

## **Can Anyone Tell You Not to Covet?**

It's all very well to say, "Don't covet", but how can anyone - even God - order it?

There's only a problem if we consider the Decalogue to be ten legislative commands, but the truth is that the Decalogue is not law but a set of principles (the Torah calls the Decalogue Aseret HaD'varim, "Ten Words" or "Ten Statements") meant to govern our relationships with God and each other.

Ibn Ezra says that the reference to coveting has to be understood logically.

A peasant can be jealous of the good fortune of a second peasant because they both have the same opportunity of working hard and being successful. A peasant will, however, not be jealous of someone who marries the king's daughter because he knows that royal marriages are generally not possible for the peasantry.

Coveting is a rule about recognising the differences between people.

If the peasant does not marry the

princess no-one will think badly of him, but if the same peasant is lazy and does not work towards prosperity people will be disappointed.

In religious life everyone has the same opportunity of reaching out to God. No human being can be God, but all can look towards Him and if they don't, they have wasted their opportunities.