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# Your Brother's Blood Cries Out to Me from the Ground
## 4: 1-15

**Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground DIG: The LORD accepts both animal and grain sacrifices (Leviticus 6:14-30). Why do you think He rejects Cain's sacrifice? After the murder of Abel, why do you think ADONAI approaches Cain as He does? Why not directly accuse Cain? Why delay punishment? Why protect Cain? Why was Cain punished as he was? Was Cain sorry for what he did, or sorry for getting caught? What's the difference?**

**REFLECT: How do you handle anger? What might you call yourself: Vern Volcano? Suzy Suppression? Tina Tightlip? Dennis Denial? Or what? What would you like to do differently with your anger? Where might the LORD be looking on your life with favor? With disfavor? What are the warning signs that you are being enticed by your evil desires? What helps you master it? Are you your brother's keeper?**

**Adam** and **Eve** brought suffering on **their** children also. Death posed a constant threat to their attempts to be fruitful and multiply. The appetite of the grave knows no end. The pain of childbirth was not limited to the **pain** of labor. Now, instead of being the joyful event it should have been, the birth of a child eventually became the source of unavoidable **pain** for everyone. A broken child in a broken world. The parents suffer as well because they are helpless to shield their child from the heartache and fallen nature of the world.

The failure of **Cain** to master **sin** here illustrates its full growth cycle. **When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death (James 1:13-15).**

**Now Adam lay with his wife Eve and she conceived and gave birth: Cain (4:1a).** In this sentence, the direct object is **birth**, followed by the word **Cain.** The word "to" is not in the Hebrew text. This translation will be important in the second part of this verse. However, now there is a play on words between the Hebrew word for **Cain (4:1a),** *kana,* and the Hebrew word for **gotten (4:1b)**, *kaniti.* The name **Cain**, or *kana* comes from the root word *kanah,* which means *to acquire.* But the word **gotten** comes from the root word *kin,* which means *to fashion, to shape or to give form to* **(Psalm 139:13; Proverbs 8:22).** Therefore, the play on words between **Cain** and **gotten** is not based upon similar root words, but solely on the sound in Hebrew. In other words, they sound alike. Once again, this points to the fact that the original language was Hebrew.

And **she** said: **I have brought forth a man: the LORD (4:1b).** The phrase "with the help of" **(NIV)**, or "from" **(NKJ)**, is not in the Hebrew text. In this sentence, the direct object is **man,** followed by the single Hebrew word, **the LORD.** Martin Luther translated this verse in the same way. This shows **Eve's** understanding of **3:15. She** believed that **she** would bear **the Deliverer** and that **He** would be the **God-man**. **He** would be the **Seed of the woman (3:15)** and **Cain** was **her** first born! But **she** made the assumption that **Cain** *was* the **God**-man. Obviously, **she** was wrong. It would be a long time until **the Savior** would come.

**Again, she gave birth to his brother: Abel (4:2a). The rabbis teach that she had twins.** The Hebrew word for **Abel** is *hevel,* which means *vanity or futility.* Literally, it means *a mere breath, and emphasizes the shortness of human life* **(Job 7:16; Psalm 144:4).** By naming their son **Abel**, this shows that the curse of the Fall had begun to make itself felt in the lives of **Adam** and **Eve**. By the time **Abel** was born, **they** realized that whoever **he** would be, **he** would be no **God**-man.

**Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil (4:2b). Abel** was a shepherd and because animals were not yet used for food, the sheep and goats were used for milk, clothing and sacrifice. **Cain** became a farmer to raise the food and basically followed **his father's** profession **(2:15; 3:17).**

**In the course of time Cain brought an offering to the LORD (4:3).** The phrase: **in the course of time** literally means *at the end of days* and points to a specifically appointed time. Therefore, this early in human history, there was a fixed time for a sacrifice to be **offered to ADONAI.** It may have been weekly, we don't know, but it was an appointed time and place. **The LORD** had placed two **cherubim to guard the way to the tree of life.** These **cherubim** had **a flaming**

**sword flashing back and forth (3:24).** There they remained, apparently until the Flood. And with the Flood, **the Garden** disappeared. This would have been the logical place for them to bring their **offering**. The entrance to **the Garden of Eden** was on **the east side,** and the entrance to the Tabernacle and the Temple was on **the east side** were **the bronze altar** stood (see my commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Fa – Build an Altar of Acacia Wood Overlaid with Bronze**).

**Cain** was no infidel and believed in **God**. No doubt **Adam** and **Eve** had obediently taught **their** children how to make a proper **offering to the LORD** and up to then **Cain** had chosen to be obedient. But this time **he brought some of the fruits of the soil as his** sacrifice **(4:3).** And if we have no spiritual insight, there seems nothing wrong with what **he** did. **He** brought the best of what **he** had; however, *it was bloodless*. And because it was bloodless, it was *unacceptable*. In effect, **his** offering said he didn't need a substitute. **He** was setting out to establish **his** *own* righteousness. In addition, **Cain's** offering denied that **he** was separated from **ADONAI**. **He** acted like everything was all right. The world teaches that we are born sinless, and for an Adolph Hitler or Saddam Hussein to happen, something has to go horribly wrong. But everything was not all right. The Bible teaches that we are separated from **God** at birth because we are born with a terminal disease. We are born with a **sin** nature, **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)**. We have to be born again to be children of God **(John 3:1-21). Cain** refused to recognize that, as do most today.

In the dispensation of the Torah, **the sin offering** would be mandatory atonement for specific unintentional **sin**, confessed **sin**, and forgiveness for **sin** where restitution was not required (see my commentary on **Exodus Fc – The Sin Offering**). **The LORD** would accept **the blood** of the animal as payment for the specific sin of the worshiper. **The blood** averted **God's** wrath on the sinner, and ultimately directed that wrath to **the Suffering Servant** where **He** became sin for us on the cross **(Second Corinthians 5:21; First Peter 2:24)**. **Abel's** sacrifice foreshadowed that **sin offering**.

**But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock (4:4a). Leviticus 3:16** makes clear to us what both **brothers** had been told by **their** parents, that **all the fat is the LORD's.** How do I know that? Because **faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ (Romans 10:17). ADONAI** had told **Adam** and **Eve** and **they** told **Cain** and **Abel** to bring **a blood offering**, and **by faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did (Hebrews 11:4a).** Later, with the clearer light of

the New Covenant we learn that the sprinkled **blood** of **Yeshua** would far surpass the sacrifice of **Abel**, and **speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (Hebrews 12:24b). Abel's** sacrifice was, however, acceptable to **ADONAI** because it was offered in **faith**, but it had no atoning power – not even for **Abel**, much less for anyone else. **Jesus' blood**, however, was sufficient to cleanse **the sins** of all mankind for all time, to make peace with **ADONAI** for whoever believes in, trusts in or has **faith** in His **blood** sacrifice **(Colossians 1:20).**[79] Therefore, **Abel's** sacrifice was a mere shadow of the reality of **Messiah's** sacrifice that would come later. That is why **the LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering (4:4b). The rabbis teach that fire descended from heaven and consumed it. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings (Hebrews 11:4b).** So the issue here was a **blood offering**. **Abel** was obedient. But **Cain's** attitude became evident when **he** refused to obey and bring a **blood** sacrifice.

**But on Cain and his offering God did not look with favor (4:5a). His** was an act of self-righteousness. **He** was offering **the LORD** the fruits of a cursed ground instead of submitting himself, in obedience, to what **God** had asked for. Make no mistake about it, this was outright rebellion and **ADONAI** did not accept **his offering. Jude** uses **Cain** as an example of rebellion in the end times before **Messiah** returns to set up **His** Kingdom. Both **Cain** and **Abel** were sinners, both were born after the Fall outside **the Garden of Eden**. The only difference between **the two brothers** was their **offerings**. **They** had the same parents, the same upbringing, the same knowledge and the same environment. **Cain's offering** was not of **faith**, but **Abel's** offering was an act of **faith**. This is still an important lesson for us today.

**So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast (4:5b). His** response to **the LORD** was anger, which is never good. **He** rejected **God's** way, went **his** own way and was called on it. **He** had rejected **ADONAI's** truth. **Cain** knew **the LORD** required a **blood** sacrifice, but instead of **obeying, he** invented **his** own form of worship. **His** inappropriate **offering** revealed the irreverent blasphemy of **his** heart, as **he** rejected **God's** revelation and operated by **his** own self-styled instinct and pride in what **he** had produced. **Jude** would call this **the way of Cain** (see my commentary on **Jude Aq – They Have Taken the Way of Cain, Rushed into Balaam's Error, and have been Destroyed by Korah's Rebellion**). **Cain** was rebellious and disobedient, and when **the LORD** did not accept **his offering, he** responded in jealous **anger**. Consequently, **He** murdered **his** obedient **brother**. [80]

**Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast" (4:6)?** These are rhetorical questions not requiring an answer because **God** already knew the answer. We never really hide anything from **Him.** Maybe up to this point in **his** life, **Cain** may have seemed outwardly obedient to **God**. But this incident finally revealed the resentment that had built up in **his** heart towards **ADONAI** and **his brother Abel**. **The LORD**, however, kept reaching out to **Cain** to do the **right** thing because mankind has the ability to choose **(Genesis 2:16-17; Isaiah 1:18-20; Ezeki'el 18; Jeremiah 36:3** and **7; John 7:17).**

**He** said: **If you do what is right, will you not be accepted (4:7a)?** To **do what** was **right** in this context meant to offer a proper sacrifice. If **he** would **obey God's** word, then **his** sacrifice would **be accepted. If you will repent, your sin will be forgiven.** Then **the LORD** adds: **But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door: it desires to have you, but you must master it (4:7b).** This is the first mention of **sin** in the Bible. The Hebrew word for **desire** here is *teshukah* and means *desire to possess.* **Sin** is pictured as an animal that *desires* to control and dominate **Cain**, but **the LORD** challenged **Cain** *to rule over* the unrestrained desire to **sin**. **Eve** had been talked into **her sin**, but **Cain** could not be talked out of **his**, even by **ADONAI Himself**.[81]



**Cain** lured **Abel away from their parents' presence** into a **field** and started an argument. **And while they were in the field**, **I** am sure **Abel,** being **God's** first prophet **(Luke 11:49-51)** urged repentance, while **Cain** accused **the LORD** of petty favoritism and **his brother** of self-righteousness until the argument became so bitter that **Cain attacked his brother and killed him (4:8).** And why did **Cain**

murder **his brother** (see my commentary on **Exodus Dp – You Shall Not Murder**)? Because **his** offering was **evil**, and **his brother's** was righteous **(First John 3:12).** The seed of the serpent was quickly striking at **the Seed of the woman**, corrupting **her** first **son** and killing **her** second, thus trying to prevent the fulfillment of **Christ's** destiny with the cross.

So basically, **Cain** killed **Abel** after church. **He** had gone to the designated place of worship, and presented **his** offering (which was actually an act of rebellion), that was rejected. And because **Cain** was furious with **God**, and **he** couldn't fight **Him**, **he** took out **his** anger on **his brother**. Evil cannot tolerate righteousness. Therefore, **Cain attacked his brother and killed him. Do you do what right?** If not, **sin is crouching at your door: it desires to have you, but you must master it (4:7b).**

**Eve** cried out in physical **pain** countless times as **she** gave birth. But **the pain** of childbirth was nothing compared to the pain **she** felt when **her firstborn**, **Cain**, murdered **her second son, Abel**. That **pain** inflected the world as the descendants of **Adam** and **Eve** lived out **their** fallen nature. As Rabbi Saul would write: **The wages of sin is death (Romans 5:8).** Spiritual **death** had caused **physical death**.

The picture of **sin** in the Bible is like that of a swimmer in the rapids of a large river, miles upstream from a huge waterfall. The swimmer can easily get out of the water, but as the rapids get rougher and she gets closer to the falls, it becomes more and more difficult to be free of the currents and the force of the water. The safest and best time to resist temptation is before it is too strong or powerful to resist. The rising doubt or evil thought quickly becomes **sin** when we dwell on it and allow it to take up residence in our hearts.[82]

No sooner had **Cain** murdered **his brother** than **ADONAI** called **him** to account. **He** asks: **Where is your brother Abel?** This time **Cain** had not gone to the place of sacrifice seeking **the LORD**; **the LORD** had gone out to the field seeking **Cain**. Of course, **God** knew where **his brother** was; **He asked Cain the question to give him the opportunity of confessing and repenting**. When **Cain** answered: **I don't know**, **he** told the first lie. But in a sense, **he** really didn't know where **Abel** was. Like all others who died in **faith**, not having received the promises, **Abel** was the first human inhabitant of sh'ol, that place in the heart of the earth where

the righteous of the TaNaKh awaited the coming of **the Savior of sinners** to be taken up to **heaven (Luke 16:19-31; Ephesians 4:7-10).**[83]Instead of responding in fear and humility, **he** compounded the problem by boldly questioning **God's** right to ask such a question! **Am I my brother's keeper (4:9)?** This is the first question raised by a human in the Bible. But by asking this question **he** really avoided answering **the LORD's** question. **Adam**, when confronted with **his sin**, confessed and repented – but not **Cain.** This is what **sin** does. It hardens the heart and perverts the senses.

Then **ADONAI** said: **What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground (4:10).** On Mount Tziyon in modern Yerushalayim stands a museum that contains the remains of a few of the six million Jews who were brutally put to **death** by the Nazis during World War II. Included among the shocking exhibits are lampshades made of human skin and soap made from human fat. The museum itself is called the Chamber of Destruction, and the relics it contains are disquieting reminders of man's inhumanity to man. Outside the building is a simple plaque inscribed with a brief quotation from this verse: **Listen! Your brother's blood cries out.**[84]

This is the first mention of **blood** in the Bible. **The Hebrew for blood is plural, meaning the blood of Abel and all his descendants. Abe**l spoke to **the LORD** after **his death**, asking that **his** murder be avenged. **By faith, Abel still speaks, even though he is dead (Hebrews 11:4c).** Like the souls underneath the altar **who had been slain because of the Word of God (Revelation 6:9-10), Abel** asked that **ADONAI** avenge **his blood.** But the primary way **Abel still speaks** is to remind of three things: people come to **the LORD** by **faith**, not by works; we must obey **God's** revelation above our own reasoning and self-will; and **sin** is severely punished. We must never forget that **the righteous will live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4b; Romans 1:16-17; Hebrews 10:38a)**.[85]

**Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand (4:11). The ground,** from which **Cain** made a living, was now under **a curse**. This is profoundly prophetic because **he** was a farmer. **His** pride came from **the ground**. Now it would yield **him** nothing. The picture of **the ground, opening its mouth**, is found several times in Scripture **(Numbers 16:30-35; Deuteronomy 11:6; Psalm 106:17; Isaiah 5:14)**, always in a negative sense.

**When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you (4:12a).**

Every time **Cain's** feet touched **the ground**, it would be a reminder of **his** wicked deed. **The earth**, in effect, rejected **Cain** as **he** had rejected **the LORD** and **his brother**. In this way, **Abel** continued to speak to **his brother**.

**You will be a restless wanderer on the earth (4:12b).** The natural reading of this Scripture means that **Cain** was not to stay anywhere very long, continually anxious, running and on the move; **he** would have no home, and in that way, **he** would **be a** fugitive and a **restless wanderer.** But **Cain** defied that **curse** by living in **a city in the land of Nod, east of Eden (4:16-17).**

Then **Cain** said to **ADONAI**: **My punishment is more than I can bear (4:13). Sin** always takes you further than you wanted to go, and costs you more than you wanted to pay. The word **punishment** literally means *my iniquity,* or *sin.* **Adam** did not complain about **his** being driven from **the Garden of Eden**, but **Cain**, a greater sinner than **his** father, did object.

**Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence. He** knew **he** would be cut off from fellowship with **the LORD**. That's what **sin** does to us. It separates us from **God**. **I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me (4:14).** On the surface, it might seem that **Cain** was sorry for what **he** had done. The fact that **he** uses the word **punishment**, which is usually translated **sin**, does show a certain amount of acknowledgment. But being sorry for being caught is very different than repentance. The fact that **Cain**, in the end, defied **the curse of God** by living in **a city (4:14)** shows that **he** never truly repented. **He** was only interested in **himself**. No remorse, not even any concern about how **Abel's** death affected **his** parents. Nevertheless, **ADONAI** spared **Cain's** life. The only people who could find **Cain** and **kill him** were other family members, **his** brothers and sisters. Then why don't we know about them? Because **God's Word** is focused on telling the Gospel story, which is the redemption of mankind through **the Seed of the woman;** through **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**, which became the nation of **Isra'el** and ultimately **the Messiah**. People who are not important to understanding that narrative are not important, and therefore, not mentioned.

**The LORD** reserves the judgment on **Cain** to **Himself**. **He** doesn't allow a relative of **Abel** to come and avenge **his death. God** is going to institute capital punishment in **Genesis Chapter 9** with the Dispensation of Civil Government. But you can imagine **Cain's** fear. Everyone **on the earth** was a relative! There was probably over a hundred thousand people **on the earth** at this time and the

statement in **5:4** about **Adam** and **Eve** having **other sons and daughters** was well underway. In **ADONAI's** response to **Cain's** concern that **whoever** found **him** would **kill him, ADONAI** said: **Not so; whoever kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over (4:15a). The rabbis interpreted this to mean that Cain could not be killed until seven generations had passed.** What we see here is the grace of **the LORD** because **Cain** obtained divine protection.

**Then ADONAI put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him (4:15b).** The Hebrew word *oth,* means *a sign* rather than **a mark.** So a better translation would be: *Then **the Lord** placed a sign on **Cain**.* Whatever *the sign* was we do not know, but it was obviously visible. The same word is used in **Exodus 12:13** and **23** of the visible Passover **blood**, and in **Joshua 2:12** of the visible scarlet thread. **The rabbis have four different views of what this sign was. First, some believe that God engraved the four letters of His name, YHWH, on his forehead. Second, some believe that since Cain feared the wild beasts at that point, God restored their natural fear of man. Third, that ADONAI provided him with a dog for guidance; wherever the dog directed him, he would be safe. And fourth, some believe that it was a horn on his head to fight off any attacker.** It was supposedly some kind of *sign* to assure **him** of **his** protection. But we can be assured it did not give **him** peace. For all who came in contact with **him, he** would be a continual reminder of **God's** judgment of **sin**.