

# OLD TESTAMENT 1

## UNIT SIX ISRAEL AT SINAI

### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

- The Commandments outline a new way of life for Israel.
- They describe how faith is to be put into action.
- They presuppose the saving event; they do not make salvation possible.
- The commandments can be divided into 1-4 (obligations to God) and 5-10 (obligations to neighbours).
  
- I. YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS 'BEFORE ME'
  - A prohibition of involvement with nations devoted to other gods.
- II. YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FOR YOURSELF AN IDOL
  - Does not forbid idolatry (the first commandment has done that) but controls the way Yahweh is to be worshipped.

➤ III. YOU SHALL NOT MISUSE THE  
NAME OF GOD

- The use of the divine name was Israel's means of access to God, and so it must be used reverently.

➤ IV. REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY BY  
KEEPING IT HOLY

- This reminds us that the ideal of life is rest in God's presence.

➤ V. HONOUR YOUR FATHER AND  
MOTHER

- Not just submission to authority, but also care of parents by children and maintenance of faith passed on through generations.

➤ VI. YOU SHALL NOT KILL

- This includes murder, and refers to the unauthorized taking of life.

➤ VII. YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT  
ADULTERY

- Just as the previous commandment is to safeguard life, this is to safeguard marriage.

➤ VIII. YOU SHALL NOT STEAL

- May be a reference to kidnapping, the theft of a person as well as property.

## ➤ IX. YOU SHALL NOT GIVE FALSE TESTIMONY

- This is a reference to giving false evidence in a legal procedure rather than about lying in general.

## ➤ X. YOU SHALL NOT COVET

- Some suggest that this refers to taking steps to secure the object that is desired, as well as the desire itself.

# ISRAEL'S UNDERSTANDING OF LAW

## ➤ THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND THE COVENANT CODE

- Exodus gives a further set of social, civil and agricultural laws in chapters 21-23 –the 'covenant code'.
- The Ten Commandments are addressed directly to Israel; the covenant code is mediated through Moses.
- The covenant code is a social application of the general principles of the Ten Commandments.
- The Ten Commandments are fundamental principles of life in covenant with God.

- The covenant code would not continue beyond specific situations, the Ten Commandments are universal and timeless in their application.
- The Ten Commandments continue into the Christian era and reflect relationships which the new covenant also expresses.
- Most of the provisions of the covenant code do not directly apply beyond Old Testament Israel.

#### ➤ THE ROLE OF BIBLICAL LAW

- Law is an expression of the divine will and so all breaches of law are sins.
- The distinction between different kinds of laws is not known to Old Testament writers.

#### ➤ ISRAELITE LAW AND OTHER ANCIENT LAW CODES

- Israelite law establishes the sacredness of human life and does not have the focus on crimes against property seen in other societies.
- Israelite law was designed to fit individuals into the society of the Kingdom of God, not just into the social order they were a part of.

# ISRAEL'S APOSTASY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

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- Moses is called up onto the mountain and remains there for forty days, where he is given the plan for the tabernacle.
- When he comes down from the mountain he finds that an act of gross apostasy has been committed – a golden calf has been made and worshipped.
- Moses intercedes and averts God's wrath but God's immediate direct presence is denied to the people, Moses now has a more significant role as mediator.

## ➤ 'CHESSED': GOD'S COVENANT LOVE

- When the covenant between Israel and God is renewed in Exodus 34, the term 'chesed' is used.
- 'Chesed' comes to be used in reference to God's commitment to the covenant relationship.
- In human relationships it refers to something done for someone else on the basis of a close personal relationship.
- It is not an obligation but comes from a freely adopted sense of faithfulness.

# THE MEDIATORIAL ROLE OF MOSES

- The passage about the Sinai covenant concludes with the account of Moses' veil.
  - Moses' face was radiant after he had been in the presence of God, and so when he was not acting as mediator he wore a veil to cover his face.
  - In Exodus 20 the people heard the commandments directly – Moses' mediatorial role was not dominant at that time.
  - After the apostasy of Exodus 32, God could no longer communicate directly with Israel.
  - Moses' veil suggests that the full experience of the Sinai covenant is veiled from Israel, and will remain so until the veil is removed by Jesus.