

## I am Zipporah

When God told my husband what preparations the people had to make before he'd appear to them on Mount Sinai, it was very clear that 'the people' meant only the men: first of all, Moses didn't even bother to tell any of us, the women, what was going on; and second, one of those preparations was "come not at your wives" (Ex 19:15)--women don't have wives, do they? So--and I'll say this loud and clear--the Ten Commandments are *for men only*. Let's look at the Third Commandment for instance: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy; six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work, but on the seventh day thou shalt not do any work. Now this commandment is impossible for women to follow: much of our work--childcare especially--cannot be ignored *ever*, let alone for a whole day, on a regular and scheduled basis. I can just hear us try: 'Now kids listen up, tomorrow is the Sabbath, so you there with the chubby little legs, give up on trying to walk tomorrow because if you fall down, I can't pick you up and get you going again--no, you'll just have to lie there, face in the floor--all day; and you, if the boys around the corner beat you up tomorrow, well--too bad; and you over there in the crib, try not to mess tomorrow okay, because I can't change your diaper; and you, the one with the thousand questions a minute, tomorrow, don't you wonder 'bout a thing.'

And Number Six: Thou shalt not commit adultery. Women didn't have to be told. We knew that another man's child would be disowned (if not killed) by our husband, so monogamy was a very practical-ethical practice, know what I mean? Now the men, they didn't have that concern; their concern for children tended to extend only to their own (even though they couldn't ever be sure just which ones those were, that's always been kinda funny--remember Hambone? --never mind); and since venereal disease was an epidemic, this commandment was given--to them.

Number Seven: Thou shalt not steal. Now why would we steal when we weren't allowed to own property--we *were* property.

Number Eight: Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. This is another silly one for women--we were non-persons, we weren't allowed to bear *any* witness, false or true.

And Number Ten: Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife. I don't think he was talking to the lesbians among us.

So, now, I thought that since *those* Commandments were for *men* only, we could make our own, you know, for *women* only. For starters, I propose the following list--pass it around, discuss it with your coffee klatch, your consciousness-raising group, your collective; and revise, refine, add, delete, substitute--then when we reach agreement, together we'll weave them into a tapestry of scarlet and gold.

Preamble: these commandments are neither abstracts nor absolutes, and are to be interpreted according to your own context and circumstance.

1. Seek to maximize the joy of life for yourself and others.
2. Temper justice with mercy and compassion, at all times calling upon your reason and your feeling to guide you.
3. Never love unconditionally--human sacrifice has never been blessed.
4. Remember that the basis of morality is care and communication.
5. Act in accordance to the rule of reciprocity: if you give, you are entitled to get; and if you get, you are obligated to give. This applies to all relationships--person to person, people to people, people to planet.
6. Rights and responsibilities go hand in hand: exercise your rights only to the extent that you take the responsibilities that go with them.
7. Make your choices carefully, for no choice is without consequence.
8. Remember that peace involves freedom, and freedom involves compromise.