

Parashat Naso

Turning Competition and Jealousy into Unity and Peace

Jealousy – The Key Destructive Emotion

When I was 2 ½ years old, my sister was born. Until then, I was the only star in the family, and of course, the cutest! I was told that I was very jealous at my sister. No wonder! Many first-born children experience their world crumbling down when their parents' undivided love and adoration for them suddenly shatters, and the new sibling invader seems to be getting the biggest share. In my experience from treating women through EmunaHealing, I find that the root of many of their current problems are connected with the birth of a sibling. Jealousy has been at the core of every conflict and adversity since the first brothers of the world, until today. The senseless hatred that caused the destruction of the Temple also derived from this negative emotion. Jealousy is actually the key negative emotion that "takes a person out of the world" (*Pirkei Avot* 4:21). It makes our lives miserable in *this world*, by never allowing us to feel satisfied with our portion, or accomplishment so long as there is a 'neighbor' who has more or can do it better. Even worse, this negative emotion tempts us to speak lashon hara, complain, carry a grudge, or take revenge, etc. and in this way, "takes a person out of the *world-to-come*." There is hardly a person who hasn't experienced feeling jealous at some point in his life. Often jealousy is a result of projection, protection, or competitiveness. Jealousy can lead to distrust, accusations, regrettable arguments and broken relationships. One of the less known characters in this week's parasha teaches us how to overcome this archetypical competition and jealousy.

Avoiding 'One Upping' Promotes Communal Peace and Unity

We named our baby boy Netanel Shalom based on this week's parasha's remarkable initiative by Netanel ben Tzuar, the head of the tribe of Yissaschar, designed to prevent jealousy among the tribes, and engender peace. For the dedication of the altar, Netanel gave the advice that all the tribes should offer exactly the same, in order to avoid competition and jealousy. This gave Hashem such *nachat* (pleasure and satisfaction) that He said, "Include me among you and I will give you My Shabbat." There is an inviolate rule that only a Public but not a Private Offering can override Shabbat. Therefore, the sequence of offerings of the princes should have been suspended on Shabbat, since they were Private Offerings. G-d, however, made an exception, and allowed the offering to be brought even on Shabbat. Since each of the offerings were made exactly alike, in order to maintain the unity of the community – they were infused with the spirit of a Public Offering and so considered by Hashem. (*Midrash Bamidbar Rabbah* 14:1). Furthermore, although one description of the offering would have sufficed for all the princes, since they respected one another, each tribe was allotted his own section in the Torah. It is a great honor for the princes, that every year we read the sections dealing with their gifts, instead of just including the gifts of all the tribes in a few letters like in *Parashat Vayakhel*. This teaches us that we must exert ourselves to be beloved to one another and to respect each other. The prophet teaches: "What does Hashem ask of you? To do justice and love *chesed*" (*Michah* 6:8). The fact that the prophet needs to give us this command teaches us that it is not natural for people to understand that this is what brings G-d the greatest *nachat* (Chafetz Chaim on the Torah, *Parashat Naso*).

Repetition, Due to Excitement and Awareness

Hashem rewarded Netanel ben Tzuar for his great initiative, and allowed the tribe of Yissaschar to be the second tribe to make his dedication offering, although Yissaschar is one of the younger tribes and never enumerated second in any other place in the Torah.

ספר במדבר פרק ז

(יח) בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי הִקְרִיב נְתַנְאֵל בֶּן צוּעַר נָשִׂיא יִשְׁשַׁכָּר: (יט) הִקְרִיב אֶת קֶרְבָּנוֹ קִעֶרֶת כֶּסֶף אַחַת שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמָאָה מִשְׁקָלָהּ מִזְרָק אֶחָד כֶּסֶף שִׁבְעִים שֶׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ שְׁנֵיהֶם מִלֵּאִים סֹלֶת בָּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן לְמִנְחָה:

“On the second day, Netanel the son of Tzuar, prince of Yissaschar made his offering: One silver bowl weighing hundred and thirty shekels and one silver basin of seventy shekels by the sanctuary weight; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meal-offering. One gold ladle of ten shekels, filled with incense; one bull of the herd, one ram and one lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; one goat for a sin offering; and for his sacrifice of well-being: two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five yearling lambs. That was the offering of Netanel son of Tzuar” (*Bamidbar 7:18-23*).

Parashat Naso is in fact the longest parasha in the entire Chumash because it repeats word for word the offering of each of the tribes instead of just paraphrasing that all the tribes offered the exact same such and such. This is to demonstrate Hashem's great pleasure with their identical offering of unity that rectified the sibling jealousy of Kain and Hevel. Another reason why this entire paragraph is repeated word by word for each tribe is to show that although the princes brought the exact same offering, none of them copied his friend. Each had his own personal relationship to his offering. Because of each tribe's original intention, excitement and awareness, the Torah described each of their offering in its own section.

Turning Around Jealousy to Strengthen Relationships

Jealousy may stem from a feeling of inadequacy that we don't have the capacity to get or achieve what someone else got or did. When we trust ourselves and/or others to act in a manner that will keep the relationship that we treasure strong, we can turn around our jealousy to sustain this very relationship. The following anecdote illustrates how we can use our jealousy to work on ourselves and learn to believe in our ability to achieve our true desires. Danny and Gabby were brothers. Danny became jealous of Gabby when their dad mentioned how much he had enjoyed an afternoon of hiking with Gabby. “Dad never hikes with me,” Danny thought. “Gabby is more fun than I am. I don't know how to make Dad laugh the way Gabby does.” With the help of a school psychologist, Danny learned to look deeper into his jealousy in order to discover what it intended to accomplish. He realized that he was competing with Gabby for Dad's affection, and that his brother was winning. “I want Dad to love *me* and I don't trust either that he does, or that I merit his love,” revealed Danny. “What might be a more effective way to go about winning your Dad's affection than getting stuck in the jealous feeling?” asked the psychologist. “Perhaps I could think about what I can do to build a better relationship with Dad instead of dwelling on my jealousy?” pondered Danny, picking up the clue. “Dad and I both love music. I'll start inviting him to join when my friends and I have a jam session. Maybe he and I could even work together on writing some songs... and make a recording of them as a Mother's Day present for Mom. Dad would really love that.” We can learn from this anecdote that instead of comparing our actions to what others do better than us, we can look into ourselves to find there what is special that we can offer, and do more of it.” (Susan Heitler, PhD, a Denver Clinical psychologist, author of *From Conflict to Resolution* and *The Power of Two*).

Discerning the Deeper Unified Reality of Abundance

How can we apply the lesson of Netanel ben Tzuar to get rid of nagging jealous feelings that won't let us sleep peacefully at night? How can we work on overcoming this negative emotion? Understanding the mistaken outlook that feeds jealousy will help us to make the reality shift necessary to defeat it. Jealousy derives from a feeling of "there is not enough" – whether it be enough space, food, love or attention to provide for the needs of everyone. Therefore, if someone else is more beloved, wealthy, honored, youthful, beautiful or successful, the jealous person will falsely conclude, consciously or subconsciously, that this other person, somehow embezzled these desired goods or virtues from the portion that was due to him or her. We need to attune this warped, minimalistic outlook to the deeper reality of abundance. In Hashem's infinite world, there is enough light and love to go around. A mother and a grandmother's heart can infinitely expand with overflowing love for their ever-increasing offspring. If someone else has mastered a desirable skill or a trait, that doesn't mean we can't acquire it, too. Rather than envying the accomplishments of others – secretly begrudging them for having snapped away our opportunities-, we can look to them for inspiration. We can turn around our jealousy and learn from the people who elicit it to gain more self-awareness. We can become conscious of what we truly desire and learn from those who have achieved it how we can get there as well. The Talmud praises this attitude calling it, חכמה תרבה סופרים לקנאת/kinat sofrim tarbeh chachma – jealousy for learning increases wisdom (*Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra 21a*). When we strengthen our *emunah* in Hashem's infinite love, together with a belief in our own deservingness, we will no longer fear any personal lack, no matter how blessed or successful someone else may be. We need to realize that we are not separate competing entities, but rather, part of a unified organism, like the individual fingers in a hand. Would one finger be jealous at the other? Rather, each of us completes the other and works together to accomplish the task at hand. By tuning into the underlying organic unity between every individual, there is no room for jealousy and competition – only unity and peace. Once we learn to overcome jealousy and competition by allowing this awareness to penetrate every fiber of our being, then we have truly tapped into the lesson of Netanel ben Tzuar.