



Lecture # 15 Part 1

## The Ten Commandments, The Laws Governing Man's Duty To Others (Part 10):

### Commandment Ten Concerns Man's Desires and Security— Never Covet, Exodus 20:17

#### The Tenth Commandment Against Covetousness

“Lo tahmod bet re'ekha lo tahmod eshet re'ekha veavdo vaam-ato veshoro vahamoro vekhol asher lere'ekha” (Exodus 20:14) “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.”

Exodus 20:17 (BHS)

<sup>17</sup> “לֹא תִחְמַד בֵּית רֵעֶךָ לֹא תִחְמַד אִשְׁת רֵעֶךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמָּתְךָ וְשׁוֹרְךָ וְחֲמֹרְךָ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר  
פ לְרֵעֶךָ: פ”

“Lo tahmod bet re'ekha lo tahmod eshet re'ekha veavdo vaam-ato veshoro vahamoro vekhol asher lere'ekha”

Exodus 20:17 (KJV)

<sup>17</sup> “**Thou shalt not covet** thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour's.”

Exodus 20:17 (NASB)

<sup>17</sup> “**You shall not covet** your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

It is interesting to note that Moses prohibited coveting another's wife but did not explicitly prohibit desiring her, which is, as **Hertz** has observed, “a distinction of far-reaching moral consequence.”<sup>469</sup>

It should be borne in mind, as a general proposition, that the sages understood “**to covet**” to mean actually seeking to obtain something, whereas “**to desire**” meant merely wishing for something without actually seeking to acquire it. However, this reiteration of the commandment has been interpreted by **Maimonides** as including the “**desire for another's wife**”: “If one desires another's house or his wife or any similar thing that he might buy from him, he transgresses a negative commandment as soon as thinks in his heart how he is to acquire the desired object and allows his mind to be seduced by it. For Scripture says, Thou shalt not desire, and desire is a matter of the heart only.”<sup>470</sup>

**Nahshoni** has remarked that the Decalogue began with a commandment concerning belief in God, a matter of the mind, and here concludes with an injunction concerning the mind, which illustrates that the Torah is not only concerned with the behavioral aspect of human existence but also with matters of the heart and mind.<sup>471</sup>



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**Exodus 20:17 (BHS)**

<sup>17</sup> “רָעָה לְאִתְחַמֵּד אִשֶּׁת רֵעֶה וְעַבְדּוֹ וְאִמָּתוֹ וְשׁוֹרוֹ וְחִמְרוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לֹא תַחְמַד בֵּית”  
פ’ לְרֵעֶה: פ”

“Lo tahmod bet re’ekha lo tahmod eshet re’ekha veavdo vaam-ato veshoro vahamoro vekhol asher lere’ekha”

**Exodus 20:17 (KJV)**

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(Exodus [20:17](#)) **Introduction— Covet— Desire— Lust:** covetousness is a sin given little attention. Few sermons are ever preached and few lessons ever taught on covetousness. And there are even fewer books written on the subject. This is surprising, for covetousness is one of the most prevailing evils of society. Simply stated, **“covetousness is a predominant desire or thought, a desire or thought that craves, lusts, and yearns, that just eats away at the human heart.”**

**It is covetousness.....**

1. that craves the things of the world, the things a person does not have
2. that craves the things of others

Covetousness can and often does enslave the human soul: it often destroys a person or causes the destruction of other people.

**Covetousness is what causes and leads to so many of the other sins:**

1. A person covets a woman and commits adultery.
2. A person covets money or property and steals or kills.
3. A person covets recognition and acceptance, or he seeks to escape suspicion; therefore, he lies.
4. A person feels unattractive, unhealthy, inadequate, or poor and he covets what someone else has to the point of wishing that something bad would happen to the person

Covetousness is terribly destructive. It is a desire or thought that will gnaw away at the mind until it consumes a person. A covetous thought or desire left unchecked can be so consuming that it almost forces a person to act. In such covetous moments, only the power of God can enable us to withstand the temptation. Only God can keep us from reaching out and taking what is not ours. Covetousness is a sin of the human heart that causes so many of the problems within society.



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This is the critical importance of this commandment: *Commandment Ten Concerns Man's Desires and Security—Never Covet, [Exodus 20:17](#)*.

1. Who is to obey this commandment? How long was this commandment to be in force (v.17)?
2. What is forbidden by this commandment (v.17)?
3. What is the decision required by this commandment (v.17)?

### 1. ([Exodus 20:17](#)) Commandments, The Ten—Covetousness—Desire—Lust—Craving: Who is to obey this commandment? How long was this commandment to be in force?

[Exodus 20:17 \(BHS\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> “לא תַחַמַּד בֵּית רֵעֶךָ לֹא-תַחַמַּד אִשֶּׁת רֵעֶךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמָּתְךָ וְשׁוֹרְךָ וְחִמְרֶךָ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר בְּיָד רֵעֶךָ: פ”

“Lo tahmod bet re’ekha lo tahmod eshet re’ekha veavdo vaam-ato veshoro vahamoro vekhol asher lere’ekha”

[Exodus 20:17 \(KJV\)](#)

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Beyond question, covetousness is the most serious infection that corrupts man’s heart. Covetousness always has been and always will be the prevailing sin of man’s heart. Before man ever carries out any sin, covetousness—the desire, the lust, the thought—is aroused within his heart. Man covets, desires, lusts to sin; and then he carries out the act of sin.

**The point is clear and forceful:** as long as man exists and God rules over the earth, there will be a need for this tenth commandment, a need for man to heed the demand of God: “**You shall not covet**” ([Exodus 20:17](#)).

Now, who is to obey this commandment? Note the verse: “**You.**” Every one of us. Every generation of man is to obey this commandment.