

Breaking the Law

Most people in the West are familiar with the concept of the Ten Commandments, but they probably couldn't name more than a few. In general, the Ten Commandments are a snapshot of God's commands toward man. Take time to look at each of the commandments and decide whether the Israelites broke each in what we have read about them, and record the examples in the table below.

EXODUS	COMMANDMENT	EXAMPLE OF DISOBEDIENCE
20:3	You shall have no other gods before Me.	
20:4–6	Do not make, serve, or bow down to idols.	
20:7	Do not use God's name in vain.	
20:8–11	Remember the Sabbath and do no work on it.	
20:12	Honor your father and mother.	
20:13	Do not murder.	
20:14	Do not commit adultery.	
20:15	Do not steal.	
20:16	Do not bear false witness against others (broadly, do not lie).	
20:17	Do not covet your neighbor's wife or his possessions.	

1. Do you think it was possible for the Israelites to obey the Law? Why or why not?

2. Identify the commandments you have violated in your life.

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Answer Key

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EXODUS	COMMANDMENT	EXAMPLE OF DISOBEDIENCE
20:3	You shall have no other gods before Me.	<i>Worshipping the calf (32:1–6)</i>
20:4–6	Do not make, serve, or bow down to idols.	<i>Making and worshipping the calf (32:1)</i>
20:7	Do not use God's name in vain.	<i>Claiming that God brought them into the wilderness to kill them; referring to the calf as "Lord" (32:4–5)</i>
20:8–11	Remember the Sabbath and do no work on it.	<i>Not mentioned, though they held a feast as they worshipped the calf (32:5)</i>
20:12	Honor your father and mother.	<i>By disobeying God, they did not bring honor to their parents.</i>
20:13	Do not murder.	<i>Not mentioned, although Moses murdered the Egyptian before he fled</i>
20:14	Do not commit adultery.	<i>While worshipping the calf, they "rose up to play," and most scholars suggest this was some form of sexual perversion they added to the festival.</i>
20:15	Do not steal.	<i>Not mentioned</i>
20:16	Do not bear false witness against others (broadly, do not lie).	<i>Aaron was untruthful with his description of how the calf came to be. The Israelites accused Moses and Aaron of wanting to kill them by leading them into the wilderness.</i>
20:17	Do not covet your neighbor's wife or his possessions.	<i>If there was adultery involved in the worship, then coveting another's wife would have been involved. They also coveted their former life in Egypt and its meat and vegetables.</i>

1. Do you think it was possible for the Israelites to obey the Law? Why or why not?
2. Identify the commandments you have violated in your life.