

And the man said, the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the fruit, and I did eat. (3:12)

The *parsha* begins relating the narrative of the first family by telling about the creation of man and his life's companion. The entire paradise is there for both of them. Hashem commanded them to stay away from only one fruit in *Gan Eden*. When Adam and Chava strolled through the garden, Adam conceded to Chava's wish and partook of this forbidden fruit. When Hashem confronted him, he did not forthrightly accept his responsibility, but he rather responded by blaming the entire event on his wife. The *Midrash Tanchuma* relates that Adam's statement was doubly wrong. First, he indicated his own weakness in allowing his wife to convince him to partake of the fruit. Second, *Chazal* state that he demonstrated great ingratitude to the One who presented him with his life's companion. He even intimated that had he been alone he would not have fallen prey to sin, assigning the fault to Hashem for giving him this woman.

Soon thereafter Adam and Chava's sons were born into a world of great bounty. When there is just enough to share, quarreling within families is rare; when there is plenty, jealousy arouses. Such a situation regrettably led to Kayin's rising up against his brother, Hevel, and killing him. When Hashem called out to Kayin, "seeking" his brother Hevel, Kayin responded with the well known words: "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" The *Midrash* continues to explain that Kayin was blaming Hashem for giving him an evil inclination. The evil inclination made him susceptible to transgression. In the second generation, Kayin continues demonstrating the inability to accept all responsibility. Hashem responded that the opportunity for doing both good and evil is accessible to everyone. Man was created in the image of Hashem, armed with the strength to rise above nature. This means the power to choose: to build, to destroy, to kill or to let live. Man has the key to existence. He must learn to accept that responsibility. It is always easy to place the blame on someone else - the teacher, the Rabbi, the *shule*, or the school.

The development of modern technology has enhanced the fear of children's exposure to inappropriate stimuli even in the privacy of our own homes. The portrayal of hideous crimes and other forms of decadence are real dangers to contemporary youth. Whose responsibility is it? The scientist for producing the technology, or perhaps Hashem's for giving him the intelligence to invent it? Or is it the fault of the husband and father and the wife and mother for not actualizing their own potential? One of the most valued lessons to be derived from this *parsha* is the obligation to shoulder one's own responsibilities toward one's own self and towards one's children. In our chaotic times we must ask ourselves the same question that Hashem asked of Adam, "*Where are you?*" What have you done with yourself? I gave you the power to be you and to direct yourself, your home, your family. Accept your responsibilities, and the world will be as I wanted it to be, a world of beauty, of harmony, of peace, and of happiness.