

WHICH CAME FIRST?

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Bereishis

Which Came First?

Our parashah opens: "In the beginning of G-d's creating the heavens and the earth . . ."--heavens before earth. Later we read (2:4), "These are the products of the heaven and the earth when they were created, on the day that Hashem Elokim made earth and heaven"--first heaven before earth, and then earth before heaven. Why?

R' Eliyahu David Rabinowitz-Teomim z"l (the "Aderet"; 1845-1905; rabbi of Mir and Ponovezh and Assistant Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim) explains: The world was created so that Torah will be observed, and the place for doing that is on earth. If so, the earth was primary in G-d's thoughts when He created the world, though He created it after the heavens. As the popular expression says, "Sof ma'aseh b'machashavah techilah" / "that which was last in deed was first in thought."

Why then do we read, "On the day that Hashem Elokim made earth and heaven"--earth before heaven? The Aderet answers: Hashem's plan that the Torah be kept in this world has not yet been fulfilled, since the yetzer hara interferes. Only in the future, when the yetzer hara has been eliminated, will the true fulfillment of G-d's plan take place. Only then can it be said that the earth has been *made,* i.e., fulfilled its purpose. Thus, the verse should be read: "These are the products of the heaven and the earth when they were created"--at Creation, heaven still preceded earth, which existed only in potential. But, "on the day that Hashem Elokim [will have] made earth and heaven"--when Creation attains its fulfillment, when it is "made," earth will precede heaven. (Seder Parshiyot)

"Hevel became a shepherd, and Kayin became a tiller of the ground." (4:2)

The midrash Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer (ch.21) relates: Kayin enjoyed working the ground and Hevel enjoyed shepherding sheep. This one gave the fruits of his labor to the other one to eat, and the other one gave the fruits of his labor to the first one to eat. When the night of Pesach arrived, Adam said to his sons, "On this night Yisrael is destined to offer Pesach offerings. You, too, should offer offerings before your Creator." Kayin brought the leftovers of his meal--flax seed, while Hevel

brought the best of his flocks--lambs which had never been shorn. Kayin's gift was despised by Hashem and Kayin's gift was found to be desirable, as is written (verse 4), "Hashem turned to Hevel and to his offering."

R' David Luria z"l (Poland; 1798-1855) comments: From the beginning of Creation, Hashem implanted in man's heart the idea to prepare what others need and to barter with them to obtain one's own needs. This is what the sage Ben Zoma meant when he praised G-d by saying, "How many tasks Adam [who was alone in the world] had to perform before he found bread to eat-- plowing, planting, harvesting, gathering, threshing, winnowing, selecting, milling, sifting, kneading, and baking, while I wake up and find everything ready for me!" (Be'ur Ha'Radal)

R' Avraham Aharon Broide z"l (early 19th century) observes: The sheep products that Hevel gave Kayin must have been milk, butter and wool, since eating meat was forbidden before the flood. Alternatively, perhaps they were permitted to eat an animal that died of natural or accidental causes. (Bayit Ha'gadol - Be'ur Maspik)

R' Yitzchak Binyamin Wolf Gottingen-Ashkenazi z"l (Poland and Germany; died 1686) asks: The Torah says about the korban Pesach (Shmot 12:48), "No uncircumcised male may eat of it." If so, how could Kayin and Hevel have brought a korban Pesach? Do not say, R' Gottingen-Ashkenazi, writes, that this prohibition did not apply to them since they lived before the mitzvah of circumcision was given. They also had no mitzvah of korban Pesach, but Adam told them to observe it. Presumably, then, they observed it correctly to the extent possible [though they were not actually permitted to slaughter a lamb].

So the question stands: How could they bring a korban Pesach if they were not circumcised? The answer, R' Gottingen-Ashkenazi writes, is found in the Torah commentary of R' Moshe Alshich z"l (1508-1593). He writes that, if not for Adam's sin, all men would have been born circumcised, just as Adam himself was. If so, continues R' Gottingen-Ashkenazi, Kayin and Hevel, who were born before the sin, must have been born circumcised as well. Thus they could offer a korban Pesach. (Nachalat Binyamin, mitzvah 2)

R' Eliyahu Hakohen Ha'Itamari z"l (Izmir, Turkey; died 1729) asks: Why didn't Adam himself practice what he preached and offer a korban Pesach himself? He explains:

Earlier, the quoted midrash Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer (as explained by the commentaries) stated that the souls of all tzaddikim are offshoots from the soul of Adam's third son, Shait, while the souls of all wicked people are offshoots from the soul of Kayin. When Adam told his sons to bring a korban Pesach, writes R' Ha'Itamari, his intention was to test Kayin. Kayin was the spiritual ancestor of Pharaoh. Indeed, Kayin was a farmer of flax, a crop for which Egypt would later be known. Would Kayin rejoice at the news that Bnei Yisrael would bring a korban Pesach and escape Pharaoh's grip, or would he be saddened by the news? (The answer, as events revealed, was that Kayin was saddened.) In any event, Adam's intention wasn't that his sons would fulfill the mitzvah of korban

Pesach. Thus, one cannot ask why Adam did not bring that offering himself. (V'lo Od Ela)

"Hashem said to Kayin, 'Why are you annoyed, and why has your face fallen? Surely, if you improve yourself, you will be uplifted. But if you do not improve yourself, sin rests at the door. .'" (4:6-7)

R' Zvi Pesach Frank z"l (1873-1960; Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim) writes: "Why are you annoyed?" refers to Kayin's reaction to his sacrifice not being accepted, while "Why has your face fallen?" refers to Kayin's shame that Hevel's sacrifice *was* accepted. The first question is understandable, R' Frank writes, since Kayin had only himself to blame for his sacrifice not being accepted. Thus, why should he be annoyed? The second question, however, is difficult to understand. Seemingly, Kayin's shame was admirable, for its absence would have implied disinterest in whether Hashem accepts man's sacrificial offerings. Additionally, R' Frank asks, what is the connection between verse 6 and verse 7?

He explains: The Gemara (Yoma 86b) teaches that when one is motivated by *love* of Hashem to repent, his sins turn into merits. This, writes R' Frank, is why a ba'al teshuvah is greater than a perfect tzaddik, for the perfect tzaddik has the merits of his mitzvot, while the ba'al teshuvah has the merit of his mitzvot and also of his sins (but only if he is motivated by love of Hashem). In contrast, when one's repentance is motivated by *fear* of G-d, his sins are forgiven, but they do not become merits.

In this light, we can understand Hashem's discussion with Kayin. "Why has your face fallen?" It is within your control to turn your shame into a merit. Verse 7 answers the question: "Surely, if you improve yourself, you will be uplifted." If you repent out of love of G-d, your sin will become a merit for you. (Har Zvi Al Ha'Torah Ha'shaleim)

Memories of Yerushalayim

R' Ben-Zion Yadler z"l (1871-1962; the "Maggid / preacher of Yerushalayim), opens his memoirs, B'tuv Yerushalayim, as follows:

On the eighth day of the month of Kislev, in the year 5632, I was born in the Old City of Yerushalayim to my father, the gaon / great scholar and tzaddik, R' Yitzchak Ze'ev from the city of Miadel [Lithuania], may his merit protect us. [R' Yitzchak Ze'ev Yadler authored Tiferet Zion, a commentary on Midrash Rabbah, and other works.] On the fifteenth day of that month, I was brought into the covenant of Avraham Avinu a"h.

The mohel was the gaon R' Meir Auerbach, the rabbi of Kalish [Poland] zt"l. For many years, it was my

custom to pray at his grave, asking that he advocate on my behalf so that G-d would lead me on the path of the upright. I did this because he [R' Auerbach] had "made me a Jew" and, when someone begins a mitzvah, we tell him to finish it.

My sandak was my father zt"l, though he had been the sandak for my older brother R' Avraham Yochanan zt"l [and it is customary not to have the same sandak for two brothers]. My brother was born outside of Eretz Yisrael, and my father said that moving to Eretz Yisrael made him a new person so that what he had done in the diaspora did not count.

My father named me "Ben-Zion" because, out of his love for Yerushalayim, he said, "You should be accustomed to saying the word 'Zion'." . . .

Thank G-d, I inherited the talents of father, the gaon and tzaddik, and his trait of dedication to Torah studies. Thus, I was very dedicated and reviewed each page of Gemara ten times. Then I reviewed each chapter ten times and, thereafter, each tractate ten times. I reviewed many tractates tens of times to the point that I was an expert in which sages appear in each tractate. I could review ten pages in one hour such that I could tell time thereby, without needing a clock. . . I am confident that this was due to the blessing of R' Shmuel Salant zt"l [1816-1909; rabbi of Yerushalayim].

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **[Torah.org](https://torah.org)** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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