

# The 10 COMMANDMENTS

EXODUS 20:2-17

- 2 "I am Yahweh your Elohim,  
who brought you out of the land (*erets*) of Egypt,  
out of the house of slavery (*'avadim*).
- 3 **There will not be** for you any other *elohim* before me.
- 4 **You will not make** (*'asah*) for yourself an idol,  
or any likeness of what is in the skies (*shamayim*) above  
or on the land (*erets*) beneath  
or in the waters (*mayim*) under the land (*'erets*).
- 5 You will not worship them,  
and you will not *serve* (*'avad*) them,  
for I, Yahweh your Elohim, am a passionate El(*ohim*),  
visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children  
to the threes and the fours  
for those who hate me,
- 6 but **showing** (*'asah*) loyal love to thousands  
for those who love me and keep my commands.



- 7 **You will not carry** the name of Yahweh your Elohim in vain,  
for Yahweh will not declare innocent  
the one who carries his name in vain.

- 8 **Remember** the day (*yom*) of *Shabbat* to treat it as holy (*qadash*).
- 9 Six days (*yom*) you will labor (*'avad*),  
and you will do (*'asah*) all your work,
- 10 but the seventh day (*yom*) is a *Shabbat* of Yahweh your Elohim,  
on it you will not do (*'asah*) any work,  
you  
or your son  
or your daughter,  
your male-slave (*'eved*)  
or your female-slave,  
or your cattle  
or your immigrant who is in your gates.
- 11 For in six days (*yom*) Yahweh made (*'asah*) the skies (*shamayim*)  
and the land (*erets*),  
the sea (*yam*)  
and all that is in them,  
and he rested on the seventh day (*yom*);  
therefore Yahweh blessed the day (*yom*) of *Shabbat* and made it holy (*qadash*).



- 12 **Honor** your father and your mother,  
so that your days (*yom*) may be prolonged in the land (*'adamah*)  
which Yahweh your Elohim gives you.

- 13 **Do not kill.**  
14 **Do not commit adultery.**  
15 **Do not steal.**

- 16 **Do not bear** false witness against your neighbor (*rea'*).
- 17 **Do not desire** your neighbor's (*rea'*) house;  
**do not desire** your neighbor's (*rea'*) wife,  
or his male-slave (*'eved*)  
or his female-slave,  
or his ox  
or his donkey  
or anything that belongs to your neighbor (*rea'*)."



## Consider

Repeated words and other literary features suggest dividing the 10 Commandments into six sections. We can further divide these six sections into either:



### Two sets of three

| Directed Toward God (Exod. 20:2-11)        | Directed Toward People (Exod. 20:12-17)  |
|--|--|
| No other gods or idols (Exod. 20:2-6)      | Honor your father and mother (Exod. 20:12)                                       |
| Do not carry the name in vain (Exod. 20:7) | No killing, adultery, or stealing (Exod. 20:13-15)                               |
| Remember the Sabbath (Exod. 20:8-11)       | Do not bear false witness or desire your neighbor's possessions (Exod. 20:16-17) |

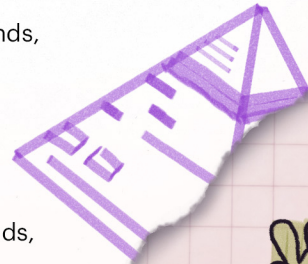
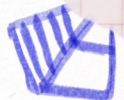
### ... or three sets of two

| Directed Toward God (Exod. 20:2-7)         | About Honoring Time and Parents (Exod. 20:8-12) | About Protecting People's Life and Property (Exod. 20:13-17)                     |
|--|---|--|
| No other gods or idols (Exod. 20:2-6)      | Remember the Sabbath (Exod. 20:8-11)            | No killing, adultery, or stealing (Exod. 20:13-15)                               |
| Do not carry the name in vain (Exod. 20:7) | Honor your father and mother (Exod. 20:12)      | Do not bear false witness or desire your neighbor's possessions (Exod. 20:16-17) |



### Notice the following observations and connections:

- Two statements in the **first section** begin with "I (am) Yahweh your Elohim," and two sets of negative commands fall in between.
- "Carry the name in vain" frames the **second section**.
- *Qadash* ("to treat as/make holy") frames the **third section**.
- We find the only two positive commands at the center, in the **third and fourth sections**, linked by the key words *yom* ("day") and "Yahweh your Elohim."
- The **fifth section** includes three short negative commands, each only two words in Hebrew:
  - *lo' tirtsakh* ("Do not kill")
  - *lo' tin'aph* ("Do not commit adultery")
  - *lo' tignov* ("Do not steal")
- The **sixth section** also includes three negative commands, each linked by the term *rea'* ("neighbor").
- The **third and sixth sections** both contain lists of seven (marked in italics).



What else do you observe?

