



A SURVEY OF THE SCRIPTURAL
AND LEGENDARY TRADITIONS

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CAIN AND HIS FAMILY

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It is one of the best known episodes in the Bible and one of the foundational stories of our culture: the brothers Cain and Abel, the sinner and the saint, and the murder of the saint by the sinner resulting in divine retribution in the form of a curse and an identifying mark on the sinner. But the biblical account of what happened next is not as well known. Expelled from the land of Eden for his sin, Cain later builds a city and becomes the ancestor of a line of Pre-Flood patriarchs. The Cainites subsequently perish in the Flood, and Cain's lineage is blotted out completely. While it is true that all the hopes and striving and accomplishments of Cain and his family ended in vanity and futility, nevertheless the biblical story of Cain and his family was not told in vain. As we shall see in this survey of the ancient scriptural and legendary traditions about Cain and the Cainites, there is much that the Holy Spirit intends us to learn from their story.

INTRODUCTION:

“I HAVE GOTTEN A MAN . . .”

After Adam and Eve committed the primal sin and were expelled from the "Paradise" or garden of Eden, they settled near the garden and began their lives of toil and suffering in a world that had been marred by sin. Immediately after the account of their expulsion from Paradise, the story is told in Gen. 4:1-5 of the births of their eldest children:

"Adam was intimate with Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, 'I have

gotten [Heb. *kanah*] a man from God.' She again bore his brother Abel. Abel was a

keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. It happened after some time that Cain

brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the LORD. Abel also brought of the

firstlings of his sheep and of his fatlings. God looked favorably upon Abel and his offering, but He

did not regard Cain and his offering. Cain was very angry [Septuagint: 'very sorrowful'], and his

face was downcast."

Eve's joyful, even triumphant, exclamation at the birth of her firstborn son - - "I have gotten a man from God" -- reminds us of the promise of salvation in Gen. 3:15, in which God prophesies ongoing strife between the Serpent and the Woman, and between the "seed" or offspring of the Serpent and the offspring of the Woman. During the course of this strife, the Woman's seed would crush the head of the Serpent, but the Serpent would strike the Woman's seed in His heel. The birth of Cain may have raised Eve's hopes and expectations, encouraging her that perhaps the promised redemption would be accomplished through Cain.

But if she hoped that Cain would be the Redeemer, her hopes would prove to have been misplaced. Setting a pattern that would be repeated many times in the history of the human race and of the Chosen People, the firstborn or the elder son fell into sin while a younger son followed the paths of holiness. This was true not only in the case of Cain and Abel (and the third son Seth, who took Abel's place as progenitor of the righteous seed), but also with the sons of Noah (Shem, apparently the third and youngest son, is almost always listed first) as well as the sons of Terah (again, Abraham, apparently the third and youngest son, is always listed first). This pattern continues with the successive generations of the patriarchs. The promises devolved upon Isaac instead of his older brother Ishmael; upon Jacob instead of his older brother Esau; upon Judah, Levi, and Joseph instead of their older brother Reuben; and upon David instead of any of his seven older brothers. Each time, the offspring of the elder son or sons would express hostility towards the offspring of the younger son, or would even be noted for unfaithfulness to God.

CHAPTER I

CAIN AND HIS OFFERING

However, at first glance Cain seems to be a faithful worshipper of God -- or so it might appear that he was at first. He and his brother Abel both brought their offerings to God, as their parents must have taught them to do. Cain offered God a portion of the fruit of his agricultural labors, and Abel offered God a portion of his flock. But, in some way that the Scriptures do not explain, God made it known that He was pleased with Abel's offering but displeased with Cain's offering. Perhaps, as some have thought, and as some of the ancient legends state, God signaled His approval by sending fire to consume Abel's offering, as He did to the offerings of Gideon and Elijah.

The Scriptures do not clearly state what it was about Cain's offering that displeased God. Certainly it is not that offerings of grains or vegetables are inferior to animal sacrifices -- God commanded Israel to sacrifice both vegetables and beasts, and in Psalm 50 and Psalm 51, God explains that, in a real or ultimate sense, the blood of bulls and goats means nothing to Him. Probably the explanation is found in the words of the text, "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstlings of his sheep and of his fatlings." That is, Cain offered God a portion of his agricultural yield, whereas Abel brought the firstlings and fatlings, the very best of his flock. By implication, Cain was not careful to give God the best he had or the firstfruits of his harvest, indicating that Cain's devotion to God was not as strong as Abel's.

As it happens, the Septuagint rendering of Gen. 4:7 is very different from the textual reading found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the later Hebrew Masoretic text. As we saw above, after the sacrifice and God's expression of displeasure, Cain grew angry and his face was downcast. God then confronted Cain. In the Septuagint, the text says:

"And the LORD God said to Cain, 'Why have you become angry and why is your face

downcast? Have you not sinned if you have brought it rightly, but not rightly divided it?

Be still -- to you shall be his submission, and you shall rule over him.'" (Gen. 4:6-7)

"Not rightly divided it" suggests that Cain had offered God an imperfect sacrifice, keeping the better part of the harvest for himself. But in his *City of God*, St. Augustine of Hippo presented a different interpretation of the Septuagint's "not rightly divided." According to St. Augustine, Cain gave God some of his possessions but did not give God what He really wanted -- his heart. Cain did not have faith, as indicated by Heb. 11:4, which says that it was by faith that Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain. In other words, Cain's heart was disposed to evil, and that evil disposition would shortly display itself with Cain's murder of his brother, as St. John said:

"For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one

another. Not as Cain, who was of the wicked one, and slew his brother. And why

did he slay him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."

(I John 3:11-12)

In contrast to the Septuagint's "not rightly divided" reading, the Hebrew Masoretic and the Dead Sea Scrolls show the following version of Gen. 4:6-7

"And the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry, and why is your face downcast?

If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you don't do well, sin crouches at

the door. Its desire is to have you, but you must rule over it.'"

Although the Septuagint's reading is probably based on a Hebrew text of Genesis that is older than both the Masoretic and the Dead Sea Scrolls, in this case the Masoretic and Dead Sea Scrolls seem to have the better reading. The meaning of the Septuagint's admonition, "Be still -- to you shall be his submission, and you shall rule over him," is not at all obvious. Who shall submit to Cain? Over whom shall Cain rule? Perhaps we should understand "him" as a reference to Abel. Was God saying that if Cain controlled his anger and repented, God would favor him above Abel? That interpretation is possible, even if the meaning of the text is unclear. In comparison, the Masoretic/Dead Sea Scrolls reading presents no such interpretive difficulties, and in fact shows a sublime moral theology, exhibiting the drama of the inner struggle against temptation and the inclination toward sin that we all experience, and portraying sin as a deadly beast lying in wait to pounce on us and devour us.

In any case, whatever reading of Gen. 4:6-7 is the correct one, we may conclude that this scripture passage indicates that Cain's offering was displeasing to God because his heart was not right with God. As St. John said, "his own works were evil."

Cain's offering in Jewish legend

The stories of Cain and his family were embellished and interpreted in the various ancient Jewish legends that are recorded in such sources as the pre-Christian apocryphal Book of Jubilees (circa 100 B.C.), the so-called books of Adam and Eve (three pre-Christian apocryphal works that were redacted and rewritten by Christian editors), the historical writings of Flavius

Josephus (circa 90 A.D.), and the medieval collection of Jewish midrash known as the *Sepher ha-Yashar* (Book of Jasher, circa 1200 A.D.).

Of these legendary sources, the Book of Jubilees has the least to say about Cain and his family, with the books of Adam and Eve and the Book of Jasher offering the most embellishments. Regarding Cain's offering, the Book of Jubilees says only that "in the first (year) of the third jubilee, Cain slew Abel because (God) accepted the sacrifice of Abel, and did not accept the offering of Cain." (Jubilees 4:2) Thus, the author of Jubilees mentions the fact that God did not accept Cain's offering, but does not venture to explain why Cain's offering was displeasing to God -- unless, that is, there is any significance to the use of the word "sacrifice" for Abel's gifts as opposed to the use of the word "offering" for Cain's gifts.

Two of the three books of Adam and Eve, the *Life of Adam and Eve* and the erroneously-named *Apocalypse of Moses*, are very similar to each other, because the *Apocalypse* is in fact an embellished and redacted version of the *Life*. Neither of those books mentions the episode of Cain and Abel's offerings, nor do they provide an explanation for Cain's murder of Abel. However, the third book of Adam and Eve -- traditionally divided into "First" and "Second" Adam and Eve, and sometimes known as *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* -- not only tells the story of Cain and Abel's offerings with much added detail that is neither found in nor would be suspected from the biblical narrative, but it goes so far as to introduce an entirely different motive for Cain's murder of Abel. In *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*, God's disapproval of Cain's offering plays a comparatively minor role in the events leading up to Abel's murder. Instead, this legend says that Cain, who from an early age began to display a character that was proud, hard-hearted, impious, and violent (I Adam and Eve 76:1-2), was moved to do away with pious and godly Abel because Cain wanted to marry his sister Luluwa, whom Adam and Eve intended Abel to marry (I Adam and Eve 76:10-12; 78:1-12). Upon learning from Satan about his parents' plans for Luluwa and Abel, Cain confronted his mother in anger:

". . . he went to Eve, his mother, and beat her, and cursed her, and said to her,

'Why are you planning to take my sister to wed her to my brother?
Am I dead?'

His mother, however, quieted him, and sent him to the field where
he had been.

Then when Adam came, she told him of what Cain had done. But
Adam grieved

and held his peace, and said not a word. Then on the next morning
Adam said to

Cain his son, 'Take of your sheep, young and good, and offer them
up to your

God; and I will speak to your brother, to make to his God an
offering of corn.'

They both obeyed their father Adam, and they took their offerings,
and offered

them up on the mountain by the altar." (I Adam and Eve 78:12-17)

It is remarkable that in this legend the offerings of Cain and Abel have
been reversed. Contrary to what the Scriptures say, in this tale it is Cain
who offers animal sacrifices and Abel who offers grains and vegetables. It
is possible that this alteration reflects a bowdlerisation of the biblical
narrative by an Encratic Christian heretic who rejected the killing and
eating of animals, perhaps due to a "Manichaeian" rejection of created
matter. The introduction of the motive of Cain's jealousy over his sister
Luluwa also seems to be suggestive of Encratism.

Continuing with this greatly embellished account of Cain and Abel's
sacrifice, *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* says:

"But Cain behaved haughtily towards his brother, and shoved him from the altar,

and would not let him offer up his gift on the altar; but he offered his own on it,

with a proud heart, full of guile, and fraud. But as for Abel, he set up stones that

were near at hand, and on that, he offered up his gift with a heart humble and free

from guile. Cain was then standing by the altar on which he had offered up his

gift; and he cried to God to accept his offering; but God did not accept it from him;

neither did a divine fire come down to consume his offering. But he remained

standing over against the altar, out of humor and meanness, looking towards his

brother Abel, to see if God would accept his offering or not. And Abel prayed

to God to accept his offering. Then a divine fire came down and consumed his

offering. And God smelled the sweet savor of his offering; because Abel loved

Him and rejoiced in Him. And because God was well pleased with him, He sent

him an angel of light in the figure of a man who had partaken of his offering,

because He had smelled the sweet savor of his offering, and they comforted Abel

and strengthened his heart. But Cain was looking on all that took place at his

brother's offering, and was angry because of it. Then he opened his mouth and

blasphemed God, because He had not accepted his offering. But God said to

Cain, 'Why do you look sad? Be righteous, that I may accept your offering. Not

against Me have you murmured, but against yourself.' And God said this to Cain

in rebuke, and because He abhorred him and his offering. And Cain came down

from the altar, his color changed and with a sad face, and came to his father and

mother and told them all that had befallen him. And Adam grieved much because

God had not accepted Cain's offering." (I Adam and Eve 78:18-28)

In this retelling of the story of the offerings of Cain and Abel, there can be no doubt about the reason God did not accept Cain's offering. In fact, the drama of this episode almost seems anticlimactic, since the author had already gone to such lengths to establish Cain's wickedness and impiety. Even prior to this episode, the author had explained that Cain never liked offering sacrifices, and that God therefore did not accept Cain's sacrifices (I Adam and Eve 77:7-8). The way the author told this story, there could be no question that God could never accept such a sacrifice as Cain offered.

As mentioned above, the legends found in the books of Adam and Eve were Jewish in origin (several of the same legends that appear in these books are also mentioned in ancient Jewish rabbinical writings), but the books themselves are Christian writings. When it comes to specifically Jewish interpretations or embellishments of the story of Cain and Abel's offerings, it is the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria and the Jewish priest and historian Josephus who provide us with the earliest known Jewish interpretations of this episode. To Philo, Cain is the type of covetousness, folly, and impiety, and in a treatise on the sacrifices of Abel and Cain, Philo identifies Cain as the type of self-love (cf. "the way of Cain" in Jude 10-13). Josephus presents Cain as suffering from those same moral flaws:

"Adam and Eve had two sons. The elder of them was named Cain, which name,

when it is interpreted, signifies *a possession*; the younger was Abel, which signifies

sorrow. They had also daughters. Now, the two brethren were pleased with

different courses of life; for Abel, the younger, was a lover of righteousness, and,

believing that God was present at all his actions, he excelled in virtue, and his

employment was that of a shepherd. But Cain was not only very wicked in other

respects, but was wholly intent upon getting, and he first contrived to plough the

ground. He slew his brother on the occasion following: -- They had resolved to

sacrifice to God. Now Cain brought the fruits of the earth, and of his husbandry;

but Abel brought milk, and the first-fruits of his flocks; but God was more delighted

with the latter oblation, when he was honoured with what grew naturally of its own

accord, than he was with what was the invention of a covetous man, and gotten

by forcing the ground; whence it was that Cain was very angry that Abel was

preferred by God before him;" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, I, II, 1)

In this account, Josephus examines the occupations of Cain and Abel to find clues to their respective characters. According to Josephus, Cain's decision to become a farmer is associated with a covetous, domineering and controlling nature, while Abel's decision to become a shepherd is linked to his righteousness and virtue. Because Abel believed that God is omnipresent, he chose an occupation in which he tended and guarded God's creation, but because Cain did not believe as his brother, but was a covetous man, he exploited the earth and "forced" the ground. For that reason -- not because farming is a sinful line of work, nor because God does not accept vegetable offerings, but because of Cain's wicked motives in becoming a farmer -- God did not accept Cain's offering of vegetables and grain.

In contrast, the Book of Jasher tells the story of the birth of Cain and Abel and their offerings in this way:

"And the Lord God drove them that day from the garden of Eden, to till the

ground from which they were taken, and they went and dwelt at the east of

the garden of Eden; and Adam knew his wife Eve and she bore two sons and

three daughters. And she called the name of the first born Cain, saying, 'I have

obtained a man from the Lord,' and the name of the other she called Abel, for

she said, 'In vanity we came into the earth, and in vanity we shall be taken from

it.' And the boys grew up and their father gave them a possession in the land;

and Cain was a tiller of the ground, and Abel a keeper of sheep. And it was at

the expiration of a few years, that they brought an approximating offering to the

Lord, and Cain brought from the fruit of the ground, and Abel brought from the

firstlings of his flock from the fat thereof, and God turned and inclined to Abel

and his offering, and a fire came down from the Lord from heaven and consumed

it. And unto Cain and his offering the Lord did not turn, and he did not incline to

it, for he had brought from the inferior fruit of the ground before the Lord, and

Cain was jealous against his brother Abel on account of this, and he sought a

pretext to slay him." (Jasher 1:12-16)

In accordance with the speculation of other writers, this midrash says that God made known His acceptance of Abel's offering by sending fire from heaven to consume it. However, Cain's offering was not accepted by God, because it was "the inferior fruit of the ground." Apparently that means not that God likes animal sacrifices better than vegetable offerings, but that, as the Septuagint says and even the Masoretic text suggests, Cain was not careful to bring God the best of the harvest. The consensus of ancient Jewish and Christian tradition, then, is that Cain's offering was unacceptable either because it was not the best of the harvest, or because Cain had a selfish and covetous heart, or both. God was not first in Cain's life, and that became evident in the way he offered his sacrifice.

CHAPTER II

THE MURDER OF ABEL

Despite God's admonition, Cain did not repent. Rather, he nursed his anger and jealousy, and sought an opportunity to "get even" with his brother.

"Cain said to Abel his brother, 'Let us go out to the field.' It came to pass while

they were in the field that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him.

The LORD God said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' He said, 'I do not

know. Am I my brother's keeper?' The LORD said, 'What have you done?

The voice of your brother's blood cries to Me out of the ground.'" (Gen. 4:8-10)

It should be mentioned that both the Masoretic text and the Dead Sea Scrolls have a defective reading in Gen. 4:8. In agreement with the ancient Targumim, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Aramaic Peshitta, the Greek Septuagint says, "And Cain said to Abel his brother, 'Let us go out to the field.' And it came to pass while they were in the field" But the Hebrew Masoretic text and the Hebrew scrolls from Qumran say, "And

Cain said to Abel his brother. And it came to pass while they were in the field" Perhaps while an ancient scribe was copying this text, his eyes strayed from the first "field" to the second "field," causing the accidental deletion of what Cain said to Abel. Because the Hebrew texts are lacking the words "Let us go out to the field," English translations usually render the Hebrew words for "Cain said to Abel his brother" as, "Cain spoke to Abel his brother" or "Cain told Abel his brother."

Notwithstanding that mistake in the Masoretic and the Qumran texts, all manuscripts agree that, given a chance to resist temptation, Cain chose to indulge his basest desires. As it says in the Book of Wisdom in reference to Cain's murder of Abel, "But when the unjust man withdrew from [wisdom] in his anger, he perished through his fratricidal wrath" (Wisdom 10:3). Then, having committed murder, God gave him a chance to confess his sin, but Cain lied to God and pretended not to know where Abel was or what had become of him. Cain's attempt to mislead or misdirect the omniscient and omnipresent God is a further indication of his lack of faith. As Josephus suggested, Cain apparently did not believe that God was present at all his actions -- and so the first baby ever born became the world's first murderer.

The enormity of the crime of murder is expressed in God's declaration that Abel's blood was crying to God -- but not crying for mercy and forgiveness for Cain, but for justice, for vengeance (Heb. 12:24). Beginning with the story of Abel's murder, the Scriptures continually teach the need for severe justice and reparations to atone for the shedding of the blood of the innocent. In the Gospels, Jesus identified Abel's murder as the first in a long, bloody roll of martyrdoms, the wicked rising up against the righteous and shedding their blood. After issuing a sharp and stinging indictment of the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus pronounced a dire threat of punishment on them:

"Therefore, behold, I send you prophets and wise men and scribes,
and some of

them you shall kill and crucify, and some of them you shall beat in
your synagogues,

and persecute them from city to city, so that all the righteous blood shed upon the

earth may come upon you, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of

Zechariah son of Berechiah, whom you slew between the Temple and the altar.

Amen, I say to you, all these things shall come upon this people."
(Matt. 23:34-36)

The ancient Jewish sages taught that taking a life is like destroying a whole world, and that saving a life is like saving a whole world. But Christ's teaching goes much further than that, for He showed that persecuting and killing the righteous effectively makes one a participant in the persecution and martyrdom of all the innocents and saints who have ever suffered and died at the hands of the unrighteous.

Abel's murder in Jewish legend

Perhaps the earliest known extrabiblical Jewish legend about Abel's death is found in the apocryphal Book of Enoch, which was apparently written well before 200 B.C. At one point in that book, Enoch visits or sees a vision of Sheol or Hades:

"I saw (the spirit of) a dead man making suit, and his voice went forth to heaven

and made suit. And I asked Raphael the angel who was with me, and I said unto

him: 'This spirit which maketh suit, whose is it, whose voice goeth forth and maketh

suit to heaven ?' And he answered me saying: 'This is the spirit which went forth

from Abel, whom his brother Cain slew, and he makes his suit against him till his

seed is destroyed from the face of the earth, and his seed is annihilated from

amongst the seed of men." (Enoch 22:4-7)

It is possible that Heb. 12:24 was alluding to that very legend, or to a similar tradition. The image of Abel's blood crying to God for vengeance is at least comparable to this legend of Abel's spirit in Sheol praying to God for the annihilation of Cain's descendants. Similarly, in Rev. 6:9-11 the souls of Christian martyrs in heaven pray to God to avenge their deaths by punishing the wicked on earth.

As for the Book of Jubilees, just as it had little to say about the offerings of Cain and Abel, so it was very concise in relating Cain's murder of Abel, saying only, "And he slew him in the field, and his blood cried from the ground to heaven, complaining because he had slain him. And the Lord reprov'd Cain because of Abel, because he had slain him," (Jubilees 4:3-4). Then in Jubilees 4:5, Cain is characterised as the prototype of the man "who smites his neighbor treacherously," and in Jubilees 4:31 it says "with a stone he had killed Abel," the first time any known source identifies Cain's murder weapon.

Jubilees' description of Abel's murder as a act of treachery might be an indication that the author of Jubilees was working with a copy of Genesis that had the original reading of Gen. 4:8 as preserved in the Septuagint. In the Septuagint, Gen. 4:8 shows Cain inviting Abel to accompany him to the field and then attacking him when they were out in the field alone. Such a scenario would be "treacherous." On the other hand, the mere act of Cain's murdering his own younger brother, whom he should have loved and protected, could be said to be "treacherous." Certainly the author of Jubilees had a copy of Genesis that partially agreed with the Septuagint and clearly disagreed with the Masoretic in Gen. 11:12-13, so it could be that Jubilees 4:5 is another instance of agreement with a Septuagint reading.

As for other ancient Jewish legends, the *Life of Adam and Eve* and the *Apocalypse of Moses* do not describe the actual murder of Abel with any

more detail than is found in Holy Scripture, but they do embellish the story by supplying some interesting details from the perspective of Adam and Eve. In the *Life*, the story is told that after Cain and Abel were born, Eve had a vision while she slept: ". . . as it were the blood of our son Abel in the hand of Cain, who was gulping it down in his mouth" (compare Gen. 4:11). When Eve told Adam her vision, as a precaution he decided that their sons should be raised in separate locations. "And they made Cain an husbandman, (but) Abel they made a shepherd; in order that in this wise they might be mutually separated." Despite those precautions, Cain nevertheless murdered his brother Abel when Adam was 130 years old and Abel was 122 years old.

In the *Apocalypse*, Eve's vision of Cain's swallowing Abel's blood was not a prophecy of the murder, but served as the means by which Adam and Eve discovered Abel's murder. "And they both went and found Abel murdered by the hand of Cain his brother." But Michael the Archangel told Adam and Eve, "Reveal not the secret that thou knowest to Cain thy son, for he is a son of wrath. . . . Do thou tell him nothing."

Another interesting detail found in the *Life* and the *Apocalypse* is that at the time of Adam's funeral, Abel's body was buried with Adam's, but in the *Life* it is not made clear if Abel's body had previously been buried elsewhere. The *Apocalypse* says it was not possible to bury Abel's body until Adam's death:

"And God said: 'Let the body of Abel also be brought.' And they brought other

linen clothes and prepared his (body) also. For he was unburied since the day

when Cain his brother slew him; for wicked Cain took great pains to conceal (him)

but could not, for the earth would not receive him for the body sprang up from the

earth and a voice went out of the earth saying: 'I will not receive a companion body,

till the earth which was taken and fashioned in me cometh to me.'
At that time, the

angels took it and placed it on a rock, till Adam his father was
buried. And both

were buried, according to the commandment of God, in the spot
where God

found the dust, and He caused the place to be dug for two."

The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan includes a lengthy and detailed account of the murder of Abel and Cain's thwarted attempts to conceal Abel's body. Significantly, this version of the legend agrees with the Septuagint reading of Gen. 4:8 in which Cain says to Abel, "Let us go out to the field":

"As to Cain, he was so resentful and so angry that he went into the field, where

Satan came to him and said to him, 'Since your brother Abel has taken refuge with

your father Adam, because you shoved him from the altar, they have kissed his face,

and they rejoice over him, far more than over you.' When Cain heard these words

of Satan, he was filled with rage; and he let no one know. But he was laying wait to

kill his brother, until he brought him into the cave, and then said to him: -- 'O brother,

the country is so beautiful, and there are such beautiful and pleasurable trees in it, and

charming to look at! But brother, you have never been one day in the field to take

your pleasure in that place. Today, O my brother, I very much wish you would come

with me into the field, to enjoy yourself and to bless our fields and our flocks, for you

are righteous, and I love you much, O my brother! But you have alienated yourself

from me.' Then Abel consented to go with his brother Cain into the field. But before

going out, Cain said to Abel, 'Wait for me, until I fetch a staff, because of wild beasts.'

Then Abel stood waiting in his innocence. But Cain the froward fetched a staff and

went out. And they began, Cain and his brother Abel, to walk in the way; Cain

talking to him, and comforting him, to make him forget everything." (I Adam and Eve 78:32-39)

In this account, Cain's invitation to Abel, "Let us go out to the field" is interpreted as nothing more than a deceitful ploy. That seems to be the interpretation that is most likely to be the right one. Nevertheless, it is possible that the murder of Abel was not premeditated, and that Cain only wanted to talk to Abel, or maybe even quarrel with him or take out his anger on Abel in a non-lethal fashion.

The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan then describes the murder of Abel in graphic and gruesome detail, agreeing with the tradition in the Book of Jubilees that Cain murdered Abel with a stone:

"And so they went on, until they came to a lonely place, where there were no sheep;

then Abel said to Cain, 'Behold, my brother, we are tired from walking; for we see

none of the trees, nor of the fruits, nor of the flourishing green plants, nor of the sheep,

nor any one of the things of which you told me. Where are those sheep of thine you

told me to bless?' Then Cain said to him, 'Come on, and you shall see many beautiful

things very soon, but go before me, until I catch up to you.' Then went Abel forward,

but Cain remained behind him. And Abel was walking in his innocence, without guile;

not believing his brother would kill him. Then Cain, when he came up to him,

comforted him with his talk, walking a little behind him; then he ran up to him and beat

him with the staff, blow after blow, until he was stunned. But when Abel fell down on

the ground, seeing that his brother meant to kill him, he said to Cain, 'O my brother,

have pity on me. By the breasts we have sucked, don't hit me! By the womb that bore

us and that brought us into the world, don't beat me to death with that staff! If you will

kill me, take one of these large stones and kill me outright.' Then Cain, the hard-hearted

and cruel murderer, took a large stone, and beat his brother's head with it, until his

brains oozed out, and he wallowed in his blood, before him. And Cain repented not of

what he had done." (I Adam and Eve 79:1-8)

The story then continues with an account of Abel's blood crying out to God and unrepentant Cain's attempts to bury Abel's body. Interestingly, this legend's reason for the earth's first expulsion of Abel's body agrees with the *Apocalypse of Moses'* stated reason for the earth's expulsion of Abel's body:

"But the earth, when the blood of righteous Abel fell on it, trembled, as it drank his blood,

and would have destroyed Cain because of it. And the blood of Abel cried mysteriously

to God, to avenge him of his murder. Then Cain began at once to dig the ground

wherein to lay his brother; for he was trembling from the fear that came over him, when

he saw the earth tremble on his account. He then cast his brother into the pit he made,

and covered him with dust. But the ground would not receive him; but it threw him up at

once. Again Cain dug the ground and hid his brother in it; but again the ground threw

him up on itself; until three times the ground thus threw up on itself the body of Abel.

The muddy ground threw him up the first time, because he was not the first creation; and

it threw him up the second time and would not receive him, because he was righteous and

good, and was killed without a cause; and the ground threw him up the third time and would

not receive him, that there might remain before his brother a witness against him. And so

the earth mocked Cain, until the word of God came to him concerning his brother."

(I Adam and Eve 79:9-15)

After its greatly embellished account of Cain's murder, this legend shows a surprisingly brief account of God's confrontation of Cain regarding what had become of Abel:

"Then was God angry, and much displeased at Abel's death; and He thundered from

heaven, and lightnings went before Him, and the Word of the Lord God came from heaven

to Cain, and said to him, 'Where is Abel your brother?' Then Cain answered with a proud

heart and a gruff voice,"How, O God? Am I my brother's keeper?" (I Adam and Eve 79: 16-17)

Turning now to Josephus, he says of the murder merely that Cain "slew his brother, and hid his dead body, thinking to escape discovery." Josephus

then related this somewhat embellished account of God's confrontation of Cain:

"But God, knowing what had been done, came to Cain, and asked him what

was become of his brother, because he had not seen him of many days,

whereas he used to observe them conversing together at other times. But Cain

was in doubt with himself, and knew not what answer to give to God. At first

he said that he was himself at a loss about his brother's disappearing; but when

he was provoked by God, who pressed him vehemently, as resolving to know

what the matter was, he replied he was not his brother's guardian or keeper,

nor was he an observer of what he did. But in return, God convicted Cain as

having been the murderer of his brother, and said, 'I wonder at thee, that thou

knowest not what is become of a man whom thou thyself hast destroyed."

Among all the sources of extrabiblical Jewish legend, *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* has the longest and most embellished version of Cain's murder of his brother and God's confrontation of Cain. In comparison, the

account in the medieval Book of Jasher, although it is very embellished, is nowhere near as lengthy. Jasher also presents a very different scenario than the form of the legend in *Conflict*, as we see here:

"And in some time after, Cain and Abel his brother, went one day into the field

to do their work; and they were both in the field, Cain tilling and ploughing his

ground, and Abel feeding his flock; and the flock passed that part which Cain

had ploughed in the ground, and it sorely grieved Cain on this account. And

Cain approached his brother Abel in anger, and he said unto him, What is there

between me and thee, that thou comest to dwell and bring thy flock to feed in

my land? And Abel answered his brother Cain and said unto him, What is

there between me and thee, that thou shalt eat the flesh of my flock and clothe

thyself with their wool? And now therefore, put off the wool of my sheep with

which thou hast clothed thyself, and recompense me for their fruit and flesh which

thou hast eaten, and when thou shalt have done this, I will then go from thy land

as thou hast said. And Cain said to his brother Abel, Surely if I slay thee this day,

who will require thy blood from me? And Abel answered Cain, saying, Surely

God who has made us in the earth, he will avenge my cause, and he will require

my blood from thee shouldst thou slay me, for the Lord is the judge and arbiter,

and it is he who will requite man according to his evil, and the wicked man

according to the wickedness that he may do upon earth. And now, if thou

shouldst slay me here, surely God knoweth thy secret views, and will judge thee

for the evil which thou didst declare to do unto me this day. And when Cain

heard the words which Abel his brother had spoken, behold the anger of Cain

was kindled against his brother Abel for declaring this thing. And Cain hastened

and rose up, and took the iron part of his ploughing instrument, with which he

suddenly smote his brother and he slew him, and Cain spilt the blood of his brother

Abel upon the earth, and the blood of Abel streamed upon the earth before the

flock. And after this Cain repented having slain his brother, and he was sadly

grieved, and he wept over him and it vexed him exceedingly. And Cain rose up

and dug a hole in the field, wherein he put his brother's body, and he turned the

dust over it. And the Lord knew what Cain had done to his brother, and the

Lord appeared to Cain and said unto him, Where is Abel thy brother that was

with thee? And Cain dissembled, and said, I do not know, am I my brother's

keeper? And the Lord said unto him, What hast thou done? The voice of thy

brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground where thou hast slain him. For

thou hast slain thy brother and hast dissembled before me, and didst imagine in

thy heart that I saw thee not, nor knew all thy actions. But thou didst this thing

and didst slay thy brother for naught and because he spoke rightly to thee, . . ."

(Jasher 1:17-31)

In the Book of Jasher, obviously following the defective Masoretic reading of Gen. 4:8, Cain does not invite his brother to accompany him to the field, but he does "speak" or "say" things to Abel prior to attacking and killing

him in the field. In Jasher, Cain quarrels with Abel while he and his brother are about their usual labors in the field. Also, in this fictionalised account, Cain does not tell Abel the real reason he is angry with him -- he says nothing of their offerings, instead finding fault with Abel on other grounds, much like a typical fight or quarrel between siblings. Especially fascinating is the reference to Cain's "repentance" -- more regret or remorse than true repentance, of course. The great Jewish sage Rashi interpreted Cain's repentance as sincere, but many other Jewish rabbis said Cain's repentance was not genuine, just as it says in *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*. Also, like Josephus, the Book of Jasher makes explicit what seems to be strongly implied in Holy Scripture, that Cain concealed Abel's murder by burying his body. Josephus and Jasher both show no knowledge of the legend in the books of Adam and Eve regarding the impossibility of burying Abel's body until Adam's burial.

CHAPTER III

CAIN'S CURSE AND THE MARK OF CAIN

After confronting Cain about the horrible crime he had committed, God pronounced a curse on Cain, as it says in Gen. 4:11-15:

" 'And now you are cursed from [or 'by'] the earth which has opened her mouth

to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the earth, from

now on it will not yield its strength to you. You shall be a fugitive and a

vagabond on the earth.' Cain said to the LORD God, 'My sin [or 'punishment'] is

too great for me to bear. Behold, You have driven me out this day from the face of

the earth, and I shall be hidden from Your face, and I shall be a fugitive and a

vagabond on the earth. It will come to pass that anyone who finds me shall slay

me.' The LORD God said to him, 'Therefore anyone who slays Cain shall suffer

sevenfold vengeance.' The LORD God set a mark upon Cain so that no one

who found him would slay him."

The Hebrew of Gen. 4:11 can be translated either as "And now you are cursed *from* the earth" or as "And now you are cursed *by* the earth." It is not clear which translation is the correct one, because both make sense. If it is rendered "from," the curse would refer to the vagabond life to which Cain was condemned, but if it is rendered "by," the curse would refer to the earth no longer yielding its strength to Cain. The Septuagint says "from."

Overall, the Septuagint text of Gen. 4:11-15 is in essential agreement with the Masoretic rendering, but differs in some important respects. First, instead of the Masoretic text's "a fugitive and a vagabond," the Septuagint says, "groaning and trembling." In light of Cain's subsequent wandering in the land east of Eden, "a fugitive and a vagabond" appears to be the superior translation of this scripture passage.

Second, in the Masoretic text, Cain makes a plaintive declaration of what God's curse will entail for him, but in the Septuagint, he makes a conditional "if-then" statement of what the curse would entail, saying, "*If* You cast me out this day from the face of the earth, and I shall be hidden from Your presence, and I shall be groaning and trembling on the earth, *then* it will be that anyone who finds me shall slay me." In the Septuagint, God responds, "Not so," whereas in the Masoretic the response is, "Therefore"

But the most remarkable feature of the Septuagint in this passage is that Cain is presented as despairing of God's mercy, exclaiming, "My crime is too great for me to be forgiven." That translation is one possible rendering of the underlying Hebrew, which can also be translated, "My sin is too great for me to bear" or "My punishment is too great for me to bear." Thus, the Septuagint shows Cain in despair, fearing that his guilt will inevitably result in divine retribution in the form of his own violent death. On the other hand, the alternate translations would show Cain either

as expressing grief and contrition, or else as complaining about the severity of God's punishment and arguing that it amounts to a death sentence -- but apparently not despairing of the possibility of forgiveness. It is unclear which of these three possible translations is the right one.

Cain apparently found his punishment to be very severe, but what is noteworthy about this episode is God's leniency in punishing Cain. Although the Scriptures teach that death is the just punishment for murder, and that the shedding of innocent blood calls for a severe penalty, God does not issue a death sentence. Instead He decrees that Cain's days as a farmer are at an end, and that he would be doomed to a wandering, restless life. God even threatens a sevenfold vengeance on anyone who kills Cain, indicating that God was not eager for Cain's death. Thus, God showed Himself to be a fair and just and moderate judge, tempering justice with mercy. As He later said through Ezekiel, "I have no pleasure in the death of him who dies, says the Lord GOD. Therefore repent and live" (Ezek. 18:32).

As for the famous "mark of Cain," the Scriptures do not explain what Cain's "mark" was, so naturally there has been much speculation about the "mark." There is nothing to favor the old racist speculation that God turned Cain's skin black so that Cain was the ancestor of the African peoples. After all, according to the Scriptures and ancient tradition, the entire lineage of the Cainites was exterminated in the Flood, so no one on earth since the Flood could be a descendant of Cain. Nor is there much, if anything, to recommend the more recent speculation that Cain was the legendary ancestor of the Kenites, and that the story of the mark of Cain is nothing more than a Hebrew folktale or fable that was based on a distinctive Kenite tattoo. It is quite possible, however, that the mark of Cain was in fact an identifying tattoo.

Cain's curse and mark in Jewish legend

The Book of Jubilees does not mention the mark of Cain, but on the subject of Cain's curse, Jubilees says, "And the Lord reproved Cain because of Abel, because he had slain him, and he made him a fugitive on the earth because of the blood of his brother, and he cursed him upon the earth. And on this account it is written on the heavenly tables, 'Cursed is he who smites his neighbor treacherously, and let all who have seen and heard say,

So be it; and the man who had seen and not declared (it), let him be accursed as the other.' And for this reason we [i.e., the angels] announce when we come before the Lord our God all the sin which is committed in heaven and on earth, and in light and in darkness, and everywhere" (Jubilees 4:4-7).

Thus, the only added material in the Book of Jubilees' account of Cain's curse is the purported statement of the angel that Cain's murder of Abel caused a divine law to be written on the heavenly tables and made it necessary for the angels to tell God about all the sins they observe on earth. Remarkably, in this way the author of Jubilees seems to have intended to explain why God found out about Abel's murder from the "voice" of Abel's blood rather than from an angel's report. Of course, this purported statement is in keeping with the Book of Jubilees' insistence that all of the commandments and rites of the *Torah* are nothing less than earthly versions of commandments and rites that angels observe in heaven. It should be noted, though, that Jubilees seems to agree with the Masoretic reading of "fugitive and vagabond" in Gen. 4:12, 14 instead of the Septuagint's "groaning and trembling."

The *Life of Adam and Eve* and the *Apocalypse of Moses* do not say anything about Cain's curse or Cain's mark, since they tell the story of Abel's murder from Adam and Eve's perspective. In those two books, Cain is "wicked," "a son of wrath," perhaps even destined from birth to turn to wickedness and murder his brother (a detail that could reflect a bit of Manichaean coloring that may have been added to the legend by a medieval Christian heretic), but as for Cain's curse and what it would entail for him, these legends say nothing. Indeed, throughout the remainder of the *Life of Adam and Eve* and the *Apocalypse of Moses*, nothing else is said pertaining to Cain except for the account of Abel's burial with his father Adam.

In *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan's* version of Cain's curse, we again see evidence that the author was following a text of Genesis that was in agreement with the Septuagint tradition:

"Then God said to Cain, 'Cursed be the earth that has drunk the blood of Abel your

brother; and as for you, you will always be trembling and shaking;
and this will be

a mark on you so that whoever finds you will kill you.' But Cain
cried because

God had said those words to him; and Cain said to Him, 'O God,
whosoever finds

me shall kill me, and I shall be blotted out from the face of the
earth.' Then God

said to Cain, 'Whoever finds you will not kill you;' because before
this, God had

been saying to Cain, 'I shall put seven punishments on anyone that
kills Cain.'"

(I Adam and Eve 79:16-20)

The reference to "trembling and shaking" matches the Septuagint's "groaning and trembling" in Gen. 4:12, 14. Interestingly, this legend interprets Cain's "trembling and shaking" as the mark of Cain, and interprets his mark as meant to make it easier for people to identify Cain so they could kill him. This is opposed to the Scriptures, which say that the mark of Cain was intended to prevent anyone from killing him. Notice, however, that this legend is somewhat ineptly written at this point, in that it has God tell Cain that "whoever finds you will kill you," but then has God immediately contradict Himself by reassuring Cain, "Whoever finds you will not kill you."

The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan goes on to interpret God's confrontation of Cain and the curse of Cain as follows:

"For as to the word of God to Cain, 'Where is your brother?' God said it in mercy

for him, to try and make him repent. For if Cain had repented at that time, and had

said, 'O God, forgive me my sin, and the murder of my brother,' God would then

have forgiven him his sin. And as to God saying to Cain, 'Cursed be the ground that

has drunk the blood of your brother,' that also was God's mercy on Cain. For God

did not curse him, but He cursed the ground; although it was not the ground that had

killed Abel and committed a wicked sin. For it was fitting that the curse should fall

on the murderer; yet in mercy did God so manage His thoughts as that no one should

know it, and turn away from Cain. And He said to him, 'Where is your brother?'

To which he answered and said, 'I know not.' Then the Creator said to him, 'Be

trembling and quaking.' Then Cain trembled and became terrified; and through this

sign did God make him an example before all the creation, as the murderer of his

brother. Also did God bring trembling and terror over him, that he might see the

peace in which he was at first, and see also the trembling and terror he endured at

the last, so that he might humble himself before God, and repent of his sin, and seek

the peace that he enjoyed at first. And in the word of God that said, 'I will put seven

punishments on anyone who kills Cain,' God was not seeking to kill Cain with the

sword, but He sought to mortify him through fasting, and praying and crying by hard

rule, until the time that he was delivered from his sin. And the seven punishments are

the seven generations during which God awaited Cain for the murder of his brother.

But as to Cain, ever since he had killed his brother, he could find no rest in any place,

but went back to Adam and Eve, trembling, terrified, and defiled with blood."

(I Adam and Eve 79:20-28)

Although this is a Christian writing, some aspects of this interpretation of Cain's curse are reflected in Jewish rabbinical sources. Turning to Josephus, we see some similarities to this legend in the way Josephus interprets the curse of Cain. As for the mark of Cain, however, Josephus mentions the mark but does not attempt to explain what it actually was. This is what Josephus said the curse would entail:

"God therefore did not inflict the punishment [of death] upon him, on account of

his offering sacrifice, and thereby making supplication to Him not to be extreme in

His wrath to him; but He made him accursed, and threatened his posterity in the

seventh generation. He also cast him, together with his wife, out of that land. And

when he was afraid that in wandering about he should fall among wild beasts, and

by that means perish, God bid him not to entertain such a melancholy suspicion,

and to go over all the earth without fear of what mischief he might suffer from wild

beasts; and setting a mark upon him, that he might be known, He commanded him

to depart."

It is very notable that Josephus saw Cain's sacrifice as the reason that God refrained from sentencing Cain to death. Josephus apparently did not see any contradiction between, on the one hand, God being displeased with Cain's sacrifice, and yet, on the other hand, God honoring the fact that Cain's sacrifice was a form of supplication for mercy. In other words, according to Josephus, God let himself be entreated by the sacrifice even though Cain's heart was not right and even though Cain had gone on to commit murder, and therefore limited Cain's punishment to banishment. It is certainly a creative interpretation, and not at all an obvious or a likely one, though it is not an impossible interpretation.

Another creative interpretation is Josephus' statement that God "threatened [Cain's] posterity in the seventh generation," which agrees with *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan's* interpretation of Gen. 4:15, taking the sevenfold vengeance as a curse that endures for seven generations. It must be said, though, that Josephus' interpretation doesn't agree with the plain meaning or sense of the text. On the other hand, it is significant that Gen. 4:17-22 shows a total of seven generations, beginning with Cain and

ending with the children of Cain's descendant Lamech. Perhaps Josephus' tradition refers to the extermination of the Cainites in the Flood, with the fact that the biblical genealogy of the Cainites stops at the seventh generation being taken as an indication that the Cainites were wiped out in that generation.

The last interesting feature of Josephus' interpretation of Cain's curse is that he presents Cain as afraid that he would be killed by wild beasts. The biblical text does not specify who or what might threaten Cain with death during his wanderings, so Josephus' interpretation is possible. However, it is probable that Josephus mentioned wild beasts due to the often-asked question, "Why was Cain afraid someone would kill him if there were hardly any humans alive on earth at the time?" In fact, some have even used Gen. 4:14-15, 17 as "proof" that at that time there were already other humans on earth who did not come from Adam and Eve. But such an interpretation is neither necessary nor justified by the text. For one thing, at that time Adam and Eve probably already had other children, including a daughter who, according to ancient Jewish legend, became Cain's wife. For another thing, Cain would have been able to predict that more children and grandchildren of Adam and Eve would be born in the near future, and that eventually some of them might encounter him during his wanderings. Therefore it is unnecessary to interpret the text as Josephus did, just as there is no need or justification for the speculation that Adam and Eve weren't the ancestors of the entire human race.

Turning now to the medieval Book of Jasher, although, as we saw above, Jasher includes an extensive midrash on Cain's murder of Abel, nevertheless when it comes to Cain's curse, the Book of Jasher is uncharacteristically concise. Jasher 1:31-32 sticks very closely to Gen. 4:11-12, with only two additional clauses not found in Scripture:

". . . and now, therefore, cursed be thou from the ground which opened its mouth

to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand, and wherein thou didst bury him.

And it shall be when thou shalt till it, it shall no more give thee its strength as in the

beginning, for thorns and thistles shall the ground produce, and thou shalt be moving

and wandering in the earth until the day of thy death."

Surprisingly, the Book of Jasher does not include any equivalent of Gen. 4:13-15, so it unknown whether or not the author of the Book of Jasher would have agreed with Josephus' interpretation of those verses.

CHAPTER IV

CAIN'S WANDERING AND CITY-BUILDING

According to the Scriptures, after Cain was cursed and marked by God, Cain left his parents and began a life of wandering:

"So Cain went forth from the presence of God and dwelt in the land of Nod on

the east of Eden. And Cain was intimate with his wife, and she conceived and

bore Enoch. And he built a city, and he named the city after the name of his son,

Enoch." (Gen. 4:16-17)

In verse 16 we find that Cain leaves God's presence. By this we are to understand not just that his meeting with God ended and that Cain walked elsewhere, but that Cain decided to continue in his life of sin, cut off from God's presence. His murder of his brother Abel would have been a mortal wound to his relationship with his parents, and he apparently did nothing to try to heal that wound. Cain then dwells in the land of Nod, that is, the land of wandering, the land of nomads. This is in fulfillment of the words of Gen. 4:12 whereby God cursed Cain's agricultural endeavors, making it impossible for Cain live as a farmer as he had up until that time.

Then in verse 17, Cain and his wife -- according to unvarying tradition, one of his sisters -- have a son named Enoch (Heb. *Chanok*). Cain then builds a city and names it Enoch after his son. In that way, Cain apparently sought to escape from the nomadic consequences of God's curse on his agricultural efforts. By building a city and drawing together a structured community in an urban setting, Cain could settle in one place, no longer a nomad, and others in or near the city would do the farming for him. And so we see the earliest beginnings of urban life and what we might consider to be civilisation. Some have speculated that Cain's city of "Chanok" or Enoch was the ancient Sumerian city of "Unug" or Uruk (called Erech in Gen. 10:10). Wherever Enoch was located, presumably it was there that Cain's family first settled and began to flourish.

The building of Enoch is the last action of Cain's or event in his life that is mentioned in the Scriptures. Nothing certain is known of Cain's subsequent life, how long he lived or how and where he finally died. But of those matters, extrabiblical tradition had much to say, as we shall see.

Cain's wandering and city-building in Jewish legend

The Book of Jubilees relates the events of Gen. 4:16-17 very concisely, saying only, "And Cain took Awan his sister to be his wife and she bare him Enoch at the close of the fourth jubilee. And in the first year of the first week of the fifth jubilee, houses were built on the earth, and Cain built a city, and called its name after the name of his son Enoch" (Jubilees 4:9-10).

The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan, as usual, is much more expansive in its telling of the story of Cain and the beginnings of Cain's family. It includes a moving account of Adam and Eve's discovery of Abel's murder and his burial:

"When Luluwa heard Cain's words, she wept and went to call her father and mother,

and told them how that Cain had killed his brother Abel. Then they all cried aloud

and lifted up their voices, and slapped their faces, and threw dust upon their heads,

and rent asunder their garments, and went out and came to the place where Abel

was killed. And they found him lying on the earth, killed, and beasts around him;

while they wept and cried because of this just one. From his body, by reason of its

purity, went forth a smell of sweet spices. And Adam carried him, his tears

streaming down his face; and went to the Cave of Treasures, where he laid him, and

wound him up with sweet spices and myrrh. And Adam and Eve continued by the

burial of him in great grief a hundred and forty days. Abel was fifteen and a half years

old, and Cain seventeen years and a half. As for Cain, when the mourning for his

brother was ended, he took his sister Luluwa and married her, without leave from his

father and mother; for they could not keep him from her, by reason of their heavy heart.

He then went down to the bottom of the mountain, away from the garden, near to the

place where he had killed his brother. And in that place were many fruit trees and forest

trees. His sister bare him children, who in their turn began to multiply by degrees until

they filled that place. (II Adam and Eve 1:1-8)

This legend apparently identified the land of Nod (wandering) as a location near the place where Cain murdered Abel. However, nothing is said of the building of the city of Enoch. *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* later describes the Cainites as a wicked, lascivious people with whom the family of Adam's son Seth would have nothing to do:

"After the death of Adam and of Eve, Seth severed his children, and his children's

children, from Cain's children. Cain and his seed went down and dwelt westward,

below the place where he had killed his brother Abel. But Seth and his children,

dwelt northwards upon the mountain of the Cave of Treasures, in order to be near

to their father Adam. And Seth the elder, tall and good, with a fine soul, and of a

strong mind, stood at the head of his people; and tended them in innocence,

penitence, and meekness, and did not allow one of them to go down to Cain's

children." (II Adam and Eve 11:1-3)

According to Josephus, God's curse and admonitions were of no avail in bringing Cain to repentance. Instead, as time went on, Cain's covetousness and violent tendencies led him to a life of robbery:

"And when Cain had traveled over many countries, he, with his wife, built a city,

named Nod, which is a place so called, and there he settled his abode; where

also he had children. However, he did not accept of his punishment in order to

amendment, but to increase his wickedness; for he only aimed to procure every

thing that was for his own bodily pleasure, though it obliged him to be injurious

to his neighbours. He augmented his household substance with much wealth, by

rapine and violence; he excited his acquaintance to procure pleasures and spoils

by robbery, and became a great leader of men into wicked courses. He also

introduced a change in that way of simplicity wherein men lived before; and was

the author of measures and weights. And whereas they lived innocently and

generously while they knew nothing of such arts, he changed the world into

cunning craftiness. He first of all set boundaries about lands: he built a city, and

fortified it with walls, and he compelled his family to come together to it; and

called that city Enoch, after the name of his eldest son Enoch."
(*Antiquities of the*

Jews, I, II, 2)

Josephus evidently mistook "Nod" for the name of a city, so that in this account Cain is the builder of two cities, Nod and Enoch, whereas the Scriptures mention only Enoch. Of course, with walled cities there will also be trade and merchandise, along with the allotment of parcels of land among the city residents. Hence, according to Josephus, not only the origin of cities, but also the invention of money and setting boundaries around land, are attributable to wicked Cain. Upon reflection, those traditions appear to be very sensible. If a divine curse prevented Cain from growing crops, he would have to live the nomadic life of a hunter-gatherer. But once the human family began to grow, Cain would be able to obtain food by engaging in barter and trade with other farmers, selling some of his game to them -- a development that would naturally lend itself to the founding of a settlement or "city." Thus, Cain would no longer have to wander the earth.

The medieval Book of Jasher again adds very little to the biblical account:

"And at that time Cain went out from the presence of the Lord,
from the place

where he was, and he went moving and wandering in the land
toward the east

of Eden, he and all belonging to him. And Cain knew his wife in
those days,

and she conceived and bare a son, and he called his name Enoch,
saying, In

that time the Lord began to give him rest and quiet in the earth.
And at that time

Cain also began to build a city: and he built the city and he called the name of

the city Enoch, according to the name of his son; for in those days the Lord had

given him rest upon the earth, and he did not move about and wander as in the

beginning." (Jasher 1:33-35)

Noticing the seeming contradiction between Cain's curse of wandering and his later building a city, the Book of Jasher in a typical rabbinic fashion interprets the name of Cain's son Enoch ("Begun" or "Initiated") as a sign that God had "begun" to give Cain rest. In comparison, because *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* followed the Septuagint reading of "groaning and trembling" rather than "fugitive and vagabond," the author of those legends had no apparent contradiction to explain. Also, unlike Jubilees and *Conflict*, Josephus and the Book of Jasher neither give a name to Cain's wife nor attempt to identify her, although both Josephus and the Book of Jasher's author undoubtedly believed Cain's wife was one of his sisters.

CHAPTER V

THE CAINITE GENEALOGY

Starting with the birth of Cain's son Enoch, the Scriptures trace the line of Cain's descendants for five generations, coming down to a patriarch named Lamech:

"And to Enoch [*Chanok*] was born Irad [*Yirad*], and Irad begot Mehujael

[*Mechiyael* or *Mechuyael*], and Mehujael begot Methusael [*Methushael*],

and Methusael begot Lamech [*Lemek*]" (Gen. 4:18)

The Septuagint's spellings of these names is very close to the Hebrew text, but with two differences: "Henoah," "Gaidad," "Maleleel," "Mathusala," and "Lamech." The form "Gaidad" represents a Hebrew form of *Yaidad* or *Yidad*, differing from the Hebrew spelling by just one letter. The Hebrew letters *daleth* (D) and *reysh* (R) are very similar in appearance, and confusion between those two letters is common in ancient Hebrew manuscripts. In this case, the Septuagint is in error, since there can be little question that *Yirad* is the proper form of the name.

The Septuagint's reading of "Maleleel" also seems to be erroneous, because "Maleleel" is the Septuagint's rendering of the Hebrew name *Mahalal'el*, the name of an antediluvian patriarch of the line of Seth, son of Adam (Gen. 5:12-17), whereas the Hebrew text of Gen. 4:18 shows *Mechiyael* or *Mechuyael*. In contrast to the Septuagint's "Maleleel," the Latin Vulgate shows "Maviahel" ("Mauiael") as the name of Irad's son, which is very close to the Hebrew form of the name of Irad's son. *Mechiyael* means "God is my life-giver," but *Mechuyael* means "wiped out by God," a foreshadowing of the ultimate fate of the Cainites, who all drowned in the Flood.

The Septuagint's apparent confusion about the name of Irad's son probably resulted from the remarkable fact that six of the names in Cain's family in Gen. 4 are very similar or identical to six of the names in Seth's family in Gen. 5. In Cain's family, we find the names of Cain (*Kayin*), Enoch (*Chanok*), Irad (*Yirad*), Mehujael (*Mechuyael*), Methusael (*Methushael*), and Lamech (*Lemek*). In Seth's family, we find Cainan (*Kenan*), Mahalaleel (*Mahalal'el*), Jared (*Yered*), Enoch (*Chanok*), Methuselah (*Methushelach*), and Lamech (*Lemek*). Thus, two of the names, Enoch and Lamech, are identical, and the other four names are very similar: Cainan answers to Cain, Jared answers to Irad, Mahalaleel answers to Mehujael, and Methuselah answers to Methusael. Due to these correlations, it is hardly surprising that, whether by carelessness or design, the Septuagint renders both Mahalaleel and Mehujael as "Maleleel," and renders both Methuselah and Methusael as "Mathusala." Further on we shall examine additional indications that in ancient times the Cainite and Sethite lineages were sometimes confused.

What are we to make of these correlations between Cainite names and Sethite names? To many commentators and exegetes, this affinity is evidence that the lineage of Cain and the lineage of Seth are in fact merely different versions of the same basic legends and traditions. On the other hand, the Cainite and Sethite genealogies may both have been accurately handed down, and there is reason to believe that the sacred author presented the genealogies of Genesis 4-5 in such way that he intended his readers to notice both the similarities and the significant differences between the Cainites and the Sethites. In any case, the popularity of and recurrence of names in closely related families is a very, very common phenomenon. The families of Cain and Seth evidently spoke the same

language, and were probably aware of each other. In those days, certain names could have been more popular than others, and naming customs in those far-off days could have been such that these cousins would choose similar or identical names for their sons. The resemblance of the one lineage to the other is not of itself sufficient grounds for concluding that one or both of the lineages is imaginary.

Indeed, we may consider that the similar names of the Cainite and Sethite lineages in fact helps to underscore the stark differences between Cain's lineage and Seth's lineage. As we shall explore in greater detail below, in Genesis 4 the story is told of how, in just seven generations, Cain's family achieved worldly success -- city-building (Enoch), animal husbandry (Jabal), metal smelting (Tubal-cain), music (Jubal) -- but mingled those achievements with violence and sexual immorality. In contrast, in ten generations Seth's family produced two saintly men, Enoch and Noah, righteous men who walked with God, unlike Cain who left the Lord's presence.

The great difference between the Cainites and Sethites is especially indicated by the great contrast and differences between the two same-named persons in these genealogies, the two Enochs and the two Lamechs. The Cainite Enoch is known merely as the eponym of the first city ever built, whereas the Sethite Enoch is known for godliness and for being assumed into heaven that he should not see death. The Cainite Enoch is this-worldly, and typifies material and temporal successes and achievements. The Sethite Enoch is other-worldly, is devoted to serving and pleasing God and seeking union with Him -- that is, he typifies receiving grace and blessing from heaven. As for the two Lamechs, we will take a closer look at them below, but for now we can note that it is hardly a coincidence that both Lamechs speak prophecies or predictions -- but how different are their prophecies. The bigamist Cainite announces that he has committed homicide and predicts a fearful vengeance on anyone who kills him, whereas the Sethite predicts that his son Noah will be a harbinger of blessing and better days.

The impression one might get from all of this is that it almost seems like the Cainites and Sethites were engaged in a "naming duel," as if the one family would try to "answer" the other family's person of a given name.

The meaning of Mehujael's name was noted above. Mehujael's father bore a name, *Yirad*, that may mean "a scion," coming from *arada*, "to sprout," or it could mean "descent," from *yarad*. As for the names *Methushael* and *Lemek*, they seem to be Babylonian or Sumerian in origin. *Methushael* probably is the Hebrew equivalent of *Mutusha-ilu*, "vassal of God," while *Lemek* could be related to the Sumerian word *lamga*, "servant" -- in this case, presumably, a servant of God or of some deity. Thus, despite Cain's wickedness, several of the names in his family indicate that they retained some kind of religion and knowledge of God. Indeed, another tell-tale indication of Cainite religion is the presence of "theophoric" names -- that is, names containing a deity's name or title -- in the Cainite lineage.

Interestingly enough, theophoric names appear in both the Cainite and the Sethites lineages in the same generation. The first theophoric name in the Cainite lineage is Mehujael, third in descent from Cain, while the first theophoric name in the Sethite lineage is Mahalaleel, third in descent from Seth. The appearance of theophoric names may be related to Gen. 4:26, where it says that in the days after the birth of Seth's son Enosh, "calling upon the LORD's name" began. Cain's family had some kind of religion, but because of Cain's sinful life we should expect the religion of his descendants to be corrupted in some way.

The Cainite genealogy in Jewish legend

Neither the Book of Jubilees nor the various books of Adam and Eve trace the genealogy of the Cainites. The earliest extrabiblical Jewish source to name the Cainites was Josephus, who wrote:

"Now Jared was the son of Enoch; whose son was Malaleel; whose son was

Mathusela; whose son was Lamech;"

This version is very close to the Septuagint, but makes the similarities between the Cainite and Sethite genealogies even more apparent, not only with the names of Malaleel and Mathusela, but especially with the name "Jared" instead of the Septuagint's "Gaidad." In comparison, the medieval Book of Jasher repeats the Hebrew Masoretic version of the genealogy without any variation:

"And Irad was born to Enoch, and Irad begat Mehujael and Mehujael begat

Methusael. . . . And Lamech, the son of Methusael," (Jasher 1:36; 2:17)

CHAPTER VI

LAMECH THE CAINITE AND HIS FAMILY

After the enumeration of the bare list of names in the Cainite pedigree, the story reaches the birth of a patriarch named Lamech, whose family history appears in Scripture as follows:

"Lamech took two wives for himself. The name of the first was Adah, and the

name of the other was Zillah. Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who

dwell in tents and raise cattle. His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father

of all of those who play the harp and the recorder. As for Zillah, she also bore

Tubal-cain, a smith who forged instruments of both bronze and iron. The sister

of Tubal-cain was Naamah." (Gen. 4:19-22)

With Lamech we see the first recorded appearance of bigamy or polygamy. Before Lamech's time, only two marriages are mentioned in Scripture, both of them monogamous: Adam and his wife Eve, and Cain and Cain's wife. Lamech, however, takes two wives, presumably the first time anyone had made such a dramatic change to the institution of marriage. It is significant that Scripture first mentions polygamy among the family of Cain, who had left the Lord's presence. The Scriptures would go on to tell the stories of the grievous marital and family strife that polygamy caused among the families of Abraham, Jacob, David, and Solomon, until at last the Messiah restored marriage to its original glory, reminding God's People that "from the beginning it was not so."

Lamech's sons are presented as significant and influential figures in human history. The first, Jabal, is the originator of a new way of life: large-scale animal husbandry by tent-dwelling tribes or clans. The second, Jubal, is a musician, the inventor of primitive stringed and wind instruments. The third, Tubal-cain, introduces the all-important technological advance of metal-smelting and blacksmithing (and many have noticed the fascinating resemblance to the similarly-named divine blacksmith "Vulcan"). By all appearances, Lamech's family is talented, prosperous, and prominent, aiding greatly the early development of human civilisation. But Lamech's bigamy suggests that their success is darkened by the shadow of sexual lust and immorality.

Lamech's daughter Naamah presents something of a puzzle. The Scriptures say nothing of her besides her name and the fact that she was Tubal-cain's sister, daughter of Lamech and Zillah. As younger sister of three influential men, one might expect the sacred author to provide additional details about Naamah, but if the sacred author knew anything about her, he apparently saw no need to tell his readers. Presumably he had found her in one of his sources, and it is likely that she had been remembered because she was a character in some oral or written story about Lamech's family. Perhaps the original audience of Genesis knew who Naamah was and did not need any explanations or additional details. Inevitably, several legends about Naamah would later be recorded, as we shall see.

Lamech and his family in Jewish legend

As mentioned above, neither the Book of Jubilees nor the books of Adam and Eve trace the genealogy of the Cainites. However, as we have seen, *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* does mention the Cainites several times, portraying them as a wicked and lascivious people who were shunned by the righteous family of Seth, who lived on a mountain apart from the sinful Cainites. "Among the children of Cain, there was much robbery, murder, and sin" (II Adam and Eve 13:2) Although *Conflict* does not include the Cainite genealogy, a brief episode involving Lamech the Cainite does appear, and commences with these words:

"But by the time Enos was eight hundred and twenty years old,
Cain had a large

progeny; for they married frequently, being given to animal lusts,
until the land

below the mountain was filled with them. In those days lived
Lamech the blind,

who was of the sons of Cain. . . ." (II Adam and Eve 12:16; 13:1)

This depiction of the Cainites as "marrying frequently, being given to animal lusts," is probably based on the story of Lamech's bigamy in Gen. 4:19, but *Conflict* does not say anything about Lamech's bigamy. Similarly, just as *Conflict* omits the Cainite genealogy, so it says nothing of the four children of Lamech named in Gen. 4:20-22. Rather, in a very important story that we shall examine later, these legends mention an otherwise unknown son of Lamech named Atun, whose wife was named Hazina. *Conflict* also provides a glimpse of the immoral customs and manners of the Cainites. This account of Cainite manners appears in the story of Satan's temptation of the Sethite patriarch Jared. According to that story, Satan and some demons impersonated Jared's ancestors, with Satan pretending to be Adam. Through that stratagem, they tricked Jared, whose name in Hebrew means "descent," into agreeing to "descend" to the foot of the mountain, where they visited the Cainites:

"And they came down from the mountain, and Jared with them;
and they stayed

by a fountain of water, near the houses of the children of Cain
Then they

gathered around them both men and women. Then the elder [i.e. Satan pretending

to be Adam] said to them, 'We are strangers in your land. Bring us some good

food and drink, you and your women, to refresh ourselves with you.' When those

men heard these words of the elder, every one of Cain's sons brought his wife, and

another brought his daughter, and so, many women came to them; every one

addressing Jared either for himself or for his wife; all alike. But when Jared saw

what they did, his very soul wrenched itself from them; neither would he taste of

their food or of their drink. The elder saw him as he wrenched himself from them,

and said to him, 'Be not sad; I am the great elder. As thou shalt see me do, do

thyself in like manner.' Then he spread his hands and took one of the women, and

five of his companions did the same before Jared, that he should do as they did.

But when Jared saw them working infamy he wept, and said in his mind, 'My fathers

never did the like.' He then spread his hands and prayed with a fervent heart, and

with much weeping, and entreated God to deliver him from their hands. No sooner

did Jared begin to pray than the elder fled with his companions; for they could not

abide in a place of prayer. Then Jared turned round but could not see them, but

found himself standing in the midst of the children of Cain. He then wept and said,

'O God, destroy me not with this race, concerning which my fathers have warned

me'" (II Adam and Eve 17:32, 36-46)

Jared then prays that God would send an angel to rescue him, and the angel carries him back to the mountain dwelling of the Sethites. It would appear that this depiction of the Cainites was based in part on verses such as Gen. 4:19, where the Cainite practice of bigamy is mentioned. The author of these legends probably made the inference from the biblical testimony that the Cainites were sexually dissolute. Similarly, this description of Satan and the demons taking on human forms and engaging in sexual relations with Cainite women is no doubt based on Gen. 6:1-2. According to the Book of Enoch and other ancient sources, the "sons of God" mentioned in Gen. 6:1 were fallen angels. That interpretation is even found in certain Greek Septuagint copies, which show a reading of "angels of God" instead of "sons of God." We have previously noted that the author of *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* relied on the Septuagint, or at least relied on a Hebrew text of the sort on which the Septuagint was based, so this would be another example of that reliance.

Turning to Josephus, we find that his account of Lamech and the Cainites has much in common with the legends in *Conflict*, and again shows a point of agreement with the Septuagint:

"Now Jared was the son of Enoch; whose son was Malaleel; whose son was

Mathusela; whose son was Lamech; who had seventy-seven children by two wives,

Silla and Ada. Of those children by Ada, one was Jabal; he erected tents, and

loved the life of a shepherd. But Jubal, who was born of the same mother with him,

exercised himself in music; and invented the psaltery and the harp. But Tubal, one

of his children by the other wife, exceeded all men in strength, and was very expert

and famous in martial performances. He procured what tended to the pleasures of

the body by that method; and first of all invented the art of making brass. Lamech

was also the father of a daughter, whose name was Naamah. . . . Nay, even while

Adam was alive, it came to pass that the posterity of Cain became exceedingly

wicked, every one successively dying, one after another, more wicked than the

former. They were intolerable in war, and vehement in robberies; and if any one

were slow to murder people, yet was he bold in his profligate behaviour, in acting

unjustly, and doing injury for gain." (*Antiquities of the Jews*, I, II, 2)

Josephus' list of the children of Lamech shows agreement with the Septuagint in the name of Lamech's son Tubal. In the Masoretic text, that son is named "Tubal-cain," but the Septuagint calls him "Thobel" (Tubal). However, that is no warrant to identify him, as some have, with Tubal, son of Japheth, in Gen. 10:2. Josephus also agrees with the Septuagint's rendering of Gen. 4:21, in which Jubal is said to have "invented the psaltery and harp." We also see that in Josephus' account, Tubal-cain is not merely a smith, skilled in metal-working, but is a mighty warrior. Thus, it would appear that Tubal-cain's metal-working has been interpreted as an indication that he was making weapons as well as tools. Overall, we find that Josephus has depicted the Cainites in the same way that the author of *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* depicted them: wicked, greedy, lustful, sexually dissolute, and violent.

But perhaps one of the most noteworthy extrabiblical traditions about Lamech the Cainite that we find in Josephus' account is the statement that Lamech had 77 children by his two wives. Following the scriptural testimony, Josephus mentions only four of Lamech's children and says nothing about the other 73 children Lamech reputedly had. This tradition of 77 children of Lamech is especially remarkable in light of the fact that the Scriptures associate the Cainites, and the name of Lamech, with the number seven. As we have noted, God announced a sevenfold vengeance on anyone who killed Cain, and Lamech the Cainite is the seventh generation starting with Adam. In addition, as we shall see, in Gen. 4:24 Lamech will pronounce a seventy-sevenfold vengeance on anyone who kills him. And now we see a tradition that Lamech had 77 children. In this context, it cannot be forgotten that the Masoretic text in Gen. 5:32, along with Josephus, says that Lamech the Sethite died at the age of 777. Thus, both the Cainite and the Sethite Lamech are associated with the number seven and multiples of seven. Some scholars see that as evidence

that the two Lamechs are originally one and the same legendary ancestor. However, it should be noted that the Septuagint says Lamech the Sethite died at the age of 753, while the Samaritan Pentateuch says Lamech the Sethite died at the age of 653. Probably both the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch are older than the Masoretic text, so they may be more reliable on the age of Lamech the Sethite than the Masoretic text is. It is possible that confusion between the two Lamechs, only one of which should properly be associated with multiples of seven, helped contribute to the alteration of Lamech the Sethite's age in Gen. 5:32 from "753" to "777."

As we might expect, the medieval Book of Jasher is in general agreement with the legends regarding the family of Lamech the Cainite that are found in Josephus and *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*. However, the legend of Lamech the Cainite takes on a unique form in the Book of Jasher:

"And these are the names of the children of Cainan; the name of the first born

Mahalaleel, the second Enan, and the third Mered, and their sisters were Adah and

Zillah; these are the five children of Cainan that were born to him. And Lamech,

the son of Methusael, became related to Cainan by marriage, and he took his two

daughters for his wives, and Adah conceived and bare a son to Lamech, and she

called his name Jabal. And she again conceived and bare a son, and called his

name Jubal; and Zillah, her sister, was barren in those days and had no offspring.

For in those days the sons of men began to trespass against God,
and to transgress

the commandments which he had commanded to Adam, to be
fruitful and multiply

in the earth. And some of the sons of men caused their wives to
drink a draught

that would render them barren, in order that they might retain their
figures and

whereby their beautiful appearance might not fade. And when the
sons of men

caused some of their wives to drink, Zillah drank with them. And
the child-bearing

women appeared abominable in the sight of their husbands, as
widows whilst their

husbands lived, for to the barren ones only they were attached.
And in the end of

days and years, when Zillah became old, the Lord opened her
womb. And she

conceived and bare a son and she called his name Tubal-cain,
saying, After I had

withered away have I obtained him from the Almighty God. And
she conceived

again and bare a daughter, and she called her name Naamah, for
she said, After I

had withered away have I obtained pleasure and delight." (Jasher
2:16-25)

The first of the unique features of this account is the claim that Lamech's wives, Adah and Zillah, were both daughters of Cainan the Sethite. In contrast, *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* emphasises that the Sethites shunned the Cainites until the time of Cainan's grandson Jared, supposedly the first Sethite to visit the Cainites. But the Book of Jasher's reference to Cainan's daughters calls to mind Josephus' obscure statement, "Jared was the son of Malaleel, who, *with many of his sisters*, were the children of Cainan, the son of Enos" (*Antiquities of the Jews* I, III, 2). Josephus does not mention any other sisters or daughters of the Sethites, but he apparently knew of a tradition that drew attention to Cainan's daughters for some reason. The Book of Jasher's tradition about Adah and Zillah could have been derived in part from a similar tradition.

Unlike other rabbinic sources, the Book of Jasher mentions the bigamous marriages of Lamech without comment or condemnation, nor does it express any judgment on the fact that a Cainite had married two Sethite women. In comparison, the Christian historian Julius Africanus, writing in the early 200s A.D., interpreted Gen. 6:1-2 as intermarriage of the holy seed of Seth with the unholy seed of Cain that led to the moral downfall of the Sethites and the spread of sin on the earth. But while the Book of Jasher does not single out Lamech's bigamy for criticism, and does not depict the Cainites as notable for sexual immorality, it does introduce a criticism of contraception into the story of Lamech's family. In old Jewish rabbinic tradition, contraception is regarded as sinful. In this regard, at least, the Book of Jasher agreed with the ancient tradition that the Cainites were sexually immoral, even though Jasher ascribes the practice of contraception to an unspecified number of "sons of men" without singling out the Cainite family (and in this legend, Zillah herself is a Sethite by birth, not a Cainite).

Although these ancient legends include added material on Lamech's family, they are just as silent about Lamech's daughter Naamah as the Scriptures are. However, in subsequent rabbinic tradition, two very opposite legends about Naamah appear. The majority of rabbinic sources interpreted her name, which means "pleasant," as an indication that she worshipped idols and sang pleasant songs in worship of them. In that tradition, Naamah is the inventor of divinisation and witchcraft. Those legends are in accordance with the general depiction of the Cainites as a wicked people. In some sources, however, Naamah's name was interpreted to mean that

her conduct was pleasing to God. In that tradition, Naamah is identified as the wife of Noah. However, the earliest Jewish legend regarding Noah's wife is that found in the Book of Jubilees, where Noah's wife is said to be his first cousin Emzara, daughter of Rakeel, brother of Noah's father Lamech (Jubilees 4:33). Interestingly enough, the Book of Jasher claims that Noah's wife was named Naamah, but identifies her as a different Naamah, a purported daughter of the holy patriarch Enoch, Noah's own great-grandfather (Jasher 5:13-16). Presumably the author of Jasher was aware of the tradition that Noah married Naamah the Cainite, but perhaps he found it inappropriate for the holy seed of Seth to mix with the unholy seed of Cain, and therefore created a Sethite Naamah to marry Noah. More recently, some have speculated that Lamech's daughter Naamah was the wife of Noah's son Ham, but such a tradition is unknown to ancient and medieval Jewish and Christian legend.

CHAPTER VII

LAMECH'S ACT OF HOMICIDE

After the account of Lamech's family, the Scriptures record some very important words that Lamech said to his wives. From those words we learn that the first known bigamist in world history has become the second known person to have taken someone's life:

"And Lamech said to his wives, 'Adah and Zillah, hear my voice.
You wives of

Lamech, listen to my speech. For I have slain a man to my
wounding, and a

young man to my injury. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, surely
Lamech

seventy-seven fold." (Gen. 4:23-24)

Lamech's words are dreadful and ominous, announcing death and threatening vengeance. The increase from "sevenfold" to "seventy-sevenfold" testifies to the way in which violence begets more violence. The deadly seed planted by Cain had yielded a harvest of bloodshed, and in due time the whole earth would be filled with violence (Gen. 6:11).

The exact circumstances of Lamech's act of homicide have not been included in the Scriptures. The Hebrew text and the ancient translations, such as the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, indicate Lamech's awareness that what he has done will bring a curse upon him. However, the Hebrew text of Gen. 4:23 can also be translated as, "I have slain a man for wounding me, and a young man for injuring me." In that scenario, Lamech was either acting in self-defense or was retaliating for something that had been done to him. The poetic parallelism of Lamech's words could indicate that "man" and "young man" refer to the same person, a single victim, but it is also possible that Lamech took two lives, that of a man and that of a young man.

It should be noted that in the Septuagint, Lamech threatens not only a "seventy-sevenfold" vengeance, but "seventy times seven." That cannot but call to mind the words of Jesus on forgiveness that He spoke when St. Peter inquired how many times a person should forgive a brother who sins against him:

"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how many times shall my brother sin

against me and I forgive him? Until seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say

to you, 'Until seven times,' but, 'Until seventy times seven.'""
(Matt. 18:21-22)

The words of Jesus help to underscore the way in which the Old Testament's call for vengeance and justice is answered by the New Testament's gift of mercy and pardon. In biblical parlance, "seven" signifies perfection, completion, wholeness. Therefore St. Peter was suggesting the rule that we should forgive our brothers perfectly and completely. But Jesus said that kind of forgiveness is inadequate. Jesus calls for, and offers, superabundant forgiveness -- not just sevenfold, but seventy times sevenfold.

Lamech's homicide in Jewish legend

As we have seen, the Scriptures do not tell us who it was that Lamech killed, and are unclear on whether it was just one man who was killed by Lamech, or rather a man and a young man. The Scriptures also are ambiguous about the circumstances of the killing. Was it premeditated? Was it unplanned and provoked? Was it self-defense? Was it an accident? Inevitably, some would be motivated to try to flesh out the story and provide answers to those questions by searching for clues in the biblical text itself. This is how the story of Lamech's homicide came to be embellished in *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*:

"In those days lived Lamech the blind, who was of the sons of Cain. He had a

son whose name was Atun, and they two had much cattle. But Lamech was in

the habit of sending them to feed with a young shepherd, who tended them; and

who, when coming home in the evening wept before his grandfather, and before

his father Atun and his mother Hazina, and said to them, 'As for me, I cannot feed

those cattle alone, lest one rob me of some of them, or kill me for the sake of

them.' For among the children of Cain, there was much robbery, murder and sin.

Then Lamech pitied him, and he said, 'Truly, he when alone might be

overpowered by the men of this place.' So Lamech arose, took a bow he had

kept ever since he was a youth, ere he became blind, and he took large arrows,

and smooth stones, and a sling which he had, and went to the field with the young

shepherd, and placed himself behind the cattle; while the young shepherd watched

the cattle. Thus did Lamech many days. Meanwhile Cain, ever since God had

cast him off, and had cursed him with trembling and terror, could neither settle nor

find rest in any one place; but wandered from place to place. In his wanderings he

came to Lamech's wives, and asked them about him. They said to him, 'He is in

the field with the cattle.' Then Cain went to look for him; and as he came into the

field, the young shepherd heard the noise he made, and the cattle herding together

from before him. Then said he to Lamech, 'O my lord, is that a wild beast or a

robber?' And Lamech said to him, 'Make me understand which way he looks,

when he comes up. Then Lamech bent his bow, placed an arrow on it, and fitted

a stone in the sling, and when Cain came out from the open country, the shepherd

said to Lamech, 'Shoot, behold, he is coming.' Then Lamech shot at Cain with his

arrow and hit him in his side. And Lamech struck him with a stone from his sling,

that fell upon his face and knocked out both his eyes; then Cain fell at once and

died. Then Lamech and the young shepherd came up to him, and found him lying

on the ground. And the young shepherd said to him, 'It is Cain, our grandfather,

whom thou hast killed, O my lord!' Then was Lamech sorry for it, and from the

bitterness of his regret, he clapped his hands together, and struck with his flat

palm the head of the youth, who fell as if dead; but Lamech thought it was a feint;

so he took up a stone and smote him, and smashed his head until he died."

(II Adam and Eve 13:1-18)

We see that in this legend, Lamech is said to have mistakenly killed two men: none other than Lamech's own ancestor Cain, and a young shepherd who was Lamech's own grandson. Those would be the "man" and the "young man" mentioned in Gen. 4:23. (Incidentally, with the description of Atun as having "much cattle," one would have expected Jabal to appear in this story, not Atun.) The killings supposedly were unintentional, the result of the debilitating effects of Lamech's old age, especially his blindness. That is a stark contrast to Cain's murder of his brother, which appears to have been premeditated and in any event arose out of anger and

resentment. In this account, Lamech is not said to have been injured or wounded by Cain or the young shepherd prior to his killing them, so the author of *Conflict* may have interpreted Gen. 4:23 to mean that these killings would cause harm to Lamech, not that the killings were in response to Lamech having been attacked or injured.

This tale that Lamech killed his ancestor Cain is without a doubt one of the most remarkable of all the legends that grew up around the biblical story of Cain and his family. Obviously it seemed fitting and just that Cain, the world's first murderer, would meet a violent end, and one that was at the hands of one of his own descendants. Perhaps Lamech's words in Gen. 4:24 -- "If Cain is avenged sevenfold, surely Lamech seventy-seven fold" - - were interpreted as an allusion to Lamech's having killed the man whom God had said would be avenged sevenfold. That is, the interpreter may have thought, "Why would Lamech mention Cain being avenged sevenfold if Cain had not been killed?"

But there is nothing in Gen. 4:23-24 that requires the interpretation that Lamech killed Cain. Indeed, the oldest known tradition of Cain's death is found in the Book of Jubilees, which provides a completely different account of Cain's death. After telling of Adam's death at the age of 930, Jubilees says:

"At the close of this jubilee Cain was killed after [Adam] in the same year; for his

house fell upon him and he died in the midst of his house, and he was killed by its

stones; for with a stone he had killed Abel, and by a stone was he killed in

righteous judgment. For this reason it was ordained on the heavenly tablets:

'With the instrument with which a man kills his neighbour with the same shall he be

killed; after the manner that he wounded him, in like manner shall they deal with

him." (Jubilees 4:31-32)

Despite their different accounts, both the Book of Jubilees and *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* show Cain being killed in a way that is poetically just. In *Conflict*, the man who killed his brother is finally killed by his own descendant, while in Jubilees, the man who used a stone to kill his brother eventually is crushed to death by the stones of his own house. It is also worth noting that according to Jubilees, Cain was 860 years old when he died (Jubilees says Cain was born when Adam was 70 years old and died the same year as Adam). In comparison, later rabbinical tradition has Cain live for 700 years, in basic agreement with the interpretation of Gen. 4:15 found in Josephus and *Conflict* that Cain and his family would suffer under a seven-generation curse. In this case, the rabbis interpreted "generation" as 100 years, so Cain was said to have lived for 700 years.

Josephus surprisingly has little to say about Lamech's homicide. Indeed, just as we saw that his interpretation of Gen. 4:15 does not seem to be the natural or obvious meaning of the scriptural text, so we see again that Josephus' interpretation of Lamech's homicide is very creative:

". . . Lamech; who had seventy-seven children by two wives, Silla and Ada. . . .

And because he was so skillful in matters of divine revelation, that he knew he

was to be punished for Cain's murder of his brother, he made that known to his

wives." (*Antiquities of the Jews*, I, II, 2)

These comments of Josephus are somewhat puzzling, because they do not include any reference to Lamech having committed homicide. Rather than being portrayed as having killed someone, Josephus describes Lamech as a

prophet or seer who foretells his own fate. It is as though Josephus was not aware of Gen. 4:23, only Gen. 4:24. On the other hand, Josephus may have left Lamech's homicide unstated but implied -- Josephus does go on to describe the Cainites as a violent people. In any case, Josephus says nothing about Lamech killing anyone, let alone his ancestor Cain. Instead, he sees Lamech and his family as the ones who would be punished for the sin of their ancestor -- as we noted previously, Josephus said that God "threatened his posterity in the seventh generation." Thus, the Scripture's reference to sevenfold vengeance is interpreted genealogically in Josephus. Similarly, it is possible that Josephus' tradition of Lamech's 77 children is a genealogical interpretation of the scriptural reference to "seventy-sevenfold vengeance." Perhaps that tradition read Gen. 4:24 as saying that if anyone kills Lamech, he had 77 children who would avenge his death.

Turning now to the Book of Jasher, we find an embellished account of Lamech's homicide that is very similar to the legend found in *The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*:

"And Lamech was old and advanced in years, and his eyes were dim that he could

not see, and Tubal-cain, his son, was leading him; and it was one day that Lamech

went into the field and Tubal-cain his son was with him, and whilst they were

walking in the field, Cain the son of Adam advanced towards them; for Lamech

was very old and could not see much, and Tubal-cain his son was very young.

And Tubal-cain told his father to draw his bow, and with the arrows he smote

Cain, who was yet far off, and he slew him, for he appeared to them to be an

animal. And the arrows entered Cain's body although he was distant from them,

and he fell to the ground and died. And the Lord requited Cain's evil according

to his wickedness, which he had done to his brother Abel, according to the word

of the Lord which he had spoken. And it came to pass when Cain had died, that

Lamech and Tubal went to see the animal which they had slain, and they saw,

and behold Cain their grandfather was fallen dead upon the earth. And Lamech

was very much grieved at having done this, and in clapping his hands together he

struck his son and caused his death. And the wives of Lamech heard what

Lamech had done, and they sought to kill him. And the wives of Lamech hated

him from that day, because he slew Cain and Tubal-cain, and the wives of

Lamech separated from him, and would not hearken to him in those days. And

Lamech came to his wives, and he pressed them to listen to him about this matter.

And he said to his wives Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice O wives of Lamech,

attend to my words, for now you have imagined and said that I slew a man with

my wounds, and a child with my stripes for their having done no violence, but

surely know that I am old and grey-headed, and that my eyes are heavy through

age, and I did this thing unknowingly. And the wives of Lamech listened to him in

this matter, and they returned to him with the advice of their father Adam, but they

bore no children to him from that time, knowing that God's anger was increasing

in those days against the sons of men, to destroy them with the waters of the flood

for their evil doings." (Jasher 2:26-36)

The resemblance between this version of Lamech's homicide and the version in *Conflict* is unmistakable. In fact, it is so close that the versions in *Conflict* and Jasher probably both ultimately derived from a common source. In both accounts, Lamech is old and blind, and accompanies a young man of his family out into the field, where he accidentally fells Cain with an arrow, and then in his grief he unintentionally kills the young man. In *Conflict*, Lamech is helping to guard his grandson's sheep, while in Jasher, Lamech is out for a walk and is guided by his son Tubal-cain. As usual, *Conflict* is more detailed and much more gruesome and graphic than Jasher, but both sources agree that Lamech committed unintentional manslaughter, not intentional murder.

Conflict tells the story of Lamech's homicide and then drops the subject, without telling the story of Lamech's confession to his wives. The Book of Jasher embellishes and alters that part of the story, so that what the Scriptures present as a confession becomes in Jasher an attempt to reconcile with his wives. Jasher's rewritten version of Gen. 4:23 is especially interesting -- "I slew a man with my wounds and a child with my stripes." It would appear that Lamech's reference to "wounding" and "injury" were taken as a reference to Lamech's old age and blindness. Another remarkable feature of Jasher's account is that it lacks any reference to Gen. 4:24, which mentions the threat of seventy-sevenfold vengeance on the person who kills Lamech. So, whereas Josephus does not refer to verse 23, Jasher does not refer to verse 24. It is interesting, though, that Jasher says Lamech's wives tried to kill him. Could it be that the author of Jasher (or an earlier source on which Jasher relied) interpreted the words of verse 24 as Lamech warning or pleading with his wives not to kill him for what he had done?

CONCLUSION:

In this survey of the biblical and legendary accounts of Cain and his family, we have found that this ancient story from the dawn of mankind's history has been interpreted and embellished in different ways. It was entirely natural that similar but contradictory legends about Cain and the Cainites would develop, to fill in the spare and concise account found in Holy Scripture. Even among the various legends, and despite the uncertainty regarding the correct interpretation of certain passages, the basic message of Genesis chapter 4 can readily be discerned. The chapter opens with an account of the first human family and the birth of the first human children, a story of hope dashed by the evil of violence and bloodshed. The chapter closes with another account of a human family, and again the evil of violence and bloodshed. The story of the Cainites is the tragedy of human sin begetting further sin, of a family who began with a violent and impious man and then achieved earthly success before succumbing once more to sin. Holy Scripture presents the story of Cain and the Cainites as a cautionary tale for us all -- a lesson in the futility and ultimate misery of human life enslaved to sin.

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