

Rabbi's Column

Some would say that the tough part is over for our ancestors. They have left the land of oppression and succeeded in washing away the bridges that might have encouraged them to return to the oppressive slavery they knew.

For Moses, this stage of events is far more difficult than the previous set had been. While there are no outside enemies seeking his death or discredit, there is an entire people to forge from a largish family into a tribal nation. This week he begins the process by taking advice and encouraging communication. Jethro's advice is simple: Not even you can do everything, so delegate! [It is difficult when your role model for leadership is God to formulate something that works for humans.]

Everything leads up this week to the Big 10, although the more practical details have to wait for another week. To sum up the Big 10:

1. You get to listen to Me because I am YHVH.
2. You cannot visually perceive Me, so do not pretend that anything you might see could be Me.
3. I have a certain reputation I would like to uphold, and if you mess with that by your actions or by making use of my reputation for selfish reasons, I am not all that interested in forgetting or forgiving.
4. You are going to need lots of practice at being free, so do what I did and stop working every time the day I stopped arrive. Everyone should make this a special day - this includes your family, your staff, your friends, your critters and your homeless.
5. You are a large family, so practice being nice to each other by honoring the people who helped you get here.
6. I spent some time prepping the universe for your arrival, so none of you should try to murder anybody.
7. Being married is hard. (I'll tell you later about what to do when it doesn't work out.) Do not mess with a marriage..
8. Do not take things. [There is one theory that says this really means "do not steal a person"; others broaden this to include intangibles like trust (which means do not lie to people in general)]
9. Do not reply concerning a friend or neighbor with a lie. [Please note that silence is not forbidden,]
10. Do not be so interested in owning what somebody else has to the extent that rather than get it in the same fashion they or their ancestors did, you decide to skip the middleman and work out a way to deprive them of it. (This should keep you from one source of temptation to break 6-9.)

May the day come in our lifetimes that everyone will be concerned about how well they themselves are following the Big 10, and less concerned about how well everyone else is doing.