

# WORD STUDY

## English Word

### Covet

This is in preparation for a class on the Ten Commandments. The Tenth Commandment is found twice in the Old Testament: Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy. Paul also mentions it in Romans 7: 7 and Romans 13:9.

## English Definition

- wish, long, or crave for (something, especially the property of another person); "She covets her sister's house"  
[wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn](http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn)
- To wish for with eagerness; to desire possession of, notably enviously; -- also used in a good sense; To long for inordinately or unlawfully; to hanker after (something forbidden); To yearn, have or indulge inordinate desire, notably for another's possession  
[en.wiktionary.org/wiki/covet](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/covet)
- Coveting - Greed in psychology is a desire to obtain some material good or social position. In economic terms, it is the genesis of economic activity.  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coveting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coveting)

### Synonyms:

aspire to, begrudge, choose, crave, desiderate, envy, fancy, hanker for, have eye on, have hots for, itch for, long for, lust after, spoil for, thirst for, want, wish for, yearn for, yen for

### Antonyms:

abjure, be generous, give, not want

## Comparison of Translations

	Exodus 20:17	Deuteronomy 5:21
NIV	Covet	Covet, set your desire on
NASB	Covet	Covet, desire
KJV	Covet	Desire, Covet
Amplified	Covet	Covet, desire
English Standard	Covet	Covet, desire
New Living	Covet	Covet
Message (Paraphrase)	Lusting, don't set your heart	Coveting, lusting
Contemporary English	Want	Want
New King James	Covet	Covet, Desire
21 <sup>st</sup> Century KJV	Covet	Desire, Covet
American Standard	Covet	Covet, Desire
Young's Literal	Desire	Desire, Covet
Darby	Desire	Desire, Covet
Holman Christian	Covet	Desire, Covet

<b>NirV</b> <b>Today's NIV</b>	Long for	Long for
	Covet	Covet, set your desire on

### Original Word and Short Definition

Since I am studying this as part of the Ten Commandment, I will be focusing on the Hebrew words for **covet** and not the Greek. There are two different Hebrews words that have been translated as **Covet**

- **‘avah** - desire, incline, covet, wait longingly, wish, sigh, want, be greedy, prefer
  - (Piel) to desire, crave (food and drink)
  - (Hithpael) to desire, long for, lust after (of bodily appetites)
- **Chamad**
  1. to desire, covet, take pleasure in, delight in
    - (Qal) to desire
    - (Niphal) to be desirable
    - (Piel) to delight greatly, desire greatly
  2. desirableness, preciousness

**Chamad** is used in Exodus 20:17 while both **chamad** and **‘avah** are used Deuteronomy 5:21.

### Occurrences in the Bible

**‘avah** (used a total of 26 times)

Desire (verb) (17 times)	Lust (verb) (4 times)	Longed (verb) (3 times)	Covet (verb) (2 times)
1 Samuel 2:16	Numbers 11:4	2 Samuel 23:15	Deuteronomy 5:21
2 Samuel 3:21	Numbers 11:34	1 Chronicles 11:17	Proverbs 21:26
1 Kings 11:37	Deuteronomy 12:20		
Job 23:13	Deuteronomy 14:26		
Psalms 45:11			
Psalms 132:13			
Psalms 132:14			
Proverbs 13:4			
Proverbs 21:10			
Proverbs 23:3			
Proverbs 23:6			
Proverbs 24:1			
Ecclesiastes 6:2			
Isaiah 26:9			
Jeremiah 17:16			
Amos 5:18			
Micah 7:1			

**Chamad** (used a total of 21 times in 20 verses)

Desire (11 times)	Covet (4 times)	Delight (2 times)	Pleasant (1 time)	Beauty (1 time)	Lust (1 time)	Delectable Things ( 1 time)
Genesis 3:6	Ex. 20:17 (2)	Proverbs 1:22	Genesis 2:9	Ps 39:11	Proverbs 6:25	Isaiah 44:9
Exodus 34:24	Joshua 7:21	Songs 2:3				
Deut. 5:21	Micah 2:2					
Deut 7:25						
Job 20:20						
Psalms 19:10						
Psalms 68:16						
Pr. 12:12						
Proverbs 21:20						
Isaiah 1:29						
Is. 53:2						

### Root Meaning and Origin

**‘avah**

There are two spheres of meaning: (1) “to devote oneself to,” (2) “to stay, dwell.” There is also an etymological connection to *havvah*, which means “to love.”

**Chamad** is verb from the root (Chet-Mem-Dalet) and means “to desire”

**‘avah** is considered to be completely synonymous with **chamadh**. This is supported by more than simply the parallelism in Genesis 3:6. Even more convincing are Proverbs 6:25 and Psalm 68:17, where **chamadh** appears in the same connection as **‘avah** does in Psalm 45:11 and 132:13f.

This “desire” does not appear to be just a mere wishing or wanting (*think of four year old in a toy store: “I want this. I want that.” But three minutes later has forgotten the object.*). It denotes an aspiration that is rooted deep within the human existence. It is more of a guttural craving, a soul-wrenching yearning. A related word is *ta’avah* that means “residence” or “to reside” leads one to see that **‘avah** is a want that takes up residence in one’s heart and becomes his all-consuming passion.

### How the Word was Used

#### A. In Other writings:

According to my references, **‘avah** and **chamad** are used in Western Semitic languages. They are found in Arabic, Aramaic, Syriac, and Mandaean. They are used in the context of fundamental necessities, such as eating and drinking, and toward the opposite sex.

## B. Throughout the Bible:

Since there are only 46 verses to cover, let's look at each one in more detail.

(SEE [OTVerses Covet.xlsx](#))

Neither **chamad** or '*avah*' implies anything inherently evil. Both Hebrew words can be employed to express a sin or to express a strong desire for something. Covetousness, therefore, depends upon motivation and the person or object that is coveted.

For example, when **chamad** is directed at the gold and silver of idols in Deuteronomy 7:25, it is evil. In Proverbs 6:25, where **chamad** is translated as "lust" for a woman other than one's wife, it also denotes evil. Yet, in Song of Solomon 2:3, the lust of the Shummaite woman for her lover is in no way evil.

On the other hand, we also find passages where **chamad** is clearly used in a righteous sense (Psalm 19:7-10)

God wants us to covet His law, His commandments, statutes, and judgments. The blessings from wisdom are also something to be coveted. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." This is a form of covetousness.

Covetousness appears to be used in context of the

- desire for food
- desire for sex
- desire for wealth
- desire for wisdom
- desire for God
- desire for property
- desire for power
- desire for companionship
- desire for dwelling place

## C. In the context of the Passage:

When Moses used *chamad* in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, the desire or lust is directed at what belongs to someone else and is clearly evil. These two passages specifically prohibit the lusting after an already-spoken for woman and property that is already owned by others.

Desire, in and of itself, is neither good nor bad, but if focused on that which we should not possess (other peoples possessions) then when we do that we sin. In my understanding of the commandment to not covet it means to me that one should not desire to the point of wanting to possess the very thing the other man has. I see no problem to desire something that does not belong to another or to want something like another. But to possess that thing which is not to be possessed is what is being referred here.

For example, if my neighbor has a boat that I like and I go purchase another like it I have not coveted whereas, if I desire the very boat go and tow it to my driveway, that is wrong, for it belongs to another.

### **Application**

Where is the line drawn, then, between healthy desires and unhealthy ones?

### **Resources Used**

1. Google (define : covet)
2. thesaurus.reference.com
3. Biblegateway.com
4. bible.christianity.com
  - a. The Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon
5. Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Volume 12 (pages 134-137)  
(<http://books.google.com/books?id=znB4gOMlb3AC&lpg=PA135&ots=ToZs4RIV1q&dq='avah%20bible%20usage&pg=>

[PA135#v=onepage&q=&f=false](#))

6. <http://www.missiontoisrael.org/10thcom.php>
7. <http://www.rbc.org/radio-tv/discover-the-word/2009/06/11/program.aspx> (Come back and listen to this)