

THE ILLUSION OF JEALOUSY

by Rabbi Label Lam

"I am HASHEM, your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage (Shemos 21:2)

Honor your father and mother! (Shemos 21:12)

...You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, his manservant, his maidservant, his ox, his donkey, or whatever belongs to your neighbor." (Shemos 21:14)

Here we have a sample of three of the Ten Commandments. They were chosen here for discussion because they have something profound in common. We are compelled to find the common denominator even though it may not be so apparent, because of their positioning. The Ten Commandments were not spelled out on one page like a laundry list or a Divine wish list. No, it was organized into two albeit inseparable groups. One side is defining the relationship between man and G-d while the other outlines the major boundaries in our relationships with other people. Therefore, the Ten Commandments are not to be read only from one to ten but in all kinds of directions like a crossword puzzle.

Number one relates not just to number two, but to its companion, number six, the first one on the other column. What does knowing there is HASHEM have to do with the mandate not to kill? You guessed it! Who gives man life? Who breathes a soul of life into his nostrils? Who decides, ultimately, who lives and who dies? If someone understands there is a G-d in, and involved in the affairs of this universe, he will tend to see himself and his fellow as a Divine creature worthy of the highest respect. He will see the G-dliness he knows he possesses in others. The converse is also true. If someone fails to recognize a Creator then it's not likely he will be able to identify that holy spark in the heart of others and when push comes to shove, what will stop him from committing the worst of crimes!? That was easy enough.

Now we can do this four more times for fun, but we won't now. What does number five, "Honor your father and mother", have to do with not coveting, desiring what someone else has? I think that that one is a little harder. Let's first examine vertically and figure out what number one on the first column and number five on the same side have to do with each other. What is the relationship between knowing there's a G-d and honoring parents?

Here is an approach that maybe helpful. The Ten Commandments are really statements,

introductory statements by G-d to humanity. It is actually an orientation to reality. The first large fact of reality, unarguable and non-negotiable given is the HASHEM is and He does! Park the philosophy, curb the skepticism, and accept this primary point, period. Now maybe there is some lost and confused soul on the planet that questions and wonders why his parents are his parents and why he was thrust into this family with these siblings at this time in history? Sounds frighteningly familiar, huh? Well, these are your parents! You inherited your 46 chromosomes from them, with the curly hair and the odd shaped nose and the asymmetrical features. Don't try to wriggle out from respecting them because you found some small or large fault in their character. This, these are your givens. Welcome to reality. Don't fight reality! Accept it! Love and embrace and honor it-them!

Now we turn to number ten! What does it have to do with its near neighbor, number five, honoring parents? Maybe we can extend the same notion and employ the same idea. Don't covet your neighbor's house, wife, car etc. That's what was granted to him! You (we) have to accept reality, his and ours! This is what has been granted to us! Get over it!

Number ten is the final exam on number one! If you believe and accept The Almighty as the ultimate arbiter of good, then the settling of that notion from knowing to understanding to accepting, to embracing that reality can cure the human heart of **the illusion of jealousy**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.