

Bible Study for November 11, 2020

[Adapted from The Serendipity Bible]

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Read Genesis 4 [NET Bible translation, footnotes included]

4 Now^[a] the man was intimate with^[b] his wife Eve, and she became pregnant^[c] and gave birth to Cain. Then she said, “I have created^[d] a man just as the LORD did!”^[e] 2 Then she gave birth^[f] to his brother Abel.^[g] Abel took care of the flocks, while Cain cultivated the ground.^[h]

3 At the designated time^[i] Cain brought some of the fruit of the ground for an offering^[j] to the LORD. 4 But Abel brought^[k] some of the firstborn of his flock—even the fattest^[l] of them. And the LORD was pleased with^[m] Abel and his offering,⁵ but with Cain and his offering he was not pleased.^[n] So Cain became very angry,^[o] and his expression was downcast.^[p]

6 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why is your expression downcast? 7 Is it not true^[q] that if you do what is right, you will be fine?^[r] But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching^[s] at the door. It desires to dominate you, but you must subdue it.”^[t]

8 Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.”^[u] While they were in the field, Cain attacked^[v] his brother^[w] Abel and killed him.

9 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”^[x] And he replied, “I don’t know! Am I my brother’s guardian?”^[y] 10 But the LORD said, “What have you done?^[z] The voice^[aa] of your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground! 11 So now you are banished^[ab] from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. 12 When you try to cultivate^[ac] the ground it will no longer yield^[ad] its best^[ae] for you. You will be a homeless wanderer^[af] on the earth.”

13 Then Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment^[ag] is too great to endure!^[ah] 14 Look, you are driving me off the land^[ai] today, and I must hide from your presence.^[aj] I will be a homeless wanderer on the earth; whoever finds me will kill me!” 15 But the LORD said to him, “All right then,^[ak] if anyone kills Cain, Cain will be avenged seven times as much.”^[al] Then the LORD put a special mark^[am] on Cain so that no

one who found him would strike him down.^[an] ¹⁶ So Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and lived in the land of Nod,^[ao] east of Eden.

¹⁷ Cain was intimate with^[ap] his wife, and she became pregnant^[aq] and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was building a city, and he named the city after^[ar] his son Enoch. ¹⁸ To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad was the father of^[as] Mehujael. Mehujael was the father of Methushael, and Methushael was the father of Lamech.

¹⁹ Lamech took two wives for himself; the name of the first was Adah, and the name of the second was Zillah. ²⁰ Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the first^[at] of those who live in tents and keep^[au] livestock. ²¹ The name of his brother was Jubal; he was the first of all who play the harp and the flute. ²² Now Zillah also gave birth to Tubal-Cain, who heated metal and shaped^[av] all kinds of tools made of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah.

²³ Lamech said to his wives,

“Adah and Zillah, listen to me!
You wives of Lamech, hear my words!
I have killed a man for wounding me,
a young man^[aw] for hurting me.

²⁴ If Cain is to be avenged seven times as much,
then Lamech seventy-seven times!”^[ax]

²⁵ And Adam was intimate with^[ay] his wife again, and she gave birth to a son. She named him Seth, saying, “God has given^[az] me another child^[ba] in place of Abel because Cain killed him.” ²⁶ And a son was also born to Seth, whom he named Enosh. At that time people^[bb] began to worship^[bc] the LORD.

Footnotes

- a. [Genesis 4:1](#) **tn** The disjunctive clause (conjunction + subject + verb) introduces a new episode in the ongoing narrative.
- b. [Genesis 4:1](#) **tn** *Heb* “the man knew,” a frequent euphemism for sexual relations.
- c. [Genesis 4:1](#) **tn** Or “she conceived.”
- d. [Genesis 4:1](#) **tn** Here is another sound play (paronomasia) on a name. The sound of the verb קָנִיתִי (*qaniti*, “I have created”) 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 [Gen 14:19, 22](#); [Deut 32:6](#); [Ps 139:13](#); [Prov 8:22](#)). The latter fits this context very well. Eve has created a man.

- e. [Genesis 4:1](#) **tn** *Heb* “with the LORD.” The particle אֶת (*’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. אֶת; 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 אֶת 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”). **sn** Since [Exod 6:3](#) seems to indicate that the name Yahweh (יְהוָה, *y^hwhah*, translated LORD) was first revealed to Moses (see also [Exod 3:14](#)), it is odd to see it used in quotations in Genesis by people who lived long before Moses. This problem has been resolved in various ways: (1) Source critics propose that [Exod 6:3](#) is part of the “P” (or priestly) tradition, which is at odds with the “J” (or Yahwistic) tradition. (2) Many propose that “name” in [Exod 6:3](#) does not refer to the divine name per se, but to the character suggested by the name. God appeared to the patriarchs primarily in the role of El Shaddai, the giver of fertility, not as Yahweh, the one who fulfills his promises. In this case the patriarchs knew the name Yahweh, but had not experienced the full significance of the name. In this regard it is possible that [Exod 6:3b](#) should not be translated as a statement of denial, but as an affirmation followed by a rhetorical question implying that the patriarchs did indeed know God by the name of Yahweh, just as they knew him as El Shaddai. D. A. Garrett, following the lead of F. Andersen, sees [Exod 6:2-3](#) as displaying a paneled A/B parallelism and translates them as follows: (A) “I am Yahweh.” (B) “And I made myself known to Abraham...as El Shaddai.” (A') “And my name is Yahweh”; (B') “Did I not make myself known to them?” (D. A. Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis*, 21). However, even if one translates the text this way, the LORD’s words do not necessarily mean that he made the name Yahweh known to the fathers.

God is simply affirming that he now wants to be called Yahweh (see [Exod 3:14-16](#)) and that he revealed himself in prior times as El Shaddai. If we stress the parallelism with B, the implied answer to the concluding question might be: “Yes, you did make yourself known to them—as El Shaddai!” The main point of the verse would be that El Shaddai, the God of the fathers, and the God who has just revealed himself to Moses as Yahweh are one and the same. (3) G. J. Wenham suggests that pre-Mosaic references to Yahweh are the product of the author/editor of Genesis, who wanted to be sure that Yahweh was identified with the God of the fathers. In this regard, note how Yahweh is joined with another divine name or title in [Gen 9:26-27](#); [14:22](#); [15:2, 8](#); [24:3, 7, 12, 27, 42, 48](#); [27:20](#); [32:9](#). The angel uses the name Yahweh when instructing Hagar concerning her child’s name, but the actual name (Ishma-el, “El hears”) suggests that El, not Yahweh, originally appeared in the angel’s statement ([16:11](#)). In her response to the angel Hagar calls God El, not Yahweh ([16:13](#)). In [22:14](#) Abraham names the place of sacrifice “Yahweh Will Provide” (cf. [v. 16](#)), but in [v. 8](#) he declares, “God will provide.” God uses the name Yahweh when speaking to Jacob at Bethel ([28:13](#)) and Jacob also uses the name when he awakens from the dream ([28:16](#)). Nevertheless he names the place Beth El (“house of El”). In [31:49](#) Laban prays, “May Yahweh keep watch,” but in [v. 50](#) he declares, “God is a witness between you and me.” Yahweh’s use of the name in [15:7](#) and [18:14](#) may reflect theological idiom, while the use in [18:19](#) is within a soliloquy. (Other uses of Yahweh in quotations occur in [16:2, 5](#); [24:31, 35, 40, 42, 44, 48, 50, 51, 56](#); [26:22, 28-29](#); [27:7, 27](#); [29:32-35](#); [30:24, 30](#); [49:18](#). In these cases there is no contextual indication that a different name was originally used.) For a fuller discussion of this proposal, see G. J. Wenham, “The Religion of the Patriarchs,” *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives*, 189-93.

- f. [Genesis 4:2](#) **tn** *Heb* “And she again gave birth.”
- g. [Genesis 4:2](#) **sn** The name *Abel* is not defined here in the text, but the tone is ominous. Abel’s name, the Hebrew word הֶבֶל (*hevel*), means “breath, vapor, vanity,” foreshadowing Abel’s untimely and premature death.
- h. [Genesis 4:2](#) **tn** *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, רֹעֶה (*ro‘eh*, “shepherd”) and עֹבֵד (‘*oved*, “worker”). Abel is occupied with sheep, whereas Cain is living under the curse, cultivating the ground.

- i. [Genesis 4:3](#) **tn** *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.
- j. [Genesis 4:3](#) **tn** 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.
- k. [Genesis 4:4](#) **tn** *Heb* “But Abel brought, also he....” The disjunctive clause (conjunction plus subject plus verb) stresses the contrast between Cain’s offering and Abel’s.
- l. [Genesis 4:4](#) **tn** 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). **sn** Here are two types of worshipers—one (Cain) merely discharges a duty at the proper time, while the other (Abel) goes out of his way to please God with the first and the best.
- m. [Genesis 4:4](#) **tn** The Hebrew verb שָׁחַ (*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.
- n. [Genesis 4:5](#) **sn** The Letter to the Hebrews explains the difference between the brothers as one of faith—Abel *by faith* offered a better sacrifice. Cain’s offering as well as his reaction to God’s displeasure did not reflect faith. See further B. K. Waltke, “Cain and His Offering,” *WTJ* 48 (1986): 363-72.
- o. [Genesis 4:5](#) **tn** *Heb* “and it was hot to Cain.” This Hebrew idiom means that Cain “burned” with anger.
- p. [Genesis 4:5](#) **tn** *Heb* “And his face fell.” The idiom means that the inner anger is reflected in Cain’s facial expression. 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.

- q. [Genesis 4:7](#) **tn** 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.
- r. [Genesis 4:7](#) **tn** The Hebrew text is difficult, because only one word occurs, **נָאֵץ** (*s'et*), which appears to be the infinitive construct from the verb "to lift up" (**נָאָץ**, *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.
- s. [Genesis 4:7](#) **tn** The Hebrew term translated "crouching" (**רֹבֵץ**, *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" (see E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* [AB], 29, 32-33).
- t. [Genesis 4:7](#) **tn** *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](#)," *JETS* 23 (1980): 297-306.
- u. [Genesis 4:8](#) **tc** The MT 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 (Smr, LXX, Vulgate, and Syriac), which include Cain's words, "Let's go out to the field," preserve the original reading here. After

writing אָחִיו (*'akhiyv*, “his brother”), a scribe’s eye may have jumped to the end of the form בַּשָּׂדֶה (*bassadeh*, “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 אָחִיו is graphically similar to the final ה (*he*) on בַּשָּׂדֶה.

- v. [Genesis 4:8](#) **tn** *Heb* “arose against” (in a hostile sense).
- w. [Genesis 4:8](#) **sn** The word “brother” appears six times in [vv. 8-11](#), stressing the shocking nature of Cain’s fratricide (see [1 John 3:12](#)).
- x. [Genesis 4:9](#) **sn** *Where is Abel your brother?* Again the LORD confronts a guilty sinner with a rhetorical question (see [Gen 3:9-13](#)), asking for an explanation of what has happened.
- y. [Genesis 4:9](#) **tn** *Heb* “The one guarding my brother [am] I?” **sn** *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. See P. A. Riemann, “Am I My Brother’s Keeper?” *Int* 24 (1970): 482-91.
- z. [Genesis 4:10](#) **sn** *What have you done?* Again the LORD’s question is rhetorical (see [Gen 3:13](#)), condemning Cain for his sin.
- aa. [Genesis 4:10](#) **tn** The word “voice” is a personification; the evidence of Abel’s shed blood condemns Cain, just as a human eyewitness would testify in court. For helpful insights, see G. von Rad, *Biblical Interpretations in Preaching*; and L. Morris, “The Biblical Use of the Term ‘Blood,’” *JTS* 6 (1955/56): 77-82.
- bb. [Genesis 4:11](#) **tn** *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 [vv. 12b, 14](#)).
- cc. [Genesis 4:12](#) **tn** *Heb* “work.”
- dd. [Genesis 4:12](#) **tn** *Heb* “it will not again (תֹּסֵף, *tosef*) give (תֵּת, *tet*),” meaning the ground will no longer yield. In translation the infinitive becomes the main verb, and the imperfect verb form becomes adverbial.

- ee. [Genesis 4:12](#) **tn** *Heb* “its strength.”
- ff. [Genesis 4:12](#) **tn** Two similar sounding synonyms are used here: נָדָד וְנָגַד (*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).
- gg. [Genesis 4:13](#) **tn** The primary meaning of the Hebrew word אָוֹן (*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.
- hh. [Genesis 4:13](#) **tn** *Heb* “great is my punishment from bearing.” The preposition מִן (*min*, “from”) is used here in a comparative sense.
- ii. [Genesis 4:14](#) **tn** *Heb* “from upon the surface of the ground.”
- jj. [Genesis 4:14](#) **sn** *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](#).
- kk. [Genesis 4:15](#) **tn** The Hebrew term לָכֵן (*lakhen*, “therefore”) in this context carries the sense of “Okay,” or “in that case then I will do this.”
- ll. [Genesis 4:15](#) **sn** 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 [Pss 12:6; 79:12; Prov 6:31; Isa 30:26](#).
- mm. [Genesis 4:15](#) **tn** *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.
- nn. [Genesis 4:15](#) **sn** God becomes Cain’s protector. Here is common grace—Cain and his community will live on under God’s care, but without salvation.
- oo. [Genesis 4:16](#) **sn** The name *Nod* means “wandering” in Hebrew (see [vv. 12, 14](#)).
- pp. [Genesis 4:17](#) **tn** *Heb* “knew,” a frequent euphemism for sexual relations.
- qq. [Genesis 4:17](#) **tn** Or “she conceived.”
- rr. [Genesis 4:17](#) **tn** *Heb* “according to the name of.”
- ss. [Genesis 4:18](#) **tn** *Heb* “and Irad fathered.”

- tt. [Genesis 4:20](#) **tn** *Heb* “father.” In this passage the word “father” means “founder,” referring to the first to establish such lifestyles and occupations.
- uu. [Genesis 4:20](#) **tn** The word “keep” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation. Other words that might be supplied instead are “tend,” “raise” (NIV), or “have” (NRSV).
- vv. [Genesis 4:22](#) **tn** 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.
- ww. [Genesis 4:23](#) **tn** The Hebrew term יָלֵד (*yeled*) probably refers to a youthful warrior here, not a child.
- xx. [Genesis 4:24](#) **sn** *Seventy-seven times*. Lamech seems to reason this way: If Cain, a murderer, is to be avenged seven times (see [v. 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.
- yy. [Genesis 4:25](#) **tn** *Heb* “knew,” a frequent euphemism for sexual relations.
- zz. [Genesis 4:25](#) **sn** The name *Seth* probably means something like “placed”; “appointed”; “set”; “granted,” assuming it is actually related to the verb that is used in the sentiment. At any rate, the name שֵׁט (*shet*) and the verb שָׁט (*shat*, “to place, to appoint, to set, to grant”) form a wordplay (paronomasia).
- aaa. [Genesis 4:25](#) **tn** *Heb* “offspring.”
- bbb. [Genesis 4:26](#) **tn** The word “people” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation. The construction uses a passive verb without an expressed subject. “To call was begun” can be interpreted to mean that people began to call.
- ccc. [Genesis 4:26](#) **tn** *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](#)). See G. J. Wenham, *Genesis* (WBC), 1:116.

Questions to consider:

1. Whom did you envy as a child?

2. Did you ever suspect your parents of having favourites among your siblings?
3. God accepts both animal and grain sacrifices [see Leviticus 6.14-30]. Why then, do you think God rejects Cain's sacrifice?
4. When God tells Cain to "do what is right" [v.7], what does this tell you about the man's source of anger? The strength of anger? God's way of soothing anger?
5. After the murder of Abel, why do you think God approaches Cain as he does? Why not directly accuse Cain? Why delay punishment? Why protect Cain?
6. Did Cain repent of his sin? How does his confession [vv.13-14] and the Lord's reply [vv.16-17] shed light on this?
7. How would you assess the way you handle anger? What would you like to do differently with your anger?
8. Cain is promised frustration at work and restlessness in life [vv.11-12]. How are you experiencing either of these?
9. Are you your brother's keeper? How so?