

the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) was the only piece of the Pentateuch unmediated by Moses and written by God himself (Exodus 20:1, 22; 24:12; 31:18). In YHWH's establishing his covenant with the Israelites, Moses mediated for the Israelites only after they failed in their fidelity to their God in the "golden calf" incident. Moses established the Levitical priesthood, with its accompanying dietary and ceremonial laws, *after* this mass disobedience. The laws reflect a rejection of Egypt; i.e., taking the "Egypt" out of Israel by sacrificing the gods of Egypt (e.g., sheep, goats, cattle) and avoiding food offered to those idols. Thus, YHWH's "words" are distinguished from the case and ritual laws in the Sinai narrative, which are subject to change.<sup>15</sup> Second, the Decalogue is the deed of the covenant of Sinai.<sup>16</sup> Only the Decalogue has a special designation – the ten words – and is repeated in Deuteronomy. Also, the Decalogue is distinguished from the other laws because of the sense of finality noted in Deuteronomy 5:22: "These words, and nothing more." In addition, the Ten Commandments are addressed to everyone (not specific segments) within Israel.<sup>17</sup> Third, love (*ahavah*) is the primary (though not sole motive) for keeping the Ten Commandments. Loving YHWH and being faithful to his words is a theme found throughout the Pentateuch, and even is incorporated in the Decalogue itself (Exodus 20:6, Deuteronomy 5:10).<sup>18</sup> To accomplish this love, God will excise the disobedient disposition of the Israelites: "The Lord, your God, will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendents, that you may love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and all your soul, and so may live" (Deuteronomy 30:6). The interior obedience and devotion to YHWH is the substance of living the torah. The prophets affirm this. Jeremiah reiterates the real problem of his contemporaries: they are uncircumcised of heart (Jeremiah 4:4, 9:25). The Lord speaks through Ezekiel, saying, "I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes, careful to observe my decrees" (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

According to the prophets of YHWH – Samuel, Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Micah, and even David – the peripheral and (ultimately) provisional laws of

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<sup>15</sup> See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) pp. 77, 88.

<sup>16</sup> See Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, Volume 1 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965) p. 147.

<sup>17</sup> See Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985) p. 63.

<sup>18</sup> In the Pentateuchal narrative, we read of the motivational love for keeping the commandments first in Exodus, then in Leviticus regarding love of neighbor (19:18), and then from Moses in the plains of Moab (Deuteronomy).