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Do Not Steal
5: 19

Do not steal DIG: This mitzvah has to do with property. What is yours' is yours' but what is not, is theft. A healthy society is built on common respect. What are some subtle ways that people can steal today? From a believers' standpoint, what is the most serious?

REFLECT: Have I taken things or ideas that were not mine? Do I consider cheating at school, in my business or on my taxes? If I think I could get away with it, is stealing or cheating an acceptable option for me? How is my giving to the LORD? What would He say?

Throughout the TaNaKh YHVH is seen as the ultimate owner of everything, but He entrusted His gifts to mankind, and the use of His property was to be respected.

You shall not steal (Deuteronomy 5:19). This **mitzvah** is distinctive in a way that is not immediately obvious from **the Ten Words** (**to see link click Bk – The Ten Words**). **They** do not prescribe legal penalties, but in the rest of **Isra'el's** legislation, all the offenses that carry a death sentence can be related, either directly or indirectly, to **mitzvot** in **the Ten Words**. However, **the** eighth **mitzvot** is exceptional. Normally, no theft of property carried a death sentence. Only theft of persons, like kidnapping, was a capital offense **(Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7)**.[179]

You shall not steal (Exodus 20:15).

He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need (Ephesians 4:28).

Of all the **mitzvot** in the Bible, this one seems to be the most clear-cut. On the surface it looks very simple. You would think it needs no explanation at all. To **steal** means the same thing today as it did when **God** wrote it on tablets of stone. It means the taking of something that belongs to someone else.

This **mitzvah** is probably the most universal of all the laws in the world. For example, some primitive cultures had no taboo against immorality as long as neither party was married. But if one of the parties were married, adultery was strictly forbidden, not because it was immoral but because it was considered a form of theft, or **stealing** another person's spouse. Often the offender settled the matter by simply paying the husband in cows, goats, money, or the sum the husband originally paid for the wife.

Just as **the** sixth **mitzvah**: **You shall not murder**, safeguards life, and **the mitzvah**: **You shall not commit adultery**, safeguards love and the family, this eighth **mitzvah** safeguards property. It forbids theft, the taking or keeping of something that belongs to someone else. Consequently, this **mitzvah** is desperately needed today.[180]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, We praise **You** for **Your** love. Let us not take that love for granted for **You** are holy and **You** hate sin. We desire to please **You** and that means to follow **Your** pattern of love. **Let love be without hypocrisy – detesting what is evil, holding fast to the good**. **(Romans 12:9).** We choose to follow **Your** commandment of no **stealing** at all, even when our friends or community says that it is "not really" **stealing** when we take something that is not ours. **You** are our **Shepherd** and we are **your people (Psalms 100:3)**. **Your** love is what dictates what is the best for us and so we submit to each of your **mitzvot**, knowing that they were given for our good. Praise **You** that though we cannot perfectly obey them on our own, **You** have sent **Your Spirit** into our hearts **(Romans 5:5)** to help and guide us to the perfect Jewish **Messiah (Hebrews 7:28)** of the world. **Therefore, the Torah became our guardian to lead us to Messiah, so that we might be made right based on trusting (Galatians 3:24). His** perfect **blood** paid our sin's penalty, **how much more will the blood***

of Messiah – who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God – cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:14). *We choose to follow* ***You*** *in not* ***stealing*** *because we love and trust* ***You*** *with all our hearts. In the holy name of* ***Your Son*** *and the power of* ***His*** *resurrection. Amen*

Today **theft** is at an all-time high. The cost of crime is now in the billions of dollars a year just in the United States alone. Many teenagers today think **stealing** from department stores is like a video game. But when they end up in jail with a felony count it is no laughing matter. Amazingly, most of the theft comes from the employees themselves! Therefore, in today's society honesty is a quality that is highly valued by employers because it is so rare. In fact, many godly employees will find security and advancement in their jobs, merely because they follow **the** eighth **mitzvah**.

In our schools and colleges plagiarism on papers and cheating on tests are almost the norm today. Students are infected with the "everyone is doing it" mentality. When caught, most have a "what's the big deal" attitude. Plagiarism is more and more common because of this fact. Often in my lifetime different people have said to me, "Do you think that posting **the Ten Words** in our classrooms would make any difference at all." My answer is, "Yes, I do." **ADONAI** has said: **The word that goes out of My mouth will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:11).**

The Bible is clear that **stealing** can also be taking advantage of someone in need. From the biblical standpoint, to overcharge, to undersell or to deceive is to **steal**. It's trying to get something for nothing. It's trying to gain something at the expense of another person. This is exactly why **Jesus** drove out **the moneychangers** from **the Temple** of **His** day. **Yeshua entered the Temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. He said to them: It is written, My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers (Matthew 21:13). The Temple** was supposed to be a place of worship, quiet meditation, contemplation, praise and devotion, a place where **God's** people could draw close to **Him** in worship, sacrifice, and offerings and could seek **His** will and blessing. But all of that was stolen from them by people who carried on their greedy schemes under the guise of serving and worshiping **God**.[181]

To cheat is to **steal** anything, including an honor, which is not rightly yours.

Stealing is getting the reward without paying the price, collecting the dividend without making the investment. It's receiving money without working, it's making good grades without studying, it's getting to the top of the ladder without climbing the rungs. Like the other **mitzvot**, **the** eighth **mitzvah** is written from the nature of **God** into us because we were created in **His** image. Our lives are an investment. Life involves putting something into it and receiving something in return. **Stealing**, however, is the shortcut philosophy of life that contradicts this basic principle of **God**.

The human desire to take shortcuts formed the basis of **Christ's** three great temptations in the desert **(Matthew 4:1-11)**. **Jesus** knew that there would be no crown without the cross, and no redemption without the suffering of a redeemer, and no resurrection without a crucifixion. But Satan tempted **Him** to get all of that without paying the price for them, to **steal** them, if you will. Satan knew people were eagerly looking for a king so he told **Yeshua** to turn **stones** into **bread**, to **throw Himself down** from **the highest point of the Temple** so the **angles** would catch **Him**, and finally to bow down to Satan himself. In other words, to take a shortcut to the kingship without making the sacrifice. But **Jesus** would have none of it. **He** knew there could be no shortcuts when **He** redeemed us; **He** was willing to pay the price and be nailed to a cross to die as our substitute.

The Bible also describes another way of **stealing**, which, from a believer's standpoint, may be the most serious of all. This is **stealing** by failing to give our **talents** or our **tithe** to **ADONAI**. This is perhaps the highest level of trying to get something for nothing. We **steal** by accepting something and giving nothing in return. This sin is not doing wrong acts but failing to use our **God**-given **talents** and gifts for **Yeshua's** service. These were the people in the parables of **Jesus** who were condemned and punished most severely. We can also **steal** from **God Himself**. **Malachi 3:8** asks: **Will a man rob God? Yet you rob Me.** It goes on to explain that we **rob God** when we fail to give our **tithes and offerings**. Like his grandfather Abraham who gave **tithes** to Melchizedek **(Genesis 14:40)** before him, Jacob acknowledged that everything he had belonged to **ADONAI (Genesis 28:22)**. Later, tithing would become an obligation under the Torah **(Leviticus 27:30; Numbers 18:21-24)**. Today, in the Dispensation of Grace, believers should **tithe** and it should be done cheerfully and gratefully, not grudgingly or with a selfish attitude (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Do – When You Give to the Needy, Do Not Do It to be Honored by Others**).

What seems to be a great help in understanding the original purpose of **the Ten**

Words is their function within the community. These are **mitzvot** given by a redeeming **God** to recently redeemed people for whom **He** had a national purpose. As **God's** people, **His** special possession, **the Israelites** had to know what **He** required of them. Being an **Israelite** was not a matter of private, personal faith. It had vertical and horizontal dimensions. After all, if **Isra'el** could not treat **ADONAI** with respect and treat each other as a special people, how could they be a light to the Gentiles? How could they ever be a kingdom of priests in a world that did not know the true **God**?[182]