Law Came In: Chronological Promise vs Sinai Covenant Word Study

August 12, 2026

Word study · Promise vs Law

Law Came In: *Promise vs Sinai Covenant*

Sixteen passages from Abraham through Paul — promise grammar first, conditional Law later.

Jump to a section

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- Chronological timeline
- Before & after Sinai: murmuring
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- Why the shift?

Reading guide: Use the jump links below · expand any ▸ accordion for verses and notes · tap a **word chip** to jump to the Hebrew/Greek entry · **gold highlights** mark load-bearing phrases.

Thesis

Thesis: God’s original basis for relationship with humanity was **promise**, sealed unilaterally and received by **faith** (Genesis 12, 15, 17). The **conditional, law-based covenant** was introduced later, at Sinai — and the people themselves accepted its terms in their own words: *“all that the LORD hath spoken we will do”* (Exodus 19:8; 24:3, 7). Paul later describes the Law in Greek as something that **“came in alongside”** (Rom 5:20, *pareisēlthen*) and was **“added”** (Gal 3:19, *prosetethē*) — grammar that marks it as a secondary, temporary addition, not the original foundation.

Genesis 15 (promise) vs Exodus 19 (condition)

Promise — Genesis 15

- God alone walks through the pieces; Abraham is asleep
- Verbs: **I will** — unilateral
- Righteousness credited by faith (15:6)
- Obligation rests on God alone

Condition — Exodus 19

- People vow: **“All that the LORD hath spoken we will do”**
- Grammar shifts to *im* (if) — conditional
- Blessing tied to obedience (19:5–6)
- Bilateral, performance-based covenant

*Normal covenant ritual: both parties walk between the pieces. In Genesis __, **only God passes through** while Abraham sleeps — the oath rests on God alone, not mutual performance.*

Chronological timeline

Sixteen passages from Abraham through Paul — promise grammar first, conditional Law later.

Promise (Abraham)

Egypt (before Sinai)

Sinai (the condition)

New Testament commentary

*Galatians 3: th_ **promise** to Abraham stays the foundation; th_ **Law** was added alongside 430 years later and cannot disannul it.*

Before & after Sinai: murmuring

Claim being tested

Even earlier than the wilderness, the patriarchs themselves lied, deceived, and endangered others for selfish reasons — Abraham twice, Isaac once, Jacob repeatedly — and God protected and blessed them anyway. Then between Egypt and Sinai, Israel murmured and even spoke against Moses and God repeatedly — yet **no one died**, and each complaint was met with provision. **After Sinai**, the same kind of murmuring begins producing plagues, fire, and death. Deuteronomy 9:7–8 confirms rebellion ran the whole way through — but Horeb (Sinai) is singled out as the place God was provoked “to have destroyed” them.

Even earlier — the patriarchs’ own moral failures, met with protection

Note the difference in kind

The wilderness incidents below are the people’s *words* against God and Moses. These patriarchal incidents are worse in one sense — actual deception and endangering others for personal gain — yet the outcome is the same shape: no rebuke from God at all in Genesis 12 or 26, and in every case, blessing or protection follows directly on the heels of the failure.

Egypt → Sinai (Exodus 14–20)

0 deaths

4 recorded murmuring incidents (Red Sea, Marah, Wilderness of Sin, Rephidim) — every one answered with deliverance or provision.

After Sinai (Exodus 32 – Numbers 25)

~42,950+ deaths

From explicitly numbered incidents alone (3,000 + 250 + 14,700 + 24,000), not counting unnumbered plagues/fire, nor the full Exodus generation’s 40-year death sentence (Num 14).

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%%{init: {"theme": "base", "themeVariables": {"background": "transparent", "line
stateDiagram-v2
    direction TB
    [*] --> PromiseEra: Abraham to wilderness
    PromiseEra --> Murmur1: People complain
```

```
    Murmur1 --> Provision: Manna water deliverance
    Provision --> PromiseEra: Zero deaths recorded

    PromiseEra --> Sinai: Exodus 19 vow plus Law
    Sinai --> LawEra

    LawEra --> Murmur2: Same kind of complaint
    Murmur2 --> Judgment: Fire plague death
    Judgment --> LawEra

    class PromiseEra,Provision promise
    class Sinai,LawEra,Murmur2,Judgment law
    class Murmur1 promise

classDef promise fill:#bbf7d0,stroke:#16a34a,color:#14532d
classDef law fill:#fecaca,stroke:#991b1b,color:#991b1b
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```

Same complaint — different covenant era. Before Sinai, murmuring is answered with provision and no recorded deaths; after Sinai, the same pattern triggers judgment.

Before Sinai — murmured, and were blessed

After Sinai — murmured, and many died

Lifespan: Adam to Moses

Claim being tested

Every named lifespan from Adam through Moses' own generation is **above 120 years** — Genesis 6:3's stated ceiling ("his days shall be an hundred and twenty years"). Moses himself is the first person in the Bible recorded to die at exactly 120 (Deuteronomy 34:7). After Moses, recorded lifespans drop below 120 and keep falling — Joshua 110, Eli 98, David about 70 — arriving at Psalm 90:10's "threescore years and ten."

Bar chart (age ÷ 1000)

Name	Era	Age (bar ÷1000)	Years	Reference
Adam	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	??????????????????	930	Gen 5:5

Name	Era	Age (bar ÷1000)	Years	Reference
Seth	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	??????????????????	912	Gen 5:8
Enos	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	??????????????????	905	Gen 5:11
Cainan	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	??????????????????	910	Gen 5:14
Mahalaleel	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	??????????????????	895	Gen 5:17
Jared	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	??????????????????	962	Gen 5:20
Enoch *	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	??????????????????	365	Gen 5:23
Methuselah	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	??????????????????	969	Gen 5:27
Lamech	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	??????????????????	777	Gen 5:31
Noah	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	??????????????????	950	Gen 9:29
Shem	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	??????????????????	600	Gen 11:10–11
Arphaxad	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	??????????????????	438	Gen 11:12–13
Salah	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	??????????????????	433	Gen 11:14–15

Name	Era	Age (bar ÷1000)	Years	Reference
Eber	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	??????????????????	464	Gen 11:16–17
Peleg	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	??????????????????	239	Gen 11:18–19
Reu	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	??????????????????	239	Gen 11:20–21
Serug	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	??????????????????	230	Gen 11:22–23
Nahor	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	??????????????????	148	Gen 11:24–25
Terah	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	??????????????????	205	Gen 11:32
Abraham	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	??????????????????	175	Gen 25:7
Isaac	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	??????????????????	180	Gen 35:28
Jacob	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	??????????????????	147	Gen 47:28
Joseph	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	??????????????????	110	Gen 50:26

Name	Era	Age (bar ÷1000)	Years	Reference
Levi	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	??????????????????	137	Exod 6:16
Kohath	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	??????????????????	133	Exod 6:18
Amram	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	??????????????????	137	Exod 6:20
Moses	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	??????????????????	120	Deut 34:7
Aaron	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	??????????????????	123	Num 33:39
Joshua	After Moses	??????????????????	110	Josh 24:29
Eli	After Moses	??????????????????	98	1 Sam 4:15
David	After Moses	??????????????????	70	2 Sam 5:4; 1 Kings 2:11

Reference line: Genesis 6:3 — 120 years (Moses is the first recorded death at exactly 120).

Full lifespan table

Name	Era	Reference	Age at death	Note
Adam	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	Gen 5:5	930	

Name	Era	Reference	Age at death	Note
Seth	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	Gen 5:8	912	
Enos	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	Gen 5:11	905	
Cainan	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	Gen 5:14	910	
Mahalaleel	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	Gen 5:17	895	
Jared	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	Gen 5:20	962	
Enoch *	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	Gen 5:23	365	— Not a normal death — “he was not; for God took him” (5:24). Shown for genealogical completeness, not as a natural lifespan.
Methuselah	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	Gen 5:27	969	— The longest recorded human lifespan in the Bible.
Lamech	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	Gen 5:31	777	
Noah	Pre-Flood (Genesis 5)	Gen 9:29	950	
Shem	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	Gen 11:10–11	600	— The first sharp drop after the Flood — from Noah’s 950 to 600 in one generation.

Name	Era	Reference	Age at death	Note
Arphaxad	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	Gen 11:12–13	438	
Salah	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	Gen 11:14–15	433	
Eber	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	Gen 11:16–17	464	
Peleg	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	Gen 11:18–19	239	
Reu	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	Gen 11:20–21	239	
Serug	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	Gen 11:22–23	230	
Nahor	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	Gen 11:24–25	148	

Name	Era	Reference	Age at death	Note
Terah	Post-Flood decline (Genesis 11)	Gen 11:32	205	
Abraham	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	Gen 25:7	175	
Isaac	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	Gen 35:28	180	
Jacob	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	Gen 47:28	147	
Joseph	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	Gen 50:26	110	
Levi	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	Exod 6:16	137	
Kohath	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	Exod 6:18	133	
Amram	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	Exod 6:20	137	— Moses' father — still comfortably above 120.

Name	Era	Reference	Age at death	Note
Moses (pivot)	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	Deut 34:7	120	— “His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (34:7) — yet he is the first person in the whole Bible recorded to die at exactly the number named in Genesis 6:3, centuries earlier: “his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.”
Aaron	Patriarchs & Levites to Moses	Num 33:39	123	— Moses’ brother, same generation — right at the same threshold.
Joshua	After Moses	Josh 24:29	110	— The first named figure after Moses’ generation — already below the 120 mark.
Eli	After Moses	1 Sam 4:15	98	
David	After Moses	2 Sam 5:4; 1 Kings 2:11	70	— Reigned 40 years, beginning at age 30 (2 Sam 5:4) — dying at almost exactly Psalm 90:10’s “threescore years and ten.”

Reading notes

1. Order along the axis is genealogical/birth order, not a strict calendar timeline — many of these lives overlap (Shem, for instance, was still alive during much of Abraham’s life). The chart shows generational decline, not a literal year-by-year line.

2. Enoch (*) is marked with a hatch pattern in the source study: his 365 years is not a natural death — Genesis 5:24 says “he was not; for God took him.” Included for

genealogical completeness, not as evidence of a shortened lifespan.

3. Genesis 6:3 is spoken centuries before it is fulfilled — lifespans stay well above 120 for many generations afterward (Noah 950, Shem 600, even Abraham's father Terah at 205). The verse reads less like an immediate cutoff and more like a long-range trajectory that lands, almost exactly, on Moses.

Hebrew & Greek word study

46 words — scan the index table, or expand each accordion for the full entry.

Term	Gloss	Language	References
Choreb	Horeb	Hebrew	Deut 5:2
Massah	testing, temptation	Hebrew	Exod 17:7
apistia	unbelief, faithlessness	Greek	Heb 3:19
berakah	blessing	Hebrew	Gen 12:2–3
berith	covenant	Hebrew	Gen 17:7; Exod 19:5; Deut 5:2
charis	grace, favor	Hebrew	John 1:17
chata'ah gedolah	a great sin	Hebrew	Gen 20:9
cheirographon	handwritten note / certificate of debt	Greek	Col 2:14
chesed	lovingkindness, steadfast love	Hebrew	Jer 31:3; Exod 34:6
chrēstotēs	goodness, kindness	Greek	Rom 2:4
dogma	decree, ordinance	Greek	Col 2:14
epangelia	promise	Greek	Gal 3:17–18; Heb 6:13

Term	Gloss	Language	References
gongyzete (root: gongyzō)	to murmur / grumble	Greek	1 Cor 10:10
he’emin	he believed / trusted	Hebrew	Gen 15:6
horkos	oath	Greek	Heb 6:13, 16–17
hypakoē	obedience	Greek	Rom 5:19
hēthel (root: hathal)	to mock, deceive	Hebrew	Gen 31:7
iddim	filthy / menstrual rags	Hebrew	Isa 64:6
im	if	Hebrew	Exod 19:5
karat berith	to cut a covenant	Hebrew	Gen 15:18
mirmah	deceit, treachery	Hebrew	Gen 27:35
na’aseh venishma	we will do and we will hear/obey	Hebrew	Exod 24:7 (cf. 19:8; 24:3)
ni’ets (verb na’ats)	to spurn, despise, provoke	Hebrew	Num 14:11, 23
nomos	law	Greek	John 1:17; Rom 5:20; Gal 3
olothreutēs	the destroyer	Greek	1 Cor 10:10
paidagōgos	child-guardian / custodian-slave	Greek	Gal 3:24–25
parabasis	transgression, overstepping	Greek	Gal 3:19
paraiteomai	to beg off, entreat to be excused	Greek	Heb 12:19
pareisēlthen	came in alongside / slipped in	Greek	Rom 5:20

Term	Gloss	Language	References
pistis	faith / trust	Greek	Gal 3:6–9
prosetethē	was added	Greek	Gal 3:19
qetzeph	wrath, fury	Hebrew	Num 16:46
riv	to strive, chide, contend	Hebrew	Exod 17:2 (place name Meribah)
segullah	treasured possession	Hebrew	Exod 19:5
sha’al	to ask / request	Hebrew	Deut 18:16 (‘desiredst’)
shama beqol	to hear/obey a voice	Hebrew	Exod 19:5
sperma	seed, offspring	Greek	Gal 3:16, 19
tardemah	deep sleep	Hebrew	Gen 15:12
telos	end, goal, completion	Greek	Rom 10:4
telunah (pl. telunot)	murmuring, complaint	Hebrew	Exod 16:7, 8, 9, 12
torah	instruction, teaching, law	Hebrew	Deut 4:13; throughout
tsa’aq	to cry out (in distress)	Hebrew	Exod 14:10
tsedaqah	righteousness	Hebrew	Gen 15:6
wayyichar aph	his anger burned / was kindled	Hebrew	Exod 32:10; Num 11:1, 10, 33; 12:9; 25:3
wayyillonu (root: lun / lin)	they murmured / grumbled	Hebrew	Exod 15:24; 16:2
zakar	to remember	Hebrew	Exod 2:24; 6:5

Hebrew (28 words)

Choreb · Horeb

Hebrew: □□□□

Transliteration: Choreb · **Gloss:** Horeb

References: Deut 5:2

Alternate name for Sinai, meaning ‘desolation/waste’ — the mountain where the conditional, Mosaic covenant (as distinct from the Abrahamic) was formally cut.

Massah · testing, temptation
Hebrew: □□□□□

Transliteration: Massah · **Gloss:** testing, temptation

References: Exod 17:7

From □□□□ (nasah, ‘to test’). Israel tested God by asking ‘is the LORD among us or not?’ — and God still provided water in response.

berakah · blessing
Hebrew: □□□□□□□

Transliteration: berakah · **Gloss:** blessing

References: Gen 12:2–3

From the root □□□ (to bless/kneel). Unconditional divine favor spoken over Abraham before any law existed.

berith · covenant
Hebrew: □□□□□□

Transliteration: berith · **Gloss:** covenant

References: Gen 17:7; Exod 19:5; Deut 5:2

The master term of the whole study. Note how its content changes: unconditional in Genesis (17:7 ‘I will establish’), conditional at Sinai (19:5 ‘if you will obey’).

charis · grace, favor
Hebrew: χάρις

Transliteration: charis · **Gloss:** grace, favor

References: John 1:17

Unmerited favor — paired with alētheia (‘truth’) as what ‘came to be’ (egeneto) through Christ, contrasted with what was merely ‘given’ (edothē) through Moses.

chata’ah gedolah · a great sin

Hebrew: □□□□□□ □□□□□□

Transliteration: chata’ah gedolah · **Gloss:** a great sin

References: Gen 20:9

Abimelech’s own words to Abraham — not God’s — naming what Abraham’s lie nearly caused. It is the pagan king, not the narrator or God, who calls it ‘sin’; God’s recorded action in the chapter is to protect Sarah and heal Abimelech’s household, not to judge Abraham.

chesed · lovingkindness, steadfast love

Hebrew: □□□□

Transliteration: chesed · **Gloss:** lovingkindness, steadfast love

References: Jer 31:3; Exod 34:6

God’s own covenant loyalty and goodness — the basis Jeremiah names for the New Covenant’s power to change hearts: ‘with lovingkindness have I drawn thee,’ not commandment-keeping. The same quality underlies every pre-Sinai ‘I will bless.’

he’emin · he believed / trusted

Hebrew: □□□□□□

Transliteration: he’emin · **Gloss:** he believed / trusted

References: Gen 15:6

Hiphil form of □□□ (aman, root of ‘amen’), meaning to consider firm, to trust, to lean one’s full weight on. Abraham ‘amened’ God’s word — the origin of the New Testament’s pistis (faith).

hēthel (root: hathal) · to mock, deceive

Hebrew: □□□□

Transliteration: hēthel (root: hathal) · **Gloss:** to mock, deceive

References: Gen 31:7

Jacob’s own word for what Laban did to him — ‘your father hath deceived me… but God suffered him not to hurt me.’ Positions God as protector of the deceived party, without the text ever framing Jacob’s own past deceptions as grounds for God to withhold that protection.

iddim · filthy / menstrual rags
Hebrew: □□□□□□

Transliteration: iddim · **Gloss:** filthy / menstrual rags

References: Isa 64:6

Isaiah’s own word for human righteousness apart from grace — a garment stained with the ritual impurity of menstruation. Not merely ‘imperfect’ but ritually disqualifying, which is why Paul’s verdict on law-keeping is so absolute and repeated.

im · if
Hebrew: □□

Transliteration: im · **Gloss:** if

References: Exod 19:5

The Hebrew conditional particle. Its appearance in 19:5 is the precise grammatical turning point where covenant language shifts from unilateral promise to bilateral condition.

karat berith · to cut a covenant
Hebrew: □□□□□ □□□□□□

Transliteration: karat berith · **Gloss:** to cut a covenant

References: Gen 15:18

Idiom from the ritual of cutting animals in half; both parties would normally walk between the pieces as a self-curse oath. In Genesis 15 only the theophany (furnace/lamp) passes through — God alone takes the oath.

mirmah · deceit, treachery
Hebrew: □□□□□□

Transliteration: mirmah · **Gloss:** deceit, treachery

References: Gen 27:35

Isaac’s own word for what Jacob did to obtain the blessing — direct, unflattering, and undenied by the text. Yet no punishment from God follows; God’s next recorded word to Jacob (Gen 28:15) is an unconditional promise, not a rebuke.

na’aseh venishma · we will do and we will hear/obey

Hebrew: □□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□

Transliteration: na’aseh venishma · **Gloss:** we will do and we will hear/obey

References: Exod 24:7 (cf. 19:8; 24:3)

Israel’s own self-binding vow — first-person plural imperfects of □□□ (asah, ‘to do’) and □□□ (shama, ‘to hear’). This is the people’s spoken acceptance that converts Sinai into a performance-conditioned covenant. Contrast: at Sinai the PEOPLE say ‘we will’; at Abraham’s covenant only GOD said ‘I will.’

ni’ets (verb na’ats) · to spurn, despise, provoke

Hebrew: □□□□

Transliteration: ni’ets (verb na’ats) · **Gloss:** to spurn, despise, provoke

References: Num 14:11, 23

God’s own word for what the spies’ rebellion did: ‘How long will this people provoke [na’ats] me?’ Used again in 14:23 — the generation that provoked God this way would not see the land.

qetzeph · wrath, fury

Hebrew: □□□□

Transliteration: qetzeph · **Gloss:** wrath, fury

References: Num 16:46

From □□□□ (qatsaph, ‘to be wrathful’). Named explicitly as having ‘gone out from the LORD’ during Korah’s rebellion, triggering the plague that killed 14,700.

riv · to strive, chide, contend

Hebrew: □□□

Transliteration: riv · **Gloss:** to strive, chide, contend

References: Exod 17:2 (place name Meribah)

A legal/adversarial term — ‘to bring a grievance.’ Source of the place-name Meribah, ‘strife.’ Sharper than lun, yet still answered with water from the rock, not death.

segullah · treasured possession
Hebrew: □□□□□□□

Transliteration: segullah · **Gloss:** treasured possession

References: Exod 19:5

A king’s personal, private treasure (attested in Akkadian sikiltu). The reward offered for the conditional obedience of 19:5.

sha’al · to ask / request
Hebrew: □□□□□

Transliteration: sha’al · **Gloss:** to ask / request

References: Deut 18:16 (‘desiredst’)

Moses recalls that the people themselves requested a mediator rather than hearing God’s voice directly — root of the word for ‘Saul,’ the one ‘asked for.’

shama beqol · to hear/obey a voice
Hebrew: □□□□□ □□□□□□

Transliteration: shama beqol · **Gloss:** to hear/obey a voice

References: Exod 19:5

Literally ‘to hear in the voice of’ — a Hebrew idiom for obedience. The condition God poses: obedience in exchange for treasured-people status.

tardemah · deep sleep
Hebrew: □□□□□□□□□

Transliteration: tardemah · **Gloss:** deep sleep

References: Gen 15:12

The same word used for Adam’s sleep in Gen 2:21. Abraham is a passive, unconscious party to this covenant — he contributes no vow, no walking, no oath.

telunah (pl. telunot) · murmuring, complaint
Hebrew: □□□□□□□

Transliteration: telunah (pl. telunot) · **Gloss:** murmuring, complaint

References: Exod 16:7, 8, 9, 12

The noun form of lun. God says four times in one chapter, ‘I have heard your murmurings’ — and responds with manna and quail, not punishment. Contrast with its near-absence of consequence here versus the plagues that follow the same word-family after Sinai (implied) in Numbers.

torah · instruction, teaching, law
Hebrew: □□□□□□

Transliteration: torah · **Gloss:** instruction, teaching, law

References: Deut 4:13; throughout

From □□□ (yarah, ‘to point/direct/teach’) — not primarily ‘law’ in the sense of legislation, but directive teaching. Still, Paul’s Greek nomos flattens it toward ‘law’ as a legal system in his argument.

tsa’aq · to cry out (in distress)
Hebrew: □□□□

Transliteration: tsa’aq · **Gloss:** to cry out (in distress)

References: Exod 14:10

A cry of fear/distress at the Red Sea — not yet the technical ‘murmuring’ root (lun). Even so, it is met with total deliverance, not judgment.

tsedaqah · righteousness
Hebrew: □□□□□□

Transliteration: tsedaqah · **Gloss:** righteousness

References: Gen 15:6

Credited (chashab — ‘reckoned, imputed like an accounting entry’) to Abraham on the basis of trust alone, 430 years before Sinai (per Gal 3:17).

wayyichar aph · his anger burned / was kindled
Hebrew: □□□□□□ □□

Transliteration: wayyichar aph · **Gloss:** his anger burned / was kindled

References: Exod 32:10; Num 11:1, 10, 33; 12:9; 25:3

Literally ‘his nose burned’ — the standard Hebrew idiom for God’s anger (aph, ‘nose/anger,’ from the flaring of nostrils). This exact phrase is essentially absent from the Exodus 14–17 murmuring accounts, but becomes a recurring formula immediately after Sinai.

wayyillonu (root: lun / lin) · they murmured / grumbled
Hebrew: □□□□□□□□□□

Transliteration: wayyillonu (root: lun / lin) · **Gloss:** they murmured / grumbled

References: Exod 15:24; 16:2

From □□□ / □□□ (lun/lin). The Bible’s standard verb for Israel’s wilderness grumbling. Used repeatedly before Sinai — every occurrence pre-Sinai is answered with provision.

zakar · to remember
Hebrew: □□□□

Transliteration: zakar · **Gloss:** to remember

References: Exod 2:24; 6:5

Covenant-memory in Hebrew is active and relational, not mere recollection — it triggers God’s action to deliver, based on a prior promise, not present obedience.

Greek (18 words)

apistia · unbelief, faithlessness
Greek: ἀπιστία

Transliteration: apistia · **Gloss:** unbelief, faithlessness

References: Heb 3:19

Hebrews’ diagnosis for why the wilderness generation ‘could not enter in’ — the negative mirror of pistis (faith), the very word used of Abraham’s trust in Genesis 15:6.

cheirographon · handwritten note / certificate of debt
Greek: χειρόγραφον

Transliteration: cheirographon · **Gloss:** handwritten note / certificate of debt

References: Col 2:14

Standard Hellenistic legal term for a signed IOU. Paul pictures the Law's charges against us as a debt-document — bearing, in effect, humanity's own signature (echoing Israel's na'aseh, 'we will do,' at Sinai) — cancelled and nailed to the cross.

chrēstotēs · goodness, kindness
Greek: χρηστότης

Transliteration: chrēstotēs · **Gloss:** goodness, kindness

References: Rom 2:4

Paul's word for the divine quality that 'leadeth thee to repentance' — goodness as the cause of a right response, not its reward. This is the same goodness-first logic that governed Abraham's justification by promise, before the Law arrived.

dogma · decree, ordinance
Greek: δόγμα

Transliteration: dogma · **Gloss:** decree, ordinance

References: Col 2:14

Plural dogmasin — the itemized legal requirements/ordinances that made up the 'debt' nailed to the cross.

epangelia · promise
Greek: ἐπαγγελία

Transliteration: epangelia · **Gloss:** promise

References: Gal 3:17–18; Heb 6:13

A pledge or announcement made unilaterally. Paul contrasts epangelia directly with nomos (law) as two distinct bases for inheritance in Galatians 3.

gongyzete (root: gongyzō) · to murmur / grumble
Greek: γογγύζετε

Transliteration: gongyzete (root: gongyzō) · **Gloss:** to murmur / grumble

References: 1 Cor 10:10

The Greek verb Paul uses (an onomatopoeic word imitating a low grumbling sound) when he warns the church: 'neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.' The LXX uses the same root to translate Hebrew

lun in the wilderness narratives.

horkos · oath
Greek: ὅρκος

Transliteration: horkos · **Gloss:** oath

References: Heb 6:13, 16–17

God swears the oath Himself, ‘because he could swear by no greater’ — the guarantee rests entirely on God’s own character.

hypakoē · obedience
Greek: ὑπακοή

Transliteration: hypakoē · **Gloss:** obedience

References: Rom 5:19

‘By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.’ Paul locates the obedience that makes people righteous in Christ, not in the many — the same structure as Genesis 15, where God alone (not Abraham) walked through the pieces and bore the obligation.

nomos · law
Greek: νόμος

Transliteration: nomos · **Gloss:** law

References: John 1:17; Rom 5:20; Gal 3

Greek legal/customary term the LXX and NT use to render Hebrew torah — but nomos leans more heavily toward codified legal statute than torah’s broader ‘instruction.’

olothreutēs · the destroyer
Greek: ὀλοθρευτής

Transliteration: olothreutēs · **Gloss:** the destroyer

References: 1 Cor 10:10

Named agent of death in Paul’s commentary on the wilderness judgments — echoing the destroying angel of Exodus 12 and the plagues of Numbers.

paidagōgos · child-guardian / custodian-slave

Greek: παιδαγωγός

Transliteration: paidagōgos · **Gloss:** child-guardian / custodian-slave

References: Gal 3:24–25

A household slave (not the father, not the teacher) assigned to walk a freeborn boy to school and enforce discipline until he came of age. A vivid, deliberately temporary and subordinate role — never the source of the child's inheritance.

parabasis · transgression, overstepping
Greek: παράβασις

Transliteration: parabasis · **Gloss:** transgression, overstepping

References: Gal 3:19

Literally 'a stepping across' (para + bainō). The Law's stated purpose (charin — 'for the sake of') is to make transgression visible/countable, not to generate righteousness.

paraiteomai · to beg off, entreat to be excused
Greek: παραιτέομαι

Transliteration: paraiteomai · **Gloss:** to beg off, entreat to be excused

References: Heb 12:19

The NT's verb for Israel's plea at Sinai — 'they intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more.' A verb of active refusal/request, not passive reception.

pareisēlthen · came in alongside / slipped in
Greek: παρεισῆλθεν

Transliteration: pareisēlthen · **Gloss:** came in alongside / slipped in

References: Rom 5:20

Aorist of pareiserchomai (para 'alongside' + eis 'into' + erchomai 'to come'). Paul's verb of choice for the Law's entrance — the same word-family used in Galatians 2:4 for false brothers who 'came in privily' to spy out liberty. It marks secondary, additive entry, not foundational origin.

pistis · faith / trust
Greek: πίστις

Transliteration: pistis · **Gloss:** faith / trust

References: Gal 3:6–9

The Greek term Paul consistently uses to translate the dynamic of Genesis 15:6 — trust that is credited as righteousness apart from law-keeping.

prosetethē · was added
Greek: προσετέθη

Transliteration: prosetethē · **Gloss:** was added

References: Gal 3:19

Aorist passive of prostithēmi (‘to add to, place additionally’). Grammatically requires something pre-existing to be added TO — here, the prior promise/covenant with Abraham.

sperma · seed, offspring
Greek: σπέρμα

Transliteration: sperma · **Gloss:** seed, offspring

References: Gal 3:16, 19

Paul insists the promise’s ‘seed’ is singular — Christ — making the Law a parenthesis between the promise given and the promise fulfilled.

telos · end, goal, completion
Greek: τέλος

Transliteration: telos · **Gloss:** end, goal, completion

References: Rom 10:4

Carries both ‘termination’ and ‘intended destination/fulfillment’ — Christ is where the Law’s custodial arc was always heading, and where its jurisdiction over believers ends.

Why the shift? Text, not just pattern

Deuteronomy 9:7–8 — Moses names Horeb directly

> *“Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness… ye have been rebellious against the LORD. Also in Horeb ye provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry with you to have destroyed you.”*

Moses’ own summary: rebellion happened the whole way, from the day they left Egypt — but Horeb/Sinai is the place he singles out as where God was provoked “to have destroyed” the nation entirely (referring to the Golden Calf).

The deeper hinge: blessed by God’s goodness, not by my performance

> *“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness [chrēstotēs] and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Romans 2:4)*
>
> *“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience [hypakoē] of one shall many be made righteous.” (Romans 5:19)*

Before Sinai, every “I will bless” is unconditional. Abraham is blessed, and Israel is delivered and fed in the wilderness, purely because of who God is — His chesed, His own goodness and faithfulness — not because of what the people had done to earn it. In Genesis 15, it is God alone who walks through the pieces and binds Himself; Abraham is asleep. The Law reframes the mechanism itself: Deuteronomy 28 states blessing and curse as a direct function of obedience — “if thou shalt hearken diligently… blessings shall come on thee” (28:1–2), but “if thou wilt not hearken… curses shall come upon thee” (28:15). Blessing is no longer God’s goodness reaching down to the undeserving; it is now conditioned on how good the people themselves are — which is exactly why failure now carries a curse where before it carried none. Paul states the true order explicitly: God’s goodness produces repentance — not the reverse. And where righteousness is finally secured for good, Romans 5:19 locates the decisive obedience in one man (Christ), not in “many” — the very same structure as Genesis 15, where God alone bore the obligation while Abraham slept. The Law’s “if you obey” was always the exception in the story, not the rule.

Before Sinai, blessing flows from God’s goodness unconditionally; after Deuteronomy 28 it depends on your obedience. Romans 2:4 restores the true order.

Why decline, not just one event — the Law's own built-in verdict

> *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags [iddim]…" (Isaiah 64:6)*
>
> *"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20)*
>
> *"…by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Galatians 2:16)*
>
> *"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse…" (Galatians 3:10)*

The mechanism is not a single incident like the Golden Calf — it is the conditional covenant itself. Once blessing is tied to "how good you are" (Deuteronomy 28:1–2, 15), the outcome depends on a standard human obedience cannot actually meet. Isaiah names what that obedience is worth: "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags [iddim]" — not merely imperfect, but ritually disqualifying. Paul draws the direct legal conclusion, repeatedly, across three different letters. Once the standard becomes "your own obedience," the verdict is set in advance — not because God grew arbitrarily harsher after Sinai, but because the Law was never a standard flesh could meet. That is why the wilderness deaths, the drop below 120, and Psalm 90's wrath all belong to the same stretch of history — not one punitive event, but a whole covenant built on a condition nobody could satisfy.

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    B -->|Isaiah 64:6 filthy rags| C["Verdict set in advance"]
    C --> D["Wilderness deaths"]
    C --> E["Lifespan drops below 120"]
    C --> F["Psalm 90 wrath — 70 to 80 years"]
    G["Golden Calf"] -.->|one incident not root cause| A
    H["Paul — Rom 3:20 Gal 2:16 Gal 3:10"] --> C

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Decline is structural: once the covenant conditions blessing on human obedience, the verdict follows — wilderness deaths, shortened lifespans, and Psalm 90's wrath all

belong to the same Law-shaped era.

Psalm 90 — "threescore years and ten" (superscription: "A Prayer of Moses the man of God")

> *"For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled… For all our days are passed away in thy wrath… The days of our years are threescore years and ten [70]; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years [80], yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."*

The wrath language surrounding "70 to 80 years" (vv. 7, 9, 11) is not general human-mortality talk — scan the narrative before Sinai and it isn't there. Toward the collective congregation, God's dealings up to that point are described only as deliverance, provision, and "I will" promises; the first time His anger is described as kindled against the whole people is Exodus 32:10, at the Golden Calf — the first instance, not the sole cause. Psalm 90, traditionally Moses' own reflection on the Numbers 14 generation dying off under that same wrath, reads as a wilderness-judgment psalm through and through — its "70 to 80 years" sits inside, not beside, that wrath, and inside the whole Law-shaped era the card above describes.

Psalm 90's 70 to 80 years sits inside post-Sinai wrath language – not general mortality talk before Horeb.

1 Corinthians 10:10–11 & Hebrews 3:16–19 — the New Testament's own commentary

> *"Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer [olothreutēs]… these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition." (1 Cor 10:10–11)*
>
> *"With whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness?… they could not enter in because of unbelief [apistia]." (Heb 3:17, 19)*

Paul uses the Greek verb gongyzō — the LXX's own translation of Hebrew lun — as a direct warning label on the post-Sinai deaths. Hebrews names the root cause as apistia, unbelief — the negative mirror of Abraham's pistis in Genesis 15:6.

Hebrews names apistia (unbelief) as the wilderness root – the mirror of Abraham's pistis in Genesis 15:6.

Careful wording — precision on two points

1. The Amalek attack (Exodus 17:8–16) is included for completeness — confirmed: the text never calls it God's judgment on Israel for murmuring. It reads as an external military assault answered with victory, not a divine strike on Israel.

2. Psalm 90's wrath language (vv. 7, 9, 11) is real and, as shown above, matches the post-Sinai pattern rather than anything said of Israel before Horeb — that part is well-supported by the text itself. No single verse states the mechanism outright in one sentence — but it isn't speculation either: Paul's own repeated, explicit doctrine supplies it (Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16; Gal 3:10), backed by Isaiah 64:6's "filthy rags." So the more precise claim is not "the Golden Calf caused the decline" but "the conditional covenant did" — once blessing depended on an obedience nobody could actually render, decline was the structural result of the Law itself, not a one-off penalty for one incident. Genesis 6:3's 120-year ceiling, set centuries earlier, is where that number first appears — the front edge of a Law-shaped trajectory, not a separate coincidence.

The precise claim: decline follows the conditional covenant structure, not a single Golden Calf incident.
