

Romans 9:4-5 — who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Review:

"Israelites" is the national identity. This section of Romans (9-11) contains the only references to Israel and Israelites in the letter. Paul's prayer in this section excludes the church and focuses on his desire, God's plan, and the responsibility of the church towards Israel.

"Adoption as sons" refers to Israel as being the selected nation, the son that God selected from among the nations. This was a national sonship, not a spiritual sonship. The spiritual aspect of being sons is granted to the Gentiles during this dispensation because Israel is set aside for a time.

"The glory" refers to the glory of God that was shown to Israel in the Exodus account, in the tabernacle, and in the temple. It departed at the time of the Babylonian captivity and will not return until Jesus returns to restore the kingdom to Israel. The glory was an identifying marker of Israel. It is to Israel that it was originally given and to whom it will be given again. We stand as those graced to participate with God's selected nation in that glory.

"The covenants" is a specific reference to the Hebrew Scriptures' account of the Abrahamic Covenant, which was restated and reemphasized in David and finalized in the New Covenant. The church may have some benefits that sound similar to the New Covenant from Jeremiah 31, but similarity does not mean equality.

Take note of the structure of this writing, "to whom are...the lawgiving." Understand that the word "belong" is not in the text, but in looking back to the pronoun (to whom), the idea is that this isn't simply a list of possessions, but an identification. This means when we as Gentiles claim any of the things meant for the Nation of Israel, we are claiming to be something we are not. This is more nefarious than claiming to own something that is not ours.

There is a definite article here, but it is combined with an uncommon word. "**νομοθεσία** *nomothesia* (nah-mah-theh-see-ah) is a compound word made up of "law" (*nomos*) and "placing, to put, give" (*tithēmi*). This is the only instance this word is used. It is in the feminine, which is why this is not translated as the "law-giver."

In the New Testament, the noun "nomos" has 22 cognates. This particular form of "nomos" and "*tithēmi*" has three cognates, "**νομοθεσία** *nomothesia* (nah-mah-theh-see-ah)," "**νομοθέτης** *nomothetēs* (nah-mah-theh-

tays),” and “**νομοθετέω** *nomotheteō* (*nah-mah-theh-teh-oh*)” — the Lawgiving, the Lawgiver (James 4:12), and the reception of the Law; establishing; legislating (Hebrews 7:11). This could be understood passively as "to whom is the reception of the law."

The point is this — the word used in Romans 9:4, regardless of translation, absolutely refers to the Mosaic Law found in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. Compare this with the covenants which are established in Genesis, reestablished in the life of David, and finalized in the prophets. Remember that in Exodus 2:24, God remembered the covenant, one thing led to another and God gave the Law.

The Law is also called a covenant, the Old Covenant (2nd Corinthians 3:14). This is the only reference to the Law as the Old Covenant. In Hebrews, the Law is referred to as the covenant I made with the fathers which they broke and the first covenant (as in the predecessor to the New Covenant).

To understand the Law and this Old Covenant, we need to review the source, Exodus 19. To understand this giving of the Law or rather the reception of the Law, we need to understand the circumstances. The year is 1446 BC. The ten plagues have come against Egypt, the Passover has commenced and Israel has come out of Egypt through the Red Sea. They have been delivered from the Egyptians and have begun their trek to the promised land. But first, they take a detour to Sinai.

Upwards of 3 million people walked from Egypt to Mt. Sinai in about 2 months (Exodus 19:1-2). In the two-month period after leaving Egypt, God provided fresh water from undrinkable water (15:22-26). The Lord provided manna (16:1-7) and meat (16:8-21). The Lord the provided water from a rock (17:1-7). The Lord also fought for them against Amalek at Rephidim (17:8-16). The point is that they have seen all the works of the Lord, they have seen His power and His glory.

Then God spoke to them through Moses (read Exodus 19:4-9). God has given them every reason to understand and believe that the Lord, the God of creation, was indeed speaking to them and the Lord offered a covenant with them. The people agreed — "all the Lord has spoken we will do." This is a conditional covenant and Nation Israel had to keep it to avoid the judgments and enjoy the benefits.

Moses begins with the overview; the details follow. Notice that they agree to the "all that the Lord has spoken we will do." This is repeated in 24:3-8.

The Lord is making a deal with them, with Israel. Several points must be understood.

1. This is to redeemed Israel

2. The agreement is so that they will be a kingdom of priests
 - a. Not Levitical
 - b. Priests to the nations – mediator for God
3. There is no promise of eternal life in the giving of the Law

Exodus 19:10-15 – God demands holiness (separateness). Before they can even receive the Law, they must consecrate themselves. This was to demonstrate that Who was speaking and what He was going to give them were not common. This was the Lord God speaking and the Law, the Covenant with Israel, was holy.

Exodus 19:18-25 – As to demonstrate this all the more, God tells them to set boundaries so they will not even come close to the mountain where God is.

Exodus 20 is the well-known portion of Scripture where we have the 10 Commandments. It is clear that the first four address the relationship the believing Israelite has with God. These can be summed up in Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

The six following are interpersonal laws dealing with how the believing Israelite was to interact with each other. These can all be summed up in Leviticus 19:17-18. We know that these are the summations because of Matthew 22:35-40.

There needs to be a counterpoint here. Some place commandment #5 in the "Love your God" category because to honor your father and mother was to honor the godly training they would receive from parents. They were to honor the parents because it was assumed they were God's appointed representatives as they grew up (Lev 19:1-4).

In Exodus 20:1-2, God identifies Himself to reaffirm who He is in relation to His action of deliverance. Yahweh is God and has already delivered them. The deliverance out of bondage is done and never to be repeated.

The language in verse 2 is more powerful in the Hebrew. There is no verb in the first phrase. The literal translation is "I Yahweh, your God, who led you out from land Egypt from house bondage."

The first four laws distinguish the Lord among the people. But notice that these laws are not natural to the mind of man. The only way that a person would know these commandments is to read them in the Bible.

The first is "You shall have no other gods before Me." The verb here is "הָיָה *hāyāh*." This is a state-of-being word; let there be. The understanding relates to existence or actuality. The explanation for this command is the fact that Yahweh is God who delivered. The verb is in the Qal Imperfect. This indicates an incomplete

action or being in this state. "Before me" is actually "in my presence." The command is understood but the emphasis is lost. Within the command is the emphatic statement that there are no other gods, therefore, "other gods do not exist to you in My presence." This is the first distinguishing mark for Israel. They are monotheistic and their God is Yahweh. He will have a reputation of His own because Yahweh is the living God, the God who acts. Israel did nothing to defeat Egypt. God did it (Joshua 2:8-11).

The second commandment is to make a solid distinction between all other nations and the nation of Israel. There is no image of Yahweh. All other nations have an idol, or a statue, or an image of their god to worship. This will be the second distinguishing mark. Notice that it says that "you will not make." This word is "עָשָׂה" 'āsāh" and is different than the word for "create." This word means to take a material and form it into something else. God says in Genesis let us make man, then forms him from the dirt. There may be a connection of being made in the image of God and therefore being commanded not make any idols. But the reason given in Exodus 20 is not because they were made in the image of God, rather it is because nothing made represents Yahweh.

The third law is, "Do not take the Lord's name in vain." The word for vain is "שָׁוֶה" *shāwe (shahv)*." This noun means worthlessness, falsehood, or pointless. Theologically speaking, this seems to first imply that you should not use the name of Yahweh with an attitude of disrespect. There is no dispute to this observation, but the Laws are written so as to be held up by the people. The action is highly debated; the best biblical response is found in Leviticus 19:12. The literal translation is, "You will not lift up the name of Yahweh, your God, with (*shāwe*)." The idea must mean to speak the name of Yahweh with intent to mislead or manipulate another. The common church understanding is not incorrect, but it probably meant much more to Israel. This is the third distinction of Israel from other nations because Israel was not to make an oath frivolously or worthlessly in the name of Yahweh.

The fourth commandment is to remember the Sabbath. This was a huge marker in the life of an Israelite. An entire day of rest for the nation as a remembrance and honoring of Yahweh would have been very peculiar, thus this is the fourth distinction for Israel. The purpose as stated — because of the example God gave forth in the account of creation. It is interesting that God gave no commandment concerning resting on the Sabbath to anyone prior to this law, only that God blessed it and made it holy (Genesis 2:2-3). The next time the seventh day is mentioned is during the Exodus, during the feast of unleavened bread (Exodus 12:14-16). In Exodus 16 when Israel was being provided food, there was no food provided on the seventh day because it was a sabbath, a day of rest. This commandment was already established as separate among the people.

Honor is “כָּבֵד *kāvfidh (kah-vahd)*” and it can have either a negative or positive connotation. They both have the same idea of being heavy. The mother and father have weight, meaning that greater respect is given them than another. As explained before, this is an anticipation of the Israelite parent being the representative of God to their children and it is expected that the word of the parent is representing the Word of God. Respecting one's parent then is representative of how one respected God. Remember that this is a visual representation, able to be judged by men in Israel.

Murder is “רָצַח *rātsach (rah-tskah)*” and is different than simply to kill. Taking a life can only be done if sanctioned by God as His judgment. This word is different than "he must be put to death." In Numbers 35, Moses clarifies this point (35:18,21). Moses is distinguishing between accidental death and hurting someone so that it causes someone to die or having the intent to kill.

Adultery is “נָאַף *nā'aph (nah-ahf)*” and means to mate with someone that does not belong to you. There are two facets of this commandment. Until the father gives permission and his daughter is married, the woman remains under the guardianship of the father. This word also means to mate while away. Therefore, this word in full indicates sexual activity outside the confines of marriage. This differs from Greek where there is a word for fornication and one for adultery.

Steal is “גָּנַב *gānav (gah-nahvb)*” and means more than simply taking what does not belong to you. It includes kidnapping or selling something without the legal right to do so. This seems to be an ethical word of any deception to gain something by dishonest means (Genesis 31:19; 40:15; 2nd Samuel 15:1-6).

"Bear false witness" is literally "you will not testify against your fellow countryman a witness of a lie." Lie, “שָׁקַר *sheqer (sheh-khehr)*,” means false, lie, or falsehood. This includes speaking a lie when the truth is known, but it also includes speaking falsely because one has no idea what they are talking about. The matter of being false does not take into account intent, merely if the person spoke falsely.

The final law pertains to coveting. “חָמַד *chāmadh (khab-mahd)*” means to desire, take pleasure in, or lust after. This is the only one that speaks to internal disposition and not an external action. The previous four are rooted in desiring what is not a person's possession.

All of the ten commandments are expanded upon and reiterated throughout the Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy — all except for coveting. There is no penalty given; there are no expansions. This is simply a law that is to prevent a breaking of the law to occur.

In today's anti-biblical mindset, even the origin of the God-ordained Law has come into question. Deniers of biblical authenticity, popularized by Wellhausen, claim that the Hebrew Scriptures were not even written down until the Babylonian Captivity. They deny Moses wrote the Pentateuch. One of the arguments is that the Code of Hammurabi predates Israel and influenced the writers of the Hebrew Scriptures. Translations codify 282 laws that cover slander, trade, slavery, theft, divorce, eye-for-an-eye, and tooth-for-a-tooth. The code is set to civil and criminal law to keep peace and stability in a society.

What most biblical apologists do not mention is Genesis 9:3-7. God gave Noah basic rules. As the narrative progresses in Genesis, it is clear that societies had a code of ethics, a sense of right and wrong. The Law is not the first set of rules, either understood or written, but nevertheless, it is unique in three aspects.

1. Given by the Word of God, not Moses' Law
2. Provided Laws concerning the Respect for God
 - a. Monotheistic
 - b. No Idols
 - c. No Vain Usage of Yahweh
 - d. Sabbath Day for Worship
3. A Law of Coveting