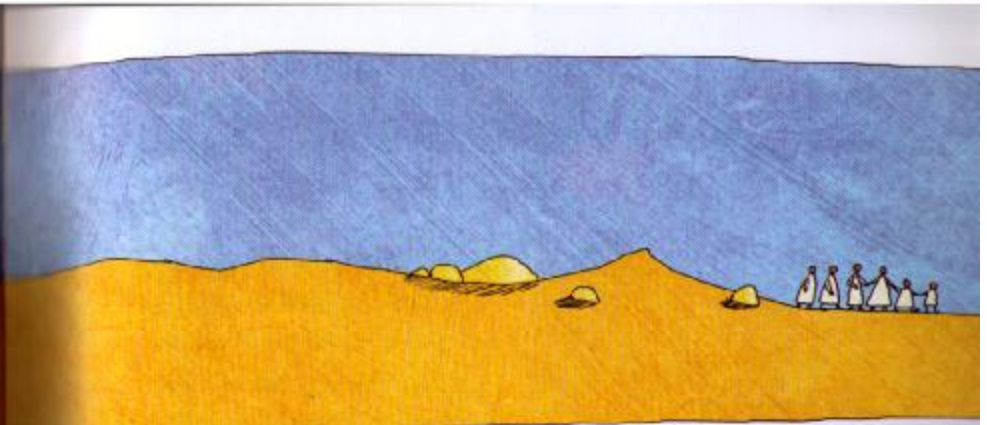


Ten ways to be perfect

Moses and the Ten Commandments, from Exodus 16–17, 19–40

SO THERE THEY all were. Grannies, granddads, babies, uncles, aunts, children, moms, and dads. Out there in the middle of the desert. They had blisters from all the walking. They were hungry. And thirsty. And much, much too hot.

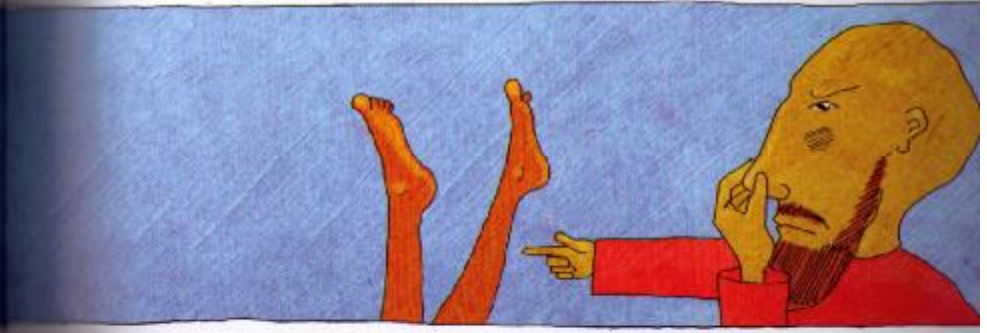
“We don’t like it!” they said. “It stinks!” (And so did they, for that matter, because no one had taken a bath in weeks.)



Now remember — because this is something they’d forgotten — God had done amazing things for his people. He’d hidden them inside a cloud. He’d moved the sea. He’d set them free.

But God’s people still weren’t happy. They didn’t care about being free — wasn’t it better when they were slaves? At least they’d had lots of nice food to eat.

“God doesn’t want us to be happy,” they said. It was the same lie that Adam and Eve had heard all those years before. “God has brought us out here to kill us. God doesn’t love us!” But they didn’t know God very well, did they?





Every day of their journey, God kept on showing his people how well he would look after them, if they would trust him, and obey him. When they were hungry, God made the sky rain with food — bread coming down from heaven! “What is it?” they asked each other. They didn’t know, so they called it, “What is it?” (which, of course, is a very good name for something when you don’t know what it is). When they were thirsty and started quarrelling, God made water flow from a rock. Moses called that place “Quarrelling” (because that seemed like a good name, too).

And still God’s children didn’t trust him or do what he said. They thought they could do a better job of looking after themselves and making themselves happy. But God knew there was no such thing as happiness without him.

So God led them to a tall mountain. God wanted to talk to his people and show them what he was like. He wanted to help them know him better and tell them about the special land he was going to give them.

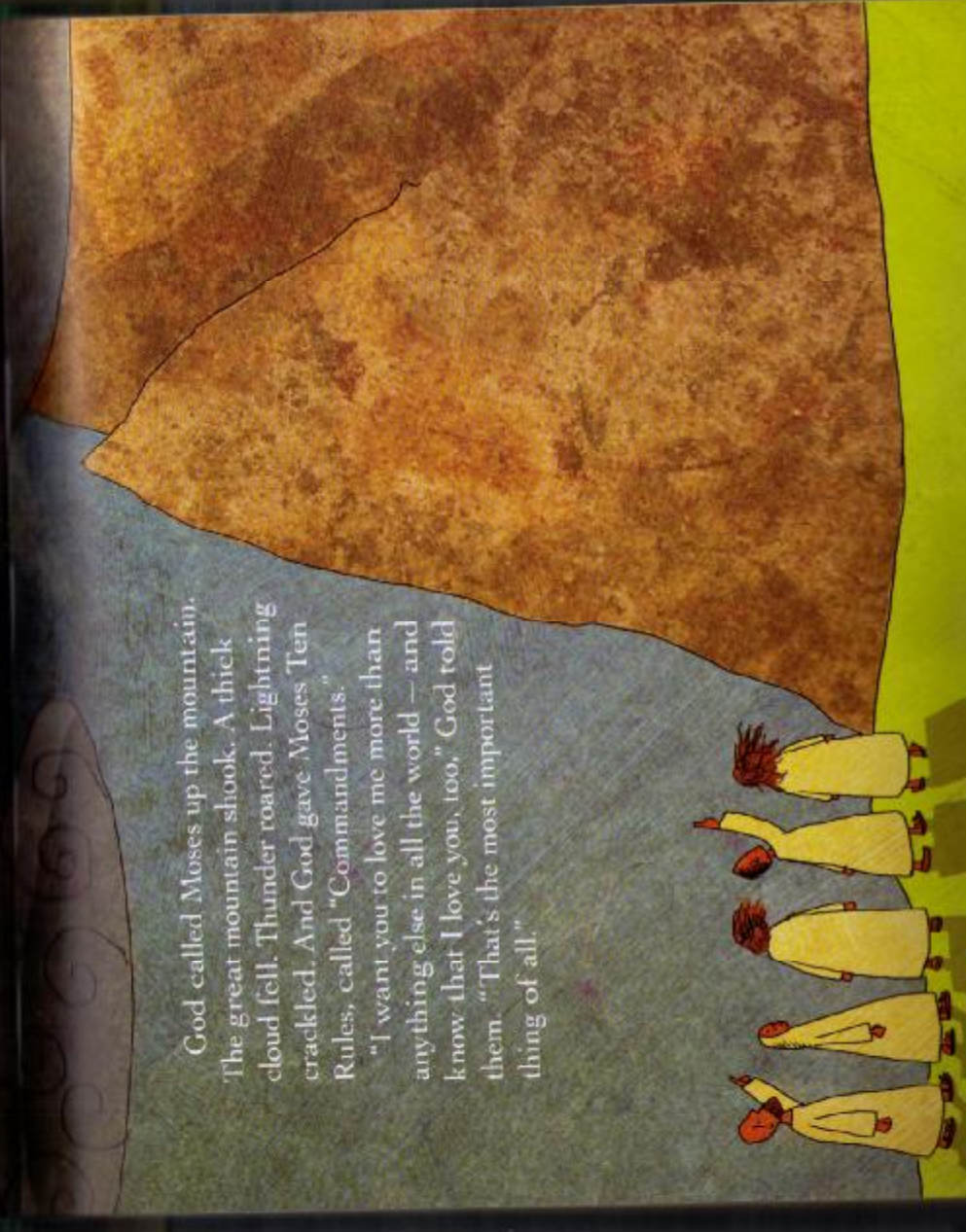
“The whole earth belongs to me!” God said. “But I have chosen you — you are my special family. I want you to live in a way that shows everyone else what I’m like — so they can know me, too.”






God called Moses up the mountain. The great mountain shook. A thick cloud fell. Thunder roared. Lightning crackled. And God gave Moses Ten Rules, called "Commandments."

"I want you to love me more than anything else in all the world — and know that I love you, too," God told them. "That's the most important thing of all."





God gave them other rules, like don't make yourselves pretend gods; don't kill people; or steal; or lie. The rules showed God's people how to live, and how to be close to him, and how to be happy. They showed how life worked best.

"God promises to always look after you," Moses said. "Will you love him and keep these rules?"

"We can do it! Yes! We promise!"

But they were wrong. They couldn't do it. No matter how hard they tried, they could never keep God's rules all the time.

God knew they couldn't. And he wanted them to know it, too.

Only one Person could keep all the rules. And many years later God would send him — to stand in their place and be perfect for them.

Because the rules couldn't save them.

Only God could save them.

