

WORLD RELIGION

Judaism Notes: Mt. Sinai to Babylonian Captivity

1312 BC EXODUS

Passover was the beginning of a commitment to a certain responsibility

- Unleavened bread is used in ceremony to commemorate the Jews having to leave quickly and did not have time to let their bread rise
- Also symbolic of removing the “puffiness” (pride / arrogance) from our souls

At Mt. Sinai

- every Jewish person had an encounter with God
 - **UNIQUE TO HUMAN HISTORY**
- God spoke to an entire people
- this could not be faked
 - Jews look at what happened at Mt. Sinai as reason to keep the Torah, not because of miracles, but because they stood and heard God
- Jews became a nation
 - they did this outside of their homeland, in bondage and under the conditions of destroying them
- Jews did not pledge their allegiance to Israel, but to God

according to Maimonides

“The Jewish people did not believe in Moses our teacher because of the miracles he performed. If one believes in something because of miracles, he may suspect that they were performed through sleight of hand or sorcery... We believe in Moshe because of what happened at Mt. Sinai. Our own eyes saw, not a stranger’s, our own ears heard, and not another’s... The revelation at Sinai is the only real proof that Moses’ prophecy was true and above suspicion.”

Moses spent 40 days listening to God – receiving the “written” and “oral” laws

- 613 commandments (**Mitzvot**)
 - “written laws”
 - **TORAH**
 - CANNOT BE CHANGED – GIVEN BY GOD
 - “to hit the mark” (sin = “to miss the mark”)
- Oral Law (**Mishna**)
 - how to apply Mitzvot
 - **COULD NOT BE WRITTEN DOWN**
 - Teachers, not books, were best way to pass on knowledge

Moses brought the “**Ten Commandments**” down the mountain – Jews were worshipping an idol (Golden Calf) – Moses smashed the commandments

Ten Commandments (“Ten Statements”)

1. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of slavery in Egypt.
2. You shall have no other gods but me.
3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
4. You shall remember and keep the Sabbath day holy.
5. Honor your father and mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

Moses executes those responsible

Moses spends another 40 days on Mt. Sinai – comes down with set #2

- sign that God has forgiven
- **Yom Kippur**

TANAKH

Jewish Bible

- **Torah** (TA)
 - **Pentateuch**
 - **Genesis** – beginning
 - **Exodus** – leaving Egypt
 - **Leviticus** – instructions of Temple service/sacrifice
 - **Numbers** – Jews in desert as they approach “Promise Land”
 - Joshua
 - **Deuteronomy** – speech from Moses – recounting history and covenant with God and that God would ensure their survival
- **Neviim** (NAK) (Prophets – Joshua, Samuel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc...)
- **Ketuvim** (KH) (writings – Psalms, Proverbs, Job, etc...)

HALAKAH

- Jewish law in its entirety
 - Mitzvot
 - Rabbinic Law (“Takkanah”)
 - customs (“Minhag”)

Moses places both sets of tablets inside “**ARK OF THE COVENANT**”

- used to connect with God
- “Clouds of Glory” – “Shechina” glory of God – God’s infinite presence
- tangible sign that God was with the Jews
- miracles happened daily

After a year at Mount Sinai, the Jewish people pack up their portable sanctuary and come to the borders of the Land of Israel. They should have entered the land at this point, but the Jewish people came to Moses and said, “Wait a minute, let’s scout out the land first before we enter.”

- they select 12 “scouts” or “spies”
 - one from each of the 12 tribes
- send them in to do some reconnaissance work.

We have to spend a little time talking about the tragedy of the spies, because the implication of this event is going to reverberate throughout all of Jewish history. It's going to put into place one of the most significant and certainly most depressing dates in the Jewish calendar -- the Ninth of Av -- Tisha B'Av.

- Virtually every major disaster in Jewish history is going to be connected to the Ninth of Av
 - which is also the exact date when both the first and second Temples were destroyed.

Again, actions of the Jews have huge consequences which reverberate throughout history. Jews have suffered throughout history because of that mistake they made "back then." So what was the terrible mistake of the spies?

- These 12 spies spend 40 days scouting out the land and they come back with a huge cluster of grapes saying, "You all see the size of these grapes? You should see the size of some of the people who eat them. They are giants! No way can we beat them. We may as well go back to Egypt."(1)
- Only two of the spies dissent from this report
 - Joshua
 - Caleb

Even at the urging of Moses, the Jewish people accept the majority report of the spies and refuse to budge.

- Moses is absolutely horrified and God is very angry
- God issues 2 punishments:
 - 1) God tells the Jews that because they displayed this lack of faith after He had brought them so far, they are doomed to wander in the desert for 40 years
 - 1 year for every day they spied out the land...until the entire adult male population, except for the Levites who did not listen to the spies had died off
 - the women, who always carried the standard of faith in Judaism, didn't listen to the spies and lived to go into the land
 - 2) God tells the Jews that because they cried on this day for no good reason, they will cry on this day in history for some very good reasons

DEATH OF MOSES

- Jews wander in the desert for 40 years
- Near the end of the 40 years of wandering, they find themselves, as they did a number of times before without water
 - as the Jews did a number of times before, they complain
 - God tells Moses to speak to the rock and water will flow

For the past 40 years Moses has had the hardest job on the planet earth, leading an unruly group of people God himself described as "stiff-necked."

- so after 40 years of trying to lead this stubborn nation, Moses loses his temper
- "You rebels!" he shouts. And instead of speaking to the rock as he was commanded to do, he hits it.

God says to Moses, "Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Israel, you're not going to go into the Land of Israel with the Jewish people." (Numbers. 20:12)

The Sages say that anger is a form of idolatry, because if God runs the world, then everything that happens to you, whether for bad or for good, is the will of God

- losing your temper is a form of denial that God is running the world, a rejection of the idea that whatever happens is for your own good
- for Moses, the ultimate prophet to whom God spoke face-to-face, to get angry even for a few seconds, the consequences are awesome...It's a desecration of God's name, done publicly in front of the Jewish people
 - Moses, of course, sees his error right away and accepts God's judgment.

Moses now prepares the people for their entry into the Promised Land

When **Deuteronomy** begins, Moses already knows he's not destined to bring the Jewish people into the Land of Israel, and this entire book is Moses' farewell address to the people

- Moses reviews the commandments, and reiterates the Jewish national mission
- the most common idea he repeats over and over again is: "Keep the Torah."
- In a nutshell, Moses says, "If you keep the laws between 'man and God' and between 'man and man', everything will go fine for you. No other nation will touch you. You'll have material prosperity, and you will live to change the world. But if you don't keep the Torah, if you break your end of the bargain, then the land will vomit you out, your enemies will attack, and you will suffer."
- The message is clear, the solution to all our problems has nothing to do with external threats...external threats are merely symptoms of the deeper problem which is always the Jewish people not keeping their side of the bargain. It always has to do with the Jews' relationship to each other and their relationship to God.

Prior to his death, Moses completes the writing of the first **Torah** scroll

- It was placed in the Ark of the Covenant and eventually in the Holy of Holies in the Temple
- he writes another twelve scrolls for each of the twelve tribes

1272 BC after delivering his final message, Moses died

- **Joshua** took Jews into "**Promise Land**"
- sent spies to Jericho
 - **Rahab** hid the spies

Battle of Jericho

- 1st battle
- entrance to the heartland of Canaan
- crossing of the Jordan the river grew dry as soon as the feet of the priests carrying the Ark touched its waters, and remained so until the priests, with the Ark, left the river, after the people had passed over
- circled Jericho once everyday for 6 days on the 7th day they marched around the walls 7x
 - 7 priests blew rams horns and the soldiers shouted and the walls crumbled
 - God commanded to take no booty
 - Every man, woman, child were killed, except for Rahab and her family

JEWISH MONARCHY

1030 BC **Saul**

- 1st king

1010 BC **David**

- greatest leader
- fought **Goliath**
- established **Jerusalem** as capital of Israel

961 BC **Solomon**

- built the 1st **TEMPLE**
 - oppressive / heavy taxes
 - God was in Temple
 - Ark of the Covenant in the "**Holy of Holies**"

- 920 BC After Solomon died, **Rehobaum** (son) became leader
- some counseled him to ease up from Solomon's harsh policies and others counseled to also show them that he was the new boss
 - went with the latter and continued the harsh policies

ISRAEL SPLITS

- 796 BC Northern tribes = **ISRAEL**
Southern tribes = **JUDAH**
- Jerusalem

Jeroboam becomes leader of **Israel** (Northern kingdom)

- chief concern is keeping his power
- knows Jews in north are still connected to Temple in Jerusalem
 - during Passover, Shavout, Sukkot, Jews go to the Temple in Jerusalem
- he fears this could bring a re-unification with Judah and lessening of his power
- Jeroboam builds 2 temples in Israel
 - uses golden calves – NO, NO!!!!
 - Israel goes more 3+ years without rain as a judgment for their idolatry

RISE OF PROPHETS

denounce injustice / preach morality / predict future

Prophet Elijah

- trying to get Jews to repent
 - calls for showdown with King Ahab and his priests of Baal (over 450 priests)
 - 1 Kings 18
 - each side given d a sacrificial bull
 - whichever deity sends fire to consume the bull would be accepted as the true God
 - Priests of Baal waited all day, but nothing happened
 - began to shout louder
 - began to cut themselves with swords and spears
 - Elijah tells people to pour water over his sacrificial bull
 - prays to God
 - God sends fire which consumes bull and the entire altar
 - Jews respond "The Lord He is God, the Lord He is God" (said at end of Yom Kippur)
 - God ends 3+ year drought

JEWS RESUME IDOL WORSHIP

Jews still not keeping their covenant with God

722 BC **Assyrians** conquer/destroy **Israel**

- 597 BC **Babylonians** attack **Judah**
- Led by **Nebuchadnezzar**
 - destroy **Temple**
 - "**Babylonian Captivity**"
 - took best and brightest
 - lessen rebellion

- ironically – helps Judaism continue
 - forced change

Prophet Ezekiel

- searching for answers from God
- ANSWER...God was mobile / present everywhere
- beginning of **Synagogues**
 - 2 requirements
 1. 10 adult Jewish males
 2. Torah

Prophet Isaiah

- God is not only Israel's Lord, but ultimately the God of all people
- It teaches that Israel's mission is to become a "**light to the nations**" and that the entire world will one day honor God at Jerusalem infrastructure established

Belshazzar

- son of **Nebuchadnezzar**
- feels God has abandoned the Jews and will not return them to Israel
- he throws a feast to honor his gods
 - uses the sacred cups from the Temple to drink from
 - an unattached hand writes on the wall, but no one can decipher, so **Daniel** is called
 - "God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end...your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians." (Daniel 5:25-28)
 - THAT NIGHT MEDES / PERSIANS ATTACK AND THE BABYLONIANS ARE DESTROYED