

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

By: Robert Sher

This past September, during a Bat Mitzvah service in Highland Park, Illinois, for a family friend, the girl of the hour was wonderful, my friends were very pleased and I was prepared to daydream during the Rabbi's sermon. I was half asleep when Rabbi Vernon Kurtz of North Suburban Synagogue Beth El told this story.

Two men operated a similar business very close to one another. One man's store was wildly successful while the other man's store barely eked out a living for its owner. After a period of time elapsed and the situations for the stores remained unchanged, the owner of the store that was barely limping along decided to take the bull by the horns.

He walked into the successful man's store and said to the owner: "I operate a competing store in the area. My store is not too successful. Would you please share the secret of your success?" The other man smiled and said: "The secret is obvious. I am watching only one store while you are apparently preoccupied in watching two stores."

Coveting, as used in this Tenth Commandment and as it was originally understood, was a secret treason, a hidden danger from which no one was safe. This final commandment, Rabbi Kurtz explained, is believed to be the most difficult of all the commandments because it is inherent in human nature to desire what another person has. However, he added, observing this commandment makes it far easier to observe the others. Those who do not covet, the rabbi noted, generally do not steal murder, commit adultery, bear false witness or stray after other gods.

I woke up and realized I had my next article.

The message, while it applies to every aspect of our lives, is something we should hold onto every day in both our business and personal lives. I hope Rabbi Kurtz's message inspires you. The Tenth Commandment forbids coveting the goods of another and we should each remember this every time someone else gets promoted, every time something good happens to someone else, every time someone else buys something you have wanted and cannot afford.

Forget what everyone else is doing. Stay focused on doing your own work, taking care of yourself and your family, doing what it takes to support yourself, pay your bills and make a difference in the world.

Take a Post It note now and write down two words: **Quit coveting.** Jealousy is a wasted emotion leading to resentment and distrust. Remind yourself of the Tenth

Commandment which forbids coveting the goods of another as the root of theft, robbery and fraud.

Pay attention to your job, your business and your life and quit looking over the shoulder of somebody else's success. "In Jewish tradition, God is quoted as teaching Moses the proper role success should play in the lives of people," Rabbi Kurtz said in his sermon, adding that God showed Moses a coin of fire – which is both a destroyer and the key to human creativity. "That very duality you see in fire, God explained to Moses, is the same duality implicit in success and especially in monetary success. With money, God said, you can build me a sanctuary or fashion a golden calf."

We have choices. We choose our career paths. We choose our friends. Ultimately, we must choose and be responsible for our own happiness. None of us should ever be dissatisfied with our own successes and/or failures just because we are looking at other people who seem to be more accomplished.

Years ago I was told an Aesop Fable about "a dog and a bone": A dog once had a large bone that his master had given him. As he trotted off to enjoy it, he went across a bridge across a river. He looked down into the water and saw another dog. The other dog was also carrying a bone in his mouth. The dog stopped to look. The other dog's bone was bigger than his bone. He dropped his bone and lunged for the other dog's bone. His bone fell into the water with a splash. The dog fell into the water and struggled to shore. As he climbed out of the water, he realized how stupid he had been.

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