



## Juggling Jealousy

In *Parashat Bereisheet* we learn of the sacrifice Kayin offers to Hashem. His brother Hevel follows suit but becomes despondent when his sacrifice is not accepted and, out of apparent jealousy, kills Kayin. Every story in Torah is multi-dimensional and replete with significant and relevant lessons for our lives. Each incident has nuances that speak volumes to direct our own behaviors and choices. What can we learn here?

*“Ve’raisi ani et kol ha’amal ve’et kol kisharon ha’maaseh ki hi **kinat ish mei-re’iehu gam zeh hevel** - And I saw all the toil and all the excellence of work, which is a **man’s envy of his friend; this too is vanity**” (Kohelet 4:4). Rabbeinu Bechaya homiletically explains the verse to teach that any type of jealousy, whether of possession, wisdom or anything else, is wrong, such was the sin of Hevel. Jealousy prompted Hevel to bring his offering; this led him to hatred and ultimately his death. Chazal learn from the words “*gam hu – he too*” (*Bereisheet* 4:4), that Hevel followed his brother’s initiative and did not bring his offering out of his own desire.*

Thus, both brothers were motivated by feelings of jealousy, which escalated to feelings of hatred, and ended in fratricide. In both cases there was potential for spiritual growth and refinement but unfortunately, it went awry.

What is a healthy, positive “*kinat sof-rim*”? Rav Kestenbaum in *Olam Hamidot* teaches that when one wishes to emulate another and not to imitate them, it can be the greatest motivator for spiritual development and elevation. For example, if one sees his friend heavily involved in doing chesed daily, one can contemplate how to realistically add chesed into his day. The world does not need us to clone or duplicate the deeds of others, it needs us to figure out how to capitalize on our uniqueness to improve ourselves and the circumstances of those around us.

What can we do practically to minimize unhealthy jealousy? Rav Tuvya Weiss z”l emphasizes the importance of love. When there is no love, each person feels that the other is taking from him and reducing his assets, breeding feelings of envy. With love, there is always room for another. The *Chatam Sofer* explains how it could be that no one ever said, “it is too crowded to sleep in Yerushalayim [at *aliyah le’regeil*]” (*Avot* 5:7). Even if reality dictated that Yerushalayim was jam-packed and even cramped, the people never complained since feelings of love among brethren created a spirit of expansiveness.

Rav Kestenbaum adds that if someone is jealous of another person, he ought to be jealous of the whole package. While some

people may have areas of their lives or material possessions that may be enviable, we all know that there are likely many other things that they have that we wouldn't wish for ourselves. The key is to deepen our emunah, to know that Hashem has arranged everything to the exact degree and proportion that we need to lead successful lives of meaning and purpose. When we focus on appreciating what we have rather than looking at what others have, we will feel greater love and enhanced fulfillment.

The story of Kayin and Hevel is the story of human existence. Two people who are envious of each other for different reasons are all too familiar. Let us take inspiration from this story to appreciate what we have and use our G-d given gifts to best serve our Creator with sublimity and ennoblement. ■

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