

Exodus Sinai

Interpreting the Text:

1. How do the Israelites encounter God on Mount Sinai? How does their reaction to God change over the course of the story?
2. What do we learn about 'monotheism' and 'polytheism' from this story?
3. There are many biblical translations that have been reinterpreted or modified by readers over time, including the commandment about murder. Does the Bible forbid the taking of human life? How would you, as an interpreter, nuance this for someone struggling to understand this commandment in the context of the story of Exodus?

Applying the Text:

1. Moses seems to be a constant intermediary between the people and God's word. How does this pattern of communication relate to the ways we conceive of communication with God? Do you believe that we all have a direct line of communication to God, or should we work with faithful intermediaries?
2. What does it mean not to "swear falsely by the name of the Lord your God" (JPS) or to "make wrongful use of the name of the Lord" (NRSV)? What is this commandment asking us to commit to, and how should we uphold it today?
3. God declares that we should not make idols of anything on earth or in heaven. Some communities have taken this as a prohibition on art altogether. What constitutes an idol for you personally? In your tradition? Are there 'idols' in our world that are not Christian at all?