

## Mishlei 14-30

### Envy

#### Key Concepts

The destructive emotion of envy occurs when a person resents the fact that someone else is blessed with a quality or possession that he thinks he is lacking. That resentment may be fueled by a wish for any one of a number of things including verbal skills, good looks, health, friends, or wealth.

Envy is one of the most potent causes of unhappiness even though it is self-generated. The resentment of the envious person reflects the assumption that he is at least as deserving as the person he envies. Thus, he is angry at the circumstances of his life that seem to have treated him unfairly.

Tragically envy causes a person to harm himself because of its effect on his peace of mind. It can also lead himself to indulge in malicious behavior in a misguided effort by to correct the perceived disparity. He feels justified in such behavior because he thinks of himself as an injured party.

On the other hand, envy can be a benign quality if it motivates a person to correct the disparity in a positive way. For example, envy of the knowledge possessed by a *talmid chacham* can motivate the envious person to apply himself to learning.

A righteous person is blessed with the opposite of envy: a gentle, generous heart, which begrudges nothing to others. Such a person has achieved inner tranquility that dissolves any anger that may rise within the mind.

#### Exploring Mishlei

**(ל) חַיִּי בְּשָׂרִים לֵב מְרַפָּא וְרָקֵב עֲצָמוֹת קִנְאָה :**

**(30) A healing heart gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.**

This proverb compares the emotion that gives rise to envy with its opposite, a good heart. The good heart is described as a healing heart since it brings well-being and healthful serenity. In contrast, envy is so self-destructive that it is viewed as rotting the person's bones, the very aspects of his being that give him the strength to carry on in life.

## Learning Mishlei

(30) **Life to the body — חַיֵּי בְּשָׂרִים**  
is given by a **healing heart — לֵב מְרִפָּא**  
that is tranquil, tolerant and generous,  
begrudging nothing to others.  
but **rotting the bones — וּרְקַב עֲצָמוֹת**,  
**is the product of envy — קִנְאָה**  
and resentment at the good fortune of others.

## Additional Insights

- (1) A good heart generates a healing effect through the joy and happiness it promotes. (אבן עזרא)
- (2) The envious heart generates a self-destructive effect by focusing on thoughts of resentment and vengeance. (מצודות)
- (3) Envy undermines even the bones, which are the strongest and hardest parts of the body. (רבינו יונה)
- (4) The word for envy (**קִנְאָה**) also means anger because envy arouses resentment and anger. (המאירי)
- (5) The soothing quality of the healing heart guards the person from the effects of anger. (רלב"ג)
- (6) The good heart protects the serenity of a person who is the object of another's anger. It does so by trying to understand the basis for that anger and acts to mollify it through silence. (הגרי"א)
- (7) An envious person has constant opportunity for dissatisfaction, since most people are bound to possess something he is lacking. For a person who has given himself over to envy, if any one of his wishes is denied to him, everything else appears valueless to him. (רשר"ה)