



Exodus 20-35

What's happening in Exodus 20-24

Exodus 20-24 begins with the Ten Commandments. These chapters are, of course, embedded within Israel's historical narrative, but they **very closely follow** the same suzerain covenant format as the **Code of Hammurabi**:

Preamble: 'Then God spoke all these words . . .' The suzerain is identified,

History: 'I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.' God's (brief) historical relationship with the (newly-forming) nation of Israel is described,

Stipulations: 'You shall . . .' The Ten Commandments initiate a series of laws, continuing all the way to Exodus 23 (concluding abruptly with the command not to boil a kid in its mother's milk),

Sanctions: God promises reward to Israel for their continued obedience to the angel (messenger) guiding them, namely, they will be rewarded with entry and settlement in the land of Canaan.

Exodus 24 depicts a ratification ceremony for this suzerain covenant: Moses reads the laws of Exodus 20-23 to the people of Israel, blood from a sacrifice binds the people to the covenant, and Moses and the elders of Israel partake in a meal with their suzerain on Mount Sinai.



Table 1 Treaty/Covenant Pattern in the Old Testament and in Mosiah

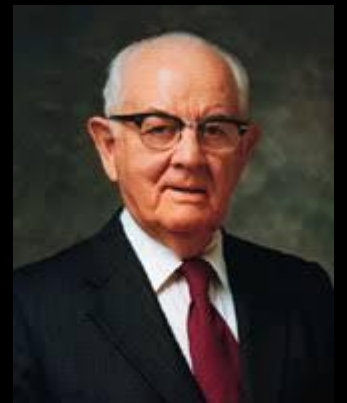
Elements	Exodus 19:3b-8	Exodus 20-24	Deuteronomy	Joshua 24	Mosiah 1-6
Preamble	19:3b	20:1	1:5 (1:1-5)	24:2a (24:1-2a)	2:9a (1:1-2:9a)
Antecedent History	19:4	20:2	1:6-3:29	24:2b-13, 16b-18a	2:9b-21, 23-24a, 25-30
Terms of the Covenant	19:5-6	20:3-23:19	chapters 4-26	24:14, 18b, 23	2:22, 24b, 31-41; 4:6-30
Formal Witness	19:8	24:3	31:19	24:16a, 19a, 21-23	5:2-8
Blessings and Curses	19:5	23:20-33	27:9-28:68	24:19b-20	5:9-15 (3:24-27)
Recital of the Covenant and Deposit of the Text	19:7	24:4-8	27:1-8; 31:9; 24-26	24:25-27	(2:8, 9a) 6:1-3, 6

Treaty-Covenant Pattern in the Old Testament and Benjamin's Speech

Elements	Exodus 19:3b-8	Exodus 20-24	Deuteronomy	Joshua 24	Mosiah 1-6
Preamble	19:3b	20:1	1:1-5	24:1-2a	1:1-2:9a
Antecedent History	19:4	20:2	1:6-3:29	24:2b-13, 16b-18a	2:9b-21, 23-30
Terms of the Covenant	19:5-6	20:3-23:19	4-26	24:14, 18b, 23	2:22, 24b, 31-41; 4:6-30
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Exodus 20:4-6 Idolatry

“The idolatry we are most concerned with here is the conscious worshipping of still other gods. Some are of metal and plush and chrome, of wood and stone and fabrics. They are not in the image of God or of man, but are developed to give man comfort and enjoyment, to satisfy his wants, ambitions, passions and desires. Some are in no physical form at all, but are intangible. ...



Exodus 20:4-6 Idolatry

“Modern idols or false gods can take such forms as clothes, homes, businesses, machines, automobiles, pleasure boats, and numerous other material deflectors from the path to godhood. What difference does it make that the item concerned is not shaped like an idol?

Brigham Young said: ‘I would as soon see a man worshipping a little god made of brass or of wood as to see him worshipping his property’ [Journal of Discourses, 6:196].



Exodus 20:4-6 Idolatry

“Intangible things make just as ready gods. Degrees and letters and titles can become idols. Many young men decide to attend college when they should be on missions first. The degree, and the wealth and the security which come through it, appear so desirable that the mission takes second place. Some neglect Church service through their college years, feeling to give preference to the secular training and ignoring the spiritual covenants they have made.



Exodus 20:4-6 Idolatry

“Many people build and furnish a home and buy the automobile first—and then find they ‘cannot afford’ to pay tithing. Whom do they worship? Certainly not the Lord of heaven and earth, for we serve whom we love and give first consideration to the object of our affection and desires. Young married couples who postpone parenthood until their degrees are attained might be shocked if their expressed preference were labeled idolatry. Their rationalization gives them degrees at the expense of children. Is it a justifiable exchange? Whom do they love and worship—themselves or God? Other couples, recognizing that life is not intended primarily for comforts, ease, and luxuries, complete their educations while they move forward with full lives, having their children and giving Church and community service.

Exodus 20:4-6 Idolatry

“Many worship the hunt, the fishing trip, the vacation, the weekend picnics and outings. Others have as their idols the games of sport, baseball, football, the bullfight, or golf. These pursuits more often than not interfere with the worship of the Lord and with giving service to the building up of the kingdom of God. To the participants this emphasis may not seem serious, yet it indicates where their allegiance and loyalty are.

“Still another image men worship is that of power and prestige. Many will trample underfoot the spiritual and often the ethical values in their climb to success. These gods of power, wealth, and influence are most demanding and are quite as real as the golden calves of the children of Israel in the wilderness.” (Miracle of Forgiveness, pp. 40–42.)



Exodus 20:7 The name of God in vain

“You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain... Do not hasten to take **a false oath** and let not an oath be habitual in your mouth, for great is the punishment thereof.” – Midrash of the Ten Commandments 3



Exodus 20:7 The name of God in vain

“Profanity is incompatible with reverence. Surely at this critical time in our nation’s history, when we need the sustaining help of God, we should see that we do not offend him by reason of our language. We appeal to our young people everywhere to hold in reverence the sacred name of Deity, that they may walk acceptably before the Lord, so that, should there come a time in their lives when they need his sustaining help, they may go to him with good conscience and call upon him with faith that he will hear their plea.” (LeGrand Richards, In “The Third Commandment,” *The Ten Commandments Today*, pp. 52–53.)



Exodus 20:7 The name of God in vain

Exodus 20:8-11 Sabbath Day

This commandment brought a host of questions... What did “you shall not do any work” mean? Could a roofer putter around in his garden on the Sabbath, planting and weeding and harvesting? Could a farmer climb up on his roof to fix a leak? And if all work was forbidden, did that also include things like cooking and cleaning? As for working with one’s cattle, did this mean that it was forbidden to milk the cows on the Sabbath? Would that not bring them pain instead of rest?



Exodus 20:8-11 Sabbath Day

Jeremiah 17:21-22 further says that even carrying your burdens on the Sabbath is forbidden: “Let them not carry their burdens on the Sabbath.”

But what was a burden? A sack of grain? A book? Moreover, this verse seemed to imply that going out of one's house without a burden was permitted. Yet Exodus 16:29 says “Let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.” Which was correct? Then Isaiah said something causing even more anxiety:



Exodus 20:8-11 Sabbath Day

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, **nor speaking thine own words...** (Isaiah 58:13)



Exodus 20:8-11 Sabbath Day

The man who does any work on it (The Sabbath) is to die. Any man who desecrates this day... who says anything about work on it- that he is set out on a trip on it, or about any selling or buying- or who draws water... or lifts any load to bring it outside his tent or his house is to die. – Jubilees 50:8



Exodus 20:8-11 Sabbath Day

When does the Sabbath begin? At dawn? On the preceding midnight? Even earlier? The Bible does not give a clear answer. But this was obviously an important question: if people were to do no work on the Sabbath, they had to know at what hour of the day this prohibition came into effect each week.

Nehemiah 13:17-19 – before dark Friday?



Exodus 20:8-11 Sabbath Day

Caesar Augustus, Pontifex Maximus with tribunician power, decrees as follows:... The Jews may follow their own customs in accordance with the law of their fathers... that they need not give bond (to appear in court) on the Sabbath or on the day of preparation for it after the ninth hour (3:00 pm).

- Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 16:162-163



Exodus 20:8-11 Sabbath Day

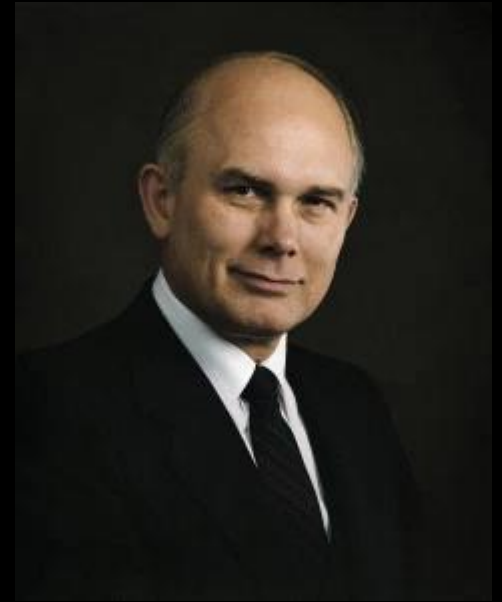
What about how far I can travel? **Exodus 16:29** says I cannot go “out of my place” ... but what did that mean? Most ancient interpreters applied the law to mean somewhere outside of your house or grounds... to not travel too far from your home. But how far? Eventually it was decided to not travel outside of your city. **Numbers 35:4-5** established the idea of the distance. The limit was put at 1,000 to 2,000 cubits, depending on which source you looked to. See **Acts 1:12**



Exodus 20:8-11 Sabbath Day

How do we apply this commandment?

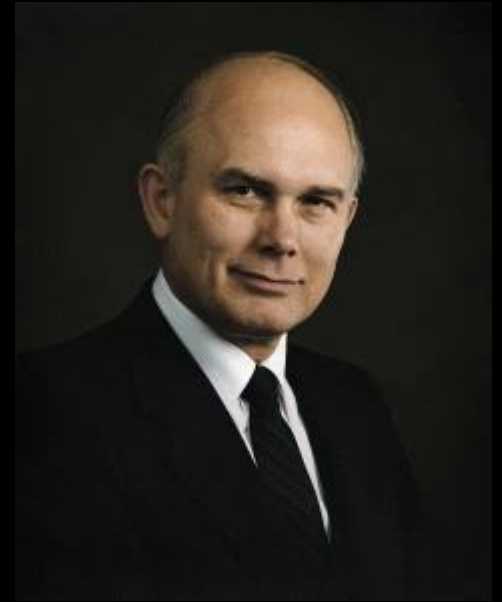
Teachers who are commanded to teach “the principles of [the] gospel” and “the doctrine of the kingdom” (D&C 88:77) **should generally forgo teaching specific rules or applications.** For example, they would not teach any rules for determining what is a full tithing, and **they would not provide a list of do’s and don’ts for keeping the Sabbath day holy.**



Exodus 20:8-11 Sabbath Day

How do we apply this commandment?

Once a teacher has taught the doctrine and the associated principles from the scriptures and the living prophets, such specific applications or rules are generally the responsibility of individuals and families. **Well-taught doctrines and principles have a more powerful influence on behavior than rules.** When we teach gospel doctrine and principles, we can qualify for the witness and guidance of the Spirit to reinforce our teaching, and we enlist the faith of our students in seeking the guidance of that same Spirit in applying those teachings in their **personal lives** (Dallin H. Oaks, "Gospel Teaching," Ensign, Nov. 1999, 78-80).



Exodus 20:12 Honor your parents

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. (Exodus 20:12)

Cross reference this with Deuteronomy 21:18-21 or Exodus 21:16!

Exodus 21 Slavery, An eye for an eye

How are we supposed to act when we are offended, misunderstood, unfairly or unkindly treated, or sinned against? What are we supposed to do if we are hurt by those we love, or are passed over for promotion, or are falsely accused, or have our motives unfairly assailed? Do we fight back? Do we send in an ever-larger battalion? Do we revert to an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, or, as Tevye says in Fiddler on the Roof, do we come to the realization that this finally leaves us **blind and toothless?** (Howard W. Hunter, The Beacon in the Harbor of Peace, October 1992)



Exodus 24 Many see God!



Leviticus 23

These **Feasts** are called:

V. 5	פסח	Passover
V. 10	עמר	First Fruits
V. 16	שבועות	Feast of Weeks
V. 24	תרועה	Trumpets
V. 27	יום כפרים	Day of Atonement
V. 34	סכות	Tabernacles

