

## Genesis 4:1–26 THE GENERATIONS OF CAIN

The genealogies of Genesis were designed to show both the multiplication of evil in the world and God’s plan of redemption. In 4:16–24 the line from Cain through Lamech shows the spread of murderers. In 5:3–32 the narrative moves from Adam, through Seth, to Noah and his sons. Noah’s father said about him, “Lamech named his son Noah, for he said, ‘He will bring us relief from the painful labor of farming this ground that the Lord has cursed.’ ” (5:29). These family trees separate the world into two categories: the descendants of Adam through Cain and those through Seth.

The fighting between the godly and ungodly lines that were born of the woman was manifested when Cain murdered Abel. The apostle John later used Cain to typify those who murder and show hatred toward the righteous (1 John 3:12). The ground already had been cursed by God; then Cain was cursed from the ground that had soaked up Abel’s blood (Gen. 4:9–15), revealing that God still held sovereign right and protection over life. Lamech’s killing of a man (4:23) shows that moral advancement did not keep pace with cultural progress, for there was a growing presumption among mankind on God’s protective grace.

*Tyndale concise Bible commentary*

### THE TESTIMONY OF ABEL (4:1–26)

- A. **Abel, the godly son** (4:1–2, 4): He is a shepherd who obediently offers an animal sacrifice to God.
- B. **Cain, the godless son** (4:3–26)
  - 1. **The apostate** (4:3): He offers God a bloodless offering.
  - 2. **The angered** (4:5–7): God refuses Cain’s offering but urges him to offer an acceptable one.
  - 3. **The assassin** (4:8–16)
    - a. Cain’s crime (4:8): In a fit of rage and envy, Cain kills Abel.
    - b. Cain’s curse (4:9–12): He becomes a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.

**4:1–15 First family, first homicide.** Eve gave birth to Cain and Abel. Abel was a shepherd; Cain was a farmer. God refused Cain’s gift of farm produce but accepted Abel’s animal sacrifice. Abel’s gift was offered “by faith” but Cain’s was not (Heb. 11:4). Cain apparently knew what God desired and was given a second chance to make the right sacrifice (4:7). He still chose not to and, in bitterness, killed Abel.

God decreed that Cain would become a restless wanderer. Realizing that his parents would have more children (5:4) and that one of them might someday seek his life in revenge, Cain sought God’s protection. God gave Cain a protective “mark.” This would be a deterrent to lawlessness in the days before divinely sanctioned human government (9:1–7). God was also claiming his right to show mercy or take vengeance as he saw fit (Deut. 32:35; Rom. 9:15; Heb. 10:30).

## THE ADVANCE OF SIN IN CAIN'S MURDER OF ABEL (4:1-16)

The subject of chapter 4 is the spread of godless society. Here is man in rebellion against God—man who did not obey and who destroyed the godly and denied his responsibility and culpability for it. The ungodly here are portrayed as living on in the world (with a protective mark of grace; cf. comments on v. 15) without being saved. Their sense of guilt was eased by their cultural development and their geographical expansion.

Under Moses' leadership Israel would move into a world of cultures. Civilizations with music, art, industry, and enterprise would be on every side. These would be antagonistic to Israel, and would help cause God's people to reject the sacrifices and live as cursed people. Israel needed to be warned against such arrogant opposition.

In the story of Cain and Abel the seed of the woman met the seed of the serpent (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 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.

**4:1-5.** Cain and Abel were played off against each other, reversing the subjects clause after clause. In fact, the entire chapter contrasts them: Cain is mentioned 13 times in verses 1-16. Seven times Abel is mentioned, and three other times "brother" is substituted. Rightly the Apostle John saw murder as a sin against one's brother (1 John 3:12, 15).

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, 'āqāmâh, Gen. 4:2; cf. 3:17). **Abel**, however, seems to be lined up with man's original purpose, to have dominion over life (cf. 1:28); he **kept flocks**. These coincidental descriptions are enhanced with their actions in worship. **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.

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**.

**4:6-7.** 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** (rōqē 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

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cf. *confer*, compare

v. verse

lit. literal, literally

Heb. Hebrew

over it. Here is the perpetual struggle between good and evil. Anyone filled with envy and strife is prey for the evil one.

**4:8-16.** After murdering **his brother** (v. 8) **Cain** repudiated responsibility for it (v. 9) and claimed that God’s punishment (cropless soil and wandering, vv. 10-12) was too severe (v. 13). God graciously protected him by some **mark** or sign that would be a deterrent to an avenger (v. 15—nowhere is the nature of this “mark” clarified), but God condemned him to a life of ceaseless wandering (v. 12). This was his curse, to be banished from God’s **presence** (v. 14). But **Cain** defied that curse by living in a city **in the land of Nod** (lit., “wandering”), **east of Eden** (v. 16).

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 (v. 4). (2) Israelites had responsibilities to their brothers—they were each others’ keepers and must not kill one another. (3) Homicidal blood polluted the land, crying out for vengeance—spilled blood raised its voice of accusation (v. 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. *The Bible knowledge commentary*

## Genesis 4–5

Outline **Chapter summary.** The consequences of the Fall now work themselves out in  
Place the descendants of Adam and Eve. Cain murders his brother, Abel (4:1–18).  
Finder Lamech breaks the pattern of monogamous marriage by taking two wives (vv.  
CREATION 19–22), and justifies his murder of a young man “for injuring me” (vv. 23–24),  
**CHOICE** making the bent of sinful human society all too clear. But another son is born to  
COVENANT Adam and Eve, Seth, and at least some in his line “call on the name of the Lord”  
BACK (vv. 25–26). Centuries pass. God keeps track of the godly line (5:1–31), which  
to Outline culminates in a man named Noah (v. 32).

**Key verse.** 5:3: Adam’s children bear his likeness.

**Personal application.** How will your children be like you?

**Key concepts.** Anger Exodus 32-34, 1 Samuel 25, Psalms 35-37. Genealogy 1  
Chronicles 1-3. Marriage Genesis 2, Ephesians 5-6. Polygamy Genesis 28-29.  
Murder Numbers 35-36, Jesus on the Law

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vv. verses

Jesus on the Law

### *Jesus on the Law*

Jesus expresses His total allegiance to the Old Testament Law in Matthew 5:17–18. At the same time He points out the inadequacy of the views held by the teachers of His day. The many illustrations Jesus then develops make His point. Law identifies behaviors which are wrong. But it also reveals attitudes, values, and motives which must be transformed if human beings are to be truly in harmony with God (5:19–48). Only transformation of the inner man, via a redeemed and sensitive heart, can make a human being truly righteous in God’s sight.

The same point is made in other passages which record Christ’s sayings about the Law. Matthew 7:12 and 22:36–40 give Jesus’ summation of the Law. When asked by an “expert in

## INSIGHT

**Significance.** God had warned Adam that the very day he ate the forbidden fruit he would “surely die” (2:17). The act of sin brought immediate spiritual death. Genesis 4 demonstrates the reality of the spiritual death that grips our race. In the murder committed by Cain, and the arrogant selfishness of Lamech, we see the first hint of the crime and the injustice that corrupt human society.

**Cain’s offering.** Why was Cain’s offering unacceptable? Cain brought vegetables that he had grown. Genesis 4:7 indicates that Cain knew it was “right” to sacrifice an animal as an offering to God (cf. 3:21). Cain may have brought his best. But we are sinners, whose access to God calls for blood sacrifice.

**“Cain was very angry” (4:5).** Cain’s anger shows how intent he was on having his own way rather than submitting to God. Anger is a destructive emotion. We can never excuse attacks on others by saying, “I have a bad temper.” We need to acknowledge anger as a sin, and consciously submit to God’s will.

**Why did God protect Cain?** Cain feared he would be killed for murdering his brother. God marked Cain instead. Why? Perhaps to demonstrate that no one who lives away “from the Lord’s presence” can be the source of a just society.

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the law” about the greatest commandment, Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” Here too Jesus shifts attention from compliance with the detailed instructions contained in the Old Testament to heart attitude.

John 1:17, Matthew 11:13, and Luke 16:16–17 contain Jesus’ teachings that a day is coming in which Mosaic Law will be superseded. Jesus said, “The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached.” The Old Testament economy was not rejected, but all that it implied is fulfilled with and in Jesus. He is the Prophet which the first Testament said would come and whose revelations supersede the Mosaic code. That same Old Testament envisions a time when the Law is unnecessary, because God has written it not on stone tablets but in the hearts of believers (cf. Jer. 31).

Another passage that bears on the Law is Matthew 19:3–9. Here the Pharisees ask for an interpretation of the Law on divorce, found in Deuteronomy 24. Jesus responds by pointing to God’s intention as revealed in the Creation. When pressed, Jesus says that God permitted divorce because human hearts were hard. That is, God knew that sin would so warp some marriages that divorce was necessary to dissolve a relationship which otherwise would be destructive. The point here is that the ruling in Deuteronomy 24 proves that Law is a lowered standard! It’s not a way for man to climb closer to God. It’s proof that God in grace required less of Israel than strict righteousness would demand!

Rightly understood, Law reveals the failure of human beings to be truly godly and leads them to cry out to God for grace. No wonder the “poor in spirit” are blessed. Only they realize their spiritual bankruptcy. Those who rely on a righteousness measured by the do’s and don’ts of law never realize that they must appeal to God, to be forgiven and transformed within.

**Cainite civilization.** Gen. 4:20–22 pictures a developed culture, with leisure time for music, and a technology capable of smelting metal ores. But no matter how great human achievements in the material realm, humanity is spiritually crippled. Lamech’s poetic defense of his murderous revenge reminds us that sinful man is still incapable of shaping a world of love, harmony, and peace.

**“The likeness of God” (5:1–2).** “Image” and “likeness” (*selem, demut*) are found together in passages where the essential nature of man is taught (cf. 1:26). Together these make a theological statement: to understand human nature we must see man as originally created, gifted with the “image-likeness” of God. We must not compare our nature with that of any animal, but only with God. What is this image-likeness? What sets us apart is that we share with God attributes of personhood. Like Him, we have a capacity to think, to feel, to choose. This image-likeness makes each human being of worth and value in God’s eyes. We are like Him, and God cares for each one of us. Verses 1–3 remind us, however, that the image which reflected God so well in Adam was warped and twisted in the Fall. Adam passed to us, not the unflawed image-likeness of God, but his own imperfection. Today we are still like God in many respects. But we are also like Adam, in desperate need of Christ and His transforming touch.

**Long lives? (Gen. 5)** Many cultures have stories of long lives for ancestors who lived prior to a great flood. Some have suggested that heavy cloud cover then (cf. 2:5–6) may have cut off the radiation we know today is associated with aging.

**Painful toil (5:29).** The curse on nature (3:17–19) helps shape the O. T.’s view of work. Some passages suggest work can be productive and satisfying. But many reflect the fact that work can be drudgery: unending, unpleasant toil that brings neither fulfillment nor profit. At its best, work reflects the joy God found in creating. At its worst, it reminds us of the burden of Adam’s Fall.

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## GENESIS 4

Cain is the chief actor in this chapter, and his character and conduct are revealed in four different aspects.

### **I. The Worshiper (4:1–5)**

God’s promise in 3:15 and Adam’s faith in 3:20 are both seen in 4:1. Eve brought new life into the world, and she thought her child was the promised Seed. “I have gotten a man—the Lord!” is a possible translation. “Cain” means “acquired”—the baby boy was looked upon as a gift from God. Abel means “vanity, vapor”—it suggests the futility of life apart from God, or perhaps Eve’s disappointment that Cain was not the promised Seed. From the very beginning, we see a division of work: as Cain is identified with the ground, Abel with the flock. God had already cursed the ground (3:17), so Cain is identified with that curse.

This earliest family must have known a definite place for worship, for both sons brought offerings to the Lord. It may be that the glory of God tabernacled at the tree of life, with the way guarded by the cherubim (3:24). Hebrews 11:4 indicates that Abel brought his offering by faith; and Rom. 10:17 teaches that “faith comes by hearing, (NKJV).” This means that God

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<sup>1</sup>Richards, L. (1991). *The Bible reader's companion*. Includes index. (28). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

must have taught Adam and his family how to approach Him, and 3:21 indicates that sacrifice of blood was involved. Hebrews 9:22 states that there must be the shedding of blood before there can be the remission of sin, but Cain brought a bloodless offering from the cursed earth. His offering may have been sincere, but it was not accepted. He had no faith in God's Word or dependence on the sacrifice of a substitute. God probably "answered by fire" (Lev. 9:24) and burned up Abel's offering, but Cain's offering lay there on the altar.

Cain had a form of godliness and religion, but he denied the power (2 Tim. 3:5). First John 3:12 indicates that Cain was a child of the devil, and this means he practiced a false righteousness of the flesh, not the righteousness of God through faith. Jesus called the self-righteous Pharisees "children of the devil" and blamed their kind for the death of Abel (Luke. 11:37–51). Jude 11 talks about "the way of Cain," which is the way of religion without blood, religion based on religious good works and self-righteousness. There are only two religions in the world today: (1) that of Abel that depends on the blood of Christ and His finished work on the cross; and (2) that of Cain that depends on good works and man-pleasing religion. One leads to heaven, the other to hell!

## **II. The Murderer (4:6–8)**

James 1:15 warns us that sin begins in a small way, but grows and leads to death. So it was with Cain. We see disappointment, anger, jealousy, and finally murder. The hatred in his heart led to murder with his hand (Matt. 5:21–26). God saw Cain's faithless heart and fallen countenance and warned him that sin was crouching like a wild beast, waiting to destroy him. God said, "Its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." Alas, Cain fed the wild beast of temptation, then opened the door and invited him in! Cain invited his brother to talk with him, then killed him in cold blood. A child of the devil (1 John 3:12), Cain, like his father, was a liar and a murderer (John 8:44). In chapter 3, we have man sinning against God by disobeying His Word; in chapter 4, we have man sinning against man.

## **III. The Wanderer (4:9–16)**

"Adam, where are you?" "Where is Abel your brother?" How significant are these first two questions in the Bible! Sin always finds us out, even though we try (like Cain) to lie about our sin. Abel's blood cried out for vengeance; Christ's blood cries out peace and forgiveness (Heb. 12:24). God had cursed the serpent and the ground; now He curses Cain. "You are cursed away from the earth..." (v. 11) is a suggested translation. In other words, the ground would not yield increase to Cain, and he would have to wander from place to place in order to live. He would be a fugitive, a wanderer.

Cain did not repent of his sin; instead, he showed remorse and despair. Like his parents, he blamed God. "You have driven me out!" (v. 14, NKJV) He was rejected by heaven and refused by earth! He was condemned to a restlessness that could be cured only by faith.

Note also Cain's fear and hopelessness: "Anyone who finds me will kill me!" (v. 14, NKJV) In grace, God promised to protect Cain and gave him a sign (mark) to verify His promise. (It is not likely that there was a literal mark on Cain; rather, God gave a sign to Cain to assure him. What grace!) Why did God release Cain? For one thing, 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!

Did Cain spend the rest of his life wandering? No! He settled down and built a city! We have here the origin of "civilization"—man's substitute for God's spiritual gifts.

#### **IV. The Builder (4:17–26)**

“Nod” means “to stray, to wander”, so the very land of Cain’s choice speaks of his wandering away from God. He went away from the presence of God (4:16); he had no need for a religion of blood. Cain certainly married one of his sisters, for by then there were many descendants of Adam (5:3 indicates 130 years had passed). Abraham later married his half-sister; why could Cain not marry his full sister, especially in a day when sin had not yet taken its toll in the human body? His son’s name “Enoch” means “initiation” and suggests a new beginning, but it was a beginning without God.

Evaluated from a human point of view, Cain’s descendants are an admirable lot. Jabal (“wanderer”) founded the science of agriculture (v. 20); Jubal founded “culture”—music; and Tubal-Cain founded the metal industries. In outward appearances, Cain’s “city” was a great success, but God made it clear that He had rejected the whole thing. In v. 25, God gave Adam and Eve another seed—Seth—which means “the appointed, the substitute” (taking Abel’s place). God did not try to reform the Cainites. He rejected them and ultimately would condemn them in the flood. 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).

We must take special note of “Lamech’s Message” (vv. 23–24). This passage is not clear, and not all Bible students interpret it the same way. Lamech was the seventh from Adam on Cain’s side and was a man who displeased God, while Enoch was the seventh from Adam on Seth’s side (5:3–27) and walked with God and pleased God (Heb. 11:5). Note that the Cainite line even copied the names of the true believers in Seth’s line (Enoch—Enos; Irad—Jared; Mehujael—Mahalaleel; Lamech—Lamech). Some suggest that Lamech had been wounded by a young man, so had killed his attacker in self-defense. If God had avenged Cain, who was guilty of gross murder, surely He would defend Lamech who had killed in self-defense. Another suggestion is that Tubal-Cain had devised the first weapons of brass and iron and that Lamech had proudly demonstrated them to his wives. The Hebrew verbs can be translated in the future tense: “I will slay anyone who wounds me and will not need God’s protection, for with these weapons I can avenge myself seventy-seven fold!” Seen in this light, it is the first expression of arrogant defiance and warfare in the Bible.

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#### **. The Two Brothers. 4:1-26.**

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<sup>2</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's expository outlines on the Old Testament* (Ge 4:1). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

1. **Cain** (*Qayin*). The word **Cain** is usually associated with the Hebrew word *qānâ*, “to acquire” or “to get.” The derivation is based on the resemblance of sound, rather than on basic etymology. It might be called a play on words. The actual meaning of the word possibly came through the Arabic (“a lance” or “a smith”). Eve was overjoyed at the birth of her son. She exclaimed, “I have gotten a man.” 2. **Abel** (*Hebel*). The name given to the second son indicates “a fleeting breath” or “a vapor.” The cognate Accadian word *aplu* means son. Abel was the originator of pastoral life, while Cain followed his father in the pursuit of agriculture.

3, 4. **An offering** (*min□â*). Each man brought a special present or gift to Jehovah. No mention is made of the altar or of the place of the religious observance. The *min□â*, as the ancients knew it, served to express gratitude, to effect reconciliation with the Lord, and to accompany worship. This account pictures the first act of worship recorded in human history. In each case the worshiper brought something of his own as an oblation to the Lord.

5a. **The Lord had respect** (*shā□â*). The gift brought by Cain was not received by the Lord. No reason is given here for the rejection. And the Scripture does not tell us how God indicated his disapproval. It may be that fire fell from heaven and consumed the accepted offering but left the other untouched. Some have thought that Cain’s offering was rejected because Cain failed to perform the proper ritual. Others have advanced the idea that the nature of the gifts made the difference—the one being flesh and involving death and bloodshed, the other being vegetable, without bloodshed (cf. Heb 9:22). The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives us the inspired explanation of the difference between the offerings: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain ... God bearing witness in respect of his gifts” (Heb 11:4). This explanation centers upon the difference in spirit manifested by the two men. Because Abel was a man of faith, he came in the right spirit and presented worship that pleased God. We have reason to believe that Abel had some realization of his need for substitutionary atonement. To all appearances both offerings expressed gratitude, thanksgiving, and devotion to God. But the man who lacked genuine faith in his heart could not please God even though the material gift was spotless. God did not **look upon** Cain because **He** had already looked *at* him and seen what was in his heart. Abel came to God in the right attitude of heart for worship and in the only way sinful men can approach a holy God. Cain did not.

5b. Cain’s unbridled anger showed itself instantly. Furious wrath blazed out, revealing the spirit that was lodged within the heart. Cain became an enemy of God and hostile to his brother. Thus, wounded pride produced envy and a spirit of revenge. And these brought forth the burning hatred and violence that made murder possible. 6, 7a. **Countenance fallen .... a lifting up**. The heat that blazed within him caused his countenance to “fall.” It brought on brooding and an unlovely, morose spirit. Gently and patiently God dealt with Cain, seeking to save the rebellious sinner. He assured him that if he would sincerely repent, he might again lift up his face in happiness and reconciliation. *Nāsā*, “lift up,” lends itself to the idea of forgiveness. The merciful Jehovah thus held out to Cain the hope of forgiveness and victory as he faced his momentous decision.

7b. **Sin** (*□att□at*) **coucheth** (*rāba□*). Close upon that heartening promise, Jehovah uttered a stiff warning, urging the sinner to control his temper and beware lest a crouching beast (sin) spring upon him and devour him. The danger was real. The deadly beast was even at that

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cf. *confer* (compare)

moment ready to overpower him. God's word demanded instant action and strong effort to repulse the would-be conqueror. Cain must not let these boiling thoughts and impulses drive him to ruinous behavior. God made his strong appeal to Cain's *will*. The will had to be thrown into the struggle to make victory over sin (□*att*□*at*) complete. It was up to Cain to conquer sin in himself, to control rather than be controlled. The moment of destiny was upon him. It was not too late for him to choose the way of God.

9. **Where is Abel thy brother?** Failing to gain the mastery over the savage monster, Cain soon found himself at the mercy of a force that controlled him completely. Almost immediately one son became a murderer and the other a martyr. Jehovah came quickly to confront the murderer with a question. Seemingly he hoped to elicit a confession of guilt that could prepare the way for mercy and full pardon. Though Cain had willfully sinned, he found himself pursued by a loving God, rich in grace. **Am I my brother's keeper?** (*shōmēr*) A shameful response to a question from a loving Father! Petulantly, defiantly, Cain made his reply. Sin already had him in the grip of a vise. He renounced the clamant rights of brotherhood. He refused to show respect to the eternal God. He brazenly leaned back on his own selfish defiance and spoke that which no one should dare to utter.

10. **The voice (*qôl*) of the bloods of thy brother are crying (*sō*□*qi*□*m*) unto me from the ground.** Blood spilled by a murderer, though covered by earth, was crying out to God. Jehovah could hear it, and he understood the meaning of the cry, for he knew of Cain's guilt. How plaintively those **bloods** were crying out for vengeance! The author of Hebrews refers to this experience in the phrase, "the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (12:24).

12. **A fugitive (*nā*□) and a wanderer (*nād*).** The curse pronounced on the murderer involved banishment from food-producing soil to the unproductive desert. The ground, God said, would be hostile to the murderer, so that he could not derive sustenance from tilling the soil. In his search for subsistence, he would become a Bedouin of the waste lands, wandering about in weariness and despair. Insecurity, restlessness, hard struggle, guilt, and fears, were to be his constant "companions." The word for **fugitive** carries the idea of tottering, staggering, stumbling uncertainly along in a fruitless search for satisfaction. It was a dismal, discouraging prospect.

13. **My punishment (□*âwōn*).** Though Cain's life was spared, he trembled under the weight of his sin, his guilt, his punishment, and the unending consequences that loomed before him. The Hebrew word □*âwōn* literally refers to his iniquity, but it also contains the thought of the consequences of his sin. Cain was far more concerned with his sentence than with his sin. **Greater than I can bear.** His bitter cry to God called attention to the unbearable weight of his punishment. It was heavier than he could lift and carry. The Hebrew word *nāsa* carries the ideas of "taking away" (forgiveness) and "lifting up" (expiation). Again, it seems clear that the frightened murderer was thinking of the punishment about to come upon him.

14b. **Every one ... shall slay me.** Dread and despondency began to overwhelm the sinful man as he thought of the perils of the desert. He imagined that cruel foes would delight to kill him. He could feel the hot breath of the avenger on his neck. His active conscience was already at work. In his fear, he was sure that certain destruction awaited him, for he felt that he would be completely outside the circle of God's care. 15. **A sign (*i* □*ôt*) for Cain.** But Jehovah, in mercy, assured Cain of his continuing presence and unending protection. He set a

**sign** on him—evidently a mark or designation to indicate that Cain belonged to the Lord God and must be spared bodily harm. There is no evidence that the 'mark of Cain' was a sign to announce to the world that he was a murderer. It was, rather, a special mark of loving care and protection. Cain would continue always in the safekeeping of the covenant God. Though a murderer, he was the recipient of God's favor.

16. **Land of Nod** (*nôd*). Literally, *land of wandering* or *flight* (cf. 4:12, 14) There is no way to locate this area geographically except to speak of it as being **east of Eden**. Cain was but fulfilling the prediction God made concerning his future existence. Pathetically and stoically he set out into the trackless wastes. The ideas of "flight" and "misery" are discernible in the Hebrew word for **went out**.

17. **His wife** (*ishtë*). The Book of Genesis does not answer the oft-repeated question: Where did Cain get his wife? It does make it clear that many other sons and daughters were born to Adam and Eve. It also presents the lapse of many years (maybe hundreds of years) before Cain's marriage experience. Since all life came from the first divinely created human pair, it is necessary to conclude that at some time brothers and sisters were married to each other. By the time Cain was ready to set up a home, Adam and Eve had numerous descendants. It is not at all necessary to imagine another race of people already well established in the world. Cain's wife was one of the family of Adam and Eve.

25. **Seth** (*Shēt*). The divine narrative has preserved the name **Seth** as that of the third son in Adam's line. The Hebrew word shows marked similarity to the word *shāt*, translated "appointed" or "set." In reality, Seth became the one on whom God could depend as the foundation stone for His family. He was "set" or "appointed" to take up the work and mission of Abel. Cain had forfeited his right to carry forward God's sublime hope. Seth would take the burden and the privilege upon his shoulders. Through his line God would perfect His promises.

26. **Began to call upon the name of Jehovah**. It was a never-to-be-forgotten experience when, under the encouragement of **Enosh** (or Enos), men began to call **upon** (or *with*) the name of Jehovah, the covenant God. Enosh, who was prominent in the line of Seth, was the originator of public prayer and spiritual worship. In it, the ineffable name of the eternal God was used. There was hope for a better day through Seth's descendants.

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<sup>3</sup>Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Ge 4:1). Chicago: Moody Press.