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The 10 Commandments

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The 10 Commandments

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"In the Qur'ān, there is not a list of commandments such as we see in the Bible; however, there are many injunctions throughout the text of the Qur'ān. From these, Caesar E. Farah extracts a list of 10 "commandments" in his book, *Islam*. When comparing these Islamic commandments with the Judeo-Christian 10 Commandments, we can see some obvious similarities, some subtle differences and some commandments that don't even compare."

The 10 Commandments

by

James L. Smith, Jr.

In the Qur'ān, there is not a list of commandments such as we see in the Bible; however, there are many injunctions throughout the text of the Qur'ān. From these, Caesar E. Farah extracts a list of 10 “commandments” in his book, *Islam*. When comparing these Islamic commandments with the Judeo-Christian 10 Commandments, we can see some obvious similarities, some subtle differences and some commandments that don't even compare.

For this comparison, we will take the commandments in the Jewish Bible in the order they appear and compare them with the corresponding commandments found in Farah's book.

The first and second commandments state: *You shall have no other gods before me and You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.* These two commandments, taken together, say that you should worship only the one God and no others, nor use any form of idol worship. These correspond with Farah's first commandment: *Acknowledging there is no god whatsoever but God—“Thy Lord hath decreed, that ye worship none save Him...”* (Notice the use of capitalization, when God refers to the one God it is capitalized, in all other instances it is lower case, showing God's superiority.)

The third Biblical commandment states: *You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.* In other words, do not blaspheme or take the Lord's name in vain. This shows God's demand for respect and worship. There is no corresponding commandment in Farah's list.

The fourth Biblical commandment states: *Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the 7th day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.* Again, there is no corresponding commandment on Farah's list. This may be because Muslims are required to perform ritual prayers five times a day. Islam does have a day of Sabbath, which occurs on Friday. The traditional Jewish Sabbath is on Saturday and the Christian Sabbath is on Sunday.

The fifth Biblical commandment states: *Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.* This corresponds with the second commandment on Farah's list which states: *Honoring and respecting parents- "And lower unto them the wing of submission through mercy, and say: My Lord! Have mercy on them both as they did care for me when I was little."* These are both pretty straightforward. They say honor your parents, for your own benefit so you may live, and because they earned your respect by caring for you when you couldn't care for yourself.

The sixth Biblical commandment states: *You shall not murder.* The corresponding Islamic commandment (#5): *Avoid killing except for justifiable cause- "Slay not the life which Allah hath forbidden save with right. Whoso is slain wrongfully, We have given power unto his heir, but let him not commit excess slaying."* The Islamic commandment expands a little further than the Biblical commandment, as to what constitutes murder and how justice should be distributed (by the victim's heir).

The seventh Biblical commandment states: *You shall not commit adultery.* This corresponds with the sixth commandment on Farah's list: *Committing not adultery- "And come not near unto adultery. Lo! It is an abomination and an evil way."* Both are very straightforward, don't commit adultery, it is evil.

The eighth Biblical commandment states: *You shall not steal*. There is not a directly corresponding commandment on Farah's list, but there are two that stealing would be considered a violation of. Commandment #3 states: *Respecting the rights of others- "Give the kinsman his due, and the needy, and the wayfarer...But if thou turn away from them, seeking mercy from the Lord, for which thou hopest, then speak unto them a reasonable word."* Stealing is obviously a violation of the rights of others, specifically property rights. Commandment #8 would also be violated by stealing. It states: *Dealing justly and equitably- "Fill the measure when ye measure, and weigh with a right balance; that is meet and better in the end."* Deception or trickery in trade is a form of stealing, and outright thievery is certainly not dealing equitably.

The two final Biblical commandments don't have Islamic counterparts on Farah's list. Number nine is: *You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor*. The tenth and final commandment states: *You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor*.

There are four commandments on Farah's list that do not appear in the Bible. Number four states: *Being generous but not a squanderer- "...squander not (thy wealth) in wantonness. Lo! The squanderers were ever brothers of the devil, and the devil was ever an ingrate to his Lord. And let not thy hand be chained to thy neck nor open it with a complete opening, lest thou sit down rebuked, denuded. Lo! Thy Lord enlargeth the provision for whom He will, and straiteneth (it for whom He will)."* The Bible does not comment on the squandering of wealth.

Commandment number seven on Farah's list states: *Safeguarding the possessions of orphans- "Come not near the wealth of the orphan save with that which is better till he come to strength; and keep the covenant. Lo! Of the covenant it will be asked."* The Bible has no commandments regarding the wealth of orphans.

The final two commandments on Farah's list involve personal characteristics a Muslim should attain and live by. Again, the Bible has no such injunctions. Number nine states: *Being pure of heart and mind- "Your Lord is best aware of what is in your minds. If ye are righteous then lo! He was ever Forgiving unto those who turn (unto Him)."* The tenth and final commandment on Farah's list states: *Being humble and unpretentious- "And walk not in the earth exultant. Lo! Thou canst not rend the earth, nor canst thou stretch to the height of the hills... and follow not that whereof thou hast no knowledge. Lo! The hearing and the sight and the heart- of each of these it will be asked."*

We can see that for the most part the Biblical commandments focus on social regulations, whereas the Qur'ānic commandments also give guidelines for one's personal and spiritual life. As we have seen some of the commandments are very alike while others are not. Each have offered basic rules for its followers and have served them well for centuries.