

1. Goal of God’s Commandments:

- The **Torah**¹ (Genesis – Deuteronomy) provides instruction for both the individual and at the societal level – the nation of Israel.
- Coming out of slavery – the Israelites need structure to create a functioning society
 - Three branches of Israelite governance: Prophet, Priest, and King.
 - “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” – Ex 19:6.²
- The Ten Commandments = a summary document of the Torah.

2. Ten Commandments – the Debate:

- Should we call them – the “Ten Commandments” or the “Ten Statements”
 - **Exodus 34:28** in Hebrew says the “ten words” (Heb: *ha aseret **deberim***).
- How are they to be numbered?
 - Jews, Catholics, and Protestants number the commandments differently.
- Is there a structure to the division?
 - Traditionally, we have divided the commandments into two parts based on the two tablets – five on one tablet and five on the other.
 - First five – commandments about God
 - Second five – commandments between humanity.

3. Other structures in the Bible:

- Creation – Days 1,2,3 – God separates. Days 4,5,6 – God fills. Day Seven – God Rests

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Day & Night	Waters Up/down	Water from Land	Fills Day & Night	Fills Water Fish/Birds	Fills Land Animals	

- Ten Plagues

1-3	4-6	7-9	10
1 & 2 Warning 3 – no warning	1 & 2 Warning 3 – no warning	1 & 2 Warning 3 – no warning	

¹ The Hebrew word Torah means to instruct or guide. The Torah is an instruction manual for the Israelites.

² See also 1 Peter 2:9.

4. Structure of the Ten Commandments gives us an image of the proper Structure of Society:

God as Sovereign

- Human rulers must be responsible to a higher authority.
- The actions of human rulers will be judged by God (Pharaoh's heart).

1. "I am the LORD your God" (Ex. 20:2)
2. "No other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3-6)
3. "Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God" (Ex. 20:7)

Sanctity of Createdness

- We are to be grateful for and celebrate God's creation and our part in it.
- sanctity of created life
- despite the inherent suffering of being we are to celebrate the world as "good" (Gen.

4. "Keep the Sabbath holy" (Ex. 20:8-11)
5. "Honor Mother and Father" (Ex. 20:12)
6. "Do not murder." (Ex. 20:7)

Pillars of a Stable Society

- Marriage/Family
- Property Rights (including right to your own body – slavery).
- Justice - a commitment to justice and truth.

7. "Do not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14)
5. "Do not steal." (Ex. 20:15)
6. "No False Testimony." (Ex. 20:16)

- To Covet is the "inordinate, ungoverned, selfish desire." If we do not hold these desires in check, they can/will lead to theft, adultery, false testimony, and even murder.

Self-Regulating Individuals

- all must choose to govern their "selfish desires."

10. "Do not covet" (Ex. 20:17)