

Exodus 20:1-17ⁱⁱ

Then God spoke all these words: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. 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. You 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, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. 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. Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. 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, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

ⁱⁱ About the First Reading: Exodus 20:1-17

The Ten Commandments set forth the duties of the Israelites to God and to those within the community. The commandments are covenant demands founded on their special relationship to God that specify ways that right relationships are endangered or violated. The commandments concerning human interrelationships have parallels in other ancient cultures, but those concerning the people's relationship to God are unique to the Old

Testament.

Verses 4-6 probably originally forbade physical representations of Yahweh, confirmed by the absence of such artifacts in excavations of Israelite sites even when idols of other gods are found. Verse 7 is not a prohibition against God's name in oaths, but against swearing falsely or misusing God's name for spells and incantations. This led eventually to a refusal among pious Jews to pronounce the sacred name of Yahweh at all. Verse 12 is directed more toward the responsibilities of grown children for the support of and respect for aged parents than toward the behavior of young children. Verse 13 prohibits murder, not capital punishment or warfare. "Covet" (v. 17) probably implies an attempt to acquire unlawfully ("defraud," Mark 10:19).