

Divine Commandments – The Decalogue: God's covenant with men through Moses

[Note: this year accent should be placed on learning the Ten Commandments, not on the historical event]

After the escape of the Hebrew people from the slavery of Egypt, Moses is called by God on Mount Sinai to give him the **Ten Commandments**, or **Precepts** allowing the people to become God's "chosen people" by fulfilling them, "priestly kingdom and holy nation."

When Moses came down from the mountain he told the people of God's will. The Hebrews replied, "We will be obedient and do everything the Lord said." And Moses brought the words of the people to the Lord. The Lord commanded Moses to prepare the people for the third day when God's Law would be made known. The Hebrews prepared themselves for the day by prayer and fasting.

On the third day, which was the fiftieth day from the Jewish Passover, that is, from the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt, a thick cloud covered the top of Mt. Sinai. Lightning flashed, thunder resounded, and a loud blaring sound rang out. Smoke rose from the mountain, and the whole mountain violently shook. Amidst these awesome signs of His presence, the Lord delivered His laws in the form of Ten Commandments.

Then God spoke these words before Moses:

1. I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and out the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me!
2. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. There are six days for labor, for doing all the work you have to do. When the seventh day comes, it is a day of rest, consecrated to the Lord your God.
5. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.
6. You shall not kill.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor's.

And the next day Moses offered God a bull as a sacrifice in the name of the people, and spoke the commandments of the Lord before them, and the Hebrews replied: "We will be obedient and do everything the Lord said." At God's command, Moses went up the mountain and stayed there forty days and forty nights without any food or drink. Then the Lord spoke with him and gave him the Ten Commandments, written by His hand, on two tables of stone, later called "the Table of the Law." The

Hebrew kept them with great reverence in a chest made of acacia wood and covered inside and out with gold, called the Ark of the Covenant. This chest was kept in holiness as a sign of their bond with God. Christians keep them in their hearts, fulfilling them day by day.

Through the Ten Commandments, God conveys the Hebrew, and through them to all of us, how does He wish us to behave. The ten divine commandments are also called “**The Decalogue**” (“deca” = ten; “logos” = commandment, word). Through the Decalogue, God tells people what are the rules of good behavior / good deeds, according to His holy will; rules that ensure people will have a peaceful cohabitation in this life, and be rewarded in the future eternal life. The Decalogue includes, in essence, the **people's duties to God (the first 4) and the duties to their peers (the last 6)**.

God wants everyone to fulfill His Commandments **freely, based on the trust in His word and promise** that those who follow them will have His rewards and blessings.

Exercise: the need for the Decalogue: until today, the Decalogue remains **a set of rules to follow for all people, of all times and places**, without which human society could not continue to exist. (e.g. how would the world be if no one would obey the commandment of not stealing or not killing?)