

The Five Principles of the Ten Commandments

by

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The Ten Commandments are a wakeup call unto the ego to acknowledge the existence of “the other” and develop appropriate (moral) relationships with “non-ego” others.

There are two “non-ego” others:

- * The Divine (God)
- * Living beings, in general, and fellow human beings, in particular.

Accordingly, the Ten-Commandments are divided into two sets of five commandments each: The first five relate to relationship with God; The last five relate to relationships with other living beings, human beings in particular.

Both sets preserve a unity in the sense that for each commandment in the first set there is a corresponding commandment in the last five. Each of the five pairs of commandments represents a single principle, and all five form the core guidelines that the ego should pursue to be able to relate morally to “non-ego” others. Accordingly, all principles are moral ones, as mandated by the Divine. They are not intended to instruct the ego how to profit from relationships with “non-ego” others; Rather, they provide the ego with necessary and sufficient requirements for it to be able to relate to others and maintain and preserve these relationships. In other words: The five principles form

the core of Divine morality, to be expounded and detailed further throughout the Torah.

In this post we detail the five principles to the best of our understanding of these principles.

Comment: Periods after Bible quotation below indicate partial quotation (namely, commandment is not always presented in full).

Principle 1: Acknowledge existence of “non-ego” others

Commandment 1: “I am Jehovah, your Elohim, who have brought **you out of the land of Egypt, from a house of bondage” (Exodus 20:2)**

Explanation: Acknowledge existence of God and acknowledge intervention of the Divine in whatever occurs in your life (“Hashgacha Pratit”). Note that **you** in the original Hebrew is in the singular.

Commandment 6: “Thou shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13)

Explanation: Murdering a human being is ultimate and concrete denial-of-existence of another, equal to you in all rights; Therefore it is the ultimate violation of first principle.

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Principle 2: Own your relationships with “others” (be loyal, be faithful)

Commandment 2: “Thou shall have no other gods besides me...” (Exodus 20:3)

Explanation: Do not engage in idolatry.

Commandment 7: “Thou shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:13)

Explanation: Do not engage in adultery.

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Principle 3: Preserve integrity (avoid hypocrisy) in relating to “others”

Hypocrisy means that one pretends to others to be (or do; or believe; or think) one thing but in reality pursue the opposite, as “one in mouth, another in deed”. Acknowledging the “other” as equal to you can only mean that no façade of falsehood towards the other is acceptable, or else your “ego” would lose its capability of relating to “others”. The epitome of hypocrisy is pretending to pursue the first principle above but in reality behave in complete denial thereof. Two extreme models for lack of integrity (hypocrisy) are addressed in the third and the eighth commandments.

Commandment 3: “Thou shall not take the name of Jehovah, your Elohim, in vain..” (Exodus 20:7)

Explanation: You may swear, in the name of God, to act in a certain way (if certain conditions are met); Or you may similarly swear that a certain claim you make about reality is true. According to the Talmud, repeated by Rashi, this commandment refers to the latter. When one take oath in the name of God, the objective is to lend enhanced validity to your claim. You swear in vain, in violation of the third commandment, either when you tell a lie or when you swear about an indisputable truth, a claim that no one doubts, so that “recruiting” God’s name to enhance the validity of your claim is redundant, unnecessary. Why taking oath in vain shows hypocrisy? Because what you declare to others is at odds with what you know. Thus, a split is taking place between your true self and the façade you display to others, attempting thereby to gain a certain profit for the ego on account of the “others”. This violates the first principle (particularly, first commandment): You pretend to acknowledge that God exists but behave as though He is not there, witnessing your every falsehood as you display “split personality” relating to “non-ego” others. Using God’s name in vain, namely, “Swear by the name of God that marble is gold or that gold is marble” (an example from the Talmud), you outwardly acknowledge that God exists but behave as though he is not there, witnessing you using his name in vain (either in order to substantiate and strengthen a false claim, or when the claim is well established so that there is no need to summon God’s name to corroborate it).

Commandment 8: “Thou shall not steal” (Exodus 20:13)

Explanation: Jewish sages agree that the text here does not address stealing in general but rather “stealing a soul”, in other words, taking hostage.

Why is that equivalent, or corresponds, to “taking the name of Jehovah, your Elohim, in vain...”?? Because in both cases you acknowledge the first principle outwardly but behave otherwise. Acknowledging existence of the “non-ego” other, who, just like yourself, had been created in the image of the Divine with certain inalienable rights, while denying to him/her first basic right, the right to freedom, is as contradictory to the first principle as one can imagine (besides murder, which is total denial of that principle).

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Principle 4: Preserve integrity (avoid duplicity) in relating to society and its institutions

Making public claims means bearing witness. You bear witness to God’s creation of the Heavens and the Earth by keeping the Shabbat, and you bear witness in the court of law. In both cases, your attention is directed not to relationships with individuals but rather to society as a whole and to its institutions (The Shabbat and Court of Law).

Commandment 4: “Remember the Shabbat day to keep it holy...for in six days the Lord made the Heaven and the Earth ...and rested on the seventh day; therefore, the Lord blessed the seventh day and made it holy” (Exodus 20:8,11)

Explanation: Keeping the Shabbat holy you bear witness to God's creation. Since this is done both in private and in public beware of a split: A façade of keeping the Shabbat holy in public while otherwise in private.

Comment: In Deuteronomy (5:12-15) the commandment is to “keep the Shabbat to sanctify it” in order to bear witness to Hashgachah Pratit (rather than to God's creation, as specified earlier):

“Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and Jehovah, your Elohim, brought you out of there with a mighty hand...”

(Deuteronomy 5:15). Again, “You”— in the singular...

Commandment 9: “Thou shall not bear false witness about your friend” (Exodus 20:13)

Explanation: While delivering witness in the court of law, preserve integrity in the claims you make: Tell what you know and do not tell what you do not know; and do not pervert either.

Preserving integrity in relating to society does not end there. When you evade tax by bearing false witness about your income you also deprive the “other”, this time society as a whole, of its right (the right to portion of your money, as mandated by the agreed-upon law).

Comment: One of the reasons Jewish sages give for the special contempt reserved in Judaism towards the non-kosher pig is its duplicity, appearing outwardly as “Kosher” but inwardly it is not...

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Principle 5: Acknowledge uniqueness of “others” (as you acknowledge your own) and respect it

You have been created unique, destined to fulfill unique mission on Planet Earth and provided by the Divine with all means necessary to pursue your life mission. To maintain moral relationships with “non-ego” others, acknowledge their own uniqueness, either by respecting them (as your parents) or by not coveting the means provided to them to fulfill **their** own mission in life. In other words, do not covet that which constitute others’ own unique private environment.

**Commandment 5: “Honor your father and your mother...
(Exodus 20:12)**

Explanation: It is no coincidence that this commandment is the fifth, forming a bridge between commandments addressing relationship with God (1-5) and those that relate to relationships with other human beings (6-10). As related by Jewish sages, three participants are there to creating life: the father, the mother and the Divine. Honoring your father and your mother you declare that even though you may still share private environment with them, even though your parents have kept fulfilling your ego desires (not unlike yourself), they are nevertheless separate unique “others”; they are not part of you and your own ego (as a just-born baby feel for a while). Therefore, as unique and separate “others”, your parents deserve to be respected as equal “others”, entitled to be treated according to all guidelines and all commandments directed towards other human beings, perhaps with an extra surplus...

**Commandment 10: “Thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s...”
(Exodus 20:14).**

Explanation: This last commandment is somewhat unique in the sense that it relates to the desires of the heart, not to believes, spoken words or deeds.

**SUMMARY OF FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR DIVINELY- MANDATED
MORAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH “NON-EGO” OTHERS:**

Principle 1: Acknowledge existence of “non-ego” others

(Commandments 1 and 6)

Principle 2: Own your relationships with “others” (be loyal, be faithful) (Commandments 2 and 7)

Principle 3: Preserve integrity (avoid hypocrisy) in relating to “others” (Commandments 3 and 8)

Principle 4: Preserve integrity (avoid duplicity) in relating to society and its institutions (Commandments 4 and 9)

Principle 5: Acknowledge uniqueness of “others” (as you acknowledge your own) and respect it (Commandments 5 and 10)