A NOTE TO PARENTS

If I were rich, I’d have the time that I lack
   to sit in the synagogue and pray,
And maybe have a seat by the eastern wall;
And I’d discuss the holy books with the learned men
   seven hours every day:
                       That would be the sweetest thing of all ...

These lines from *Fiddler on the Roof* communicate the intensity of Judaism’s love of the Torah, the law of God. As in today’s Psalm, “their delight is in the law of the Lord; they meditate on it day and night.” As Christians, our view of the law of Israel is highly colored by Jesus’ condemnation of the arrogant and elitist legalism he perceived in the religious power structure of his time. We tend to lose sight of the joy with which the Hebrew Scriptures approach God’s statutes and commandments. Jesus shared this joy: he did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it. He knew that the poor and ignorant, as well as the rich and learned, hunger for the ravishing “sweetness” of God’s law; the clear, energizing vision of holiness that gives life to the rules and commandments.

Children have plenty of experience with both these ways of encountering the Law, or the “rules” that govern their lives. The rules may be a prison for them, a weapon that adults use against them and they use against each other ... or they may be a liberating vision of goodness and right. Ask your child to name some of the rules in your household. Probably the answer will range all the way from “Hang up your pajamas when you get dressed” and “No dessert till you finish your vegetables,” to “No hitting, ever.” You might try asking what is the single most important rule. When you’ve heard your child’s suggestions (and they might surprise you!), you can use Jesus’ summary of the most important laws of God as a model for expressing your own sense of the really basic, important principles in your family, the law that does not oppress but is “sweeter than honey.” And remember that any such rule is binding on the parents every bit as much as on the children! Pray together for help to keep your rule with love.

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In the Bible, there are many rules. They are called COMMANDMENTS, or LAWS.

Ten very famous ones are called the TEN COMMANDMENTS.

I. Worship God alone.
II. Do not kill.
III. Do not worship idols.
IV. Do not use God's name carelessly.
V. Be patient in marriage.
VI. Do not steal.
VII. Keep the Sabbath day holy.
VIII. Tell the truth.
IX. Honor your father and mother.
X. Do not long for others' possessions.

Jesus said that two commandments are greatest of all. One is:

LOVE GOD WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART

The second is: LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.

Jesus said, "All the other laws in the Bible come out of these two commandments."

The Bible tells us that God's laws are good and right. Draw a green healthy tree in the picture, to show that keeping God's laws makes us grow strong and good.

Happy are those who delight in the law of the Lord. They are like trees planted by streams of water.

Psalm 1:2-3