

The Ten Commandments

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

My teacher Simon Greenberg once explained the great innovation of the Ten Commandments. He explained that the first four are the justification for the last six. In other words, he told us, the Ten Commandments introduced the world to the idea that God cares most how we treat one another.

In the Greek myths for example, the gods are preoccupied with whether human beings show them due respect. But they do not make rules for how people themselves interact. In the Torah, God's rules are about shaping human character and caring for human needs. As God's children, we are all of concern to the Creator.

Judaism divides *mitzvot*: *bein adam l'havero* and *bein adam l'makom*: between people, and between a person and God. But in truth, as Rabbi Greenberg explained, the first is a consequence of the second. Judaism tells us that ethical conduct is an outgrowth of our realization that we are all part of the same human family, with the same Divine parent. Untangle the strands of our spiritual DNA and you will discover a spark, in every human being, of the One who spoke and created a world.