

Shavuot 2024: An "Additional" Ten Commandments For Shavuot 2024

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For over two thousand years humanity lived in darkness and confusion. The human imagination could not imagine a One G-d responsible for all creation, who scrutinized human behavior and held them morally accountable. In a tangled world of multiple gods, no common baseline of moral behavior emerged.

The chaos and moral anarchy continued until, finally, God Hashem delivered His word and His will to our nation. We were selected to live a godlike lifestyle, obeying a system of 613 eternal divine mitzvot which permeate every aspect of human experience.

Additionally, Hashem God summarized this elaborate network of mitzvot by issuing ten foundational commandments which, like to the stony luchot tablets upon which they were etched, are absolute and unchanging. The Ten Commandments, by underscoring immutable religious and moral responsibilities, provided moral clarity to a muddled world.

We are living through a baffling period of history. Our people and our land were viciously attacked and, yet we are blamed and denounced with baseless and spurious claims. The world around has gone berserk with hatred and antisemitism. This Shavuot, alongside the Ten Commandments of Sinai we require ten additional "commandments" or ten guiding principles to provide clarity and sanity during our age of bewilderment.

Here are ten fundamental doctrines regarding Israel, Jewish destiny, and Jewish universalism.

- I. Hashem chose us as His people, tasking us with inspiring the world to higher religious and moral ground. We were awarded His land of Israel to better broadcast our divine message. In an ideal condition, Jewish presence in Israel provides broader benefit to the entire world. Jewish settlement of Israel is both a nationalist and universalist agenda.

- II. We broke history. Originally, we were intended to establish a Jewish homeland and monarchy in Israel and to educate humanity through the nation state we assembled. After our repeated betrayals of Hashem, we were expelled from Israel and, for the past two thousand years we have lived on the margins of history and of society. We are slowly repairing that rupture and gradually reconvening Jews into our ancient homeland. This gathering will not be swift, nor will it be easy. We continue to face domestic challenges and international opposition. Repairing historical breakdowns takes time.
- III. Anti-Semitism is woven into the fabric of history. We serve as the moral and religious conscience of humanity, and no one likes a whistle blower. Though antisemitism can be traced to political, economic, ethnic, and sociological factors it stems from the larger truth that we challenge the world to higher ground. As antisemitism is programmed into history it will only end when history ends. Over the past few decades, education and legislation have succeeded in dramatically curbing this hatred. Yet, despite our best efforts, the monster still lives. Just when we thought that Jew-hatred was a relic of an oppressive medieval past we were reminded that it is still very much alive. It will only end when history itself ends.
- IV. For years we were cast as outsiders, a sub-human race of religious infidels unfit for membership in general society. We were both hated *and* marginalized. We weren't viewed as central, or even relevant to human history. Now that we have returned to Israel the tables of history have turned. Our battle to defend our homeland lies at the center of a larger global battle of ideas. This is unsurprising. Israel is the land where human history began and where human history will end. We know it and, subliminally, the entire world knows it. For this reason, Jewish presence in the land of God is so hotly contested, and for this reason the battle over the land of Israel is integrated within a larger ideological and cultural struggle.
- V. Arab violence against Jews has absolutely nothing to do with borders, refugees, or any other political factor. Regarded as

religious heretics, Jews were discriminated against in Arab countries well before the state of Israel was conceived. We faced dozens of blood libels and pogroms unrelated to Jewish settlement of Israel. In the past two centuries our constant willingness to negotiate peacefully was met with Arab inflexibility and intransigence. We were not the aggressors on October 7th and have never been the aggressors in our peaceful attempt to settle a small parcel of our ancient homeland. Sadly, had the Arabs not been so consumed with hatred and violence we would have long ago converted the Middle East into an oasis of prosperity. But history is too confusing for a tik-tok generation of protesters with attention spans no longer than 15 seconds.

- VI. The application of "International law" to Israel has become farcical. International bodies, established to supervise and enforce international behavior, have been hijacked by political interest groups and have been weaponized against our people. Condemning Israel in the UN or prosecuting us in the Hague provides the appearance of legitimacy to vile and repugnant Jew-hatred. Antisemitism has always taken two forms: raw violence by mobs complemented with governmental legislation. This wave is no different. We face both military and legislative antisemitism. Nothing about this war has violated international law, though we may have violated the verdicts of kangaroo courts manipulated by antisemites. Block out the noise.
- VII. The sky isn't falling upon our people. We have suffered a horrible tragedy, and there is no easy or quick solution upon the horizon. However, the condition of our people has never been better in the past two thousand years. Despite our ongoing struggles, Jewish history has made dramatic strides. Our ancestors, who suffered far worse hardships, would gladly trade places with us. It is specifically during dark and depressing periods that historical perspective is crucial.
- VIII. We are responsible to lead a moral lifestyle and to conduct warfare ethically. We avoid indiscriminate bombing not only to appease international opinion but because of our own moral

code. As the people of Hashem, we are expected to try, as best we can, to protect innocent civilians. Hamas murderers and their accomplices must be killed or arrested but, to the degree possible, innocents must be protected. The unfortunate loss of civilian life is completely the responsibility of maniacal terrorists who exploit them as human shields. Battling murderers who have embedded themselves within citizens, we have conducted the most moral war in the annals of military history. Block out the cacophony of Israel bashing, and keep your sanity, while the rest of the world loses theirs.

- IX. The easiest way to repel hate is to retaliate with our own hatred, and this certainly hasn't been humanity's finest hour. However, in response to this loathing we cannot become misanthropic or lose hope in human potential. Currently, the world is very confused. People of higher education from whom we expect more, are acting foolishly and embarrassingly. Yet we must continue to believe in the divine potential of every human being and hope that, one day, our current enemies will become our audiences as we deliver spiritual and cultural restoration. If we abandon this hope, we abdicate Jewish mission.
- X. We know how history ends. Knowing the ending doesn't excuse us from struggling with history and attempting to improve it. However, as gloomy as our current situation may be, we know how this all ends. What we don't know is how quickly it ends and whose shoulders carry history to the finish line. One manner of negotiating tragedy is by taking the long view of Jewish history.

Ten historical commandments for this year's Shavuot.

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