



Hevel Was Condemned to Death for Gazing at the Shechinah and Was Rectified by Reincarnating into Moshe Rabeinu Who Refrained from Looking at G-d

As we study parshas Bereishis, it behooves us to explore the tragic jealousy that developed between Kayin and Hevel—the first pair of brothers in the world. Due to his jealousy, Kayin murdered Hevel; this accounted for the first murder and the first death in history. Here is the Torah’s depiction of these events (Bereishis 4, 2):

”ויהי הבל רועה צאן וקין היה עובד אדמה, ויהי מקץ ימים ויבא קין מפרי האדמה מנחה לה’, והבל הביא גם הוא מבכורות צאנו ומחלביהן, וישע ה’ אל הבל ואל מנחתו, ואל קין ואל מנחתו לא שעה, ויחר לקין מאד ויפלו פניו, ויאמר ה’ אל קין למה חרה לך ולמה נפלו פניך, הלוא אם תיטיב שאת, ואם לא תיטיב לפתח חטאת רובץ, ואלריך תשוקתו ואתה תמשל בו, ויאמר קין אל הבל אחיו, ויהי בהיותם בשדה ויקם קין אל הבל אחיו ויהרגהו.”

Hevel became a shepherd, and Kayin tilled the soil. After a period of time, Kayin brought an offering to Hashem of the fruit of the land; and as for Hevel, he also brought of the firstborn of his flock and from their choicest. Hashem paid heed to Hevel and his offering, but to Kayin and his offering, He paid no heed. Kayin became very angry, and his countenance fell. And Hashem said to Kayin, “Why are you annoyed, and why has your countenance fallen? Is it not true that if you do good (improve), you will be forgiven? But if you do not do good, at the entrance, sin crouches; its longing is toward you, yet you will rule over it.” Kayin spoke with his brother Hevel. And it happened when they were in the field, Kayin rose up against his brother Hevel and killed him.

The renowned commentator, the holy teacher of all of Yisrael, Rashi, cites the Midrash. Why, indeed, did HKB”H not accept Kayin’s offering, but He did accept Hevel’s? He notes that with respect to Kayin, the text merely says: “**Kayin brought from the fruit of the land**”—implying that he brought a low-quality offering, scraps so-to-speak; he did not bring an offering of choice, high-quality fruit. With respect to Hevel, however, the text says: “**As for Hevel, he also brought of the firstborn of his flock and from their choicest.**”

Hevel Brought His Offering Only after He Saw that Kayin Brought an Offering of Scraps

This raises an interesting question. The narrative portrays Hevel as a tzaddik, who brought Hashem an offering from the best of his flock. Yet, he only brought an offering to Hashem after seeing that his brother had done so. Perhaps, this, too, was an indication of his righteousness; he respected his brother’s firstborn status by allowing him to go first, as is only proper. This is consistent with the elucidation in the Gemara (Kesubos 103a) related to the passuk (Shemos 20, 12): “**כבד את אביך ואת אמך**... וי’ יתירה לרבות את אחיך הגדול.” It is written: “**Honor your father and your mother**” . . . the extraneous “**vav**” (“and your mother”) comes to include the older brother.

To explain the matter in greater depth, let us refer to another Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 4, 8): **When the world was first created, Adam HaRishon was the firstborn in the world. When he offered his korban, as it says (Tehillim**

69, 32): **“And it shall please Hashem more than a full-grown bull, possessed of horns and hoofs”—he wore the garments of a Kohen Gadol—as it says (Bereishis 3, 21): “And Hashem G-d made for Adam and his wife garments of skin, and he clothed them.” They were garments of distinction; they were used by the firstborn.**

This suggests that Hevel did not initially intend to offer a korban. On the contrary, he respectfully left that “avodah” for his older brother, the “bechor,” to continue the service of their father, Adam HaRishon. However, when Hevel witnessed the poor quality of the offering Kayin brought for Hashem, he acted zealously for the sake of the glory and honor of the Almighty. Hence, he brought a korban from the choicest of his flock.

This explains very nicely why the text says: **“As for Hevel, he also brought of the firstborn of his flock and from their choicest.”** The Torah emphasizes the fact that Hevel **“also brought.”** It is teaching us that initially, Hevel did not intend to bring a korban, because he relied on his brother, the “bechor,” and trusted that Kayin would bring a respectable korban to properly honor Hashem. When he saw that this was not the case, he reacted by **“also”** bringing an offering, in addition to his brother’s. In fact, the Torah indicates the reason for Hevel’s change of mind: **“Of the firstborn of his flock and from their choicest”—**he felt that it was important and proper to bring an offering to Hashem from the very best.

The Murder of Hevel Stemmed from Jealousy Desire and Honor

It is apparent from the narrative in parshas Bereishis that Kayin murdered his brother Hevel in a fit of jealousy. Our blessed sages, however, with their divine intuition, understood that the seeds of jealousy between the two brothers were present even before the incident involving their respective offerings to Hashem. Let us present a pertinent Midrash (B.R. 22, 7):

“And Kayin spoke to Hevel his brother, and it came to pass when they were in the field . . .” What were they arguing about? They said, **“Come let us divide up the world—one will take the land and one will take the moveable property. This one (Kayin) said, “The ground you are standing on is mine”; while the other one (Hevel)**

said, “What you are wearing is mine.” This one (Hevel) said, “Take off my clothes!” The other one said, “Fly away (get off my land).” Because of this: “Kayin rose up against his brother Hevel and killed him.”

It is hard to believe and alarming that the tragic consequences of this jealousy that erupted between the first two brothers in the world destroyed all that was good. Even though they had divided up the entire world between them, they were still not content; each one felt that he had been shortchanged and had been treated unfairly by his brother. As the Torah teaches us, the dispute resulted in the murder of Hevel.

The Midrash goes on to present two other opinions concerning the dispute that ensued between Kayin and Hevel—one more spiritual and one more material:

Rabbi Yehoshua of Sachnin said in the name of Rabbi Levi: They both took land, and they both took moveable property. So, what were they arguing about? One said, “The Beis HaMikdash must be built in my territory.” And the other one said, “The Beis HaMikdash must be built in my territory.” As it says: **“When they were in the field . . .”** Now, the **“field”** refers specifically to the Beis HaMikdash, as it says (Yirmiyah 26, 18; Michah 3, 12): **“Tziyon shall be plowed as a field.”** Because of this **“Kayin rose up against Hevel his brother, etc.” . . .** Rabbi Huna said: **An additional twin (sister) was born with Hevel. This one (Kayin) said, “I will take her, because I am the firstborn.” The other one (Hevel) said, “I will take her, because she was born with me.”** Because of this: **“Kayin rose up . . .”**

Now, we have a fundamental principle taught by our blessed sages (Eiruvim 13b). When there is a dispute among Torah sages: **“אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים”—both are the words of the living G-d,** i.e., they both are consistent with and represent divine truth. We can apply this principle here as well. It is possible that Kayin and Hevel argued about all three of these issues. This would concur with the following teaching in the Mishnah (Avos 4, 21): **“הקנאה והתאוה והכבוד מוציאים את האדם מן העולם—jealousy, lust, and (pursuit of) honor expel a person from the world.** We can propose that this Mishnah alludes to the first death in history, the death of Hevel, which was the result of jealousy, lust, and the pursuit of honor.

They quarreled over their respective possessions—land and clothing—because of the yetzer of “הקנאה”, **envy**. The quarrel over the twin sister that was born with Hevel was due to the yetzer of “התאוה”, **lust**. Whereas the quarrel over who should have the distinction of having the Beis HaMikdash built in his territory is attributable to the yetzer of “הכבוד”, **the thirst and pursuit of honor**. Thus, the Tanna of the Mishnah is stating that the first death in the annals of mankind was attributable to these three negative attributes: “הקנאה והתאוה והכבוד מוציאין את האדם מן העולם”.

The Name ה"ב Alludes to the Three Books that Are Opened on Rosh HaShanah

I was struck by an intriguing idea that is relevant to all of us. In the holy sefer Bris Kehunas Olam, authored by the divine Tanna, Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac of Koritz, zy" a, he presents a fascinating allusion related to the phrase we utter repeatedly in our tefilos on the Yamim Nora'im: “זכרנו לחיים מלך חפץ בחיים—remember us for life, O King Who desires life, and inscribe us in the Book of Life, for Your sake, O G-d of life.”

He points out that in this phrase, we mention “חיים” three times prefaced each time by one of the letters of the name ה"ב—ה'חיים, ה'חיים, and ה'חיים. He asserts (Chapter 4) in his own inimitable way that they correspond to the three sefarim that are opened on Rosh HaShanah (R.H. 16b): “שלושה ספרים נפתחין בראש השנה, אחד של רשעים גמורין, ואחד של צדיקים גמורין, ואחד של בינוניים צדיקים גמורין”—one for the totally wicked, one for total tzaddikim, and one for those in between. We request that all three categories be granted life—“chayim.”

Let us suggest an explanation based on what the Ran (R.H. 16b) writes citing the Midrash. The reason Rosh HaShanah was designated as the Day of Judgment for all living creatures is because it is the day on which Adam HaRishon was created, sinned, and sentenced to death (i.e., it was decreed that all living creatures would be subject to death). As we have just explained, the cause of the sin that caused Kayin to murder Hevel is rooted in the three negative midos listed in the Mishnah—jealousy, lust, and thirst for honor. Therefore, throughout the days of judgment extending from Rosh HaShanah to Yom Kippur, we utter the word “חיים” three times

in conjunction with the three letters of ה"ב in this phrase in our tefilos. We are praying that we be spared from these three midos that led to the murder of ה"ב.

The Bris Kehunas Olam adds another explanation based on a teaching in the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 69 112b). He writes that the letters of the name ה"ב allude to Torah she'b'chsav. There are ה' (5) books of the Torah; the Torah begins with the ב' of ב'ראשית and ends with the ל' of ל' ישראל. Furthermore, the determination of life for all creatures is based on Hashem's Torah, as it is written (Tehillim 19, 8): “תורת ה' תמימה משיבת נפש—the Torah of Hashem is perfect, restoring the soul (life). Therefore, we add the letters ה"ב to our entreaty for life in order to renew our lease on life by means of the holy Torah, which is alluded to by these three letters. This is the gist of his remarkable insight.

As we have learned, we mention the term “חיים” three times in this phrase to save us from three types of death resulting from the three negative midos of jealousy, lust, and the thirst for honor. In keeping with this discussion, we can suggest that we add these three letters alluding to the Torah-- ה"ב - since Torah-study is a wonderful segulah—auspicious device—that protects us and rescues us from these three negative midos. In the words of the Gemara (Kiddushin 30b), HKB”H says to Yisrael: “בני בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תכלין, ואם אתם עוסקים בתורה—בני בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תכלין, ואם אתם עוסקים בתורה, אין אתם נמסרים בידו—My son, I have created the yetzer hara, and I have created Torah as its antidote. If you engage in Torah-study, you will not be delivered into its hand.

Let us provide support for the notion that Torah-study possesses the capacity to eliminate the three negative midos and to transform them into midos of kedushah. With regards to the yetzer of jealousy, we have learned in the Gemara (B.B. 21a): “קנאת סופרים תרבה חכמה—jealousy among scholars increases wisdom. With regards to the yetzer of lust, we can cite the words of David HaMelech extolling the virtues of the Torah (ibid. 11): “הנחמדים מזהב ומפז רב ומתוקים מדבש ונופת צופים— they are more desirable than gold and even pure gold, and sweeter than honey and the finest nectar. Thirdly, with regards to the yetzer of pursuit of honor, there is the “kavod” associated with the study of Torah. As we learn in the Mishnah (Avos 6, 3): “הלומד מחברו פרק אחד או הלכה אחת או פסוק אחד או דיבור אחד או אפילו אות אחת, על אחת כמה וכמה שצריך לנהג בו

One who learns from his fellow man a single chapter, a single halachah, a single passuk, a single Torah statement, or even a single letter, how much more so must he treat him with honor! And honor is associated only with the Torah, as it states (Mishlei 3, 35): “The wise shall inherit honor.”

Hevel Glanced at the Shechinah and Was Judged Stringently

At this point of our sacred journey, let us turn our attention to an issue that has perplexed the commentaries. If Hevel was such a tzaddik, why didn't HKB”H prevent Kayin from murdering him? After all, we have a passuk that states explicitly (ibid. 35, 20): **“רבות רעות צדיק ומכולם יצילנו ה', שומר כל”**—**many are the misfortunes of the tzaddik, but Hashem will rescue him from all of them. He guards all his bones, even one of them was not broken.** Similarly, another passuk states (ibid. 97, 10): **“אוהבי ה' שנאו—O lovers of Hashem, despise evil; He protects the lives of His devout ones; He rescues them from the hand of the wicked.**

We find an answer to this question in the Tikunei Zohar (ibid. 102a). It asserts that Hevel was faulted for gazing at the Shechinah when HKB”H descended to accept his korban. On the passuk that states that HKB”H responded favorably to Hevel's offering, Rashi comments (Bereishis 4, 4): **“ירדה אש—fire descended and scorched his offering.** This heavenly fire was the holy Shechinah coming down to accept Hevel's korban. Because Hevel glanced at it for longer than was appropriate, he was condemned to death.

According to the Tikunei Zohar (ibid.), to make amends for this misdeed, it was necessary for Hevel to reincarnate into Moshe Rabeinu. This is alluded to by the name **מש”ה**, which is an acronym for **מישה שית הבל**. In other words, Hevel initially reincarnated into Sheis and, subsequently, into Moshe. It was for this reason that Moshe refrained from gazing at the burning bush, as it is written (Shemos 3, 6): **“ויסתר משה פניו כי ירא מהביט—Moshe hid his face, for he was afraid to look at G-d.** By not gazing at that divine phenomenon, Moshe wished to make amends for Hevel's inappropriate gaze.

This explanation is also given by Rabeinu Bachayei (Shemos 3, 6). He contends that Hevel deserved to die, because he gazed too long at the Shechinah. Since Moshe was a reincarnation of Hevel, he refrained from gazing at the burning bush, because of his inappropriate gaze in his earlier incarnation. It is analogous to someone who is ashamed, because of something he did previously.

Hevel Inherited This Flaw from His Mother Chava

This topic is actually addressed in the teachings of the Arizal in greater depth. We will begin by presenting what he explains in Sha'ar HaPesukim (Shemos 3) regarding the passuk (Shemos 3, 1): **“ומשה היה רועה. כבר הודעתוך, כי הוא גלגולו של הבל בן אדם הראשון, וזה שאמר שגם הוא היה רועה לשעבר, כמו שאמר הכתוב ויהי הבל רועה צאן. וזה שאמר הכתוב היה רועה, לשון לשעבר, גם נתבאר טעם למה משה היה רועה.”** **“Moshe was herding the sheep.”** I have already explained that he was a gilgul of Hevel, the son of Adam HaRishon. He was also a shepherd in the past, as it is stated in the passuk: **“Hevel became a herder of sheep.”** The fact that the passuk here states that he was tending to the sheep (that he was a shepherd), in the past tense, also explains the reason why **Moshe was a shepherd.** In other words, the Arizal asserts that the passuk is alluding to the fact that Moshe was a shepherd in a previous incarnation, as Hevel.

Based on this premise, the Arizal explains in Likutei HaShas the reason that Moshe covered his face so as not to gaze at G-d. Here is a translation of the passage:

The blessed Rabbis taught that Hevel gazed at the Shechinah. Therefore, he was condemned to die, and for this reason Kayin murdered him. Otherwise, HKB”H would have protected him. The cause of this transgression is related to that which is stated in the narrative (Bereishis 3, 6): “The woman saw (that the tree was good for eating) etc.” She sinned and caused her son (Hevel) to sin with his eyes. Our blessed Rabbis also taught (Berachos 7a) that in the merit of “Moshe hid his face,” he was privileged to (Bamidbar 12, 8): “And at the image of Hashem does he gaze etc.” For, he was a gilgul of Hevel, who blemished his sight by gazing at the Shechinah as mentioned; therefore, he made amends by hiding his face at the incident with the bush, because “he was afraid to look.”

It is fitting that we attempt to explain Hevel's misdeed albeit to the best of our limited understanding. When he saw that he merited having the honor of having his korban accepted by Hashem and having HKB"H descend with His Shechinah as a blaze of fire, he was overjoyed. This prompted him to gaze at the Shechinah, because had a momentary impulse that he was worthy and deserving to do so. Yet, as we know from the Gemara's (Yevamos 121b) elucidation of the passuk (Tehillim 50, 3): "וּסְבִיבוֹ נִשְׁעָרָה מְאֹד, מִלְמַד שֶׁהַקֹּב"ה מְדַקְדֵּק עִם סְבִיבוֹ כְּחוֹט הַשְּׁעָרָה." **"And His surroundings are extremely turbulent" teaches us that HKB"H is exacting with those closest to Him to the extent of a hairsbreadth.** Therefore, HKB"H did not protect Hevel when his brother Kayin rose up to kill him.

This explains very nicely the character of Moshe Rabeinu, Hevel's gilgul and tikun. The Torah attests to his extreme humility (Bamidbar 12, 3): "וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עֲנִי מְאֹד מִכָּל הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה"—**now the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more so than any person on the face of the earth!** He was extremely careful to avoid any shred of haughtiness because Hevel's sin stemmed from the momentary impulse of haughtiness that he deserved to gaze at the Shechinah. Thus, Moshe rectified Hevel's flaw.

Hevel's Name Alludes to the Fact that He Was Destined to Deliver the Torah to Yisrael

It gives me great pleasure to treat our esteemed audience to the wonders of the Torah. We learn in the Tikunei Zohar (ibid. 112b) that Adam HaRishon named his son הַב"ל, because this name alludes to the fact that he would reincarnate into Moshe, who was destined to deliver the Torah to Yisrael. As mentioned above: The **"hei,"** with a numerical value of five, alludes to the five books of the Torah; the **"beis"** is the first letter in the Torah; the **"lamed"** is the last letter in the Torah.

Let us embellish this idea by introducing a fascinating Midrash (B.R. 24, 5) related to the passuk (Bereishis 5, 1): "זֶה סֵפֶר תּוֹלְדוֹת אָדָם"—**this is the account of the descendants of Adam.** Here is a loose translation of the passage:

It would have been fitting for the Torah to be delivered by Adam HaRishon, since it says: "This is the account of the descendants of Adam." Hence, HKB"H queried: He

is the creation of My hands, shouldn't I give it to him? However, HKB"H recanted and said to him: Seeing as I gave him six mitzvot and he was unable to abide by them, how can I give him 613 mitzvot—248 mitzvot aseh and 365 mitzvot lo ta'aseh? . . . Therefore, I will not give it to Adam but rather to his descendants, as it says: "This is the account of the descendants of Adam."

So, let us suggest the following: After Adam sinned with the Eitz HaDa'as, he realized that he had forfeited the privilege of being the one to deliver HKB"H's Torah to the world. Notwithstanding, he figured that at least his son Hevel, who possessed the neshamah of Moshe Rabeinu, would have the privilege of delivering the Torah to Yisrael. Therefore, he named him הַב"ל alluding to the five books of the Torah and the first and last letters of the Torah.

However, Hevel also sinned by gazing inappropriately at the Shechinah when it came down to accept his korban. Subsequently, however, Moshe—Hevel's gilgul—made amends for Hevel's flaw by hiding his face: **"Because he was afraid to gaze at G-d."** Hence, he was rewarded **"midah k'neged midah"**—measure for measure—at Matan Torah, as it is written: **"And at the image of Hashem does he gaze."** That was when the allusion in the name **Hevel** became a reality.

This concurs magnificently with what the Arizal teaches us in Sha'ar HaPesukim (Yisro) in relation to the passuk (Shemos 19, 23): "וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל ה' לֹא יוּכַל הָעָם לַעֲלוֹת אֶל הַר סִינַי כִּי אַתָּה הַעֲדוֹתָ: " **Moshe said to Hashem, "The people will not be able to go up onto Har Sinai, because You have warned us, saying: "Set a boundary around the mountain and sanctify it."** According to our master the Arizal, Moshe's statement implies that he had gone to great lengths to prevent Yisrael from going up onto the mountain and gazing at the Shechinah. Additionally, he, too, would exercise extreme caution not to gaze at the Shechinah in order to make amends for the fact that Hevel had inappropriately gazed at the Shechinah. Here are his sacred words:

"הִנֵּה רָאִשֵׁי תִיבוֹת הַעֲדוֹתָה בְּנֹו לְאֹמֶר הוּא הַב"ל, לְרִמּוֹז כִּי מֹשֶׁה הוּא הַבֵּל אֲשֶׁר הִצִּיץ וּמָת וּנְעַנְשׁ, וּלְכֹן אָמַר מֹשֶׁה שֶׁהוּא הַבֵּל, כִּי כִּבְר הַעֲדוֹתָה בִּי מִקְדַּמָּת דְּנָא, שְׁנַעֲנַשְׁתִּי עַל כִּיּוֹצֵא בְזָה, וְאִינִי צָרִיךְ אֶזְהָרָה עִתָּה." He notes that the first letters of the words הַעֲדוֹתָה בְּנֹו לְאֹמֶר spell **Hevel**. **This**

alludes to the fact that Moshe was Hevel who had gazed, died, and been punished. Therefore, Moshe, who was Hevel, told Hashem that he had already been admonished and punished for this act and did not need to be warned again at that time.

In conclusion, it is incumbent upon us to learn a vital lesson from the first murder in the annals of history. Kayin killed his brother Hevel due to jealousy, lust, and the thirst for honor. As we are taught in the Mishnah, these three negative midos remove a person from this world. Unfortunately, this senseless hatred—sin'as chinam—still exists among fellows and brothers and plagues us throughout this lengthy galus. As we know, this serious flaw and sin caused the churban of the Beis HaMikdash.

The obvious tikun for this major flaw is to adopt the midah of “Ahavas chinam”—unconditional love—thereby fulfilling the mitzvah of (Vayikra 19, 18): **”ואהבת לרעך כמוך”—you shall love your fellow as yourself.** It is imperative that we always remember that all Jews are brothers. We are the children of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. We are the children of HKB”H, the Almighty; it is His will that we live together with ahavah, harmony, and unity. This is expressed by the following passuk (Devarim 14, 1): **”בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם לא תתגודדו”—you are children to Hashem, your G-d; you shall not cut yourselves.** They expound on this passuk in the Gemara (Yevamos 13b): **”לא תתגודדו, לא תעשו אגודות אגודות”—do not split up into factions.** In this merit we will be deserving of the complete geulah—swiftly, in our times! Amen.



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