

AN EXEGESIS PAPER ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

A Paper

Submitted to Dr. Derrick A. Wilson

of the

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Course

OTHB5352- Hebrew II

In the Division Of Biblical Studies

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B.S, MNSU, 2022

May 1, 2026

CONTENTS

Section

1. Translation of the Passage.....	1
2. Background of the Passage.....	4
Authorship of Exodus.....	5
Date and Location.....	6
Canonical Context.....	6
Exodus in Pentateuch.....	7
Immediate Context.....	7
3. Exegesis of Exodus 20:1-17.....	10
First Commandment.....	13
Second Commandment.....	15
Third Commandment.....	17
Fourth Commandment.....	18
Fifth Commandment.....	20
Sixth Commandment.....	21
Seventh Commandment.....	22
Eights Commandment.....	22
Ninth Commandment.....	23
Tenth Commandment.....	24
4. Textual Notes.....	26
5. Theological Message.....	27
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	29

1. Translation of the Passage Exodus 20:1-17

Verse 1- וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה לְאַמֵּר

וַיְדַבֵּר — verb, Piel stem, wayyiqtol (waw-consecutive + imperfect), 3ms, from the root דבר (“to speak”).

Translation: “And God spoke all these words saying”

Verse 2- אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים

הוֹצֵאתִיךָ — verb, Hiphil stem, perfect (qatal), 1 cs + 2ms suffix, from the root יצא (“to bring out” / “to cause to go out”).

Translation: “I am the LORD your God who caused you to come forth from the land of Egypt from the house of slaves.”

Verse 3- לֹא יִהְיֶה־לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל־פָּנָי:

Translation: “There shall never be to you other gods before my face.”

Verse 4- לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה־לְךָ פֶסֶל וְכָל־תְּמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִלַּת חַת וְאֲשֶׁר בַּיָּם מִתַּת לָאָרֶץ:

תַּעֲשֶׂה־לְךָ Verb, Qal yiqtol imperfect, 2ms, from the root עשה (Make, manufacture, do)

Translation-

‘There shall not be to you a graven image nor any likeness which is in heaven from above or which is on the earth from below or which is in the sea from underneath the earth.”

Verse 5- לֹא־תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָהֶם וְלֹא תַעֲבֹדָם כִּי אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵל קַדָּשׁ עֵינֹן אַבְתָּ עַל־בְּגָדִים עַל־שְׁלֵשִׁים וְעַל־רַבָּעִים לְשָׁנָא י:

תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה Verb, Hithpael, imperfect, 2ms, from the root word שָׁחָ (to bow down, to kneel)

תַּעֲבֹדָם Verb, Hophil, imperfect, 2ms, from the root word עָבַד (to serve)

פָּקַד Verb, Qal, Participle, ms, absolute, from the root word פָּקַד (visit, summon, afflict)

לִשְׂנֹאֵי - Verb, Qal, Participle, mp, preposition לְ, (to hate)

Translation- You shall not bow down to them. You shall not be caused to serve them because I am the Lord your God, a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon children, upon the third and fourth generations of those who hate me.

Verse 6- וַעֲשֵׂה חֶסֶד לְאַלְפִים לְאַהֲבֵי וּלְשֹׂמְרֵי מִצְוֹתַי:

וַעֲשֵׂה - verb, Qal, Participle, ms, from the root word עָשָׂה (to do)

לְאַהֲבֵי - Verb, Qal, Participle, ms, from the root word אָהַב (love, like)

וּלְשֹׂמְרֵי - Verb, Qal, , Participle, mp, construct, from the root word שָׁמַר (“to keep, watch over, guard”)

Translation- “But doing kindness to thousands of those who love me and keep my commands.”

Verse 7- לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת־שֵׁם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוֹן כִּי לֹא יִנְקָה יְהוָה אֶת אֲשֶׁר־יִשָּׂא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ לְשׁוֹן:

תִּשָּׂא - Verb, Qal, yiqtol (imperfect), 2ms, from root word נָשָׂא (to take, lift up)

יִנְקָה - Verb, Piel, yiqtol (imperfect), 3ms, from the root word נָקָה (“leave unpunished, hold guiltless”)

Translation- “You shall not take the name of your God in vanity. For the Lord will not hold guiltless the one who takes his name to vanity.”

Verse 8- זָכוֹר אֶת־יּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ

זָכוֹר - Verb, Qal, infinitive, absolute, from the root word זָכַר (“to remember”)

לְקַדְּשׁוֹ - verb, Piel, infinitive, construct, from the root word קָדַשׁ “to sanctify”)

Translation- “Remember the Sabbath day to set apart.”

Verse 9- אֵלֶּיךָ נִשְׁתַּחֲוֶיִם יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל־מְלָאכָתְךָ

תַּעֲבֹד - verb, Qal, yiqtol (imperfect), 2ms, from the root word עָבַד (“till, toil, work”)

וְעָשִׂיתָ - verb, Qal, wqatal (waw+perfect), 2ms, from the root word עָשָׂה (“to do”)

Translation- “Six days you shall toil and shall do all your work.”

Verse 10- וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאֶמְעָלָהּ כָּל־מַלְאָכָה אֲתָהּ וּבְנֵהָ וְיִבְתָּהּ עֲבָדָהּ וְנַאֲמָתָהּ וּבְהֶמְלָהּ וְגֵרָהּ
אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂעִירִים:

לְאֶמְעָלָהּ - verb, Qal, yiqtol (imperfect), 2ms, from the root word עָשָׂה (“to do”)

Translation- “But the seventh day is a Shabbath to the Lord your God, you shall not do any work, not your sons, not your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your livestock, nor the stranger who is in your gates.”

Verse 11- כִּי שִׁשַּׁת־יָמִים עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּם וַיָּנַח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עַל־כֵּן בֵּרַךְ
יְהוָה אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֵׁהוּ:

עָשָׂה - Verb, Qal, perfect, 3ms, from the root word עָשָׂה (“to do”)

וַיָּנַח - verb, Qal, (Waw+imperfect), 3ms, from the root word נָח (“to settle down, rest”)

בֵּרַךְ - verb, Piel, perfect, 3ms, from the root word בָּרַךְ (“to bless”)

וַיְקַדְּשֵׁהוּ - verb, Piel, (waw+imperfect), 3ms, from the root word קָדַשׁ (“sanctify, To be holy”)

Translation- “for six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that was in them, and he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the seventh day to be holy.”

Verse 12- כִּבְדֹּת אֶת־אָבִיךָ וְאֶת־אִמְךָ לְמַעַן יָאָרְכּוֹן יָמֶיךָ עַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ:

כִּבְדֹּת - verb, piel, imperative, 2ms, from the root word כָּבַד (“to honor”)

יָאָרְכּוֹן - verb, hiphil, yiqtol (imperfect), 3mp, from the root word אָרַךְ (“length”)

נָתַן - verb, Qal, participle, ms, absolute, from the root word נָתַן (“to give”)

Translation- “Honor your father and your mother in order that your days be extended upon the land which the Lord your God is giving to you.”

Verse 13- לֹא תִרְצַח

תִּרְצַח - verb, Qal, imperfect 2ms, from the root word רָצַח (“to commit murder”)

Translation- “You shall not commit murder.”

Verse 14- לֹא תִנָּאֵף

תִּנָּאֵף- Verb, Qal, imperfect 2ms, from the root word נָאֵף (“to commit adultery”)

Translation- “You shall not commit adultery.”

Verse 15- לֹא תִגְנוֹב

תִּגְנוֹב- Verb, Qal, imperfect 2ms, from the root word גָּנַב (“to steal”)

Translation- “you shall not steal.”

Verse 16- לֹא תִעֲנֶה בְּרֵעֶךָ עַד שֹׁקֶר

תִּעֲנֶה- verb, Qal, imperfect, 2ms, from the root word עָנָה (“to answer”)

Translation- “You shall not bear false witness.”

Verse 17- לֹא תִחְמֹד בֵּית רֵעֶךָ לֹא תִחְמֹד אִשְׁתּוֹ רֵעֶךָ וְעַבְדּוֹ וְאִמָּתוֹ וְשׁוֹרְךָ וְחֲמֹרְךָ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֶךָ

תִּחְמֹד- verb, Qal, imperfect, 2ms, from the root word חָמַד (“to covet”)

Translation- “You shall not covet the house of your neighbor, you shall not covet the wife of your neighbor, not his male servant, nor female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, not anything which belongs to your neighbor.”

2. Background of the Passage

The Ten Commandments are the Old Testament collection of laws given by Yahweh to the people of Israel on Mount Sinai. The Old Testament does not use the term “the Ten Commandments”; however, it does use the phrase הַדְּבָרִים “the Ten Words.” Exodus 34:28 states, “And he [Moses] wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, עֲשֵׂרֶת הַדְּבָרִים.” The Septuagint translates this Hebrew phrase literally as δέκα λόγοι (“ten words”), which is the origin of the term

“Decalogue,” though in Deuteronomy 4:13 it uses δέκα ῥήματα.¹ The Decalogue appears immediately after the narrative of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt.

Authorship of Exodus

The authorship of Exodus is integrally connected to the authorship of the rest of the Torah (תורה), since it is the second part of a five-part literary composition. Various views exist regarding authorship, but the traditional position affirms Moses as the author of the Pentateuch. At the same time, some allowance may be made for Moses not being the final compiler of the text. Some scholars suggest that Moses may have used earlier sources and that the book reached its final form through later editorial activity. Nevertheless, interpretation need not depend on isolating Mosaic material from later additions, since the canonical form of the text is what the faith community has ultimately received as authoritative.²

Modern scholarship has proposed the Documentary Hypothesis, most notably associated with Julius Wellhausen, to explain the authorship of the Pentateuch. According to this theory, the Pentateuch is composed of several sources: J (Yahwist), which uses the divine name YHWH early and presents a vivid, narrative style with anthropomorphic depictions of God; E (Elohist), which prefers “Elohim” and emphasizes prophetic mediation and dreams; P (Priestly), which focuses on ritual, genealogy, and order, with a structured and formal style (e.g., the tabernacle instructions in Exodus 25–31); and D (Deuteronomist), primarily associated with Deuteronomy,

¹ Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 312.

² Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Exodus* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 177.

though its theological perspective echoes elsewhere.³ In this framework, Exodus is not the work of a single author but a composition that weaves together multiple traditions. Repeated events (such as the water-from-the-rock narratives) and variations in divine names are often cited as evidence of these sources.

Date and Location

A common view dates the Exodus to around 1446 BC. This is based largely on the calculation of 480 years from Israel's departure from Egypt to the fourth year of Solomon's reign (cf. 1 Kings 6:1). However, Exodus 1:11 mentions Israel's labor on the city of Raamses, leading some scholars to place the Exodus during the reign of Ramesses II (1279–1213 BC), possibly around 1260 BC.⁴

Canonical Context

The Decalogue in Exodus 20 is repeated in Deuteronomy 5, forming a foundational summary of the law. Its repetition underscores its central importance and prepares for the broader commands concerning love for God (the first half) and love for one's neighbor (the second half). These commandments continue to have significance in the New Testament, where each is reaffirmed in various ways.⁵

³ Joel S. Kaminsky and Joel N. Lohr, *The Hebrew Bible for Beginners: A Jewish and Christian Introduction* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2015)

⁴ *ESV Systematic Theology Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), "Introduction to Exodus," 177.

⁵ Richard S. Hess, *The Old Testament: A Historical, Theological, and Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), page number.

Exodus in the Pentateuch

The opening verses of Exodus show a deliberate connection with the closing verses of Genesis, while the priestly instructions in the closing chapters of Exodus continue into Leviticus and Numbers. When the Pentateuch is considered as a whole, five major themes emerge: God's promise to the patriarchs; the exodus; God's self-revelation in covenant and law at Sinai; the wilderness wandering; and the entrance into Canaan. Three of these five themes are treated extensively in the book of Exodus. In addition, Exodus looks back to the first theme and forward to the last. Moses' vision and call at Mount Sinai are presented as a fulfillment of God's promise to Israel's forefathers, while the book concludes with the assurance of God's guidance until Canaan is reached. Thus, although Exodus is only one part of a larger whole, it is an essential part and, in a real sense, enshrines the heart of the Pentateuchal revelation.⁶

Immediate Context

The overarching theme of the book of Exodus is the fulfillment of God's promise to the patriarchs. He said to Abraham, "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" Genesis 12:2–3. Focusing on the Decalogue, after the breaking of the original tablets, God tells Moses, "Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel" Exodus 34:27. This narrative continues from Genesis. Joseph provided a way for his family to live in Egypt during a severe famine. Jacob and his sons settled in the land of Goshen, where they were fruitful, multiplied, and prospered greatly under God's blessing. The text describes them as fruitful (פָּרָה) and exceedingly strong (מְאֹד עֲצֻם) (Gen. 47:27; Exod. 1:7).

⁶ Hess, *The Old Testament*, 73.

However, this development was not viewed favorably by Pharaoh of Egypt. Here begins the humiliation of Pharaoh, who had positioned himself as divine. Yahweh not only humbles the king of Egypt but also the gods of Egypt. The narrative portrays God multiplying Israel while Pharaoh attempts to suppress them. Pharaoh represents opposition, yet God's blessing prevails. "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, 'Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them...'" Exodus 1:8–10. This also marks the beginning of Israel's suffering. After their affliction, God hears their cry and raises up Moses to initiate deliverance from bondage and lead them to the promised land.

In the burning bush, God commissions Moses: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Exodus 3:6. God declares His intent to deliver His people and bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey (Exod. 3:7–8). God reveals His covenant name, "I AM WHO I AM" (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה). Pharaoh stands as opposition, yet through the ten plagues God demonstrates His power over Egypt and its gods, bringing about Israel's deliverance.

Furthermore, God establishes a covenant with His people, forming the foundation of Israel as a nation. "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples" Exodus 19:5. God descends in "worship-inducing"⁷ glory and prepares to give the Ten Commandments.

There are also literary questions regarding the structure of the Decalogue. It begins and ends with commands concerning devotion to God, forming a comprehensive framework for

⁷ Samuel G. Parkison, *To Gaze upon God: The Beatific Vision in Doctrine, Tradition, and Practice* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2024), 63.

worship and obedience. The prologue (Exod. 20:2) summarizes the preceding narrative (Exod. 1–18), while the commandments (Exod. 20:3–17) provide the authoritative basis for the laws that follow. The variation in the length of the commandments is not accidental; it serves a literary purpose. The Sabbath commandment, for example, is the most extensive and occupies a central position, with duties toward God and neighbor arranged around it. The two positive commands (the Sabbath and honoring parents) call for active obedience, while the others are primarily prohibitions.⁸

The Decalogue is framed by divine encounter, as Moses receives the law directly from God. The first half (Exod. 20:3–12) addresses humanity’s relationship to God, while the second half concerns relationships with others. There are two recensions of the Decalogue: Exodus 20:2–17 and Deuteronomy 5:6–21. These parallel accounts contain approximately twenty-five variations, ranging from minor stylistic differences to more substantive distinctions. For example, in the second commandment, Deuteronomy 5:8 refers to “an image,” whereas Exodus 20:4 reads “an image or any likeness,” expanding the scope.⁹

In the fourth commandment, Deuteronomy uses “observe” (שָׁמַר), emphasizing obedience, while Exodus uses “remember” (זָכַר), highlighting liturgical remembrance (cf. John 6).

Deuteronomy also adds the phrase “as the LORD your God commanded you” (Deut. 5:12, 16), reflecting its sermonic context. The rationale differs as well: Deuteronomy grounds

⁸ William Johnstone, *Exodus, Old Testament Guides* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 95.

⁹ Hess, *The Old Testament*, 67.

Sabbath observance in redemption from Egypt (Deut. 5:14–15), while Exodus grounds it in creation (Exod. 20:11).

In commandments seven through ten, Deuteronomy frequently adds “and,” linking the prohibitions into a cohesive unit.

In the ninth commandment, Deuteronomy reads “false witness of vanity,” echoing the misuse of the divine name, while Exodus reads “false witness.”

In the tenth commandment, Deuteronomy places “your neighbor’s wife” first and uses a different verb for “covet,” distinguishing the prohibitions more clearly.¹⁰

A common literary-critical view is that these variations reflect the expansion of a shared earlier form, likely expressed in brief, uniformly negative commands (as seen in commandments six through nine). The present forms, therefore, may represent theological and liturgical development rather than contradiction.¹¹

3. Exegesis of Exodus 20:1-17

This section of the book of Exodus begins with God’s direct call to listen and obey. These are not the words of a mere man, but of Yahweh, who rescued them from slavery. The authority of these commandments is grounded not in what is said, but in who says it.¹² Therefore, God clearly announces himself as the giver at the beginning of the commandments. It is not the אֱלֹהִים—the inferior deities of Egypt—but Yahweh who delivered them. Thus, the “Ten Words” begin with this proclamation: the giver is Yahweh. Their significance goes beyond that of

¹⁰ Johnstone, *Exodus*, 90.

¹¹ Ibid., 91.

¹² Hamilton, *Exodus*, 327.

ordinary laws. The Ten “Words” (דְּבָרִים) function more like the content of a national constitution than merely one section of codified law.¹³

Verse one of Exodus 20 contains the verb וַיְדַבֵּר, which is Piel imperfect, third masculine singular. The Piel stem is an intensive active form. The root דָּבַר appears 1,193 times and means “to speak.” This conveys the intensity and weight of God’s authority here.¹⁴ These are divine revelations and must not be taken lightly. The text continues by stating that אֱלֹהִים spoke these words (דְּבָר). This name of God first appears in Genesis 1:1: בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים. It carries significant weight; it is the same great, transcendent אֱלֹהִים who created everything *ex nihilo* who now speaks to them. The emphasis, then, is that God himself spoke the Ten Words directly to Israel, rather than through the mediation of Moses. כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים—God speaks all “these words.” The Ten Commandments, or the “Ten Words,” arise from this phrase, though the more common terminology in the church is “the Ten Commandments.”

Verse two is commonly termed “the preface to the Ten Commandments.” Several Jewish writings—such as the Talmud, the Targum Jonathan, and Maimonides—regard it as forming a distinct precept.¹⁵ Others refer to it as the prologue. Within Judaism, this is often counted as the first commandment, expressing a foundational point of agreement between Israel and Yahweh. However, the author follows the Christian tradition in treating this verse as a preamble, with the following verse constituting the first commandment.

¹³ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 440.

¹⁴ Gary Staats, *The Ten Commandments: An Inductive Hebrew Grammar Focusing on the Ten Commandments* (Findlay, OH: Gary Staats, 2015), 2.

¹⁵ David Brown, A. R. Fausset, and Robert Jamieson, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Genesis–Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited, n.d.), 62

In verse two, the identity of the speaker is further clarified. *אֲנִי* is the personal pronoun “I,” serving as an act of self-identification. This is followed by the use of the Tetragrammaton, *יְהוָה*: “I am the LORD your God.” The phrase *אֲנִי יְהוָה* directs our attention to Leviticus 19, where its significance is underscored by its repeated use—sixteen times in total.¹⁶ In the midst of various laws, God reminds Israel that he is the same deliverer and redeemer. This act of self-identification also recalls Exodus 3:13–14, where God reveals himself to Moses as “I AM WHO I AM.”

Further, the verb *הוֹצֵאתִיךָ* derives from the root *הֹצֵא*, meaning “to bring forth.” Here it appears in the Hiphil perfect, first common singular, followed by the pronominal suffix *ךָ* (second masculine singular). The prefixed *ה* marks the Hiphil stem, yielding the sense, “I have caused you to come forth.” Historically, this verb reflects what is known as a pe/yod verb, though in this case it exhibits the historically pe/waw form, where the waw appears instead of the expected yod. Thus, the root was historically *הֹצֵא*. By contrast, a typical pe/yod verb, such as *יָנַק*, becomes *יִנֵּק* in the imperfect. In this instance, the form has shifted from *הוֹצֵאתִיךָ* to *הוֹצֵאתִיךָ*, where the pataḥ under the waw lengthens to a ḥolem, aligning it with the Hiphil pattern. The result is the causative sense: “I have caused you to come forth ...” The phrase *מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם* means “from the land of Egypt.”¹⁷ While the English Standard Version renders the clause as “who brought you out of the land of Egypt,” the author prefers the more literal translation, “who caused you to come forth from the land of Egypt,” preserving the causative nuance of the Hiphil stem.

¹⁶ J. Alec Motyer, *The Message of Exodus: The Days of Our Pilgrimage*, The Bible Speaks Today (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), 212.

¹⁷ Staats, *The Ten Commandments*, 5.

The first commandment in the Ten Words begins in verse three. The verse opens with the negative particle *לֹא*, which carries the force of an absolute prohibition, “not ever.” This differs from *לֹא־יִהְיֶה*, and thus the emphasis is, “There shall never be.”¹⁸ This commandment calls Israel to absolute loyalty to Yahweh and to reject all other *אֱלֹהִים*. The traditional Jewish interpretation of this commandment as a prohibition against idolatry is based on the fact that elsewhere in the Old Testament, “other gods” (*אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים*) refers not to divine beings but to wooden or stone idols worshiped by other nations.¹⁹ ²⁰However, Douglas Stuart comments, “The word *’elōhīm* carries the connotation of ‘supernatural beings,’ including angels. Accordingly, this first word/commandment implicitly acknowledges that there are many ‘gods’ (nonhuman, nonearthly beings) in the same sense that Psalm 82 does (or that Jesus does in John 10:34–36), but at the same time demands that only Yahweh be worshiped as the sole divinity, or God. All other ‘gods’ (supernatural beings such as angels) are to be understood and appreciated for their roles in the universe, but only Yahweh is divine.”²¹

The formulation of Deuteronomy 6:5, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might,” is a positive variant of this commandment. In this way, this commandment becomes the foundation for all the commandments that follow.

¹⁸ Staats, *The Ten Commandments*, 7.

¹⁹ John L. Mackay, *Exodus, Mentor Commentaries* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 2001), 340.

²⁰ Deuteronomy 28:36

²¹ Stuart, *Exodus*, 449.

The expression “other gods” (אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים) occurs in Exodus only here and in 23:13. It appears eighteen times in Deuteronomy and eighteen times in Jeremiah.²² Most translators have chosen to render עַל־פָּנַי as either “before me” or “beside me.” When translated “before me,” some scholars suggest it could imply that the commandment calls only for Yahweh to be Israel’s supreme God, allowing for a hierarchical structure rather than an outright prohibition of polytheism, whereas “beside me” more clearly demands monotheism.

Douglas Stuart comments, “Outside of the Pentateuch, עַל־פָּנַי with a pronominal suffix usually means ‘against [me/you/them],’ as in Isaiah 65:3; Jeremiah 6:7; Nahum 2:1, although various derived meanings such as ‘in my presence’ can arguably be substituted. The LXX, Syriac, and the Targums translated the expression in Exodus 20:3 with the equivalent of ‘in addition to me,’ in other words, as if the meaning from their point of view were that of exclusivity rather than hierarchy. We suggest that the balance of the linguistic evidence favors the judgment of these ancient translators, so a translation something like ‘You must have no other gods over against me’ or ‘You must have no other gods in distinction to me’ would capture the idiomatic sense in the context. The text clearly prohibits other gods—so much so that some commentators have opined that the original form of the commandment might have been simply, ‘You must have no other gods,’ with the ‘al-pānāy (‘before me’) being added later.”²³

This is a striking instance of God instituting monotheistic worship of Himself. Although Israel had encountered many deities in Egypt, this new relationship with the true God demands absolute faithfulness. There shall not be עַל־פָּנַי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים—there shall be no “other gods before my face.”

²² Hamilton, *Exodus*, 322.

²³ Stuart, *Exodus*, 448.

The second commandment in verse four again begins with the negative particle **לֹא**, meaning “not.” This verse stands as a prohibition against manufacturing any image to represent Yahweh. Yahweh is transcendent and beyond everything in creation. Therefore, Israel was not to make idols or images, neither of “other gods,” such as those of the Canaanites, which carried strong cultural implications, nor of Yahweh, because He cannot be adequately represented by any graven image. Yet it seems more likely that the prohibition concerns Yahweh’s relatedness rather than merely His transcendence. It outlaws idolatry in any form whatsoever. Such an act is an offense to Yahweh; thus, the newly liberated Israel must not engage in it.

A **פֶּסֶל** is a carved or sculptured image and is usually representational. The word is one of several terms for “idols” in the vocabulary of the Hebrew Bible. One may “make” (**‘āśâ**) a **pesel** (Exod. 20:4; Deut. 5:8; 27:15; Judg. 17:3–4), “fashion” (**yāṣar**) a **pesel** (Isa. 44:9–10), or “set up, erect” (**qûm**, Hiphil) a **pesel** (Judg. 18:30). The Akkadian equivalent of **‘āśâ pesel** is **ṣalman epēšu**, “to make an image.”²⁴ This is evident in the ancient world, where carved images were made for Baal and Asherah, as well as in the episode of the golden calf permitted by Aaron in Exodus. Thus, Yahweh issues a warning against any manufacture of a **פֶּסֶל** in relation to Himself. Israel is not to chisel any graven image in **שָׁמַיִם** or on **אֶרֶץ**.

The prohibition continues in verse five, again with the negative particle. A strong warning is given against worshiping these carved idols. The consequences are not ordinary; they extend to future generations. This is the corollary of worshiping **אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים**, “other gods.” In verse 5, **תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה** means “to bow down to.” The root is **שָׁחָה**, a final-**ה** verb. The form is Hithpael imperfect, second person masculine singular. The **ת** marks the imperfect prefix, and there is metathesis between the **ש** and **ח**, producing **תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה**, a common feature in the Hithpael stem. The final vowel

²⁴ Hamilton, *Exodus*, 323.

pattern reflects the behavior of lamed-he verbs. The sense is emphatic: “You shall never bow down to them.”²⁵

The phrase **וְלֹא תַעֲבֹדֵם** is rendered, “And you shall not be induced to serve them.” **לֹא** is the negative particle, “never,” and **תַּעֲבֹדֵם** derives from the root **עֲבַד**, “to serve.” The form suggests a Hophal nuance, which often carries a passive or reflexive sense. If it were Qal, the form would be **ta‘abdēm**, as in Exod. 4:23, **וַיַּעֲבֹדֵנִי** (“that he may serve me”). Weinfeld suggests that the Hophal conveys the idea of being seduced into idolatry: “You shall not allow yourself to be brought to worship them.”²⁶ Yahweh’s strong objection is further emphasized by the use of the Tetragrammaton, **יְהוָה**: “I am the LORD your God, a jealous God.”

This language draws from the sphere of marriage and underscores exclusive allegiance to Yahweh. The meaning of **קָנָא**, “jealous,” may be illuminated through comparison with the Arabic and Syriac cognate *qana’a* (قَانَأَ) which can denote “to become dark/intensely red.”²⁷ The verb suggests the visible effects of intense emotion upon the face. Yahweh’s response to idolatry is thus portrayed in vivid, almost embodied terms. Yet this same Yahweh shows covenantal love and kindness to those who remain loyal to Him. **וְעֹשֶׂה** means “but showing” or “doing kindness.” The conjunction **וְ** may be rendered “and” or “but,” and **עֹשֶׂה** is the Qal participle masculine singular from **עָשָׂה**, “to do.” The term **חֶסֶד** is a rich word in the Hebrew Scriptures, denoting steadfast love, covenantal faithfulness, and enduring mercy. Yahweh, therefore, displays immeasurable kindness to those who remain faithfully devoted to Him alone.²⁸

²⁵ Staats, *The Ten Commandments*, 15.

²⁶ Hamilton, *Exodus*, 323.

²⁷ Ibid., 323.

²⁸ Staats, *The Ten Commandments*, 19.

The third commandment in verse seven begins with the negative particle **לֹא**. God commands that His name is not to be taken in vain. This commandment extends beyond the kind of foul-mouthed profanity so prevalent today. **שָׁמַר** is from the verb **שָׁמַר**, a pe-nun verb in which the **מ** assimilates into the **ש**, so that **שָׁמַר** becomes **שָׁמַר**. The verb **שָׁמַר** most often means “to carry,” “to bear,” or “to lift up.” Thus, the sense is “You shall not lift up...” The form is Qal imperfect, second masculine singular from **שָׁמַר**. The particle **אֵת** marks the direct object. **שֵׁם** means “name” and stands in construct with **יְהוָה**, yielding “the name of the LORD.” **יְהוָה**, from **יְהוָה**, is a plural form expressing majesty.²⁹

The command, then, forbids lifting up the name of the LORD to falsehood or emptiness. The Septuagint renders it **οὐ λήψῃ ἐπὶ ματαιῶν**, “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God upon a vain thing,” that is, for a trivial or frivolous purpose.³⁰ The prohibition is fundamentally concerned with the divine reputation; it seeks to guard the divine name from any use that brings God or His purposes into disrepute. God’s name is to be excellent in all the earth.

The verb **נָקָה** (*nāqâ*), often translated “leave unpunished,” has the basic sense of “to be clean” or “pure,” and by extension, “to be acquitted” or “to go unpunished.” The Akkadian cognate *zakû* (“to be clean”) shares a similar semantic range. The verb appears in the Niphal stem in Exod. 21:19, “the one who struck the blow will not be held responsible,” and in the Piel stem in Exod. 34:7, “yet by no means clearing the guilty.” It is also frequent in Proverbs (e.g., 6:29; 11:21; 16:5; 17:5; 19:5, 9; 28:20), where it consistently conveys the idea of not going unpunished. Exodus 20:7 and 34:7 both employ the verbs **שָׁמַר** and **נָקָה**. In both cases, **נָקָה** retains

²⁹ Staats, *The Ten Commandments*, 21

³⁰ Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1991), 228.

the sense of acquittal or non-punishment. However, נָשָׂא shifts in nuance: in 34:7 it carries the sense “to forgive” or “to bear away,” whereas in 20:7 it means “to lift up,” particularly in the sense of taking something upon the lips.³¹

In sum, the third commandment warns against invoking the Lord’s name in a way that is false, trivial, or unworthy. The divine name is not to be enlisted in the service of emptiness or deceit; rather, it is to be revered with gravity and truth.

The fourth commandment in verses 8–11 concerns keeping the Sabbath. Exodus gives the reason for Sabbath observance as the remembrance of God’s rest from the great work of creation. This is something God institutes as a sign with Israel. This is a positive command within the series, along with verse 12. יוֹם is in construct with the noun שַׁבָּת. שַׁבָּת is the noun meaning “Sabbath,” and the pathah under the ה shows that we have the definite article.³²

“Sabbath” is the English reflex of the common Hebrew word שַׁבָּת, meaning “stopping”, “cessation”, or “rest”. Both the Exodus and Deuteronomic versions of the Decalogue begin the fourth commandment by using the infinitive absolute with imperative force: זָכוֹר (Exod. 20:8) and שָׁמֹר (Deut. 5:12). For a previous use of זָכוֹר with imperative function, see Exod. 13:3 (“Remember [זָכוֹר] this day on which you came out of the land of Egypt”). For later uses in the Torah, see Lev. 2:6 (“Crumble [פָּתוֹת] it and pour oil on it”); Lev. 6:14 [7] (“Let Aaron’s sons bring [הִקְרִיב] it before the Lord”); and Num. 15:35 (“The man must die. Let the whole assembly stone [רָגוּם] him”).³³

³¹ Hamilton, *Exodus*, 324.

³² Staats, *The Ten Commandments*, 24.

³³ Hamilton, *Exodus*, 325.

This cessation of work is to זָכַר, “remember,” the LORD who gave the Israelites rest from captivity. It was intended to serve as a reminder that Yahweh is the source of ultimate rest and liberty. Therefore, the Lord designates this day for reflection on that reality. Israel is to labor for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath. The verb “you shall work” is from the root עָבַד, “to work,” and it is a Qal imperfect, second person masculine singular. The prefixed ו is a waw consecutive (or conversive), giving it a future sense: “and you shall do/work ...” In contrast, the seventh day is to be set apart as the Sabbath: הַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שָׁבַת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה. הַשְּׁבִיעִי, “the seventh,” is an adjective with the article. The waw here is contrastive: “But the seventh day is a Sabbath ...” שָׁבַת is a masculine singular noun meaning “rest” or “Sabbath.”³⁴

Not only Israelites, but also their beasts and the sojourner among them, are to observe this command. Verse 11 gives the rationale: Yahweh made הַשָּׁמַיִם, the dual form of שָׁמַיִם, preceded by the definite article. Note the dagesh in the ש, resulting from assimilation after the article. He also made הָאָרֶץ, from the noun אֶרֶץ, “earth.” Here, the qamats under the ה reflects compensatory lengthening, since the aleph cannot assimilate the lamed of the article.³⁵ “... The Lord blessed the Sabbath day ...” וַיְבָרֶכְהוּ, “and he sanctified it.” The ו is a waw consecutive, converting the imperfect Piel into a past narrative form. The root is קָדַשׁ, “to set apart.” The doubling of the middle radical (ד) marks the Piel stem, and the suffix הוּ is the third masculine singular pronominal suffix. Thus, the day is uniquely set apart—sanctified by God himself.³⁶

³⁴ Staats, *The Ten Commandments*, 29.

³⁵ Ibid., 31.

³⁶ Ibid., 34.

In sum, this command is a weighty directive from Yahweh to regard the Sabbath as holy. God's own action, resting and sanctifying the day, grounds the command not merely in law but in divine example, giving it enduring theological significance.

The fifth commandment is to honor one's father and mother. This command is positive in direction, whereas the previous commands begin with a negative particle. Earlier commandments focus on covenant fidelity, emphasizing the necessity of honoring God as the means of keeping His covenant. Now the focus turns to honoring father and mother, who represent God to their children. The status granted to both father and mother indicates the value God places on the family structure.

The roles of both father and mother are clearly affirmed, challenging the common caricature of Israelite society as so thoroughly patriarchal that the role of women and mothers was diminished. On the contrary, the text upholds their shared dignity. As has been observed, "The status of father and mother had to be jointly acknowledged to preserve the integrity of the family and to promote the well-being of society. When societies fail to observe the need to promote family life, they sow the seeds of their own downfall."³⁷

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you." The verb כָּבֵד is a Piel imperative, second masculine singular, from כָּבֵד, meaning "to be heavy" or "to give weight to." The root כבד carries the idea of weight or heaviness. Thus, to honor is to treat the father and mother as weighty, significant, and not to be taken lightly. This same root underlies כְּבוֹד, "glory," which expresses not merely brightness or abstract honor, but the weightiness of presence—substance, worth, and overwhelming reality.

³⁷ Mackay, *Exodus*, 350.

“The heavens declare the glory of God...” Psalm 19:1. Here, כְּבוֹד points to the visible manifestation of God’s invisible majesty. Accordingly, the Piel stem intensifies the command, calling for an active, weighty honoring of father and mother. The form is marked by the pathah and the doubling of the middle radical, characteristic of the Piel. The command is not passive respect but deliberate, embodied honor. The promise attached to this command is the length of days. In this sense, כָּבַד, “to honor,” calls one to give substantial care and regard to one’s parents. To “weigh them heavily” in one’s actions is to align with the order God has established, so that one’s days may be prolonged in the land.³⁸

The sixth commandment in verse 13 is a prohibition against murder. Like the commandments that follow, it is stated tersely, yet it strongly underscores the dignity and sanctity of human life. Life is a gift from God, and it is not for human beings to extinguish it. תִּרְצָח conveys the force: “You shall not murder”—never commit violence against another. The verb is from רָצַח, with a tav prefix, and is a Qal imperfect, second masculine singular.³⁹ The verb used here refers specifically to the killing of human beings; it is never used of animals. At the same time, it is not the most general term for taking human life and does not ordinarily include killing in war or the judicial administration of the death penalty. Thus, the translation “murder” best reflects its semantic range. Its frequent use in Numbers 35 indicates that it can encompass both accidental and premeditated acts of manslaughter.⁴⁰ God takes seriously the life He gives; therefore, human beings are called to uphold its sanctity.

³⁸ Staats, *The Ten Commandments*, 39.

³⁹ Staats, *The Ten Commandments*, 41.

⁴⁰ Mackay, *Exodus*, 352.

The seventh commandment in verse 14 is a prohibition against adultery. In the fifth commandment, God required honor for father and mother, establishing peace and respect within the family and creating order. Here, however, God establishes relational fidelity by forbidding sexual relations outside of marriage. This, too, preserves peace within the family. Marriage between a man and a woman is to be marked by fidelity, love, and faithfulness. This principle derives from the original creation order: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Genesis 2:24.⁴¹ The Israelites are thus called to avoid the practices of Canaan and Egypt by maintaining sexual purity.

In the New Testament, Jesus intensifies the prohibition against adultery. “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Matthew 5:28. This issue, therefore, is not merely external but reaches into the inner life, revealing it to be a serious matter before God.

The eighth commandment in verse 15 is a prohibition against stealing. It refers to the act of theft—the secret taking of property that belongs to another. Ultimately, all possessions belong to God, who entrusts them to individuals as He wills; therefore, it is prohibited for anyone to violate that divine ordering. There are no truly communal societies in an absolute sense; some form of ownership exists within families, neighborhoods, and broader social structures, regardless of their economic organization. Yet with ownership comes responsibility, and respect for the property of others is itself a moral obligation. This command is reinforced by various laws concerning theft in Exodus (22:1–16), Leviticus (6:2–5; 19:11, 13), and Deuteronomy (24:7). Stealing threatens social order and causes harm by undermining a person’s secure access

⁴¹ Mackay, *Exodus*, 353.

to what is necessary and useful.⁴² It disrupts trust within the community and fractures covenantal relationships. Perhaps the original prohibition was mainly directed against kidnapping for slavery (see Joseph's experience in Gen. 37), but no doubt all sorts of theft are included. The covenant code makes details clear (e.g. Exod. 22:1–4), so no expansion is felt necessary here. In a peasant society where life is hard, any theft of property may lead to death, so theft is a very serious crime. There is a clear relation between this and the tenth commandment.⁴³ The verb **גָּנַב** can indeed be used in the sense of kidnapping.

In sum, this command serves to protect covenantal fellowship. Israel is called to honor the property of others, recognizing that such respect reflects obedience to God's ordering of human life.

The ninth commandment in verse 16 is a prohibition against bearing false witness. The original focus of this commandment is the giving of false testimony in legal proceedings.⁴⁴ ⁴⁵The verb **הִשָּׁעֵן** is from the root **שָׁעַן**, meaning “to bear witness.” It is a Qal imperfect, second masculine singular. Because the first radical is ש, a guttural, it takes a *hateph pataḥ*, and this influences the vowel under the prefixed ה. The form also shows a final segol rather than an expected “o” or “a” class vowel (as in **הִשָּׁעַן**). Historically, this likely reflects the development of the root **שָׁעַן** as a doubly weak verb (pe/ayin and lamed/he), originating from an earlier form with a final yod, which tended to prefer a segol vowel.⁴⁶

⁴² R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 168.

⁴³ Ibid., 168.

⁴⁴ Fretheim, *Exodus*, 236.

⁴⁵ Exodus 23:2

⁴⁶ Staats, *The Ten Commandments*, 48.

Positively, this commandment calls for a commitment to truth in all one's dealings. The Israelites are to use their speech constructively, not maliciously, and not in a way that brings injustice upon their neighbor.⁴⁷ At its core, this command concerns justice and fairness within the community. It is also the first commandment to employ the word רֵעַ, “neighbor,” in its broader juridical sense—referring not merely to someone nearby, but to any person with whom one has dealings. In legal and ethical contexts, “neighbor” is not defined by proximity or familiarity but encompasses any fellow human being. In Exodus 20, the phrase עֵד שֶׁקָרָא (“false witness”) is used, while Deuteronomy 5:20 has עֵד שֶׁנֶאֱמָר. These terms appear in parallel in passages such as Psalm 144:8, 11, where falsehood and deceit are closely associated. Similarly, Zechariah 10:2 speaks of deceitful speech, lying visions, and false dreams, reinforcing the broader biblical concern with truthfulness.⁴⁸ In sum, this command is a warning from God to His people not to bear false witness. Such an act is an offense against Him. Though it is rooted in legal settings, its implications extend deeply into daily life, calling for integrity in all speech and relationships.

The tenth commandment in verse 17 is a prohibition against coveting another's possessions. It begins with a command not to covet a neighbor's בֵּית house. Here we have two nouns in construct, “the house of your neighbor.” רֵעֶךָ means “your neighbor,” and the segol functions as a helping vowel before the second masculine singular pronominal suffix.⁴⁹

Yahweh warns against desiring what belongs to another. The verb חָמַד means “to desire” or “to take delight in.” In itself, it is a neutral term; it becomes sinful when directed toward what

⁴⁷ Stuart, *Exodus*, 466.

⁴⁸ Hamilton, *Exodus*, 324.

⁴⁹ Staats, *The Ten Commandments*, 51.

belongs to someone else. It is sometimes argued that this commandment uniquely addresses an internal attitude rather than an outward act, but such a distinction does not fully reflect Hebrew thought. As with “loving” or “hating,” “desiring” is active, closely aligned with the impulse to pursue or acquire.⁵⁰

The command moves from the general (“household”) to the specific, including the neighbor’s wife. The placement of “wife” after “house” in Exodus 20 suggests that “house” may carry the broader sense of “household,” encompassing wife, servants, and animals. In Deuteronomy 5:21, however, the order is reversed, beginning with “wife” and then moving to “house.” In that context, “house” more clearly refers to property and does not subsume the wife under that category, thereby preserving her distinct status. Another difference between Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy 5:21 is lexical. Exodus uses *חָמַד* twice, whereas Deuteronomy uses *חָמַד* in the first clause and then employs the Hitpael of *חָמַד* in the second. Thus, “You shall not covet... You shall not covet” becomes “You shall not covet... You shall not crave.” This variation deepens the prohibition, addressing both desire and longing.⁵¹

Furthermore, the command extends to servants, oxen, donkeys, and anything that belongs to another. It is comprehensive, guarding not only external actions but also internal dispositions. In this way, the command teaches what it means to love one’s neighbor: to honor the integrity of their household and possessions without inward resentment or grasping. In sum, this commandment reminds Israel that Yahweh is concerned not only with outward conduct but also with the desires of the heart, calling His people to a posture of contentment and reverence toward what belongs to others.

⁵⁰ Cole, *Exodus*, 169.

⁵¹ Hamilton, *Exodus*, 326.

4. Textual Notes⁵²

In Exodus 20:1, instead of אֱלֹהִים in וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים (“God spoke”), the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate read κύριος (“Lord”). This does not diminish the theological significance of Yahweh; rather, the choice of κύριος appears to emphasize God as the exclusive ruler and master.

In verse 3, the Septuagint and the Targum add πλὴν ἐμοῦ (“besides” or “except me”) in the commandment prohibiting the worship of other אֱלֹהִים. The Hebrew manuscripts read עַל-פָּנַי, which may be translated “before my face” or “before me.” The Septuagint rendering stresses exclusivity, whereas the Hebrew emphasizes relational and spatial proximity. This reading is supported by manuscripts such as the Leningrad Codex.

In verse 5, within the commandment prohibiting idolatry, the Nash Papyrus (a second-century BC Hebrew manuscript) reads קַנָּא (“jealous”). However, it also appears in the form קִנּוּא, reflecting orthographic variation meaning “jealousy.” This suggests linguistic development over time, though the theological meaning remains stable.

In verse 8, concerning the Sabbath command, the Hebrew Bible reads זָכוֹר (“remember”), while the Samaritan Pentateuch uses שְׁמֹר (“observe” or “keep”). Thus, instead of “Remember the Sabbath day,” the Samaritan text reads “Observe the Sabbath day.” The distinction is subtle but meaningful: זָכוֹר may carry a reflective sense, whereas שְׁמֹר conveys a more active, imperative force.

In verse 10, the Nash Papyrus and some other manuscripts include וּבַיּוֹם (“and on this day”) rather than the standard בַּיּוֹם (“on the day”). This yields the sense, “on this day you shall not do any work,” providing greater specificity. In the same verse, the Nash Papyrus, Septuagint,

⁵² Ellis R. Brotzman and Eric J. Tully, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016).

Syriac, and Latin versions add **בָּה** to **לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה**, producing “you shall not do work in it,” which clarifies and slightly expands the prohibition. Furthermore, the Nash Papyrus and Septuagint agree in reading **וְאֶמְצָנֶיךָ** (“and your maidservant”) in Exodus 20:10. Compare Deuteronomy 5:14, which adds **כְּמוֹךָ** (“like you”). The Septuagint concludes the verse with **ὁ παροικῶν ἐν σοί**, “the sojourner dwelling among you,” emphasizing the inclusive scope of the command.

In verse 11, **אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם** functions as the direct object marker attached to “the heavens.” However, many manuscripts, along with the Septuagint, Syriac, and Targum (including Targum Pseudo-Jonathan), add **וְ** (“and”) before the direct object marker, smoothing the syntax.

In verses 13–15, the order of the prohibitions varies among witnesses. The Nash Papyrus and Septuagint read: “You shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not murder.” Other witnesses, such as Philo (On the Decalogue) and Luke, present the order: “You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal.” These variations may reflect differing emphases in ethical arrangement rather than substantive disagreement.

In verse 17, the Septuagint inverts elements found in the Hebrew text. Compare Deuteronomy 5:21, which begins, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife,” with Exodus 20:17, which begins, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.” The shift in order—wife before house in Deuteronomy, and house before wife in Exodus—suggests a variation in emphasis. However, the evidence from the Nash Papyrus remains uncertain regarding this arrangement.

5. Theological Message

There are enormous implications of the Ten Commandments for the present day. These are the very words Yahweh delivered to Moses. The New Testament affirms that the sole and proper worship of the true God, honor toward one’s parents, and the prohibition of murder,

adultery, theft, lying, and coveting remain requirements for those who want to please God. In the pursuit of living for the Lord, the Ten Commandments remind us that God is just and holy. He is also a God of order.

When the Israelites were led out of Egypt, they still possessed an Egyptian mindset; however, Yahweh, a holy God, redeemed them and commanded them to follow His laws. Today, something greater than the law is here: Jesus Christ, who has been revealed to us and who fulfills all the law and its requirements for us. Certainly, Christ is the fulfillment of all law, and we must trust in Him for deliverance. This does not necessarily imply that we abandon the value of the Ten Commandments. They teach us about the heart of Yahweh and His disdain for evil. They reveal the truth about God and His righteousness. They are also an invitation to have a covenant relationship with Him. They are not legalistic rules but rather divine self-disclosure.

In these short seventeen verses, the whole theology of God and humanity unfolds. They are full of beautiful truth about God's heart. The Ten Commandments represent a profound truth about God, and we should meditate on them and love them.

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