

2-3-24 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene– Yitro [Jethro] (“abundance”)
Torah Portion: Exodus 18:1 – 20:26
Haftarah: Isa 6:1 – 7:6, 9:6-7
Suggested Acheron K’tuvim: Acts 20:7-9

What About the Sabbath?

Central question of this message: How did the church decide that Sunday was the Sabbath?

Today we are in the fifth portion of *Shemot* (Exodus). It is entitled *Yitro*, and gets its name from the second word, both in the Hebrew and also of the passage in English, which is the name, *Yitro*. This name is often rendered in English translations as Jethro.

Ex 18:1-5

18 Now Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt. 2 And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Moses' wife Zipporah, after he had sent her away, 3 and her two sons, of whom one was named Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land." 4 And the other was named Eliezer, for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh."

18:1

כָּל־ all <u>3605</u>	אַתָּה Moses' <u>853</u>	מֹשֶׁה father in law, <u>4872</u>	חַתְּנִי Midian, <u>2859</u>	מִדְיָן the priest of <u>4080</u>	כֹּהֵן Jethro, <u>3548</u>	יִתְרוֹ When heard of <u>3503</u>	וַיִּשְׁמָע 8085
כִּי־ that <u>3588</u>	וְעַמּוֹ and his people, <u>9999</u>	וְלִישְׂרָאֵל his people, <u>5971</u>	לְמֹשֶׁה and for Israel <u>3478</u>	אֱלֹהִים for Moses, <u>4872</u>	עָשָׂה God <u>430</u>	אֲשֶׁר had done <u>6213</u>	כִּי־ that <u>834</u>
		מִמִּצְרַיִם: out of Egypt; <u>4714</u>	יִשְׂרָאֵל Israel <u>3478</u>	אֶת־ the Lord <u>853</u>	יְהוָה the Lord <u>3068</u>	הוֹצִיא had brought <u>3318</u>	
מֹשֶׁה Moses' <u>4872</u>	אִשְׁתּוֹ wife, <u>802</u>	צִפּוֹרָה Zipporah, <u>6855</u>	אֶת־ 853	מֹשֶׁה Moses' <u>4872</u>	חַתְּנִי father in law, <u>2859</u>	יִתְרוֹ Jethro, <u>3503</u>	וַיִּקַּח Then took <u>3947</u>
						שְׁלוּחֶיהָ: he had sent her back, <u>7964</u>	אַחֵר after <u>310</u>

2

In today's parasha we see what is known as the "Ten Commandments. We should begin by simply standing and reading the "Ten Commandments". Because the people stood at the foot of the mountain to receive these words, our people have stood during the reading of these words in our congregations ever since. Please stand.

Ex 20:1-17

20 Then God spoke all these words, saying,

2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

3 "You shall have no other gods before Me.

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. 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, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

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.

8 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 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. 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.

12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

13 "You shall not murder. [the proper word is “murder”, not “kill”]

14 "You shall not commit adultery.

15 "You shall not steal.

16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

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."

To hear the commandments chanted with the proper Hebrew cantillation, but with English words, you can hear Cantor Yonah Kliger do that, here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDfUao1AVcw>

And if you wish to see a chant in the Hebrew, with a different trup, as well as sign language, you can find it here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1Oe2bDVBA>

Please be seated.

I ask you to count how many words in the English passage above relate to murder. There are 4. Regarding stealing? Only 4. Regarding adultery? Now 5 words. What believer would think it is acceptable to do any of these things? If you would even suggest such a thing, that believer would react with horror.

But count now the number of words in the English passage above relating to the Sabbath. There are 101 words. Shouldn't that tell us something? I find it true that when G-d spends a lot of time talking about something, that usually means that it is pretty important to Him. So, if it is important to G-d, shouldn't it be important to us as well?

That being said, then I suggest we begin with unity in the commandment in the "Big Ten" which consumes more text and attention than any other – Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

The greater body of faith today has determined that the first day of the week – Sunday – is the proper day to assemble and worship G-d. There are some smaller groups within the body of faith which insist that the Sabbath is Saturday. And the Messianics hold to the ancient tradition that the weekly Sabbath begins at sunset Friday evening and continues until sunset Saturday evening. How and why did this division occur?

Today, the precious ones in the church will insist that the proper day of worship is Sunday, and a large number of them will cement that conclusion by calling it “the Lord’s Day.” A very large number of them will even call Sunday the “Sabbath.”

Let’s look at the verses which most church members will cite from Scripture when they are challenged on this topic. There are very few.

Matt 28:1-2

28 Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.

They will tell you that Yeshua rose from the grave “on the first day of the week”, which was Sunday, and therefore it is properly called the “Lord’s Day” and most certainly we should worship on that day.

They gloss-over the first words of the passage. It was “after the Sabbath” dawning on the first day of the week (the current “Sunday”). So, this passage already defeats the “Sunday is the Sabbath” argument. But the

characterization as “the Lord’s Day” can find footing here. Let’s look at the other passages.

Acts 20:7-9

7 And on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to depart the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. 8 And there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together.

What do we know for certain about this event?

- First day of the week (began sundown Saturday night).
- Gathered to break bread (a fellowship meal).
- Paul was giving a teaching, a really long teaching.
- There were “many lamps” in the room.

If we understand Jewish culture at that time, we also know that this event bears a striking similarity to a ceremonial closing of the Sabbath, called *havdallah*, which means “separation.” It is used to declare the Sabbath closed, and the beginning of the “six days of the week.” If Paul were teaching these people how to live Torah, then it stands to reason that he may well have taught them the ceremony of *havdallah*. We know that

Paul not only kept Torah, but also followed the traditions of the fathers,¹ which included opening and closing the Sabbath. He taught those traditions to the Goyim where he was preaching.²

A *havdallah* ceremony involves lighting the *havdallah* candle or lamp. It is important, I believe, that the author of this account thought it important to tell us that there were “many lamps” in the room. We already know it was dark outside. We already know that people light rooms where they gather at night. So, the author is not commenting that “the lights were on” in the room. Of course they were. He didn’t comment that the people were properly clothed, or that the food was cooked. The only reason that makes sense for his comment is that those “many lamps” have a special significance. That significance, I believe, is intricately connected to *havdallah*. The significance of the comment to me is that many people in the room had brought their own *havdallah* lights to this very special celebration.

During *havdallah*, after the kiddush cup is consumed – signifying the end of the Sabbath – it is permitted once again to cook food³. So, it is reasonable to conclude that the meal was prepared after sunset. That is

¹ Gal 1:14; Act 25:8

² 1 Cor 11:2; 2Thes 2:15; Rom 2:3, 3:31, 7:12

³ Preparation of food is prohibited on the Sabbath

the custom today as well. This could help us understand why things went well into the night.

It is also custom after the celebration of the Sabbath morning liturgy and Torah readings that an honored special guest will be given the opportunity to conduct a *midrash*, a teaching, on a topic of his choosing. That midrash can continue right into *havdallah*. And since Paul was one of the most honored guests any congregation might host, I am certain that he was permitted all the time he wished to say all he wished to say.

Once night fell on Saturday evening, the “first day of the week” began. So, the author of this account gives us a detailed account of what happened during what to me clearly appears to be a *havdallah* celebration.

This doesn’t seem to support a worship time on Sunday so much as it does a *havdallah* service connected to the Sabbath. So, let’s keep looking at other proof verses the church uses.

1 Cor 16:1-3

16 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. 2 On the first day of

every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.

The church of today has seized on the language “on the first day of every week” as mandating a Sunday meeting for worship.

Let me please make an assumption now, for the purposes of argument, that the passages is actually referring to the Sabbath, and not the first day of the week (Sunday). I will justify that presumption below.

In Jewish tradition, it is proper to come to the synagogue (or home group) with an offering to put into the offering box there. On Sabbath, the contributions are designated for the upkeep of the synagogue, the welfare of the Rabbi, and also for the poor. In those days, as is the custom today, a “special offering” is often taken for such a guest’s benefit.

But I need not rely entirely upon what I know of Jewish culture and Paul’s own description of what he held dear, and what he was teaching as tradition. I can make my point using the very words of these verses themselves, which are in most Bibles so poorly translated as to have lost the true meaning.

Here is how Acts 20:7 is rendered in the Greek.

⁷	Ἐν	δὲ	τῇ	μὴ	τῶν	σαββάτων	συνηγμένων	
	upon	And	the	first	day	of the	week,	when came together
	<u>1722</u>	<u>1161</u>	<u>3588</u>	<u>3391</u>	<u>9999</u>	<u>3588</u>	<u>4521</u>	<u>4863</u>
	En	dé	teé	miá	toón	sabbátoon	suneegménoon	

Let's look at each word and the proper definitions.

1161 And

1722 upon (with high certainty)

3588 the (definite)

3391 first (or “one”)

9999 day (not in the original, this word is added by the translators)

3588 of the (definite)

4521 week, (*sabaton* – a borrowed Hebrew word – the Sabbath)

A better translation might read:

“But upon (with certainty) the (definite) certain day, the
(definite) Sabbath...”

So, they had met on the Sabbath, according to the actual words used in that passage.

What do we find if we do the same analysis on the first few words of 1 Cor 16:3, which is rendered like this in the Greek:

² κατὰ	μίαν	σαββάτου	ἕκαστος	ὑμῶν	παρ'	ἑαυτῷ		
Upon	the	first	day	of the week	every one	of you	by	him
<u>2596</u>	<u>9999</u>	<u>3391</u>	<u>9999</u>	<u>4521</u>	<u>1538</u>	<u>5216</u>	<u>3844</u>	<u>1438</u>
Katá	mían	sabbátou	hékastos	humoón	par	heautoó		

2596 Upon (preposition indicating a certain place or time)

9999 the (not in the original. This is added by the translators)

3391 first (one or first)

9999 day (not in the original. This is added by the translators)

4521 of the week (sabaton – a borrowed Hebrew word – the Sabbath)

So, a better translation might read:

“Upon one (or the first) Sabbath...”

So, neither of these verses support a Sunday worship. In fact, when properly rendered from the Greek, both support events, or instructions by Paul, regarding what happened on a couple of Sabbath days.

How did the Christian church then come to worship on Sunday, and abandon the Sabbath? There is a well-documented history regarding that switch. There are many, many documents I have found which

demonstrate how, and why, this happened. But I will give you only a few of them here.

The Bible is replete with references to followers of Yeshua keeping the Sabbath, as Yeshua did, throughout the first century. Those are easily found by simply conducting a word search for “Sabbath” in any Concordance. But I will give an example or two of such extra-Biblical records throughout the centuries as a modest example.

Second Century.

From the apostles' time until the council of Laodicea, which was about the year 364, the holy observance of the Jews' Sabbath continued, as may be proved out of many authors: yea, notwithstanding the decree of the council against it." *Sunday a Sabbath*, John Ley, p.163. London: 1640.

The primitive Christians had a great veneration for the Sabbath, and spent the day in devotion and sermons. And it is not to be doubted but they derived this practice from the Apostles themselves, as appears by several scriptures to the purpose. *Dialogues on the Lord's Day*, p. 189. London: 1701, By Dr. T.H. Morer (A Church of England divine).

Third Century.

Thou shalt observe the Sabbath, on account of Him who ceased from His work of creation, but ceased not from His work of providence: it is a rest for meditation of the law, not for idleness of the hands. "*The Anti-Nicene Fathers*," Vol 7,p. 413. From *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, a document of the 3rd and 4th Centuries.

Fourth Century.

The ancient Christians were very careful in the observance of Saturday, or the seventh day...It is plain that all the Oriental churches, and the greatest part of the world, observed the Sabbath as a festival...Athanasius likewise tells us that they held religious assembles on the Sabbath, not because they were infected with Judaism, but to worship Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, Epiphanius says the same. *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Vol.II Book XX, chap. 3, sec.1, 66. 1137,1138.

And now the Catholic Church, at the Council of Laodicea, made it clear that Christians must not honor the Sabbath, but rather Sunday.

Council Laodicea - A.D.365 "Canon 16-On Saturday the Gospels and other portions of the Scripture shall be read aloud." "Canon 29-Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honor, and as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day." *Hefele's Councils*, Vol. 2, b. 6.

Fifth Century.

The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which custom is never observed at Rome or at Alexandria. Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 7, chap.19.

Pope Innocent (402-417) points out that Pope Sylvester (314-335) was the first to order the churches to fast on Saturday, and Pope Innocent (402-417) made it a binding law in the churches that obeyed him, (In order to bring the Sabbath into disfavour.) "Innocentius did ordain the Saturday or Sabbath to be always fasted." Dr. Peter Heylyn, *History of the Sabbath*, Part 2, p. 44.

Down even to the fifth century the observance of the Jewish Sabbath was continued in the Christian church. *Ancient Christianity Exemplified*, Lyman Coleman, ch. 26, sec. 2, p. 527.

In Jerome's day (420 A.D.) the devoutest Christians did ordinary work on Sunday. *Treatise of the Sabbath Day*, by Dr. White, Lord Bishop of Ely, p. 219.

How did the Catholic Church claim authority to switch the day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday? The writings of the Church itself contain its own admission of this act, and by what authority they believed they had to do it.

"But you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify." James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of our Fathers*, 88th ed., pp. 89.

"Question: Have you any other way of proving that the Church has power to institute festivals of precept? Answer:

Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her-she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday, the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority." Stephen Keenan, *A Doctrinal Catechism* 3rd ed., p. 174.

"Some theologians have held that God likewise directly determined the Sunday as the day of worship in the New Law, that He Himself has explicitly substituted the Sunday for the Sabbath. But this theory is now entirely abandoned. It is now commonly held that God simply gave His Church the power to set aside whatever day or days she would deem suitable as Holy Days. The Church chose Sunday, the first day of the week, and in the course of time added other days as holy days." John Laux, *A Course in Religion for Catholic High Schools and Academies* (1936), vol. 1, P. 51.

In an 1893 publication called *The Catholic Mirror* authored by James Cardinal Gibbons (Archbishop of Baltimore, Maryland), the Catholic Church itself rails against the apparent hypocrisy of the Protestant Church in the matter of the Sabbath. In doing so, the Church directly

admits the very act for which they stand accused. “She, and Her” refers to the Catholic Church.

“The Catholic Church for over one thousand years before the existence of a Protestant, by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday. We say by virtue of her divine mission, because He who called Himself the "Lord of the Sabbath," endowed her with His own power to teach, "he that heareth you, heareth Me;" commanded all who believe in Him to hear her, under penalty of being placed with "heathen and publican;" and promised to be with her to the end of the world. She holds her charter as teacher from Him — a charter as infallible as perpetual. The Protestant world at its birth found the Christian Sabbath too strongly entrenched to run counter to its existence; it was therefore placed under the necessity of acquiescing in the arrangement, thus implying the Church's right to change the day, for over three hundred years. The Christian Sabbath is therefore to this day, the acknowledged offspring of the Catholic Church as spouse of the Holy Ghost, without a word of remonstrance from the Protestant world.”

Why did Martin Luther fail to truly “reform” the Catholic Church in his day? He most certainly divided it. The eastern Catholic churches went on unchanged. The western Catholic churches of Europe followed Luther, and became known as “Lutheran.” But what was Luther’s downfall in his quest to reform? We find the answer in the final speech given at the Council of Trent on the 18th of January 1562 by the Archbishop of Reggio, who pointed out the hypocrisy of Luther, who said “Scripture only” but nonetheless worshipped on Sunday. Here are some excerpts from that speech:

The Protestants claim to stand upon the written word only. They profess to hold the Scripture alone as the standard of faith. They justify their revolt by the plea that the Church has apostatized from the written word and follows tradition. Now the Protestants claim, that they stand upon the written word only, is not true. Their profession of holding the Scripture alone as the standard of faith, is false. PROOF: The written word explicitly enjoins [requires] the observance of the seventh day [Saturday] as the Sabbath. They do not observe the seventh day, but reject it. If they do truly hold the scripture alone as their standard, they would be observing the seventh day as is enjoined [required] in the Scripture throughout. Yet they not only reject the observance of the

Sabbath enjoined in the written word, but they have adopted and do practice the observance of Sunday, for which they have only the tradition of the Church. Consequently the claim of 'Scripture alone as the standard,' fails; and the doctrine of 'Scripture and tradition' as essential, is fully established, the Protestants themselves being judges. ⁴

A further editor's note to the *Catholic Mirror* article makes it abundantly clear.

This was the inconsistency of the Protestant practice with the Protestant profession that gave to the Catholic Church her long-sought and anxiously desired ground upon which to condemn Protestantism and the whole Reformation movement as only a selfishly ambitious rebellion against the Church authority. And in this vital controversy the key, the chiefest and culminative expression, of the Protestant inconsistency was in the rejection of the Sabbath of the Lord, the seventh day, enjoined [mandated] in the Scriptures, and

⁴ The Archbishop of Reggio (Gaspar [Ricciulli] de Fosso) made his speech at the last opening session of Trent, (17th Session) reconvened under a new Pope (Pius IV), on the 18th of January, 1562 after having been suspended in 1552. — J. H. Holtzman, *Canon and Tradition*, published in Ludwigsburg, Germany, in 1859, page 263, and Archbishop of Reggio's address in the 17th session of the Council of Trent, Jan. 18, 1562, in *Mansi SC*, Vol. 33, cols. 529, 530. Latin.

the adoption and observance of the Sunday as enjoined [mandated] by the Catholic Church.

Arthur Weigall in his book, *The Paganism in Our Christianity* [New York, 1928], writes at p.145:

"The Hebrew Sabbath having been abolished by Christians, the Church made a sacred day of Sunday, partly because it was the day of the resurrection, but largely because it was the weekly festival of the sun; for it was definite Christian policy to take over the pagan festivals endeared to the people by tradition, and to give them a Christian significance. But as a solar festival, Sunday was the sacred day of Mithra; and it is interesting to notice that since Mithra was addressed as Dominus, 'Lord,' Sunday must have been 'the Lord's Day' long before Christian times."

Some Christian churches which have no commonality with Catholicism (other than Sunday worship) have now even adopted other Catholic traditions, such as Lent, and Ash Wednesday.

"There is no word, no hint, in the New Testament about abstaining from work on Sunday ... into the rest of Sunday no

divine law enters... The observance of Ash Wednesday or Lent stands exactly on the same footing as the observance of Sunday." Canon Eyton, *The Ten Commandments* , pp. 52, 63, 65.

At one time the Baptist Church knew the truth, and it was preached and proclaimed.

"There was and is a commandment to keep holy the Sabbath day, but that Sabbath day was not Sunday. It will be said, however, and with some show of triumph, that the Sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week Where can the record of such a transaction be found? Not in the New Testament absolutely not. To me it seems unaccountable that Jesus, during three years' intercourse with His disciples, often conversing with them upon the Sabbath question . . . never alluded to any transference of the day; also, that during forty days of His resurrection life, no such thing was intimated. "Of course, I quite well know that Sunday did come into use in early Christian history But what a pity it comes branded with the mark of paganism, and christened with the name of the sun god, adopted and sanctioned by the papal apostasy, and bequeathed as a sacred

legacy to Protestantism!" (Baptist) Dr. Edward T. Hiscox, a paper read before a New York ministers' conference, Nov. 13, 1893, reported in *New York Examiner*, Nov. 16, 1893

Some of the most prominent names in many Christian denominations such as Augustus Neander, John Mueller, John Wesley, Dwight Moody and others, have writings recognizing that there is no Scriptural basis for abandoning Sabbath for Sunday as the weekly day of worship. Yet their denominations have persisted in following the Catholic Church into its unfortunate abrogation of what is arguably one of the most important of the Ten Commandments. Surely such has grieved the heart of G-d for many generations.

Let us pray that in these days the truth of Scripture will finally prevail over the entrenched traditions of the greater segment of the body of faith, which have been fashioned in defiance of G-d, and followed ignorantly by so many of our precious brothers and sisters.