

Mar 2 2026 Weekly reflection

Why Did God Give the Law to His People in the Old Testament?

In the narrative of the Old Testament, God's giving of the Law to Israel was not an accidental historical moment but a crucial part of His redemptive plan. The Law first serves as a revelation of God's own character. Through it, Israel came to know that the God who called them is holy, righteous, and good. The Law is not merely an abstract moral code; it is a concrete expression of God's nature, allowing His people to understand His heart rather than rely on human imagination.

At the same time, the Law shaped Israel's identity as a nation. God chose Israel to be "a holy nation" and "a people belonging to Him." The Law became the marker that set them apart from the surrounding nations, shaping their way of life, their worship, and their ethical values. By living according to the Law, Israel became a visible testimony of God's wisdom and justice among the nations.

Furthermore, the Law functioned as the covenantal terms between God and Israel. The covenant at Sinai was not a cold legal arrangement but a relational commitment. God promised to be their God, and Israel was to respond by keeping His statutes. The Law thus served as the foundation of this covenant relationship, much like vows in a marriage or a constitution in a nation, defining the roles and responsibilities of both parties.

Yet the Law not only revealed God's standards; it also exposed human shortcomings. It acted as a mirror, showing people their sin and weakness, and revealing that no one could meet God's requirements through personal effort. As the New Testament emphasizes, one purpose of the Law was to lead people to recognize their need for redemption, preparing the way for the coming of Christ. The Law was never meant to be the final means of salvation but a signpost pointing toward it.

On a practical level, the Law also protected Israel and enabled them to thrive in the complex and often dangerous world of the ancient Near East. Many of its statutes addressed social justice, hygiene, ethics, and the protection of the vulnerable, shaping Israel into a wise and orderly society. The Law was not merely spiritual instruction but also a tangible blessing for daily life.

Ultimately, the sacrificial system, festivals, and ceremonial laws all pointed forward to Christ. They functioned as shadows of the reality to come, anticipating the One who would fulfill the Law and bring complete redemption. Christ's coming did not abolish the Law but brought its meaning to fullness.