613 COMMANDMENTS
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The Talmud tells us that there are 613 mitzvot (commandments) in the Torah, first recorded in the third century CE, when Rabbi Simlai mentioned it in a sermon.

However, the Talmud does not provide us with a list of these commandments. Several great Jewish scholars have compiled a complete listing of them; 248 of them are positive commandments (do's) and 365 are negative ones (do not's).

Many of the commandments cannot currently be observed, dating back to the Second Temple's destruction in 70 CE, though they still retain religious significance. According to one standard reckoning, there are 271 commandments that can be observed today, of which 26 apply only within the Land of Israel.

As I combed through all 613 mitzvot for the first time, I had three distinct reactions:

Wow.

Whoa.

Wowww.

Allow me to explain:

1. Wow.
Translation: This is timeless wisdom.
My first reaction to reading all 613 mitzvot for the first time was just how relevant many of the commandments still are today. For example, in no particular order:

To love other Jews (Leviticus 19:18)

Not to break oaths or vows (Numbers 30:3)

Not to covet and scheme to acquire another's possession (Exodus 20:14)

Not to embarrass others (Leviticus 19:17)

Not to desire another's possession (Deuteronomy 5:18)

Not to gossip about others (Leviticus 19:16)

Not to kill the murderer before he stands trial (Numbers 35:12)

Not to insult or harm anybody with words (Leviticus 25:17)

To decide by majority in case of disagreement (Exodus 23:2)

Not to bear a grudge (Leviticus 19:18)

To give charity (Deuteronomy 15:11)

Not to withhold wages or fail to repay a debt (Leviticus 19:13)

Not to testify falsely (Exodus 20:13)

Not to commit injustice with scales and weights (Leviticus 19:35)

Help another remove the load from a beast which can no longer carry it (Exodus 23:5)

To recognize a lost object (Deuteronomy 22:3) and to return the lost object (Deuteronomy 22:1)

Not to stand idly by if someone's life is in danger (Leviticus 19:16)

Each man must give a half shekel annually (Exodus 30:13)

Not to put a stumbling block before a blind man (Leviticus 19:14)

To recognize others distraught with burdens (Deuteronomy 22:4)

Whereas we, today's people, are constantly confronted with being wrong time and again, the Jews of more than 3,000 years ago were truly ahead of their time!

2. Whoa.
Translation: This is pretty outdated.
With that said, there are many mitzvot which are simply irrelevant today, such as:

To burn a city that has turned to idol worship (Deuteronomy 13:17)

Not to be afraid of killing the false prophet (Deuteronomy 18:22)

Not to attempt to engage the dead in conversation (Deuteronomy 18:11)

Break the neck of a calf by a stream following an unsolved murder (Deuteronomy 21:4)

Purchase a Hebrew slave in accordance with the prescribed laws (Exodus 21:2)

I guess it only makes sense that, out of 613 commandments, a few of them would no longer be relevant more than 3,000 years later…

3. Wowww.
Translation: The symbolism here is impeccably relevant today.
I was incredibly surprised at just how many of the 613 commandments carry so much symbolism in today's day and age. Namely, these ten:

1. Not to put a stumbling block before a blind man (Leviticus 19:14)

In other words: Refrain from intentionally giving advice or performing an act which will be detrimental to another person and beneficial to yourself.

2. To ensure that his scales and weights are accurate (Leviticus 19:36)

In other words: Be honest and exact in what you offer to other people.

"The punishment for unjust measures is more severe than the punishment for immorality, for the latter is a sin against God only, the former against one's fellow man," Maimonides wrote.1

3. Not to destroy fruit trees even during the siege (Deuteronomy 20:19)

In other words: Do not make a situation worse when things aren't going your way.

4. Not to eat fruit of a tree during its first three years (Leviticus 19:23)

In other words: When starting something new, continue to cultivate it for a prolonged period of time before extracting what you want.

5. Not to allow pitfalls and obstacles to remain on your property (Deuteronomy 22:8)

In other words: Take responsibility for your bad choices, behaviors, and actions. Keep your side of the street clean.

6. Not to have too much silver and gold if you are the king (Deuteronomy 17:17)

In other words: Take what you need, not what you want. Do not over-indulge.

7. Not to panic and retreat during battle (Deuteronomy 20:3)

In other words: Face your fears and challenges head on.

8. Not to bow down on smooth stone (Leviticus 26:1)

In other words: Do not seek the easy, more comfortable path.

9. To leave a corner of the field uncut for the poor (Leviticus 19:10)

In other words: Offer some of your possessions to those less fortunate than you.

10. Not to dwell permanently in Egypt (Deuteronomy 17:16)

In other words: Jews ought to remember that the Diaspora, while enjoyable and beneficial for many, is not their home. Israel is.

The end.