# SUMMARY OF PARASHAT YITRO

The Advice of Yitro

Moshe’s father-in-law, Yitro, arrives at the Israelite camp in the desert and is informed by Moshe of the many miracles that God performed for the Jews in Egypt. Yitro offers sacrifices to God in gratitude and sees that Moshe is carrying the burden of judging the people and mediating in their disputes alone. Yitro suggests that Moshe establish a system of judges, selecting wise and just men, and delegate his responsibilities to them while only handling the most difficult cases. This would allow Moshe to spend more time teaching the Torah to the people. Moshe accepts Yitro’s suggestion and implements the judicial system before Yitro returns to his homeland.

The Proposal

Six weeks after leaving Egypt, the Hebrews arrive in the desert and camp at the foot of Mount Sinai. Moshe ascends the mountain and is told by God of a proposed pact between Him and Israel, where God will choose the Israelites as His protected people and the Jews will become a Kingdom of Priests and a Nation consecrated to God. Moshe conveys God’s proposal to the people, who agree, and they are told to prepare for the event by purifying and sanctifying themselves for three days. On the third day, thunder, lightning, and the sound of a shofar are heard from the top of the mountain, and Moshe leads the people there. God warns that only Moshe and Aharon should go up and reveals the Ten Commandments to all the people.

The Ten Commandments

1. Accept God as the Supreme authority
2. Do not believe in pagan gods or worship idols or images
3. Do not carry/use God’s name in vain
4. Observe the Shabbat
5. Honor your parents

6. Do not murder
7. Do not commit adultery
8. Do not steal
9. Do not bear false testimony
10. Do not covet the property of others

People Request Moshe’s Intermediation

Overwhelmed by the close encounter with God’s “voice,” the Israelites ask Moshe to serve as an intermediary between them and God. Moshe calms them down and agrees to be God’s spokesman.

No Images

God warns the people about making any images or visual representations of Him and reminds them that no image was seen when He revealed himself. The Parasha concludes with the command to erect a sacrificial altar made of stones, without using metal instruments or building steps on the ramp.

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