

## And Hashem said to Kayin, “Why are you annoyed, and why has your countenance fallen? Surely, if you improve yourself, you will be forgiven. But if you do not improve yourself, sin rests at the door.” (4:6,7)

The *Baal HaTanya*, *zl*, derives an important lesson concerning human nature from this *pasuk*. We note that the individual outlook of people varies in perspective. There are those who see negativity all of the time. They care about *mitzvah* observance and seek every opportunity to strengthen it, but at what expense? Everywhere they go, whatever comes into their line of vision, they see sin. Everyone but themselves, of course, is not observing Torah and *mitzvos* properly:

*Shabbos* observance is not what it should be; people are not learning enough; their manner of dress reflects western society’s moral bankruptcy – and the list goes on. They want to help; they want to effect change, but how can they work with a world filled with sinners?

The other type of Jew attempts to look for and, thus, find every redeemable value that a Jew possesses. He sees their good, their acts of kindness, their minimal Torah study due to the taxing burdens of earning a living. He sees that their manner of dress has truly been influenced by the society in which they live and the environment in which they must function. This type of Jew seeks ways to reach out, to bring his fellow closer – not to shoot him full of piercing arrows. He wants to include, rather than ostracize. He understands that everyone has a history, every family has a pathology. Perhaps, by delving into their lives, we might be able to bring them closer.

Why is it that some always look at the dark side, that which is *tamei*, ritually unclean, while others have their vision set for the ritually pure, the *mitzvos* that another Jew performs, his positive attributes and actions? The *pasuk* gives us a profound answer. *Im teitiv*, “If **you** will improve **yourself**,” if **you** will be a repository of Torah and *mitzvos*, if **your** life will be one of dedication to you, Hashem and your fellowman, then, *s’eis*, “You will be forgiven/You will also tolerate the failings of others.” If you are good, then you will be patient with others. On the other hand, *Im lo teitiv*, “If you will not be good/ if your personal life will be checkered with sin, if your life will be replete with moral and ethical failings”; if spiritual bankruptcy will define your character, then, *l’pesach chatas roveitz*, “Sin will rest at the door/You will see sin at every doorstep.” Every step that you take; every person that you meet, you will see only negativity.

A person tends to see others as a mirror image of the individual himself. One sees in others what he is personally. If he is a good person with refined character traits, he will see the same positive image in others. If, regrettably, he is spiritually and morally deficient, he will see himself emulated by others. Before one looks at others, he should take a long, hard look at himself.