

פרשת יתרו

לא תחמוד בית רעך וגו' וכל אשר לרעך [כיד]

The מפרשים try to understand how the Torah can command a person not to be envious of what belongs to others. Jealousy is a feeling that is human nature. What can a person do if his heart desires another person's belonging? There is a well known answer from the Ibn Ezra. The מצוה of לא תחמוד is that a person should come to regard anything that belongs to someone else as simply not in his ability to possess. Just like a farmer doesn't aspire or even dream of marrying a princess. He understands that that it is something that is not possible for him to attain. So too, we must view another person's belongings simply as something impossible to attain.

The Bais Halevy offers another explanation regarding the מצוה of לא תחמוד with a משל. When a person has a tremendous desire to do something and is on his way to do it, all of a sudden he is faced with a life threatening danger. During those moments while he is in the throes of danger, that burning desire is the farthest thing from his mind. The fear of danger is so overpowering that it blocks everything else from his mind. The Bais Halevy says the same is true with the prohibition of jealousy. If we would possess a real fear of transgressing an עבירה, and going against the רצון ה', the envy and desire we might have for another's property would just dissipate.

We see from both of these explanations that the essential obligation behind the מצוה of לא תחמוד is not simply for one to be envy-free. Rather the Torah wants us to work on ourselves and to change our outlook on how we view other people's property. Or as the Bais Halevy said, to work on our יראת חטא, fear of not transgressing an עבירה. This not only will prevent us from transgressing the prohibition of לא תחמוד, but it will also transform the way we interact with other people and elevate us into better people.

Have a good Shabbos.

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