**Research on: Cain and Abel**

“The narrative, which forms part of the primitive document, impressively shows how sin, having once appeared, became hereditary in the human race, and speedily developed into its most revolting form. Its details enable us to see how jealousy, when indulged, leads to hatred and murder, and violates not only the ties of humanity but those of family affection” (Dummelow 11).

**Gen. 4:1-5, 8-12, 16**

1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.

**Knew** is *yada* in Hebrew which means “ascertain by seeing; acknowledge; to observe with the eyes; to turn the mind to something; care about;” ([www.blueletterbible.org)](http://www.blueletterbible.org)).

**Conceive** is *harah* in Hebrew which means “to become pregnant; be with child; conceive” ([www.blueletterbible.org)](http://www.blueletterbible.org)).

“From the Lord means ‘*with the help of the Lord’*” (Dummelow 11).

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

“The Hebrews attached a great importance to names, which were mostly regarded as descriptive of some characteristic in the thing of person on whom they were bestowed” (Dummelow 11).

**Abel** is *Hebel* in Hebrew which means “breath”; the breath of the mouth; commonly used of anything transitory, evanescent, frail, something vain and empty; and the second son of Adam and Eve, killed by his brother Cain; probably so called from the shortness of his life” ([www.blueletterbible.org)](http://www.blueletterbible.org)).

Cain’s name is a play upon the Hebrew infinitive ***qanah*** meaning “to purchase, buy, get, possess.” The name “Cain” finds its derivation in this Hebrew word – **Qayin**, a spear. This name is suggested in the fact that he murders his brother.

“Cain’s name is represented as a derivation of a word meaning ‘acquire,’ ‘get’ – of the popular etymologies frequent in Genesis – hence the mother’s words ***I have gotten a man from the Lord***.” (*IBC*.1.519).

**Keeper** is *ra’ah* in Hebrew which means “to tend, pasture, shepherd, a herdsman” ([www.blueletterbible.org)](http://www.blueletterbible.org)).

**Tiller** is *abad* in Hebrew which means “ to work, to serve, to labor, work for another, serve another by labor, to be led or enticed to serve” ([www.blueletterbible.org)](http://www.blueletterbible.org)).

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

**Offering** is *minchah* in Hebrew which means “a gift, present, tribute, offering to God” ([www.blueletterbible.org)](http://www.blueletterbible.org)).

4 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:

“***And the Lord had respect***. The characters of the brothers rather than their offerings are kept chiefly in view. Many passages show that the decisive reason why a worshipper is accepted or rejected lies in the disposition with which he draws nigh. . . Possibly the toilsome life in tilling the soil and the easier existence of Abel, makes Cain envious” (Dummerlow 11).

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

**Fell** is *naphal* in Hebrew which means “to throw down or prostrate oneself, to lie prostrate, to fall short, fail, to be inferior to” ([www.blueletterbible.org)](http://www.blueletterbible.org)).

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

“The field means the open country, where Cain thought he would be safe from observation.” (*IBC*.1.519).

“And Cain told Abel ‘Let us go into the open country, showing Cain’s intention to murder. In his case the harbored jealousy tempted him not merely to take an opportunity of using violence, but to make one.” (Dummelow 11).

**Slew** is *harag* in Hebrew which means “to slay, murder, destroy, to kill” ([www.blueletterbible.org)](http://www.blueletterbible.org)).

“Malice in the heart ends in murder by the hands. Cain slew Abel, his own brother, his own mother's son, whom he ought to have loved; his younger brother, whom he ought to have protected; a good brother, who had never done him any wrong. . . Observe the pride, unbelief, and impenitence of Cain. He denies the crime, as if he could conceal it from God. He tries to cover a deliberate murder with a deliberate lie” (Matthew Henry’s Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

9 And the Lord said unto Cain, Where *is* Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: *Am* I my brother’s keeper?

**Keeper** is *shamar* in Hebrew which means “to keep, guard, give heed, to keep watch, protect, watchman” ([www.blueletterbible.org)](http://www.blueletterbible.org)).

“Cain sounds a much lower depth of depravity than his parents. Besides the guilt of murder, there is the impudent denial that he has harmed Abel, and the repudiation of responsibility for his safety” (Dummelow 11).

“**I do not know**. Cain defiantly lies, stifling all conscience and expressing no remorse.

“An I my brother’s keeper? The sevenfold stress in this chapter on the obvious fraternal relationship of Cain and Abel emphatically teaches that man is indeed his brother’s keeper and that all homicide is fratricide” (Torah Commentary: Genesis, 34).

10 And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground.

“**What have you done**? Not a question, but a cry of horror” (Torah Commentary: Genesis, 34).

“The ground, which has been unwillingly obliged to drink the blood of Abel, is represented as refusing to tolerate his murderer or to make him an adequate return for his toil” (Dummelow 11.)

11 And now *art* thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand;

“**Blood** in Hebrew is *damim* and is plural, a usage that, with rare exceptions, appears in a context of bloodshed or bloodguilt. ‘Whoever takes a single life destroys thereby an entire world.’

“A breach of the moral law inevitably sets in motion countervailing forces that must ultimately prevail because they are sustained by God Himself. Cain, tiller of the soil, whose criminal act was the outcome of his offering the fruits of the soil, stained the earth with his brother’s blood. It is fitting, then, that the earth be the instrument of his punishment. It will no longer yield him its produce, and so he can no longer pursue his vocation. He must perforce become a vagrant and an outcast.” (Torah Commentary: Genesis, 34).

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

**Fugitive** is *nuwa* in Hebrew which means “to wave, quiver, totter, shake, stagger, wander, move, sift, tremble, be unstable, vagabond, to toss about” ([www.blueletterbible.org)](http://www.blueletterbible.org)).

“a fugitive—condemned to perpetual exile; a degraded outcast; the miserable victim of an accusing conscience” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

**Vagabond** is *nuwd* in Hebrew which means “to shake, waver, wander, move to and fro, to show grief, lament, show sympathy, to cause to wander aimlessly, be a fugitive” ([www.blueletterbible.org)](http://www.blueletterbible.org)).

“The word for “a fugitive” means “one who staggers, or reels,” from weakness, faintness, or weariness.

Two points are to be noticed in this sentence upon Cain:

(1) He is sent forth from the cultivated soil: in other words, he is banished into the desert. He is to lead the life, neither of the shepherd, nor of the tiller of the soil, but of the roaming Bedouin of the desert.

(2) His wandering is not the result of a guilty conscience, but of a Divine sentence. It is his penalty to lead the nomad life of the desert, homeless and insecure and restless. Whereas Adam was banished from the garden to till the soil ([Genesis 3:17](http://biblehub.com/genesis/3-17.htm)), now that soil is to refuse its fruits to Cain, and he must fly into the desert” (Cambridge Bible, www.biblehub.com).

16 And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

**Presence** is *paniym* in Hebrew which means “in the presence, the face of, before and behind, in front of, the face of God; Peniel” ([www.blueletterbible.org)](http://www.blueletterbible.org)).

**Nod** is *nowd* in Hebrew which means “wandering” flight or exile” ([www.blueletterbible.org)](http://www.blueletterbible.org)).

**Eden** is *eden* in Hebrew which means “pleasure; the first habitat of man after the creation; site unknown” ([www.blueletterbible.org)](http://www.blueletterbible.org)).