

Kayin brought an offering to Hashem of the fruit of the ground... and as for Hevel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and from their choicest. (4:3,4)

Kayin brought his offering, followed by Hevel's offering. Hashem turned (listened/accepted) to Hevel's offering, but did not respond to Kayin's offering. On the surface, the disparity between Kayin and Hevel's offering was quality. Hevel offered his finest, choicest, while Kayin brought what he did not want for himself. The inferior crops were designated for offering. So begins the first tragic story of brother killing brother. We understand that the Torah's narrative is replete with powerful messages and lessons. How do we understand this incident between history's first two sons? First and foremost: Why did Hashem not accept Kayin's *korban*, offering? It may not have represented his finest crops, but it was a *korban*. Just because a potential donor does not give in accordance to our expectations, is this reason to ignore or refuse his present donation?

Horav Moshe Bik, zl, explains that Kayin's offering differed from Hevel's offering in two areas. First, Kayin wanted to do his own thing, to be the only one bringing a *korban* to Hashem. It was his innovation, and he had no desire to share the limelight with anyone else – even his brother. Hevel was an inclusive type of person. He also wanted to bring a *korban*, and he would have liked for others to follow suit. Thus, the Torah writes, *V'Hevel heivi gam hu*; "He also brought." This means that he also brought others with him. He believed in spreading the spiritual wealth, in allowing others to partake in the spiritual opportunity.

Hevel and Kayin had diverse perspectives in another area. Kayin felt that he had done Hashem a favor by offering a *korban*. Hence, the Torah writes that Kayin "brought an offering." He was quite proud of his achievement. Hevel thought nothing of his actions. He brought a *korban*, because it was the correct and proper thing to do. He neither did so in order to appease and find favor in Hashem's eyes, nor did he feel that Hashem was in his debt for his actions.

This is what David *Hamelech* means when he says (*Tehillim* 32:2), *Ashrei Adam lo yachshov Hashem lo Aven v'ein b'rucho remiyah*, "Praiseworthy is the man to whom Hashem does not ascribe iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit." Who is the person that is worthy of such appellation? One whose spirit does not rise up when he serves Hashem. We *daven* well; we learn well; we perform a wonderful act of kindness; it goes to our head. After all, now Hashem owes us, because we have been so good. Hashem does not respond favorably to such religious arrogance. We serve Hashem because it is a Heavenly mandate. The haughtiness that enters our mind after a "job well done" undermines the service that we performed.

This is why Hashem did not turn favorably to Kayin's *korban*. The *korban* that Kayin offered was more about Kayin than it was about Hashem. The Almighty does not approve of arrogance – and especially when one employs his religious service as a means for lording over others and garnering attention for himself.