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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

BECOME A MITZVAH BILLIONAIRE!

PARSHAS BEREISHIS

Rabbeinu Bachya offers a parable about two businessmen. One of them sold an item for ten times the amount that he paid for it. He bought the item for \$10 and sold it for \$100. He made a profit of \$90. The other businessman only sold his merchandise for twice what he paid for it. However, he had much more merchandise. He paid \$5,000 for all his merchandise and sold it for \$10,000. His profit was \$5,000. Although the percentage of his profit was less than that of the first businessman, he profited more because he had more merchandise. (Chovos Halevavos Shaar Avodas Hashem Perek 6)

The first man, Adam, had two sons, Kayin and Hevel. Kayin and Hevel both offered sacrifices to Hashem. Kayin's sacrifice was from inferior quality produce whereas Hevel's was from among his choicest animals.

Hashem accepted Hevel's sacrifice but did not accept Kayin's sacrifice. Since Kayin's sacrifice was not accepted by Hashem, Kayin became jealous of and angry at his brother. According to some commentaries, that was the reason why Kayin killed Hevel.

Hashem called out to Kayin, "*What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.*" (Bereishis 4:10). The word used for "*your brother's blood*" is in plural, "דְּמֵי אָחִיךָ". Why? **Rashi** gives two explanations that are recorded in the **Talmud** (Sanhedrin 37A). The first is that Kayin inflicted many wounds on Hevel, not knowing which blow would prove to be fatal. The second explanation which **Onkelos** also says is that it referred to Hevel's blood and the blood of his future descendants. Kayin's act of murder was even worse than imagined. He was responsible for all of Hevel's descendants who would never be born. **Talmud** (Sanhedrin 37A) says that in cases

"Hashem said [to Kayin], What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground." (Bereishis 4:10)

of capital law, if one testifies falsely, the blood of the accused and the blood of his offspring that he did not merit to produce are attributed to the witness's testimony for eternity!

Talmud Yerushalmi (Sanhedrin 4:9) says that anybody who

destroys a single life is counted as if he destroyed an entire world! On the other hand, anybody who preserves a single life is counted as if he preserved an entire world! **Rabbi Zelig Pliskin** (Love Thy Neighbor) quotes the **Chofetz Chaim** z"l who says that if one is punished for the negative effects of his actions on future generations then certainly, he will be rewarded for the positive effects. One who teaches Torah to others and influences them to fulfill the mitzvos, is also credited with the Torah learning and mitzvos of all that man's future generations.

Rabbi Pliskin also quotes **Rabbeinu Bachya** (Chovos Halevavos Shaar Avodas Hashem Perek 6) that the merits of one who teaches a Jew who is not knowledgeable of his heritage or one who influences others to repent is even greater than one who has achieved spiritual perfection in his own service to Hashem! The reason is that when a person influences others to do mitzvos and come closer to Hashem, all their merits [and I

assume the merits of all their descendants] will also be added to his own merits. Rabbeinu Bachya's parable recorded above illustrates that

if someone improves himself AND others, his merits are much greater than the person who simply improves himself!

Since October 7th, many Jews have accepted upon themselves to do certain mitzvos.

Now is an opportune time when Jews are more receptive to learning about and doing mitzvos.

Most of us probably know of at least one Jew who is ignorant of the beauty of Judaism. It may be a neighbor, someone we do business with, or a co-worker. Maybe now is a good time to invite them for a Shabbos meal, to our Chanukah lighting, to a Purim seudah, ... Maybe we can show them a short, inspirational Torah video or gently teach them about a particular mitzvah.

Our actions will make Hashem very happy. Doing so will also increase our own merits quantitatively!!

Let us all strive to become mitzvah billionaires!

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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