

And Hashem Elokim called to the man, and said unto him, 'Where are you?'" (3:8)

It seems strange that Hashem, Who knows everything, asked Adam, "*Where are you?*" Obviously, Hashem knew where Adam was. The Midrash tells us that Hashem certainly knew where Adam was; He just wanted to talk to him, to engage him in conversation. Hashem wanted to interact with Adam, to get him to open up and talk about the act that he had committed. **Horav Moshe Swift, zl**, offers a thoughtful insight. Whenever one senses a rift in a relationship, he should maintain contact in order to sustain hope of reconciliation. The tragedy is when there is no contact. When a child moves away, either by his own initiative or by his parents' "encouragement," if communication is interrupted, the break could become more than just temporary.

The same idea can be applied to our relationship with Hashem. Hashem did not want to break contact with Adam. A sin is not necessarily intrinsically devastating. We are human beings with shortcomings, and we are prone to make mistakes. When these mistakes cause a break in our relationship with Hashem, the situation becomes tragic. When the relationship is severed, one forgets who he is and where he is. He no longer cares; he no longer fears; he thinks he is independent.

In the *Midrash Eichah*, *Chazal* suggest a play on the word "v'fht", "*Where are you?*" They read the word "*Ayeca*," "Where," as "*Eichah*," "How?" This word has the same spelling, but a different meaning. If you know where you are, then how could you have done it?

Kayin was not punished as much for taking his brother's life, as for responding to Hashem's query by saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" What temerity, what blatant *chutzpah!* Instead of remorse, he responded with derision. We say in the *Selichos*, "I am ashamed to lift up my face unto You." This should be our attitude--shame and remorse. The greatest sin is when we forget who we are and where we are. When we lose our shame, we regrettably lose an essential component of our Jewishness.