

“glitches” in the system, relegated to living a life of loneliness, supported by the kindness of decent, kind-hearted people, who recognize the significance of *Ayeca*? How did you get here? Sadly, many of us tend to ignore these people, because they make us uncomfortable. I am not sure if the people themselves make us uncomfortable or is it their history, the reason that they are here today under such wretched circumstances, that makes us uncomfortable. Indeed, there, if not for the grace of G-d, go I. We are lucky. They have not been so fortunate. By asking, *Ayeca*? more often, we might prevent the next person from becoming a statistic.

וישע ד' אל הבל ואל מנחתו ואל קין ואל מנחתו לא שעה... ויחר לקין מאד ויפלו פניו... ויקם קין אל הבל אחיו ויהרגו
Hashem turned to Hevel and his offering, but to Kayin and his offering He did not turn... this annoyed Kayin exceedingly, and his countenance fell... Kayin rose up against his brother Hevel and killed him. (4:4,8)

The **Chasam Sofer**, **zl**, teaches us a profound lesson, which, coming at the beginning of the Torah, should serve as a guide for us on how to view life through the lens of Torah. Hevel offered a *korban*, sacrifice. Hashem was pleased with Hevel's offering. At the end of the day – where did this *korban* get him? What benefit did Hevel accrue as a result of Hashem's turning to his *korban*? [This is a question likely to be asked by someone whose belief in Hashem and faith in the Torah system are, at best, deficient. A believing Jew does not ask such questions, because he has faith in Hashem.] Now, let us see what his *korban* achieved for Hevel. On page two, we see Hevel lying on the ground, bleeding to death from all of the stab wounds inflicted upon him by his jealous brother, Kayin. So, to wrap up Hevel's short life: Hashem turned to His *korban*. This was followed by Hevel's untimely demise in the most painful manner. He left the world alone, leaving over no wife, no progeny, no legacy, nothing by which to be remembered. This is the seeming end of a very sad story.

Let us now look at Kayin, Hevel's brother and murderer. Hashem did not turn to Kayin's *korban*. This catalyzed Kayin's envy and ire, resulting in his murder of his brother, Hevel. He escaped and was on the “run” for seven generations, during which time his family propagated. He saw the birth of thousands of his descendants, the homes they built, the cities they had established. In the end, he, too, died – but after having lived a full life replete with *nachas* and seeing the transmission of his legacy (whatever it was worth). It almost makes one wonder: Hevel the *tzaddik*, righteous and pious, dies an untimely, miserable death, leaving hardly anyone to mourn him. Kayin, his messed up brother, lived for seven generations and was the progenitor of thousands of descendants. Is it fair?

The **Chasam Sofer** asks us to turn the page and view the Hevel/Kayin tragedy from the Torah's perspective. Hevel died, but his pure, holy *neshamah* ascended to Heaven to be *misgalgel*, transmigration of the soul, into Shes, son of Adam and

Chavah, who established the world. True, it took 130 years for this to take place, but Hashem has His reasons. After Shes died, Hevel's *neshamah* returned in the body of none other than Noah *ish tzaddik*, who played a leading role in the saving of the world. Noah, too, died, but Hevel's *neshamah* returned once again after hundreds of years, this time in the body of our quintessential leader, Moshe *Rabbeinu!* Not bad for a legacy! The word *neshamah* is an acronym for: *nun* – Noah; *shin* – Shes; *mem* – Moshe; *Hay* – Hevel!

By the way, do you know what happened to all of Kayin's thousands upon thousands of descendants? They perished in the *Mabul*, Flood! So, who had the legacy – Kayin or Hevel?

This teaches us, explains the **Chasam Sofer**, that it is all about *Olam Habba*, the World to Come. What we see here – or do not see here – is meaningless. It is what we will one day see (if we are worthy) in *Olam Habba* that matters.

Va'ani Tefillah

Atah Kadosh v'Shimcha kadosh. You are Kadosh; and Your Name is kadosh.

We are so used to defining *kadosh* as holy that we either lose sight of its core meaning, or we lack the understanding of what designates an entity as holy. **Horav Shimon Schwab, zl**, points out that *kadosh* at its core means separation, as we find, *Kedoshim tiheyu*, “You shall be holy.” **Chazal** explain that this means: *perushim tihiyu* – separate yourself from illicit relationships and sin. Thus, when we refer to an *ish kadosh*, a holy man, we mean an individual who has separated and elevated himself above most other people. The root of *kadosh* is used also in regard to a *kdeishah*, harlot, who is separated and designated for a lewd purpose.

We find numerous examples of various border cities being called *kadesh*, with the meaning of boundary, since they separate one country from another. Concerning Hashem, the concept of *kadesh* conveys the idea of His being far removed from our sphere of understanding. We have no ability whatsoever of understanding Hashem. I think that man's awareness of his inability to understand Hashem is in and of itself an element of *kedushah*.

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TORAH THOUGHTS ON THE PARSHA

לא טוב היות האדם לבדו אעשה לו עזר כנגדו
It is not good that man be alone, I will make him a helper corresponding to him. (2:18)

Eizer k'negdo is translated as – “a helper corresponding to him.” *K'negdo* usually means opposite him. How is this reconciled? **Chazal** teach: *Zacha – naasis lo eizer; lo zachah – k'negdo*, “If the man is worthy, the woman will be a helper; if he is not worthy, she will be against him.” The ideal marriage is not necessarily one of total agreement in all matters. Obviously, a good relationship has to allow for a difference of opinion. By their basic nature and temperament, man and woman are different; thus, they might have discrepant or differing views on various subjects. It is the wife's responsibility to oppose her husband when he acts without thinking (or if his thinking is without *seichel*, common sense). She should help him to focus and achieve the proper course by helping him to navigate between various obstacles. She does this by suggesting, questioning, even criticizing (constructively), never by putting him down. As a result, there are times when a wife's greatest contribution to a marriage is her being “against” her husband. In order to follow the course, it is often necessary to steer off course.

Rashi emphasizes that one who is unworthy will have a wife that will be against him to the point of battling against him. Clearly, this represents a bad marriage. **The Brisker Rav, zl**, interprets the *pasuk* differently. He says that the *lo tov hayos ha'adam levado* – “It is not good that man be alone” applies to both aspects of *eizer k'negdo*, *zachah* and *lo zachah*. In other words, even when one is unworthy and is married to a woman who is constantly critical of him, whose perspective vis-à-vis her husband comes across as jaundiced to the point that she is battling with him – he is still better off than being alone! To be alone is worse than to be married to a woman who personifies *k'negdo* – opposite him.

Horav Eliyahu Baruch Finkel, zl, supports this with an exposition of the *Baal HaTurim*. When Hashem admonished Adam for eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*, Tree of Knowledge, Adam responded, “The woman whom You gave to be with me – she gave me of the tree and I ate” (ibid 3:12). **Rashi** writes that Adam's response was an act of *kafui tov*, ingratitude. It was as if he were saying to Hashem, “You gave me the woman. It is not my fault. Had I not had her, I would not have sinned.” It is as if Adam were placing the blame at Hashem's door. This is the

height of ingratitude. The *Baal HaTurim*, however, writes, “She gave me of the tree,” she hit me with the wood/tree. She forced me to eat. The *pasuk* does not say, “She gave me of the fruit”; rather, it says, “She gave me of the tree.” This implies that she hit him with the tree until he agreed to eat! If so, what element of *kefiyas tov*, ingratitude, can there be? It is not as if Adam ate willingly. He was forced to eat! This teaches, posits **Rav Eliyahu Baruch**, that, even if one's wife beats him, he is still better off than being alone. It is still considered under the purview of *lo tov* – it is not good (to be alone).

The venerable **Maggid** of Yerushalayim, **Horav BenTzion Yadler, zl**, asks to identify the justification for the idea that “the woman whom You gave me – she gave me of the tree and I ate.” If his wife would have fed him poison, would he have eaten it? How does one listen to his wife when she presents him with prohibited food? According to the *Baal HaTurim*, it was no simple act of “presenting.” She beat him into eating it. How do we understand Adam's reply according to the “conventional” *p'shat*, interpretation, that she simply gave it to him?

The **Maggid** explains this with an enlightening analogy. A top student of a prestigious *yeshiva* married the *Rosh Yeshiva's* daughter. Shortly after their marriage, the young man questioned his wife concerning the kosher preparation of meat (i.e., Was it washed and salted properly?) and concerning the fruits and vegetables (i.e., Were they tithed according to *halachah*?). Slightly indignant, his wife replied, “Whatever *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven you have, you received through my father (as *Rosh Yeshiva* and your primary *rebbe*, he inspired you); now, you are going to question the *frumkeit*, religious observance, of his daughter?”

Regarding the definition of the word *tov*, good, we find an anomaly in the commentary of *Targum Onkelos*. For *lo tov*, *Onkelos* writes *lo takin*, it is not correct, proper; it is not the way it should be. *Takin* has a different connotation than *tov*. Why does he alter the definition?

Concerning the sixth day of Creation, the Torah writes, “And G-d saw all that He had made; and behold it was very good” (Ibid 1:31). There *Onkelos* defines *tov meod*, very good, as *takin lachada*, meaning, “It was very perfect.” For the rest of Creation, when the word *tov* is used, he writes *tav*. This question is asked by **Ramban**, who explains that *Onkelos* wrote this definition by design. The word *tov* (regarding the sixth day)

must mean much more than “good.” The sixth day was the culmination of Creation; hence, on this day “good” was much more than a description of Creation. Rather, it was an affirmation that it was exceedingly perfect in its arrangement. The *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, was now included in Creation. With its creation the world was not perfect, since evil is necessary to preserve good. One must overcome evil, thus making adherence to good that much more laudable. Thus, *Onkelos* interprets *tov* as being more than good; it is perfect.

With the idea in mind that *takin/tov* implies the perfection of something, the achievement of *shleimus*, harmony, suitability, perfection, *Rav* Eliyahu Baruch suggests that concerning marriage, *Onkelos* used *takin* to teach that *tov*, good, in marriage attains perfection when each partner completes the other. Whatever deficiency one might find in one’s spouse, it will be filled by the other. Together, they are completely suitable, perfect. *Onkelos* thus interprets *lo tov* as *lo takin*; a man alone is imperfect. Good is insufficient. It must be perfect.

וישמעו את קול ד' אלקים מתהלך בנן לרוח היום ויחבא האדם ואשתו מפני ד' אלקים בתוך עץ הגן

And they heard the sound of Hashem Elokim walking in the garden in the wind of the day, and Adam and his wife hid from before Hashem among the trees of the garden. (3:8)

The concept of Hashem “walking” in the garden or the “sound” that He makes in the wind has anthropomorphic overtones which do not apply to Hashem, Who has no physical presence. *Rashi* and *Ibn Ezra* define *kol* as voice, rather than sound, and *ruach* as direction, rather than wind. This would be a reference to the direction of the sun at the end of the day. A voice travels as it increases with intensity. Thus, the *pasuk* is interpreted: And they heard the voice of Hashem steadily increasing in the garden towards the end of the day.

Bearing this in mind, **Horav Yisrael Belsky, zl**, asks three questions: First, what is the significance of a steadily increasing voice? Second, why are we told that this voice was heard specifically towards the end of the day? Last, since voice is usually associated with words, what was Hashem’s voice telling them?

Let us first understand the depth of Adam and Chavah’s sin. The sin was initially catalyzed by Chavah’s desire for the fruit after she saw it. Looking at the tree, she realized the potential for knowledge, power and intelligence that would result from partaking of the tree’s fruit. Adam acted accordingly when he saw the tree. Thus, gazing at the tree generated a powerful passion for its fruit. The allure was too strong for either of them. They succumbed and ate of the fruit.

Nonetheless, Adam and Chavah were not simple people. They possessed a singular knowledge and understanding of Hashem’s way. To ignore a direct *tzivui*, command, order from Hashem, was unconscionable for them. What took place that resulted in such a metamorphosis?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* brilliantly explains that, when Chavah saw the fruit and perceived all of its benefits, the echo of Hashem’s command, “Do not eat of its fruit,” became nothing more than a mere whisper. The power of eating of the *Eitz Hadaas* was so strong, so overwhelmingly compelling, that the prohibition against eating the fruit became a minor detail which was easily subsumed by the obvious and immediate urge to eat the fruit.

Soon after, the sun began to set, and the brilliance of the fruit’s image lost some of its sublimity and beauty, ultimately

fading away in the evening shadows. When this occurred, Hashem’s original voice declaring the prohibition against eating the fruit, which had heretofore faded to whisper status, now returned in all its power and glory. Now, they could hear clearly: “Do not eat of its fruit!” The mirage that had overtaken them had dissipated; the voice had returned. They were now confronted with the full-blown tragedy of their sin.

They ran to the tree, seeking to reinspire themselves through its brilliance, only to discover that it was too late, the dazzling seductiveness of the tree was gone. They were left alone, bereft of the many lessons the tree could have taught them, confronting the terrible sin which they had committed.

The sin of the *Eitz Hadaas* might have been the first such sin, but, throughout history, we have fallen prey to the *yetzer hora*’s ruse, its power of illusion, its ability to present sin in a background of aura, piety and goodness. How often has he obscured Hashem’s will behind the veil of a compelling world view and philosophy? As we have tried to understand and cope with society’s realities, we have reneged on our commitment to the Torah’s code of theology and ethics. As always, we follow the latest fad or whatever theory is in vogue at the time – all at the expense of the Torah. Over time, as the fad or whatever *narishkeit*, foolishness, that we have been gullible enough to fall for, loses its allure, and we wonder about how nonsensical we had been, appalled at how we allowed ourselves to be misled.

The only protection that we have against the allure of these pretenses which claim to save us, is the Torah, with its lens of clarity that pierces through ambiguity and illusion. It is our touchstone of reality, our anchor in a sea of confusion. We cannot afford to wait for the *ruach hayom*, when, towards “evening” the voice of Hashem becomes steadily and increasingly stronger. Then it will be too late. The damage will have already been done.

ויקרא ד' אלקים אל האדם ויאמר לו איכה Hashem Elokim called out to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” (3:9)

At face value, this was not a question. Hashem certainly knew Adam’s whereabouts. Hashem was initiating a dialogue with Adam, so that he would not be afraid to repent. This, obviously, is a lesson for us when approaching someone – a student, a child, a friend who has erred – not to pounce upon him, “Why did you do it? How could you have acted so badly?” but rather, begin a conversation, get the subject relaxed, then ease into the reproof in such a manner that he will open up and be willing to repent.

The word *Ayeca*, “Where are you?” has been interpreted in a number of ways. It has the same letters as *Eichah*, which implies, “How could you?” *Ayeca*, “Where?” also intimates, “Do you know where you are; Do you realize that you sinned in *Gan Eden*?” These expositions each present an understanding of the gravity of sin, its roots, and effect on those in the proximity of the sinner.

From a well-documented incident which occurred concerning the **Baal HaTanya, zl**, we derive a deeper explanation of the word *Ayeca* and its implication to all of us. The *Alter Rebbe (Baal HaTanya)* had been jailed in St. Petersburg, the result of being slandered to the government by insecure people who felt threatened by his success. This occurred during the nascent days of *Chassidus*, when any form of worship that deviated from the tried and true was immediately suspect of involvement with Shabbthai Tzvi messianism. In Russia, *Chabad*

Chassidus, established by the *Baal HaTanya*, was most prominent.

While the *Rebbe* was imprisoned, he was visited by a minister, an assimilated Jew, who was in charge of prisoner interrogations. The minister knew a holy man when he saw one, and he understood that the prisoner sitting before him deeply engrossed in thought, was no ordinary prisoner. While he was foolish in abandoning his religion, the minister was no fool. He was astute and well-versed in Torah literature, having attended *yeshivah* prior to apostatizing himself. He turned to the *Rebbe* and said, “I have long been bothered by a question on the Torah for which I have never received a satisfactory answer. When G-d entered the Garden of Eden, He spoke to Adam, asking him, ‘Where are you?’ Is it possible that He did not know the whereabouts of Adam?”

The *Baal HaTanya* listened to the question, and then asked the minister, “Tell me, do you believe that the Torah is eternal and that it will be around for all time?” “Yes,” replied the minister. He might have been an apostate, rejecting the Torah, but he was well aware that the Torah exists and that it is G-d’s communication with man.

“G-d’s question of Adam,” the *Rebbe* began, “was a question that each and every one of his descendants must ask themselves, *Ayeca* – ‘Where are you?’ – Every person is granted a specific amount of time to live. He is mandated to carry out Hashem’s *mitzvos* and perform acts of kindness to his fellow man. He is asked, *Ayeca* – ‘Where do you stand with your G-d-given mission? How much of your mission have you completed?’” The *Rebbe* then asked the minister, “In the x number of years (the *Rebbe* knew how old the minister was) that you have lived, did you achieve your Heavenly designated goals – or did you fall short? This is what G-d asks each and every one of us: *Ayeca*?”

Perhaps *Ayeca* has a dual interpretation: one which addresses the individual himself; and one which implores the individual to ask concerning others. Each and every one of us has a path of life in which we are the products of our own personal history, a series of events in our background in which we have interacted with people, both very close – such as parents and family – and others, who have played significant roles in our life stories. We should ask ourselves *Ayeca* – How did I get here? What have I gone through to reach this point? What were the factors that have influenced my life – both positive and negative? Now that you realize how it has all led up to this moment, what are you going to do about it? Are you a success, or is your life a mess? How did this happen? What led up to this point? The same piercing questions apply to the way we view other people. Do we judge them according to their present demeanor, or do we ask *Ayeca* – How did you get here? What events and people have catalyzed your success or failure?

Adam *HaRishon* had sinned. The first step toward reconciliation was *teshuvah*, repentance. In order to repent a sin, one should first introspect the root of his behavior, the pathology that led up to that moment. Likewise, a young person, a middle-aged or older individual who has fallen on hard times and distanced himself from Hashem, must first make a self-diagnosis as to how he had plummeted to this low point. We should not judge people according to the here and now, but *Ayeca* – How did they get here?

Allow me to present the following vignettes, one of which saw the pages of *Peninim* a number of years ago, but its message is timeless. First story: *Rebbetzin* Dessler, wife of the *Michtav MeiEliyahu*, was in Lithuania together with her young

daughter (the future *Rebbetzin* Geltzeiler) when World War II broke out. They could not return home to England since their host country was at war with Germany. As a result, they were displaced to Australia, which was neutral. This became their home for the duration of the war years.

One day, mother and daughter took a walk and passed a pawn shop which had a number of jewelry pieces displayed in its picture window. When the young girl oohed and aahed over the jewelry, her mother responded that while it was true that each piece was quite beautiful, even captivating, every item in the window had a history. Someone had been forced to sell her jewelry for economic reasons. This might have been a cherished family heirloom, but the family had fallen on hard times and bread had become more important than jewelry. “We should not take pleasure from someone else’s misfortune,” the *Rebbetzin* told her daughter.

The simple lesson to be derived herein is how far one person’s sensitivity for another human being can extend. She saw a necklace in the store window and was immediately aware that it represented another human being’s misfortune. Others saw dazzling jewelry. She saw the history of the jewelry. It represented a person’s economic fall. It reflected someone’s need. This is how this special woman viewed a piece of jewelry in a pawnshop. *Ayeca*? How did it get here? Everything/everybody has a history. Take it into consideration.

The second story is taken from a tribute rendered by *Horav Aharon Lopiansky, Shlita*, to the memory of his father, a student of *Slabodka Yeshivah*, where they taught *gadlus ha’adam*, the greatness of man, the overriding significance of every individual as being a creation of Hashem. They would *daven* in one of the large old *shuls* that graced New York. These *shuls* were also home to a number of homeless Jews who had fallen on hard times and would use the *shul* as their “base of operations.”

A lively group of ten-year-old boys accompanied their fathers to *shul*. Since *davening* took a long time, and the boys were bored, they searched for things to do. One of their favorite pastimes was chasing a wretched, homeless man who used the *shul*’s furnace room as an “apartment.” Like many others like him, his clothing smelled, he was slightly unhinged, and he survived on the handouts that kind people gave him. The children would delight in rousing his ire and running away as he hurled epithets after them.

One day, *Rav Lopiansky*’s father noticed this and called his son over. No angry yelling; no loud rebuke – just soft and gentle words. “You see this man?” his father asked. “He was born a cute little baby whose mother stroked him lovingly. She cooed to him and delighted when he cooed back and smiled at her. His father secretly hoped that he would achieve a position and stature in life, which he regrettably had not. He himself began dreaming and fantasizing about what he would be one day. He had brothers and sisters who played and fought with him, as all siblings do.

“And now look at what has become of him. Is it not a tragedy? Should one not be moved to tears at what happened to him? And you are compounding the tragedy by taking a *tzelem Elokim*, a person who was created in Hashem’s image, and making ‘dirt’ out of him.” With these words, his father softly concluded his rebuke.

We have all met the type of person that fits this description. Every community is graced with people who, instead of achieving the aspirations and dreams of their parents, become