

is equivalent to marital infidelity--stealing will lead to a false oath (cf. Zech. 5:3-4, Prov. 30:9)--the Sabbath-breaker attests falsely that God did not create the world in six days and rest on the seventh--he who covets his fellow's wife will end by fathering a child who rejects his true parent and honors another (Mekh., Yitro. 8).

The "words" are ranged in a fairly clear descending order from matters divine to matters human, and within each group from higher to lower values. Duties to God come first; the obligation to worship Him alone precedes treating His name with reverence, and both precede the symbolic piety of Sabbath rest. Respect for parental authority naturally follows respect for God. The purely ethical injunctions are ranged in an obvious hierarchy: life, the family, right of possession, reliability of public statements. The last "word" -- the ban on guilty attempts or desires--deals with what is both least culpable and most ethically sensitive; it acts as a safeguard against infringing any of the other ethical injunctions.

Do New Testament references assist us with the arrangement? Let us see.

Matthew 19:16-19 -- "And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God; but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Matthew 22:34-40 -- "But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Mark 10:17-19 -- "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother."

Luke 10:25-28 -- "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live."

Luke 18:18-20 -- "And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master,