

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments 1:

Introduction.

**I Adonai, your God am
the One.**

The Ten Commandments

Introduction

The Ten Utterances

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The Name of God

“Your “ God

God the “Bringer Out;” The Involved God

God the Liberator from Bondage

Introduction

“The Ten Utterances”

Hebrew *aseret hadibrot* = “the ten utterances”

Greek *deka logoi* (“the ten words”).

- From the Greek comes the alternative name for the ten commandments = the “**decalogue**” (see pages 317 and 350 of the Book of Common Prayer)

Introduction

Scripture Reference

Exodus 20: 1-17: God's words to Israel
from Mount Sinai

Deuteronomy 5:6-21: Moses's
recapitulation to Israel of what God told
him at Mount Horeb

Introduction

Context

part of the story of Israel's liberation from
Egypt

basis for Israel's continuing relationship
with God = "covenant"

the way to lead Israel to the fullness of life
God intended

obedience to the commandments a response
of love from a grateful Israel

Introduction

Numbering

varies among the religious traditions:

| Commandment | Jews and Most Christian Traditions (from Rabbinic and reformed traditions) | Roman Catholic, Lutherans (after Origen, Clement of Alexandria, and Augustine) |
|--|---|---|
| I am the Lord your God . . . | 1. * | 1. |
| Have no other God before me.* Do not make for yourself an idol . . . | 2.* | 1. |
| Do not lift up the name of God in vain | 3. | 2. |

| | | |
|--|-----|----------|
| Remember the Sabbath | 4. | 3. |
| Honor you father and mother... | 5. | 4. |
| You shall not murder... | 6. | 5. |
| You shall not commit adultery | 7. | 6. |
| You shall not steal | 8. | 7. |
| You shall not give false testimony | 9. | 8. |
| You shall not covet your neighbor's house, wife... | 10. | 9 and 10 |

* The Christians traditions give Exodus 20:2-3 as the first Commandment, and Exodus 20:4-6 as the second. However, some Jewish traditions give Exodus 20:2 as the first Commandment, and Exodus 20:3-6 as the second.

Introduction

Arrangement and Order

Jewish tradition:

five on one tablet, five on the other

first tablet: obligations primarily to God

second tablet: obligations primarily to
each other

bridge: 5th commandment (honor your
father and mother). Father and mother
are our immediate “creators,”
mediators of God’s gift of life to us

| first tablet | second tablet | why? |
|--|--|--|
| 1. I am the Lord your God... | 6. You shall not murder | killing destroys a reflection of God (we are each in God's image) |
| 2. Have no other God. . . | 7. You shall not commit adultery | religion and marriage both require fidelity |
| 3. Do not lift up the name of God in vain... | 8. You shall not steal | those who steal may in the end deny it by swearing falsely in God's name |
| 4. Remember the Sabbath | 9. You shall not bear false witness | profaning the Sabbath is like testifying God did not create the world |
| 5. Honor your father and mother | 10. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife | such coveting can lead to complex relationships or families; making it difficult to give both parents a proper honor |

Introduction

Arrangement and Order

God's name is not mentioned in the commandments on the second tablet. Roman emperor Hadrian (76 to 138 AD) asked Rabbi Joshua ben Chananyah why. His answer: God's name cannot lie adjacent to heinous crimes, just as the emperor does not put his name on outhouses and such.

Introduction

Arrangement and Order

The last five commandments about our relationship with others parallels the law codes of other ancient near Eastern peoples.

What is unique: breaking these laws about our relationship with others also effects our relationship with God

Introduction

At Mount Sinai

after the destruction of the temple, the **Torah** became the central focus of Jewish faith.

Whenever 2 or more gather together to study Torah, there will be the Divine Presence, the *Shekhinah*

God gave the Commandments and the entire Torah (written and oral = all rabbinic interpretation) to Moses at Mount Sinai

Introduction At Mount Sinai

whole world hushed in silence
God began to speak
with each word, the entire world filled with
a unique fragrance of spice
each word as it spread broke out into 70
languages, filling the earth

The First Commandment

I, Adonai your God, am the One

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery”

Exodus 20:2 (NRSV)

“I, Adonai your God, [am the one] who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from a slavehouse

*Exodus 20:2 (tr. Eugene Borowitz, in **Broken Tablets**)*

The First Commandment

Topics:

Can God Command Belief?

A God who is an “I”

The Name of God

“Your “ God

God the “Bringer Out;” The Involved God

God the Liberator from Bondage

The First Commandment

Can God Command Belief?

Is this really a commandment?

How can God demand we believe when belief is not under our direct voluntary control?

Some have suggested the “first commandment” should be considered a preface to the actual commands that follow.

Maimonides: it is the first among the commandments, the essential pillar upon which all else rests

The First Commandment

A God who is an “I”

“**I** am the LORD your God. . .

an “I” speaks (first person, pronoun, singular)
one vs. the polytheism of the ancient world
an entity with characteristics of personhood
vs. the later Aristotle’s God as Pure Intellect
continuously contemplating perfection
(itself)
vs. the later Neoplatonic idea of “The Good”
or “the One:” above definition, structure,
limitation, intelligibility

The First Commandment

The Name of God

YHWH

hwhy

Hebrew letters *yod y*, *he h*, *waw W*, *he h*

Tetragrammaton

actual name of God

The First Commandment

The Name of God

spoken only by the high priest on the high holy days (Yom Kippur) in the temple in ancient Israel

Levite choirs increased their volumes to hide the sound

those in the temple threw themselves prostrate to the ground

No longer pronounced since the Romans destroyed the temple in 70 A.D.

No one now knows the correct pronunciation

The First Commandment

The Name of God

Because it is otherwise blasphemy to say the name of God, when a devout Jew encounters **YHWH** in the Hebrew scripture, they substitute a word that could not possibly sound like the real name of God -- **Adonai**, meaning “my LORD.”

The pronunciation of **YHWH** as “Yahweh” is a guess by Jewish scholars (Masoretes) some time before the 10th century.

The First Commandment

The Name of God

Christian bible translators in the 16th century combined the consonants of **YHWH** (poorly transliterated as “**JHVH**,” with the vowels of the substitute name **Adonai** to produce the artificial hybrid name Jehovah.

Devout Jews: saying aloud the approximation “Yahweh” is getting too close to the real name and hence is blasphemous.

Hallelujah = “Praise Yah”

The First Commandment

“Your” God

God is God of everyone and everything but the “your” here is a singular pronoun: God is addressing us as individuals.

implications:

- Adonai is “my” God in a very personal and intimate way
- to bring the fullness of life intended by the commandments, to fulfill God’s covenant with the people of God, we must respond as individuals, one by one

The First Commandment

God the “Bringer Out;” The Involved God

Adonai does not say:

“I am the LORD your God, all powerful, almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, who created you and the universe you live in. . .”

but

“who brought you out the land of Egypt. . .”

Why this description / emphasis?

The First Commandment God the “Bringer Out;” The Involved God

God is the “bringer out”

God is both transcendent and immanent in creation, a participant in the world and in our lives

“high and exalted beyond this world yet present within history”

The First Commandment God the “Bringer Out;” The Involved God

“The divine presence is incarnate in all the world. God is *ruach kol basar*; the spirit that resides in all flesh. That presence may be brought to consciousness in the mind of every human who is open to it, as it may be blocked out and negated entirely by the closing of the human heart, by cruelty, or by the denial of God’s image. The *Shechinah*, the divine presence in our world, does not dwell where she is not wanted.”

- *Arthur Green, in Seek My Face, Speak My Name*

The First Commandment

God the Liberator from Bondage

Can be a metaphor for anything that releases us from the many possible bondages that impede our freedom to act properly / live fully

- ghetto to emancipation
- despotism to democracy
- ignorance to knowledge
- unemployment to job
- discrimination to equality
- illness to health
- neurosis to maturity
- depression to hope

The First Commandment God the Liberator from Bondage

Whenever we are so freed, it is through the
God who liberates from bondage, who
brings us out of slavery

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The Ten Commandments

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**Have no other god before
Me**

The Ten Commandments

The Second Commandment

Topics:

The Idol of Self

Idols of Money, Technology, Addictions,
Absolute Political Systems, Addictions. . .

The Gods of Other Religions

Why Do We Worship Idols?

A Jealous God

How Can God Hold Responsible the Children of
Those Who Hate Him?

The Second Commandment

**You shall have no other gods before me
You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether
in the form of anything that is in heaven
above, or that is on the earth beneath, or
that is in the water under the earth.
You shall not bow down to them or worship
them,
for I the LORD your God am a jealous God,
punishing children for the iniquity of
parents, to the third and the fourth
generation of those who reject me,
but showing steadfast love to the thousandth
generation of those who love me and keep
my commandments**

Exodus 20: 3-6. NRSV

The Second Commandment

A “positive” phrasing of the second commandment:

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”

Deuteronomy 6:5 (NRSV)

The Idol of Self

The Kotzker rabbi: The “I” is a thief

- it takes the partial and mistakes it for the whole.
- in our search for self-fulfillment, we tend to seek meaningful existence only of ourselves

examples:

- making our personal concerns more important than God’s
- making a religious service a “pick and choose feel-good activity” that turns our emotions into idols

The Idols of Money, Technology, Absolute Political Systems, Addictions

...

we are called to *discipleship*, a totality of
commitment to

- God
- God's word
- God's vision and desire for us and for
others

we must be suspicious of *anything* that may
interfere with that commitment

The Idols of Money, Technology, Absolute Political Systems, Addictions

...

for example, wealth:

No one can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth (Matthew 6:24, NRSV)

also:

Ezekiel 7:19-20

Deuteronomy 32:10-18

The Gods of Other Religions

true or false?

- all religious non-Christians are idolaters
- all non-orthodox Christians are heretics

Questions:

Do only Christians worship the one true living God?

What should our attitude be towards other religions?

Can salvation be found outside the church?

Why Do We Worship Idols?

1. The Religious Instinct in Humanity
2. The Desire to Manipulate God
3. A Need for a Visible God
4. A Confused Sense of Freedom

(from Timmerman)

Why Do We Worship Idols?

1. The Religious “Instinct” in Humanity

the suggestion we have an innate sense of the divine, a inner longing for transcendence

- Platonism: “intellectual vision” of ultimate good, justice, love. . . part of the Divine Mind
- Schleiermacher: “God consciousness,” our feeling of utter dependency

can be perverted, misdirected

Why Do We Worship Idols?

2. The Desire to Manipulate God

our tendency to envision, project onto

- God,

or

- a substitute “god”

those characteristics that satisfy our own psychological needs (thus “manipulating” God)

Why Do We Worship Idols?

3. A Need for a Visible God

a desire to:

“capture” God in a concrete, visible, static form (*denying the relatedness of God*),

worship a God who is fully knowable, who is without mystery (*denying the transcendence of God*)

worship a God fashioned by our own hands (*forming God in our own image*)

worship the here and now (*an ego centered universe*)

Why Do We Worship Idols?

4. A Confused Sense of Freedom

freedom is not being bound by the conventions of others, but choosing your own way (?)

idolatry, choosing what to “worship,” is a path to freedom

Why Do We Worship Idols?

4. A Confused Sense of Freedom

What is freedom?

The metaphor of the train journey. If a train wants to go to Chicago, is it bondage or freedom for it to stay on the track to Chicago?

Where does Grace come in?

Why Do We Worship Idols?

4. A Confused Sense of Freedom

Grace and Freedom. Two paradigms:

1. *Augustine*. We are naturally inclined to the divine, but our natures have become corrupted. Grace *restores* us to our natural state.
2. *Aquinas*. We are naturally inclined to the world. Grace *raises* us up so we can aspire to and achieve that which we would otherwise be incapable of in our natural state

A Jealous God

**“(for you shall worship no other god,
because the LORD, whose name is
Jealous, is a jealous God)”**

Exodus 34: 14 (NRSV)

**“They made me jealous with what is
no god, provoked me with their
idols.”**

Deuteronomy 32:21 (NRSV)

metaphor is from marriage, stressing

allegiance to YHWH alone

YHWH demands absolute loyalty and

rejection of all other Gods

A Jealous God

there are no other real gods, so why should
God be jealous of that which is not real?

Rabbi Gamliel's answer: parable of the man
who takes a second wife inferior to the
first.

- First wife will be rightly infuriated that
her husband is lessening his devotion
to her for a woman who is less worthy

How Can God Hold Responsible the Children of Those Who Hate Him?

“ . . .for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me. . . ”

Exodus 20:5 (NRSV)

“Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents, only for their own crimes may persons be put to death.”

Deuteronomy 24:16 (NRSV)

How Can God Hold Responsible the Children of Those Who Hate Him?

Possible Answers:

1. offspring punished only if children:
 - follow the sinful ways of their parents
 - fail to protest if it is within their power
2. God's remembrance of the parent's sins is
God taking notice that a parent's actions,
genetic predisposition shape a child's
behavior

How Can God Hold Responsible the Children of Those Who Hate Him?

Possible Answers:

3. a reminder that children do suffer from the iniquities of their parents: neglect; inheritance of a polluted world
4. statement is harsh, but God later changes his mind after the Golden Calf incident, removing the conditions on his steadfast love (Exodus 34:6-7)

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The Ten Commandments 3:

**Do not lift up the name
of your God for vain
purpose.**

The Ten Commandments

The Third Commandment

Topics:

What does it mean to take the name of the Lord
God in vain?

How far can we take it?

How can we lift up the name of the Lord God
correctly?

The relationship at the heart of the
commandment

Implications for Prayer

The Lord will not hold guiltless those who take
his name in vain

The Third Commandment

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 (RSV)

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. (NRSV)

You shall not lift up the name of Adonai your God for vain purpose, for Adonai will not clear one who uses the Name in vain (Broken Tablets)

What does using God's name "in vain," "for vain purpose" mean?

vain: dictionary definition:

1. having no real value, idle, worthless
2. marked by futility or ineffectualness; useless

do not use God's name:

- in an idle, superfluous way, or
- for a worthless or unworthy purpose, or
- for an unnecessary or futile purpose

What does using God's name "in vain," "for vain purpose" mean?

"positive" statement of the commandment:

we should lift up the name of God only:

- in earnestness, in a full and deep awareness of what we are doing
- for worthy, valuable purposes
- for necessary, fruitful purposes

What does using God's name "in vain," "for vain purpose" mean?

examples of lifting up God's name in vain:

1. profanity. Dragging God's name through the mud of human emotion.
2. false swearing. Swearing to contradict known facts, to deceive
3. false prophecy
4. "reflex religion" Reflexive use of God's name without a religious commitment (often in a time of need)

What does using God's name "in vain," "for vain purpose" mean?

examples of lifting up God's name in vain:

5. frivolous use of God's name.

Exclamations such as "Oh My God,"
"My Lord!"

6. unworthy use of God's name. (e.g. for magic or for destructive purposes)

7. unnecessary or unfruitful use of God's name.

- praying for the sex of an unborn child
- saying a blessing before a meal and then not enjoying the meal
- swearing before the oblivious

How Far Can We Take It?

Can we of dust and ashes ever use the transcendent name of God without subtly taking it in vain?

- our finite minds cannot know the fullness of God
- our praise, glorification, exaltation, honoring of God will always fall short of what God is worthy of

we should consider the commandment a:

- gracious permission to use God's name
- a kindness bestowed on us by the One who knows our need to connect God to our lives
- this permission however has boundaries

How Far Can We Take It?

Is every action of a religious person a reflection on God's name?

If we call ourselves “Christians” and do not act as Christ, are we then taking God's name in vain?

How Can We Lift Up the Name of the Lord God Correctly?

we should lift up the name of God only

- in earnestness, in a full and deep awareness of what we are doing
- for worthy, valuable purposes
- for necessary, fruitful purposes

basis: the relationship at the heart of the commandment

The Relationship at the Heart of the Commandment

our relationship with God involves:

- covenant loyalty
- respect and love (as in any human relationship)

therefore we should try to lift up God's name:

- respectfully (holy, awe-filled reverence)
- lovingly

Implications for Prayer

In praying, we are invoking God's name,
“lifting up” the name of God.

Third Commandment requires
we pray for:

- worthy, valuable purposes
- necessary, fruitful purposes

pray with a deep earnestness and honesty:

- no “social duplicity” when we call upon
God's name
- words matter, and they matter a lot to God
- must not make God's name a mere breath,
an emptiness

Implications for Prayer

Moses: God “**great, mighty and awesome**”

Jeremiah: God “**great and mighty**” (*not awesome*)

Daniel: God “**great and awesome**” (*not mighty*)

rabbis: Jeremiah and Daniel were being true to their experience of God. They would not lie to the Holy One

When the temple destroyed by the Romans:
“**Who is like You among the gods (*elim*)**”

A rabbi suggested praying “**Who is like You among the mute**” (*ilemim*)

Implications for Prayer

Job: **“God damn the day I was born and the night that forced me from the womb” (Job 3:3)**

blasphemous? or deeply honest?

To be true to the Third Commandment requires we lift up the name of God only with deep earnestness and honesty. We must not lie to the Holy One. We must not lift up the name of God with adjectives whose meaning is empty to us.

The Lord Will Not Hold Guiltless Those Who Take His Name in Vain

**“ . . . for the Lord will not hold him
guiltless who takes his name in vain”
(RSV)**

taking God's name in vain may seem like a
victimless act. What can we possibly do to
harm God?

The Lord Will Not Hold Guiltless Those Who Take His Name in Vain

consider the relationship at the heart of the
commandment

- may hurt God
- may hurt our relationship with God
- may sully God's reputation and esteem
among other people (at the deepest level,
the use of God's name is a matter of
mission)

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The Ten Commandments:

The Fourth Commandment

The Fourth Commandment

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it

- Exodus 20:8-11 (RSV)

The Fourth Commandment

Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God, you shall not do any work -- you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15 NRSV

The Fourth Commandment

1. *command:*

- remember
- keep holy

2. *details:*

- acknowledgement of six legitimate work days
- 7th day: complete and comprehensive work stoppage for all

3. *rationale:*

- because God rested on the 7th day
- because God freed you from slavery in Egypt

Remembering

remember: involves not mere mental action,
but active observance

- Exodus version: *Zachor*, “remember”
- Deuteronomy version: *Shamor*, “keep”
or “observe”

Talmud:

Zachor: reminds us to celebrate the
positive

Shamor: charges us against violating the
“do nots”

Sabbath as a Palace in Time

“palace in time” “island in time” “sanctuary in time” “holiness in time”

- keeping the sabbath holy involves separating it from all the other days (which are characterized by the activities of work, productivity, servitude to others), making it an “island in time,” removed from the mainland of the rest of the week
- not all time is our own; the God of all time retains the right to determine how one day should be used

Sabbath as a Palace in Time

“Technical civilization is man’s conquest of space. It is a triumph frequently achieved by sacrificing an essential ingredient of existence, namely, time. In technical civilization, we expend time to gain space. . . . The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to holiness in time. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world.”

- Abraham Joshua Heschel

Sabbath as Divine Gift

Jewish poetic descriptions of the Sabbath:

“The Sabbath Bride” - radiant and beautiful, poetic symbol of charm and purity, object of love and affection

“The Sabbath Queen” - symbol of majesty, beauty and grace

“The sabbath was made for human beings, not human beings for the sabbath”

- Mark 2:27

Sabbath as Part of the Order of Creation

“God’s resting is a divine act that builds into the very created order of things a working / resting rhythm.” (Terrence Fretheim)

“it is ordained in the very fabric of creation that the world is not a place of endless productivity, ambition, or anxiety.”
(Walter Brueggemann)

Sabbath Keeping as Creation Keeping

“Even more, *sabbath-keeping is an act of creation-keeping*. To keep the sabbath is to participate in God’s intention for the rhythm of creation. Not keeping the sabbath is a violation of the created order; it returns one aspect of that order to chaos. What the creatures do with the sabbath has cosmic effects.”

- Terrence Fretheim

Sabbath as a Remembrance of Creation

- the world is not ours
- God is the Lord and Creator of the universe
- reflects our servitude to God

we can acknowledge this by stopping our labors, stopping our manipulation of nature, letting nature run itself

Sabbath as Remembrance of Exodus from Egypt

“manservants” and “maidservants” are freed
from working for their human masters on
the Sabbath

emphasizes our freedom from servitude to
human masters

(should include the “taskmaster” in
ourselves?)

“The very concreteness of sabbath is a sacrament witnessing to the reality of exodus and to the governance of the creator who has broken the restless penchant for productive activity. . . . Sabbath is the daring recognition that with the change of sovereigns wrought in the exodus, such unrewarding expenditure of labor is no longer required.”

- Walter Brueggemann

Sabbath as Egalitarian Institution

rest is for all, rich and poor, master and servant, man and animal

the implicit equality of the Sabbath rest witnesses God's intention that creation should be a community of peace in which all creatures stand in shared rest

Sabbath as Egalitarian Institution

“What is the Sabbath? A reminder of every man’s royalty; an abolition of the distinction of master and slave, rich and poor, success and failure. To celebrate the Sabbath is to experience one’s ultimate independence of civilization and society, of achievement and anxiety. The Sabbath is an embodiment of the belief that all men are equal and that equality of men means the nobility of men. The greatest sin of man is to forget that he is prince.”

- Abraham Joshua Heschel

Sabbath as Protest

Seneca, Roman philosopher: spending every seventh day without “doing anything” wastes one seventh of your life

“We must understand that doing nothing, being silent and open to the world, letting things happen inside, can be as important as -- and sometimes more important than -- what we commonly call ‘useful’”

- Rabbi Gunther Plaut

Sabbath as Protest

Sabbath is:

- protest against worldly concept that value exists only in producing (*world is more than a place of endless productivity*)
- statement that the world is not ours (*remembrance of creation*)
- statement that we belong to no human master (*remembrance of Exodus*)

Sabbath as a Foretaste of the World to Come

envisions the new world order where all the
world's creatures will be at peace with
one another

Jews pray at the end of their Sabbath service
for the Sabbath that never ends

Practice

What as a practical matter must we do to remember, observe the Sabbath, keep it holy?

Worship is not mentioned, but clearly is one means of making the Sabbath “holy”

Practice

fundamentally: must involve:

“periodic, regular disengagement from systems of productivity whereby the world uses people up to exhaustion. That disengagement refers also to culture-produced expectations for frantic leisure, frantic consumptions, or frantic exercise.”

- Walter Brueggemann

Practice

May involve:

- termination of routines
- disengagement from some social conventions
- lowering one's standard of living

Focus: God is the center of our lives

The Parable of the Rich Man whose land produced abundantly (Luke 12:16-29)

The Blessing of the Sabbath

“If you refrain from trampling the sabbath, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day; if you call the sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs, then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob . . .

“

(Isaiah 58: 13-14 NRSV)

Footnote: Sun. vs. Sat.

early centuries: Eucharist not related to the Fourth Commandment

- Fourth Commandment: imitate God the creator who rested on the Sabbath
- Sunday: day to celebrate Jesus' death, resurrection

Fourth Century: Emperor Constantine required cessation of all work on Sunday except farming

538 AD Council of Orleans: prohibited servile work on Sunday

- landowners could not require their serfs to work

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The Ten Commandments:

The Fifth Commandment

The Fifth Commandment

“Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.” (Exodus 20:12 NRSV)

“Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.” (Deuteronomy 5:16 NRSV)

“You shall each revere your mother and father, and you shall keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 19:3 NRSV)

The Fifth Commandment

Synopsis

1. Command:
 - honor / revere your father and mother
2. Motivational Clause, Promise / Benefit:
 - your days may be long
 - it may go well with you
 - in the land the LORD is giving you

The relationship between child and parent

no inter-human relationship is more basic

- a fundamental order of creation
- every person is a child of parents
throughout their life

note equality of father and mother:

- remarkable in a patriarchal Israel that
both are equally to be honored

The relationship between child and parent

commandment speaks to:

- the “valuing of the life-world of the parents by the children”
- importance of continuity between the generations

(Exodus story is concerned with the safe transmission to all generations of the story of God’s liberation of his people from bondage in Egypt)

Why does God care how we treat our parents?

Three partners in the making of a human being: father, mother, God

God often describes his relationship with us in filial terms:

- Exodus 4:22
- Jeremiah 31:20
- Hosea 11:1
- Malachi 1:6
- Isaiah 64:8, 66:13
- The Lord's Prayer

Why does God care how we treat our parents?

Command may in part reflect the God's
divine concern and authority exercised
through the parent

Honor and fear / revere

honor (Exodus and Deuteronomy) - Hebrew

kabed

revere or fear (Leviticus) - Hebrew *tira'u*

honor (*kabed*):

- wide-ranging verb; no one specific behavior is commanded
- children may respond in multiple ways to honor parents (respect, esteem, concern for, affection, love, consideration, appreciation, nurture, forgiveness. . .)
- involves positive acts to help them, bring them joy, improve their lives

Honor and fear / revere

honor (*kabed*):

- “obedience is not at the center of what it means to honor” (Fretheim)
- command directed primarily at adults (to protect parents from being driven out of their home / abused when they could no longer work)
- includes among its meanings “be heavy” suggesting “give weight to.” Parents should be treated with seriousness.

Honor and fear / revere

The New Testament “transposition” of the relationship in the angel’s announcement to Zechariah:

“With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17 NRSV)

“ ‘Honor’ is a more delicate, transactive maneuver, whereby both parties grow in dignity through the process”
(Brueggemann)

Honor and fear / revere

fear/revere (*tira'u*):

do not take our parent's place/position
do not diminish the esteem due them
from others

Talmud:

- Exodus / Deuteronomy: “honor your *father* and *mother*”
- Leviticus: “fear/revere your *mother* and *father*”

Our tendency is to honor mother, fear/revere father. This ordering emphasizes we also honor our father, fear/revere our mother

Why are we promised our days will be long?

Not really a “promise” or a “warning”
 (“may”)

Possibilities:

- improved relationships among the generations will *tend* to improve our lives
- quasi-legal note that retaining inheritance of the land requires honoring parents

Extension of the commandment to other authorities

Proverbs 24:21:

“My child, fear the LORD and the king, and do not disobey either of them. . .” (NRSV)

I Peter 2:13-17:

“For the Lord’s sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors. . . Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor.”
(NRSV)

Extension of the commandment to other authorities

The Reformers extended the Commandment
to authorities (state, judiciary)
Authorities often do take a “parental” role

Obligations of a parent for a child

Ephesians 6:2-4:

“ ‘Honor your father and mother’ -- this is the first commandment with a promise. ‘so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth’ And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (NRSV)

Obligations of a parent for a child

a child's honoring of his/her parents should evoke a response of the parent to be worthy of honor

tasks of “honorable parents”

- to *love* (unconditional love for who they are)
- to *direct* (Proverbs: training a child in the way he/she should go. Giving guidelines for right living)
- to *nurture* (guidance and support for his/her special needs/gifts)

Obligations of a parent for a child

Marion Wright Edelman's letter to her sons:

I seek your forgiveness for all the times I talked when I should have listened; got angry when I should have been patient; acted when I should have waited; feared when I should have been delighted; scolded when I should have encouraged; criticized when I should have complimented; said no when I should have said yes and said yes when I should have said no... I often tried too hard and wanted and demanded so much, and mistakenly sometimes tried to mold you into my image of what I wanted you to be rather than discovering and nourishing you as you emerged and grew."

How far does it go?

Matthew 10:35:

“For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law . . .” (NRSV)

our honor is first directed to God

our responsibility to God comes first

What if our parents are not worthy?

What if our parents are not worthy? not “honorable”?

What if there is on-going hurt and pain in the relationship that is detrimental or even harmful to us?

What if there is a history of child abuse?

What if our parents are not worthy?

honor: a wide-ranging verb; no one specific behavior is commanded. Open-ended.

Deuteronomy: “Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you. . .”

Maimonides: “It is possible for a man to honor and revere and obey those whom he does not love.”

“Honor” speaks to filial behavior, not to filial judgment or sentiment” (Leonard Fein in Broken Tablets)

What if our parents are not worthy?

Honor: can still involve positive acts to help them, improve their lives, to the degree we are able. **Fear/revere:** not detract from the esteem due to them by others

Honor may also involve forgiveness

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The Ten Commandments:

The Sixth Commandment

The Sixth Commandment

You shall not murder

- Exodus 20:13 (NRSV)

You shall not kill

- Exodus 20:13 (RSV)

The Sixth Commandment

meaning of the verb *rasah* (“to kill”)

controversial

- murder: 1 Kings 21:19 (hence NRSV translation)
- unintentional killing: Deut 4:41-42
- execution of a convicted killer: Num 35:30

Fretheim (after Exodus 21:12, Num 35:20-21):

“any act of violence against an individual out of hatred, anger, malice, deceit, or for personal gain, in whatever circumstances and by whatever method, that might result in death (even if killing was not the intention)”

The Sixth Commandment

Jesus' Extension of the Commandment

“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgement.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgement, and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council, and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.”

Matthew 5:21-24

The Sixth Commandment

New Testament Extension of the
Commandment

“All who hate a brother or sister are
murderers. . . .”

- 1 John 3:15

The Sixth Commandment

At the core of the Commandment:

- The need to see the “Face of the Other”
- The holiness / sanctity of human life

The Face of the Other

Buber: “I it” vs. “I You”

Martin Buber

1923: “I and Thou”

two modes of experience, attitudes to the world:

- world of objects = “I it”
- encounter with Another = “I Thou” or “I You”

The Face of the Other

Buber: “I it” vs. “I You”

I it

- we objectify, conceptualize, fit into the “box of our understanding” that which we see, hear, etc (“it”).
- the “normal” experienced world of space and time

I You

- the “You” can never be objectified, or “boxed” into our understanding. A “You” has no borders, cannot be measured. A “You” “fills the sky”
- an encounter, a transitory event (the “event of relation”)
- can be called love
- comes to us by grace

The Face of the Other

Levinas: Totalizing vs. “I You”

Emmanuel Levinas

1960's: contrasted “I You” not only with “I it” but with “totalizing”

- **“totalizing:”** the project of Western Philosophy: a search for truth that is a search for underlying unity, commonality, obliterating difference
- **“I You” encounter**
 - difference, not unity, is fundamental
 - the Other is “always beyond me” an infinity that can never be grasped. We can approach the Other but never reach the end of him/her

The Face of the Other

Levinas: The Original Ethical Relation

The “**original ethical relation**”

- my being is secondary; my responsibility to the Other comes first
- this “unshirkable ethical responsibility” is what makes me a unique self. Our “testimony” before the Other defines us. This starts with God as the Other. God calls, we answer “Here I am Lord.”
- Abraham in Genesis 22:1-
- Samuel in 1 Sam 3: 4-
- Isaiah in Isaiah 6: 8-

The Face of the Other

Levinas: The Face

“I You” encounter

- We meet the Other as Face
- The Face is my master in its need, its nakedness and vulnerability
- The Face gives me orders “Do not kill”
 - we are responsible for the Other in its need, when it is in danger of death

The Face of the Other

Murder as the Extreme Consequence of Not Seeing the Face of the Other

Murder is the extreme failure of not seeing
the face of the Other

The Holiness of Life

Human life is holy because:

1. Human life belongs to God. It is:
 - God's *creation*
 - God's *property*. Its disposition is God's prerogative alone
 - (the metaphor of life as a "gift" must not be taken "literally." The blessings of life are gifts to us; but our life itself still belongs to God)
2. Every human person has an intrinsic value and goodness, for each is a being made by God in the *image of God*

The Holiness of Life

Murder as a Reversal of God's Creation

Murder is a reversal of God's creation -- for each human life is God's creation:

Genesis 4:9. God to Cain:

“Your brother's blood(s) is crying out to me
from the ground”

- A cry of anguish from the earth (creation)
- Murder kills the individual, all the future children and creative work yet to be done by the individual
- Murder destroys an entire world (Saving a life can save an entire world)

The Holiness of Life

Murder as a Usurpation of God's Ownership of Life

Murder is a usurpation of God's ownership of life, for human life belongs to God, is God's property:

Implications for any shedding of blood:

- Life is not for human beings to do with as we wish
- If we take a human life for any reason we must:
 - discern God's intentions
 - act as "an agent of God"

The Holiness of Life

Murder as a Blasphemy Against God

Murder is a blasphemy against God, for it
destroys a being made in the image of God

Are We all “Murderers”?

Extrapolations on the Shedding of Blood

New Testament:

Jesus in Matthew 5:21-24: anger and insults of Another are liable under the Sixth Commandment.

1 John 3:15: hate of Another liable

Talmudic extrapolations:

- embarrassing, shaming another
 - causes blood to drain from their face
- acts that destroy aspects of life that may not be recovered
 - rape
 - causing Another to loose their livelihood

Are We all “Murderers”?

Extrapolations on the Shedding of Blood

Common theme:

Doing anything that denigrates Another, that causes the “death” of part of the human spirit or the human heart is wrong

A positive version:

We should encourage, nurture in the Other all that enriches, enhances the human spirit and heart

Resisting Wickedness and Evil that Threatens the Other

Responding to the face of the Other, to its needs and vulnerability, its possible danger of death, requires us to protest and resist wickedness and evil

Calvin, on the positive application of the Sixth Commandment:

“. . . that we should not only live at peace with men. . . but also should aid, as far as we can, the miserable who are unjustly oppressed, and should endeavor to resist the wicked, lest they should injure men.”

Resisting Wickedness and Evil that Threatens the Other

There is an evil which most of us condone and are even guilty of: indifference to evil. We remain neutral, impartial, and not easily moved by the wrongs done to other people.

Indifference to evil is more insidious than evil itself. . . . A silent justification, it makes possible an evil erupting as an exception becoming the rule. . . . The decay of conscience fills the air with a pungent smell. Good and evil, which were once as distinguishable as day and night, have become a blurred mist. But that mist is man-made. God is not silent, He has been silenced.

- Abraham Joshua Heschel

Suicide

Genesis 9:5: “For your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning. . .”

Our life belongs to God; it is not our right to decide when to end it

Who is suicide a sin against?

Capital Punishment

Israel's limited use of capital punishment had to do with violations of God's created order. It was considered a matter of world restoration under God:

- Exodus 21:12-17
- Exodus 22: 18-20

When might capital punishment be justified as a restoration of the world under God?
Is "setting an example" sufficient justification for capital punishment?
Can a secular state act as an agent of God?

Euthanasia

Adage to physicians: “When God puts his hand on, take yours off.”

- (When does God put his hand on? How can we tell?)

Can we ever

- take our hand off when God has not put his hand on?
- use our hand to actively push the Other to God when God has put his hand on?
- use our hand to actively push the Other to God when God has not put his hand on?

War

Arguments justifying war and the killing in war have included:

- defense of self
- restoration of the World to God

What criteria must be met for a war to be “just?” How “broken” must the world be before it is not longer tolerable and war necessary to “restore” the world to God?

We are called to resist evil and wickedness. Is bloodshed sometimes unavoidable in resisting evil? Why? How sure must we be that there is no better alternative?

Abortion

The debate over the ethics of the *practice* (vs. the more complex issue of the *legal availability*) of abortion:

- is not a debate about the holiness of human life (in general both sides uphold the holiness of human life)
- centers on the question: What is human life and when does it begin?

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The Ten Commandments:

The Seventh Commandment

The Seventh Commandment

You shall not commit adultery

- Exodus 20:14 (NRSV)

The Seventh Commandment

No linguistic problems

- verb *na'ap*: to commit adultery
 - can have a man or woman as its subject
- distinguished from other verbs:
 - *skb* to sleep with
 - *znh* to commit harlotry/prostitution

Command relates to **adultery**, which in the Old Testament is clearly in a different category than **fornication** (= sex between two unmarried / unbetrothed people)

- eg. punishment for adultery death (Deut 22:22); whereas for seduction of a virgin, marriage or monetary payment required

The Seventh Commandment

Double standard in the definition of adultery
in Patriarchal Israel

- men: sex with another *married* woman
- women: sex with *any other* man

The Seventh Commandment

Extensions to the Commandment

Jesus' extension to the commandment:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

- Matthew 5:27-28

The Seventh Commandment

Possible Extensions

Fornication

“Out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander.”

- Matthew 15:19

“Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body, but the fornicator sins against the body itself.”

- 1 Corinthians 6:18

The Seventh Commandment

At the Heart of the Commandment

Themes at the heart of the Commandment:

- marriage
- sexuality
- fidelity

Marriage

What Constitutes a Marriage?

Scriptures contain many images about marriage

- erotic imagery of the Song of Songs to Son of Sirach 25:13 (there is no wickedness or wrath greater than a woman's)

“There is not a biblical theology of marriage as a unified set of ideas and concepts. Instead, one has to view the richness and diversity of the various early Christian traditions.” (Francis Fiorenza in Systematic Theology)

Marriage

What Constitutes a Marriage?

The Christian sacrament of marriage grew out of the natural institution of marriage primarily by adding elements to it, and has evolved with the natural institution over time

Marriage

The “Natural” or Secular Institution

“Natural” purpose of marriage:

The institution to protect and regulate the sexual and reproductive activities of people

- for the “good” of those directly involved
- for the “good” of society

Marriage

The “Natural” or Secular Institution

More modern developments:

- partners choose each other (“fall in love”) rather than undergoing an “arranged” marriage for political, commercial or other reasons
- effective contraception has removed the necessity of a link between sex and reproduction

Marriage

The “Natural” or Secular Institution

Christian Churches in general (including the Roman Catholic Church) recognize the legitimacy of secular marriages

Marriage

The Christian Institution

1662 Book of Common Prayer:

First, [matrimony] as ordained for the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy name

Second, it was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of the Christ's body.

Thirdly, it was ordained for the mutual society, help and comfort that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity

Marriage

The Christian Institution

Modern Prayer Book (p. 423) lists:

“intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God’s will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord”

Marriage

Three Bonds in a Christian Marriage (from Macquarrie)

1. Moral Bond

- begins with the exchange of vows, as they declare their consent before the church

2. Natural Bond

- begins with the sexual consummation of the marriage

3. Sacramental Bond

- begins with the prayers said over them, commending their union to God and seeking divine grace for them

The Moral Bond - Fidelity

Vows:

- to live together in the covenant of marriage, to love, to comfort, to honor, to keep, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful as long as both shall live
- to be sanctified (= set apart) as husband and wife

The Moral Bond - Fidelity

The covenant between God and his people is frequently compared to the covenant between husband and wife in Scriptures

- Hosea invokes images of Israel as an unfaithful wife to God
- commandment against idolatry and commandment against adultery both second on their respective tablets

The Moral Bond - Fidelity

“The solemn obligations undertaken by the marriage partners cannot fail to affect them in the very depths of their being. .

“ (Macquarrie)

- our commitments define us and shape

us

- are both moral and ontological
(involve mystery of being /
existence)

- essential to the attainment of full
personhood

The Moral Bond - Fidelity

“[Marriage vows] establish a relationship so profound that it can never cease to be of moral significance. For they bring into being a new unit, no longer you and I, but we -- and however much we fail to act out this unity, once each of us is committed together with the other to the intention of constituting such a unity, neither can ever be the same again, an entirely independent entity, free from all such ties.”

- John Lucas, *Theology* Vol. 78: 229, 1975

The Natural Bond - Sex

The Seventh Commandment

“points to the recognition that sexuality is enormously wondrous and enormously dangerous. The wonder of sexuality is available in a community only if it is practiced respectfully and under discipline. The danger of sexuality is that it is capable to evoking desires that are destructive of persons and of communal relations. . . . around the subject of freedom and discipline in sexuality we deal with the most intense and elemental mystery of human existence.”

- Walter Brueggemann

The Natural Bond - Sex

“At its best, sexual union is the most complete and intimate reciprocal self-giving of which two persons are capable, making them, in the biblical phrase, ‘one flesh’ (Gen. 2:24). It brings about a relation transcending in its closeness even blood-relationships.”

- John Macquarrie

The Natural Bond - Sex

Sexual union in the context of daily companionship and sharing “profoundly and permanently affects the partners in their inward being.” (Macquarrie)

This psycho-physical sexual union adds a new bond to marriage that perhaps cannot be totally destroyed. It creates:

- a mutual belonging
- a new community

Seventh Commandment declares God’s creational intention which “links a positive role for sexuality with commitment and loyalty” (Freiheit)

The Natural Bond - Sex

Another part of the natural bond are the children that arise from the sexual union
- the most visible example of the permanent effects of sexual union

The Sacramental Bond

A Sacramental Universe

“Teach me, my God and King, in all things
thee to see”

- George Herbert, Anglican poet

“Earth’s crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes,
The rest sit round and plunk blackberries.”

- Elizabeth Barrett Browning

The Sacramental Bond

A Sacramental Universe

“To me, the meanest flower that blows can
give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for
tears.”

- William Wordsworth

“Ever since the creation of the world his
eternal power and divine nature, invisible
though they are, have been understood
and seen through the things he has
made.” (NRSV)

- St. Paul, Romans 1:20

The Sacramental Bond

A Sacramental Universe

Duality of Experience:

- we are embodied beings existing in a very material world
- we can feel intimations of beauty, mystery, meaning through this material world (a bush, a flower, a sunset. . .)

The Sacramental Bond

A Sacramental Universe

A “sacramental” view of the universe links the two pieces of this duality:

- the material world is good
- the material world can be “door to the sacred”

The Sacramental Bond

A Sacramental Universe: Fundamental basis

material world is good:

- created by God
- in the Incarnation, God freely took on embodied existence, lived in space and time

material world can be a door to the sacred:

- God is both:
 - transcendent reality beyond the world he has made
 - immanent reality who dwells in this world and is active in it

The Sacramental Bond

A Sacramental Universe: natural sacraments

There are many “natural sacraments:”
physical events, actions or rituals, that
are “doors” to feelings, inner realities,
meaning beyond the mechanics of the act
or rite:

- touching, embracing another person
- making love
- sharing a meal together
- giving a gift
- gestures of hospitality and welcome

The Sacramental Bond

The Sacraments

Church has defined seven “sacramental”
rites or rituals: “Sacraments”

two Sacraments of the Gospel:

- Baptism
- Holy Eucharist

other Sacramental Rites that evolved under
guidance of the Holy Spirit:

- Confirmation
- Ordination
- Holy Matrimony
- Reconciliation of a Penitent
(Confession)
- Unction (Anointing of the Sick)

The Sacramental Bond

The Sacraments

1. outward or visible part = “**matter**” and/or “**form.**”
 - the material object and/or physical action that is the “door” or “portal” to the sacred
 - Catechism: “the outward and visible signs”
2. inward spiritual reality = “*res*”
 - heart of the sacrament
 - the action of God on the human spirit
 - Catechism: “the inward and spiritual grace”

The Sacramental Bond

Marriage as a Sacrament

The ministers of the sacrament are the couple themselves, not the priest

res: divine grace that blesses, aids the union

matter:

- the joining of hands at the ceremony
- the exchange of rings
- the act of sexual union that consummates the marriage

The Sacramental Bond

Sexuality in marriage as a “natural sacrament”

Sexuality in marriage can be a “natural sacrament” - the visible, “material” expression of the inner reality of love between the partners

“Marriage creates family, which is the locus for the preservation of Judaism and the Jewish people. In this setting, sexual intercourse is a religious act equivalent to prayer or Torah study, and the home becomes a holy place.” (Rabbi Peter Knobel in **Broken Tablets**)

Adultery as a Violation of the Bonds of Marriage

in a narrow sense: adultery is a violation of the bonds of marriage by having sexual intercourse outside of the marriage

in a broader sense: adultery is:

any violation of the *moral bond*: our covenantal commitment to a mutuality that is life-giving, nurturing, enhancing, respectful

any violation of the *natural bond*: a slap, a punch, a sneer, a shove; the withholding of physical affection, tenderness and care

Family

Marriage is the founding of a new family:

- the fundamental unit of community in society
- the locus of safe human intimacy
- the means by which human race perpetuates itself
- first means by which our values are transmitted to future generations
 - in particular, “the knowledge and love of the Lord”

The Seventh Commandment seeks also to protect the integrity of the family

Divorce

“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

- Matthew 5:31-32 (NRSV)

Divorce

Context of Jesus' statement:

- in Jesus' day, a man could divorce his wife for nearly any reason, so long as he gave her the certificate (the requirement dating back to Moses). Women could not divorce at all.
- an ongoing debate between two Rabbinical schools of the time: Hillel school (more lenient) and Schammai school (extreme cases only)

Jesus' interpretation can be seen as offering protection for women

Divorce

“except on the ground of unchastity”

- two suggested meanings of the Greek

porneia:

- incest

- adultery: suggesting divorce is allowed
when the marriage is already broken.

Divorce

Issue is complex, for adultery and divorce are both defined in the context of marriage. But what is a “marriage”?

- the “legal” institution
- the genuine, ongoing relationship that includes an intact:
 - *moral bond* (fidelity, the covenantal, lifelong commitment to honoring, respecting, cherishing, nurturing each other)
 - *natural bond* (sharing the most intimate aspects of themselves as sexual beings only with each other as the ultimate expression of their love and fidelity)

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The Ten Commandments:

The Eighth Commandment

The 8th Commandment. Introduction

You shall not steal.

- Exodus 20:15 (NRSV)

The 8th Commandment.

Introduction

Hebrew verb *g-n-v* (steal)

- lacks an explicit object; the object can be a person or object
- has the nuance of taking by stealth
- Rabbinic tradition and some modern scholars suggest kidnapping intended meaning (“You shall not steal a person”): previous two commandments dealt with “capital” offenses, so this one logically should also
- majority: lack of an object intended, giving expansive scope to the Commandment

The 8th Commandment.

Introduction

Brueggemann: “You shall not steal a person” not necessarily limiting. In ancient Israel:

- selfhood understood to “include the necessary ‘goods’ to make a life of dignity possible”
- (Fretheim): property understood “to be an extension of the ‘self’ of its owner, so that theft of property is a violation of person, not just a person’s wealth.”

At the Heart of the Commandment

God's creational intention:

- “God dignifies human beings by giving them work to do, from which they can expect to receive some of the fruits of their labor. . .” (Fretheim)
- Genesis 2:15-16: “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; . . .”
- God gives many gifts to us for our enjoyment

At the Heart of the Commandment

Theft is the failure to accept this creational intention of God. It is the failure to accept:

- the fruits of the labors of Others
- the gifts given Others by God

At the Heart of the Commandment

A positive reading of the Commandment:

We should protect, honor, and celebrate:

- the fruits of the labors of Others
- the gifts given Others by God

Theft of Material Property

Examples:

- burglary
- shoplifting
- failing to return lost property
- not reporting all our income on an income tax form
- not returning excess money received from a malfunctioning ATM machine
- not paying for a missing item on a restaurant check
- failing to correct a bank error in our favor
- paying half price for a “child” ticket for a child just turned thirteen

Theft of Material Property

Many such thefts can deceptively appear “victimless” because the theft is spread over a large number of individuals or a large organization.

Theft of Material Property

More Examples:

- Failure to pay a just price for the labor or the fruits of the labor of Another:
 - buying a food item that does not cover the costs of the farmer's labor
 - paying a laborer a wage insufficient for living in dignity
- If charity is an obligation (= distributing in our role as Stewards that which Others need):
 - failure to contribute generously to fight poverty, hunger, famine
 - failure to tithe to the Church

Non-material Thefts

Theft of Creativity

- plagiarism
- failing to credit a felicitous turn of phrase or idea

Theft of Knowledge

- deliberately misleading someone
- flattering a person dishonestly

Theft of Opinion and Feelings

- deceiving another so they have an excessively high opinion of ourselves, or feel grateful to us when we are undeserving

Non-material Thefts

Theft of Time

- keeping Another waiting by being late

Theft of Reputation

- gossiping, engaging in the “language of hurt”

Theft from Future Generations

- wasteful use of Natural Resources

The Victims of Theft

Those we wrong, sin against in a theft are:

- the person we steal from
- God,
 - whose creational intention is that each person enjoy the fruits of their labors and the gifts God has given to them
- who has established methods for the distribution of the divine bounty

Restitution

In Israel

- theft of property a “tort” -- injured party should be restored as much as possible to their original condition
- theft of a person (kidnapping) was punishable by death

Partners in Crime

We become “partners” in a theft if we enjoy the benefits of the theft. *Examples:*

- buy a stolen item
- advance in the company hierarchy after gossip we were not responsible for “steals” the reputation and hence chances for advancement of a rival
- live comfortably, our house, food, clothing, entertainment dependant on the labor of Others who are paid an unjust wage for their work

Ownership

Ownership:

- is not a natural right, but comes from the grace of God
- carries responsibilities to use our wealth as a resource for the needs of Others
(Stewardship)

Ownership

Ownership and the World Economy

It is God's creational intention that:

- We and Others enjoy the fruits of our labors and the gifts God has given to us
- There should be no poverty. "There will, however, be no one in need among you." (Deuteronomy 15:4 NRSV). All selves should have the material goods necessary for a life of dignity

The positive side of the Eighth Commandment calls us to protect and celebrate the fruits of the labors of Others and the gifts given them by God

Ownership

Ownership and the World Economy

Yet the world is rank with poverty, hunger, with enormous disparity between the “haves” and “have-nots.” What does it mean?

Questions we must ask:

- Are we receiving more than what is justified by the “fruits of our labors”?
- Is our wealth based in part on theft from others (unjust wages, exploitation of the resources of other countries)?
- Are we doing our part to protect the fruits of the labor of Others, the gifts God has given to Others in the world?
- Are we good stewards, using our wealth as a resource for the needs of Others?

Ownership

Ownership and the World Economy

Themes on Wealth in the New Testament
include (from Wheeler):

- Wealth as a resource of human needs
- Wealth as a symptom of economic
injustice

Ownership

Wealth as a Resource for Human Needs

Ownership carries concrete and wide-ranging responsibilities

Scripture:

- Matthew 5:42: “Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.” (NRSV)
- Luke 6:30: “Give to everyone who begs from you, and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again.” (NRSV)
- Luke 14:12-14
- Romans 12:20: “if your enemies are hungry feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink” (NRSV)

Ownership

Wealth as a Symptom of Economic Injustice

Failing to give help, sharing one's possessions with those in need is culpable. Why?

- we are called to share those gifts that are rightfully ours
- part of our wealth is “stolen.” We must try to restore that which we have stolen or are partners in stealing

Ownership

Wealth as a Symptom of Economic Injustice

Scripture:

- James 5:1-6
- Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus
(Luke 16:19-26)
- Parable of the Sheep and the Goats
(Matthew 25:31-46)

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The Ten Commandments:

The Ninth Commandment

The 9th Commandment.

Introduction

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

- Exodus 20:16 (NRSV)

You shall not testify against your neighbor as a lying witness.

- Exodus 20:16 (Brevard Childs)

The 9th Commandment.

Introduction

The commandment contains several technical legal terms, suggesting its original meaning was a warning against false accusation in a court of law (Childs)

- *ed saqer* (lying witness or false witness)
- *nh* (testify or answer)
- *rea* (neighbor = referred to full citizen within the covenant community)

The 9th Commandment.

Introduction

Protection of the Accused in Ancient Israel:

- witnesses to a crime testified before a court of elders
- at least two witnesses required for evidence to be valid (Num. 35:30, Deut. 17:6, 19:15)
- the witnesses had to start the execution in capital punishment cases (Deut. 13:10, 17:7, 19:16-20)
- punishment for a lying witness = the punishment for the crime of the accused

The 9th Commandment.

Old Testament Extension of the Commandment to Lying (Slander, Deceitfulness)

**You shall not steal, you shall not deal
falsely, and you shall not lie to one
another**

- Leviticus 19:11 (NRSV)

**You shall not go around as a slanderer
among your people. . . I am the LORD.**

Leviticus 19:16. (NRSV)

The 9th Commandment.

Old Testament Extension of the Commandment to Lying (Slander, Deceitfulness)

**Israel has sinned; they have transgressed
my covenant. . . they have acted
deceitfully. . .**

- Joshua 7:11 (NRSV)

**There is no faithfulness or loyalty, and no
knowledge of God in the land. Swearing,
lying, and murder, and stealing and
adultery break out . . .**

- Hosea 4:1-2 (NRSV)

The 9th Commandment.

Jesus' Extension of the Commandment

**Again, you have heard that is was said to
those of ancient times, 'You shall not
swear falsely. . .'**

But I say to you, Do not swear at all. . .

**Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No';
anything more than this comes from the
evil one.**

- from Matthew 5:33-37 (NRSV)

Swearing, oath-taking presume a tendency to
lie. Jesus requires a truthfulness in his
disciples that makes oaths unnecessary.

At the Heart of the Commandment

At the heart of the Commandment:

- an absolute commitment to Truth

At the Heart of the Commandment

“Negative” side of the Commandment. We must:

- not lie or deceive
- not be silent before falsehood

“Positive” side of the Commandment. We must:

- be witnesses to the truth
- promote personal relationships,
communities, societies where truth can
be told

Lying and Deception

Dictionary Lie: To say / write something untrue, with the intention to deceive.

The heart of the commandment is a *commitment to truth*. The sin of a “lie” lies in the *intention to deceive*, not the means of deception (voice, writing, facial expression and tone, or innuendo)

Lying and Deception

Is Withholding Truth Like Lying?

Is it a “lie” to deliberately withhold truth to keep alive or nurture a possible *false impression* in the mind of others?

- Letting a misunderstanding that is false continue without trying to correct it
- Creating a false impression by “true” statements that have a double meaning

Lying and Deception

Is Withholding Truth Like Lying?

Is it a “lie” to deliberately withhold the truth, not for purposes of nurturing or keeping alive a false impression, but to impart an *incomplete or unbalanced understanding*?

- Is an “absence” of truth (a “vacuum” of truth) a kind of “falsehood?”
- Is an “incomplete” or “unbalanced” understanding a false understanding? Is the presentation of a “skewed” reality using partial truths the same as a lie?

Lying and Deception

Sins Against Truth

1. Slander - to make false charges or misrepresentations of Another to defame or damage their reputation
 - *motzi shem ra* = drawing out a bad reputation
2. The “evil tongue” (*lashon hara*) and “the dust of the evil tongue” (*avak lashon hara*). Using a partial truth or exaggerated truth to tear Another down
 - gossip (*rechilut*)

Is Lying and Deception Ever Permissible?

How far must we take our commitment to truth?

Is lying / deception ever permissible?

Are there values that override our commitment to truth?

Is Lying and Deception Ever Permissible? White Lies

White Lies (*devarim shevalev* = “words in the heart”). Statements understood to reflect a sentiment of the heart, not necessarily a pure, literal truth

- “What a beautiful baby”
- “Fine, thank you,” in response to “How are you?”
- “You don’t look a day over forty.”

Is Lying and Deception Ever Permissible? White Lies

We justify these “lies” because:

- as “words in the heart” the *intention* is not deception.
- it is *understood* by the listener not necessarily as a literal truth
- the *greater good* of keeping peace, of not damaging Another’s feelings overrides the “minor lie”
- our *motivation* is not selfish interest, but concern for Another

Is Lying and Deception Ever Permissible?

**Lies to protect Another from serious
harm**

WWII: lying to the Gestapo to protect the a
Jewish family hiding in the antic

Is Lying and Deception Ever Permissible?

Immanuel Kant's Position:

- it is never permissible to lie. The duty to truthfulness is *unconditional*
- a lie:
 - harms society because “it vitiates the source of law”
 - harms the liar by destroying his/her dignity

Is Lying and Deception Ever Permissible?

Most moral theologians would justify a lie
when telling the truth would cause
Another serious harm

Is Lying and Deception Ever Permissible?

Questions to ask if a lie is to be a permissible action:

- What is the conflicting moral value that justifies our lie? (for example, the life or feelings of Another). Does it override the duty to Truth?
- Is the victim of the lie or deceived harmed by it? Are there other unintended victims?
- What motivates our lie? (Concern to protect Another, or selfish interest?)
- What is the consequence to the “fabric of trust” in the community?

Truth and Community

“Viable human community depends on truth telling” (Brueggemann)

In the sense of the original, narrow meaning of the commandment:

- Truth in the courtroom is essential to a healthy judiciary system
- A healthy judiciary is essential to a viable community

Truth and Community

The commandment is **“a recognition that community life is not possible unless there is an arena in which there is public confidence that social reality will be reliably described and reported.”** (Brueggemann)

Truth and Community

In the sense of the broader meaning of the commandment:

- members of a community should not distort or skew reality to each other.
- public truth must accurately portrait reality

Relevance in modern life:

- propaganda
- forms of “spin doctoring”
- advertising

Promoting Truth

(from Timmerman)

Truthful living in our personal relationships, families and communities requires that we:

- choose our words with care so we don't distort things
- *listen*, lovingly and carefully, so we know what words to choose
- keep our word. Don't promise more than we can keep

Promoting Truth

(from Keenan)

We need to create a “space where truth can be told”

- in our personal relationships
- in our families
- in our communities
- in our culture

Promoting Truth

(from Keenan)

Our culture does not invite truth-telling

- intolerance and ridicule inhibit honesty
- litigiousness
 - failing to apologize because admission of fault invites legal prosecution
- the “tattered cloak of privacy”
 - we say we believe in a right to privacy for public officials, but insatiably lap up invasions of that privacy
- we have no credible leadership urging us to promote truth

Promoting Truth

“if we would . . . learn more about tolerance, human failure, the real possibility of broken promises. . . if we learned to allow others to speak, acknowledge, opine, or even, if necessary, confess and repent, we could become a society promoting truthfulness.”

- James F. Keenan, S.J.

Promoting Truth

As Christian, we have a special call in promoting truth: evangelism

- “we follow truthful living by the way we represent Christ to others in our words and actions” (Timmerman)

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The Ten Commandments:

**The Tenth
Commandment.
Concluding Remarks**

The 10th Commandment.

Introduction

You shall not covet your neighbor's house, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor

- Exodus 20:17 (NRSV)

The 10th Commandment

Introduction

Controversary over the meaning of “covet”

- *hamad* (to covet, lust after)
- Does it mean a:
 - the combination of the feeling of desire plus the action to obtain the object of desire, or
 - just the feeling of desire for that which belongs to another?

The 10th Commandment

A Matter of the Heart

“the commandment is probably solely concerned with attitudes of the heart/mind that subtly or not so subtly lead to the misuse of that which is not one’s own.”

- Terrence Fretheim, Exodus, Interpretation
Bible Commentary Series

The 10th Commandment

A Matter of the Heart

- 10th Commandment differs from the previous commandments about sins against one's neighbor. It warns:
- not against an *action* (murder, stealing, adultery, lying testimony),
 - but against a *state of the heart*, a *feeling*

The 10th Commandment

A Matter of the Heart

The 10th Commandment “. . .relates to the spirit of the individual that forms the interior ground of the violation of the other commandments.”

- Terrence Fretheim, Exodus,
Interpretation Bible Commentary
Series

(an appropriate culmination of the Ten
Commandment)

The 10th Commandment

A Matter of the Heart

Implications:

God wants us not just to be a people who does not murder, steal, commit adultery or lie, but in addition:

God wants us to be a people *who are not tempted* to murder, steal, commit adultery or lie, a people *in whose heart* such acts are repulsive

The 10th Commandment

A Matter of the Heart

“ . . . it is easier to obey ‘duties of the limbs,’ those obligations and prohibitions that involve outward behavior, and which thus involve social approbation and disapprobation, than it is to fulfill the ‘duties of the heart,’ since ‘only’ God knows if we have fulfilled the latter, not our neighbors, or, often, not even ourselves.”

- paraphrase by Rabbi Weiman-Kelman in **Broken Tablets** of Bahya ibn pakuda in his 11th century work **Duties of the Heart**

Desire

The Commandment is not against desire.

Human beings are driven by desire. The Commandment is specifically against a *desire for that which is not properly one's own*. This is:

- a misdirection of desire
- a desire destructive to community
- a desire destructive to the person who covets

Desire

“It is not forbidden to wish to have a house like my neighbor’s house or a car like his or even a woman just like his wife. What is forbidden, I think, is to want *his* car or *his* wife, *her* house or *her* husband -- to replace the other, not to replicate her. It is all right to want to have a big house. It is forbidden to want to live in someone else’s house or life. I am commanded to be me, not you or her. I am forbidden to covet *your* place, to wish to be *you*.”

- Rabbi Arnold Wolf, in Broken Tablets

Desire

“to covet is to deny our own life and our own being, which God cannot abide”

- Rabbi Rachel S. Mikva in Broken Tablets

Desire

(from Keenan)

Both Luther and Calvin commented that the 10th Commandment is about our “deepest desires”

Our “deepest desires” are:

- rarely expressible
- complex, wanting satisfaction in a variety of ways

Desire

Our “deepest desires” are:

- often discernable / felt in:
 - disappointments of expectations arising from them. Disappointments can be “windows” to our deepest desires
- loss
- the pleasure or happiness in seeing something that fits in with those desires

Desire

Our goal as Christians:

- our deepest desires should be grounded in a love of God and neighbor
- images and hope for the “kingdom of God”
 - a world where God rules and God’s will is done -- should live in our deepest desires

Desire

“As Christians, we have a deeply abiding and viscerally felt image of the kingdom of God that we carry in our hearts.”

- Keenan

In the Tenth Commandment, **“we confront our own desire for a loving relationship with God. Will I covet the things of this world, and envy others the things I don’t have, or will I turn all my desire to the Lord?”**

- Timmerman

Changing Our Hearts

- learn an enduring, grateful satisfaction with our lot (the opposite of coveting)
“discipline our hearts to accept what is ours and what cannot be ours (objects and abilities)” - Mikva
- have no “false idols.” Turn both our minds and hearts to God
 - first and last Commandment often described as “bookends” to the Commandments
 - violating the 10th Commandment rises from a violation of the 1st.

Coveting and Consumerism

(from Brueggemann)

“the propensity to covet in our society is enacted through an unbridled consumerism that believes the main activity of human life is to accumulate, use, and enjoy more and more of the available resources of the earth.”

- based on an assumption of scarcity, which justifies accumulating all that one can

Coveting and Consumerism

“This commandment summons the faithful to break with the practice of acquisitive individualism and to reject the ideology of scarcity upon which it is based.”

- Brueggemann

Links with the Fourth Commandment on the Sabbath.

- “coveting is an “activity of untrusting restlessness”

Concluding Comments on the Commandments

(Brueggemann)

A Unique Revelation

Decalogue (Exodus 20:1-17)

- only direct address of commands from
God to Israel
- thus a unique revelation

Concluding Comments on the Commandments

(after Brueggemann)

Position of the Commandments in Biblical Faith.

Views:

- 1. Non-negotiable will of God. Absolute rules / laws of God
- 2. “mission statement” of the community of the faithful, providing a framework for specific actions
- 3. “instructions” for the “inculcation of an attitude of the mind / heart” (Fretheim)

Concluding Comments on the Commandments

(after Timmerman)

Two truths that stand out in the study of the
Commandments:

- The Centrality of God
- The Rewards of Righteousness

Concluding Comments on the Commandments

1. The Centrality of God

- Commandments fundamentally relate to our relationship with God
- violation of any Commandment is an offense against God, an undoing of God's intention for creation
- God's passionate response seen in Exodus 22:21-27

Concluding Comments on the Commandments

(Timmerman)

2. The Rewards of Righteousness

“O that you had paid attention to my commandments! Then your prosperity would have been like a river, and your success like the waves of the sea;”

- Isaiah 48:18 (NRSV)

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”

- John 14:27 (NRSV)

Concluding Comments on the Commandments

(Brueggemann)

Jesus and the Commandments

- Asked what is necessary for eternal life, Jesus cites some of commandments (Matt 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-30), but suggests more
- Commandments are a “threshold to more serious discipleship and a step on the demanding way to ‘eternal life’!”

Concluding Comments on the Commandments

Jesus and the Commandments

Matthew 5:17-19 (NRSV):

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter; not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Concluding Comments on the Commandments

Jesus and the Commandments

Mark 12:28-31 (NRSV):

“Which Commandment is the first of all?”

Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’

The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

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