

THE EASY WAY OUT!

by Rabbi Label Lam

And it was from the end of days, Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground; and Hevel he also brought himself of the firstlings of his flock and of the choicest. HASHEM turned to Hevel and to his offering, but to Cain and his offering He did not turn. This angered Cain exceedingly and his countenance fell. And HASHEM said to Cain, "Why are you angry and why is your face fallen. Surely if you improve yourself you will be forgiven, but if you do not improve yourself sin squats by the door. Its desire is against you but you can conquer it." And Cain spoke with his brother Hevel, and it happened when they were in the field that Cain rose up against his brother Hevel and killed him. (Breishis 4:3-8)

Here we have such a terribly tragic episode so early in human history; one brother kills another. How did such a thing happen? What was the motive? The answer can be summarized in one word, "Jealousy". Cain was upset that his brother Hevel excelled in an area that he initiated and gained the ultimate, a cosmic ovation from The Creator. His reaction can be described in clinical terms as "angry and depressed". He was in need of some serious psychological intervention. Who came to the rescue? None other than HASHEM! From here we can learn the art of good counseling. Our sages tell us that the question of the wise is half an answer, and so HASHEM asks, "Why are you angry and why are you depressed?" What's so brilliant about that question? The Ha'emek Davar the Netziv cleverly points out that there are two questions here. 1st- Why are you angry? And 2nd-Why are you depressed? What difference does it make that there are two questions? Are these not two conflicting emotions? Let's see!

What makes someone angry? One is brought to experience anger, I would posit, when something or someone frustrates his power.

When somebody suddenly usurps your parking place or behaves against your will, a fighting rage may be aroused. Here is an area where you feel empowered and someone has curbed your clout, thwarted your will, or disregarded your expectation. The result is anger. Who was the object of Cain's anger? He felt betrayed by and he blamed Hevel. Over whom does he have real power? Who is the only one that he truly has control of? Isn't it obviously true that he is only fully responsible for himself!?

Why does someone become depressed? Is it not when all hope is lost, at least in the imagination of the thinker!? The person feels de-energized at the news from the doctor or lawyer that there's nothing more to do. Concerning whom has Cain given up? He's given up on himself. Who is the only

one that he has full control of? You guessed it! Why then should he give up on himself? Why should he try to control his brother?

Rebbe Nachman ztl. said, "When you try to break a "mida" - a character trait, you end up with two broken character traits." Cain had two strong responses to his brother's meteoric rise to stardom. One was energizing, the other enervating. While trying to boost the battery of a car the positive and negative cables must be properly aligned. If the wires are crossed the result can be disastrous. Cain's wires were crossed, so he was told to take control of his own destiny. "Surely if you improve you will be forgiven". The talent and tendency to "let go" is for Hevel. Why then did he fail?

Cain's jealousy over Hevel's success was a sign of his own potential. Cain could have and should have allowed himself to become inspired. He had three choices, though. 1) Improve. That's hard. 2) Accept the status quo. That hurts. 3) Chop Hevel down. That's **the easy way out**.

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