בס״ד

Divrei HaRav

Parshas Bereishis 5787

Delivered by HaRav Ari Farkas shlit״a
Rav of Khal Noam Hashem

Divrei Torah from Friday night, Shabbos day, and Shalosh Seudos
Prepared from a listener's recollection

Friday Night

Humility Through Forbearance and Making Room for Others

The Torah says, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Bereishis 1:26). Rashi explains that although this wording gives heretics an opening to claim, Heaven forbid, that there is more than one divine authority, Hashem nevertheless used it to teach proper conduct and humility: a greater person should consult someone smaller and seek his advice.

This deserves reflection. Hashem knew that the wording could be misunderstood, yet chose it to show us how precious and important humility is.

There is a deeper lesson here. This was not merely an outward display of humility, like someone who asks another person’s opinion to appear considerate while having no intention of taking it seriously. Hashem teaches that genuine humility means making room for another person, valuing his opinion, and including him, rather than performing an external act of submission.

Humility is among the most difficult qualities to acquire fully. It also carries a particular danger: a person can easily present himself as humble and lowly while remaining full of self-importance inside. Actions that look humble therefore do not necessarily express true humility.

The main task is consequently not to pursue outward acts of humility. It is to train ourselves to value others sincerely, listen to their opinions, make room for their words, and respect their thoughts and wishes. Through this conduct, a person approaches genuine humility.

This also sheds light on the description of Moshe Rabbeinu: “The man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more than any person upon the face of the earth” (Bamidbar 12:3).

Humility means being not only lowly, but also forbearing and willing to carry another person’s burden. A person must be able to bear with others, including their opinions and wishes, even when these differ from his own. He need not place his own view at the center of everything; he can make room for someone else.

This is the depth of “shafel vesovel,” lowly and forbearing. By learning to bear with others, carry their burdens, and give them room, a person becomes genuinely humble.

The way to acquire humility is therefore not by trying to look humble. By listening to others and sincerely valuing their views, a person gradually acquires humility within himself.

This is the great lesson of “Let us make man”: true greatness is expressed in the ability to make room for others and value them.

Shabbos Day

Kayin and the Danger of Measuring Ourselves Against Others

Our parshah relates the story of Kayin and Hevel. Kayin was the first person recorded in the Torah to commit murder, rising against his brother Hevel and killing him. We must consider what brought him to such a terrible act and what this teaches us in serving Hashem.

Kayin and Hevel pursued different occupations. Kayin worked the soil, while Hevel tended sheep. As explained in the commentary cited in the drasha, Hevel chose shepherding because the ground had been cursed following Adam's sin, and he wished to distance himself from it.

Kayin was the first to be moved on his own to bring an offering to Hashem: "After a period of days, Kayin brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to Hashem" (Bereishis 4:3). Seeing Kayin's act, Hevel was also inspired to bring an offering: "Hevel, too, brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat."

Thus, the initiative to bring an offering began with Kayin, and his inspiration led Hevel to bring one as well.

Yet the Torah tells us: "Hashem turned to Hevel and to his offering, but to Kayin and to his offering He did not turn." Hevel's offering was accepted, while Kayin's was not.

Immediately afterward, "Kayin became very angry, and his countenance fell." He lost heart, until Hashem addressed him: "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? Surely, if you improve, you will be uplifted."

What did Hashem mean by these words?

Hashem had not rejected Kayin altogether. On the contrary, He told him that he could correct his actions and rise higher. Moreover, according to the understanding of Ramban presented in the drasha, Kayin could, by improving his ways, reach a level even higher than Hevel's.

Why, then, did Kayin not accept Hashem's words and strengthen himself to improve, instead descending to such a terrible act?

Here we discover an important principle in a person's avodah.

There is a destructive tendency to look constantly at others and compare ourselves with them. When a person measures his success by another person's success, and his spiritual level by what someone else has attained, he can bring great destruction upon himself.

This was the point of Kayin's failure.

Kayin had been the first to bring an offering. The idea was his; the inspiration was his; and the path of serving Hashem remained open to him. Even after his offering was not accepted, Hashem Himself encouraged him: "If you improve, you will be uplifted." By improving his actions, he could rise and grow.

But Kayin could not take his eyes off Hevel. Instead of considering what he himself needed to correct, he remained preoccupied with the fact that Hevel's offering had

been accepted while his had not. He could not separate his own avodah from his brother's success.

This was the root of the destruction.

In truth, Kayin's work could have brought him to a very high level. Hevel, a shepherd, brought the firstborn and choicest portions of his flock, and his offering was accepted. Kayin, who worked the ground, needed to labor: plow, sow, wait for good produce to grow, and choose the finest fruit to bring before Hashem.

Precisely through that effort, sustained work, attempts, and corrections, he could have reached a lofty level, even rising above Hevel's.

There is a special value in work accomplished through toil. A person does not achieve perfection all at once; he advances gradually, corrects what needs correction, and tries again until he succeeds.

This was Hashem's message: "If you improve, you will be uplifted." Do not focus on your brother's achievements or measure yourself against him. Look at yourself, the work entrusted to you, and the way you can progress.

This offers a lesson for every person in serving Hashem.

Often a person sees someone else's success, whether spiritual or in other areas, and begins measuring himself against it. He wants to achieve what the other person achieved, become like him, and succeed in the same way.

But this is not the proper path.

Another person's success can certainly inspire and strengthen us, and we can learn from his good deeds. Yet his success should not become the standard by which we measure our own.

A person's success is measured by his own progress and improvement, rather than by what his friend has achieved.

We must look inward, recognize our strengths and shortcomings, and work on ourselves step by step. Sometimes we will succeed and sometimes stumble. Through our attempts, corrections, and effort, we can continue rising in our service of Hashem.

This is the lesson of Kayin and Hevel. Kayin began with a good impulse and a good deed, and great heights were within his reach. His focus on his brother's success, and his inability to accept that Hevel succeeded where he had not, brought about his downfall.

Our primary task is to rise above our own previous level, rather than above someone else.

When a person turns away from comparison and directs his energies toward improving himself, "If you improve, you will be uplifted" becomes fulfilled in him. By improving his ways, he rises to greater heights in serving Hashem.

Shalosh Seudos

Adam HaRishon and the Responsibility to Share Another Person's Burden

When Hashem questioned Adam HaRishon about eating from the Tree of Knowledge, Adam replied: "The woman whom You gave to be with me—she gave me of the tree, and I ate" (Bereishis 3:12). The Rav asked: What kind of answer is this? Does another person's wrongdoing justify doing the same and blaming that person?

We would not accept such an excuse even from a child. If a child says he did something wrong because his friend did it, his answer reveals another failing beyond the act itself: he has surrendered his judgment and his responsibility for his actions. How could Adam respond with what appears to be shifting the blame to Chavah?

The Rav also cited the Midrash's reading of "and I ate": "I ate, and I will eat again." This is equally puzzling. How can a person respond to his first sin by saying that he would repeat it?

Drawing on a teaching he cited in the name of Beis Yaakov, the Rav explained that Adam was not attempting to abandon responsibility. Rather, he was describing the responsibility he felt toward his wife. Hashem had given Chavah to be with him, entrusting him with a relationship and a partnership. Once she ate from the tree, Adam thought that he should not remain in the light of Gan Eden while she stood alone in the darkness outside it.

His reasoning was: "The woman whom You gave to be with me"—You gave her to be beside me, and I must be beside her and share her burden. He was not saying, "What You gave me is now Your problem." He was saying, "What You gave me has become my responsibility." He therefore thought that he must join her, even at the cost of leaving Gan Eden.

The Rav further explained that Kayin made a similar mistake. Kayin reasoned that, because Hashem—the perfect Creator—had created him, he himself must be as close to perfection as possible. He therefore assumed that his natural feelings must be appropriate. Even the anger that led him to kill Hevel seemed justified to him: if that anger and its resulting action were wrong, he reasoned, he would not have acted that way.

Hashem answered him: "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground" (Bereishis 4:10). The Rav explained that the blood crying out from the ground, and the earth's refusal, as it were, to accept the bloodshed, reveal that the act was not as it should have been. Had Kayin's action been right and consistent with the proper order of creation, this cry would not have risen from the earth. The fact that he felt anger and acted on it was therefore no proof that his action was justified.

This was the principle Hashem taught him: although the Creator is perfect, a person is not created with every character trait already perfected. Hashem created us with shortcomings and traits that require correction, and entrusted us with the work of recognizing them, managing our anger, and overcoming our impulses. We cannot justify every feeling by saying that we were created that way. We must examine how we ought to act and work on what needs improvement.

This also connects to Adam HaRishon’s reasoning. Even when a person is convinced that his reasoning is correct, and even when it arises from a sense of responsibility toward another person, he must recognize that he may have made a mistake. The Creator’s perfection does not eliminate the created person’s shortcomings, and reasoning that seems right does not exempt us from examining our actions in light of Hashem’s commands.

The Rav offered his own further explanation of “I ate, and I will eat again.” According to Adam’s reasoning, this was not a declaration of contempt, but an expression of what he still considered his duty: if his wife were in the same situation again, he would not wish to leave her alone. This explanation of the Midrash was the Rav’s own extension of the principle he cited from Beis Yaakov.

The Rav also explained, based on the teaching he cited from Beis Yaakov, the sequence of the passage. Hashem did not immediately pronounce Adam’s punishment. He first addressed Chavah, who said: “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” The serpent’s punishment was then pronounced, followed by Chavah’s, and finally Adam’s.

In this reading, the sequence first establishes the source of the stumbling and the reality of the sin, and then returns to Adam. Although he presented an argument rooted in responsibility toward his wife, he had nevertheless violated Hashem’s command. His reasoning did not exempt him from punishment. This does not imply that Hashem needed to discover new information; rather, the sequence teaches us how Adam’s claim is assessed.

The Rav then spoke about the great responsibility of marriage. He said that one of the moments at a wedding that moves him most deeply is the act of kinyan, when the chasan accepts the obligations of the kesubah. This is not merely a verbal undertaking. It is accepting the responsibility of being a husband, standing beside his wife, and sharing her burdens.

We must distinguish the worthy principle from the mistaken action. Responsibility for another person does not permit joining that person in an aveirah. We are not required to descend into sin so that someone will not be alone. We must remain beside that person in hardship, offer support, and help him or her emerge from the darkness.

This is the practical lesson. When someone close to us stumbles or faces distress, our responsibility does not disappear. We must share the burden, stand beside that person, and offer help while remaining faithful to Hashem’s commands. Genuine responsibility means refusing to abandon another person in difficulty and helping that person rise again.

Editorial note

These teachings were prepared from a listener’s recollection and are not a verbatim transcript. The attribution to Ramban regarding Kayin’s potential to rise above Hevel, and the precise Beis Yaakov reference for Adam’s argument and the order of punishments, remain to be confirmed. Beis Yosef was also mentioned in the initial recollection of the Shalosh Seudos drasha; the exact attribution needs clarification. The explanation of “I ate, and I will eat again” is presented as the Rav’s own addition. No exact reference is supplied here for the Midrash or for the expression “shafel vesovel.”