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The Tenth Commandment (Deut 5:21): Two Different Verbs, the Same Desire

Abstract: This paper approaches the question of the two different verbs – *ḥmd* and *'wh* – in the Tenth Commandment (Deut 5:21) using results of the semantic analysis of all the biblical passages where the verb form of the lexical roots *ḥmd* and *'wh* appears. Analysis revealed that, under the influence of wisdom understanding, the deuteronomic editor understood both roots as synonymous without semantic difference.

Key words: desire, greed, Tenth Commandment, wisdom tradition, root *ḥmd*, root *'wh*

Povzetek: **Deseta božja zapoved (5 Mz 5,21): dva različna glagola, isto poželenje**

Prispevek odgovarja na vprašanje dveh različnih glagolov – *ḥmd* in *'wh* – v deseti božji zapovedi (5 Mz 5,21) z uporabo rezultatov semantične analize vseh svetopisemskih odlomkov z glagolsko obliko korenov *ḥmd* in *'wh*. Analiza je pokazala, da je urednik Devteronomija (dekaloga v Devteronimiju) pod vplivi svetopisemske modrostne literature (posebej Knjige pregovorov) razumel oba korena kot sinonima brez opazne pomenske razlike.

Ključne besede: poželenje, pohlep, deseta božja zapoved, modrostna tradicija (literatura), koren *ḥmd*, koren *'wh*.

In the Tenth Commandment (Deut 5:21), desire is identified by two different verbs: the verb form of the lexical root חמד and the verb form of the lexical root אוה. While the first verb indicates a desire that stems from greed, the second refers to a desire that arises from basic human needs (hunger, thirst, etc.).¹ If this is so, why, then, is אוה here directed toward material objects – »house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour«?

Owing to the fact that the Tenth Commandment is part of one of the most basic texts of the Jewish and Christian faiths, there exists a wide range of different interpretations from ancient to modern times. However, a detailed review of exi-

¹ See the author's articles: in *Vetus Testamentum* entitled The dynamism of desire: the root *ḥmd* in relation to the root *'wh* (accepted for publication in January 2016); in *Biblische Notizen* entitled The meaning and interpretation of desire in the Tenth Commandment (Exod 20,17) – The semantic study of the *ḥmd* word field (accepted for publication in February 2016); in *Bogoslovna smotra* entitled God's Desire in the Psalms: A semantic study of the *ḥmd* and *'wh* word fields in Ps 68:17 and Ps 132:13-14 (accepted for publication in March 2016).

sting studies reveals that there is no semantic analysis based on all the biblical passages, or one that also assesses the (existential) dynamics of desire. In this paper, to fill the gap, we shall approach the question of these two different verbs using a synthesis of the results of the semantic analysis of all the biblical passages where the verb forms of the lexical root **חמד** and **אווה** appear.

1. The semantic study of the **חמד** and **אווה** word fields

First, let us look at the Masoretic text (MT) of the Tenth Commandment in Deuteronomy:

»Neither shall you covet (ולא תחמד) your neighbour's wife. Neither shall you desire (ולא תתאוה) your neighbour's house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.« (NRSV)

The commandment opens with the verb form of the lexical root **חמד** (Qal imperfect 2nd person masculine singular) and follows with the verb form of the lexical root **אווה** (Hithpael imperfect 2nd person masculine singular), each with a different object(s) of desire.

1.1 Semantic study of the verb form of the lexical root **חמד**

The verb form of the lexical root **חמד** occurs in the Hebrew Bible (BHS) 21 times. It appears 16 times in Qal (Ps 39:12; 68:17; Prov 1:22; 6:25; 12:12; Mic 2:2; Isa 1:29; 44:9; 53:2; Exod 20:17 (twice); 34:24; Deut 5:21; 7:25; Josh 7:21; Job 20:20), 4 times in Nifal (Gen 2:9; 3:6; Prov 21:20; Ps 19:11) and once in Piel (Song 2:3). The Qal and Piel stems describe the dynamism of desire with(in) an active subject, while the Nifal stem (in its participial conjugation) and various noun forms characterize the desired object.

The kind of desire depends in part on the context. For example, sitting in the shadow of a tree and testing its fruits, which is a metaphor for the physical union of fiancée and fiancé, reveals that the verb form of the lexical root **חמד** here must be – by way of exception – understood as an intensive passionate desire (Song 2:3), while, in Ps 19:11, it underlines the immense value of God's laws and does not denote a dynamism of desire (for God). In other cases, however, the verb form of the lexical root **חמד** denotes the psychological process of greed – with a negative moral connotation.²

² Only the presence of other details in the context, such as the connotations of the subject and / or object, determine a positive or negative moral connotation. A positive moral connotation occurs when the desire is oriented toward a positive object, for example, toward the shadow of a beloved fiancé in Song 2:3. Further, when desire refers generally to material goods, and the subject of this desire is a wise man (Prov 21:20) or a prayer (Ps 39:12), it can have a neutral moral evaluation. A negative connotation is evident when: a) the subject of desire is a wicked man (Prov 12:12), a mocker (Prov 1:22) the godless (Job 20:5,20), or those who plan iniquity and evil (Mic 2:1-2); b) the object of desire is a false idol (Isa 1:29; 44:9); c) when the desire is followed by appropriation (Josh 7:21; Mic 2:2; Deut 7:25) or when the verb root is used in the context of prohibition (Exod 20:17; Deut 5:21; Prov 6:25).

1.2 Premeditated dynamism of greed³

In most cases, the verb form of the lexical root **חמד** indicates the dynamics of a greed which is triggered by the external visual impression and / or value of an object (or person).⁴ Although the causes (initial moments) and intensity of the desire can vary in different contexts, the dynamism most often denotes the premeditated⁵ psychological process of greed.⁶ The verb form of the lexical root **חמד** (as a general rule) denotes an excessive desire oriented on valuables with the intention of appropriating something that is not associated with the basic necessities of life. This intention refers to what one plans to do or achieve, i.e. it signifies a course of action that one decides to follow under the influence of the external visual impression and / or value of the object(s). Though all the passages where the verb form of the lexical root **חמד** occurs do not reflect the dynamics of greed, a fairly consistent pattern is still discernible:⁷ it suggests that the verb form of the lexical root **חמד** is used to express the desire for appropriation, although it may exceptionally occur in the sphere of physical needs (passionate desire in Song 2:3 and Prov 6:25; desire for food in Gen 2:9). An act of possession represents the final stage, the culmination of the dynamics, as an inner urge leads to its execution, but this is designated by *another verb*

2. Semantic study of the verb form of the lexical root **אוה**

The verb form of the lexical root **אוה** occurs in the Hebrew Bible (BHS) 27 times. It appears 11 times in Piel (Ps 132:13-14; Mic 7:1; Deut 12:20; 14:26; 1 Sam 2:16; 2 Sam 3:21; 1 Kgs 11:37; Prov 21:10; Isa 26:9; Job 23:13) and 16 times in Hitpael (Prov 13:4; 21:26; 23:3; 23:6; 24:1; Jer 17:16; Num 11:4; 11:34; 34:10; Eccl 6:2;

³ For precise semantic analysis of individual passages, see the author's doctoral dissertation entitled *The meaning and interpretation of desire in the Tenth Commandment (Exod 20:17): The semantic study of the hmd and 'wh word fields* (Ljubljana, 2015). This dissertation is written in Slovenian.

⁴ In most passages, the verb form of the lexical root **חמד** is either focused on material objects with the motive of appropriation (Exod 20:17 (twice); 34:24; Josh 7:21; Deut 5:21; 7:25; Job 20:20; Mic 2:2; Prov 1:22 (indirectly); 12:12) or itself indicates (the value of) material possessions (Ps 39:12; Prov 21:20; Isa 44,9).

⁵ The fact that the verb form of the lexical root **חמד** indicates the premeditated and planned process (of greed) is furthermore supported by another fact, namely, that all the synonyms (e.g. **בחר**, **אהב**, **חשב**, **חשב**), which, together with the verb form of the lexical root **חמד**, form a common lexical paradigm, are also characterized by a conscious process of thinking, planning, decision-making and by a pragmatic character.

⁶ This can be illustrated by Josh 7:21 where the verb form of the lexical root **חמד** expresses the typical dynamism of greed: the visual impression of the desired objects triggers Achan's inner urge which is followed by the act of appropriation (denoted by a different verb). We must recognize a strong connection between the viewing (sensory perception) and the intensity of the desire, since the presence of a number of valuable elements strengthens the desire. It seems that the description of the valuable goods is designed as a lesson in the powerful attraction of valuable things and the dangers of coveting, that is, the danger of a desire that can overwhelm the mind.

⁷ The verb form of the lexical root **חמד** occurs in the Hebrew Bible (BHS) 21 times, of which more than half of the cases are focused on material objects with the motive of appropriation.

2 Sam 23:15; Ps 45:12; 106:14; 1 Chr 11:17; Amos 5:18; Deut 5:21), without indicating a difference in meaning between both conjugations.

2.1 The diversity of the needs of human beings

The semantic range of the lexical root אִוָּה corresponds to the diversity of the needs and desires of human beings. The root (whether as verb or as noun) almost always occurs combined with the term נִפְשׁ, which indicates that the root אִוָּה and נִפְשׁ have a particular semantic relationship. The term נִפְשׁ defines human existence with all its needs, i.e. the totality of human life. Therefore the desire expressed by the lexical root אִוָּה can be defined as the vital need for preservation (in a multiplicity of forms) which is characteristic of a living being (Strola 1999, 362–363). The verb form of the lexical root אִוָּה occurs in the context of verbs that describe the consumption of food and drink: אָכַל (Deut 12:20; 14:26; Mic 7:1); לָחַם (Prov 23:6); שָׁקָה («give» to drink 2 Sam 23:15; 1 Chr 11:17). The verb form of the lexical root אִוָּה (combined with the term נִפְשׁ), therefore, expresses vital dynamism (need) and intuitive reaction, i.e. the intention for self-preservation, but not an act of satisfaction itself.

The root expresses a living dynamism that pushes a human being to the fulfilment of vital needs. It is intuitive and independent of rational examination. It is of significant importance that not in a single case throughout the whole Bible, with the exception of Deut 5:21, is the dynamism of desire triggered by external appearance and / or the value of the object itself, but always by the desire for (pleasure of) consumption.

To summarize: the original purpose (intended use) of each root in the Hebrew Bible is clear: the verb form of the lexical root חָמַד is used to express the desire for appropriation while the verb form of the lexical root אִוָּה applies in cases in which the desire is an expression of basic physical needs or other instinctive tendencies.

3. Consistency with ancient Jewish interpretations

How do the ancient rabbinic interpretations support this thesis? In the Mekhilta de Rabbi Simeon bar Yohami, for example, there is a short discussion of the meaning of the verb form of the lexical roots חָמַד and אִוָּה:

»The Commandment here reads ›You shall not covet‹ (חָמַד, a/n), but the text in Deuteronomy (5:18) goes on to say ›nor shall you crave‹ (אִוָּה, a/n). The purpose is to make craving a separate offense, and coveting a separate offense. /.../ Craving is in the heart, as a Scripture says ›if your soul craves‹ (Deut 12:20) while coveting is an actual deed, as in the verse ›You shall not covet the silver and gold on them and take it for yourselves‹ (Deut 7:25).« (Rofé 1990, 45)

It is evident that Rabbi Simeon understands each desire (root) as a separate offense. According to his interpretation, coveting (חמד) involves action, while craving (אווה) does not.

Focusing first on the root חמד, we see that Rabbi Simeon understood the verb form of the lexical root חמד as an »actual deed«. As an argument, he cites passage Deut 7:25, despite the fact that the act of appropriation is here indicated by another verb (לקחת). How should we understand this ambiguous assertion? Maimonides, for example, understood the verb form of the lexical root חמד as a desire with the motive of appropriation which leads to a scheming, a process of greed, just as highlighted by the results of our semantic analysis:

»This Commandment admonishes us not to contrive schemes for acquiring what belongs to someone else. That is what the Exalted One means by saying ›You shall not covet your neighbor's house.‹ /.../ ›Thus it is made clear that this injunction warns against developing stratagems for getting hold of what belongs to someone else /.../« (Rofé 1990, 46)

Maimonides understood the verb form of the lexical root חמד not merely as the appearance of desire, not even as an act, but as »schemes for acquiring what belongs to someone else«, i.e. a premeditated process of greed. Desire, indicated by the verb form of the lexical root חמד, therefore, represents a kind of inner necessity of acts of realisation. It seems therefore that, according to Rabbi Simeon's interpretation, the dynamism of desire (denoted by verb form of the lexical root חמד) involves action (the act of appropriation), but does not mean action. The main reason rabbis interpret and understand desire (חמד) to be in fact an »actual deed« is because they interpret it within the holistic perception of Hebrew culture which perceived an act as the »fruit of schemes« (cf. Jer 4,14; 6,19; Prov 24,8-9; Matt 15,19 etc.).

On the other hand, focusing now on the root אווה, we can see that Rabbi Simeon cites (juxtaposes) Deut 5:12 as evidence that the verb form of the lexical root אווה indicates a »craving /.../ in the heart«. It should be noted at once that in Deut 5:12 the word »heart«, which would stress the interior craving for possession without satisfaction (אווה), does not appear. What *is* present is the word נפש, which underscores the totality of the individual, in many passages with an emphasised primary physical need for food, i.e. appetite (e.g. Prov 10:3; 25:25; 28:25; Isa 55:2) (Seebass 1983b, 504). This is also the case for Deut 5:12, where the root אווה occurs in the context of eating (the object of desire is the meat of slaughtered animals) and in combination with the term נפש undoubtedly denotes appetite. It can be understood either in a strict sense of an empty stomach or in the broader sense of the vital drive to self-preservation (the desire for food). Additionally, in all other instances, the lexical root אווה denotes appetite in a narrow context (as a noun in Deut 12:15; 12:20; 12:21; as a verb in 12:20). It seems, therefore, that the rabbi's argumentation (*gezerah šawah*) is not convincing.

Rabbi Simon's argumentation is not an isolated case, as this interpretation »became the standard halakhic ruling« (Rofé 1990, 14). Eduard Nielson (1968, 42), for example, sees the verb form of the lexical root אווה in passage Deut 5:21 as a

»watering down« of the original meaning of the root **חמד** in the Tenth Commandment (Exod 20:17). Johann Jakob Stamm (1967, 104), another example, considers the verb form of the lexical root **אווה** in passage Deut 5:21b to be a »mental coveting«, i.e. »coveting only in the sense of an impulse of the will«. For Alexander Rofé (1990, 54), the replacement represents an extension of the original Tenth Commandment (which prohibits acts) to (unrealised) thoughts, i.e. to »even longing thoughts for the property of one's fellowman«. All these interpretations seek to interpret the verb form of the lexical root **אווה** in relation to the root **חמד** as its opposite. In the background, we must probably see an attempt to explain the deuteronomic choice of two different verbs (**חמד**, **אווה**) in the Tenth Commandment, i.e. the replacement of the verb form of the lexical root **חמד** with the verb form of the lexical root **אווה** (Deut 5:21). (Skralovnik 2013, 59–76)

Ancient Jewish (and some contemporary) interpretations are only partly consistent with our semantic analysis since the only similarity occurs when we consider the meaning of the verb form of the lexical root **חמד**. It denotes a conscious dynamism of greed, i.e. a desire to possess, even though the rabbis go further and interpret it within a holistic and experiential perception of Hebrew culture. The understanding of the verb form of the lexical root **אווה** tends to develop in a different direction. While the semantic analysis shows that it denotes a vital need for preservation in a multiplicity of forms, rabbis (and many others) interpret it in relation to the root **חמד** as its opposite. The verb form of this lexical root supposedly denotes the same desire, with the difference that the dynamism does not involve action. We have shown that this is not the case (this is also confirmed by the results of semantic study). As mentioned, in the background, we must see an attempt(s) to explain the occurrence of both verbs in the deuteronomic version of the Tenth Commandment (Deut 5:21) where **אווה** is, by way of exception, focused on material objects with the motive of appropriation.

4. The meaning and interpretation of desire in Deut 5:21

The results of the semantic analysis of all the biblical passages where the verb forms of the lexical root **חמד** and **אווה** appear showed that the verb form of the lexical root **אווה** refers to a desire that arises from basic human needs (hunger, thirst, etc.), whereas the verb form of the lexical root **חמד** denotes a desire that stems from greed. How can this be applied within the Tenth Commandment?

The object of the verb form of the lexical root **חמד** is wife. This is not surprising since the same is true for the Exodus version of the Tenth Commandment (20:17) where the verb form of the lexical root **חמד** is directed toward the wife with the motive for appropriation (which does not simply mean that we must understand a wife as an object).

However, what is surprising is that the verb form of the lexical root **אווה** is here directed toward material objects – »house, or field, or male or female slave, or

ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour» – with the motive for appropriation. The verb form of the lexical root אָוֶה is used to express basic physical needs or other instinctive tendencies. Semantic analysis has revealed that the verb form of the lexical root אָוֶה indeed could be directed toward material objects – meat, fat (1 Sam 2:16; Num 11:4.34; Deut 12:20), water (2 Sam 23:15; 1 Chr 11:17), cattle, sheep, goats, wine etc. (Deut 14:26), etc –, but always with the motive for consumption! Additionally, the verb form of the lexical root אָוֶה is never directed toward »house or land« or toward any of the listed objects. With the exception of Prov 24:1, the dynamism of desire is never triggered by external appearance and / or the value of the object *per se*, but always by the desire for (the pleasure of) consumption.

How, then, should we understand the fact that the verb form of the lexical root אָוֶה is directed toward material objects, apparently with the motive for appropriation? All this leads to presumption that the deuteronomic author (or editor) was not paying attention to the semantic differences between the two roots (חָמַד and אָוֶה), thus understanding both as synonyms.

4.1 The MT of Deut 5:21 compared with Samaritan Torah, Dead Sea Scrolls and some other ancient records

The unusual use of the verb form of the lexical root אָוֶה in the MT of Deut 5:21 leads to the necessary step of comparing the Masoretic formulation of the text, as we know it today, with the formulations in the (older) Samaritan Torah and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The comparison between the texts shows the following:

MT of Deut 5:21:

ולא תחמד אשת רעך ס ולא תתאוה בית רעך שדהו ועבדו ואמתו שורו וחמרו וכל אשר לרעך
Samaritan Torah text of Deut 5:21:⁸

לא תחמד בית רעך ולא תחמד אשת רעך שדהו ועבדו ואמתו שורו וחמרו וכל אשר
Dead Sea Scroll text (4Q^(Dtn)) of Deut 5:21:⁹

לוא תחמוד אשת רעיד לוא תחמוד בית רעיד שדהו עבדו אמתו שורו חמורו וכול אשר

Comparison shows that neither of the older mentioned texts of Deut 5:21, the Samaritan Torah¹⁰ and the Dead Sea Scroll, have the verb form of the lexical root אָוֶה. Sidnie White Crawford (1990, 193–206) additionally compared the MT of Deut 5:21 with some other ancient manuscripts. Here are her findings:

⁸ See: <http://www.patrologia-lib.ru/biblia/index.htm>.

⁹ See also: <http://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/featured-scrolls>.

¹⁰ The Samaritan Torah text of Deut 5:21 is an exact copy of the Samaritan Torah text of Exod 20:17 and has the same word order as the Masoretic text of Exod 20:17, therefore this comparison is not much of an argument.

בית רעך	אשת רעך לוא תחמוד	לוא תחמוד	4Q
בית רעך	אשת רעך ולא תתאוה	ולא תחמוד	M, Tg.
אשת רעך	בית רעך ולא תחמוד	לא תחמוד	S, S ^{Ex}
בית רעך	אשת רעך ולא תחמוד	לא תחמוד	Syr.
אשת רעך	בית רעך לא תחמוד	לא תחמוד	M ^{Ex}
את בית רעך	את אשת רעך לוא תחמוד	לוא תחמוד	PapNash.

We can see that with the exception of the MT of Deut 5:21 (=M) and its targum, the Targum Onqelos (=Tg O), all the other versions have חמד (twice). These are: Samaritan Torah text in both versions of the Tenth Commandment (=S, S^{Ex}), the Syriac Peshitta (=Syr.), the MT of Exod 20:17 (=M^{Ex}), The Nash Papyrus (=PapNash.)¹¹ and the Dead Sea Scroll text of Deut 5:21 (=4Q^(Dtn)).

This comparison shows that we must see the verb form of the lexical root אוה in the MT of Deut 5:21 as an exception, i.e. as later revision. S. W. Crawford argues in her conclusion: »The MT of Deuteronomy (and its targums) has תתאוה, while all the other witnesses have תחמד.« It seems, therefore, that we must see the חמד as original and the replacement of it (with אוה) as a later understanding, i.e. a later Deuteronomic revision.¹²

4.2 Deuteronomic revision in the light of the wisdom tradition

Deuteronomy reflects influence from ancient Wisdom traditions, such as those in the book of Proverbs (O’Dowd 2009; Sneed, ed. 2015; Weinfeld 2014). G. Mayer in TWAT (1:147–148) argues that the change (replacement of verbs) in Deut 5:21 reflects this influence of the wisdom tradition. As evidence, he cites similar formulations, both with the root אוה, in Deut 5:21 and in Prov 23:3.6, as follows:¹³

Biblical passage	Masoretic text
Deut 5:21	ולא תתאוה בית רעך
Prov 23:3.6	אל־תתאו למטעמותיו

Although the root appears in all Biblical genres, the apparent accumulation of the root אוה in Psalms and Proverbs has also been observed by other scholars (Strola 1999, 363).¹⁴ Mayer’s evidence is not sufficient, but it seems that his as-

¹¹ »The Nash Papyrus is a second-century BCE fragment containing the text of the Ten Commandments followed by the Šema’. Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls it was the oldest known manuscript containing a text from the Hebrew Bible. The manuscript was originally identified as a lectionary used in liturgical contexts, due to the juxtaposition of the Decalogue (probably reflecting a mixed tradition, a composite of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5) with the Šema’ prayer (Deuteronomy 6:4-5), and it has been suggested that it is, in fact, from a phylactery (tefillin, used in daily prayer).« (Cambridge Digital Library: <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-OR-00233/1>)

¹² It is noteworthy that the second verb (תתאוה) belongs to the Deuteronomic phraseology.

¹³ For many other »striking parallels« between Deuteronomy and Proverbs see also article of Ethan Schwartz entitled *Torah: Deuteronomy’s Version of Wisdom for Israel* (<http://thetorah.com/torah-deuteronomy-version-of-wisdom-for-israel/>).

¹⁴ E. Gerstenberger claim the same in THAT (=HALOT) 1:74.

sumption is correct for the following reasons. Semantic analysis showed that, exclusively in the wisdom texts both roots denote a human greedy moral nature with no discernible semantic differences (compare Prov 21:10.26 and Prov 12:12). It is important to note that the verb form of the lexical root אָוֶה is used as a synonym of verb form of the lexical root חָמַד only in the book of Proverbs (when the subject is a human). All this suggests that the editor of the Decalogue in Deuteronomy – under the influence of the wisdom understanding of both the roots as synonyms – understood both roots as synonymous without any semantic difference. Kessler (2015, 60) in a slightly different context (and with a different approach) comes to the same conclusion: »The choice of two different verbs ... does not include a semantic difference.«¹⁵

4.3 Deuteronomy and status of women

Owing to the differentiated place of a woman as a separate object of desire, some scholars believe that Deut 5:21 (in comparison with Exod 20:17) reflects the better (legal) status of a woman, i.e. that Deuteronomy (in relation to Exodus) reflects a different theological and legal perspective. A replacement of the house with the wife – in comparison with Exodus version – supposedly reflects the improved social status of women (see Deut 7:3; 15:12-17; 17:2-5; 22:22).¹⁶

But W. L. Moran (1967, 551–552) believes that the formulation in Deut 5:21 does not necessarily reflect the improved (social) status of women, but rather more precise legal distinction(s) between the man's property and his wife. He suggests that formulation in Deut 5:21 was organized according to more precise Ugaritic legal distinctions. In fact, he discovered that the MT of Deut 5:21b is a copy of an older Ugaritic legal text:

»But one text merits special consideration, for it is particularly striking. It is RŠ 16.148+ (PRU III 115–116) /.../ The correspondence (between RŠ 16.148+ and Deut 5:21b; a/n) is one of virtual identity, with the differences minimal: plural versus singular, the lexical divergences expected in two languages, and the biblical reference to the neighbor ... we should hardly hesitate to see in them (in list(s) of property in Ugarit; a/n) the ultimate source of the list in Dt 5,21.«

It seems, therefore, that Deut 5:21 corresponds to (depends on) a well-established type of list of possessions. Whatever the precise social status of woman may have been in the ancient society of Ugarit, it is important to note that the Ugaritic list(s) never mention a woman (wife) classified simply as property in the same way as other objects. This is as it seems also the solution in Deuteronomy. In Exod 20:17, a wife is perceived as the possession (in some sense) and therefore listed among the other property listed. Deuteronomy does not negate this un-

¹⁵ »The choice of two different verbs, *hmd* for the coveting of the wife and *hit'awwah* for the desire for the house and the household, is due to the intention to form two commandments out of one. It does not include a semantic difference.« (Kessler 2015, 60)

¹⁶ Improved status but not equality. A woman was never treated as fully equal to men, not even in Deuteronomy (21:15) – men could have several wives (Deut 21:15). It is also true, that a woman was never treated as an object, not even in Exodus (Wright 1990, 220).

derstanding while the wife is still the object of desire expressed by the root חמד. It seems, therefore, that the formulation in Deut 5:21 does not reflect the improved status of women, but rather more precise legal distinction(s) between the man's property and his wife – to precise ownership distinction(s) between the man's property and his wife. The wife is still coveted as a possession, but as a separate object and with a different verb.

5. Conclusion

The comparison of various ancient texts showed that with the exception of the MT of Deut 5:21 and its targums, all other (preserved) versions of the Tenth Commandment have חמד (twice). Therefore, it seems that we must see חמד as the original which was later replaced (with אזה) as a later understanding, i.e. a later Deuteronomic revision.

Semantic analysis revealed that the lexical root אזה is never oriented toward material object(s) with the motive of appropriation – with the exception of Prov 24:1 where it indicates the dynamics of desire that are characteristic of חמד. Additionally, it revealed that, exclusively in the wisdom texts, and specifically in the Book of Proverbs, both roots are understood as synonyms with no discernible semantic. Recognising the fact that Deuteronomy reflects the influence of the wisdom tradition, we can reasonably suggest that the deuteronomic editor, under the influence of the wisdom understanding of both verbs as synonyms, took both roots as synonymous without semantic difference. This is confirmed by the very fact that the deuteronomic editor used אזה, which functions as a synonym of חמד only in the wisdom texts, and combined it with a typical list of (material) possessions. All this shows that redactor of Deuteronomy understood both verbs as synonyms, i.e. as greedy desire with the motive of appropriation.

On the basis of these (arguments) – the influence of the wisdom understanding of both the roots as synonyms and a replacement of the house with the wife – we believe that the choice of two different roots, חמד for the coveting of the wife and אזה for the other possessions, is (among other reasons) meant to reflect different position of women – according to more precise legal distinctions. That is to precise ownership distinction(s) between the man's property and his wife. However, a woman was still coveted in the sense of a possession, but not as an object listed alongside other objects.

According to semantic analysis and rabbinic understanding we must see the verb form of the lexical root חמד not merely as the appearance of desire, nor as an act, but as »schemes for acquiring what belongs to someone else« (as Maimonides put it), i.e. a premeditated process of greed with external consequences in a multiplicity of forms. Since both verbs in Deut 5:21 act as synonyms, we should understand the verb form of the lexical root אזה in the same way.

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