

# DO NOT COVET AND DO NOT DESIRE PART 1

*by Rabbi Yehonasan Gefen*

Having spent several months discussing the prohibition of stealing, it is instructive to examine another commandment that pertains to our attitude and relationship to other people's property. Right at the end of the Ten Commandments the Torah instructs us:

"Do not covet (tachmod) your fellow's house. You shall not covet your fellow's wife, his manservant, his maidservant, his ox, his donkey, nor anything that belongs to your fellow." [2]

From a simplistic reading of this verse, it would seem that the Torah is prohibiting a person from merely wanting someone else's possessions. However, the Shulchan Aruch [3] states that this is not the nature of this prohibition. Rather, the word, 'tachmod' implies to cajoling, pressuring, or embarrassing someone into selling him something that the owner really did not want to sell. This is what the Torah is prohibiting.

Later in the Torah, the Ten Commandments are repeated with slight changes. One of them is in the above mentioned verse. The verse begins; "You shall not covet your fellow's wife," using the same word, tachmod, implying an active effort to attain the item. However the verse continues differently, saying, "you shall not desire (titaveh) your fellow's house..." [4] The Shulchan Aruch explains here the Torah is prohibiting merely thinking and scheming how to pressure one's fellow into selling him the item. Thus, even if one only plans how to attain the item in such a fashion and never proceeds, he nonetheless transgresses the Torah commandment of 'loh titaveh'.

In the coming weeks we will discuss the details of this mitzva.

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[1] Much of the information for this essay is taken from "Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Yisroel Pinchos Bodner.

[2] Yisro, 20:14.

[3] This is the body of law that forms the basis for much of halacha.

[4] Va'eschanan, 5:18.

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