

# THE ETERNAL EMOTIONAL IMPACT

*by Rabbi Yehudah Prero*

## Asara BeTeves

### The Eternal Emotional Impact

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*"And in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the word of G-d came to me, saying 'Son of Adam, write the name of the day, of this same day - the king of Bavel has laid siege on Jerusalem on this very day.'" (Yechezkel 24:1)*

The prophet Yechezkel recorded a prophecy that came to him on the 10th day of Teves, the day that Nevuchadnetzar, king of Bavel, laid siege to Jerusalem. It is this day that marked the beginning of the descent of the nation of Israel into exile. It is this day that we still observe as a day of fasting and repentance.

Rav Yehonasan Eibshitz (Ya'aros D'vash 2:12) writes that the verse in Yechezkel teaches us something special about this date. G-d commanded Yechezkel to write down his prophecy with a command that consisted of unique verbiage: "son of Adam," and "of this same day." The special terminology was necessitated as the verse alludes to the very first 10th of Teves in the world's history.

Rav Eibshitz explains that Kayin killed his brother Hevel on the third day of Teves. For seven days, Kayin was excommunicated and banished, and on the 10th day of Teves, he had a dialogue with G-d. G-d confronted Kayin about his murderous act, and then cursed him: "You shall become a vagrant and a wanderer on earth." Kayin responded to G-d "Is my sin too great to be borne? . . . I must become a vagrant and wanderer on earth."

G-d was telling Yechezkel that from the very first 10th of Teves, when a "son of Adam," Kayin, was in essence exiled and inspired to repent for his sins, so to, the nation of Israel, would now, "on that same day," need to spend the 10th of Teves repenting and fasting as well.

What exactly happened with Kayin that his actions set the stage for the duration of history? Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz notes that Kayin's actions were not typical. Hevel was a shepherd, Kayin was a farmer. Both of them brought an offering to G-d. G-d looked favorably upon Hevel's offering and rejected Kayin's. G-d let Kayin know that he should not be despondent, as he could improve himself. Kayin then had a conversation with Hevel. The Targum Yonasan writes that Kayin told Hevel "There are neither laws nor judge, there is no world to come, and there is no one to reward the righteous or to exact punishment from the wicked." He then went and killed Hevel.

What happened to Kayin that his reaction was so severe that he totally rejected G-d and murdered his brother? Rav Shmuelevitz answers that when G-d initially rejected his offering, Kayin got angry. He became confused. He did not think straight. This state of anger and confusion allowed the Yetzer HoRa, the Evil Inclination, to get a hold on Kayin and to persuade Kayin to act in a way that no rational person would. Kayin's descent was swift and drastic. Kayin, in one fell swoop, allowed his Evil Inclination to rule his conduct, with dire and everlasting consequences. And how did this happen? Because Kayin let his emotions get out of control - he got angry and confused.

Every year, on the 10th of Teves, we spend the day engaged in fasting and the recitation of prayers of repentance. Yes, the day does mark the beginning of the nation's entry into exile. Additionally, literally from the beginning of time, the 10th of Teves is the day on which we should repent for those sins that stemmed from our personal loss of control, our allowing unfettered power over our actions to the Evil Inclination. Because Kayin was overwhelmed by his emotions, he sinned in a fashion that, had he been in a rational state of mind, he would have never dreamed he would act. The sins resulted in exile. On the 10th of Teves, in exile, we should repent as well for those sins whose genesis was in uncontrolled emotions.

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The author has Rabbinic ordination from Mesivta Tifereth Jerusalem, NY.