MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism · Christianity · Islam

DOCUMENT 354

Your Commandment Is Exceedingly Broad

A Covenant Deep Dive into the Number of Yahweh's Laws — *torah (instruction)*, *mitzvah (commandment)*, *choq (statute)*, and *mishpat (judgment)* — and the History of the Count of 613

How Many Laws, Statutes, Judgments, Ordinances, and Commandments Did Yahweh Give? Jewish Tradition Says 613 — Where Did That Number Come From, Does the Tanakh Ever Give a Number, and How Should the Covenant Believer Hold What Yahweh Commanded? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

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The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

✡ JUDAISM	✝ CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Rabbinic tradition counts 613 commandments, 248 positive and 365 negative, from a saying of Rabbi Simlai in the Talmud (Makkot 23b). Maimonides made the best-known list, guided by fourteen rules of counting. Yet Ibn Ezra, Nachmanides, Gersonides, and Duran all said the number was uncertain. This study tests the count against the written text.	Many Christians hear ***"613"*** as proof that the Law was a heavy burden, replaced by two great commandments (Matthew 22:36–40). Others keep the Ten Commandments only, or divide the Law into moral, ceremonial, and civil parts. This study shows that both great commandments are quoted from the Tanakh, and that the Tanakh never divides its laws that way.	The Qur'an calls the Torah ***"guidance and light"*** (Q. 5:44) but gives no count of its laws. Muslim jurists themselves disagree on how many Qur'anic verses carry legal rulings, from 150 to 500 to 900 and more, and some said hardly a verse is without one. This study sets that same counting problem beside the Tanakh.

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh**'s own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh**'s covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written Tanakh to one question: how many laws, statutes, judgments, ordinances, and commandments **Yahweh** gave, and whether the number 613 comes from Him. **Yahweh** (**יהוה**) and **Elohim** (**אֱלֹהִים**) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books and personal names are given in English. Hebrew transliterations appear in ***bold italic*** with their English meaning in parentheses at every occurrence. Scripture references are bold, and anything in quotation marks is bold italic. Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew. **Verse numbers follow the English version. In a few chapters the Hebrew Bible divides the chapter at a different point, so the same verse carries a different number in the Hebrew text. Where that happens, the Hebrew number is given in brackets on first citation, for example Numbers 30:13 [Hebrew 30:14].** Each finding is graded under the two-or-three-witness standard as **Corroborated** (two or more independent Tanakh witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**. Lexicons (BDB, HALOT, Gesenius, TWOT, DCH) are used as witnesses, never as the authority; where a lexicon gives a meaning the Tanakh's own usage does not carry, or where lexicons disagree, the reader is told. One more rule governs this study in particular: part of the question is historical — where

the number 613 came from and who first said it. That history is told in Section IV from the rabbinic, medieval, and modern sources named in the Comparative Texts table. It is reported as history, so that the reader can see where the number came from; it is never used as doctrine, and no teaching in this document rests on it. Rabbinic commentary, New Testament texts, and the Qur'an and Islamic jurisprudence otherwise appear only in the three-religion table, the Comparative Texts table, and the Three-Religion Audit, as historical and comparative reference — not as binding authority. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	The words for law; Abraham's four terms; the Ten Words; the Passover named by every term; the closing formulas of the law; ***"all the commandment"***; nothing added and nothing taken away; Moses' summary
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Joshua, 1 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Micah, Habakkuk, Zechariah, Malachi	The whole law read aloud; ***"not one word has fallen"***; the prophets' summaries; the commandment written on the heart; the fixed decrees of sea, moon, and stars
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Nehemiah	***"Your commandment is exceedingly broad"***; the words of Psalm 19 and Psalm 119; ***"do not add to His words"***; ***"the whole of man"***; the law read and explained in Ezra's day

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Rabbinic and medieval	Talmud Makkot 23b–24a; Sifre Deuteronomy 76; Mishnah Oholot 1:8; Mishnah Sanhedrin 7:1; Halakhot Gedolot; Saadia Gaon; Maimonides, Sefer HaMitzvot; Nachmanides, glosses on Sefer HaMitzvot; Abraham ibn Ezra, Yesod Mora 2; Gersonides; Shimon ben Tzemach Duran, Zohar HaRakia; Sefer HaChinuch; Sefer Yereim; Sefer Mitzvot Katan; Israel Meir Kagan (Chafetz Chaim), Sefer HaMitzvot HaKatzar	Where the number 613 first appears; what was said before it; how the lists were built; what the counters themselves said about the number; how many they hold can be kept today
Modern scholarship	Ephraim E. Urbach, The Sages; Marc Herman, ***"The Origins and Use of the 613 Mitzvot"*** (TheTorah.com, 2017); Israel Drazin, ***"There Are Not 613 Biblical Commands"*** (2017); Albert Friedberg, Crafting the 613 Commandments (2013); Adolf Jellinek, Quntres Taryag (1878); Tracey Rich, Judaism 101, ***"A List of the 613 Mitzvot"***	The manuscript evidence; the history of the lists; the arrangement followed by Miqdash Bethel's own 613 listing
New Testament and Christian theology	Matthew 22:36–40; Romans 13:8–10; Galatians 5:3; James 2:10; Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae I–II, q. 99; Westminster Confession of Faith, ch. 19	The two great commandments; the law as one whole; the moral, ceremonial, and judicial division
Qur'an and Islamic jurisprudence	Q. 5:44; 6:151–153; the ***ayat al-ahkam (verses of rulings)*** and the five legal rulings; al-Zarkashi and al-Qarafi on the number of legal verses	The Torah as guidance and light; the same counting problem in Islamic law

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — HOW MANY DID YAHWEH GIVE?

I-A. The Question

Ask almost anyone who has studied the Law of Moses how many commandments it holds, and the answer comes at once: six hundred and thirteen. The number is printed on charts, taught in synagogues, repeated in churches and in Sacred Name assemblies, and carried in Miqdash Bethel's own listing, ***"The 613 Laws of the Tanakh."*** The same tradition divides the number into 248 commands to do and 365 commands not to do.

The question of this study is plain: how many laws, statutes, judgments, ordinances, and commandments did **Yahweh** give? Is 613 a number **Yahweh** gave, or a number men gave? If the Tanakh does not give it, where did it come from, who first said it, and what did the men who counted the commandments say about it themselves? And when the counting is done, what does the written covenant want the believer to do with it?

This is not a question about whether **Yahweh**'s commandments matter. The Library has shown that they do, and that not one word of them has fallen (**Doc 330**; **1 Kings 8:56**). It is a question of honesty: whether a number we repeat is a number **Yahweh** spoke. A number added to His words is still an addition to His words.

"You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of Yahweh your Elohim which I command you." (**Deuteronomy 4:2**)

I-B. The Questions

First: what words does the Tanakh use for **Yahweh**'s laws, and are they separate kinds that can be counted one by one?

Second: does the Tanakh anywhere give a total number of commandments?

Third: where did the number 613 come from, who first said it, and how was it built into lists?

Fourth: what did the Jewish authorities who counted the commandments say about the number, and how many of the 613 do they hold can be kept today?

Fifth: if not by a number, how should the covenant believer hold **Yahweh**'s commandments?

I-C. What This Study Builds On

This study builds on earlier work in the Library and does not repeat it. **Doc 270** (***For Our Good Always***) set out the reasons the Tanakh itself gives for keeping the commandments. **Doc 285** (***Righteous Statutes and Judgments***) examined **Deuteronomy 4:8** and the righteousness of **Yahweh**'s statutes and judgments. **Doc 330** (***Not One Word Has Fallen***) answered whether the law is done away. **Doc 332** (***Not to the Right or to the Left***) traced the Pharisees, whose teaching became rabbinic Judaism, and flagged the introduction to Miqdash Bethel's 613 listing for correction; this study settles that point (Section IX). **Doc 333** (***The Word Is Very Near You***) explained why Miqdash Bethel uses the Tanakh alone, and **Doc 228** (***Of Making Many Books***) held the Library to its own standard. The Library's 613 listing and the 613 Laws course are tested here in the same way, because a covenant library must measure its own material by the rule it applies to others.

II. THE WORDS YAHWEH USED — MANY NAMES FOR ONE COVENANT

The question names five English words: laws, statutes, judgments, ordinances, and commandments. Behind them stand a handful of Hebrew words. Following the Hebrew Word-Meaning Rule, each is defined first by its use in the Tanakh, with the lexicons as second witnesses.

HEBREW	TRANSLITERATION	STRONG'S	MEANING FROM USAGE	TANAKH WITNESSES
תּוֹרָה	*torah (instruction, law)*	H8451	Teaching or instruction; one ritual procedure, or the whole covenant teaching	**Exodus 12:49**; **Leviticus 6:9 [Hebrew 6:2]**; **Deuteronomy 4:44; 17:11; 31:9**
מִצְוָה	*mitzvah (commandment)*	H4687	A command given with authority; in the singular, often the whole body of what was commanded	**Genesis 26:5**; **Deuteronomy 6:1, 25; 8:1; 30:11**; **Psalms 119:96**
חֹק חֻקָּה	*choq, chuqqah (statute, decree)*	H2706; H2708	A fixed, inscribed decree or boundary; also the fixed order of sea, moon, and stars	**Genesis 47:26**; **Exodus 12:14**; **Proverbs 8:29**; **Jeremiah 31:35–36 [Hebrew 31:34–35]**
מִשְׁפָּט	*mishpat (judgment, ordinance)*	H4941	A ruling of justice; the right way of deciding a case; the due manner of a thing	**Exodus 21:1**; **Numbers 9:3**; **Deuteronomy 1:17**; **1 Samuel 8:9, 11**

HEBREW	TRANSLITERATION	STRONG'S	MEANING FROM USAGE	TANAKH WITNESSES
עֵדוּת עֵדָה	*edut, edah (testimony)*	H5715; H5713	That which bears witness; the stone tablets themselves are called the testimony	**Exodus 25:16; 31:18**; **Deuteronomy 4:45**; **Psalms 19:7 [Hebrew 19:8]**
פִּקּוּדִים	*piqqudim (precepts)*	H6490	Charges laid on someone to keep; the word occurs only in the Psalms	**Psalms 19:8 [Hebrew 19:9]; 103:18; 111:7; 119:4**
מִשְׁמֶרֶת	*mishmeret (charge)*	H4931	What is to be guarded and kept; a watch	**Genesis 26:5**; **Leviticus 18:30**; **Deuteronomy 11:1**
דָּבָר	*davar (word)*	H1697	A spoken word or matter; the Ten Words	**Exodus 20:1; 34:28**; **Deuteronomy 4:13; 10:4**

II-A. Torah — Instruction, Small and Whole

Torah (instruction), Strong's H8451, is joined in usage to the verb ***yarah (to point, to teach)***, H3384: the priests are to judge ***"according to the torah (instruction) which they teach you"*** (**Deuteronomy 17:11**). The same noun names one procedure and the whole covenant: ***"This is the torah (instruction) of the burnt offering"*** (**Leviticus 6:9 [Hebrew 6:2]**); ***"One torah (law) shall be for the native and for the stranger"*** (**Exodus 12:49**); ***"This is the torah (law) which Moses set before the children of Israel"*** (**Deuteronomy 4:44**). A word that can mean one instruction or all of them cannot be used to count them.

II-B. Mitzvah — One Commandment, Spoken as a Whole

Mitzvah (commandment), H4687, from ***tsavah (to command)***, H6680, is the word most people mean when they say ***"the 613 mitzvot."*** Yet in Deuteronomy, Moses again and again uses it in the singular for the whole of what **Yahweh** commanded:

וְזֹאת הַמִּצְוָה הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים

"Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments, which Yahweh your Elohim commanded to teach you, that you may do them in the land." (**Deuteronomy 6:1**)

The Hebrew is ***ve-zot ha-mitzvah (and this is the commandment)*** — one commandment, of which the statutes and the judgments are the content. The singular returns throughout the book: ***"all the commandment"*** (**Deuteronomy 5:31 [Hebrew 5:28]; 8:1; 11:8; 27:1**), ***"all this commandment"*** (**Deuteronomy 6:25; 11:22; 15:5; 19:9**), and ***"this commandment which I***

command you today is not too hard for you, nor is it far off" (**Deuteronomy 30:11**). Joshua speaks the same way: ***"take great care to do the commandment and the torah (law)"*** (**Joshua 22:5**).

Finding — The Tanakh speaks of all that Yahweh commanded as one commandment, with its statutes and judgments: Corroborated (**Deuteronomy 5:31; 6:1, 25; 8:1; 11:8, 22; 27:1; 30:11; Joshua 22:5**).

II-C. Choq — The Engraved Decree

Choq (statute), H2706, and its feminine form ***chuqqah (statute)***, H2708, are joined in usage to ***chaqaq (to engrave, to inscribe, to decree)***, H2710: Isaiah is told to ***"inscribe it in a book"*** (**Isaiah 30:8**), Job wishes his words were ***"inscribed in a book"*** (**Job 19:23**), and by wisdom ***"rulers decree what is just"*** (**Proverbs 8:15**). A statute is a thing cut in and fixed. The Tanakh uses the word for a land-law Joseph set in Egypt (**Genesis 47:26**), for the boundary **Yahweh** set for the sea (**Proverbs 8:29**; **Jeremiah 5:22**), and for the fixed order of moon and stars (**Jeremiah 31:35–36 [Hebrew 31:34–35]; 33:25**).

Lexicon and tradition note: much rabbinic teaching defines a ***choq (statute)*** as a decree with no reason given, kept only because the King commanded it. That definition is not drawn from the Tanakh's usage. The Torah says the opposite of the statutes:

"Keep them and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of the peoples, who will hear all these statutes and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." (**Deuteronomy 4:6**)

A statute may not state its reason, but the Tanakh never calls it unreasonable. **Finding — "A statute is a law without reason": Not in the text.**

II-D. Mishpat — The Judgment

Mishpat (judgment), H4941, from ***shafat (to judge)***, H8199, is the ruling of a just judge and the right way of doing a thing. ***"These are the judgments which you shall set before them"*** (**Exodus 21:1**) opens the case law of the covenant. ***"The judgment is Elohim's"*** (**Deuteronomy 1:17**). The same word can mean the due manner of a thing, as in ***"the manner of the king who will reign over you"*** (**1 Samuel 8:9, 11**).

II-E. Testimony, Precepts, Charge, and Word

Edut (testimony), H5715, names what bears witness. The two stone tablets are ***luchot ha-edut (the tablets of the testimony)*** (**Exodus 31:18**), placed in the ark (**Exodus 25:16**). Moses' closing

summary joins the words: ***"These are the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments"*** (**Deuteronomy 4:45**).

Piqqudim (precepts), H6490, occurs only in the Psalms — in **Psalms 19:8 [Hebrew 19:9]**, **103:18**, **111:7**, and twenty-one times in Psalm 119. It is joined in usage to ***paqad (to appoint, to charge, to oversee)***, H6485: a precept is a charge laid on a servant to keep.

Mishmeret (charge), H4931, from ***shamar (to guard, to keep)***, H8104, is what a watchman guards: ***"You shall love Yahweh your Elohim and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always"*** (**Deuteronomy 11:1**).

Davar (word), H1697, is the word the Tanakh uses for the Ten: ***aseret ha-devarim (the ten words)*** (**Exodus 34:28**). ***"And Elohim spoke all these words"*** (**Exodus 20:1**).

II-F. "Ordinance" — One English Word for Two Hebrew Words

The King James Version, which shaped how English speakers name these laws, renders ***chuqqah (statute)*** as ***"ordinance"*** at **Exodus 12:14**, where the Passover is kept ***"by an ordinance for ever,"*** and renders ***mishpat (judgment)*** as ***"ordinance"*** at **Exodus 15:25**, where **Yahweh** made ***"a statute and an ordinance."*** So the English word ***"ordinance"*** stands for two different Hebrew words, and the English words ***"statute," "judgment,"*** and ***"law"*** do not always line up with one Hebrew word each. Counting English words cannot count Hebrew categories.

II-G. One Law, Many Names — The Passover

The plainest proof that these words are not separate piles of law is that the Tanakh gives one law all of them. The Passover is called:

First: a ***chuqqah (statute) — "you shall keep it as a feast to Yahweh ... a statute forever"*** (**Exodus 12:14**), and ***"This is the statute of the Passover"*** (**Exodus 12:43**).

Second: a ***torah (law) — "One law shall be for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you"*** (**Exodus 12:49**).

Third: statutes and judgments together — ***"according to all its statutes and according to all its judgments you shall keep it"*** (**Numbers 9:3**; compare **Numbers 9:14**).

Fourth: a thing commanded — ***"according to all that Yahweh commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did"*** (**Numbers 9:5**).

Abraham's obedience is described the same way, with four of these words at once: he ***"kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws"*** (**Genesis 26:5**).

וַיִּשְׁמֹר מִשְׁמַרְתִּי מִצְוֹתַי חֻקּוֹתַי וְתוֹרֹתָי

Finding — The Tanakh's words for law name sides of one covenant, not separate classes to be counted: Corroborated (Exodus 12:14, 43, 49; Numbers 9:3, 5, 14; Genesis 26:5; Deuteronomy 11:1).

III. DOES THE TANAKH EVER GIVE A NUMBER?

III-A. The Only Number: Ten Words

וַיַּגֶּד לָכֶם אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֶתְכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרִים

"He declared to you His covenant, which He commanded you to do, the Ten Words; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone." (Deuteronomy 4:13)

The Tanakh gives this number three times: **Exodus 34:28**, **Deuteronomy 4:13**, and **Deuteronomy 10:4**. The Hebrew is ***aseret ha-devarim (the ten words)***, not ten ***"commandments."*** Even here the text does not number the words one through ten; Jewish, Catholic and Lutheran, and Reformed and Orthodox Christian traditions divide the same words into ten in different ways. **Yahweh** gave the total; men supplied the dividing lines.

Finding — The only number the Tanakh attaches to Yahweh's commandments is the Ten Words: Corroborated (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13; 10:4).

III-B. The Whole Named by Its Parts — Never by a Total

When the Torah closes a body of law, it says ***"These are ..."*** and gives no number:

"These are the statutes and the judgments and the laws which Yahweh made between Himself and the children of Israel on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses." (Leviticus 26:46)

The same pattern closes Leviticus (***"These are the commandments which Yahweh commanded Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai,"*** **Leviticus 27:34**), closes Numbers (**Numbers 36:13**), opens the second address of Deuteronomy (**Deuteronomy 4:44–45**), and opens its law code (***"These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall be careful to do in the land,"*** **Deuteronomy 12:1**). The prophets and the writings speak the same way: ***"the statutes, the judgments, the law, and the commandment which He wrote for you"*** (**2 Kings 17:37**); ***"right judgments and true laws, good statutes and commandments"*** (**Nehemiah 9:13–14**); ***"Remember the law of Moses My servant ... the statutes and the judgments"*** (**Malachi 4:4 [Hebrew 3:22]**). In none of these places, and nowhere else in the Tanakh, is a total given.

Finding — The Tanakh gives a total number of commandments, whether 613 or any other: Not in the text.

III-C. Read Whole, Not Counted

The covenant was handed down as a book to be read aloud, written out, and taught entire. Moses commanded that ***"this law"*** be read before all Israel every seventh year at the Feast of Booths — men, women, little ones, and the stranger (**Deuteronomy 31:10–12**). The king was to write ***"a copy of this law"*** and keep ***"all the words of this law and these statutes"*** (**Deuteronomy 17:18–19**). When Joshua read it at Mount Ebal, the measure was not a number but completeness:

"There was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who walked among them." (**Joshua 8:35**)

In Ezra's day the law was read from morning to midday, and the Levites ***"gave the sense"*** so the people understood (**Nehemiah 8:3, 8**). Not one of these scenes involves a list or a count.

III-D. "Your Commandment Is Exceedingly Broad"

לְכָל־תִּכְלָה רָאִיתִי קֵץ רְחָבָה מִצְוָתְךָ מְאֹד

"To every perfection I have seen an end; Your commandment is exceedingly broad." (**Psalms 119:96**)

The psalmist uses the singular again: ***mitzvatecha (Your commandment)***. Every human thing he had measured had an end; **Yahweh**'s commandment did not. The word ***rechavah (broad, wide)*** is common in the Tanakh for wide land and open space (**Genesis 34:21**; **Exodus 3:8**; **Nehemiah 7:4**). Psalm 119 itself is built on the family of words in Section II — law, testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, word, and saying — across 176 verses, and it never once counts them.

Lexicon note: ***tichlah (perfection, completeness)***, H8502, occurs only in this verse. Lexicons render it ***"perfection," "completeness,"*** or ***"limit."*** Under the Word-Meaning Rule it is graded **Single witness**, and nothing in this study rests on it. The point rests on ***"exceedingly broad,"*** which is plain.

IV. WHERE THE NUMBER 613 CAME FROM — THE HISTORY

Because the Tanakh gives no total, the number came from somewhere else. The history is well documented. What follows is reported as history, from the sources in the Comparative Texts table; it is not doctrine, and the Tanakh alone decides what **Yahweh** commanded.

IV-A. A Sermon of the Third Century

The number first appears in the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Makkot, page 23b, in the name of Rabbi Simlai, a teacher in the land of Israel in the third century CE. The Talmud introduces his words with ***darash (he expounded, he preached)*** — the word for a sermon, not for a legal ruling. In substance he taught that 613 commandments were spoken to Moses: 365 prohibitions, as many as the days of the solar year, and 248 positive commands, as many as the limbs of a man's body.

The lesson of the sermon is easy to see: a man should obey with every part of his body, every day of the year. A later teacher, Rav Hamnuna, then looked for a verse to support it and found one in **Deuteronomy 33:4**, ***"Moses commanded us a torah (law)."*** The letters of the Hebrew word **תּוֹרָה** (tav 400, vav 6, resh 200, he 5) add up to 611. Add the first two of the Ten Words, which the Talmud says Israel heard from **Yahweh** Himself, and the total is 613.

The same page then goes straight on to say that David set the commandments upon eleven (**Psalms 15**), Isaiah upon six (**Isaiah 33:15**), Micah upon three (**Micah 6:8**), Isaiah again upon two (**Isaiah 56:1**), and Amos and Habakkuk upon one (**Amos 5:4**; **Habakkuk 2:4**) (Makkot 23b–24a). The page that gives the number 613 also counts the commandments as eleven, six, three, two, and one. It was preaching, not bookkeeping.

IV-B. Before Rabbi Simlai: Three Hundred, or "All the Commandments"

Older rabbinic writings do not know the number. In the Sifre on Deuteronomy, section 76, which preserves teachings of the second century, Shimon ben Azzai comments on ***"Only be strong not to eat the blood"*** (**Deuteronomy 12:23**). In Louis Finkelstein's critical edition of the Sifre, he says there are ***"three hundred positive commandments in the Torah"*** like it — not 248, and not 613.

The Israeli scholar Ephraim E. Urbach concluded that the number 613 is unknown in the earliest rabbinic sources, and that where printed editions of some of those texts show it, the manuscripts almost always read ***"all the commandments"*** instead. Marc Herman of York University, reviewing the evidence in 2017, found that the Makkot passage is the only place where the manuscripts consistently preserve the idea that exactly 613 commandments were given. The Jewish Encyclopedia of

1906 had listed several printed passages as earlier witnesses to 613; the manuscript evidence does not bear that out.

IV-C. From Sermon to List: Poems, Geonim, and Karaites

For several centuries no one tried to name the 613 one by one. The first attempts were not law books but liturgical poems called ***azharot (warnings)***, sung on the Feast of Weeks. The earliest that survives lists fewer than 613 commandments and does not mention the number at all.

The most influential early list stands at the head of the ***Halakhot Gedolot (Great Laws)***, a ninth-century work ascribed to Simeon Qayyara, who may have come from Basra in Babylonia. Several scholars doubt that the list and the book share an author, because the book itself is arranged by the tractates of the Mishnah and hardly refers to the list. To reach the total of 613, the early counters and poets had to include many laws that the rabbis themselves made.

Saadia Gaon (882–942) composed his own counts, but wrote in his prayer book that the lists were not an essential principle; he made them, in substance, because he saw that people's hearts were set on them. The genre of ***"Books of the Commandments"*** appears to have begun among the Karaites, who rejected the rabbinic oral law, and the first rabbinic works of that name, by Saadia and by Samuel ben Hofni (died 1034), answered them. By 1878 the scholar Adolf Jellinek could catalogue about one hundred and forty-four works devoted to counting the commandments, and others were found after him.

IV-D. Maimonides' Fourteen Rules — and the Lists That Disagree

Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) wrote the best-known list in his ***Sefer HaMitzvot (Book of the Commandments)***, and he placed a count of the 613 at the head of his law code, the Mishneh Torah. He saw that a total cannot be reached without rules for counting, so he first laid down fourteen principles deciding what may be counted — for example, that the four kinds of plants taken at the Feast of Booths count as one commandment, not four. He then criticized the lists before him, above all that of the Halakhot Gedolot.

His own list was challenged in turn. Nachmanides (1194–1270) wrote critical glosses removing some of Maimonides' items and adding others, such as the command to dwell in the land, which Maimonides had left out. In the thirteenth century Moses of Coucy (***Sefer Mitzvot Gadol***) and Isaac of Corbeil (***Sefer Mitzvot Katan***) offered further identifications, and the ***Sefer HaChinuch*** set out Maimonides' count in the order of the Torah's portions. Eliezer of Metz, in his ***Sefer Yereim***, listed only 417 commandments in all. Modern scholars have shown that Maimonides' own two works

disagree with each other in places, and that his list includes laws the rabbis held to come from the Torah though the verse cited does not plainly state them (Friedberg, 2013; Drazin, 2017).

The pattern is plain. The total stayed fixed; the contents kept moving. When the answer is fixed before the counting begins, the rules of counting must be shaped to reach it.

IV-E. What the Counters Themselves Said

The most careful Jewish scholars did not hide the problem.

Abraham ibn Ezra (1089–1167), the great grammarian and commentator, wrote in his ***Yesod Mora*** that the sages counted 613 in many different ways, but that in truth there is no end to the number of commandments — and that if only the root principles were counted, they would not reach 613.

Judah ibn Balaam (eleventh century) held that Rabbi Simlai's number was meant only as an approximation.

Nachmanides admitted at the start of his glosses that the count is disputed and uncertain, and accepted it chiefly because it had spread through the sermons of the sages.

Gersonides (1288–1344) treated the number as homiletic — a way of teaching that a man should serve with his whole body every day — and not as a binding total.

Shimon ben Tzemach Duran (1361–1444), in his ***Zohar HaRakia***, suggested that the number 613 may be only Rabbi Simlai's own opinion, which need not be followed in deciding the law.

Elijah, the Vilna Gaon (1720–1797), held that there are many more than 613 commandments and that the 613 are only ***shorashim (roots)***.

These men all loved the commandments. They were not trying to lessen them. They were telling the truth about a number.

IV-F. How Many Can Be Kept Today?

By the counters' own reckoning, most of the 613 cannot be kept today. Israel Meir Kagan, known as the Chafetz Chaim (1839–1933), prepared a short book of the commandments that apply now. Following Maimonides' count, he found 77 positive commandments and 194 negative commandments that can be kept outside the land of Israel — 271 in all — with 26 more that apply only within the land. Isaac of Corbeil in the thirteenth century had counted 320. Whatever list is used, fewer than half of the 613 apply to anyone, anywhere, today.

Finding — The Tanakh teaches that Yahweh gave 613 commandments: Not in the text. Historical finding — the number is first stated in a third-century sermon (Makkot 23b); it is unknown in the earlier rabbinic sources, which speak of ***"three hundred"*** or ***"all the commandments"***; it was filled out by lists that disagree with one another; and it was called uncertain by several of the very scholars who counted it.

V. TESTING THE TRADITION AGAINST THE WRITTEN TEXT

V-A. The 365 and the 248

Neither number is a count found in the Tanakh. The 248 is the number of ***"limbs"*** — bones with flesh on them — given in the Mishnah (Oholot 1:8), a rabbinic anatomy; modern anatomy counts about 206 bones in the adult skeleton, and the number changes with how the parts are counted, which is the same difficulty that meets anyone who counts commandments. The 365 is the solar year; but the Tanakh sets **Yahweh**'s appointed times by the moon and the month (**Genesis 1:14**; **Psalms 104:19**; **Exodus 12:2**; see **Doc 240**), and never makes 365 a covenant number. The pairing was chosen because it preached well.

Finding — That the commandments number 248 positive and 365 negative: Not in the text.

V-B. The Number Drawn from Letters, and What Israel Heard

Rav Hamnuna's support for the number rests on two things the Tanakh does not teach. First, it reads a number out of the letters of a word. The Tanakh nowhere teaches that its words carry hidden sums, and no prophet ever proves a teaching that way. Second, it assumes that Israel heard only the first two of the Ten Words from **Yahweh** Himself. The Torah says otherwise:

"And Elohim spoke all these words, saying ..." (**Exodus 20:1**)

"These words Yahweh spoke to all your assembly on the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a great voice, and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me." (**Deuteronomy 5:22** [Hebrew 5:19])

Moses also told the people, ***"Yahweh spoke with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire"*** (**Deuteronomy 5:4**), and ***"you heard the sound of words"*** (**Deuteronomy 4:12**). Only after hearing the Ten Words did the people ask Moses to speak to them instead (**Exodus 20:19 [Hebrew 20:16]**; **Deuteronomy 5:23–27 [Hebrew 5:20–24]**).

Finding — That Israel heard only the first two of the Ten Words from Yahweh: Not in the text (Exodus 20:1; Deuteronomy 4:12–13; 5:4, 22). Finding — That a doctrine may be proved by adding up the letters of a word: Not in the text.

V-C. Why Every Count Depends on the Counter

Anyone who tries to count the commandments meets choices the Tanakh never makes for him. Six of them can be seen in the text itself.

First — Repetition. The Sabbath is commanded in at least eleven passages of the Torah (**Exodus 16:23–30; 20:8–11; 23:12; 31:12–17; 34:21; 35:2–3; Leviticus 19:3, 30; 23:3; 26:2; Deuteronomy 5:12–15**). Is that one commandment, or eleven, or one for each separate instruction inside them?

Second — Many commands in one verse. Leviticus 19:9–10 is two verses about leaving the corners, the gleanings, and the fallen grapes for the poor and the stranger. The rabbinic count, followed in Miqdash Bethel's listing, makes eight commandments of them (listing Nos. 41–48), counting each act once as ***"do"*** and once as ***"do not."***

Third — One command in three places. ***"You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk"*** stands three times (**Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 14:21**). The rabbinic count makes two commandments of it (listing Nos. 163–164).

Fourth — Commands for some and not for others. Laws for priests (**Leviticus 21**), for the king (**Deuteronomy 17:14–20**), for the Nazirite (**Numbers 6**), and for a woman after childbirth (**Leviticus 12**) are all counted in, though no single person could ever keep them all.

Fifth — Commands outside the Five Books. The prophets command as well: ***"Obey My voice ... and walk in all the way that I command you"*** (**Jeremiah 7:23**); ***"Execute true judgment, and show kindness and mercy every man to his brother"*** (**Zechariah 7:9**). The rabbinic count stops at the end of Deuteronomy.

Sixth — Statements counted as commands. ***"I am Yahweh your Elohim"*** (**Exodus 20:2**) is a statement. Maimonides counted it as the command to believe (listing No. 1); some earlier counters, beginning with the Halakhot Gedolot, did not count it at all.

None of these choices is made by the Tanakh. Each is made by the man counting. That is why careful men could agree on the total and disagree on the contents.

Finding — Any total for Yahweh's commandments depends on rules of counting that the Tanakh does not give: Corroborated by the Tanakh's own way of giving its laws (**Leviticus 19:9–10; Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 14:21**; the eleven Sabbath passages above).

V-D. When a Count Adds to the Word

To reach 613, the counters had to include laws the Torah does not state. Miqdash Bethel's own listing shows this in its own words. No. 90 (incest with one's daughter) is marked ***"not explicitly in the Torah but inferred."*** No. 402 is marked ***"not explicitly set forth in the Torah."*** The listing's notes, added under the Corrections Rule, now mark twenty-one items whose wording is ***"the rabbinic reading"*** or ***"a rabbinic interpretation"*** rather than the verse. Nos. 285–288 list four court death penalties — sword, strangulation, burning, and stoning — which is the Mishnah's list (Sanhedrin 7:1); **Leviticus 20:10**, cited for strangulation, says only that the adulterer and the adulteress ***"shall surely be put to death."***

"Whatever I command you, be careful to do it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it." (**Deuteronomy 12:32** [Hebrew 13:1])

"Do not add to His words, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar." (**Proverbs 30:6**)

Finding — Counting men's inferences as Yahweh's commandments adds to His word: Corroborated (**Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32 [Hebrew 13:1]; Proverbs 30:6**).

V-E. When a Count Takes Away

The opposite error is just as real. A short list — ten, or two — is sometimes used to set the rest aside, as though **Yahweh** had spoken only those. **Deuteronomy 4:2** forbids both errors in one sentence: nothing added, ***"nor take away from it."*** The Tanakh's own summaries, examined next, are never used by the prophets to set any commandment aside.

VI. THE TANAKH'S OWN SUMMARIES — THE HEART OF THE WHOLE, NOT A SMALLER LAW

The Tanakh does something better than count: it summarizes. These summaries are Scripture. That a rabbinic sermon later arranged some of them as eleven, six, three, two, and one is history (Section IV-A). Here each is read in its own setting.

Witness One — Deuteronomy 10:12–13: Moses' own summary.

"And now, Israel, what does Yahweh your Elohim ask of you, but to fear Yahweh your Elohim, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, and to serve Yahweh your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul, to keep the commandments of Yahweh and His statutes which I command you today for your good?" (**Deuteronomy 10:12–13**)

The summary does not replace the commandments. It ends by commanding them, ***"for your good"*** (see **Doc 270**).

Witness Two — Psalms 15 and Isaiah 33:15: who may dwell with Yahweh. David asks who may sojourn in **Yahweh**'s tent and answers with a portrait: he who walks blamelessly, does what is right, speaks truth in his heart, does no evil to his neighbor, keeps his oath though it hurts, lends without interest, and takes no bribe (**Psalms 15:1–5**). Isaiah draws the same man: he walks in righteousness, speaks uprightly, despises gain from oppression, shakes his hands free of bribes, and shuts his eyes from looking on evil (**Isaiah 33:15**). These describe the character the commandments form; they do not cancel the commandments.

Witness Three — Micah 6:8: justice, kindness, and a humble walk.

"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does Yahweh require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your Elohim?" (**Micah 6:8**)

The verse answers the man who offers thousands of rams and rivers of oil while his hands are full of wrong (**Micah 6:6–7**). It does not abolish the offerings the Torah commands; it puts the heart first, as Samuel did: ***"to obey is better than sacrifice"*** (**1 Samuel 15:22**).

Witness Four — Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18: love Yahweh; love your neighbor. Both are commandments of the Torah, set among other commandments. ***"You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am Yahweh"*** (**Leviticus 19:18**) stands one verse before ***"You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed"*** (**Leviticus 19:19**), and the chapter closes, ***"You shall keep all My statutes and all My judgments and do them: I am Yahweh"*** (**Leviticus 19:37**). The Torah places love, farming, honest weights (**Leviticus 19:35–36**), and the Sabbath (**Leviticus 19:30**) side by side under one Name. It does not sort its laws into ***"moral," "ceremonial,"*** and ***"civil"*** piles; that division was made later by Christian theologians (Section VIII).

Witness Five — Amos 5:4, Habakkuk 2:4, and Ecclesiastes 12:13: one word for the whole. ***"Seek Me and live"*** (**Amos 5:4**). ***"The righteous shall live by his faithfulness"*** (**Habakkuk 2:4**). And Solomon's last word:

"The end of the matter, all has been heard: fear Elohim and keep His commandments, for this is the whole of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

Finding — The Tanakh summarizes the commandments, but no summary releases anyone from any commandment: Corroborated (Deuteronomy 10:12–13; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Leviticus 19:37; Deuteronomy 4:2). Finding — That the law divides into moral, ceremonial, and civil classes: Not in the text.

VII. SO HOW MANY ARE THERE? THE COVENANT ANSWER

VII-A. What Can Be Said on Two or Three Witnesses

First: Yahweh gave one number for His commandments, and only one: the Ten Words (**Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13; 10:4**).

Second: He gave no total for all that He commanded. The number 613 is a rabbinic number, first stated in a sermon, and it must not be taught as His word (**Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6**).

Third: He speaks of all He commanded as one commandment, with its statutes and judgments, to be kept whole (**Deuteronomy 6:1, 25; 8:1; 30:11**).

Fourth: His commandment is broader than any human list. What He has revealed belongs to us ***"that we may do all the words of this law"*** (**Deuteronomy 29:29 [Hebrew 29:28]**; **Psalms 119:96**).

Fifth: what He asks is the whole, kept from the heart. ***"The word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it"*** (**Deuteronomy 30:14**); He will write His law on the heart of His people (**Jeremiah 31:33 [Hebrew 31:32]**; see **Doc 281**).

VII-B. Not Fewer Laws, but Laws in Their Place

Many of the 613 cannot be kept today — not because **Yahweh** withdrew them, but because the Torah ties them to a place, an office, or a circumstance that it names: the land (**Deuteronomy 12:1**), the place **Yahweh** chooses (**Deuteronomy 12:5–14**; see **Doc 251**), the priesthood (**Numbers 18:7**; see **Doc 288**), the king (**Deuteronomy 17:14–20**). A commandment that waits for its place is not abolished; it waits. The covenant believer keeps what is given to him where he stands, does not pretend to keep what cannot be kept, and does not call it done away.

VII-C. How Miqdash Bethel Uses Its 613 Listing

Miqdash Bethel's 613 listing remains useful as a study index: a map of where the commandments stand in the Torah, as rabbinic tradition gathered them. Used that way, every item is tested against its verse, as the listing's own notes now do. It must not be presented as a count **Yahweh** gave. Its headings and order also have a source the reader should know: they follow the topical arrangement published by Tracey Rich on her Judaism 101 website, which she describes as based mainly on Maimonides' list but arranged in her own order. The listing's numbers 1 to 613 are therefore neither Maimonides' numbers nor the Torah's. Section IX records the corrections made and the decisions left open.

VII-D. A Covenant Way to Hold the Commandments

First — Read the whole. The king was to read the law ***"all the days of his life"*** (**Deuteronomy 17:19**); Joshua was told to meditate on it day and night (**Joshua 1:8**); the blessed man delights in it (**Psalms 1:2**). A person who reads the whole will never need a number to know what is there.

Second — Keep what is written to you, where you stand, with all your heart (**Deuteronomy 6:5–6**).

Third — Ask of every rule, "Where is it written?" ***"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, there is no dawn for them"*** (**Isaiah 8:20**).

Fourth — Add nothing and take nothing away (**Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32 [Hebrew 13:1]**).

Fifth — Teach it to your children as a way of life, when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way (**Deuteronomy 6:7; 11:19**) — not as a tally to be finished, but as a path to be walked.

VIII. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION COUNTS THE LAW

ELEMENT	JUDAISM	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
Primary teaching	Talmud Makkot 23b–24a: 613 commandments, 365 negative and 248 positive. Maimonides' Sefer HaMitzvot, with fourteen rules of counting; Sefer HaChinuch in Torah order; the Chafetz Chaim's 77 positive and 194 negative for today.	Matthew 22:36–40: on two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. Romans 13:8–10: love fulfills the law. James 2:10 and Galatians 5:3: the law is one whole. Many churches keep the Ten Commandments only, or divide the law into moral, ceremonial, and judicial parts (Aquinas, Summa Theologiae I–II, q. 99; Westminster Confession, ch. 19).	Q. 5:44: the Torah is ***"guidance and light."*** Q. 6:151–153 gives a short list of what God forbids, close to the Ten Words. Jurists sort acts into five rulings (obligatory, recommended, permitted, disliked, forbidden) and disagree on how many Qur'anic verses are legal: 150, 200, 500, 900, or more.
Covenant strength	Takes every word of the Torah seriously. The honest dissent of Ibn Ezra, Gersonides, and Duran shows scholars willing to say a cherished number is uncertain.	Both great commandments are quoted word for word from the Tanakh (**Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18**). James 2:10 treats the law as one whole, as **Deuteronomy 6:25** does.	The jurists' own disagreement, and al-Qarafi's view that hardly a verse lacks a ruling, admit what Ibn Ezra admitted: revealed law cannot be closed by a count.
Covenant departure	Teaching 613 as a number given at Sinai; counting rabbinic inferences as Torah commandments (**Deuteronomy 4:2**).	Using the summary, or the image of ***"613 burdens,"*** to set commandments aside, which **Deuteronomy 4:2** forbids (***"nor take away from it"***); the moral, ceremonial, and civil division is not in the text (**Leviticus 19:18–19, 37**).	Where later rulings go beyond the earlier revealed text, the same **Deuteronomy 4:2** test applies. The Qur'an's own praise of the Torah (Q. 5:44) points the reader back to the Torah itself.
Covenant witness	**Deuteronomy 4:2; 6:1; Psalms 119:96**	**Deuteronomy 6:25; Leviticus 19:37; Ecclesiastes 12:13**	**Deuteronomy 4:6–8; Psalms 19:7–9 [Hebrew 19:8–10]**

IX. CORRECTIONS TO EARLIER LIBRARY MATERIAL

Under the standing Corrections Rule (October 2, 2026), the following points in earlier Library material were found while preparing this study. Each correction marked ***"made"*** has also been entered in the affected Google Doc so that the website copy can be replaced.

Correction 1 — 613 Laws listing, introduction (made). The listing said that ***"the Hebrew sages, following the evidentiary standard of Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15,"*** identified 613 commandments, and that they were codified most comprehensively by the Rambam. The number did not come from the two-or-three-witness standard; it came from a sermon of Rabbi Simlai. The sentence now reads: ***"The number 613 is not given in the Tanakh. It comes from a sermon of Rabbi Simlai, a teacher of the third century CE, recorded in the Talmud (Makkot 23b), who taught that 613 commandments were spoken to Moses: 365 prohibitions, like the days of the solar year, and 248 positive commands, like the limbs of a man. The best-known list of the 613 was made by the Rambam (Maimonides) in his Sefer HaMitzvot and at the head of his Mishneh Torah; other rabbis made different lists. This listing follows that rabbinic count as a study index, and each item is tested against its verse (see Document 354)."*** This settles the point that **Doc 332** left for decision.

Correction 2 — 613 Laws listing, introduction (made). The listing called the Torah's ***"positive commandments (248 in number)"*** and ***"negative commandments (365 in number)"*** as though the Torah gave those totals. The phrase now begins: ***"Its commandments, which rabbinic tradition counts as 248 positive and 365 negative (Talmud Makkot 23b), though the Tanakh itself gives no total, exist for …"***

Left for Kepha's decision — the listing's title and opening sentence. The title ***"THE 613 LAWS of the TANAKH"*** and the opening words ***"as they are recorded in the Torah … from antiquity to the present day"*** present the count as the Tanakh's own and as ancient. A title such as ***"The 613 Commandments as Counted by Rabbinic Tradition — Tested Against the Tanakh"*** is recommended, with a line crediting the topical arrangement to Judaism 101 (Section VII-C). Nothing was changed.

Left for Kepha's decision — listing Nos. 285–288. The four court death penalties are the Mishnah's list (Sanhedrin 7:1). **Leviticus 20:10**, cited for strangulation, does not name a method; **Exodus 21:20**, cited for the sword, says the slayer ***"shall surely be avenged"*** without naming a method, and **Leviticus 26:25** is a covenant curse, not a court sentence. Notes like those already added elsewhere in the listing are recommended. Nothing was changed.

Left for Kepha's decision — 613 Laws course headings. Several course lessons carry the heading ***"The 613 Mitzvot of Yahweh"*** or ***"The 613 Covenant Laws of Yahweh"*** (for example Lessons 18, 21, and 22), which presents the count as **Yahweh**'s own. When each lesson is next revised, a heading such as ***"The Commandments of Yahweh — Rabbinic Count 613"*** is recommended. Nothing was changed.

X. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE NUMBER OF THE COMMANDMENTS

Under the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard, no doctrine may stand on a single text. Each declaration below draws on more than one witness.

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	**Yahweh** gave His covenant as one whole commandment, with its statutes and judgments, to be kept entire.	**Deuteronomy 6:1, 25; 8:1; 30:11**
II	The only number **Yahweh** attached to His commandments is the Ten Words.	**Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13; 10:4**
III	The number 613 is a rabbinic count, first stated in a third-century sermon. It is not a word of **Yahweh** and must not be taught as one.	**Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32 [Hebrew 13:1]; Proverbs 30:6**
IV	Law, commandment, statute, judgment, testimony, precept, charge, and word name one covenant from different sides; they are not separate piles of law to be counted.	**Genesis 26:5; Exodus 12:14, 43, 49; Numbers 9:3, 14**
V	**Yahweh**'s commandment is broader than any human list. No count can close it, and no summary can shrink it.	**Psalms 119:96; Deuteronomy 29:29; Ecclesiastes 12:13**
VI	Nothing is to be added to His words by counting men's inferences as commandments, and nothing taken away by keeping only a short list.	**Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Leviticus 19:37**
VII	The covenant is kept by reading it whole, keeping what is given to each person in his place, and teaching it to our children as a way of life.	**Deuteronomy 17:19; Joshua 8:35; Deuteronomy 6:6–7**

XI. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS TO THE ONE WHO ASKS

To the Jewish reader who learned the 613 as a child. Keep your love for every commandment; the Tanakh shares it. But you do not need the number to honor the commandments, and the best of your own scholars told you the number was uncertain. Read the Torah whole, as Joshua read it to all Israel (**Joshua 8:35**), and test every rule by whether it is written (**Isaiah 8:20**). What **Yahweh** spoke at Sinai, all Israel heard: ***"these words Yahweh spoke to all your assembly ... and He added no more"*** (**Deuteronomy 5:22 [Hebrew 5:19]**).

To the Christian reader who was told the Law was 613 burdens. The number was never in the Law, and the Law was never called a burden by the One who gave it: ***"this commandment which I command you today is not too hard for you"*** (**Deuteronomy 30:11**), and it was given ***"for your good always"*** (**Deuteronomy 6:24**). The two great commandments you were taught are quoted from the Torah itself (**Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18**), set among the other commandments, not in place of them. Your own scripture says that whoever keeps the whole law and stumbles in one point is guilty of all (James 2:10) — a whole, not a remnant.

To the Muslim reader. Your jurists never agreed on how many verses carry law, and some said nearly every verse does. The Torah you are told is ***"guidance and light"*** speaks of itself the same way: broad beyond any count (**Psalms 119:96**), and to be kept whole (**Deuteronomy 6:25**). Read it for yourself.

To the covenant believer and the Sacred Name assemblies. Many of us have printed the 613 list and taught it as **Yahweh**'s own count. Miqdash Bethel did as well. It is right to say so plainly and correct it, for ***"do not add to His words, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar"*** (**Proverbs 30:6**). Use the list as a map if it helps; never as a fence around **Yahweh**'s word.

And to all. The question ***"How many?"*** is answered by the Tanakh with the word ***"all"***: ***"all the commandment," "all the words of this law," "not a word of all that Moses commanded"*** (**Deuteronomy 8:1; 29:29; Joshua 8:35**). The covenant is not a sum to be reached but a way to be walked. ***"Fear Elohim and keep His commandments, for this is the whole of man"*** (**Ecclesiastes 12:13**).

SCRIPTURE INDEX

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Genesis 1:14	Lights for seasons, days, and years	V-A

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Genesis 26:5	Abraham kept My charge, commandments, statutes, laws	II; II-G; X
Genesis 34:21	***Rachav (wide)*** — the land is wide	III-D
Genesis 47:26	Joseph's ***choq (statute)*** in Egypt	II; II-C
Exodus 3:8	A good and broad land	III-D
Exodus 12:2	This month shall be the first of months	V-A
Exodus 12:14, 43, 49	The Passover as statute and law	II; II-A; II-F; II-G; X
Exodus 15:25	A statute and an ordinance	II-F
Exodus 16:23–30	The Sabbath in the wilderness	V-C
Exodus 20:1	**Elohim** spoke all these words	II; II-E; V-B
Exodus 20:2	I am **Yahweh** your **Elohim** — a statement	V-C
Exodus 20:8–11	Remember the Sabbath day	V-C
Exodus 20:19 [Hebrew 20:16]	You speak with us	V-B
Exodus 21:1	These are the judgments	II; II-D
Exodus 21:20	He shall surely be avenged	IX
Exodus 23:12	Six days you shall do your work	V-C
Exodus 23:19; 34:26	A kid in its mother's milk	V-C
Exodus 25:16; 31:18	The tablets of the testimony	II; II-E
Exodus 31:12–17; 35:2–3	The Sabbath a sign	V-C
Exodus 34:21	In plowing and harvest you shall rest	V-C
Exodus 34:28	The Ten Words	II; II-E; III-A; VII-A; X
Leviticus 6:9 [Hebrew 6:2]	The torah of the burnt offering	II; II-A

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Leviticus 12	The woman after childbirth	V-C
Leviticus 18:30	Keep My charge	II
Leviticus 19:3, 30	Keep My Sabbaths	V-C; VI
Leviticus 19:9–10	Corners, gleanings, fallen grapes	V-C
Leviticus 19:18–19	Love your neighbor; two kinds of seed	VI; VIII; XI
Leviticus 19:35–37	Honest weights; keep all My statutes	VI; VIII; X
Leviticus 20:10	Shall surely be put to death	V-D; IX
Leviticus 21	Laws for the priests	V-C
Leviticus 23:3; 26:2	The Sabbath a holy convocation	V-C
Leviticus 26:25	The sword of the covenant curse	IX
Leviticus 26:46; 27:34	"These are …" — closing formulas	III-B
Numbers 6	The Nazirite	V-C
Numbers 9:3, 5, 14	The Passover by its statutes and judgments	II; II-G; X
Numbers 18:7	The priesthood a gift	VII-B
Numbers 36:13	These are the commandments and judgments	III-B
Deuteronomy 1:17	The judgment is **Elohim**'s	II; II-D
Deuteronomy 4:2	Do not add, do not take away	I-A; V-D; V-E; VI; VII-A; VII-D; VIII; X
Deuteronomy 4:6, 8	Your wisdom in the eyes of the peoples; righteous statutes	I-C; II-C; VIII
Deuteronomy 4:12–13	You heard the sound of words; the Ten Words	III-A; V-B; X
Deuteronomy 4:44–45	This is the torah; the testimonies, statutes, judgments	II; II-A; II-E; III-B

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Deuteronomy 5:4	Face to face on the mountain	V-B
Deuteronomy 5:12–15	Keep the Sabbath day	V-C
Deuteronomy 5:22 [Hebrew 5:19]	These words **Yahweh** spoke … and He added no more	V-B; XI
Deuteronomy 5:23–27 [Hebrew 5:20–24]	The people ask Moses to speak	V-B
Deuteronomy 5:31 [Hebrew 5:28]	All the commandment	II-B
Deuteronomy 6:1	This is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments	II; II-B; VII-A; VIII; X
Deuteronomy 6:5–7	Love **Yahweh**; teach your children	VI; VII-D; VIII; X; XI
Deuteronomy 6:24–25	For our good always; all this commandment	II-B; VII-A; VIII; X; XI; Closing
Deuteronomy 8:1; 11:8; 27:1	All the commandment	II-B; VII-A; X; XI
Deuteronomy 10:4	The Ten Words on the tablets	II; III-A; VII-A; X
Deuteronomy 10:12–13	What does **Yahweh** ask of you	VI
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Deuteronomy 11:19, 22; 15:5; 19:9	All this commandment; teach your children	II-B; VII-D
Deuteronomy 12:1, 5–14	In the land; the place He chooses	III-B; VII-B
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Deuteronomy 30:11, 14	Not too hard; the word is very near you	II; II-B; VII-A; X; XI
Deuteronomy 31:9–12	Moses wrote this law; read it before all Israel	II; III-C
Deuteronomy 33:4	Moses commanded us a torah	IV-A
Joshua 1:8	Meditate on it day and night	VII-D
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Joshua 22:5	The commandment and the torah	II-B
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1 Samuel 15:22	To obey is better than sacrifice	VI
1 Kings 8:56	Not one word has fallen	I-A
2 Kings 17:37	Statutes, judgments, law, and commandment	III-B
Isaiah 8:20	To the law and to the testimony	VII-D; XI
Isaiah 30:8	Inscribe it in a book	II-C
Isaiah 33:15; 56:1	He who walks in righteousness; keep justice	IV-A; VI
Jeremiah 5:22	The sand a boundary for the sea	II-C
Jeremiah 7:23	Walk in all the way I command you	V-C
Jeremiah 31:33 [Hebrew 31:32]	My law on their heart	VII-A
Jeremiah 31:35–36 [Hebrew 31:34–35]; 33:25	The fixed order of moon and stars	II; II-C
Amos 5:4	Seek Me and live	IV-A; VI
Micah 6:6–8	Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly	IV-A; VI
Habakkuk 2:4	The righteous shall live by his faithfulness	IV-A; VI

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Malachi 4:4 [Hebrew 3:22]	Remember the law of Moses	III-B
Psalms 1:2	His delight is in the law	VII-D
Psalms 15:1–5	Who may dwell in Your tent	IV-A; VI
Psalms 19:7–9 [Hebrew 19:8–10]	Law, testimony, precepts, commandment, judgments	II; II-E; VIII
Psalms 103:18; 111:7	***Piqqudim (precepts)***	II; II-E
Psalms 104:19	The moon for appointed times	V-A
Psalms 119:4	Your precepts to be kept diligently	II
Psalms 119:96	Your commandment is exceedingly broad	II; III-D; VII-A; VIII; X; XI
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Ecclesiastes 12:13	Fear **Elohim** and keep His commandments	VI; VIII; X; XI
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Nehemiah 8:3, 8	The law read and the sense given	III-C
Nehemiah 9:13–14	Right judgments, true laws, good statutes	III-B

"And it shall be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before Yahweh our Elohim, as He has commanded us."

Deuteronomy 6:25 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

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