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The Faith of Abel

11: 4

The faith of Abel DIG: Why did God regard Abel's sacrifice as being better than Cain's (see the commentary on **Genesis, to see link click [Bj](#) - Your Brother's Blood Cries Out to Me from the Ground**)? Why is it significant that God made cloaks of animal skins for Adam and Eve? How did Abel's sacrifice point to Christ's ultimate sacrifice in a way that Cain's did not? In what way was Cain the father of all false religion? What is the basis of our faith? What did God do for Abel, after accepting his sacrifice? What was Cain's reaction when his sacrifice failed to receive God's approval?

REFLECT: Cain's problems began when he offered God unacceptable worship. When you go to your messianic synagogue or church, is the worship you offer to God acceptable? Ask yourself: Am I sincere? Is my attention focused on ADONAI? Am I coming to worship YHVH, knowing His acceptance of me is based solely on what Messiah has done for me at the cross? Am I coming with a pure heart, having dealt with any sin in my life? Am I coming to be a spectator or a participant?²⁹⁵

James Moffatt wrote, "Death is never the final word in the life of a **righteous** man. When a man leaves this world, be he **righteous** or unrighteous, he leaves something in the world. He may leave something that will grow and spread like a cancer or a poison, or he may leave something like the fragrance of perfume or a blossom of beauty that permeates the atmosphere with blessing." Man leaves this world either a Rabbi Sha'ul or a Nero.



It is significant that the writer chooses **Abel** as the first example of what **faith** can do for the one who exercises it. **But those who are righteous will live their lives by faith (Hebrews 10:38 CJB quoting Habakkuk 2:4 CJB)**. In the case of **Abel**, it was his personal salvation that is in view, as was also the case with the unbelieving Jews in the midst of the Messianic congregation to which the letter to the **Hebrews** was written (see [Ag - The Audience of the book of Hebrews](#)). If **Abel's** salvation was by means of **faith**, it had to be shown to those unbelieving Jews that from the very beginning, **faith** was the only way they could be counted as **righteous**. Not through **the Temple sacrifices**.²⁹⁶

Dead men do tell tales. They are not silent, but still speak to those who will listen. From many thousand years ago, **Abel** speaks to us in the twenty-first century. **He** lived when the earth was new and **he** has something to teach modern, sophisticated, technological mankind. **He** lived in a far distant age, in a far different culture, with far less light from **YHVH** than we have. But what **he** has to tell us is more relevant than anything we are likely to read today.²⁹⁷

Adam and Even could not have been people of **faith** in the same way as their descendants. They had seen **Ha'Shem** face-to-face, fellowshiped with **Him**, talked with **Him**, and had lived in the garden of Paradise. Until they **sinned**, they had no need of **faith** because they lived in **God's** very presence. Even after they **sinned**, they had the memory and knowledge of this unique and beautiful relationship they had with their **Creator**. Their children were the first to have need of **faith** in its fullest sense. **Abel** was the first man of **faith**, and it is important to understand what **his faith** had to do with **his** personal salvation. **Abel's faith** led to three successive things: **true sacrifice, true righteousness, and true witness**.

Abel made a true sacrifice: By faith Abel brought God a better sacrifice than Cain did (11:4a). This verse takes us back to **Genesis**, where we read about **Abel's sacrifice**. **In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to ADONAI. And Abel also brought an offering - fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering He did not look with favor (Genesis 4:3-5a).** **Cain and Abel** must have been taught well by **their** parents Adam and Even because they knew specifically of a time to worship, a place to worship, and most importantly, a way to worship.

A place to worship: Because they brought offerings, some sort of altar must have been used on which to make the sacrifice. There is no mention of their building an altar at this time, and it may be that an altar already existed near the east side of the garden of Eden, where **ADONAI** had placed the cherubim with the flaming sword to prevent people from entering. It seems perfectly reasonable with **God's** grace that, from the beginning, **He** would have provided for some means of worship. Perhaps the altar here was a forerunner of the mercy seat, a place where mankind could come for forgiveness and atonement. Very early in mankind's history, **God** promised a future **Deliverer**, and very early **He** provide a temporary means of worship and sacrifice.

A time to worship: There seems also to have been a time for worship. **In the course of time**, means literally, *at the end of days*, that is, *at the end of a certain period of time*. It may be, therefore, that **ADONAI** had designated a special time for sacrificing. **God** is a **God** of honor, and we know that in later centuries **He** did specify definite times and ways of worshiping (see the commentary on **Exodus Fb - The Five Offerings of the Tabernacle: Christ, Our Sacrificial Offering**). The fact that **Cain** and **Abel** came to sacrifice at the same time also suggests that **Ha'Shem** had specified a particular time.

A way to worship: **Cain and Abel** would know nothing about the need, place or time for a **sacrifice**, much less the way, had they not been told by **God** through their parents. It is especially significant that the first recorded act of worship was **sacrifice**, a **sin** offering, and the supreme act of worship in all of **God's** covenants with **His** people. Abraham sacrificed to **YHVH**, and Moshe revealed the Levitical sacrifices in the Torah. The heart of the B'rit Chadashah is **Yeshua's** perfect, once-for-all **sacrifice** on the cross. **Ha'Shem** accepted only the one kind of **sacrifice**, a **blood sacrifice**, and established it as a pattern for worship.

The life of **faith** begins with a **sacrifice** for **sin** (see the commentary on **Exodus Fc - The Sin Offering**). It begins with believing **YHVH** that we are **sinners** and that **the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23a)**, that we need forgiveness, and that the only acceptable **sacrifice** was **one** whose **blood** was shed. It was in such **faith** that **Abel** offered **his sacrifice** to **God**. And it was because of such **faith** that **ADONAI** accepted **his sacrifice**.

Abel brought God a better sacrifice than Cain did because it was a **blood sacrifice**. **He** obeyed **Ha'Shem**, as if saying: **Not what I will, but what You will (Matthew 26:39c; Mark 14:36b; Luke 22:42b)**. **Cain** believed in **God** or he wouldn't have brought **Him** a sacrifice. But **Cain** is an example of one who thinks **he** can choose **his** own way to **God**. **Abel** gave what **God** wanted, while **Cain** gave what **he** wanted. **Able** was obedient, but **Cain** was disobedient. **Able** acknowledged **his sin**. **Cain** did not. **He** didn't mind worshiping **ADONAI** as long as it was on **his** own terms.

Cain's disobedience and setting up **his** own standards of living were the beginning of the **Adversary's** world system (see the commentary on **Genesis Df - The Tower of Babel**), and culminating in **MYSTERY BABYLON** (see the commentary on **Revelation Dd - I Saw a Woman Holding a Golden Cup, Filled with the Filth of Her Adulteries**). **Cain went out from the presence of ADONAI (Genesis 4:16)**, into a life of continuous self-will, which is the heart of worldliness and unbelief. By **his** own decision **he** turned away from **God's** way to **his** own way. The vast majority of the world does the same thing today. **Jude** says: **Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain** (see the commentary on **Jude Aq - They Have Taken the Way of Cain, Rushed into Balaam's Error**). **Cain** is an example of the religious natural man who believes in **God** and in religion; but only religion that follows his own will and he also rejects redemption by **blood**. Rabbi Sha'ul says of such **people** that **they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they do not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit themselves to God's righteousness (Romans 10:2-3)**.

Ha'Shem is not unreasonable, or fanciful, or unpredictable. **He** was not playing a game with **Cain** and **Abel**. **He** did not hold **them** accountable for what **they** could not have known or could not have done. **Abel's sacrifice** was accepted because **he** knew what **God** wanted and **he** obeyed. **Cain's** was rejected because **he** knew what **God** wanted, yet **he** disobeyed. To obey is **righteous**; to disobey is **evil**. **Abel** was of **ADONAI**; **Cain** was of **the Adversary (First John 3:12)**. **Abel brought**

God a better sacrifice because it represented the obedience of **faith**. Therefore, **Abel's sacrifice** foreshadowed the way of the cross.²⁹⁸

Abel obtained true righteousness: Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed His approval of his blood sacrifice (11:4b NLT). The blood of Abel's offering spoke symbolically of the Sacrifice for sin that Yeshua made on the cross. But it was not the blood sacrifice that made Abel righteous. What made Abel righteous was his faith, and the evidence of his faith was that he offered the type of sacrifice that YHVH required - Blood.²⁹⁹

Abel was just as **sinful** as **Cain** was. But it is quite possible that **Abel** was a better person than **Cain**. **He** was probably more moral, more dependable, more honest, and even more likeable than **Cain**. But those qualities didn't make **Abel's sacrifice** acceptable, or lack of those qualities that made **Cain's** offering unacceptable. The difference was how they approached **God**; one in obedient **faith**; the other in disobedient unbelief.

It is also likely that **ADONAI** showed **His approval of Abel's sacrifice** by causing **it** to be **consumed**. On at least five other occasions recorded in the Bible, **Ha'Shem** showed **His approval** of a **sacrifice** by sending **fire** to **consume** it.

First, when **Aaron and his sons** began **their** priestly ministry, **the LORD** appeared, **the Sh'khinah glory** appeared to all the people. After **Moshe** and **Aaron** came out of the Tabernacle, **fire** came out from the presence of **ADONAI** and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the bronze altar (Leviticus 9:24).

Second, when **Gideon** requested a **sign** to confirm **God's** promise to **save Isra'el** from **the Midianites**, **the Angel of the LORD**, the preincarnate **Messiah**, touched the meat and unleavened bread that **Gideon** had placed upon **on a rock**, and **fire** consumed the meat and bread, thus providing **the sign** **Gideon** had requested (Judges 6:21).

Third, when **Elijah** entered a contest of **calling down fire** on an offering with **the prophets of Ba'al** to end a **three-and-a-half year drought**, **Ba'al** did not answer. But when **Elijah** prayed that **ADONAI** would answer **him** to prove that **He** is **God**, **the fire of Ha'Shem** fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil (First Kings 18:38).

Fourth, when **David sinned** and took a **census** against the wishes of **ADONAI**, the judgment of **the Angel of the LORD** stopped **at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite**. There, **David built an altar to ADONAI there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings on Mount Moriah**. (It was the place where **the Temple** would be built.) **David called on the LORD, and God answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of the burnt offerings and it was consumed (First Chronicles 21:26)**.

And fifth, before King **David** died **he** had made all the preparations for **his son Solomon** to build **God's Temple**. **When all the work Solomon had done was finished, he dedicated the Temple. And when he finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the Sh'khinah glory of ADONAI filled the Temple (Second Chronicles 7:1)**.

Abel is a true witness: And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead (11:4c). When **ADONAI** confronted **Cain** after **Abel's** murder, **God** said: **What have you done? Your Brother's Blood Cries Out to Me from the ground (Genesis 4:10)**. So the first time **Abel spoke** after **his death** was to ask **Ha'Shem** that **his** murder be **avenged**. Like **the souls under the altar who had been slain because of the Word of God, Abel** cried out: **How long, ADONAI, holy and true, until You avenge my blood (Revelation 6:9-10)?**

God also spoke to **Cain**, **"Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth" (Genesis 4:11-12)**. Every time **Cain's** feet touched **the ground**, **he** would be reminded of **his evil deed**. **The earth**, in effect, rejected **Cain** as **he** had rejected **YHVH** and **his brother**. Although **dead, Abel** continued to **speak to his brother**.

The primary meaning of **Hebrews 11:4**, however, has to do with **Abel's** speaking to later generations of believers and potential believers. **He still speaks** and has three things to say to us. First, we come to **God** by **faith**, not by works. You don't get to heaven by what you do; you get to heaven by what you **believe**. Second, We must accept and obey **God's** Word above our own reason and self-will. And third, **wickedness** is punished severely. This is **Abel's** timeless three-point sermon to the world, which **he** has been preaching for thousands of years to those who will hear: **The righteous will live by faith.**³⁰⁰

