

# Hebrew for the Goyim

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## The Ten Words (Commandments)

What we call “The Ten Commandments” is better translated *The Ten Things* or *Ten Words*.

“Word in the OT is usually the translation of Heb. *dabar*, which means a spoken utterance of any kind, a saying, a speech, narrative, message, command, request, promise, etc....But *dabar* also means a matter, affair, event, act, etc.; in this sense it is usually translated ‘thing’....” It was the common belief in ancient times that words, once uttered, had a strange inherent power of their own.”<sup>1</sup>

Modern Hebrew pronounces it *davar* and it means “thing” or “word.” The concept of a *word* being a *thing* is consistent with the meaning of Hebrew letters in *davar* (דבר). From the middle letter *bet* (ב) we see a symbol of inwardness, beginning inside a *bet* “house.” It moves (resh) through a “door” (*dalet* - ד) in the mind to become conscious. We could say that once that happens, a symbolic “son” (*bar* - בר) is born, and each *word* is a *thing* which exists forever.

**Back to Genesis.** Take this idea to Genesis 1:1 translated, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (את השמים ואת הארץ). Break it down into parts:

- **Be** (ב in, with, by)
  - **resheet** (ראש - mind, head, mentally, in potentiality)
  - **Elohim** (אלהים - Ultimate Power, always existing Eternal One)
  - **Bara** (ברא created) **Bar** (בר son) means: ...Ultimate power (God-Alef א)  
...that is to say, Inward (ב) Powerful Being  
...moved (ה). That is what *create* means.
- No one but God creates.** The rest of us work or form things already created. *Bara* (ברא) is also an *acronym* which could refer to the first letters of *father* (אבא), *spirit* (רוח) and *son* (בר).

● **et** means a to z, or *alef* (א) to *tov* (ת) of *ha* (the) *shamaim* (heavens), that is to say, everything in the heavens.

● **Et** means a to z, or *alef* to *tov* of *ha* (the) *arets* (earth). In other words, everything in earth.

● **BUT**, the earth was *without* form. (*not so* in heavens).

Although all possibilities of every *thing* that could or would ever exist were created in God’s mind, nothing was yet formed on the earth. So then, God created all potentialities

for all eternity in a Great Architectural Plan, if you will. Genesis frequently records that God “said” *amar* (אמר), God “saw” *yar* (ראה), God “called” *yikra* (יקרא). Note *each word* includes the letters *resh* (ר) and *alef* (א), *God* (א) *moving* (ר), perhaps meaning what was created potential in God’s mind moves like a *ray* (א) to another level. Certainly, on *Day One* God *said* (אמר), “Let there be light,” but this was *before* suns, moons or stars (*Day Four*).

We do not read of *davar*, translated *word* or *thing*, until Genesis 8:15, “And God *spoke* (דבר) **unto Noah** saying (אמר)...” Further, Genesis 11:1 indicates “the whole land was one *tongue* [שפא activity involving the mouth (*peh* - פ)] and one *word* (דבר), which means *speech*. Is it possible all communication before this time was real, but inward or by spirit? In other words, mental or spiritual, but not through the mouth.

**The Ten Words:** Now we look briefly at the *Ten Words, Things, or Commandments*. Exodus 20 lists *The Big Ten*, probably in order of significance. They are repeated in Deuteronomy 5.

Note: In Genesis 26:5, Moses writes what Yahweh (יהוה) said regarding Abraham, “he obeyed my voice, guarded/kept my charge (משמרת - mismor), my commandments (מצוות - mitzvot), my statutes (חוקות - chukot) and my laws (תורות - torahs).”

Yet, we don’t find the phrase translated “The Ten Commandments” until Exodus 34:28, “He (Moses) was with the LORD (Yahweh יהוה) forty days and forty nights; he (Moses) did not eat bread and he did not drink water, but wrote on the tables (stone tablets) the “**words of the covenant, (that is to say), ten words or things (דברים - devarim).**” (parenthesis mine)

● **Chapter 17:** Moses *wrote* what Yahweh said as a memorial.

● **Chapter 18:** Moses *took counsel* from his father-in-law Jethro, a priest of Midian, who “rejoiced for all the goodness which Yahweh had done to Israel.” Jethro confirmed that Yahweh was God and offered sacrifices. It implies that Jethro, the priest with whom Moses had lived for many years and whose daughter he married, was already a believer in Yahweh and perhaps Midian was the center of that worship. **Before** the Mount Sinai trip to get the Ten Words,

Moses already was making known to the people the “statutes and laws” of God.

● **Chapter 19** speaks of trips up and down Mt. Sinai and during one of those trips God speaks of “**my covenant**” (19:5). Moses went before the elders and spoke to them about it, so Moses must have known about the covenant beforehand.

● **Chapter 24:12:** God told Moses “Come up and I will give you the tables of stone, law and commandments which I have written.” Since we read in Genesis 1:1 that God created everything in the heavens and earth, the Ten Words (devarim – words/things) **must have been created and in God’s mind and plan at the beginning.** Later on, a people (Israel) would be chosen to preserve these Words of God, with the ultimate goal being that one day **all mankind** would know them (Genesis 12:3).

**The Covenant of The Ten Words:** There are many covenants in the Bible, but the one we speak of here is the Covenant of Ten Words. The Covenant of Ten Things. **Or...The Big Ten!!**

● Deuteronomy 5:1-2: Moses told all Israel to listen to the statutes and judgments I’m speaking “this day,” but then adds, “Yahweh our God made a **covenant** with us in Horeb.” (Ten Commandments)

● Deuteronomy 4:13 instructs the “**Ten Words**” are “The Covenant,” and other statutes and laws were specific rules for living in the land.

● Exodus 34:28: The **covenant** God made is the Ten Words, the Ten Things, the Ten Commandments. And He “**added no more!**”

● The **Mosaic Covenant, then, is the Ten Words.** When Jesus was asked “Which is the **first** commandment of all,” he answered that to (Deuteronomy 6:4) “**Love God** with all your heart, soul, mind and strength” was the first. However, he immediately added that the second (commandment) “is **like** it,” that is to say, “**Love your neighbor as yourself.**”

Basically, in summarizing the Ten Words, Jesus confirmed that **The Big Ten** are not only the *foundation* of God’s will and ways from the beginning, but that they are rules of faith for all relationships with God and man.

1. Richardson, Alan, A Theological Word Book of the Bible, SCM Press, London, p. 283-4.