

Shabbat shalom. I want you all to know that I'm normally a pretty good kid. But I am human, and just like all humans, I envy things. Let me tell you a little story about a time when I envied what others had. Last year, when I got my first cell phone, I was pretty excited. I went around telling my friends I received a new phone. It was exciting for a while, but after a bit I started to realize, it wasn't a very good phone. All my friends had the new and updated iPhones, and Samsungs, and I was stuck with this phone I really hated. I envied all of my friends and the people who had the newest phones. I soon realized, that there was no reason to envy anyone at all. It was good enough for what I needed, and it was good enough for what anyone my age needed. From that I learned that even though it is a natural human emotion to be envious of people, no one should ever envy someone else.

In this week's parsha, Shemini, the sons of Aaron, Nadav and Avihu were killed for giving an unacceptable offering to G-d. It seems they were doing the right thing by giving a sacrifice to G-d. What could they have done wrong? In the Etz Hayim chumash, commentary, it says that Nadav and Avihu said, "When will these old men, our father Aaron and our uncle Moses, die already so that we can take their place?" That is an extreme case of someone being envious. That is why they were punished, because of their envy. Even though most of us do not envy someone that much that we want our relatives to be dead, we all envy someone or something one way or another. It is not likely to end well for you.

In the Mishnah, the Rabbis write that a person should be, sameyach bachelko, which means every person should be happy with their portion in life. We are all blessed with so much that we fail to appreciate it, and thus we all look at others as if they have better lives than ours. There is a popular saying, the grass is greener on the other side. That saying may not always be true. We only think that our neighbour's grass is greener because we envy it.

Envyng someone is very pointless. There are always people who are worse off than we are. There are people in third world countries who can barely afford food for themselves and yet they have to feed their families too. If they ever caught you envying someone because they have a bigger house than you, or their lunches have more junk food than yours does, they would be very insulted. I have envied someone about both of those things multiple times, and every time I think about it I regret it. I am so fortunate to have what I have and I should appreciate it, and so should everyone else.

In the process of envying someone or something, you can potentially lose a lot. You waste good time that you could be happy, being sad. Every minute in life counts, don't waste it being sad. You can also destroy a relationship with someone if you get mad at them. Would you really be willing to lose your friend over something so dumb like envying one or two things they have and you don't? And the worst part is, is that for some of us, we may never get what we want. When we don't get what we envy, we will continue to envy that thing for nothing. It just isn't worth it.

Over all I think that even though we see something other people have and we want it, we still should not envy them or that. Here in Canada we all have such great lives, we have families that love us, friends who care about us, food and clean water to consume, and freedom. I don't think that it is fair to envy something like a toy or phone, when people are struggling to get their basic needs in life. It is a natural human emotion, but just like most habits, we must learn to stop. Jenifer James says, Envy is simply and clearly the fear that you do not have value. Envy scans for evidence to prove the point - that others will be preferred and rewarded more than you. There is only one alternative - self-value. If you cannot love yourself, you will not believe that you are loved. You will always think it's a mistake or luck. Take your eyes off others and turn the scanner within. Find the seeds of your envy, clear the old voices and experiences. Put all the energy into building your personal and emotional security. Then you will be the one others envy, and you can remember the pain and reach out to them. Shabbat shalom.