

Exodus 20:17

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-20/exodus-2017/>

The 10th commandment is to not yearn or lust for that which belonged to others.

All of the other nine commandments concern actions in which a person must (or must not) participate. The tenth commandment is different. It involves that which goes on in the heart and mind. The command says *You shall not covet*. The word for *covet* (Heb. “khamad”) has the idea of “desiring strongly” or “to long after,” even “to lust after” ([Proverbs 6:25](#)). It is used to describe how “pleasing to the sight” were the trees in the garden of Eden ([Genesis 2:9, 3:6](#)).

The LORD mentions five things that belong to one’s neighbor that should not be coveted—their *house* (representing everything the neighbor owns), their *wife*, their *male servant and female servant*, their livestock (*ox and donkey*), or *anything else that belongs to their neighbor*.

This could be viewed as a catchall to make clear God’s intent was for Israel to be self-governing. God made clear that each community member was to respect the lives and property of other members of the community as obedience to Himself. This command not to covet closes any potential loopholes that might be crafted to avoid the sixth through ninth commandment. It makes it clear that each community member is to protect as well as serve the best interest of their fellow community members.

The blessing God promised for obedience would, in large part, flow directly from the obedience. Any community made up of persons who treat each other in this manner will be a delightful and productive place in which to live.

It is interesting that when Jesus was asked by the Pharisees, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus did not quote from the Ten Commandments.

“Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” ([Matthew 22:36-39](#))

The passages Jesus quotes from are [Deuteronomy 6:4](#) (Love the Lord) and [Leviticus 19:18](#) (Love your neighbor as yourself). Then Jesus adds “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” ([Matthew 22:40](#)).

It seems reasonable to conclude that the first and greatest commandment is a summary of the first five of the Ten Commandments (with parents standing in for God with children), and the second greatest command is a summary of the last five of the Ten Commandments. The tenth commandment could be viewed as a way of stating in the negative the affirmative statement of “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

There were other codes and laws supporting other Suzerain Vassal treaties in this time period. What makes the Mosaic law unique is that:

1. God has a covenant relationship directly with the people, rather than the “god” bestowing divine authority upon a human tyrant.
2. The effect of the Ten Commandments was to create a self-governing society built around mutual benefit and equality of all persons under the Law.

Biblical Text:

¹⁷ “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.”