

The Inscrutable Question: Cain's Rebellion against Divine Policy Regarding Approved Sacrifices, Gen 4:6-7

Genesis 4:6 - Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why is your countenance fallen?"

v. 7 - "If you do well [**orient and adjust to divine mandates**] will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well [**do not orient and adjust**], sin is crouching at the door; and its desire [**חשוקה / teshuqa** /] is for you, but you must master it [**משל / masha** /]; **through the free will choice of faith alone in Messiah alone**]."

- 28) Cain's status in the Adamic family was based on the Old Testament principle of primogeniture: an exclusive right of inheritance belonging to the eldest son.
- 29) This means that as first-born son, Cain would become at Adam's death the *pater familias*: head of the household. When the sacrifices were conducted according to schedule, Cain valued his vegetables as superior to Abel's animals.
- 30) When the Lord rejected Cain's sacrifice before the entire family it resulted in an inner resentment that was reflected by the expression on his face—his countenance fell.
- 31) The mental attitude behind it was known to the Lord and in verse 6 He asks Cain why he was resentful. The Lord did not need to hear the answer to the question as omniscience already knew. The line of questioning was designed to alert Cain to his sins.
- 32) In addition, the Lord gives Cain an analysis of his choices: (1) If you do well, i.e., bring the required sacrifice, then you will be accepted. However, (2) if you do not bring the appropriate sacrifice then you will enter into locked-in negative volition and fall under the power of satanic influence. This is the warning of the last half of:

Genesis 4:7b - "If you do not do well, sin [**חטאת / chattath** /] is crouching [**רבץ / ravas** /] at the door; and its desire [**חשוקה / teshuqa** /] is for you, but you must master [**משל / masha** /] it."

- 33) This is the opportunity for Cain to believe in Messiah, bring the appropriate sacrifice and assume his rightful place as priest-designate of Adam's family. The warning contains double entendre: an ambiguity of meaning arising from language that lends itself to more than one interpretation.
- 34) The first key to the double entendre is the word for sin:
חטאת / chattath / - "sin" or "sin offering"

This word can be interpreted either way. Thus, the Lord places a challenge before Cain's volition.
- 35) With reference to "sin," its meaning refers to Cain's decision to violate the divine mandate, e.g., bringing vegetables instead of an animal to the scheduled sacrifice. With reference to "sin offering" it refers to the opportunity Cain has to repent, i.e., change his mind, and bring the required offering. In other words, the Lord is offering Cain the opportunity for a "do over."
- 36) The options are brought out by the word "crouching" [NASV & NIV] or "lieth" [KJV]. It is the Hebrew verb:

רבץ / ravas / - "to lie down: crouch or repose"

- 37) If Cain does well and decides to bring the appropriate sacrifice then the required animal lies patiently awaiting him to do so. The real issue in redemption is the change of mental attitude toward Messiah from which emerges the desire to bring the appropriate sacrifice.
- 38) However, if Cain does not do well, then satanic influence lies at the door of his stream of conscience and he will move into intensified bitterness.
- 39) The next key word is “desire,” the Hebrew verb with which we have become familiar:
- השוקה / *t^hshuqa* / - “desire” or “longing”
- 40) On the one hand, “desire” refers to Satan’s objective to capture the thinking of Cain, to influence him into committing the heinous act of murdering his very own brother in order to destroy the line of Christ.

1 Peter 5:8 - Be of sober spirit. Become vigilant. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Peter’s observation refers to the danger faced by the carnal believer. The application to Cain is that he has been given an opportunity to believe in Messiah and forewarned that should he fail to do so, Lucifer will seize the opportunity to co-opt him into his nefarious scheme.

- 41) On the other hand, “desire” refers to the motivation behind the sacrifice, depicted in context as a lamb from the flocks but, as a type, representative of the coming Messiah. The Lord is offering Cain a gracious second chance to go positive and then demonstrate that decision by bringing the designated sacrifice.
- 42) The issue before Cain can only be resolved by his own free will: “... but you must master it.” The word “master” is the Qal future of the verb:
- משל / *mashal* / - Refers to superior rank.
- Cain has free will and thus has the power and authority to make the right choice and in so doing must take the responsibility to rule over the desires of his sinful nature.
- 43) Consequently, the primary meaning of the double entendre is the fact that Cain is an unbeliever who is about to fall under the evil influence of Lucifer himself.
- 44) The secondary inference is that this does not need to continue, for if Cain believes in Messiah the power of his sinful nature will be broken, he can take control over his own body, “master” his sinful desires, and offer the approved sacrificial animal. Cain’s choices can be illustrated by this paraphrase of:

Genesis 4:7 - “If you do well by bringing the required sacrifice, will not your change of mind be demonstrated in your facial expression, and I will accept your sacrifice? And if you do not do well, then sin crouches at the door like a roaring lion, as does the required sacrifice of the lamb, lying in repose, which is a type of the Messiah. Both have a desire that you respond to them, but you must make the final decision so you can rule over your sinful nature and then submit to the divine mandate.”