TENTH COMMANDMENT: You Shall Not Covet

While the highest ideal of a Yehudi is to develop a character that is immune to the feeling of envy, the reality is that it is almost impossible to prevent a thought of envy from "seeping" into our mind. But what we can definitely do is avoiding that thought from being installed in us, "controlling" our mind and causing us great emotional damage.
Controlling or channeling envy is perhaps the oldest lesson HaShem taught mankind. When Cain saw that HaShem had received the offering of his brother Hebel (Abel) and had rejected his, Cain was filled with envy and became depressed. What had happened? While Hebel had offered to HaShem, as a gesture of gratitude, the best of his harvest, Cain offered Him what he no longer wanted, what he would have anyways discarded. HaShem explained to Cain what he had to do to have his offerings received: "Cain, why are you depressed? If you simply do things better [and you are a little less selfish] your offering will be received" □□□ □□□□ □□ □□□ " … And if you do not, I want you to know that this sin [envy] will make you fall, because if you do not control it, it will end up controlling you … ". As we all know, Cain did not listen to the words of HaShem and instead of concentrating on doing things better to get his offering received, he chose the easiest way: to kill the competition. Thus, envy destroyed the victim and the perpetrator. Envy killed Hebel and condemned Cain to live a nomadic life and being permanently persecuted.
In Melakhim 1, chapter 21 we have another example in which envy led to murder. Nabot , an honorable citizen of Israel (circa 900 BCE) was the neighbor of King Ahab, of the Kingdom of Israel. Nabot had a vineyard. And Ahab the king wanted his vineyard. And Ahab said to Naboth, "Sell me your vineyard, which is near my palace, that I may make for myself a beautiful garden." Naboth replied to Ahab that he could not sell his vineyard, for it was the inheritance of his ancestors. Ahab returned to his palace, sad and depressed (like Cain). The king, who had everything, was now a prisoner of his envy. He became obsessed with having the field of

Nabot. He could not think of anything else. He felt that his happiness and personal fulfillment depended on possessing that vineyard. Envy seized his mind. His Phoenician wife, Izabel, a woman of reprehensible behavior, asked the same question that HaShem asked Cain: “Why are you depressed?” And when Ahab told her the cause of her sadness, Izabel advised her husband exactly the opposite of what HaShem advised Cain. Instead of minimizing the importance of that vineyard and encouraging her husband not allowing himself to be controlled by envy, he said to him, “Are you not the king of Israel? Now you will see how I will give you the vineyard of Nabot.” Izabel planned a plot against Nabot, falsely accusing him of having blasphemed God and the king, a capital crime. She paid two indecent men to act as false witnesses and incriminate Nabot. Finally, the court found Nabot guilty. He was sentenced to death and executed. And Izabel said to Ahab, “Now you may confiscate the vineyard, take possession of it and do with it as you please.”
It is interesting to note in this case that violating the last Commandment, “YOU SHALL NOT COVET,” led to the transgression of the Ninth Commandment, “DO NOT GIVE FALSE TESTIMONY,” when Nabot was falsely accused. And also the Eighth, “YOU SHALL NOT STEAL,” when Ahab “confiscated” the property of Nabot. And the Sixth Commandment, “DO NOT KILL”, when they executed poor Nabot. Envy leads to all that, and more.
The last commandments prohibit criminal acts: “6. You shall not kill, 7. You shall not commit adultery, 8. You shall not steal, and 9. You shall not bear false witness.” The Tenth Commandment, “You shall not envy” forbids what eventually might lead to transgressing any or all of the previous four Commandments. Envy is the root of many destructive actions. It pushes us to destroy others and ends up destroying our own lives.
(To be continued…)