

The Lectures of Rudolf Steiner

The Ten Commandments

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Today we will occupy ourselves with an important document of mankind, although it appears far removed from the realm of our present line of study, yet nevertheless stands in an inner relationship to it. It is the Ten Commandments, which we will strive to illuminate from the basis of spiritual science because perhaps through spiritual science the right light may help clarify our understanding of this document.

From the side of learned theology it is often maintained that these Ten Commandments concur with various laws and commandments of other ancient folk and don't really depict anything extraordinary. They are considered at most only noteworthy as part of a collection in which laws and orders are to be found among various ancient peoples, as for example with Lycurgus of Sparta or the law tablets of Hammurabi.

What we have examined in the developmental route of mankind in the post Atlantic time and having allowed this to work on our souls, can become a specific connecting thread allowing an understanding of the revelation regarding the greatness, the enormity, which struck mankind, in the Ten Commandments given in Sinai. Let's remind ourselves about our contemplation of the evolution of mankind during the post-Atlantic time. We saw how the five cultural epochs - the Indian, Persian, Chaldean-Egyptian-Judaic, the Greek-Roman and Germanic cultural epochs - are a gradual conquering of the physical plane by mankind. Now we stand at the end of the third and at the beginning of the fourth epoch which we could call the "Mission of Moses." Out of what did this Mission exist?

We will strive to direct our souls more precisely to how inspiration of the Initiates actually occurred in the successive time intervals. Yesterday we spoke about the Rishis, the inspirational ones in the ancient Indian time. The Rishis announced that they were mere common people in ordinary life who became however at specific times an instrument, a mouth piece for the inspirations of higher, spiritual beings. This fact was particularly prevalent in the ancient Indian times and these ancient Rishis, these great teachers of the post-Atlantean time could speak of lofty spiritual truths. We can ask ourselves in which spiritual regions these Rishis moved when they wanted to be permeated and surged through inwardly by higher Beings, who spoke through them? The Rishis were raised up while higher forces lived within them, not only to the astral or lower Devachan planes but above, right to the upper Devachan, so their learning originated in upper Devachan. In these ancient times, shortly after the Atlantic catastrophe, the old Indian bodies still gave mankind possibilities to go out of their bodies, and thus step into a relationship with Beings of Higher Worlds.

Now the cultural epochs continued. In the cultural epoch of Zarathustra, the ancient Persian, the highest initiates certainly knew how to speak about the highest spiritual Beings but their rise could not without further ado reach to the upper parts of Devachan. They could only rise to lower Devachan. Despite that however they could be taught about the higher planes because these elevated beings of the lower Devachanic planes knew about the higher planes.

In the world in which the Egyptian initiates were mainly indigenous, they could usually rise to the astral plane and it was not only a small circle which could still rise up to the astral plane in the old Egyptian time. A relatively large number of people, through their own observation, still knew what was happening on the astral plane. At least in certain in-between conditions of life, between waking and sleeping for instance, many experienced community with these Beings who did not descend to the physical plane but were at home on the astral plane. Thus the ancient Egyptian initiates who could enter and exit the astral plane found it easy to reveal things happening in the Higher Worlds.

The more we approach the later cultural epochs, the more the veil in front of the spiritual worlds drew to a close. The number of people who were capable of making observations in the spiritual worlds diminished ever more, and as a result, from the fourth cultural epoch onwards, a particular form of proclamation was required from the Initiates. One of these Initiates, familiar with all the occult arts of the Egyptian Initiates, was Moses; he moved freely throughout the astral plane. Even his people were chosen to behold certain revelations, and were capable of being something to the people even if they could no longer see into the higher worlds. It required Initiates, although diminished in their numbers, who knew directly or indirectly about the higher worlds, because they could consciously live out of their bodies. The largest part of the people however had to restrict their lives to the physical plane. The task which mankind had to fulfil in this time when the mission of Moses began, was this: those people who were completely dependent on the physical plane were to be given a revelation out of the spirit, which stands behind the physical, according to which they could regulate their lives. How could this Mission of Moses be formulated then? Just consider the necessity to clarify to the people that what is around them, what they can see and touch, is the physical plane - here is nothing spiritual. This was not to be looked at as something representative of the spiritual, but there had to be a clear understanding that the spiritual was to be sought in the spiritual, and only a few could do this spiritual research.

In ancient Indian times, when the holy Rishis spoke out of the upper parts of Devachan, images were given which could be seen as outer symbolic pictures in comparisons and indications coming from Upper Devachan. Images and portraits could be given and it was relatively easy for people to understand: we give you as it were images but because you see the outer world as an illusion, as Maya, these images are nothing more to you than images, reflections of the supersensible world. — In no way was there a danger leading to worship of these images. How could it have been with a people where everything sense perceptible was seen as Maya, illusion? These people could never practice worship. That only came much later. Certainly later in the oriental culture symbols and images of God appeared in some places. It was easy however for the holy Rishis to make it clear to the entire Indian people: that which we revealed, originated out of the higher planes of Devachan, while the visible or physical is a symbol for something so high and serene that it can only be taken in as a symbol.

During the Persian cultural epoch however, the students of Zarathustra couldn't proceed in the same way. They could only establish a kind of relationship between the people and the lower parts of the Devachanic planes. They were only capable of talking of images, spiritual images, of the supersensible. They referred to no sensory image. Above all they spoke amongst their people of an actual, spiritual, good being, who they called Ahura Mazda, the being who had his outer corporeality in the sun and who connected himself with mankind and against the dark spirit: Ahriman. This was

presented in a sensory-supersensory image so to speak, to the people. They had to imagine him for themselves as a spiritual light Being. However, not a finished image, not a portrait should they fashion. At most they could imagine this godly Ahura Mazda as precursor within fire, for example, and not as a stiff, outer, sensory image. Everything which appeared as sensory pictures or idols came at a much later time. The ancient Persian culture had pictorial precursors which had to reveal the super-sensory. That was the progress.

Now we come to the third cultural epoch which we encounter mainly in the Egyptian time. Here stands the form of Osiris, as we know, at the central point of all religious thought and feeling. We can easily understand what now has to be said. What kind of being is Osiris, mainly in his godly form? Consider what the Egyptian cultural leaders said to the people: when you really fulfil your tasks in the physical world, when you have done everything related to your soul striving towards becoming a worthy person, then you will be united with Osiris after death. - On the other hand they are told: Osiris had only a short life on earth, because he was conquered by his brother Typhon - Seth — and has been living for a time in the worlds which are celestial, above the ground. His lower regions are no longer the physical but the astral plane, he will not descend lower. It is no longer possible for Osiris to step on the physical plane. Therefore people can't meet Osiris in life. After death however, when they have become sufficiently worthy, they will be united with Osiris because then they are within the world in which Osiris stays. A person can therefore meet Osiris, either after they have died or if they enter as an Initiate into the astral plane. Through this the disciples of the Osiris religion were prepared: the supersensible to which you are related, should place before your soul nothing other than pictures which your own soul imagines, 'soul' as is imagined under the concept of the astral body. Osiris became considered the ideal human form, possessing all possible virtues, and while desires as well as virtues exist in the astral body, so the human astral being was thus represented as the Being of Osiris.

For the Semites who gradually went through the Egyptian schools and who had to prepare the great event through which the spiritual, the Christ, descended into the physical world - not like Osiris to the astral plane, but like Christ, who came right down to the physical plane - they dared to live with God as a parable, a symbol, just like in the ancient Indian epoch they dared worship a god in a sensory-supersensory image, just like in the Persian culture in images of an astral presence, and in the Egyptian culture, now single and alone beneath the non-sensory imagination of the "I" (Ich). All images, originally given in ancient Indian times with which to imagine the spiritual, were of the physical world, borrowed from the mineral kingdom; they were images in distinct physical-mineral forms. The form through which the Initiates of the Persian culture made the supersensible clear to their people was removed from that which also lives in the human astral body, the lively etheric, because Ahura Mazda also became visible to them as a result of his etheric form, the sun aura, becoming known to them. Osiris was represented by the Egyptians in an astral form. That divinity however, which the Jewish people proclaimed, had to have no other qualities than the "I," the fourth member of the human being. Under the "I" we grasp something which only we can call "I."

This is connected to something else. At this point people had to allow the Mission of Moses to flow into them; he had to be the representative of the image of the "I" of God. From that moment onwards people had to be told: Just as an "I" lives in every person and is the ruler of the members of human nature, so you must imagine the Being who weaves in the world as creative Being, who lives, rules and prevails over everything that's been and is created. Nothing sensory, neither etheric nor an astral image can represent this. Merely under the form of the "I," only under the name "I am the I-am" should you imagine this highest Being. - In the "I am" itself every person should experience a reflection of the godhead. It was the Mission, the proclamation of Moses to say: Look within

ourselves, only there will you find the real image of the pure godhead. - As a result all activity amongst people should from this moment onward only be from one "I" to another "I." This had to be prepared through the Mission of Moses.

Let's place ourselves once more in the Egyptian culture. Much activity took place but it didn't move from one "I" to another "I" but from one astral to another astral body. What is this called? Just think how one of the gigantic pyramids were built. A great army of people was needed to bring such a pyramid into existence. The construction workers of such pyramids followed the order of the master builder and those were the temple priests, the spiritual guides of culture. Don't believe that these orders were given as they are today, from one "I" to another "I." That was not the case. You will most easily understand what was happening when the word "suggestion" is implied. Physical powers of nature were employed to guide the masses. The Egyptian priests controlled such powers to a high degree. They didn't work on the "I" by saying: Do this or that - but they controlled the masses by managing their physical powers, so that the people meekly followed the priests who bypassed the "I." These priests stood as Initiates in lofty service. They were incapable of abusing these powers; they placed themselves in service of the Good. Thus it was inspired, physically inspired, through *them* working; the freedom of the "I" in opposition to the priests of the temple was not in question. If you understand that, then you will also understand how in ancient India the Holy Rishis applied even higher spiritual powers. With them it was as follows: when they appeared and gave meaningful proclamations from the spiritual worlds, it was self-evident that the entire folk would follow meekly. Just as the hand follows the head, so the masses followed their leaders, the Initiates. This diminished ever more, the further humanity sunk into the physical plane, but in ancient Egypt there was still great effectiveness of these physical forces. To withdraw people from this kind of involvement and the predictive manifestation in the ego-opposition, was the Mission of Moses. For each human being to search for the godly fountainhead, the great World-I, that the realm of the surging, wafting "I" can be perceived as the archetypal image of the individual "I," that was the great call which is linked to the Mission of Moses.

From these viewpoints we will understand how this great World-"I" had to be proclaimed through Moses. In this way we must translate the announcement of the "I"-Laws into everyday language, in order to really go through what was felt, experienced and thought when for instance the First Commandment was heard at that time. All lexicographic translations give the most inconceivable inaccuracies. Now I want to present the first commandment to you as it really needs to be translated, to bring it to such an expression as people then imagined they had heard.

First Commandment: I am the everlasting Divine, which you experience within yourself. I have led you out of the land of Egypt where you couldn't follow me within yourself. Henceforth you will not place other gods above me. You will not acknowledge gods as higher, who show you an image of something which appears above in the heaven, which works out of the earth or between heaven and earth. You shall not worship what is beneath the divine which is within you. I am the everlasting in you and a continual divinity. If you don't recognise Me within you, I will disappear as the divine in your children, parents and grandparents and their bodies will become stultified. If you acknowledge Me within you, I will live forth in you for up to thousands of generations and the bodies of your people would prosper.

This gives us the indication how the single "I" is within the archetypal "I," how to recognise the after-image of the archetypal divine "I" and also, the indication of how, through acknowledgement of one's own "I" as divine, the way is given to become free from the opposition experienced between people and their leaders in ancient Egypt. "I have led you out of the lands of Egypt, where you can follow Me within you. The will of the Initiate followed you there, and there you were not free." These Initiates applied their psychic powers which the people followed. The first dawning of this human

freedom, which rose as the freedom of mercy in Christianity, shows itself in this reference: "I led you out of the Egyptian lands where you couldn't follow Me within you." "Henceforth you shall not place other gods above Me." Therefore, in order for the Jewish people to become the most prepared people for the proclamation in Christendom, it had to be made clear that all other representatives of the divine, the archetypal images of the "I," had to fall away. Outer representations of the divine, even the signs of the Zodiac or something else, had to fall away. Nothing was to illustrate the divine, because people had to, in order to become free, find the source of everything within them: everything which was to be experienced regarding the divine had to be after-images of the great World-I and experienced in their "I." "You should not acknowledge anything higher than the Divine, who appears as an image of something which shines above in the heaven, which originates from the earth or is active between the heaven and the earth." An image-free divine! The only legitimate expression for this is the human "I," the image of the "I am the I-Am." "You shall not worship anything which is *beneath* the godly which is within you."

We have emphasized: out of the physical body the image was taken in ancient India, out of the ether body in the Persian culture, out of the astral body with the Egyptians. Those all stand below the "I." From out of this no image should be taken and called divine. We know that the physical body was formed from mineral nature, the ether body from the etheric in nature, and the astral body from that realm where the animal astral body is also formed. From all which exists in the members of human nature, having originated from the rest of nature, from all that which is below the "I," nothing should be worshipped. "I am the everlasting in you and a continual divinity." Here we have an important sentence. This was given to the Jews as a commandment, which was previously a fact. We have already remarked that when common blood flows in any people, a particular awareness runs through the generation, how the son feels bound through the blood with his father and grand-father. Common blood felt like a common "I." This "I" lived through generations. The god who announced himself primarily as an "I" to the Jews, had to announce Himself by saying the He was this, which worked as God through the generations. "When you really understand Me, then you will understand what continues to work from generation to generation." This has been translated with: "I am a striving God," or even "I am an angry God," while the actual meaning is: "I am the god working continually from generation to generation."

"Don't seek to find an incorrect imagination of Me, protect the truth within you, as an imagination of Me, then you plant within the blood enduring health from gender to gender." A real medicinal imagination is linked to that which this commandment gave, linked to the imagination that when the human being has a pure imagination of his relationship to the divine, then a healthy "I"-image will flow through the blood and people will remain healthy from one generation to the next. We don't come to a real understanding of the lively form in which Moses presented this to his people when he announced the laws, if we only think abstractly about what he said. No, it was said under the presupposition that correct thoughts are an active reality. "When you create a false imagination of the Divine, then you will, from gender to gender, bequeath it into an expression of disease and infirmity." Correct thoughts activate health, false ones, illness. This is in the genuine sense an anthroposophic or occult image. This has to be thought about or otherwise no real understanding can be reached, no real picture formed regarding this First Commandment. The Jewish people were instructed: Don't place your God under false images. When they knelt in front of the golden calf, a false image flowed from the gods into them and this false image of god produced, because it works through the blood and goes down the generations, the effectively continuous sin which translates into illness. "If you don't recognise Me within you, I will disappear as the divine in your children, parents and grandparents and their bodies will become stultified." You produce children, parents, grandparents capable of surviving, when you take up the correct imagination of the Divine, otherwise that which depends on the blood will die out. By truly acknowledging Me within you, the source of the "I," the power transmits from one generation to the next because I am a continually effective Divinity. I will

disappear from the bodies if I live in you as a false image. This is again quite an occult and medicinal indication. "If you acknowledge Me within you, I will live forth in you for up to thousands of generations and the bodies of your people would be purified and therefore would prosper." Thus the physical will prosper, in the genuine occult sense, when the human being forms the true spiritual imagination. Through this a simultaneous breath of human freedom is drawn in human development: right at the peak, so to speak, of the continual "I" the human being is placed and then formed with the divine "I." One can't allow comparisons with any other legislation; it is real dilettantism to place the Ten Commandments beside other legislation and compare it one-sidedly, just because they are outwardly similar in words, they can be seen as the same. The legislation of the Ten Commandments from Sinai is unique and only allows illumination through the unique Mission of Moses. As with this First Commandment, so it is with all the other Commandments when they are correctly translated. It becomes clear to us from the spirit of Moses' Mission, with reference to the "I"-impulse, how this now had to be poured into humanity.

Second Commandment: You will not speak in error of Me in you, because every error about the "I"-in-you will corrupt your body. - Thus the necessity for the correct thought process is established, the actual creator of the real healthy body. Errors about the ruler of the highest divine in you produce sickness in the body to the fullest degree. It is extraordinarily important to have insight into the content of the Second Commandment: "The error about the "I" in you will be spoilt." There is a further saying: In a beautiful body lives a beautiful soul. - Modern materialistic humanity now and then interprets it as: if I take good care of my body, then I will have a beautiful soul. - It actually means that a soul is inwardly strong because it has brought something from previous incarnations which has inspirationally worked through the soul and is now the correct creator for the sheath of a healthy, vigorous body. The body does not create the soul, exactly the opposite. So we see that sometimes it doesn't at all come down to stating a precise wording. Every time it is according to impulses in your life to find a different interpretation of the same wording. Depending on how you feel or are disposed, so it is interpreted. Accordingly one doesn't always have the correct proof that you are indicating an equivalent wording, but only through penetrating into the soul of the time and thoroughly seeking understanding for this or that word.

Third Commandment: You shall separate the workday from the festive day, so that the image of Your Being becomes the image of My Being. Because, what lives in you as My "I," has built the world in seven days and lives within it on the seventh day. Thus your actions and your son's activities and your daughter's actions and your servant's activity and your cattle's actions and everything that is with you, is within the outer boundary of the six days, but on the seventh day your gaze should seek My gaze within you. - This is the kind of absolute translation corresponding to the Third Commandment. Not in outer images should the Divine within people be portrayed as the archetypal-"I," but through what the "I" does, the archetypal-"I" must be portrayed and how this archetypal-"I" had created the world in six world days and on the seventh day found rest, so mankind must separate workdays and festive days, six days for creation and the seventh day to seek the Divine with the help of the "I." So we see in what a wonderful way This Third Commandment is the portrayal of the archetypal-"I" in us and is placed there as guiding God.

In these three first Commandments we have indications of how the human being related to divinity, during the time of the Mission of Moses, which was revealing itself in a new way. In the fourth Commandment we go out on to the physical plane. The first three Commandments sets out how the human being can relate in the right way towards the higher Worlds through the activities of his "I."

The Fourth Commandment says: Work forth with your fathers and mothers in mind, so that you retain possession of the property you acquired through the power which I have built in you.

Here you have the meaningless: "Honour father and mother, that you may fare well and live long on earth." It is about actual outward action which really sprouts from what had been planted spiritually in the "I" within man, as we have understood, how the divine works medicinally, like a drop. This Fourth Commandment is a practical commandment. It says: Observe your descendants as your ancestors; then you as a descendent stand in contrast to them — a peaceful, beneficial, continual development will never take place. Just as you inwardly convey the "I" through the blood, so also must that, which you possess after your "I" has worked through it, be maintained. The strong "I" that was created, flowed from the one side through the blood in the generations; on the other side however had to, in order for the human being to strengthen the "I," work in the outer world. What had been founded as a strong "I" had to be preserved and evolve continuously, without interruption. Work forth with the fathers in mind in order to maintain coherence in the work your father and mother did in creating your "I." - This shows you how also the outer rules of conduct are given in order not to destroy from outside the creation of a new culture, given as an inner impulse.

Now we come to the Commandments where your independent "I" is confronted by the "I" of others, and how this should in fact rule in the social world. This is actually a repeat of what Paul said, which the Bible gives as: Love thy neighbour as thyself (Gal.5,14). — See in other people the same "I" as in yourself. - In an extraordinary way this old Hebraic folk received the impulse to pursue the godly right into the weaving of the "I" within the human soul. Therefore this people had to preserve the Commandments, which do not only prescribe the protection of their own "I" but also prescribe respect and protection of the "I" in the other.

Fifth Commandment: Murder not.

Sixth Commandment: Don't break the marriage.

Seventh Commandment: Don't steal.

All three expand on the one commandment: Recognise in your fellow men the "I" which you have in yourself!

In this deed the Jewish people were led from the lands of Egypt, enabling them to also recognise the "I" in others through the evaluation of the other's "I," for in Egyptian lands one didn't work through the respect of others but through the suppression of the "I" through suggestion. Now further:

The Eighth Commandment: Do not undermine the worth of your fellow men by telling untruths about them. - Not only through deeds could one damage and impair the rights of the "I" within the other, but one should not once in a spoken word diminish the worth of his "I." One should not state untruths about the "I" of another. Whoever states an untruth about the "I" of another, does not realize that the "I" of the other is the same as your own "I." So it proceeds systematically with the Ten Commandments. Reference is made [to] what you express damagingly in community of life from one "I" to another "I." A deed penetrates directly, damagingly into the sphere of the "I" of the other, but a word more secretly. However, if you want to earnestly acknowledge the "I" of the other, then you also do not dare intervene from the basis of your wants and desires into the sphere of your fellow man. [It is] Not only through this that you rob him, but already through also desiring something of his, do you penetrate into his "I"-sphere. You acknowledge the full equal evaluation of the other's "I" through not allowing yourself to desire what he has. Now the two last Commandments:

Ninth Commandment: Do not look grudgingly at what your fellow man possesses as property.

Tenth Commandment: Do not begrudge your fellow man his wife nor the helpers and others through whom he gains his earnings.

The only way to find healthy relationships between one person and another is by not resenting what the other person owns. So a person is placed beside others in order for him or her to notice and venerate the divine image in every "I." Thus the existence of the single "I" amongst others is regulated. This was one of the biggest spiritual impacts which entered into mankind. Yet, what had to come through Christ was not pronounced, yet lay within the words here, that each one can find the interrelation with the Father-God. "No one comes to the Father but through Me." At this time the legislation was given in relationship to the communal "I" which flowed through the generations. Yet at the same time the earlier proclamation was given, that the "I" is not only an image of the Divine, but that God Himself is a living Being within this "I." The "I" is substance and Being identical to the Father. "I and the Father are one."

So we see how the impulse, conveyed through the world's development, follows one after the other. It is easy to say: In the world's development all causes and effects are connected by a wisdom-filled world guidance and world command but nothing is visible. - When we however look back in world evolution, as we have done in this examination, we arrive at the notion that at the right time the right thing always happens to direct human development further, then, I may say, nothing else is left over than to acknowledge the wisdom-filled directing and guidance in world development.

When one sees through occult research how at the exit of the third cultural epoch into the fourth time period the proclamation of the Ten Commandments took place in order for people to have time to prepare for the greatest event, the Mystery of Golgotha, then one sees exactly what a great expression of wisdom this is within world guidance.

In the entire tone of the Ten Commandments, when we really understand them, we see how the Divine reveals itself in an archetypal way in images in preparation for the moment when the Divine Spirit will really be embodied in an individual. In order for people to be steered towards an understanding of God in the flesh, an incarnated God, they must first learn to grasp God's substance and Being within their deepest, innermost soul. Considering this document of mankind, the Ten Commandments, we notice from the entire tone, that God speaks through it to mankind and that this address throughout is in line with the ever further emergence of people on the physical plane and that this can only really happen when the Divine is grasped in the right way. Repeatedly it is pointed out that bodies prosper when the Divine is properly grasped. Indications are given that to venerate the Divine also brings prosperity to outer things on the physical plane. In the correct way it is pointed out that a gradual, healthy development must ensue, in order for the outer social relationships to prosper.

Through the Mission of Moses it is regulated that the Divine remains protected within the Being of man, while man's conquering of the physical plane can be carried out in the right way in the sense of the post-Atlantic development remaining in harmony with the Divine.

Upper Devachan				
Lower Devachan				
Astral plane				
Physical Plane	Rishis Phys-min. Image <i>Physical Body</i> Culture I	Zarathustra's pupils Prelim-Sense-Supersensible <i>Ether Body</i> Culture II	Hermes pupils Astral image <i>Astral Body</i> Culture III	Christ No image <i>"I" (Ich)</i> Culture IV

Source: https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/TC1891_index.html



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