

# Genesis 4 Commentary

[Previous](#)[Next](#)

**CLICK VERSE**  
**To go directly to that verse**

[Genesis 4:1 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:2 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:3 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:4 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:5 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:6 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:7 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:8 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:9 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:10 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:11 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:12 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:13 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:14 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:15 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:16 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:17 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:18 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:19 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:20 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:21 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:22 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:23 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:24 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:25 Commentary](#)  
[Genesis 4:26 Commentary](#)

---

Click chart to enlarge  
cChart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission

Summary Chart of The Book of Genesis								
Focus	Foundation Events (Four Events) (Events Predominant)				Foundation People (Four People) (People Predominant)			
Divisions	Creation (Ge 1-2)	Fall (Ge 3-5)	Flood (Ge 6-9)	Nations (Ge 10-12)	Abraham's Faith (Ge 12-24)	Isaac's Family (Ge 25-26)	Jacob's Conflicts (Ge 27-36)	Joseph's Calamity (Ge 37-50)
Topics	Beginning of the Human Race (Race As A Whole)				Beginning of the Hebrew Race (Family of Abraham)			
	Faithfulness of Mankind (Noah)				Faithfulness of One Man's Family (Abraham)			
	Historical				Biographical			
Place	Eastward From Eden to Ur				Westward From Canaan to Egypt			

Time	~2000+ Years (20% of Genesis) (~4004-2090BC)	About 300 Years 193 Yr in Canaan, 93 Yr in Egypt (80% of Genesis) (2090-1804BC)
	Primeval History of Humanity	Patriarchal History of Israel
Author	Moses	

## BEGINNINGS

- Ge 1:1-25 - The Universe (Everything)
- Ge 1:26-2:25 - The Human Race
- Ge 3:1-7 - Sin Enters the World
- Ge 3:8-24- God Promises Redemption from Bondage to Sin
- Ge 4:1-15 - Family Life
- Ge 4:16ff - Civilization
- Ge 10:1-11:32 - The Nations of the World
- Ge 12:1ff - The Story of Israel and the Jews

**Genesis 4:1 Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD."**

- **had relations** - Nu 31:17
- **I have gotten** - Ge 4:25 Ge 3:15 5:29 1Jn 3:12
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### Related Passages:

Numbers 31:17-18+ “Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who **has known** (*yada*) man intimately. 18 “But all the girls who have **not known** (*yada*) man intimately, spare for yourselves.

Genesis 19:5 (PERVERSION OF A PERFECT PLAN) and they called to Lot and said to him, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we **may have relations** (*yada*; Lxx - *sugginomai* - have sexual intercourse) with them.”

Judges 19:25+ But the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine and brought her out to them; and they **raped** (*yada*; Lxx - *ginosko* = know experientially, intimately) her and abused her all night until morning, then let her go at the approach of dawn.

Genesis 3:16+ To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you.

### ADAM'S FAMILY TREE

## THE FIRST BORN SON - CAIN

**Now...** - [NET NOTE](#) - The disjunctive clause (conjunction + subject + verb) introduces a new episode in the ongoing narrative. This chapter shows how quickly fallen mankind plunged into depraved behavior. One might subtitle this chapter "What Happens When Sin Enters Society!"

**Allen Ross** - In the story of Cain and Abel the seed of the woman met the seed of the serpent (Ge 3:15). Cain fell to the prey of the crouching evil and eventually went out to form a godless society, rejecting God's way. The "way of Cain" (Jude 1:11), then, is a lack of faith which shows itself in envy of God's dealings with the righteous, in murderous acts, in denial of responsibility, and in refusal to accept God's punishment. (See context in [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Pulpit Commentary** - Exiled from Eden, o'er, canopied by grace, animated by hope, assured of the Divine forgiveness, and filled with a sweet peace, the first pair enter on their life experience of labor and sorrow, and the human race begins its onward course of development in sight of the mystic cherubim and flaming sword.

**Warren Wiersbe** - All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players," wrote Shakespeare. "They all have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts." Remember those familiar words from English Lit 101? Shakespeare was right: we have many roles to play in life as from time to time we relate to various people and confront different circumstances. The important thing is that we let God write the script, choose the cast, and direct the action. If we disregard Him and try to produce the drama ourselves, the story will have a tragic ending. That's what ruined Cain, the first human baby born on the stage of Planet Earth: He ignored God's script, "did his own thing," and made a mess out of it. Genesis 4 focuses the spotlight on Cain; he's mentioned thirteen times, and seven times Abel is identified as "his [Cain's] brother." As you consider Cain's life and some of the roles he played, you will better understand how important it is for us to know God and do His will. (See context in [The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#))

**The man had relations** ([yada](#); Lxx - [ginosko](#) = know experientially, intimately) **with his wife** ([ishshah](#)) **Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain** ([Qayin](#)) - The sinful couple had disobeyed the command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Ge 2:17+) but now they obey God's commands to **be fruitful** and **multiply** (Ge 1:28+). **Had relations** is literally "knew Eve" (as in Ge 4:1KJV) and is the Hebrew verb [yada](#) which means to know intimately and is used here euphemistically to describe sexual relations in marriage. The old KJV's "know" is an excellent euphemism for sexual intercourse for it describes an intimate relationship with ardor and passion, as well as mutuality and oneness. [Yada](#) is used 3 more times in chapter 4 - Ge 4:9 of knowledge (making the point in word studies to always check the context!) and Ge 4:17, 25 of marital relations. **Eve's** name means life giver, life-producer, life giving and she now lives up to her name (recall how Biblical names often convey some truth about the person so named).

The words "**with the help**" ([see note below](#)) are not in the Hebrew text (NAS is helpful as it puts added words in ITALICS. The popular ESV makes one think it was in the original text). However, the literal rendering is "by the LORD" (Ge 4:1YLT) and the Greek has "through (dia) the Lord," so the addition of "with the help of the LORD," is certainly justified. We know that all births are ordained by the LORD and are a gift from Him. (Ps 127:3) **Cain** ([Qayin](#)) means acquisition, possession, maker or possibly "spear," for some writers feel his Hebrew name "[Qayin](#)" is derived from qayin the word for spear, a word which is only used one time in the OT (2Sa 21:16 - spear).

nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything,  
since **He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;**  
-- Acts 17:25+

**Derek Kidner** points out that "Eve's cry of faith, here as in Ge 4:25, lifts the situation out of the rut of the purely natural, to its true level (as faith always does: 1Ti 4:4, 5), whether she is touching on the oracle of Ge 3:15 or not." (See context in [Genesis - TOTC](#) or borrow [Genesis: an introduction and commentary](#))

**Robert Neighbour** - The only human beings God ever created were Adam and Eve. They were created with the power to propagate their race. Every human being upon the earth came forth from the first created pair. Cain and Abel received from their parents a sinful nature. The one was not good and the other bad. They were both alike evil. A bitter fountain cannot give forth sweet water, and both were sons of Adam and Eve. Cain and Abel were children of death and not of life. We read in the Scripture, "As in Adam all die." Again it is written, "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Death passed upon all men both physically and spiritually. Every son of Adam and Eve has a dying body. ([Wells of Living Water](#))

Sadly as we learn later, John writes that **Cain**...was of the evil one (HIS "FATHER" WAS THE DEVIL) and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous." (1Jn 3:12+) In other words, Cain was a physical child of Adam and Eve, but his spiritual father was Satan (Jn 8:44).

**THOUGHT** - As discussed below, the second son Abel was a child of God by faith (Heb 11:4+). So here we see the great divide of every soul ever born on earth - they either follow the way of Cain (Jude 1:11+) or they follow the way of Abel (Heb 11:4+, Heb 11:6+). Both sons came from the same pure stock (albeit both sinners), but their subsequent spiritual trajectories were diametrically (and eternally) different! This is a mystery we cannot fully understand. However this does help explain how some children from a godly family grow into godly offspring, whereas others remain [intractably](#) ungodly. Abel chose the small gate and narrow road that led to eternal life, but Cain chose the wide gate and broad way ("the way of Cain" - Jude 1:11+) that led to his eternal destruction. (Mt 7:13,14+).

**Guzik** has an interesting comment on **had relations** (knew) - There is power in this way of referring to sex. It shows the high,

interpersonal terms in which the Bible sees the sexual relationship. Most terms and phrases people use for sex today are either coarse or violent, but the Bible sees sex as a means of knowing one another in a committed relationship. *Knew* indicates an act that contributes to the bond of unity and the building up of a one-flesh relationship. ([Genesis 4](#))

**And she said, "I have gotten (qanah) a manchild (ish) with the help of the LORD"** - "I have created a man just as the LORD did!" (Ge 4:1NET) Note *with the help* is added by the translators. Note that **Cain (Qayin)** is somewhat of a "pun" on the Hebrew word for **gotten** (qaniti). If Eve understood Genesis 3:15+, it is very likely she thought this son (or one from his line) would be the one who would overcome the serpent. She was wrong. Their firstborn son Cain sadly became the first murderer, taking after his spiritual father Satan who himself "was a murderer from the beginning" (Jn 8:44), in effect, murdering Cain's parents!

**Alfred Edersheim** - When Eve called her first-born son Cain ("gotten," or "acquired"), she said, "I have gotten a man from Jehovah." Apparently she connected the birth of her son with the immediate fulfilment of the promise concerning the Seed, who was to bruise the head of the serpent. This expectation was, if we may be allowed the comparison, as natural on her part as that of the immediate return of our Lord by some of the early Christians. It also showed how deeply this hope had sunk into her heart, how lively was her faith in the fulfilment of the promise, and how ardent her longing for it

**Hindson and Kroll** - The last phrase, **from the LORD**, has caused some problems. Luther translated it as "*I have the man, the Lord*," making 'et' the regular sign of the accusative. This means that Eve was referring to the Deliverer promised in verse Ge 3:15. The other view would express, *I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord* interpreting the preposition as it functions in Ge 49:25; Jdg 8:7; Esther 9:29. In this case Eve would be emphasizing God's role in the birth of her child. The [Targum](#) and LXX favor this second view. (See online [King James Bible Commentary](#))

**David Thompson** - As the book of Genesis develops, those right with God always see the hand of the LORD in the conception of a baby - Genesis 4:1; 29:33; 33:5. Those who support abortion had better prepare themselves for the day they will face the LORD God, having murdered life Divinely Decreed by Him. According to the Bible, babies come from God - Psalm 127:3 - "Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward."

**Matthew Henry** - When Cain was born, Eve said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. Perhaps she thought that this was the promised seed. If so, she was woefully disappointed. **Abel** signifies vanity: when she thought she had the promised seed in **Cain**, whose name signifies *possession*, she was so taken up with him that another son was as vanity to her. Observe, each son had a calling. It is the will of God for everyone to have something to do in this world. Parents ought to bring up their children to work. **Give them a Bible and a calling, said good Mr. Dod, and God be with them.** We may believe that God commanded Adam, after the fall, to shed the blood of innocent animals, and after their death to burn part or the whole of their bodies by fire. Thus that punishment which sinners deserve, even the death of the body, and the wrath of God, of which fire is a well-known emblem, and also the sufferings of Christ, were prefigured. Observe that the religious worship of God is no new invention. It was from the beginning; it is the good old way, Jeremiah 6:16. **The offerings of Cain and Abel were different.** Cain showed a proud, unbelieving heart. Therefore he and his offering were rejected. **Abel** came as a sinner, and according to God's appointment, by his sacrifice expressing humility, sincerity, and believing obedience (Heb 11:4). Thus, seeking the benefit of the new covenant of mercy, through the promised Seed, his sacrifice had a token that God accepted it. **Abel offered in faith, and Cain did not** (Hebrews 11:4). **In all ages there have been two sorts of worshippers, such as Cain and Abel; namely, proud, hardened despisers of the gospel method of salvation, who attempt to please God in ways of their own devising; and humble believers, who draw near to him in the way he has revealed.** Cain indulged malignant anger against Abel. He harbored an evil spirit of discontent and rebellion against God (cf 1Jn 3:12). God notices all our sinful passions and discontents. There is not an angry, envious, or fretful look, that escapes his observing eye.

---

**Know (03045) yada** to know, to learn, to perceive, to discern, to experience, to confess, to consider, to know people relationally, to know how, to be skillful, to be made known, to make oneself known, to make known. Used as a description of intimate relations is Ge 4:1, Ge 4:17, Ge 4:25, Ge 38:26, Jdg 11:39, 1Sa 1:19). **Kidner** says "The word *knew*, in this special sense (Ge 4:1), conveys very well the fully personal level of true sexual union, although it can lose this higher content altogether (cf. Ge 19:5)." Knowing God means knowing Him on the spiritual level in the closest personal way. Do you "know" Him or just know about Him? Your answer will determine your eternal destiny! Do not be deceived by head knowledge with heart circumcision!

**Yada in Genesis** - Gen. 3:5; Gen. 3:7; Gen. 3:22; Gen. 4:1; Gen. 4:9; Gen. 4:17; Gen. 4:25; Gen. 8:11; Gen. 9:24; Gen. 12:11; Gen. 15:8; Gen. 15:13; Gen. 18:19; Gen. 18:21; Gen. 19:5; Gen. 19:8; Gen. 19:33; Gen. 19:35; Gen. 20:6; Gen. 20:7; Gen. 21:26; Gen. 22:12; Gen. 24:14; Gen. 24:16; Gen. 24:21; Gen. 25:27; Gen. 27:2; Gen. 28:16; Gen. 29:5; Gen. 30:26; Gen. 30:29; Gen. 31:6; Gen. 31:32; Gen. 33:13; Gen. 38:9; Gen. 38:16; Gen. 38:26; Gen. 39:6; Gen. 39:8; Gen. 41:21; Gen. 41:31; Gen. 41:39; Gen. 42:23; Gen. 42:33; Gen. 42:34; Gen. 43:7; Gen. 43:22; Gen. 44:15; Gen. 44:27; Gen. 45:1; Gen. 47:6; Gen. 48:19

**Gotten** (acquired) ([07069](#)) [qanah](#) means to get, to buy, to purchase, to acquire, to possess (Ge 25:10, 47:19). It describes buying, acquiring various things and is used of acquiring wisdom (Pr 4:5, Pr 4:7) and in this passage acquiring **wise counsel**. Note that another sense of qanah is to create (Pr 8:22, Creator/Possessor - Ge 14:19, 22), which results in some lexicons giving this meaning a separate entry. Vine discusses the meaning of "to create."

**Manchild** ([0376](#)) [ish](#) means man (as opposed to woman - Ge 2:18, Eccl 7:28), mankind, generically the human race (Ge 1:27; Nu 8:17; Ps. 144:3; Isa. 2:17), son of man in Ezekiel (cf Ezek 2:1,3, et al). **Vine** - This noun is related to the verb 'ādōm, "to be red," and therefore probably relates to the original ruddiness of human skin. The noun connotes notes "man" as the creature created in God's image, the crown of all creation.

**Cain** ([07014](#)) (Qayin) first child of Adam and Eve. Cain means acquired. Some say it comes from qayin which means spear, but most think Cain's Hebrew name qayin is related to the Hebrew verb qaniti (I have gotten). If that is the case, Cain's name is a play on the words, with the verb meaning "to acquire or get." Baker says "His name means "acquired" of the Lord" ([Complete Word Study Dictionary- Old Testament](#)) Easton's Bible Dictionary says his name means a possession or a spear. Smith's Bible Dictionary says it means "possession." [ISBE](#) says "spear" or "smith," resembling in sound the root [qanah](#), "get," "acquire." [Kidner](#) adds that "Cain has something of the sound of qānā, 'to get'. Such comments on names are usually wordplays rather than etymologies, overlaying a standard name with a particular significance. So, e.g. in Ge 17:17, 19 an existing name Isaac ('may [God] smile') was chosen to commemorate a certain human smile and the promise that provoked it."

**Qayin - 16x in 13v** - Gen. 4:1; Gen. 4:2; Gen. 4:3; Gen. 4:5; Gen. 4:6; Gen. 4:8; Gen. 4:9; Gen. 4:13; Gen. 4:15; Gen. 4:16; Gen. 4:17; Gen. 4:24; Gen. 4:25

Cain in the NT - Heb. 11:4; 1Jn. 3:12; Jude 1:11

**NET NOTE** - Here is another sound play ([paronomasia](#)) on a name. The sound of the verb קָנִיתִ (qaniti, "I have created" or "I have gotten") reflects the sound of the name **Cain** in Hebrew (קַיִן, qayin) and gives meaning to it. The saying uses the Qal perfect of קָנָה (qanah). There are two homonymic verbs with this spelling, one meaning "obtain, acquire" and the other meaning "create" (see Ge 14:19, 22; Dt 32:6; Ps 139:13; Pr8:22). The latter fits this context very well. Eve has created a man....Hebrew on **OF THE LORD = "with the LORD"**. The particle תְּנָךְ ('et) is not the accusative/object sign, but the preposition "with" as the ancient versions attest. Some take the preposition in the sense of "with the help of" (see BDB 85 s.v. תְּנָךְ; cf. NEB, NIV, NRSV), while others prefer "along with" in the sense of "like, equally with, in common with" (see Lev 26:39; Isa 45:9; Jer 23:28). Either works well in this context; the latter is reflected in the present translation. Some understand תְּנָךְ as the accusative/object sign and translate, "I have acquired a man—the LORD." They suggest that the woman thought (mistakenly) that she had given birth to the incarnate LORD, the Messiah who would bruise the Serpent's head. This fanciful suggestion is based on a questionable allegorical interpretation of Gen 3:15+ ([see the note there](#) on the word "heel").

**J D Watson** - When we hear the name Cain, most of us probably think immediately of the first murderer and his heinous crime. But there is more here. The Hebrew is **Qayin**, which as most scholars agree is a play on the verb [qanah](#), "to buy, purchase, acquire, or possess." This seems all the more apparent in what Eve herself says of Cain: "I have gotten [i.e., acquired, [qanah](#)] a man from the LORD" (Ge 4:1).

It did not take long, however, for that blessed acquisition to take a turn for the worse, long before Cain's murder of his brother Abel. Jude alludes to Cain's real problem when he writes of apostates: "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain" (Jude 1:11). The Greek for way is hodos, which literally refers to a road, highway, or street, but metaphorically to a course of conduct or way of thinking. So what was Cain's way of thinking? That he could please God his own way.

What offering, then, did Cain bring, and why did God not accept it? Some teachers insist the problem was that Cain did not bring blood, as did Abel. Genesis 3:21, it is argued, reveals that God taught Adam and Eve that blood had to be shed for sin, so this same knowledge was undoubtedly handed down to Cain and Abel. While we respect this view and its defenders, that is not what the text precisely says. The Hebrew, in fact, for the offering both men brought is [minchah](#), which does not refer to blood at all, rather the general idea of a gift. The offering each man brought, therefore, was appropriate to his vocation and could have been accepted equally.

So why was Cain's offering not accepted? We submit two reasons: First, the absence of a term such as "first fruits" for Cain (in contrast to Abel bringing the "firstlings" (Ge 4:4)) shows that Cain didn't bring the best (ED: OR MAY NOT), the choice of his crop, rather whatever he could "get by on," whatever he thought would appease God. Second, and more importantly, Abel's offering was by faith alone (Heb. 11:4); Cain's was not.

What, then, is the way of Cain? The way of religion. Cain's way of thinking was that he could please God his own way, and that is religion. Christianity, however, is not a religion; it is a life, a life found only in Christ by grace through faith. (J D Watson - [A Hebrew Word for the Day:](#))

**CAIN [ISBE]** - kan (qayin, "spear" or "smith," resembling in sound the root *qanah*, "get," "acquire," Gen 4:1 the Revised Version, margin, but not necessarily derived from that root; Septuagint Cain): In Gen 4:1-24 Cain is the first son of Adam and Eve. His birth is hailed as a manifestation of Yahweh's help. He becomes "a tiller of the ground," and brings to Yahweh an offering of the produce of the soil, his brother Abel, the shepherd, bringing at the same time the fat of the first-born of his own flock. From Cain and from his offering Yahweh withholds the sign of acceptance which he grants to Abel. That the ground of this difference of treatment is to be found (so Heb 11:4) in Cain's lack of right disposition toward Yahweh is shown by his behavior (see ABEL). Instead of humbling himself he gives signs of strong indignation at Yahweh's refusal to favor him. Under the just rebuke of Yahweh he hardens his heart and is further confirmed in impenitence. His jealousy of Abel, unrepented of, increases until it culminates in deliberate murder. Deliberate, for in Gen 4:8 we must restore a clause to the Hebrew text, all the ancient versions bearing witness, and read "And Cain said unto Abel his brother, Let us go into the field," etc. In the vain attempt to conceal his crime Cain adds falsehood to his other sins. He is cursed "from," i.e. away from, that soil upon which he poured out his brother's blood, and must become a fugitive and a wanderer, far from the immediate presence of Yahweh. Although his remonstrance against the severity of his sentence displays no genuine contrition, still Yahweh in pity appoints a "sign" for his protection. Cain takes up his abode in the land of Nod ("wandering"), and there builds a city and becomes the ancestor of a line which includes Jabal, forefather of tent-dwelling cattle-keepers; Jubal, forefather of musicians; Tubal-cain, forefather of smiths; and Lamech, like Cain, a man of violence. In Cain's character we see "a terrible outburst of selfwill, pride, and jealousy, leading to a total and relentless renunciation of all human ties and affection." "Among the lessons or truths which the narrative teaches may be instanced: the nature of temptation, and the manner in which it should be resisted; the consequences to which an unsubdued temper may lead a man; the gradual steps by which in the end a deadly crime may be committed; the need of sincerity of purpose lest our offering should be rejected; God's care for the guilty sinner after he has been punished; the interdependence upon one another of members of the human race; and the duties and obligations which we all owe to each other" (Driver). In Heb 11:4 Cain's spiritual deficiency is pointed out; 1 Jn 3:12 observes his envy and jealousy, as "of the wicked one," and Jude 1:11 makes him a very type of the ungodly.

---

#### QUESTION - [Who was Cain in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Cain was one of the sons of Adam and Eve. His birth is the first one recorded in Scripture, leading us to believe that Cain was Adam and Eve's firstborn: "Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, 'With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man'" (Genesis 4:1). The name *Cain* is based on the Hebrew root word *qanah*, which means "possession." Cain was a rebellious man who rejected God's plan, ignored God's warnings, and received God's judgment.

Cain is most infamous for being the world's first murderer. When his sacrifice was rejected by God while his brother Abel's was accepted, Cain grew angry (Genesis 4:4-5). God warned Cain against further sin, but Cain spurned God's warning and killed his brother [Abel](#) in a field (verses 6-8). God punished Cain by increasing his hardship and banishing him from society (verse 10-12). But God also [marked Cain](#) in some way to protect him from being killed by revenge-seekers (verse 15). Cain settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden, married a sister (or cousin or niece), and had descendants that are listed in the Bible to the sixth generation. Cain built a city (verse 17), and his descendants included nomadic herdsmen, musicians, and smiths (verses 20-22).

Cain's descendants, some of whom are listed in Genesis 5, grew more and more wicked. Lamech, the fifth from Cain, was a polygamist and a murderer, and he boasted of his sin (Genesis 5:23). All of Cain's seed were probably wiped out in the flood. Genesis 5 follows the more godly line of Seth, one of Cain's younger brothers. Seth's descendants included Enoch, Methuselah, and Noah.

The tragic story of Cain illustrates the damaging effects of [anger](#) and [jealousy](#). The willfulness and disobedience of Cain are alluded to in Scripture as a caution to others who might follow in his steps. First John 3:12 warns us against a lack of brotherly love: "Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous." Those who welcome evil into their hearts have a natural hatred for those who are righteous.

Hebrews 11:4 gives us a clue as to why Cain's offering was rejected: "By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did." Abel had faith, and, by inference, Cain did not. Cain did not receive the approval of God because his heart was not right with God. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God" (verse 6).

Finally, Jude speaks against ungodly men "who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ"

(Jude 1:4). These hypocrites within the church face certain judgment: "Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain" (verse 11). Like Cain, they have rejected God's will; like Cain, they proudly continue to ignore God's warnings; and, like Cain, they will be judged in the end. [GotQuestions.org](#)

---

#### QUESTION - [Who was Cain's wife? Was Cain's wife his sister? See accompanying video.](#)

**ANSWER** - he Bible does not specifically say who Cain's wife was. The only possible answer is that Cain's wife was his sister or niece or great-niece, etc. The Bible does not say how old Cain was when he killed Abel (Genesis 4:8). Since they were both farmers, they were likely both full-grown adults, possibly with families of their own. Adam and Eve surely had given birth to more children than just Cain and Abel at the time Abel was killed. They definitely had many more children later (Genesis 5:4). The fact that Cain was scared for his own life after he killed Abel (Genesis 4:14) indicates that there were likely many other children and perhaps even grandchildren of Adam and Eve already living at that time. Cain's wife (Genesis 4:17) was a daughter or granddaughter of Adam and Eve.

Since Adam and Eve were the first (and only) human beings, their children would have no other choice than to intermarry. God did not forbid inter-family marriage until much later when there were enough people to make intermarriage unnecessary (Leviticus 18:6-18). The reason that incest today often results in genetic abnormalities is that when two people of similar genetics (i.e., a brother and sister) have children together, there is a high risk of their recessive characteristics becoming dominant. When people from different families have children, it is highly unlikely that both parents will carry the same recessive traits. The human genetic code has become increasingly "polluted" over the centuries as genetic defects are multiplied, amplified, and passed down from generation to generation. Adam and Eve did not have any genetic defects, and that enabled them and the first few generations of their descendants to have a far greater quality of health than we do now. Adam and Eve's children had few, if any, genetic defects. As a result, it was safe for them to intermarry. [GotQuestions.org](#)

---

**Genesis 4:2 Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.**

---

- **Abel** - Ge 30:29-31 37:13 46:32-34 47:3 Ex 3:1 Ps 78:70-72 Am 7:15
- **a keeper** - Heb. a feeder, Ge 4:25,26 Ps 127:3 Joh 8:44 1Jn 3:10,12,15
- **tiller** - Ge 3:23 9:20
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### ABEL TENDED CAIN TILLED

**Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel ([Hebel](#))** - The meaning of names in Scripture is often very significant, but given the thousands of years between these original events, it is not surprising that we see variation in the etymology of these ancient names. In the case of Abel, the most frequent meanings mentioned include breath, vapor, transitoriness, nothingness, vanity. In light of the fact that his lift was greatly shortened by Cain, one can understand how any of these meanings would be valid, especially when you understand that a name often conveyed a meaning or attribute of the person. Abel's life was like a vapor (James 4:14 = "You are just a **vapor** that appears for a little while and then vanishes away", Ps 144:4 = "Man is like a merebreath; His days are like a passing shadow.") All of our lives are but a vapor so redeem the time!

**NET NOTE** adds "The name Abel is not defined here in the text, but the tone is ominous. Abel's name, the Hebrew word נֶבֶל (hevel), means "breath, vapor, vanity," foreshadowing Abel's untimely and premature death."

**And Abel ([Hebel](#)) was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground([adamah](#))** - Abel was a rancher and Cain was a farmer, both noble occupations.

**Allen Ross** on the two brother's beginnings - The nature of rebellious man unfolds in the person of **Cain** who had an auspicious beginning as the child of hope. But the narrative lines him up with the curse; he worked the soil (lit., ground, 'adamah, Ge 4:2; cf. Ge 3:17). **Abel**, however, seems to be lined up with man's original purpose, to have dominion over life (cf. Ge 1:28) (See context in [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Cornerstone Bible Commentary** - One man was living according to the original instruction of God, ruling over living creatures, but the other was living according to the decree of the Curse, working the ground from which they were taken. The alignment of their occupations does not mean that one was cursed and the other was not; it simply shows that they each had a different orientation to life, one with living animals, the other with the ground. (See context in [Genesis](#))

**Hindson and Kroll - Abel** means breath or vanity, and the question arises as to whether this was a posthumous naming (cf. Ge 4:25c) or a reflection of an earlier experience of the curse's frustration (cf. Ge 5:29; Eccl 1:2ff.). (See online [King James Bible Commentary](#))

**M. O. Evans** makes the interesting observation that "The first two brothers in history stand as the types and representatives of the two main and enduring divisions of mankind, and bear witness to the absolute antithesis and eternal enmity between good and evil." ([ISBE](#))

**NET NOTE** - Heb "and Abel was a shepherd of the flock, and Cain was a worker of the ground." The designations of the two occupations are expressed with active participles, רֹאשׁ (ro'eh, "shepherd") and תַּעֲבֹד ('oved, "worker"). Abel is occupied with sheep, whereas Cain is living under the curse, cultivating the ground.

**THOUGHT** - Work isn't a punishment from God because of sin, for Adam had work to do in the Garden before he and his wife yielded to Satan's temptation. The biblical approach to work is that we are privileged to cooperate with God by using His creation gifts for the good of people and the glory of God. (See Col. 3:22–23; 1 Thes. 4:11–12; Ecc. 9:10.) Work in the will of God isn't a curse; it's a blessing....As Christians, we don't work simply to pay our bills and provide for our needs. We work because it's God's ordained way for us to serve Him and others and thereby glorify God in our lives (1 Cor. 10:31)....Workers need to be worshipers or they may become idolaters, focusing on the gifts and not the Giver, and forgetting that God gives the power to work and gain wealth (Deut. 8:10–20). (Warren Wiersbe - see context in [The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#))

---

**Abel** (01893) (**Hebel** related to [hebel 01892](#) = Vanity ,futility, idols, breath, delusion, worthless, emptiness as in Eccl 1:2) **Gilbrant** - Abel was the second son of Adam. His name means "breath" or "vapor." Mentioned throughout Genesis 4, Abel's name perhaps derives from Eve's realization that life outside the Garden of Eden would not last forever. Abel was the brother of Cain. He was a shepherd, whose offering of the firstborn and the fat of the flock pleased Yahweh, unlike his brother Cain's offering. Homocide entered humanity in its second generation, as humans had barely left the Garden. Jesus called Abel a righteous man. His death stemmed from his worship of God. Abel, then, was the first martyr, killed because of the jealousy of the unrighteous. (See Matt. 23:33-36; Luke 11:50-51). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Abel - 5x** - Gen. 4:2; Gen. 4:4; Gen. 4:8; Gen. 4:9; Gen. 4:25

**Abel - Hebel** . Second of Adam and Eve's sons, Genesis 4: Abel means "vanity" or "weakness", "vapor" or "transitoriness". Cain means "possession"; for Eve said at his birth, "I have gotten as a possession a man from Jehovah," or as the Hebrew (eth ) may mean, "with the help of Jehovah"; she inferring the commencement of the fulfillment of the promise of the Redeemer (Genesis 3:15) herein. On the contrary, Abel's weakness of body suggested his name: moreover prophetic inspiration guided her to choose one indicative of his untimely death. But God's way is here from the first shown, "My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9; Hebrews 11:34. The cause of Cain's hatred was "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3:12). Envy of the godly was "the way of Cain" (Judges 1:11). "Faith" was present in Abel, absent from Cain (Hebrews 11:4); consequently the kind of sacrifice (the mode of showing faith) Abel offered was "much more a sacrifice" (Wycliffe; so the Greek) than Cain's. "By faith Abel offered unto God a much more sacrifice than Cain," i.e. one which had more of the true virtue of sacrifice; for it was an animal sacrifice of the firstlings of the flock, a token of the forfeiture of man's life by sin, and a type of the Redeemer to be bruised in heel that He might bruise the serpent's head.

God's having made for man coats of skin presupposes the slaying of animals; and doubtless implies that Abel's sacrifice of an animal life was an act of faith which rested on God's command (though not expressly recorded) that such were the sacrifices He required. If it had not been God's command, it would have been presumptuous will worship (Colossians 2:23), and taking of a life which man had no right over before the flood (Genesis 9:2-4). Cain in self-righteous unbelief, refusing to confess his guilt and need of atonement (typified by sacrifice), presented a mere thank offering of the first fruits; not, like Abel, feeling his need of the propitiatory offering for sin. So "God had respect unto Abel (first) and (then) to his offering." "God testified of his gifts" by consuming them with fire from the shekinah or cherubic symbol E. of Eden ("the presence of the Lord": Genesis 4:16; Genesis 3:24), where the first sacrifices were offered. Thus" he obtained witness that he was righteous," namely, with the righteousness which is by faith to the sincere penitent.

Christ calls him "righteous": Matthew 23:35. Abel represents the regenerate, Cain the unregenerate natural man. Abel offered the best, Cain that most readily procured. The words "in process of time" (Genesis 4:3 margin), "at the end of days," probably mark the definite time appointed for public worship already in

paradise, the seventh day sabbath. The firstling and the fat point to the divine dignity and infinite fullness of the Spirit in the coming Messiah. "By faith he being dead yet speaketh" to us; his "blood crying from the ground to God" (Genesis 4:10) shows how precious in God's sight is the death of His saints (Psalms 116:15; Revelation 6:10). The shedding of Abel's blood is the first, as that of Jesus is the last and crowning guilt which brought the accumulated vengeance on the Jews (Luke 11:51; Matthew 23:34-35-38). There is a further avenging of still more accentuated guilt, of innocent blood yet coming on "them that dwell on the earth". (Revelation 11). In Hebrews 12:24, it is written "Christ's blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than that of Abel," namely, than the blood of Abel's animal sacrifice. For Abel's is but the type, Christ's the antitype and one only true propitiatory sacrifice. To deny the propitiation would make Cain's offering to be as much a sacrifice as Abel's. Tradition makes the place of his murder and grave to be near Damascus. ([Fausset's Bible Dictionary](#))

**Ground** (land, earth, dust, soil)[\(0127\)](#) **adamah** means dirt, ground (first us Ge 1:25), earth, clay (God used dirt/clay to form man - Ge 2:7), land (cultivated - Ge 4:2, Zech 13:5). Adam originated from the ground and charged with the task of tending the ground, his source of origin (Ge 2:7, 15). In a broader sense, **adamah** means the inhabited earth (Isa. 24:21; Amos 3:2). **Adamah** describes dirt put on one's head during mourning (2Sa 1:2; Neh. 9:1).

**Adamah in Genesis** - Gen. 1:25; Gen. 2:5; Gen. 2:6; Gen. 2:7; Gen. 2:9; Gen. 2:19; Gen. 3:17; Gen. 3:19; Gen. 3:23; Gen. 4:2; Gen. 4:3; Gen. 4:10; Gen. 4:11; Gen. 4:12; Gen. 4:14; Gen. 5:29; Gen. 6:1; Gen. 6:7; Gen. 6:20; Gen. 7:4; Gen. 7:8; Gen. 7:23; Gen. 8:8; Gen. 8:13; Gen. 8:21; Gen. 9:2; Gen. 9:20; Gen. 12:3; Gen. 19:25; Gen. 28:14; Gen. 28:15; Gen. 47:18; Gen. 47:19; Gen. 47:20; Gen. 47:22; Gen. 47:23; Gen. 47:26

---

**ABEL [ISBE]** - a'-bel (hebhel; Abel; Westcott and Hort, The New Testament in Greek Habel; etymology uncertain. Some translation "a breath," "vapor," "transitoriness," which are suggestive of his brief existence and tragic end; others take it to be a variant of Jabal, yabhal, "shepherd" or "herdman," Gen 4:20. Compare Assyrian ablu and Babylonian abil, "son"): The second son of Adam and Eve. The absence of the verb harah (Gen 4:2; compare verse 1) has been taken to imply, perhaps truly, that Cain and Abel were twins.

**1. A Shepherd:** "Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground," thus representing the two fundamental pursuits of civilized life, the two earliest subdivisions of the human race. On the Hebrew tradition of the superiority of the pastoral over agricultural and city life, see The Expositor T, V, 351 ff. The narrative may possibly bear witness to the primitive idea that pastoral life was more pleasing to Yahweh than husbandry.

**2. A Worshipper:** "In process of time," the two brothers came in a solemn manner to sacrifice unto Yahweh, in order to express their gratitude to Him whose tenants they were in the land (Gen 4:3,4. See SACRIFICE). How Yahweh signified His acceptance of the one offering and rejection of the other, we are not told. That it was due to the difference in the material of the sacrifice or in their manner of offering was probably the belief among the early Israelites, who regarded animal offerings as superior to cereal offerings. Both kinds, however, were fully in accord with Hebrew law and custom. It has been suggested that the Septuagint rendering of Gen 4:7 makes Cain's offense a ritual one, the offering not being "correctly" made or rightly divided, and hence rejected as irregular. "If thou makest a proper offering, but dost not cut in pieces rightly, art thou not in fault? Be still!" The Septuagint evidently took the rebuke to turn upon Cain's neglect to prepare his offering according to strict ceremonial requirements. dieles (Septuagint in the place cited.), however, implies nathach (nattach), and would only apply to animal sacrifices. Compare Ex 29:17; Lev 8:20; Jdg 19:29; 1 Ki 18:23; and see COUCH.

**3. A Righteous Man:** The true reason for the Divine preference is doubtless to be found in the disposition of the brothers (see CAIN). Well-doing consisted not in the outward offering (Gen 4:7) but in the right state of mind and feeling. The acceptability depends on the inner motives and moral characters of the offerers. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent (abundant, pleiona) sacrifice than Cain" (Heb 11:4). The "more abundant sacrifice," Westcott thinks, "suggests the deeper gratitude of Abel, and shows a fuller sense of the claims of God" to the best. Cain's "works (the collective expression of his inner life) were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 Jn 3:12). "It would be an outrage if the gods looked to gifts and sacrifices and not to the soul" (Alcibiades II.149E.150A). Cain's heart was no longer pure; it had a criminal propensity, springing from envy and jealousy, which rendered both his offering and person unacceptable. His evil works and hatred of his brother culminated in the act of murder, specifically evoked by the opposite character of Abel's works and the acceptance of his offering. The evil man cannot endure the sight of goodness in another.

**4. A Martyr:** Abel ranks as the first martyr (Mt 23:35), whose blood cried for vengeance (Gen 4:10; compare Rev 6:9,10) and brought despair (Gen 4:13), whereas that of Jesus appeals to God for forgiveness and speaks peace (Heb 12:24) and is preferred before Abel's.

**5. A Type:** The first two brothers in history stand as the types and representatives of the two main and enduring divisions of

**Genesis 4:3 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground.**

LXE And it was so after some time that Cain brought of the fruits of the earth a sacrifice to the Lord.

BGT καὶ γένετο μέθη μὲν πρὸς νεύκεν Καὶν πάτερ τοῦ καρποῦ τοῦ γῆς θυσὶν ἀντικείμενος

KJV And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

NET At the designated time Cain brought some of the fruit of the ground for an offering to the LORD.

CSB In the course of time Cain presented some of the land's produce as an offering to the LORD.

ERV And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

ESV In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground,

NIV In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD.

NLT When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD.

NRS In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground,

YLT And it cometh to pass at the end of days that Cain bringeth from the fruit of the ground a present to Jehovah;

GWN Later Cain brought some crops from the land as an offering to the LORD.

NKJ And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.

NAB In the course of time Cain brought an offering to the LORD from the fruit of the soil,

NJB Time passed and Cain brought some of the produce of the soil as an offering for Yahweh,

ASV And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Jehovah.

DBY And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to Jehovah.

BBE And after a time, Cain gave to the Lord an offering of the fruits of the earth.

BHT wa'yühî miqqēc yämîm wayyäbë' qa'yin miPPürî hä'ádämâ minHâ lyhwh(la)dönäy)

- **in the course of time** - Heb. at the end of days, Either at the end of the year, or of the week, i.e., on the Sabbath. 1Ki 17:7 Ne 13:6
- **the fruit of the ground** - Lev 2:1-11 Nu 18:12
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## CAIN'S OFFERING OF FRUIT

**So it came about in the course of time-** NET = "At the designated time." It seems highly unlikely that both brothers would have spontaneously and independently inaugurated what amounts to an act of worship. The fact that both brothers brought offerings to God indicates that somehow they had received instructions on how this was to be carried out. We can only speculate but the fact is God does not give us the details.

**NET NOTE** - Heb "And it happened at the end of days." The clause indicates the passing of a set period of time leading up to offering sacrifices.

**that Cain brought an offering (minchah) to the LORD of the fruit of the ground-** It is ironic that the first offering mentioned in the Bible is not accepted by Yahweh! Cain's gift to God was the fruit of the ground, but it does not say these were first-fruits which one might have expected, especially in light of the fact that Abel brought his firstborn. However there is otherwise nothing inherently

negative about Cain's offering. God did not reject Cain's offering because it was fruit and not meat. God rejected it because of the "rotten fruit" in Cain's heart. God always looks at the heart (1Sa 16:7, 2Chr 16:9, Ps 7:9, Jer 17:10). In Ps 51 David wrote "For You do not delight in **sacrifice**, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with **burnt offering**. (THIS IS WHAT GOD LOOKS AT - THE "OFFERER" -- HIS HEART -- AND SECONDARILY AT THE OFFERING!) The sacrifices of God are a **broken spirit**; A **broken and a contrite heart**, O God, You will not despise." (Ps 51:16-17, cf Isa 57:15) Cain was merely discharging a duty, checking off a "spiritual box," for as John later writes his deeds were evil (EVIDENCE OF HIS EVIL HEART), while Abel's deeds were righteous (FROM A RIGHT HEART). (1Jn 3:12+) Abel's righteous deeds did not save him, but were an outflow of his heart of belief in Yahweh (Heb 11:4+). In sum, the first two offspring of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, are prototypes of every person who would ever be born. Two hearts. Two ways. Two destinies!

The content of the offering (vegetables, as opposed to animals) was not the critical issue, but rather the attitude of the offerer.

-- NET NOTE

**NET NOTE** on **offering** - The Hebrew term מִנְחָה (minkhah, "offering") is a general word for tribute, a gift, or an offering. It is the main word used in Lev 2 for the dedication offering. This type of offering could be comprised of vegetables. The content of the offering (vegetables, as opposed to animals) was not the critical issue, but rather the attitude of the offerer.

**David Thompson** - The phrase "**in the course of time**" seems to refer to a special time when both of these men were aware of offerings they needed to present to the LORD...The word "**offering**" is a Hebrew word which refers to something offered as a **gift** to God. What this immediately tells us is that both work and worship are an important part of a life properly related to God. Cain brought fruit of the ground as an offering and Abel brought the fattest of his flock of sheep . Both brought things that pertained to their specific work and both brought offerings on the basis of their specific faith (Hebrews 11:4). Both boys had the same parents, both worked for a living, both were interested in worshipping the LORD and bringing an offering to the LORD, but one was interested in pleasing the LORD on His terms and the other wanted it on his own terms.

---

**Offering** (04503) **minchah** means a gift (given to another without compensation = Ge 32:13, 2Ki 8:8), tribute ( payment by one ruler or nation to another in acknowledgment of submission or as the price of protection = Jdg 3:14, 2Sa 8:2; Hos 10:6) or offering (as a gift offered to God). The most common sense by far in the OT is as an offering (usually "**grain offering**" in the NAS but it could refer to animal offerings Ge 4:3-5 or "sacrifices" in general Isa 19:21). **Minchah** is translated most often (152x) simply as offering. The first use is in Genesis 4 describing the offerings of Cain and Abel.

**Genesis 4:4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;**

LXE And Abel also brought of the first born of his sheep and of his fatlings, and God looked upon Abel and his gifts,

BGT καὶ Αβελ νεγκεν καὶ ατὰς πὶ τὸν πρωτὸν κῶν τὸν προβότων αὐτῷ καὶ πὶ τὸν στέτων αὐτὸν καὶ πεδενθεὶς θεῖς πατέρα καὶ πατέρα τοῦ δούλου αὐτοῦ

KJV And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

NET But Abel brought some of the firstborn of his flock— even the fattest of them. And the LORD was pleased with Abel and his offering,

CSB And Abel also presented an offering-- some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. The LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,

ERV And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

ESV and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,

NIV But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering,

NLT Abel also brought a gift-- the best of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his

gift,

NRS and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,

YLT and Abel, he hath brought, he also, from the female firstlings of his flock, even from their fat ones; and Jehovah looketh unto Abel and unto his present,

GWN Abel also brought some choice parts of the firstborn animals from his flock. The LORD approved of Abel and his offering,

NKJ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,

NAB while Abel, for his part, brought one of the best firstlings of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering,

NJB while Abel for his part brought the first-born of his flock and some of their fat as well. Yahweh looked with favour on Abel and his offering.

ASV And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And Jehovah had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

DBY And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of their fat. And Jehovah looked upon Abel, and on his offering;

BBE And Abel gave an offering of the young lambs of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord was pleased with Abel's offering;

BHT wühe<sup>9</sup>bel hëbí<sup>7</sup> gam-hú<sup>1</sup> miBBükörôt cö'ñô ûmë|Helbëhen wayy)<sup>9</sup>ša` yhwh(‘ädonäy) ‘el-he<sup>9</sup>bel wü’el-minHätô

NAS And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;

NIRV But Abel brought the fattest parts of some of the lambs from his flock. They were the male animals that were born first to their mothers. The LORD was pleased with Abel and his offering.

RSV and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,

- **the firstlings** - Ex 13:12 Nu 18:12,17 Pr 3:9 Heb 9:22 1Pe 1:19,20 Rev 13:8
- **fat** - Lev 3:16,17
- **the LORD had regard for Abel** - Ge 15:17 Lev 9:24 Nu 16:35 Jdg 6:21 1Ki 18:24,38 1Ch 21:26 2Ch 7:1 Ps 20:3 Heb 11:4
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## YAHWEH ACCEPTS ABEL'S GIFT

**Abel (Hebel)** , on his part also brought of the firstlings([bekor](#); Lxx - [prototokos](#) = firstborn) of his flock and of their fat portions - The NET translation begins this passage with a "but" (as does the NIV - Ge 4:4NIV) - "But Abel brought some...." (Ge 4:4NET), and their note on this verse explains that the Hebrew clause "stresses the contrast between Cain's offering and Abel's." Some commentaries favor Abel bringing his firstlings as evidence of his faith, and that is certainly possible. As discussed below clearly Abel's offering in some way was related to his faith. The offering of the firstlings or first born acknowledged that all the productivity of the flock was from the Lord and all belonged to Him.

**NET NOTE** on **firstlings...fat portions** - Two prepositional phrases are used to qualify the kind of sacrifice that Abel brought: "from the firstborn" and "from the fattest of them." These also could be interpreted as a [hendiadys](#): "from the fattest of the firstborn of the flock." Another option is to understand the second prepositional phrase as referring to the fat portions of the sacrificial sheep. In this case one may translate, "some of the firstborn of his flock, even some of their fat portions" (cf. NEB, NIV, NRSV).

**And the LORD had regard** (shaah) **for Abel and for his offering** ([minchah](#); Lxx - [epeidon](#)) - Why did Yahweh accept Abel's offering? In a word it was because of Abel's **faith**. The writer of Hebrews explains "By **faith** Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous (cf Abram Ge 15:6+), God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks." (Heb 11:4+) So what does it mean that Abel offered**by faith**? The implication is

that he faithfully followed divine directions for bringing offerings to God (even though Scripture is silent on how he and Cain knew they were to bring offerings to God). In a word, Abel obeyed God. Faith that is genuine is faith that obeys. We say in the NT that faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone. The writer of Hebrews adds that "without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." (Heb 11:6+) It follows that since Abel's offering pleased the LORD, he had genuine faith. Note that Hebrews 11:4+ says "**he was righteous**," and we know that the only way to be righteous before God, is by genuine faith. We see this portrayed in the life of Abraham, the father of faith, Moses recording that Abraham "**believed** in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as **righteousness**." (Ge 15:6+)

**MacArthur** writes "Abel's offering was acceptable (cf. Heb 11:4+), not just because it was an animal, nor just because it was the very best of what he had, nor even that it was the culmination of a zealous heart for God; but, because it was in every way obediently given according to what God must have revealed (though not recorded in Genesis). Cain, disdaining the divine instruction, just brought what he wanted to bring: some of his crop."

**Allen Ross** - Abel went out of his way to please God (which meant he had faith in God, Heb. 11:6), whereas Cain was simply discharging a duty. Abel's actions were righteous, whereas Cain's were evil (1 John 3:12). These two types of people are still present. (See context in [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

---

**Firstlings** (firstborn) ([01060](#)) **bekor** means an offspring who came first in the order of birth (animals Ge 4:4) or persons (Ge 25:13). Swanson adds that bekor means "firstborn, usually, the first male offspring, the oldest son, with the associative meaning of prominence in the clan and privileges pertaining to clan and inheritance (Ge 43:33; Ne 10:37)." The firstborn of clean animals were sacrificed to the Lord (Dt. 12:6, 17), but the firstborn males of unclean animals could be redeemed (Nu 18:15)

---

#### **Walter Kaiser - Genesis 4:3–4 Did God Favor Abel over Cain? (Go to page 68 in [Hard Sayings](#))**

Does God have favorites? Does he show partiality for one over another—in this case, Abel over Cain? And does God prefer shepherds to farmers? If not, what was the essential difference between these first two sacrifices in the Bible?

The traditional interpretation says that the difference between Cain and Abel is that one offered a bloody sacrifice and the other did not. If this understanding is correct, why are neither we nor they given any specific instructions to that effect? Up to this point, that distinction had not been made. And even if a distinction between the use and absence of blood was in vogue at this early date, why are both sacrifices referred to throughout this whole narrative with the Hebrew term *minhâh*, a "gift" or "meal offering"?

The answers to these questions are not as difficult as they may appear. There is only one point on which there can be legitimate puzzlement: nothing in this episode indicates that this is the inauguration of the sacrificial system. While it does appear that this is the first time anyone ever sacrificed anything, the text does not specifically say so. That will remain, at best, only an inference.

Actually, the supposition that Cain and Abel's father, Adam, originated sacrifices may be closer to the truth, since no command authorizing or requesting sacrifices appears in these first chapters of Genesis. The whole subject of the origins of sacrifice is one that scholars have debated long and hard, but the subject remains a mystery.

Even with this much caution, we must be careful about importing back into the times of Adam and Eve the instructions that Moses was later given on sacrifices. The word used to describe "sacrifice" throughout this episode of Cain and Abel is the word used in the broadest sense, *minhâh*. It covers any type of gift that any person might bring. Consequently, the merit one gift might have over another does not lie in the content or type of gift—including the presence or absence of blood.

Of course, there was a problem with Cain's "gift"—he was the problem. Genesis 4:3 describes how Cain merely brought "some" of the fruits of the field. Nothing can be said about the fact that he, as an agriculturalist, naturally brought what farmers have to give. But when his offering is contrasted with Abel's, a flaw immediately shows up.

Abel gave what cost him dearly, the "fat pieces"—in that culture considered the choicest parts—of "the firstborn" of his flock. Abel could very well have rationalized, as we might have done, that he would wait until some of those firstborn animals had matured and had one, two or three lambs of their own. Certainly at that point it would have been possible to give an even larger gift to God, and Abel would have been further ahead as well. But he gave instead what cost him most, the "firstborn."

The telltale signs that we are dealing here with a contrast between formalistic worship and true worship are the emphasis that the text gives to the men and the verb it uses with both of them. In Genesis 4:4–5 there are four emphatic marks used with reference to the two brothers.

Literally, the Hebrew of verses 4 and 5 says, "And Abel, he brought, indeed, even he, some of the firstlings of his flock and some of the fat portions belonging to him. And the Lord regarded with favor Abel and [then] his offering. But unto Cain and [then] unto his

offering, he did not have regard."

Clearly the focus of this passage is on the men. There are four emphatic elements in the text that mark this emphasis: first, the man's name; then the verb for "bringing" with the pronominal suffix; then the emphasizing particle gam; and finally the personal independent pronoun. It is difficult to see how the writer could have made it any more pointed that it was the men, and their hearts' condition, that was the determinative factor in God's deciding whose sacrifice was to be accepted. The text almost stutters: "And Abel, he, he also, he brought."

The verb shā'âh means "to gaze," but when it is used with the preposition 'el ("unto" or "toward"), as it is here, it means "to regard with favor." Ever since Luther, commentators have noticed that God's favor was pointedly directed toward the person first and then, and only then, toward the offering that person brought. Accordingly, this became the determinative factor in all worship: the heart attitude of the individual. If the heart was not found acceptable, the gift was likewise unacceptable.

It is true that an old Greek translation of this text rendered shā'âh in Greek as enepyrisen, "he kindled." Apparently the translator wanted to say that on some occasions God did kindle acceptable sacrifices. But since there is a double object for this verb, namely, Abel and his sacrifice, this translation is unacceptable, for it would set the man on fire as well as the sacrifice!

That Cain's heart and not his offering was the real problem here can be seen from the last part of verse 5: "So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast"—literally, "it burned Cain greatly [or, to the core] and his face dropped."

God's displeasure with Cain revealed the sad state of affairs in Cain's heart. Instead of moving to rectify his attitude, Cain let it harden into murder. For the moment, however, anger hid itself in Cain's eyes—he avoided looking anyone in the eye. Averting his own gaze, he kept others from seeing (through the eye gate) what was in his heart.

Hermann Gunkel—who unwisely called this episode a myth—was truly unjustified in claiming this story taught that God loved shepherds but not farmers. Despite others who have followed Gunkel's lead, there is no proven connection between this narrative and any parallel stories in the ancient Near East of rivalries between shepherds and farmers.

Sacrifice in the Old Testament is not a "preapproved" way of earning divine credit. The principle behind it remains the same as it does for all acts of service and ritual in the Christian faith today: God always inspects the giver and the worshiper before he inspects the gift, service or worship.

See also comment on 1 SAMUEL 15:22 ([Does the Lord Delight in Sacrifices?](#) go to page 180); PSALM 51:16–17, 19 ([Does God Desire Sacrifices?](#) go to page 245). ([Hard Sayings](#))

#### Genesis 4:5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

LXE but Cain and his sacrifices he regarded not, and Cain was exceedingly sorrowful and his countenance fell.

BGT π δ Καὶν κα π τας θυσ αις α το ο προσ σχεν κα λ πησεν τ ν Καὶν λ αν κα συν πεσεν τ προσ π

KJV But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

NET but with Cain and his offering he was not pleased. So Cain became very angry, and his expression was downcast.

CSB but He did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Cain was furious, and he looked despondent.

ERV but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

ESV but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.

NIV but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

NLT but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

NRS but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

YLT and unto Cain and unto his present He hath not looked; and it is very displeasing to Cain, and his countenance is fallen.

GWN but he didn't approve of Cain and his offering. So Cain became very angry and was disappointed.

NKJ but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

NAB but on Cain and his offering he did not. Cain greatly resented this and was crestfallen.

NJB But he did not look with favour on Cain and his offering, and Cain was very angry and downcast.

ASV but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

DBY and upon Cain, and on his offering, he did not look. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

BBE But in Cain and his offering he had no pleasure. And Cain was angry and his face became sad.

BHT wü'el-qəyin wü'el-minHätō lō' šä`â wayyi⁹Har lüqa⁹yin mü'öd walyyiPPÜlū Pänäyw

NIRV But he wasn't pleased with Cain and his offering. So Cain became very angry. His face was sad.

RSV but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

▪ **but for Cain** - Nu 16:15 Heb 11:4

▪ **So Cain became very angry** - Ge 31:2,5 Job 5:2 Ps 20:3 Isa 3:10,11 Mt 20:15 Lu 15:28-30 Ac 13:45

▪ [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## GOD DID NOT GAZE AT CAIN'S OFFERING

**But** - Term of contrast in this case ultimately contrasting the lives and destinies of two brothers.

**For Cain and for his offering** ([minchah](#)) **He had no regard** (shaah) - **NLT** = "but he did not accept Cain and his gift." The text does not tell us how God let Cain know his offering was not acceptable.

**Derek Kidner** - It is precarious to claim that the absence of blood disqualifies Cain's gift (cf. Dt. 26:1–11); all that is explicit here is that Abel offered the pick of his flock and that Cain's spirit was arrogant (Ge 4:5b; cf. Prov. 21:27). The New Testament draws out the further important implications that Cain's life, unlike Abel's, gave the lie to his offering (1 John 3:12) and that Abel's faith was decisive for his acceptance (Heb. 11:4). (See context in [Genesis - Tyndale OT Commentary](#) or borrow [Genesis: an introduction and commentary](#))

Cain wasn't rejected because of his offering,  
but his offering was rejected because of Cain:  
his heart wasn't right with God.

--[Warren Wiersbe](#)

**THOUGHT** - The fact that people attend religious meetings and participate in church activities is no proof that they're true believers. It's possible to have "a form of godliness" but never experience its saving power (2 Tim. 3:5). "These people come near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me" (Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:8). The most costly sacrifices apart from the submission of the heart can never make the worshiper right before God (Ps. 51:16–17). "The way of Cain" (Jude 11) is the way of self-will and unbelief. ([The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#))

**Allen Ross** - In contrast to Abel's offering, Cain's is simply mentioned—he brought an offering of the fruit of the ground. Cassuto concludes that, whereas the one worshiper went out of his way to please God, the other simply discharged a duty (see context in [Commentary on Genesis, vol. 1, p. 205](#)). That there was something wrong with Cain's attitude or motivation may be seen immediately in the Lord's response: "And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but he did not respect Cain and his offering." In each case the person is mentioned before the offering, which suggests that the kind of offering is not as important to the story as the attitude of the person making the offering. Here again we can see that Cain is not right. ([A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis](#))

**Bruce Waltke** concludes ([see below](#)) that "Elsewhere Yahweh rejected the gifts of Korah (Nu 16:15), Saul's men (1Sa 26:19), and apostate Israel (Isa 1:13), not because of some blemish in their offering, but because of their deformed characters."

The three NT uses of Cain paint a picture of why his offering was rejected by God - Cain was without faith (cf Heb 11:6) and of his father the devil. And ultimately he did the deeds of his father by murdering his brother because of his anger and jealousy.

Hebrews 11:4+ By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

1 John 3:12+ not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his

deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

Comment - John explains that Cain's "deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous." (1Jn 3:12). Deeds is plural and would include the deeds of his offering and his murder. Both were evil. While some writers posit that Cain's offering was unacceptable because it was not an animal, but that is not easy to support because the word used for offering ([minchah](#)) was used in Leviticus for grain or cereal offerings which were acceptable to the LORD.

Jude 1:11+ Woe to them (WHO IS THEM? Jude 1:10)! For they have gone **the way of Cain**, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

**So** - Term of conclusion. Based on God's disapproval of his offering.

**Cain became (charah) very (meod) angry (charah)** - Cain should have been crushed in spirit and contrite in heart, but that was not to be! Note that [charah](#) is used twice which intensifies the picture of Cain's anger! In addition the Hebrew text adds the word [meod](#) which even further intensifies the degree of his anger as "muchness" or "abundance." Literally the Hebrew reads "*and it was hot to Cain*" which pictures him filled with angry (possibly even with face flushed because he was so angry). We would describe Cain as "burning with anger!" Given that Cain's anger led to murder, it is interesting to note that when Samson's anger was kindled, he killed thirty men in Ashkelon (Jdg 14:19+). Note well that Cain's lack of faith is shown by his response to God's displeasure. In other words, Cain's reaction was a reflection of the state of his unbelieving heart (See Jesus' description of "evil thoughts, murders" in Mt 15:18-20+), causing him to respond with a storm of rage that eventually led to murder, instead of responding with an attitude of brokenness and contrition, which the LORD would have readily received (Ps 51:16, 17).

**Allen Ross** - Cain's lack of faith shows up in his response to God's rejection of his offering of fruit (Gen. 4:5). Rather than being concerned about remedying the situation and pleasing God, he was very angry. (See context in [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Alfred Edersheim** - Instead of inquiring into the reason of his rejection, and trying to have it removed, Cain now gave way to feelings of anger and jealousy. In His mercy, God indeed brought before him his sin, warned him of its danger, and pointed out the way of escape. But Cain had chosen his course.

**And his countenance (panim/paniyim) fell** - Literally the Hebrew reads "*and his face fell*." The [NET NOTE](#) explains "The idiom means that the inner anger is reflected in Cain's facial expression. When someone is extremely angry it is difficult to hide this deep emotion. The fallen or downcast face expresses anger, dejection, or depression. Conversely, in Num 6 the high priestly blessing speaks of the LORD lifting up his face and giving peace."

**Thompson on his countenance fell** - When the text says Cain's "countenance fell" it is not just a reference to something facial, but also something theological . Cain's relationship to God, his status, his position fell from that which was once honorable, to that which is sinful .

The heart of Cain's offering problem, was the problem of his heart!

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke about **offering** from a right heart.

"Therefore if you are presenting your **offering** at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your **offering** there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your **offering**. (Mt 5:23-24+)

While Cain may not have need to be reconciled to Abel **prior** to his offering, after Yahweh rejected his offering, clearly Cain became very angry. The text does not say at whom his anger was directed, but by simple deduction (in context of his rejection of God's plea to "get right" and his subsequent murder of Abel) Cain was very angry with God and with Abel. God was giving him an opportunity in Ge 4:6-7 to be reconciled and then present his offering with a right heart attitude, an attitude of faith. Sadly Cain rejected reconciliation and chose "revenge!" The rest is history!

**THOUGHT** - When people are affirming and praising us, it's very easy to be nice. The test comes when we are criticized or rejected; how do we react then? How can we tell if a grape is ripe? We squeeze it, and see if the juice is sweet or bitter. Cain was "squeezed," and out came bitterness. (Thomas Hale in [Applied Old Testament Commentary](#))

---

**Regard** (look, turn gaze)([08159](#)) ([shaah](#)) means to look at with interest. To gaze intentionally or look intently (Job 7:19; Ps. 39:13). **Shaah** is never a casual or disinterested look. Ge 4:4 has the connotation to look upon with approval so as to accept. to look on some burdensome thing or situation in trepidation, dismay (Ex. 5:9). To look on some burdensome thing or situation in trepidation or dismay (Ex. 5:9). It can mean to hope for or desire (2Sa 22:42). Looking at with high regard and appreciation (Isa. 17:7) or just the opposite according to context (Isa. 17:8; 41:10). Isaiah 17:7-8 God says that the time is coming when a "man will regard his maker"

and no more have regard for the altars which his hands have made. It can also have the sense of seeing with understanding (Isa. 32:3). Another sense means to look at something with dismay. (cf Isa. 41:10, 23) In Isa 31:1 Israel looks to horses and chariots and not to the Holy One of Israel. Another meaning is "look away from," (with the preposition *min*) always in a request meaning "leave me alone!" (Isa 22:4; Job 7:19; Job 14:6; Ps 39:13).

**NET NOTE** - The Hebrew verb נְשָׁאַה (sha'ah) simply means "to gaze at, to have regard for, to look on with favor [or "with devotion"]." The text does not indicate how this was communicated, but it indicates that Cain and Abel knew immediately. Either there was some manifestation of divine pleasure given to Abel and withheld from Cain (fire consuming the sacrifice?), or there was an inner awareness of divine response

**Shaah** - 15x in 14v gaze away(1), had regard(1), had...regard(1), have regard(3), look(3), looked(1), pay...attention(1), turn your eyes(1), turn your gaze(2), turn your gaze away(1). Gen. 4:4; Gen. 4:5; Exod. 5:9; 2 Sam. 22:42; Job 7:19; Job 14:6; Ps. 39:13; Ps. 119:117; Isa. 17:7; Isa. 17:8; Isa. 22:4; Isa. 31:1; Isa. 41:10; Isa. 41:23

**Became angry** ([02734](#))**(charah)** means to burn or be kindled with anger, and in the Hithpael, **charah** is used 4x (Ps 37:1, 7,8, Pr 24:19) always meaning "to worry" and describing the agitation, irritation or vexation resulting from active worry. **Charah** is used in reference to the anger of both man and God. The verb emphasizes the kindling and burning aspects of anger. This primary nuance is attested in Talmudic and Middle Hebrew. There is evidence of the translation "rage" found in Yaudic, Middle Hebrew, Targumic, Arabic and Syriac. In the Qal stem, the noun [aph](#) is usually the subject, yielding the Hebrew idiom, "nose was kindled." Although [aph](#) is often omitted, e.g., "it was kindled."

Often the anger of a human is kindled. When Potiphar's wife made the false claim that Joseph had made sexual advances on her, Potiphar's anger was kindled, and Joseph was thrown in prison (Ge 39:19f). Moses' anger burned when he came down from Mount Sinai after receiving the Ten Commandments because of the sin which the Israelites committed in making a golden calf (Ex 32:19). When the Philistines extorted the answer to Samson's riddle from his wife, Samson's anger was kindled, and he killed thirty men in Ashkelon (Jdg. 14:19). When Saul heard that Nahash the Ammonite had threatened to gouge out the eyes of the Israelites, he became angry and raised an army to defeat the Ammonites (1Sa 11:6).

**Charah in Genesis** - Gen. 4:5; Gen. 4:6; Gen. 18:30; Gen. 18:32; Gen. 30:2; Gen. 31:35; Gen. 31:36; Gen. 34:7; Gen. 39:19; Gen. 44:18; Gen. 45:5

**Very** (great, exceedingly) ([03966](#)) **meod** is usually used as an adverb. (and means "very" - Ge 1:31) Me'ōd occurs in many combinations with adjectives and verbs to communicate the idea of "exceeding," thereby showing an intensification of the word modified (1 Sa 20:19; Obad. 2; Ps. 31:11; 46:1; 139:14). Below are words used to translate meod in the NASB....

abundantly(1), all(1), almost(1), badly(3), carefully(1), closely(1), diligent(1), diligently(3), enough(1), especially(1), exceeding(1), exceedingly(14), exceedingly\*(3), excessive(1), extremely\*(1), far(1), firmly(1), fully(1), great(16), great abundance(1), greatly(52), greatly\*(1), hard(1), harder\*(1), highly(4), immense(1), louder(1), measure(2), might(2), more(2), more\*(1), most(1), much\*(1), quickly(1), richly(1), serious\*(1), severely(1), so(2), so much(1), sorely(1), strongly(1), swiftly(1), too(2), utterly(1), utterly\*(3), very(139), very well(1), very\*(2), violently(1), violently\*(1), well(2).

**Countenance** ([06440](#)) **panim/paniyim/paneh** occurs over 2000x and is a masculine plural (it always occurs in plural in OT) noun which literally means face (Ge 43:31; Lev. 13:41; 1Kgs. 19:13). Paniym can be a substitute for the entire person (Ex 33:14,15). More often it is used figuratively. The face identifies a person and reflects attitude and sentiments of person. As such, panim can be a substitute for the self or the feelings of the self. The "face" (along w other parts of body) is described not merely as an exterior instrument in one's physiology, but rather as being engaged in some form of behavioral pattern, and is thus characterized by some personal quality. It is only natural that the face was considered to be extraordinarily revealing vis-a-vis a man's emotions, moods, and dispositions.

Paniym is used many times in Genesis - Gen. 1:2; Gen. 1:20; Gen. 1:29; Gen. 2:6; Gen. 3:8; Gen. 4:5; Gen. 4:6; Gen. 4:14; Gen. 4:16; Gen. 6:1; Gen. 6:7; Gen. 6:11; Gen. 6:13; Gen. 7:1; Gen. 7:3; Gen. 7:4; Gen. 7:7; Gen. 7:18; Gen. 7:23; Gen. 8:8; Gen. 8:9; Gen. 8:13; Gen. 9:23; Gen. 10:9; Gen. 11:4; Gen. 11:8; Gen. 11:9; Gen. 11:28; Gen. 13:9; Gen. 13:10; Gen. 16:6; Gen. 16:8; Gen. 16:12; Gen. 17:1; Gen. 17:3; Gen. 17:17; Gen. 17:18; Gen. 18:8; Gen. 18:16; Gen. 18:22; Gen. 19:13; Gen. 19:27; Gen. 19:28; Gen. 20:15; Gen. 23:3; Gen. 23:4; Gen. 23:8; Gen. 23:12; Gen. 23:17; Gen. 23:19; Gen. 24:7; Gen. 24:33; Gen. 24:40; Gen. 24:51; Gen. 25:9; Gen. 25:18; Gen. 27:7; Gen. 27:10; Gen. 27:30; Gen. 27:46; Gen. 29:26; Gen. 30:30; Gen. 30:40; Gen. 31:2; Gen. 31:5; Gen. 31:21; Gen. 31:35; Gen. 32:3; Gen. 32:16; Gen. 32:17; Gen. 32:20; Gen. 32:21; Gen. 32:30; Gen. 33:3; Gen. 33:10; Gen. 33:14; Gen. 33:18; Gen. 34:10; Gen. 36:7; Gen. 36:31; Gen. 38:15; Gen. 40:7; Gen. 40:9; Gen. 41:31; Gen. 41:43; Gen. 41:46; Gen. 41:56; Gen. 43:3; Gen. 43:5; Gen. 43:9; Gen. 43:14; Gen. 43:15; Gen. 43:31; Gen. 43:33; Gen. 43:34; Gen. 44:14; Gen. 44:23; Gen. 44:26; Gen. 45:3; Gen. 45:5; Gen. 45:7; Gen. 46:28; Gen. 46:30; Gen. 47:2; Gen. 47:6; Gen. 47:10; Gen. 47:13; Gen. 48:11; Gen. 48:15; Gen. 48:20; Gen. 49:30; Gen. 50:1; Gen. 50:13; Gen. 50:16; Gen. 50:18

---

**GOTQUESTIONS - Why did God accept Abel's offering but reject Cain's offering? Why did Cain then kill Abel?**

**ANSWER** - The stories of the first act of worship in human history and the first murder are recorded in Genesis chapter 4. The act of

worship—Cain’s and Abel’s offerings—follows the account of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, their disobedience to God, and the entrance of sin into the human race. Death, the judgment pronounced upon them by God, soon made its entrance in the first family.

Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve, “in the course of time” brought offerings to the Lord (Genesis 4:3). Without doubt, they were doing this because God had revealed to them the necessity of a sacrifice. Some wonder how Cain and Abel were supposed to know *what* to sacrifice. The answer is that God must have instructed them concerning the details of acceptable worship, although those instructions are not included in the Genesis narrative.

Abel was a shepherd, and his offering to the Lord was “the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock” (Genesis 4:4NLT). Cain was a farmer, and his offering was “some of his crops” (Genesis 4:4NLT). The most evident difference between the two sacrifices is that Abel’s offering was an animal (blood) sacrifice, and Cain’s was a vegetable (bloodless) sacrifice. There may be an additional implication that, while Abel brought “the best portions,” Cain simply brought some of his ordinary crops. Scripture does not give an indication, however, that either of these differences factored into God’s acceptance of Abel and rejection of Cain.

What we know for sure is that “the LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor” (Genesis 4:4–5). We also know that God looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). There was something in Cain’s motivation and heart attitude, and possibly something in his performance, that made his offering unacceptable to God. It was obviously something that he was aware of and could remedy, since God tells him after the fact, “You will be accepted if you do what is right” (Genesis 4:7NLT).

Abel, on the other hand, had the proper motivation, the proper procedure, and the proper relationship with God. That relationship was based on faith: “By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did” (Hebrews 11:4). Ever since the beginning, people must come to God in faith. “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6), and faith is evidently what Cain lacked.

In Jude 1:11, we read, “They have taken the way of Cain,” a description that refers to lawless men. This may mean that they, like Cain, dis obediently devised their own ways of worship, and they did not come to God by faith. Cain’s offering, while acceptable in his own eyes, was not acceptable to the Lord. In some way, Cain had perverted God’s prescribed form of worship, and his heart was not right. He grew jealous of Abel, and he selfishly nursed his wounded pride. Rather than repent at God’s rebuke, Cain became angry, and later, in the field, he killed Abel and brought judgment upon himself (Genesis 4:8).

The apostle John gives us more insight into Cain’s heart: “Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous” (1 John 3:12). Those who belong to the evil one will have evil actions, and those with evil actions will naturally hate those with righteous actions. The evil in Cain’s heart was further revealed when the Lord asked him, “Where is your brother Abel?” to which Cain replied, “I don’t know. . . . Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4:9). In this response Cain tells a stone-cold lie and shows an amazing level of insolence.

When Jesus Christ died upon the cross, He became the substitutionary atonement for our sins. The blood of Christ “speaks a better word than the blood of Abel” (Hebrews 12:24). Both Abel and Christ were slain by wicked men. But, as the theologian Erasmus commented, “The blood of Abel cried for vengeance; that of Christ for remission.[GotQuestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)

---

#### Norman Geisler - GENESIS 4:5—[Does God show respect to certain persons?](#)

**PROBLEM:** God is represented in the Scriptures as someone who “is no respect[er] of persons” (Rom. 2:11, KJV), and one who “shows no partiality” (Deut. 10:17). Yet, this verse tells us that God “did not respect Cain and his offering,” which seems contradictory to the other verses.

**SOLUTION:** First of all, in the fundamental sense of the word, God respects every person for who he or she is, a creature made in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:27). If He didn’t, He would not be respecting Himself. But, when the Bible says God is no respecter of persons, it means that He does not show partiality in meeting out His justice. As Deuteronomy 10 puts it, He “shows no partiality nor takes a bribe” (v. 17). In other words, God is completely fair and even-handed in His dealings.

However, there is a sense in which it can be said that God does not respect some persons because of their evil deeds. God “did not respect Cain and his offering” (Gen. 4:5) because it was not offered in faith (Heb. 11:4). Thus, the Bible also speaks of God hating Esau (Mal. 1:3) and the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:6), not because of their person, but because of their practice. As John told the believers at Ephesus, they should “hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans” (Rev. 2:6). God loves the sinner, but hates the sin.

---

#### Related Resources:

- [Bruce K. Waltke, “Cain and His Offering.” Westminster Theological Journal 48 \(1986\): 363–72](#) - If you are wrestling with the

interpretation of why God accepted Abel and rejected Cain's offerings, I would recommend taking a few moments and reading this 10 page article by Waltke. Here is his **conclusion**...

Although the narrative by repeating the preposition 'el with both the proper names, Abel and Cain, and with minha syntactically distinguishes the brothers and their offerings, yet theologically, as suggested above, the two are inseparable. Elsewhere Yahweh rejected the gifts of Korah (Nu16:15), Saul's men (1Sa 26:19), and apostate Israel (Isa 1:13), not because of some blemish in their offering, but because of their deformed characters. Cain's flawed character led to his feigned worship. Had his mind been enlightened

- [Jack P. Lewis, "The Offering of Abel \(Gen 4:4\): A History of Interpretation," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 37:4 \(December 1994\):481-96.](#) (click for article)

#### Genesis 4:6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?

LXE And the Lord God said to Cain, Why art thou become very sorrowful and why is thy countenance fallen?

BGT καὶ εἶπεν καὶ Ῥιος θεὸς τοῖς Καίν νατ περ λυπός γεννου καὶ νατ σου πεσεν την προσωπον σου

KJV And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

NET Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why is your expression downcast?

CSB Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you furious? And why do you look despondent?

ERV And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

ESV The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?

NIV Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?

NLT "Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected?

NRS The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen?

YLT And Jehovah saith unto Cain, 'Why hast thou displeasure? and why hath thy countenance fallen?

GWN Then the LORD asked Cain, "Why are you angry, and why do you look disappointed?

NKJ So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?

NAB So the LORD said to Cain: "Why are you so resentful and crestfallen?

NJB Yahweh asked Cain, 'Why are you angry and downcast?

ASV And Jehovah said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

DBY And Jehovah said to Cain, Why art thou angry, and why is thy countenance fallen?

BBE And the Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry? and why is your face sad?

BHT wayyō'mer yhwh(‘ädonäy) ‘el-qāyin lōmmâ Hǟrâ läk wülǟmmâ näplû pänÊökä

NAS Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?

NIRV Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why are you looking so sad?

RSV The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen?

- 1Ch 13:11-13 Job 5:2 Isa 1:18 Jer 2:5,31 Joh 4:1-4,8-11 Mic 6:3-5 Mt 20:15 Lu 15:31,32

- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

Cain, by [Henri Vidal](#), 1896,

#### YAHWEH'S RHETORICAL QUESTIONS TO CAIN

**Then** - Pay attention to this word as it usually marks progression in a narrative so helps to establish the timeframe.

**The LORD said to Cain** - At this time in man's history God was still speaking directly with man. How was He manifest? We simply do not know, but He spoke audibly and clearly.

**"Why are you angry (charah)? And why has your countenance (panim/paniyim) fallen?** - Notice how the LORD phrases these two facts as questions (i.e., rhetorical questions), in an attempt to give Cain an opportunity to acknowledge his sin.

**THOUGHT** - Believers need to heed this lesson of Cain's anger out of control. We are on dangerous ground when we become angry and even righteous anger can be an opportunity for Satan to shoot fiery missiles at our minds. Paul writes "BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27and do not give the devil an opportunity." (Eph 4:26-27+)

---

**Spurgeon** - SINNERS are not all of the laughing sort: Cain's mind was angry, and his heart was heavy. The short life of the vicious is not always a merry one. See, here you have a man who is utterly without God, but he is not without sorrow. His countenance has fallen: his looks are sullen: he is a miserable man. There are many ungodly people still in the world who are not happy in the condition in which they find themselves. The present does not content them, and they have no future from which to borrow the light of hope. The service of sin is hard to them, and yet they do not quit it for the service of the Lord. They are in danger of having two hells—one in this life, and another in the world to come.

They have a religion of their own, even as Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground; but it yields them no comfort, for God has no respect to their offering, and therefore they are displeased about it. The things of God bring an increase to their inward wretchedness: it was after a sacrifice that Cain's countenance fell. Many unrenewed hearts quarrel with God at his own altar: quarrel by presenting what he never commanded, and then by growing wroth because he rejects their will-worship. They attend the means of grace, but they are not saved nor comforted, and they do not like it. They pray, after a fashion, and they are not heard, and they feel indignant at the slight. They read the Scriptures, but no cheering promise is ever applied to their hearts, and they grow fierce at their failure. They see another accepted, as Abel was, and this excites their jealousy, and envy gnaws at their heart. They are wroth with God, with their fellow man, and with everything about them; their countenance falls, and they are in a morose mood, which fits them for any cruel word or deed. Can you not see their sullen looks?

They would like to have the enjoyments of religion very much, they would like to have peace of conscience, they would like to be uplifted beyond all fear of death, they would like to be as happy as Christian people are; but they do not want to pay the price, namely, obedience to God by faith in Jesus Christ. They would willingly bring an offering to God according to their own choice and taste; but they do not care to come with "the lamb" as their sacrifice: they cannot accept the atonement made by our Lord's laying down his life for us. They wish to have the reward of obedient faith while yet they have their own way. They would reap the harvest without sowing the seed. They would gather clusters without planting vines. They would win the wages without serving the Master of the vineyard. But as this cannot be, and never will be, they are full of bitter feeling. Since sin and sorrow are sure to be, sooner or later, married together, and since only by walking in the ways of God can we hope to find peace and rest, they quarrel with the divine arrangement, grow inwardly miserable, and show it by their sullen looks and growling words.

They are in a bitter state of heart, and it is fair to ask each one of them, "Why art thou wroth?" Alas! they are not angry with themselves, as they ought to be, but angry with God; and often they are angry with God's chosen, and envious of them, even as Cain was malicious and vindictive towards Abel. "Why should my neighbour be saved, and not I? Why should my brother rejoice because he has peace with God, while I cannot get it? Why should my own sister be converted and sing of heaven, and I, who have gone to the same place of worship, and have joined in the same prayers and hymns, seem to be left out in the cold?" Such questions might be useful to them; but instead of looking into their own hearts to see what is wrong there, instead of judging themselves and trying to get right with God, they inwardly blame the Lord, or the persons whom they think to be more favoured than themselves. The blessings of grace are to be had by them; but they refuse to take them, and yet quarrel with those who accept them. They play the part of the dog in the manger, who could not eat the hay himself, and would not let the horses do so. They will not accept Christ, and yet grumble because others have him.

It is one of the sure signs of the seed of the serpent—that they will always be at enmity with the seed of the woman. This is one of the marks of distinction between those who walk after the flesh and those who walk after the spirit; for as Ishmael mocked Isaac, so the child of the flesh mocks the child of promise even to this day. So soon as the two sons born to Adam were grown up, the great division was seen: he who was of the wicked one slew the man who by faith offered a more acceptable sacrifice. This division has never ceased, and never will cease, while the race of man remains on earth under the reign of God's long-suffering. By this shall ye know to which seed ye belong; whether ye are of those who hate the righteous, or of those who are hated for Christ's sake. (For full Sermon see [To Those Who are Angry with Their Godly Friends](#) = IF YOU ARE DEALING WITH ANGER, THIS WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT SERMON TO PONDER)

---

**Genesis 4:7 "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."**

LXE Hast thou not sinned if thou hast brought it rightly, but not rightly divided it? be still, to thee shall be his submission, and thou shalt rule over him.

BGT ο κ ν ρθ ζ προσεν γκ ζ ρθ ζ δ μ δι λ ζ μαρτες σ χασον πρ ζ σ ποστροφ α το κα σ ρξεις α το

KJV 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.

NET Is it not true that if you do what is right, you will be fine? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. It desires to dominate you, but you must subdue it."

CSB If you do what is right, won't you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

ERV If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door: and unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

ESV If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."

NIV If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

NLT You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master."

NRS If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

YLT Is there not, if thou dost well, acceptance? and if thou dost not well, at the opening a sin-offering is crouching, and unto thee its desire, and thou rulest over it.'

GWN If you do well, won't you be accepted? But if you don't do well, sin is lying outside your door ready to attack. It wants to control you, but you must master it."

NKJ "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

NAB If you do well, you can hold up your head; but if not, sin is a demon lurking at the door: his urge is toward you, yet you can be his master."

NJB If you are doing right, surely you ought to hold your head high! But if you are not doing right, Sin is crouching at the door hungry to get you. You can still master him.'

ASV If thou doest well, shall it not be lifted up? and if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door: and unto thee shall be its desire, but do thou rule over it.

DBY If thou doest well, will not thy countenance look up with confidence? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door; and unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

BBE If you do well, will you not have honour? and if you do wrong, sin is waiting at the door, desiring to have you, but do not let it be your master.

BHT háló' 'im-Têṭib Sü'ët wü' im lö' têṭib laPPeºtaH Hattä't röbēc wü' élÊºkä Tüsûºqätô wü'aTTâ Timšol-Bô

NAS "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

NIRV Do what is right. Then you will be accepted. If you don't do what is right, sin is waiting at your door to grab you. It longs to have you. But you must rule over it."

RSV If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

10 12:1 Ro 14:18 15:16 Eph 1:6 1Ti 5:4 1Pe 2:5

- **will not your countenance be lifted up** Job 29:4 Pr 21:27 Heb 11:4
- **sin is crouching at the door** Ge 4:8-13 Ro 7:8,9 Jas 1:15
- **its desire is for you, but you must master it** Ge 3:16
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Genesis 49:9 "Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he **lies down** ([rabas](#)) - same word for "crouching" in Ge 4:7) **as a lion**, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?

James 1:19+ This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and **slow to anger**; 20 for **the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God**

## DO RIGHT AND BE BLESSED

If - God was offering a way out, but with a condition that he must meet. "The introduction of the conditional clause with an interrogative particle prods the answer from Cain, as if he should have known this. It is not a condemnation, but an encouragement to do what is right." ([NET NOTE](#))

**You do well** ([yatab](#)) , **will not your countenance be lifted up** ([seet](#))? - The words *your countenance* are added by the NAS translation. Compare **ESV** = "If you do well, will you not be accepted?" **NLT** = "You will be accepted if you do what is right." ([see Ross' note](#)) The LORD asks Cain a third question, in the question actually telling him he could rectify the problem. In short, **do well** and be blessed. This passage has always puzzled me because clearly God is calling for Cain to do something that the fallen flesh by itself is not capable of doing. God in essence is telling Cain to do well which in some way would counteract the power of sin waiting to pounce on him. God never asks someone to do something without providing the power, so in some way had Cain agreed to do well, God would have enabled him to do well (probably in some way by the action of the Holy Spirit, but one cannot be dogmatic). In any event, Cain refused to do well and [Sin](#) pounced on him and he pounced on his brother Abel and the rest is history!

**Do well** ([yatab](#)) is translated in the Septuagint with **orthós** which (figuratively) speaks of persevering on a correct course of life toward a goal and pertains to acting in conformity with a norm or standard. Presumably God had told Cain and Abel what the norm or standard was in regard to the offering He would judge acceptable -- the right offering and the right heart attitude.

**Derek Kidner** on "will you not be accepted" (ESV) - In the Hebrew, **accepted** (Ge 4:7) is literally 'a lifting up' (cf. RV mg), an expression that can indicate a smiling as against a frowning (fallen, Ge 4:6) face: cf. Nu 6:26+. The sense may be that the very look on Cain's face gives him away; more probably it goes further, to promise God's restoration (cf. Ge 40:13) on a change of heart. (See context in [Genesis - Tyndale OT Commentary](#) or borrow [Genesis: an introduction and commentary](#))

**Andrew Fuller** - By doing well he means doing as Abel did, offering in faith, which is the only well-doing among sinful creatures. If Cain had believed in the Messiah, there was forgiveness for him, no less than for his brother

**Matthew Henry** - The Lord reasoned with this rebellious man; if he came in the right way, he should be accepted. Some understand this as an intimation of mercy. "If thou doest not well, sin, that is, the sin-offering, lies at the door, and thou mayest take the benefit of it." The same word signifies sin, and a sacrifice for sin. "Though thou hast not done well, yet do not despair; the remedy is at hand." Christ, the great sin-offering, is said to stand at the door, Revelation 3:20. And those well deserve to perish in their sins, that will not go to the door to ask for the benefit of this sin-offering. God's acceptance of Abel's offering did not change the birthright, and make it his; why then should Cain be so angry? Sinful heats and disquiets vanish before a strict and fair inquiry into the cause.

**TECHNICAL NOTES** - [NET NOTE](#) - The Hebrew text is difficult, because only one word occurs, **תָּאַסֵּע** ([seet](#)), which appears to be the infinitive construct from the verb "to lift up" (**נִאָסֵעַ**, na'as). The sentence reads: "If you do well, uplifting." On the surface it seems to be the opposite of the fallen face. Everything will be changed if he does well. God will show him favor, he will not be angry, and his face will reflect that. But more may be intended since the second half of the verse forms the contrast: "If you do not do well, sin is crouching...." Not doing well leads to sinful attack; doing well leads to victory and God's blessing.

**Allen Ross** on the NLT rendering "**You will be accepted if you do what is right**" - This is an attempt to capture the meaning of an extremely difficult word. The passage literally says, "If you do what is right, [there will be] uplift." The word "uplift" ([seet](#)) appears to be the infinitive of the verb **nasa** (to lift up, lift away, carry). The word may contrast with the report that Cain's face fell, which is to say that if he did right things, his attitude

and expression would begin to look up. God says that things will be fine if Cain simply tries to please Him; he could be accepted like Abel. The word *nasa'* can be used in the Bible for forgiveness, but God is not condemning Cain yet, nor calling for a confession. He is simply telling him to do well.

**And if you do not do well, sin is crouching(rabas) at the door - NAB** = "sin is a demon lurking at the door" Cain would soon learn the difficult lesson that if he did not control his anger, his anger would control him. God is not condemning him (which He might have done because of the unacceptable offering), but is encouraging him to **do well**, warning him of dire consequences if he did not **do well**.

**Allen Ross** - Cain's lack of faith shows up in his response to God's rejection of his offering of fruit (Gen. 4:5). Rather than being concerned about remedying the situation and pleasing God, he was very angry. Cain was so angry he would not be talked out of his sin—even by God. Eve, however, had to be talked into her sin by Satan; but Cain "belonged to the evil one" (1 John 3:12). It is as if he could not wait to destroy his brother—a natural man's solution to his own failure. God's advice was that if Cain would please God by doing what is right, all would be well. But if not sin would be crouching (rōbēš is used here in the figure of a crouching animal) at his door, ready to overcome him. Sin desires to have Cain (these words show God's interpretation of "desire," the same Heb. word, in Gen. 3:16), but Cain could have the mastery over it. Here is the perpetual struggle between good and evil. Anyone filled with envy and strife is prey for the evil one. (See context in [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Derek Kidner** - while Eve had been talked into her sin, Cain will not have even God talk him out of it; nor will he confess to it, nor yet accept his punishment. (See context in [Genesis - TOTC](#) or borrow [Genesis: an introduction and commentary](#))

**NET NOTE** on **crouching (rabas)** - The Hebrew term translated "**crouching**" (רֹבֶשׁ, rovets) is an active participle. Sin is portrayed with animal imagery here as a beast crouching and ready to pounce (a figure of speech known as [zoomorphism](#)). An Akkadian cognate refers to a type of demon; in this case perhaps one could translate, "Sin is the demon at the door."

**KJV Commentary** note is interesting (but probably a bit conjectural) - The Hebrew word for "crouching" is the same as an ancient Babylonian word referring to an evil demon crouching at the door of a building to threaten the people inside. Sin may thus be pictured here as just such a demon, waiting to pounce on Cain. He may already have been plotting his brother's murder. (See context [King James Version Commentary](#))

**W White** on **crouching(rabas)** in Ge 4:7 - This verse, of course, has been much discussed. Another view interprets "sin" in the figure of a ferocious beast ready to spring. But this meaning of rābaš seems to be found only in Genesis 49:9. Others, taking the usual meaning of rābaš take the word "sin" as "sin offering" which is lying available at the door.

**Allen Ross** - Sin is personified as an animal couching at the door and ready to pounce on Cain, whose anger made him susceptible to this evil influence. Perhaps there is more in this passage, however, than a personification. The participle "couching" or "lies" (rōbēš) is cognate to an Akkadian term used of a type of demon. The first edition of the Jewish Publication Society's Torah offered the translation: "Sin is the demon at the door." If such a translation is legitimate, then there is a connection with the oracle about the seed of the serpent. ([A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis](#))

**And its desire (teshuqah) is for you, but you must master (mashal) it - NET** = "It desires to dominate you." **NLT** = "eager to control you." Sin wants to "pounce" on Cain, but God gives Cain a "way of escape." Its desire means that **Sin** wanted to overpower him, to defeat him, to subdue him and ultimately to make him a slave! (cf Jn 8:34, Ro 6:16-17, 19+) **You must master it** is more literally "*you shall rule over it*" God in great mercy and grace gave Cain a chance and a choice to master**Sin** or be mastered by it. Sadly, Cain chose the latter path and it changed his life forever. As alluded to above, exactly how Cain in the Old Covenant and without the indwelling Spirit could master the power of **Sin** in this circumstance is not explained in the text. However, rest assured that what God commands, He always enables. I believe that if Cain had yielded or submitted to God, God would have supernaturally enabled him to kill his sin of anger. James states the immutable principle that "God is opposed to the proud (CAIN), but gives grace to the humble (ABEL). (Jas 4:6+) Although it is conjecture, I feel that the Holy Spirit in some way would have given Cain the necessary power to master sin in this circumstance.

**Victor Hamilton** adds that "He is not so deeply embedded in sin, either inherited or actual, that his further sin is determined and inevitable. The emphasis here is not on Cain as a constitutional sinner, one utterly depraved, but on Cain as one who has a free choice. When facing the alternatives, he is capable of making the right choice. Otherwise, God's words to him about "doing well" would be meaningless and comic. Should he so desire, Cain is able to overcome this creature who now confronts him. The text makes Cain's personal responsibility even more focused by its use of the initial emphatic pronoun: "you, you are to master it." (See context in [The Book of Genesis](#))

**THOUGHT** - Genesis 4:7 has a parallel in the New Testament (IN MY OPINION). In Romans 6 Paul personifies **Sin** as a evil despot seeking to control believers. Therefore Paul issues 4 commands to avert acquiescing to the power of **Sin** -- "Even so (1) **consider** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the](#)

[Holy Spirit to obey](#)) yourselves to be dead to [Sin](#), but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore (2) **do not let Sin reign** ([present imperative with a negative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) - could mean stop letting this occur in your life) in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and (3) **do not go on presenting present imperative with a negative** see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) the members of your body to [Sin](#) as instruments of unrighteousness; but (4) **present** ([aorist imperative](#)) = speaks of a sense of urgency "**JUST DO IT!**" - see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." (Ro 6:11-13+) Later, in Romans 8:13+ (Martyn Lloyd-Jones calls this the most important verse in the for a believer's progressive sanctification - [listen to his 4 sermons on Ro 8:12-13](#)) Paul adds "if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if **by the Spirit** (GOD'S PART/POWER) you are putting to death (MAN'S PART/RESPONSIBILITY) (present tense - as a lifestyle, not referring to "perfection" but to general "direction" of your life) the deeds of the body, you will live." As the rest of the story in Genesis 4 makes clear, Cain did not seek to master (or kill) the [Sin](#) that was crouching and ready to move him from angry thoughts to angry deeds (murder)!

In the story of Cain and Abel

the seed of the woman met the seed of the serpent (Ge 3:15+).

-- Allen Ross

**NET NOTE** on its desire ([teshuqah](#)) is for you but you must master ([mashal](#)) it - Heb "and toward you [is] its desire, but you must rule over it." As in Gen 3:16, the Hebrew noun "**desire**" refers to an urge to control or dominate. Here the desire is that which sin has for Cain, a desire to control for the sake of evil, but Cain must have mastery over it. The imperfect is understood as having an obligatory sense. Another option is to understand it as expressing potential ("you can have [or "are capable of having"] mastery over it."). It will be a struggle, but sin can be defeated by righteousness. In addition to this connection to Gen 3, other linguistic and thematic links between chaps. 3 and 4 are discussed by A. J. Hauser, ["Linguistic and Thematic Links Between Genesis 4:1–6 and Genesis 2–3 \(CLICK FOR ARTICLE\)"](#), JETS 23 (1980): 297–306.

---

**Andrew Fuller** - But though Cain was silenced by the Almighty, yet his malice was not subdued, but rather inflamed. If the life of God had been within his reach, he would have killed him; but this he could not do. From that time, therefore, his dark soul meditated revenge upon Abel, as being God's favourite, his own rival, and the only object within his power. This is the first instance of the enmity of the seed of the serpent breaking out against the seed of the woman; but not the last! Observe the subtlety and treachery with which it was accomplished: "Cain talked with Abel his brother." He talked with him, probably, in a very familiar manner, as though he had quite forgotten the affair which had lately hurt his mind; and when they were engaged in conversation, persuaded him to take a walk with him into his field; and, having got him away from the family, he murdered him! O Adam! thou didst murder an unborn world, and now thou shalt see some of the fruits of it in thine own family! Thou hast never before witnessed a human death: go, see the first victim of the king of terrors in the mangled corpse of Abel thy son!—Poor Abel! Shall we pity him? In one view we must, but in others he is an object of envy. He was the first of the noble army of martyrs, the first of human kind who entered the abodes of the blessed, and the first instance of death being subservient to Christ. When the serpent had drawn man into sin, and exposed him to its threatened penalty, he seemed to have obtained the power of death; and, had man been left under the ruins of the fall, he would have been continually walking through the earth, arm in arm, as it were, with the monster, the one taking the bodies and the other the souls of men. But the woman's Seed is destined to overcome him. By death he destroyed "him who had the power of death, and delivered them who" must otherwise, "through fear of death," have been "all their lifetime subject to bondage," Heb. 2:14, 15. (See [The Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller](#))

---

**John Calvin on Genesis 4:7** - God will pronounce a dreadful sentence against Cain if the man hardens his mind in wickedness and indulges himself in his crime. The warning is emphatic; God not only repels Cain's unjust complaint but shows that Cain could have no greater adversary than the sin that he inwardly cherishes.

God so binds the impious man in these concise words that he can find no refuge. It is as if he says, "Your obstinacy will not profit you, for, though you would have nothing to do with me, your sin will give you no rest but will sharply drive you on, pursue you, urge you, and never allow you to escape." Cain rages in vain but to no profit. He is guilty by his own inward conviction even though no one accuses him. The expression "**sin lieth at the door**" refers to the interior judgment of the conscience that convinces man of his sin and besieges him on every side.

The impious may imagine that God slumbers in heaven. They may strive to repel fear of his judgment. But sin will perpetually draw these reluctant fugitives back to the tribunal from which they flee.

The expression of Moses has peculiar energy. **Sin lieth at the door**, meaning the sinner is not immediately tormented with the fear

of judgment. Rather, gathering around him whatever delights he can to deceive himself, he appears to walk in free space and to revel in pleasant meadows. However, when he comes to the door, he meets sin, which keeps constant guard. Then conscience, which before was at liberty, is arrested, and he receives double punishment for the delay.

---

**Wiersbe - Controlling Anger** - We may have righteous anger against sin (Mark 3:5; Eph. 4:26), but too often our anger is itself sinful. Jesus warned that anger could be the first step toward murder (Matt. 5:21–26). We must ask the Holy Spirit to help us control anger (Prov. 15:18; 16:32), manifest love to those who offend us (Matt. 5:43–48), and learn to practice forgiveness (Eph. 4:26–32). (See context in [With the Word: The Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Handbook](#))

---

### Henry Blackaby on Genesis 4:6–8NKJV

The most dangerous decisions are made in the heat of anger. Anger makes us reckless and causes us to foolishly disregard the possible results of our actions. Only after we have cooled down do we recognize the damage we have done.

Cain was furious! His kid brother, Abel, could apparently do no wrong. Their parents always seemed pleased with Abel and disappointed in Cain. Even God appeared to favor Abel over his older brother. Finally, Cain's jealousy boiled over into rage, and he lost perspective. That's when he made an irrational decision: if he couldn't match up to his brother, he'd get rid of him! Of course Cain should have realized that he couldn't hide a murder from God. However, anger blinded him to the point that even when God warned him of the outcome of his diabolical plan he took no notice! At that moment he didn't care what the consequences would be.

When you allow yourself to become angry and lose your self-control, you are in great danger. No one can make you angry. It is a choice you make. Anger is never your only option: you can choose to forgive; you can decide to change your attitude; you can even pray for the one who has provoked you. Do you sometimes find that being angry at someone else is easier than making changes in your own life?

When you find your heart is filled with rage, go immediately to God. Ask him to remove the anger from your heart and to replace it with patience, forgiveness, and love. Through his Holy Spirit, God will warn you, as he did Cain, of the danger in acting out your anger. Be wiser than Cain was, and you won't have to live with regret. ([The Experience: Day by Day with God: A Devotional](#))

---

### David Rudolph in [The Voice of the Lord: Messianic Jewish Daily Devotional](#)

Sin is crouching at the door—it wants you, but you can rule over it (Gen. 4:7).

Rabbi Isaac comments on the phrase, "Sin is crouching at the door," saying, "At first it is like a [passing] visitor, then like a guest [who stays longer], and finally like the master of the house" (Genesis Rabbah 22:6). God warns Cain that he must resist sin and master it, or else it will master him. Like his parents, Adam and Eve, Cain encounters a clear choice: obedience and blessing, or disobedience and death. And like his parents, he makes the wrong choice.

We may also see the choice clearly enough, yet find ourselves without the strength to make the right decision. God's intention is to provide the means to obey his Word. Once we choose God's way, the power will be there, as it would have been even for Cain.

With the coming of the Messiah, it became clear that we could have the power to master sin. As Sha'ul (Saul; i.e., Paul) says, "For sin will not have authority over you; because you are not under legalism but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). God's grace does not give us the freedom to sin, but the power in Messiah to rule over the sin that crouches at our door.

#### Today I Will

... examine my heart for any excuses I still use to justify sinful behavior in my life. I will not allow sin to rule me, but I will master it through Messiah (**ED: HIS SPIRIT** - Ro 8:13).

---

**Do well** (do good, do right) ([03190](#)) ([yatab](#)) means to be good, to be well, to be pleasing. To be made well, happy, cheerful, joyful.

**Lifted up** ([07613](#)) (seet from [nasa](#) = to lift, to carry). exaltation, dignity, swelling, uprising. **Baker** - A feminine noun indicating honoring, elevation, dignity. It refers in general to a lifting up of someone or something: of the dignity given to the firstborn (Ge. 49:3); of a high office or place in society (Ps. 62:4); of God's unsurpassed exaltedness (Job 13:11; 31:23); of an infection, skin swelling (Lev. 13:2, 10, 19, 28, 43; 14:56); of Leviathan's stirring himself up (Job 41:25); of an approving, uplifting look, recognition (Gen. 4:7). **II.** A feminine noun indicating swelling. This is an expansion or enlargement of a person's flesh or skin because of an infection or irritation, a condition that was diagnosed by the priests (Lev. 13:2, 10, 19, 28, 43; 14:56). ([Complete Word Study Dictionary- Old Testament](#))

**Seeth** - 14x in 13v - authority(1), dignity(1), high position(1), lifted(1), majesty(2), raises(1), swelling(7). Gen.

4:7; Gen. 49:3; Lev. 13:2; Lev. 13:10; Lev. 13:19; Lev. 13:28; Lev. 13:43; Lev. 14:56; Job 13:11; Job 31:23; Job 41:25; Ps. 62:4; Hab. 1:7

**Crouching** ([07257](#)) (rabas) means stretch oneself out, lie down, lie stretched out, to lie down, to lay something down. It has the connotation of "repose" or "rest from exertion" rather than sleep. Figuratively of sin lying down, crouching at the door (Ge 4:7), of a curse resting on a person (Dt 29:20). Rabats describes animals lying down (Ge 49:9, Ex 23:5), birds sitting on eggs (Dt 22:6) **Rabas** describes the "lying" of many living things, figurative of people as sheep (Ezek 34:14); of the needy person (Isa 14:30), of flocks (Isa 13:20, Hiphil), of sheep (Ge 29:2), of the lion (Ge 49:9), of the leopard and goat in tranquility together (Isa 11:6), of the nesting mother bird (Dt. 22:6). In its causative stem rabas means to lay, to set stones (Isa. 54:11); to cause one's flock to lie down to rest (Song 1:7).

**Rabats** - 30x/30v - crouching(1), lay down(2), lead them to rest(1), lie down(15), lies(2), lies down(1), lying(3), lying down(1), rest(2), set(1), sitting(1). Gen. 4:7; Gen. 29:2; Gen. 49:9; Gen. 49:14; Gen. 49:25; Exod. 23:5; Num. 22:27; Deut. 22:6; Deut. 29:20; Deut. 33:13; Job 11:19; Ps. 23:2; Ps. 104:22; Song. 1:7; Isa. 11:6; Isa. 11:7; Isa. 13:20; Isa. 13:21; Isa. 14:30; Isa. 17:2; Isa. 27:10; Isa. 54:11; Jer. 33:12; Ezek. 19:2; Ezek. 29:3; Ezek. 34:14; Ezek. 34:15; Zeph. 2:7; Zeph. 2:14; Zeph. 3:13

**Desire** ([08669](#)) **teshuqah** is a feminine noun meaning longing, urge, craving, desire and refers to an urge to control or dominate. In Genesis 4:7 the desire is that which sin has for Cain, a desire to control for the sake of evil, but Cain must have mastery over it. The meaning in Ge 3:16 is debated - Some feel **teshuqah** in Ge 3:16 refers to sexual desire, because the passage discusses the relationship of a wife to her husband, and also because **teshuqah** is used in a romantic sense in Song 7:10.

**Master** ([4910](#)) (**mashal**) means to reign, or to have dominion over. Baker writes that "Although its general tone communicates leadership and authority, its specific nuance and connotation are derived from the context in which it appears. In the creation narratives on the fourth day, God created the great luminaries. The greater luminary was to rule the day, and the lesser was to rule the night (Gen. 1:18). It is also applied to people who rule: a servant over his master's household (Ge 24:2); a king over his country (Josh. 12:5); or his people (Jdg. 8:22, 23); a people over another people (Jdg. 14:4). God is also said to rule over His people (Jdg 8:23); not over His adversaries (Isa. 63:19); over the nations (2 Chr. 20:6; Ps. 22:28[29]); over Jacob (Ps. 59:13); over all things (1Chr. 29:12)."

**Mashal** - 73v - Usage: dominion(1), gain control(1), govern(1), had charge(1), have authority(1), master(1), obtain dominion(1), really going to rule(1), rule(27), ruled(5), ruler(18), ruler's(2), rulers(6), rules(9), ruling(3), wielded(1). Ge 1:18; 3:16; 4:7; 24:2; 37:8; 45:8, 26;

## Genesis 4:1-7 A Worthy Offering

If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. —Genesis 4:7

I was delighted when a mutual friend gave my neighbor a Bible. But my neighbor told me she stopped reading it because she couldn't understand why God would be so unfair as to reject Cain's offering. "After all," she said, "as a farmer, he simply brought to God what he had. Did God expect him to buy a different kind of sacrifice?" Sadly, she had missed the point.

It wasn't that God didn't like vegetables. Rather, He knew that Cain's offering was masking an unrighteous attitude. Cain wasn't fully committed to God, as expressed by the fact that he wasn't living according to His ways.

It's easy to worship God on the outside while stubbornly keeping territory from Him on the inside. Jude writes about outwardly religious people who use religious activities to cover the reality of their sinful lives: "Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain" (Jude 11). We can faithfully serve God, sing His praises, and give sacrificially to His work. But God doesn't want any of that without our hearts.

Does the Lord take priority over our plans and dreams? Is He worth more than the sin that tempts us? When we express to Him that He is more worthy than anything or anyone else in our lives, it's an offering He won't refuse. — by Joe Stowell ([Our Daily Bread](#), [Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI](#). — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Lord, may our worship and our praise,  
From hearts surrendered to Your ways,  
Be worthy offerings of love  
For all Your blessings from above.  
—Sper

God won't refuse a heart that is surrendered to Him.

## **Genesis 4:1-16 Sin Crouches At The Door**

Sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it. —Genesis 4:7

The award-winning author John Steinbeck often used biblical themes in his novels. In his book East of Eden, he describes characters who illustrate the conflict of jealousy and revenge reflected in the story of Cain and Abel. Steinbeck shows how an angry heart burning with revenge doesn't have to act a certain way. There's always a choice.

When Abel's animal sacrifice received divine favor and Cain's offering of fruit was rejected, Cain burned with anger (Gen. 4:1-6). But the Lord admonished him, "Sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Ge 4:7). The original Hebrew words paint the picture of an animal crouching, ready to devour its prey. Cain's anger and jealousy, if not brought under control, would "eat him up" and spill out in destructive behavior. Tragically, Cain gave in to his evil desires. It resulted in the first homicide and his departure from the presence of the Lord (Gen. 4:8-16).

Do you have feelings of jealousy or anger toward someone? If so, you have a choice. If you ignore the internal struggle, it will only get worse and control you. But if you bring your anger to the Lord and ask for His help, in His strength you will have victory. — by Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When faced with trials from without  
Or tempted from within,  
Rely upon the Lord for strength  
To turn away from sin.  
—Sper

Control your anger, or it will control you.

**Genesis 4:8 Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.**

- **Cain told Abel his brother** - 2Sa 3:27 13:26-28 20:9,10 Ne 6:2 Ps 36:3 55:21 Pr 26:24-26 Mic 7:6 Lu 22:48
- **Cain rose** - 2Sa 14:6 Job 11:15 Ps 24:3-6 139:19 Mt 23:35 Lu 11:51 1Jn 3:12-15 Jude 1:11
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

Cain slaying Abel, by Peter Paul Rubens, c. 1600

### **Related Passages:**

Jude 1:11+ Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

1 John 3:11-12+ For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; 12 not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

## **ADAM'S SIN SOON BEARS TRAGIC FRUIT**

**Cain told Abel (Hebel) his brother** - NET = "Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." (See [technical note](#)) This was the ultimate "small talk," for it was deliberate deceit and evidence that Cain had pre-meditated (a field would have no witnesses to his crime) that he would kill his brother (see [premeditated murder](#)), his anger finally culminating in a slaying of his own (and only) brother! Genesis 3 introduces the corrupt root ([Sin](#) - Sin principle - "virus" from Adam) and Genesis 4 the rotten fruit (anger giving way to murder), the cause in 3 and the effect in 4.

**NET NOTE** on **brother** - The word "brother" appears six times in Ge 4:8–11, stressing the shocking nature of Cain's fratricide (see 1 John 3:12).

**TECHNICAL NOTE** - The [Masoretic Text](#) has simply "and Cain said to Abel his brother," omitting Cain's words to Abel. It is possible that the elliptical text is original. Perhaps the author uses the technique of aposiopesis, "a sudden silence" to create tension. In the midst of the story the narrator suddenly rushes ahead to what

happened in the field. It is more likely that the ancient versions (Samaritan Pentateuch, LXX, Vulgate, and Syriac), which include Cain's words, "Let's go out to the field," preserve the original reading here. After writing יְהִי אֶחָד ('akhiyy, "his brother"), a scribe's eye may have jumped to the end of the form בַּשְׂדֵה (basadeh, "to the field") and accidentally omitted the quotation. This would be an error of virtual homoioteleuton. In older phases of the Hebrew script the sequence יו (yod-vav) on יְהִי אֶחָד is graphically similar to the final ה (he) on בַּשְׂדֵה. ([NET NOTE](#))

**And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed**[\(harag\)](#); Lxx - [\(apokteino\)](#) **him** - In the field presumably would be away from where Adam and Eve were so they could not intervene or witness the crime. Cain lost sight of the fact that God has all sight, all the time (Pr 15:3). It also worth noting how quickly Adam's sin spread, even resulting in one of the most heinous sins of taking the life of another person in the image of God!

In a sense the death God had warned Adam about (Ge 2:17, Ge 3:19) had now become a reality.

Sin is a good "mathematician" for it quickly multiplies as in Cain's case from envy/jealousy, to anger, to hatred, to murder, all evidence of his basic heart defect (Mt 15:19+, Mk 7:21-23+)

It is sad that sin entered in Genesis 3 and murder or killing [\(harag\)](#) became a key word in Genesis 4 (Ge 4:8; Ge 4:14; Ge 4:15; Ge 4:23; Ge 4:25) reflecting the rapid descent of man's moral/ethical behavior in such a short amount of time.

John writes "For this is the message which you have heard**from the beginning** (EVEN IN GENESIS?, that we should love (present tense - continually, as a lifestyle) one another; 12 not as Cain, who was of the evil one (SPIRITUAL SON OF SATAN) and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous. (AKA - JEALOUSY, ENVY) 13 Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. (ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE "ABEL-LIKE" FAITH/DEEDS) 14 We know that we have passed out of death (SPIRITUAL DEATH) into (ETERNAL) life, because we love the brethren (ONE OF THE CLEAREST SIGNS ONE'S FAITH IS GENUINE - CAIN CLEARLY WAS NOT SAVED). He who does not love abides in death (ETERNAL DEATH). 15 Everyone who (present tense - continually, as a lifestyle) hates his brother is a murderer (IT IS A HEART ISSUE - Mt 5:21-26+); and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." (1Jn 3:11-15+).

**Victor Hamilton** has an interesting note on parallels between Gen. 4 and Matt. 23:35 (par. Luke 11:51); Heb. 12:24 - Each of these NT verses uses Abel's death as a foreshadowing of either Christ's sufferings (Heb. 12:24) or the persecution of believers (Matt. 23:35). Abel is coupled with Zechariah (Matt. 23:35) as the first (Gen. 4) and last (2 Chr. 24:20-22) victims of murder mentioned in the OT. (Chronicles is the last book in the Hebrew canon.) Understandably Abel is characterized as "innocent" but Zechariah is simply named. (See context in [The Book of Genesis - NICOT](#))

---

**Cuyler** - On the summit of a hill in a Western State is a courthouse, so situated that the raindrops that fall on one side of the roof descend into Lake Erie, and thence, through the St. Lawrence, into the Atlantic. The drops on the other side trickle down from rivulet to river, until they reach the Ohio and Mississippi, and enter the ocean by the Gulf of Mexico. A faint breath of wind determines the destination of these raindrops for three thousand miles. So a single act determines, sometimes, a human destiny for all time and for eternity.

---

**Bishop Hall** - Death did not first strike Adam, the first sinful man; nor Cain, the first hypocrite; but**Abel, the innocent and righteous**. The first soul that met with death overcame death: the first soul that parted from earth went to heaven. Death argues not displeasure; because he whom God loved best died first; and the murderer was punished while living.

---

**James Hastings** - In Abel we have the first-fruits of the City of God; the fulness of the last and crowning beatitude; "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "For not only," says St. Augustine, "from the bodily presence of Christ and His Apostles but from righteous Abel unto the end of time, amidst the persecutions of the world, and the consolations of God, the Church advances onward in her pilgrimage."

So when a great man dies,  
For years beyond our ken  
The light he leaves behind him lies  
Upon the paths of men.

---

**Genesis 4:9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"**

- **Where is** - Ge 3:9-11 Ps 9:12
- **know** - Ge 37:32 Job 22:13,14 Ps 10:13,14 Pr 28:13 Joh 8:44 Ac 5:4-9
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Genesis 3:9+ Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, **Where are you?**"

The Body of Abel Found by Adam and Eve  
by William Blake, 1826

## CAIN REPUDIATES RESPONSIBILITY FOR MURDER

**Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel(Hebel) your brother?"** (cf God's question to Adam in Ge 3:9+) - God offers a rhetorical question (see [similar tact with Adam](#)). Whether Cain buried Abel's body or left it for the beasts to devour is not stated in the text, but in either case God knows where Abel's body is, and is looking to draw a confession out of Cain but without success. At least his father Adam confessed his sin (Ge 3:12)!

**And he said, "I do not know(yada;** Lxx - **ginosko** = know experientially, intimately) - Of course he knew! "[Liar, liar, pants on fire!](#)" Notice how one sin (murder) leads to another sin (lying), a principle we all do well to remember (cf Ro 6:19 "as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness")

**THOUGHT-** Quick confession and repentance may be uncomfortable, but is far better than attempting to cover sin. As Numbers 32:23b+ says "be sure your sin will find you out." Proverbs 28:13+ sum up the two approaches we can take to our sins "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion."

**Kidner** points out that "The truculent reply, equally in character, betrays a hardening in comparison with the shuffling answers (OF HIS PARENTS) in Ge 3:10ff." (See context in [Genesis - TOTC](#) or borrow [Genesis: an introduction and commentary](#))

**Am I my brother's keeper?" - NET, CSB** = "Am I my brother's guardian." **GWT** = "Am I supposed to take care of my brother?" Bold-faced callous indifference! This is an defiant, insolent rhetorical question to the Almighty, especially in view of what Cain had done.

**My brother's keeper** is still used as an idiom meaning the person who is responsible for the actions, behavior, or whereabouts of someone (usually a close relative or friend, not necessarily a brother). Most commonly used to express frustration that such a responsibility is assumed to belong to one.

**NET NOTE** on **Am I my brother's guardian?** - Cain lies and then responds with a defiant rhetorical question of his own in which he repudiates any responsibility for his brother. But his question is ironic, for he is responsible for his brother's fate, especially if he wanted to kill him.

**Wiersbe** - The more you think about Cain's sin, the more heinous it becomes. The murder wasn't motivated by sudden passion; it was carefully premeditated. Cain didn't kill a stranger in defense; he murdered his own brother out of envy and hatred. Furthermore, Cain did it after being at the altar to worship God and in spite of God's warning and promise. Finally, once the horrible deed was done, Cain took it all very lightly and tried to lie his way out of it. (See context in [The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#))

#### **AN ILLUSTRATION** Cain slew Abel, but Cain's worst enemy was himself. - R E Neighbour - [Wells of Living Water](#)

"There is an old Icelandic legend that contains its own lesson. There was a man who was constantly pursued by a terrible spirit which took the form of a dwarf:

'His grain ricks were fired, his barns unroofed, his cattle destroyed, his lands blasted, and his first-born slain. So he lay in wait for the monster where it lived in the caves near his house, and in the darkness of night he saw it With a cry he rushed upon it, and gripped it about the waist, and it turned upon him and held him by the shoulder.'

'Long he wrestled with it, reeling, staggering, falling, and rising again, but at length a flood of strength came to him, and he overthrew it, and stood over it, covering it, conquering it, with his right hand set hard at its throat. Then he drew his knife to kill it, and the moon shot through a rack of cloud, opening an alley of light about it, and he saw its face, and lo! the face of the evil dwarf was his own.'

**"We ourselves are our own worst enemy.** The greatest business that we ever have to do is with God. Sin leaves such a stain that

there is no power in all the world that can cleanse it." (**ED:** BUT THE BLOOD OF JESUS CAN EXPUNGE IT FOREVER. AMEN!)

---

**Spurgeon from [Am I My Brother's Keeper?](#)** - TO what a shameful pitch of presumptuous impudence had Cain arrived when he could thus insult the Lord God. If it had not been on record in the page of inspiration, we might almost have doubted whether a man could speak so impudently when actually conscious that God himself was addressing him. Men blaspheme frightfully, but it is usually because they forget God, and ignore his presence; but Cain was conscious that God was speaking to him. He heard him say, "Where is Abel thy brother?" and yet he dared, with the coolest impertinence, to reply to God, "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?" As much as to say—"Do you think that I have to keep him as he keeps his sheep? Am I also a shepherd as he was, and am I to take as much care of him as he did of a lame lamb?"

The cool impudence of Cain is an indication of the state of heart which led up to his murdering his brother; and it was also a part of the result of his having committed that terrible crime. He would not have proceeded to the cruel deed of bloodshed if he had not first cast off the fear of God and been ready to defy his Maker. Having committed murder, the hardening influence of sin upon Cain's mind must have been intense, and so at last he was able to speak out to God's face what he felt within his heart, and to say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" This goes a long way to explain what has puzzled some persons, namely, the wonderful calmness with which great criminals will appear in the dock. I remember to have heard it said of one who had undoubtedly committed a very foul murder, that he looked like an innocent man. He stood up before his accusers as calmly and quietly, they said, as an innocent man could do. I remember feeling at the time that an innocent man would probably not have been calm. The distress of mind occasioned to an innocent man by being under such a charge would have prevented his having the coolness which was displayed by the guilty individual. Instead of its being any evidence of innocence that a man wears a brazen front when charged with a great crime, it should by wise men be considered to be evidence against him. Well may he seem dispassionate and unmoved who has already been so unfeeling as to dip his hand in blood. If he was so hardened as to do the deed, it is not likely he will display much softness when the deed is brought home to him. Oh, dear friends, let us shun sin, if it were only for the evil effect which it has upon our minds. It is poison to the heart. It stultifies the conscience, drugs it, sends it to sleep; it intoxicates the judgment, and puts all the faculties as it were into a state of drunkenness, so that we become capable of a monstrous bravery, and a blind impertinence, which makes us mad enough to dare insult God to his face. Save us, O God, from having our hearts hammered to the hardness of steel by sin; and daily keep us by thy grace sensible and tender before thee, trembling at thy word. (Excerpt from sermon [Am I My Brother's Keeper?](#))

---

**Andrew Fuller - Genesis 4:9** - We have seen the tragical end of righteous Abel; but what becomes of the murderer? Probably he had hid the dead body of his brother to elude detection; but God will find him out. Jehovah said to Cain, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" What a cutting question! The words thy brother would remind him of the tender ties of flesh and blood which he had broken; and if he had any feeling of conscience left in him, must pierce him to the quick. But oh how black, how hardened is the state of his mind! Mark his answer. First, The falsehood of it—"I know not." We feel astonished that a man can dare to lie in the presence of his Maker; yet how many lies are uttered before him by formalists and hypocrites! Secondly, The insolence of it—"Am I my brother's keeper?" This man had no fear of God before his eyes; and where this is wanting, regard to man will be wanting also. Even natural affection will be swallowed up in selfishness. Supposing he had not known where his brother was, it did not follow that he had no interest in his preservation; but he did know, and instead of being his keeper, had been his murderer (See [The Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller](#))

---

#### F B Meyer - Genesis 4:9 Where is Abel thy Brother?

The first question God puts to the soul is, "Adam, where art thou?" The next, "Where is Abel thy brother?" We are our brothers' keepers. Each within our reach, all who need our help, all related to us by the ties of the family, have a claim on us. We must not take an advantage over them; their weakness and need are strong claims on our resources of every kind; we are bound to keep them so far as we can; we may at any moment be called to give an account of their whereabouts. To dispute this is to betray the spirit of Cain, who was a murderer.

**God keeps an inventory of his saints.** — In his book their names are written. Their names, abode, and circumstances; their fathers, mothers, and brothers; their occupation, whether they keep the sheep or till the land: all are known to Him, because fixed by his providence. Whatever touches them is, therefore, instantly known to Him. It is as though they were part of his very being, and a stab of pain to them thrills his heart.

**God calls us to help Him in keeping one another.** — We are to watch for each other's souls; to consider one another to provoke to good works; to bear one another's burdens; to exhort each other, to convert the wanderer from the path of the destroyer, and to wash stains from his feet. The cure of souls is the work of all the saints. But this is only possible to those who have been baptized into the Spirit of Christ. Remember that you have just as much love towards God, as you are willing to show towards the brother

whom you have seen. "This commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

#### Genesis 4:10 He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground.

- **What** - Ge 3:13 Jos 7:19 Ps 50:21
- **blood is crying to Me** - Ge 18:20 Ex 3:7 2Ki 9:26 Job 16:18 24:12 31:38,39 Ps 9:12 72:14 Isa 5:7 Ac 5:3,9 Heb 11:4 12:24 Jas 5:4 Rev 6:10
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Genesis 3:9-13+ Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, **Where are you?**" (RHETORICAL QUESTION #1) 10 He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." 11 And He said, "**Who told you that you were naked?**" (RHETORICAL QUESTION #2) **Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?**" (RHETORICAL QUESTION #3) 12 The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "**What is this you have done?**" (RHETORICAL QUESTION #4) And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Revelation 6:9-10+ When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; 10 and they **cried out with a loud voice**, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

Luke 18:7-8+ now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who **cry to Him day and night**, and will He delay long over them? 8 "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

Matthew 23:35 so that upon you may fall the guilt of **all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel** to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

Luke 11:50-51+ so that the **blood of all the prophets**, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, 51 from **the blood of Abel** to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.'

Hebrews 11:4+ By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, **though he is dead, he still speaks.**

Hebrews 12:24+ and to Jesus, the Mediator of anew covenant, and to the **sprinkled blood**, which **speaks better than the blood of Abel.**

### RHETORICAL QUESTION FROM GOD

**He said, "What have you done?** - The question is [rhetorical](#) (for effect) and is the same manner in which Yahweh confronted Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 ([see text above](#)). The omniscient God knew what Cain had done! His questions seek to draw out the truth from Cain, that he might confess and repent. One is reminded of the great passage in Deuteronomy (which speaks to every soul ever born)....

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, (Deut. 30:19+)

Sadly, Cain chose the curse and (eternal) death!

**The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground- NET** = "The voice of your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground!" Obviously blood can't cry out, but it is personified as if it is crying out, testifying against Cain. It is ironic that Abel had never spoken in the preceding passages, but now his blood cries out from the ground!

**Wiersbe** - Adam and Eve had run to hide when they heard God's voice (Ge 3:8), but God heard Abel's voice crying from the ground

and Cain couldn't hide. The shedding of innocent blood pollutes the land (Nu 35:30–34+) and that blood cries out for justice (Job 16:18; Isa. 26:21; Rev. 6:9–10) (The plaque outside "The Chamber of Destruction" holocaust museum on Mount Zion in Jerusalem reads, "Listen! Your brother's blood cries out!"). Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden, and Cain became a rejected wanderer in the earth....Righteous Abel (Matt. 23:35) speaks to God's people today both by his sacrifices (Heb. 11:4) and by his shed blood (Heb. 12:24). In the latter passage, the writer contrasts the blood of Christ and the blood of Abel. The blood of Abel speaks from the earth, but Christ's blood speaks from heaven. Abel's blood cries out for justice, but Christ's blood speaks of justice satisfied on the cross. Abel's blood declared Cain's guilt and made him a wanderer, but Christ's blood speaks of grace and forgiveness and reconciles believing sinners to God. (HALLELUJAH! AMEN!) (See context in [The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#))

**Kidner** - We ourselves speak of wrongs that 'cry out' to be righted. The New Testament concurs with the Old in this, and develops the metaphor (e.g. Rev. 6:9, 10; Luke 18:7, 8), which should still however be read as metaphor. In striking contrast, the blood of Jesus cries out for grace (Heb. 12:24). (See context in [Genesis - TOTC](#) or borrow [Genesis: an introduction and commentary](#))

**Westermann on your brother's blood is crying to Me** - This is one of the monumental sentences in the Bible. It needs no explanation and retains its validity through the centuries for each generation. The most important word in the sentence is נִזְבֵּן, "to me." It is no empty sentence that the blood of the victim cries out; there is someone there to whom it cries out. Cain cannot hide his deed. [Genesis, vol. 1, p. 305]

**Kenneth Matthews** - Ironically, though Abel never talks in Genesis, his testimony of faith continues to speak, and his voice cries out for revenge against the unrighteous who oppose God's work among the saints (Heb 11:4). Although it is Abel's blood that convicts the sinner, it is the blood of Christ that makes adequate reparations for the sins of the unrighteous, offering forgiveness and not vengeance, speaking a better word (Heb 12:24) (See context in [Genesis 1-11:26 - New American Commentary](#))

**Calvin** - God shows, first, that he knows men's deeds even when no one complains or accuses; second, that human life is too precious to him for him not to punish the shedding of blood; third, that he takes the faithful under his care not only when they are alive but also after they die. Earthly judges for the most part doze unless an accuser appeals to them. But even when the wounded are silent, their very injuries cry out to God to pronounce the penalty. It is a wonderfully sweet comfort to good men who are harassed unjustly to hear that the evils they endure silently go before God of their own accord and demand vengeance. Abel was silent when his throat was cut (perhaps he was killed some other way), but after his death the voice of his blood was more eloquent than the plea of any orator. Thus, men may stifle or silence [the cry of the innocent]; but they cannot prevent God from judging a cause which the world considers buried. This consolation richly nourishes our endurance. When we learn that nothing of our right is lost, we bear our injuries with moderation and steady minds. The soul's calm silence raises an effective cry which fills heaven and earth.

**NET NOTE on your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground** - The word "voice" is a personification; the evidence of Abel's shed blood condemns Cain, just as a human eyewitness would testify in court.

**Genesis 4:11 "Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.**

- **Now you are cursed** Ge 4:14 Ge 3:14 De 27:16-26 28:15-20 29:19-21 Ga 3:10
- **opened** - Job 16:18 31:38-40 Isa 26:21 Rev 12:16
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Genesis 3:14 The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,**Cursed are you** more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life;

## CAIN UNDER A CURSE

**Now you are cursed (arar) from the ground (adamah)** - NET = "So now, you are banished from the ground." NIV = "Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground." NLT = "Now you are cursed and banished from the ground." It is notable that this is the first occasion in Scripture where a human is cursed (Adam and Eve were not cursed per se in Ge 3:16-19 - Satan was first one

cursed - Ge 3:14, next the ground was cursed - Ge 3:17).

**Theology of Work** - Adam's sin did not bring God's curse upon people, but only upon the ground (Gen. 3:17). Cain's sin brings the ground's curse on Cain himself (Gen. 4:11) ([People Work in a Fallen Creation Genesis 4-8](#))

**HCSB** - God's judgment began with a curse whose wording in the Hebrew parallels the curse placed on the snake. This is particularly fitting since both were liars and murderers (Jn 8:44). It is possible to translate God's statement here as "You are more cursed than the ground." The curse against a murderer is repeated in the law of Moses (Dt 27:24). (See context in [CSB Study Bible](#))

**Which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand- NLT** = "which has swallowed your brother's blood." How justifiably ironic - Cain was a tiller of the ground but now that very ground had opened its mouth to his brother's blood! And that very ground would now withhold produce from him who once tilled it with an abundant yield (Ge 4:12)! Cain experienced what the world would call [poetic justice](#).

**NET NOTE** on **you are cursed from the ground** - Heb "cursed are you from the ground." As in Gen 3:14, the word "cursed," a passive participle from אָרַר ('arar), either means "punished" or "banished," depending on how one interprets the following preposition. If the preposition is taken as indicating source, then the idea is "cursed (i.e., punished) are you from [i.e., "through the agency of"] the ground" (see v. 12a). If the preposition is taken as separative, then the idea is "cursed and banished from the ground." In this case the ground rejects Cain's efforts in such a way that he is banished from the ground and forced to become a fugitive out in the earth (see Ge 4:12b, 14).

**Gerhard von Rad** offers an interesting analysis of Ge 4:11-12 - God's judgment on the fratricide is more terrible than the punishment in Genesis 3. Something that could not be made good again, something that ancient man found much more terrible had happened: the earth, man's maternal basis of life, had drunk a brother's blood. At this point the punishment begins: Cain is banished from the soil ('adamah), the earth itself is to deny him its power of blessing. The punishment goes far beyond that inflicted in Genesis 3:17ff. The relation of the fratricide to the mother earth is disturbed much more deeply. **It is so shattered, in fact, that the earth has no home for him. What remains for him is an unstable and fugitive life.** (Ge 4:12b) As in the story of Paradise, so here there is throughout the story the 'adamah-motif, the thought of the earth as the most basic foundation of all human existence. Cain had plowed the soil (**ED: RECALL CAIN WAS A "TILLER OF THE GROUND"** - Ge 4:2<sup>+</sup>), offered the fruit of the soil, caused the soil to drink a brother's blood; but the blood complained against him from the soil, and therefore the soil denies him its fruit, and he is banned from the soil. But this theme is completely sacred, for the story of Cain understands cultivated land as the realm of cult and blessing close to God. In this again it is very old. (See context in [Genesis, Revised Edition: A Commentary](#))

**Robert Neighbour** - Physically Cain still lived, while spiritually he was dead. Physically Abel was dead, but spiritually he gloriously lived. You can think of Abel in death, but you can also think of Cain in death. The sinner is dead, while he liveth. The Christian is living, though he be dead. ([Wells of Living Water](#))

---

**Cursed** (0779) [arar](#) refers principally to exclamations, or imprecations, uttered by one person against another. To inflict with a curse. This verb, in a more specific sense, means to bind (with a spell); to hem in with obstacles; to render powerless to resist. It bears the idea of people reviling one another and carries the idea of being bound or banned from something. Therefore, God's original curse to Satan in Ge 3:14, 17, means he was banned from all the other animals and condemned to the dust. In God's curse upon Cain, "you are cursed from the earth" (Ge 4:11, 12), Cain was banned from enjoying the productivity of the earth's soil. Furthermore, the curse pronounced upon Jezebel by Elijah ([1 Ki. 21:23](#)) barred her from a proper burial ([2 Ki. 9:34](#)). Balaam was hired by King Balak to curse the Israelites ([Num. 22:6ff](#)). Although his efforts were unsuccessful, Balak desired Balaam to disable the Israelite forces. The Israelites, however, eventually brought the curse of God upon themselves through idolatry and its accompanying immorality ([Num. 25:1-9](#)). Most of the curse sayings are within proclamations of laws ([Deut. 27:15-26](#); [28:16-19](#)) or pronouncements of threats ([Jer. 11:3](#); [17:5](#)).

**Arar in Genesis** - Ge 3:14; Ge 3:17; Ge 4:11; Ge 5:29; Ge 9:25; Ge 12:3; Ge 27:29; Ge 49:7

**Ground** (land, earth, dust, soil) (0127) [adamah](#) means dirt, ground (first us Ge 1:25), earth, clay (God used dirt/clay to form man - Ge 2:7), land (cultivated - Ge 4:2, Zech 13:5). Adam originated from the ground and charged with the task of tending the ground, his source of origin (Ge 2:7, 15). In a broader sense, [adamah](#) means the inhabited earth ([Isa. 24:21](#); [Amos 3:2](#)). **Adamah** describes dirt put on one's head during mourning ([2Sa 1:2](#); [Neh. 9:1](#)).

**Adamah in Genesis** - NOTICE THAT MOST USES OCCUR IN THE CREATION, FALL AND FLOOD - Gen. 1:25; Gen. 2:5; Gen. 2:6; Gen. 2:7; Gen. 2:9; Gen. 2:19; Gen. 3:17; Gen. 3:19; Gen. 3:23; Gen. 4:2; Gen. 4:3; Gen. 4:10; Gen. 4:11; Gen. 4:12; Gen. 4:14; Gen. 5:29; Gen. 6:1; Gen. 6:7; Gen. 6:20; Gen. 7:4; Gen. 7:8; Gen. 7:23; Gen. 8:8; Gen. 8:13; Gen. 8:21; Gen. 9:2; Gen. 9:20; Gen. 12:3; Gen. 19:25; Gen. 28:14; Gen. 28:15; Gen. 47:18; Gen. 47:19; Gen. 47:20; Gen. 47:22; Gen. 47:23; Gen. 47:26;

**Genesis 4:12 "When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."**

- **it will no longer yield its strength**- Ge 3:17-18 Lev 26:20 De 28:23,24 Ro 8:20
- **you will be a vagrant and a wanderer** - Ge 4:14 Lev 26:36 De 28:65,66 Ps 109:10 Jer 20:3,4 Ho 9:17
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## CAIN'S CURSE DESCRIBED

Observe the two-fold curse of Cain - (1) tilling of soil would no longer be productive (from fertile to futile) and (2) the KJV says he would be a "fugitive" from God.

**When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength** ([koah/koach](#); Lxx - [ischus](#)) **to you** - NET = "No longer yield its best for you." "He was rejected by heaven and refused by earth!" (Wiersbe) In Genesis 3 because of Adam's sin God decreed to him "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; **Cursed is the ground** because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field." (Ge 3:17-18+) Because of Adam's sin God placed a curse on the earth, but in distinction, because the ground had been defiled by Cain, his curse was FROM the ground. This is a bitter irony, for Cain had previously been able to till the soil which yielded fruit that he used in his ill-fated offering to Yahweh. Cain's punishment includes a loss of his livelihood (tiller of the soil) and condemnation to a life of ceaseless wandering and then to die and enter ceaseless punishment in Hell. It is interesting that many of the [antediluvian](#) patriarchs have a specific record of the length of their lives, but none of the line of Cain have any lifespan records! It is almost like God is saying their godless lives were not worth recording their lifespans.

**THOUGHT-** Cain's story is so tragic because it did not have to end this way. If Cain had only humbled himself, yielded to Yahweh and responded to His appeal to master the sin in Ge 4:7! Remember Paul's warning in 1Cor 10:11+ "Now these things happened to them (SPEAKS PRIMARILY OF ISRAEL BUT ONE COULD APPLY THE PRINCIPLE TO CAIN'S LIFE) as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

**NET NOTE** on **it will no longer yield its strength** - Hebrew - "it will not again (תֹּסֵף, tosef) give (תְּתַת, tet)," meaning the ground will no longer yield. In translation the infinitive becomes the main verb, and the imperfect verb form becomes adverbial.

**Believer's Study Bible** - His boastful pride in the fruits he had been able to grow from the cursed earth had been the occasion of his sin, but now he would no longer be able to till the ground even for his own food. Those who trust in their own good works eventually find it impossible to produce them any more.

**Victor Hamilton** - In some ways it is a fate worse than death. It is to lose all sense of belonging and identification with a community. It is to become rootless and detached. Perhaps we, the readers, should at this point view Cain not so much as a villain but as a tragic character. Cain, once a farmer, is now ousted from civilization and is to become a vagabond. Rootlessness is the punishment and the wilderness is the refuge of the sinner. One need only recall that in biblical typology the representatives of such wanderers are Ishmael and Esau. (See context [The Book of Genesis](#))

A vagabond has no home; a fugitive is running from home;  
a stranger is away from home; but a pilgrim is heading home

-- [Warren Wiersbe](#)

**You will be a vagrant** ([nua](#)) **and a wanderer** ([nud](#)) **on the earth** - NET = "You will be a homeless wanderer on the earth." **CSB** = You will be a restless wanderer on the earth." **NLT** = "homeless fugitive on the earth, constantly wandering from place to place."

**Young's Literal** = "a wanderer, even a trembling one, thou art in the earth." The **Greek Septuagint** is slightly different rendering it you shall "groaning and trembling on the earth." Clearly, however you translated the Hebrew text, the picture is one of misery, loss, and loneliness.

**THOUGHT-** Isn't that what it feels like when we are out of fellowship with our heavenly Father?

"Thou hast made us for Thyself,  
and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."  
-- Augustine

Cain's unbelieving heart remained restless for the rest of his life!

**NET NOTE** on a vagrant ([nua](#)) and a wanderer ([nud](#)) on the earth - Two similar sounding synonyms are used here: נָבָד (na' vanad, "a wanderer and a fugitive"). This juxtaposition of synonyms emphasizes the single idea. In translation one can serve as the main description, the other as a modifier. Other translation options include "a wandering fugitive" and a "ceaseless wanderer" (cf. NIV).

**Leonard Copes** says "He was not only driven away from his parents, but was condemned to be an unstable person ([nua](#)) and a homeless wanderer ([nud](#)). (See [TWOT online](#))

---

**Strength** (power) ([03581](#)) **koah/koach** means power, capacity or ability and thus speaks of power in the sense of the inherent potential to perform some function. Koah is the capacity to act and be able to produce. The Lord's right hand is magnificent in strength (**koah**). The Lxx translates **koah** with the Greek noun [ischus](#), which describes the capability to function effectively. Koach is used 3x in Genesis - Gen. 4:12; Gen. 31:6; Gen. 49:3

**Vagrant** ([05128](#)) ([nua](#)) conveys the primary idea of a repetitive, to and fro movement -- These movements can be on a relatively small scale expressed by ideas such as shaking, reeling, or swaying. Or they can be on a geographic scale calling for meanings such as "to wander about.". to quiver, wave, waver, tremble, totter, stagger, wander. A person physically shaking or trembling from fear (Ex 20:18) A person's lips quivering or mumbling (1Sa 1:13). Wandering of Israel in the wilderness (Nu 32:13; cf. Amos 4:8). To move or jerk quickly and involuntarily up and down or back and forth, often as a sign of fear or anguish in a person. Some of the uses mean to wander in a nomadic, random (Ge 4:12; Ps 59:16]; Pr 109:10) or make wander (Nu 32:13; 2Sa 15:20; Ps 59:12,16). Sailors in a stormy sea are said to "stagger" like drunkards (Ps. 107:27); the ways of an adulterer are called "unstable" (Prov. 5:6); beggars "totter" along in uncertainty (Ps. 109:10); lips "quiver" (1 Sam. 1:13); heads "wag" as a sign of contempt and insult (Lam. 2:15; Zeph. 2:15); and at times, doorposts, people, idols and the earth "tremble" (Isa. 6:4; Exo. 20:18; Isa. 19:1; 24:20, respectively).

Nua - 36v - disturb(1), moving(1), reels(1), scatter(1), set trembling(1), shake(4), shaken(4), shook(1), stagger(3), staggered(1), swing to and fro(1), to and fro(1), tremble(1), trembled(2), unstable(1), vagrant(2), wag(2), wander(5), wandered(2), wave(4). Gen. 4:12; Gen. 4:14; Exod. 20:18; Num. 32:13; Jdg. 9:9; Jdg. 9:11; Jdg. 9:13; 1 Sam. 1:13; 2 Sam. 15:20; 2 Ki. 19:21; 2 Ki. 23:18; Job 16:4; Job 28:4; Ps. 22:7; Ps. 59:11; Ps. 59:15; Ps. 107:27; Ps. 109:10; Ps. 109:25; Prov. 5:6; Isa. 6:4; Isa. 7:2; Isa. 19:1; Isa. 24:20; Isa. 29:9; Isa. 37:22; Jer. 14:10; Lam. 2:15; Lam. 4:14; Lam. 4:15; Dan. 10:10; Amos 4:8; Amos 8:12; Amos 9:9; Nah. 3:12; Zeph. 2:15

**Wanderer** ([05110](#)) ([nud](#)) basically denotes a going back and forth. It is applied to a physical movement or an attitude. To move to and fro (as the head of one falling asleep), wander, flutter, show grief. The basic meaning, to wander aimlessly and/or homelessly (Ge 4:12,14)

**Leonard Copes** - That our root connotes aimless to and fro (wandering) movement is clear from 1 Kings 14:15 where it represents the action of a reed moved by water. Another example is Isaiah 24:20 where it represents the unsteady wavering movement of a drunk man. In Proverbs 26:2 it parallels a bird's "flying" signifying its aimless flitting motion (cf. KD, Jeremiah 4:1). This to and fro movement is also typical of the nodding of one's head "as a sign of pity that sympathizes with one and recognizes the magnitude of the evil" (KD; Psalm 69:20). Whether or not this action was always understood when this root appears is uncertain, but the attitude so symbolized is. The exile brings righteous and deserved judgment on Judah and, hence, none should nor would show them pity (Isaiah 51:19; Jeremiah 15:5). Other nations judged by God receive similar treatment, i.e. God declares that no one should or would have pity on them (Jeremiah 48:17; Nahum 3:7). Jeremiah says that the magnitude of Judah's punishment will be so great that it will be fruitless to mourn nûd for the dead king Josiah in view of the calamities that will come upon his successors (Jeremiah 22:10). Individuals in deep trouble are objects of sympathy (Job 2:11; Job 42:11; Psalm 69:20). The nodding of one's head may connote astonishment (Jeremiah 18:16); even more forceful nodding connotes scornful rejection (Jeremiah 48:17; Psalm 64:8; cf. Psalm 22:8), or deep mourning (Jeremiah 31:17). Our verb often signifies "flight away from" (cf. nûs, nâdad). In Psalm 11:1 David asserts that Jehovah is his refuge and chides his enemies for advising him to seek another refuge. Jeremiah clearly uses our verb interchangeably with nâdad (cf. Jeremiah 49:30, 5; Jeremiah 50:3, 8). God tells his people (Leviticus 26:17, 28; cf. Dt. 28:7) that victory and safety depend on his presence, and that his presence depends on their obedience (cf. nûs). This idea is reflected in 2 Kings 21:8. David reminding God of the ancient promise prays that the evildoers will not be allowed to drive him away (into exile, KD; Psalm 36:11). (See [TWOT online](#))

**Nud** - 24x/24v - console(1), consoled(1), drive away(1), flee(2), flitting(1), grieve(1), grieving(1), mourn(4), shake(2), shaken(1), sympathize(1), sympathy(1), totters(1), wander(2), wandered(1), wanderer(2), waver(1). Gen. 4:12; Gen. 4:14; 1 Ki. 14:15; 2 Ki. 21:8; Job 2:11; Job 42:11; Ps. 11:1; Ps. 36:11; Ps. 69:20;

Prov. 26:2; Isa. 24:20; Isa. 51:19; Jer. 4:1; Jer. 15:5; Jer. 16:5; Jer. 18:16; Jer. 22:10; Jer. 31:18; Jer. 48:17; Jer. 48:27; Jer. 49:30; Jer. 50:3; Jer. 50:8; Nah. 3:7

---

**QUESTION -** [\*\*What is the meaning of the phrase raising Cain?\*\*](#) (See also [Grammarist's discussion](#))

**ANSWER** - The phrase *raising Cain* is an American idiom first recorded in the early to mid-nineteenth century, but its origin traces back to the Bible. To raise Cain means to cause a lot of trouble, to create a great commotion, or to behave in an uncontrolled, disruptive way. The word *Cain* is capitalized in the expression because it refers to the Old Testament Bible character Cain, the firstborn son of Adam and Eve who killed his brother [Abel](#).

Cain's story takes place in Genesis 4 and begins with the two brothers bringing an offering to God. But there was something wrong with the offering Cain brought; in fact, there was something wrong with Cain himself: "The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor" (Genesis 4:4–5). Cain became angry because God rejected his offering. God warned him that he must control his anger, because "sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you" (verse 7). Cain refused to heed God's word, and in a fit of jealous rage he murdered his brother Abel.

For his crime, Cain was punished by God. The earth would no longer yield its fruitfulness to him, and he was destined to be "a restless wanderer on the earth" (Genesis 4:12). God [marked Cain](#) in some way so that he would be protected from those who sought to avenge Abel's death: "The Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him" (verse 15). Cain lived the rest of his life under God's curse.

In the phrase *raising Cain*, the verb *raising* means "conjuring or summoning something like a spirit, demon, or ghost." The usage of the verb in this sense has been around since the Middle Ages. Thus, *raising Cain* means literally "conjuring up the murderous spirit of Cain." The idea is that the risen spirit of Cain would be a destructive force, capable of making serious trouble, acting wildly, violently, or causing a significant disturbance. For example, we might say, "The students are raising Cain while the teacher is out." We don't mean that the students are literally conjuring Cain's evil spirit from the dead, only that they are completely out of control. *Raising Cain* also describes criminal activity or mischievous acts. For example, we might say, "The rival street gangs are raising Cain tonight." It's not that the street gangs are practicing [necromancy](#) but that they are engaging in criminality. To raise Cain is to act "in the spirit" of Cain.

The phrase *raising Cain* is similar in meaning to the expressions *raising hell* and *raising the devil*. In fact, some use *raising Cain* as a euphemism to avoid saying the more profane *raising hell*. Incidentally, the first published example of the idiom appeared in this pun-based joke in the *Daily Pennant*, a St. Louis newspaper, on May 2, 1840: "Why have we every reason to believe that Adam and Eve were both rowdies? Because they both raised Cain." A newer version of the joke goes something like this: "Adam and Eve were the world's first troublemakers. They both raised Cain."

The Bible does not use the idiom *raising Cain*, but it describes that type of behavior: "They get drunk, carry on at [wild parties](#), and do other evil things as well" (Galatians 5:21CEV). Those who raise Cain are acting according to the flesh, not the Holy Spirit, and they must repent of their deeds: "I told you before, and I am telling you again: No one who does these things will share in the blessings of God's kingdom" (verse 21). [GotQuestions.org](#)

---

**Genesis 4:13 Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear!"**

LXE And Cain said to the Lord God, My crime is too great for me to be forgiven.

BGT καὶ εἶπεν Καίν πρὸς τὸν κύριον με ζωντανόν αὐτῷ μου τοῦ φεθεῖν με με

KJV And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

NET Then Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to endure!

CSB But Cain answered the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear!"

ERV And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

ESV Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear."

NIV Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear."

NLT Cain replied to the LORD, "My punishment is too great for me to bear!"

NRS Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!"

YLT And Cain saith unto Jehovah, 'Greater is my punishment than to be borne;

GWN But Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can stand!

NKJ And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!

NAB Cain said to the LORD: "My punishment is too great to bear.

NJB Cain then said to Yahweh, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear.

ASV And Cain said unto Jehovah, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

DBY And Cain said to Jehovah, My punishment is too great to be borne.

BBE And Cain said, My punishment is greater than my strength.

BHT wayyö' mer qa<sup>o</sup>yin 'el-yhwh(‘ädönäy) Gädöl `awönî minnüsö'

NAS And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear!"

NIRV Cain said to the LORD, "You are punishing me more than I can take."

RSV Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear."

RWB And Cain said to the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

- Job 15:22 Rev 16:9,11,21
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

*Cain or My Punishment is Greater than I can Bear*  
by [Edwin Roscoe Mullins](#)

## CAIN'S CHILDISH COMPLAINT

**Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment ([avon](#)) is too great to bear!** - This curse staggered Cain and yet there is no conviction of sin, only concern for self! Self-pity instead of godly sorrow (2Co 7:9-10+). Cain's complaining reminds us of the idiomatic phrase "raising Cain," ([see above](#)) which basically speaks of causing trouble. Here Cain is troubling God and questioning God's perfect justice. In one swift stroke God decrees loss of fertility, family relationships and fellowship with Him! Indeed, the price was high for the first murder in the Bible.

He was concerned only with his punishment,  
not with his character

-- [Warren Wiersbe](#)

**THOUGHT** - What Cain had sown, he would now reap, which is a good principle for all of us (believers and non-believers) to continually keep in the back of our minds, especially when we are contemplating committing willful sin against God (you've never done that have you?)! Willful sin cost Cain dearly!

Cain was not confessing that his sin was great;  
he was complaining the punishment was too severe  
-- [Allen Ross](#)

**HCSB** - Cain's response has several possible English renderings. The HCSB—which reflects the unrepentant attitude Cain showed earlier—expresses Cain's anguish, but no remorse. The Septuagint and Martin Luther translated it as, "My sin is too great to be forgiven," while early rabbis took it as a question: "Is my sin too great to forgive?" In view of Cain's previous and later actions, the HCSB's translation (my punishment is too great to bear!) seems best. (See context in [CSB Study Bible](#))

**Robert Neighbour** - The poor man felt quite differently about his own curse, than he did about Abel's 'death. He himself, more than he did his brother. He said unto God, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." So it is with sin. Sin wrecks; sin slays. Sin takes the light out of the eye, the color out of the cheek, the joy out of the heart. What untold agony has been wrought by sin! ([Wells of Living Water](#))

**Alfred Edersheim** - even this punishment, though "greater" than Cain "can bear," leads him not to repentance, only to fear of its consequences

**Alan Ross** sums up the pathology of Cain - Cain fell to the prey of the crouching evil and eventually went out to form a godless

society, rejecting God's way. The "way of Cain" (Jude 1:11), then, is a lack of faith which shows itself in envy of God's dealings with the righteous, in murderous acts, in denial of responsibility, and in refusal to accept God's punishment. (See context in [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Gerhard von Rad** [Ge 4:13–14] - Under the weight of this curse Cain goes to pieces, though not in remorse. The '**avon**' of which Cain speaks and which he thinks himself unable to bear is the punishment for sin. It is a cry of horror at the prospect of such a life of unrest and harassment without peace. Cain sees immediately that a life far from God is a life that God no longer protects. Once God has withdrawn his hand from him, all others will fall upon him. (See context in [Genesis, Revised Edition: A Commentary](#))

---

**Punishment** ([05771](#)) '**avon**' from verb '**avah**' = to bend, twist, distort) describes the iniquity, evil, punishment or guilt which is associated with a twisting of the standard or deviation from it. Since there is a deliberate twisting or perverting, '**avon**' describes sin that is particularly evil. **Avon** came to be used for the guilty feelings that went with the iniquity and the punishment for it

**NET NOTE** adds that "The primary meaning of the Hebrew word **jiy** ('**avon**) is "sin, iniquity." But by [metonymy](#) it can refer to the "guilt" of sin, or to "punishment" for sin. The third meaning applies here. Just before this the LORD announces the punishment for Cain's actions, and right after this statement Cain complains of the severity of the punishment. Cain is not portrayed as repenting of his sin."

**'Avon in Genesis** - Gen. 4:13; Gen. 15:16; Gen. 19:15; Gen. 44:16;

---

#### QUESTION - [Why wasn't Cain's punishment death \(Genesis 4:14\)?](#)

**ANSWER** - After Cain killed his brother Abel, God gave the following judgment to Cain:

"And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth" (Genesis 4:11-12).

It would seem to many that Cain received a lesser punishment than he deserved for murder. Why wasn't Cain given capital punishment?

First, the punishment he received was severe. Cain believed it to be worse than death. He replied to God, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me" (Genesis 4:13-14). Previously, Cain had been "a tiller of the ground" (Genesis 4:2, NKJV), so this particular punishment took away his livelihood. In addition, Cain feared death at the hands of another person. To prevent others from killing Cain, God marked him somehow (what type of mark is uncertain). Instead of being put to death, Cain was forced to live the rest of his life with unfruitful work and the guilt of having killed his brother.

Second, God had additional plans for Cain's life. Cain's family line is found in the verses that follow the pronouncement of his judgment. Many notable achievements are attributed to Cain's family members (Genesis 4:20-22). On a negative note, a descendant named Lamech is mentioned as also committing murder. While the reason for this detail is not given, one possible explanation is to reveal that the judgment upon Cain extended to some of his descendants who also lived violently.

Another reason some suggest for Cain's punishment not being death was that there were too few people on the earth. While this is one possible reason, it is not given as a clear answer in the text of Scripture. Instead, Cain had a wife (one of Adam and Eve's other descendants) and built a town. Adam and Eve had Seth and certainly other children who provided the world's other initial inhabitants.

Later, when God instituted the [Noahic Covenant](#), murder became a capital crime (Genesis 9:6). The death penalty was codified in the Mosaic Law in Numbers 35:30-31, 33. Cain lived before God required death as a punishment for murder. So, God provided an appropriate punishment. The Judge of all the earth always does right (Genesis 18:25). [GotQuestions.org](#)

---

**Genesis 4:14 "Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."**

- 
- **You have driven me this day-** Job 15:20-24 Pr 14:32 28:1 Isa 8:22 Ho 13:3
  - **from the face of the ground-** Ge 4:16 Job 21:14,15 Ps 51:11-14 143:7 Mt 25:41,46 2Th 1:9
  - **I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth-** De 28:65 Ps 109:10
  - **whoever finds me will kill me-** Ge 4:15 9:5,6 Lev 26:17,36 Nu 17:12,13 35:19,21,27 2Sa 14:7 Job 15:20-24 Pr 28:1

- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## CAIN REHEARSES CURSE AND FEARS VENGEANCE

**Behold You have driven ([garas](#); Lxx - [ekbállō](#) = eject by force, throw out, expel) me this day from the face ([panim/paniyim](#)) of the ground; and from Your face ([panim/paniyim](#)) I will be hidden** - Cain was driven from the face of the earth but far worse from the face of God! Cain is banished from God's presence, which is how Paul describes eternal punishment in 2Th 1:9+ when all unbelievers "will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, **away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power!**"

This same verb was used to describe his father Adam's fate in Genesis 3:24+ "So He **drove** the man **out** ([garas](#); Lxx - [ekbállō](#) = eject by force, throw out, expel); and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life." Note Adam was only driven out of the Garden, but Cain was driven from the soil!

**NET NOTE** on **from Your face I will be hidden** - I must hide from your presence. The motif of hiding from the LORD as a result of sin also appears in Gen 3:8–10.

"Oh, to have no Christ, no Saviour,  
How dark this world must be;  
Like a steamer lost and driven  
On a wild and shoreless sea;  
Oh, to have no Christ, no Saviour,  
No rock, no refuge nigh thee  
When the powers of darkness gather;  
How sad thy lot must be!"

**And I will be a vagrant ([nua](#)) and a wanderer ([nud](#)) on the earth** - Cain acknowledges his punishment as a restless, nomadic wanderer on the earth.

**THOUGHT** - R. Neighbour applies this picture of Cain's curse -- The sinner is a fugitive and a vagabond. He is ever seeking something to alleviate his pain, and to quiet his sense of sin. To do this he gives himself over to the pursuit of sinful pleasure. He dives deep into the ocean of lustful carnalities, trying to drown out the voice of his conscience. His sin is ever before him. ([Wells of Living Water](#))

**And whoever finds me will kill ([harag](#); Lxx - [apokteino](#)) me** - To whom does this refer? Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters (Ge 5:4) and since they were kin of murdered Abel, there would be a desire to avenge his murder by taking Cain's life.

**Ross** - The passage then reminds us of the primitive instinct that is in mankind to seek vengeance, even if the offense lies long in the past. But God sought to check this instinct with a mark on Cain, just as he would do later with the [cities of refuge](#). To be sure, under the law there were many more rulings to be applied, but God used the same principle to prevent widespread, unchecked revenge killings. The stories are therefore about actual events in the beginnings of the family, but they are also archetypal as regards human nature in general. (See context in [Genesis](#))

Notice how Cain's sin brought fear, the dread of death by murder, the very sin he committed. Sin is often like that, having even a "boomerang-like" effect. The warning message is think before you "throw that boomerang!"

**THOUGHT** - Mark it down beloved. When we sin wantonly against God, there will be consequences including fear.

### Related Resource:

- [Jesus Our Kinsman Redeemer and Blood Avenger](#)

**Driven** ([01644](#)) [garas](#) is a verb that means to cast out, drive out. Garash depicts God driving Adam and Eve from Eden (Ge 3:24), God driving Cain from His presence (Ge 4:14), Jonah expelled from God's sight (Jonah 2:4), Pharaoh driving out the Israelites (Ex 6:1; 12:39), Pharaoh driving Moses and Aaron from his presence (Ex. 10:11), repeatedly used of God driving out Israel's enemies (Ex 23:28-31, 33:2, 34:11, Dt 33:27, Jos. 24:12, Ps. 78:55, Ps. 80:8 contrast result because of Israel's disobedience - Jdg 2:3-note, Hos. 9:15) . It is used in the general sense of banishing outcasts from society (Job 30:5). In its figurative usage, it indicates divorcing one's wife (Lev. 21:7). It describes the sea or a river as driven and tossed (Isa. 57:20; Amos 8:8). The word is also used of a divorced woman in Lev. 21:7, a woman that is "put away from her husband." Garas is used 3 times in Genesis - Ge 3:24, Ge 4:14,

#### QUESTION - Of whom was Cain afraid after he killed Abel?

**ANSWER** - In Genesis 4:13-14, shortly after he killed his brother Abel, "Cain said to the LORD, 'My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.'" Whom exactly was Cain afraid of? The only people the book of Genesis had mentioned to this point are Adam and Eve (Cain's parents) and Abel (who was now dead). Who would possibly be a threat to Cain?

It is important to recognize that Cain and Abel were both full-grown adults at the time that Cain killed Abel. Both Cain and Abel were farmers, who tended to their own lands and flocks (Genesis 4:2-4). The Bible does not tell us how old Cain and Abel were, but they very likely could have been in their 30's or 40's. The Bible does not specifically mention Adam and Eve having any children between Abel and Seth (Genesis 4:25). However, it is highly unlikely that the two most perfect human beings in the history of the world, Adam and Eve, would not have any children over several decades. Adam and Eve had many children after Seth (Genesis 5:4), so why would they not also have had other children between Abel and Seth? The Bible does not say that Seth was Adam and Eve's first child, or even first son, after Abel was killed. Rather, it states that Seth was born as a "replacement" for Abel. Genesis chapter 5 traces the genealogy of Seth. Prior to his death, Abel was likely the "chosen" son that would eventually produce the Messiah (Genesis 3:15). It is in this sense that Seth "replaced" Abel.

So, whom was Cain afraid of? Cain was afraid of his own brothers, sisters, nephews, and nieces, who were already born and would be capable of seeking revenge. The fact that Cain had a wife (Genesis 4:17) is a further evidence that Adam and Eve had other children after Cain and Abel, but before Seth. [GotQuestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)

**Genesis 4:15 So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him.**

- **So** - 1Ki 16:7 Ps 59:11 Hos 1:4 Mt 26:52
- **sevenfold** - Ge 4:24 Lev 26:18,21,24,28 Ps 79:12 Pr 6:31
- **the LORD appointed a sign for Cain** - Ezek 9:4,6 Rev 14:9,11
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Ezekiel 9:4-6+ The LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and **put a mark** (tav) **on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst.**" 5 But to the others He said in my hearing, "Go through the city after him and strike; do not let your eye have pity and do not spare. 6 "Utterly slay old men, young men, maidens, little children, and women, but **do not touch any man on whom is the mark** (tav) ; and you shall start from My sanctuary." So they started with the elders who were before the temple.

### THE PROTECTING MARK OF A [MARKED MAN](#)

**So** - Term of conclusion. God bestows amazing grace on Cain. We often define grace as God's unmerited favor. There could hardly be a better example of unmerited favor (cf Ex 34:6-7) than Cain's being the recipient of Yahweh's undeserved protection as a murderer! We often hear this aspect of God's grace referred to as "[common grace](#)." Note God in His great mercy made Himself Cain's Protector giving him two protective provisions - (1) warning to a potential avenger (how this was communicated to those on the earth at this time is not stated but clearly it was communicated) and (2) a sign to Cain. In a sense He functions somewhat like a goel for Cain. Remember **mercy** is God not giving us what we deserve (Cain deserved death) and **grace** is Him giving us what we do not deserve (a protective warning and sign).

**the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills ([harag](#); Lxx - [apokteino](#)) Cain, vengeance ([naqam](#)) will be taken on him sevenfold."** - NLT = ""They will not kill you, for I will give seven times your punishment to anyone who does." This divine warning appears to have effectively countered anyone's desire to slay Cain because there is no record that anyone killed him. **Sevenfold** is a figure of speech meaning fullness or completeness and thus the certainty and severity of divine vengeance on any prospective "[vigilante](#)."

**NET NOTE** on **sevenfold** - The symbolic number seven is used here to emphasize that the offender will receive severe punishment. For other rhetorical and hyperbolic uses of the expression "seven times over," see Ps 12:6; Ps 79:12; Pr 6:31; Isa 30:26.

**And the LORD appointed a sign (*'oth*) for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay (*nākāh*) him** - Cain knew he was a **"marked man,"** (so to speak) and Abel's brethren would seek to avenge his murder. So God gave the marked man a mark to prevent anyone from killing him. As discussed below, the sign God put on Cain is not stated, but only that the sign would prevent others from slaying him. Thus presumably the sign was something readily visible and somehow the LORD's prohibition against killing Cain was relayed to all the offspring.

**Wiersbe** makes a fascinating point that "Cain became a "walking sermon" on the grace of God and the tragic consequences of sin. What a picture of humankind today: restless, hopeless, wandering, defeated!" Sadly apparently none of Cain's line heard and heeded the sermon! (See context in [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament](#))

**Ross** - So God in his grace protected Cain by some mark that would be a deterrent to an avenger (Ge 4:15). Here we see how God made himself Cain's protector. This is the beginning of common grace, the protection of the godless in the world, even though they do not trust the Lord. Even with that goodness of God, Cain defied him yet again and settled in the east, in the land of Nod (which means "wandering") and built a city. The subject of chapter 4 is the spread of sin in the family and in society, producing a godless society....The "way of Cain" (Jude 1:11KJV), then, is a lack of faith that reveals itself in envy of God's dealings with the righteous, in murderous acts, in denial of responsibility, and in refusal to accept God's punishment.(See context in [Genesis](#))

**NET NOTE** on **sign** - Heb "sign"; "reminder." The term "**sign**" is not used in the translation because it might imply to an English reader that God hung a sign on Cain. The text does not identify what the "**sign**" was. It must have been some outward, visual reminder of Cain's special protected status.

**Gerhard von Rad** - [Ge 4:15–16] But the narrative surprisingly does not conclude with this picture of the condemned murderer. Indeed, one must say that only now does it reach its most important point: Cain does not have the last word in this story, but rather God, who now places Cain's forfeited life under strict protection. Yahweh obviously placed the sign on Cain's body; the narrator appears to be thinking of a tattoo or something similar. This sign, however, is not to disgrace him but to refer to that mysterious protective relationship in which Cain henceforth will be held by God. The conclusion of the story, according to which Cain then goes forth "**away from the presence of the Lord**" completely sharpens the riddle of his future existence: because of his murder he is cursed by separation from God and yet incomprehensibly guarded and supported by God's protection. Even his life belongs to God, and he does not abandon it. A land of Nod is geographically unknown to us; more important is the fact that the Hebrew recognized in the name his word nad, "fugitive" (v. 12). It is therefore the land of restlessness. (See context in [Genesis, Revised Edition: A Commentary](#))

---

**Vengeance** ([05358](#)) *naqam* means to avenge, take vengeance, revenge, avenge oneself, be avenged, be punished. (Qal) to avenge, take vengeance, to entertain revengeful feelings. (Niphal) to avenge oneself, to suffer vengeance (Piel) to avenge. The first use in Ge 4:15 has "whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." In Lev 19:18 individual in Israel are instructed "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people" On the other hand Yahweh has the right to vengeance declaring "I will also bring upon you a sword which will execute vengeance for the covenant." (Lev 26:25). The last OT use in Nahum 1:2 gives us a good sense of the meaning as it applies to divine vengeance - "A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; The LORD is avenging and wrathful. The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies." God allows and uses men to take vengeance as Numbers 31 and also in the case of Samson when he "called to the LORD and said, "O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." (Jdg 16:28)

**Sign** ([0226](#)) *'oth* means a signal, a mark a miracle and is used to describe amazing events such as God bringing Israel out of Egypt (Ex 4:8, 9, Nu 14:22) or a sign serving to authenticate the message as from God (1Sa 2:34, 10:7, 9) in contrast to the signs from false prophets (Dt 13:1, 2). **'Oth** includes what amounts to a "signboard" or "standard" (Nu 2:2). In the first use in Genesis 1:14 (cf Jer 10:2), it refers to the luminaries serving as "signs" to distinguish the seasons. In Genesis 9:12-13, 17, the rainbow is a "sign" of the covenant. Circumcision is the sign in Ge 17:11. The Sabbath is a "sign," (Ex 31:13, 17, Ezek 20:12). Most of the eighty occurrences refer to "miraculous signs." E.g., all the plagues on the Egyptians are called "signs."

See Ezekiel 9:4 comments for a mark on the forehead that would protect men from being slain.

**Slay** (strike)([05221](#)) *nākāh* means to beat, to strike, to wound and ranges from hitting to killing. There are many instances of striking physically (Ex. 21:15, 19; Job 16:10; Ps. 3:7[8]; Song 5:7). Of Yahweh smiting the firstborn (Nu 3:13, 8:17), His own people (Nu 11:33). Of Moses striking the rock twice resulting in his not being allowed to enter the Promised Land (Nu 20:11) Frequently, *nākhāh* is related to the Israelite conquest of Canaan. God used disease to smite the inhabitants of Canaan (Num. 14:12).

---

#### **QUESTION - What was the mark that God put on Cain (Genesis 4:15)?**

**ANSWER** - After Cain killed his brother Abel, God declared 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). In response, Cain lamented, "My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me" (Genesis 4:13-14). God responded, "Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him" (Genesis 4:15-16).

The nature of the mark on Cain has been the subject of much debate and speculation. The Hebrew word translated "mark" is 'owth and refers to a "mark, sign, or token." Elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures, 'owth is used 79 times and is most frequently translated as "sign." So, the Hebrew word does not identify the exact nature of the mark God put on Cain. Whatever it was, it was a sign/indicator that Cain was not to be killed. Some propose that the mark was a scar, or some kind of tattoo. Whatever the case, the precise nature of the mark is not the focus of the passage. The focus is that God would not allow people to exact vengeance against Cain. Whatever the mark on Cain was, it served this purpose.

In the past, many believed the mark on Cain to be dark skin—that God changed the color of Cain's skin to black in order to identify him. Since Cain also received a curse, the belief that the mark was black skin caused many to believe that people of dark skin were cursed. Many used the "mark of Cain" teaching as a justification for the African slave trade and discrimination against people with black/dark skin. This interpretation of the mark of Cain is completely unbiblical. Nowhere in the Hebrew Scriptures is 'owth used to refer to skin color. The curse on Cain in Genesis chapter 4 was on Cain himself. Nothing is said of Cain's curse being passed on to his descendants. There is absolutely no biblical basis to claim that Cain's descendants had dark skin. Further, unless one of Noah's sons' wives was a descendant of Cain (possible but unlikely), Cain's line was terminated by the Flood.

What was the mark that God put on Cain? The Bible does not say. The meaning of the mark, that Cain was not to be killed, was more important than the nature of the mark itself. Whatever the mark was, it had no connection to skin color or a generational curse on the descendants of Cain. To use the mark on Cain as an excuse for [racism](#) or discrimination is absolutely unbiblical.[GotQuestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)

---

#### **QUESTION - What is common grace?**

**ANSWER** - The doctrine of common grace pertains to the sovereign grace of God bestowed upon all of mankind regardless of their [election](#). In other words, God has always bestowed His graciousness on all people in all parts of the earth at all times. Although the doctrine of common grace has always been clear in Scripture, in 1924, the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) adopted the doctrine of common grace at the Synod of Kalamazoo (Michigan) and formulated what is known as the "three points of common grace."

The first point pertains to the favorable attitude of God toward all His creatures, not only toward the elect. "The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made" (Psalm 145:9). Jesus said God causes "his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45) and God "is kind to the ungrateful and wicked" (Luke 6:35). Barnabas and Paul would later say the same thing: "He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy" (Acts 14:17). In addition to His compassion, goodness, and kindness, God also sheds His patience upon both the elect and the non-elect. While God's patience for His own is undoubtedly different from His patience with those whom He has not chosen, God still exercises "longsuffering" toward those whom He has not chosen (Nahum 1:3). Every breath that the wicked man takes is an example of the mercy of our holy God.

The second point of common grace is the restraint of sin in the life of the individual and in society. Scripture records God directly intervening and restraining individuals from sinning. In Genesis 20, God restrained Abimelech from touching Sarah, Abraham's wife, and affirmed it to him in a dream by saying, "Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her" (Genesis 20:6). Another example of God restraining the wicked hearts of evil men is seen in God's protection of the land of Israel from being invaded by the pagan nations on their border. God commanded the men of Israel that three times a year they would leave their plot of land to go and appear before Him (Exodus 34:23). To ensure the protection of God's people from invasion during these times, even though the pagan nations surrounding them desired their land year-round, God promised that "no one will covet your land when you go up three times each year to appear before the Lord your God" (Exodus 34:24). God also restrained David from taking revenge on Nabal for scorning the messengers that David sent to greet Nabal (1 Samuel 25:14). Abigail, Nabal's wife, recognized God's grace when she pleaded with David not to seek vengeance against her husband, "since the Lord has kept you, my master, from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands..." (1 Samuel 25:26). David acknowledged this truth by responding, "As surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from

harming you..." (1 Samuel 25:34).

This second point of common grace not only includes God's restraining of evil, but also His sovereignly releasing it for His purposes. When God hardens the hearts of individuals (Exodus 4:21; Joshua 11:20; Isaiah 63:17), He does so by releasing His restraint on their hearts, thereby giving them over to the sin that resides there. In His punishment of Israel for their rebellion, God gave "them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices" (Psalm 81:11-12). The passage of Scripture best known for speaking of God's releasing of restraint is found in Romans 1 where Paul describes those who suppress the truth by their wickedness. God "gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another" (Romans 1:28).

The third point of common grace as adopted by the CRC pertains to "civic righteousness by the unregenerate." This means that God, without renewing the heart, exercises such influence that even the unsaved man is enabled to perform good deeds toward his fellow man. As Paul said of a group of unregenerate Gentiles, they "do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law" (Romans 2:14). The necessity of God restraining the hearts of the unredeemed becomes clear when we understand the biblical doctrine of [total depravity](#). If God did not restrain the evil that resides in the hearts of all men, hearts which are "deceitful and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9), humanity would have destroyed itself centuries ago. But because He works through common grace given to all men, God's sovereign plan for history is not thwarted by their evil hearts. In the doctrine of common grace, we see God's purposes stand, His people blessed, and His glory magnified. [GotQuestions.org](#)

---

### Sheep Thief or Saint?

And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. Ge 4:15

The story is told of two brothers, convicted of stealing sheep, who were branded on the forehead with the letters ST, to indicate "sheep thief." The one couldn't bear the stigma, became bitter, and moved away. Eventually he died and was forgotten. The other brother chose a different course. He said, "I can't run from what I did, so I'll stay here and win back the respect of my neighbors and myself." As the years passed, he built a solid reputation for integrity. One day a stranger saw him, now an old man, with the letters on his forehead. He asked a townsman what they signified. "It happened a long time ago," said the villager. "I've forgotten the particulars, but I think the letters are an abbreviation for 'saint'".

Cain too was a marked man who, like that first brother in the story, never thought beyond the severity of his punishment to the severity of his sin. He didn't realize that his "brand" was a blessing as well as a curse. It held in check the vengeance of his fellowmen so that he wouldn't be killed. God was granting Cain an opportunity to acknowledge his wrong, to plead for mercy, and to wipe out his reputation as a murderer. How tragic that he chose not to!

A bad reputation doesn't have to be permanent. Because Christ died for our sins, His forgiveness wipes the slate clean, and His power enables us to live a new life. If you've never done so, repent and trust Him as your Savior. If you have received Jesus but have since made a mess of your life, return to Him. He'll give you grace and power to build a new reputation. - D. J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Once I was foolish, and sin ruled my heart,  
Causing my footsteps from God to depart;  
Jesus has found me, happy my case—  
I now am a sinner saved by grace!  
- Gray

You may have had a bad start in life, but you need not have a bad ending.

---

**Genesis 4:16 Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.**

---

- **Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD** Ge 4:14 3:8 Ex 20:18 2Ki 13:23 24:20 Job 1:12 2:7 20:17 Ps 5:11 Ps 68:2 Jer 23:39 52:3 Joh 1:3,10 Mt 18:20 Lu 13:26 1Th 1:9
- **Nod** - So called from {nad,} "a vagabond," which Cain is termed in ver. 12.
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## CAIN'S LOSS OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

**Then Cain went out from the presence (panim/paniyim) of the LORD** - This is a very sad phrase - literally from the face of God! Alienated from his Creator (forever!) Cain would never again experience fellowship with Yahweh.

**Kenneth Matthews** - Cain expresses no inkling of remorse, only self-pity and resentment. That Cain does not receive divine forgiveness is shown by his expulsion "from the LORD'S presence" (See context in [Genesis - New American Commentary](#))

Cain's separation from God is a foreshadowing of the greater separation of all who follow in the path of Cain, Paul explaining

For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, (2Th 1:6-9+)

**THOUGHT** - Note that the penalty Paul describes is not "hellfire and brimstone" (which also awaits all souls not saved in Christ) but the unspeakable tragedy of eternal separation of every unsaved creature from their Creator. If this does not break your heart and motivate you to share the Gospel with relatives, friends, etc, then nothing will!

One is also reminded of John's words in 1Jn 1:6-7 that relate to a believer's fellowship with God...

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness (WHICH IS THE WAY OF CAIN), we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but (PRAISE GOD FOR THIS TRUTH) if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son (CONTINUALLY) cleanses us from all sin."

**And settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden**- Nod is from the verb **nud** used in Ge 4:12, 14 which means to wander aimlessly or homelessly. One might say Cain lived in a land of "aimless wandering." How far "east of Eden" we do not know. It is best not to conjecture lest we miss the most important "location" - away from the presence of his Creator! That is the loneliest place in the universe! This is the only mention of Nod in Scripture and it is never again mentioned, even as Cain's family line is never again mentioned after Genesis 4 (the Lamech in Genesis 5 is not the Lamech of Genesis 4).

**NOD [ISBE]** - nod (nodh): The land to which Cain migrated after the murder of his brother and his banishment by Yahweh (Gen 4:16). Conjecture is useless as to the region intended. The ideas of China, India, etc., which some have entertained, are groundless. The territory was evidently at some distance, but where is now undiscoverable.

**Wikipedia** - [Josephus](#) wrote in [Antiquities of the Jews](#) (c. AD 93) that Cain continued his wickedness in Nod: resorting to violence and robbery; establishing [weights and measures](#); transforming human culture from innocence into craftiness and deceit; establishing [property lines](#); and building a fortified [city](#).<sup>[6][7]</sup>

---

**Allen Ross** summarizes this first section of Genesis 4 - Several Mosaic motifs were founded here:

- (1) Sacrifices should be offered to God from a heart of faith, and should be the best of the livestock, the firstborn (Ge 4:4).
  - (2) Israelites had responsibilities to their brothers—they were each other's keepers and must not kill one another.
  - (3) Homicidal blood polluted the land, crying out for vengeance—spilled blood raised its voice of accusation (Ge 4:10).
  - (4) Blood revenge was averted by God through protective care, just as later removal to a [city of refuge](#) would avert an avenger.
  - (5) Punishment for guilt was at the foundation of Israel's theocracy.
  - (6) Life without God is a dangerous life without protection.
  - (7) Sometimes the elder was rejected in favor of the younger, turning the normative societal custom around.
- (See context in [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

---

## **James Butler - DISINTEREST IN GOD Genesis 4:16 [Sermon Starters](#)**

"Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden" (Genesis 4:16)

The record of Cain, the first child of Adam and Eve, is the record of multitudes of people in every age. He was not interested in God and thus did not want to be where God was.

### **FIRST—THE CAUSE OF HIS DISINTEREST**

The cause of Cain's disinterest in God was sin. It came as a result of his murdering of his brother Abel.

- The event of his sin. This event is recorded in the first part of Genesis 4. It involved a sacrifice. Cain's was without blood. The modernist and apostate who preach a bloodless theology (leave out the necessity of the blood of Christ for the cleansing of sin) persecute those who believe in the necessity of the blood of Christ for the cleansing of sin and so Cain murdered Abel.
- The effect of the sin. Sin does not make us want to be around God. The cause behind the anti-God attitude in our society is sin. You cannot tolerate abortion, homosexuality, gambling, and other sins and still desire to be in God's presence. If you are starting to miss church, your daily devotions etc. you probably have a sin problem.

### **SECOND—THE CONDUCT OF HIS DISINTEREST**

"Cain went out from the presence of the Lord." Cain intentionally moved. He moved away from God. It is true that God is omnipresence and in a sense you can never get away from God.

- The company in Cain's attitude. Cain did not want to be where God was. So Cain will prefer the company of the wicked. Your companions tell us a lot about your interest in God.
- The comparison of his attitude. Cain and Moses were a contrast in their attitude about God's presence. Cain did not want God's presence but Moses did not want to go anywhere without it (Exodus 33:15).

### **THIRD—THE COUNTRY OF HIS DISINTEREST**

"Dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden." Cain lived in the land of Nod. The word "Nod" means to wander. When you leave the presence of God you will wander. Nod may have popularity, possessions, and position as Cain had in Nod but it is the land of the aimless, the dissatisfied, and the restless.

- The country of dissatisfaction. "Nod" is like the world, it does not satisfy, it is the land of the wandering spirit. "Ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). Cain's dissatisfaction is described by Solomon who said he tried everything and found that "All was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:11).
- The country of dishonor. "East of Eden" Eden was where God's honor was. Man was prohibited from entering Eden because man would not honor God's Word. Cain lived apart from Eden because he would not honor God's word.

---

**Genesis 4:17 Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son.**

---

- [Enoch](#) - Ge 5:18,22
- [and he](#) - Ge 11:4 Ec 2:4-11 Da 4:30 Lu 17:28,29
- [the name](#) - 2Sa 18:18 Ps 49:11
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### **CAIN'S FAMILY TREE**

### **THE LINE OF CAIN**

Wenham sums up this last section "With the aid of a genealogy from Adam to Lameck, the seventh generation, it traces the development of technology and arts on the one hand and the growth of violence on the other. Only in the last two verses introducing the descendants of Seth do we have glimmers of hope, for from him, as chap. 5 will describe, descended Noah, the survivor of the flood, and it was in Enosh's day that the public worship of God was reintroduced. "At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD." (See context in [Genesis 1-15, Volume 1](#))

Genesis 4:17-24 describes Cain's line, which apparently were all godless and yet they made significant contributions in the form of tents, music, and implements (possibly also weapons).

**Cain had relations** ([yada](#); Lxx - [ginosko](#) = know experientially, intimately) **with his wife** ([ishshah](#)) **and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son** - "Cain had marital relations with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was building a city, and he named the city after his son Enoch." (Ge 4:17NET) It is doubtful that his wife was a daughter of Adam. Can you imagine Cain seeking Adam's permission to marry his daughter! Note this is the first city mentioned in the Bible and it was built by a man who was cursed.

Notice that Cain's building **a city** is one last act of defiance against God (he was to be a wanderer not a builder!)

The psalmist spoke of the ungodly like those descended from Cain who give their names to works in what seems like a vain attempt to achieve some degree of immortality (Ps 49:10-12)

For he sees that even wise men die; The stupid and the senseless alike perish And leave their wealth to others. 11 Their (FUTILE) inner thought is that their houses are forever And their dwelling places to all generations; **They have called their lands after their own names.** 12 But **man in his pomp will not endure; He is like the beasts that perish.**

**HCSB** has an interesting note on comparison of Adam and Cain - The parallel tracks of Adam's and Cain's lives—sin, judgment by God, banishment, and eastward movement—continue with the notation that after these things Cain was intimate with his wife (cp. Ge 4:1). In spite of his grave sin, Cain still fulfilled the divine command to be fruitful and multiply (Ge 1:28). On the other hand, Cain's efforts to become the builder of a city were one more expression of disobedience to God, for God had ordained Cain to be a wanderer (Ge 4:12). The city of Enoch is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, and its location is unknown. Cain's genealogy in Ge 4:17–24 has similarities with Seth's genealogy (Ge 5:3–32). Two of the names in both lines are identical (Enoch, Lamech) and others are similar (Cain/Kenan; Methushael/Methuselah). In addition, the seventh member of both genealogies (Cain's Lamech, Seth's Enoch) are given special emphasis, and both conclude with a person who has three named sons. Notable differences exist as well: Seth's genealogy is longer and contains lifespan details, but it omits any mention of occupations or wives' names. (See context in [CSB Study Bible](#))

---

#### Norman Geisler - GENESIS 4:12–13—[Why wasn't Cain given capital punishment for the murder he committed?](#)

**PROBLEM:** In the OT, murderers were given capital punishment for their crime (Gen. 9:6; Ex. 21:12). Yet Cain was not only set free after murdering his brother, but he was protected from any avenger (Gen. 4:15).

**SOLUTION:** There are several reasons why Cain was not executed for his capital crime. First, God had not yet established capital punishment as an instrument of human government (cf. Rom. 13:1–4). Only after violence filled the earth in the days before the flood did God say, "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man" (Gen. 9:6).

Further, who would have killed Cain? Cain had just killed Abel. At this early stage only Adam and Eve were left. Surely, God would not have called upon the parents to kill their only remaining son. In view of this, God, who alone is sovereign over life and death (Deut. 32:39), personally commuted Cain's death penalty. However, in so doing, God implied the gravity of Cain's sin and implied he was worthy of death by declaring that "the voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me [for vengeance] from the ground" (v. 10). Nonetheless, even Cain seemed to recognize that he was worthy of death, and he asked God for protection (v. 14). Finally, God's promise to protect Cain from vengeance implies capital punishment would be taken on any who took Cain's life (cf. v. 15). So, Cain's case is the exception that proves the rule, and by no means does it argue against capital punishment as established by God (see comments on John 8:3–11).

---

#### Walter Kaiser - 4:17 Where Did Cain Get His Wife?

Up to this point in Genesis we only know about Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel. But the most obvious answer to this common question must be that Adam and Eve had other children, including daughters. Indeed, Genesis 5:4 plainly says as much, "[Adam] had other sons and daughters."

Cain must have married his sister. But to admit this is to raise a further difficulty: was he thereby guilty of incest?

At least two things can be said in response to this reproach. First, if the human race was propagated from a single pair, as we believe the evidence indicates, such closely related marriages were unavoidable. The demand for some other way of getting the race started is an unfair expectation.

In the second place, the notion of incest must be probed more closely. At first the sin of incest was connected with sexual

relationships between parents and children. Only afterward was the notion of incest extended to sibling relationships.

By Moses' time there were laws governing all forms of incest (Lev 18:7–17; 20:11–12, 14, 17, 20–21; Deut 22:30; 27:20, 22, 23). These laws clearly state that sexual relations or marriage is forbidden with a mother, father, stepmother, sister, brother, half brother, half sister, granddaughter, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, aunt, uncle or brother's wife.

The Bible, in the meantime, notes that Abraham married his half sister (Gen 20:12). Therefore, the phenomenon is not unknown in Scripture. Prior to Moses' time, incest in many of the forms later proscribed were not thought to be wrong. Thus, even Moses' own father, Amram, married an aunt, his father's sister, Jochebed (Ex 6:20). In Egypt, the routine marriage of brothers and sisters among the Pharaohs all the way up to the second century made the Mosaic law all the more a radical break with their Egyptian past.

The genetic reasons for forbidding incest were not always an issue. Close inbreeding in ancient times was without serious or any genetic damage. Today, the risk of genetic damage is extremely high. Since the genetic possibilities of Adam and Eve were very good, there were no biological reasons for restricting marriages to the degree that it became necessary to do later. (Go to page 71 of [Hard Sayings](#))

---

#### Norman Geisler - GENESIS 4:17—[How could Cain marry a relative without committing incest?](#)

**PROBLEM:** If Cain married his sister, this is incest, which the Bible condemns (Lev. 18:6). Furthermore, incestuous marriages often produce genetically defective children.

**SOLUTION:** First, there were no genetic imperfections at the beginning of the human race. God created a genetically perfect Adam (Gen. 1:27). Genetic defects resulted from the Fall and only occurred gradually over long periods of time. Further, there was no command in Cain's day not to marry a close relative. This command (Lev. 18) came thousands of years later in Moses' day (c. 1500 B.C.). Finally, since the human race began with a single pair (Adam and Eve), Cain had no one else to marry except a close female relative (sister or niece).

---

#### Related Resources:

- [How did Cain die? What happened to Cain? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Genesis 4:18 Now to Enoch was born Irad, and Irad became the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael became the father of Methushael, and Methushael became the father of Lamech.**

- Lamech - Ge 5:21 36:2
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### ENOCH'S FAMILY TREE

#### CAIN'S LINE CONTINUED

**Now to Enoch was born Irad, and Irad became the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael became the father of Methushael, and Methushael became the father of Lamech.** - Lamech was the seventh from Adam and was likely a contemporary of the godly Enoch who was also the seventh from Adam (Ge 5:3-21), the Spirit again showing us the division of all mankind into righteous by faith, and unrighteous by unbelief. Notice the pairings in the family tree above (Cain/Seth, Enoch/Enos, Irad/Cainan, Mehujael/Mahalaleal, Lamech/Enoch). The most detailed description of Cain's offspring is Lamech who was an arrogant, godless, polygamist and murderer who presents a striking contrast with godly Enoch who "walked with God and he was not, for God took him." (Ge 5:24). In sum, we have a striking juxtaposition between the way of Cain (Jude 1:11) and the way of Seth, a foreshadowing of the agelong juxtaposition of ungodly, unrighteous men and women and godly, righteous men and women and as the line goes "neary the twain shall meet."

**THOUGHT** - When you begin to grasp the vast differences and destinies between unbelievers and believers, does it not stir your heart to seek like never before to be holy as He is holy (1Pe 1:16) and to pursue peace with all men and holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14)? Beloved, we are aliens and strangers (1Pe 1:1, 2:11) and our citizenship is in heaven (Php 3:20-21). The wide chasm between the lineage

of Cain and the lineage of Seth can only be bridged by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Father, may You Holy Spirit enable each of us to live progressively more and more set apart lives from this crooked and perverse generation (Php 2:15) and give us manifold supernatural opportunities to throw out "Gospel life rafts," so that many might be rescued from darkness to light (Col 1:13, Acts 26:18) and from the wrath to come (1Th 1:10). In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Note that this **Enoch** is to be distinguished from **Enoch**, the son of Jared and father of Methuselah (Ge 5:18-24) and who "walked with God" and was translated directly to heaven without the experience of death because of his faith (Ge 5:24; Heb. 11:5f).

**Mehujael** means "smitten by God," a fitting name for the descendant of the first murderer who was cursed by God.

**THOUGHT-** Fathers beware that your sinful lifestyle may be passed on to your lineage and last for generations!

In the family tree above, the line of Cain, through Enoch ends with 4 names discussed in the following passages, but after this the line of Cain is never mentioned again, and unlike most early genealogies, none of his descendants become the ancestors of peoples.

**LAMECH [ISBE]** LAMECH - la'-mek (lemekh; Lamech, "a strong youth"?):

**(1) The name is first mentioned in Gen 4:18-24.** Here Lamech, the son of Methushael, is named as the last of the descendants of Cain. He was the father of Jabel, Jubal, Tubal-cain, and Naamah. As the husband of two wives, namely, Adah and Zillah, he furnishes the first recorded instance of polygamy. It is very instructive to note that this "father of polygamy" at once becomes the first blustering tyrant and a braggadocio; we are fully permitted to draw this conclusion from his so-called "swordlay" (Gen 4:23 f). He does not put his trust in God, but in the weapons and implements invented by his sons, or rather these instruments, enhancing the physical and material powers of man, are his God. He glories in them and misconstrues the Divine kindness which insured to Cain freedom from the revenge of his fellow-men.

**(2) Another Lamech. is mentioned in Gen 5:25,28** (compare 1Chr 1:3; Lk 3:36), the son of Methuselah and the father of Noah. His words (Gen 5:29) show the great difference between this descendant of Seth and the descendant of Cain. While the one is stimulated to a song of defiance by the worldly inventions of his sons, the other, in prophetic mood, expresses his sure belief in the coming of better times, and calmly and prayerfully awaits the period of comfort and rest which he expected to be ushered in by his son Noah. William Baur

---

#### QUESTION - [Who was Lamech in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - The Bible mentions two different men by the name of Lamech, both in the[book of Genesis](#). The first Lamech was the son of Methushael, and the second Lamech was the son of Methuselah. Although the men shared a name and had fathers with names that sound very much alike, that is where their similarities end.

The first Lamech was a wicked descendant of Cain. After Adam and Eve were forced out of the Garden of Eden as a punishment for their sin, they had children. Two of their sons were Cain and Abel. The Bible tells us that both men offered God a sacrifice, and [God accepted Abel's sacrifice](#) but rejected Cain's (Genesis 4:3–5). Out of jealousy, Cain murdered Abel in cold blood. God punished Cain by cursing him and sending him away to live as a fugitive (verses 11–12). When Cain complained about the severity of the punishment, God marked Cain and promised that anyone who harmed him would receive punishment sevenfold (verse 15).

Cain settled in the land of Nod and eventually begat children (Genesis 4:16–18) who continued the trend of sin. Lamech son of Methushael was Cain's great-great-great grandson, and he followed Cain's disobedient and murderous ways. Lamech married two wives—the Bible's first mention of polygamy—and he committed murder. Another man struck and wounded Lamech in some way, and Lamech killed him for this seemingly small offense. Afterward, he boasted of his sin to his two wives and exulted in that he suffered no consequences: "If Cain is avenged seven times, / then Lamech seventy-seven times" (verse 24). This Lamech was the father of [Tubal-Cain](#) (verse 22).

The other Lamech was a descendant of Seth. After Cain's banishment Eve bore another son and named him Seth. In contrast to Cain's sinful line, Seth's descendants were known for righteousness. [Enoch](#), Seth's great-great-great grandson, walked so closely with God that God took him directly to heaven when Enoch was 365 years old (Genesis 5:22–24). Enoch's son Methusaleh (the oldest man recorded in the Bible) continued the righteous line and fathered Lamech (verse 25).

When Lamech was 182 years old, he fathered his own son and named him Noah, a name that sounds like the Hebrew word for "comfort." Lamech said, "He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed"

(Genesis 5:29). Lamech looked forward to the day when the curse on the ground would be ended by God's promised Savior (cf. Genesis 3:15). After Lamech died, his son Noah was known as a righteous man in a [world filled with great sin](#) and perversion (Genesis 6:90). Noah and his family were saved from the flood God sent to judge the earth and thus were able to continue the line of promise. Thousands of years later, Jesus Christ would be born into the line of Seth through Lamech (Luke 3:37). Lamech's godly hope that the curse would end was realized in Jesus, whose death and resurrection abolished the reign of sin and death.[GotQuestions.org](#)

#### Genesis 4:19 Lamech took to himself two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah.

- **two wives** - Ge 2:18,24 Mt 19:4-6,8
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Matthew 19:4-6 And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, 5 and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? 6 "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

### LAMECH THE FIRST BIGAMIST!

**Lamech took to himself two wives ([ishshah](#)): the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah-** We immediately see Lamech's rebellious spirit at taking two wives, instead of one! Adam's sin virus was spreading in manifold ways and it will continue to do so until the Righteous One returns, for as Paul said men will be "inventors of evil." (Ro 1:30+). And with the internet today, we are seeing new forms of practicing evil that would have boggled even Paul's mind (in my opinion).

[Theology of Work](#) summarizes the last half of chapter 4 - The remainder of chapter 4 follows Cain's descendants for seven generations to Lamech, whose tyrannical deeds make his ancestor Cain seem tame. Lamech shows us a progressive hardening in sin. First comes polygamy (Gen. 4:19), violating God's purpose in marriage in Genesis 2:24 (cf. Matt. 19:5-6). Then, a vendetta that leads him to kill someone who had merely struck him (Gen. 4:23-24). Yet in Lamech we also see the beginnings of civilization. Division of labor—which spelled trouble between Cain and Abel—brings a specialization here that makes certain advances possible. Some of Lamech's sons create musical instruments and ply crafts using bronze and iron tools (Gen. 4:21-22). The ability to create music, to craft the instruments for playing it, and to develop technological advances in metallurgy are all within the scope of the creators we are created to be in God's image. The arts and sciences are a worthy outworking of the creation mandate, but Lamech's crowing about his vicious deeds points to the dangers that accompany technology in a depraved culture bent on violence. The first human poet after the Fall celebrates human pride and abuse of power. Yet the harp and the flute can be redeemed and used in the praise of God (1 Sam. 16:23), as can the metallurgy that went into the construction of the Hebrew tabernacle (Exod. 35:4-19, 30-35).

---

#### QUESTION - [Why did God allow polygamy / bigamy in the Bible? See associated video.](#)

**ANSWER** - The question of polygamy is an interesting one in that most people today view polygamy as immoral while the Bible nowhere explicitly condemns it. The first instance of polygamy/bigamy in the Bible was that of Lamech in Genesis 4:19: "Lamech married two women." Several prominent men in the Old Testament were polygamists. Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon, and others all had multiple wives. Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines (essentially wives of a lower status), according to 1 Kings 11:3. What are we to do with these instances of polygamy in the Old Testament? There are three questions that need to be answered: 1) Why did God allow polygamy in the Old Testament? 2) How does God view polygamy today? 3) Why did it change?

1) Why did God allow polygamy in the Old Testament? The Bible does not specifically say why God allowed polygamy. As we speculate about God's silence, there is at least one key factor to consider. Due to patriarchal societies, it was nearly impossible for an unmarried woman to provide for herself. Women were often uneducated and untrained. Women relied on their fathers, brothers, and husbands for provision and protection. Unmarried women were often subjected to prostitution and slavery.

So, it seems that God may have allowed polygamy to protect and provide for the women who could not find a husband otherwise. A man would take multiple wives and serve as the provider and protector of all of them. While definitely not ideal, living in a polygamist household was far better than the alternatives: prostitution, slavery, or starvation. In addition to the protection/provision factor,

Polygamy enabled a much faster expansion of humanity, fulfilling God's command to "be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth" (Genesis 9:7). Men are capable of impregnating multiple women in the same time period, causing humanity to grow much faster than if each man was only producing one child each year.

2) How does God view polygamy today? Even while allowing polygamy, the Bible presents monogamy as the plan that conforms most closely to God's ideal for marriage. The Bible says that God's original intention was for one man to be married to only one woman: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife [not wives], and they will become one flesh [not fleshes]" (Genesis 2:24). While Genesis 2:24 is describing what marriage is, rather than how many people are involved, the consistent use of the singular should be noted. In Deuteronomy 17:14-20, God says that the kings were not supposed to multiply wives (or horses or gold). While this cannot be interpreted as a command that the kings must be monogamous, it can be understood as declaring that having multiple wives causes problems. This can be clearly seen in the life of Solomon (1 Kings 11:3-4).

In the New Testament, 1 Timothy 3:2, 12 and Titus 1:6 give "the husband of one wife" in a list of qualifications for spiritual leadership. There is some debate as to what specifically this qualification means. The phrase could literally be translated "a one-woman man." Whether or not this phrase is referring exclusively to polygamy, in no sense can a polygamist be considered a "one-woman man." While these qualifications are specifically for positions of spiritual leadership, they should apply equally to all Christians. Should not all Christians be "above reproach...temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money" (1 Timothy 3:2-4)? If we are called to be holy (1 Peter 1:16), and if these standards are holy for elders and deacons, then they are holy for all.

Ephesians 5:22-33 speaks of the relationship between husbands and wives. When referring to a husband (singular), it always also refers to a wife (singular). "For the husband is the head of the wife [singular] ... He who loves his wife [singular] loves himself. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife [singular], and the two will become one flesh....Each one of you also must love his wife [singular] as he loves himself, and the wife [singular] must respect her husband [singular]." While a somewhat parallel passage, Colossians 3:18-19, refers to husbands and wives in the plural, it is clear that Paul is addressing all the husbands and wives among the Colossian believers, not stating that a husband might have multiple wives. In contrast, Ephesians 5:22-33 is specifically describing the marital relationship. If polygamy were allowable, the entire illustration of Christ's relationship with His body (the church) and the husband-wife relationship falls apart.

3) Why did it change? It is not so much God's disallowing something He previously allowed as it is God's restoring marriage to His original plan. Even going back to Adam and Eve, polygamy was not God's original intent. God seems to have allowed polygamy to solve a problem, but it is not the ideal. In most modern societies, there is absolutely no need for polygamy. In most cultures today, women are able to provide for and protect themselves—removing the only "positive" aspect of polygamy. Further, most modern nations outlaw polygamy. According to Romans 13:1-7, we are to obey the laws the government establishes. The only instance in which disobeying the law is permitted by Scripture is if the law contradicts God's commands (Acts 5:29). Since God only allows for polygamy, and does not command it, a law prohibiting polygamy should be upheld.

Are there some instances in which the allowance for polygamy would still apply today? Perhaps, but it is unfathomable that there would be no other possible solution. Due to the "one flesh" aspect of marriage, the need for oneness and harmony in marriage, and the lack of any real need for polygamy, it is our firm belief that polygamy does not honor God and is not His design for marriage. [GotQuestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)

---

### Norman Geisler - Genesis 4:19 Does the Bible approve of polygamy?

**ADDRESSED IN** [1 Kings 11:1—How could God allow Solomon to have so many wives when he condemns polygamy?](#)

**PROBLEM:** First Kings 11:3 says Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines. And yet the Scriptures repeatedly warn against having multiple wives (Deut. 17:17) and violating the principle of monogamy—one man for one wife (cf. 1 Cor. 7:2).

**SOLUTION:** Monogamy is God's standard for the human race. This is clear from the following facts: (1) From the very beginning God set the pattern by creating a monogamous marriage relationship with one man and one woman, Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:27; 2:21–25). (2) Following from this God-established example of one woman for one man, this was the general practice of the human race (Gen. 4:1) until interrupted by sin (Gen. 4:23). (3) The Law of Moses clearly commands, "You shall not multiply wives" (Deut. 17:17). (4) The warning against polygamy is repeated in the very passage where it numbers Solomon's many wives (1 Kings 11:2), warning "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you." (5) Our Lord reaffirmed God's original intention by citing this passage (Matt. 19:4) and noting that God created one "male and [one] female" and joined them in marriage. (6) The NT stresses that "Each man [should] have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:2). (7) Likewise, Paul insisted that a church leader should be "the husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2, 12). (8) Indeed, monogamous marriage is a prefiguration of the relation between Christ and His bride, the church (Eph. 5:31–32).

Polygamy was never established by God for any people under any circumstances. In fact, the Bible reveals that God severely punished those who practiced it, as is evidenced by the following: (1) Polygamy is first mentioned in the context of a sinful society in rebellion against God where the murderer "Lamech took for himself two wives" (Gen. 4:19, 23). (2) God repeatedly warned polygamists of the consequences of their actions "lest his heart turn away" from God (Deut. 17:17; cf. 1 Kings 11:2). (3) God never commanded polygamy—like divorce, He only permitted it because of the hardness of their hearts (Deut. 24:1; Matt. 19:8). (4) Every polygamist in the Bible, including David and Solomon (1 Chron. 14:3), paid dearly for his sins. (5) God hates polygamy, as He hates divorce, since it destroys His ideal for the family (cf. Mal. 2:16).

In brief, monogamy is taught in the Bible in several ways: (1) by precedent, since God gave the first man only one wife; (2) by proportion, since the amount of males and females God brings into the world are about equal; (3) by precept, since both OT and NT command it (see verses above); (4) by punishment, since God punished those who violated His standard (1 Kings 11:2); and, (5) by prefiguration, since marriage is a typology of Christ and His bride, the church (Eph. 5:31–32). Simply because the Bible records Solomon's sin of polygamy does not mean that God approved of it.

#### Related Resource:

- [Why did God allow Solomon to have 1,000 wives and concubines? Gotquestions](#)

#### Genesis 4:20 Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.

- **the** - Ge 4:21 1Ch 2:50-52 4:4,5 Joh 8:44 Ro 4:11,12
- **father** - 1 Sa 10:12.
- **dwell** - Ge 4:2 25:27 Jer 35:9,10 Heb 11:9
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### JABAL FOUNDER OF TENT DWELLERS

**Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock-** "he was the first of those who live in tents and keep livestock." (Ge 4:20NET) "he was the father of the nomadic herdsmen" (Gen 4:20 CSB) Jabal is thought by some to mean stream or stream of water but we cannot be dogmatic.

**NET NOTE** on **father** - Heb "father." In this passage the word "father" means "founder," referring to the first to establish such lifestyles and occupations.

**JABAL [ISBE]** - ja'-bal (yabhal, meaning uncertain): In Gen 4:20, a son of Lamech by Adah. He is called 'the father of those who dwell in tents and (with) herds.' So Gunkel, Gen3, 52, who says that the corresponding word in Arabic means "the herdsman who tends the camels." Skinner, Gen, 120, says that both Jabal and Jubal suggest yobhel, which in Phoenician and Hebrew "means primarily 'ram,' then 'ram's horn' as a musical instrument, and finally 'joyous music' (in the designation of the year of Jubilee)."

#### Genesis 4:21 His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe.

- **father** - Ro 4:11,12
- **the harp** - Ge 31:27 Job 21:12 Isa 5:12 Am 6:5
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### JUBAL PRODUCER OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

**His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe-** The production of musical instruments is certainly not evil and is a gift of the grace of God, for it is by music that believers can rejoice and praise His holy Name on earth and in Heaven (cf Rev 5:9+, Rev 15:3-4+).

Jubal - Lamech's son by Adah; invented the harp and organ (pipe), i.e. stringed and wind instruments (Genesis 4:21). Brother of Jabal, the beginner of pastoral life. The connection herein is implied between nomadic life

and music, which can be practiced in the leisure afforded by such a life. Pan and Apollo, to whom the Greeks attributed the invention of the pipe and lyre respectively, were represented as shepherds.

#### Related Resources:

- [What does the Bible say about music? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Genesis 4:22 As for Zillah, she also gave birth to Tubal-cain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron; and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.**

- **bronze** - Ex 25:3 Nu 31:22 De 8:9 33:25 2Ch 2:7
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT

**As for Zillah** - Zillah was Lamech's second wife.

**She also gave birth to Tubal-cain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron; and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah** - "who heated metal and shaped all kinds of tools made of bronze and iron. (Ge 4:22NET) "He became an expert in forging tools of bronze and iron.: (Gen 4:22NLT) Tubal-cain was the first "[blacksmith](#)." The fact that Lamech's sons, Jubal, Jubal and Tubal-Cain were allowed to achieve progress in various areas is clearly another evidence of the grace of God, even on a line that is destined eventually for perdition.

**HCSB** - Tubal-cain's metallurgical advances in creating bronze (made by combining copper and tin) and smelting iron would prove crucial for crafting tools and weapons. (See context in [CSB Study Bible](#))

**NET NOTE** on **forger** - The traditional rendering here, "who forged" (or "a forger of") is now more commonly associated with counterfeit or fraud (e.g., "forged copies" or "forged checks") than with the forging of metal. The phrase "heated metal and shaped [it]" has been used in the translation instead.

---

#### QUESTION - [Who was Tubal-Cain in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Tubal-Cain ("Tubalcain" in the KJV) is the name of a pre-flood descendant of Cain. Tubal-Cain was the son of Lamech and Zillah. His half-brothers were Jubal and Jabal; his sister's name was Naamah. The two elements of his name mean "producer" and "smith," and he is associated with the origin of metal working.

"Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah. Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock. His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play stringed instruments and pipes. Zillah also had a son, Tubal-cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron" (Genesis 4:19–22).

These verses say that Lamech and his wives produced four children. Each of their sons is listed with a cultural accomplishment. Jubal raised livestock, Jubal played musical instruments, and Tubal-Cain forged tools out of bronze and iron. The reference here may be to copper and iron. It seems that Tubal-Cain was the world's first coppersmith.

What can we learn from this section of Scripture? We learn that God used the disobedient descendants of Cain to significantly impact history through their discoveries, inventions, art, and industry. The cultural contributions of Tubal-Cain are an illustration of the grace of God at work. [GotQuestions.org](#)

**Genesis 4:23 Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, Listen to my voice, You wives of Lamech, Give heed to my speech, For I have killed a man for wounding me; And a boy for striking me;**

- **Listen** - Nu 23:18 Jdg 9:7
- I have slain a man to my wounding. or, I would slay a man in my wound, etc. Ge 49:6
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## LAMECH BOASTS

## OF MURDER

**Lamech said to his wives (ishshah), "Adah and Zillah, Listen to my voice, You wives (ishshah) of Lamech, Give heed to my speech** - Lamech barks out two commands to his wives which reminds us of part of the curse in Ge 3:16 that the husband would "rule over" his wife (in this case wives). While Lamech's sons were contributing to the society (implements by Tubal-Cain, music by Jubal), Lamech was giving evidence of the rapid decline of the society into sin. This devolution of society would continue until God finally "flushed" the evil down the drain (so to speak) in the global flood!

**THOUGHT** - These notes are being written in 2022 in a time of rapid devolution of society in America. As one theologian has said, we are no longer just post-Christian, but are now proudly pagan! One has to wonder if God might not be preparing once again to "vacuum" the earth (aka, [Rapture](#)) in preparation for a renewed earth ruled by Christ?

**HCSB** - Lamech's so-called "**Song of the Sword**," the longest recorded speech by a human being to this point in the Bible (21 Hebrew words), represents the dark climax of the Cainite genealogy. His level of retaliation against a man and a young man goes far beyond the biblical limits (Ex 21:23–25), and his boast of killing for vengeance foreshadows the conditions that led to the flood in Noah's day (Gen 6:11). (See context in [CSB Study Bible](#))

**Lamech's "Song of the Sword"** (Genesis 4:23-24) (See [Wikipedia article](#) - most of it is fiction so use your Holy Spirit discretion)

Lamech said to his wives,  
"Adah and Zillah,  
Listen to my voice,  
You wives of Lamech,  
Give heed to my speech,  
For I have killed a man for wounding me;  
And a boy for striking me;  
If Cain is avenged sevenfold,  
Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

**John Phillips** comments on Lamech's **Song of the Sword** - The first song in Scripture was composed by Lamech, seventh from Adam in the godless line of Cain. Lamech was the great rebel of the ante-deluvian world, a man who shook his fist in the face of God and told God to stay out of his life. Moreover, he threatened with dire and swift vengeance anyone who opposed him. He was the world's first polygamist, a man who gloried in his self-will. Lamech embodied the spirit of permissiveness that permeated the days of Noah. Lamech first gave tongue to the anti-God spirit of the age before the flood. ([Exploring Genesis: An Expository Commentary](#))

**For** - Term of explanation. What is Lamech explaining? Is he not in a sense warning the wives that they need to heed what he says for he has been violent.

**I have killed (harag; Lxx - apokteino) a man for wounding me; And a boy for striking me** - Note that **killed (harag; Lxx - apokteino)** is the same verb used of Cain's murder of Abel. Fallen men are boastful and here we see Lamech reach a low-point in arrogantly, boldly, boasting about taking the life of another human being created in the image of God!

**Wenham** says "the unbridled vengeance of Lamek stands in ferocious contrast to the strict justice of the law of talion. Where Lamek claimed to have killed a man for bruising him and a youth for hitting him, Ex21:20–25 says "eye for eye ... bruise for bruise, hit for hit." Without the protection of the law, Genesis 4 implies, even the able-bodied, let alone the weak, will be at the mercy of men like Lamek. (See context in [Genesis 1-15, Volume 1](#))

**Victor Hamilton** - Unlike his ancestor several generations earlier who felt the desperate need of divine protection, Lamech feels he is his own security. He can handle any difficulty or any mistreatment quite adequately by himself. If Cain is avenged only sevenfold, he will be avenged seventy-sevenfold. He has no scruples about taking the law into his own hands. Lamech's chief characteristics, in line with his irregular marriages, are not commendable. He is not only replete with a spirit of vindictiveness, but he is also a proud man who backs away from nobody and does not hesitate to kill anybody. Cain's mind-set now surfaces in his great-great-great grandson. (See context in [The Book of Genesis - NICOT](#))

**NET NOTE** on **young man** - The Hebrew term תַּלְיָה (yeled) probably refers to a youthful warrior here, not a child.

---

**Killed** (slayed, murdered)([02026](#))(harag) means to kill, murder, slay, smite, destroy and is used in modern Hebrew expressing the idea of killing or slaughter. The root includes the ideas of murder and judicial execution, as well as the killing of animals. The 163

uses in the OT reflect the penchant for man to take another man's life, with Cain being the prototype in slaying righteous Abel (Ge 4:8). The slaughter of many people, as all the inhabitants of Ai (Josh 8:24, cf 1Ki 9:16, Esther 8:11). God's killing as in judgment (Ex 13:15, Amos 2:3). Killing animals (Lev 20:15, Nu 22:29). Animals killing humans (2Ki 17:25, Job 20:16). Sadly harag is a "key word" in chapter 4 following the introduction of sin in Genesis 3 (Ge 4:8; Ge 4:14; Ge 4:15; Ge 4:23; Ge 4:25)

**Vine** - "Rarely suggesting premeditated killing or murder, this term generally is used for the "killing" of animals, including sacrificially, and for ruthless personal violence of man against man. **Hārag** is not the term used in the sixth commandment (Ex 20:13; Dt. 5:17). The word there is **rāṣah**, and since it implies premeditated killing, the commandment is better translated: "Do not murder," as most modern versions have it. The word **hārag** often means wholesale slaughter, both in battle and after battle (Nu 31:7-8; Josh 8:24; 2Sa 10:18). The word is only infrequently used of men's killing at the command of God. In such instances, the causative form of the common Hebrew verb for "to die" is commonly found. In general, **hārag** refers to violent "killing" and destruction, sometimes even referring to the "killing" of vines by hail (Ps. 78:47). ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

**Harold Stigers** - The first use of the word (Genesis 4:8) reports Cain's crime, shedding Abel's blood which "cried to God," i.e. for vengeance. David ordered the execution of the murderers of Ishbosheth (2 Samuel 4:11-12). The same word is used for both murder and judicial execution in agreement with the command of Genesis 9:6. The murderer is to be executed on the grounds that failure to do so signifies consent to the crime and breaks the covenant with God. Furthermore it denies God's image in man. If a householder killed a robber who broke into his home during the night, he would not incur blood guilt, since the nocturnal housebreaker would not stop at murder to accomplish his purpose. Parallels to biblical laws on murder are few in the literature of Mesopotamia. There loss of life could be compensated for through payment of a fine. Only in aggravated cases was the death penalty imposed. There is much overlapping in the use of the various words for "kill." This word is seldom used of killing animals. Usually it is used of killing men and numerous times of violent killing in war or intrigue. It is never used for the killing of sacrificial animals and very seldom for the killing of animals for food. The word is common in the histories of the judges and the monarchy as the thing represented was itself all too common. Numbers of these instances refer to murder (for which **rāṣah** is more characteristic, cf. Exodus 20:13), but many refer to such items as Jezebel's killing the prophets of the Lord (1 Kings 18:13), Levi and Simeon's slaughter of the Shechemites (Genesis 34:26), and Joab's killing of Abner (2 Samuel 3:30). The word is used sometimes of God's judicial judgments, e.g. the slaying of Egypt's firstborn (Exodus 13:15), but such uses are rare. In the angel's slaughter of Sennacherib's army, the word **nākā** is used. Usually **hārag** is used of violent killing of men by other men—sometimes with justification, often, alas not! (See [TWOT online](#))

Harag - 163x in 157v - destroyed(1), kill(44), kill me as you killed(1), kill me at once(1), killed(58), killing(3), kills(2), murdered(2), murderer(1), murderers(1), occurs(1), slain(16), slaughter(1), slay(14), slayer(2), slays(2), slew(11), smitten(1), surely kill(1). Gen. 4:8; Gen. 4:14; Gen. 4:15; Gen. 4:23; Gen. 4:25; Gen. 12:12; Gen. 20:4; Gen. 20:11; Gen. 26:7; Gen. 27:41; Gen. 27:42; Gen. 34:25; Gen. 34:26; Gen. 37:20; Gen. 37:26; Gen. 49:6; Exod. 2:14; Exod. 2:15; Exod. 4:23; Exod. 5:21; Exod. 13:15; Exod. 21:14; Exod. 22:24; Exod. 23:7; Exod. 32:12; Exod. 32:27; Lev. 20:15; Lev. 20:16; Num. 11:15; Num. 22:29; Num. 22:33; Num. 25:5; Num. 31:7; Num. 31:8; Num. 31:17; Num. 31:19; Deut. 13:9; Jos. 8:24; Jos. 9:26; Jos. 10:11; Jos. 13:22; Jdg. 7:25; Jdg. 8:17; Jdg. 8:18; Jdg. 8:19; Jdg. 8:20; Jdg. 8:21; Jdg. 9:5; Jdg. 9:18; Jdg. 9:24; Jdg. 9:45; Jdg. 9:54; Jdg. 9:56; Jdg. 16:2; Jdg. 20:5; 1 Sam. 16:2; 1 Sam. 22:21; 1 Sam. 24:10; 1 Sam. 24:11; Sam. 24:18; 2 Sam. 3:30; 2 Sam. 4:10; 2 Sam. 4:11; 2 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam. 10:18; 2 Sam. 12:9; 2 Sam. 14:7; 2 Sam. 23:21; 1 Ki. 2:5; 1 Ki. 2:32; 1 Ki. 9:16; 1 Ki. 11:24; 1 Ki. 12:27; 1 Ki. 18:12; 1 Ki. 18:13; 1 Ki. 18:14; 1 Ki. 19:1; 1 Ki. 19:10; 1 Ki. 19:14; 2 Ki. 8:12; 2 Ki. 9:31; 2 Ki. 10:9; 2 Ki. 11:18; 2 Ki. 17:25; 1 Chr. 7:21; 1 Chr. 11:23; 1 Chr. 19:18; 2 Chr. 21:4; 2 Chr. 21:13; 2 Chr. 22:1; 2 Chr. 22:8; 2 Chr. 23:17; 2 Chr. 24:22; 2 Chr. 24:25; 2 Chr. 25:3; 2 Chr. 28:6; 2 Chr. 28:7; 2 Chr. 28:9; 2 Chr. 36:17; Neh. 4:11; Neh. 6:10; Neh. 9:26; Est. 3:13; Est. 7:4; Est. 8:11; Est. 9:6; Est. 9:11; Est. 9:12; Est. 9:15; Est. 9:16; Job 5:2; Job 20:16; Ps. 10:8; Ps. 44:22; Ps. 59:11; Ps. 78:31; Ps. 78:34; Ps. 78:47; Ps. 94:6; Ps. 135:10; Ps. 136:18; Prov. 1:32; Prov. 7:26; Eccl. 3:3; Isa. 10:4; Isa. 14:19; Isa. 14:20; Isa. 14:30; Isa. 14:32; Isa. 22:13; Isa. 26:21; Isa. 27:1; Isa. 27:7; Jer. 4:31; Jer. 15:3; Jer. 18:21; Lam. 2:4; Lam. 2:20; Lam. 2:21; Lam. 3:43; Ezek. 9:6; Ezek. 21:11; Ezek. 23:10; Ezek. 23:47; Ezek. 26:6; Ezek. 26:8; Ezek. 26:11; Ezek. 26:15; Ezek. 28:9; Ezek. 37:9; Hos. 6:5; Hos. 9:13; Amos 2:3; Amos 4:10; Amos 9:1; Amos 9:4; Hab. 1:17; Zech. 11:5

## Genesis 4:24 If Cain is avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

- **if** - Ge 4:15
- **seventy** - Mt 18:22
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### Related Passage:

Genesis 4:15 So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him **sevenfold**." And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him.

## LAMECH'S LOGIC

**If Cain is avenged sevenfold, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold - NLT** - "If someone who kills Cain is punished seven times, then the one who kills me will be punished seventy-seven times!" Lamech is saying if God would protect Cain for murder, then He would avenge Lamech for protecting himself. The mention of Cain indicates that his sordid story was passed from generation to generation, but sadly no one in Cain's line (as far as we can discern from Scripture) repented and turned to the Lord. It is notable that none of Cain's descendants are recorded as even mentioning God's Name!

**Cornerstone Bible Commentary**- Not only did Lamech exact revenge—a fate Cain had feared—but he demanded greater leniency than that which was afforded to Cain (Ge 4:24), boasting that his killer would be punished seventy-seven times and not just seven. In contrast to this defiance, Jesus taught his disciples to forgive “seventy times seven” (Matt 18:22). (See [Genesis](#))

**HCSB** - Using twisted logic, Lamech seemed to suggest that God would provide him with greater protection than He did Cain since he had killed double the number of men. (See context in [CSB Study Bible](#))

**Allen Ross** - So here is a picture of an affluent society defying God and His laws, seeking pleasure and self-indulgence. Into this world Israel (and later the church) would come as a kingdom of priests to proclaim God's righteousness. (See context in [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**NET NOTE - Seventy-seven times.** Lamech seems to reason this way: If Cain, a murderer, is to be avenged seven times (see Ge 4:15), then how much more one who has been unjustly wronged! Lamech misses the point of God's merciful treatment of Cain. God was not establishing a principle of justice when he warned he would avenge Cain's murder. In fact he was trying to limit the shedding of blood, something Lamech wants to multiply instead. The use of “seventy-seven,” a multiple of seven, is hyperbolic, emphasizing the extreme severity of the vengeance envisioned by Lamech.

**Wiersbe** - Lamech's brand of violence spread (Ge 4:5, 11–12), and by the time of the Flood, only eight people believed God's warning and acted upon it by faith. The rest were destroyed. (See context in [The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#))

The world is passing away, and also its lusts;  
but the one who does the will of God lives forever.  
-- 1 John 2:17+

**Genesis 4:25 Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, she said, "God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him."**

LXE And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore a son, and called his name Seth, saying, For God has raised up to me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.

BGT γνω δ Αδαμ Ευαν τν γυνακα ατο κα συλλαβο σα τεκεν υ ν κα πων μασεν τ νομα ατο Σηθ λ γουσα ξαν στησεν γρ μοι θες σπ ρμα τερον ντ Αβελ ν π κτεινεν Καιν

KJV And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.

NET And Adam had marital relations with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son. She named him Seth, saying, "God has given me another child in place of Abel because Cain killed him."

CSB Adam was intimate with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, for she said, "God has given me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him."

ERV And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For, said she, God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel; for Cain slew him.

ESV And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him."

NIV Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, "God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him."

NLT Adam had sexual relations with his wife again, and she gave birth to another son. She named him Seth, for she said, "God has granted me another son in place of Abel, whom Cain killed."

NRS Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel, because Cain killed him."

YLT And Adam again knoweth his wife, and she beareth a son, and calleth his name Seth, 'for God hath appointed for me another seed instead of Abel:' for Cain had slain him.

GWN Adam made love to his wife again. She gave birth to a son and named him Seth, because she said, "God has given me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him."

NKJ And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, "For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed."

NAB Adam again had relations with his wife, and she gave birth to a son whom she called Seth. "God has granted me more offspring in place of Abel," she said, "because Cain slew him."

NJB Adam had intercourse with his wife, and she gave birth to a son whom she named Seth, 'because God has granted me other offspring', she said, 'in place of Abel, since Cain has killed him.'

ASV And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth. For, said she, God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel; for Cain slew him.

DBY And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son, and called his name Seth: ...For God has appointed me another seed instead of Abel, because Cain has slain him.

BBE And Adam had connection with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son to whom she gave the name of Seth: for she said, God has given me another seed in place of Abel, whom Cain put to death.

BHT wayyē<sup>9</sup>da` `ädäm `ôd `et- `išTō waTTē<sup>9</sup>led Bēn waTTiqrä` `et-šūmô šēt Kî šä|t-lî `élöhîm ze<sup>9</sup>ra` `aHēr Ta<sup>9</sup>Hat he<sup>9</sup>bel Kî hárägô qä<sup>9</sup>yin

NIRV Adam made love to his wife again. She gave birth to a son and named him Seth. She said, "God has given me another child. The child will take the place of Abel, because Cain killed him."

RSV And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel, for Cain slew him."

- **and named** - Ge 5:3,4 1Ch 1:1 Lu 3:38
- **Seth** - Heb. Sheth; i. e. appointed, or put
- **God** - Ge 4:1-3,8,10,11
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## SETH'S FAMILY TREE

### SETH - GOD'S APPOINTED REPLACEMENT FOR ABEL

After godless Lamech's boastful poem, nick-named "The Song of the Sword," the Spirit juxtaposes the bright light of the godly line of Seth from whom the Messiah would one day come. There could hardly be a striking contrast between darkness that dominates Genesis 4 and the light at the end of the Chapter. **Matthews** notes that there is "an even sharper distinction between Cain's offspring and that of Seth: Cain's firstborn and successors pioneer cities and the civilized arts, but Seth's firstborn and successors pioneer worship."

**Adam (adam) had relations (yada; Lxx - ginosko** = know experientially, intimately) **with his wife (ishshah) again** - KJV has "Adam knew his wife again" where **knew (yada)** is a euphemism for sexual relations. This procreative event would bring forth the third son of Adam.

**And she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth (Sheth)** - **Seth** was the third son of Adam and Eve and his name means appointed, put, placed, set, or granted. This meaning is suggested by the explanation in the last clause (beginning with "for"), as Scripture frequently gives a name and then "explains" the meaning of the name. For example in Mt 1:21+ the angel tells Joseph that his wife Mary "will bear a Son; and you shall call His name **Jesus**, (**Iesous** - "Jehovah saves") for (term of explanation) He will **save** His people from their sins."

**Allen Ross** - In the line from Seth there was faith. Seth himself was a provision from God, according to Eve's statement of faith. (See context in [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**For** (term of explanation), **she said, "God has appointed (shith) me another offspring in place of Abel - Appointed me another** is another way of saying God had given Eve a replacement for Abel. Thus Eve again (Ge 4:1) acknowledged God as the giver of children. The sovereign God gives children (Ps 127:3) and here He gives Seth thus assuring the line of the Messiah would be kept intact. As Luke would later record regarding Jesus Christ - "When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli...the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of

God." (Lk 3:23, 38+).

**NET NOTE** on the words **Seth** and **appointed** - the name שֵׁת (shet) and the verb שִׁתָּה (shith, "to place, to appoint, to set, to grant") form a wordplay ([paronomasia](#)).

**For** (term of explanation) here explaining why there needed to be a replacement for righteous Abel.

**Cain killed** ([harag](#); Lxx - [apokteino](#)) **him** - Poor Eve, and the pain she must have felt as she experienced the immutable principle that the "wages of sin is death." (Ro 6:23+) In killing Abel, Cain, the firstborn forfeited his place in the line of the Messiah. Sin always has consequences, and in God's perfect justice, some of our sins have seemingly greater consequences than other sins! The moral of the story is DON'T COMMIT SIN! Or to say it another way "[look before you leap!](#)"

---

**Adam** (man) ([0120](#)) [adam](#) usually refers to mankind in the collective sense (Ge 1:26, 27). It is also a proper noun, **Adam**, the first man whom God created (Ge 2:20). 'Adam' is translated "persons" in Nu 31:28, 30, 35, 40. It can refer to any given person, whether male or female (Lv13:2).

**Wife** ([0802](#)) [ishshah](#) means woman, wife, female, betrothed one, bride. **Ishshah** is one who is a female human being regardless of her age or virginity. The basic meaning is a female, as opposed to a male. Although the deriv. of 'ishshah' is uncertain and no linguistic etymology appears to be involved, Adam makes a beautiful play on words in Gen. 2:23 in the passage where the word is first used, "This is now bone of my bones . . . she shall be called Woman [ishshah], because she was taken out of man ['ish]."

All uses of ishshah in Genesis - Gen. 2:22; Gen. 2:23; Gen. 2:24; Gen. 2:25; Gen. 3:1; Gen. 3:2; Gen. 3:4; Gen. 3:6; Gen. 3:8; Gen. 3:12; Gen. 3:13; Gen. 3:15; Gen. 3:16; Gen. 3:17; Gen. 3:20; Gen. 3:21; Gen. 4:1; Gen. 4:17; Gen. 4:19; Gen. 4:23; Gen. 4:25; Gen. 6:2; Gen. 6:18; Gen. 7:2; Gen. 7:7; Gen. 7:13; Gen. 8:16; Gen. 8:18; Gen. 11:29; Gen. 11:31; Gen. 12:5; Gen. 12:11; Gen. 12:12; Gen. 12:14; Gen. 12:15; Gen. 12:17; Gen. 12:18; Gen. 12:19; Gen. 12:20; Gen. 13:1; Gen. 14:16; Gen. 16:1; Gen. 16:3; Gen. 17:15; Gen. 17:19; Gen. 18:9; Gen. 18:10; Gen. 18:11; Gen. 19:15; Gen. 19:16; Gen. 19:26; Gen. 20:2; Gen. 20:3; Gen. 20:7; Gen. 20:11; Gen. 20:12; Gen. 20:14; Gen. 20:17; Gen. 20:18; Gen. 21:21; Gen. 23:19; Gen. 24:3; Gen. 24:4; Gen. 24:5; Gen. 24:7; Gen. 24:8; Gen. 24:15; Gen. 24:36; Gen. 24:37; Gen. 24:38; Gen. 24:39; Gen. 24:40; Gen. 24:44; Gen. 24:51; Gen. 24:67; Gen. 25:1; Gen. 25:10; Gen. 25:20; Gen. 25:21; Gen. 26:7; Gen. 26:8; Gen. 26:9; Gen. 26:10; Gen. 26:11; Gen. 26:34; Gen. 27:46; Gen. 28:1; Gen. 28:2; Gen. 28:6; Gen. 28:9; Gen. 29:21; Gen. 29:28; Gen. 30:4; Gen. 30:9; Gen. 30:26; Gen. 31:17; Gen. 31:35; Gen. 31:50; Gen. 32:22; Gen. 33:5; Gen. 34:4; Gen. 34:8; Gen. 34:12; Gen. 34:21; Gen. 34:29; Gen. 36:2; Gen. 36:6; Gen. 36:10; Gen. 36:12; Gen. 36:13; Gen. 36:14; Gen. 36:17; Gen. 36:18; Gen. 36:39; Gen. 37:2; Gen. 38:6; Gen. 38:8; Gen. 38:9; Gen. 38:12; Gen. 38:14; Gen. 38:20; Gen. 39:7; Gen. 39:8; Gen. 39:9; Gen. 39:19; Gen. 41:45; Gen. 44:27; Gen. 45:19; Gen. 46:5; Gen. 46:19; Gen. 46:26; Gen. 49:31

**Knew** ([03045](#)) [yada](#) to know, to learn, to perceive, to discern, to experience, to confess, to consider, to know people relationally, to know how, to be skillful, to be made known, to make oneself known, to make known. Used as a description of intimate relations is Ge 4:1, Ge 4:17, Ge 4:25, Ge 38:26, Jdg 11:39, 1Sa 1:19). Knowing God means knowing Him on the spiritual level in the closest personal way.

**Yada in Genesis** - Gen. 3:5; Gen. 3:7; Gen. 3:22; Gen. 4:1; Gen. 4:9; Gen. 4:17; Gen. 4:25; Gen. 8:11; Gen. 9:24; Gen. 12:11; Gen. 15:8; Gen. 15:13; Gen. 18:19; Gen. 18:21; Gen. 19:5; Gen. 19:8; Gen. 19:33; Gen. 19:35; Gen. 20:6; Gen. 20:7; Gen. 21:26; Gen. 22:12; Gen. 24:14; Gen. 24:16; Gen. 24:21; Gen. 25:27; Gen. 27:2; Gen. 28:16; Gen. 29:5; Gen. 30:26; Gen. 30:29; Gen. 31:6; Gen. 31:32; Gen. 33:13; Gen. 38:9; Gen. 38:16; Gen. 38:26; Gen. 39:6; Gen. 39:8; Gen. 41:21; Gen. 41:31; Gen. 41:39; Gen. 42:23; Gen. 42:33; Gen. 42:34; Gen. 43:7; Gen. 43:22; Gen. 44:15; Gen. 44:27; Gen. 45:1; Gen. 47:6; Gen. 48:19

**Seth** ([08352](#)) (Sheth from shith) means appointed, put, placed, set, or granted. **Gilbrant** - The proper noun "Seth" occurs nine times in the OT as the name of the third son of Adam. Eve named her son Seth for she said, "God has appointed me another seed instead of Abel" (Gen. 4:25). Seth was the father of Enosh (Ge 4:26). Adam was 130 years old when Seth was born (Ge 5:3), and he lived 800 years beyond Seth's birth (Ge 5:4). Seth was 105 years old when his son Enosh was born (Ge 5:6), and he lived 807 years beyond Enos' birth (Ge 5:7f). The KJV spells the name "Sheth" in 1 Chr. 1:1. He was an ancestor of Noah and was in the line of Jesus Christ.

**Sheth** - 9v - Seth(8), Sheth(1). Gen. 4:25; Gen. 4:26; Gen. 5:3; Gen. 5:4; Gen. 5:6; Gen. 5:7; Gen. 5:8; Num. 24:17; 1 Chr. 1:1

**Appointed** ([07896](#)) (shith) means "to set, to put, to lay." The most frequent object of shith is heart (10x) - "to set the heart" (Ex 7:23 Job 7:17 Ps 62:10 Pr 22:17 Pr 24:32 Jer 31:21). **Baker** says shith "basically means to place or put something somewhere: hostility between the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15); to appoint or replace something (Gen. 4:25); to place or put sheep in a separate area (Gen. 30:40); to appoint or establish a person in an official position (Gen. 41:33; Ps. 21:6[7]; 132:11; Isa. 5:6; 26:1; Jer. 22:6). It is used of God's setting or establishing the earth on its foundations (1 Sam. 2:8). To set one's hand on a person's eyes at death means to close them (Gen. 46:4). It indicates merely placing one's hand on a person (Gen. 48:14, 17). To set one's heart on something means to pay attention to it (Ex. 7:23; 2 Sam. 13:20; Jer. 31:21). The phrase שִׁלְתַּבְדֵּל means to set apart (Gen. 30:40). The phrases to set one's hand to means to help or to have a common goal (Ex. 23:1); to blame someone means to set sin upon them (Num. 12:11). It takes on the sense of to make, to constitute something as: to make someone turn the shoulder (Ps. 21:12[13]); to make something like something else, e.g., Israel like a land of hunting, a wilderness (Jer. 2:15; Hos. 2:3[5]); to make or appoint darkness (Ps. 104:20). It refers to appointing a feast (Jer. 51:39); or of setting, putting one's refuge in the

Lord (Ps. 73:28). God sets, defines Israel's borders (Ex. 23:31). ([Complete Word Study Dictionary- Old Testament](#))

**Shith** - 80v - account(1), apply(1), appoint(1), appointed(1), bring(1), cast(1), close\*(1), concern\*(1), concerned\*(1), consider\*(1), demand(1), demanded(2), direct(1), fix(1), fixed positions(1), join(1), **laid**(5), lay(3), lays(1), **made**(5), make them turn(1), pay(2), perform(1), place(1), placed(1), **put**(9), reflected\*(1), serve(1), **set**(17), sets(1), stop(1), take(2), took up fixed positions(1), turns(1), withdraw(1). Gen. 3:15; Gen. 4:25; Gen. 30:40; Gen. 41:33; Gen. 46:4; Gen. 48:14; Gen. 48:17; Exod. 7:23; Exod. 10:1; Exod. 21:22; Exod. 21:30; Exod. 23:1; Exod. 23:31; Exod. 33:4; Num. 12:11; Num. 24:1; Ruth 3:15; Ruth 4:16; 1 Sam. 2:8; 1 Sam. 4:20; 2 Sam. 13:20; 2 Sam. 19:28; 2 Sam. 22:12; 1 Ki. 11:34; Job 7:17; Job 9:33; Job 10:20; Job 14:13; Job 22:24; Job 30:1; Job 38:11; Job 38:36; Ps. 3:6; Ps. 8:6; Ps. 9:20; Ps. 12:5; Ps. 13:2; Ps. 17:11; Ps. 18:11; Ps. 21:3; Ps. 21:6; Ps. 21:9; Ps. 21:12; Ps. 45:16; Ps. 48:13; Ps. 62:10; Ps. 73:18; Ps. 73:28; Ps. 83:11; Ps. 83:13; Ps. 84:3; Ps. 84:6; Ps. 88:6; Ps. 88:8; Ps. 90:8; Ps. 101:3; Ps. 104:20; Ps. 110:1; Ps. 132:11; Ps. 139:5; Ps. 140:5; Ps. 141:3; Prov. 22:17; Prov. 24:32; Prov. 26:24; Prov. 27:23; Isa. 5:6; Isa. 15:9; Isa. 16:3; Isa. 22:7; Isa. 26:1; Jer. 2:15; Jer. 3:19; Jer. 13:16; Jer. 22:6; Jer. 31:21; Jer. 50:3; Jer. 51:39; Hos. 2:3; Hos. 6:11

---

#### QUESTION - [Who was Seth in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Seth, a son of Adam and Eve (the third of their sons named in Scripture), was born after [Cain murdered Abel](#) (Genesis 4:8). Eve believed that God had appointed him as a replacement for Abel and named him Seth, which means “set in place of” (Genesis 4:25). Later, when Seth was 105 years old, his son Enosh was born (Genesis 4:26), and Enosh continues what is sometimes called “the godly line of Seth” that leads to Abraham.

The story of Cain’s killing the righteous “seed” (Abel) and God’s raising up another “seed” (Seth) becomes the central theme of the divine plan. Evil is always attempting to rid the world of good, and God is always thwarting evil’s plans. There is always a Seth to replace Abel. It was through the seed of Seth that Jesus was born (Genesis 5:3–8, 1 Chronicles 1:1, Luke 3:38).

After the birth of Seth’s son Enosh, the Bible tells us, “At that time men began to call on the name of the Lord” (Genesis 4:26), which confirms Eve’s foretelling of the purpose of Seth’s birth. The word *call* also means “to proclaim,” which refers to men testifying about God to one another. It was through Seth’s family that organized, corporate worship of the one true God began to enter the fallen world. Though the descendants of Seth are not the first in Adam’s line to develop inventions or advances in civilization, they are the first to praise and worship God.

Unlike Cain’s descendants, Seth’s prove faithful to God. From Seth come the patriarchs, the nation of Israel, and eventually Christ. And it’s Christ who not only destroys Satan but also condemns sin and death (Luke 3:23–38). It was through Seth that the “Offspring of the Woman” came who would crush the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15).

Seth is also mentioned in other works, including the [Apocrypha \(Sirah 49:16\)](#), the [pseudepigraphical](#) works, such as the [Ascension of Isaiah](#), [Jubilees](#), and the Life of Adam and Eve. His name is also recorded in some of the Gnostic texts, e.g., the Gospel of the Egyptians and the Second Treatise of the Great Seth. [GotQuestions.org](#)

---

**Genesis 4:26 To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the LORD.**

---

LXE And Seth had a son, and he called his name Enos: he hoped to call on the name of the Lord God.

BGT καὶ τὸ Σηθ γένετο ἡμῖν δὲ τὸν νομακόν τοῦ Ενωκοῦ τοῦ λπισεν πικαλεσθαι τὸν νομακού τοῦ θεοῦ

KJV 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 the LORD.

NET And a son was also born to Seth, whom he named Enosh. At that time people began to worship the LORD.

CSB A son was born to Seth also, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of Yahweh.

ERV And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enosh: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.

ESV To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD.

NIV Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD.

NLT When Seth grew up, he had a son and named him Enosh. At that time people first began to worship the LORD by name.

NRS To Seth also a son was born, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to invoke the name of the LORD.

YLT And to Seth, to him also a son hath been born, and he calleth his name Enos; then a beginning was made of preaching in the name of Jehovah.

GWN A son was also born to Seth, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to worship the LORD.

NKJ And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.

NAB To Seth, in turn, a son was born, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to invoke the LORD by name.

NJB A son was also born to Seth, and he named him Enosh. This man was the first to invoke the name Yahweh.

ASV And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enosh. Then began men to call upon the name of Jehovah.

DBY And to Seth, to him also was born a son; and he called his name Enosh. Then people began to call on the name of Jehovah.

BBE And Seth had a son, and he gave him the name of Enosh: at this time men first made use of the name of the Lord in worship.

BHT ָלְעֵשֶׂת גָּמַהּוּ יָלַד-בֵּן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת-שְׁםָךְ אֶנֹּשׁ אֶזְרָחֵל לִקְרֹב בָּשֵׂם יְהֻהָּנָה פ

NAS And to Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then men began to call upon the name of the LORD.

NIRV Seth also had a son. He named him Enosh. At that time people began to worship the LORD.

RSV To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time men began to call upon the name of the LORD.

- **To him** - Ge 4:6-8
- **Enosh**, to call upon the name of the Lord. or, call themselves by the name of the Lord. De 26:17,18 1Ki 18:24 Ps 116:17 Isa 44:5 48:1 63:19 Jer 33:16 Joe 2:32 Zep 3:9 Ac 2:21 11:26 Ro 10:13 1Co 1:2 Eph 3:14,15
- [Genesis 4 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Genesis 12:8 Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and **called upon the name of the LORD**.

Genesis 13:4 to the place of the altar which he had made there formerly; and there Abram**called on the name of the LORD**.

Genesis 21:33 Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he **called on the name of the LORD**, the Everlasting God.

Genesis 26:25 So he built an altar there and**called upon the name of the LORD**, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well.

**BEGIN TO CALL ON  
NAME OF THE LORD**

**To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name [Enosh](#)** - It is interesting that Seth's wife is not mentioned with a phrase like she gave birth to a son. [Enosh](#) means humanity, mortal man and

**Then** - Or "at that time." Time phrase. Always ask "When?" or "What time?" Or even "Why now?" [Enosh](#)'s birth seems to mark (a "birthmark" so to speak) a new beginning for mortal men when humanity **began to call upon the name of the LORD**.

**Men began to call upon the name of the LORD** - There are several interpretations of this clause as shown by the variation in the translations - **YLT** = "then a beginning was made of preaching in the name of Jehovah" **NET** = "At that time people began to worship the LORD." **NLT** = "At that time people first began to worship the LORD by name." See [note below](#).

**NET NOTE** - Heb "call in the name." The expression refers to worshiping the LORD through prayer and sacrifice (see Gen 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25).

**Wenham** says this "seems to be an umbrella phrase for worship, most obviously prayer and sacrifice. On this view Gen 4:26 is noting the origin of regular divine worship, just as the preceding verses have noted the origins of farming, music, and metallurgy. Though Cain and Abel offered sacrifice, this verse notes its reintroduction on a regular basis (cf. the other reintroductions in Ge 9:20; 10:8)." (See context in [Genesis 1-15, Volume 1 - Page 116](#))

**Wiersbe** - As the Cainites were gradually wandering away from the true worship of God, the Sethites were returning to Him (v. 26) and establishing again their worship of the Lord. Civilization today is Cainite in origin. It has such elements as agriculture, industry, arts, great cities, and religion without faith in the blood of Christ. Also, like Cain's civilization of old, it will be destroyed. We still have boasting murderers like Lamech, and we still have people (like Lamech) who violate the sacred vows of marriage. "As the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37, NKJV). Men still reject divine revelation and depend on their own human resources. The true Christian does not belong to this "world system" that is passing away (1 John 2:15–17), and should not get involved with it (Rom. 12:1–2; 2 Cor. 6:14–7:1). (See context in [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament](#))

---

#### **Norman Geisler - GENESIS 4:26—[Did worship of God begin here or earlier?](#)**

**PROBLEM:** According to this verse, people did not begin "to call on the name of the Lord" until the days of Enosh, the third son of Adam and Eve. Yet their first son, Abel, brought an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord before this time (Gen. 4:3–4).

**SOLUTION:** The meaning of "call upon the name of the Lord" (in Gen. 4:26) is not clear. And what is not clear cannot be taken to contradict what is clear, namely, that Abel worshiped God before Enosh did. It is possible that calling on the Lord implied a regular, more solemn, and/or public worship of the Lord, or prayer (cf. Rom. 10:13) that was not practiced earlier. At any rate, there is no contradiction here, since it does not say that Abel or anyone else "called on the Lord" before this time—whatever it may mean.

---

#### **QUESTION - [What does it mean to call upon the name of the Lord?](#)**

**ANSWER** - The first mention in Scripture of people calling on the name of the Lord is Genesis 4:26: "Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD." Here, to call on the name of the Lord means that people began to gather for corporate worship and seeking the help of the Creator. Cain's family line is contrasted with Seth's: descendants of Cain began to practice herding (verse 20), music production (verse 21), and metallurgy (verse 22). At the same time, the world was becoming more and more wicked (verses 19 and 23). Seth's descendants stood out from their corrupt society in that they began to call on the name of the Lord.

When Abram entered Canaan, he camped between Ai and Bethel. There, "he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord" (Genesis 12:8). In other words, Abram publicly thanked God, praised His name, and sought His protection and guidance. Years later, Abraham's son Isaac built an altar to the Lord in Beersheba and also "called on the name of the Lord" (Genesis 26:25).

To call on the name of the Lord is to invoke His proper name "in audible and social prayer and praise" (Albert Barnes). To call on the name of the Lord is to approach Him in thanksgiving, worship, and petition, and in so doing proclaim the name of God. To call on the name of the Lord is to pray "in a more public and solemn manner" (Matthew Poole). Those who are children of God will naturally call on the name of the Lord.

Calling on the name of the Lord is basic for salvation and presupposes faith in the Lord. God promises to save those who, in faith, call upon His name: "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved" (Romans 10:13; cf. Joel 2:32). Everyone who invokes the name of God for mercy and salvation, by or in the name of Jesus, shall be saved (Acts 2:21). "There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12NLT).

Using a person's name expresses familiarity and helps connect one person to another. The first thing we do upon meeting someone

is to extend a hand and introduce ourselves. This builds familiarity for future interactions. To call upon the name of the Lord is a sign of knowing Him and a way of connecting to Him. There is a difference between knowing *about* God and knowing Him *personally*. Calling on the name of the Lord indicates personal interaction and relationship. When we call upon the name of the Lord, as a form of worship, we recognize our dependence upon Him.

What saves a person is not the action, per se, of “calling upon” the name of Jesus; what saves is God’s grace in response to one’s personal faith in the Savior being called upon. Calling on the name of the Lord is more than a verbal expression; it is also shown in the heart and in deed through repentance. “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out” (Acts 3:19).

Calling on the name of the Lord is to be a lifelong pursuit (Psalm 116:2). God commands us to call on Him in times of trouble (Psalm 50:15). The one who “dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty” (Psalm 91:1) and has God’s promise of blessing: “Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him” (verses 14–15).

Those who refuse to call upon the name of the Lord are also described in Scripture, along with the results of their disobedience: “Will the workers of iniquity never learn? . . . They refuse to call upon the LORD. There they are, overwhelmed with dread, where there was nothing to fear” (Psalm 53:4–5).

Even as rebellious or ignorant people neglect to call upon the name of the Lord, He is willing to hear them and accept them. God wants to be found; He is ready to be known: “I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, ‘Here I am, here I am,’ to a nation that was not called by my name” (Isaiah 65:1ESV; cf. Romans 10:20).

In 1 Corinthians 1:2, those who call upon the name of the Lord are identified as believers: “To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours.” Calling on the name of the Lord is one of the marks of a Christian.

In summary, those who call on the name of the Lord are those who recognize Him as Savior. Whether it is a first-time calling upon Jesus’ name for forgiveness of sins or a continuous calling as the relationship progresses and grows, giving Him lordship over our lives in surrender to His will, calling on the name of the Lord is vital to spiritual life. Ultimately, calling on the name of the Lord is a sign of humility and dependence on God our Creator and Redeemer. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

Previous

Next