

5782 – Leviticus 26-27 - Bechukotai (My Decrees)

^{26:3}"**IF YOU FOLLOW** my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, ⁴**(THEN) I will** send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit. ⁵Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and **you will** eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land. ⁶"**I will** grant peace in the land, and **you will** lie down and no one will make you afraid. **I will** remove savage beasts from the land, and the sword will not pass through your country. ⁷**You will** pursue your enemies, and they will fall by the sword before you. ⁸Five of **you will** chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you. ⁹"**I will** look on you with favor and make you fruitful and increase your numbers, and **I will KEEP MY COVENANT WITH YOU**. ¹⁰**You will** still be eating last year's harvest when **you will** have to move it out to make room for the new. ¹¹**I will** put my dwelling place among you, and **I will** not abhor you. ¹²**I will** walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people. ¹³I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians; I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high.

1. The Torah reading of *Bechukotai* (Leviticus 26:3-2:34) opens with G-d's promise of material prosperity for those who adhere to His commandments. "If you walk in My statutes," the Parshah begins, "and keep My commandments and do them; I will give your rain in due season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit..."—and goes on to list the multiple blessing that will flow when we faithfully carry out the Divine plan for life on earth.¹

Many of the commentaries struggle to explain this emphasis on material reward for the observance of the mitzvot. Did not our sages (in *Ethics of the Fathers* 1:3) state the ideal, "**Do not be as servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward; but rather be as servants who serve their master not for the sake of receiving a reward**"? Are we not enjoined, as Maimonides puts it, to "do the truth because it is true"? And if the Torah does have its reasons to promise to reward a righteous life, why does it speak of material rewards, awarded in our physical lifetimes upon earth? Wouldn't spiritual blessings, awarded to the soul after it is freed from the confines and limitations of the body, more aptly reciprocate a G-dly life? Indeed, the Talmud states so in so many words: "Today (i.e., in this world)—to do them (the mitzvot); Tomorrow (i.e., in the World To Come)—to receive reward." The Talmud cites one authority who cate-

gorically states: "There is no reward for mitzvot in this world" (Talmud, Eruvin [Mixtures] 22a, derived from Deuteronomy 7:11).

As we said, numerous commentaries and scholars discuss this contradiction, seeking to reconcile the Torah's promises in *Bechukotai* (and other places) with the principles cited above, which are also rooted in Torah. In one of his talks, the Lubavitcher Rebbe approaches the issue from an interesting angle—the legal angle. Using Torah law as our criterion, what would G-d's obligations toward us be when we fulfill the tasks He demands of us? Is there any *legal* basis to our petitions to G-d in our daily prayers for material life, health and sustenance?

(For although G-d invented these laws, He too, by choice, is bound by them. In the words of the Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 30:6): "G-d's way is not like the way of flesh and blood. The way of flesh and blood is that he instructs others to do, but does not do himself; G-d, however, what He Himself does, that is what He tells Israel to do and observe.")

2. To define G-d's legal obligations to us, we first need to define our legal relationship with Him. There are, in fact, **three models for this relationship: the slave, the employee, and the partner.**

Which of these models our individual life fits into is entirely up to us. The Talmud (Megillah 12b) states: "In the manner in which man measures himself, so is meted out to him" ... G-d leaves it to us to define our vision of life and our relationship with Him, and then relates to us accordingly. So it is up to us whether to perceive—and thus define—the labor of life via the mentality of the "slave", the attitude of the "employee", or the perspective of the "partner".

Some are apt to see themselves as slaves of an autocratic master (i.e., a Ruler who has absolute power). I didn't ask to be born—goes this line of thinking—nor was I consulted when the laws of life were formulated. All this was imposed on me. As the *Ethics* puts it, "Against your will you are born, and against your will you die." My master is all-powerful, so I had best carry out His commands.

Others adopt the less apathetic attitude of the employee. I have a job to do, is their approach, and I'll give it my best effort. And has G-d not promised to reward my toil? True, our sages have established that "There is no reward for mitzvot in this world"; but certainly the eventual rewards of the World To Come will more than compensate for my present-day labors.

This vision of life—life as a job—is expressed by the talmudic sage Rabbi Tarfon in the closing words of the second chapter of *Ethics of the Fathers*:

The day is short, the work is much, the workers are lazy, the reward is great and the Master is pressing ... It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task, but neither are you free to absolve yourself from it. If you have learned much Torah, you will be greatly rewarded, and your Employer is trustworthy to pay you the reward of your labors. Know that the reward of the righteous is in the World to Come.

Finally, **there are those who experience life as a partnership**. They, too, are "slaves" in the sense that they acknowledge G-d's absolute mastery over their lives; they too are "employees" in the sense that He has defined their life's assignment and has promised to reward them for their labor. But **they also believe that man has been granted the ability to elevate life into a partnership with G-d**. As G-d's partners, they develop their selves and their world in accordance with the Divine will not only because they must, nor merely to "do their job," but as an intensely personal enterprise. **Life is their joint venture with G-d**—a venture conceived and enabled by Him, but fueled by their own initiative and ambition.

3. **The Initial Verdict**—So what does Torah law legislate in regard to these three models of the G-d-man relationship?

At first glance, it would seem that however we define our relationship with G-d, our life's toil on His behalf does not obligate Him toward us in any way, at least not regarding our material needs and wants.

If we are His slaves, G-d already owns the product of our toil. On the other extreme, if we are His partners, we are laboring for ourselves as well as for Him: for the "partner"—to again quote the *Ethics*—"The reward of a mitzvah is the mitzvah itself." When the perfect world that is the aim of G-d and man's "joint venture" is complete, this will itself yield the ultimate spiritual *and* material reward for man. "At that time," writes Maimonides in the closing words of his *Mishneh Torah*, "there will be no hunger or war, no jealousy or rivalry. For the good will be plentiful, and all delicacies available as dust ... 'For the world shall be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters submerge the sea' (Isaiah 11:9)."

The only one who might seem to have any legal claim is the "employee." Indeed, the Torah commands an employer, "Do not delay the wages of your employee overnight" (Leviticus 19:13). But this law applies only to a day-laborer, not to one who is hired for a longer period or to accomplish a specific task. In such cases, the law is that "wages must be paid only at the conclusion of the employment" (Talmud, Eruvin 22a). So when G-d tells us, "Today, is the time to do; tomorrow, to receive reward," this is fully in keeping with the laws He instituted to govern the employer-employee relationship: He owes us our wages only upon the completion of the collective task for which He has "hired" us.

4. **Get a Better Lawyer**—This is what a cursory look at the law yields. But a more thorough examination reveals a series of laws that G-d commanded in His Torah which would obligate Him to provide us with our daily needs in all three cases—whether we define our duties toward Him as those of the slave, the employee or the partner.

- a. **The slave:** "A master is obligated to make his Hebrew slave or Hebrew maid equal to himself in food, drink, clothing and dwelling. This is derived from the verse 'for it is beneficial to him *together with you*' (Deuteronomy 15:16.)—i.e., you cannot eat fine bread and feed him coarse bread; drink aged wine and have him drink new wine; sleep on soft fibers and have him sleep on straw ... Thus it has been said: one who acquires a Hebrew slave, acquires for himself a master..." (Mishneh Torah, *Laws of Slaves* 1:9 ... Kiddushin 20a.).
- b. **The employee:** In Deuteronomy 23:24-25 we read: "When you enter your fellow's vineyard (as an employee), you may eat your fill of grapes, at your desire ... When you enter the standing crop of your fellow, you may pluck grain with your hands ..." These verses are interpreted by our sages to mean: "Workers who are employed in processing produce of the earth that has not yet reached its final desired state ... the employer is commanded to allow them to eat from the produce they are working with." This is quite apart from the wages owed to the employee upon completion of the term of his employment. This law applies to work-animals as well; as the Torah (Deuteronomy 25:4) commands, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is threshing." (Rashi on verse; Mishneh Torah, *Laws of Hire* 12:1.)
- c. **The partner:** A law dealing with a partnership that parallels our own joint endeavor with the Almighty, reads: "If a person gives eggs to a chicken-farmer so that he seat his chickens on them until they hatch and raise the chicks, with the understanding that the profit is to be divided between them, he is obligated to also pay him his labor and feeding costs" (Mishneh Torah, *Laws of Agents and Partners* 8:1; Talmud, Bava Metzia 68b. To have the chicken-farmer hatch the eggs and raise the chicks solely for the promise of profit would be a violation of the prohibition against usury—see Rashi on Talmud, *ibid.*). So when G-d gives us a world to develop and perfect as a "profit-sharing" venture, Torah law mandates that He also provide us with the daily expenses our work entails.

This is the basis for Maimonides explanation of the material, this-wordly rewards promised by the Torah when the people of Israel fulfill the commandments of the Torah (Mishneh Torah, *Laws of Repentance* 9:1):

Since we know that the reward for the mitzvot is ... the life of the World To Come ... why does it say throughout the Torah, "If you obey, you will receive such and such; if you do not obey, it shall happen to you such and such"—all this, things that are of the present world, such as plenty and hunger, war and peace, sovereignty and subjugation, inhabitan-
 tancy of the land and exile, success and failure, etc.? ... The explanation of this [apparent contradiction] is: G-d gave us this Torah, it is a tree of life, and whoever observes all that is written in it and knows it with a complete knowledge merits thereby the life of the World To come ... Yet G-d also promised us in the Torah that if we observe it with joy ... He will remove from us all things that may prevent us from fulfilling it, such as illness, war, hunger, etc., and He will bestow upon us all blessings that bolster our hand to observe the Torah such as abundant food, peace, and much gold and silver, so that we need not preoccupy ourselves all our days with our material needs but be free to lean the wisdom and observe the commandments by which we shall merit the life of the World To come ...

So when we approach G-d in prayer—concludes the Rebbe—we can do so with the confidence that no matter what level we have attained in identifying with our life's mission—whether we have achieved the commitment of a partner, or only the responsibility of an employee, or merely the resignation of a slave or beast-of-burden—**He will surely heed our requests and bless us with health, sustenance and tranquility.**

The Parable of the Fair Employer—Matthew 20:1-16

¹"For the kingdom of heaven **is like a landowner** who went out early in the morning to hire **men** to work in his vineyard. ²He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

³"About the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' ⁵So they went.

"He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. ⁶About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?'

⁷"Because no one has hired us,' they answered.

"He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.'

⁸"When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.'

⁹"The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and **each received a denarius**. ¹⁰So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius.

¹¹**When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner.**

¹²"These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'

¹³"But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? ¹⁴Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or **are you envious because I am generous?**'

¹⁶"So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

Serving God for Love or Reward?

1. The pious person serves God because of love rather than the hope of receiving a reward.³

a. Avot 1:3

MISHNAH 3. ANTIGONUS¹⁰ ... RECEIVED [THE ORAL TRADITION] FROM SIMEON THE RIGHTEOUS. HE USED TO SAY: **BE NOT LIKE UNTO SERVANTS WHO SERVE THE MASTER IN THE EXPECTATION OF RECEIVING A GRATUITY,**¹² **BUT BE LIKE UNTO SERVANTS WHO SERVE THE MASTER WITHOUT THE EXPECTATION OF RECEIVING A GRATUITY, AND LET THE FEAR OF HEAVEN**¹³ **BE UPON YOU.**¹⁴

(10) The first noted Jew known to have had a Greek name. First half of the third century B.C.E.

(12) 'Gratuity' rather than 'reward' (for which שכר would have been used and not פרס) since a servant may rightly and without reproach expect and accept his wage (v. M.).

(13) The term was used before the Persian and Greek periods (Marmorstein, A., The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God, p. 14 and pp. 105-6), as against the view that 'Heaven' for God, in Jewish literature is an expression derived from the Greek, as Bousset, Die Religion des Judentums, p. 359, n. 3).

(14) The 'Antigonius' trilogy was directed against Epicurean teachings; the first and second sayings against the eudaemonist doctrine that all action, even specifically moral action, should be undertaken for the purpose of creating happiness for oneself; the third, against the Epicurean doctrine that whereas there are gods, these gods do not concern themselves with the doings of men,' (Frankel, op. cit. pp. 8-9).

b. Matthew 5:11-12

¹¹"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹²**Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven**, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

2 Robert R. Gorelik, *Parables: Comparing the Parables of Yeshua to Rabbinic Parables of the 2nd Temple Period*, (Eshav Books), pp.48-51.

3 *Mishnah*, ed. Albeck, 4:35 on Abot 1:3.

c. Matthew 5:44-47

⁴⁴But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶**If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?** Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

d. **The compensation is a reality but not a goal.** The motive of love, which emerges from a deep awe and reverence for God, should be the guiding principle of moral action and spiritual life.⁴

1) **The fulfillment of a commandment, doing good to help someone or simply obeying God, is the quintessence of Jewish faith and practice.**

2) Faith begins with knowing who God is and having no other god (Deu 6:4).

3) But, true faith is accompanied by action because it involves so much more than belief.

e. Pesikta Rabbati 23/24:2⁵

R. Hiyya taught: To a king who had an orchard into which he brought laborers without revealing to them the reward for planting each of several kinds of trees in the orchard. Had he revealed to them the reward for planting each of several kinds of trees in the orchard, the laborers would have picked out the kind of tree for whose planting there was the greatest reward and planted it; thus the work of the orchard would have been neglected in one section and not neglected in another section. **Even so, concluded R. Abba bar Kahana, the Holy One, blessed be He, did not reveal to Israel the reward for heeding the different precepts of the Torah. Had he revealed it to them, Israel might have picked out the most rewarding precept and heeded only that one. Then the Torah would be neglected at one Section and maintained only at another Section.**

1) Matthew 5:17-18

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, **not the smallest**

letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

2) **While the reward is a reality, obedience to the teachings of Torah is the essence of a genuine faith in God** ... The rabbinic parable emphasizes total obedience to God without concern for the final compensation.

Grace or Works?

1. Semachot (Ordinations) de-Rabbi Chiyah 3:2

How do the righteous come [into the world]? Through love, because they uphold the world through their good deeds. How do they depart—also through love. R. Simeon ben Eleazar told a parable. To what may the matter be compared? To a king who hired two workers. The first worked all day and received one denarius. The second worked only one hour and yet he also received a denarius. Which one was more beloved? Not the one who worked one hour and received a denarius! Thus Moses our teacher served Israel **one hundred and twenty years** and Samuel [served them] only **fifty two. Nevertheless both are equal before the Omnipresent!** As it is said, “Then the LORD said to me, ‘Though Moses and Samuel stood before me’” (Jer 15:1); and thus He said, “Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel also was among those who called on his name” (Psalm 99:6); concerning them and others like them He says, “Sweet is the sleep of the laborer whether he eats little or much” (Eccl 5:12).

a. The element of time plays a prominent role in both parables—latecomers are paid the same wage as the others. **Is this fair?**

1) In the context of Jewish theology, all are rewarded justly according to their obedience rather than job performance alone. Moses ... (and) Samuel ... **receive equal reward from God.** Is this justice? Both the Gospel and rabbinic parables imply identical replies to this question.⁶

b. Many scholars ... claim that Yeshua broke away from traditional Judaism by teaching grace instead of reward in this parable. The law of Judaism is superseded by the grace of Christianity. Jeremiah based his interpretation of Judaism on the rabbinic parable of “The Industrious Laborer.” The motifs in this classic rabbinic parable are very similar to Matthew's parable of the Fair Employer.

1) The Industrious Laborer⁷

To what may R. Bun bar Chaya be compared? To a king who

⁴ Brad H. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation*, (Hendrickson Publishers), p. 74.

⁵ Translated from the Hebrew by William G. Baude, 2 vol., (Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 1:494-95.

⁶ *The Parables*—, pp. 75-76.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

hired many laborers. One of them was extremely proficient in his work. What did the king do? He took him and walked with him the lengths and breadths [of the field]. In the evening the laborers came to take their wages. But [to the one with whom he had walked—the king] gave a full day's wage. The laborers murmured and complained, "We worked all day long, but [the king] has given this one who only worked two hours a full wage like us." The king answered them, "He has done more in two hours than what you did for the entire day!" Thus though R. Bun labored only twenty eight years, he did more than a learned scholar could have studied in a hundred.

- a) The occasion of this parable was the funeral of Rabbi Bun bar Chaya—he died at the young age of twenty-eight.
- b) In an effort to comfort the bereaved family, **the parable was told as a part of a eulogy in honor of the young but distinguished scholar**. When the solemn nature of the context of the parable is kept in view, the image of the king takes on much greater significance ... Here (the king) is drawn to the proficient worker and yearns to be with him. **The reality behind the word-picture conveys a message of comfort for a bereaved family: God so loved the proficient R. Bun bar Chaya that he gave him a break from the toilsome labor of this life to be with him.**
- 2) **The focus of (this) rabbinic parable is God and his grace.** His justice is beyond knowing. While it is true, as Jeremias points out⁸, that the king comments on the productivity of the proficient worker, it should be observed that the laborer served the king all day long.
 - a) R. Bun bar Chaya certainly earned a day's pay, but he was praised for his tremendous accomplishment in the first two hours.
 - b) When the payment for services was given at the end of the workday, the other laborers grumbled about the fact that the proficient worker spent most of the time walking around with the king.
 - c) The king countered their argument by saying, "He has done more in two hours than what you did for the entire day!"
 - d) This element of apparent hyperbole and exaggeration is designed to defend the king's sovereignty and justice. The force of the message must be located in the reality behind the parable.

- e) Thus, though R. Bun bar Chaya labored only twenty-eight years, he faithfully served the King. As the King's beloved laborer, in the highest sense of divine justice he will be rewarded fairly along with the other workers.
- f) Although R. Bun bar Chaya died young, God's purpose is beyond human comprehension. His accomplishments are no less than those of others who are given more time, **and his reward is just and fair.**

¹⁴"**BUT IF YOU WILL NOT** listen to me and carry out all these commands, ¹⁵and **IF YOU REJECT** my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and **SO VIOLATE MY COVENANT**, ¹⁶**THEN I will** do this to you:

—I will break My Covenant with you? No!

I will bring upon you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life. **You will** plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it. ¹⁷**I will** set my face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate **you will** rule over you, and **you will** flee even when no one is pursuing you. ¹⁸"**IF AFTER ALL THIS YOU WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME, I will** punish you for your sins seven times over. ¹⁹**I will** break down your stubborn pride and make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze. ²⁰Your strength will be spent in vain, because your soil will not yield its crops, nor will the trees of the land yield their fruit.

²¹"**IF YOU REMAIN HOSTILE TOWARD ME AND REFUSE TO LISTEN TO ME, I will** multiply your afflictions seven times over, as your sins deserve. ²²**I will** send wild animals against you, and they will rob you of your children, destroy your cattle and make you so few in number that your roads will be deserted.

²³"**IF IN SPITE OF THESE THINGS YOU DO NOT ACCEPT MY CORRECTION BUT CONTINUE TO BE HOSTILE TOWARD ME,** ²⁴**I myself will** be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins seven times over. ²⁵And **I will** bring the sword upon you **TO AVENGE THE BREAKING OF THE COVENANT**. When you withdraw into your cities, **I will** send a plague among you, and you will be given into enemy hands. ²⁶When I cut off your supply of bread, ten women will be able to bake your bread in one oven, and they will dole out the bread by weight. **You will** eat, but you will not be satisfied.

²⁷"**IF IN SPITE OF THIS YOU STILL DO NOT LISTEN TO ME BUT CONTINUE TO BE HOSTILE TOWARD ME,** ²⁸then in my anger **I will** be hostile toward you, and **I myself will** punish you for your sins seven times over. ²⁹**You will** eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters.

³⁰**I will** destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars and pile your dead bodies on the lifeless forms of your idols, and **I will** abhor you.

³¹**I will** turn your cities into ruins and lay waste your sanctuaries, and **I will** take no delight in the pleasing aroma of your offerings. ³²**I will** lay waste the land, so that your enemies who live there will be appalled. ³³**I will** scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. **Your land will** be laid waste, and **your cities will** lie in ruins.

³⁴Then **the land will** enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. ³⁵All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it. ³⁶As for those of you who are left, **I will** make their hearts so fearful in the lands of their enemies that the sound of a windblown leaf will put them to flight. **They will** run as though fleeing from the sword, and **they will** fall, even though no one is pursuing them. ³⁷**They will** stumble over one another as though fleeing from the sword, even though no one is pursuing them. So **you will** not be able to stand before your enemies. ³⁸**You will** perish among the nations; the land of your enemies will devour you. ³⁹**Those of you who are left will** waste away in the lands of their enemies because of their sins; also because of their fathers' sins they will waste away.

⁴⁰**BUT IF THEY WILL CONFESS THEIR SINS** and the sins of their fathers—their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, ⁴¹which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies—then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and **they pay for their sin**, ⁴²**I will REMEMBER MY COVENANT WITH JACOB AND MY COVENANT WITH ISAAC AND MY COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM, AND I WILL REMEMBER THE LAND.**

—Too late! Some say, “the Covenant is ‘conditional’ and has already been broken!” (see v, 9, 15, 25).

⁴³For the land will be deserted by them and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them. **They will pay for their sins** because they rejected my laws and abhorred my decrees. ⁴⁴**YET IN SPITE OF THIS, when they are in the land of their enemies, I WILL NOT REJECT THEM OR ABHOR THEM SO AS TO DESTROY THEM COMPLETELY, BREAKING MY COVENANT WITH THEM. I AM THE LORD THEIR GOD.** ⁴⁵**But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the LORD.**”

⁴⁶These are the decrees, the laws and the regulations that the LORD established on Mount Sinai between himself and the Israelites through Moses.

1. Matthew 19:16-22

¹⁶Now a man came up to Yeshua and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”

¹⁷“Why do you ask me about what is good?” Yeshua replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.”

¹⁸“Which ones?” the man inquired. Yeshua replied, “Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, ¹⁹honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.”

²⁰All these I have kept,” the young man said. **“What do I still lack?”**

²¹Yeshua answered, **“IF you want to be perfect, (THEN) GO, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. THEN COME, FOLLOW ME.”** ²²When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

a) Derekh Eretz Zuta (The Way of the Land) 4

Give it to those who need it in this world, in order that you may get the world to come.

b) Sotah 14a

R. Hama son of R. Hanina said: “After the Lord your God shall ye walk” (Deut. 13:5) ... the verse means ... that you are to follow the ways of the Holy One. **He clothed the naked:** “The Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin, and clothed them” (Gen. 3:21). **So should you clothe the naked. The Holy One visited the sick:** “The Lord appeared unto him in the terebinths of Mamre” (Gen. 18:1). **So should you visit the sick. The Holy One buried the dead:** “He buried [Moses] in the valley” (Deut. 34:6). **So should you bury the dead. The Holy One comforted mourners:** “And it came to pass after the death of Abraham that God bestowed blessing upon Isaac his son” (Gen. 25:11). **So should you comfort mourners.**

c) Derekh Eretz Rabbah (The Way of the Land) 6

On one occasion, Hillel the Elder had a meal prepared for a certain man. In the meantime, a poor man came by, stood at his doorway, and said, “I am to marry today, and I have no provisions whatsoever.” At that, **Hillel's wife took the entire meal and [without telling her husband] gave it to the poor man.** Then she kneaded fresh dough, cooked another pot of stew, and came and set it before Hillel and his guest [who were waiting to eat]. Hillel asked, “My dear, why did you not bring it sooner?” She told him what happened. He said, **“My dear, the truth is, I did not mean to judge you on the scale of guilt, but rather on the scale of merit, because everything you have done, you have always done for the sake of Heaven.”**

d) Avot 5:16

Among those asked to give charity are four types: 1) he who wishes to give but does not wish others to give—he is grudging toward others; 2) he who wishes others to give but is himself unwilling to give—he is grudging of his own; 3) **he who willingly gives and**

wishes others to give—the pious man; 4) he who does not give and wishes others not to give—the wicked man.

2. Matthew 6:14-15 (cf., Mark 11:25)

¹⁴For **IF** you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But **IF** you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

3. Luke 16:10-13

¹⁰"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. ¹¹So **IF** you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹²And **IF** you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? ¹³"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

4. John 13:34-35

³⁴"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are my disciples, **IF** you love one another."

5. John 14:15

¹⁵"**IF** you love me, you will obey what I command.

6. John 15:5-17

⁵"I am the vine; you are the branches. **IF** a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶**IF** anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷**IF** you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, **that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples ...** ¹⁰**IF** you obey my commands, you will remain in my love ... ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that **your joy may be complete.**

¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you ... ¹⁴You are my friends **IF** you do what I command ... ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.

7. Romans 8:12-14

¹²Therefore, brothers, **WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION**—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. ¹³For **IF** you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but **IF** by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, ¹⁴because those who are **LED** by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

8. Galatians 5:13-18

¹³You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. ¹⁴**The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."—So what?**

¹⁵**IF** you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or **you will be destroyed by each other.**

¹⁶So I say, **live by the Spirit**, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ¹⁷For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. ¹⁸But **IF you are led by the Spirit, you are not under (THE CURSE OF THE) law.**

9. 2Peter 1:1-11

... ⁵make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸For **IF** you possess these qualities in increasing measure, **they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive** in your knowledge of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah. ⁹But **IF** anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. ¹⁰Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For **IF** you do these things, **you will never fall**, ¹¹and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Yeshua the Messiah.