

Mountains of the Sinai Peninsula

(Sinai and Horeb)

The majority, of scholars today accept the Sinai and Horeb are different names for the same place, although debate has continued over centuries. In the 12th century the scholars Abraham Ibn Ezra and John Calvin both entered the debate. Sinai and Horeb

Abraham Ibn Ezra, a Jewish scholar put forward the view that while it was one mountain it had two peaks which bore different names. The Protestant reformer John Calvin's opinion was that Mount Sinai and Mount Horeb were the same mountain, but the eastern side of the mountain was Sinai and the western side being Horeb.

(Both these scholars were born late 11th century, and died second half of the 12th century)

Mount Sinai in the morning

Abraham - Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0



It has also been suggested '*that both Horeb and Sinai are names for the general area*'

(Bromiley, Geoffrey Wed. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Revised*. Wm.B. Eerdmans, 1979-88.)

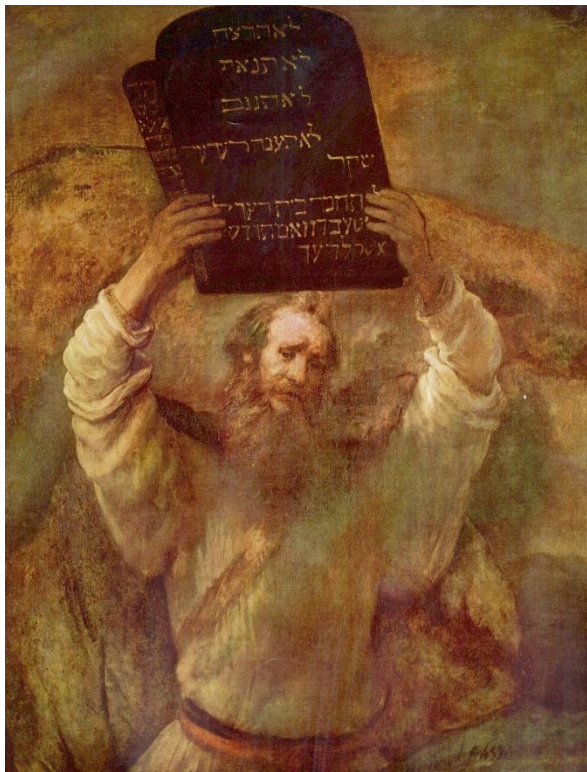
Whatever view we take on Sinai and Horeb, they are, within the Judeo-Christian tradition, the story of the encounter between Moses and God and the giving of the Law that became a code for relationships with God and among ourselves.



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Above Saint Catherine's Monastery with the mountains in the background

Saint Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai, Peninsula, Egypt was established AD 565. It is recognised as the world's oldest continuously used Christian monastery. To the left of the photograph is Mount Sinai with the mountain Ras es-Safsafeh or Willow Peak in the background. Ras es-Safsafeh / Willow Peak is thought by some to be Horeb.



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Rembrandt captures the image in his 1659 picture of YAHWEH, God and the giving of the 10 Commandments, as recorded in Exodus chapter 20 and the establishing of a covenant relationship between God and the people of Israel.

Mounts Sinai / Horeb

Some Bible references

Moses hears the voice of God in the burning bush (theophany, a visible manifestation to people of God)

Moses receive the 10 Commandments.

Elijah encounters God in the still small voice not in the wind, earthquake, or fire. (1 Kings19:11-13)

Elijah has a vision and appoints Elisha as his successor. (1 Kings19:19-21)

The Ten Commandments Exodus chapter 20

And God spoke all these words, saying:

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

"You shall have no other gods before Me.

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image—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 upon 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.

"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.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

"Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

"You shall not murder.

"You shall not commit adultery.

"You shall not steal.

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

"You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour's."

(New King James Version)

Descent from Mount Sinai, view of Saint Catherine's Monastery

Einsamer Schütze - Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0



While on holiday on the Sinai Peninsula a group of us decided to rather than go on an organised coach trip to hire a 4x4, with driver, to St Catherine's Monastery. Economically it was a good decision. As it turned out we were unable to see the monastery from the inside, so the driver took us into the interior and a landscape similar to the photograph above.

This was the landscape where the encounter between Moses and God was set, rough, barren and with a stillness. A thousand or so years and in a landscape different to the Sinai Peninsula, Jesus, in answer to the question from the scribes 'Which is the first commandment of all?' gave this summary of the commandments.

' . . . you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.' (Mark 12:30-31 - New King James Version)

Jesus in using these words, changed the Commandments from a list of do and don'ts to a description of wholesome and nurturing relationships. Following these words of Jesus leads us to fulfil all that is required of the Law. Our relationship with God and one another, our neighbours.

Time to pause



**Come to pray as you can, accept the invitation to be
with Christ,**

so

Slow down, breathe calmly, be comfortable and relax.

**Light a candle, turn off your phone. Be ready to
discover!**

As always, I suggest you find your favourite space for this time of prayerful reflection and

We start with a prayer of confession. We all miss the mark and Lent gives us an opportunity to become more aware of those times when we get things wrong, we miss the mark, we sin.

A prayer of confession for the season of Lent.

Forgive us Lord for our apathy, for our lack of courage to speak out.
Lord have mercy.

Forgive us when we walk past and don't offer help.
Christ have mercy

Forgive us when we get it wrong.
Lord have mercy.

Hearing words of forgiveness.

Lord, Your forgiveness is total
there is no notebook, post-it notes to remind you of that moment when we missed
the mark, sinned.

You take our confession offered with hands outstretched
and gently like the loving heavenly Father that you are
put it to one side to be forgotten.

No grudges, no itching for judgement
No resentment or ill-will
Not like us who find it easy to say sorry
but so hard to forgive absolutely

Forgive us, Father that we are often more willing to accept forgiveness than to forgive.

(John Birch - adapted from a version on the Worship Cloud)

We sing along with the Chet Valley Churches 'Be still and know'.

The words of the hymn appear on the screen via the YouTube link.

 **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/dbBImzfVy94?si=YjocaiNzp-42Bk07&t=8>

Reading from Mark (12:28-34 New King James Version)

Jesus would have been familiar for the accounts of Moses on the mountain and the giving of the Law. He would also be aware that there could be ulterior motives among in what looked like a straightforward question. some of the scribes there were often

Let us read these words, words that take the commandments from a list of rules written in stone to another level. From written rules to ones that should be written in our hearts. The scribes' response to Jesus' words were warm and perhaps ones that surprised Jesus and got the response 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.'

Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.'

Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

So the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." But after that no one dared question Him.

Let us reflect on these words, read through the closing words again:

So, the scribe said to Him, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." But after that no one dared question Him.

Let us pray:

Lord, teach us to become imitators of you, and encourage those of us who learn slowly.

Help us to accept with grace those things we cannot do and concentrate instead upon the gifts we have from you.

Thank you

for the privilege of life,
for the beauty of life,
for the love of life,
for the joys of life,
for the tears of life,
for the hope of life.

Thank you.

(Ripples by John Birch)

When asked about how to pray Jesus gave these simple but profound words, so let them be our prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil. Amen

Our closing hymn is Rock of Ages from the Chet Valley Churches.

 **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/cv4qQgiO5fQ?si=P-L7pbDVi395FpV3>

Lord, pour your Spirit upon us in a gracious, healing way. Make us agents of reconciliation as we live and may we bring a blessing to those we meet. Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen

Fr Derek Akker

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(Derek is a retired Anglican Parish Priest and a member of the congregations of All Saints & St James. Prior to his ordination he was accredited as a Methodist Preacher in 1968 and served within the Methodist Church until returning to the Anglican Church in the mid 1980's)

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