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פרשת בראשית

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Seeking Hashem's Favor

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Part I. Two Brothers

Kayin The Pioneer

Everything that is written in the Torah is a teaching; that's the definition of the word 'torah' – it means 'teaching'. And it's important to understand that whatever is closer to the beginning of the Torah is a more general teaching. As the Torah progresses, its teachings become more detailed, but in the beginning of the Torah we find the general rules of Torah living. Later the Torah tells us subdivisions of the big headings which were already explained beforehand.

Now, the incident of Kayin and Hevel is at the very beginning of the Torah and therefore we can understand that it's intended to be studied as a *klal gadol*, as a great rule in human behavior. After all, that's why it's written – many other incidents happened in the long lives of Kayin and Hevel but the Torah chose to tell us about this one because it's intended

as an important general teaching which should be studied as a lesson in human behavior. It's a lesson in the way the Torah expects us to live.

We read וַיָּבֵא קַיִן מִפְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה מִנְחָה לַה' – *Kayin brought from the fruit of the earth an offering to Hashem.* At that time, Kayin pioneered a new undertaking; he invented a form of service to Hashem which had never been done before. We know from Mesichta Chulin (60a) that his father, Adam, had already offered up an ox as a *korban* but Kayin invented the form of service of bringing the produce of the earth.

Unsullied Antediluvian Minds

Now to us it may seem a small step forward from bringing an ox to bringing the *pri ho'adomah* but that's only because we're looking now in retrospect and therefore these ideas are commonplace to us because we already know Chumash. But in those early days every step in *avodas Hashem*, even the smallest one, was very important because they had no precedents to follow; everything depended on their own minds. And because there was no television yet, no New York Times or literature, so they were able to rely on their unsullied minds to blaze new paths in the service of Hashem.

And so when Kayin invented this original idea, that he could serve Hashem by offering up to Him the fruits of the earth, it was a big *chiddush*, a big innovation in *avodas Hashem*.

Now, Kayin didn't come to such an innovation by accident. You have to understand that it's not like we were taught as little children that Kayin was some kind of low character; that's plain foolish. The oldest son of Adam Harishon was a great personality, a *tzadik* who walked in the footsteps of his father, and he therefore went about for some time contemplating what he should do to serve Hashem, considering ways and means of showing his loyalty to Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

To bring *pri ho'adomah* as an offering wasn't a spur of the moment decision like someone might make today, he gets excited, inspired, and he decides he's going to say the whole Tehillim or put on a long black coat, something similar. No, no; Kayin was a deep thinker and he spent days and weeks thinking of ways of serving Hashem.

Kayin Finds a Solution

And if we find that he invented one thing, we are warranted to think that he invented other things too. The Torah doesn't tell us this story just for itself. יִלְמַד סְתוּם מִן הַמְּפָרֵשׁ – *From the little revealed to us, we can deduce what was doing in general.* And so we understand that this is

the person Kayin always was; he went about thinking, “What could I do to demonstrate my love to the One who created me?”

Now, that question may not bother us but it's not a compliment to us that it doesn't. To go around thinking up ways and means of serving Hakodosh Boruch Hu, of demonstrating our love and our loyalty to him? That's the least of our worries. We congratulate ourselves if in the morning we come to the synagogue and rattle off a stereotype of *davenen*; we feel quite happy as we walk home from the *shul* carrying a *tallis* and *tefillin*. We barely discharged the minimum obligations of the Shulchan Aruch – and we're satisfied.

But Kayin didn't have any Shulchan Aruch. He had no code that obligated him, something that would allow him to merely check off things he did; *tallis*, *tefillin*, *brachos*, *davenen*. Kayin's code was his conscience, and therefore he went around thinking of what he could do to express his desire to be close to his Creator, what acts would be acceptable. And finally he hit upon an idea: *pri ho'adamah*.

A Life-Giving Gift

Now we wouldn't have come up with that but that doesn't mean we are wiser than Kayin. Kayin, remember, was a farmer. But not just a farmer. *וַיִּקְרַן הָיָה עֹבֵר אֲרָמָה* – *he served the earth*. The Medrash tells us he literally served the earth. *Oived*, the Medrash Tanchuma says, means that he put into the earth all of his talents, all of his heart.

Don't forget, he was from the first ones to walk the earth and therefore it wasn't something commonplace to him, to work the land and to bring forth fruit from soil. It was a novelty, a novelty of novelties, and he fell in love with the earth. He loved working with this gift of Hashem, the life-giving gift that Hashem had covered the globe with.

The earth, the soil, is the most precious material that we have, the most precious of all compounds. If you study the soil, you come to the conclusion that it's the most remarkable concoction of chemicals that you can find anywhere. It's not just the chemical compounds; it's a community of organisms that work together. The soil is alive! In one tablespoon full of soil, you have more living organisms than you have people in all of metropolitan New York; that's besides the chemical properties in the soil.

And so when a person with an unsullied mind works the earth, he sees the greatness of Hashem, the *chochmas Hashem*, the *chesed Hashem*, under his feet. After all, who made everything? Where did seeds come

from? The seed is such a complex organization of cunning planning that in the early days of Mankind, when someone saw a seed for the first time—for the first ten thousand times—it staggered the imagination.

The Wonderful Peach Pit

We unfortunately are accustomed to seeds, but Kayin was a newcomer in the world and he was enamored of the soil and the seeds and plants because he saw in them the hand of the Creator – if you see a seed, then there are no arguments anymore; all the scientists and all the academicians fall mute in the presence of a seed. All of their arguments, the whole structure that they have erected falls apart when you confront them with a seed.

How could it be, a seed? How did it happen? Here's a peach pit; it's hard, it can't open. But when it falls into the earth, wonder of wonders, in the earth it yields to the soil bacteria and opens up. So although the animals and birds will try in vain to eat it, the soil bacteria have the ability of opening it up. And it has within it the blueprints for a tree. Now blueprints for a peach tree, that's a very complicated business. That's something that you won't have even in the Dupont Chemical Company because you'd need blocks and blocks just to store the blueprints alone. Not to mention the machinery to carry out the instructions to the blueprint. And this seed has all the blueprints for the next tree protected in a case that cannot be opened until it falls into the soil.

How could the soil and the seed work together to make *pri ho'adomah*? Is this the result of accident? It's the *yad Hashem*, absolutely. Your hand as it tills the earth, is working together with the Hand of Hashem.

And so when a man learns to utilize the soil, it becomes the most entrancing of all occupations, to force out of the soil all the precious results that Hashem created it for. And therefore Kayin decided to show his love for Hakodosh Boruch Hu by bringing *m'pri ho'adomah*, from what grew out of the ground, *minchah laHashem*, as his offering to Hashem. He wanted to bring what was most precious to him, the produce he had forced out of the earth. He was so happy, so aware of the wisdom of Hashem, the *nissim* he saw every day, that he decided to demonstrate gratitude to Hakodosh Boruch Hu who created this.

The Grand Ceremony

Now something like that, a new way of *avodas Hashem* that came as a result of much thought and great devotion wasn't relegated to a

sideshow. Kayin was so happy with his innovation that he gathered his whole family together; *b'rov am hadras Melech* – the more people who come, the more honor for Hashem.

And besides, let them be inspired too. And so Kayin did it in the presence of the entire family. His father and mother were present there, Hevel too, and Kayin made a *mizbeach* and said, “Today I’m going to make a demonstration of my gratitude to my Creator. Let’s all come and celebrate a Yom Tov.”

And then he brought his offering to Hashem; he put *m’pri ha’adomah* on the *mizbeach* and said, “I’m going to burn this to Hashem as an offering.” Oh, was it beautiful!

And his parents congratulated him. They had so much *nachas* from him! A son who was *oived Hashem* without being commanded on his own! It was a very great occasion!

The Little Brother

Now everybody knows what happened after that. Kayin had a younger brother, Hevel, who looked up to him. And when he saw what Kayin had accomplished, so he took him as his teacher, as his model. **וְהֵבֵל הֵבִיא גַם הוּא** – And Hevel, he too, brought an offering. *Gam hu* means he also *followed suit*.

It’s a great thing if someone is able to emulate good things. Like it says (Mishlei 1:5) **יִשְׁמַע הָרֶכֶם** – *A chochom listens*; he absorbs what you tell him. But not only that; **וַיֹּסֶף לָקַח** – *He also adds to what he learned*. So Hevel learned from his brother and he brought even better than his brother.

The fact is he was only following in his brother’s footsteps. Just like Kayin followed in father’s footsteps, so too **וְהֵבֵל הֵבִיא גַם הוּא**, *Hevel emulated his brother and he brought* **מִמְבָּרֹת צֹאנוּ וּמִהַלְבֵּהוֹן**, *from the fattest of his flocks*.

Achieving Recognition

And here we see that Hevel made a step forward beyond what Kayin had accomplished. After Kayin brought his offering, his brother Hevel emulated him only that Hevel added the element of greater devotion in his offering. He brought even a better offering, the element of *muvchar*, to bring the choicest. And with that he expressed a great devotion to Hashem.

At that time, when Hevel stepped forward and brought an even more handsome offering to Hashem than his brother, something special happened. וַיִּשַׁע הַשֵּׁם אֶל הֶבֶל וְאֶל מִנְחָתוֹ –*Hakodosh Boruch Hu showed recognition* (Bereishis 4:4). Hashem made a demonstration; He turned, He paid attention to Hevel. Exactly what happened, I cannot tell you. Something took place; I imagine that a fire came down *min haShomayim* and consumed Hevel's offering.

Whatever it was, something happened as a tremendous demonstration. Hakodosh Boruch Hu showed His favor to Hevel and to his offering and by this means Hevel gained what's called *ratzon Hashem*, the favor, the good-will, of Hashem.

Part II. Two Attitudes

An Old-Fashioned Concept

Now, this concept of *ratzon Hashem*, of desiring to gain the favor of Hashem, is something which most people don't know about. Most people in our modern time think that it's up to us to have love of Hakodosh Boruch Hu; and so if we're good people, the best, so we do things to demonstrate our love of Him. But to do things in order to *gain His love of us*? That's a concept that's not in style.

It's a fact, a sad fact, that we don't think about gaining the favor of Hashem. But in the Torah and throughout the whole Tanach we find this idea that the great men endeavored to gain a *ratzon Hashem*, that He should look favorably upon them, that He should love them.

Now why is it that this concept which was in style in those days is not in fashion today? It's because of the big difference between our attitude and theirs. Our attitude today, we must confess, is that we are pretty good people if we do what's required of us. Let's be honest; we look around and we see so many disloyal people so when we are *mekayem* the Shulchan Aruch, we feel that we're doing pretty well by Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

The Satisfied Latecomer

The fact is if you sit in a synagogue Shabbos morning and you see a gentleman, he comes in let's say at 9:30 or 9:45, and he walks in without embarrassment. He's complacent because he feels he's doing pretty well. Look how many people don't come at all. And so he's not ashamed to come in at 9:45. He puts on his silken *tallis* and he feels that he's quite a

man. He feels he's conferring who knows how many favors on Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

And so for him it's not a question of trying to gain the goodwill of Hashem. He never even *thought* about such things. It's *his own goodwill* that he is demonstrating. He wants to demonstrate that his heart is in the right place towards the Creator, that he is friendly towards Him.

Now all this is a caricature but it holds good for the best of us. If you don't analyze yourself, you may not realize that that is the attitude, but it is. And it's engendered by comparing ourselves with the faithless masses. And we are still faithful so we feel we're doing pretty good.

But the *kadmonim*, when they served Hakodosh Boruch Hu, there was an entirely different attitude that was underpinning their service; in one word it's 'gratitude.' The earlier generations understood that all of their devotion and all of their service could not require the endless benefactions which the Creator was showering upon them. That's how the great men were. They felt loaded down by a debt of gratitude.

Dovid Hamelech and Chaim the Tyrant

Like Dovid Hamelech said, *מָה אֶשִׁיב לָהּ* – *What can I pay back to Hashem*, *כָּל תְּגִמּוּלוֹהֶי עָלַי* – *for all that He bestowed upon me?* Now, that's not a worry that bothers us. Nobody in the middle of the night wakes up oppressed by this thought. Who walks around today concerned, "How can I pay Hashem back?"

I once spoke to a yeshiva boy about this problem; so he says to me, "Pay back for what?" Well, of course he says that. If he doesn't study, if he doesn't think, he'll never know. Because all his life he was trained by his mother into the attitude that if he accepted the food that she put on the table, *he was doing her the biggest favor.*

She started out when he was a little baby. She got on her knees and said, "Please, Chaim, drink the milk!" And Chaim, the little tyrant who is sitting in the highchair, on the throne, was banging with his shoes on the chair, "No, I won't do it!" He was looking longingly at the milk, but he wouldn't do it; he wouldn't give her the satisfaction.

And she was shedding tears. She was becoming frantic and she offered him nickels and dimes and quarters. Finally when the price is big enough and his mother was frantic enough, he deigned to accept the milk. And his mother was so happy, she was beaming. She hugged him and kissed him.

Raising Devils

That's training him to be a demon. And that's why they grow up to be demons, devils. He grows up thinking that whatever he takes of the house, if he's good enough to take his father's money and spend it, his father has to be grateful to him. American boys think that if they take their father's money and spend it, they're doing the father a favor.

Here's a big girl. She lives at home but she has a good job. She earns more than her father does and so he wouldn't mind if she gave a few dollars a week towards the household. He doesn't want the whole money. That he wouldn't dream of. He doesn't have the audacity; he has too much politeness, too much *derech erez* for her.

But if her father timidly drops a hint that it might be proper to give something towards the household expenses from her big earnings, she's so outraged that she wants to go to the Legal Aid Society and complain at his cruelty! The cruelty of my parents!

Don't think she wouldn't find Jewish lawyers there to defend her. She'll find plenty of Jewish lawyers! And this poor slave, her father, goes to the factory a whole day long – he doesn't see daylight in wintertime – in order to keep her dressed with expensive clothing; the clothing is from the father's money. The food she eats is the father's money. "But I buy my own lunches," she says. "What do you want from me?!"

Wash Your Own Dishes

She doesn't have in her head the slightest thought that she owes a debt of gratitude to her parents. And so as she sits at the table like a queen and the mother is handing her dishes loaded with food, it doesn't occur to her that there is such a thing as saying to the mother "Thank you." Or maybe even better, maybe she should get up and serve herself. Maybe the mother should sit down and she should hand the food to her mother. Such a crazy idea! If she's sitting now behind the curtain listening (*the curtain that separated the women's section from the men's section in the shul during the lecture*) she's thinking, "That's a lunatic, that man over there!"

Or the boy on this side of the curtain; he'll say the same thing! That boy will say, "You mean to say that after the meal I should get up and wash the dish that I dirtied." Wash the dish?! Now he *knows* there's nothing to hear in this place.

And so their character becomes ruined and they grow up with the attitude that this is a world where they have to get. Give me, give me!

And so what kind of gratitude can we expect? Even when they become *frum*, they're Orthodox, they're pious, will they go around thinking, "How can I repay Hakodosh Boruch Hu?" That's the last thought. Just the opposite – they know that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is mortgaged up to His ears, *kavyochol*, for the good things they're doing.

After all, she's a good girl. She wears skirts – sometimes even below the knee. Yes. That's wonderful. She deserves credit. And he *davens* every day – sometimes he even walks in before *Borchu*. And so the only question is, "Is Hashem doing enough for me?"

A Novel Idea

But in the ancient times when people were trained by their parents for the business of life, they grew up quickly. The Gemara (Kesubos 49b) tells us about a *takanah* that was made in ancient times; it was very late in our history, long after the *churban* *Beis Hamikdosh*, in the second *churban*. When the Sanhedrin was established in the town of Usha they made a *takanah*, a novel idea, וְשִׂיחָא אָרַם זֶן אֶת בְּנָיו וּבְנוֹתָיו בְּשָׂהֵם קְטַנִּים – that a man should have to support his children when they're little. It's a *takanas chachomim*, a new idea.

So the question is: What does it mean little children? Who does a father have to begin supporting now? My eighteen year old child? Sixteen? No, no. בְּשָׂהֵם שֵׁשׁ. Six years old. When they're six years old, you have to support them. That's a *takanas chachomim*.

After that, if he's a big boy of seven already, he can come out into the field with me. What am I doing all day in the field by myself? Let him help out.

There were no laws in those days that the father had to be a slave and the child was the master. In those days, they didn't know about child labor laws. Let the child labor just like the father labors. The father would also like to go to school with his pocket full of money and eat and nosh all day long in the schools. But that's what ruins a person. Better to work in the field. The child followed the father on the field and he helped him in the work and he grew up understanding that this is not a world where you get something for nothing. You have to be grateful if you get anything at all.

Pious Clichés

Today? I don't think you find that too much. Sometimes you'll find Orthodox millionaires sitting in his office and when you come in and speak to him he says, "What did I do to deserve this wealth?" But it's only

a cliché. He's only saying words. He doesn't feel any worry. He doesn't feel a debt of gratitude. He doesn't walk out of his office bowed down with a heavy burden on his shoulders, "What can I do to pay off?"

Nobody is worried about that today. The Orthodox millionaire is walking out of his office thinking, "Look what a great guy I am. Look at all the other millionaires, dappers galavanting around town, playboys, and I'm going to the *shul* tonight! What a great fellow I am! Hakodosh Boruch Hu is getting a lot of *nachas* from me!"

But in the olden days, any one of the better people when he became more successful he became more and more worried. And the greater his success, the more was his concern, "How can I repay because the debt is becoming heavier and heavier?"

Desiring His Favor

Now, if you don't think about these things, so it might be difficult for you to understand what it means to seek the *ratzon Hashem*, to desire the favor of Hashem. But the great men sought to demonstrate to Hakodosh Boruch Hu their appreciation, and they desired more than anything, to gain the *ratzon Hashem*. If Hashem will show me His goodwill, if He'll shine His Face on me, that means I'm fulfilling my purpose. Like the Chumash tells us about a *korban*: וְכִי תִזְבְּחוּ זֶבַח תְּנוּחָה לְרִצְוֹנְכֶם תִּזְבְּחוּ – When you offer a sacrifice, do it for your will; it means you should want to achieve goodwill from Hashem.

To get the goodwill, to get the love of Hashem towards you, that's the great desire of an *oveid Hashem*. It's a new idea but it's important. Don't disdain it just because you never heard it before. Living successfully means you do things to cause Hakodosh Boruch Hu to regard you with favor. And that's what Hevel merited on that day. He outdid Kayin and merited the *ratzon Hashem* that his older brother had so desired.

Part III. Two Reactions

Pain of Rejection

Now, it doesn't mean that Kayin's hard work was rejected. וְאֵל קַיִן וְאֵל מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שָׁעָה – And to Kayin's *korban*, Hashem did not turn doesn't mean that He didn't accept the *korban*. When we say 'Hakodosh Boruch Hu did not turn', it's relative. It means there was no especial demonstration of turning, of showing favor. It was accepted like when a man ordinarily brings an offering.

What happens in the Beis Hamikdash when a *frum* Jew offers a sacrifice? Nothing happens. It's an offering, that's all. There's no phenomenon, no apparition, no fire coming down from the heavens. But it's a good *korban*; it's accepted. And that's what happened here. It's not that Hashem declared Kayin's offering as unworthy – only that He was especially satisfied with Hevel's acts and it was he, not Kayin, who received the especial favor of Hashem.

And yet for Kayin that was a tragedy of tremendous proportions. **וַיַּחַר לְקַיִן מְאֹד** – *And Kayin was exceedingly distressed*. Not “he was distressed” – *me'od* means “he was *exceedingly* distressed.” He fell into a tremendous sadness as a result of this and **וַיִּפֹּל פָּנָיו**, his face fell; all the way down.

Now, we shouldn't blame the poor man. Of course, he was upset! Because **וַיִּשְׁעַע** is what *he* wanted! To gain the favor of Hashem! That's why he had thought days and nights until he had contrived a form of serving Hashem by bringing his beloved produce; what his hands had taken out of the earth. He was going to do something now that would express at least just a little bit how much gratitude he felt in his heart for everything Hashem did for him. And here his younger brother who was only his disciple, a follower in his footsteps, had outdone him.

The Strange Neighbor

It certainly hurts. Suppose today you would bring a *korban*, a *koshere korban*. You make a *mizbeach* in your backyard – you can build a *mizbeach* if you're not *makriv* real *korbanos* – and you bring onto the *mizbeach*, let's say ten pounds of grapes. You're not going to be *makdish* it for a *korban*, but you're showing gratitude to Hashem: “I'm thanking You that You gave me *peiros*. A whole summer You gave me apples and peaches and grapes and cherries. I'm so grateful for the delicious miracle of *peiros* and I'm thanking You, Hashem, by means of this demonstration.”

And so you invite your family and your neighbors to come and participate. Now it could be that some of your neighbors might think it's a strange thing; maybe they're right, but no question you'd deserve a lot of credit for such an original way of expressing gratitude, such an innovation. I don't think anyone in Flatbush has done that yet. And you're doing it *leshem shomayim* too! You deserve great credit!

Now, imagine that you did all of this and so you have now a crowd of people in the backyard with you; you place the ten pounds of grapes on the *mizbeach* and then suddenly the sky opens up and a fire comes

down from Hashem; and it's heading towards your *mizbeach* to eat up your gift to Him. Ooh wah! That's *ratzon Hashem*! Hashem is shining His face on you, on your *chiddush*!

Flaming Jealousy

And then, a tragedy. You see that the fire comes down in your neighbor's backyard. You have a neighbor who imitated you. He saw what you were doing and he copied you. Only that he went a step further; he did something better, something more than you. And Hashem didn't turn to you – instead He turned your neighbor and He's shining His face on your neighbor. Ooh wah, that's a bitter pill to swallow.

And so, don't think it was a small peeve, a picayunish and unimportant matter that aroused Kayin's jealousy. It was the *ratzon Hashem*; it was Hashem's favor that just went lost from him!

That's something new to people; not like we learned when we were little children in *cheder* that Kayin was a wicked person. Kayin's frustration was occasioned by jealousy over *ratzon Hashem*.

What's the Problem?

Now since the desire to achieve *ratzon Hashem* is a most commendable attitude, so why did Hashem reprove Kayin? When Hakodosh Boruch Hu saw that Kayin was crestfallen because the offering of Hevel was accepted over his, at that time He spoke to Kayin by means of a prophecy and He said, לָמָּה חָרָה לְךָ – “Why has this vexed you?” What's the question? Of course it vexed him! Shouldn't it vex him that he lost out on *ratzon Hashem*?

The answer is that Hashem was saying, “You're making a mistake, Kayin. Why are you eating yourself up? It's excellent that you want My favor – that's the perfection of a person in this world – but you have to know how to channel that desire.”

I'll give you a *maschal*, a frequent occurrence in the *yeshivas*. Here's a boy sitting over his Gemara. But he's looking at the other table – there's somebody over there who is talking in learning and creating fireworks in the *beis hamedrash*; and he's becoming popular, getting a name of a big *talmid chacham*. And this boy over here is being devoured by envy.

Results of Jealousy

So the question is: What's the true reason for his envy? If it's because he would like the perfection of finding favor in the eyes of Hashem by means of knowing His Torah, so the envy would result in

spurring him on to additional effort. He'd put in more hours as a result of that envy. He'd concentrate more. He'd try to review and know better and discuss things with others to clarify points. If it's genuine envy of the other man's achieving *ratzon Hashem*, so there's nothing to be down about. It should result in his being spurred on to more efforts.

But suppose this result does not happen but instead he goes around vexed and sour faced. So Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "לָמָּה הָרַה לְךָ - what is the true reason that you're angry? Is it because you desire also to attain the *ratzon Hashem*? If that would be the reason, if you're really interested in the greatness that he achieved, then why waste time eating yourself up with anguish? Get busy! Make yourself better! Go ahead and do the same. "הֲלוֹא אִם תִּשְׁתַּבֵּר - if you'll improve, שְׂאֵת - I will uplift you by means of My favor."

You yeshiva man, why are you sitting devouring yourself with envy because of what the other man is doing? Get busy! Do it yourself. You don't have extra time? Instead of wasting Shabbos morning before *davening*, you can get an hour and a half of learning in. An hour and a half! You *daven*, let's say, 8:30; at 7:00 you can be in the synagogue and you can accomplish every Shabbos morning!

So Much Opportunity

There's a big Shabbos afternoon. The sun doesn't set until about a quarter to 6. You have plenty of time! Big Friday nights! And Sunday evenings! You have time and time and time! So get busy! Instead he's lying in bed Shabbos morning and the fires of jealousy are burning in him; that shows he's not really interested in achieving the favor of Hashem.

Every *baalabos*, there's always opportunity to improve yourself. You'd be surprised, even if you start late in life, you can become a very big *talmid chochom* in your spare time. And if people want to know how to do it, we're happy to advise them privately and give them a program that's easy, that's available, and it's a program that everybody can succeed in. If you're interested, join our telephone Torah program.

It's amazing what you can accomplish if you join us. Now it doesn't mean that if you'll study with us, you're going to become a *chaver* of Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky. It doesn't mean you'll sit next to the Steipler and talk in learning. But you certainly can achieve and you'll find especial favor in the eyes of Hashem.

That's a very important *yesod* that Hashem was teaching Kayin — he was teaching it to us in the Torah too — that when we see good people accomplishing, that's intended not as a reason to be down but instead to be a model for us, a spur.

Many Fields of Excellence

Not only in Torah learning; there are all kinds of models whom you can follow in life to achieve *ratzon Hashem*. Some people can find a model, a *chossid*. I don't mean "chossid" in the sense of opposed to a non-chossid. "Chossid" means a servant of Hashem. He learns how to put his heart into thinking about Hakodosh Boruch Hu in the style of the Chovos Halevavos.

Yes, certainly people can grow great in *emunah*. That's a big field! People can grow great in *tefillah*; a very big field. People can grow great in *tzedakah*; a big field. People can grow great in changing their *middos* of character. A very big field! There are other fields and branches, subdivisions of these fields. There is a great deal of work to do in this world. Like it says *hayom katzeir*, life is short, *vehamelachah merubah*, and there's a great deal of work. And nobody is left out of opportunities; there are so many avenues to achievement.

Let's say a woman. She sees other women who have worked in *avodas Hashem* and accomplished, she should use that as a model to emulate. There's a woman over here, not too far from here, who is busy helping the poor. I know her, and she's always sending parcels to the needy. She's gathering clothing and helping families. She's helping poor girls get married. There are a lot of good things that she is doing. Somebody might want to use her as a model.

Now some women would like to use the model of someone else, someone who looks into *seforim*, who meditates on Hashem's kindness, who reads Torah works. Very good.

Find A Model

Many women have grown great in the field of *tznius*. Someone might want to follow the model of a woman like that. Or another woman who writes. There are women who write, and they enrich our literature with Torah stories for children, inspiring stories of *ba'alei teshuva*, books that show the glory of living Torah lives. And these women are doing a big job. And there are not enough of them.

So it depends on which model is suited to your nature and what you want to accomplish. It needs not one lecture, but many lectures. But

there are all types of models and you should look for a model of somebody who is succeeding in virtue, a kind of model that you feel is suitable for you to follow.

And therefore all of the Hevels in the world, the ones who perfect themselves in *avodas Hashem*, are models for us. Instead of *vayipol panav*, we seek models; we look for models who can stir up the fire of good jealousy in our hearts.

If you see something, someone striding ahead, and you're worried about the loss of perfection, about how he or she is finding favor in Hashem's eyes while you are lagging behind, what should your reaction be then? Your reaction should be, **וְאֶעֱשֶׂה כֵּן גַּם אֲנִי** – *I also want to do the same.* Next time I'll bring a better *korban*." You'll exert yourself to improve your ways to better yourself. And then, you too will succeed in gaining that which you desire.

And that's the great Torah lesson that Hashem teaches us in beginning of the Torah; "If you want to grow great; if you want to achieve the greatness of *ratzon Hashem* which is the pinnacle of perfection in this world, then **תִּיטִיב**, make yourself better! Go ahead and do the same. **הֲלוֹא אִם תִּיטִיב** – And if you'll do that, **שָׂאֵת** – I will uplift you by means of My favor; My favor in this world and the next."

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Learning From Others

Sometimes someone we know is particularly successful in serving Hashem and in acquiring His Favor. If our objective is to gain the Love and Favor of Hashem, we cannot afford to be discouraged at our failures, rather we must attempt to imitate those who are successful in His service. This week I will *bli neder* spend a minute each day considering how I can find Hashem's favor by emulating someone who has been successful at serving Him.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

20 - Truth of Cain – Hevel | 272 - Cain, Noach and Uziahu
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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

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Q:

Why is it that the month of Cheshvan doesn't have any holidays in it or even any fast days?

A:

OAnd the answer is that Cheshvan comes right after the month of Tishrei. And since we lost so much time on the holidays, so much time from learning, so we need time to make it up. You know, if you learn every day with groups of *bochurim* in the yeshiva, your heart hurts because of all the learning that goes lost. Now it's Rosh Hashana, now it's Yom Kippur, now it's Sukkos. Your heart hurts you – you're missing so much.

And if you're a businessman you lose out a lot. If you work for a company your boss is getting sourer and sourer with you every day. He sees you're taking off for this Yom Tov and this holiday. You need a lot of alibis to explain that!

So finally Cheshvan comes along and it's a solid month of achievement. You can work every day; you can learn every day. And that's a great blessing, a great opportunity for making progress. No *yomim tovim*, no fast days, there's a lot of time to achieve.

Now, if you have a better explanation, go ahead, why not?

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