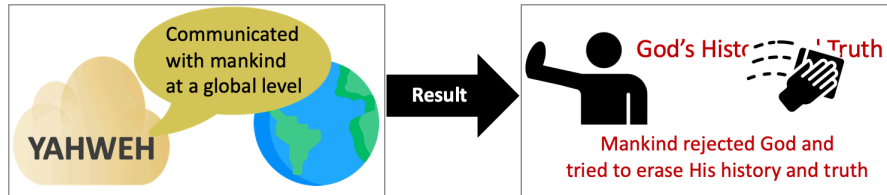


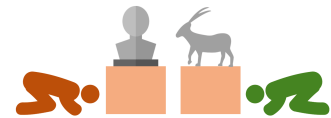
9. God Revealed His Standards – Part 1

Previously...

We learnt that from the first man and woman at Creation to the generations after the Global Flood, Yahweh shared information about Himself and about world history at a global level. However, the majority of the people chose to reject Him.



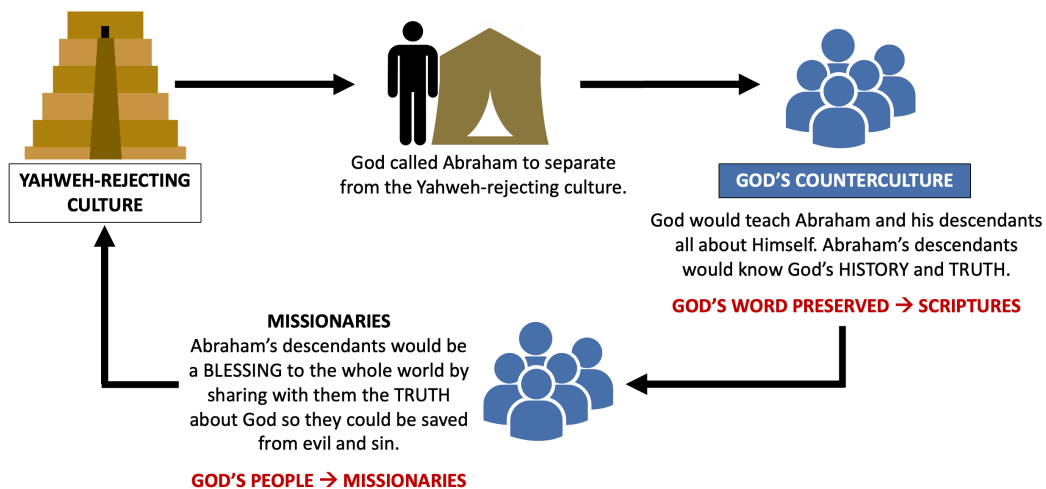
Many of them created handmade gods for themselves by working with wood, metal, gold and silver. They then assigned powers to these gods, choosing to believe that the different gods were in charge of different aspects of nature or particular geographical locations.



Others chose to make themselves their own ultimate authority, seeking to make their own name famous. Their rejection of Yahweh and all that was good would lead them to the Second Death.



Yahweh, in His mercy, still wanted to provide a way for mankind to be saved from this eternal death. So He decided to work through Abraham. Yahweh would reveal Himself to Abraham and his family so they would know Him. Then they would record His Word and make it available to the world so all mankind across the generations would also have access to God's history. The plan was also for Abraham's family to share the message of God and how to be saved from eternal death with the whole world.

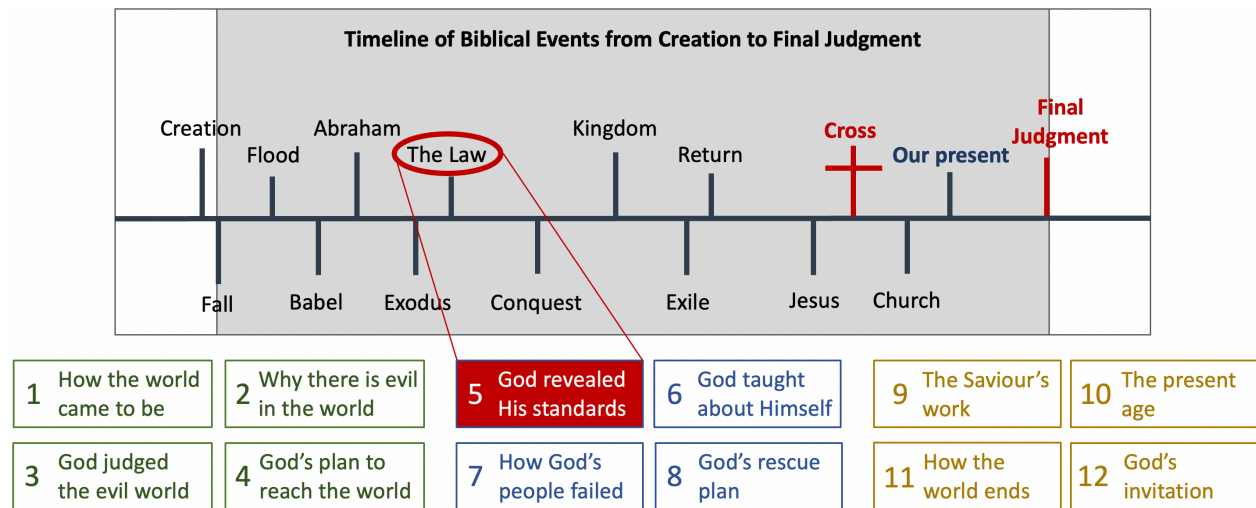


When Yahweh approached Abraham and promised him land and descendants, and told him that he would be a blessing to the whole world, Abraham believed what He said.



God kept His promise by giving Abraham a son, and from that son, Isaac, God grew Abraham’s family into the nation of Israel. As He promised, God protected them and later on, saved them out of Egypt at the time of the Exodus.

But what was God going to do with Israel now that He had got them safely out of slavery in Egypt? This is what we will be looking at in this lesson.

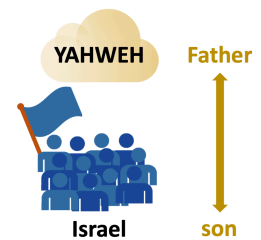


YAHWEH’S RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL

While they were still slaves in Egypt, God had said that His relationship to the entire nation of Israel was that of Father and son.

Hosea 11:1

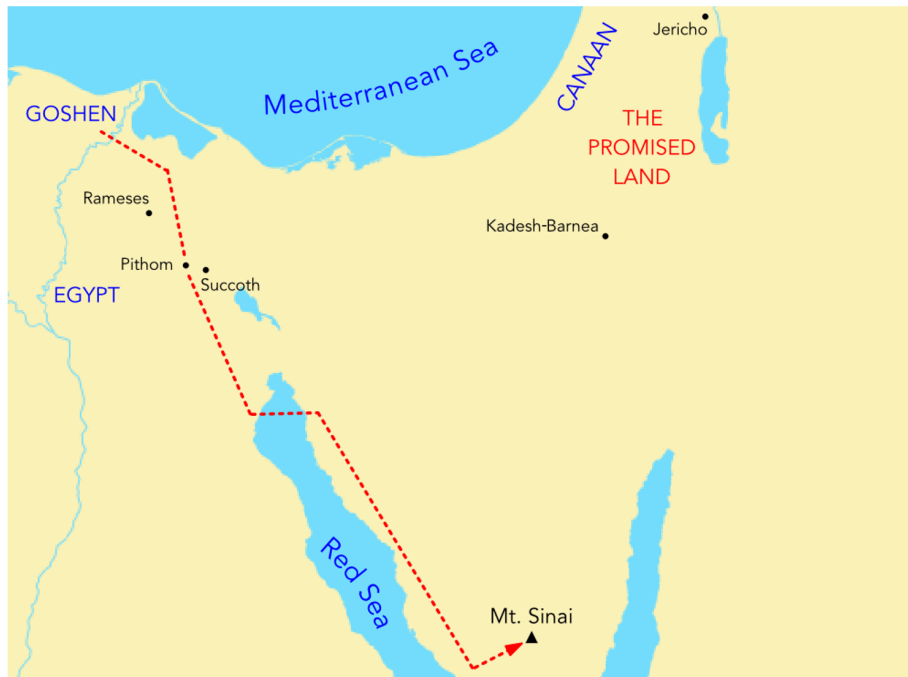
“When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and I called my son out of Egypt.”



But how did Israel become God’s son? It was through God sovereignly choosing Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and then the nation of Israel to be His people.



After the Exodus, God brought the people to Mount Sinai.



Yahweh was going to teach Israel more about the Father-son relationship that they were to enjoy. This was going to be a time of nation building when God would give them their law, national anthem and national holiday calendar, including their feasts and festivals. He was also going to teach them how to approach Him and relate to Him.

Why was Yahweh doing this? If Israel was to be a counterculture to the Yahweh-rejecting world, they would need:

- **Firstly, to learn more about Yahweh.**

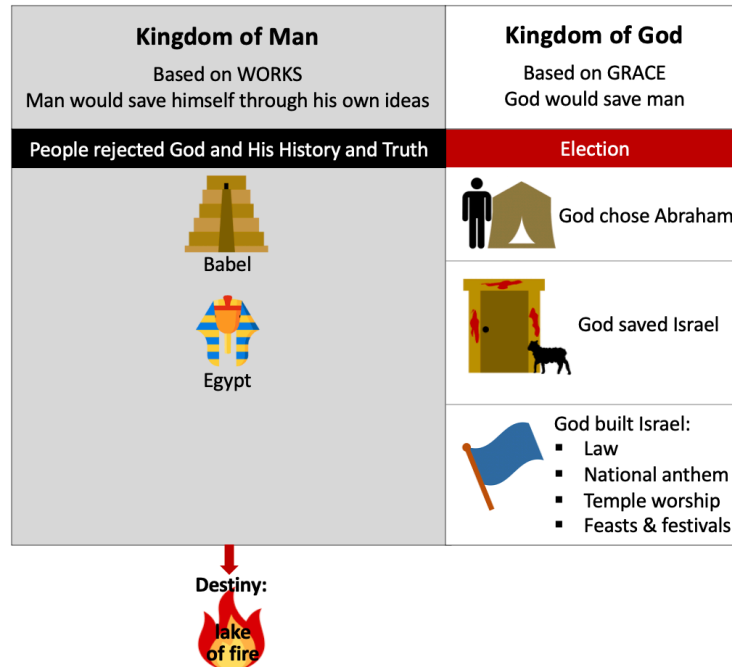
In receiving their law from Yahweh, they would be able to better understand who He was, what He was like and what He expected of mankind.

- **Secondly, to know how to live in a visibly different way from the rest of the cultures of the world.**

Their national calendar, feasts and festivals, as well as how they worshipped Yahweh would make them visibly different from others. But, more than that, the law would also instruct them on how they were to treat each other and also people from other cultures. Yahweh intended Israel to live very differently from the other cultures around them.

The people in Babel and Egypt both rejected Yahweh. They wanted to live life and build society independent of the Creator-God. They thought that whatever they made up in their minds to believe, was the truth.

However, even if they ignored Yahweh, because He is the Creator-Owner of the entire universe, they would still be accountable to Him for their choices. And their choice would lead to death.



So God’s plan with the nation of Israel was very important for the benefit of the whole world. To show how serious He was about working with Israel, Yahweh made another covenant. This time, the contract was with the entire nation of Israel.

But before we look at the contract, we’ll see how God communicated all these things to Israel.

HOW YAHWEH REVEALED HIMSELF TO ISRAEL

At the foot of Mount Sinai where Israel had set up camp, God instructed their leader Moses to prepare the people to listen to His voice as He spoke to them.

We will first read the account of this event in the Bible.



Let’s turn to our Bibles and read Deuteronomy 5:1–33.

(The leader reads aloud. For reference, the verses are also here.)

Deuteronomy 5:1–33

¹ Moses called all the people of Israel together and said, “Listen carefully, Israel. Hear the decrees and regulations I am giving you today, so you may learn them and obey them!”

² “The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Mount Sinai. ³ The LORD did not make this covenant with our ancestors, but with all of us who are alive today. ⁴ At the mountain the LORD spoke to you face to face from the heart of the fire. ⁵ I stood as an intermediary between you and the LORD, for you were afraid of the fire and did not want to approach the mountain. He spoke to me, and I passed his words on to you. This is what he said:

⁶ “I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery.

⁷ “You must not have any other god but me.

⁸ “You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind, or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. ⁹ You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. ¹⁰ But I lavish unending love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands.

¹¹ “You must not misuse the name of the LORD your God. The LORD will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name.

¹² “Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. ¹³ You have six days each week for your ordinary work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your oxen and donkeys and other livestock, and any foreigners living among you. All your male and female servants must rest as you do. ¹⁵ Remember that you were once slaves in Egypt, but the LORD your God brought you out with his strong hand and powerful arm. That is why the LORD your God has commanded you to rest on the Sabbath day.

¹⁶ “Honor your father and mother, as the LORD your God commanded you. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

¹⁷ “You must not murder.

¹⁸ “You must not commit adultery.

¹⁹ “You must not steal.

²⁰ “You must not testify falsely against your neighbor.

²¹ “You must not covet your neighbor’s wife. You must not covet your neighbor’s house or land, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.

²² “The LORD spoke these words to all of you assembled there at the foot of the mountain. He spoke with a loud voice from the heart of the fire, surrounded by clouds and deep darkness. This was all he said at that time, and he wrote his words on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

²³ “But when you heard the voice from the heart of the darkness, while the mountain was blazing with fire, all your tribal leaders and elders came to me. ²⁴ They said, ‘Look, the LORD our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice from the heart of the fire. Today we have seen that God can speak to us humans, and yet we live! ²⁵ But now, why should we risk death again? If the LORD our God speaks to us again, we will certainly die and be consumed by this awesome fire. ²⁶ Can any living thing hear

the voice of the living God from the heart of the fire as we did and yet survive? ²⁷ Go yourself and listen to what the LORD our God says. Then come and tell us everything he tells you, and we will listen and obey.’

²⁸ “The LORD heard the request you made to me. And he said, ‘I have heard what the people said to you, and they are right. ²⁹ Oh, that they would always have hearts like this, that they might fear me and obey all my commands! If they did, they and their descendants would prosper forever. ³⁰ Go and tell them, “Return to your tents.” ³¹ But you stand here with me so I can give you all my commands, decrees, and regulations. You must teach them to the people so they can obey them in the land I am giving them as their possession.”

³² So Moses told the people, “You must be careful to obey all the commands of the LORD your God, following his instructions in every detail. ³³ Stay on the path that the LORD your God has commanded you to follow. Then you will live long and prosperous lives in the land you are about to enter and occupy.

There are a few important things in the passage we just read.

The holy God

Yahweh wanted the people to understand that He is righteous, just and therefore a holy God. He did not want them to make the mistake of thinking He was just a “super-human”. He required them to clearly understand that He is at a totally different level of being than mankind. He is the Creator-Owner and because of that, He is the Judge of all creation.

Creator-Creature Distinction	
1 st level	CREATOR
2 nd level	Creature: what God created

This was why Yahweh appeared to the people in the midst of a blazing fire, dark clouds and deep darkness. Another passage in the Bible added that there was also thunder, lightning, the sound of a long loud blast from a ram’s horn and the violent shaking of the entire mountain.



The frightened leaders of the people rightly understood the message: they could not treat God casually. There was a separation between God and mankind. Sinful mankind could not approach God and live. In fact, this was what God told Moses.

Exodus 19:12

Mark off a boundary all around the mountain. Warn the people, ‘Be careful! Do not go up on the mountain or even touch its boundaries. Anyone who touches the mountain will certainly be put to death.

God was teaching them that sin and evil had separated all of mankind from Him. For mankind to be able to approach God, He would have to make the invitation.

That was why the leaders also rightly asked Moses to be an intermediary for them. They knew they would physically die if they tried to approach God themselves. This was what Moses said.

Deuteronomy 5:5a

I stood as an intermediary between you and the LORD, for you were afraid of the fire and did not want to approach the mountain. He spoke to me, and I passed his words on to you.

Yahweh spoke and wrote

God wanted the people to know who He is. He wanted them to know that He communicates. This was why He allowed them to audibly hear His voice. This was what Moses recorded.

Deuteronomy 5:22a

“The LORD spoke these words to all of you assembled there at the foot of the mountain. He spoke with a loud voice from the heart of the fire, surrounded by clouds and deep darkness. This was all he said at that time, and he wrote his words on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

Yahweh spoke and wrote in Hebrew, the language that the Israelites could understand.

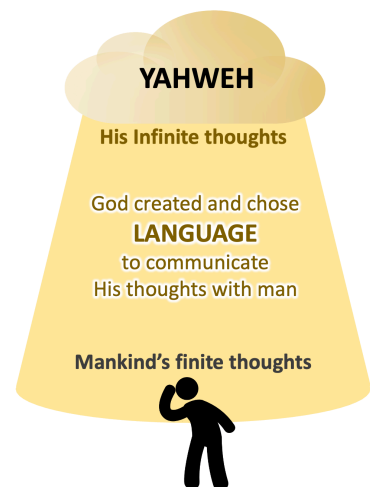
The only way we can get to know a person is if they choose to talk or write to us. Then we will learn who they are, what they think, how they think, or why they think a certain way.

Likewise, the only way the Israelites could know about God was if He revealed Himself to them. God did want the Israelites to know Him, so He chose to use words, verbal and written.

Language is very important to God. The Bible shows that this is Yahweh’s preferred form of communication with mankind. Through His own words, people can know the heart of God.

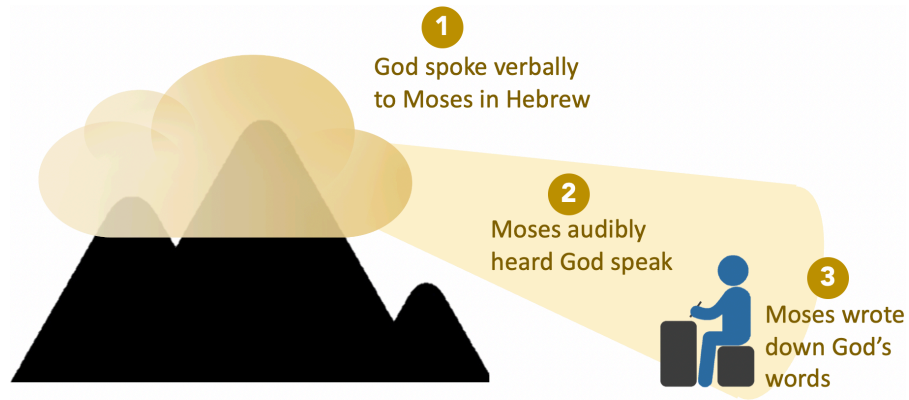
Notice that the people did not “feel” God speaking to them in their minds nor did they have an “impression” of God speaking. They literally heard Yahweh’s voice. Mankind can know God’s thoughts because He speaks.

And Yahweh also wrote. He wrote on two stone tablets for Moses to bring to the people.



Moses wrote

After the people asked Moses to be an intermediary for them, Moses went up the mountain to be with God. There, God spoke to him and Moses recorded His words in the book of the law.



Then God told him to teach the people all that He had said. What's more, every seventh year, God's law was to be publicly read aloud and taught to all the Israelites. God wanted all the people to know and remember His words.

Deuteronomy 5:31, 31:9–13

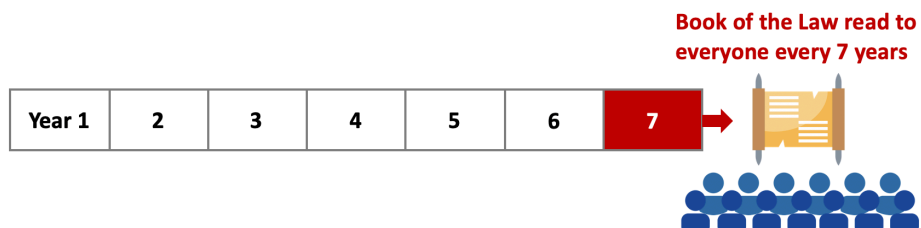
³¹ But you stand here with me so I can give you all my commands, decrees, and regulations. You must teach them to the people so they can obey them in the land I am giving them as their possession.”

⁹ So Moses wrote this entire body of instruction in a book and gave it to the priests, who carried the Ark of the LORD's Covenant, and to the elders of Israel.

¹⁰ Then Moses gave them this command: “At the end of every seventh year, the Year of Release, during the Festival of Shelters, ¹¹ you must read this Book of Instruction to all the people of Israel when they assemble before the LORD your God at the place he chooses.

¹² Call them all together—men, women, children, and the foreigners living in your towns—so they may hear this Book of Instruction and learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully obey all the terms of these instructions.

¹³ Do this so that your children who have not known these instructions will hear them and will learn to fear the LORD your God. Do this as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to occupy.”



Later on, God also told Moses many more things and told him to write everything down for all the people. In fact, it was Moses who wrote the first five books of the Bible based on what God told him.

While God spoke to man from time to time in history, He did not speak continuously. And God did not reveal Himself directly to every generation.






How then would people in the “in-between” generations as well as people in future generations know what God was thinking? They would rely on His written Word. Today, all of God’s revealed and recorded words are found in the Bible. Those who want to get to know Him can go to His revealed word. The Bible records God’s words, thoughts and also His actions. People can see what kind of Person Yahweh is, what His character is like and what His track record looks like.



THE MOSAIC COVENANT

Now that we’ve seen how God communicated with Moses and the Israelites, we’ll learn more about the contract He made with them.

Here is an overview of the Mosaic contract.

		 Mosaic Covenant
 Parties		God and the 12 tribes of Israel (sons of Jacob)
 Promises		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blessings for obeying all the laws • Cursings for disobeying the laws
 Signatories		God (with the sign of the Sabbath)
 Type		Conditional



The parties to the Mosaic Contract

This contract is only between Yahweh and the 12 tribes of Israel.

This is what Yahweh said to them.

Exodus 19:4–6

⁴ ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. ⁶ And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.’ This is the message you must give to the people of Israel.”

God was not showing favouritism when He chose to work specifically with Israel. He gave them a job to do: record His Word and share it with the world.



But He required them to be serious about this job. He required them to behave in a manner worthy of being a kingdom of priests in representing Him to the whole world. So this contract was to guide their behaviour.

The laws He gave were to show them how to live well as a counterculture and be starkly different from the Yahweh-rejecting culture of mankind.

Promises or the legal terms of the Mosaic Contract

To encourage the people to keep the Mosaic law, God promised:

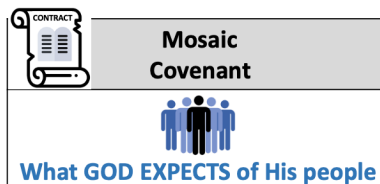
- **blessings** if they kept the law but
- **cursings** or punishment if they violated it.



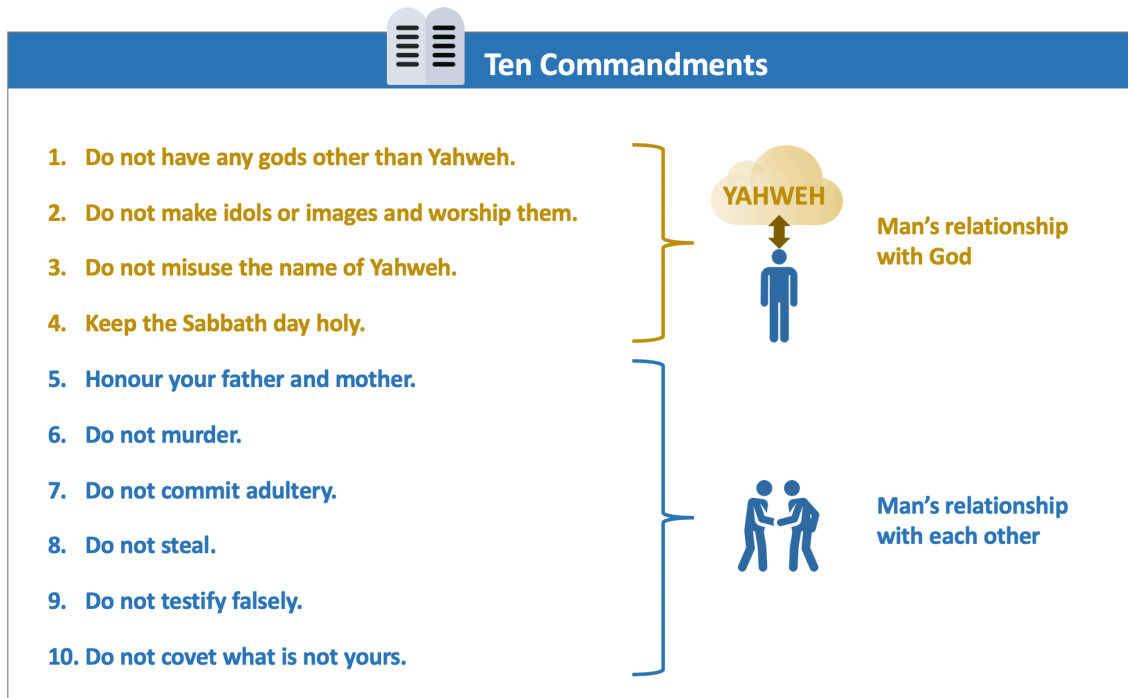
But what was in the law?

There were 613 rules. The rules focused on Yahweh's righteous expectations of His people. They covered all aspects of life. For example:

- What were the "family responsibilities" and "house rules" for a son?
- How were they supposed to relate to God as Father?
- How were they supposed to relate to each other as siblings?



God wrote a summary of the laws on stone tablets. They are called the Ten Commandments.



But Yahweh also told Moses to write out all 613 laws as He spoke audibly to him.

Moses wrote down



The Book of the Law

God wrote down



The Ten Commandments

The 613 laws were comprehensive and addressed all areas of practical daily life that would have been of concern to the Israelites. They covered areas such as: health, cleanliness, medical treatment, the justice system, the criminal system, business terms with each other, family matters, social interactions, community, war, dietary laws, agriculture matters, etc.

We might think that 613 laws are a lot. But actually, they are very compact yet comprehensive.

As a comparison, even in a relatively young country like the United States of America, no one knows exactly how many laws there are because the number is so great. For example, in 2015, it was estimated that there were 5,000 federal criminal laws and 100,000–300,000 criminally enforceable regulations.¹ And that is just regarding the criminal code. So 613 laws are not a lot at all!

To encourage the Israelites to take His law seriously, God said:

- If they kept their side of the contract (obeyed the Law), God would bless them.
- If they broke their side of the contract (disobeyed the Law), God would curse them.

At Creation, God made a 24-hour day cycle and the earth reflects that cycle because it takes 24 hours to complete one full rotation on its axis. A year is measured by how long the earth takes to complete one orbit around the sun.



However, there is no astrophysical reason why a week has to be seven days, aside from the fact that God did it that way. In this way, the Sabbath was God’s signature, a mark of His sovereignty as Creator-God. And God told the Israelites to observe this day.

Exodus 20:8–11

⁸ “Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ You have six days each week for your ordinary work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.

With regards to the Mosaic contract, God said that the Sabbath was His contract signature.

Exodus 31:12–13








¹² The LORD then gave these instructions to Moses: ¹³ “Tell the people of Israel: ‘Be careful to keep my Sabbath day, for the Sabbath is a sign of the covenant between me and you from generation to generation. It is given so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.



Type of contract

The Mosaic Covenant was the only conditional contract that God made with His people. This meant that the nation of Israel had obligations to fulfil.

All other contracts before and after this were unconditional. This means that God alone would keep the promises in those contracts. Those did not depend on whether or not Israel was obedient. This is because unconditional contracts are a reflection of God’s faithful promise-keeping character.

	 Noahic Covenant	 Abrahamic Covenant	 Mosaic Covenant
 Parties	God, mankind, animals	God, Abraham and descendants	God and the 12 tribes of Israel (sons of Jacob)
 Promises	No future global floods	Land, descendants, worldwide blessing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blessings for obeying all the laws • Cursings for disobeying the laws
 Signatories	God alone (with the rainbow)	God alone (with the animal halves)	God (with the sign of the Sabbath)
 Type	Unconditional	Unconditional	Conditional

What happened next?

When we study the 613 laws that Yahweh gave Israel, we actually learn more about His perspective, values and standards of righteousness. In the next lesson, we will examine one very important aspect of God that impacts all mankind—how God defines justice.



Bible reading for review

Deuteronomy 5–6; Leviticus 26

Endnotes

¹ Vespa, Matt. “How Many Federal Laws Are There Again?” *Townhall*, 6 June 2015, <https://townhall.com/tipsheet/mattvespa/2015/06/06/how-many-federal-laws-are-there-again-n2009184>. (Accessed 18 Jun 2021.)

In addition, see also:

Rahman, Shameema. “Frequent Reference Question: How Many Federal Laws Are There?” *Library of Congress*, 12 March 2013, <https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2013/03/frequent-reference-question-how-many-federal-laws-are-there/>. (Accessed 18 Jun 2021.)