And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and it was desirous for the eyes, and the tree was lovely to behold. And she took the fruit of it and she ate it. And she gave it to the man who was with her, and he ate it.

Deuteronomy 5:18

Do not covet the wife of your neighbor. Do not desire the house of your neighbor, his field, his servant, his maidservant, his ox, his donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.

Proverbs 30:9

Lest I be full, and deny you, and say, Who is the Lord?

Psalms 42:3

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?

YOUR BIBLE NAVIGATOR

1. What is the purpose of desire?
2. What are the pitfalls?
3. Why does desire make one forget about the spirit?

Values of our Fathers 4:21

Rabbi Elazar HaKapar said: Jealousy, desire, and honor take a person out of this world.

YOUR VALUES OF OUR FATHERS NAVIGATOR

1. What does “take a person out of the world” mean?
Breaking material desire. One should answer in his heart that desire causes his soul to sin and to draw the sin to vain pursuits. He should make a fence to protect the way of return. He should separate himself from physical pleasures and not follow after his desires even for things that are permitted to him. He should comport himself by abstaining and only eat to refresh and sustain himself, as it is written: “The righteous eat only for refreshment...” (Proverbs 13:25) He should not approach his wife except to fulfill the commandment, “Be fruitful and multiply...”, or the commandment to please his wife.

For whenever a person follows his desires, he is being drawn into the realm of the material, and he is distancing himself from the enlightened soul, and then his urges overcome him, as it is written: “Yeshurun became fat and kicked...” (Deuteronomy 32:15)

And it is written: “Lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses, and lived there; And when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; Then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery,ˮ (Ibid 8:12-14)

And it is written: “Lest I be full, and deny you, and say, Who is the Lord?” (Proverbs 30:9)

And it is written: A man has a small organ, when it is full it is hungry, and when it is hungry—it is full. (Babylonian Talmud, Succah 52b)

YOUR RABBENU YONAH NAVIGATOR
1. Does Rabbenu Yonah see anything positive about desire?
2. Would you like to go to a party with him?
Maybe a person would say, “Since jealousy, desire and honor and the like are bad ways and they take people out of the world, I will separate myself from them completely and to the extreme until I will not eat meat nor drink wine, and not get married, and not live in a nice home, and not wear nice clothing, but only sackcloth and harsh wool I will wear like those idolaters. This too is a bad way to be, and it is forbidden to walk on this path. The one who walks this way is called a sinner, as it says of the Nazirite, “…And he will atone for that sin of the soul.” (Numbers 6:11) The sages said, “Just as the Nazirite who only denied himself wine requires atonement, the one who denies himself everything, how much more so.” Therefore, the sages commanded that one should not deny himself anything that the Torah itself did not prohibit, and that he should not deny himself that which is permitted to him with oaths and vows. The sages said the following: “The Torah has not forbidden enough things without you looking for further prohibitions?” Similarly, those who fast all the time are not considered to be following the good way and the Sages forbade a person from afflicting himself by fasting. Regarding all these issues and the like, Solomon said “Do not be excessively righteous nor make yourself too wise; why should you destroy yourself?” (Ecclesiastes 7:16)

YOUR MAIMONIDES NAVIGATOR
1. How does Maimonides differ from Rabben Yonah?
2. According to Maimonides, is desire positive, negative, or neutral?