

# A Thought for Shabbat

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## Shabbat Shalom

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This week's *Thought For Shabbat* is dedicated to Rabbi Gunther Plaut, who died yesterday at the age of ninety-nine. He was the author of the book, *The Torah; A Modern Commentary*. He was a congregational rabbi and a first rate scholar who was charged by the Reform Movement to write the standard-bearer of liberal Torah commentary. His influence was great, his contribution eternal and his spirit monumental. May he rest in peace.

Ironic it is that on the week of Rabbi Plaut's death is the Torah portion that contains the Ten Commandments. If I asked you to name all Ten Commandments, could you? If the answer is yes—that is great. If the answer is no, then there is time to learn them.

If you commit these ten statements to memory and then to practice, our religious lives will have guidance and structure. Allow me to list them and comment on them, in the spirit of Rabbi Plaut as well.

**1. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of land of Egypt, the house of bondage.**

The first commandment is anything but a commandment – it is a statement. Believing in God is central to the reason we obey the commandments.

**2. You shall have no other gods but me.**

Let us not confuse the essence of the one God in our lives who demands ethical behavior from us. We ought not be influenced by other pulls on our being.

**3. You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain.**

Never say, "I swear to God..." It is inappropriate to use God's name as collateral for things we may or may not do.

**4. You shall remember Sabbath day and keep it holy.**

Human beings need rest once every seventh day to be productive the other six.

**5. Honor your father and mother.**

A just society and healthy family is based on this principle.

**6. You shall not murder.**

Life is given by God and only God can end it.

**7. You shall not commit adultery.**

All relationships are sacred, so be careful and gentle with those we love.

**8. You shall not steal.**

To take something that is not yours flies in the face of a righteous society.

**9. You shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.**

Truth is the seal of God. Words hold more emotional power than anything else and we ought to use our verbal abilities with care and compassion.

**10. You shall not covet.**

Rarely in Judaism do we have commandments that direct our feelings. Coveting is forbidden in that if one covets then they are on the path to committing sin (adultery, murder, stealing...). Keeping one's feelings in check is the best way to avoid committing overt destructive acts.

Let's remember these core Jewish values and live them in our lives. Rabbi Plaut lived a century long and provided us a model of righteous living in learning, practice and meaning. Let us follow in his footsteps.