

And Kayin rose against his brother Hevel and killed him. (4:8)

The world consisted of four human beings. Kayin killed his brother Hevel. They were reduced to three people. Kayin was the world's first murderer. Hevel was the world's first victim. Without question, Kayin deserved to be punished for wiping out one-fourth of the world population. What about Hevel? One does not become a victim just because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. We do not believe in coincidence or chance. If Hevel was designated to be the victim, there is a reason. Nothing occurs in this world unless it has been Heavenly-decreed. Hevel must have acted in a manner that warranted Divine retribution, which resulted in Kayin becoming the agent of death. What did Hevel do to deserve this "distinction"?

Horav Eliezer Sorotzkin, zl, explains that it was not what Hevel did that earned him the dubious distinction of becoming the world's first victim; rather, it was what he did not do. Once Hashem did not "listen"/accept Kayin's *korban*, sacrifice, regardless of the reason, Kayin became depressed. He had no one with whom to share his feelings of dejection. He walked around, his head down, miserable, lost, broken-hearted. Where was Hevel when his brother needed him? Why did Hevel not go over to Kayin and comfort him, talk to him, listen to him, share his pain? After all, he was his brother. It is not as if Hevel had so many other people with whom he could converse. Kayin was a brother, broken, in pain, with no one to turn to. It was Hashem who asked Kayin why his face had "fallen"?

Hevel did not show empathy for his brother. He was more concerned with himself. One who does not take the time to support his brother, to feel his pain, to listen to his plight, is heartless, insensitive and narcissistic. When it involves a brother who just happens to represent one fourth of the world population, it is unforgivable. Thus, Heaven intervened.

Shlomo Hamelech says (*Mishlei* 12:25), *Daagah b'lev ish yashchenah*; "When there is worry in a man's heart, he should suppress it." There is a debate in *Chazal* (*Yoma* 75a) as to how one suppresses his worry. One says to erase it from his mind, not to dwell on worry. The other contends (*yashchenah*) that he should talk it over with others. We should never underestimate the power of talking to someone who cares, who listens. We live in a culture that teaches people to suppress their feelings. Displaying emotions is considered to be a sign of weakness. "Be strong"; "Keep your feelings to yourself"; "Get over it": are catchphrases which can destroy – and have destroyed – people. When one has no one with whom to talk, because no one is willing to listen or empathize, he/she will turn to other coping mechanisms – often resulting in dire consequences. These people could have benefited by talking to someone who listens patiently, non-judgmentally, empathetically. One does not have to solve the problem, but he must be willing to listen. Most often, that is all the person wants or needs.

One last note: There are people in every community who are lonely. Some are alone; others just need someone to whom they can open up, who will make them feel important, who will listen to what they have to say, regardless of its insignificance. For these individuals, listening to them could

be a lifesaver. Let us not forget Kayin. In this manner he, too, was a victim.