

# DO NOT COVET AND DO NOT DESIRE PART 5

*by Rabbi Yehonasan Gefen*

We have completed the halachic (legal) issues relating to the mitzvo of 'Do not Covet'. It is now important to discuss some of the philosophical aspects of this mitzvo.

The commentaries discuss why it is wrong to covet someone else's item. The early commentator, the Ibn Ezra, offers a useful analogy to help understand the Torah's outlook on what one's attitude should be towards material possessions. He tells us to imagine a lowly peasant man who sees a beautiful princess. If he is of sound mind, he will not contemplate marrying her, because he is well aware that she is not designated for him, because she is in a completely different social sphere. In a similar vein, everything that a person has is given to him from HaShem and anything that he does not need is not given to him. Therefore, the property of another person has no relevance to him - it is completely out of his sphere of ownership.

This idea is developed further by an illuminating saying of the Sages. They tell us that righteous people are very careful about looking after their material possessions because they know that they did not acquire anything dishonestly<sup>[1]</sup>. As we said above, everything that a person owns is given to him from HaShem. However, this is on condition that it was acquired in an honest fashion. A righteous person recognizes that since he is totally honest, whatever he has been given or acquired is necessary for him to properly serve HaShem. Accordingly, he is very careful not to damage or lose his property, because to do so, would make it very difficult to achieve his purpose. With this in mind, it is evident that acquiring other people's property is totally unnecessary for a person to achieve his life potential. By definition, anything that his fellow owns is not needed for him. Therefore, it is fruitless for him to try to attain it from his friend.

With this attitude a person can learn to become far more satisfied with his lot.

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1. Chullin, 91a.

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