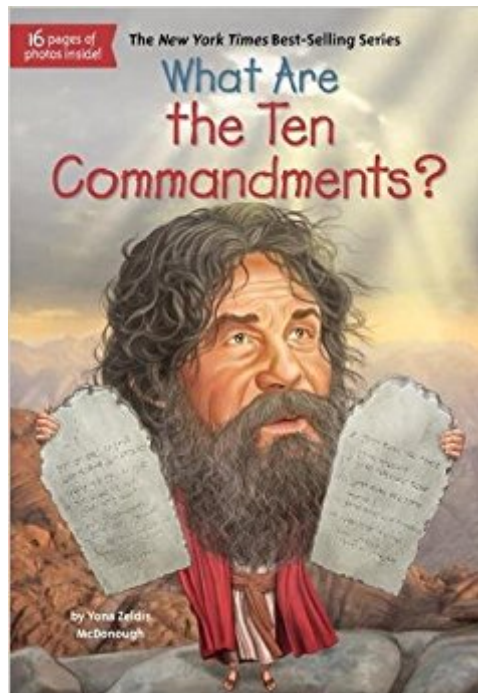


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What Are The Ten Commandments? (What Was?)



Synopsis

Learn the story behind the ten laws that have been the guiding light of Judeo-Christian belief. Not just about Moses, whose origin story leaves open questions, this book looks back at the time when the commandments were written, how the belief in one all-powerful God set the Israelites apart from other ancient peoples, and the roles the Ten Commandments have played in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It also looks at what each individual commandment means and how together they form the basis of leading a moral life as well as forming a just government.

Book Information

Series: What Was?

Paperback: 112 pages

Publisher: Penguin Workshop; Dgs edition (October 10, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0515157236

ISBN-13: 978-0515157239

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.4 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: Be the first to review this item

Best Sellers Rank: #116,038 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 in [Books > Children's Books > Religions > Christianity > Bible > Reference & Interpretation](#) #116 in [Books > Children's Books > Religions > Christianity > Devotional](#) #411 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Values](#)

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Yona Zeldis McDonough is the author of *What Was the Underground Railroad?*, *Who Was Rosa Parks?*, *Who Was John F. Kennedy?*, *Who Was Louis Armstrong?*, *Who Was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart?*, and *Who Was Harriet Tubman?*

What Are the Ten Commandments? c. 1446 BC According to the Old Testament of the Bible, for three long months, Moses led his people, the ancient Israelites, as they escaped from Egypt into the desert. The land was parched and dry. The sun was scorching. The journey was long. But everyone believed God would protect them and lead them to the Promised Land. Finally,

they came to Mount Sinai and pitched their tents—600,000 men, as well as women and children. Leaving his followers, Moses went up Mount Sinai, where he heard God's words. God said that if the children of Israel obeyed His laws, He would make them His Chosen People—special in His eyes. God also said He had a gift for them. He would give it to Moses in three days. Moses shared this news with the Israelites. He told them to begin praying because God had promised to appear again to Moses very soon. The Israelites spent the next three days in prayer. On the third day, a thick cloud appeared above the mountain. That was not all. There were claps of thunder and bolts of lightning. There was also the loud, powerful sound of a trumpet. God called Moses to the mountaintop again, to receive the gift: It was a pair of large stone tablets. On them were carved ten rules for leading a good life and loving God. They were the Ten Commandments, which the Bible says are the only laws written "by the finger of God." And they are as important today as they were so long ago, in Moses's time.

Chapter 1: The Israelites Become Slaves c. 1526 BC

For many years, the Israelites had lived and thrived in the ancient kingdom of Egypt. They were different from their neighbors. Unlike the Egyptians, the Israelites believed in one almighty God. And no other. The Egyptians believed in many gods. The Israelites in Egypt had descended from Joseph, a son of Jacob, and his family. Joseph's brothers had sold him into slavery there. Though Joseph began as a slave, he became a powerful man in Egypt. He was an adviser to the pharaoh (king). He had many children and grandchildren. Joseph's father's family joined him in Egypt, and they too had many children. Over the years, there came to be many Israelites in Egypt—hundreds of thousands. Much later on, the pharaoh ruling over Egypt began to fear the Israelites. What if they rebelled against him? Or even worse—what if they left Egypt? So Pharaoh decided to enslave the Israelites. From then on, the Israelites were mistreated and abused. They had to work long and hard for the pharaoh, building cities for him. But did hard labor kill off the Israelites, as the pharaoh had hoped? No. It did not. This made the pharaoh even angrier. So he gave a command. Every newborn Israelite boy was to be thrown into the Nile River and drowned. He would let the baby girls live because when they grew up, there would be no men for them to marry. There would be no Israelite babies born. The Israelites whom Pharaoh hated and feared would die out. Around this time, an Israelite couple named Amram (say: AM-ram) and Jochebed (say: YAH-keh-bed) had a baby boy. They already had a daughter, Miriam, and a son named Aaron. Somehow they had kept Aaron safe from the Egyptians. But how could they keep their newborn safe? A crying baby was sure to be discovered. Jochebed loved her infant son and could not bear the thought of him being drowned. So she put him in a small basket and set

it floating on the Nile River. Then she hid behind the bulrushes that grew at the water's edge and waited. She prayed that someone would find her baby and take good care of him. Her daughter, Miriam, was beside her. The Bible goes on to tell how Pharaoh's daughter, the princess, soon came down to the river to bathe. Her servants were with her. The princess saw the basket and sent a maid to get it. In the basket was a crying baby boy! The princess was sure the baby must belong to an Israelite couple who had refused to drown their child. The princess felt pity for him, a little baby alone on the river. The princess decided she would keep the baby safe. At that moment, the baby's sister came out of hiding. Miriam asked if the princess needed a family to care for the baby. The princess said yes. So Miriam took the princess to Jochebed. Pharaoh's daughter told Jochebed to look after the baby for a while. Later on the boy would be brought to Pharaoh's court. After that, the princess would raise the boy as her own child. He would be a prince of Egypt. Without knowing it, the princess had asked the baby's very own mother to raise him.

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