

Hot Spot

What Does the New Testament Mean By “The Commandments”?

David K. Trudgett



Hot Spots in Theology Torah Toolbox Series

Theological Climate Change in Progress!

**What Does the
New Testament Mean By
“The Commandments”?**

A Survey of the Apostolic Writings

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Torah Toolbox

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Cover art painting by our late friend, and servant of Yahweh, Fiona R. Smith.

With thanks to my dear wife, Julie R. Trudgett, for reviewing the draft and suggesting several improvements.

Some feel that when, “the commandments” are mentioned in the New Testament books—the Apostolic Writings—that it is the Ten Commandments in particular to which it refers. However, an explicitly named thing called, “The Ten Commandments,” is never mentioned anywhere in the Hebrew Scriptures, nor in the Apostolic Writings. It turns out that a tight focus on, “The Ten Commandments,” to the exclusion of the rest of the Law, is an idiosyncrasy not based on biblical precedent. This focus may indicate a lack of full appreciation for what the ten commandments really are, which in turn can be attributed in a cause-and-effect manner, to a general, widespread rejection and neglect of Torah.

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Introduction

Within the Apostolic Writings, or the “New Testament,” there are numerous references to the, “commandments,” and the need to keep them. If we are to keep them, though, we need to know what they are.

There are only a limited number of possibilities from which we may reasonably choose. Context, as well as common sense, rules out all except the following options:

1. Yahweh’s Torah commandments.
2. The Ten Commandments.
3. “Love God,” and, “Love your neighbour.”
4. Yeshua’s¹ personal directions given during his earthly ministry.

¹‘Yeshua’ is ‘Jesus’. Many do not know that Jesus was actually Yeshua, or Joshua. ‘Jesus’ is an anglicised form of the name that came to us via Greek and Latin.

The correct answer is the first, yet it is the only one that is almost universally rejected among today's Christian denominations. To be clear, option one, Yahweh's Torah commandments, actually encompasses the other three alternatives:

- The Ten Commandments form the kernel of the whole Law.
- "Love God," and, "Love your neighbour," are the Torah's two greatest commandments.
- Yeshua's personal directions are in full harmony with his Father's Law, and bring it to fullness.

Option one therefore does not exclude any of the other possibilities. It is a deep mystery,² then, why it is rejected with such vehemence in many quarters, by many denominations.

Options two, three and four, on the other hand, intentionally exclude option one. They do this, each of them individually, and all of them taken as a whole. In fact, the only real reason they are even considered rational possibilities is the *a priori* exclusion of the Law. This means that Torah is *excluded* from consideration from

²See 2 Thessalonians 2:7.

the outset, and everything else is reasoned about given this as the fundamental *assumption*.

Of the four options, three and four are easily dismissed and can be immediately excluded for the following reasons.

1. The two greatest commandments are not the only commandments which Yeshua himself listed as required to be kept in order to gain eternal life. Therefore, these cannot be *the commandments* one is required to keep. It does not help to say that these two commandments include the other commandments: which other commandments?
2. The commandments that Yeshua has given, do not only include the ones he gave during his earthly ministry, but also include all the previous commandments given in Torah. There is no way to deny this without denying that Yeshua is Yahweh. Therefore, option four is an impossibility.

That leaves only options one and two as possibilities: either ‘the commandments’ refers to the Ten Commandments, or it refers to the whole of the Law given by Yahweh to his people.

In this work, we will make no *a priori* assumption to exclude Yahweh’s Torah commandments from considera-

tion. Taking this approach, we will be able to show from the text that the only rational possibility is that in the New Testament (N.T.), “the commandments,” refers to the whole of Torah unless the particular context indicates otherwise.

But our journey will not start with the Apostolic Writings, or New Testament. We will begin with the books of Moses (‘Mosheh’ in Hebrew) and in particular, the two chapters which contain the text of the Ten Commandments.

While considering Moses, we will look at whether the Ten Commandments are even called that in Scripture, or if this is just a name that has been applied by tradition over the centuries. If Scripture calls the Ten Commandments by name over and over again, then we would have a good clue or indication that they may, indeed, be a separate and distinct entity, apart from Torah.

Once the groundwork has been laid in the books of Moses, our next port of call will be the Gospels, followed by Paul’s writings, and finishing with the books of John (Hebrew ‘Yohanan’). At this point, having completed our survey of the N.T. references to, “the commandments,” we will be in a secure position to answer our original question: “What *does* the N.T. mean by, ‘the commandments’?”

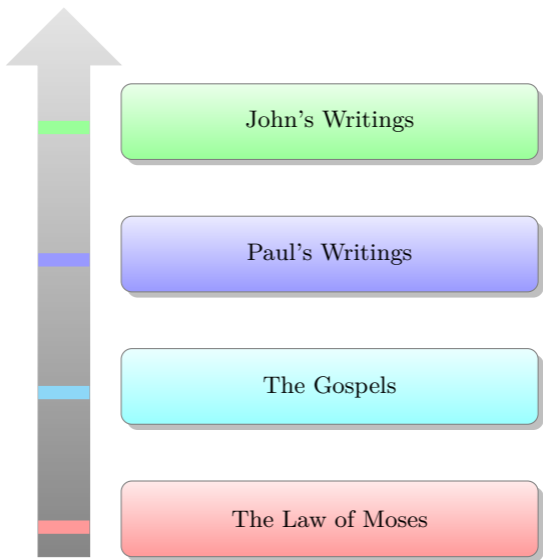


Figure 0.1: Our journey through the commandments.

Before embarking on our journey, it is worth noting one other point. There are those who recognise clearly that ‘the commandments’ cannot simply refer to the Ten Commandments, but must refer to Torah; yet they cannot admit this, either, due to centuries of accumulated prejudice. As a final, desperate measure, they *fabricate* a distinction which does not exist in Scripture, and claim that Torah consists of “moral” laws and “ceremonial” laws, only the former needing to be kept.

This claim fairly boggles the imagination, and is why it is not listed as one of the four allowable options. It is irrational. Who decides which laws are moral and which ceremonial? Scripture certainly does not! All Torah laws are moral! This is because *every single law* is telling us either how to love Yahweh, or how to love our neighbour! This includes all the Temple and sacrificial laws, without exception.

In both the Apostolic Writings and the Hebrew Scriptures, there is not one single place which mentions, let alone discusses, a distinction between two types of laws. It is a pure invention by those who will not keep Yahweh’s Law.

Those who wish to persist with this invention need only refer to Yeshua’s own words to see the error, because Yeshua has condemned that view in no uncertain terms.

Do not suppose that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. Because amen I say to you, until the heaven and the earth shall pass away, never ever shall one smallest letter or one tiny serif pass away from the Law. Until everything comes to pass, therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the Kingdom of the Heavens. But whoever does and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the Kingdom of the Heavens. Because I am telling you, if your righteousness shall not exceed that of the scribes and of the Pharisees, you shall never ever enter into the Kingdom of the Heavens!

(Matthew 5:17–20)

1 The Books of Mosheh

Moses (Mosheh) wrote, edited and curated the first five books of the Bible. In two of these books, Exodus and Deuteronomy, the accounts of how we came to have the Ten Commandments are to be found. These accounts include the detailed text of the commandments, as well as the surrounding circumstances. We find these accounts in the following locations:

- Exodus chapter twenty;
- Deuteronomy chapter five.

These two chapters are found here in the appendices, to save you looking them up. In neither of those chapters does the phrase, “ten commandments,” occur. However, the phrase occurs in three other places, which are the only places it does occur in Scripture, whether the Hebrew Scriptures, or the Apostolic Writings (generally known as the “New Testament”). The phrase occurs once

in Exodus and twice in Deuteronomy, as we will shortly see.

It is interesting to look at usages of the phrase, “ten commandments,” or, “the ten commandments”, because it will show how preoccupied or not the Hebrews were with giving a special name to the core commandments of the Covenant.

This is not to say or imply that the Ten Commandments are not important. Clearly, the Ten Commandments, as we call them now, form the very core of the Covenant between Yahweh and his people. This is so much the case, that referring to the ten commandments written in stone by Yahweh himself, is tantamount to referring to the whole Covenant as later written down in detail by Mosheh and preserved in the books of Scripture.

In the Hebrew mind, the ten commandments written by Yahweh, being the very core and essence of the Covenant, represent the *whole* of the Covenant, which includes *all* of the books of the Law.

The following analysis shows that the Hebrew Scriptures do not single out, “The Ten Commandments,” as a special, named and distinct entity apart from the *whole* Law of which they form the foundation. To this end, we will now review the three occurrences of the phrase in



Figure 1.1: The Ten Commandments.

question.

Exodus 34, shown below, is the first occurrence in Scripture of the phrase, “the ten commandments”:

He was there with Yahweh forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread, nor drank water. He wrote on the tablets the words of the Covenant, the ten commandments. (Exodus 34:28 [WEB]¹)

When reading this verse, common sense alone shows that we cannot permit ourselves to believe that Mosheh spent a whole forty days and forty nights filling two stone tablets with the words that Yahweh himself had already written there. The preceding verses, in fact, demonstrate that he was writing a much more detailed fleshing out of the Covenant whose *foundation* and *essence* was the ten commandments written on the two tables of stone. So, we must understand from this that Mosheh spent forty days writing out the words of the Covenant, the core and foundation of which being the ten commandments written by Yahweh on the two tablets. The phrase, “the ten commandments,” therefore, is being used here to refer to the *whole* Law, and not just to the actual Ten Commandments.

¹Edits: Capitalised the word, ‘Covenant’.

It is entirely unnecessary to suppose here that Mosheh intended to give the words of the Covenant another name, that being, “The Ten Commandments.” In fact, it would be contradictory, because the, “words of the Covenant,” to which he refers, are the words which took him forty days to write! The plain reading, then, is that the number ‘ten’ is mentioned because that is the number of the commandments written by Yahweh on the two tablets of stone, as opposed to the many more commandments written by the hand of Mosheh.

Now, the second occurrence of the phrase, “the ten commandments,” occurs in the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy, before the actual text of the commandments is given in the following chapter.

He declared to you his Covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even the ten commandments. He wrote them on two stone tablets. (Deuteronomy 4:13 [WEB]²)

Here, Mosheh is again clearly referring to the original and foundational ten commandments written by Yahweh, not in themselves, but in their *capacity* of forming the core of the whole *Covenant*, the words of which were written out by Mosheh in the presence of and under the

²Edits: Capitalised the word, ‘Covenant’.

direction of Yahweh over a period of forty days. The two tablets, and the ten commandments written on them, therefore represent the whole of the Covenant, which is why they have a special and central role, and why those tablets are kept in the, “Ark of the Covenant.”

Once more, there is no necessity to assume that Mosheh is giving Yahweh’s commandments a special name since, if they have a name, it would surely rather be, “The Words of the Covenant.” There is no reason to believe that the number ‘ten’ is given for any other reason than to distinguish those original and core words of the Covenant from the rest which were added later. As Deuteronomy 4:13 implies, the Ten Commandments are Yahweh’s *declaration* of the whole Covenant with his people.

Finally, the last occurrence of the phrase, “the ten commandments,” is found in Deuteronomy, five chapters after chapter five, in which the text of the ten commandments was given:

He wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments which Yahweh spoke to you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly: and Yahweh gave them to me. (Deuteronomy 10:4 [WEB])

Here also, despite some attempts at creative punctuation, like putting a comma after, “the ten command-

ments,” where no comma is needed, this is clearly a case of simply drawing attention to the number of original commandments that were written on the two tables of stone. There is no need to believe that Mosheh is giving those commandments a special name, “The Ten Commandments.”

Although not one of these three examples, the two in Deuteronomy and the one in Exodus, can be thought to necessarily be giving a proper name to the commandments written by Yahweh, is it nevertheless a permissible interpretation? The answer is, ‘no’, because then we would need to explain the inexplicable, which is, “Why would Scripture go to the trouble to baptise Yahweh’s tablet commandments as, ‘The Ten Commandments,’ and then never use this name again throughout all of the rest of Scripture?” In other words, it is a figment of the collective imagination, that those ten commandments have been given the title, “The Ten Commandments,” by Scripture, rather than by subsequent tradition.

The fact that the Hebrew Scriptures do not give the original and core ten commandments their own special name, shows that in the Hebrew mind, the ten commandments were not an island entity in themselves to be followed in isolation and without the interpretation and concrete implementation of the rest of the Law of

Yahweh. The Covenant Law of Yahweh and the Ten Commandments are an indivisible unity, where referring to one refers to the other out of necessity. The ten commandments do not stand by themselves.

2 The Gospels

There are many places in the Gospels which refer to the commandments, and the Law and the Prophets. That is because Yahweh's Law is central.

There are doubtless too many references to the Law and the commandments to cover in a brief work such as this. However, if we find those places which mention the word, 'commandments' in the plural (in most English translations), then we will have a good sampling of ten or so references to the commandments and the Law in the Gospels, and a couple of dozen or so references in the whole of the Apostolic Writings or New Testament.

The methodology we will follow here is to examine each use of the term 'commandments' in the Gospels, examine it in its local and wider context, and determine what each use means. For the purposes of this exercise, we have chosen the World English Bible (WEB) translation to search for occurrences of the word 'commandments'. It is therefore possible to miss instances

which the WEB decided to translate in some other way. However, this will not affect our purposes, because this relatively brief work is not intended to be an exhaustive survey. A quick cross check with some other translations shows a similar number of matches, and a search of the original Greek shows no important omissions.

One problem with the WEB is that quite a number of its translation choices are regrettably suboptimal, or sometimes just plain wrong. Where this is the case, I have substituted the Good News of Messiah (GNM) 5th Edition translation, rather than quote an incorrect or objectionable rendering. I do not believe any of the analysis or commentary here depends particularly on the exact translation one wishes to use. We do need to keep in mind, though, when reading the GNM text, that it is quite often extremely literal, especially in its rendering of verbal tenses; this makes it a little difficult to interpret at times, but does often serve the reader better for knowing the exact meaning of the text, usually after having thought about it for some time!

To begin our analysis, then, we will look at Matthew 5:19, which forms a part of the famous Matthew 5:17–20 passage, which affirms the continued validity of Yahweh's Law as recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures:

Up to the point that all things will have happened,¹ whoever then will have abolished one of the least of these *commandments*, and likewise may have taught others, will be called least in the kingdom of the heavens, but whoever will have kept and will have taught them, this one will be called great in the kingdom of the heavens. (Matthew 5:19 [GNM])

It is very easy to know to which commandments this refers, because it explicitly says so two verses earlier:

You should not suppose that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I came not to abolish, but to fulfill.² (Matthew 5:17 [GNM])

So, ‘commandments’ in verse 19 refers to the Law, which is the books of Mosheh in a strict sense, and in the general sense, the great bulk of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is, therefore, saying that anyone who does not observe the *least* of the so-called Old Testament (O.T.) laws and statutes, and teaches others likewise, will be called *least*

¹I agree with Daniel Gregg, the author of the GNM, that the traditional verse break is incorrect here.

²‘Fulfill’ here means, ‘bring to fullness’, and not ‘complete the terms to finish it’, because otherwise Yeshua would be contradicting himself both in this verse, and in the ones following.

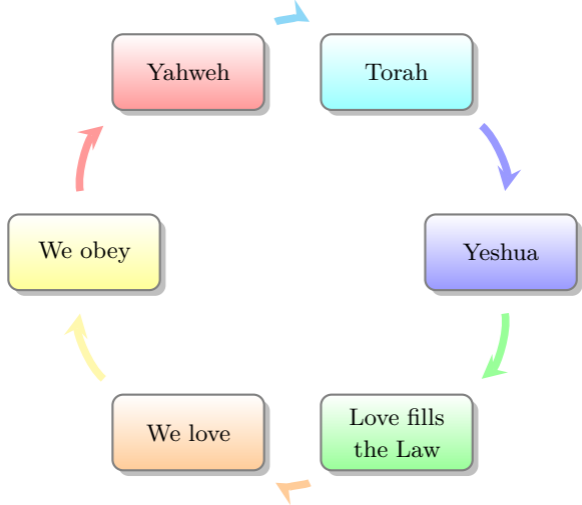


Figure 2.1: The Full Filling of the Law.

in the kingdom of the heavens. This is a stern and sobering rebuke, indeed, because it does not even mention those who reject the whole Law completely.

Still in the Gospel of Matthew ('Mattityahu' was his actual, Hebrew, name), our next verse shows us what is necessary if we are to enter into (eternal) life:

He said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but one, that is, God. But if you

want to enter into life, keep the *commandments*.”
(Matthew 19:17 [WEB])

In the next verse, verse 18, the questioner asks which commandments Yeshua means. Immediately, we surmise that, “the commandments”, therefore, does *not* mean only the Ten Commandments! If it did, there would be no need for the man to seek clarification. So, what should Yeshua reply? Should he list hundreds of commandments? Or should he point the man to the very kernel of the Law? Here is his answer:

And Yěshua said, “You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Be honouring your father and mother, and you shall love your neighbour as yourself.” (Matthew 19:18b–19 [GNM])

First, Yeshua points the man to sample commandments of the Ten, but then finishes with, “you shall love your neighbour as yourself,” which appears nowhere in the Ten Commandments! (It comes from Leviticus 19:18.) What does Yeshua leave out? He leaves out loving Yahweh, which are the first four of the Ten Commandments! Apparently, then, one needs to keep only half of the Ten Commandments, and does not even need to love Yahweh, in order to enter into eternal life. Clearly, I am

using tongue-in-cheek, because there is something very wrong with that interpretation!

Yeshua is giving *examples*, and not an exhaustive list, of the types of commandments the man needs to observe in order to enter into life. The man to which Yeshua was speaking had been brought up following these laws, and obviously must have observed also the first four of the Ten Commandments, which are about how to love Yahweh. The examples Yeshua gave, combined with loving Yahweh, are the core and foundation of the entire Law! Yeshua is saying that the man needs to observe *all* Scriptural commandments which apply to him, but not the man-made traditions or “commandments” of the Pharisees. So, in this case also, the term ‘commandments’, is referring to the whole of Yahweh’s Law.

Love Yahweh and love your neighbour.

Now, three chapters further on in Matthew, we find out which two are the *greatest* commandments. These must surely feature in the Ten Commandments, then, since these two are the greatest commandments. Let’s

see:

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “‘You shall love Yāhweh your Almighty with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’³ This is the greatest and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’⁴ On these two *commandments* hang the whole Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:36–40 [GNM]⁵)

Surprisingly, we see that neither the greatest commandment, nor the second greatest, appear in the Ten Commandments! Yet, on these two great commandments hang the whole of the Law. Since that is the case, it logically follows that the Law needs to be observed in its entirety. We see again that, “commandments,” does *not* refer to the Ten Commandments, nor even just to the two greatest commandments, but to the whole Law.

Moving to the next Gospel, that of Mark, we can find two usages of ‘commandments’ in the plural. The first is in the middle of the Gospel, in which Yeshua quotes the prophet Isaiah:

³Deuteronomy 6:5

⁴Leviticus 19:18

⁵Edits: Spelling of ‘neighbour’; ‘Law and the Prophets’ capitalised.

And he said to them, “Rightly did Yeshayahu [Isaiah] prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. But in vain do they reverence me, teaching as doctrines the *precepts* of men.’” (Mark 7:6–7 [GNM]⁶)

The GNM renders the WEB’s ‘commandments’ as ‘precepts’, which is more correct.⁷ These “commandments”, therefore, are actually traditional doctrines or injunctions of men, rather than Yahweh’s Torah commandments. So, here too, ‘commandments’ does not refer to the Ten Commandments.

Several chapters further on in Mark, we appear to have our first example of ‘commandments’ referring to the Ten Commandments, but it is not the case:

Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except one—God. You know the *commandments*: ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not give false testimony,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honour your father and mother.’” (Mark 10:18–19 [WEB]⁸)

⁶Edits: ‘has been getting written’ simplified to, ‘is written’; spelling of ‘honours’.

⁷The Greek word is “ἐντάλμα”, which means a religious precept.

⁸Edits: Spelling of ‘honour’.

Notice that this passage (and also Luke 18:19–20) is parallel to Matthew 19:17, which we covered earlier. In Matthew 19:17, the word ‘commandments’ does *not* refer to the Ten Commandments, and so neither does it here. How is it, then, that all of the examples come from the Ten Commandments? It is because the ten commandments stand for the whole Law, and is the basis and foundation of it. A reference to the Ten Commandments is a reference to the *whole* Law. This is why Mark can validly omit the part in which Yeshua stipulates that the man must love his neighbour as himself, which is not in the Ten Commandments.

Another instance clearly not referring to the Ten Commandments is found in the account of the character of Zekaryahu and Elisheva⁹ at the beginning of Luke’s Gospel. Here, it is emphasised that both husband and wife were *righteous*, and crucially it is then explained to us what righteousness is: that is, walking in the *commandments and ordinances of Yahweh*.

There was in the days of Herod, king of Yehudah,

⁹Better known as Zaccarias and Elizabeth, due to the Greek rendering of those Hebrew names in the manuscripts—Ζαχαρίας and Ἐλισάβετ. Also notable is the accent on the “a” of Elisabet, and the fact that her name ends in a “t”, not a “th” sound in the Greek.

a certain priest, by name Zekaryahu, from the division of Aviyah, and his wife from the daughters of Aharon, and her name was Elisheva. And they were both righteous before the Almighty, walking in all the *commandments* and ordinances of Yăhweh, blamelessly. (Luke 1:5–6 [GNM])

Not only is this an utterly unmistakable reference to their adherence to Yahweh's Torah commandments, statutes and ordinances, but it is *also* presented implicitly as an admirable state of affairs, thus implying that this is what all of Yahweh's people should be doing. *Nowhere* is the definition of *righteousness* ever changed in Scripture: it is always and everywhere the adherence to Torah.



*Righteousness is walking in the
commandments and ordinances of Yahweh.*



Since the very definition of *righteousness* is walking in the commandments and ordinances of Yahweh, we can draw a clear conclusion, and that is that anywhere which refers to *commandments* in general must, by default, unless there is context or evidence to the contrary, be re-

ferring to Yahweh's Torah commandments! There is no reasonable alternative.

Yet is our theory immediately dashed to pieces when we arrive at the very next example usage of *commandments*?

If you love me, keep my *commandments*. (John 14:15)

Yeshua says, “*my* commandments,” so is this the context we need to say that these commandments are not Yahweh's Torah commandments? It is impossible to make this interpretation for at least two reasons:

1. Almost in the same breath before uttering the words of John 14:15, Yeshua plainly says, “The words that I tell you, I speak not from myself; but the Father who lives in me does his works.” (Verse 10) And this is not the only place Yeshua says this. See also John 5:30; John 7:16–17,28; John 8:28,42,55; John 12:49–50.
2. Yeshua is Yahweh! The Father's commandments are indeed unarguably Yeshua's commandments, because they speak as one! Yeshua's Law *is* Torah, his commandments are all those in the Hebrew Scriptures!¹⁰

¹⁰The beginning of John's Gospels starts out with, “Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ

Therefore, when Yeshua says, “If you love me, keep my commandments,” he is saying, “If you love me, keep Torah!” Nothing Yeshua ever said contradicted anything commanded in his Father’s Torah, and Yeshua never commanded anyone, ever, for any reason, to disobey Torah, God’s commandments for God’s people.

Just a few verses further on, Yeshua again emphasises the necessity of keeping his commandments, but adds that anyone doing so will be loved not only by Yeshua, but also by the Father:

He who has my *commandments* and keeps them, he it is who loves me, and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will disclose myself to him. (John 14:21 [GNM])

The reason is that Yeshua’s commandments are the Father’s commandments, and *vice versa*, the Father’s commandments are Yeshua’s commandments. They are one and the same.

A significant group appear to believe some version of

λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.” (In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the Almighty, and Almighty was the Word. John 1:1) And follows up with, “Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν” (And the Word became flesh and tabernacled [tented] among us. John 1:14)

the following, when you take away the niceties and embellishments:

1. The Father issued and required obedience to numerous commandments in the Hebrew Scriptures.
2. Yeshua came to do away with most of those useless commandments and so taught the abolition of a great part of his Father's commandments.
3. But the Father loves the Son, and so he changed his mind about all those commandments that have stood for many hundreds of years.
4. Because the Father loves the Son, he will also love those who ignore his laws on the say-so of his Son.

There are some problems with this view. First, Yeshua never abolished a single commandment of his Father's. Second, the Father never changed his mind about anything, and his commandments still stand. And third, the Father has explicitly said that he will severely punish willful disobedience of his commandments,¹¹ so he will *not* love those who abolish his Law, or even just part of it.

¹¹See Leviticus 26:14–39

Our final Gospel text case study confirms that Yeshua's commandments and the Father's commandments are one and the same thing:

If you have kept my *commandments*, you will remain in my love, even as I have been keeping my Father's *commandments* and remain in his love. (John 15:10)

It would be odd to interpret this to mean that Yeshua is handing out a different set of commandments from that of his Father, yet remaining in the Father's love!

Yeshua remains in his Father's love by keeping his Father's commandments, and we in turn remain in Yeshua's love by keeping the same commandments. And these are not the Ten Commandments alone, but *all of the Torah commandments!*

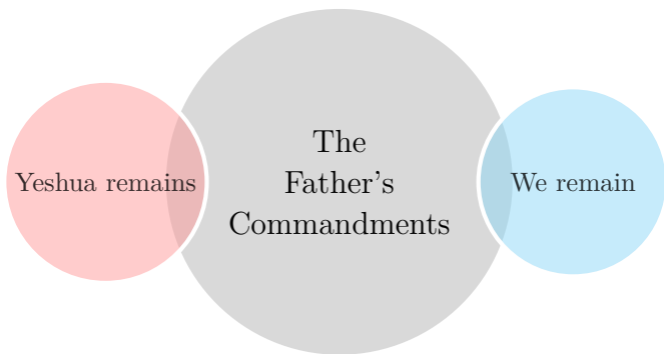


Figure 2.2: Remaining in the Commandments.

3 Paul's Writings

Paul wrote extensively about the Law and keeping its commandments. He took a solemn vow, which he planned to confirm through animal sacrifice before Yahweh in the courts of the Temple, that he himself kept every provision of Torah, and taught others to do the same.¹

In the following passage in Paul's letter to the assembly in Rome, he clearly links keeping the commandments with keeping Yahweh's entire Law.

Indeed this, "You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment in this matter, it is being headed up, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbour. Therefore love is the full filling of the Law. (Romans 13:9–10 [GNM]²)

¹See Acts 21:23–26.

²Edits: Spelling of 'neighbour'.

Because love is the fulfilling—the *full filling*—of the Law, it is the Law which defines what love is, and not love which defines what the Law is. It is the latter, however, which many appear to believe, on the evidence of statements like the ones following.

- If you love, you have already fulfilled the Law. (This is false because the *intended meaning* is that we can disregard Torah—defined by Yahweh—as long as we love our neighbour, according to a love we define ourselves, through our heart, which is deceitful above all things.)³
- The Law is written in my heart. (This is false because the *intended meaning* is that by following one's deceitful heart, one is bound to follow the Law.)⁴

In reality, the objective measure and proof that we are loving Yahweh and our neighbour is that we are keeping Yahweh's Torah commandments. Conversely, abrogating or breaching Yahweh's Law is *proof* that we are not loving either God or our neighbour.

³See Jeremiah 17:9.

⁴The *true* meaning of this phrase is that it is in our heart to follow Yahweh's Law, Torah.

*Paul kept every provision of Torah,
and taught others to do the same.*

Paul makes a similar point in his letter to the assembly at Corinth. In the following verse, Paul says that the important point is *keeping the commandments of Yahweh*, and not the outward appearance of being a Jew.⁵ Many perhaps do not realise that circumcision is a commandment, and therefore not nothing.⁶

Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, unless it is keeping of the *commandments* of the Almighty. (1 Corinthians 7:19 [GNM])

Clearly, these commandments, again, have nothing to do with the Ten Commandments, but with Yahweh's

⁵That is, the appearance of being circumcised. The controversy was about whether a new convert had to become Jewish and be circumcised, but Paul's point is that circumcision is irrelevant unless it is keeping the commandments of Yahweh. For example, to enter and dwell in the Promised Land, it is required to be circumcised. See Joshua 5:2–8, which sets a precedent and, therefore, a new commandment.

⁶See Leviticus 12:3.

Torah commandments which apply just as much to non-Jewish converts to the Faith, because the whole question Paul is dealing with here is whether these non-Jewish converts need to be circumcised and become Jewish before they can be considered a part of Yahweh's people and therefore saved! Paul's answer is that being Jewish or not Jewish is unimportant, but what is important is keeping the commandments of Yahweh, including the one to circumcise.

So we are seeing that in the N.T., commandments and the Law go hand in hand, because commandments are just particular provisions of Yahweh's Law for his people, or Torah.

Another demonstration of this point occurs in Ephesians chapter two, because the "commandments" mentioned there are the commandments of a judge which, in the modern world, we call 'sentences'.

But now, by way of the Anointed Yeshua, you being formerly from far away, have been made to come near, by the blood of the Anointed, because he is the peace offering for us, who has made the two one, and the partition fence he has made to be opened. The hostility, by way of his flesh, which is the norm for *sentences* in legal condemnations, he has made to be without effect, so that he shall have created the two, by

way of himself, into one new-made man, making peace,... (Ephesians 2:13–15 [GNM])

Compare the above with one of the common translations, and you will see that in the Church there has been widespread misunderstanding and misinterpretation of Paul's words here. The reason for the misunderstanding is the *assumption* that Torah has been done away with, even though it says this nowhere in Scripture.

Paul is saying that the Gentiles or non-Jews are joining with the Jews because the barrier between them has been removed, and so therefore the condemnation of the Law which had previously hung over the heads of the lawless Gentiles now no longer applies, because they have become part of Yahweh's people, keeping his Law, accepting Yeshua as their Messiah and therefore qualifying to receive the pardon freely offered to them which has been made possible by the substitutionary sacrifice of the blood of Yeshua. Thus, the two, Jew and non-Jew, have been brought together into one people under one Law and one salvation, which is the free pardon offered to all who ally themselves with Yeshua and keep his Law. No one can love Yeshua and reject his Law.

In his letter to Titus in Crete, Paul has a stern warning for those who do reject Yahweh's Law:

This testimony is true. For this cause, reprove

them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish fables and *commandments* of men who turn away from the truth. (Titus 1:13–14 [WEB])

Paul is not referring to the Ten Commandments here, nor even to the commandments or sentences of a judge, but this time he refers to the traditional doctrines of some Jews (“Jewish fables”) and the “commandments” of some of these men who arrogate to themselves the authority to command obedience to *their* directives, rather than the commandments of Yahweh.



*No one can love Yeshua
and reject his Law.*



There are at least a few who, doubtlessly unaware of the blasphemy, lump together most of the Hebrew Scriptures under the heading of, “Jewish fables and commandments of men.” This is, regrettably, a necessary corollary of having estranged oneself from Yahweh’s life instructions. It is the thing about which Paul was warning—turning away from the truth will ultimately result in fol-

lowing fables and commandments of men, rather than the commandments of the Creator of the Universe.

4 The Writings of Yohanan

John (Yohanan, in reality, because he was not English, but Hebrew) wrote the gospel of the same name, and later he wrote three letters and the book of Revelation. By the time he came to write the latter works, there had already arisen serious *gnostic* and *lawless* heresy among believers. We know this because of the way Yohanan targeted these false beliefs in his writings.

While the more extravagant excesses of the gnostic heresies were largely defeated, the heresy of *lawlessness* gained a foothold and rapid ascendancy within the Church. This heresy is, of course, never spoken of in mainstream Christianity, because by now it is part of the furniture, so to speak, and regrettably neither observed nor recognised by the majority today. This is because, just as in Yohanan's day, fine-sounding lawless belief can successfully masquerade as true belief, and deceive the faithful.

For this reason, it is a most dangerous teaching.

The following few example catchphrases may serve to illustrate the reality of the heresy of lawlessness today:

- Follow your heart. *That most deceitful of things.*
- God knows what is in my heart. *Which should make one tremble.*
- I have the law written in my heart. *The unstated conclusion is: "So I can do what I like." Note also the lowercase 'l' for 'Law'.*
- Love is the fulfilment of the law. *Implied is: "So we do not need to keep it any more." Try this line on a police officer.*
- Jesus kept the law so that we don't have to. *If we don't have to, then neither did Yeshua.*
- It's impossible to keep the law. *This is a form of blasphemy, because Yahweh said the opposite. See Deuteronomy 30:11-14.*
- Six hundred and something laws is too many for anyone to keep. *Yet we all keep tens of thousands of laws in our daily life, no trouble whatsoever.*

It was this very attitude among believers, about following one's own heart and loving one's neighbour, and not having to actually keep the commandments of Yahweh, which prompted Yohanan to write:

And by this we know that we know him: if we are keeping his *commandments*. The one who says, "I know him," but does not keep his *commandments*, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
(1 John 2:3–4)

These are harsh and sobering¹ words, indeed; but to which "commandments" does Yohanan refer? From the context, it is obvious he is referring to Yeshua's commandments, and since Yohanan *himself* wrote that Yeshua is Yahweh and existed from the beginning, to which commandments does he refer? Clearly, there is no other answer possible: he is referring to all commandments of Yahweh throughout Scripture. We can even confirm this from the lips of Yeshua himself:

The scribes and the Pharisees have sat down upon the seat of Moses. All *accordingly*, whatsoever they should say to you, do and observe,

¹Sobering when we realise why the warning is necessary: those who reject the Law are easily able to pass themselves off as believers.

but do not be doing according to their deeds, because they (only) say (so) and they do not do (so). (Matthew 23:2–3)

Yeshua is thus instructing his disciples to do exactly what the Pharisees say must be done, so long as they teach in accordance with the Law of Moses.² It is inescapable, therefore, that Yeshua is commanding his disciples to follow the Law of Moses, Torah.

At this point, some would like to object that although this is true, it is only because the disciples were themselves Jews. The claim is that the Gentiles or non-Jews do not need to keep the Law. But that is false, again from the very lips of Yeshua:

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, immersing them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe *all* that I myself commanded you... (Matthew 28:19–20)

The very *definition* of ‘special pleading’ must be the claim that, “Jesus *really* meant for the disciples to teach

²The word, ‘accordingly’ makes the direction contingent upon the Pharisees representing Moses. It is not an instruction to follow all of their human traditions which Yeshua so often condemned!

the nations to observe everything he taught them *except* the bit about keeping all of Yahweh's commandments!"

In case it is not clear enough that Yeshua's commandments are Yahweh's commandments, Yohanan ensures there is no misunderstanding possible:

Beloved, if our heart be not condemning us, we have confidence before the Almighty, and whatever we be asking we receive from him, because we are keeping his *commandments* and doing the things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, that we shall hold faithful to the name of his Son Yeshua the Anointed, that is, we should be loving one another, just as he commanded us. And the one keeping his *commandments* remains in him, and he in him. And we know by this that he remains in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. (1 John 3:21–24)

The first instance of 'commandments' unarguably means the commandments of *the Almighty*. These commandments have a name: Torah. There is no escaping from the need to keep Yahweh's Law.

The second instance of the word refers to the commandments of Yeshua the Anointed (Jesus the Christ³),

³'Christ' and 'Messiah' both mean 'anointed one'.

and it goes on to affirm that in keeping Yeshua's commandments we remain in *the Almighty* and he in us. If there is any permissible ambiguity here, the reason is that *both sets of commandments are one and the same!*

Just as Peter denied Yeshua three times, and later three times declared his allegiance to Yeshua, now Yohanan for the *third time* asserts in unmistakable terms that we must keep Yahweh's commandments if we claim to love him:

By this we know that we are loving the children of the Almighty, when we be loving the Almighty and observing his *commandments*. For this is the love of the Almighty, that we be keeping his *commandments*, and his *commandments* are not burdensome, ... (1 John 5:2-3)

In this *third* assertion, Yohanan employs the word 'commandments' *three* times. This is not an accident. It would have been very easy to have said instead, "and they are not burdensome." The word 'commandments' was used again intentionally. The purpose of this double trinity is to drive home once and for all the absolute necessity of keeping Yahweh's commandments if we claim to love him!

And this is love, that we be walking according to his *commandments*. This is the commandment,

just as you have heard from the beginning, that you walk in it. (2 John 1:6)

Walking according to Yahweh's commandments on one hand, and loving on the other hand, are the *same thing*. This type of love is not a feeling. We cannot (necessarily) control our feelings, but we can control our actions; and our actions must be to keep his commandments as our way of life.

In Revelation, Yohanan tells us these things again, in another way:

Then the dragon was enraged with the woman. Then he went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the *commandments* of the Almighty and hold to the testimony of Yeshua. (Revelation 12:17 [GNM])

We know from psalm 119 and Deuteronomy⁴ that testimonies and commandments are the same thing. Therefore, we know that keeping Yahweh's commandments and the testimony of Yeshua are the same thing!

In any case, it is very clear that the dragon's, i.e., Satan's, special enemies are those who keep Torah, which are the commandments of the Almighty, and who also

⁴See Deuteronomy 6:17 and Psalms 119:129, for instance.

ally themselves with Yeshua, the only special Son of the Almighty. But who are these enemies? What do we call them today? They are not the majority of the Jews, who certainly do not ally themselves with Yeshua. Sadly, they are not the majority of Christians either, who do not keep Yahweh's commandments. The only people who do both are today called, 'Messianics', and therefore the dragon is especially enraged by them, because they are God's people, following his life instructions.

With Yahweh there is no fence sitting. There are the saints or the holy ones who keep the commandments of the Almighty and maintain allegiance with Yeshua, and then there is everyone else.

In Revelation 14 (see below), Yohanan is not talking about a subset of the holy ones, the ones who keep God's commandments; he is referring to all of them, because there is no other type of holy one: there are no holy ones who disobey Yahweh:

In this circumstance is the endurance of the holy ones who guard the *commandments* of the Almighty and the faithfulness of Yeshua. (Revelation 14:12
[GNM])

Keeping the commandments is so important and foundational that in the concluding paragraphs of his book of

Revelation, Yohanan again emphasises who it is who are blessed with eternal life:

Blessed are those keeping his *commandments*, wherein it will be their right to eat of the tree of life, and enter by the gates into the city. (Revelation 22:14)

This clear statement regarding the Father's commandments has been so hated that the original words of Scripture themselves were cleverly altered in an attempt to erase this damning statement we find at the very end of our Bible.⁵ Is it pure luck that they did not succeed, and that the original words are still found in some of the surviving manuscripts? Let the reader decide.

⁵The text, μακαριοι οι ποιουντες τας εντολας αυτου, was altered to read: μακαριοι οι πλυνοντες τας στολας αυτων. For some further information on this, see *Keeping the Father's Commandments* at https://ttbox.org/snippets/2015-06-09_keeping-the-fathers-commandments.html.

Conclusion

Our survey of the Apostolic Writings has shown with no room for doubt that, “the commandments,” we need to keep are not simply the Ten Commandments, but indeed the whole of the Law for Yahweh’s people, called Torah.

Not only is Yeshua himself Yahweh, making all of the O.T. commandments his, but we are *also* told explicitly that it is the commandments of the Father, of the Almighty, that we must keep.¹

Recognising that there is no way to avoid this conclusion, in desperation there are those who create an arbitrary and non-Scriptural distinction between so-called “moral” laws which we must keep, and the so-called “ceremonial” laws which we must not keep. This is a pure invention on two levels:

1. the very dichotomy between the two alleged kinds of law is not made anywhere in Scripture; and

¹1 John 5:2–3, Revelation 22:14.

2. nowhere in the entire Scriptures does it say that some laws may be ignored while others kept. Indeed, it says just the opposite.

Yeshua has warned us against such thinking² by telling us directly that we are not to *suppose* he came to abolish any part of the Law! All of the following heresies do *precisely* what Yeshua commanded us not to do:

1. “We only need to keep the Ten Commandments.”
2. “We only need to love God and our neighbour.”
3. “We only need to keep New Testament commandments.”
4. “We only need to keep the moral laws.”

All of these *start* by supposing that Yeshua came to abolish Torah laws, and so supporting any of those heresies is disobedience to Yeshua, who is Yahweh in the flesh.

Remembering that *righteousness* in Scripture is *keeping the commandments of Yahweh*, let us remind ourselves of Yeshua’s words:

²Matthew 5:17–20.

Because I am telling you, if your righteousness shall not exceed that of the scribes and of the Pharisees, you shall never ever enter into the Kingdom of the Heavens!

(Matthew 5:20)

Sadly, and perhaps ironically, there are many who read those words and think that Yeshua is setting a low bar here because, after all, were not the Pharisees those nasty people he was always attacking? The truth is that Yeshua is setting a very *high* bar, because the Pharisees taught strict adherence to the Law,³ and generally succeeded in keeping the letter of the Law quite well. They fell short, however, because they lacked the ingredient of *love*, and followed their traditions as if commanded by Yahweh, even to the extent of neglecting actual commandments of the Almighty.

It is by *this* that we know that we are knowing him and loving him—that we are keeping his commandments.

³Matthew 23:2–3.

Appendix A

Exodus Chapter Twenty

THE ALMIGHTY spoke all these words, saying,

② I am Yahweh your Almighty who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

③ You shall have no other gods before me.

④ You shall not make for yourselves an idol, nor any image of anything that is in the heavens above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: ⑤ you shall not bow yourself down to them, nor serve them, for I, Yahweh your Almighty, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and on the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⑥ and showing loving kindness to thousands

of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⑦ You shall not misuse the name of Yahweh your Almighty, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who misuses his name.

⑧ Remember the day of ceasing from work, to keep it holy. ⑨ You shall labour six days, and do all your work, ⑩ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Yahweh your God. You shall not do any work in it, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your livestock, nor your stranger who is within your gates; ⑪ for in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day, and made it holy.¹

⑫ Honour your father and your mother, that

¹There is a teaching that this commandment teaches *only a pattern* of six days' work followed by one day's rest from work. In reality, the Shabbat is a *particular* day, determined by the *particular* day of the Almighty's rest on that *first* Shabbat! Refer, for example, to Exodus 16:23, where Yahweh says that *tomorrow* is a Day of Solemn Rest (a Sabbath Day). Also, refer to Genesis 2:3, and read carefully Exodus 20:11 in which Yahweh made *the* seventh day holy, and by implication, *every* seventh day thereafter!

your days may be long in the land which Yahweh your God gives you.

⑬ You shall not murder.

⑭ You shall not commit adultery.

⑮ You shall not steal.

⑯ You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.

⑰ You shall not covet your neighbour's house.

You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour's.

⑱ All the people perceived the thunderings, the lightnings, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking. When the people saw it, they trembled, and stayed at a distance. ⑲ They said to Moses, "Speak with us yourself, and we will listen; but do not let God speak with us, lest we die."

⑳ Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, for God has come to test you, and that his fear may be before you, that you not sin."

㉑ The people stayed at a distance, and Moses came near to the thick darkness where God was. ㉒ Yahweh said to Moses, "This is what you shall tell the children of Israel:"

“You yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. ⁽²³⁾ You shall most certainly not make gods of silver or gods of gold for yourselves to be alongside me. ⁽²⁴⁾ You shall make an altar of earth for me, and shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your cattle. In every place where I record my name I will come to you and I will bless you. ⁽²⁵⁾ If you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of cut stones; for if you lift up your tool on it, you have polluted it. ⁽²⁶⁾ You shall not go up by steps to my altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed to it.”

Appendix B

Deuteronomy Chapter Five

MOSES called to all Israel, and said to them, “Hear, Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I speak in your ears this day, that you may learn them, and observe to do them.” ^②Yahweh our Almighty made a Covenant with us in Horeb. ^③Yahweh did not make this Covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. ^④Yahweh spoke with you face-to-face on the mountain out of the midst of the fire, ^⑤(I stood between Yahweh and you at that time, to show you Yahweh’s Word: for you were afraid because of the fire, and did not go up onto the mountain.) saying,

^⑥I am Yahweh your Almighty, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

⑦ You shall have no other gods before me.

⑧ You shall not make an engraved image for yourself, any likeness of what is in heaven above, or what is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⑨ You shall not bow yourself down to them, nor serve them; for I, Yahweh, your Almighty, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and on the fourth generation of those who hate me; ⑩ and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⑪ You shall not take the name of Yahweh your Almighty in vain: for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

⑫ Observe the Day of Ceasing from Work [Sabbath Day], to keep it holy, as Yahweh your Almighty commanded you. ⑬ You shall labour six days, and do all your work; ⑭ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Yahweh your Almighty, in which you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your

livestock, nor your stranger who is within your gates; that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. ⁽¹⁵⁾ You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh your Almighty brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm. Therefore Yahweh your Almighty commanded you to keep the Sabbath Day.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Honour your father and your mother, as Yahweh your Almighty commanded you; that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you, in the land which Yahweh your Almighty gives you.

⁽¹⁷⁾ You shall not murder.

⁽¹⁸⁾ You shall not commit adultery.

⁽¹⁹⁾ You shall not steal.

⁽²⁰⁾ You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.

⁽²¹⁾ You shall not covet your neighbour's wife. Neither shall you desire your neighbour's house, his field, or his male servant, or his female servant, his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour's.

⁽²²⁾ Yahweh spoke these words to all your assembly on

the mountain out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice. He added no more. He wrote them on two stone tablets, and gave them to me.¹ (23) When you heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you came near to me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders; (24) and you said, "Behold, Yahweh our Almighty has shown us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that the Almighty does speak with man, and he lives. (25) Now therefore why should we die? For this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of Yahweh our Almighty any more, then we shall die. (26) For who is there of all flesh, that has heard the voice of the living Almighty speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? (27) Go near, and hear all that Yahweh our Almighty shall say, and tell us all that Yahweh our Almighty tells you; and

¹It is noteworthy that it was not by the hand of Moses that the Ten Commandments were written, but by the hand of Yahweh directly. This forces the reader to make a choice: either the Commandments must be observed because they come directly from the hand of Yahweh God himself, or the Bible contains deliberate, outright lies, and must be ignored. There is no middle ground, and Yahweh has no intention of creating any such middle ground. It is up to each of us to choose.

we will hear it, and do it.”

⁽²⁸⁾Yahweh heard the voice of your words, when you spoke to me; and Yahweh said to me, “I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken to you. They have well said all that they have spoken.

⁽²⁹⁾Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever! ⁽³⁰⁾Go tell them, ‘Return to your tents.’ ⁽³¹⁾But

as for you, stand here by me, and I will tell you the whole commandment, and the statutes, and the ordinances, which you shall teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it.” ⁽³²⁾You

shall observe to do therefore as Yahweh your Almighty has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. ⁽³³⁾You shall walk in all the way

which Yahweh your Almighty has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess.