



Week 3

קנאה

This guided learning sheet explores the *middah* of *kinah*—jealousy. Each source is accompanied by explanation and discussion questions to facilitate personal reflection and group dialogue.

The first box of questions in color below are general questions about participants' experience of working on *middot* and remain the same from week to week. These questions are a helpful tool to check in and reflect on growth over time, in a consistent manner. Though the questions remain the same each week, the answers will naturally change depending on which *middah* is being explored. You may choose to start or end your learning session with these questions. The rest of questions are specifically related to the *middah* of the week and are interspersed throughout the session to deepen the conversation.

General questions when reflecting on the *middah* of the week:

General questions remain the same from week to week and are helpful tools to reflect on growth over time. The answers will vastly change depending on the *middah* of the week.

1. What did I learn about myself this week?
2. What felt difficult when working on this *middah*?
3. What felt natural or easy when working on this *middah*?
4. How has practicing this *middah* improved your life or how does it have the potential to impact your life?
5. Does anyone in the group have a story of how this *middah* came up in a real situation (this week or beyond)? How did you respond?
6. Does anyone in the group have insights, advice or tips to keep in mind when working on this *middah* going forward?

Kinah refers to envy/jealousy. This is generally aroused when someone else has something we want, whether a material possession, talent, asset, relationship, or role. These feelings either destroy a person or be redirected toward positive growth.

Source 1

Let's start by taking a look at the connection between harboring jealousy and the danger of losing sight of one's mission and purpose in this world:

ר' שלמה וולבה - עלי שור ח"א, פרק ששי

המכיר את עצמו ויודע תכונותיו ויודע כי מה שהננו הבורא יתברך – מתנה גדולה היא, ואם רק ינצל את כוחותיו יגיע לכל מעלה חמודה, וישיג בתורה הקדושה מה שהבורא עולם רצה שהוא ישיג ובאופן שהבורא עולם רצה שישגוהו – אדם זה אינו סובל עוד מקנאה...

He who knows himself and knows his qualities and knows that what the Creator has bestowed upon him – is a great gift, and if he only utilizes his powers, he will reach every precious level, and will achieve in the holy Torah what the Creator wanted him to achieve and in the way the Creator wanted him to achieve. This person no longer suffers from envy...

הרי עליך להתבונן כי הבורא יתברך אינו רוצה שכל בני אדם יסתכלו בתורה באותו מבט וילמדו באותה דרך ויבינו אותו דבר אלא כל אחד בגישה שלו לפי כשרונותיו שלו וביגיעה המיוחדת לו ואז, כולם יחד יזכו לתורה שלימה.

You must contemplate that the Creator, the Blessed, does not want all people to look at the Torah with the same lens and learn in the same way and understand the same thing, but each with his *own* approach according to his *own* talents and his *own* unique toil. Then, all together will attain the *complete* Torah.

Takeaway: *Hashem does not want the same thing from every person. He wants something specific from you, which you alone can bring to the world. This is why He gifted you with specific abilities and assets and other people with different abilities and assets. Focusing on the person you are, with the unique constellation of qualities you have been given, instead of wasting time and hyper-focusing what others have and you don't, allows you to focus on and fulfill your unique purpose and role.*

Discuss:

1. Do you feel an awareness of your unique qualities?
2. It is easy to see how these qualities and life experiences are tools for fulfilling your unique purpose in serving Hashem? Why or why not?
3. How does this awareness that Hashem wants something specific from *you* impact the way you feel when you see someone with assets or attributes that appear more desirable than yours?
4. How might focusing on your own mission reduce feelings of envy? What makes this shift difficult in practice?
5. What would be lost if everyone approached Torah in the same way? How does this idea shape the way we build our personal connection to Torah, learning environments, homes, or communities?

- Imagine being able to channel the energy and emotion you invest in comparing yourself with others, and instead devote it to your own betterment. What might look different in your life (internally, vis-a-vis yourself, and externally in your interactions with others)?
- Are the people who are the most frequent targets of your jealousy? Where do you find overlap or share commonality? In what way are you “the same” as them, which makes comparison more inevitable?

Source 2

The trait of of kinah is actually rooted in positive aspiration:

ר' יחזקאל "האצקל" לעוונישטיין – אור יחזקאל - חלק ד

והנה בפשטות דומה בעינינו שכוחות אלו של קנאה והקושי לסבול להיות פחות מחברו נובע כולו מחמת כוחות יצר הרע, אך באמת אין הדברים כן, אלא כל כח המידה מקורה בכוחות הנפש, שהוא חלק אלוק ממעל אור פני ה' והיא מידה רוחנית, וכח הרוחני הוא שאינו רוצה לסבול שתהיה ירידה בכוחותיו, מפני כח המעלה בעצמותה, ששאפת המעלה שתהא קרובה לה' יתברך ושלא תהיה התרחקות ממנו יתברך. ולכן אינו יכול לסבול בראותו אחרים הקרובים יותר ממנו לשלימות אך כיון שניתן הנפש בתוך החומר הגופני, נתעטפו כוחות הנפש כל ידי כוחות החומר ונעשו כדוגמתן לכוחות הרע והחושך.

And here, in simple terms, it seems to us that these forces of envy and the difficulty of tolerating being less than one's friend stem entirely from the forces of the evil inclination, but in reality, things are not so, rather, all the power of measure originates from the powers of the soul, which is a part of G-d, the light of G-d's face, and it is a spiritual trait. It is the spiritual power that does not want to tolerate a decline in its powers, because the power of ascension/growth is in its essence, which is the aspiration of virtue to be close to G-d, and not to be distant from Him. Therefore, he cannot tolerate seeing others who are closer to perfection than he is. But since the soul is given within physical matter, the powers of the soul are enveloped by the powers of physicality and become like the powers of evil and darkness.

Takeaway: *Feelings of kinah actually stem from a desire for growth and ascension — to live as a higher, more perfected being. Instead of feelings of kinah evoking feelings of shame and disappointment, realize that it issues from a yearning for closeness to Hashem.*

Discuss:

- What messages do you generally communicate to yourself when you encounter a negative trait like jealousy?
- How might reframing *kinah* from a source of shame and disappointment to an expression of a deeper yearning for closeness to Hashem help us channel this trait more constructively?
- Does recognizing that *kinah* stems from a higher desire for goodness change how you view yourself or your capacity for growth?

Source 3

We can indeed harness the constructive power of kinah:

אור יחזקאל - חלק ד

"הקנאה והתאווה והכבוד מוציאים את האדם מן העולם" (אבות ד', כ"ב) מורגלים אנו להבין כי מידות אלו מקורן אלו בהרגשת חיסרון, וכאשר רואה בעיניו דברים שחסרים לו שואף ומתאווה אליהם כדי להשיגם.

"Envy, lust, and pride take a person out of the world" (Avot 4:22). We are accustomed to understanding that these qualities originate from a sense of deficiency, and when one sees things that he lacks, he aspires and desires them in order to obtain them.

Takeaway: *Kinah is an indication that I feel a deficiency or lack in myself that I see fulfilled in someone else.*

Discuss:

1. Is there a specific type of person or thing you generally find yourself jealous of?
2. What quality, characteristics, or traits do they have that you believe you lack?
3. Are these things you can work toward and eventually acquire, or are they counter to your nature, values, or lifestyle?
4. Note that Mishnah says jealousy "takes a person out of the world". Where may *kinah* have affected your ability to earn *Olam Haba* (i.e., taken you out of the World to Come) by thwarting your mitzvah observance?
5. Has *kinah* ever negatively affected your feelings of satisfaction and appreciation for something that previously brought you joy and wholeness (i.e., taken you out of this world)?
6. When you find yourself "peering into" other people's lives and circumstances, does it generally breed more satisfaction with your life? When/with whom do you find this form of היזק ראייה (damaging by looking into someone else's property/life), presenting most frequently?

We can come to view kinah not as a flaw to suppress, but as a message — a mirror that reveals something about our own values, desires, and areas for growth.

Source 4

The story of Kayin and Hevel teaches us about the first time we encounter kinah in mankind:

בראשית: ד'ג'-ה'

וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ יָמִים וַיֵּבֵא לָנוֹן מִפְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה מִנְחָה לַ'ה': וַיִּקְבֹּל הַבְּיָא גַם־הוּא מִבְּכֹרוֹת צֹאנָו וּמִמְחֻלְבָּהוּ וַיִּשַׁע ה' אֶל־הַקֶּבֶל וְאֶל־מִנְחָתוֹ: וְאֶל־קַיִן וְאֶל־מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שָׁעָה וַיִּחַר לְקַיִן מְאֹד וַיִּפְּלוּ פָּנָיו: וַיִּזְאָמֶר ה' אֶל־קַיִן לָמָּה חָרָה לְךָ וּלְמָּה נָפְלוּ פָּנֶיךָ: הֲלוֹא אִם־תֵּיטִיב שְׂאֵת וְאִם לֹא תֵיטִיב לְפָתַח חַטָּאת רֹבֵץ וְאֵלֶיךָ תִּשְׁוֹקָתוֹ וְאַתָּה תִּמְשָׁל־בּוֹ: וַיִּזְאָמֶר קַיִן אֶל־הַקֶּבֶל אָחִיו וַיְהִי בִּהְיוֹתָם בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיִּקָּם קַיִן אֶל־הַקֶּבֶל אָחִיו וַיַּהַרְגֵהוּ:

In the course of time, Kayin brought an offering to Hashem from the fruit of the ground; and Hevel brought the choicest of the firstlings of his flock. Hashem turned to Hevel and his offering, but did not turn to Kayin and his offering. Kayin was very distressed and his face fell. And Hashem said to Kayin, "Why are you upset, And why is your face fallen? Surely, if you do right, there is uplift. But if you do not do right sin crouches at the door; Its desire is toward you, yet you can be its master." Kayin said to his brother Hevel and when they were in the field, Kayin set upon his brother Hevel and killed him.

Sources 5, 6, 7, 8

The story of Kayin and Hevel helps us glean important insights into what kinah can actually teach us about ourselves:

Rashi

רש"י: מפרי האדמה

מן הגרוע, ויש אגדה שאומרת ורע פשתן היה:

FROM THE FRUIT OF THE GROUND — Of the worst. And there is an aggadah which says it was flaxseed.

רש"י: וישע

ויפן, וכן ואל מנתתו לא ישע – לא פנה, וכן ולא ישע (ישעיהו י"ז) – לא יפנה, וכן ישע מעליו (איוב י"ד) פנה מעליו:

AND HE TURNED — and He turned to; similarly in the next verse means, “He did not turn to it.” Similarly, (Isaiah 17:8) which means “And he shall not turn towards the altars”; so also (Job 14:6) “turn away from him”.

Seforno

ספורנו: למה חרה לך

למה קנאת באחיה כדואג על שקבלתי קרבנו בראון? הנה לא היה זה ראון פשוט או שלא כדיון.

WHY ARE YOU UPSET — Why are you jealous that I accepted your brother’s offering? I did not do so easily or arbitrarily, nor was it unjust.

ספורנו: ולמה נפלו פניך

כי פשיש לקלוקול איזו תקנה, אין ראוי להצטער על מה שעבר, אבל ראוי להשתדל להשיג תקון לעתיד:

AND WHY HAS YOUR FACE FALLEN — When there is an ability or opportunity to fix something it is pointless to brood over the past when the matter can be rectified. Rather, it is fitting to strive to achieve a fix for the future.

Takeaway: *Instead of seeing a gap he could grow from, Kayin saw a threat he needed to eliminate. Often, when we feel we don’t measure up, jealousy, rumination and negative behavior takes root, instead of introspection and forward movement.*

Discuss:

1. Have you ever experienced jealousy based on feelings of inferiority?
2. Do you find these feelings are generally grounded in truth or rooted in unhealthy comparison?
3. What would it look like to respond to moments of jealousy with *tikun* (self-repair), as Seforno mentions, instead of resentment or rumination?
4. If Kayin had paused and asked, “What is this feeling trying to teach me?” things may have ended differently. Have you ever been able to lean into this sort of question with curiosity instead of with jealousy (or any other negative emotion)? How did it shift the situation?

Sources 9 and 10

Hashem's message to Kayin teaches us that kinah can actually be instructive, highlighting where we need to improve and redirect ourselves:

Seforno

ספורנו:הלא אם תטיב.

עצמך ותשתדל להיות גם אתה לרצון

If only you improve yourself you will also be desired.

Rashbam

רשב"ם: ואם לא תיטיב

לפתח חטאתך [תהיה] רובץ, כלומר: ואם תעשה עונות הרבה, תהיה רובץ תחת החטאת והעון שלא תוכל לשאת ולסבול אותם.
Sin will crouch at your door, meaning: if you commit many sins, you will be weighed down by sin and iniquity that you will not be able to bear and endure.

Takeaway: Jealousy over someone's success can be a smokescreen, concealing the need for one's own improvement. Instead of using someone else's success as a distraction, we should turn inwards for self-reflection and improvement.

- **Path 1 (Kayin's instinct; Jealousy masks a call to action):**
Stay externally focused → fixate on the other person success → avoid responsibility
- **Path 2 (Torah suggests; Engaging with jealousy promotes growth):**
Turn inward → identify what's within reach → take ownership → growth

Discuss:

1. Why might it be easier to focus on others' success instead of confronting your own next step?
2. Think of a time when someone else's success felt hard to sit with. Which specific behaviors, choices, or traits contributed to their success? Which of those are actually within your control? Were the feelings pointing to something you genuinely value and could grow toward or were they comparing yourself in a way that doesn't reflect your path or reality?
3. Think of a time you felt קנאת סופרים—envy of another's spiritual growth. What aspect of that experience impacted you most? To what extent did it reflect something you see or want to see in yourself?

Two Thought Exercises for Internal Reflection

1. **Exercise in values:** I feel jealous of ___ because they have ___. This shows me that I value ___, and one step I can take is ___.
2. **Exercise in Emunah:** Think of something you wish you had, whether physical or metaphysical, but are currently unable to acquire.
 - a. What are the barriers to acquiring it?
 - b. Who would you need to connect with/what would I need to do/where would I need to go/what would facilitate its acquisition?
 - c. If there are no active steps you can take, recognize that Hashem is bigger than any barrier. If He has not given it to you, it's because, at present, it is not good for you to have it or necessary to achieve your current role in the world as He intended it.