

Awakening in the Word

By Glenn McWilliams of TK Torah Keepers

www.MichaelRoodMinistries.com and www.tktorahkeepers.com

OVERVIEW

This portion could have several different names: “The Fruit Doesn’t Fall Far from the Tree,” “Man: The Sequel,” or simply “The Next Generation.” But regardless of what we call this portion, its focus remains upon the relationship between the Creator and His exalted creature, man. In this narrative Adam and Havah begin fulfilling the commandment to be fruitful and multiply. The chapter begins with the birth of two brothers and the story of their life outside the Garden of Eden. There are numerous lessons to be gleaned from this story. There are also a number of assumptions to be challenged and puzzles to be solved. Clearly there are two dominant subjects in this portion. The first is the tension between the two brothers Cain and Abel, the descendants of Adam. The second is the relationship and demeanor of the Creator with His creatures outside the Garden of Eden.

OUTLINE

The outline of this portion can be broken down in a number of ways. The simplest of outlines divides this chapter into four sections.

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| Bereshit 4:1-16 | The saga of Cain and Abel |
| Bereshit 4:17-22 | The genealogy of Cain |
| Bereshit 4:23-24 | The song of Lamech |
| Bereshit 4:25-26 | The line of Seth |

The above is certainly not the only outline to be considered.

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| Bereshit 4:1-2 | The birth of Cain and Abel |
| Bereshit 4:3-4a | The offerings of Cain and Abel |
| Bereshit 4:4b-5a | The Creator’s response to their offerings |
| Bereshit 4:5b-6 | Cain’s response to the Creator |
| Bereshit 4:7-8 | Grace offered and grace refused |
| Bereshit 4:9-16 | Consequences, cries, and further grace |
| Bereshit 4:17-22 | The development of human civilization |
| Bereshit 4:23-24 | The downfall of human civilization |
| Bereshit 4:25-26 | Further grace given |

SUGGESTED STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to “know” someone in the biblical understanding?
2. Were Cain and Abel twins?
3. What is the significance of their birth order?
4. What is the significance of their names?
5. What is the significance of their occupations?
6. Were their offerings sacrifices?
7. What was different about Abel’s offering?
8. Why was Abel’s offering accepted and Cain’s rejected?
9. What was lying at Cain’s door?
10. Why was the ground used to punish Cain?
11. Did the Creator follow Torah by not killing the murderer Cain?
12. Did Cain receive a “mark” or simply a “promise”?
13. What is significant about Seth being called “seed”?
14. What is the significance of the name of the Creator used in this portion?

THE TEXT Genesis 4:1-26

Genesis 4:1 ¶ And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from YHWH. ² And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. ³ And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto YHWH. ⁴ And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And YHWH had respect unto Abel and to his offering: ⁵ But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell. ⁶ And YHWH said unto Cain, Why art thou wrath? and why is thy countenance fallen? ⁷ If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. ⁸ ¶ And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. ⁹ And YHWH said unto Cain, Where *is* Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: *Am* I my brother's keeper? ¹⁰ And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. ¹¹ And now *art* thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; ¹² When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. ¹³ And Cain said unto YHWH, My punishment *is* greater than I can bear. ¹⁴ Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, *that* every one that findeth me shall slay me. ¹⁵ And YHWH said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And YHWH set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. ¹⁶ And Cain went out from the presence of YHWH, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. ¹⁷ ¶ And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch. ¹⁸ And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and Mehujael begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech. ¹⁹ And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. ²⁰ And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as

dwell in tents, and *of such as have* cattle. ²¹ And his brother's name *was* Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. ²² And Zillah, she also bare Tubalcain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubalcain *was* Naamah. ²³ ¶ And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. ²⁴ If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold. ²⁵ ¶ And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For Elohim, *said she*, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew. ²⁶ And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of YWHW.

Awakening in the Word

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There are a number of important themes running through our portion this week, but clearly the greatest of these is the phenomenal love and mercy that the Creator extends toward His most beloved creature, man.

Last week our portion ended with Adam and Havah hearing the consequences of their disobedience, which included expulsion from the Garden of Eden, shame, pain in childbirth, toiling for food, and death. Barring the way to the Tree of Life, the Creator forced man to face death and look forward to the coming of the one who would have the power and ability to crush the head of the serpent, thus freeing man from bondage to the consequences of his disobedience.

It is in anticipation of this hopeful victory over sin and death that our portion begins with the announcement "It's a boy!" In fact, "It's two boys!" Given the dire consequences of Havah's previous choice, it should not surprise us that Havah praised the Creator for the grace gift of a son.

Genesis 4:1 *And Adam knew Havah his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from YHWH.*

Even in their fallen state, Adam and Havah sought to fulfill their calling to manifest the image of the Creator through their dominion and creative ability. The Torah teaches that this creative process began with Adam "knowing" his wife. The Hebrew word translated as "knew" is *yada* (*yud, dalet, ayin*). Clearly from the context of the passage the word *yada* means more than just a familiar recognition of Havah as his wife. It was not as if Adam had a lot of women to confuse her with. The ancient Hebrew ideograph of this word will help us gain understanding as to its power. The letter *yud* is a picture of a hand. *Dalet* is a picture of a door. *Ayin* is a picture of an eye. Together, hand, door, and eye convey the idea of a hand opening a door and looking inside. Thus the Hebrew word *yada* has the connotation of entering into something to look at it intimately. Nuhum M. Sarna defines biblical "knowing" this way:

"Knowing" in the Bible is not essentially intellectual activity, nor simply objective contemplation of reality. Rather, it is experiential, emotional, and above all, relational. Thus, in [Genesis] 18:19, when God says of Abraham, "I have singled him out," or to Israel, in Amos 3:2, "You alone have I singled out of all the families of the earth," the true connotation is, "I have entered into a special relationship with you." For that reason the Hebrew stem y-d-' can encompass a range of meanings that include involvement, interaction, loyalty, and obligation. It can be used of the Most High God. Significantly, the verb is never employed for animal copulation.¹

We should note from this definition and the biblical evidence as well that procreation was not to be the mere accident of animal desires. Man was not to live like an animal. Let us look again at the similarities and differences between the original blessings given to the animals and those given to man.

Genesis 1:21-22 *And Elohim created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and Elohim saw that it was good. ²²And Elohim blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.*

¹ The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis, Nahum M. Sarna, Jewish Publication Society, Pg. 31

Genesis 1:27-28 *So Elohim created man in His own image, in the image of Elohim created He him; male and female created He them. ²⁸And Elohim blessed them, and Elohim said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

The difference between these two blessings is quite subtle and yet very important. Both man and the animals are to be “fruitful and multiply.” In the blessing over the animals, note that the word is about the animals but is not addressed directly to the animals. In other words, being fruitful and multiplying is simply a part of their created nature; it is instinctual, driven by their animal nature. But the blessing spoken to Adam and Havah is addressed “unto them” as a commandment. In other words, man is not simply to reproduce out of his animal nature, but out of willful obedience to the Creator.

Adam and Havah were given free choice. For man the act of procreation was not to be merely an act of animal behavior driven by lust, but a willful choice to fulfill a commandment of the Creator. We must understand that the seed of Adam was to produce after its kind. If Adam was to be the image of the Creator, then his offspring were likewise to come forth as the image of the Creator. No other creature was given this honor. Because Adam was willfully and lovingly created by Elohim, so the offspring of Adam were to be brought forth willfully and lovingly. By this love and choice man was to sanctify the human procreative process. The fact that Adam and Havah are commanded to likewise subdue and exercise dominion over the animal realm again emphasizes the fact that man was more than animal and was to act accordingly, even in the fulfillment of the commandment to be fruitful and multiply.

By exercising dominion over his own animal lusts, man has the ability to dignify and sanctify the most intimate of his acts. Based upon this understanding we should always approach our marriage partner with dignity, respect, and a sense of sacredness. We should likewise understand that we are not to enter into relationships based upon animal lust. Neither are we to engage in sexual activity in an animal nature. We are, however, called to *yada* – to know, have experience with, have a relationship with, and be obligated to – the person that we share such intimacy with. We must never forget that we are to be the manifest presence of YHWH even in our most intimate relationships. We must manifest the love and faithfulness of the Creator to our spouses, children, family, friends, and neighbors.

In our portion, Adam and Havah seek to correct the consequences of their choice to disobey. This correction comes both in the desire to fulfill the commandment to be fruitful and multiply and in their hope that in their offspring the head or authority of the serpent would be crushed. Let us also remember from last week’s portion that the serpent was representative of the animal nature of man. The prophetic declaration spoken to the serpent by YHWH was one of ultimate defeat.

Genesis 3:15 *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

So it is the hope of Adam and Havah that by their obedience to the command to be fruitful and multiply they might bring forth the one who would subdue the animal nature and lead them back to life in the Garden of Eden and to the Tree of Life.

We should note that Havah sees the birth of her firstborn not simply as an accident of their human nature, but as the very work of the Creator. The very name Havah bestows upon her firstborn son reflects this understanding.

Genesis 4:1 *And Adam knew Havah his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from YHWH.*

Names play an important role in the Bible. Understanding names and why they were given is essential to understanding and remembering the meaning of the story. While it is not at all evident in the English translation, the motive for Havah naming her son Qayn (Cain) is quite evident in the Hebrew text. In Hebrew, the text would read,

Genesis 4:1 *And Adam knew Havah his wife; and she conceived, and bare Qayn, and said, qayniti (I have gotten) a man from YHWH.*

Clearly Havah understood life to be a gift from the Creator. How much more precious this gift must be in the light of the curse of death they now faced! That the Creator would continue to bring forth life from Adam and Havah even after their fall clearly demonstrates the Creator's attribute of mercy. Through this gift of life Adam and Havah realized that the Creator had not completely rejected, cut off, or abandoned them to their own fate.

While there are many themes running throughout this portion, none of them is as prominently displayed as that of the Creator's attribute of mercy. We noted in our very first Torah portion that only the more generic title "Elohim" is used for the Creator. We stated that this title is associated with the Creator's attributes of sovereignty and judgment. In the second portion we noted that the name YHWH was added to the title Elohim, indicating that the Sovereign One was the same one who intimately desired a relationship with Adam and Havah. In this portion, only the name YHWH is used. As we have already stated, YHWH is the name associated with the Creator's attributes of mercy, redemption, deliverance, and fulfillment of promises. It is no accident that this name alone is used throughout this portion.

So it is that Havah points to the mercy of the Creator in blessing her with a son. Not only did YHWH bless Havah with one son, but with two sons. Here we may recall the Creator's words to Havah after the fall.

Genesis 3:16 *Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.*

In the birth of Abel, YHWH fulfilled this promise to Havah. The Torah does not tell us that Adam knew his wife a second time. It is safe to assume therefore, given the promise of YHWH, that Cain and Abel are in fact twins.

Genesis 4:2 *And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.*

The name Hevel (*hey, vet, lamed*) means "breath," "vapor," "vanity," or even "idol."² This name may have been given prophetically in description of the shortness of Abel's life, although we must admit that we do not have any clues as to the ages of Cain and Abel at the time of their tragic encounter.

At the heart of this portion is the story of Cain and Abel. As we mentioned above, Adam and Havah may have hoped that in the birth of their son the consequences of their disobedience would be overcome. Instead, however, what we witness in this portion is the fruit of eating of the tree of mixed seed, good and evil. In the story of Cain and Abel we witness the beginning of the ongoing struggle between good and evil, between the flesh and the spirit, and between the seed of the serpent and the seed of Adam.

We are told in the Torah that Cain was a farmer of the ground while Abel was a shepherd of flocks. Both of these sons of Adam brought an offering unto YHWH. We are further told that YHWH looked with favor on Abel's offering, while at the same time rejecting Cain's offering. This rejection led Cain to rise up against his brother Abel and kill him.

This story raises a multitude of important questions, not the least of which is why YHWH accepted Abel's offering, but not Cain's. I have heard numerous preachers and teachers suggest that Abel's offering was accepted because he acknowledged his need for atonement through a blood offering, while Cain merely

² The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, James Strong, LL.D., S.T.D., Thomas Nelson Publishers, Reference number 1892, Pg. 66

brought a bloodless offering of the produce of his fields. Those who hold this view often point to the fact that YHWH created garments to “cover”³ Adam and Havah’s nakedness by killing an animal.

Genesis 3:21 *Unto Adam also and to his wife did YHWH Elohim make coats of skins, and clothed them.*

For most of my life I too held this view, but the text seems to contradict this notion. There is no mention of a sacrifice or a slaughtering taking place in this story. Both occupations, farming and shepherding, developed due to the fall of Adam and Havah. Prior to the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, food was readily available. After the fall, however, Adam was told that he would have to toil for his food.

Genesis 3:17-19 *And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; ¹⁸thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; ¹⁹in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

Let us be careful to note that man’s diet did not change. Animals were not permitted for food until after the flood;⁴ therefore farming was the main source of food for Cain and Abel. Shepherding, however, was necessary in order to obtain wool and skins for clothing, which likewise were not necessary until after the fall.

Further supporting the fact that there was no sacrifice or bloodshed as part of the offering is the fact that both offerings are referred to as *minchah* offerings. The Torah clearly defines the *minchah* offering as a bloodless offering. That the *minchah* is a bloodless gift is clearly demonstrated in the fact that the Torah describes Jacob’s gift of living animals to Esau as a *minchah* offering.⁵ In the books of Leviticus and Numbers, the *minchah* offering is a meal offering that is distinguished from the blood offerings.⁶ It is therefore possible that both Cain and Abel simply brought their offerings and left them for YHWH to do with as He desired. Many of the medieval commentaries taught that the acceptance of an offering was demonstrated by fire coming down from the heavens to consume it.⁷ This view does have some merit, given the testimony of later stories in the Tanach.

Leviticus 9:24 *And there came a fire out from before YHWH, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.*

Judges 6:21 *Then the angel of YHWH put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of YHWH departed out of his sight.*

1 Kings 18:38 *Then the fire of YHWH fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.*

2 Chronicles 7:1 *Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of YHWH filled the house.*

³ The Hebrew word *kaphar*, often translated as “to make atonement,” means “to cover.”

⁴ Genesis 9:1ff

⁵ Genesis 43:11,15,25,26

⁶ Leviticus 2:1ff, 6:14; Numbers 7:13-87

⁷ The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis, Nahum M. Sarna, Jewish Publication Society, Pg. 33

Thus, while there is no overt evidence that fire fell from heaven to consume Abel's offering, it is certainly a possibility. For our purposes, however, I simply want to make the point that there was no blood shed by Abel; thus, this was not the reason his offering was accepted. There is also no evidence that Abel was acknowledging his need for atonement, and no mention of blood serving in such a manner is made.

Some may point to the phrase "the fat thereof" as referring to the fats of the blood offering as demanded in the sacrifice commanded in the book of Leviticus and elsewhere.

***Leviticus 3:16-17** And the priest shall burn them upon the altar: it is the food of the offering made by fire for a sweet savour: all the fat is YHWH'S. ¹⁷It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood.*

As we shall see in a moment, the phrase "the fat thereof" is not to be understood in a literal manner; instead, it is used metaphorically to describe the sheep or goats as being the best. Therefore, I do not believe the acceptance or rejection of either offering was based upon the presence of blood. Instead, I would suggest two possible reasons for Abel's offering being accepted and Cain's being rejected. Both of these suggestions have significant ramifications.

Let us now contrast and compare the two offerings as the Torah describes them.

***Genesis 4:3-4** And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto YHWH. ⁴And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And YHWH had respect unto Abel and to his offering.*

We have already noted that both offerings are called *minchah* offerings. We may also note that both offerings are voluntary. Both offerings are brought from the labor of the brothers' own hands. In these aspects the two offerings appear to be identical. But the Torah also tells us that Cain brought the fruit of the ground, while Abel brought the fattest and the best of the firstlings of his flock. The word *chelev* (*chet, lamed, vet*) not only means "fat," but "fat ones." We should be careful not to read this as though Abel slaughtered a lamb or kid and put the fat on the altar as described in book of Leviticus.⁸ Instead, we should understand the "fat" to be metaphorically describing the healthiest and best, as is portrayed in the book of Numbers.

***Numbers 18:12** All the **best**⁹ of the oil, and all the **best** of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto YHWH, them have I given thee.*

***Numbers 18:29-30** Out of all your gifts ye shall offer every heave offering of YHWH, of all the **best** thereof, even the hallowed part thereof out of it. ³⁰Therefore thou shalt say unto them, When ye have heaved the **best** thereof from it, then it shall be counted unto the Levites as the increase of the threshingfloor, and as the increase of the winepress.*

***Numbers 18:32** And ye shall bear no sin by reason of it, when ye have heaved from it the **best** of it: neither shall ye pollute the holy things of the children of Israel, lest ye die.*

We may therefore distinguish a difference in the sincerity of both Cain and Abel in making their offerings. Abel did not just bring a firstling; he brought the best of his firstlings. Clearly Abel put thought behind what would be communicated by his actions and offering. His offering reflected the love and sincerity of the heart that made it. Cain, on the other hand, simply brought fruit from the earth without discretion. Implied in this contrast is the idea that Cain fulfilled the intent to offer something in gratitude for the

⁸ Leviticus 3:3,4,9,10,14,15

⁹ *Chelev* is here translated as "best."

Creator's help, but did not think enough to give his very best (no Hallmark cards from Cain). This lack of discretion demonstrated a spirit of disingenuousness in Cain. Mere ritual is never acceptable to YHWH; nor is a half-hearted act of devotion. Mere religion is never to be an acceptable replacement for true, heartfelt worship. If we desire to worship YHWH through our offerings, tithes, and obedience, it must be done in spirit and in truth.¹⁰ In His rejection of Cain's offering, YHWH rejected religion and religiousness. In His acceptance of Abel's offering, YHWH welcomed heartfelt and sincere worship, devotion, gratitude, and love.

There is yet a second reason given in the Scriptures for the rejection of Cain's offering and the acceptance of Abel's offering. The clue to this second reason for acceptance and rejection is found in the details of Cain and Abel's respective occupations. We have already stated that both of their occupations had their origins in the fall of Adam and Havah. We should note, however, that there is symbolic significance to each of these occupations and its relationship to their offerings.

Genesis 4:2 *And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a **keeper of sheep**, but Cain was a **tiller of the ground**.*

Genesis 4:3-4 *And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of **the fruit of the ground** an offering unto YHWH. ⁴And Abel, he also brought of the **firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof**. And YHWH had respect unto Abel and to his offering:*

Here we should note that Cain, the firstborn, is a tiller of the *adamah* (ground), and brought forth for his offering the fruit of the *adamah*. Let us recall that the very flesh of Adam was created from the dust of the *adamah*.¹¹ Cain represents a man of the flesh. Cain is a carnal man bringing forth the fruits or works of the flesh. We may remember the words of Yeshua and the apostle Shaul on this matter.

John 6:63 *It is the spirit that quickeneth; **the flesh profiteth nothing**: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

Galatians 5:19-21 *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of Elohim.*

Romans 8:5-8 *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷Because the carnal mind is enmity against Elohim: for it is not subject to the law of Elohim, neither indeed can be. ⁸So then they that are in the flesh cannot please Elohim.*

Abel, on the other hand, was a shepherd. A shepherd by definition is one who exercises dominion over the animal realm. This is consistent with the calling of man to be the image of the Creator by exercising dominion over the animal realm.

Genesis 1:26-27 *And Elohim said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. ²⁷So Elohim created man in His own image, in the image of Elohim created He him; male and female created He them.*

Abel represents the man who loves the Creator with his whole heart, mind, and being. In other words, Abel exercised dominion over his animal nature and caused even this lower nature of man to serve the

¹⁰ John 4:24

¹¹ Genesis 2:7

Creator's higher purposes. Abel offered the best of his animal nature to YHWH for His holy purposes. Abel lived in the proper created order. Abel had offered himself up as a holy and living sacrifice acceptable unto YHWH.¹² Abel represents the spiritual man who submits even his flesh to the will of the Creator.

We should note in the birth order of these two brothers the very principle that the apostle Shaul would later recognize. Cain, the carnal man, was the firstborn; while Abel, the spiritual man, was the second born.

1 Corinthians 15:46-50 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is YHWH from heaven. ⁴⁸As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. ⁴⁹And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. ⁵⁰Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of Elohim; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

We see in this portion the beginning of the pattern of the second born being preferred over the firstborn. Abel's offering was accepted over Cain's; Isaac was accepted over Ishmael, Jacob was preferred over Esau. Given the spiritual implication above, we may also look at Israel (as being defined purely as the biological descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), the firstborn of YHWH according to the flesh,¹³ being rejected for Israel (as defined by those who have been given a new heart emblazoned with Torah¹⁴), who will keep the covenant in spirit and in truth. Ultimately, this pattern finds its fulfillment in Yeshua, the "last Adam," being accepted over the first earthly Adam, who fell and brought death to the whole human race.

On this spiritual level it should not surprise us then that the earthly-minded man would rise up to kill the spiritual man. This is generally how it is. Ishmael, described as a wild animal,¹⁵ rose up to mock¹⁶ and ultimately to kill Isaac and his seed. Esau, also described as a man of the field,¹⁷ rose up to kill his brother Jacob.¹⁸ So too did the firstborn (carnal) Israel rise up to kill Yeshua and his seed (spiritual descendants).

In response to the Creator's acceptance of Abel's offering, Cain felt dejected. Note the language of direction used to demonstrate Cain's demeanor in this matter.

Genesis 4:5 But unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect. And Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell. ⁶And YHWH said unto Cain, Why art thou wrath? And why is thy countenance fallen? ⁷If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

The Torah describes Cain as angry and fallen. YHWH sought to show Cain a measure of mercy, and encouraged Cain to do what was good and right. In this we see that it is always YHWH'S heart to be in communion with His creation. YHWH does not change. It was Cain who turned away and fell from his high calling. The Creator told Cain the reason for His rejection. The word "sin" is the Hebrew word *chatah* (*chet, tet, aleph, hey*), which means both "sin" and "sin offering."

¹² Romans 12:1

¹³ Exodus 4:23

¹⁴ Jeremiah 31:31-33; Ezekiel 36:25ff

¹⁵ Genesis 16:12

¹⁶ Genesis 21:9

¹⁷ Genesis 25:27

¹⁸ Genesis 27:41

Exodus 29:14 *But the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his dung, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it is a **sin offering**.*

Leviticus 4:3 *If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the **sin** of the people; then let him bring for his **sin**, which he hath **sinned**, a young bullock without blemish unto YHWH for a **sin offering**.*

Thus, YHWH simply may have been pointing to Cain's sin or animal nature, or to an actual animal now to be slain as a blood offering for his sin. Either way, it is clear that the Creator is telling Cain to repent from his ways and exercise dominion over that which belongs to the animal realm. We should understand that the whole purpose of man sacrificing animals was to demonstrate that we have indeed chosen to exercise dominion and authority over our animal nature. But Cain refused to do this. Instead of exercising dominion over himself, he rose up to murder his brother Abel.

In this heinous act we once again witness the fruit of eating from the tree of mixed seed, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. We should note now the great similarities between the story of the fall of Adam and Havah and the fall of their seed, Cain and Abel.

Disobedience leads to death

Genesis 3:17 *And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.*

Genesis 4:8 *And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.*

The Creator comes to commune with His creatures and inquire of them.

Genesis 3:8-11 *And they heard the voice of YHWH Elohim walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of YHWH Elohim amongst the trees of the garden. ⁹And YHWH Elohim called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? ¹⁰And he said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. ¹¹And He said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?*

Genesis 4:9 *And YHWH said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?*

There is a curse upon the ground.

Genesis 3:17-19 *And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; ¹⁸thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; ¹⁹in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

Genesis 4:12 *When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.*

There is an expulsion.

Genesis 3:24 So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Genesis 4:14 Behold, Thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from Thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

The question that begs to be asked is why the Creator did not execute Cain. The story of Cain murdering Abel is a clear-cut case of premeditated murder. Cain was given the choice to do what was right, but instead willfully murdered his brother. The Torah is quite clear about this matter. No pity is shown to a murderer.

Genesis 9:4 But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.
⁵And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.
⁶Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of Elohim made He man.

Exodus 20:13 Thou shalt not kill.

Deuteronomy 5:17 Thou shalt not kill.

Leviticus 24:17 And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.

Numbers 35:15-29 ¹⁵These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither. ¹⁶And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. ¹⁷And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. ¹⁸Or if he smite him with an hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. ¹⁹The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he shall slay him. ²⁰But if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by laying of wait, that he die; ²¹or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die: he that smote him shall surely be put to death; for he is a murderer: the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him. ²²But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or have cast upon him any thing without laying of wait, ²³or with any stone, wherewith a man may die, seeing him not, and cast it upon him, that he die, and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm: ²⁴then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments: ²⁵and the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil. ²⁶But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge, whither he was fled; ²⁷and the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge, and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood: ²⁸because he should have remained in the city of his refuge until the death of the high priest: but after the death of the high priest the slayer shall return into the land of his possession. ²⁹So these things shall be for a statute of judgment unto you throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

Deuteronomy 19:11-13 But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities: ¹²then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. ¹³Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee.

Clearly the intentional murderer is to be put to death. Again we must ask why Cain was not executed. Some have tried to argue that it is because there were only two brothers, and there would have been no one left to populate the earth. This is refuted by the fact that Abel was replaced by Seth. Also, Cain marries, which means that Adam and Havah had already had other children by the time this happened. There is some suggestion that Cain may have repented of his sin, causing YHWH to show him mercy. In Cain's response to the hardship imposed on him by YHWH as a result of the murder, Cain declared that the "punishment" was too great for him to bear.

Genesis 4:13 *And Cain said unto YHWH, My punishment is greater than I can bear.*

The Hebrew word translated here as "punishment" is the word *avon* (*ayin, vav, nun*), which may also mean "perversity," "iniquity," or "guilt." In other words, it is possible that Cain is saying, "My sin is greater than I can bear." This would seem to indicate some sense of remorse, or perhaps fear that his sin was too grievous to be forgiven. If this was the case, then it is possible that for the sake of the whole human race YHWH allowed Cain to live so that we might all understand that there is NO SIN so terrible that YHWH cannot forgive it. Let us remember that the only name for the Creator used in this entire portion is the title "YHWH," which is associated with the Creator's attribute of mercy. We may also see the mercy of allowing Cain's seed to live among the righteous as a prophetic shadow picture. Here we should remember the parable of Yeshua concerning the wheat and the tares.

Matthew 13:24-30 *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: ²⁵but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. ²⁶But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. ²⁷So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? ²⁸He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? ²⁹But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. ³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*

Thus, through the death of Abel YHWH is revealed to be an Elohim of great mercy. In this revelation Abel's death is not in vain. If we are to be the image of YHWH in the world, then we too must learn to live mercifully. This is not always easy. We must remember that YHWH is about LIFE! Death has no part in the Creator. YHWH neither delights in nor desires the death of the wicked, but that all would repent and live. Nor is Elohim swift in exercising justice; rather He is patient, not desiring any to die.

Ezekiel 18:23 *Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith Adonai YHWH: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?*

Ezekiel 18:32 *For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith Adonai YHWH: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.*

Ezekiel 33:11 *Say unto them, As I live, saith Adonai YHWH, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

2 Peter 3:9 *YHWH is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

I would like to suggest a second possible reason why the Creator did not immediately kill Cain. The Torah requires that every truth be established by two or more witnesses. While this is true for minor issues, capital offenses must be established not by two witnesses, but by a pair of witnesses.

Numbers 35:30 *Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.*

Deuteronomy 17:6 *At the mouth of two (sh'nayim - pair, twins, twos) witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.*

Deuteronomy 19:15 *One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two (sh'nay) witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.*

For capital offenses, there must be a pair of witnesses that saw everything at the same time and from the same perspective. Their testimony must be identical. This is not the same as two witnesses viewing the event from a different viewpoint or at a different time. We should note that in this story YHWH is clearly the judge, but there is only one witness and complainant.

Genesis 4:10 *And He said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground.*

Abel's blood cries out from the ground as a witness. Usually when the earth is a witness it is invoked with its substantiating partner, heaven.

Deuteronomy 30:19 *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.*

Deuteronomy 4:26 *I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.*

Deuteronomy 31:28 *Gather unto Me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them.*

Is it possible that YHWH could not convict Cain of a capital offense justly without the pair of witnesses?

We may also note here another law of the Torah being invoked. It is clear that the witness who accuses is to be the first to execute the punishment.

Deuteronomy 17:7 *The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.*

In our story it is the earth that cries out against Cain, and it is the earth that punishes Cain by withholding her strength from him.

Genesis 4:11 *And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; ¹²when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.*

While it seems quite grievous for Cain, being a farmer, to be "cursed from the earth" and banished from the land, the concern he expresses is for the hands that might find him and rise against him. YHWH again shows Cain phenomenal mercy by giving him a sign that he would not be killed by others. We must be careful here not to interpret this as a mark placed upon Cain himself. While this imagery does come

up frequently in the Scriptures,¹⁹ possibly based upon this passage, there is nothing in this text that indicates that there was a physical mark placed on Cain. In the Hebrew the text simply states that YHWH gave Cain a sign. We may understand this to be similar to the sign of the rainbow given to Noah,²⁰ or the sign of the Sabbath²¹ given to the children of Israel. Generally the sign or token was given as a reminder of a promise or oath made between two parties. Thus we may read our portion as saying that YHWH gave Cain His oath or promise.

The result of the mercy shown to Cain is that his seed and nature continue in the earth. The tares remain in the garden along with the wheat. This is made quite evident in the song of Lamech, who clearly boasts of his fleshliness. Lamech is the archetype of the wicked one who misunderstands mercy and patience for license and impotence.

Psalm 10:2-11 *The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. ³For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom YHWH abhorreth. ⁴The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after Elohim: Elohim is not in all his thoughts. ⁵His ways are always grievous; Thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. ⁶He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity. ⁷His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity. ⁸He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor. ⁹He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net. ¹⁰He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones. ¹¹He hath said in his heart, Elohim hath forgotten: He hideth His face; He will never see it.*

Our portion does not end with the wicked, but rather tells us that Adam knew his wife again and she brought forth another son to replace Abel. Havah names her new son Shayt (Seth), which is Hebrew for “compensated” or “appointed.”

Genesis 4:25 *And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For Elohim, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew. ²⁶And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of YHWH.*

We should not miss the prophetic shadow picture of the Messiah given in this portion. Adam and Havah are waiting for the one to come who will free the human race from the consequences of their disobedience. Cain and Abel are born, and carnal Cain slays the righteous Abel; but now Seth (the appointed one) comes, and men begin calling upon the name of YHWH. Clearly we may see in Abel and Seth the first and second coming of the Messiah. Like Adam and Havah, we too are waiting and watching for the coming of the appointed one who will lead us in all righteousness and teach us to call upon the name of the Merciful One, YHWH.

¹⁹ Ezekiel 9:4-6 – the sign of the *tav*; Exodus 28:36-38; Revelation 7:3; 9:4; 14:1,9; 22:4. Compare Revelation 13:16; 20:4; 17:5

²⁰ Genesis 9:12-17

²¹ Exodus 31:13,17

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