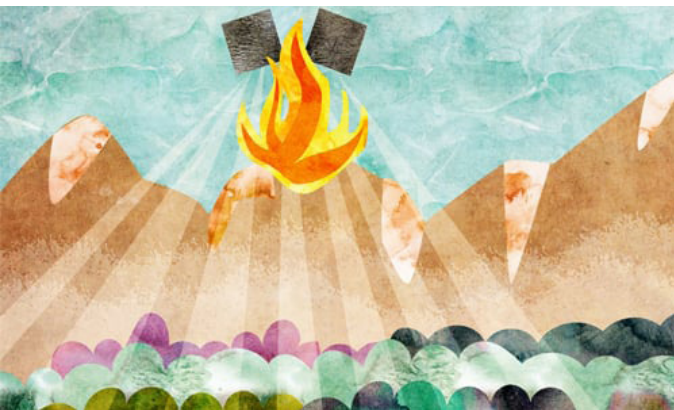
**Ninth Commandment (Exodus 20:13):** You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

**Tenth Commandment (Exodus 20:14):** You shall not covet your neighbor’s house, nor his wife, his man-servant, his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.

# Shavuot Torah Readings in a Nutshell

*From Chabad.org*

**On the first day of Shavuot we read from Exodus chapters 19 and 20.**



A summary of the content: The Children of Israel camp opposite Mount Sinai, where they are told that G-d has chosen them to be His “kingdom of priests” and “holy nation.” The people respond by proclaiming, “All that G-d has spoken, we shall do.”

On the sixth day of the third month (Sivan), seven weeks after the Exodus, the entire nation of Israel assembles at the foot of Mount Sinai. G-d descends

on the mountain amidst thunder, lightning, billows of smoke and the blast of the shofar, and summons Moses to ascend.

G-d proclaims the Ten Commandments, commanding the people of Israel to believe in G-d, not to worship idols or take G-d’s name in vain, to keep the Shabbat, to honor their parents, not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to steal, and not to bear false witness or covet another’s property. The people cry out to Moses that the revelation is too intense for them to bear, begging him to receive the Torah from G-d and convey it to them.

**On the second day of Shavuot we read from Deuteronomy chapters 14-16.**

The reading details the laws of the three pilgrimage festivals — Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot — on which all Jews came “to see and be seen before the face of G-d” in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

## Shavuot Haftorahs in a Nutshell

### First Day of Shavuot

**Ezekiel 1:1-28 3:12**

The haftorah for the first day of Shavuot describes Ezekiel’s Vision of the Chariot reminiscent of the revelation experienced by the Jewish people at Mount Sinai, on the very first Shavuot of history.

The prophet Ezekiel son of Buzi relays the vision he had of a chariot led by four creatures that resemble men and describes their physical appearance and actions in detail, “When they [the living beings] would go, they [the wheels] would go, and when they would stand, they would stand, and when they would lift themselves up from the ground, the wheels would lift themselves correspondingly to them, for the will of the living being was in the wheels... Like

the appearance of the rainbow that is in the cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness round about; that was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the L-rd, and when I saw, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice speaking.”

The haftorah ends with Ezekiel’s mention of the prayers of the angels to G-d.

## Second Day of Shavuot

**Habakkuk 2:20, 3:1-19**

The haftorah of the second day of Shavuot is a prophecy of Habakkuk

The prophet recalls the wonders that G-d had done for Israel at the time of the Giving of the Torah at Sinai. He also speaks of the punishments that G-d meted out to the enemies of Israel.

# Haftorah Commentary

## Second Day of Shavuot

The Haftorah is read from the book of Habakkuk, 3:1-19. Habakkuk is the 8th of the 12 prophets in the Book of Trai-Assar.

### The connection of the Haftorah to Shavuot:

On Shavuot we celebrate Hashem giving Bnei Yisrael the Torah, the 5 Books of Moses. Habakkuk recounts how Hashem lead the nation of Israel “from the south” through the Sinai desert to the land of Israel. The Kohanim carried the Holy Ark containing the Ten Commandments into battle where Hashem never let us down and enabled us to triumph over our enemies.

### The storyline of this week’s Haftorah:

Habakkuk sings a song of prayer to Hashem, regretting his false utterances. Habakkuk says that Hashem will show his anger against the Jews by exiling them from their homeland. Eventually Hashem will save the Jewish people and they will rejoice because they will be reunited with Hashem after returning to their homeland of Israel.

Prophet Habakkuk (c. 600 BCE) descended from Jewish exiles in Babylon. The 8th book of the Bible bears his name. The prophet’s famous scriptural phrase says: “the righteous shall live by his faith” [Habakkuk 2,4.] This means that his own faith shall be his faith, which springs forth from the depths of his soul.

### Habakkuk’s Biography:

- ♦ The meaning of his name is embrace or caress.
- ♦ Known as the Philosopher Prophet. He was a Levite.





- ◆ Lived in the time after the Assyrian's defeated the ten Northern Tribes, and just before the destruction of the first Beit HaMikdash, the Holy Temple that King Solomon built.
- ◆ Studied at the school for prophecy called the Benai Haneviem, "The Sons of the Prophets".
- ◆ He was one of four people who spoke harshly against Hashem (The other three were Moshe, David and Jeremiah). He drew a circle around himself in the ground and said "I'm not moving until Hashem explains why the Jews are suffering so much." He questioned, "Why do the evil people prosper?" specifically regarding the injustice of the Babylonian's having power over the Jews.
- ◆ His peers were the prophets Joel, Nahum, Jeremiah and Zephaniah.
- ◆ Menashe, the evil King of Judah reigned during his time.
- ◆ Habakkuk wrote his own 3 chapter book. Habakkuk's prophecies lasted for 55 years, although not consecutively.

## Famous Phrases:

Habakkuk 3:3, "Yehallelu et shem Hashem" "Praise the name of Hashem". This prayer is recited before returning the Torah scroll to the Ark. The congregation responds with "Hodo al Eretz, veshamayim" ("His glory covers the earth and the heavens"). This sentence refers to the world after the Torah was presented to the Jewish people. Another sentence in Habakkuk refers to the time before the Torah was given: "Kisah shamayim hodo" "His glory covered the heavens" - and not the earth. (Man, represented by earth, wasn't glorifying Hashem yet.)



## Haftorahman's Lesson of the Week:

This Haftorah is a great example of "finger pointing". Habakkuk "Points his finger at Hashem" and says "How can you let these bad guys walk all over us? How are you going to let the Babylonians conquer Jerusalem? I thought you said you were never going to abandon us?" Hashem then responds "You call yourselves the "Chosen People" Why? Take a look at what you choose". Originally Hashem asked all the nations of the world if they wanted to be G-d's people and wanted the Torah. The Israelites were the only nation to say "We will do, and then we will listen." Hashem continues "Not only did you not listen, look at what you did! Idol worshipping in the Holy Temple, speaking lashon hara (slander), jealousy, adultery, dishonest business deals, paying off judges and on and on. Do I need to say more? You shouldn't be disappointed with me. You're lucky that I am a merciful G-d. I should wipe you out, but I am not. I'm just going to straighten you out. Then you will behave yourselves and appreciate me." It's so easy to point the finger at someone else to blame them. But remember: When you point your finger at another person, you are pointing three at yourself.

## Timeline:

Habakkuk lived in the Israelite year 3250 about 2,530 years ago, before the destruction of the 1st Beit HaMikdash.

*Many synagogues read the Book of Ruth on the second day of Shavuot. We do not, but I am including a Summary of the Book of Ruth from [myjewishlearning.com](http://myjewishlearning.com). It is a fascinating account of how a Moabite who converted to Judaism became an important part of our Jewish heritage.*

# Summary of the Book of Ruth

*By My Jewish Learning*

The Book of Ruth is one of five megillot that are part of Ketuvim, or Writings, the last third of the Hebrew Bible. It recounts the story of how Ruth, a Moabite, became a member of the Israelite nation and, eventually, the great-grandmother of King David. It is surprising, mysterious and romantic. It is traditionally read in synagogue on Shavuot.

Ruth is only four chapters long, but it's a fast-paced story. Here is a brief summary:

## Chapter 1: Ruth Follows Naomi

As our story opens, the land of Israel is hit by a terrible drought and so a man named Elimelech moves his family, his wife Naomi and two sons (Mahlon and Hilyon) from the Israelite city of Bethlehem to the foreign land of Moab. In Moab, Elimelech dies and the two sons marry Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. Ten years pass, and now the sons die too, leaving Naomi in Moab with her two daughters-in-law.

Now bereft of husband and both sons, Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem in the land of Israel. Initially, her two daughters-in-law follow her, but she urges them to turn back to their own land, saying that she cannot provide for them, either financially or by producing new sons for them to marry. Eventually, Orpah turns back to Moab but Ruth clings to Naomi and pledges her eternally loyalty in one of the most famous speeches in the entire Hebrew Bible:

Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus and more may the LORD do to me if anything but death parts me from you.

### Ruth 1:16–17

This chapter of Ruth provides an archetype for Jewish conversion.

## Chapter 2: Ruth Finds Food — And a Man

Now that Ruth and Naomi are two widows newly arrived back in Bethlehem, finances are tight. In ancient Israel, farmers were required to leave gleanings in their fields — sheaves of grain that fell on the ground during the harvest process — for the poor to collect. Ruth determines that she will go glean to feed herself and her mother-in-law.



As luck would have it, Ruth ends up gleaning in the field of Naomi's distant relative Boaz. Also as luck would have it, Boaz notices Ruth and inquires after her. When he learns of her loyalty to Naomi, he makes special arrangements for her comfort and even invites her to lunch and tells his harvesters to intentionally leave a little extra grain on the ground for her. By the end of the day, Ruth has collected a huge amount of grain. She ends up gleaning in Boaz's field for the entire harvest season.



## Chapter 3: A Midnight Tryst

At this point in the story, Naomi is concerned about Ruth's future and determines that she should get married again. In ancient Israel, an unmarried woman was usually without much financial support. And without a child, Ruth could not hand down any family property in the name of her dead husband. Ordinarily, a childless widow would marry the next-of-kin who was required to "raise up seed" for the dead husband. Given that Boaz has treated Ruth so well, Naomi determines that he would be the best man for this job.

Naomi hatches a plan to make this request. She asks Ruth to dress finely and lie down on Boaz's threshing floor in the middle of the night. Presumably, at the end of the harvest, Boaz will have a party and get drunk and end up asleep in that same threshing floor. In fact, that's precisely what happens and Ruth snuggles in next to him and uncovers his "feet." When Boaz wakes up, he is surprised and doesn't even recognize her at first. But when she asks him to be her redeeming kinsman, he couldn't be more pleased. He tells her that there is a closer relative who would have first priority to become her new husband, but if that man does not wish to he will more than gladly step into that role. He sends her home with even more grain.

## Chapter 4: Boaz Claims Ruth As His Wife

In this chapter, Boaz goes to the city gate and meets the kinsman who is closer to Naomi than himself and has first claim on Naomi's property and Ruth's hand. Cleverly, he talks the man out of claiming the land and Ruth. The kinsman formalizes the agreement by removing his sandal before witnesses — this signifies that he has abandoned his claim to Ruth and Boaz is free to marry her.

Immediately, Boaz claims Ruth as his wife and declares that their children will carry on the name of Ruth's deceased husband. And, indeed, Ruth conceives. She gives birth to Obed, who in turn became the father of Jesse, who in turn became the father of King David, the greatest king of Israel and the one from whose line the messiah will be born. Thus, Israel's greatest king and the messiah will both issue from a woman whose own people, the Moabites, are the enemies of Israel. But when it comes to loyalty, no one surpasses Ruth.

# Shavuos

*This week, beginning at sunset on Thursday, we begin celebrating the two day festival of Shavuos. Here is an explanation of the holiday from myjewishlearning.com:*

## Shavuot 101

**Shavuot commemorates the spring harvest and the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.**

*By My Jewish Learning*

Shavuot, the “Feast of Weeks,” is celebrated seven weeks after Passover (Pesach). Since the counting of this period (sefirat ha-omer) begins on the second evening of Passover, Shavuot takes place exactly 50 days after the (first) seder. Hence, following the Greek word for “fifty,” Shavuot is also referred to sometimes as Pentecost. Although its origins are to be found in an ancient grain harvest festival, Shavuot has long been identified with the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

## Shavuot History

Shavuot combines two major religious observances. First is the grain harvest of the early summer. Second is the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai seven weeks after the exodus from Egypt. The first determines the ritual for the holiday, which was one of the three pilgrimage festivals of ancient Israel, when Israelite males were commanded to appear before God in Jerusalem, bringing offerings of the first fruits of their harvest. The second determines the significance of the holiday for Judaism, tying it in with the seminal event of Jewish religious memory, namely the entering into a covenant between God and Israel, exemplified by Israel’s assumption of Divine law.

## Shavuot at Home

Since Shavuot is an ancient pilgrimage holiday, it is not surprising that its ritual focuses on the community. Nonetheless, there are a number of customs associated with personal practice. Chief among them is the eating of dairy products on Shavuot. Although the reasons for this custom are not completely clear, it has become traditional to eat milk and cheese products as part of the celebration of Shavuot. Some Sephardic communities also enjoy foods flavored with rosewater at this time of year.



## In the Community

Much of the observance of the holiday centers on the synagogue and its rituals. The special readings for the holiday include medieval poems (piyyutim) and the Book of Ruth. A number



of reasons are given for the inclusion of the latter. Among them are that the book takes place at the time of the barley harvest, that Ruth's assumption of Naomi's religion reflects the Israelites' acceptance of the Torah at Sinai, and that King David, who is alleged to have died at this time of year according to rabbinic tradition, is mentioned at the end of Ruth.

Another tradition is to participate in a Tikkun Leil Shavuot, an all-night study session marking the holiday. And finally, Shavuot is one of the holidays on which Hallel, the Psalms of Praise, is recited. In Ashkenazi communities, Yizkor, the memorial service, is observed. In Sephardic communities, it has become customary to read a ketubah l'Shavuot, a symbolic marriage contract between God and the Jewish people.

## Shavuot Themes and Theology



By associating an ancient holiday of the grain harvest with the exodus from Egypt, Jewish tradition has imbued Shavuot with religious significance derived from the foundational event in Jewish historical consciousness. In the specific case of Shavuot, this takes the form of the entering into a covenant or formal agreement between God and Israel at Mount Sinai. This is a joyous time, since it is the moment at which God and Israel entered into a figurative marriage with each other, the hopeful springtime of their relationship.

## Yahrtzeits

This week the Carnegie Shul acknowledges the yahrtzeits of:

**Pearl Lowe**

**Carrie Roth**

**Elaine Bovitch Rosenfield**

**Sarah Lee Backal**

**Helen Miller Mossoff**

**Harry Zemon**

May their memories be for a blessing.