

NOTES FOR EXODUS

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INTRODUCING HEBREW BIBLE

- Hebrew Bible (HB) is the title given to the portion of the Bible which Christians know as Old Testament (OT).
- HB and OT have the same books but not in the same order and the books are sectioned differently.
- HB comprises 3 sets of books—Torah (Moses' writings), Nebi'im (prophets) and Ketuvim (writings).
- In OT, the sections are Pentateuch, Historical, Wisdom and Prophets.

Lands of HB

- The lands of HB comprise much of what we know today as the Middle East (see map below).



- While the names are unfamiliar to us today, they include the countries we know as Turkey, Armenia, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.
- There are some important geographical features in this region.
 - It has 3 of the world's largest rivers, Nile, Euphrates and Tigris
 - There are 5 large seas, Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, Persian Gulf, Caspian Sea and Black Sea.
 - There are important mountain ranges, Lebanon, Taurus, Ararat and Zagros.
 - The region includes a large desert, the Arabian Desert.
 - The region connects 3 of the world's continents, Asia, Africa and Europe.
- The lands of HB literally sit at the crossroads of the ancient world.
- HB was born in what may be considered the centre of the world.

- The Bible lands geographically coincide with the land God promised Abraham.
 - In the promise, God spelled out the borders of this land.
 - From Euphrates in the east to the Mediterranean in the west.
 - From the Lebanese mountains to the Arabian Desert.
 - Most of HB stories and history occur within these boundaries. (see map below)



Languages of HB

- The languages of HB, Hebrew and Aramaic, belong to the Semitic family of languages comprising 2 principal branches which then subdivide into smaller branches.
- East Semitic. This is the first major branch of the family and comprises languages that are largely extinct today.
 - Group 1 consisted of Eblaite (from ancient Ebla in modern-day Syria), Old Assyrian, Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian (the language of the Assyrian empire whose capital was the city of Nineveh).
 - Group 2 consisted of Old Akkadian, Old Babylonian, Middle Babylonian, Neo-Babylonian and Late Babylonian. This is the language group used by the various empires based on the city of Babylon.
- West Semitic. This branch of the family is made up of two larger divisions which may be subdivided into smaller families.
 - Southwest. This division consists of 2 groups, classical Arabic (the language of the Arabian Peninsula) and Ethiopic (the language of Ethiopia).
 - Northwest. This division comprises 4 smaller groups as follows
 - Ugaritic. This was the language of Ugarit which was located in western Syria.
 - Amorite. This was the language of the Amorite peoples who lived in Canaan.
 - Aramaic. This was the lingua franca adopted by the Neo-Babylonian Empire.
 - Canaanite. This included the languages of the Egyptian Amarna period, Phoenicia (Lebanon), Moab, Ammon, Edom (these 3 were located in Jordan) and Hebrew (the language of Israel and the HB).
- The sample shows how Hebrew of the HB looks like.
- בראשית ברא אלהים (in the beginning God created)
- Hebrew and Arabic are cousin languages which sound very much the same and function exactly the same way.

- All Semitic languages are traceable to the geography of Bible lands. If we follow the account of Genesis 10, Semitic languages are from the line of Shem, Noah's son.
- In the distribution of nations, Shem's descendants stayed in the Bible lands, while descendants of Japheth and Ham moved to other continents.

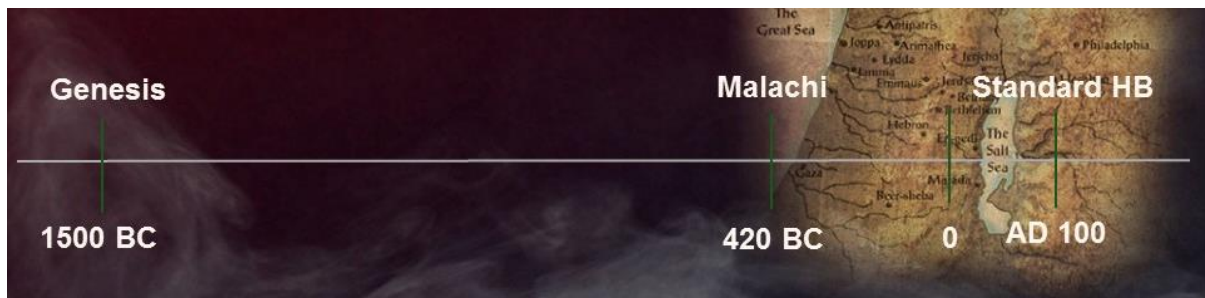
Authors of HB

- It is difficult to estimate the precise number of authors involved in writing HB.
 - Some books may have just one author. For instance, the first 5 books were written by Moses.
 - Some books have several authors. Psalms and Proverbs are good examples of this.
 - Some books carry no author names at all, like Chronicles.
 - Some authors wrote only parts of books, like Asaph who wrote only a few psalms.
- What is important is to learn that HB authors came from all walks of life.
- There were aristocrats, kings, priests, farmers, shepherds and authors with unknown background.
- Many of the authors were prophets who were called by God to work for him.
- The personal and educational background of the authors is often reflected in their work as we can see different styles of writing and depth of vocabulary.
- Most of them wrote in Hebrew, but Daniel wrote in both Hebrew and Aramaic, as did Ezekiel, Ezra and Nehemiah.
- All authors were guided by God to put on paper thoughts, ideas, events, songs and prophecies. These were not simply human inventions; they were sacred writings.

Time Frame of HB

- The HB, from the first book (Genesis) to the last book (Malachi), stretched over a period of about 1,000 years (see following timeline).
- Genesis was written by Moses probably during his time in Midian. This would mean a dating around 1500 BC. The Exodus took place about 1450 BC (some date it later around 1290 BC).
- Malachi was written about 420 BC, though some may date the book earlier and others date it later.
- This would give the HB a time frame of about 1,100 years. This was a long time for a book to be put together.
- If the process of standardisation is included, the HB became standard Scripture about AD 100. This would mean adding another 600 years to its history.
- During the period of HB, many world empires appeared and disappeared, making HB one of the great records of ancient history.
- This long journey is evidence that the book was truly guided by God because the long time frame and the many people living in different times could not simply put together such a book.

- Some posit that Job was written earlier than Genesis. There is no source, biblical or otherwise, suggesting this to be the case. To be on the side of caution, it is better to see Genesis as the first book of HB, chronologically and conceptually.



Basic History of Israel

- The primary interest of HB is the history of the people we know as Israel.
- Many people who read the Bible often do so without looking at the world in which Israel lived.
- The chart displays Israel's history alongside 2 of its most important neighbours, Egypt and Mesopotamia (the name for the lands of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris).
- The history of Israel is made up of 8 distinct periods.
 - The Patriarchal period. This was the time of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons.
 - The Egyptian sojourn. This was the time Israel lived in Egypt, before and during the slavery.
 - The Exodus, Desert and Conquest period. This involves Israel's exit from Egypt, led by Moses, until the death of Joshua.
 - The Judges period. This was a 300-year period and probably the 'dark ages' of Israel's history.
 - The United Monarchy. This was a 120-year period under kings Saul, David and Solomon.
 - The Divided Kingdom.
 - This period stretched from Rehoboam, Solomon's son, until the Babylonian captivity (exile) in 586 BC.
 - During Rehoboam's time the kingdom split into 2 nations.
 - The Babylonians destroyed Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple, ending Israel's existence as an independent nation.
 - The Exile period. During this period, most Jews were either forced exiles in Babylon or runaway exiles in Egypt.
 - The Post-Exile period. The Persian Emperor Cyrus was the first to permit the Jews (new name for Israel) to return to Israel and begin a period of nation rebuilding that would stretch until the Roman period.

Date (BC)	Israel	Egypt	Mesopotamia	
2500		Old Kingdom (2700)	Early Dynasty (2900)	
2400			Agade Dynasty	
2300				
2200			Period of the Patriarchs	1 st Intermediate
2100			Ur III Period	
2000		Middle Kingdom		
1900			Old Babylonian	
1800	Egyptian Sojourn	2 nd Intermediate	Kassite Period	
1700				
1600				
1500		New Kingdom		
1400	Exodus/Wilderness Conquest			
1300	Period of the Judges			
1200				
1100				
1000				United Monarchy (1050-930)
900	Divided Monarchy (930-587)	Late Period		
800				
700				Neo-Assyrian (745-605)
600	Exile (587-539)		Neo-Babylonian (605-539)	
500	Post-Exile (539)		Persian (539-331)	
400				

- The timeframe used here is based on rounded numbers.
 - Most Bible scholars recognise that the dating of biblical events is secure only from the time of Solomon downwards.
 - Dates prior to Solomon are a bit conjectural and still require further corroboration.
 - The same holds true for Israel's neighbours.
 - The absence of a unified dating system in the ancient world makes it difficult to determine very precise dates.

OVERVIEW OF TORAH

- Torah is the first part of HB.
- Jews consider it the most holy part of HB.
- Christians refer to these books as Pentateuch based on the Greek name for them found in Septuagint (LXX).

What Is Torah?

- Torah is the name given to the first 5 books of HB which were written by Moses.
- The entire Torah was written on a single scroll, often referred to as Torah Scroll.
- All 5 books were written on one scroll and are intentionally connected to each other.
- A quick examination of the connectors allows us to view the Torah as a five-part book.
 - Genesis. The first Torah book begins with stories about beginnings (the world and Israel) but ends with stories about ‘the sons of Israel.’
 - Exodus. The second book contains stories about Israel and the Sanctuary. It begins with the story about ‘the sons of Israel’ and ends with ‘Tabernacle’.
 - Leviticus. The third book contains laws for Israel and the Sanctuary. It begins with ‘Tent of Meeting’ and ends with ‘the Lord commanded Moses on Mt Sinai.’
 - Numbers. This is a collection of stories about Israel’s wilderness journey. The book begins with ‘the Lord spoke to Moses in the Sinai desert’ and ends with ‘the commandments of the Lord through Moses.’
 - Deuteronomy. The final book, a collection of Moses’ last sermons to Israel, begins with ‘the words which Moses spoke.’

Who Wrote Torah?

- The authorship of the Torah is a rather perplexing question and there is no consensus in today’s Bible scholarship.
- Traditional and conservative views accept Moses as the author and date the books to the 15th century BC.
- Critical scholars have strenuously challenged this traditional view and replaced it with a system of 4 sources (referred to as source criticism).
 - Source Criticism has been the chief approach to Torah books used by most modern scholars.
 - In this system, there are four sources of materials, J, E, D and P.
 - Each source is from a different time period stretching all the way to the post-exile period.
 - Despite the popularity of this system in modern scholarship, there is not sufficient evidence to abandon the traditional view.
 - In recent years, more and more scholars are moving away from Source Criticism.
- This theory asserts that the Torah was probably completed only after the Exile and its materials came from 4 different sources.
- However, there is no convincing reason to reject the traditional theory.
- Both Jews and Christians have traditionally accepted Moses as author of Torah for thousands of years.

The Special Place of Torah

- Torah has been an important part of Jewish worship over the centuries.
- At the time of Jesus, the Torah was read in every Synagogue (worship place for Jews), every Sabbath.
- Reading schedule (called Lectionaries) were made so that the whole Torah was read in 1 year.
- Torah was considered the 'most holy' part of Scripture and was treated as something very special.
- This concept is still practised by the Jews even today. Torah reading is still the most holy act of worship in Judaism. This has not changed for over 2,000 years.
- To show the special status of Torah, the Torah Scrolls in modern Synagogues are kept in special cabinets called Torah Arks (see sample below).



The Laws of Torah

- The Torah has often been mistakenly translated 'law'. This happened because of the many laws in Torah.
- The word 'Torah' does not mean 'law' but rather 'instruction'.
- Moreover, only the book of Leviticus is really a law book in the modern sense, but there are rules and regulations in Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
- Genesis contains no rules, while Exodus and Numbers have many stories and speeches and Deuteronomy is made up of speeches.
- The Torah laws (about 613 of them) cover every area of life—worship, lifestyle, food, family, work, farming, marriage and many other subjects.
- The important part of these laws is the idea that they belong to the covenant God made with Israel.
- There are 2 types of laws or rules.
 - Prescription laws which say what happens to people if they break the rule.
 - Description laws which do not say what happens if the rule is broken.

- Another important concept of Torah laws is that they are given by God and spell out a proper lifestyle for covenant relationship with him.
- Some laws clearly applied to local culture and geography at that time, while others have principles for people of every age. It is important to recognise this difference or we may misunderstand the laws.

Jesus and Torah

- Jesus used the word 'law' whenever he spoke about the Torah (see Matthew 5:17-20).
- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus did several things with Torah laws (Matthew 5:17-42).
 - He said the instructions of Torah cannot be done away with until they are fulfilled. He stated that his work was to make this happen.
 - He said those who observe Torah law will be considered great in his kingdom. This means these laws are still important for believers today.
 - He reinterpreted some of the rules; he added to their meaning. For example, Jesus taught that being angry with someone is the same as 'killing' that person.
 - He made the laws more about thought and motives than action. Our thoughts and desires often dictate what we actually do. The law pointed to the actions, but Jesus pointed to the thoughts and feelings.
 - He also completely changed some laws.
 - For instance, Torah law allows some form of 'getting even' like 'an eye for an eye' as a way to balance human behaviour.
 - However, Jesus taught that we should not take revenge at all. Instead, we should learn to 'turn the other cheek'.
- Therefore, to Jesus, Torah laws are still valid, but he made them more about our thoughts and even changed some of their meanings.
- Throughout the NT, the word rendered 'law' in English is 'nomos' in Greek.
 - Jesus, and later Paul, used Greek 'nomos' as the word for Torah.
 - It did not mean 'law' as in the modern sense.
 - The word was also not applied to the Ten Commandments.
- Often, both Jesus and Paul would use the phrase 'law and prophets' as code for HB (OT). Both Hebrew and Greek differentiate between 'law' and 'commandment'. 'Law', in the NT is 'nomos' which stands for Torah.

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

- Genesis climaxes with Abraham's descendants entering Egypt to avoid trouble.
- Exodus begins with Abraham's descendants still in Egypt but in trouble.

The Problem of Israel

- The second book of the Torah tells the story of how God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian slavery.
- The Israelites had settled in Egypt during the famine migration which occurred at the time when Joseph was Vizier of Egypt. This would have been during the period of Egypt called the Hyksos Period.
- However, the rise of the 18th Dynasty or New Kingdom saw a large scale reversal of fortunes for the Israelites who were made slaves by the Egyptians.
- The period of slavery probably lasted about 100 to 150 years. Some people think it was 430 years but this number includes the period from Abraham to Moses.
- Under the New Kingdom, Israel went from being favoured by the Pharaoh to becoming slaves of Egypt.
- Under these terrible conditions the people finally called to God for help.
- God answered their call and arranged their freedom from Egypt.
- The moment of deliverance is remembered in the title 'Exodus'. This event became the benchmark of all deliverances that God would perform for Israel.
- The book of Exodus also traces the initial steps in Israel's return to their own land.
- After the Exodus Israel was led into the Sinai desert to meet God and receive a covenant commitment from him.

The Deliverer

- The person chosen by God to free Israel was a man called Moses, son of Amram and Jochebed.
- At the time he was born, the Pharaoh had decided to kill all Israelite baby boys to control Israel's large population growth.
- Moses' mother took the risk of putting the baby in a basket and then floating it on the River Nile. His sister Miriam was asked to watch what happens next.
- The baby was discovered by the Egyptian princess who had no children. She adopted Moses and he grew up as an Egyptian prince. His birth mother was also involved in bringing him up.
- When Moses was 40 years old, he witnessed an Israelite being beaten by an Egyptian and he killed the Egyptian.
- Moses became a fugitive and ran away to Midian where he met Jethro and married his daughter, Zipporah.
- After 40 years in Midian, God called Moses to return to Egypt to liberate the people of Israel.
- While unwilling at first, Moses finally accepted God's call. He was given signs and miracle powers so that he could complete his work.

The Exodus

- Back in Egypt, Moses approached the Pharaoh who refused to release Israel.
- What followed next was a contest to prove to Pharaoh that Israel's God was more powerful and should be obeyed.
- Pharaoh refused to listen to the warnings that God would send plagues to destroy Egypt unless he allowed Israel to go free.
- God sent 10 plagues upon Egypt and only at the 10th plague did Pharaoh finally agree to let Israel go free. The chart gives the list of 10 plagues.
- Goshen, where Israel lived, was not affected by the plagues. However, even Israel had to prepare to escape the 10th plague. They put blood on their doors and windows.
- After the 10th plague, Israel were permitted to leave Egypt. This event is called the Exodus.

Plague Number	Plague	Effect
1	Water turned to blood	Fish died
2	Frogs	Covered the land and then died
3	Gnats	Covered people and animals
4	Flies	Covered Egyptian homes and the land
5	Animal disease	All domestic animals died
6	Boils	People were covered with sores
7	Hail	Destroyed the crops
8	Locusts	Ate up all vegetation
9	Darkness	Lasted for 3 days
10	Death of first born	All first born died, even Pharaoh's son

- The dating of the Exodus is one of the most vexing questions in Bible scholarship.
- There are basically 2 dates given, an early date (15th cent BC) and a late date (13th cent BC).
- There are 2 main possibilities for the dating of the Exodus:
 1. The 15th century BC.
 - a. This was the golden period of Egypt's 18th Dynasty.
 - b. During this period, Egypt had reached the peak of its development and become the superpower of the world.
 - c. Many of the kings during this period had names with the element 'Moshe' in them, for example, Ahmose and Thutmose. Moses' name (Moshe in Hebrew) is probably a contraction.
 - d. This date is the traditional view of the Church.
 2. The 13th century BC.
 - a. This was Egypt's 19th Dynasty, still a part of the golden period.
 - b. The great kings of this period were called Ramases/Raamses (a name which appears in Exodus).
 - c. This view is favoured by most scholars today.
- The early date theory accepts 1450 BC, while the late date theory accepts 1290 BC.

- This would place the Exodus either during the 18th Dynasty or the 19th Dynasty; both are part of the Golden period of Egypt and the plagues would have had the same devastating impact in either century.
- There are many arguments for this difference in dating, but conservative scholars generally accept the early date for Exodus.

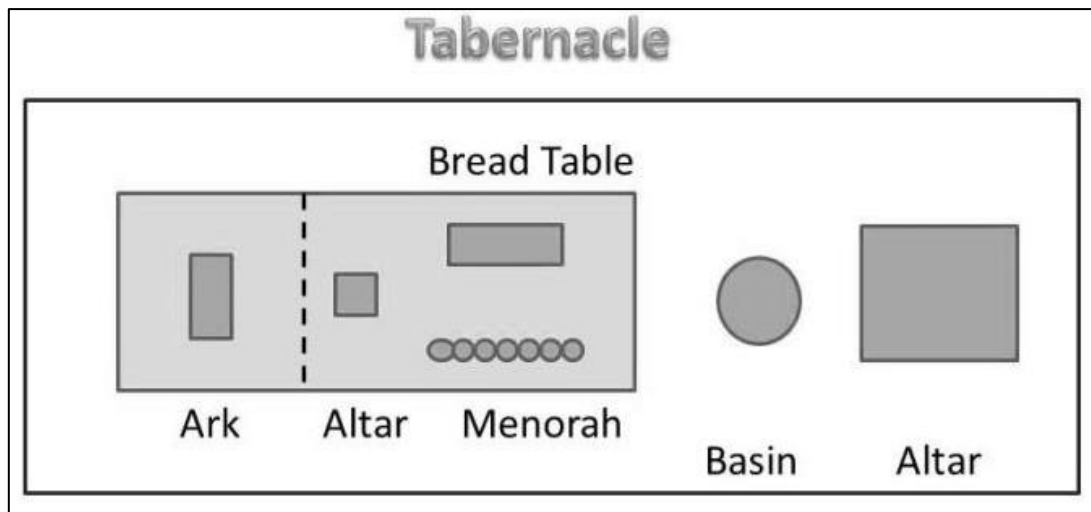
The Covenant

- An important part of the book involves the concept of Covenant. The so-called Book of Covenant (Exod 24:7) runs from chapters 19 to 24 and includes the Ten Words (Commandments).
- 'Covenant' comes from the Hebrew word which refers to an agreement, a treaty or a contract.
- Covenant was an agreement between two parties, a superior one (God) and a subordinate one (Israel).
- The covenant involved specific terms (see Exod 19:5; 20:1-17; 20:24ff.) like job description and lifestyle rules.
- It also came equipped with particular promises (Exod 19:4-6).
- It included human commitment (Exod 19:8; 24:3, 7) and punishment for not fulfilling their commitment (Exod 19:10-13).
- The covenant consisted of the following elements
 - A statement about relationship with God the superior partner (Exod 19). God claimed Israel as his special people.
 - Lifestyle expectations (Exod 20A) or guidelines for how to live in relationship with God. These are called the Ten Words.
 - Contingency plans for failure are portrayed in the use of altar (Exod 20B). The altar was a way for connecting with God even when Israel failed to live up to the covenant.
 - Community laws appear in chapters 21-23.

The Sanctuary

- The third major topic of the book of Exodus is the Tabernacle or Sanctuary.
- God commanded Israel to build the Tabernacle as a symbol of his presence among them (Exod 25:8).
- Compartments. The Tabernacle consisted of 3 separate chambers.
 - An outer common area called Outer Court or Courtyard.
 - A larger front room called Holy Place.
 - An inner room called Holy of Holies or Most Holy Place.
- The first two areas were involved in the daily worship of Israel, but the inner room was used only once a year, on *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement).
- Furniture. The services of the Tabernacle were conducted around certain specific furniture with varying symbolisms.
 - In the Courtyard was a large altar for sacrifices and a basin for washings.
 - The Holy Place had a bread table, the *Menorah* (lampstand) and an altar for incense. The three pieces conveyed the constancy and continuity of the work of the priests on behalf of Israel.

- The Holy of Holies housed the Ark of the Covenant, Israel's holiest object, which symbolised the very presence of God himself.
- The diagram provides a cross-section view of the Tabernacle.



Moses: Leader Extraordinaire

- Moses is the quintessential Bible leader.
- He was a man of immense patience and unflinching courage even in the face of personal attacks.
- A brief journey into his life is rather helpful.

From Prince to Exile to Exodus

- Jacob's family, called Israelites, settled in Egypt and were prosperous until a new Pharaoh came to Egypt. He did not trust the Israelites and made them slaves.
- He also wanted to reduce their numbers by ordering the death of every baby boy. Moses was born during this trying time.
- Moses' mother, Jochebed, saved the baby by putting him in a basket and leaving him on the River Nile.
- The Egyptian princess (either Hatshepsut or Nefertiti, depending on dating) found the baby, adopted him, and raised him as her own son. Moses became a prince of Egypt.
- However, when he was old enough (about 40 years old), Moses realised he was not Egyptian and tried to help the Israelites. He killed an Egyptian and had to run away.
- Moses went to the country of Midian (northern Arabia) and lived with a man called Jethro (also known as Rueul), a priest in Midian. Moses lived in Midian for 40 years, married Zipporah (Jethro's daughter), and had a son called Gershom.
- One day, God came to him in a burning bush and asked Moses to return to Egypt to free the Israelites. At first Moses did not want to go, but then he did.
- The Pharaoh refused to free the Israelites so God sent 10 plagues on Egypt. The first plague turned all water to blood, while in the last one all firstborn sons died.
- The Israelites were freed, but Pharaoh changed his mind and tried to catch them at the Red ('Reed Sea' in Hebrew) Sea. God opened the Sea for them and they escaped.
- This event is called the Exodus. It meant Israel were free from Egypt, free to return to the land promised to Abraham.

A Lawgiver

- After the Exodus, Moses brought the Israelites to Mount Sinai/Horeb. This was the same place where he had met God in a burning bush.
- Two important things happened at this place:
- First, God appeared to the Israelites and made a 'covenant' ('agreement') with them.
- He reminded them of the Exodus, declared them as his people, and gave them guidelines for their lives.
- God also promised to take them safely to the land promised to Abraham.
- Moses became the lawgiver to deliver and explained the rules of life which God gave to him.

- The most important part of this work was a set of 10 statements we know today as Ten Commandments. These were also called the 10 Words of God and were written down on 2 stone pieces.
- The 10 Words (Exod 20) have 2 parts:

Part 1 has 4 ideas pertaining to relationship with God	Part 2 has 6 concepts pertaining to relationship with other people
First, we should have no other God Second, we should not make images of God Third, we should not misuse God's name Fourth, we should remember God's special time, the Sabbath	Fifth, we should honour our parents Sixth, we should not kill other people Seventh, we should not commit adultery Eighth, we should not steal Ninth, we should not give false testimony Tenth, we should not covet.

- Words 6-9 carry the same idea: do not take what is not yours – someone's life, someone's wife/husband, someone's things and someone's name.
- Words 6-9 are clearly differentiated from the others by their brevity; they are short and compact.
- The first 4 words occupy much narrative space, while 5 and 10 have multiple elements.

Sanctuary Builder

- Second, God asked Moses to build a Sanctuary (also called Tabernacle), a place where the Israelites could worship God.
- This Sanctuary would be seen as a reminder that God was always with them.
- The Sanctuary comprised 3 parts: Courtyard, Holy Place and Holy of Holies.
- In the Courtyard was a big altar for sacrifices and a wash basin for cleaning and washing.
- In the Holy Place were a table with 12 loaves of bread, a golden candle-stand and a smaller golden altar for burning incense.
- In the Holy of Holies, was a golden box called 'Ark of the Covenant' which contained the 2 pieces of stones with the 10 Words.
- The Sanctuary became the centre of Israel during their journey and when they finally settled in the land of promise. Eventually it was replaced with a permanent Temple in the city of Jerusalem.
- Below are 2 views (side and top) of the Sanctuary which show where every furniture was placed.

