

# 10. God Revealed His Standards – Part 2

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## Previously...

After Yahweh rescued Abraham’s descendants from Egypt, He brought them to Mount Sinai. This generation had been slaves in Egypt, but now, they were an independent nation led by Yahweh.

God did not want them to live like the other God-rejecting nations around them. He wanted Israel to be a counterculture and a good example of the kind of relationship God wanted to have with mankind.

So Yahweh began a time of nation building. He spoke audibly to the people to tell them how they were to relate to Him as their Father and how He expected them to relate to each other. Specifically, He gave the nation of Israel 613 laws. Yahweh Himself wrote a summary of the laws on two stone tablets while Moses wrote the laws into a book.

Moses wrote down



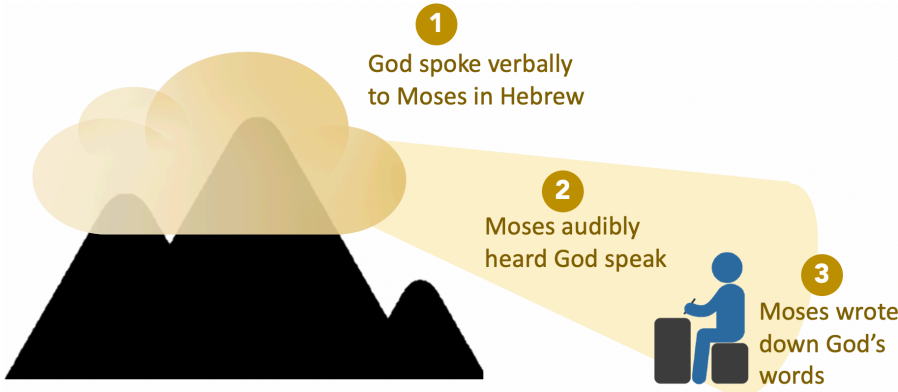
The Book of the Law

God wrote down



The Ten Commandments






Importantly, we learnt that Yahweh spoke audibly in a human language that Moses and the people could understand. The people didn’t imagine, dream or feel God communicate to them. When God spoke, it was public revelation that everyone there could verify.



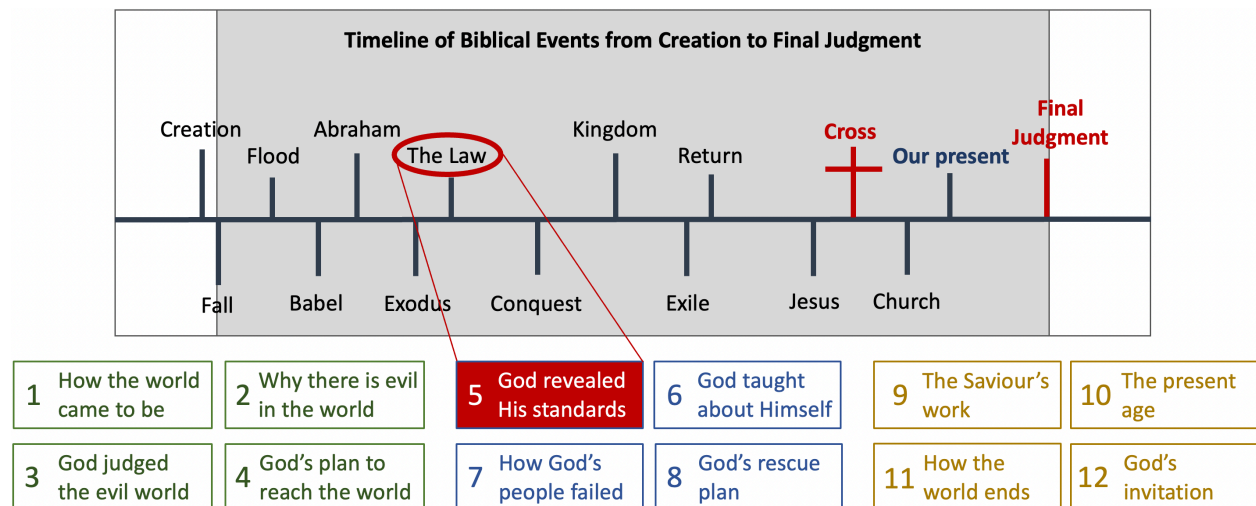
But because God’s plan was to work through Abraham’s descendants, the nation of Israel, to reach the world, He wanted to encourage them to take His laws seriously. So God made a contract with them. If they obeyed His laws, He would bless them abundantly.

But on the other hand, if they rebelled against His laws and therefore be useless at representing Him to the world, then He would discipline them to encourage them to change their mind about how they were behaving.

This contract, known as the Mosaic Covenant, was conditional. The people had obligations to fulfil. The people needed to decide how they would respond to Yahweh and His law.

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

Within the law itself, we learn very interesting things about what Yahweh is like and what He values. In this lesson, we will look at God’s standards regarding justice.



## GOD TEACHES ABOUT JUSTICE THROUGH THE LAW

If we study the 613 laws that Yahweh gave, we begin to better understand His character, how He sees things, and therefore why He gave certain instructions. Here is one very important thing we learn through the law—how God defines justice.

### Restitution: How God sees justice


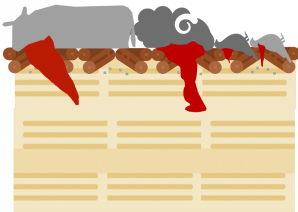

When Adam and Eve rebelled against Yahweh, He did something very curious. He killed animals, skinned them and covered the man and woman’s nakedness and shame with the skins or hides.

**Genesis 3:21**

And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.



And as time moved on, the Bible records other instances of the killing of animals.

Abel kills animals as an offering to God	Noah sacrifices animals after the Flood	Abraham sacrifices animals in the covenant ceremony
<p><b>Genesis 4:4</b> Abel also brought a gift—<u>the best portions</u> of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift,</p> 	<p><b>Genesis 8:20–21a</b> <sup>20</sup> Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and there <u>he sacrificed as burnt offerings the animals and birds</u> that had been approved for that purpose. <sup>21</sup> And the LORD was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice</p> 	<p><b>Genesis 15:9–10a</b> <sup>9</sup> The LORD told him, “Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” <sup>10</sup> So <u>Abram presented all these to him and killed them.</u></p> 

Though the Bible does not record what God said to Adam and Eve about sacrifices, He must have explained it to them to a certain degree for they knew to pass along the information to their descendants. Abel, Noah and Abraham must have learnt about Yahweh's plan for the offspring of the woman to be the Saviour. And they learnt how the animal sacrifices pictured the work that the Saviour would do. And they made sacrifices according to Yahweh's instructions.

Some people reading these biblical accounts might be repulsed by all the blood. However, in giving the Mosaic Law, Yahweh recorded in detail what was going on.

## 1. As Creator-Owner of the universe, Yahweh has the right to set the rules and give the law

Because Yahweh is the infinite, righteous Creator-Owner of everything that is in existence, He has the right to set the rules.

For example, if you create an art piece, you are the owner of that art piece. If you found a business, you are the owner of the business. You have the right to do what you want with both the art and the business. You have the right to set the rules with regards to the art piece and the business. That is what it means to be the creator and owner. Those are your rights.



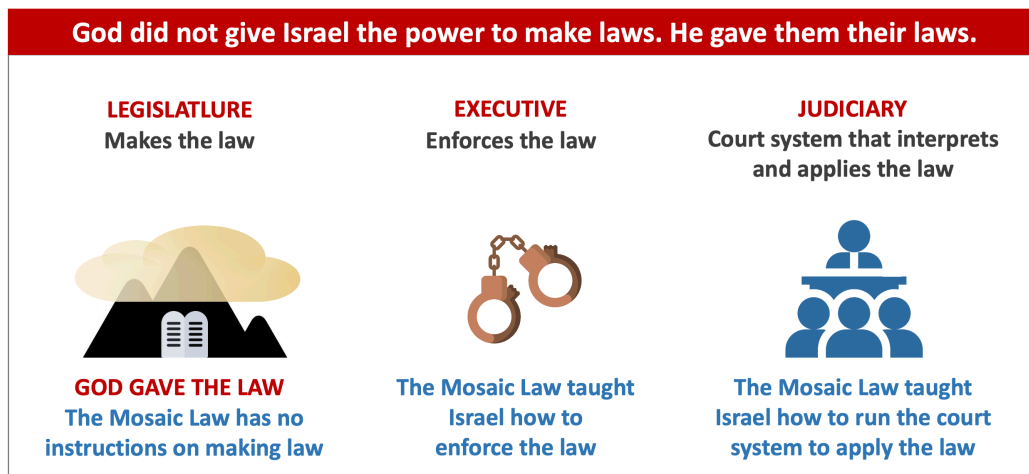
We saw that at the time of Creation, Yahweh, as Creator-Owner, gave Adam one rule.

### Genesis 2:16–17a

<sup>16</sup> But the LORD God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— <sup>17</sup> except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

And at Mount Sinai, Yahweh gave the Israelites their law. While God gave Israel instructions on how to run the nation (executive power) and on how the court system should work (judicial power), none of the 613 laws gave them the authority to make new laws (no legislative power).

God was showing that He alone was the lawgiver and lawmaker. This is because He alone is the Creator-Owner of mankind.



## 2. Yahweh’s definition of “justice” is based upon restitution

In giving the Mosaic Law, God explained that justice means restitution.

“Restitution” is to fix a situation so that whatever is lost or stolen is returned to the rightful owner. This is God’s heart and plan for justice: to put right what was made wrong.

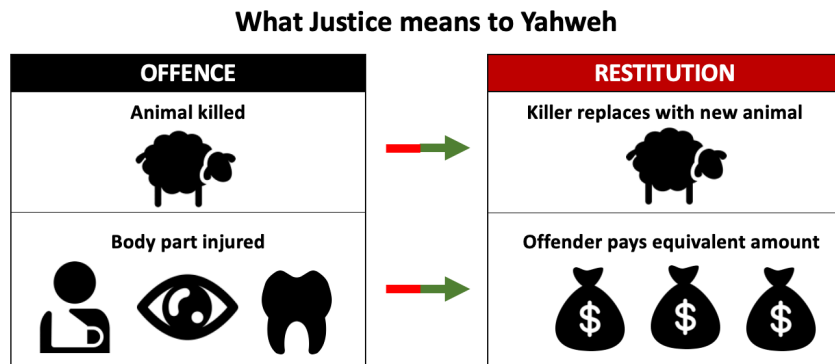
For example, this is what God said in His Law:

### Leviticus 24:18–20

<sup>18</sup> “Anyone who kills another person’s animal must pay for it in full—a live animal for the animal that was killed.

<sup>19</sup> “Anyone who injures another person must be dealt with according to the injury inflicted—  
<sup>20</sup> a fracture for a fracture, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Whatever anyone does to injure another person must be paid back in kind.

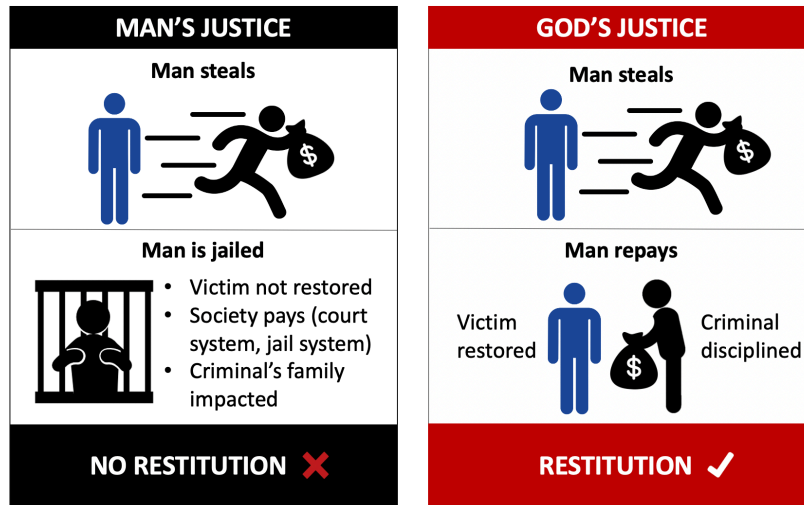
This means that when someone steals an ox, the penalty would be to repay an ox to the one he stole from. This is fair and just.



Contrast this with how many nations today would deal with theft in this scenario:

- i. The thief is thrown into jail, meaning he cannot earn a living to support his family.
- ii. While in jail, the state has to house and feed him, using up taxpayers’ money.
- iii. The thief’s family often suffers from the lack of income and has to go on welfare, using up even more taxpayers’ money.
- iv. The victim doesn’t get his stolen property back.
- v. The victim claims insurance for his loss, meaning insurance buyers together fund his claim.

This way of dealing with theft penalises the entire society.



On the other hand, God's law does not put the thief out of work but instead, forces him to pay for his crime. That is what God considers just. The person who committed the crime pays for it himself.

God's laws are also based on the principle that the penalty must be proportionate to the crime and not overly severe.

When God's law refers to an "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth", some people misunderstand and think God is teaching retaliation. It is not. The law is talking about an appropriate, fair and equal-value penalty for the crime committed. God is saying that that the guilty one should not pay back too little or too much. The payment should match the value of what was lost or damaged. This is what God considers fair and appropriate.

So we see that "justice" to God means that the full value of what is lost, is repaid.

### 3. All rebellion against God results in the penalty of death

Rebellion against the Creator-God of the universe is such a serious crime that the only fitting penalty is the forfeiting of one's life, that is, death. This is what God said in warning Adam.

#### **Genesis 2:16–17**

- <sup>16</sup> But the LORD God warned him, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—  
<sup>17</sup> except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die."

God gave Adam just one rule.

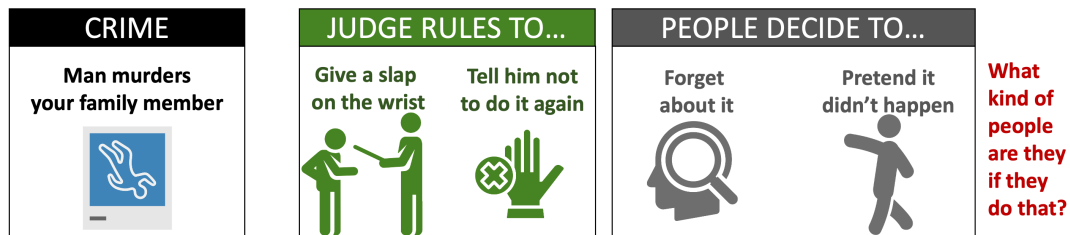
- If Adam valued God and their relationship, he would not eat the forbidden fruit.
- If Adam rejected God's warning and their relationship, he would eat the fruit.

But why was death the only appropriate penalty?





Here is an example. If your family member was murdered:

- Would there be justice if the murderer only received a slap on the wrist and was told to try harder not to kill anymore? No!
- Would there be justice if everyone chose to forget about the crime and pretended it had not happened? Again, no.


In fact, we would start to question what kind of people they all were, to ignore a horrible crime and to treat it so carelessly. The murderer would have to be held accountable for destroying a life. The seriousness of the crime demands an equally serious punishment.



Similarly, Yahweh created the world and mankind, and established an intimate relationship with people. When Adam and Eve murdered their relationship with God, it was an act of destruction that resulted in severe consequences for themselves and the whole universe.

- Adam and Eve corrupted their innocent nature when they rebelled against God. From then on, all their descendants were born with the same corrupted nature and were separated from God. Thus all people are bound for the lake of fire. 
- And while alive, all mankind suffers from illness, abnormalities and disabilities, diseases and brokenness, whether physical, emotional or mental. 
- Nature also suffers from abnormalities like hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, etc. 
- Animals also suffer from diseases and sickness; they are preyed upon by other animals and some even turn against humans and attack them. 

Yahweh could not pretend that the Fall didn't happen. And He couldn't just give mankind a slap on the wrist. Because He is all-good, He must deal with the situation and provide real justice. Real justice to Yahweh is restitution.

This means that in the case of mankind killing their relationship with the all-good God resulting in destruction to the whole world, God demands that the killers pay for the crime with their own lives. The seriousness of the punishment indicates the severity of the crime. For God to destroy something as precious as life meant that the sin was very severe. 

No amount of money or goods could restore the relationship and reverse the consequences that the whole world now suffers from. The only fair, appropriate and equal-value payment was for the killers to lose their lives.

#### 4. Yahweh, in His mercy, allows an innocent substitute to take the place of the guilty person

The penalty for rebellion against God is death. Mankind can pay this penalty for themselves. People can die physically and then be separated from Yahweh by suffering the Second Death in the lake of fire forever.



But this is not a good proposition for mankind as the Second Death never ends.

God was not stuck. He had a plan.

In the garden of Eden, immediately after Adam and Eve rebelled and introduced sin and evil into the world, Yahweh mercifully promised that He would provide a solution for their sin problem and the problem of evil in the world. He would send a rescuer who would crush Satan and evil. This was what He said to the serpent.

##### Genesis 3:15

And I will cause hostility between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring.  
He will strike your head,  
and you will strike his heel.”

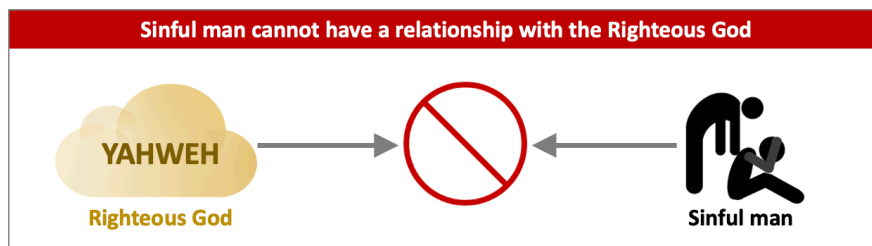


The “offspring of the woman” (or “seed of the woman”) would be the rescuer who would crush Satan and solve the problem of sin and evil. Through this special rescuer, God could restore the broken relationship with mankind. But at that point, Yahweh did not explain in detail what He planned to do. However, He started using visual aids to help mankind’s understanding. For example:

- In the garden of Eden, God killed animals and used the skins or hides to cover Adam and Eve from their shame of being exposed in front of Him. He was showing them that **death is the necessary consequence of rebellion**.

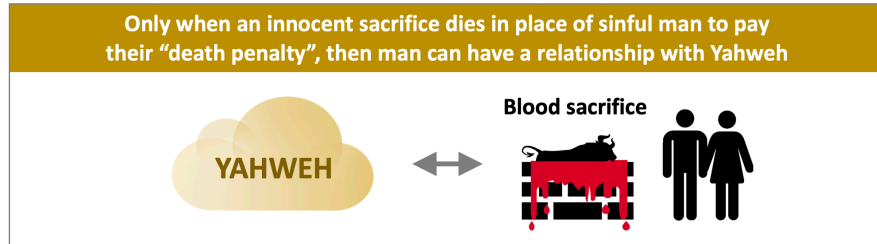


- When God instructed Abel, Noah and Abraham to kill animals as sacrifices, He was teaching them an important lesson: He was showing that **sinful man cannot have a relationship with God**. Mankind is separated from Him because the all-righteous God cannot have a relationship with a criminal whose crimes have not been paid for.

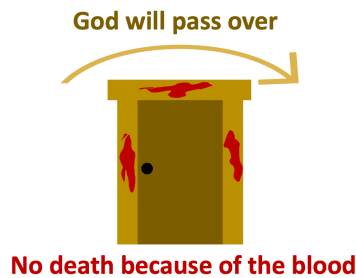




However, **if the blood of an innocent substitute animal was shed as the “death payment” on behalf of the guilty party**, Yahweh would allow this death to temporarily pay for the guilty person’s sins and satisfy His justice. Since a creature cannot live without its blood, shedding its blood is killing it. The blood, representing the animal’s life, is offered as a substitute death payment. With this temporary death payment, mankind could once again have a relationship with Yahweh.



- Yahweh affirmed this lesson through the event of the Passover. Recall that in the tenth and final plague that God sent on Egypt, the only way of avoiding the death of the firstborn was to kill a substitute lamb and smear its blood on the doorframe of the house.



When God saw the blood on the door, He “passed over” that house and spared the firstborn within. This meant that there was still a death in that house, but it was not the firstborn who died. The firstborn lived, but only because the lamb had died in his place.



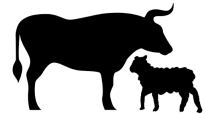
God was teaching that **He would accept the death of a substitute in place of the one who was meant to die.**

## 5. Animals are just a temporary substitute that paid the death payment for mankind, allowing people to have a relationship with Yahweh; ultimately the real substitute must be a sinless man

God values the life of mankind more than that of animals. In fact, God said that in His mercy, He intentionally gave some animals such as cows, sheep and goats to be used as substitutes for the “blood payment” required from mankind. This is what God said in the Mosaic Law.

### Leviticus 17:11

for the life of the body is in its blood. I have given you the blood on the altar to purify you, making you right with the LORD. It is the blood, given in exchange for a life, that makes purification possible.



Those who wanted to approach God and restore a relationship with Him would need to make animal sacrifices. The sacrifice ritual pictured for the people several truths:

- their sin separated them from Yahweh;
- they needed a substitute to take on the death penalty in their place;
- the shed blood of the substitute would cleanse or purify them from their sin problem;
- the animal sacrifice was a temporary substitute and they would have to look forward to God’s provision of a permanent and ultimate rescuer—a sinless human saviour.



So within the Mosaic Law, God gave specific instructions on how and when mankind was to sacrifice animals as a temporary payment and cleansing.

One stark instruction was that this sacrifice would need to be repeated again and again. This was because animals were not of the same value as mankind. While God would temporarily accept the animal as a “death penalty” substitute and cleansing from sin, the real substitute for mankind had to be another man. Only another man was of equal value to mankind. This was what God explained in a later part of the Bible.

### Hebrews 10:1–4

<sup>1</sup> The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. <sup>2</sup> If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshipers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared.

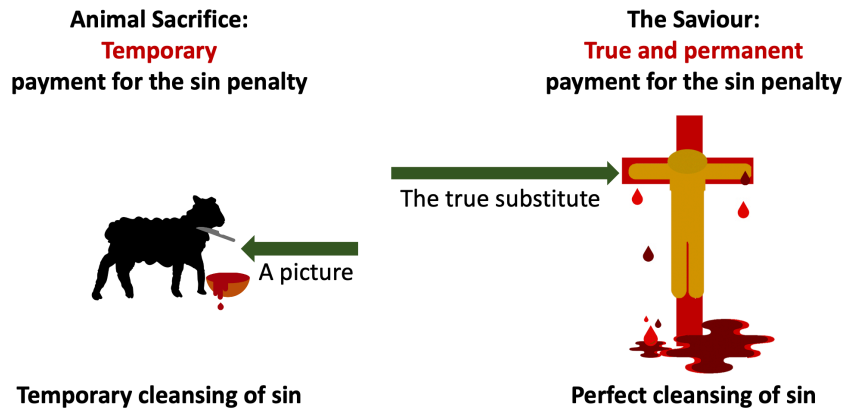
<sup>3</sup> But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year. <sup>4</sup> For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Further in this passage, God went on to explain that it was therefore necessary for Him to send a sinless human substitute who would die in the place of guilty mankind.



Yahweh would forgive a person of their sin problem if they believed His plan to provide this sinless human substitute. They had to trust and wait for Yahweh to act out His plan to send this special man, known as the Saviour. This Saviour would be the “offspring of the woman” He had promised in Genesis.

In the meantime, Yahweh instructed the people to perform ritual animal sacrifices. These sacrifices did not really solve the sin problem but they would demonstrate to the people just how the coming Saviour would actually pay the death penalty and purify those who trust Yahweh and bring them into a relationship with Him.



Just as Yahweh had accepted the death of the innocent substitute lamb in place of the firstborn who was meant to die at the Passover, when He sends the Saviour, God would likewise accept the death of the Saviour in place of guilty mankind who is bound for eternal death.



The Saviour would only need to die once. And his death would be sufficient to cover the death penalty for all mankind of all generations. (We will learn more about this in Lesson 17.)



## 6. Those who trust Yahweh for His solution to mankind's sin problem would be saved from eternal death

Yahweh's plan to offer salvation began when He gave Adam and Eve the initial information that the offspring of the woman would take care of mankind's sin problem. Then Yahweh worked out this plan through Abraham and his family. Abraham, of his own free will, decided to believe God and His plan of salvation.

### Genesis 15:6

And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith.

What does it mean that Abraham believed Yahweh and Yahweh counted him as righteous?

Recall that in the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve chose not to believe Yahweh and they rejected Him. They chose to believe the serpent when he said that Yahweh was lying to them. They chose to believe Satan's words that eating the forbidden fruit would make them like God and make them wise.

However, Abraham responded differently. Instead of disbelief and rejection, Abraham believed what he had learnt about Yahweh. And when Yahweh called him to go and made promises to him, Abraham believed and he acted on his belief by obeying God's instructions to him. This is what the Bible says:



### Romans 4:20–24a

<sup>20</sup> Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. <sup>21</sup> He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises. <sup>22</sup> And because of Abraham's faith, God counted him as righteous. <sup>23</sup> And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. It was recorded <sup>24</sup> for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him...

Abraham trusted Yahweh. And God was willing to regard Abraham as righteous because He was looking ahead to the future work of the Saviour and applying it to Abraham. (We will explore how God does this in Lesson 17.)

And this passage from the book of Romans tells us that God does the same thing with any person who believes in Him and His promises. God uses Abraham as the model of how He counts a person as righteous though their faith in Him.

## GOD’S PURPOSE FOR GIVING THE MOSAIC LAW

While it is true that God gave Israel their law to show them how to live and how they could be a counterculture to the Yahweh-rejecting world, He also wanted to teach them more about who He is and what His standards are like. He also wanted to show them what all mankind is like.

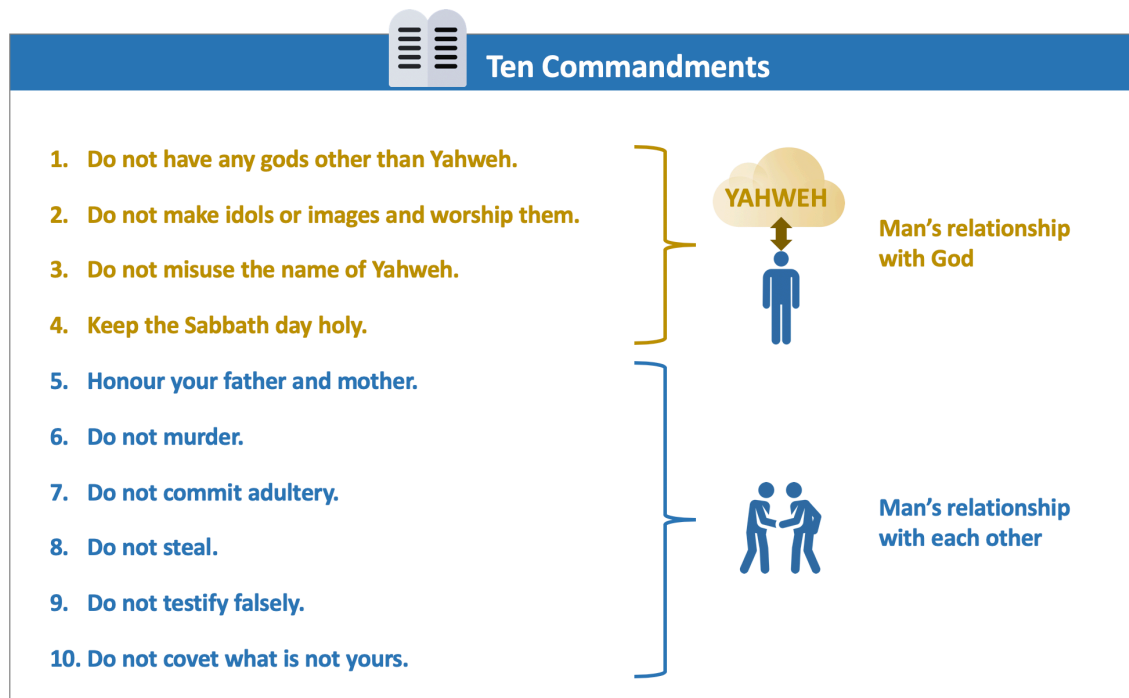
At this point, the Israelites did not understand how holy Yahweh is and how high God’s standards of righteousness are. When Moses explained the law to them, they immediately and perhaps a little overconfidently told Moses they would do all that God commanded.

### Exodus 19:7–8

<sup>7</sup> So Moses returned from the mountain and called together the elders of the people and told them everything the LORD had commanded him. <sup>8</sup> And all the people responded together, “We will do everything the LORD has commanded.” So Moses brought the people’s answer back to the LORD.



They thought they could become righteous by obeying all 613 laws through their own willpower and strength. They did not yet recognise that they (and all mankind) would have great difficulty obeying even the 10 summary laws all their lives.



For example, regarding the fifth command to honour their father and mother, could they be certain they could do this throughout their lives?

As for the ninth commandment against lying (or giving false testimony), would they be able to go through every day of their lives without telling even a single lie?

God's standard of righteousness required that they obey all the laws perfectly all the time. This is what the Bible tells us.

**James 2:10–11**

<sup>10</sup> For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws. <sup>11</sup> For the same God who said, "You must not commit adultery," also said, "You must not murder." So if you murder someone but do not commit adultery, you have still broken the law.

God's standard of righteousness is an impossible standard for mankind to achieve!

Yahweh was not trying to sabotage them. He knew that they would have trouble keeping the law.

God's solution to save the Israelites and all mankind from eternal death would not be to rely on people's own efforts to be righteous by obeying the law perfectly enough to be reconciled to Him.

But at this stage, the Israelites did not understand that yet. The Israelites believed in themselves, that they could do everything God commanded. So God was going to reveal to them just what mankind is like, and just how much mankind really needs a Saviour.

## What happened next?

We will see how the nation of Israel lived as they tried to follow the Mosaic Law. We will also see how God revealed more about His character and how He taught the Israelites about Himself.

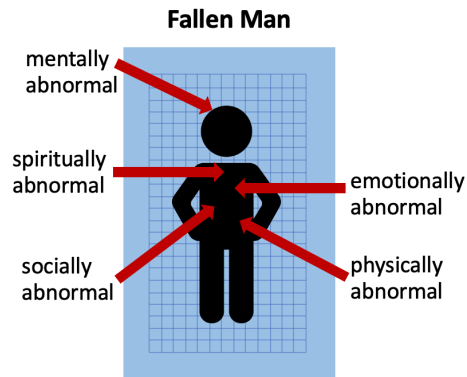


**Bible reading for review**

Exodus 21:12–22:14

## Is mankind good enough to make good laws?

Because all mankind is fallen, we cannot use ourselves as a measure of what is “normal”.

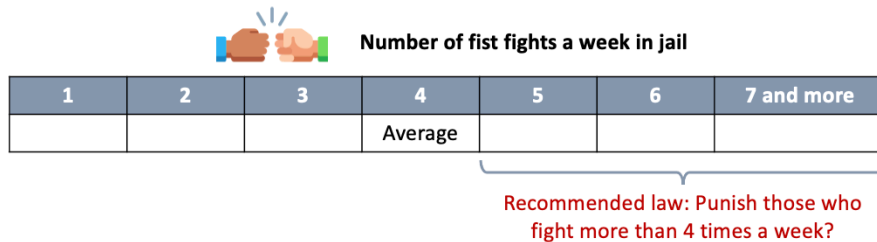


For example, if a survey were done in a prison and the question was: “How many times did you get into a fight last month?” The average among the prisoners might be four times a week.



A lawmaker could possibly say that if the average is a fist fight four times a week, then the law should be that any person who has more than four fist fights a week should be punished.


Though four times a week might be the average in jail, this average is neither acceptable nor desirable in society! What is needed for society would be no fist fights! So using the average in prison as a benchmark is not appropriate for society.




Likewise, using what fallen people consider to be the standard for “normal”, “average” or “desirable” does not lead to what is truly right and good in God’s eyes.

### Which standard can fallen man use for lawmaking?

Everyone decides their own standard of right and wrong and argues it out?



Whatever the majority (or 51%) of people think is right and wrong?



What we need is not an average to gauge what might be acceptable, but a calibration tool to know what is acceptable.

“Calibration” is a comparison. The calibration standard is normally a national or international standard that is based on an unchangeable measure.

To give a very simple example: say your living room clock shows it is 12:20 p.m. Your watch says it is 12:23 p.m. Your bedroom clock says it is 12:25 p.m. Which is correct?

A person can check their clocks against the “Coordinated Universal Time” (UTC). This is a time standard based on International Atomic Time. The UTC helps you “calibrate” or “compare” the times on your devices against the actual, accurate time.



Similarly, Yahweh gave mankind “calibration tools”.



- **God’s Law** was given to the Israelites. It was their reference point for right and wrong. It was given by a holy, righteous and loving God and His laws were a reflection of His unchanging character.
- **The Bible** as a whole is a calibration tool. It corrects fallen mankind’s thinking and reasoning. Without it, we cannot know who God is and we cannot interpret life correctly.
- **The Saviour**, whom we will learn more about in later sessions, is also the standard for calibration. We will see that even though He is human, He is not a fallen man.