

# HERMENEUTICS

## #7- THE LAW

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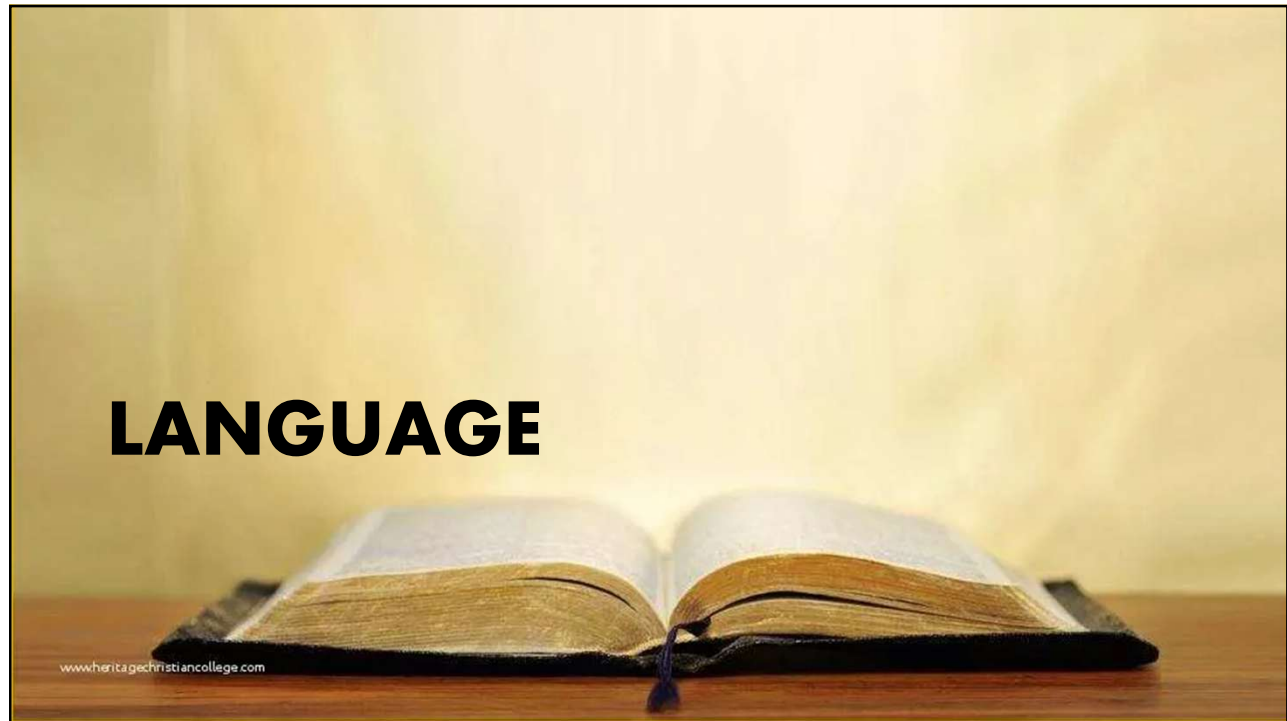
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## INTRODUCTION

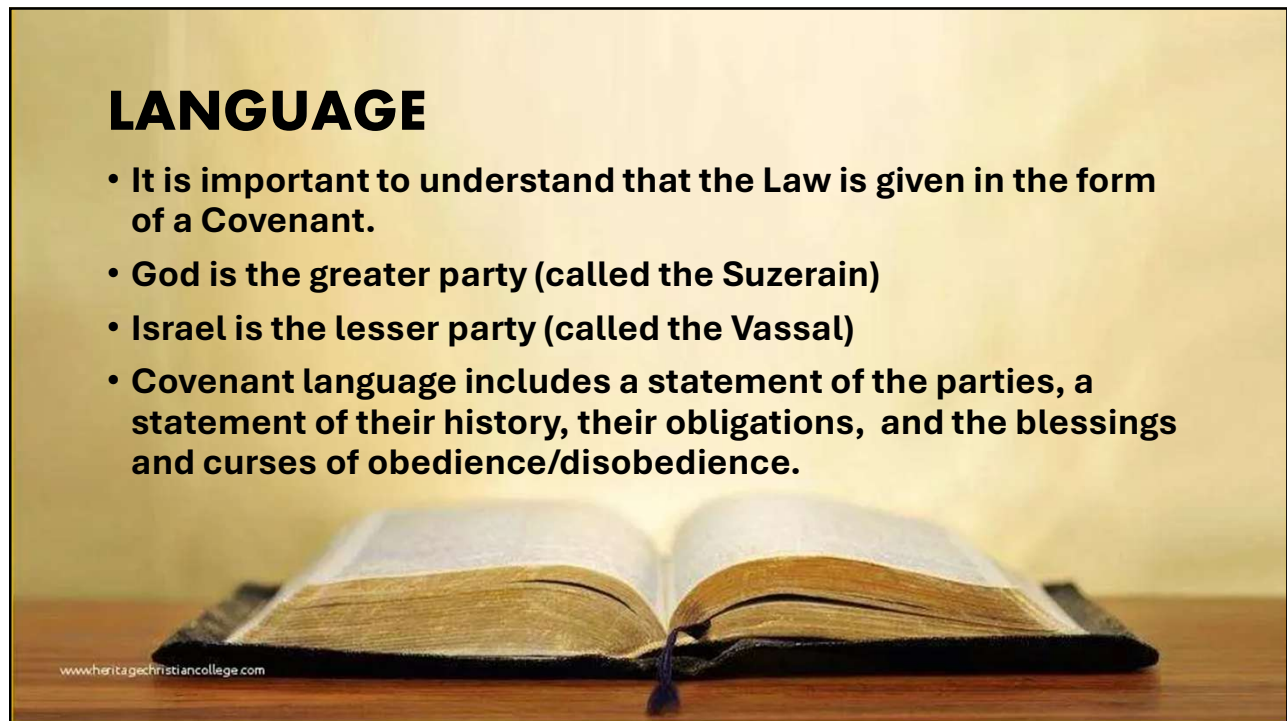
- The Old Testament Law is found in Exodus through Deuteronomy.
- The Old Testament law itself is composed of three different forms of law
  - Moral
  - Civil
  - Ceremonial
- Each with its own linguistic style and challenges

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## LANGUAGE

*Exodus 20:1-2 (NKJV)*

*<sup>1</sup> And God spoke all these words, saying:*

*<sup>2</sup> “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

- In the two verses that introduce the Law (Covenant), the parties and their history are revealed.
- Much of the rest of the following books contain the stipulations.

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## LANGUAGE

*Exodus 20:5-6*

*<sup>5</sup> you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, <sup>6</sup> but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*

- This is an example of the many places where God gives covenant blessings or curses.
- Deuteronomy 6,7, 27 and 28 contain longer sections of blessings and curses.

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## LANGUAGE – MORAL LAW

- The Moral Law is found in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.
- These laws are in the form of commands.
- **Deuteronomy 5:11 (LSB)**  
*<sup>11</sup> ‘You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.*
- **Deuteronomy 5:17-18 (LSB)**  
*<sup>17</sup> ‘You shall not murder.  
<sup>18</sup> ‘You shall not commit adultery.*

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## LANGUAGE – MORAL LAW

- The Moral Law applies to all people at all times, even though it is given to the nation of Israel.
- The Moral Law is reflective of God’s character, and not a specific culture, time, or place.
- The Moral Law is repeated and amplified in the New Testament, such as the Sermon on the Mount.
- The Moral Law is the easiest to read because it consists of commands in plain language.

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## LANGUAGE – MORAL LAW

- That does not mean it is the easiest to interpret or apply.
- Look at Exodus 20:13 - “You shall not murder.”
- What is the definition of “murder”?
- According to the Brown, Driver & Briggs lexicon the meaning is “murder, slay.” Literal “to break or dash in pieces”
- Not accidental. Intentional.
- The command is NOT “You shall not KILL.”
- How does that affect our interpretation and application?

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## LANGUAGE – CIVIL

*Exodus 21:12-14 (ESV)*

<sup>12</sup> “Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death.

<sup>13</sup> But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee. <sup>14</sup>

But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him by cunning, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die.

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## **LANGUAGE – CIVIL**

- According to Jewish tradition, there are 613 laws within the Books of Moses.
- The larger portion of the law is civil and ceremonial.
- Civil laws were the rules for the nation of Israel.
- They governed most aspects of day-to-day life

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## **LANGUAGE – CIVIL**

- Unlike the Moral Law, these laws are given for a specific time, place, and people.
- While the Moral Law is repeated and amplified in the New Testament, that is not the case with the civil laws.
- This does not mean that we cannot learn from them, or have them reflected in any way in our modern society.

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## LANGUAGE – CIVIL

- Much of the civil law is what is called “casuistic” or case-by-case law.
- Casuistic law dictates what should be done when a situation occurs.
- They give guidance.
- They are not exhaustive. They do not cover every situation.

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## LANGUAGE – CIVIL

*Leviticus 20:10 (NKJV)*

*<sup>10</sup> The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.*

- Some laws give penalties, including death.

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## LANGUAGE – CIVIL

*Exodus 22:5 (NKJV)*

*<sup>5</sup> “If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed, and lets loose his animal, and it feeds in another man’s field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard.*

- Other laws demand restitution rather than punishment.

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## LANGUAGE – CEREMONIAL

- The ceremonial law refers to God’s commands regarding things such as diet, the priesthood, the tabernacle and contents, and sacrifices.
- These are not part of the legal code (civil law) but part of Israel’s religious practice.
- The ceremonial laws, like the civil laws, are also not binding on Christians today because Jesus has fulfilled them (Matt. 5:17).
- Matthew 5:17 (NASB95)  
*<sup>17</sup> “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.*

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## LANGUAGE – CEREMONIAL

- They contain Food Laws which are difficult for our modern minds to comprehend.

***Leviticus 11:9-12 (BSB)***

***<sup>9</sup> Of all the creatures that live in the water, whether in the seas or in the streams, you may eat anything with fins and scales.***

***<sup>10</sup> But the following among all the teeming life and creatures in the water are detestable to you: everything in the seas or streams that does not have fins and scales. <sup>11</sup> They shall be an abomination to you; you must not eat their meat, and you must detest their carcasses. <sup>12</sup> Everything in the water that does not have fins and scales shall be detestable to you.***

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## OCCASION

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## OCCASION

- Occasion refers to the historical, cultural, geographic, and political setting of the passage.
- There are actually two occasions. One at each end of their desert wandering.
- However, it would be incorrect to restrict the occasion of the Law to the desert wandering.
- It was given and repeated then, but it governed their entire existence as a nation.
- The intended audience extends beyond those to whom it was given originally.

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## OCCASION

- Food laws do not make sense partly because we are removed from the situation in which they lived.

***Leviticus 11:9-12 (BSB)***

***<sup>9</sup> Of all the creatures that live in the water, whether in the seas or in the streams, you may eat anything with fins and scales.***

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## OCCASION

- Why might such food laws exist?
- There could be practical concerns like disease or ability to care for a certain type of animal.
- It could be that such animals were used in religious sacrifices of the people around them. They were not to be copied.
- Truth be told, it is largely educated speculation.

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## OCCASION

- There are also some rather unusual prohibitions.
- Deuteronomy 14:21b  
*“You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.”*
- Why would God prohibit such a strange thing?
- Why would someone even do such a strange thing?
- These kinds of prohibitions are usually related to the pagan practices of the peoples around Israel.

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## OCCASION

- The Canannaites believed that symbolic actions could influence the gods and nature.
- They believed that boiling a goat kid in its mother's milk would magically ensure the continuing fertility of the flock.
- They also believed that mixing breeds of animals, seeds or materials would bring them together in a way so as to produce "offspring" and bounty.

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Fee and Stuart. *How To Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Third Edition. p. 179.

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*King of Kings*



*Reformed Church*

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