

WHAT'S ON THE TABLETS?

Rabbi Sarah Bassin

The Two Tablets of Testimony (Ex 31:18)

(Ex. 24:12) Now the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction."

HANINA BEN GAMLIEL: each tablet contained five commandments, but the Sages say ten on one tablet and ten on the other. -Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael

RASHI: All the six hundred and thirteen commandments are implicitly contained in the Ten Commandments and may therefore be regarded as having been written on the tablets. Rabbi Saadia specified in the אזהרות which he has composed those commandments which may be associated with each of the Ten Commandments.

(Ex. 31:18) When God had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, God gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.

RASHI: — The word ככלתו is written defectively (without a ו after the ל) to intimate that the Torah was handed over to Moses as a gift, complete in every respect, even as the bride (the word ככלתו is taken to be connected with "כלה", bride) is handed over to the bridegroom completely equipped with all she requires — for in a period brief as this which Moses spent on the mountain, he must have been unable to learn in its entirety every law to be derived from it.

RABEYNU BAHYA: According to our sages in the *Zohar*, all the 613 commandments are somehow contained in the text of the Ten Commandments. Seeing that this was so, the words: "when He had finished speaking with Moses at Mount Sinai," are a hint that seeing the entire Torah is somehow part of the two Tablets, G'd had to wait until God had taught Moses the entire Torah at the end of forty days. The words "שני לוחות העדות" are merely a description of what it was G'd spoke to Moses about for forty days.

There are 620 letters in the Ten Commandments; 613 letters refer to the 613 commandments and the other 7 refer to the seven days of creation. "This comes to teach you that the entire world was created for the sake of the Torah."-Numbers Rabbah

Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 5a

And Rabbi Levi bar Ḥama said that Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: God said to Moses, **“Ascend to me on the mountain and be there, and I will give you the stone tablets and the Torah and the mitzva that I have written that you may teach them”** (Exodus 24:12), meaning that God revealed to Moses not only the Written Torah, but all of Torah, as it would be transmitted through the generations.

The **“tablets”** are the ten commandments that were written on the tablets of the Covenant, the **“Torah”** is the five books of Moses.

The **“mitzva”** is the Mishna, which includes explanations for the mitzvot and how they are to be performed.

“That I have written” refers to the Prophets and Writings, written with divine inspiration.

“That you may teach them” refers to the Talmud, which explains the Mishna.

These explanations are the foundation for the rulings of practical *halakha*. This verse teaches that all aspects of Torah were given to Moses from Sinai.

Rabbi Simlai taught: There were **613 mitzvot stated to Moses** in the Torah, consisting of **365 prohibitions corresponding to the number of days in the solar year, and 248 positive mitzvot corresponding to the number of a person’s limbs.**

Rav Hamnuna said: **What is the verse** that alludes to this? It is written: **“Moses commanded to us the Torah, an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob”** (Deuteronomy 33:4). The word **Torah, in terms of its numerical value [gimatriyya], is 611, the number of mitzvot that were received and taught by Moses our teacher. In addition, there are two mitzvot: “I am the Lord your God” and: “You shall have no other gods” (Exodus 20:2, 3), the first two of the Ten Commandments, that we heard from the mouth of the Almighty, for a total of 613. -Babylonian TalmudMakkot 23b**