



February 2014

The Ethical-Religious Framework for Shalom

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Recommended Citation

Cafferky, Michael E. (2014) "The Ethical-Religious Framework for Shalom," *Journal of Religion and Business Ethics*: Vol. 3 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/jrbe/vol3/iss1/7>

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Cover Page Footnote

Thank you to the peer reviewers for their suggestions on how to improve the manuscript.

THE ETHICAL-RELIGIOUS FRAMEWORK FOR SHALOM

INTRODUCTION

As a description of the ethical-religious covenant relationship which their God intended to have with the ancient Hebrews, the Ten Commandments provide in capsule form the prescription for achieving flourishing well-being. Idealistic as it might be, this can be seen as a divine-human partnership where humans interpret the moral frameworks established by God in order to realize God's promised blessings.¹ If the people write the principles of the Law on their hearts, the expected result is Yahweh's blessing for all who participate.²

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the contribution that the ancient Decalogue makes in terms of its ethical basis for community well-being in all of its dimensions. The thesis presented here is that the principles contained in the Decalogue have a direct relationship to the realization of promised blessings of Shalom as experienced in the community as a whole. The Commandments are not merely a random, arbitrary list of ethical "dos and don'ts" for individuals. They form the prescription for how the community as a whole can experience Shalom through individual and collective behaviors. Each of the Ten Commandments will be reviewed in terms of its contributions to flourishing community life. Looking through the lens of the ancient concept of Shalom, this paper contends that it is artificial and dangerous to develop any one dimension of life apart from its larger Shalom context.

LITERATURE ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The traditional tendency has been to apply the spiritual nature of the Ten at primarily the individual level of behavior. From the perspective of ancient Judaic culture, the Ten Commandments are broadly applicable and essentially spiritual in nature.³ At the same time the Ten represent a range of objective duties for living

¹ Meir Tamari, *With All Your Possessions* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 36-37; Moses L. Pava, *Business Ethics: A Jewish Perspective* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 1997), 29.

² Psalm 29:11; 34:14. The New American Standard Version of the Bible is used throughout this paper.

³ Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 6:4-6; 26:16; Psalm 19:7; 40:8; 119:32, 96; Isaiah 42:21; Jeremiah 31:33; 32:40.

life in community including our life in the marketplace.⁴ For example, one command simply states “You shall not steal;” however, as will be illustrated below, the intended application of this command is very broad. Hebrew law involves the duty to go beyond the explicit legal requirement and when the duty is observed the promise includes the hope of positive well-being and a flourishing life in the community.⁵

Application to Business Ethics and Economics. That elements of the ancient Hebrew Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, have a bearing on applied economics has been recognized by more than one writer. For example, although Epstein does not go into detail on this point, he sees three of the Ten Commandments as having “explicitly economic implications” – remember the Sabbath day, you shall not steal, you shall not covet.⁶ Furthermore, Epstein’s thesis is that the Ten Commandments are one important contribution to contemporary business ethics that Judaism makes. Epstein concludes that wealth and righteousness go hand in hand; however, he does not explore the ancient covenantal roots of this connection in terms of the ancient idea of Shalom.

The Ten Commandments are baselines of morality containing several precepts related to business. For example, in his brief introduction to Jewish business ethics, Melé identifies the Divine Covenantal origin of Jewish ethics.⁷ Ethics is comprised of the objective duties that came directly from God. He also highlights the centrality of community and the importance of being transformed by the principles of God’s law. Some specific items from the Ten Commandments are the basis of business ethics. Calkins agrees when he asserts that a portion of the Decalogue is the origin of some business ethics concepts found in contemporary society.⁸ The Law of God shows the blending of justice and love in God’s actions. This Law provides structure to practices in the community. In terms of the thesis of this paper, Calkins does not explore the covenant community theme or the relationship between the Ten Commandments and Shalom.

⁴ Domènec Melé, “Religious Foundations of Business Ethics,” in *The Accountable Corporation*, vol. 2, ed. Marc J. Epstein and Kirk O. Hanson (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 11-43.

⁵ Deuteronomy 6:18; 12:28; Hershey H. Friedman, “The Impact of Jewish Values on Marketing and Business Practices,” *Journal of Macromarketing* 21, no. 1(2001): 75.

⁶ Edwin M. Epstein, “Judaism’s Contribution to Contemporary Business Ethics,” *Society and Economy*. 25(2003): 253.

⁷ Domènec Melé, “Religious Foundations of Business Ethics,” 11-43.

⁸ Martin Calkins SJ, “Recovering Religion’s Prophetic Voice for Business Ethics,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 23, no. 4(2000): 339-352.

Green's treatment of Jewish business ethics takes in the broad scope of traditional rabbinic teachings related to business.⁹ Like most other scholars, Green does not provide an exposition regarding the covenant and Shalom basis of the Ten Commandments. Tamari's treatment of the ancient roots of Hebrew business ethics is identified as the "a spiritual and moral framework for business."¹⁰ Tamari highlights the divine-human partnership whereby humans participate in the on-going process of Creation. He refers to the "abundance of material possessions" as one of the outcomes of observing the Ten Commandments. This could be construed as a reference to Shalom.

At the micro level the Ten Commandments have been evaluated in terms of organizational hierarchy and power¹¹ and human resources management.¹² The Decalogue's connection with the Hebrew idea of wisdom has been addressed by Hoebeke.¹³ Stackhouse provides from a Christian point of view an overview of the implications of the Ten Commandments as an ethical-religious framework for those in business.¹⁴ These applications of the Commandments illustrate that the principles may have broad usefulness in society. They seem to give support for the notion that the world of applied economics is not outside the purview of the Ten.

Further support for this notion comes in discussions of we might call Generally-Accepted Moral Principles (GAMP) for business and the larger economic system. For example, Gert has put forward a list of principles he identifies with common morality.¹⁵ Gert makes no attempt to analyze the

⁹ Ronald M. Green, "Guiding Principles of Jewish Business Ethics," *Business Ethics Quarterly* 7, no. 2(1997): 21-30.

¹⁰ Meir Tamari, "The Challenge of Wealth: Jewish Business Ethics," *Business Ethics Quarterly* 7, no. 2(1997): 46.

¹¹ Abbas J. Ali, Robert C. Camp, and Manton Gibbs, "The Ten Commandments Perspective on Power and Authority in Organizations," *Journal of Business Ethics* 26, no. 4(2000): 351-361.

¹² Abbas J. Ali, Manton Gibbs and Robert C. Camp, "Human Resource Strategy: The Ten Commandments Perspective," *The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 20, no. 5/6(2000): 114-132; David W. Gill, "A Fourth Use of the Law? The Decalogue in the Workplace," *Journal of Religion and Business Ethics* 2, no. 2(2011): 1-18.

¹³ Luc Hoebeke, "The Decalogue and Practical Wisdom: Rereading a Seminal Text," *The Journal of Management Development* 29, no. 7/8(2010): 736-746.

¹⁴ Max L. Stackhouse. "The Ten Commandments: Economic Implications," in *On Moral Business: Classical and Contemporary Resources for Ethics in Economic Life*, ed. Max L. Stackhouse, Dennis P. McCann, Shirley J. Roels and Preston N. Williams (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 59-62.

¹⁵ Bernard Gert, (1999). "Common Morality and Computing," *Ethics and Information Technology* 1(1999): 53, 58-64; Bernard Gert, *Common Morality: Deciding What to Do* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

connection between these and the Decalogue or with the purpose of the Decalogue; however, the similarity is *prima facie* obvious. Two basic principles are at the root of all others and these ground all moral principles in the context of community relationships: Do not harm others and do not deprive others of their freedom. All other generally-accepted moral principles (keep promises, do not cheat, do not deceive, etc.) are derivatives.

In contrast to Gert, Beauchamp has a slightly different way of describing common morality which he refers to as universally-admired traits of character or virtues. These also show a degree of similarity to some of the Ten Commandments.¹⁶ Although Beauchamp does not describe primary and secondary virtues in his model, the root virtues seem to be integrity and faithfulness.

Other scholars have identified minimum moral standards of business behaviors in an economic system that are parallel with elements of Judaic law. For example, Quinn and Jones suggest four fundamental principles are followed by businesses in efficient markets.¹⁷ Each of these, one could argue, is similar to the principles found in the Ten Commandments: Honor agreements, tell the truth, respect the autonomy of others, and avoid doing harm to others. Hosmer sees being truthful and honoring contracts as the ethical basis of the free market.¹⁸ Hare sees “honesty, truthfulness and fair dealing” as the minimum standards.¹⁹ When taken by themselves, they might offer no more than the bare minimum. This paper contends that the Ten Commandments are not merely the means to achieve bare minimum existence but instead are intended to foster a wholistic, comprehensive approach to a full life of flourishing well-being.

Using another approach to identifying generally-accepted moral principles by surveying various organizations Schwartz identified six principles common in many cultures: Trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.²⁰ The organizations Schwartz surveyed included the *United Nations Global Compact* (1999), the *Caux Round Table Principles For Business* (1994)

¹⁶ Thomas L. Beauchamp, “A Defense of the Common Morality,” *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* 13, no. 3(2003): 259-274.

¹⁷ Dennis P. Quinn and Thomas M. Jones, “An Agent Morality View of Business Policy,” *Academy of Management Review* 20, no. 1(1995): 22-42.

¹⁸ LaRue T. Hosmer, *The Ethics of Management*, 6th ed (New York: McGraw-Hill Irwin, 2008), p. 33.

¹⁹ R. M. Hare, “One Philosopher’s Approach to Business Ethics,” in *Business Ethics: Perspectives on the Practice of Theory*, ed. Christopher Cowton and Roger Crisp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 49.

²⁰ Mark S. Schwartz, “Universal Moral Values for Corporate Codes of Ethics,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 59, no 1/2(2005): 27-44.

and the *Interfaith Declaration* report (1993) produced by a group of religious organizations. An initial view of these six principles suggests that some of them are in direct alignment with elements of the ancient Decalogue while others appear to be only tangentially related.

When comparing the work of these writers with the contents of the Ten Commandments in **Table 1**,²¹ we can see some similarities. However, the question of similarity, by itself, misses the deeper significance of the Decalogue when seen from its own ethical-religious roots and from its larger purpose in society. The noticeable gaps shown in **Table 1** might be a signal that there is something deeper at stake with the Ten Commandments than fundamental common morality in world commerce.

Table 1. Generally-Accepted Moral Principles (GAMP) Compared with Ancient Judaic Law

| Ten Commandments | Gert | Beauchamp | Quinn & Jones | Schwartz | Hosmer | Hare |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Have no other gods | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Worship no idols | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Keep promises | Keep promises; do not deceive | Trustworthiness Fidelity Truthfulness | Honor agreements Tell the truth | Trustworthiness | Honor contracts Truthful | Truthfulness |
| Observe the Sabbath | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Honor your parents | Do your duty | -- | -- | Respect | -- | -- |
| Do not murder | Do not kill; do not cause pain; do not disable | Nonmalevolence; Lovingness; Kindness | Respect autonomy of others Avoid doing harm | Respect Caring | -- | -- |
| Do not commit adultery | | Fidelity | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Do not steal | Do not cheat; do not deprive of freedom or pleasure | Conscientiousness | Respect autonomy of others | Respect | | Fair dealing |
| Be a trustworthy witness | Do not deceive | Honesty Integrity Truthfulness | Tell the truth | Fairness | Truthful | Honesty Truthfulness |
| Do not covet | -- | Gratitude | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| | Obey the law | -- | -- | Responsibility Citizenship | -- | -- |

²¹ The reformed Protestant Christian divisions of the Ten Commandments are used here. Other divisions (such as Roman Catholic and Anglican) can be used for comparison without a difference in the result in terms of the thesis of this paper.

In terms of the thesis of this paper, Tamari and Pava appear to come closer than others to representing the covenantal Shalom roots of the Ten Commandments. In other writings on the topic by business ethics scholars the presentation of covenant and Shalom are merely alluded to, only briefly mentioned, glossed over or simply not addressed. Most business ethics scholars select just a few of the Ten related to business activities. They do not attempt to account for the presence of the other Commandments or the larger purpose of all of Decalogue as a whole.

When we consider the broader purpose for the Ten Commandments as they came to be seen by and integrated into the communal life of the ancient Hebrews, we see a gap in contemporary business ethics literature. Addressing this gap requires understanding the import of the Ten as a whole. We must consider the dual, interrelated ancient concepts of Covenant community and Shalom. First, the Covenant community was given the shared responsibility *for* the Decalogue to oversee, protect and interpret its prophetic purpose. Second, the purpose of the Decalogue anticipates how the community will experience the result of accountability *to* the Decalogue, i.e., Shalom. Before we explore the content of the Decalogue, we will address each of these concepts in turn.

RESPONSIBILITY *FOR* THE DECALOGUE: THE COVENANT AND ITS COMMUNITY

One of the central themes of Hebrew Bible is Covenant (*berith*).²² Covenant describes the type of relationship that God desires to have with his people. It is also a model for humans to emulate in their relationships.²³ The most common

²² Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Center of the OT and the OT Theology," in, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1972), 49-63; William A. Dyrness, "Wisdom," In, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 189-199; William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984); Walter Brueggemann, "Covenant," "Community," in, *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 35-40; Hans K. LaRondelle, *Our Creator Redeemer: An Introduction to Biblical Covenant Theology* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2005); Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House, *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007).

²³ Dennis P. McCann, "On Moral Business: A Theological Perspective," *Review of Business* 19, no. 1(1997): 9-14; Stewart W. Herman, *Durable Goods: A Covenantal Ethic for Management and Employees* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997); Moses L. Pava, "The Many Paths to Covenantal Leadership: Traditional Resources for Contemporary Business," *Journal of Business Ethics* 29, no. 1/2(2001): 85-93; Hans K. LaRondelle, *Our Creator Redeemer: An Introduction to Biblical Covenant Theology*.

meaning of Hebrew word for covenant (*berith*) is that involving mutual agreement.²⁴

Surveying the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures on the covenant we conclude that covenants between humans are made in the presence of God.²⁵ Covenant is for the purpose of making formal any important relationship where long-term commitments are made. It is covenant that overcomes the basic ontological separation that humans experience from each other as interdependent persons.

The root idea of covenant making alludes to the cutting of a sacrificial animal in a rite that “invokes the presence or witness of God.”²⁶ The metaphor of cutting refers to the ancient practice of killing and dismembering a sacrificial animal, laying the parts of the slain animal on the ground to form a pathway through which the less dominant party to the relationship would be required to walk as if to say, “May I be as this animal if I breach our agreement.”²⁷ A celebratory meal may have been involved whereby the covenant parties signified their intention to continue a relationship that fostered flourishing life for all.

Purpose. God’s ultimate purpose of the Covenant for humans is to foster life.²⁸ Accordingly, the purpose of human covenants, patterned after the Divine, is to bless others with flourishing of life. On this foundation of Covenant is built the strong ethical emphasis on the sanctity of human life we see in contemporary Jewish ethics. At least three instrumental purposes are at work in Covenant relationships: To continually reveal the character of the covenant maker(s), to nourish a faithfulness-enhancing, interdependent relationship among all those involved with or represented in the covenant, and to provide a means by which at least one party can act in redemptive ways when the other party breaches the covenant.

Covenants assume that conflicts will arise and when they do, the covenant makers must have provisions for preserving the relationship through reconciliation and forgiveness. This requires each party to view the relationship from a perspective larger than that envisioned by individual self-interests.

²⁴ E.g., Genesis 21:27, 32; 26:28-29; 1 Kings 5:12.

²⁵ Genesis 31:50; 1 Samuel 23:18; 2 Samuel 5:3; 2 Kings 23:3.

²⁶ Jean Lee, *The Two Pillars of the Market: A Paradigm for Dialogue Between Theology and Economics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 78.

²⁷ An example of this ceremony can be found in Genesis 15 where God establishes the covenant with Abraham. In this narrative God, the dominant party, is the one that, in the form of a flaming torch, passes between the animal parts.

²⁸ John H. Walton, *Covenant: God’s Purpose, God’s Plan* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1994).

Asymmetry. Some covenants involve the dependence of a less dominant party upon a more dominant party. The dominant party first takes an action on behalf of the other party giving evidence of trustworthiness. This action provides a basis of the relationship for the future. This radical principle of “others first” (while not completely forgetting self interests and responsibilities toward the firm and its objectives) will find its way into every relationship. The more dominant party is expected to watch out for the interests of the less dominant party in terms of covenant breach. The less dominant party has an obligation to make a full commitment to the relationship.

Communal nature. We should not deny the importance of an individual emphasis in the Ten Commandments as the description of individual behaviors. However, given the social nature of ethics, a wider, communal perspective must be taken. Individual and communal perspectives of social conduct are ultimately inseparable. In covenant thinking communal needs take precedence over but are not destructive of individual needs. Pava states that “God’s religious and ethical commandments are directed first to the community and only after to individual members of the community.”²⁹ The centrality of community as the context of ethics is also supported by others.³⁰ If the task is assigned to just one person, given human nature, the risk is great that the principles upon which Shalom is to be based will become corrupted. Accordingly, the community has shared responsibility for overseeing, protecting and interpreting the Covenant.

Political influence. Power in the ancient community is related to the Covenant concepts of right doing and justice. When a community leader takes an action that is in support of what the community believes to be right, the community accepts the leader’s power. Members of the community must continually evaluate the alignment between the policies and actions of their leaders and the Decalogue. The community will resist the leader’s actions if the action is against what the community believes to be right. If needed, spokespersons (prophets) must have the courage to stand up and confront

²⁹ Moses L. Pava, “The Substance of Jewish Business Ethics,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 17, no. 6(1998): 606.

³⁰ Walter J. Harrelson, *The Ten Commandments and Human Rights* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980); Meir Tamari, *With All Your Possessions*, 36-37; Meir Tamari, “The Challenge of Wealth: Jewish Business Ethics,” 45-56; Moses L. Pava, 89-92, 129; P. J. Nel, “8966 *slm*,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Exegesis* vol. 4, ed. W. A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 130-135; David Novak, *Covenantal Rights: A Study in Jewish Political Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 154-158; Domènec Melé, “Religious Foundations of Business Ethics,” 11-43; Luc Hoebeke, “The Decalogue and Practical Wisdom: Rereading a Seminal Text,” 736-746; Elliot N. Dorff, “Judaism, Business and Privacy,” *Business Ethics Quarterly* 7, no. 2(1997): 31-46.

unfaithful leaders. Thus, a community leader's power is derived, at least in part, from the moral convictions of members of the community.³¹

An implication of the shared responsibility for the Decalogue is that the principles of the Covenant are absolutely normative and yet adaptable, uncompromising yet, at the same time containing a degree of elasticity to apply to the variety of human relationships.³²

THE RESULT OF ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE DECALOGUE: SHALOM

The Decalogue has a prophetic and educational purpose.³³ It anticipates a wonderful, flourishing life in the future if its principles are integrated into the hearts of individuals and into communal life as a whole. The principles themselves comprise the guidance for how the realization of this future hope can be achieved. In brief, the larger purpose of the Covenant is creation of Shalom, a process ultimately that can be accomplished only by the power of the Creator but with the cooperation of all persons of faith in the community. Similar to goal theory of motivation, we see a paradox here.³⁴ The Decalogue creates a discrepancy between the current state of communal life and the future goal described as Shalom. But obedience to the Decalogue also is designed to resolve this discrepancy, serving to focus effort and accountability to goal-directed behaviors designed to achieve a future, improved community life.

It is difficult to find one word which encompasses the full range of meaning of the Hebrew word Shalom translated into English as peace. Perhaps well-being in every dimension of life comes the closest.³⁵ One of the poetic passages of Hebrew Scripture records Solomon's prayer for peace for his son, expected to be the next king.³⁶ In this passage we see that Shalom comes from God in the forms of righteousness, help to the poor, freedom from oppression, rain for crops that bring abundant harvests, international harmony and political power, economic power, and world-wide worship to God.

³¹ J. P. M. Walsh, *The Mighty From Their Thrones: Power in the Biblical Tradition* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pres, 1987), 5-7, 179. See also Psalm 89:14; 97:2; 119:121; Proverbs 1:3; 2:9.

³² Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 595.

³³ Deuteronomy 6:6-9; 28. See also Psalm 37:31; Proverbs 3:1-3; Ezekiel 11:19-20; Jeremiah 31:33.

³⁴ Gary P. Latham, *Work Motivation: History, Theory, Research and Practice*, 2nd Edition (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2012), 62-72, 194-236.

³⁵ Psalm 85:9-13; Isaiah 60:17; 66:12; Jeremiah 29:4-14.

³⁶ Psalm 72.

The term Shalom is an experience of individuals, their associates at work, the community as a whole and potentially the nation as a whole. Thus, Shalom comprehends all levels of society. It encompasses all of life's integrated dimensions – spiritual well-being, physical and emotional well-being, domestic social harmony, international political harmony, and, no less important, economic success.³⁷ The term prosperity might be substituted for the word Shalom if and only if what is intended is full prosperity in all of life's dimensions including life lived in love to God and love to each other.

When considering the purpose of the Ten Commandments as Stendebach contends: “The intended purpose of [Judaic] law is *Shalom*.”³⁸ Shalom means more than simply making peace between conflicting parties; it means promoting full well-being and success in all of life including physical and mental health, social harmony, economic prosperity, and international political harmony. “Those who love Thy law have great peace (Shalom).”³⁹

Integral to the concepts of Covenant and Shalom is the idea of receiving and giving blessings. The act of pronouncing a blessing upon another person became a way to say to someone else, “May God bring to you (and us) all the promised blessings of Shalom!” Blessing is essentially a prayer that God will creatively work in the community as envisioned by Shalom.⁴⁰ It was a reminder of the larger goal that all members of the community, friends and enemies alike, aspire. When a father blessed his son at the giving of the inheritance, this transferred the economic and moral power to cooperate with God in realizing Shalom for the next generation. Blessing requires the person to move out of narrow selfish concerns and enter the concerns of another. Blessing another was statement of faith in God who is the ultimate source of prosperity and well-being. Furthermore, the traditional blessing was also an implicit admonition for accountability that in essence said, “Be a champion of Shalom today in your walk with God!”

The connection between Shalom and the Covenant is recognized among ancient Hebrew prophets such as Moses,⁴¹ Ezekiel,⁴² Isaiah⁴³ and Malachi⁴⁴ who

³⁷ Exodus 15:26; Leviticus 26:3-9; Deuteronomy 7:12-15; 1 Chronicles 22:9; 2 Chronicles 15:5; Job 5:23-24; Psalm 85:8-13; 119:165; 122:6-9; Proverbs 16:7; Jeremiah 33:6.

³⁸ F. J. Stendebach, “*Shalom*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 15, ed. G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringren and H.-J. Fabry (Grand Rapids, MI: William Be. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 39.

³⁹ Psalm 119:165; see also Deuteronomy 6:18; Isaiah 32:17.

⁴⁰ Numbers 6:24-26; Psalm 29:11.

⁴¹ Numbers 25:12.

⁴² Ezekiel 37:25-26.

name this relationship *Berith Shalom* (Covenant of Peace). Some of these prophets lamented that leaders in the community did not remain loyal to the principles of the covenant and as a result suffered the opposite of Shalom.⁴⁵ With the hope of Shalom under threat prophets arose to speak on behalf of the Covenant community to resolve discrepancies between the ideal and the current state of affairs. When a person disregarded the principles of Covenant, he was undermining the relationship with God and with the community. When community-wide disregard for the principles of the Covenant became extensive, the prophets nourished the hope that one day God would restore Shalom. But such restoration could not be accomplished without a heart transformed by the Spirit God commitment to obey the Decalogue.⁴⁶

Following the pattern laid down by Moses, prophets framed their messages not only in terms of negative warnings but also in positive promises.⁴⁷ When Shalom is realized, a time of unparalleled moral right doing, domestic and international harmony, physical health, safety and amazing economic wealth can be expected. Isaiah, in one of his more poetic portions, speaks about this in glowing hyperbole stating that under such circumstances the community would experience unprecedented, if not miraculous, prosperity. Further, there would be no more need for the presence of managers to exercise managerial control in organizations as they would be replaced by right doing and peace prevalent everywhere.⁴⁸

Shalom and business. A few Christian scholars have tied the concept of Shalom with business practice.⁴⁹ It is argued here that such a connection is possible only for two reasons. First, Shalom has a direct relationship between the

⁴³ Isaiah 54:10.

⁴⁴ Malachi 2:5.

⁴⁵ Isaiah 48:18; Zephaniah 3:1-7.

⁴⁶ Deuteronomy 30:6; Psalm 37:31; 40:8; 51:10; Isaiah 51:7; Jeremiah 24:7; 31:33; 32:40; Ezekiel 11:19-20.

⁴⁷ Deuteronomy 28.

⁴⁸ Isaiah 60:17.

⁴⁹ E.g., Michael E. Cafferky, *Management: A Faith-based Perspective* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc, 2012); Kenman L. Wong and Scott B. Rae, *Business for the Common Good: A Christian Vision for the Marketplace* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011); Jeff Van Duzer, *Why Business Matters to God and What Still Needs to be Fixed* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010); R. Paul Stevens, *Doing God's Business: Meaning and Motivation for the Marketplace* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006); Todd P. Steen and Steve VanderVeen, "Finance: On Earth as it is in Heaven?" *Managerial Finance* 32(2006): 802-811; Richard C. Chewning, John W. Eby and Shirley J. Roels, *Business Through the Eyes of Faith* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990).

ethical-religious principles contained in the Ten Commandments when followed by both buyers and sellers in a wider context than just the marketplace. Second, success in commerce cannot be isolated from the other dimensions of Shalom. The key is that life in all of its abundance is envisioned in and fulfilled by Shalom. This is based on the duty of right doing and justice as called for in the Decalogue. Acting justly, living righteously, being faithful to all relationships are behavior patterns that are reciprocally interdependent with experiencing the abundant life of well-being.

The connection between Shalom and business success is a topic that appears more than once in the Hebrew Scriptures. For example, it is God's power that helps the people become prosperous in order that he may fulfill his Covenant.⁵⁰ Keeping the law is associated with a national reputation for wisdom and understanding.⁵¹ Obedience to the law is expected to produce well-being.⁵² Although he does not discuss Jewish business ethics in the explicit terms of Shalom, and although Shalom is described in Scripture as an ideal, Pava may have this in view when he presents the concept of the promise of transformation.⁵³ People in business are faced with a daily opportunity to be transformed by the deep spiritual nature of the Decalogue and in being transformed themselves they become transforming agents for others bringing Shalom into the market.

This paper addresses a gap in the business ethics literature that deals with the ancient Hebrew Decalogue. By grasping the import of the Ten Commandments, namely flourishing life of Shalom in the Covenant community, we are now prepared to employ this perspective by reviewing each of the Ten Commandments.

PROLOGUE

This exploration begins with what is sometimes referred to as the Prologue of the Ten Commandments.⁵⁴ The giving of the Covenant is in the context of a redemption narrative. In the act of redemption from bondage God displays the essence of his character. Whatever comes from this release from bondage in terms of the anticipation of well-being, this is a result of a creative work of God. This narrative forms an important long-lasting memory which becomes the starting point for response. Redemption from oppression comprehends all dimensions of

⁵⁰ Deuteronomy 7:12; 8:11-18; Proverbs 10:22.

⁵¹ Deuteronomy 4:5-6; 28:1.

⁵² Psalm 1:1-3; 19:7-8; Deuteronomy 29:9.

⁵³ Moses L. Pava, *Business Ethics: A Jewish Perspective*, 104-110, 135-137.

⁵⁴ Exodus 20:1-2.

Shalom: spiritual health, physical health, social harmony, international harmony and economic prosperity.

ALLEGIANCE OF THE HEART

You shall have no other gods before Me.⁵⁵

The first Commandment establishes the religious-faith context making unavoidable the following observation: For the ancient Hebrew believers the ethics process that is linked to individual and communal well-being is first of all a confession of faith in a gracious God who is the ultimate source of moral principles.⁵⁶ Faith is as much a communal experience as it is an individual matter. It is this Commandment that calls the faithful believers to review their whole life in community and in honesty acknowledge what might be there that is being placed ahead of a relationship with their Creator and Redeemer.

The Decalogue claims that the ultimate source of ethical standards is God alone. Whatever we might say about particular commands that when followed promote prosperity, ultimately the contribution to Shalom by the Commandments depend on the willingness of the leaders at all levels to be loyal to the One who gave the covenant principles.

The first commandment though stated in the form of a negative, contains a positive side to it, namely that which we choose to pledge the allegiance of our hearts, minds and actions is the focus of our worship and the ground of ethical standards. Essentially then, to have another god is to reject God and his plan for prosperity in favor our own ideas for prosperity. It means rejecting the Giver of Shalom.

We may find it easy to begin trusting to our own abilities to experience prosperity.⁵⁷ We may need to place constraints on our activities, on those things which we prize such as the accumulation of power to influence others, wealth, or status so that we are free to place our allegiance in God. Without this primary allegiance to the Covenant giver, humans will quickly impose their individual will upon others in the community. Thus, this command calls us to distance ourselves from individualized power, wealth and status. If this is true, an interesting and somewhat paradoxical relationship emerges between the individual experience of Shalom and the communal experience of Shalom. Only by constraining the individual experience of Shalom can the wider community experience Shalom. In

⁵⁵ Exodus 20:3.

⁵⁶ Moses L. Pava, *Business Ethics: A Jewish Perspective* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 1997), 84; Domènec Melé, "Religious Foundations of Business Ethics," in *The Accountable Corporation*, vol. 2, ed. Marc J. Epstein and Kirk O. Hanson (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 11-43.

⁵⁷ Deuteronomy 8:18.

this way the first commandment contributes something akin to the experience of freedom. It is only by constraining personal freedom that true freedom can be enjoyed by the wider community.

Perhaps it is our careers (for the managers and other workers) or our business (for the entrepreneur) that we let come between us and our Creator and Redeemer. Perhaps we tend to place ultimate confidence in productivity or even in freedom of the marketplace. Likewise technology should not ascend to such a high value that all our business commitments to God are compromised.⁵⁸ In contrast, the highest reward we can ever hope to achieve is the reward of having a relationship with God.⁵⁹

Faith in God contributes to communal Shalom by focusing all members on the narrative of God's great creative work of redemption. This has the impact of fostering an atmosphere of gratitude among community members. Faith leads to the commitment of obedience. In turn, this forms a cooperative relationship with the Covenant-giving God and the community. Without this vital faith experience throughout the community as a whole, community members will not be unified in their motivation to pursue Shalom.⁶⁰ Without the widespread acceptance of the Decalogue and its purpose, the community will be ineffective in fulfilling its shared leadership role as overseers. Moreover, in this command, we see a curious reciprocal interdependence between religious faith and ethical actions. Faith in God is depicted here as the ground for shaping community behaviors. And, constraining behaviors liberates us for worship to God. This interdependence is illustrated in other Commandments including the second.

UPWARD CONTROL OF GOD

You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth...⁶¹

This commandment is far bigger than it first appears as it relates to communal Shalom. As the Christian biblical scholar Williams says, this commandment asserts the fact that God cannot be completely defined or comprehended.⁶² It applies to physical images of what we think God looks like (though we are most likely wrong), but it also applies to any form, image or

⁵⁸ David W. Gill, "A Fourth Use of the Law? The Decalogue in the Workplace," *Journal of Religion and Business Ethics* 2, no. 2(2011): 9.

⁵⁹ Psalm 17:15; 65:4; 73:25; Proverbs 19:23; Jeremiah 31:14.

⁶⁰ Regarding the admonition to pursue Shalom see: Psalm 34:14; 122:6.

⁶¹ Exodus 20:4-6.

⁶² Jay G. Williams, *Ten Words of Freedom: An Introduction to the Faith of Israel* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971).

likeness either physical or mental that we create to represent God. God is limitless, but we like to place limits on him and manipulate him for our own purposes. In so doing, we may be placing limits on the promised Shalom prosperity.⁶³

Making and worshiping an idol is an attempt to be in a position of power over the Creator thus undermining his sovereignty while worshiping something that is less than human. Said another way, idolatry is worship of self since it is the human that creates the idol, but worship of self is a negation of the covenant.⁶⁴ The human wants his connection with God “to be the work of his own hands. This is an attempt to make himself a co-equal with God, or at least a co-participant with God in their “mutual struggle” against the unpredictable forces of nature and history.”⁶⁵ This, then, is the essence of idolatry: crossing the line between creature and Creator taking upon ourselves the authority to create a distorted attitude toward God acting as if he is the source of our personal gratification.⁶⁶ Whenever humans give reverence to the social order, the structure and forms of culture that we have created, we risk placing these above the principles of right doing outlined in the Decalogue.

Humans need concrete illustrations of deeply abstract spiritual ideas in order to grasp their meaning. As much as the concrete helps us, such images that fit our own private or even selfish ideas tend toward supremacy. When we emphasize just one dimension of Shalom because this is the dimension that we are most interested in, we risk creating a false Shalom that is out of balance and in so doing actually destroy the very thing the Law was intended to foster. In essence, our “images,” though they may merely be mental images, end up being human attempts to control God for well-being but can have a deleterious effect on the community social harmony by creating factions that conflict with each other.

Human ideas about God are powerful communal forces that shape social behaviors. But if we assume a plurality of views about God, some humans emphasizing one attribute of God and others emphasizing another, and if we assume the presence of political influence employed to persuade the acceptance of

⁶³ R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of Grace* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 1993), 89; Max L. Stackhouse. “The Ten Commandments: Economic Implications,” in *On Moral Business: Classical and Contemporary Resources for Ethics in Economic Life*, eds. Max L. Stackhouse, Dennis P. McCann, Shirley J. Roels and Preston N. Williams (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 60.

⁶⁴ Moses L. Pava, *Leading With Meaning: Using Covenantal Leadership to Build a Better Organization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

⁶⁵ Gary North, *The Sinai Strategy: Economics and the Ten Commandments* (Harrisonburg, VA: Dominion Educational Ministries, Inc., 2006), 42.

⁶⁶ Richard Rice, *Reign of God* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1997), 65.

a particular ideological slant, such dynamics might undermine community Shalom. But, if the community is willing to humbly suspend private conceptions of God allowing a greater measure of ambiguity about the nature of the Object of its worship, such humility might promote the various dimensions of Shalom including economic prosperity.

Two sides exist for this command. One side is the explicit proscription against making and worshiping images of the true God. The other side is an implied positive prescription to try, through our faithfulness to the God of the covenant, to represent the image of God to the world in all dimensions of life including the marketplace, as imperfect and flawed as such a representation might be.⁶⁷ Humans represent God to the world but in so doing we should not come to believe that such representation is the best that can be offered to the world especially since ultimate knowledge of God's mysterious nature is limited. This command is a call to humility. We should be cautious about our claims to use God's power or our claims that God is using us to influence others.

In terms of contemporary marketplaces we see that even the religious believer may be tempted to put God in a humanly-devised though illusory marketplace "box" that attempts to control God, hoping that God will give an advantage over competitors, harboring an illusion of human power over uncertainty. Some may turn to their marketplace success as evidence that God is blessing them. But such a perspective fails to give due weight to the idea that prosperity is broader than economic success. Wealth, by itself, is not an indication that people are walking with God. Indeed, some in the community might achieve financial prosperity by acting counter to the principles of the Decalogue.⁶⁸

There is an additional way this Commandment might have an impact on the prosperity of a business. Physical idol worship places the emphasis on the magical power of the idol-object. Such worship decreases personal responsibility and accountability for human actions in the organization and in the community. Making physical objects that are false or incomplete representations of God's character (idols) that are then exchanged in the marketplace divert important resources which otherwise might otherwise be used. In turn, this would contribute to market inefficiencies. Emphasizing a limited dimension of Shalom to the exclusion of other dimensions is to make an idol of it. For example, limiting the concept of prosperity to economic wealth allows economic goals to dominate decision making. We might become economically wealthy in the process;

⁶⁷ Walter J. Harrelson, *The Ten Commandments and Human Rights*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980), 65; David W. Gill, "A Fourth Use of the Law? The Decalogue in the Workplace," *Journal of Religion and Business Ethics* 2, no. 2(2011): 10.

⁶⁸ Psalm 73:3; Proverbs 17:8.

however, this will result in a false Shalom achieved at the cost of diminishing other dimensions.

FOUNDATION FOR FLOURISHING WELL-BEING

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.⁶⁹

For Israel the name of God was the most sacred possession to oversee and protect. It was guarded with the utmost of care. In the name of God is the memory of God's great deliverance. In his name is his presence, the glory of God himself for where his name is spoken at that moment you call to remembrance God's saving historical acts.⁷⁰ In his name is embedded God's character that is the standard to be reproduced in the community. Thus, the commitment to loyalty to the Covenant giver is a commitment to take seriously the community responsibility to protect and oversee the representation of God's character, namely, the Ten Commandments.

God's name, the sacred possession, carries with it a sacred duty to avoid using God's name profanely in our relationships in the community. Several ideas are included in this. It is commonly believed that this Commandment forbids using God's name as a swear word in conversation or the prohibition against vulgar or degrading speech. But this command includes something important for the marketplace. The phrase "in vain" connotes using God's name in wickedness, in a falsehood, a lie, or in emptiness. "In this commandment, any statement which deceives is forbidden. The Israelite who speaks the name of the Lord must act in truth, for the Lord's name is truth."⁷¹ Accordingly, perhaps it is this command that illustrates the connection that the ancient Hebrew drew between worship and true prosperity. True worship to God, claiming loyalty to their Creator and covenant Redeemer, means that the follower of God will follow God into the marketplace by demonstrating the essential characteristic believed to be the essence of God in his relationship with the community, i.e., faithfulness to covenant promises.

This commandment forbids lifting up God's name in order to further personal ambitions for power and money. The primary application of this commandment is in making promises be they in the marriage, the family, or in the marketplace: It forbids calling God to witness a promise or pledge you are making to someone when you either have no intention of keeping the promise, through carelessness forget to keep it or break the promise because it becomes

⁶⁹ Exodus 20:7.

⁷⁰ Jay G. Williams, *Ten Words of Freedom: An Introduction to the Faith of Israel* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971), 135-137.

⁷¹ Jay G. Williams, *Ten Words of Freedom: An Introduction to the Faith of Israel*, 136; Psalm 86:15.

inconvenient to keep it.⁷² It also forbids making a pledge (even if God's name is not invoked) that you do not keep.

The Hebrew Scriptures encourages making pledges in God's name.⁷³ Each promise we make to each other, regardless of the setting, is a restatement of the bigger commitment that the whole community makes to oversee the Covenant. Every promise we make is in the presence of God and must be kept even if doing so results to our disadvantage.⁷⁴ The strictness of this command will have a positive impact on Shalom in the community as a whole. Although there are uncertainties which can affect the ability of the promise-maker to fulfill the obligations, persons who choose to make promises to others will be circumspect about what they promise. They will think of contingencies and perhaps incorporate these into the promise itself. Further, when persons identify themselves as followers of God, this commandment requires of them higher performance than would otherwise be expected. "Therefore to swear by God or any aspect of the creation in a contractual situation is to use God's name in vain. To do this is to create the illusion of more reliable performance..."⁷⁵

Promise-making and promise-keeping is fundamental for successful relationships in community including relationships in the marketplaces. If most persons who made promises didn't keep them, the entire economic system would quickly collapse undermining Shalom. As organizations fail to follow-through on promises customers, suppliers, employees and strategic partners go away. When promises are not kept to employees, morale decreases, willingness to improve quality does down, commitment to the organization goes down while turnover costs go up. Employees who are angered by broken promises may choose to be destructive of company assets or steal company resources. When promises are broken to suppliers, suppliers may respond with opportunistic actions when the buyer is in a position of bargaining vulnerability in order to earn their profit one way or another. When buyers break promises, they increase the costs incurred by sellers which, in turn, undermines the Shalom for all by requiring all to share in this increased burden in the form of higher prices and higher barriers to transactions.

Failed promises undermine reputation which, in turn, undermines community trust an important component in the Shalom experience. In more crass

⁷² R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of Grace* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 1993), 55; William Barclay, *The Ten Commandments for Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), 25-29.

⁷³ Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 10:20; 23:21; Jeremiah 12:16; R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of Grace*, 56.

⁷⁴ Psalm 15:1-5.

⁷⁵ Gary North, *The Sinai Strategy: Economics and the Ten Commandments*, 92.

business terms, failed promises undermine brand strength; keeping promises build the brand. When customers experience broken promises they may cancel orders leaving the supplier with an increased inventory management costs, they may leave the company resulting in loss of future revenue, and they may speak badly of the company's brand. As business professionals break promises they develop a reputation as being untrustworthy, and people prefer to do business with trustworthy people. On a larger scale in the community, broken promises increases distrust tending to influence community members to be hesitant to enter into relationships where promises are required. Such hesitancy would have a downward pressure on communal exchange activities, and as a result, lower the overall well-being of the community.

In our time, promise keeping is not a high priority in many contemporary work places. Two researchers surveyed managers in over 700 businesses.⁷⁶ Promise-keeping ranked last in a hierarchy of values at work coming after values such as overcoming adversity, competence, working hard, and loyalty to one's supervisor. When a promise is believed to be legally binding, managers are more likely to keep their word. Yet, many contemporary managers routinely ignore promises even when legally required to keep them. More shocking is the survey result that the importance of religious beliefs has no statistically significant effect on the ranking of promise-keeping among other values. Researchers found that managers regularly reframe the situation they are in and refuse to take responsibility for broken promises blaming others or in other ways neutralized the moral obligation.

Perhaps in a more subtle way the third commandment cautions us against parading our faith around for others to see, invoking God as the author of strategic plans, operational decisions or business successes, using relationships in religion to build business or making reference to God in order to further personal ambitions. This places economic prosperity ahead of full well-being envisioned in Shalom.

WORKING & RESTING

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 of the LORD your God...⁷⁷

Andreasen and other Christians see Sabbath as a symbol that God is Lord of all of life.⁷⁸ The Sabbath day is a means for humans to continually renounce

⁷⁶ E. F. Oakley III and P. Lynch, "Promise-keeping: A Low Priority in a Hierarchy of Workplace Values," *Journal of Business Ethics* 27, no. 4(2000): 377-392.

⁷⁷ Exodus 20:8-11.

⁷⁸ Niels-Erik A. Andreasen, *Rest and Redemption: A Study of the Biblical Sabbath* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978).

human autonomy and acknowledge God's Lordship in human life. "The hallowing of the seventh day— its exceptional place in the stream of time—is opposed by human rapaciousness and greed, because it reminds us of the One to whom all time belongs and apart from whom all of our hustle and bustle is fruitless."⁷⁹ A similar thought in Roman Catholic tradition is expressed in *Rerum Novarum*, *Dies Domini* and other encyclicals.⁸⁰

The weekly Sabbath day of worship is inseparable from and interdependent with the commission to work. Without working creatively in the material world during the rest of the week, the experience of Shalom would be impossible to achieve. One might even say that Sabbath would lose some of its meaning if on the other six days no meaningful work was done or if God was not honored in human work.

The abundant life of well-being is not a life of leisure. The Decalogue's plan for Shalom included humans working. Yet, the aim of this work was not accumulation of material personal possessions alone but rather to enter into rest with God while serving the needs of others in the community and the needs of the Earth. In the Sabbath rest is demonstrated obedience to God by resting from pursuit of material goods. Even though humans were set in a material world the Sabbath was designed, in part, as a barrier to excessive materialism.

For the believer obedience to the Commandments was God's way of delivering all the Shalom-filled blessings of Torah to his people.⁸¹ Accordingly, although it requires work, because it involves giving up 1/7th (14.29%) of productive time each week to community worship, when superficially considered, the Sabbath concept seems counter-productive to business success. Yet, Sabbath might be the secret to a fully prosperous life in a community who shares Sabbath values.

The purpose of Sabbath is to renew fellowship with God. As such Sabbath is part of the narrative of redemption from oppression. Sabbath is part of the narrative of redemption from oppression. It is a "type" of redemption from oppression of sin and unrighteous people. The narrative is not just a memory of what God has done, but an improvisation of the current narrative that is being co-created by the community. Sabbath reminds believers of God's covenantal promises that flow from his loving kindness, promising to reclaim those who have

⁷⁹ Walther Eichrodt, "The Law and the Gospel: The Meaning of the Ten Commandments in Israel and for Us," *Interpretation* 11, no. 1(1957): 31.

⁸⁰ Leo XIII. *Rerum Novarum. Encyclical Letter on Capital and Labor*. May 15, 1891, Section 41; John Paul II. *Dies Domini. Encyclical Letter on Keeping the Lord's Day Holy*. May 31, 1998.

⁸¹ John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 187-190; Patrick D. Miller, *The Ten Commandments* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 122-123.

been trodden down by injustice, providing for preventing injustice, providing a means to restore broken relationships.⁸² But the fulfillment of such promises cannot be expected if humans are passively waiting for God to do it without their cooperation. Sabbath observance is a reminder of God's work of salvation, but it also provides a structured way for believers to continue on the journey of restoration of a relationship with God as shown in moral conduct with each other.⁸³ Thus, Shalom becomes co-created by humans serving as co-workers with God in families, in the marketplaces, and in the larger society. One might even argue that Shalom has an improvisational dimension as believers seek to fulfill their moral duties in the new situations in that emerge over time.

The form of Sabbath observance, by itself, does not necessarily result in the restoration of broken relationships and the rectifying social injustices. Indeed, Hebrew Scripture offers examples of how the opposite is true, namely observing Sabbath while bringing further injury to already broken relationships or deepening existing social injustices while maintaining a superficial, though quite visible in the community, observance of the form of Sabbath without its spiritual and essential substance.⁸⁴

It is the substance that is in view here, not merely the form of Sabbath keeping. When considering the great contrast between the spirit of Sabbath observance and the busy, sometimes hectic, lives in the marketplace, the ideal of observing the Sabbath day offers an opportunity to devote attention to things that have no apparent practical purpose. The day of rest points to the senselessness of uninterrupted work that "tends to rob man of being creatively involved with the world, until he is taken hostage by considerations of yield and profit."⁸⁵

The Sabbath command has been seen by some as the bridge between loving God and loving one's neighbor as it explains all the other commands in the Decalogue,⁸⁶ the command that stands at the junction between theology and ethics,⁸⁷ and the provision that God has made for safeguarding the honoring the other commandments. This can be illustrated through its connection with the first, second, and tenth Commandments. For example, loyalty to Yahweh is much more than avoiding worshipping other gods. Worshipping God and enjoying God's presence in your life comes to a culmination every Sabbath day. In more blunt

⁸² William Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977).

⁸³ Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

⁸⁴ See for example, Amos 8:1-6.

⁸⁵ Niels-Erik A. Andreasen, *Rest and Redemption: A Study of the Biblical Sabbath*, 41.

⁸⁶ Patrick D. Miller, *The Ten Commandments*, 117.

⁸⁷ Richard H. Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000), 106.

terms Sabbath is a safeguard against idolatry that can be tempting in business.⁸⁸ Likewise, it is a Sabbath mentality or guiding orientation the rest of the week which helps members of the community remain content with blessings of Shalom they enjoy. In this view, it is discontent that is counter-productive to true prosperity as it is an influence which tempts the business to overreach on prices, require more of each other than is conducive to Shalom, take advantage of each other, renege on promises, and desire more for ourselves than is necessary.

Applying the Sabbath command in the context of contemporary businesses offers several possibilities. Here are just a few as examples. Taking Sabbath principles to work means advocating on behalf of acquisition of wealth through fair means. Sabbath thinking means remaining open to the possibility, at times, of placing limits on wealth acquisition. In some high-pressure, high-performance organizations where cut-throat internal competition for the rewards of performance are employed, this is far from easy. Principles that foster Shalom can be shelved when the drive for business success become paramount. Encouraging workers to take time off has a renewal impact on their life and the life of the community.

The relationship between Sabbath and justice, as addressed in the Hebrew Scriptures, is not as explicit as we may wish it to be. Sabbath day worship was intended for everyone in the household including children, servants and legal aliens. They too need rest from labor. In the Hebrew culture it was not fair to require others to work for you when you enjoy the day of worship. This mentality of fairness can be taken to work the rest of the week.

Keeping Sabbath at work is not only about giving release from oppressive tasks or respite from the burden of work. Sabbath means continuing the creative work of God by entering into the joy of human work accomplished for the common good which it serves and helping to share this joy with others. Taking the Sabbath into the workplace might come from raising awareness among of all workers regarding the importance of time and the importance of their work in the larger picture of the good that the organization is doing in society. Such Sabbath keeping will involve giving voice to the common good perspective when workers may be prone to forget the larger purpose of the organization in its societal context. Workers with delegated specialized tasks that separate them from the good that their service does to the larger community may need help keeping alive the narrative of how important their work is to others. Accordingly, a manager as the redemptive task of enhancing employees' awareness of how they are contributing to communal well-being.

Anything that can be done to responsibly promote employment of persons in society, it would seem, is a positive fulfillment of the Sabbath

⁸⁸ Patrick D. Miller, *The Ten Commandments*, 133.

Commandment.⁸⁹ In the phrase “six days you shall labor” we see embedded that work contributes to community Shalom. If community leaders are unconcerned about creating opportunities for employment, they unintentionally undermine the hope of flourishing life of well-being. Helping people find jobs, helping them develop their skills that are useful in the community, helping them to increase their knowledge and talents that can be used in gainful employment, helping people transition from one job to another, making management decisions that minimize the risk that the firm must downsize all are examples of Sabbath-thinking that contribute to individual and communal Shalom.

RECIPROCAL DUTIES FOR HARMONY

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.⁹⁰

In ancient tradition the head of household served as the most immediate judicial and economic authority.⁹¹ North believes that the family unit envisioned in the fifth commandment is the primary economic unit considered in the Ten Commandments. Most businesses were family businesses with the addition of hired workers as needed. “Fathers have economic incentives to expand the family’s capital base, and they also have an incentive to train up children who will not dissipate the family’s capital. The continuity of capital, under God’s law, is promoted by the laws of inheritance-honor. This preservation of capital is crucial for long-term economic development.”⁹²

An individual’s self-interest could easily undermine the interests of the family as a whole or the wider community. The first locus of moral responsibility is with one’s primary family. “Only after satisfying family needs does one have an obligation to meet the needs of residents of one’s city.”⁹³ And after these needs are met we have an obligation to meet the needs of other people. Accordingly, the head of household had a responsibility to preserve the cohesion and progress of the family. But the family was an extended family and part of a larger cluster of tribal families that collectively represented the responsibilities of all family members for the nation. Thus, rejecting familial authority meant that the person was rejecting the structural system of justice integral to the nation.

⁸⁹ John M. Boersema, “The Use of Scripture in the Integration of Faith in Business,” Paper presented to the *Christian Business Faculty Association*. Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, CA. October 13-15, 2005.

⁹⁰ Exodus 20:12.

⁹¹ C. J. H. Wright, “The Israelite Household and the Decalogue: The Social Background and Significance of Some Commandments,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 30(1979): 101-124.

⁹² Gary North, *The Sinai Strategy: Economics and the Ten Commandments*, 117.

⁹³ Moses L. Pava, *Business Ethics: A Jewish Perspective*, 92.

Along with the fourth Commandment this one is written from a positive perspective. This does not mean that no negative prohibition exists. By implication, a negative way of formulating this commandment is to say that persons should not disrespect their elders. Wisdom comes from God.⁹⁴ But for the ancient Hebrews wisdom is mediated through those who are older, more experienced in the ways of God, in the journey of walking with God in daily life and who have responsibility for the well-being of the community as a whole. To refuse instruction provided by the wise is to dishonor God. It is in disrespecting our elders, those persons who have collected community wisdom founded on the religious-moral duties, that we show disrespect for Yahweh who is at work in such older, wiser persons changing them, restoring in them by writing the principles of the Decalogue on their hearts, keeping them integrated into the community as safeguards for moral behaviors of others. Willingness to listen to the wisdom of others is smart for well-being. Unwillingness to listen incurs costs to well-being. For example, the business costs of unwillingness to listen to marketplace wisdom comes in terms of increased errors of judgment, invalid marketplace assumptions, the waste of resources and time, and increase in costs. But listening is not limited to applied economics. It involves all levels of social relationships.

In this Commandment lies an important tension. Children should respect parents (and others in authority) but should not become their slaves.⁹⁵ Likewise, while children have a duty to respect their parents, parents have a reciprocal obligation to respect and honor their children.⁹⁶ Accordingly, duty is double-sided! Without this Shalom would quickly be undermined and the community would quickly be returned to oppression. This would undermine the redemption narrative.

Imagine the impact in a business and, when scaled up, on a community if parents not only asked their children to perform tasks but also offered to help their children with tasks! Imagine how a community would develop if parents watched out for not only their own interests but also for the interests of their children. Imagine how commercial activities would be transformed if parents would honor their children by providing safe and rewarding opportunities for learning, socialization, play, and personal development rather than simply let children go unassisted to their own devices for entertainment, conflict resolution and time management. Imagine the prosperity that could be created in a business

⁹⁴ Proverbs 2:6.

⁹⁵ Jay G. Williams, *Ten Words of Freedom: An Introduction to the Faith of Israel*, 165.

⁹⁶ William Barclay, *The Ten Commandments for Today*, 62.

characterized by mutual respect and reciprocal duties both inside and outside the company.

In the marketplace of organizations, customer relations, supplier relations, and strategic alliances, the duties we have toward each other are rarely one-sided. This is because the relationships we have in the market are most often interdependent. When one party forgets or downplays the interdependence and attempts to shift the relationship towards themselves (or toward their own organization) at the expense of the other party, problems arise. This command basically says, if you want to experience a flourishing organization, and by extension a flourishing marketplace, each has a duty to respect and honor the other regardless of the position you are in with respect to power and authority. True, there may be asymmetrical relationships where one party has more bargaining power than the other or more legitimate discretionary decision-making authority in the business. But, to be faithful to covenantal principles of the Law, both parties will watch out for the other's interest. Whenever one party attempts to use bargaining power outside the firm or legitimate authority inside the firm to hurt another, multiple commandments are breached including this one. Scaling up the application to the societal level, businesses will watch out for the interests of other businesses so that the whole community's interest is fostered, its reputation built as a safe place for strangers to visit, trade and live. On an even larger scale, one nation will watch out for the interests of other nations.

PROMOTE FLOURISHING LIFE & SAFETY

You shall not murder.⁹⁷

This commandment, stated in the negative form, forbids the taking of human life and biblical scholars would say in addition, inflicting physical harm or emotional abuse on others. Also included in this are animosity, malice, hostility, retaliation, and contempt. Apparently it is not the emotion of anger that is a breach of this command. We see examples in Scripture of God-fearing persons being angry. What seems to be the problem with anger is when it is hostile toward another person, when anger is mixed with the desire to take revenge, a prerogative allowed only to Yahweh.⁹⁸ We should include with this list the prohibition to injure yourself or another and destroy someone's property. On the positive side, the command is a "call to be a great lover of all humanity..."⁹⁹

Flourishing life of Shalom depends on a stable, safe civil society where the other blessings of Shalom are experienced. Thus, Shalom begins with

⁹⁷ Exodus 20:13.

⁹⁸ Leviticus 19:18.

⁹⁹ R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of Grace*, 55; William Barclay, *The Ten Commandments for Today*, 117.

flourishing physical life without which the other dimensions of Shalom are not possible.

If persons fear for their lives or for their economic stability, if the continuity of life is uncertain because of the presence of murderers who are not stopped, communal activities would be greatly curtailed. True prosperity for all would decline while economic prosperity for a few strong, most cunning and dangerous persons or gangs of persons would increase. If this would happen, then a few would become tyrants of the many, slavery would come next, reversing the narrative of redemption upon which the Ten Commandments were given. Accordingly, this command is one of the fundamental roots of a civil society where law and order prevail. Fostering Shalom-filled life promotes true prosperity; taking life destroys prosperity by removing productive workers from the marketplace (both the murderer who is removed and the deceased), placing survivors of attack at an economic disadvantage, increasing costs incurred from settling the deceased's affairs, burial, productive work time lost due to grieving. When success for one person or organization means that someone else loses, communal Shalom is undermined. When the drive for superiority of some (socially, politically or economically) results in diminished influence of others, this undermines covenantal relationships and thereby it undermines Shalom.

In general, we keep this command when we foster the fulfillment of Shalom promises in all dimensions. This command requires us to take responsibility for the unintentional harm we cause to others and to take reasonable means to promote safety not only at work but elsewhere in the community. It asks us to be like the tree of life¹⁰⁰ to foster a flourishing life of others in the community, promote the life of all living things, help others to develop to their fullest potential and bringing out their best, and assist those who cannot care for themselves. We must take responsibility for what we do to ourselves including the choices that we make for behaviors that affect our health and well-being. Perhaps one of the fundamental duties we owe to ourselves envisioned in this commandment is to develop ourselves and our workers to the fullest potential possible for service to others.

HOLD RELATIONSHIPS SACRED

You shall not commit adultery.¹⁰¹

In ancient Hebrew culture marriage was considered a long-term, if not permanent relationship that should be protected from third party intrusion. On the surface this Commandment seems to discuss the union in marriage. In some ways this Command is merely a different way of restating the first three Commands

¹⁰⁰ Genesis 2:9.

¹⁰¹ Exodus 20:14.

showing how Shalom is supported. Human marriage reflected “the relation between God and his people consummated at Sinai. This covenant, which is a revelation of what the relation between man and woman is meant to be like, shows that marriage should be far more than simply a physical union between two persons, for the covenant demands ultimate commitment on the part of Israel and promises absolute faithfulness on the part of God.”¹⁰²

In terms of marketplace wisdom, adultery brings the potential for a person’s reputation to be destroyed by “wounds and disgrace.” Adultery disrupts the primary economic unit in view in the Ten Commandments: the family.¹⁰³ It dissipates the capital that has been accumulated under conditions of mutual service and trust. Thus, adultery is self destructive. It is one of the things that will raise the cost of doing business as a family (paying money or buying gifts to give to the aggrieved spouse). In modern terms, adultery increases the likelihood of divorce which, in turn, raises costs of life (attorney fees, court costs, loss of assets, opportunity costs of another relationship is foregone for the sake of loyalty to the spouse). Divorce often places one of the parties (usually the female) in a much more vulnerable position economically.

Anything that would lead toward being unfaithful in a commercial and family relationships is included in the scope of this Commandment. By observing this command we will avoid making work so important that it requires us to sacrifice our commitment to our spouse and family increasing the risk of divorce, avoiding inappropriate sexual relationships in the marketplace that are counterproductive to Shalom of workers or customers including unwanted sexual advances at work, sexual harassment, or even allowing romantic relationships at work to become a distraction to other workers or to undermine workplace justice and productivity. It “forbids all unchaste acts gestures, words, thoughts and desires, and whatever may entice us to unchastity, the implications are even greater. Christians in business need to take this into account not only when considering the products they choose to produce and sell, but even more so as to how to promote them.”¹⁰⁴

Marriage is not the only relationship that is covenantal in nature, but it illustrates the sacredness of all relationships in a covenant community. Success in the community depends on maintaining solid relationships that are honored by all. Accordingly, it would seem that the deeper principle at stake in the command can be applied in any long-term relationship including those in business.

When two parties have formed a long-term working relationship, it is not right that a third party attempt to break that union. In the business of buying and

¹⁰² Jay G. Williams, *Ten Words of Freedom: An Introduction to the Faith of Israel*, 187-188.

¹⁰³ Gary North, *The Sinai Strategy: Economics and the Ten Commandments*, 152.

¹⁰⁴ John M. Boersema, “The Use of Scripture in the Integration of Faith in Business,” 6.

selling this places each person in a difficult point of tension. If I am forbidden from attempting to break up a business relationship, how will I be able to establish my company in the marketplace? Does this command implicitly call for limitations on competition? Does it implicitly promote monopoly power? It would seem not. The presence of substitutes in the market reminds all parties to a business relationship that they cannot take advantage of the other party without experiencing consequences. Business relationships should be honored. But, if a covenant relationship is broken by one party taking advantage of another party, such an action should not prevent the aggrieved party from freely entering into a fulfilling long-term business relationship with someone else. To prevent such is to allow harm to those in the wider community who depend on the business relationships. Put another way, to destroy business relationships upon which employees, suppliers, customers and the whole community depends is to do harm to all these stakeholders. Further, this disrespects the providential sustaining power of God with whom humans cooperate in the business environment so that the needs of all are met.

FOSTER TRUE PROSPERITY

You shall not steal.¹⁰⁵

Some scholars suggest that the original context of the commandment to not steal is a command related to theft of persons for the purpose of selling them into slavery.¹⁰⁶ But this command applies more broadly. Underneath the action of stealing is the meaning that stealing has in the context of the Covenant and all that it promised by God in Shalom. Since for the believer God is the owner of all things material, theft or fraud is an attack on God. It is also an attack on the dignity of the person and his/her work which was required to achieve Shalom. When we steal, we are attacking this great Commission and the Creator who gave it when our duty is to work in concert with and imitate the Creator. At a deeper level, theft is a refusal to accept what God has given, a refusal to enter into the type of contentment envisioned in the Shalom. It is an attempt to place oneself above God. It is a rejection of God in essence saying, “I don’t need God’s providential sustenance, I don’t need the community who is contributing to the welfare of my family or my business, I will take care of myself regardless of the cost to others.”

This command is broader than some wish it would be. This command includes the use of technology in trade: “A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight”; breaches of trust are forbidden; leaving unprotected a physical hazard to the community; misuse of resources such as

¹⁰⁵ Exodus 20:15.

¹⁰⁶ Meir Tamari, *With All Your Possessions*, 39.

fire.¹⁰⁷ Tamari comments that the purpose of the exodus of Israel out of Egypt is precisely for the purpose of establishing honest weights and measures in trade.¹⁰⁸ This command includes the buying and selling of land in honest ways.¹⁰⁹ It also applies in dealing with strangers.¹¹⁰

This command excludes any act of deceit or treachery, any interference by third parties in the family or with property that anyone possesses.¹¹¹ Pilfering, borrowing without repaying, “using” someone’s possessions without authority, infringing on the property rights of others, adulteration of products, and accumulating wealth in a way that takes advantage of someone all are examples of how theft can be a mistreatment or violation of property.¹¹²

On the positive side, this command requires each person in the community to watch out for the interests of others. Thus, agency is not merely an individual matter between principal and hired manager; it is a communal phenomenon where each is an agent of all other wealth-building entities in the community. “You shall not see your countryman's ox or his sheep straying away, and pay no attention to them; you shall certainly bring them back to your countryman...”¹¹³ This principle is extended even to persons who are out of social harmony with each other: “If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him.”¹¹⁴ When each person in the community watches out for the interests of others, each contributes to Shalom for all.

The positive dimension of this Command represents another invisible hand of the market. The hand of self-interest does contribute to a certain degree of flourishing well-being. But, without the invisible hand of other-interest, Shalom is only partial.

The implied positive side this command fosters positive regard for the value of others. When we take responsibility to engage in honest work in a community, we contribute to the Shalom of the entire community. This

¹⁰⁷ Proverbs 11:1; see also Exodus 22:9; 21:33; 22:6; Deuteronomy 25:13-16; Leviticus 19:35.

¹⁰⁸ Meir Tamari, *With All Your Possessions*, 44.

¹⁰⁹ Leviticus 25:14.

¹¹⁰ Leviticus 19:33

¹¹¹ W. J. Harrelson, *The Ten Commandments and Human Rights* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980), 135-136; Domènec Melé, “Religious Foundations of Business Ethics”; H. H. Friedman, “The Impact of Jewish Values on Marketing and Business Practices,” *Journal of Macromarketing* 21(2001), 74-80; Max L. Stackhouse. “The Ten Commandments: Economic Implications,” in *On Moral Business: Classical and Contemporary Resources for Ethics in Economic Life*, 61.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Deuteronomy 22:1-4.

¹¹⁴ Exodus 23:4.

commandment calls us to working against selfishness, countering covetousness by giving liberally, being responsible for possessions (your own and those belonging to others), cultivating contentment, being temperate in all things, pursuing and conserving the truth, building up the community's trust in the reputation of others thereby contributing to the well-being of others.¹¹⁵

The impact of breaking this commandment on community life in general and on business activities in particular, may be more obvious than with some of the other commandments. Community life is significantly disrupted when people steal things from each other. As Tamari says, "No functioning economic society can exist for very long without a legal system to prevent fraud."¹¹⁶ When theft of private property is allowed, no one is safe. Things they work hard to obtain might be taken from them. The more theft that is allowed, the less incentive there is to work hard if you expect that what you possess will be taken from you without your consent. Not only does theft contradict the principle of generosity and selflessness, it destroys the motivation to engage in the very pastime that is designed to achieve Shalom: Work. Theft destroys the fabric of human community and achievement.¹¹⁷ It destroys the desire to be generous. Theft is an attack on property which can be used to bless others. Theft requires property owners to work twice as hard to obtain possessions; stealing lowers productivity of those who engage in honest work. This has an upward pressure on market prices.

North has shown the impact on market prices when theft is allowed on a wide scale in society.¹¹⁸ If theft is rampant, economic profits are depressed. Customers purchase fewer goods. In comparison to demand, the short-term supply increases since people are afraid to purchase things that will quickly be stolen. Stolen goods enter the market at prices less than new goods. Producers of new goods must lower their prices but this discourages producers since the profit drops perhaps even to zero economic profits as a result. As a result some producers go out of business or experience loss to burglary. As producers leave the market, supply decreases and prices start to rise. Now the availability of stolen goods decreases while the cost of protecting goods increases. Producers will want to pass along the increased costs to customers and prices rise. The end result: prices are higher for everyone (including for the burglars) after a crime wave than before. Higher prices lure producers back into the market; believing that the market price is a signal of profits to be earned they ramp up production (supply).

¹¹⁵ Arthur W. Pink, *The Ten Commandments* (Swengel, PA: Reiner Publications, 1973), 53.

¹¹⁶ Meir Tamari, *With All Your Possessions*, 39.

¹¹⁷ James J. Londis, *God's Finger Wrote Freedom* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1978), 99.

¹¹⁸ Gary North, *The Sinai Strategy: Economics and the Ten Commandments*, 181-183.

The result is that supply increases and prices fall again which, in turn, creates more opportunities for thieves. With this cycle we should expect to see an upward perverse spiral of prices with economic profit margins being squeezed with each cycle.

PRESERVE INTEGRITY

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.¹¹⁹

We sometimes think that the intent of this commandment is the prohibition of telling lies. Actually, just as with other commandments, this ninth command is deep and broad.¹²⁰ More than one of the Commandments that has as its intent the concept of truth-telling.

The covenant community understood that deceit and lying sacrifices true Shalom.¹²¹ In this command the primary issue at stake is bringing false testimony against a fellow citizen in the context of the justice system.¹²²

The cornerstone of civil law and justice in the ancient Hebrew culture was the process of giving testimony whereby the truth is spoken by witnesses to an impartial judge who won't take bribes. Without this impartial system of justice, marketplace Shalom is destroyed. As Tamari says, "the centrality of justice provides the stable legal system which is an essential prerequisite for any economic activity."¹²³

Bearing false witness against another person was "not only an attack upon another individual, it was an undermining of the whole structure of civil justice."¹²⁴ False witnesses perpetuate injustice and this, in turn, destroys the fabric of a flourishing society. Allegations of wrong doing and other disputes are often disruptive to social harmony. If witnesses are unwilling to testify, the victim of a crime may not see a conviction and the party that has done wrong will not be held accountable for making restitution. This requires the victim to bear the economic costs. Without an impartial justice system in place, society would be a toxic place to labor. Efforts to foster Shalom would be in vain. Marketplaces would become corrupt destroying initiative, diligence, productivity and the will to succeed.

¹¹⁹ Exodus 20:16. See also Leviticus 19:11.

¹²⁰ R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of Grace*, 159-162; Jay G. Williams, *Ten Words of Freedom: An Introduction to the Faith of Israel*, 209.

¹²¹ Exodus 23:1; Psalm 101:7; Proverbs 12:22; 19:22; 21:6.

¹²² Jay G. Williams, *Ten Words of Freedom: An Introduction to the Faith of Israel*, 206.

¹²³ Meir Tamari, "The Challenge of Wealth: Jewish Business Ethics," 53.

¹²⁴ Jay G. Williams, *Ten Words of Freedom: An Introduction to the Faith of Israel*, 208.

The principles at stake in the wider justice system are applicable throughout society including business. When persons give false reports, incomplete reports, or intentionally biased reports to decision makers, this increases the risks that poor decisions will be made. Important details will be missed. The validity of assumptions will decrease. Reality will either be under-represented or over-represented causing projections and assumptions to be mistaken. The reality work processes will be misunderstood making it difficult for process improvements to be made until the truth is known. When integrity is compromised, this creates inefficiencies. When inaccurate information or incomplete information is used (when more complete information is available) for internal political advantage and in the process truth is sacrificed, the community remains weak in its ability to serve.

CURB OVERREACHING DESIRE

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.¹²⁵

Part of the responsibilities of acceptance of God's promise of Shalom was the commitment to work productively six days a week. As a result workers and business owners should expect a positive return for their efforts. This is not covetousness. However, the flip side of this is that faithful followers of God will be content with the rewards of their hard work. We must not be jealous of what others have.¹²⁶ Jealousy may result in individual prosperity but in the process it undermines prosperity of the next larger social unit of which we are a part.

We see in the commandment about coveting that the Decalogue "is a word of grace spoken to Israel. A community that experiences the blessings of Shalom is a community whose members have hearts that are being transformed by love. When God's voice is heard, the Decalogue can be understood as a structure of freedom."¹²⁷ It is only by living the tenth commandment that we can know such true freedom, but living this tenth commandment is impossible unless individuals have a heart that is being transformed. This commandment shows that at the root of a business's ability to experience the promised blessings of Shalom is a business community whose members' hearts are transformed by a common faith.

True prosperity is achieved when limits are placed on personal desires so that the needs of the community are taken care of while the needs of the organization are also met. This applies equally to buyers who desire to maximize

¹²⁵ Exodus 20:17.

¹²⁶ Jay G. Williams, *Ten Words of Freedom: An Introduction to the Faith of Israel*, 210.

¹²⁷ Jay G. Williams, *Ten Words of Freedom: An Introduction to the Faith of Israel*, 211.

their utility as it does to sellers who desire to maximize their economic profit. Unfettered desire and greed are destructive of Shalom whether exhibited in the marketplace, the family, the religious organization, or the government. When investors agree to share the risks and the profits, this does not remove them from the purview of the Command. Unconstrained desires encourage persons, nonprofit organizations and corporations to overreach. Such desires cloud the judgment and bias decision making. Time spent planning, desiring, plotting to overreach might be better spent developing the strength of competencies to serve society through the better products and services.

Covetous thoughts sometimes lead a person or an organization to take an action filled with more risk than would otherwise be taken. When we spend time thinking about taking actions that are out of alignment with God's character, we eventually find enough rationale to satisfy our desires. "When men do not trust their neighbors, it becomes expensive for them to co-operate in projects that would otherwise be mutually beneficial to them. They hesitate to share their goals, feelings, and economic expectations with each other. After all, if a man is known to be economically successful in a covetous society, he faces the threat of theft, either by individuals or bureaucrats."¹²⁸ Planning becomes more secretive. When plans are made in secret, wise counsel is less available and market assumptions are more likely to be incorrect.

CONCLUSION

The grand purpose of the Decalogue forms the basis of vocation for community members and their leaders regardless of the work they do: Be trustees of the Decalogue. This duty involves sharing responsibility for oversight, protection and interpretation of its principles.

The Ten Commandments are the essential prophetic voice in the community. They continually call us to nourish covenantal relationships fostering the hope that the promises embedded in the principles will become a reality. When these promises of Shalom are fulfilled, we see God's creative power at work. The Commandments are the voice of God reminding us of the discrepancy between behaviors and his ideal for life. Their purpose fosters the anticipation of how the community as a whole will experience the result of accountability to its principles, i.e., Shalom.

A Shalom understanding of the Ten Commandments broadens our understanding of the meaning of prosperity. On the one hand, unless the other dimensions of Shalom are included in our thinking about prosperity (spiritual well-being, physical well-being, domestic social harmony, international political harmony), it becomes hollow. The Decalogue forcefully asserts that economic

¹²⁸ Gary North, *The Sinai Strategy: Economics and the Ten Commandments*, 265.

well-being at the expense of spiritual well-being, physical health, emotional health, domestic social harmony and international political harmony is ultimately and absolutely worthless. On the other hand, without the economic dimension of prosperity included in the other dimensions of life, an important reality of life is glossed over or ignored. Without economic thinking as part of Shalom an important influence in day-to-day activities of finding, developing, and making available to each other resources needed for living a flourishing life of Shalom is made materially impossible. The contribution that the Ten Commandments make to Shalom is illustrated in **Table 2**.

Table 2 The Contribution of the Decalogue to Shalom

| Command | The Contribution of the Decalogue to Shalom |
|---|---|
| <p>Prologue</p> <p>“I am the LORD your God...”</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guidance that the Decalogue gives begins with a statement of God’s character. • The Decalogue is a description of God’s character that he wants to see reproduced in the community in all dimensions of life. • Ultimately Shalom is a creative work of God. • Although the community has a responsibility to observe all the commands, their memory of the redemption narrative is the starting point for the response. • Redemption comprehends all dimensions of life: spiritual health, physical health, social harmony, international harmony, economic prosperity. |
| <p>1</p> <p>“You shall have no other gods...”</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics is a confession of faith in a gracious God who is the ultimate source of moral principles. • Faithful believers must review their whole life in community and acknowledge those things that are being placed ahead of a relationship with the Creator and Redeemer. • That which we choose to pledge the allegiance of our hearts, minds and actions is the focus of our worship and the ground of ethical standards. • To have another god is to reject the Covenant giver and his plan for full well-being in favor our own ideas for well-being. It means rejecting the Giver of Shalom. • Committing to follow the principles of the Decalogue enhances both life in the community and the religious faith experience. |
| <p>2</p> <p>“You shall not make for yourself an idol...”</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When we emphasize one dimension of Shalom to the exclusion of the others, we risk creating an idol to “worship.” This results in false Shalom. • Making and worshiping an idol is an attempt to be in a position of power equal to or over the Creator thus undermining his sovereignty. • The life of the faithful in community becomes the tangible representation of God to others inside the community and outside the community. • Worship of false sources of Shalom decreases personal responsibility and accountability for human actions. • Supporting an economic system that produces and uses idols diverts resources. |
| <p>3</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loyalty to the Covenant giver means taking seriously the commitment to oversee and protect the description of his character: The Decalogue. |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain...”</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first promise the people make is to protect and oversee the representation of God’s character, i.e., the Ten Commandments. • Each promise we make to each other, regardless of the setting, is a restatement of the bigger commitment that the whole community makes to oversee the Covenant. • False promises attack truth (living faithfully and consistently). • Avoid parading religious faith around for others to see. |
| <p>4</p> <p>“Remember the Sabbath day ...”</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diligent work supports well-being for all in the community. • Worshiping the Creator is the foundation for Shalom; it encourages contentment. • Without contentment, there can be no Shalom. • Helping other people to experience Sabbath rest extends Shalom. • Sabbath is part of the narrative of redemption from oppression. The narrative is not just a memory of what God has done, but an improvisation of the current narrative that is being created by the community. |
| <p>5</p> <p>“Honor your father and your mother...”</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The well-being of children and the aged depends upon the parents and the children. • Listening fosters well-being in community. • Persons must earn the right to be honored by how they conduct themselves in community. • Reciprocal honor builds relationships rather than tears them down. • As children learn to honor parents, they learn how to honor others in society. • Honoring each other requires taking actions that result in well-being for each other. |
| <p>6</p> <p>“You shall not murder.”</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life is the focal point in and basis for experiencing Shalom. Work to preserve and enhance life. • Shalom depends on a stable, safe civil society. • Killing a person is a direct attack on covenant relationships and community Shalom. • Destroying or harming another is an attack on the image of God. |
| <p>7</p> <p>“You shall not commit adultery.”</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shalom is fostered when we honor our commitments to God and to each other. • Adultery interferes with the covenant relationship of another while undermining your own covenant relationship. • Disloyalty signifies that a covenant relationship is broken. • Disloyalty disrupts Creation’s plan for community. • Adultery undermines solidarity and violates the most important human relationship. |
| <p>8</p> <p>“You shall not steal.”</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stealing is an attack on God, the giver of Shalom of another person. • Stealing fosters discontentment. • All acts of deceit or treachery undermine communal Shalom. • When each person in the community watches out for the interests of others, they foster Shalom for all. |
| <p>9</p> <p>“You shall</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bearing false witness is an attempt to steal the character (reputation) of another. This is an affront to faithfulness in covenant relationships. • False witnesses steal property, freedom and even life. |

| | |
|--|--|
| not bear false witness...” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • False witnesses attempt to hide; they undermine transparency needed for Shalom. • Deceit undermines the whole structure of justice. |
| <p>10</p> <p>“You shall not covet...”</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coveting shows that the heart has not been watched over. • Coveting reveals that Shalom is lacking in the heart. • Coveting is the fundamental reason why social disorder exists. • Ethics is a confession of faith in a Creator-Redeemer who will supply all our needs. By making a relationship with God the primary focus, we will foster contentment. |

Individually and collectively, directly and indirectly the Ten Commandments make contributions to the transformation of life toward Shalom: individual, organizational, and when widely shared, societal. One might argue that a single family, one person, a particular organization, and a particular nation, adhering to the duties comprehended in the Decalogue, has the potential for contributing to Shalom. One employee served by a Shalom-minded supervisor can experience a “bit of Eden restored” at work. One family whose need for assistance touches the heart of other families who respond, receives Shalom from the community. In the receiving of the blessing, the family can become a blessing to others. One corporation, whose managers constrain corporate greed, contributes to the well-being of the market, the industry or society as a whole. Speaking quietly from the corporate board room the voice of the Decalogue says, “If you want to earn profit that exceeds your *pro forma*, foster Shalom for others.”