

Cain

The First Animal Rights Activist?

We hope you will enjoy the following unusual perspective on one of the most enigmatic stories in the Bible. Although this personal commentary DOES NOT FIT WITH CHRISTIAN OR JEWISH TRADITION! Perhaps... You will find it a bit more LOGICAL and hopefully more INTERESTING than those you have heard in the past.

Genesis Chapter Four

(1) Now the man (Adam) had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain and she said, "I have gotten the man child with the help of the Lord." (*Several commentaries on this verse state that Eve mistakenly believed Cain to be the Promised One the fulfillment of the first prophecy of the future Messianic Redemption.*)

(2) And again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And **Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.**

(3) So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground.

(4) And Abel, on his part also brought of the **firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions.** And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering;

(5) but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

(6) Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"

(7) "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up (yours will be accepted)? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

(8) And Cain told (this to) Able his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

(9) Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

(10) And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground."

(11) “And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.”

(12) “When you cultivate the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you; you shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.”

(13) And Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is too great to bear!”

(14) “Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I shall be hidden, and I shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and it will come about that whoever finds me will kill me”

(15) So the Lord said to him, “Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him seven fold.” And the Lord appointed a sign for (or set a mark on) Cain, lest anyone finding him should slay him.

(16) Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

There have been many commentaries, sermons, anecdotes, etc. based and built upon the preceding verses. After having questioned the justice of God, in His dealings with Cain after he committed the first murder, I decided to try and put the myriads of Jewish Rabbinic and Christian commentaries previously studied, as far out of mind as possible, and seek some answers from God Himself. Following some serious prayer and meditation and Bible study, I was pleasantly surprised to find answers that did not follow either “tradition”, but seemed more logical when viewed from an alternate perspective. Since Jewish and Christian theology does not agree with the premise I have held from childhood, concerning the Laws of God, it is likely that few if any theologians would agree with my deductions in this case. For the sake of dialogue, please consider this as the foundation for the balance of this commentary.

Following my initial study of the Bible at approximately 12 years of age (many years ago now), I came to a generally unpopular conclusion that the “Law” of God had been given to Adam and Eve, in “oral” form at the foundation of the earth. It appeared most likely to me that most of the major Biblical prophetic events of the future would have been explained in detail to the First Couple, by God Himself, after they were denied access to the “Tree of Life. Simply stated . . . at that time I determined through my own studies that OBEDIENCE to the Commandments should be the ONLY basis for salvation . . . and the only KEY to access the Kingdom of God. And since God said he did not change, then it would have to be the same yesterday, today and forever. My studies over the past 40 years (now over 50) concerning the Commandments, Statutes, and Ordinances of God, as outlined in the Torah, and verified in the Mishnah and Zohar, have served to confirm and solidify my original conclusion.

Since the reason I arrived at this conclusion, after having been raised predominately in the Southern Baptist Church, was the fact that God said more than once, that He was the same, yesterday, today and forever, that He does not CHANGE! That, plus the fact that He is the ONE and only Creator, King of the Universe, demands that no “created” entity (the Apostle Paul, the Early Church Fathers, Rabbi's, Sages, Saints, or Popes) have ever been given the right to change or alter that which God said was ETERNAL! Since the Biblical concept of God's Law states that it is

unequivocally "eternal" , then it must have been established BEFORE the foundation of the earth. Support for this comes in part from the statement by Cain to God, in verse 14, showing that he was aware that "murder" was a "death penalty" sin, even though no one had yet committed a murder. Neither does the Bible state that murder is a violation of any LAW prior to this act being committed. The most crucial support to me was the fact that God established the Seventh day of creation as His Sabbath. The fact that He sanctified and made holy, the Seventh day of the week to be observed as a remembrance of HIS creation, implies that ALL the Commandments of God were well understood, and passed down subsequently by the first "righteous" generations of mankind. And throughout EVERY century and EVERY millennia PRIOR to the LAW being WRITTEN down at Sinai... the descendants of the "righteous" would have had someone in their midst who KNEW the LAW of GOD and declared it to any and all who would listen... The ETERNAL COMMANDMENTS OF THE CREATOR

Since DISOBEDIENCE to the Law of God resulted in man's separation from God, it is only LOGICAL that OBEDIENCE to the Law would result in "Teshuva". . mankind being returned to Him.

Establishing this as the premise, and proceeding from this point . . . It is easier to conclude that when Adam and Eve sinned, God chose to offer the first sacrifice for their sin. Since we know that there is no Atonement without the shedding of blood; and since we know from the balance of these verses God granted them the ability to repent; we can conclude that the first sin offering was most likely a "lamb" without blemish, a pre-cursor of sorts, or possibly the "original" Passover Lamb. God obviously made that first sacrifice Himself, and took the skin and made them a covering. This would logically have been the time He demonstrated to them "how" to kill and offer a sacrifice. It is probable that God would have explained the purpose of the; "Passover" offering as it related to their dis-obedience and subsequent repentance. He would have outlined the events which this "Passover Sacrifice" would foreshadow... a long awaited Messianic Redemption that would be accomplished in the distant future by the most righteous One who would be one of their descendants. Ponder for a moment, the emotion evoked by this experience...

Since God did not require the immediate death of Adam and Eve, but allowed them a life span not to exceed 1,000 years, they obviously repented and appealed to God for mercy. God had compassion on them and they were "passed over by the death angel". Since 1,000 years is as a day with God, they still died as God said they would, in the same "day" they chose to "dis-obey" His Law. In this case they were not brought out of a land of bondage, they were allowed to escape the immediate death sentence, which could have and would have been applied... had they not repented.

Their daily existence would have changed radically after the "fall", just as it did for Israel, following the Exodus from Egypt. The entire account of Genesis is somewhat vague and obscure concerning the most important concept found in those first few chapters . . . the need to re-establish the broken relationship between God and Man.

The reason for this obscurity may be due to the fact that this account was not "written down" until Moses was commanded to do so. Logic dictates that most of the Law, and much of the history of the world would have been in existence in "oral form" prior to the Exodus from Egypt. The Book of Job, possibly written even before the Flood of Noah, outlines most of the

Laws of God and His creation within its pages. Since the “Law” would have been primarily passed down to each generation in “oral” form, prior to the Exodus, it makes sense that the entire Bible is actually dedicated to re-establishing man's shattered relationship to God. Providing that the Redemption can only come through “Teshuva” - repentance - and obedience - the only way to “repair the breach” and place mankind back on the only path, which can return him to God.

In verse two of Genesis Chapter Four we see that Able was a shepherd, a keeper of flocks, and that Cain was farmer who tilled the ground. It does not seem logical for Able or anyone else for that matter, to have become a “keeper of flocks” (by implication...domesticated sheep, goats and perhaps even cattle). Why would he be keeping live stock if everyone was still a vegetarian after the fall? MANY wild animals are considered by God to be “kosher” for food, but sheep, goats and cattle are the primary mammals domesticated for food as well as for sacrifice. Yet, many theologians claim that humans were only vegetarians before the flood. If this were so then why do we see Noah's lack of reaction to “suddenly” being commanded to become a “carnivore” (which would, no doubt, have been a complete shock!)? With all the food details found in Leviticus, there appears to be no indication anywhere that even “implies” humans were all vegetarians before the flood. The Passover Lamb which is to be sacrificed each year is also required to be eaten. If the Lamb slain at the foundation of the world in the Garden of Eden was also the first Passover Lamb, then those in the Garden would have been required to have eaten it as well!

It stands to reason that since the animals became carnivorous when Adam and Eve were removed from the Garden that the human diet would have changed at the same time... rather than changing more than 1,000 years later. Here is a VERY important point... We can see in the Bible that the instructions for most sacrificial offerings declare the meat of that offering HAD to be eaten whenever the “fat” portions were burned. Since most sacrifices were not whole “burnt offerings”, and the description of the sacrifice given by Able in Genesis verse Four seems to indicate the “fat” portions were separated, there is an even greater reason to believe that the offering may well have been similar to that of the “Passover Lamb”. . . The blood was for atonement, the meat was to be eaten, and the fat portions were consumed by fire. There is NO indication in scripture we can find to support the predominant, ancient, theory that mankind was “Veg-an” (strictly vegetarian only) until after the Flood!

NOW, to the crux of this whole scenario! IF. . . Cain is truly angry because God does not respect his “grain” offering, (most commentaries say it was because he offered poor quality grain), and if the reason was that Cain offered inferior grain, it seems Cain would have been more likely to repent and correct the situation when he had the opportunity (see verse Seven), rather than continue on such a desperate path, and continue to defy God. That was always a major stumbling block for me, when it came to finding ANY logic in these actions!

The fact the situation became so intense that Cain commits the FIRST murder; and the victim is his own brother; shows a FAR more EMOTIONAL issue is at hand. The dialogue between God and Cain lends much more support to the probability that this sacrifice was not intended to be JUST an arbitrary “THANKSGIVING” offering.

Knowing what we do about human traits and attitudes stemming from “sibling rivalry”, is it possible that Cain was the prototype of today's P.E.T.A. (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals)... fanatic? A true animal rights activist who did not want to kill any living thing? Could he have chosen to remain a true “vegetarian” for “humane” reasons? Could he have honestly felt that “killing” even for a COMMANDED “sacrifice” to God, was abhorrent to him? Even though

God obviously instructed everyone to offer these sacrifices; is it possible that Cain truly thought it would be more pleasing to God, if he refused to take the life of an innocent animal, and substituted a grain offering instead?

If this were the case, the progression of this story would be far more understandable and logical. This would be a good reason why Cain would NOT want to correct his problem, (by going and getting some better grain, fruits and veggies), and why he would be so angry with God for not rewarding his attitude and instead reprimanding him! Cain could easily have become VERY emotional about this issue, and actually be angry enough with God to want to “Get back at Him”! In the manner of many rebellious children even today; he could have said, “Ok, God, if you really want me to kill something . . . I will!” Then proceed to go and “offer” his brother Able as a “sacrifice” to God! Hence his statement, “Am I my brothers keeper?”, possibly identifying himself with the “keeper of flocks”?

In verse Eight we see that Cain may have explained his predicament with God to Abel, which could lead to the possibility that Able MAY have been willing to give his life to save his brother. Some commentaries state Isaac willingly offered himself to be a sacrifice for his father Abraham; perhaps this could also have been the situation for Cain and Able? However, since no murder had yet taken place, it is doubtful that either brother would have fully understood the implications. It is more probable, that Cain was simply unwilling to control his emotions and follow the instructions of God, and so allowed himself to be manipulated by the Adversary (who was crouching at the door). Being carried away by his anger at God for “not understanding” his good intentions, combined with his jealousy of Able for being approved of by God for doing something Cain may have felt to be “unjustified”. And perhaps he simply lost control of his emotions, and struck the only object of his anger that was within range at that moment, his brother Abel.

The reaction of God now seems to make much more sense . . . since God did not require the death of Cain immediately. Taking into consideration, the “extenuating” circumstances, the “attitude” of heart behind the killing of Able, showing that Cain's original intent was to please God, but in his anger, he allowed “sin” to overtake him as God told him it would, in verse Seven.

“And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door;
and its desire is for you, but you must master it.”

This might also have been the reason why God gave Cain a mark of protection, even though he was being banished from His presence In essence, commuting his death sentence to life without parole, in exile.

Could it have been a case of someone who disobeys a law, or commandment thinking... they are justified for the GREATER GOOD? It is still wrong, and will result in an appropriate punishment, but mitigating circumstances, in the interest of “justice” would alter the “legal” penalty. If Cain's anger with God, stemming from the “feeling” that he was justified in not killing an animal, and mistakenly thinking his attitude should please God... resulted in the first “human” sacrifice, could this have become the “precedent” for ritual human sacrifice later? It seems to follow some chain of logic in Scripture, and lends credence to the fact that so many pagan religions which developed before the flood were primarily from the descendants of Cain, were among the first to offer human sacrifice to their deities.