

The 1st Commandment: Statues

by Rev. Dennis Kneer

Here are all the words God spoke. He said, "I am the Lord your God. I brought you out of Egypt. That is the land where you were slaves. "Do not put any other gods in place of me. Do not make for yourself statues of gods that look like anything in the sky. They may not look like anything on the earth or in the waters either. Do not bow down to them or worship them. —Exodus 20:1-5 NIV

God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses and the Israelites after they escaped slavery in Egypt. Moses and Aaron brought the people through the hot, dry desert, following God's directions to the Promised Land in Canaan. Today we call that land Israel. When God spoke these words from our Bible passage for today, they were in the south part of the Sinai Peninsula camped near Mount Sinai.

- Have you ever been in a hot, dry desert area? If so, how did you like it?
- Look at a map and see where Mount Sinai is in relation to Israel and Egypt.
- Remembering they were walking, how long do you think it took them to get to the Promised Land?

In our Bible passage for today, God is talking about worshipping idols, or statues, or anything that is not Him. This is known as idolatry. God tells us in the 1st Commandment not to worship other people or other things. **(Reread the Bible passage.)**

When the people of Israel were slaves in Egypt, the Egyptians worshipped many false gods, or idols. Examples are Ra, the sun god, and Horus, the falcon god. Many of the Egyptian pharaohs (kings) called themselves a god as well. They did not know the One True God, the God who created the universe, God our Father. Since the Egyptians worshipped many gods, the Israelites may have been influenced by this and worshipped some of those false gods themselves. When God gave Israel the 10 Commandments on Mount Sinai, He set things straight. God told them: "Do not put any other gods in place of me."

- Have you ever seen a statue or piece of art people may pray, meditate or talk to?
- If so, what did it look like?

In some cultures, an idol is a piece of stone, wood, clay or some other material carved or shaped into a specific form, like a person or an animal. Then people bow down, pray, meditate or talk to this object, hoping it will help them. But idols can't help them. Idols are made from earthly material, sculpted by a person. Idols are not alive; they cannot hear prayers. Idols cannot think or heal or help in any way. They are nothing but statues, and they are certainly not God. One of the meanings of the 1st Commandment is to not worship statues.

Prayer

Dear God our Creator,
You made us Your people and You are the only God there is.
You love us, help us and guide us.
You gave Your Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross and save us from our sins.
Help us worship only You.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

