

I am the LORD thy God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make for yourself any graven image.

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain

Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it. . . ⁸

That which is italicized is essentially the enacting clause for the Ten Commandments. It states or identifies the source of the laws that follow. They came not from just any god, but from the God which brought Israel out of Egypt. That which follows the statement of authority is the body of the law. When additional laws were given by Moses, he made a statement of the authority for the laws:

Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you go to possess it.⁹

And Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together, and said to them, These are the words which the LORD has commanded, that you should do them.¹⁰

And Moses said to the Congregation, This is the thing which the LORD commanded to be done.¹¹

These were all enacting clauses for the commandments and laws which followed. Through these statements Israel knew the authority behind the laws. They were not just something Moses made up. They did not come from Pharaoh or the king of Mesopotamia. They were not laws of the Baal god. They came from Jehovah God.

Sometimes such statements also appeared after the laws of God were read or stated, as with the food laws which concluded, "For I am the LORD your God" (Lev. 11:44; see also the laws in Lev. 19). But in any case, Israel always knew by what authority the laws they were to follow were enacted. Even before this time, when God dealt with the patriarchs, we see God making a formal declaration of His identity, and thus authority:

And when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.¹²

At the outset of his communication with Abraham, God makes a statement of His identity. Thus it was known to Abraham and to all of us who read Scripture that the terms of the covenant that followed were by the authority of "Almighty God," and not of any man or king or government.

This concept of an enacting authority was used by every king and ruler when issuing their laws, decrees or proclamations. We thus see that when Cyrus, king of Persia, issued his written proclamation for the return of the Israelites back to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple, he prefaced the proclamation with these words: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia."¹³

We again see a type of enacting clause in the letter of king Artaxerxes to Ezra authorizing him to bring the people of Israel to Jerusalem, and directing what should be done and observed. The letter starts as follows:

"Artaxerxes, king of kings, To Ezra the priest, . . . I issue a decree that all those of the people of Israel. . ." (Ezra 7:12,13).

⁸ Exodus 20:2-8; Deuteronomy 5:6-12.

⁹ Deuteronomy 6:1

¹⁰ Exodus 35:1

¹¹ Leviticus 8:5.

¹² Genesis 17:1

¹³ Ezra 1:2; 2 Chronicles 36:23