

Exodus 19:1-6, 20:1-7

19 At the third new moon after the Israelites had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day, they came into the wilderness of Sinai.² They had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain.³ Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites:⁴You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, ⁶but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.'

20 Then God spoke all these words:

2 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³you shall have no other gods before me.

4 You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth

generation of those who reject me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

7 You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Context

The 10 Commandments (also called the Decalogue) are a famous moral centerpiece for Jewish and Christian ethics. Even so, they are not widely understood in context: a revelation linked to the Exodus story, where God liberated the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. The God of the 10 commandments is a God who liberates, not restricts.

The first 3 commandments are focused on our human relationship to God ("tuning into God").

Big Idea

The 10 commandments are not rules to restrict us, they mark a **relationship that releases us.**

Quote

"God is neither a lawgiver nor an enforcer of law. Rather than 'an impersonal codex,' the Ten Commandments represent... the mark of a personal relationship each individual has with the divine."

- Leora Batnitzky,
(Commenting on the work of Jewish philosopher and theologian Martin Buber)

Reflect

1. Read the scripture passage carefully and slowly. What word or image stands out to you? Why?
2. When you hear the phrase “the 10 Commandments” what do you think of or feel?
3. Why do you think it matters that the 10 commandments are connected to the story of God’s liberation from slavery in Egypt?
4. What does it mean to “make an idol” and how might our culture do this today? How can we resist the idols around us?
5. The third commandment is not so much about profanity (“bad words” that are impolite) as they are about using God’s name for evil or destructive purposes. What are some ways we (or our culture) might “make wrongful use” of God’s name?
6. How might you better “tune into God” this week and into the future?

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