

Envy — and its cure

Envy is not admiring what someone has; it is resenting that he has it. The Qur'an treats it as a complaint against the One who gave it, and the cure it prescribes is to ask Him instead.



★ The last refuge sought

وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ

“And from the evil of an envier when he envies.” The closing line of Surah al-Falaq — the harm is named as real, and refuge from it is taught.

Qur'an 113:5

★ A complaint against the Giver

أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَى مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ

“Or do they envy people for what Allah has given them of His bounty?” The envier's quarrel is not with the man; it is with the decision.

Qur'an 4:54

★ Do not even wish it

وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ

“And do not wish for that by which Allah has made some of you exceed others.” The same verse gives the alternative: ask Allah of His bounty.

Qur'an 4:32

★ Ask Him instead

وَسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ

“And ask Allah of His bounty.” The cure in four words: turn the wish into a request, addressed upward rather than sideways.

Qur'an 4:32

★ Forbidden outright

لَا تَبَاغَضُوا، وَلَا تَحْسَدُوا، وَلَا تَدَابَرُوا، وَكُونُوا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ إِخْوَانًا

“Do not hate one another, do not envy one another, do not turn your backs on one another; be servants of Allah, brothers.”

Sahih al-Bukhari 6076

★ The only envy allowed

لَا حَسَدَ إِلَّا فِي اثْنَتَيْنِ رَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ مَالًا فَسَلَّطَهُ عَلَى هَلَكَةٍ

فِي الْحَقِّ، وَرَجُلٌ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ حِكْمَةً فَهُوَ يَقْضِي بِهَا وَيُعَلِّمُهَا

“No envy except in two: a man Allah gave wealth and set him to spend it in the truth, and a man Allah gave wisdom who judges by it and teaches it.”

Sahih al-Bukhari 1409

★ Say a blessing on it

عَلَامٌ يَقْتُلُ أَحَدُكُمْ أَخَاهُ إِذَا رَأَى أَحَدُكُمْ مِنْ أَخِيهِ مَا يَعْجِبُهُ
فَلْيَدْعُ لَهُ بِالْبَرَكَاتِ

Sahl was struck down after a man admired his skin. “Why would one of you kill his brother? When he sees what pleases him, let him pray for blessing.”

Sunan Ibn Majah 3509 • sahih

★ The eye is real

الْعَيْنُ حَقٌّ

“The evil eye is real.” Which is why the admiring word is to be followed by a prayer, not swallowed.

Sunan Ibn Majah 3507 • sahih

★ What envy makes people do

كُفَّارًا حَسَدًا مِنْ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ

“...out of envy from themselves, after the truth had become clear to them.” The verse then says: pardon and overlook.

Qur'an 2:109