

Dictionary

OF THE Old Testament:

Pentateuch

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alistic content they are close to the first category, and they lack the elements of fantasy in the second. Wenham concludes, "we are dealing with real historical figures" (1994, xxi-xxii). In the absence of corroboration of the biblical texts on details about Dan, scholars either manufacture their own diverse accounts or try to establish the plausibility of the biblical narrative (Hoffmeier; Kitchen).

See also ASHER; BENJAMIN; GAD; ISSACHAR; JACOB; JOSEPH; JUDAH; LEVI, LEVITES; NAPHTALI; REUBEN; SIMEON; ZEBULON.

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DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD. See ZELOPHEHAD, DAUGHTERS OF.

DAY OF ATONEMENT. See ATONEMENT, DAY OF.

DEAD SEA SCROLLS. See TEXTUAL CRITICISM.

DEATH. See LIFE, DISEASE AND DEATH.

DEBT, REMISSION OF. See SABBATH, SABBATHICAL YEAR, JUBILEE.

DECALOGUE

The Decalogue, from the Greek translation meaning "ten words" or, in Hebrew, the *'āšeret haddēbārīm* (Ex 34:28; Deut 4:13; 10:4), is more commonly known as the Ten Commandments. This material is first encountered in Exodus 20, but the number ten and the familiar two-tablet description initially occur in Exodus 34. The Decalogue sits at the center of the "covenant between God and Israel, as mediated through *Moses. Its stipulations provide the foundational definition of an appropriate relationship between the Israelites and God and among individual Israelites under the terms of the covenant. In its OT context, the Decalogue is directed exclusively toward members of the Israelite community. As part of the Christian canon, more universal interpretations have been attached to it. One easily sees a significant influence on Christian thinking, as some informal definitions of Christian morality and piety are built upon the Decalogue. Its impact can also be observed on legal systems and business practices. Some contemporary discussions contend that the value of the Decalogue transcends any particular religious tradition and could therefore represent appropriate social values outside the domain of a religious setting.

1. Date and Origin of the Decalogue
2. Numeration of the Decalogue
3. Locations of the Decalogue Within the Text
4. The Decalogue as Covenant
5. The Decalogue as Law
6. Decalogue Content
7. Interpretation of the Decalogue
8. Hermeneutical Issues and Contemporary Relevance

DATE OF EXODUS. See EXODUS, DATE OF.

DAUGHTERS OF MAN. See SONS OF GOD, DAUGHTERS OF MAN.

1. Date and Origin of the Decalogue.
According to the text, Moses received these com-

mandments directly from God after he ascended the holy mountain. This would place the date shortly after the Israelites' escape from *Egypt, which is frequently assigned to either the fifteenth or thirteenth century B.C. (see Exodus, Date of). Many critical scholars reject Mosaic *authorship of the Decalogue based on historical-critical analysis of the text. From a literary perspective, it is argued by some that the Exodus version of the Decalogue has been introduced into an earlier narrative. Comparisons of the Exodus version with that of Deuteronomy demonstrate that paraenetic expansions occurred as this material was used in different settings. Many historical-critical scholars assign dates of origin for this material ranging from the twelfth through the ninth centuries B.C. However, from social, political and legal perspectives, there is nothing in the short, succinct "ten words" themselves that could not date to the time of Moses. Neither are there verifiable historical anchors in the text. Thus, one's position on date and origin of the material hinges on larger questions of biblical authority and canon formation.

2. Numeration of the Decalogue.

Different numbering systems are assigned to the Decalogue. The divergence stems from the treatment of the commandments to worship no other gods, to have no idols and not to covet. Jewish, Roman Catholic and Lutheran interpreters treat the laws prohibiting worship of other gods and the use of idols as one commandment. The Jewish tradition retains the number ten by treating "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" as the first commandment. The Roman Catholic and Lutheran traditions divide the commandment that prohibits coveting into two distinct parts, separating coveting the neighbor's house from coveting the neighbor's wife, servants and livestock. In doing so, they too retain ten as the number of commandments. Orthodox and Reformed traditions view the prohibitions against the worship of other gods and the use of idols as two separate items, while treating the commandment against coveting as a single prohibition.

3. Locations of the Decalogue Within the Text.

The Decalogue occurs in more than one location in the Pentateuch. In Exodus 20, where God gives the law at Sinai, the Decalogue is situated at the beginning of the *book of the covenant.

Source and redaction critics have argued that the Decalogue interrupts the flow of material between Exodus 19 and 20:18. With the Decalogue removed, the remaining material describes a theophany in which God instructs Moses to set limits around the holy mountain, with only Moses and *Aaron allowed to ascend the mountain. The people, frightened by the thunderous theophany, request that Moses be their intermediary so that they will not die from standing in God's overwhelming presence. In the current structure of Exodus 19–20, God gives the Decalogue in the midst of that theophany. The commandments precede a larger body of legal and other material known as the *book of the covenant (or covenant code), contained in Exodus 21–24.

The Decalogue in Exodus appears to be given a second time in chapter 34. When Moses discovers that the Israelites began worshipping the *golden calf in his absence, he angrily breaks the tablets containing the laws. Moses then ascends Sinai yet again, where God gives a set of replacement tablets. Though Exodus 34:28 says that God "wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments," the commands given in Exodus 34 are clearly different from the ones recorded in Exodus 20. The prohibition against *idols and the call to *sabbath rest do appear in Exodus 34, but the remaining stipulations pertain to religious *festivals and *sacrifices.

The Decalogue occurs yet another time in Deuteronomy 5, where its form and content are comparable to the material in Exodus 20. A book of speeches, Deuteronomy has a sermonic, exhortative quality. Here the Decalogue is incorporated into hortatory material by Moses that reminds Israel of its covenantal identity and responsibility in preparation for entering Canaan.

Deuteronomy recalls the giving of these laws at Mount Horeb, a more general name for the locale, rather than Mount Sinai, the more specific name for the mountain. Apart from that difference of name for the holy mountain, distinct differences between the Exodus version and the Deuteronomy version of the Decalogue are minimal. The commandment to observe a sabbath rest in Exodus is based on God's divine *rest on the seventh day. In Deuteronomy, the motivation for a sabbath rest is Israel's memory of its enslavement in Egypt.

4. The Decalogue as Covenant.

4.1. Definition. The Decalogue constitutes a covenant between God and Israel. The Hebrew term *bērit* is generally translated as "covenant," though it is sometimes rendered "promise, pledge, obligation, agreement, contract or treaty." Its etymology is uncertain. The most widely accepted suggestions include: (1) from the root verb *brh*, meaning "to see or decide"; (2) from the preposition *birīt*, unknown in Hebrew but found in Akkadian, meaning "between"; or (3) from a noun *birītu*, found in Akkadian and also in the Talmud, meaning "clasp, fetter."

Whatever its exact etymological origin, in general a covenant is a solemn promise between two parties, made binding by an oath. Both parties recognize this promise as the formal act that binds them to fulfill the promises made in the covenant. Ancient covenants could take place between different sociopolitical groups, thus creating or regulating the relationship between them. Covenants could also be made between groups within one particular legal community, in which case obligations were assumed that were not otherwise provided for by the laws and norms of that community. In this ancient Near Eastern context, these covenants usually had the sanction of a god or gods, and thus the idea of covenant was closely related to religion.

4.2. Forms. Two primary forms of covenant rooted in ancient Near Eastern culture are represented in the OT materials. The *royal grant* covenant known from Assyrian, Babylonian and Hittite sources has been used to identify the form and interpretation of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. The function of the royal grant was to bestow land or a house to a loyal vassal for past loyalties and extremely faithful service. As such, the royal grant was a reward.

The second type of covenant found in the OT closely models the *suzerainty* covenants. First known from Hittite treaties dating as early as the Late Bronze Age (1400-1200 B.C.), this covenant type is present in several later periods as well. This wide range of usage means that while the form is helpful for understanding the function of the biblical material, it is not useful for dating covenants of this type. The suzerainty covenant is closely associated with the Mosaic covenant and, thus, the Decalogue.

The suzerainty covenant was one between a superior and subordinate political powers. Treaties of this type have been found to contain many

elements similar to those of the Mosaic covenant.

(1) The treaty typically begins with a *preamble*, which gives the identity and title of the triumphant king, sometimes in detail and often opening with the phrase, "These are the words of . . ." (2) A *historical prologue* provides the foundation for the remainder of the covenant. It recounts the accomplishments of the king, especially those on behalf of the vassal. It may describe the past relationship between the two parties, likely emphasizing acts of benevolence by the suzerain for the vassal. It often reveals that the suzerain is responsible for placing the vassal power on the throne. (3) The *stipulations* spell out the obligations of the vassal to the suzerain. The content of these stipulations varies widely but is frequently meticulous in terms of military obligations. For instance, the vassal may not enter alliances with other independent kings and must be a friend to the suzerain's friends and an enemy to his enemies. The vassal must answer any summons by the suzerain for military forces. The stipulations also define the treatment of refugees and war booty. Some of the more humorous prohibitions include "murmuring unfriendly words" against the suzerain. Last but not least, a stipulated tribute is imposed. (4) After the stipulations, provision is made for the *deposit* of the covenant agreement in a "sacred" place. Periodic public reading of the covenant is required. The covenant is usually placed in the sanctuary of the vassal's temple and is read from once to four times yearly in a covenant-renewal ceremony. (5) *Witnesses* are then called to verify the implementation of the treaty. These are usually the respective gods of the groups involved. At times they include the features of the natural world, such as rivers or springs. (6) This is followed by *blessings and curses* that signify the good and the bad things that are to happen, according to the loyalty or lack of loyalty by the vassal to the suzerain. (7) Sometimes an oath or description of a ratification ceremony is included in the covenant, as is a binding symbol, such as a slaughtered animal. The latter represents what will happen to the vassal if the oath is broken.

Against this background, certain similarities with the Decalogue have been proposed. (1) The preamble finds a parallel in God's statement, "I am Yahweh your God." (2) The historical prologue, recounting the suzerain's deeds on behalf of the vassal, is contained in the phrase "who brought you out of Egypt." (3) The stipulations, or the terms of the covenant, are the prin-

ciples contained within the Decalogue.

Certain elements of the suzerain form are not part of the Decalogue itself but are described in other parts of the OT where keeping the covenant is the subject. For instance, the elements of depositing the law in a sacred place and of public reading are evident in Joshua 24. Deuteronomy 10:5 describes the ark of the covenant as a depository for the Decalogue. Public reading of the Torah, which includes the law, is mentioned in Deuteronomy 31:10-11. Witnesses are summoned in Joshua 24 (people and stones) and in Deuteronomy 32 (heaven and earth). Finally, *blessings and curses are attached to the book of Deuteronomy, which itself has been favorably compared to the suzerainty form.

Despite the shortcomings of the formal parallels with the Decalogue exclusively, the suzerainty treaty provides insight into reading and interpreting the exodus experience and the resulting covenant. Interpreted in that manner, the Decalogue represents an agreement between a superior party (God) and a subordinate party (Israel). In return for past deliverance and future provision, undivided loyalty in all matters is expected of Israel. Like the suzerainty covenants of the political realm, this covenant also hinged on a condition: Israel's observance of the stipulations. Whether one understands the response as one of obligation or gratitude is irrelevant at this point. Failure to keep the stipulations would lead to a breach of the covenant. Breach of the covenant would invoke the curses and thus ensure the demise of the vassal party.

5. The Decalogue as Law.

5.1. *Casuistic Law.* *Form-critical studies of OT law reveal two distinct types of law, along with a hybrid form that combines these two forms. The first type of law is *casuistic law*. Casuistic laws are conditional and are noted for their "if-then" structure: "If X does this, then Y will happen." This form of law establishes a hypothetical situation and prescribes the proper course of action should such a situation occur. Its *Sitz im Leben* ("setting in life") is thought to be the realm of the courts, because casuistic laws are concerned with typical problems that emerge in societies, and laws of this type are easily found in other secular legal codes.

5.2. *Apodictic Law.* The second form of law is *apodictic law*. These laws are absolute prohibitions of the "thou shalt not" variety, often con-

cerned with religious or moral issues. Unlike casuistic laws, apodictic laws offer no condition. They simply say, "Whoever does X will surely die" or "You shall not . . ." with the understood penalty being death. Even if death is not prescribed, death is the understood penalty for breaking apodictic laws. Some scholars initially argued that the apodictic laws were uniquely Israelite, with the *Sitz im Leben* being Israelite religion. Thus, these laws reflected Israel's attempt to live completely under the guidance of their God. This argument is no longer credible because apodictic laws have been found in other ancient Near Eastern materials as well. Instead, apodictic law seems to operate in settings that rely upon persuasion for urging compliance with the law rather than upon physical force or structures.

The negative prohibitions contained in the Decalogue resemble the apodictic laws, though the threatened punishment of death is lacking. Some scholars maintain that punishment by death is implied, though this cannot be conclusively demonstrated. Many of the Decalogue stipulations remain in the simplest of apodictic form, though expansions have been added to some, supplying justifying motives for the laws. For instance, one keeps the sabbath because God rested. One honors parents so that long life will follow. As the Decalogue operates within the suzerainty form of covenant given by God and mediated by Moses, their similarity with the apodictic form conveys the seriousness of keeping the covenantal stipulations.

5.3. *The Decalogue as Principles or Law?* Ultimately, is the Decalogue to be considered "law" in the strict sense? The Decalogue is contained within the Torah, a term frequently used synonymously with *law. Its location in Exodus, where it precedes the book of the covenant, and in Deuteronomy contributes to the perception that the commandments are laws. Similarities of form with apodictic law further encourage the conclusion that the Decalogue is legal material. The term *dēbārīm*, used to describe these commandments, is understood by some scholars of biblical law as a legitimate category or subcategory of legal material.

There are, however, some considerations that suggest that a wider understanding of the Decalogue is appropriate. First, the context for the giving of the Decalogue is a religious one, as God provides a covenant and in some sense a founding charter for the people delivered out of

Egypt. Second, penalties need to be stated and enforced when laws are broken if those laws are to be functionally effective. The stipulations of the Decalogue lack any prescribed punishment for those who break these laws, relying on fear of the Lord to promote allegiance to the terms of the covenant. Finally, the Decalogue addresses subject matter that is not "culture specific" but that instead has universal relevance and appeals to principles broadly held. For these reasons, the stipulations that form the Decalogue may be legitimately understood as "ordinances" or "principles" rather than as "laws" in the strictest sense (*see* Law).

6. Decalogue Content.

The suzerain-treaty form and the apodictic-law form should guide interpretation of the Decalogue. As an act of self-disclosure, this covenant indicates that God desires to be known by the Israelites. In typical suzerain fashion, the emerging relationship is based upon what God has already done on Israel's behalf. This is a covenant of choice, of *election. God has already chosen the Israelites to be a holy nation, and he has already been active on their behalf. Thus, the Decalogue is not a collection of commandments kept in order *to be* chosen by God. They are stipulations to be kept in response to *being chosen* by God. The deposit of these tablets, their public reading, the covenant-renewal ceremonies described in other locations and the Israelites' willingness to excommunicate, even kill, community members who violate the covenant affirm the central role of the covenant in Israel's identity.

Commentators have long recognized the Decalogue's personal appeal with its use of the singular pronoun "you." Equally obvious is the clear progression of focus within the Decalogue material, though different categorizations and descriptions of this progression have been offered. Many have understood the first four laws as defining humanity's proper relationship with God. The fourth, regarding sabbath rest, expands beyond the divine-human relationship and begins to address life in community. The final six stipulations regulate relationships between members of the faith community. An alternative interpretation describes the first five, which each contain the divine name, as applying specifically to Israel; the second five commandments, which do not contain the divine name, address moral issues and are intended

for a more universal audience.

The *first commandment*—"you shall have no other gods before me" (Ex 20:3)—demands absolute loyalty to Yahweh, the God of Israel. As a first response to God's election of Israel, this principle calls for an allegiance appropriate to the elect status. As a people created by God and set apart for holy purposes, commitment to Yahweh is to be fundamental to Israel's identity. Of course, Israel was frequently tempted toward, and guilty of, choosing gods other than Yahweh. Baal, Marduk, Asherah and a host of ancient Near Eastern deities, each of whom was believed to rule a particular domain such as fertility or rain, competed with Yahweh for Israel's devotion. It is probable that ancient Israel was not always a monotheistic society. Even if one argues to the contrary, OT literature is emphatic that Israel frequently worshiped other false gods, real or imagined.

With the first commandment prohibiting external threats to Israel's relationship with God, the second and third commandments are designed to prevent internal erosion of the community's perception of God's power and of their relationship to God. In doing so, the stipulations prohibit two practices common among Israel's peers.

The *second commandment* prohibits the use of a *pesel* ("image") in worship. The reference to things in heaven, on earth or under the earth covers all possible material forms. This prohibition of *idol worship served two primary functions. First, it distinguished Israelites from their ancient Near Eastern neighbors, many of whom used idols in their religious practices. The OT contains numerous references to such practices (cf. 2 Kings 17:7-18); archaeology confirms this testimony. Idols are physical representations of the deity, and herein lies one reason Israelites were not allowed to make such representations: few people were allowed to see the face of God and live. How, then, could one make an accurate representation of a God whose image had not been seen? Thus, integrity and the accuracy of the image representing God is an issue. Furthermore, idols are static, nonfeeling and nonresponsive, not at all like the God of Israel (cf. Isaiah's parody of idols: e.g., Is 40:18-20; 11:5-7, 21-29; 44:6-20; 46:1-7). The OT presents Yahweh as a God who is dynamic, who rejoices and suffers with the chosen people and who sees the actions and hears the cries of the covenant people. God is known through actions on behalf of the people, as God acts to fulfill the covenant

within Israel's historical experience.

Second, idols are never *only* a visual representation. In ancient Near Eastern religions, idols were sometimes bathed, clothed and fed as though they themselves were gods. Thus, idols could become objects of allegiance and ultimately be hallowed as *holy objects. At that point, the representation itself threatens to cause violation of the first commandment as the idol assumes a place of priority in the devotion of the worshiper. Equally important is the issue of using the idol as a means of containing and manipulating God. The idol, and supposedly God, could be used whenever desired and was to some degree at the mercy and disposal of its owner. To fashion an idol is to attempt to reduce God to manageable proportions and to assume that God is susceptible to the control of the worshiper. Such a theology is at odds with the OT, which describes Yahweh as transcendent and beyond human control.

Whereas the second commandment regulates visual and physical representations of the deity, the *third commandment* focuses upon verbal representations of God. The linguistic range of meaning for *šāw'* ("misuse") includes false swearing, false speech, and that which brings disaster. Thus, the misuse described in this commandment pertains to associating the name of Yahweh with false or disastrous purposes. This prohibition was deeply connected with the significance attached to personal names in ancient Near Eastern culture. Names revealed the character and identity of the individual. A close relationship existed between one's name and one's reputation. Equally important when considering this commandment is the ancient Near Eastern belief in the power of the spoken word. At some level, a causal connection was assumed between words and events (e.g., the concept of *blessings and curses). Thus, to know the name of God was to understand something of the divine identity. To invoke the divine name was to associate the power and purposes of Yahweh with the thing being spoken and the purposes being represented. Using Yahweh's name in vain involves associating God with purposes and powers that are inconsistent with God's identity and will. The end result is a misrepresentation of God, a false claim to divine power and endorsement, and a miscommunication of truth.

The *fourth commandment* is best understood by considering the meaning of the root word for

*sabbath (*šabbāt*), which simply means "rest." The commandment could thus be read, "Remember the rest day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a rest day to the Lord your God." The Exodus version of the Decalogue anchors this commandment in God's rest as described in the *creation story. That act of divine rest is the theological framework for this regulation in which the sabbath becomes a special day set aside to remind the Israelites that the cycle of life should include a period of rest, refreshment and remembering their Creator. When Israel remembers their Creator, they remember that the same God delivered them from bondage. When they remember that newly acquired freedom, they remember the covenant. So it is no surprise that in the Deuteronomic version of the Decalogue, the reason given for observing the sabbath is not because God rested, but because God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian captivity. Thus, sabbath rest is about more than relaxation from toil and labor and the rejuvenation of tired muscles and aching backs. This "rest," contextualized by the words "remembrance" and "holy," is a weekly reminder for the Israelites of what God has done to create this covenant community and of the holy, separate identity it bears as the covenant people. In effect, the sabbath is a sign of the covenant.

Like the fourth commandment, the *fifth commandment* is expressed positively, calling for the Israelites to honor their fathers and mothers. This command is not the only regulation of the treatment of parents (cf. Ex 21:15, 17). **"Honor"* is a translation of *kābōd*, which also means "glory" and, interestingly enough, "weighty." To honor someone in this Israelite context was to regard that one as a person of worth and value. Though the fourth commandment has traditionally been a parent's refuge when children misbehave, this verse was not originally a catechism for that purpose. It was directed to the Israelite community as a whole, shaping the way they treated their aging parents. It functioned as a guideline within a covenant community composed of family units united in a tribal federation.

According to the exodus story, these were families in the process of moving from Egyptian slavery through a *wilderness wandering to the Promised Land. They were going from a setting where their Egyptian owners determined what they received, and who consequently had some responsibility for their care, to a wilderness set-

ting where God provided for them. From there, the Israelites eventually entered Canaan, the Promised Land. Once settled there, each family received a *land inheritance and from that point onward had the primary responsibility of caring for their own.

Meeting basic subsistence needs would have been a challenge for many of the Israelite families. Archaeological discoveries indicate that Israelites initially settled in the rough, undeveloped terrain of the hill country. Land needed to be cleared and terraced. Homes had to be built. Agrarian economies were developed. Rainfall was limited. Struggles for survival were common, with debt slavery always a lingering possibility. In a situation where resources were at a premium and sacrifices had to be made, the uncomfortable question became: Who is expendable? In such cases, it would have been tempting to spend resources on those who had most of their lives before them and whose young, energetic, virile bodies would soon help relieve the nearly insurmountable work load. To combat that possibility, this commandment insists that families honor the elderly, who are sometimes weaker and needier than their adult children. This stipulation, designed to protect those who may be regarded as unimportant, unproductive or burdensome, insists that human value and meaningful life are not equated with productivity.

The social structure of the Israelite tribal system, normally described as a tripartite structure of tribes, clans and families or *bêt 'āb* ("house of the father"), gives this law an additional significance. The *bêt 'āb* created an extended family setting in which the patriarch and matriarch of the family wielded much power over the lives of the individual family members of the younger generations. This structure had economic and political ramifications (cf. the *Jacob and Laban stories). Younger generations could easily tire of the lack of control they had over their own lives and over family decisions, leading to animosity toward the father and mother of the house. In a situation primed for tense situations, this commandment reaffirms the place of honor given to the head of the *bêt 'āb*.

The *sixth commandment* prohibits killing, which is ironic given the amount of violence contained in the OT. Indeed, interpretation of this commandment is difficult, given its context. The usual word for "kill" in biblical Hebrew is *hārag*, but that is not the word used here. This

commandment prohibits *rāṣaḥ*, an interesting choice because this word has a wider range of possible meanings than *hārag*. Normally *rāṣaḥ* refers to "murder," the willful, premeditated killing of an individual, often as an act of *blood vengeance. This would suggest that this commandment intended to limit acts of revenge to protect the life of innocent community members. However, *rāṣaḥ* can also refer to unintentional homicide, as in the laws of asylum (cf. Deut 4:41-42). This usage means that intentionality can no longer be the dividing line by which one keeps or breaks this command. The word also describes the execution of a convicted killer (cf. Num 35:30). Such usage demonstrates that the implications of this commandment reach far beyond simplistic or legalistic interpretations. This is a commandment that values life and relationships, leaving decisions to end life in the hands of God. Where taking the life of another had divine sanction, the OT generally associates those deaths with certain sins for which the prescribed punishment was execution. Punishment by death was limited to capital offenses (e.g., Ex 21:12-17) and to actions that threatened the holiness of the community and the integrity of Israel's covenant with God (e.g., Josh 7). Where the Israelite community was given authority to take the lives of individuals, those decisions were not to be made lightly.

Adultery is prohibited in the *seventh commandment* (see Sexuality, Sexual Ethics). Such a stipulation presupposes an understanding of marriage, because without the latter, the former is pointless. To some degree polygamy was practiced by some Israelites, although it is impossible to know how widespread it actually was. The economic realities of polygamy may have curtailed its popularity. In certain circumstances, a marriage could be dissolved, and Israelite law contained guidelines describing when divorce was appropriate. However, so long as the marriage was intact, certain standards were to be respected. Abstaining from adultery was one of those guidelines, although a double standard existed in Israel's patriarchal society. The law prohibited wives from having sexual relations with anyone other than their husbands. In contrast, men were not to have relations with the wives of other men. Elsewhere, death is clearly stated as the penalty for adultery (cf. Deut 22:22). In contrast, the penalty for the violation of a virgin was marriage or payment (cf. Ex 22:16-17;

Deut 22:28-29). In the clan-based, tribal-affiliated Israelite community, stable home lives were essential if the community itself was to remain functional. Without such stability, intratribal and intertribal conflicts arising from these acts would threaten the survival of the group (*see* Family Relationships).

The *eighth commandment* prohibits *theft. The choice of *gānab* as the verb suggests the element of "secrecy." Questions have arisen about the relationship between this stipulation and the tenth commandment, given the apparent overlap. Drawing support from other laws (cf. Ex 21:16; Deut 24:7), some have suggested that this commandment refers to kidnapping. If one presumes that theft is a capital offense, such an argument has some logic, but there is no compelling evidence to support such a claim.

The mere possibility of stealing requires, first of all, a concept of ownership. If ownership grants access to certain people while denying access to others, that means that ownership establishes boundaries accompanied by restricted entry or access. To some degree property is understood to be an extension of the self of the owner. Consequently, the theft of property is a violation or injury of the person, not just loss of wealth. The loss may well deprive a person of the ability to survive. Elsewhere in Israel's law, prohibitions of theft generally are related to the provision of basic subsistence needs. Along with personal violation and threat to survival, theft also contributes to the loss of privilege. The loss of those things reduces the possibility of a satisfying or abundant life.

Lying is prohibited in the *ninth commandment*. The Hebrew literally reads, "you shall not respond against your neighbor falsely," and uses language that suggests a court context. Two immediate observations deserve comment. The first is only obvious in the Hebrew text. The verb used is *āna*, which is usually translated as "respond." It can, however, also mean "oppress, afflict or put down." Thus this verse could read, "You shall not oppress your neighbor by lying." Lying is more than deceit and dishonesty; it oppresses the person to whom or about whom the lie is told. The second observation is the commandment's reference to the neighbor. Thus the stipulation emphasizes that lying is a social, not a private, evil. The worst victim is the neighbor, which is to say, the one to whom or about whom the lie is told.

There is no lie that does not, in some way, affect others. At the very least, false information limits the hearer's ability to make an informed decision because he or she does not have accurate information. In the Israelite community, lying was prohibited because of what it did to the recipients of the lie. The ninth commandment protected the neighbor as well as the neighbor's reputation. It ensured the neighbor's freedom to make an informed choice and thus helped the neighbor to decide and act with integrity. Ancient Israel had no place for such a casual approach to truth and lying, especially in their law courts. Elsewhere the laws stipulate that a person who gave worthless testimony about another was to receive the penalty that the one about whom the lie was told would have been subject to, if the testimony had been true (Deut 19:18-21). In some cases that meant death; in others it meant three- or fourfold restitution. Such strenuous penalties illustrate the seriousness of false testimony in the context of the faith community.

With the *tenth commandment*, questions frequently arise about the relationship between stealing and coveting, since their territory seems to overlap. There is one primary difference. Stealing is linked completely to the act itself, in which someone takes that which belongs to another. Coveting (*hāmād*), however, has to do with an attitude deep within. It involves desires that are so strong one is willing to reach out and take, or commit other unacceptable acts, to satisfy those desires.

After nine commands that either focus on God or outer behavior, the tenth command enters the realm of the heart and mind. This prohibition does not focus on outward, visible actions. It concentrates instead on a person's thoughts, motives and attitudes. Covetous thoughts motivate and inspire, frequently producing action that will violate one of the previous nine commandments.

Laws legislate actions, not thoughts or attitudes, precisely because the former can be monitored whereas the latter cannot. The act of coveting cannot be witnessed, only becoming visible when that internal craving is acted upon. This tenth commandment's shift to the interior dimension of the human life lessens the probability that the Decalogue functioned as an actual set of laws in ancient Israel. It does, however, demonstrate that God's covenant never depends

solely upon adherence to external details. The Decalogue begins with a command that insists there be no God before Yahweh. Like coveting, one's loyalty to God also begins as an internal posture that only secondarily becomes evident in external practice. Thus two commandments that are essentially rooted in the heart and mind of the covenant people encircle a set of principles that properly order worship and community relationships.

7. Interpretation of the Decalogue.

7.1. Old Testament. When one studies the history of interpretation of these laws, or any biblical passage, one will notice development and change in the meaning assigned to these passages. Biblical passages take on new meaning, partially shaped by the context of the community or individual reading them. For that reason, understanding the history of interpretation is useful to readers who search the text for meaning.

Interpreters of the Decalogue should begin by remembering that in its original context, these stipulations were not universal truths revealed to the entire world. They were given for and directed to a specific group of people, Israel, that was chosen by God. These commandments helped define the nation of Israel in its relationship with God and to each other. Israel was rooted in and defined by the concept of "covenant."

Many Biblical scholars maintain that covenant is the key idea for understanding the OT. Israel repeatedly used the concept of covenant to understand their history, from the call of Abraham through the people's return from Babylonian exile. It even influenced their understanding of God and their conception of proper social organization. Indeed, it is difficult to find a more foundational or relational term than *covenant*, especially in regard to the Israelite understanding of community.

Israel's covenant was foundational for its community in the sense that it specified the reason for entering into the agreement with God. God delivered them from bondage, which provided the motivation for entering the covenant, and the foundation for Israel's continuing trust in God. Furthermore, the ensuing commands in Exodus 20, and again in Deuteronomy 5, provided a framework that delineated the essential characteristics and values of the community.

God and Israel both expected these commandments to be accepted and shared by those who participated in the covenant.

The covenant defined by the Decalogue was relational in the sense that it formally established the faith relationship with God. Other contexts demonstrate that the primary relational characteristic that God brought into the covenant was *hesed*, usually translated as "steadfast love." Besides the accompanying responsibilities and privileges it created, this covenant was characterized by the assurance of God's steadfast love.

As the covenant described God's actions and intentions in this *hesed*-oriented relationship with the Israelites, it also delineated the basic expectations for the participants regarding their relationship with God and with other Israelites. In short, it outlined acceptable standards for relationships shaped by faith in the God of Israel.

The Decalogue's central location within the Mosaic covenant and the revelation at Sinai demonstrates its importance in the OT's theological understanding of Israel's identity. Other lists of "ten," and prophetic admonitions that loosely parallel the Decalogue without specifically naming it, confirm its significance. However, one must balance this testimony with the claim of 2 Kings 23, where during Josiah's reign a book of the law was found in the temple, the contents of which seemed unknown to the people. This raises the question of whether the law had as central a place in the lives of the people as the theology of the OT desired it to have. In fact, the Deuteronomistic History highlights disobedience as the reason for Israel's fall and subsequent exile, confirming that though the law was central to Israel's identity as a nation, the laws were not sufficiently observed to maintain the terms of the covenant.

7.2. New Testament. The NT contains various references to the Decalogue or portions of its stipulations (cf. Rom 13:9; Col 3:5-11; Heb 4:4, 10; Jas 2:11). Reference is made to them in the conversation between the rich young ruler and Jesus (Lk 18:18-23). Some view the Beatitudes as a reinterpretation of the Decalogue. Moving beyond these literal citations, larger interpretive questions hinge on the continuing validity of these commandments, given the new covenant through Christ. At the very least, interpreters should recognize that laws once meant for a specific group of people, Israel, are now being

redirected at another faith group that, while rooted in its Jewish heritage, has a different understanding of law and covenant.

Jesus occasionally challenged Jewish traditions regarding the law and offered new interpretations of it. He also understood his work as fulfilling the law. Jesus as interpreter of the law, or as the fulfillment of the law, is different from Jesus as the negation of the law, a description one hears all too often within the church. Jesus declared he was the fulfillment of the law, suggesting that the spiritual truths represented by the various laws were to be internalized. The transfiguration (Mt 17; Mk 9; Lk 9) depicts Jesus in conversation with Moses and Elijah, representatives of the Law and Prophets. John 1:16-17, directed at early Christians, describes how they received "one blessing upon another." First the law was given through Moses; then grace and truth came through Christ. So Christians should not be quick to dismiss totally the OT material as worthless (*see DfG, Law*).

Equally important to a NT discussion of the Decalogue's continuing validity is Paul's perspective on the law, which is a more critical one than that of Jesus. Paul insisted that grace, not law, had the power to bring salvation and that "Christ is the end of the law" (Rom 10:4). However, he also insisted that all Scripture, which would have certainly included the OT law, is "inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17; *see DPL, Law*).

The heart of the discussion may be described as "law as source of salvation" versus "law as valuable for instruction." Christ has done what the law could not do. Consequently, Christians do not seek salvation through the observance of the law. However, with Christ as the fulfillment of the law and its correct interpreter, OT law can continue to be a source of inspiration and a resource for wisdom. The new covenant through Christ, not the Decalogue, occupies the center of the Christian community. The spiritual truths represented by the Decalogue's stipulations should be internalized as useful instruction for faithful living within the new covenant.

7.3. Later Judaism. One finds two themes in the rabbinic treatment of the Decalogue. One strand of tradition accords the Decalogue a central place in Jewish prayer and liturgy. Its com-

mandments were included among the material contained in phylacteries at Qumran. The Jerusalem Talmud (*y. Ber. 1:5A*) describes a direct correspondence between each word of the Shema and one of the Ten Commandments. A second strand of tradition, contained in the same document, downplays the centrality of the Decalogue in Jewish prayer, allowing the full revelation of God through Moses to be emphasized. Rabbinic literature is content to let this apparent contradiction stand.

7.4. Christian History. The Christian church's interpretation of the Decalogue has varied greatly over the course of its history, again demonstrating the influence of culture and context upon interpretation. Early catechetical material, such as the *Didache*, demonstrates a legalistic use as a means of influencing morality. Others, such as Irenaeus, used the concept of natural law as a means of embracing the value of the Decalogue while still maintaining that the Jewish law was no longer valid. Augustine promoted a Pauline argument that the law itself was good but that its goodness had been obscured by sin. The value of the Decalogue within the new covenant was its contribution to shaping the new life in Christ. The influence of these movements continued in the thinking of Reformers in a manner that elevated these formerly community-oriented stipulations to the level of eternal, divine law applicable to all times and all peoples. As a result, in the post-Reformation, precritical period, the exposition of the Decalogue was a usual feature of theological works. As critical scholarship emerged in the academy, eighteenth-century treatment of the Decalogue, and indeed the entire Bible, analyzed the text with a variety of historical-critical methods. These analyses raised questions regarding the authorship, date and origin of the Decalogue. Meanwhile, within the confessional community, the treatment of the Decalogue as a set of eternal laws to be applied universally has generally continued unscathed. Unfortunately, this has encouraged many within Christianity to use the Decalogue as a gauge for measuring righteousness, substituting legalistic prohibitions for covenant faith. A number of recent books of an interpretive nature are available, each seeking to connect the truth or spirit of the Decalogue with contemporary issues, thus demonstrating its continued relevance (Marshall, Moriarty, Timmerman).

8. Hermeneutical Issues and Contemporary Relevance.

Given the specific Israelite origin of the Decalogue and the range of meaning assigned to it by readers throughout history, modern interpreters do well to resist merely insisting upon the universal relevance of these commandments. As universal morals imposed from without, independent of a relationship with the God who gave the Decalogue, these commandments lack spiritual value. Indeed, as apodictic law without a formal structure to enforce adherence to them, there is little motivation for keeping these commandments apart from the covenant. When they are applied beyond the bounds of the faith community, a different motivation is necessary. The statements given here distance interpretation of the Decalogue from the common Christian assumption that they are universal laws. There may indeed be eternal truths within them that are worthy of wide application, but these commandments depend upon the covenant for their authority.

A first step toward discovering the contemporary relevance of the Decalogue, therefore, requires a recovery of *covenant* and *community* as central concepts within the church. The covenant established the context in which these commandments were heard. It established God's prior action on behalf of the people, God's choice of these people and God's desire to communicate with them. The commandments of the Decalogue expressed the divine will for the covenant people. As such, they provided a gift of opportunity and a warning of potential destruction. They provided the foundational principles for thinking about God and about religious living, creating a distinct group of people by defining their relationship to God differently from that of other religious groups. The commandments pertaining to social relationships framed life between members of the group. Faithful living, and indeed a faith community, results from living by the terms of the covenant.

Covenant and community remain as emphases of the Decalogue when viewed through a NT lens even though the NT redefines the faith community. Theological and conceptual parallels exist in God's prior action on the behalf of a people whom God desired to choose and in the revelation of the divine will through Jesus, who is the new covenant. The Decalogue remains useful within the new covenant, though some

important shifts must be recognized. Rather than Israel, the faith community comprises followers of Jesus. Jesus' new command points to love of God and neighbor as the summation of the law. Christians do not keep the commandments as a means of keeping the covenant. Rather, they keep them as a way of expressing their love for God. The catechetical use of the Decalogue is not inappropriate so long as the distinction is maintained between law as "resource for instruction" and law as "measurement of piety" or worse, "source of salvation." With the Decalogue as a relevant resource for instruction, the challenge for the contemporary church is to utilize the positive principles contained in these apodictic formulations in ways that emphasize the spirit of God that undergirds the letter of the law.

See also BLASPHEMY; BODILY INJURIES, MURDER, MANSLAUGHTER; ETHICS; FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS; LAW; SABBATH, SABBATICAL YEAR, JUBILEE; SEXUALITY, SEXUAL ETHICS; THEFT AND DEPRIVATION OF PROPERTY.

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DESERT. See WILDERNESS, DESERT.

DEUTERONOMIC COVENANT. See COVENANT; DEUTERONOMY, BOOK OF.

DEUTERONOMIST. See AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH; DEUTERONOMY, BOOK OF; PENTATEUCHAL CRITICISM, HISTORY OF; SOURCE CRITICISM.

DEUTERONOMY, BOOK OF

This article discusses the contents, theological themes and setting of the book of Deuteronomy. It shows how Deuteronomy relates to the OT books that precede and follow it. It describes the contents of the book as a series of speeches of *Moses on the plains of Moab, which re-present in a distinctive manner themes developed in the first four books of the Pentateuch. It goes on to review the interpretation of Deuteronomy in the modern period, explaining why it has been closely associated with the reform of King Josiah in the late seventh century B.C. and identifying the implications of this setting for its theological interpretation. Then, in critical dialogue with the thesis that Deuteronomy is the document of a Judean promonarchical program, it is argued

that the book presents a vision of a thoroughly distinctive constitution for Israel in which Yahweh's authority is mediated through the *tôrâ* (or *law) taught by Moses, with the people having final responsibility for managing Israel's affairs. The principal themes of the book are then reviewed in the light of this overarching view and in relation to other parts of the Bible.

1. Deuteronomy in the Canon of the Old Testament
2. An Outline of the Book
3. Deuteronomy in Modern Interpretation
4. Deuteronomy as a Constitution for Israel
5. Establishing a Setting for Deuteronomy
6. Deuteronomy in the Canon

1. Deuteronomy in the Canon of the Old Testament.

1.1. The Name of the Book. The name "Deuteronomy" comes from the Greek translation (LXX) of Deuteronomy 17:18, which misunderstands the phrase "a copy of this law" as "this second law" (*to deuteronomion touto*). The title in Hebrew is "These are the words," taken from the opening words of the book. Deuteronomy is not a mere addition of new material to that which was already known, but a re-presentation and inculcation of the requirements of the *covenant between Yahweh and Israel. The former title makes an observation about the relation of the book to the remainder of the Pentateuch, while the latter focuses on its content.

1.2. Its Place in the Canon. Deuteronomy is the fifth book of Moses, the last book in the Pentateuch. While the word *Pentateuch* is based on the Greek for "five scrolls," the Hebrew term *tôrâ* also came to designate the same five books. The association with Moses was a key factor in marking out these books as primary. In this context, Deuteronomy brings to a conclusion the story of the formative events of Israel's history with Yahweh. Its narrative of the death of Moses (Deut 34) marks the end of the primary era in Israel's life and the transition to the next phase.

Modern interpretation has aligned Deuteronomy not only with the books that precede it canonically but also with those that follow it (in the Hebrew canonical order): Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings—the Former Prophets in Jewish tradition or more generally the Historical Books. Deuteronomy occupies a position between Genesis—Numbers and Joshua—Kings. It is a kind of pause in the narrative, since the