

March 3, 2024

Daily Reflections

Journeying through Lent



Center for Spiritual Development

WORDS THAT BIND US TO GOD AND EACH OTHER

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Today's First Reading

In those days, God delivered all these commandments:

"I, the LORD, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. You shall not have other gods besides me. You shall not carve idols for yourselves in the shape of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth; you shall not bow down before them or worship them. For I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their fathers' wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation; but bestowing mercy down to the thousandth generation on the children of those who love me and keep my commandments.

"You shall not take the name of the LORD, your God, in vain. For the LORD will not leave unpunished the one who takes his name in vain.

"Remember to keep holy the sabbath day. Six days you may labor and do all

your work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD, your God. No work may be done then either by you, or your son or daughter, or your male or female slave, or your beast, or by the alien who lives with you. In six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD has blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

“Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you.

“You shall not kill.

“You shall not commit adultery.

“You shall not steal.

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male or female slave, nor his ox or ass, nor anything else that belongs to him.”

EXODUS 20:1-17

Reflection

More accurately the translation of “commandments” is *Words or Sayings*. These regulations offer general statements that could be applied to a variety of situations, i.e., not stealing applies to a simple laborer committing theft from a neighbor as well as to a wealthy land owner stealing from the community.

“I am the LORD your God . . .” details God’s relationship to Israel. It is comparable to ancient Middle East treaties between kings and their vassals listing the obligations that bind them to each other. The Divine LORD and Israel represent overlord and servant. For Israel, belief in only one God suggests a prohibition against any worship of another god. Within the treaty imagery of the time, Israel is to serve only one divine Lord. They are bound to each other as well as to their One God who gives them protection.

The last five “words” govern human relations. There is a sense that honoring or respecting each other is an extension of divine respect. Human relationships are connected with Divine relationships. The community of Israel thrives within both.



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For Pondering

- Which of these "Words" sustain you in your daily existence?
- Which nourish your relationship with God? With other humans? With creation?
- Which of these "Words" challenge you? How do you respond?

For Prayer

*O God, may I hear your words spoken to me as I move through life.
May I know their guidance and experience their nourishment
now and forever.
Amen.*

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