



Moses receives the 10 commandments from God

God gives us the laws of love

Introduction

4 *We have met Abraham and Sarah. God promised Abraham a people, more numerous than the stars in the sky.*

5 *And we know that Abraham and Sarah had a son, Isaac.*

6 *Then Isaac will be the father of Esau and Jacob.*

7 *Jacob, also called Israel, will have 12 children and from them, from their families, this people will be formed over the years, who will be called the people of Israel and whom we will begin to know today.*

8 *Jacob and his sons lived in the land of Canaan, the land that God had promised Abraham.*

9 *They worked the land, but after years of abundant harvests, a great famine comes: nothing grows on the land, everyone is hungry and there is no food in the warehouses.*

10 *Only in a faraway country, Egypt, inhabited by another people, there are still warehouses full of grain.*

11 *That is why Jacob, his sons and their families, go to Egypt to look for food. At first, they are well received by the Pharaoh who reigned at that time.*

12 *After a few years, however, the descendants of Jacob, the Israelites, became a large people and began to be treated badly by the new Pharaoh and all the Egyptians.*

13 *Then God will choose from among them a man, Moses, to lead them out of Egypt and into the promised land. God always remains faithful to His people.*

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14 **A very beautiful story – The Bible**

A very beautiful story

God accompanies us from creation to 'new heavens and new earth' (Episode 4)

15 God frees his people from slavery (cf. Ex 1:1-14; 2:24-25; 3:1-12; 13:17-18; 14:1-31).

16 The people of Israel are in a foreign country, Egypt. The Pharaoh who welcomed them is dead and the present one does not treat them well, he makes them work hard, as if they were slaves. All the people are suffering.

17 God sees the suffering of His people and puts a plan into action, choosing, among the members of the people of Israel, a man named Moses to help him to carry it out.

18 One day Moses is out grazing his sheep. Suddenly he sees in front of him a bush that is burning... without being consumed by the flames. Moses approaches the bush and hears God's voice: "Take off your sandals, this is a sacred place. I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob... I will make sure that the Israelites no longer have to live as slaves "(1).

19 And Moses himself will have to lead them to the land that God has thought of, "a great and beautiful land where milk and honey flow". The people of Israel, led by Moses, manage to leave Egypt and head towards the Red Sea, along the desert road.

20 But Pharaoh is furious

21 and decides to chase them with his army.

22 The Israelites see him coming from afar and get scared: where to run? There is an expanse of water in front of them!

23 But God shows Moses what to do: "Take a stick and spread it over the sea. Then you will open a passage between the waters and you will be able to walk across on dry land".

24 Moses does what God tells him to do: he lifts the stick, points it forward towards the sea. And God sends a strong wind which blows and divides the water to the right and to the left.

25 So, the Israelites at night can walk through the middle, which has become as dry as a road in the middle of the sea, and they escape the attack of the Egyptians.

26 But the Pharaoh with his army, his chariots and his horsemen chase them along the road that God has opened in the sea.

27 Behold, as soon as the Israelites finally reach the other shore, God says to Moses again: "Stretch out your hand".

28 Moses obeys: the wind dies down and the waters return to their level,

29 covering all the soldiers, horses and their chariots.

30 The Israelites will no longer have to be afraid of Pharaoh, they will no longer be slaves to the Egyptians!

Happy, they have a great feast and thank God for choosing Moses and leading them with a powerful hand towards freedom. It is the feast of the day when God saved his People, freed them from slavery. Even today this day, which is remembered every year, is the most important feast for the people of Israel!

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31 **God guides his people in the desert towards the promised land** (cf. Ex 5,22-27; 16,1-36; 19,1-8; 20,1-17; 25,10-40; 40,36-38).

32 But now the people must set out again because to reach the promised land they have to cross the desert. All together they leave again: big and small, old and young...

33 The journey is long and tiring. It is very hot and there is no water. It is not easy to find water in the desert. Here it is, finally...but you can't drink it, it's bitter.

34 People complain to Moses and ask him: "What can we drink?"

35 Moses asks the Lord for help... and behold, God points out to him a piece of wood. Moses throws it into the spring and the water becomes sweet. Now the Israelites are happy and can drink as much as they want. God says to the people: "If you listen to my voice and do what I tell you, I will protect you".

36 A little further on they arrive at an oasis with many palm trees and 12 springs of water: there they set up camp to rest.

37 Then the people start walking again in the desert. At a certain point they have no more food and complain to Moses: "If only we had stayed in Egypt! There at least we had dishes full of meat and bread as much as we wanted!".

38 But God does not abandon his people and says to Moses: "I will give you bread and meat, so you will know that I, the Lord, am always with you!"

39 In fact, in the evening, a flock of quails set down next to the Israelites' camp: here is meat, in abundance for all!

40 And in the morning, all around the camp, the people find sweet, white seeds: they are good, they taste like bread... they can gather as much as everyone can eat and according to the needs of their family! Yes, for all the years they spend in the desert, the Lord somehow provides for their food.

41 The Israelites are increasingly sure that God truly loves them and will never abandon them.

42 The journey to the Promised Land continues: they march day after day, until they approach a mountain called Mount Sinai!

43 The Israelites set up their tents. And they say: "Let us stop here. Now we want to get some rest. We have walked enough!"

44 Moses goes up the mountain. Up there God speaks to him and gives him a message for His people: "You have seen for yourselves how I have led you here. Now if you will always listen to my voice and keep our pact of friendship, then you will be my chosen and holy people".

45 Moses tells the people the message that God has given for them. The people answer in chorus: "Whatever God has said, we will do".

46 God turns to Moses again and says these words: "I am the God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. That is why you must have no other God but me". Then He says solemnly: to respect parents - not to hurt anyone - not to steal - never to say untrue things - to respect things and people.

47 Moses writes everything in large letters, on two huge stones, so that no one will forget.

48 Moses wants to keep God's words well. He has an ark built, like a wooden trunk, and inside it he places the two stones on which the laws of love are written. He closes the ark with a lid decorated with two golden angels. Then he orders a large tent to be built to protect the ark. This tent is a sacred place, which accompanies them on their journey to the Promised Land.

49 In this tent they also put a golden candelabrum with seven lamps. Moses and his people want to be always close to God, faithful to the Covenant with Him.

50 When everything is ready, they set out again on their journey to the Promised Land. They know that the journey will still be a long one, but God is with them.

51 **Arrival at the promised land** (Cf. Dt 34,1-4)

52 At the end of the long journey Moses climbs from the steppes onto a high mountain along the border: from there the view opens out onto a beautiful panorama, the land of Canaan. God says to Moses: "This is the land that I promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And now I will give it to your descendants".

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53 **A very beautiful story – The Bible**

54 *With Abraham and Moses, we saw how much God loves His people and does not abandon them. Yes, God is Love: since creation, God has had a plan of love for us.*

55 *He is a God who wants to be known, who walks with His people, saves them from slavery, gives them food...*

56 *He has also now given a great gift to His people: he has given 10 commands, which are essential recommendations to honour God and to be at peace with others, to learn to live like a big family, where everyone respects, helps and loves each other (2).*

57 *When Jesus comes to earth, He, the Son of God, will go on to teach and explain the new law, the law of Heaven, which broadens and summarizes these 10 commandments.*

58 *But what God said to Moses is to be remembered well and put into practice. Jesus reaffirms that the commandments are the basis for following Him on the way of love (cf. Mt 19:17-20). If we live them, we will be happier!*

59 **Let us live like this (a)**

60 **"Listen to my voice and observe my covenant"** (Ex 19,5) One of the 10 laws given by God to Moses says: **Do not say untrue things ("Do not give false testimony", Ex 20:16).**

61 Chiara also reminded the Gen4: **"Always tell the truth and you will always be happy!" –Chiara** (C.Lubich, in Gen4, no. 5 March-April 1979, p.1)

62 **The broken vase**

63 Marco and Paolo are brothers. They are playing together when...

64 the ball runs away and knocks over a beautiful vase that breaks! What a mess!

65 "Who did it?" Dad asks.

66 Marco is scared, and he suddenly says: "It was Paolo!" But when dad starts scolding Paolo, Marco interrupts him:

67 "No, it was me!"

68 I ruined Mum's notebook!

69 Mascia pulls a notebook out of the dresser, one that Mum usually uses. She wants to take a piece of paper to draw on, but as she pulls and continues to pull, the paper tears and the whole notebook is ruined.

"I will pretend nothing has happened and put the notebook back in its place", thinks Mascia. But then she thinks that Mum will be sad when she goes to pick it up and sees it like this.

70 So, she runs to Mum and says: "Forgive me, Mum, I'm sorry, I've ruined your notebook!"

71 "It's O.K. Mascia, you'll see that next time you'll remember to be more careful, and I'm so happy that you were sincere!" answers her mother and who gives her a kiss.

72 "Do I say it or not?"

73 Carlo, for a moment, was not careful and broke a glass. "Do I say something or not?" he thinks.

74 He wants to go back to play without thinking about it, but inside he's a bit sad. Then he remembers the sentence he put up in his room: "Always tell the truth and you will always be happy!".

75 He runs to his mum: "Sorry, Mum, I broke a glass!". "It happens, Carlo, it happens to me too" - says Mum – "but I'm glad you said sorry!"

76 Carlo goes back to play, happy. That sentence is really true!

77 Let's live like this (b)

78 "Listen to my voice and observe my covenant" (Ex 19,5)
Another of the 10 laws says: **Do not steal** (Ex 20,15)

79 And Chiara tells us: "Always give to others! But never rob anyone!"-Chiara
(C.Lubich, in Gen4, no. 4 January 1979, p.1)

80 Always give to others!

81 Today Italo notices at school that Paulina, a classmate of his, is very sad. Her shoes are broken and she cannot buy another pair, because her family is very poor.

82 Italo comes home thinking about it and asks his mother: "Can I give Paulina a pair of my shoes?".

83 His mother is moved by her son's generosity, but she says to him: "I'm sorry, but we can't do that, we don't have any money either and these shoes will serve your little brother after you!"

84 But even Italo's mum keeps thinking about how to help Paulina and tells her neighbour everything and she immediately says: "I have a pair of my daughter's shoes that I can give you without any problem!".

85 Now Italo and his mum can help Paulina!

86 But Italo is shy and doesn't know how to give the gift to his friend! So, he gets help from his teacher: she gives Paulina the shoes.

87 What an unexpected gift! Paulina bursts with joy and immediately puts on her new shoes.

88 Never rob anyone!

89 Sandra is seven years old and lives in a neighbourhood on the outskirts of a big city in Colombia.

90 One morning, on her way to school, she sees a friend of hers walking ahead of her.

91 She starts going faster to catch up with her, but before she gets to her she notices that another girl is fast approaching her friend from behind and tries to open her backpack to get something from inside, without her noticing.

92 Sandra is very hurt by this attitude, but she remembers that we must love Jesus in everyone, even that little girl who was making a mistake. So, she quickly catches up to her and calmly shows her not to do it. This little girl looks at her surprised, but then walks away without taking anything.

93 Sandra then joins her friend and they start chatting happily, walking towards the school.

94 Gen4

Notes

1 Some extracts from the rich theology of the **Eastern Orthodox Churches**, edited by Sherin H. Salama: Saint Clement of Alexandria sees in the bush an announcement of the birth of Christ from the Virgin. This is also what Saint Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, meant when he said: "The light of the Divinity which shone from it towards human life during the birth of Jesus Christ did not burn the burning bush, just as the flower of Virginity did not wither when giving birth to the child".

Commenting on the fact that God asked Moses to take off his shoes, Origen said: "In the old days, shoes were made of the skin of a dead animal: it is as if God in His commandment asked us to strip ourselves of our love for temporary, dead things, to adhere to the eternal heavens so that we might meet Him".

God says to Moses: "The God of your fathers: The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob". In his repetition three times in this encounter between God and the first head of the people, Saint Clement of Alexandria saw a sign of divine and human friendship. Even though God is the God of the whole world, the God of the heavenly and the earthly, he is affiliated with his special friends. He does not wish to be a teacher, but a friend, and we see him speaking to Moses face to face, as a friend speaks to his friend (Ex. 33:11).

2 "And we continue to speak of the commandments which, as we have said, more than commandments are the words of God to his people that they may walk well; loving words of a Father. (...) The ten Words begin like this: "I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the servile condition" (Ex 20:2). This beginning would seem foreign to the actual laws that follow. But it is not so.

Why this proclamation that God makes of Himself and of liberation? Because one arrives at Mount Sinai after crossing the Red Sea: The God of Israel first saves, then asks for trust. That is: the Decalogue begins with God's generosity. God never asks without giving first. Never. First, He saves, first He gives, then He asks. Thus, is our Father, the good God." (Pope Francis, General Audience, 27.6.2018)

"Freedom is guarded and made possible by law. The law calls us to move, to no longer put ourselves at the centre of everything, and asks us to make room for the other, be it God or neighbour. Speaking in the second person singular, the law is concretely addressed to each and every one of us, it is up to us to access respect for others through this law, for us to assume our responsibility in common life". NB : The law here refers to the commandments. (Original text : "La liberté est gardée et rendue possible par la loi. La loi qui nous appelle à nous déplacer, à ne plus nous mettre au centre de tout, et qui nous demande de faire une place à l'autre, qu'il s'agisse de Dieu ou du prochain. En nous parlant à la deuxième personne du singulier, la loi s'adresse concrètement à chacune et à chacun, à nous d'accéder par cette loi au respect d'autrui, à nous d'assumer notre responsabilité dans la vie commune." NB : Loi ici se réfère aux commandements. - Translated from the book by Barraud, Daniel and others. Dieu s'approche : un catéchisme protestant en 25 tableaux, Genève : Labor et Fides ; Arare-Genève : PBU, 1998, p 63).

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