

From the Rabbi's Desk
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Stories with a Twist [234]

Who Will Get Justice for Me from the King? Insights into Genesis Rabbah 22:9



Background to Our Story

The Biblical Narrative: Genesis 4:1-10

¹ Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gained a male child with the help of the Lord." ² She then bore his brother Abel. Abel became a keeper of sheep, and Cain became a tiller of the soil. ³ In the course of time, Cain brought an offering to the Lord from the fruit of the soil; ⁴ and Abel, for his part, brought the choicest of the firstlings of his flock. The Lord paid heed to Abel and his offering, ⁵ but to Cain and his offering He paid no heed. Cain was much distressed and his face fell. ⁶ And the Lord said to Cain,

"Why are you distressed,
And why is your face fallen?

⁷ Surely, if you do right,
There is uplift.

But if you do not do right
Sin crouches at the door;
Its urge is toward you,
Yet you can be its master."

⁸ Cain said to his brother Abel ... and when they were in the field, Cain set upon his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹ The Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

¹⁰ Then He [God] said, "What have you done? Hark, your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground!"

? Please explain verse "... *your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground!*" in the context of the Biblical story.

The Text: Genesis Rabbah 22:9

אמר רבי שמעון בן יוחאי קשה הדבר לאמרו ואי אפשר לפה לפרשו, לשני אתליטין שהיו
עומדין ומתגוששים לפני המלך, אלו רצה המלך פרשו, ולא רצה המלך לפרשו, נתחזק אחד על
חברו והרגו, והנה מצות ואמר מאן יבעי דיני קדם מלכא, כף קול דמי אחיה צועקים אלי מן
האדמה

Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai said "This is a difficult thing to say and it is impossible to say it clearly. Once two athletes were wrestling before the king. If the king wants, they can be separated; but he did not want them separated. One overcame the other and killed him. The loser cried out as he died: 'Who will get justice for me from the king?' Thus: 'The voice of your brother's blood is crying out to me from the land.' "

—GENESIS RABBAH, XXII, 9



Explaining the Story (What is the sequence of events that take place in the story?)

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

Extra Bonus **?** Why does Rabbi Shimon say "This is a difficult thing to say and it is impossible to say it clearly"?

? Who is the King in our story? **?** Who are the athletes wrestling?

Bonus **?** How could have the King separated the athletes if He wished?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

? Why do you think the King didn't wish to separate them?

Answer 1 _____

Answer 2 _____

Answer 3 _____

? In the context of this story, please explain the following: "Who will get justice for me from the king?"

? In the context of this story, please explain the following: *"The voice of your brother's blood is crying out to Me from the land."*

"The Twist" – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from the Text

! J'accuse! – "The King on trial" as a model for understanding the evils of the world.

EPILOGUE