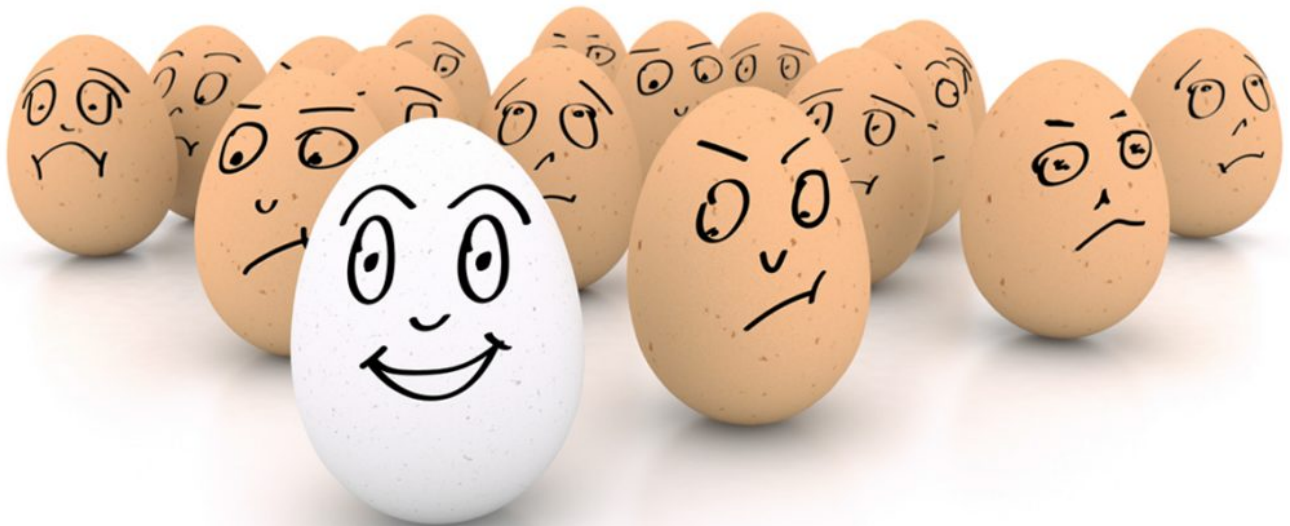


JEALOUSY

written by Chaim Kramer
November 3, 2022



The Evil Inclination succeeds in endangering or destroying our physical and emotional well-being is through the trait of jealousy!

Rebbe Nachman teaches: The Evil Inclination hates man [and seeks to harm him] physically and spiritually (*Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Rosen*). We can understand that the Evil Inclination seeks man's spiritual harm, but why his physical harm also? Just look at how much effort it puts into undermining man's physical and material well-being. The Zohar points out: "Come see the power of the Evil Inclination. An animal is born with a natural instinct for survival. It senses predators and avoids danger right from birth. Not so the human child. He runs straight towards danger. He seeks out any perilous situation and jumps right in! This is because he was born with

the *yetzer hara* (Zohar I: 179a).

Another way the Evil Inclination succeeds in endangering or destroying our physical and emotional well-being is through the trait of jealousy. One of the most ingrained of human attributes, jealousy emerges at an early age. Even as infants, we desire what someone else has. And as we all know, it doesn't stop there. Jealousy is arguably the most destructive of traits, because it leaves us without satisfaction, comfort, or peace, ever.

Our Sages taught: "Whoever has jealousy in his heart, his bones will rot" (*Shabbat* 152b). We generally think of the body's decay as a natural consequence of death. What we don't realize is that jealousy eats away at a person's body well before the soul leaves it and the corpse is placed in the ground. How can he rest, if Joe has a Mercedes-Benz and all he has is a BMW? Or Harry and his family took three vacations last year! Or his best friend just landed a top job... a great *shidduch*... a prestigious award. Jealousies such as these have the power to destroy a person. They eat away at his peace of mind, his heart, his health. They wear away his emotions and what's worse, leave an imprint on his soul. What peace can he have in his life when his entire being is consumed by burning desires – for things not rightfully his?

Rebbe Nachman taught that jealousy is rooted in the Evil Eye. Often misunderstood as some abstract mystical power, the Evil Eye referred to by the Rebbe is also the very commonplace quality of looking at our friends and neighbors with a negative or critical eye. The Talmud describes it as "Someone who is always looking into another's house" (see *Bava Batra* 2b). Rather than thinking positively about our neighbors and friends and wishing them the best, we tend to covet their possessions and their good fortune. This Evil Eye leads to slander and many other terrible destructive forces that, once let loose, shatter one's peaceful life.

What peace can he have in his life when his entire being is consumed by burning desires – for things not rightfully his?

This is also true in spiritual matters. Rebbe Nachman once taught: If people only held on to *this* [trait]... that too would be very great. Even if you cannot attain a high level yourself, you can still be supportive of others and desire that they attain what you cannot reach."Even if I cannot be a good, religious Jew, at least my friend should be one" (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #119).

Reb Noson comments: I thought that it was obvious. Of course, if I cannot be a good Jew at least my friend should be one. Of course, I wish him success. But as I grew older, I began to realize that this is a major cause of strife and derision among Jews. We see many people who have tried to become truly religious. They exert great effort, make serious attempts, but do not fully succeed and eventually drift away. Instead of encouraging others, they become intolerant and jealous of those who do pray intensely and who do study Torah. "If I can't make it, they also can't (or won't or shouldn't)," they tell themselves, and will do whatever they can to prevent others from succeeding. However, a true Jew must do the exact opposite, he should want others to serve "God, even when he himself is unable to do so. This is true Jewish love! (*Ibid.*).

Elsewhere, Reb Noson writes: The verse states: "Those who honor Me will be honored. Those who despise Me will be denigrated" (1 Samuel 2:30). Of Aharon it is written, "Those who honor Me," for he honored God by drawing close those who were distant from God. However, there are those who denigrate people, as if they themselves were perfect and without blemish. They are always finding fault in others, especially those who attempt to come closer to God. Such people despise God and by denigrating others they cast aspersion on God. Of them it is written, they "will be denigrated" (*Likutey Halakhot, Netilat Yadayim li'Seudah* 6:59).

Look at what jealousy has caused: Cain was jealous of his brother Abel so he killed one quarter of mankind. Joseph's brothers were jealous of him and because of their actions, our forefathers went into bondage in Egypt (*Shabbat* 10b). Korach's jealousy of Moshe and Aharon (Numbers 16), brought about not only the first rebellion in the history of the nation, but also the deaths of over fourteen thousand people (Numbers 17:14). King Saul nearly killed David, because of his jealousy towards him. The list is endless, and, if such outstanding individuals can fall prey to jealousy and *nitzachon*, what chance do we have? (See *Likutey Moharan* II, 1:1; *Parparaot LeChokhmah*, *loc. cit.*).

Reb Noson writes: Strife and arguments have become so prevalent among Jews, that truth is extremely difficult to find. This lack of peace is the main reason for the long delay in the rebuilding of our Holy Temple. It, more than anything else, is responsible for our having had to wait so long for Mashiah to come (*Likutey Halakhot, Netilat Yadayim li'Seudah* 6:74).

Is there a remedy? There sure is. First, we have to recognize that the problem exists. Most people don't see themselves as being jealous. "Who me? I'm not jealous of my friends – not of their possessions or of their achievements in Torah." Look again! Recognition is the very first step in correcting any situation, especially the subtleties of personality. Rebbe Nachman was aware of this. He understood how the cancer of jealousy is capable of spreading, eventually destroying a person both physically and spiritually, even before he realizes what's happening. Luckily, the Rebbe offered a solution so that we do stand a chance. Not surprisingly, that answer is prayer – *hitbodedut*. Again and again, we have to turn to God to save us: "Help us see ourselves as we really are. Please, keep us from the snare of jealousy." Sounds too simple for such a difficult problem? Maybe it does, but it works! If we truly turn to God with this request daily, and

then some, we can, and will, overcome it.

Another way to subdue jealousy is by finding the good points in others and judging them favorably. The Rebbe teaches us that by focusing on the good, we are looking at them not with an Evil Eye, but with a Good Eye. Finding good brings merit and worthiness to the world, and helps dissipate and cool off the burning flames of jealousy.

Rebbe Nachman said, "It is difficult for two prominent individuals to live [peacefully] in the same city." Reb Noson said, "I and Rabbi Aharon can live together in the same place" (*Siach Sarfei Kodesh* I-612). Rabbi Aharon was the Rav, the halakhic authority in Breslov. Rebbe Nachman, himself, afforded Rabbi Aharon great honor and respect. As for Reb Noson, his greatness and brilliance are made obvious by his unparalleled writings. Yet these two prominent people could live together in the same city. Why? Because they were both modest. Neither was jealous of the other, there was no competition between them. Rather, their intent was to serve God, and in this they helped and complemented each other.

(Taken from the book [Crossing the Narrow Bridge: A Practical Guide to Rebbe Nachman's Teachings](#) – chapter 10 – Peace)