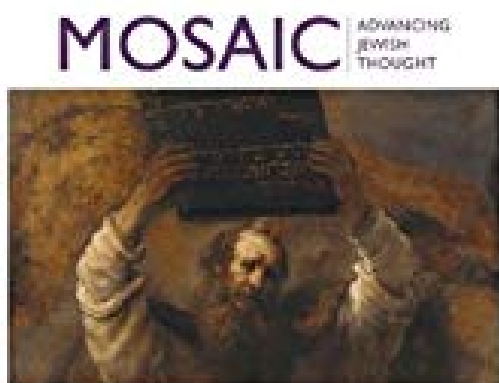


The Ten Commandments: Why the Decalogue Matters (Mosaic Monthly Essay)



The Ten Commandments

Why the Decalogue Matters

by Leon R. Kass

with responses by Michael Fishbane, Peter Berkowitz,
Gilbert Meilaender, Meir Soloveichik,
and a reply by the author

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The “Ten Commandments,” pronounced by the Lord God at Mount Sinai to the recently liberated children of Israel, constitute the most famous teaching of the book of Exodus and perhaps of the entire Hebrew Bible. Even in our increasingly secular age, their influence on the prevailing morality of the West is enormous. Yet, despite their notoriety, the Ten Commandments are still only superficially known. Why is this? In “The Ten Commandments: Why the Decalogue Matters,” the distinguished bioethicist and public intellectual Leon Kass argues that the very familiarity of the Decalogue interferes with a deeper understanding of it. In pursuit of that understanding, he focuses especially on the two affirmative commandments—to keep the Sabbath and to honor one’s father and mother—brilliantly illuminating their meaning for our personal, social, and political lives today. This e-book includes the original essay and four responses to it by the eminent scholars Peter Berkowitz, Michael Fishbane, Gilbert Meilaender, and Meir Soloveichik—as well as a reply by Kass to his respondents. All were originally published on Mosaic, a new online magazine dedicated to advancing serious thought in all areas of Jewish endeavor.