

Summer Soulwork 2008
The Ten Commandments
Exodus 20:1-7
None Other Than Me
June 15

*Then God spoke these words;
I am the Lord your God,
who brought you out of Egypt,
out of the house of bondage;
you shall have no other gods before me. (Ex:20:1-3)*

Take the passage line by line. Consider and discuss the implications.

Note: The discussion questions derive from commentary in the *New Interpreter's Bible*.

The theophany of God to Moses is the focus of chapter 19. This sets the decalogue in the context of theophany, that is, of God's self-disclosure. What does this placement suggest?

The NIB discusses the decalogue as God's vision of relationship and of social possibility. Comment on this view.

The NIB calls the decalogue the institutionalization of the revolutionary social possibility enacted by the exodus narrative. How do you understand this description?

What is the connection between our relationship with God and with others? The two tablets are traditionally understood to distinguish between these aspects of experience.

What constitutes viability in relationships? How can the exodus story be seen as paradigmatic in this regard?

The NIB commentator observes that Israel's destiny is rooted in God's self-disclosure. A new community of escaped slaves is formed around who God is and, derivatively, how godliness is to be practiced.

- v.1 By God's voice, God's performative word is spoken.
- v.2 The authority of the commandments follows from the experience of deliverance.
- v.3 The first commandment, sometimes taken with vv.4-6, requires a single allegiance. It is based in the insistence upon the integrity and coherence of all life.

Note: An alternative translation would be, "There shall not be to you any other gods." This reading changes the tense from imperative to indicative. How does it change the possible meaning?

Homework assignment: Reflect on the various ways that the exodus story, the voice of God self-disclosing, the single allegiance reverberate throughout the New Testament.