

6. Laws for Israel, Part A (Answers) Exodus

Introduction: Everybody knows that the Bible is divided into two big sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. What does the archaic English word “testament” mean (as in “Old Testament”)? It fundamentally means “covenant, contract.” There are a number of different contracts/covenants/testaments in the Bible between God and man (more than just the old one and the new one). These covenants form sort of a skeleton for the Bible. Today we are going to study the covenant that is “the” Old Testament: The covenant between God and the nation of Israel.

God made a covenant with Abraham around 2,000 B.C. Abraham lived as long before Jesus and we do after Jesus. God’s covenant with Israel came 430 years later (Ga 3:15), in roughly 1500 B.C.

The mediator of this covenant was Moses (**Joke:** you might remember Moses from his role in the famous Cecil B. DeMille movie, *The Ten Commandments*).

The first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures were written by Moses. The Greek name for it is the Pentateuch (the five scrolls or books). The Jews call these five books the Torah (which means teachings or instructions). They are also called the five books of the “Law” because they mainly deal with the laws that go along with God’s covenant with Israel.

******1. According to Exodus 2:23-25, why did God bring the Israelis out of Egyptian slavery? See 3:7-9.** It was because of the covenant that had already been made with Abraham. In this previous covenant, God promised Abraham that although his descendants would be enslaved in Egypt for 400 years, God would rescue them and bring them back into the Promised Land. The 400 years were over and it was time for them to return to the land.

******2. What did God promise to do for the Israelis in Exodus 6:6-8?** God promised three things: emancipation from Egyptian slavery, to be their God and they His people, and to bring them into the Promised Land.

******3. According to Exodus 19:1-4, where did Israel set up camp after they left Egypt?** They left Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, and ended up in wilderness of Sinai, encamped by Mount Sinai. Since the covenant was cut here at Sinai, the old covenant is also known as the Sinai covenant.

******4. Based on Exodus 19:5-6, what was the primary reason for the Sinai Covenant?** A major purpose of the covenant was to establish a God/people relationship, to make them a peculiar people and to make them into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

5. What new covenant fulfillment of Exodus 19:5-6 did the apostle Peter proclaim in 1 Peter 2:9-10? Peter picked up on Exodus 19:5-6 and applied it to the church, which he clearly sees as the new Israel.¹

6. Based on Exodus 19:5, is this “covenant” (Ex 19:5) conditional or unconditional? How so? See *Exodus 23:33*. It is conditional; note the “if”; they had to “obey” (19:5). The Sinai covenant (based on law) was fundamentally different from the covenant with Abraham (based on promise). For example:

ESV **Exodus 23:22** ... if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.

******7. In Exodus 19:7-9, how did the Israelites respond to God’s proposal? See also 24:3.** The people of Israel agreed to obey God’s voice and keep the rules of the covenant.

ESV **Exodus 24:3** Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do."

Based on 19:9, what was the purpose of shrouding the Mount Sinai in a cloud? It was to help convince the people to believe that Moses was God’s spokesman.

How long did God want the people to believe that Moses was God’s spokesman (19:9)? The ESV says “forever.” To this day, Jewish people believe that Moses was God’s spokesman.

A Jewish man once compared the magnitude of miracles for establishing Judaism versus Christianity. He mocked Jesus’ “secret” resurrection compared to the very public, national miracles of the events surrounds the exodus from Egypt and the supernatural, national spectacle that occurred at Mount Sinai. He doubted Jesus’ resurrection but he believed in Moses as a prophet because of what we are reading about right here!

8. Theologians have divined that three types (or categories) of law are evident in the Sinai covenant. Reading over Exodus 20-23, can you figure out what they are and give an example of each? Many theologians have concluded that the Law is divisible into three parts:

1. The moral (ethical) law ~ “Thou Shalt Not Steal”, Exodus 20:15 (KJV). The **moral** law establishes basic morality, right from wrong.

¹ Dennis & Grudem, *ESV Study*, 2408.

2. The **judicial** (civil) law ~ if convicted of stealing, must pay back seven times the amount stolen, Exodus 22:2-6. The **civil (penal code, judicial)** law consists of rules for Israel's civil government and the penalties to be imposed for breaking the law.
3. The **ceremonial** (religious) law (Le 22:17-25) ~ Keeping the Saturday Sabbath, Exodus 20:8-11. Other examples include not eating pork or shrimp or bringing a grain offering annually (Leviticus 22:17-25). The **ceremonial** law has religious rules concerning sacrifices, offerings, feasts, dietary regulations, etc.

However, having observed that there do indeed seem to be three categories of law, it should be pointed out that there is no grouping of law *by Moses* according to type. Instead, they are all jumbled up together.

9. Despite the fact that the law may be divisible into three types, what must we understand from James 2:10? Though there are clearly three types of Mosaic Law, the Law itself is indivisible. That is, it stands or falls as a unit. Choosing, cafeteria style, to obey only parts of the Law is not an option.

ESV **James 2:10** ...whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

10. What are some applications of James 2:10 for today? See *Romans 3:19-20, 6:14, 7:6*.
a). If a person is seeking to be right with God based on keeping the Law of Moses, his is a forlorn hope. Just breaking even one tiny law makes him as guilty as if he broke all of it.

ESV **Romans 3:19-20** Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

b). James 2:10 implies that we do not have the freedom to pick and choose, cafeteria style, which of the laws to obey. A person is either under all of them, or none of them (more on this in the next lesson). Misguided applications of Mosaic Law have occurred when New Covenant believers attempt to pick and choose which Mosaic laws are relevant under the New Covenant. We are either under all of the Law of Moses or none of it.

ESV **Romans 6:14** ... since you are not under law but under grace.

ESV **Romans 7:6** ... we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive ...

The Bible does not separate God's law into three parts: moral, ceremonial and civil. Historically, this threefold separation was not substantially taught until the time of Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century and in the 16th century by Calvin.

******How was this covenant ratified (Ex 24:3-8)?** Moses read the Book of the Covenant (the material in Exodus 20-23) to the people, the people agreed to obey, and blood was sprinkled on both the altar (representing God) and the people.

11. Why was it significant in their society for this to be a “blood” covenant (Ex 24:1-12)? It was said that covenants were “cut” (as in cut a deal) because often animals were cut and killed in the making of a covenant. A blood covenant was the highest level of covenant, typically a life-or-death commitment. As will be obvious from the penalties, this was a serious, binding, life or death contract.

12. Why is it significant that Jesus described his coming death on the cross as the blood of the covenant (Mt 26:28)?

ESV **Matthew 26:28** ... this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

The new covenant is also a blood covenant, except it was Jesus who did the dying, not for His own sins but for ours.

13. Upon what did God record some of the conditions of this covenant (Ex 24:12)? See 31:18. The commandments were written on two tables of stone.

14. Google “suzerainty treaty” and summarize your findings. The whole Sinai Covenant was typical of a **suzerainty** treaty common in that day. In it, a strong king (**suzerain**) would make a treaty with a neighboring vassal state, making it a protectorate. The Sinai Covenant and these suzerainty treaties follow the same pattern; there was sort of a standard legal format. There were rules, and then blessings and curses. There were two copies of the rules, one for the king and one for the vassal, each kept in that country’s sacred temple.

15. Where were the rules of the Sinai covenant kept (Ex 25:10-16)? Remember the old movie, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*? That adventure movie was about the recovery of the Moses’ ark (not Noah’s ark). Ark just means box. The two tablets were kept in the ark (box) of the covenant. That’s why it is named what it is called the ark of the covenant!

16. Why were there two copies (Ex 31:18)? Not because there were 5 commandments on each, but because just like with a suzerainty treaty, there was one copy of the commands for the King (Jehovah) and one for the vassal state (Israel).

******17. Based on Exodus 31:12-17, what was the “sign” of God’s covenant with Israel?** The sign of the Sinai covenant is observing the Saturday Sabbath.

What day of the week is the “seventh” day (31:15)? The seventh day is Saturday. Sunday, the Lord’s Day, is the first day of a new week. Jewish people today still worship on Saturday.

What does the “sabbath” mean? From *shabbat* (7676) “to cease, desist, rest.”

18. How long are/were the Hebrews supposed to do observe the Sabbath (Ex 31:16-17)?
The text states that they were to observe it forever.

What does “forever” (Ex 31:16-17) mean? It is from *olam* (5769), which fundamentally means “most distant times” (future or past). In some contexts, it can mean “everlasting.” However, “neither the Hebrew nor the Greek word (*aion*) in itself contains the idea of endlessness.”² It is determined by context. It literally means “a long time.”³ *Olam* is used 300 times to denote indefinite continuance into the very distant future:

PPT>> ESV 1 Samuel 1:22, 28 Hannah ... said to her husband, "As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the LORD and dwell there forever (*olam*).... Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD."

PPT>> ESV 1 Samuel 27:8 Now David and his men went up and made raids against the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites, for these were the inhabitants of the land from of old (*olam*), as far as Shur, to the land of Egypt.

Before concluding that this should be observed today, consider this:

Are you a physical descendant of Abraham?

Are you party to this covenant (suzerainty treaty)?

Do you intend to move to the Middle East and occupy Palestine, settling perhaps on the West Bank?

So What?

19. What does the New Testament have to say about Sabbath observance? See Colossians 2:16-17.

NAS Colossians 2:16-17 ... let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

20. What spiritual purpose does the Law of Moses serve for the Hebrews? See Romans 3:19-20. It served to show them their sin and need for a salvation based on promise rather than law.

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² Harris, Archer, Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), #1631a.

³ William Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971).