

## **Do not covet your friend's house... and everything that belongs to your friend. (20:14)**

The question is obvious. Why delineate various items that belong (so to speak) to your friend (which you covet) and then conclude the *pasuk* with, *V'chol asher l'reiecha*, "And everything that belongs to your friend"? The aforementioned items also belong to your friend. Why not simply write: "Do not covet anything that belongs to your friend"? The simple answer to this question is that a person covets because he sees something that his neighbor has, and this drives him into a frenzy. Why not me? I also want that. Envy is the driving force behind *chemdah*, coveting, what belongs to someone else. We often forget that everything comes with a price. If my friend has something that I do not have – he is paying for it with something in his life – a hardship, adversity, or he may have to forgo something later in his life, because he is receiving his reward now. There is a balance. If my friend has something – I should take a step back and ask myself: Do I want to trade my life for his – despite all of the luxuries that he enjoys? Am I prepared to pay the price of, *v'chol asher l'reiecha*, "everything that belongs to your friend"?

*Horav Bentzion Abba Shaul, zl*, explains that one of the primary reasons that one does not rise up to the level of sharing his friend's joy is the jealousy that gnaws at him. Why did my neighbor make a killing in the market, when I lost half of my investment? Why did his son get into *yeshivah*, and my son was told to come back next year? Why did his daughter get into her first seminary choice, while my daughter was relegated to waiting until mid-August to get into her third seminary choice? Why is his daughter engaged to a "top guy," while my daughter has yet to have a date? The list goes on, and we would be guilty of self-prevarication if we did not concede that we all harbor such feelings of envy.

Unfortunately, envy is intrinsic to human nature. Therefore, we either live with it and learn how to transcend it, or we become its captive and drive ourselves into a miserable existence. Veritably, even one who is fully committed to the observance of the *mitzvah*, *V'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha*, "Love your fellow as yourself," still has hurdles that occasionally challenge him. A classic example is when two G-d-fearing men have a monetary dispute between them. As observant Jews, they go to the *bais din*, Jewish court, to adjudicate their dispute. Inevitably, one wins and one loses. Now, the one who has lost undoubtedly still feels that he should have emerged the victor. The fact that he lost causes him grief. After all, he was right. Why did he lose? Why did his antagonist win? The scenario for the scourge of envy to fester and grow into full-scale discord is fertile.

The *Chacham* explains that envy is unrealistic. Every individual is sent to this world with a mission to fulfill. Each person has his own unique personal mission which only he can achieve. He is granted the tools with which to navigate and execute his mission successfully. Thus, when we see our neighbor blessed with material bounty, physical talents, spiritual proclivities, etc., it is because these are the tools he needs in order to fulfill his mission/purpose in life. It is almost as if Reuven is jealous that his friend has a wide array of tools. It just so happens that Shimon is a carpenter and

requires tools to do his work. Likewise, the fellow whose mission it is to be a great *baal chesed/baal tzedakah* is blessed with the wherewithal for success. Is that a reason for his friend to be jealous of him? Each has his own mission.