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Parshat HaShavua
Yeshivat Har Etzion

This parasha series is dedicated
Le-zekher Nishmat HaRabanit Chana bat HaRav Yehuda Zelig zt"l.

This shiur is dedicated in loving memory of Esther Okon z"l,
on the occasion of her yartzheit.

Parashat Bereishit
The Story of Chava (Bereishit 4)
By Rav Yehuda Rock

Chapter 4 of Bereishit is popularly referred to as the story of Kayin and Hevel. However, as we shall see, the main character of the story is actually their mother, Chava.

The structure of the chapter looks strange: first we read of the birth of Kayin and Hevel (1-2), then the Torah goes on to a description of them and their deeds (3-16), followed by the story of Kayin's dynasty, leading – seven generations later – to Lemekh and to his sons (17-24). The end of the chapter then goes back in time to Chava giving birth again after the death of Hevel. What is the meaning of this deviation from the chronological order of events?

The structure seems peculiar even if we accept the forced explanation (which Rashi brings in verse 25, from Midrash Tanchuma) that all seven generations from Adam to Lemekh grew older and bore other children before Shet was born to Chava (average age for first birth: less than 19. This is very young, especially in relation to the ages recorded for first children in chapter 5 and in chapter 11). Even if this improbable assumption were true, it would seem far more logical to complete the list of children born to Adam and Chava itself before moving on to Kayin's dynasty. In comparison we may point to chapter 5 where, following the birth of Shet to Adam (5:3), the Torah mentions the remaining eight years of Adam's life, during which he bore sons and daughters, and then his death – all this before describing the generations of Shet. Likewise, the successive generations, and similarly – the structure of chapter 11.

Attention should also be paid to another interesting point, that the beginning of the chapter and its conclusion share similar ideas and language:

Bereishit 5:1-2

- a. "Adam knew Chava, his wife
- b. And she conceived and bore Kayin
- c. For she said, 'I have acquired a man from God'
- d. And she bore further his brother, Hevel"
- e. (The second half of verse 2 may be viewed as background to the rest of the story)
- f. Professions of Kayin and Hevel, and their actions

Bereishit 4:25-26

- a. "And Adam knew his wife again
- b. And she bore a son and called his name Shet
- c. 'For God has appointed me another seed
- d. Instead of Hevel, for Kayin had slain him'
- e .
- f. And to Shet, too, a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. Then people began to call upon God by name".

Each unit opens with Adam "knowing" his wife, and continues with Chava bearing a son and naming him. The beginning of the chapter goes on to tell of the birth of Hevel, while at the end of the chapter Hevel is mentioned again, this time in the context of the naming of Shet. The end of the chapter recounts briefly that Shet bore Enosh, and what happens during Enosh's lifetime, while the beginning of the chapter continues with a longer chain of narratives, including Kayin's deeds and his descendants.

Thus, it would appear that chapter 4 has a deliberate literary structure. The first and last two verses form an outer framework, determining the main subject. This framework speaks of Chava and her births. It is Chava who is the central character of the story, and the middle part of the chapter should be viewed in the wider context of its outer framework.

Further support for this view may be found in the syntactical structure of the chapter's first verse. The subject is mentioned first, and then the verb is found in past tense (Ve-ha-adam yada'), rather than the more common construction whereby the verb, in future tense with a vav ha-hipukh, is followed by its subject (va-yeda' ha-adam). This formula is usually used to express a contrast to what preceded it, or to imply that what it describes took place in the distant future – i.e., some time preceding the events in the narrative continuum. Here the Torah cannot be intending a contrast to or contradiction of what preceded this verse, since it is the first verse of the chapter. Hence, it must be describing a relatively distant past. But why does the Torah describe Adam knowing his wife as a distant past background to the story, rather than as the first event in its literary continuum? To Rashi's view, the intention here is to establish a chronological relationship between this instance of Adam knowing his wife and their departure from the Garden of Eden, so as to teach us that he knew his wife prior to their expulsion. But this is understood only if we read the chapter as a direct continuation of the previous one, while in fact our chapter would appear to represent a new, independent literary unit. Thus it would seem that the function of the distant past tense here is to make Adam's knowledge of his wife a distant background to the story, thereby removing it from the chapter's principal narrative. This emphasizes that Chava's pregnancy and childbirth are elements of the principal narrative; the story is specifically the story of Chava, not of Adam.

As noted, the two parts of the story's outer framework parallel one another in terms of both substance and language. A comparison between them may hold the key to the main message of the story.

The first part of the framework story (1-2) speaks of Chava giving birth to Kayin and naming him. Clearly, the birth of Hevel is an event of secondary importance, and Hevel is a secondary character in the story, as we see from the expression "[she bore] further" (compare 38:5 – there, too, in the context of the birth of a son whose name has negative connotations), from the reference to the second son as "[Kayin's] brother," and from the meaning of his name. It becomes apparent, too, later on: Hevel is passive in the first part of the story, and is

altogether absent from the rest (after Kayin kills him). The second part of the framework story (25-26) speaks of Chava giving birth to Shet and naming him.

The meaning of both names – "Kayin" and "Shet" – includes the recognition that God created the child. But what a great divide separates these two names! The name "Kayin" is selected to express the idea: "I have acquired a man from God" (or "with God," in accordance with those commentators who disagree with Rav Sa'adya Gaon). Chava places herself, as it were, on a par with God, Creator of the heavens and the earth. God and Chava are joint masters and owners of the child, since they created him together. In contrast, the name "Shet" is chosen with the explanation: "God has appointed me another seed instead of Hevel, for Kayin killed him." Here the name is given from an altogether different place: there is recognition of God's mercy in the gift of seed that He has given her.

Hence, our narrative is the story of the development in Chava's consciousness. She moves from an approach of arrogance, competitive acquisitiveness and showing off her creative power, to an approach of submissiveness and gratitude towards God.

What brings about this change? The answer is hinted to in her own words: "For God has appointed me another seed in place of Hevel, for Kayin killed him." Hevel, whom she bore "further," and whom she regarded as 'hevel' – worthless, in relation to "his brother" – became precious to her with time. And when he was taken from her, she came to recognize his worth. Moreover, she recognized that God Who had taken him was also God Who had granted him. She came to sense her dependence on God, and understood that God mastership and ownership of the gift was qualitatively different from her own role in giving birth to him. With the birth of Shet, Chava understood that it was God Who had given him to her as a gift, just as He had given her Kayin and Hevel.

We must now examine the function of the middle part of the chapter – the story of Kayin and Hevel. This unit represents the main section in terms of quantity; however, as noted, it should be seen in the context of the framework story.

It seems that this chapter comes to demonstrate the consequences of Chava's approach, which is reflected in the name she gives Kayin and which she apparently passed on to him. If we examine the middle section carefully, detail by detail, we discover how the Torah describes its long-term educational results.

Kayin grew up with the authoritative, capitalistic view reflected in his name. He sought to give expression to his own mastery of the world around him, and thus became a tiller of the soil. Hevel, in contrast, was not educated towards materialism and contented himself with flocks of sheep – detached from the earth and transitory.

Kayin, in inventing the concept of bringing a sacrifice, brought "of the produce of the land as an offering to God." A comparison with the sacrifice of his brother, who brought "of the first of his flock and of their fat parts," shows that Kayin did not invest any particular effort in the quality of his offering (compare Bereishit Rabba 22,5 and Rashi and Ibn Ezra ad loc). It seems that Kayin viewed his sacrifice as a sort of act of recognition of partnership: God has contributed His part toward the bountiful harvest by bringing rain, while Kayin had contributed by working the land. For this reason Kayin brings of the produce of the land as an offering to God, from His portion. There is no expression of submission before God or serving Him; there is only recognition of His participation. In his fundamentally capitalistic

approach, assuming the right to ownership of production – extending to God, too – Kayin continues the ideological direction of his mother, Chava.

"God acquiesced to Hevel and to his offering, but to Kayin and to his offering He did not acquiesce. And Kayin was very angry, and his face fell" (4-5). The structure of the verse emphasizes the contrast between God's reaction to Hevel's offering and His reaction to that of Kayin. This structure would seem to be telling us that Kayin's bitterness corresponds principally to the contrast between him and his brother. If he had been the sole offerer and his sacrifice had not been accepted by God, it would have disturbed him less than the present situation, baldly presenting the fact that God had accepted Hevel's sacrifice but not his own. Again we encounter capitalistic, competitive aggression. The commentators deliberate over God's words to Kayin; we shall not review their various interpretations, nor suggest our own. However, it appears clear that God is warning Kayin about the great danger lurking in his personality, leading to sin ("sin crouches at the doorway"), and instructing him as to his ability – and responsibility – to choose to control his inclination ("you shall rule over it"). On the basis of the continuation of the chapter, this would appear to be a fundamental statement about Kayin's personality. Kayin has powerful abilities and inclinations – powers of creativity and dominion. These powers may draw him towards evil, but he can and must control them. We might also interpret (depending on the exegetical details of the verse) that since these inclinations exist within him, even if he "does well" in controlling them, he will only achieve the level of "acceptance," but not real acquiescence to his offerings, as achieved by Hevel. According to what we have said above, the inclinations referred to in this verse are the result of the upbringing that Kayin received from his mother – an education that glorified production and ownership.

"Then Kayin said to Hevel, his brother" (8). The commentators struggle with this verse, for the text appears not to provide the content of his "saying." The most appropriate interpretation seems to be offered by the Ibn Ezra, who explains that this sentence refers to what was mentioned previously. In other words, after God had rebuked Kayin ("God said to Kayin... and you shall rule over it"), Kayin went to Hevel and told him these things.

It appears further that Kayin did not tell his brother that God had rebuked him. Were this the case, the text should have said, "Kayin told Hevel, his brother," or "Kayin recounted to Hevel." The expression "said" (a-m-r) always refers to direct speech, a quotation of the speaker's words (see A. Mirsky, "Ha-Pisuk shel ha-Signon ha-Ivri," *Mossad Ha-Rav Kook*, Jerusalem 5738, p. 90 onwards). Therefore the verse would appear to teach us that Kayin conveyed God's words to Hevel as a direct quote, as though they had been addressed to Hevel, too.

Kayin fails to understand – or chooses not to understand – that there is a difference between himself and his brother; a different in personality that leads to a difference in the roles that they are meant to realize. Only Kayin is told that he is inclined towards aggression, production and domination, obligating him to wage a constant inner battle. Kayin's task in the world is not the same as that of Hevel, and what Hevel can achieve is not the same as what Kayin can achieve. But the competitive, domineering Kayin is not prepared to accept these terms; he feels a need to level the playing field, and he tries to force the same conditions upon Hevel, too. His jealousy and competitiveness eventually lead him to dominate Hevel and to take his life.

]Concerning Kayin's punishment, see Rav Breuer's explanation, Perek Bereishit, p. 123 onwards[.

As stated above, God gives Kayin the task of controlling the sin that crouches at his doorway. At the very outset Kayin fails in this task and kills his brother, but he comes to learn to channel his powers of production and domination in the direction of positive creativity: "He built a city..." (17.)

The generations of Kayin's descendants reflect the various directions taken by their ancestor's powers of production and acquisition. The children of Lemekh invented new technologies and new social structures: "Ada bore Yaval – he was the father of those who dwell in tents and who have cattle. And his brother's name was Yuval; he was the father of all who grasp the lyre and pipe. And Tzilla, too, bore Tuval-Kayin, who forged every type of sharp instrument in brass and iron" (20-22). Thus they continued the path of Kayin at the end of his life – the Kayin who built a city. On the other hand, their father Lemekh spoke – and apparently also acted – in a violent and domineering manner: "Lemekh said to his wives, 'Ada and Tzilla – hear my voice; wives of Lemekh – hearken to my speech. For I have killed a man for wounding me, and a child for my injury. If Kayin shall be avenged sevenfold, then Lemekh – seventy and sevenfold.'" It is clear from his words that it was Kayin's first path that served to inspire him.

Thus, just as Kayin's nature was influenced by his mother's path, so the nature of Lemekh and his children – Kayin's grandchildren – bore the influence of his own path, even several generations on. Thus the traits of Chava were felt, indirectly, throughout seven generations.

All of this, as we see from the structure of the chapter, is the story of the long-term educational effects of Chava's views and utterances at the time when she bore and raised Kayin. The end of the chapter illustrates the other side of the coin: with recognition of God's mercies and with submission to Him, Chava calls her third son "Shet" – "For God has appointed me another seed instead of Hevel, for Kayin killed him." The result of this change in direction was that her descendants learned to find new paths in true service of God: "To Shet, too, a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. Then people began calling upon God by name".

Translated by Kaeren Fish