

Torah Readings - Genesis 3:22 - 4:26

Genesis 4:1-5 - Cain and Abel - one tradition says they were twins.

Abel = “breath, ascension,” also maybe implying brevity, a short life. It can also mean “nothingness” with the idea of humility.

Cain = “acquisition”

One Jewish tradition says Eve was seduced by the serpent, and Cain was his offspring.

Gen. 4:1 - Eve says, “I have gained a male child with the Lord,” or “I have acquired a man, the Lord.” Luther and other commentators speculate that Eve believed she had birthed the deliverer that would crush Satan’s head, foretold in Genesis 3:15.

The first offerings

It is never plainly stated, but it seems both Abel and Cain knew they were to bring some kind of offering.

Also it’s not stated how they knew of God’s approval of Abel’s sacrifice. Possibly by fire from heaven consuming it, as for Gideon in Judges 6:21.

Possible reasons for Cain’s anger:

—Abel offered firstlings of the flocks, risking what he had without knowing what other sheep would be born, while Cain offered fruit already dropped from the tree and therefor, almost rotting. (Thanks, John Bojo!)

—Abel offered a blood sacrifice, pointing to Christ’s sacrificial death, while Cain offered fruits from the ground, which God had cursed. (Rashi, medieval Jewish commentator)

—Abel offered willingly and cheerfully, while Cain offered grudgingly and for his own purposes and in a manner just within the “legal limits.”

— Cain may have thought he was faithfully fulfilling the terms of exile, i.e. that he should work the cursed earth “by the sweat of his brow,” while Abel was avoiding this by simply guarding sheep.

—All of the above.

Genesis 4:6-7 - “Sin” or “sin offering” or both?

This has been called the most obscure verse in Genesis.

Genesis 4:7 - “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if though doest not well, sin (or the sin offering) lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou

shalt rule over him."

A strong Jewish tradition is that this means sin is crouching ready to pounce, but it is in our power to subdue it.

But "lieth" is the Hebrew "ravats." It means "a resting place." In almost every occurrence in the Old Testament it is associated with "repose" or "rest after exertion." In fact, this word is used many times to symbolically describe the rest of sheep under the shepherd's care.

Hebrew "chatta'ah" is translated as both sin and "sin offering" in the Old Testament. It's the first mention of sin in the Bible. The one word is translated as sin 103 times and sin offering 115 times.

Christ as the sin offering

The identification of sin with the sin offering is personified in Christ and explained in the New Testament.

Galatians 3:13 -- "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'"

2 Corinthians 5:21 -- "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Abel's type of offering fulfilled two important qualifications: he offered the best he had to offer, he offered the "first fruits" of the flock (from the first animals born in the spring) and he offered animal sacrifice, which necessitated the shedding of the animal's blood. The first century AD Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexander, speculated that this was the reason Abel's sacrifice was superior (Sacrifices 88, Philo of Alexandria) and the first century Jewish historian/ priest Flavius Josephus agreed (Antiquities of the Jews 1.54).

Abel offered in faith

The point is that Abel offered in faith and righteousness with a willing heart (Mt 23:35; Heb 11:4; 1 Jn 3:12; Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, 1:53). Jn 3:12: And why did Cain murder his brother? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's upright.

Cain is remembered in other non-canonical Jewish documents as a man of wicked intent

(1 Enoch 22:7; Jubilees 4:1-5; Pseudo Philo, Biblical Antiquities. 2:1; 59:4; 4 Mac 18:11; Life of Adam and Eve 23:2-5; Philo, Worse 68; Josephus, Antiquities 1:52, 60-61).

1 John 3:12 - "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."

The Way of Cain -

Jude 1:10-11 - "But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core."

Was Cain repentant?

Cain was very angry and downcast -- being "downcast" is not the same as repentance.

2 Corinthians 7:10 -- "For godly sorrow worketh (contributes toward the result of) repentance to salvation not to be repented of (regretted): but the sorrow of the world worketh (brings to pass) death." Judas and Pharoah also exhibited this sorrow of the world.

Esau sought repentance with many tears but never found it (Heb. 12:17).

(There is a tradition of no repentance on Esau's part: The Targum on Job 15:20 says, "all the days of Esau the ungodly, they expected that he would have repented, but he repented not." In other words, he continued his self-seeking attitude that caused him to sell his birthright in the first place.)

God's mercy

Repentance & the sin offering are always "at the tent door."

Mat 7:7-8 -- Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

But if we should despise our privileges as Esau did who sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage, and renounce our faith, it will be impossible to recover what we had lost. (Heb. 6:1-6)

What about the second part of Genesis 4:7?

Genesis 4:7b - "...And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him."

The could easily be referring to Abel (the pronouns are masculine, while "sin" is feminine) -

Translation: "[As for your brother Abel,] his obedience toward you as the elder will remain, and you will retain your rights as firstborn." (i.e., providing that you repent and take advantage of the sin offering)

Natural vs Spiritual

The conflict of Cain and Abel sets the stage for the rest of the Book of Genesis, where the younger brother consistently achieves superiority over the older brother who

inevitably fails. This reflects a spiritual truth clarified in the New Testament - first the natural, then the spiritual:

1 Corinthians 15:45-47 - So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being;" the last Adam a life-giving spirit. The spiritual, however, was not first, but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man from heaven...

Cain's exile and curse

Genesis 4:9-12 - And the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' And he said, 'I know not; Am I my brother's keeper?' And He said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened her mouth to swallow your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall not henceforth yield to you her strength; a fugitive and a wanderer shall you be in the earth.

The ground was already cursed for Adam and his descendants. Now it was doubly cursed for Cain.

Cain & Abel vs Moses & Aaron

<http://www.aish.com/tp/i/moha/48908827.html>

The rabbis saw the opposite relationship to Cain and Abel in the brothers Moses and Aaron, who related to one another with love and respect.

Exodus 4:27 - And the Lord said to Aaron, 'Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him.

The Midrash stresses the importance of this kiss:

"When it says: 'Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other' [Psalms 85:11] mercy refers to Aaron ... while truth refers to Moses ... Righteousness refers to Moses, of whom it is said: 'He executed the righteousness of the Lord' [Deuteronomy 33:21], and peace refers to Aaron, of whom it says: 'He walked with Me in peace and uprightness' [Malachi 2:6] Righteousness and peace have kissed each other, as it says, ... 'And he [Aaron] kissed him [Moses].' Why? Each one rejoiced at the other's greatness." [Midrash Rabbah, Exodus 5:10]

On the other hand, the rabbis saw the rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16:3) as exhibiting the spirit of Cain.

In the same way that Abel did not respond or argue with Cain, Moses did not respond to the argument of Korah. Significantly, Jesus did the same:

Isaiah 53:7 - "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

Self-justification is never from faith.

The mark of Cain

Genesis 4:15 - "And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him."

Much controversy throughout history on what constituted the mark of Cain.

It was a protective mark.

Similar to a few other instances in Israel's history.

—Blood on the doorposts

Exodus 12:23 - "For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you.

—Mark on the forehead

Ezekiel 9:4 - And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

Ezekiel 9:6 - Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary.

The word "mark" is the Hebrew word for the letter "tav" or T. In early Hebrew it is represented by a slightly skewed X, and it became a scribal mark used in the margins of scripture to denote Messianic passages, most notably in many of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

—His name on the forehead

And finally in Revelation 22:4 - "They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads."

Besides protection, the mark on the forehead also signifies a new way of thinking, viewing life through the lens of the Cross.

It also signifies who we belong to - the Antichrist/Beast applies his own mark (Revelation 13:16).

Genesis 4:19-24 - Lamech

The root of his name means 'despairing'

See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamech_\(descendant_of_Cain\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamech_(descendant_of_Cain))

The last part of the tale of Lamech (Genesis 4:23–24), takes the form of a brief poem, which refers back to the curse of Cain.

Some scholars have proposed that it is connected to the invention, contextually by Tubal-Cain, of the sword, for which reason the poem is often referred to as the Song of the Sword. The poem may originate from the mysterious Book of the Wars of the Lord, though the greater context for it is likely to remain obscure.

The Talmud and Midrash present an extensive legend, told, for example, by Rashi, in which Lamech first loses his sight from age, and had to be led by Tubal-Cain, the seventh generation from Cain. Tubal-Cain saw in the distance something that he first took for an animal, but it was actually Cain (still alive, due to the extensive life span of the antediluvians) whom Lamech had accidentally killed with an arrow. When they discovered who it was, Lamech, in sorrow, clapped his hands together, which (for an unclear reason) kills Tubal-Cain. In consequence, Lamech's wives desert him. A similar legend is preserved in the pseudepigraphic Second Book of Adam and Eve, Chapter XIII; in this version Tubal-Cain is not named, but is instead referred to as "the young shepherd." After Lamech claps his hands he strikes the young shepherd on the head. To ensure his death, he then smashed his head with a rock.

An alternate form of this negative attitude towards Lamech (such as Targum Pseudo-Jonathan) claims that even though Lamech did not kill anyone, his wives refused to associate with him and denied him sex, on the grounds that Cain's line was to be annihilated after seven generations. The poem is then given by Lamech to allay their fears. Other classical sources, such as Josephus, see the word seventy-seven as the number of sons which Lamech eventually had.

Birth of Seth

Seth = 'appointed'

Genesis 4:25 -

When a child was born to Adam and Eve after the murder of Abel, she called her son Seth, for "God had provided me with [shat] another offspring" (Gen. 4:25). The Rabbis understand "another offspring" as an allusion to the anointed king, the Messiah, who will be from the line of Seth and Ruth the Moabite (Genesis Rabbah 23:5).

Genesis 4:26b - "then began men to call upon the name of the LORD."

In Hebrew, "chalal" which is translated in English as "began" had a more common meaning of "to profane, defile, pollute, desecrate."

The Targum of Jonathan - That was the generation in whose days they began to err, and to make themselves idols, and surnamed their idols by the name of the Word of the Lord.

The Targum of Onkelos - Then in his days the sons of men desisted (or forbore) from praying in the name of the Lord.

Maimonides - "In the days of Enos the sons of Adam erred with great error, and the counsel of the wise men of that age became brutish, and Enos himself was (one) of them that erred....And in process of time there stood up false prophets among the sons of Adam, which said that God had commanded and said unto them, Worship such a star, or all the stars, and do sacrifice unto them thus and thus; and build a temple for it, and make an image of it, that all the people, women, and children may worship it.

"And the false prophet showed them the image which he had feigned out of his own heart, and said it was the image of such a star, which was made known unto him by prophecy. And they began after this manner to make images in temples, and under trees, and on tops of mountains and hills, and assembled together and worshipped them, etc. And this thing was spread through all the world, to serve images with services different one from another, and to sacrifice unto and worship them. So, in process of time, the glorious and fearful name (of God) was forgotten out of the mouth of all living, and out of their knowledge, and they acknowledged him not."

Rashi defines "to call on the name of God" as "calling the names of men and the names of idols after the name of the Holy One, blessed be He--making them the objects of idolatrous worship and calling them deities."

Ginzberg's "Legends of the Jews" - One rabbinical legend has Enosh explaining to people how God created humankind:

Enosh took six clods of earth, mixed them, and moulded them, and formed an image of dust and clay. "But," said the people, "this image does not walk, nor does it possess any breath of life." He then essayed to show them how God breathed the breath of life into the nostrils of Adam, but when he began to blow his breath into the image he had formed, Satan entered it, and the figure walked, and the people of his time who had been inquiring these matters of Enosh went astray after it, saying, "What is the difference between bowing down before this image and paying homage to a man?" The generation of Enosh were thus the first idol worshippers

Compare Revelation 13:15 - "The second beast was permitted to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image would also speak and cause all who refused to worship it to be killed."

Gospel in the Genealogies?

Jumping ahead, the story of the Gospel might be concealed in the names of the genealogy from Adam to Noah listed in Genesis 5:

Adam – Man
Seth – Appointed
Enosh – Mortal
Kenan – Sorrow
Mahalalel – The blessed God
Jared – Shall come down
Enoch – Teaching
Methuselah – His death shall bring
Lamech – Despairing
Noah – Comfort and rest

Jesus tells us in the Gospels that if we look at the Scriptures, we will find that they are written about Him.