

RABBI SHIMON GRUEN

TORAH LESSONS for the HOME

{ NETZAVIM VAYELECH 5780 }

THE HIDDEN ENEMY

WHY THE NEGATIVITY?

The passuk this week tells us that “Our hidden sins belong to Hashem, while our overt ones belong to us and our children.” There are some fallacies that will be readily apparent to all who meet us, while there are some that will be more insidious in nature – even as to be hidden from our own eyes.

One such flaw, which is not uncommon but will rarely be admitted to, is jealousy. Unfortunately, a husband or wife might be secretly jealous of their spouse. It’s rather ironic, because in the Aseres Hadibros we are taught not to covet our friend’s wife, and yet some people actually begrudge their own husband or wife. They might covet their success, their happiness, their personalities, or the

things that come easy to them that they find difficult.

It’s important to be aware that such a scenario exists, so that if we catch ourselves constantly finding fault with our spouse, while intellectually knowing that we are being irrational, we know a possible cause. It’s very likely that the reason we are being triggered is a hidden kernel of jealousy that we need to eradicate, something we can only do after identifying and recognizing it for what it is.

DRAMATIC REACTIONS

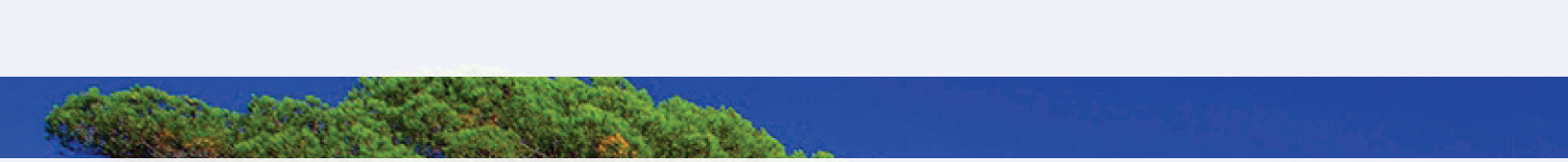
When a person is a grouch, it’s very difficult for him to see others go about their jolly lives and make the best of everything. It’s not that they begrudge them their good fortune. After all, if it’s their spouse, they pretty

much are dealt the same hand in life. What they cannot handle, is their spouse’s positive disposition. It irks them! They’re jealous of their spouse’s ability to rise above challenges and make the best of everything.

Instead of realizing where these sentiments are coming from, they attempt to put a damper on their spouse’s happiness. “How can you be so chilled when our water tank just broke down? It must be that you’re irresponsible and don’t care.”

When someone has a problem making friends or getting along with people, and sees their spouse excel socially, they might envy the ease with which they make their friends and how much people like them.

Rather than having a good, long look in the mirror to



identify the reason for their anger, they will instead lash out, “Your friends only like you because they think you’re so nice... Wait until they get to know the real you.”

EXULT IN YOUR GOOD FORTUNE

Instead of envying your spouse’s great qualities, use them to your advantage! There’s a reason the two of you ended up together. You can complement each other and fill in for where each of you is lacking. You don’t want to win every argument with your husband, that would mean you’re married to a loser!

Instead of trying to one-up your spouse in every way, stick to the things that you are good at and allow your spouse to shine in their area of expertise. Respect their good qualities and tell them so! Be happy that your spouse finds it easier than you to iron out difficult situations. Don’t put them down for doing a better job than you!

As long as you are not cognizant of your own worth and value, it will be much easier to bury other people and stand on their grave so that you appear taller. However, that will not make you happier in any way. Besides, when you resent other people’s success

and they sense that they are arousing your jealousy, they will simply stop sharing their stories with you. So try to learn how to feel better about yourself, to bring out your qualities, and be a help and an asset, instead of just spewing negativity about something good.

If your spouse is actually being hurtful or making a point of showing you how much better than you they are, you can kindly point out to them that their actions are bothering you. But if it’s just that their talents and abilities rub you the wrong way, call it for what it is and don’t put them down just because you’re jealous.

ON THE OTHER SIDE

Being on the receiving end of these incredibly hurtful comments might be confusing. “Why is he saying that? Why is she berating me for this?” It might be helpful to consider that the only reason these comments are being hurled your way is because your spouse is unconsciously jealous of your success.

If you see a pattern emerging, with them constantly putting down your accomplishments, consider toning down your successes a bit so that they don’t feel inferior. There’s a chance that you are

coming across intimidating or haughty and they do this out of self-preservation.

Try to include your spouse in your decisions and give them some of the credit for your success, even if you’re just saying it. Don’t make it awkward or walk on eggshells around them, or try to shelter them from ever finding out how amazing you are. Honestly ask them for their opinions and incorporate their ideas into your actions. After all, they are your better half and might prove to be really helpful to you!

Even in the event when you really can do everything yourself and you see no reason to burden your husband or wife with your problems, find a way to have them help you. Self-sufficiency in a marriage is not a plus.

You are not doing your husband a favor by never asking him for help. You might actually be inciting his jealousy that you are so well-equipped to handle everything that comes your way. You are not bothering your wife when you ask her for her opinion. When you don’t, she might feel like a third wheel and be jealous of the people you do talk to.

Eradicating jealousy is hard work, and can only follow astute self-awareness. We

need to be aware that some of our reactions to our spouses might stem from jealousy and we must make sure to work on ridding ourselves of this negative trait. We also have to be mindful not to incessantly brag or show off to our spouses, lest we cause them to be jealous of our constant accomplishments.

CHINUCH: WHAT YOU PRAYED FOR

As a parent, you may sometimes be jealous of your

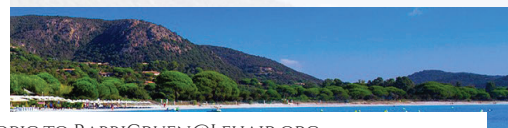
children's successes. You might have always struggled in a particular area that comes really easy to your child. You might have never managed to make good friends, win any contests, be handy around the house, while your kid is just a born pro at it.

Sometimes your child might be inadvertently rubbing it in by constantly showing off how good he is at what he does.

Don't fall into the trap!
Remember: this is your child!

You want him to be successful! Don't be threatened by his good fortune, and definitely don't knock him down for it. You don't want him to feel uncomfortable sharing with you and to hide his life from you.

Instead, be proud of him!
Isn't this what nachas is all about?



PLEASE FEEL FREE TO SEND ANY QUESTIONS, ON THIS TOPIC OR ANY TOPIC TO RABBIGRUEN@LEHAIR.ORG

QUESTION:

My son is constantly complaining that he's having a very hard time in cheder and other kids have it so much easier. What can I tell him to calm him down?

ANSWER:

As usual, these questions need to be analyzed on a case by case basis. Generally, going into a discussion or arguing with your child about the validity of his complaints is pointless. Just listen to what they're saying and empathize with their struggles.

Don't get annoyed with them for voicing their concerns. Saying things like "I told you already! It's gonna be okay! Stop complaining!" will end up being counterproductive. Just hear them out. Say something encouraging like, "That must be so hard for you! Every beginning is difficult. I'm sure you have it in you to rise above this challenge. It will hopefully pass with time." Make sure your child feels heard. Every child deserves to feel like his thoughts and feelings matter.

And offer help. Don't become codependent and show that it's your responsibility to come up with the answer or solution. That might cause your child to reject any idea you suggest. But express that if there's anything you can do you'll certainly try - and clarify that it's because you love them and care for them to no end!

To contact Rabbi Gruen please call 718.841.6557 or e-mail rabbigruen@lehair.org
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