

(c)Dr Russell Jay Hendel; Jun 2026

VERSES: Gn26-05a, Gn26-05b, Gn26-05c, Gn26-05d, Gn26-05e,

TABLE: SYNONYMS FOR *COMMANDMENTS*

There is a famous Talmudic dictum, “The Patriarchs observed all Torah commandments.” This has led to speculation on what this comment means: After all, Jacob the Patriarch married two sisters which is a violation of the biblical prohibition of marrying two sisters. Ramban gives three possible interpretations:

- #1) Abraham obeyed prophetic orders and encouraged others to do so
- #2) Abraham obeyed all Noachide commandments (which are the part of the Torah that existed at his time)
- #3) Abraham knew the Torah prohibitions through prophecy and observed them.

Based on the Rashi below I suggest a 4th approach:

- #4) Abraham observed the *categories* of commandments including the need to create rabbinic fences to prevent accidental violation, and including reformulation of the commandments into principle-driven ideas.

Rashi ID	Synonym for Commandment	Meaning	Rashi Examples	My further examples / comments
Gn26-05a	My Voice (Qol)	<i>Voice of God</i> = Prophecy	<i>When I tested Abraham (with asking him to offer his son)</i>	
Gn26-05b, Lv18-30a*	Guardings (mishmereth)	Biblical word for Rabbinic ordinances preventing accidental violation of laws	It is rabbinically prohibited to wash a table with a wet rag on Shabbos because you might end up wringing the water out of it which is biblically prohibited	
Gn26-05c	Commandments (Mitzvoth)	“Rational commandments: that is, commandments which if not commanded by God we would enact anyway such as the prohibition against murder and theft”	Prohibition against murder and theft	
Gn26-	Statutes	Rashi gives 3	Prohibition of	Note: An

<p>05d Lv18-04b, Lv19-19a, Nu19-02a Nu09-03a,</p>	<p>(ChuQiM)</p>	<p>characterizations #1) Laws without apparent reasons #2) Laws that those outside Judaism tease us on, “This is a requirement of your religion? What do you think would happen if you don’t do them #3) “Decrees of the King, God” (I commanded these; you shouldn’t speculate on them)</p>	<p>eating ham; Prohibition of wearing garments made of wool and linen (Sha’atnez)</p>	<p>American law like “Thanksgiving holiday” is not really a law without reason; rather it is a symbolic law done to reinforce values. The prohibition of eating ham, symbolically affirms, for example, that I should not behave like a pig. Thus while having a reason the reason is personal rather than inter-social.</p>
<p>Gn26-05e</p>	<p>Oral laws (Toroth)</p>	<p>I think Torah or Toroth is best translated as <i>principles</i> coming from the root <i>hey-resh-hey</i> meaning <i>pregnant</i> and corresponds to the English idioms, <i>seed of an idea</i>. A good example of <i>principles</i> are the unkosher birds: The bible only lists them while the Rabbis gave underlying characteristics unifying them. Similarly throughout the Talmud, the oral law, Biblical laws are brought down to principles: e.g. The Talmud explains the biblical category of <i>fire damage</i> as <i>any damage that travels and damages</i> so that it would include a heavy ball rolling and causing damage.</p>		<p>. A good example of <i>principles</i> are the unkosher birds: The bible only lists them while the Rabbis gave underlying characteristics unifying them. Similarly throughout the Talmud, the oral law, Biblical laws are brought down to principles: e.g. The Talmud explains the biblical category of <i>fire damage</i> as <i>any damage that travels and</i></p>

				<i>damages</i> so that it would include a heavy ball rolling and causing damage.
--	--	--	--	--
