

Cain, we recall, was so named by his mother, because, as she said, "I created (kaniti) a male child with the Lord." Blessing God for the fruit of her womb, Eve thanked God for His help in allowing the child to be born. And so, as Jonathan Grossman notes in his *Creation: The Story of Beginning* (YU Press and Maggid Books, 2019), her son, after growing up, follows suit. Cain too has produced fruit, this time of the agricultural variety, and, just like his mother, thanks God for what has "owered. And he did so while fulfilling his parents' mission, having been commanded to work the ground and toil in it. As a means of thanking God, he innovates the central ancient religious ritual, a practice that inspired our own daily prayers. He brought a korban

At this stage, Cain seems poised to be a religious hero. Clearly the focal point of the narrative (his brother Abel's name, unlike his own, was given no explanation), he movingly offers to God a sign of gratitude. As Moshe Halbertal has written, "the gift of sacrifice to God, who is in the first place the provider of the good and in no need of it, functions as a token of submission and gratitude."⁹

But Cain's act is met with brutal disappointment. God, for reasons unexplained, does not accept Cain's sacrifice. But Abel's is accepted. "Religious sacrifice is a costly act of self-giving, in denial of natural inclinations, that is offered in suspense, under conditions that threaten failure, for the purpose of establishing a relation with the transcendent reality" writes scholar David L. Weddle. And Cain's sacrifice failed.

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