

The Ten Commandments from a Christian Perspective

While the Ten Commandments were given to the people of Israel hundreds of years earlier, God's moral law and commands were also reflected in Jesus' teachings. Jesus himself said he did not come to abolish the Law and commands of Moses, but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17). The chart below reflects the Christian tradition and compares God's Laws as given at Mount Sinai with how Jesus expressed them in his teachings.

(The Life Application Study Bible, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, IL, 1988, p. 127)

The Ten Commandments Said . . .	Jesus Said . . .
Exodus 20:3 —"You shall have no other gods before me."	Matthew 4:10 —"Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only."
Exodus 20:4 —"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything."	Luke 16:13 —"No servant can serve two masters."
Exodus 20:7 —"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God."	Matthew 5:34 —"But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne."
Exodus 20:8 —"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy."	Mark 2:27-28 —"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is LORD even of the Sabbath."
Exodus 20:12 —"Honor your father and your mother."	Matthew 10:37 —"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."
Exodus 20:13 —"You shall not murder."	Matthew 5:22 —"But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment."
Exodus 20:14 —"You shall not commit adultery."	Matthew 5:28 —"But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."
Exodus 20:15 —"You shall not steal."	Matthew 5:40 —"And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well."
Exodus 20:16 —"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."	Matthew 12:36 —"But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken."
Exodus 20:17 —"You shall not covet your neighbor's house."	Luke 12:15 —"Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."



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the Rabbi looks at

Shavuot - Pentecost

A Season of Giving

Celebrating Shavuot – Pentecost

Shavuot is the Jewish harvest festival that Israel was first commanded to observe in the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible), as described in the book of Leviticus.

"Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD. From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, baked with yeast, as a wave offering of firstfruits to the LORD. . . . On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live." (Leviticus 23:15-22)

The festival, which occurs on the fiftieth day after Passover, is also known as "Pentecost" (which means "fifty" in Greek) and "The Feast of Weeks" (since it is celebrated seven complete weeks after Passover).

There is a rich assortment of special customs and liturgies associated with *Shavuot*.



Shavuot Celebration Jerusalem Style

Below is a firsthand description of a *Shavuot* celebration in Jerusalem from Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein's daughter, Yael, who writes a column titled "Yael's Corner" that appears on *The Fellowship's* website (ifcj.org).

"Shavuot in Jerusalem is truly magical. On this important holiday, Jews commemorate the time in ancient days when the firstfruits were harvested and brought to the Temple

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Shavuot A Season of Giving

in Jerusalem as an offering to God. It is also a celebration of the glorious day when God gave us the *Torah* (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible) on Mount Sinai. While *Shavuot* is special to Jews all over the world, I must say that having the blessing of celebrating the holiday in Jerusalem is beyond compare!

Jewish holidays allow us to take a break from our daily cares and worries and provide time for introspection.

I do all of the physical preparation of cooking and cleaning for *Shavuot* the day

before the holiday begins, so that I can enter the holiday free from worldly worries.

When the sun sets on the day before the holiday, the streets of Jerusalem are packed with people dressed in their most beautiful clothes making their way to synagogue.

From each block the sound of singing and dancing fill the air. Children stay up late to join the festivities and eat candies and sweets to represent the sweetness of the *Torah*.

At our house, we welcome family members from all over the country for dinner. The mood is one of gratitude to God for giving us the most precious gift possible—the Bible.

Jewish tradition holds that the

Torah was received in the morning. Therefore, on *Shavuot*, it has become the custom to stay up all night learning and praying in anticipation of the big event. At my synagogue, Bible classes take place from 11:30 p.m. until sunrise. I typically attend one class

and then walk with my husband, daughter, and thousands of others to the Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem, which Jews believe is the spiritual center of the world.

Many people flock from all over Israel to study *Torah* at the Wall throughout the night. In fact, there

are so many people that it feels like the middle of the day!

Everyone wants to get a little closer to God's presence, just like in biblical times when Jewish people were commanded to ascend to the Temple three times a year and bring a holy sacrifice. One of those times was *Shavuot*.

The feeling of unity I experience standing at the Western Wall makes me think of many moments in the history of my people . . . how God parted the Red Sea, allowing them to escape Pharaoh's army after they were freed from Egypt . . . how they walked in the desert to Mount Sinai to receive the *Torah* . . . how they entered into Israel, the land promised them by God.

I reflected how Israel today faces

many challenges, just as it did in biblical times, and how the secret to our getting through those challenges is always the same—to trust in God, to ask Him for guidance, and to listen for His voice.

You, too, have heard God's voice—and you have responded by generously helping His people in Israel and around the world. I feel I can truly say that, thanks to your support of Israel and the Jewish people, more prayers of thanksgiving will be raised to God this *Shavuot* than ever before. On behalf of all of us, thank you!"

Other *Shavuot* Customs

It is also customary to eat dairy foods on the first day of *Shavuot*. Treats such as cheesecake and cheese blintzes are often featured on the menu.

There are a number of reasons given for this. On the holiday in ancient times, a two-loaf bread offering was brought to the Temple.

To commemorate this, Jews today eat two meals on *Shavuot*—a dairy

meal, and then after a short interruption, a traditional holiday meal. Another reason given for eating dairy is that with the giving of the *Torah*, Jews now became obligated to observe the kosher laws.

Since the *Torah* was given on *Shabbat* (the Sabbath), no cattle could

be slaughtered, nor could utensils be prepared as *Kosher*, so on that day, the people ate dairy.

Since *Shavuot* is also called the "Harvest Festival," it is customary to adorn the home and synagogue with fruits, flowers, and greens.

Reaffirming the Mosaic Covenant Commitment

According to Jewish tradition, on *Shavuot*, Jews reaffirm their commitment to the Mosaic covenant and the Jewish way of life.

During synagogue services, everyone stands as the Ten Commandments are recited and renews his or her commitment as God's people by saying

"Kol asher diber Adonai na'aseh: all that the LORD has spoken, we will do." There is a special significance to bringing children, even the youngest of infants, to hear the Ten Commandments.

In accepting the covenant between God and themselves, the Israelites offered their

children as "guarantors" that generations to come will honor and obey the *Torah*.

During *Shavuot*, it is common for Jewish confirmation ceremonies to be held at the synagogue, and for young adults to recommit themselves to studying the *Torah* and to reaffirm their



Joyous dancing at a *Shavuot* celebration



Jewish men reading from the *Torah* at the Western Wall in Jerusalem