

“Do not kill and do not commit adultery, and do not steal, and do not bear false witness against your fellow. And do not covet.” (5:17–18)

Noting the order of these prohibitions, we may assume that they are written in a logical, descending order. The prohibition against murder, clearly the most grievous sin, is first, followed by the other “lesser” sins. In this manner, the Torah tells us that all of these acts are prohibited – not only the more serious ones. We wonder why the Torah joins these transgressions with the prefix “vav” – “and”?

Horav David Feinstein, Shlita, explains that the Torah emphasizes to us that all mitzvos have equal significance. Had the Torah not used the “vav”, “and” prefix, we might think that some mitzvos are less stringent than others. The “ands” convey to us that all mitzvos require the same exact level of zealous commitment. An individual who covets can one day kill someone who stands in the way of his obtaining the object of his desire. Similarly, one who rejects murder because it is Hashem’s edict will also take meticulous care not to transgress any other prohibition. By connecting these prohibitions, we learn that they are all equal expressions of Hashem’s Will and, consequently, all maintain equal significance.