

## Translation of the Ten Commandments on the Scroll

### Column II

Line 12. <sup>Deuteronomy 5:5</sup> // And He said, <sup>6</sup> I am the LORD your God who

### Column III

- Line 1. brought you from the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.<sup>7</sup> You shall not have  
2. other gods over Me. <sup>8</sup> You shall not make for yourself a statue or  
3. image of that which is in the sky above and that is on the earth  
below  
4. and that which is in the water beneath the earth; <sup>9</sup> you shall not  
bow to them or worship them  
5. because I am the LORD your God, a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of  
the fathers upon  
6. their sons to the third and fourth generations of those who hate  
Me, <sup>10</sup> but showing mercy to thousands,  
7. to those who love Me and keep My commandments. <sup>11</sup> You shall not  
raise the name of the LORD your God  
8. in vain because the LORD shall not forgive those who raise His name  
in vain.  
9. <sup>12</sup> Observe // the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God has  
commanded you.  
10. <sup>13</sup> Six days you shall labour and do all your work,  
11. <sup>14</sup> but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; you shall not do  
any work on it,  
12. (either) you, your son, your daughter, your male or female slave, your ox or  
your donkey,

### Column IV

- Line 1. or your cattle, (or) the stranger in your settlements, // so that your male and female  
slave may rest  
2. as you do. <sup>15</sup> Remember that you were a slave // in the land of Egypt and  
3. the LORD your God freed you from there with a mighty hand // and an  
outstretched arm;  
4. therefore the LORD your God has commanded you // to keep the Sabbath  
day  
5. to consecrate it. <sup>Exodus 20:11</sup> For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth,  
6. the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD

- blessed
7. the Sabbath day and consecrated it. ///// <sup>Deuteronomy 5:16</sup> Honour your father and your mother, as
  8. the LORD your God has commanded you, ///// that you may long endure, and that you may fare well,
  9. in the land that the LORD your God is assigning to you. <sup>17</sup> You shall not murder. You shall not
  10. commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. <sup>18</sup> You shall not covet
  11. your neighbour's wife. You shall not crave your neighbour's house, or his field, or his male or female slave,
  12. or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour's. /////

## Colonne II

Line 12. <sup>Dt. 5, 5</sup> ///// Et il a dit <sup>6</sup> « Je suis l'ÉTERNEL, ton Dieu qui

### **Special marks used in this translation:**

(xxx) = explanatory word or words to clarify the meaning of the translation

///// = a space left blank by the scribe owing to an imperfection in the parchment

LORD = the Tetragrammaton, the four-consonant name of God in the Hebrew Bible

## **The Commandments, as written on the Ten Commandments scroll with commentary**

### **First Commandment**

"I am the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."

Comment:

The Israelites are reminded that they owe to God a great debt. Consequently they are obliged to follow the subsequent directives.

## **Second Commandment**

“You shall not have other gods over Me. You shall not make for yourself a statue or image of that which is in the sky above and that which is on the earth below and that which is in the water beneath the earth; you shall not bow to them or worship them because I am the LORD your God, a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon their sons to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

Comment:

Note that the Decalogue neither concedes nor denies the existence or efficacy of other deities; it simply forbids their worship. With respect to idols, the Bible regards a sacred image as the god itself, despite the evidence we have today from the ancient Middle East that idols were understood to be visual representations only. Moreover, although it is a human impulse to depict nature, one may not even make such an image lest – it seems – one might be tempted to worship it.

## **Third Commandment**

“You shall not raise the name of the LORD your God in vain because the LORD shall not forgive those who raise His name in vain.”

Comment:

The meaning is not completely certain. This commandment has traditionally been understood to forbid the making of false oaths. The phrase “in vain” literally means “for nothing,” so some take this to prohibit using God’s name inappropriately. Some, in light of this commandment, replace the “o” in the word God with a hyphen when writing His name.

## **Fourth Commandment**

“Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; you shall not do any work on it, either you, your son, your daughter, your male or female slave, your ox or your donkey, or your cattle, or the stranger in your settlements, so that your male and female slave may rest as you do. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the LORD your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to keep the Sabbath day to consecrate it. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.”

Comment:

A weekly mandated day of rest for all is entirely unique to the Bible; it is virtually unknown in other ancient cultures. The precept respects God’s consecration of the day at the end of Creation as well as an ethical notion stemming from the experience of slavery in Egypt. It is taken very seriously in the biblical text where a man is put to death for gathering wood on the Sabbath (Number 15:32-36).

### **Fifth Commandment**

“Honour your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may long endure, and that you may fare well, in the land that the LORD your God is assigning to you.”

Comment:

An intergenerational bargain: I tend my children when they are young and weak so that they will tend me when I am old and weak. The reward: surviving into elderhood oneself. A long life is a common biblical reward. Rabbinical writings later explained this commandment by pointing to the parents’ partnership with God in creating offspring. (In Genesis 4:1, Eve states that she has given birth with the help of God.)

### **Sixth Commandment**

“You shall not murder.”

Comment:

This curt statement requires no justification; it affirms the sanctity of human life. However, the traditional English translation, “Thou shalt not kill,” is far too broad. The Hebrew verb has traditionally been rendered here as “murder” for, though the verb covers non-culpable homicide as well (Numbers 35:11, 27, 30; Deuteronomy 4:42), to construe it as an absolute ban on killing would bring this commandment into conflict with the death penalty prescribed by many biblical laws.

### **Seventh Commandment**

“You shall not commit adultery.”

Comment:

Since Bible accepts polygyny (one husband, several wives), adultery originally meant sexual relations between a man and a married woman who is not his wife. The inviolateness of a married woman is a necessary requirement in a strongly patriarchal, patrilineal society (that is, where descent follows the male line).

### **Eighth Commandment**

“You shall not steal.”

Comment:

“You shall not steal” was originally intended to forbid the stealing of people — as in abduction and enslavement. The standard Jewish interpretation of this statement is “You shall not kidnap.” The Bible elsewhere forbids the theft of property (Exodus, chapters 21 and 22).

### **Ninth Commandment**

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.”

Comment:

Although this directive appears to relate to proceedings in a court of justice, it is usually taken more generally to forbid lying, particularly in order to cause harm to another person.

### **Tenth Commandment**

“You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife. You shall not crave your neighbour’s house, or his field, or his male or female slave, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour’s.”

Comment:

Nowhere else does the Hebrew Bible say that merely desiring another person’s possessions is a transgression. This commandment appears to recognize that desire is the emotional root of most crimes.

The story of the Exodus speaks of the entire people of Israel, and the precepts that comprise Israel’s covenant with their God seem binding on all the people. However, the commandments themselves may indicate a much narrower audience. This commandment, for example, assumes a male audience only, in that it forbids the craving of wives but not husbands; and it also implies that the neighbour owns land or goods worth “coveting.”