

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT ASSEMBLY

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TORAH LAW EDUCATIONAL COURSE

The 613 Mitzvot of Yahweh

Bereishit • Shemot • Vayikra • Bamidbar • Devarim | The Tanakh Writings

LESSON 1

Shemot (Exodus) 20:15

לֹא תִגְנוֹב

"You shall not steal."

The Most Violated Law of Mankind — A Complete Covenant Exposition

Four Spheres of Instruction: Individual • Community • Nation • World

Authority: The Tanakh — The Word of Yahweh Alone

Standard: Devarim 19:15 — Two or Three Witnesses

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COURSE FRAMEWORK & METHODOLOGY

Purpose of This Course This educational course expounds the 613 Mitzvot (commandments) of Yahweh as revealed exclusively through the Written Torah — Bereishit (Genesis), Shemot (Exodus), Vayikra (Leviticus), Bamidbar (Numbers), and Devarim (Deuteronomy) — and as confirmed by the Tanakh Writings and Prophets. Each lesson is built on Hebrew lexical analysis, two-to-three-witness corroboration, and a four-sphere application framework that reaches the individual, the community, the nation, and the world.

Authority Hierarchy: The Written Tanakh alone governs this course. Talmud, Church councils, and hadith are cited only as historical commentary — never as binding authority. Where Talmudic discussion illuminates lexical meaning or legal categories, it is labeled as such.

Research Standard: Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15 — Two or three independent witnesses confirm every claim. Primary lexical tools: BDB (Brown-Driver-Briggs), HALOT (Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament), Gesenius, TWOT. Translations consulted: JPS 1985; Robert Alter; Everett Fox (Schocken).

The Three-Religion Standard: Every lesson concludes with an audit of where Judaism, Christianity, and Islam uphold Torah and where each departs from it — always using the Torah itself as the measure.

Four-Sphere Framework: Every commandment is expounded at four levels of application: (1) The Individual — personal ethics and conscience; (2) The Community — family, neighborhood, congregation; (3) The Nation — government, law, economy, policy; (4) The World — international law, covenant justice among nations.

Why Shemot 20:15 First? This commandment is selected as Lesson 1 not by arbitrary numbering, but because lexical and contextual analysis reveals it as the most universally violated law in human history. Its Hebrew root touches property theft, kidnapping, fraud, deception, and governmental plunder — encompassing nearly every injustice committed by individuals, communities, nations, and empires.

SECTION I — THE HEBREW TEXT

A. The Commandment: Shemot (Exodus) 20:15

The commandment appears in the Masoretic Text as:

לֹא תִגְנוֹב

Lō' tig-nōb

"You shall not steal."

Grammatical structure: Two words constitute the entire commandment. **לֹא (H3808)** — the absolute negative particle, prohibitive in nature — and **תִּגְנוֹב (H1589)** — the Qal imperfect, second person masculine singular of the root **גָּנַב (G-N-B, ganav)**. The imperfect tense in Hebrew carries the force of ongoing prohibition: "You shall not at any time steal." This is not a situational command but an unconditional covenant statute.

B. Primary Lexical Analysis — Root גָּנַב (Ganav) — H1589

BDB (Brown-Driver-Briggs) Definition: to steal, carry away, take by stealth; to take secretly without the owner's awareness. The BDB further distinguishes this from **גָּזַל (H1497)** (gazal) — open seizure by force — marking the **גָּנַב** as the covert, hidden act of taking.

HALOT Classification: The verb appears in Qal, Niphal, Pual, and Hithpael stems across the Tanakh. The Qal (basic) stem means "to steal" or "to carry off secretly." The Pual passive form **גָּנַב (Bereishit 40:15)** appears when Yosep (Joseph) declares he was "stolen away" — i.e., kidnapped. This confirms that **גָּנַב** covers both the theft of property and the theft of persons.

Gesenius / TWOT: The semantic range of **גָּנַב** includes: (1) outright property theft; (2) kidnapping / human trafficking; (3) deception — specifically **גֵּנֵיבַת דַּעַת (geneivat da'at)**, "stealing of the mind" — creating a false impression in another person's understanding. Kaddari's dictionary identifies the most primitive meaning as "to put aside, remove" covertly — the root idea is unauthorized secret removal.

Total Tanakh occurrences of root **גָּנַב: 55 occurrences** across Torah, Prophets, and Writings — confirming its central place in Yahweh's covenant legal framework.

Key Tanakh Occurrences Establishing the Full Range of the Root

Reference	Teaching / Witness
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Bereishit (Gen.) 31:19	Rachel (Raḥel) stole the teraphim — movable property theft by concealment. גָּנַב in Qal.
Bereishit (Gen.) 31:20	"Jacob stole the heart of Laban" (וַיִּגְנֹב יַעֲקֹב אֶת לֵב לָבָן) — deception; 'stealing the mind' of another. Confirms the cognitive/deception semantic range.
Bereishit (Gen.) 40:15	Yosep: "I was stolen away" (גָּנַב גְּנֻבְתִּי) — Pual passive, kidnapping. His abduction and enslavement is explicitly called ganav.
Shemot (Ex.) 20:15	The Decalogue commandment — unconditional prohibition. Qal imperfect singular.
Shemot (Ex.) 21:16	"He who kidnaps a man and sells him... shall be put to death." Capital application of ganav to human trafficking.
Vayikra (Lev.) 19:11	"לא תגבוי" — Qal imperfect plural. Community-level prohibition against property theft, paired with the prohibition of lying and deception.
Devarim (Deut.) 24:7	"If a man is found kidnapping any of his brothers..." — Repeats the capital penalty. ganav applies to persons enslaved.
Iyov (Job) 21:18	"Like chaff carried off [genavto] by a storm" — removal, displacement; extended meaning of the root.

SECTION II — WHAT THE LAW IS TEACHING

A. The Dual Scope: Property AND Persons

A critical observation from the Hebrew itself: Shemot 20:15 contains **no object**. The commandment is objectless — identical in structure to the surrounding prohibitions of murder (**לא תרצח**) and adultery (**לא תנאף**). These commandments in the Decalogue apply capital-offense severity to their categories. Scholarly analysis (including German Old Testament scholar A. Alt, Sanhedrin 86a, and Rashi) confirms that the Decalogue's **לא תגנב** is a prohibition against kidnapping — the theft of persons — precisely because it sits among death-penalty offenses and because property theft is addressed separately in Shemot 21-22 and Vayikra 19:11.

The full Torah teaching therefore encompasses **both dimensions** — confirmed by the Two or Three Witnesses standard (Devarim 19:15):

- **Witness 1:** Shemot 21:16 — "He who kidnaps a man... shall be put to death." Capital offense. (**גנב** applied to persons.)
- **Witness 2:** Devarim 24:7 — "If a man is found kidnapping any of his brothers of Israel..." Capital offense repeated. (Second witness confirming the death penalty.)
- **Witness 3:** Vayikra 19:11 — "You shall not steal" — plural form, property application, paired with lying and deception — distinguishing the broader prohibition of property and cognitive theft from the capital offense of kidnapping.

The Torah therefore teaches three interconnected prohibitions under the root **גנב**:

(1) Genivah (גנבה) — Property Theft: Taking another's possessions covertly, without their awareness. The ganav (covert thief) is distinguished from the gazlan (open robber). The Torah imposes double restitution on the ganav (Shemot 21:37) precisely because the ganav shows contempt for Yahweh while fearing man — he believes he can steal unseen.

(2) Kidnapping / Human Trafficking: The theft of a person's freedom and dignity. This is the primary referent of Shemot 20:15 in its Decalogue context. Capital offense in both Shemot 21:16 and Devarim 24:7.

(3) Geneivat Da'at (גנבת דעת) — Cognitive Theft / Deception: Stealing another's accurate understanding — creating false impressions through deception, fraud, false advertising, misleading commerce, or false witness. Bereishit 31:20 (Jacob's deception of Laban) establishes this semantic use in the Written Torah itself. Vayikra 19:11 clusters the prohibition alongside lying and deception, confirming their structural connection.

B. The Theological Root of All Theft

The Talmud's insight (Bava Kamma 79b) — here cited as historical commentary, not authority — illuminates something the Torah itself implies: the ganav who steals covertly **fears man more than he fears Yahweh**. He acts as if Yahweh does not see. This is the theological root of all theft: the belief that one can take from another without accountability to the Creator. Yahweh's commandment is not merely a social rule — it is a covenant declaration of His omniscience and sovereignty over all property, all persons, and all knowledge.

The Tanakh's own framework confirms this. Consider *Tehillim (Psalm) 24:1*: **"The earth is Yahweh's, and all its fullness."** All that exists belongs to Yahweh. Every human being holds material goods as a steward, not an absolute owner. To steal is to violate the chain of covenant stewardship that Yahweh established.

Micah (Mikhah) 2:2 provides the full progression: **"They covet fields and steal them, and houses and take them away."** Rambam (Maimonides), citing this verse (here as historical commentary), identifies the chain: desire → coveting → stealing → violence. The law against stealing is therefore the covenant firewall against a chain reaction that ends in murder.

SECTION III — FOUR-SPHERE APPLICATION FRAMEWORK

Yahweh's commandment **לֹא תִגְנוֹב** is not merely a law for private individual conduct. Its scope extends through every layer of human civilization. The following four spheres represent the concentric application of the commandment from the innermost self to the outermost reaches of international relations.

SPHERE 1 — THE INDIVIDUAL

"You shall not steal from your neighbor."

At the individual level, **לֹא תִגְנוֹב** governs the private conscience. Every person made in the image of Yahweh (*tzelem Elohim*, Bereishit 1:27) possesses the dignity of ownership. To steal is to declare that the other person's covenant rights do not matter — to reduce them from a bearer of Yahweh's image to a resource for one's own gain.

Forms of individual-level theft the Torah addresses:

- **Property Theft (Vayikra 19:11):** Taking money, goods, or possessions covertly. The Torah demands **full restitution plus double** (Shemot 22:3). Restitution — not merely punishment — is the Torah's restorative justice model.
- **Deceptive Weights and Measures (Vayikra 19:35-36; Devarim 25:13-15):** Using false scales in commerce is categorized as theft. Yahweh commands: **"You shall have just balances, just weights."**
- **Withholding Wages (Vayikra 19:13):** Failing to pay a hired worker is robbery. The commandment is direct: **"The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning."**
- **Geneivat Da'at — Cognitive Deception (Bereishit 31:20; Vayikra 19:11):** Creating false impressions — even without lying outright — constitutes theft of the mind. False advertising, misleading contracts, and deliberate omission of material defects are all violations.
- **Lost Property (Devarim 22:1-3):** Failing to return a neighbor's lost animal or property is treated as a form of theft. **"You shall restore it to him."**

The Individual Standard:

Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:11-13 — JPS 1985

"You shall not steal; you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another. You shall not swear falsely by My name... You shall not defraud your fellow.

You shall not commit robbery. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you until morning."

Witness: Covenant law clusters lo tignov (do not steal), lo teshakeru (do not deal falsely), lo tizolu (do not rob), and withheld wages — all as one continuous covenant teaching on property rights.

Individual-Level Torah Commandments Related to Shemot 20:15

Reference	Teaching / Witness
Shemot (Ex.) 20:15	Do not steal — the foundational prohibition.
Shemot (Ex.) 22:3	A thief must pay double restitution.
Vayikra (Lev.) 19:11	Do not steal, do not deal falsely, do not lie.
Vayikra (Lev.) 19:13	Do not rob; do not withhold wages.
Vayikra (Lev.) 19:35-36	Use just weights and measures in all commerce.
Devarim (Deut.) 22:1-3	Return lost property — do not ignore it.
Devarim (Deut.) 25:13-15	Do not keep two sets of weights — one large, one small.

SPHERE 2 — THE COMMUNITY

"You shall not steal from your community's shared covenant."

The Decalogue was given to a covenant assembly — a **kehillah** (congregation, community). The community-level application of **לא תגנוב** governs how members of a covenant community treat one another, how families honor one another's boundaries, and how community institutions maintain trust and justice.

Forms of community-level theft the Torah addresses:

- **Boundary Markers (Devarim 19:14):** *"You shall not move your neighbor's boundary marker which the former generations have set."* Moving a property boundary to expand one's land at a neighbor's expense is theft of real property — land theft disguised as gradual encroachment.
- **False Witness in Community Courts (Shemot 20:16; Devarim 19:15-21):** Bearing false testimony steals justice from the accused, steals reputation, and can steal life itself. The Torah's response is measure-for-measure — the false witness receives what would have been imposed on the innocent party.

- **Interest / Usury Against the Poor (Shemot 22:24; Devarim 23:20-21):** Charging exploitative interest to a covenant brother in need is a form of theft — extracting more than was given by leveraging another's desperation.
- **Kidnapping Within the Community (Shemot 21:16; Devarim 24:7):** The most severe application at the community level. Stealing a person for sale into slavery — even of a fellow Israelite — is a capital offense. **"He shall be put to death."**

The Community Standard:

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:14 — Robert Alter Translation

"You shall not move back your neighbor's boundary marker, which the early ones set, in the estate you are to receive in the land that Yahweh your Elohim is giving you to take hold of it."

Witness: The boundary marker law is the covenant protection of community land rights — moving it by even a cubit is legal theft. This applies to real property, business agreements, and inherited covenant rights.

SPHERE 3 — THE NATION

"A nation that steals from its people violates Yahweh's covenant."

The Torah does not confine **לֹא תִגְנוֹב** to private individuals. Yahweh's covenant was given to **a nation** — a body politic with leadership, courts, and economic systems. The national application of this commandment is among the most urgently needed in modern civilization, because governments and their agencies commit the most systemic theft in human history while calling it by other names.

Forms of national-level theft the Torah addresses:

- **Unjust Taxation / Plunder by Rulers:** Shemuel Aleph (1 Samuel) 8:11-17 records Yahweh's warning about kings who take (**תִּקַּח**) — fields, vineyards, servants, a tenth of grain and flocks. The prophet warns: the king will be a taker. Yahweh names this as the **way of the king** — a systemic national theft the people were warned about before demanding a monarchy.
- **Corrupt Courts and Unjust Weights in National Commerce:** Amos (Amos) 8:5-6: ***"Saying, 'When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may set out wheat, making the ephah small and the shekel great and dealing deceitfully with false balances, that we may buy the poor for silver?'"*** National commerce rigged against the poor is a covenant crime.
- **Land Theft by the State (Akhav / Naboth's Vineyard, Melakhim Aleph 21):** King Ahab and Jezebel conspired to seize Naboth's vineyard through false

witness and murder. This narrative is the definitive Torah case study in state-sponsored property theft — and Yahweh's response was the destruction of Ahab's dynasty.

- **National Scales of Economic Justice (Devarim 25:13-16):** *"You shall not have in your bag two kinds of weights, a large and a small."* Applied nationally: governments that manipulate currency, inflate monetary supply, or create two-tiered economic systems — one for the powerful, one for the common people — violate this covenant statute.
- **Chattel Slavery as National Theft (Shemot 21:16; Devarim 24:7):** The slave trade — the systematic kidnapping, transport, and sale of human beings — is the most massive violation of **לֹא תִגְנוֹב** in recorded history. Nations that built their economies on this foundation stood in direct violation of Yahweh's capital-offense law.

The National Standard:

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 1:23 — JPS 1985

"Your rulers are rogues and cronies of thieves; every one of them loves gifts and chases after bribes. They do not judge the cause of the orphan, and the widow's cause never reaches them."

Witness: Yahweh through Yeshayahu names national leadership theft directly — rulers allied with thieves, accepting bribes, and thereby stealing justice from the vulnerable. This is covenant indictment of national governance.

Amos (Amos) 5:11-12 — Robert Alter Translation

"Therefore, since you trample the poor, and take from him a burden of grain — houses of hewn stone you have built, yet you shall not dwell in them... For I know your many crimes, and your mighty sins — afflicting the righteous, taking bribes, and turning away the poor at the gate."

Witness: Amos delivers Yahweh's covenant indictment against a nation whose economic and judicial systems constitute national-scale theft.

SPHERE 4 — THE WORLD

"Yahweh's justice is covenant law for all nations."

The commandment **לֹא תִגְנוֹב** was given to Yisra'el as *"a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"* (Shemot 19:6) — but Yahweh is the Elohim of all the earth (Bereishit 1:1;

Tehillim 24:1). The prohibitions embedded in this commandment form the universal moral architecture that governs all nations, whether they acknowledge Yahweh or not.

Forms of world-level theft the Tanakh addresses:

- **Imperial Conquest as Theft (Amos 1-2):** Amos delivers Yahweh's covenant judgment against **seven surrounding nations** — Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and Judah — for specific crimes of plunder, enslavement, and territorial theft. Yahweh does not confine His jurisdiction to Yisra'el. He holds all nations accountable to the covenant standard.
- **The Slave Trade as Global Theft (Amos 1:6,9):** Yahweh names Gaza and Tyre specifically for delivering entire populations into slavery. ***"Because they exiled an entire people as slaves."*** The international slave trade is identified as a crime before Yahweh even when committed by nations outside the Sinai covenant.
- **Colonial and Imperial Plunder:** The Babylonian exile (Yirmeyahu 51-52), the Egyptian oppression (Shemot 1-2), and the Assyrian campaigns (Yeshayahu 10:13-14) are all framed in the Tanakh as acts of theft at civilizational scale — the plundering of wealth, labor, persons, and land from entire peoples. Yahweh judges each empire for this.
- **International Commerce Fraud:** Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 28:16-18 indicts the prince of Tyre for ***"unrighteous trade"*** — international commercial corruption. The same covenant standard that governs a single merchant's weights governs the trading systems of nations.
- **The Covenant Peace Vision as Remedy (Yeshayahu 19:23-25; Zekhariah 9:10):** Yahweh's ultimate answer to world-level theft is the covenant peace highway — Egypt, Assyria, and Yisra'el as equals before Yahweh. The world moves from exploitation to covenant partnership. ***"He shall speak peace to the nations."***

The World Standard:

Amos (Amos) 1:6 — JPS 1985

"Thus says Yahweh: For three transgressions of Gaza and for four I will not revoke it — because they exiled entire communities, delivering them to Edom."

Witness: Yahweh holds a non-covenant nation (Gaza/Philistia) accountable for mass kidnapping — human trafficking. The law of Shemot 20:15 transcends the Sinai covenant and is binding upon all nations.

Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 28:16-18 — JPS 1985

"By your far-flung commerce you were filled with lawlessness and you sinned. So I have struck you down... By the greatness of your guilt, through the dishonesty of your trade, you desecrated your sanctuaries."

Witness: International trade corruption — systemic commercial fraud at national scale — is covenant sin before Yahweh. This is the world-level application of lo tignov.

SECTION IV — COMPLETE APPLICATION TABLE

The following table summarizes the four-sphere teaching of Shemot 20:15 across levels, with Torah witness references for each category.

Level	Sphere	Application	Torah Witness
INDIVIDUAL	Personal Conscience	Do not take what belongs to another — property, dignity, or honest understanding.	Vayikra 19:11-13; Shemot 22:3
INDIVIDUAL	Commerce & Weights	Use honest measures; do not deceive in trade or contracts.	Vayikra 19:35-36; Devarim 25:13
INDIVIDUAL	Lost Property	Return what you find; failure to return is passive theft.	Devarim 22:1-3
INDIVIDUAL	Cognitive Deception	Do not create false impressions — geneivat da'at is theft of understanding.	Bereishit 31:20; Vayikra 19:11
COMMUNITY	Boundary Markers	Do not move property lines; covenants and inheritance must be honored.	Devarim 19:14
COMMUNITY	False Witness	Bearing false testimony steals justice, reputation, and possibly life.	Shemot 20:16; Devarim 19:15-21
COMMUNITY	Wages & Labor	Do not withhold pay; exploiting workers is robbery.	Vayikra 19:13; Devarim 24:14-15
COMMUNITY	Kidnapping	Stealing a person is a capital offense — the primary referent of Ex. 20:15.	Shemot 21:16; Devarim 24:7
NATION	State Plunder of Citizens	Rulers who take from the people by force or unjust law violate the covenant.	Shemuel Aleph 8:11-17

NATION	Corrupt Courts	Judicial systems that steal justice from the poor are national covenant crimes.	Yeshayahu 1:23; Amos 5:11-12
NATION	Land Theft by Government	Seizure of private property under color of authority violates Torah.	Melakhim Aleph 21 (Naboth)
NATION	Monetary / Economic Fraud	Systemic currency manipulation and two-tiered economic systems are national theft.	Devarim 25:13-16; Amos 8:5-6
WORLD	International Slave Trade	The trafficking of whole peoples is a capital crime before Yahweh for any nation.	Amos 1:6,9; Shemot 21:16
WORLD	Imperial Conquest/Plunder	Nations that seize others' land and wealth are held to covenant account.	Amos 1-2; Yeshayahu 10:13-14
WORLD	International Trade Fraud	Commercial corruption at national scale desecrates the covenant standard.	Yechezkel 28:16-18
WORLD	Covenant Remedy	The peace covenant among nations is Yahweh's answer to world-level theft.	Yeshayahu 19:23-25; Zekhariah 9:10

SECTION V — THREE-RELIGION AUDIT

Where Each Tradition Upholds Torah and Where Each Departs

The Three-Religion Standard of Miqdash Bethel requires that every study reach Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — showing where each upholds Yahweh's Torah and where each departs from it. The Torah itself is the standard; no tradition is judged by another tradition.

Judaism

Upholds Torah: Classical Jewish law (halachah) preserves the full range of the ganav prohibition — property theft, kidnapping, geneivat da'at — in remarkable detail. The categories of genivah vs. gezeilah, the double restitution requirement, and the capital penalty for kidnapping are all maintained from the Written Torah. The protection of workers' wages (Devarim 24:14-15) and the prohibition of false weights (Vayikra 19:35-36) are active legal doctrines.

Departs from Torah: Where binding authority shifts from the Written Torah to the Oral Torah (Talmud and rabbinic codes), interpretive additions sometimes restrict or modify the application of the Written text in ways that are not grounded in two or three Tanakh witnesses. Certain rabbinic extensions of geneivat da'at have no explicit Written Torah anchor. Commentary must be weighed against the Written standard.

Christianity

Upholds Torah: Christian traditions universally acknowledge the commandment "Thou shalt not steal" as morally binding and include it in catechisms and ethical teaching. Property rights, honesty in commerce, and the prohibition of fraud are upheld. Reformed and Lutheran traditions historically applied this commandment to economic justice, exploitation of workers, and state plunder.

Departs from Torah: The doctrine that the Torah was "nailed to the cross" (derived from a misreading of Colossians 2:14) has led many Christian traditions to teach that the 613 commandments are abolished. This directly contradicts Shemot 19:5-6, Yeshayahu 40:8, and Yirmeyahu 31:33. The historical Yeshua himself, operating in first-century Judea under full Torah observance (see Miqdash Bethel Doc. 10), never abrogated the commandments. Marcion's antinomianism (dated to 144 CE) introduced the false Torah-versus-grace dichotomy into Christianity. Additionally, the history of Christian empires engaged in colonial land theft, the slave trade, and the suppression of indigenous peoples' property rights represents a catastrophic institutional violation of Shemot 20:15 at the national and world levels.

Islam

Upholds Torah: Islamic law (Sharia) prohibits theft (**sariqa**) in direct alignment with the Torah's teaching, and many Islamic scholars recognize the Decalogue's

commandments as part of the universal moral law given to all of humanity through the prophets. The Quran (5:38) addresses theft with severity. Islamic commercial law (**fiqh al-mu'amalat**) addresses fraud, false weights, and the protection of property rights.

Departs from Torah: Where Islamic tradition substitutes the Quran as the final authority over the Written Torah, it departs from the standard of Yahweh's covenant. From Miqdash Bethel's Tanakh-only framework, the Torah itself — Devarim 4:2, Devarim 13:1 — forbids adding to or subtracting from its commandments. Historical Islamic expansion through conquest, and the historically documented Arab participation in the slave trade, represent national and world-level violations of Shemot 20:15.

SECTION VI — WHY THIS IS THE MOST VIOLATED LAW

No other commandment in the Torah has been violated across more domains, more cultures, more centuries, and more strata of human civilization than **לא תגנב**. The reason is structural: the commandment protects the foundational covenant reality that **everything belongs to Yahweh** and human beings are stewards, not absolute owners. Every civilization built on power has violated this covenant by treating its own will as superior to Yahweh's assignment of property and personhood.

The chain of violation follows the Torah's own prophetic map (Mikhah 2:2; Devarim 8:10-17):

1. Coveting — the desire for what belongs to another.
2. Scheming — devising the legal, commercial, or military mechanism to take it.
3. Stealing — the act itself, at individual, community, national, or world scale.
4. Violence — when the owner resists; murder follows theft.

This is why Rambam (historical commentary) identified coveting as the gateway to murder: ***"Desire leads to coveting, coveting leads to robbery; and if the owner prevents [the robbery], it leads to murder."*** The entire chain begins with the violation of **לא תגנב**.

The commandment is most violated because:

- Individuals commit it daily in commerce, deception, and property relations.
- Communities allow it through unjust courts and failed accountability systems.
- Nations institutionalize it through taxation without representation, currency manipulation, eminent domain abuse, and regulatory capture by the wealthy.
- The world has built its entire modern economic order partly on the foundation of the Atlantic slave trade, colonial land seizure, and the extraction of resources from peoples without their covenant consent — the largest coordinated violation of Shemot 20:15 in recorded history.

Yahweh declared the remedy from the beginning: ***"The earth is Yahweh's and all its fullness"*** (Tehillim 24:1). When nations and individuals honor this — that all possessions are held in trust from the Creator — the commandment becomes not a restraint but a liberation. The covenant vision of Yeshayahu 19:23-25 and Zekhariah 9:10 is the world that results when **לא תגנב** is honored at every level.

STUDY REVIEW & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following questions are provided for individual study, group instruction, and covenant assembly discussion. They follow the Four-Sphere framework.

Individual Level

5. What is the difference between **גְּנֵבָה** (genivah) and **גְּזֵלָה** (gezeilah) according to the Torah? What different penalties apply?
6. What does **גְּנֵבַת דָּעַת** mean, and where does the Written Torah establish this concept? Give the specific verse reference.
7. Vayikra 19:35-36 commands just weights and measures. Name three modern commercial practices that would violate this commandment.

Community Level

8. Devarim 19:14 forbids moving boundary markers. How does this law apply to disputes over inherited property, business agreements, or community land today?
9. The Torah requires double restitution from a thief (Shemot 22:3). How does this restorative justice model differ from modern criminal justice systems that focus only on punishment?
10. Bearing false witness is connected to theft in the Torah. What does Devarim 19:15-21 say should happen to a false witness, and why is this relevant to judicial testimony?

National Level

11. Shemuel Aleph (1 Samuel) 8:11-17 describes what a king will take from the people. List each form of taking that Yahweh named. Which of these exist in modern government?
12. The story of Naboth's vineyard (Melakhim Aleph 21) is the Torah's definitive case of state-sponsored theft. What were the mechanisms used, and what was Yahweh's response?
13. Amos 8:5-6 describes merchants who manipulate weights and exploit the poor. Identify a modern economic equivalent and explain how the Torah's standard applies.

World Level

14. Amos chapters 1-2 pronounce Yahweh's covenant judgment on seven nations. On what basis does Yahweh judge nations that were never given the Sinai covenant?

15. The Atlantic slave trade involved the kidnapping, transport, and sale of millions of human beings. Using Shemot 21:16 and Devarim 24:7 as your legal foundation, assess this historical institution according to Yahweh's law.
16. Yeshayahu 19:23-25 describes Yahweh's covenant peace highway among Egypt, Assyria, and Yisra'el. How is this vision the opposite of the world-level theft pattern described in Amos 1-2?

SCRIPTURE INDEX — SHEMOT 20:15 LESSON

Reference	Teaching / Witness
Bereishit (Gen.) 1:27	Man created in tzelem Elohim — the foundation of human dignity that makes theft a covenant crime.
Bereishit (Gen.) 1:29	Yahweh gives provision — He is the source; taking from another is theft of His provision.
Bereishit (Gen.) 31:19-20	Rachel steals teraphim (property); Jacob deceives Laban (geneivat da'at). Both uses of the root ganav.
Bereishit (Gen.) 40:15	Yosep: 'I was stolen away' — Pual passive of ganav. Kidnapping established as a use of the root.
Shemot (Ex.) 19:5-6	Yisra'el as a kingdom of priests and holy nation — the covenant context for all 613 commandments.
Shemot (Ex.) 20:15	לֹא תִגְנוֹב — The foundational commandment. Primary text of this lesson.
Shemot (Ex.) 21:16	Capital penalty for kidnapping. Direct application of lo tignov.
Shemot (Ex.) 22:3	Double restitution for theft — the Torah's restorative justice mechanism.
Vayikra (Lev.) 19:11-13	Community-level cluster: do not steal, lie, deal falsely, rob, or withhold wages.
Vayikra (Lev.) 19:35-36	Just weights and measures — covenant commerce standard.
Bamidbar (Num.) 35:33	Do not pollute the land — land has covenant rights; abuse of it is a form of theft from Yahweh.
Devarim (Deut.) 19:14	Do not move boundary markers — property inheritance protection.
Devarim (Deut.) 24:7	Capital penalty for kidnapping, repeated. Second witness.
Devarim (Deut.) 24:14-15	Do not defraud or oppress a hired worker. Pay wages on time.
Devarim (Deut.) 25:13-16	Two sets of weights forbidden — national commercial covenant standard.
Shemuel Aleph 8:11-17	Yahweh warns: the king will take. National-level plunder prophesied.
Melakhim Aleph 21	Naboth's vineyard — state-sponsored property theft by false witness. Paradigm case.
Tehillim (Ps.) 24:1	'The earth is Yahweh's and all its fullness' — foundational covenant property theology.

Mikhah (Micah) 2:2	'They covet fields and steal them.' The full progression: desire → theft → violence.
Yeshayahu (Is.) 1:23	Yahweh indicts national rulers allied with thieves; justice stolen from the poor.
Yeshayahu (Is.) 10:13-14	Assyrian king boasts of plunder — empire as institutionalized theft.
Yeshayahu (Is.) 19:23-25	Covenant peace highway — the world restored from theft to covenant partnership.
Yirmeyahu (Jer.) 7:9-11	'You steal, murder, swear falsely... and then come to stand before Me?' Covenant indictment.
Yechezkel (Ez.) 28:16-18	International trade corruption indicted — world-level commercial theft judged.
Amos 1:6,9	Yahweh judges Gaza and Tyre for the international slave trade. Non-covenant nations held to account.
Amos 5:11-12	National economic exploitation of the poor — covenant crime at national scale.
Amos 8:5-6	Merchants who manipulate weights and exploit the poor — national commercial theft.
Zekhariah (Zech.) 9:10	'He shall speak peace to the nations.' The covenant vision that ends world-level theft.

"Forever, O Yahweh, Your word is settled in heaven."

Tehillim (Psalm) 119:89

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