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THE RITUAL DECALOGUE

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THE ritual decalogue, it is well known, is found in Ex. 34 and also in BC, principally in Ex. 23. These two versions are usually called the J and E forms, respectively. Whether these belonged originally to the J and E documents or not, a question which will be mentioned later, these terms are sufficiently appropriate, inasmuch as it seems exceedingly probable that the form in Ex. 34 originated in Judah and that in BC in Israel.

While there have been many discussions of this subject in recent years, special attention should be called to the following. Professor Knudson, *The So-called J Decalogue*,¹ gives a historical resume of earlier views. Professor Kennett² notes in detail the parallels between the J and E forms. Professor Pfeiffer, *The Oldest Decalogue*,³ considers the oldest decalogue to have been of Canaanite origin.

It seems very probable that the original form of these commands was a real decalogue, as stated expressly in Ex. 34 28. While some have questioned the originality of this statement, it is accepted by most. Without assuming anything at this point concerning the question of priority as between the J and E forms, the consideration can most conveniently begin with the J form since that is less scattered than the E form.

Thirteen regulations in the J form, Ex. 34, might with some

¹ *JBL*, 26, pp. 82-99.

² *Deuteronomy and the Decalogue*.

³ *JBL*, 43, pp. 294-310.

reason be regarded as belonging to the original commands, viz. the following. 1. V. 14, the prohibition of the worship of another god. 2. V. 17, the prohibition of the making of molten gods. 3. V. 18, the command to observe the feast of unleavened bread. 4. V. 19, the statement that the firstborn belongs to Yahweh. 5. V. 20 end, the command that none shall appear before Yahweh empty. 6. V. 21, the command enjoining six days of work and the seventh day of rest (Sabbath). 7. V. 22 a, the command to observe the feast of weeks. 8. V. 22 b, the command to observe the feast of ingathering. 9. V. 23, the command that all males shall appear before Yahweh three times in the year. 10. V. 25 a, the prohibition of sacrifice with leavened bread. 11. V. 25 b, the prohibition of the leaving of the Passover till morning. 12. V. 26 a, the command to bring in the firstfruits. 13. V. 26 b, the prohibition of the boiling of a kid in its mother's milk.

An effort has frequently been made to reduce the number of these commands to ten, so that various omissions have been made as later additions; for these, see particularly the article by Professor Knudson. Professor Kennett omits 2, 5 and 9, and Professor Pfeiffer 1, 2 and 5.

I think that 3, 7 and 8, the specific regulations concerning the three feasts, should be omitted. From a literary standpoint this omission greatly simplifies matters, because the confusion in the arrangement of the material is found largely in these three regulations. From the standpoint of thought they are unnecessary, since No. 9 is a summary statement which covers them. It has seemed evident to most that either these three regulations or No. 9 should be omitted, and No. 9 has much appearance of originality, being found in a substantially identical form also in Ex. 23 17 and Dt. 16 16.

In the case of several of the commands the amplifying statements vary considerably as between J and E. This makes it probable that the original statements were in all cases quite brief, a conclusion which is in accord with that generally reached concerning the ethical decalogue. The following are suggested as the original forms of the J version, as found in Ex. 34, together with those of the E version. 1. J. Thou shalt wor-

ship no other god, 34 14. E. Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, 23 24. 2. J. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods, 34 17. E. Gods of silver, or gods of gold, ye shall not make unto you (or perhaps originally: Ye shall not make gods of silver or gods of gold), 20 23. 3. J. All that openeth the womb is mine, 34 19. E. The firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, and with thy sheep, 22 28 b, 29 a (Eng. 29 b, 30 a). 4. J. None shall appear before me empty, 34 20 end. E, identical with J, 23 15 end. 5. J. Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest, 34 21. E. Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest, 23 12. 6. J. Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before Yahweh, 34 23. E. Substantially identical with J, 23 17. 7. J. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread, 34 25 a. E. Identical with J, except for the use of לֶחֶם in place of חֶמֶץ , 23 18 a. 8. J. The sacrifice of the feast of the passover shall not be left unto the morning, 34 25 b. E. The fat of my feast shall not remain all night until the morning, 23 18 b. 9. J. The first of the firstfruits of thy ground thou shalt bring unto the house of Yahweh, 34 26 a. E. Identical with J, 23 19 a. 10. J. Thou shalt not boil a kid in its mother's milk, 34 26 b. E. Identical with J, 23 19 b.

The order of E varies at two points from J: the first commandment of J is put last, and 4 and 5 are transposed. In both points the order of J seems preferable. It can not be positively asserted that J has preserved entirely the original order, but any change from this is conjectural with no very definite basis.

It seems evident to most students that either J or E is dependent on the other. Which is the original? The palm of priority has usually been awarded to J, but Professor Kennett and Professor Pfeiffer both give it to E. Professor Pfeiffer's view that the code was of Canaanite origin and perhaps originally written on two tables of stone at the entrance of the sanctuary of Baal Berith at Shechem involves such a confusion of traditions that it is hardly thinkable, in the absence of any positive evidence. The priority of J is favored by the arrange-

ment, as already noted. The use of the name Yahweh in Nos. 6 and 9 is an indication of J rather than E. There seems to be no evidence to support the view of Professor Pfeiffer that the name Yahweh in these verses is a later addition; that view in his case is based upon the conjecture of the Canaanite origin of the code. The priority of J is also favored by No. 2, which seems more original in J, the E form being an expansion; further, the second person singular in J is clearly more original than the second person plural in E. This conclusion is also favored by No. 3, which seems more original in J, the E form again being an expansion. It seems to me, contrary to the opinion of many, that No. 8 is more original in the J form. It seems more likely that the original mention of the Passover was later generalized into *feast* than that the reverse process took place. "The house of Yahweh" in No. 9 is more probably the temple at Jerusalem than any other sanctuary.

To what time does the original belong? Possibly as early as Solomon's time. The statement of monolatry in No. 1 might readily be as early as that. The prohibition of molten gods, No. 2, might possibly also be as early. If, as seems probable, the Hebrew word here used, **תְּכֵלֶת**, is a loan-word from the Canaanite⁴, then the intent of the regulation was to forbid molten images because they were Canaanite, without interfering with the real Hebrew carved images. Such a regulation might possibly have originated in the time of Solomon as a protest against his use of foreign modes of worship, but it does not seem probable.

It is worth noting that the term **תְּכֵלֶת** "is applied particularly to the little golden bulls (images of Yahweh) which were worshipped in the Northern Kingdom and to the similar image which Aaron made at Horeb,"⁵ quoted approvingly by Professor Pfeiffer⁶. The stories told of Ahijah in 1 Ki. 14 and of the man of God from Judah in 1 Ki. 13, although some details of the latter are certainly unreliable, indicate a considerable

⁴ Moore, *EB*, 2148.

⁵ Moore, *Judges* (ICC), p. 375.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 803.

opposition to the molten images of Jeroboam. Naturally this would be especially intense in Judah, since the movement of Jeroboam on its religious side put itself in direct opposition to the cult at Jerusalem. Hence, such an expression as this commandment might readily have originated in *Judah* at any time after the division of the kingdom. A similar anti-Canaanite feeling is doubtless to be recognized in No. 10. There is, however, in this decalogue much of a primitive nature, suggesting a date as early as is consistent with definite indications. The second commandment, therefore, and hence the whole decalogue, is most probably to be dated not long after the division of the kingdom. This second commandment was probably not actually inconsistent with any part of the official worship at Jerusalem at that time. The brazen serpent, the worship of which Professor Kennett regards as inconsistent, was perhaps not an image in its original significance but a symbol.⁷

On this view the J decalogue is probably as early as the J document. It is by no means certain, however, that it was an original part of it, since it is quite unlike the most of J, there being no other legal code in that document. It is perhaps more likely that it was earlier than J, in which case it may have been added either by the authors of J or by an editor.

On this view, further, it is not probable that the ritual decalogue in its E form was an original part of the E document, rather having been added later with editorial changes.

⁷ See Cheyne, *EB*, 3368.