

# MOSES 5; GENESIS 4

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## THE TWO WAYS

### Overview

While the importance of the accounts of the Creation and the Fall in Moses 1–4 cannot be overstated, the temple-themed story of the book of Moses is not complete without the multi-episode drama that follows in chapters 5–8. These chapters include a series of contrasting narratives that illustrate either faithfulness or unfaithfulness to each of the five celestial laws, thus providing the best scriptural example of the ancient teaching of the Two Ways. Hugh Nibley explained:

No teaching is more frequently met with nor more emphatically brought home in the earliest Christian literature than the famous doctrine of the “Two Ways,” which proclaims that there lie before every human being . . . two roads between which a choice must be made. The one is the road of darkness, the way of evil; the other, the way of light. Every man must choose between the two every day of his life; that choosing is the most important thing he does, and the two ways, good and evil, are absolutely essential to God’s plan.<sup>1</sup>

The clarity with which the fundamental doctrines, laws, and ordinances of the gospel begin to unfold in Moses 5 fully justifies Nibley in calling it “the greatest of all chapters” in scripture.<sup>2</sup> Consistent with the themes of perfection and corruption throughout the remainder of the book of Moses, chapter 5 contains a series of stories that highlight the contrast between those who would and those who would *not* hearken to the voice of God (verses 16, 17, 23, 57). We read the record of Adam and Eve’s obedience to the “second

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh W. Nibley, “The Ancient Law of Liberty,” in *The World and the Prophets*, ed. John W. Welch, Gary P. Gillum, and Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 3 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1987), 184–185.

<sup>2</sup> Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 2004), 231.

commandments” given after the Fall<sup>3</sup> and of the angel’s explanation of the law of sacrifice (Moses 5:1–12). Then we are shown how, with the tragedy of Cain and Abel (verses 13–41), “the rebellion in the heavens was transmitted to a rebellion on the earth.”<sup>4</sup> Following the brief genealogies of the posterity of Cain (verses 42–46), we encounter the story of Lamech, one of those descendants, and his rise to the pinnacle of wickedness through murdering his rivals (verses 47–54), an account that foreshadows the sad notice of the general parting of the ways between the righteous and the wicked that becomes increasingly evident as the chapter closes (verses 55–59).

Moses 5 fills in details missing from Genesis, such as the reason why Cain’s offering was rejected (verses 18–26) and the fact that Adam and Eve had other children before Cain and Abel (verse 2). It was from among these descendants that Cain chose a wife (verse 28)—and, later, it was from these same family members that Cain feared retribution for his murder of Abel (verse 39). Such details were no doubt originally contained in an independent narrative, of which Genesis preserves only the “bare bones of the story.”<sup>5</sup> Some of these apparently lost details, found in the book of Moses, have also survived to our day in other ancient texts.<sup>6</sup>

### **Source**

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

### **Related verses**

Moses 5; Genesis 4

## **Moses 5:1–3. Adam and Eve Keep the Law of Obedience**

**5:1. “to till the earth.”** The tilling reported here was previously anticipated in Moses 3:5 and 4:29. “Tilling the earth” as Adam and Eve did is also a theme in the Book of Mormon and is sometimes linked with the commandment to have children.<sup>7</sup>

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3 Alma 12:37; compare Alma 12:29–35, Moses 6:56.

4 John Taylor, *The Mediation and Atonement* (1882; repr., Heber City, UT: Archive Publishers, 2000), 68.

5 Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 31.

6 See David Calabro, “‘This Thing Is a Similitude’: A Typological Approach to Moses 5:1–15 and Ancient Apocryphal Literature,” in *Tracing Ancient Threads in the Book of Moses: Inspired Origins, Temple Contexts, and Literary Qualities*, ed. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, David R. Seely, John W. Welch, and Scott Gordon (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Springville, UT: Book of Mormon Central; Reading, CA: FAIR; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2021).

7 See 2 Nephi 2:19–20; Alma 42:2; Ether 6:13–16.

**5:1. “bread by the sweat of his brow.”** God rewarded Adam and Eve’s labor with a harvest of life-sustaining grain. Bread relieved the couple from the diet of wild plants and roots they had presumably eaten immediately after their expulsion from Eden.

**5:1. “as I the Lord had commanded him. And Eve, also, his wife, did labor with him.”** The laws of obedience and sacrifice are highlighted in verses 1–6. These verses highlight the *obedience* of Adam and Eve by describing their faithfulness to each of the covenants they had been given. Adam, with Eve, his fellow laborer, began to “till the earth, and to have dominion over all the beasts of the field and to eat his bread by the sweat of his brow” (verse 1). Likewise, Eve fulfilled the commission she had received in the Garden of Eden and “bare . . . sons and daughters, and they began to replenish the earth” (verse 2). Moreover, “Adam was obedient to the commandments of the Lord” to offer a sacrifice of “the firstlings of their flocks” although he did not yet fully understand the reason why he had been thus commanded (verses 5–6).

**5:2. “Adam knew his wife.”** Significantly, the book of Moses expresses this event in the simple past tense rather than in the more grammatically complex “Adam had already known his wife.” An Armenian text explicitly states, “When Adam and Eve left the Garden, they were still virgins.”<sup>8</sup>

**5:2. “sons and daughters.”** In contrast to Genesis, the book of Moses specifically mentions children of both genders born before Cain and Abel.

**5:3. “two and two.”** The monogamous pairing described here can be contrasted with the presumably unauthorized polygamous marriage of the wicked Lamech (verse 44) and the general licentiousness of the people in the days of Noah.

**5:3. “till the land . . . and also begat sons and daughters.”** The wording of this verse parallels the description of Adam and Eve’s faithfulness to the law of obedience in verses 1–2. We are meant to understand that the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve thoroughly followed the pattern of their parents.

### **Source**

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

### **Related verses**

Moses 5:1–2

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<sup>8</sup> Michael E. Stone, “The Sethites and the Cainites,” in *Armenian Apocrypha Relating to Adam and Eve*, ed. Michael E. Stone (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1996), 203. This is one example among others.

## **Moses 5:4–5. Adam and Eve Keep the Law of Sacrifice and Receive Its Explanation**

**5:4. “Adam and Eve . . . called upon the name of the Lord.”** Here, we are told that Adam and Eve “called upon the name of the Lord”—meaning Jehovah. Later they will receive the more explicit instruction to “call upon God in the name of the *Son*” (verse 8; emphasis added).

William Clayton, a clerk for Joseph Smith that kept a daily journal of the Prophet’s activities, wrote that the “first word Adam spoke” was “a word of supplication, [a] key word by which the heavens are opened.”<sup>9</sup> The threefold repetition in some versions of the story may symbolize the tradition that holds that it was on the third day when Adam’s urgent and persistent request for additional knowledge from the Lord was at last answered. In ancient tradition, Adam and Eve prayed with upraised hands, and that practice is mentioned more generally in scriptures such as Isaiah 1:15–16. In some Jewish traditions, the angel who came to instruct Adam is said to have brought a book that “teaches [those who are wise and God-fearing] how to call upon the angels and make them appear before men, and answer all their questions.”<sup>10</sup> Likewise, the Prophet Joseph Smith was anxious to teach the Saints the manner by which they could “pray and have [their] prayers answered.”<sup>11</sup>

**5:4. “for they were shut out from his presence.”** Lacking knowledge of the conditions by which they could receive the blessings of the Atonement, Adam and Eve experienced a temporary state of spiritual death—the “first death, even that same death which is the last death” for the wicked (Doctrine and Covenants 29:41).

**5:5. “He gave unto them commandments.”** “What was the reward for diligence in prayer?” asked BYU professors Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes. “The answer is more commandments.”<sup>12</sup> These were among what Alma termed the “second commandments,” given because Adam and Eve had transgressed the “first commandments” that forbade them from eating from the tree of knowledge and that instructed them to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth (Alma 12:31–37). Hugh Nibley explained, “Now he gives them commandments. He gives them the law of God. He gives

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9 Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Brent M. Rogers, eds., *Journals, Volume 3: May 1843–June 1844*, vol. 3 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Ronald K. Esplin and Matthew J. Grow (Salt Lake City, UT: Church Historian’s Press, 2015), 334; spelling and grammar modernized.

10 See, for example, Louis Ginzberg, ed., *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols., trans. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 1:92.

11 “Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” *Juvenile Instructor* 27, no. 11 (June 1, 1892): 345. Compare Joseph Smith Jr., April 28, 1842, in Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1969), 226.

12 Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price: A Verse-by-Verse Commentary* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2005), 58.

them the *law of obedience*. He gives them *the law of sacrifice*, and he gives them *the law of the Gospel* . . . , which they follow. They are starting on the way back now.”<sup>13</sup>

**5:5. “offer the firstlings of their flocks.”** Jewish and Islamic traditions recount how God taught Adam the practice of animal sacrifice. The ordinance of animal sacrifice given to Adam and Eve (Moses 5:5–9) corresponds in our day to the sacrament (see Doctrine and Covenants 59:8–14). Significantly, Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that three ordinances—baptism, sacrifice, sacrament—are associated with one and the same covenant.<sup>14</sup>

### **Source**

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

### **Related verses**

Moses 5:4–5

## **Moses 5:6–8. The Law of Sacrifice Is Explained**

**5:6. “after many days.”** According to Jewish and early Christian traditions, Adam and Eve had a forty-day penance period after the Fall. Bible scholar Terje Stordalen concluded that the prohibition against eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge was given as “a test of being faithful while not perceiving (fully) the reason behind an instruction.”<sup>15</sup> We might conclude the same about the law of sacrifice. The additional light and knowledge that Adam sought did not come immediately. However, wrote Hugh Nibley, “[the Lord] doesn’t keep you waiting forever. Give your test sufficient time, enough to show your integrity, and you will get your answer.”<sup>16</sup>

**5:6. “an angel.”** The description in Alma 12:28–35 of the instructions given to Adam and Eve by an angel implies that Alma was aware of the material in the book of Moses—either through direct revelation or through his study of the brass plates. Latter-day Saint scholars Jeff Lindsay and Noel B. Reynolds have identified many other examples where the prophets of the Book of Mormon seem to have been aware of events and teachings in the book of Moses.<sup>17</sup>

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13 Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 2004), 233; emphasis added.

14 Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1985), 293.

15 Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2–3 and the Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2000), 226.

16 Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 2004), 234.

17 Noel B. Reynolds and Jeff Lindsay, “‘Strong like unto Moses’: The Case for Ancient Roots in the Book of Moses Based

**5:6. “I know not, save the Lord commanded me.”** Nibley commented on the practical implications of the example of our first parents, writing, “I doubt not that when we know the reasons for some of the things we do now on faith, the practical value of the actions will be so plain that we will wonder how we could have missed it, and then we shall be heartily glad that we did what we were told to do.”<sup>18</sup>

**5:7. “This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father.”** About this symbolism, Joseph Smith taught: “Certainly, the shedding of the blood of a beast could be beneficial to no man, except it was done in imitation or as a type, or explanation of what was to be offered through the gift of God Himself, and this performance done with an eye looking forward in faith on the power of that great Sacrifice for a remission of sins. . . . [W]henever the Lord . . . commanded [men] to offer sacrifices to Him, . . . it was done that they might look forward in faith to the time of his coming and rely upon the power of that Atonement for a remission of their sins.”<sup>19</sup>

**5:8. “Do all that thou doest in the name of the Son.”** Nephi similarly taught, “But behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul” (2 Nephi 32:9).

### **Source**

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

### **Related verses**

Moses 5:6–8

## **Moses 5:9–10. Adam Rejoices**

**5:9. “the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam.”** The explanation of the law of sacrifice in Moses 5:6–8 sets the stage for the baptism of Adam. However, contrary to expectation, that event is delayed until later in the Moses narrative within the sermon of Enoch (6:51–64). The mention of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in this verse recalls the modern baptismal prayer and thus hints at the ordinance.

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on Book of Mormon Usage of Related Content Apparently from the Brass Plates,” in *Tracing Ancient Threads in the Book of Moses: Inspired Origins, Temple Contexts, and Literary Qualities*, ed. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, David R. Seely, John W. Welch, and Scott Gordon (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Springville, UT: Book of Mormon Central; Redding, CA: FAIR; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2021), 315–420.

<sup>18</sup> Hugh W. Nibley, “Prophets and Ritual,” in *The World and the Prophets*, ed. John W. Welch, Gary P. Gillum, and Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 3 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1987), 149.

<sup>19</sup> “The Elders of the Church in Kirtland, to Their Brethren Abroad,” *The Evening and Morning Star*, March 1834, 143. See also Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price*, 233.

With no human administrator available to perform the baptism, it was accomplished in an exceptional manner by Adam's being "caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and . . . carried down into the water" (6:64). Similarly, in the Mandaean account of Adam's baptism the ordinance was completed by divine means through the Mandaean redeemer figure.<sup>20</sup> (The Mandaeans are a religious group with Jewish Palestinian roots that go back to the first century AD). After giving the account of Adam's baptism, Enoch affirmed that Adam also received the Melchizedek Priesthood and all the additional, higher ordinances necessary for him to be called "a son of God" (6:67–68).

**5:10. "Blessed be the name of God, for . . . in this life I shall have joy."** Adam's words are phrased in elegant parallels to Eve's words in verse 11. Adam and Eve's individual expressions of new-found understanding and joy meld to form a harmonious dual psalm of gratitude.

**5:10. "because of my transgression my eyes are opened, . . . and again in the flesh I shall see God."** The second part of Adam's parallel expresses a significant insight: the crowning moment and the supernal reward of the opening of Adam's eyes (first mentioned in Moses 4:13 after Adam ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge) is that one day he shall again see God. References to the opening of eyes in scripture signify gaining sudden knowledge or insight of divine origin.

**5:10. "transgression."** As in the second article of faith, the term "transgression" is deliberately used instead of the more common word "sin." Despite the fact that the two words are near synonyms in ordinary English speech, Elder Dallin H. Oaks saw an instructive parallel with "a familiar distinction in the law. Some acts, like murder, are crimes because they are inherently wrong. Other acts, like operating without a license, are crimes only because they are legally prohibited. Under these distinctions, the act that produced the Fall was not a sin—inherently wrong—but a transgression—wrong because it was formally prohibited."<sup>21</sup>

### **Source**

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

### **Related verses**

Moses 5:9–10

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<sup>20</sup> E. S. Drower, ed., *The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1959), 30.

<sup>21</sup> Dallin H. Oaks, "The Great Plan of Happiness," October 1993 general conference, online at churchofjesuschrist.org.

## **Moses 5:11–12. Eve Rejoices**

**5:11. “Eve . . . was glad, saying.”** Hugh Nibley commented: “It is [Eve] who perceives and points out to Adam that they have done the right thing after all. Sorrow, yes, but she is willing to pass through it for the sake of knowledge—knowledge of good and evil that will provide the test and the victory for working out their salvation as God intends. . . . She discovers the principle of opposites by which the world is governed and views it with high-spirited optimism: it is not wrong that there is opposition in everything, it is a constructive principle making it possible for people to be intelligently happy. It is better to know the score than not to know it.”<sup>22</sup>

**5:11. “We never should have had seed.”** Although absent from Adam’s psalm of praise, the theme of childbearing is the focus of Eve’s first expression of gratitude. As BYU professors Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes observed, “Eve’s use of the plural [in this verse] contrasts with Adam’s singular pronouns in v. 10 and divulge her broad and instinctive concern for her family members.”<sup>23</sup>

**5:12. “made all things known unto their sons and their daughters.”** Again stressing the obedience of Adam and Eve, the text tells us that the couple taught “all things” to their children—no doubt now adding the law of the gospel to the principles of obedience and sacrifice. In this respect they set an example for each of us.

### **Source**

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

### **Related verses**

Moses 5:11–12

## **Moses 5:13–15. Satan Persuades Many; God Calls upon All**

**5:13. “Satan came among them.”** As soon as Adam and Eve began to teach the gospel to their children, Satan moved in to blunt their influence. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, “In relation to the kingdom of God, the Devil always sets up his kingdom at the very same time in opposition to God.”<sup>24</sup> In deliberate

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<sup>22</sup> Hugh W. Nibley, “Patriarchy and Matriarchy,” in *Old Testament and Related Studies*, ed. John W. Welch, Gary P. Gillum, and Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 1 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 92–93.

<sup>23</sup> Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price: A Verse-by-Verse Commentary* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2005), 60.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Smith Jr., May 2, 1844, in Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1969), 365.

contrast to the eloquent expressions of Adam and Eve, Satan’s preaching is proclaimed in brash and abrupt terms: he simply said, “Believe it not,” and “they believed it not.”

**5:13. “I am also a son of God.”** Being a “son of God” is more than being a spirit child of God. Only those who are born again through their faithfulness to all the laws and ordinances of the gospel *become* God’s “sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:7; Moses 6:68). Thus, Satan’s statement is a bald-faced lie. At one time, Lucifer had been a son of God (see Job 1:6), but no more. His title is now Perdition. Hugh Nibley commented: “Notice, that . . . [Satan’s] appeal [is] that he is a son of God. . . . He’s all for the Gospel. He is all for saving people. In the Council in Heaven he wanted them saved too, and he wanted to do the saving. . . . When he appeared, his first step was to make a command, speak outright. He wants to be worshipped. That’s what he wanted in the first place. (‘Give me thine honor’ [4:1]) So he commands them.”<sup>25</sup>

**5:13. “carnal, sensual, and devilish.”** The word *carnal*, from a Latin root meaning “flesh,” is closely associated in scripture with the terms *natural*, *temporal*, and *earthly*.<sup>26</sup> It represents the condition of spiritual estrangement experienced by individuals in their fallen, mortal, and corrupt state before they are born again. “Sensual” men and women privilege the satisfaction of bodily appetites and passions. Such people become “devilish” when they “persist in [their] own carnal nature, and [go] on in the ways of sin and rebellion against God, [remaining] in [their] fallen state and the devil hath all power over [them]. . . . [They are] an enemy to God; [as] the devil [is] an enemy to God” (Mosiah 16:5; see also Mosiah 3:19). Nibley rendered the phrase differently as “lecherous, pampered, and vicious.”<sup>27</sup>

**5:14. “the Lord God called upon men by the Holy Ghost everywhere and commanded them that they should repent.”** The Holy Ghost, an invisible yet powerful opponent to Satan’s preaching, provided a witness to the things that Adam and Eve taught (verse 12). However, “there’s the rub. . . . Who wants to be told to repent? You are not going to get votes by telling people to repent, but by telling them that everything is wonderful.”<sup>28</sup> Wrote Nibley, “The test for this life is not for knowledge; it is not for intelligence, or for courage, or for anything like that. That would be a huge joke. None of us knows very much, none of us is very brave, none of us is very strong, none of us is very smart. We would flunk those tests terribly. . . . [There are] two things and the only two things we are good at: we can forgive and we can repent.”<sup>29</sup>

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25 Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 2004), 237.

26 See, for example, Doctrine and Covenants 29:35; Alma 36:4; and James 3:15.

27 Hugh W. Nibley, “Assembly and Atonement,” in *Eloquent Witness: Nibley on Himself, Others, and the Temple*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 17 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2008), 129.

28 Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price*, 237.

29 Hugh W. Nibley, “Funeral Address,” in *Approaching Zion*, ed. Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 9 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1989), 301.

## **Source**

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

## **Related verses**

Moses 5:13–15

## **Moses 5:16–17; Genesis 4:1–2. The Births of Cain and Abel**

**5:16; 4:1.** “*Adam knew Eve his wife.*” Nahum Sarna commented: “Knowing’ in the Bible is not essentially intellectual activity. . . . Rather, it is experiential, emotional, and, above all, relational. . . . It can be used of the most intimate and most hallowed relationships between man and wife, and between [humankind] and God.”<sup>30</sup> Significantly, the Hebrew term for “know/knew” links with the tree of knowledge theme of the previous chapter.

**5:16; 4:1.** “*from the Lord.*” A better translation seems to be “I have gotten the man, [namely or even] the Lord.”<sup>31</sup> According to Victor Hamilton, “this rendering suggests that in the birth of Cain Eve thought, mistakenly, that the divinely promised seed of [Moses 4:21] had now come in Cain. The child, whose birth is so welcomed, could be looked on as God himself.”<sup>32</sup> That Eve could have been so mistaken in thinking the promised redeemer had already come in the person of Cain is doubtful. However, in a wider sense, her words may be taken as foreshadowing her hope that, in contrast to her wayward progeny (Moses 4:13), Cain would “not reject [the Lord’s] words” and would become the progenitor of the righteous branch of her family through whom the promise of Moses 4:21 would eventually be fulfilled.

**5:16.** “*wherefore he may not reject his words.*” The theme of obedience—which was both the plot’s hinge in Moses 4 and the central motif of the Adam and Eve story after the expulsion in Moses 5—is once again highlighted by the hopeful words of Eve. Sadly, “Cain hearkened not” (Moses 5:16).

**5:16.** “*Who is the Lord that I should know him?*” As BYU professors Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes noted, “Cain’s arrogant question will be mirrored later by that of Pharaoh (Exodus 5:2), as well as that of King Noah” in the Book of Mormon (see Mosiah 11:27). The recurrence

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<sup>30</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 31.

<sup>31</sup> Tibor Gallus, “*Der Nachkomme der Frau*” (*Gen. 3:15*) in *der Althutheranischen Schriftauslegung: Ein Beitrag zur Geshichte der Exegese von Gen. 3:15*, vol. 1 of “*Der Nachkomme der Frau*” (*Gen. 3:15*) in *der Schriftauslegung von Luther, Zwingli und Calvin*, ed. Tibor Gallus (Klagenfurt, Germany: Verlag Carinthia, 1964), 124.

<sup>32</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 221.

of the word “know” (Moses 5:16) fittingly recalls the covenant relationship between Adam, Eve, and God that resulted in Cain’s birth—the very type of “covenant relationship that Cain refuses to enter.”<sup>33</sup>

**5:17; 4:2. “Abel.”** The announcement of a second birth cues the reader to the Old Testament pattern of sibling rivalry, where the younger son is the one favored of God. For reasons that are not stated, Eve explains Cain’s name but not Abel’s. The Hebrew term for Abel’s name can be translated as “breath” or “nothingness.” Nahum Sarna commented, “The name may augur his destiny. . . . *Hevel* [Hebrew for Abel] is often used to express the fleeting nature of life. The name may alternatively, or perhaps simultaneously, contain a reference to his vocation in that Syriac *hablâ* means a ‘herdsman.’”<sup>34</sup>

### **Source**

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

### **Related verses**

Moses 5:16–17; Genesis 4:1–2

**Moses 5:17–21; Genesis 4:2–5. Abel Keeps the Law of Sacrifice; Cain Perverts It**  
**5:17; 4:2. “keeper of sheep.”** Abel is followed by Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and David in his vocation.

**5:17; 4:2. “Cain was a tiller of the ground.”** The first-century Jewish historian Josephus reported the tradition that “Cain was not only very wicked in other respects, but was wholly intent upon getting; and he first contrived to plough the ground.”<sup>35</sup> Thomas W. Franxman saw this as a condemnation of those who dishonor God by offering him “products forced from nature by the ingenuity of grasping man,”<sup>36</sup> and Louis H. Feldman noted that Josephus’s statement “connects Cain’s name, which means ‘acquisition,’ . . . with this quality in his character.”<sup>37</sup> The descriptions recall Doctrine and Covenants 59:18, 20, which warns that the “things which come of the earth . . . [are] made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion.” The term “extortion” has the sense of forcible extraction or wresting out, as

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33 Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price: A Verse-by-Verse Commentary* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2005), 65.

34 Sarna, *Genesis*, 32.

35 Flavius Josephus, “The Antiquities of the Jews,” in *The Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus, the Jewish Historian. Translated from the Original Greek, according to Havercamp’s Accurate Edition*, trans. William Whiston, rev. ed. (1737; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1980), 26.

36 Thomas W. Franxman, *Genesis and the “Jewish Antiquities” of Flavius Josephus* (Rome, Italy: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), 67; see also page 66 and note 5.

37 Louis H. Feldman, “Hellenization in Josephus’ Portrayal of Man’s Decline,” in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1968), 346.

when money is obtained through coercion or threats. Hugh Nibley explained, “From the wine and olive presses we get the word ‘extortion,’ meaning to squeeze out the last drop, another way to make a margin of profit—putting the squeeze on, wringing out the last drop.”<sup>38</sup>

**5:18. “Make an offering unto the Lord.”** Nibley commented, “Notice [that Satan] says, ‘Make an offering unto the Lord.’ He doesn’t say, make an offering unto me, or make an offering unto devils. . . . Cain is being obedient . . . but not following the law of God. . . . He’s being obedient to Satan.”<sup>39</sup>

**5:19; 4:3. “Cain brought of the fruit of the ground.”** Speaking of the reason Cain’s sacrifice was rejected, the Prophet Joseph Smith explained that “ordinances must be kept in the very way God has appointed”—in this case by “the shedding of blood . . . [as] a type, by which man was to discern the great Sacrifice which God had prepared.”<sup>40</sup> Not only must the form of the ordinance comply with the heavenly pattern but also the performer’s heart must be filled with the spirit of sincere repentance since “the shedding of the blood of a beast could be beneficial to no man, except it was . . . done with an eye looking forward in faith on the power of that great Sacrifice for a remission of sins.”<sup>41</sup>

**5:21; 4:5. “Cain was very wroth.”** Cain’s brooding fed self-pity and resentment that turned outward and soon sparked flames of violent passion, igniting an explosion of murderous aggression. Of Cain’s ugly transformation, Elder Spencer W. Kimball wrote, “It is doubtful if Cain had murder in his heart when his first jealous thought crossed his mind, when the first hate began to develop; but ounce by ounce, moment by moment, the little parasite developed to rob him of his strength, his balance, and his peace. The evil took over, and Cain . . . changed his appearance, his attitudes, his life, and became a world wanderer, vicious and desolate.”<sup>42</sup>

### **Source**

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

### **Related verses**

Moses 5:17–21; Genesis 4:2–5

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38 Hugh W. Nibley, “Work We Must, but the Lunch Is Free,” in *Approaching Zion*, ed. Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 9 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1989), 216–217.

39 Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 2004), 238–239.

40 Joseph Smith Jr., October 5, 1840, in Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1969), 169.

41 Joseph Smith Jr., January 22, 1834, in Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet*, 58.

42 Spencer W. Kimball, “The Mistletoe,” in *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1972), 229.

## **Moses 5:22–27; Genesis 4:6–7. Cain Rejects the Lord**

**5:22; 4:6. “the Lord said unto Cain.”** The Lord lovingly persuades Cain to turn to Him. Sadly, despite the Lord’s entreaties to Cain and his spiritual successors to “love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; . . . they [were] without affection, and they [hated] their own blood [that is, their family and kin]” (Moses 7:33).

**5:23. “Satan desireth to have thee.”** The words for “desireth” and “rule” in the Hebrew text parallel the terms used in Moses 4:22 to describe the tendency for marriage relationships in a fallen world to deteriorate into a state of competition and rancor. Unwilling to escape the bands of wickedness, Satan and Cain will be eternally locked together in the utterly destructive embrace of unrighteous dominion.<sup>43</sup> The Hebrew verb used in “bruise his heel” (Moses 4:21) is related to the term “desire” as it is used in this verse, thus evoking the mortal danger Cain is courting in giving in to Satan’s craving to wound him and perhaps suggesting that he must quickly act to crush his opponent.

**5:23; 4:7. “thou shalt rule over him.”** God is telling Cain that unless he repents, he will become more of a devil than the devil himself. Sadly, Satan’s own ignominious titles “Perdition” and “the father of lies” will ultimately be conferred upon Cain. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith made the following comment relating to Cain’s subsequent “ascendancy” (or rather, “descendancy”?) over Satan: “Now as to whether or not those who in mortal life rebel and become sons of perdition will be able to exercise greater dominion than those who followed Lucifer, who became the Devil and arch-enemy of Jesus Christ, might be a moot question. However, the Lord has made it definitely clear that Cain will hold that ascendancy in the realm of wickedness; that Satan desired to have him, and the implication is clear that the reason was because Cain had a body of flesh and bones.”<sup>44</sup> Note that Cain’s ultimate dominance over Satan is foreshadowed in verse 30, where Satan takes an oath to do according to Cain’s commands.

**5:24. “Perdition.”** Emphasizing Cain’s accountability, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith wrote, “Cain sinned with his eyes open, so he became Perdition.”<sup>45</sup> The title “Perdition”—from a Latin root meaning “to destroy, ruin, lose”—is an ironic reversal of one of the derivations of the name Cain: “to produce, to create.” Tragically, Cain was determined to put himself beyond the reach of the Atonement.

**5:24. “thou wast also before the world.”** Hugh Nibley explained, “This refers back to the time in the Council in Heaven, in glory. Satan is not going to say, you brought me into this world and put me in this

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<sup>43</sup> See Doctrine and Covenants 121:39; 2 Nephi 4:18; Alma 5:7, 10.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, vol. 2 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1957), 170–171.

<sup>45</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, vol. 2, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1955), 280.

terrible jam, and I had nothing to say about it. Oh no, you were in the preexistence, too. You were high up there because you are Perdition now. ‘For thou wast also before the world.’ You had your preexistence and your chance.”<sup>46</sup>

It is important to know that anyone who becomes a son of perdition must commit the unpardonable sin. The Church does *not* teach that an “individual who receives a witness of the Holy Ghost and then falls away or becomes less active in the Church is . . . guilty of the unpardonable sin.”<sup>47</sup> Rather, Joseph Smith taught that a son of perdition “must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto him, and know God, and then sin against him.”<sup>48</sup> Thus, the kind of knowledge against which such persons tragically rebel is so sure and certain that very few mortals will ever qualify in this life to attain it. In short, none of us should worry ourselves with the thought that we have committed the unpardonable sin and are beyond the reach of forgiveness through Christ’s Atonement.

**5:25. “except thou repent.”** God tenders a last, loving plea to Cain as the tragic son of Adam and Eve nears the final crossroads. Nibley observed: “It’s still not too late. This is the gospel of repentance. As long as you are in this earth, you can still repent. As long as we are in this earth, there is no one who doesn’t need to repent. . . . The door is open to everyone here. . . . As Ezekiel [18:26–27] says, . . . However wicked the bad guys have been all their days, they can still repent and become righteous. And however righteous the good guys have been all their days, they can still fall and become the wicked.”<sup>49</sup>

**5:26. “Cain was wroth.”** Cain does not answer the Lord, choosing instead to inwardly fan his smoldering resentment into a flame of murderous passion.

**26. “listened not any more.”** Wrote Nibley, “The . . . door of repentance is held open right to the last moment, when it is Cain himself who breaks off the conversation and angrily stamps out, refusing to listen ‘any more to the voice of the Lord’ or to his brother’s remonstrances.”<sup>50</sup> Bill T. Arnold observed, “Eve had been talked into her sin. Cain could not be talked out of his, even by God himself.”<sup>51</sup>

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46 Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 2004), 240.

47 *Book of Mormon Seminary Teacher Manual* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2017), <https://churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/book-of-mormon-seminary-teacher-manual-2017/introduction-to-the-book-of-alma/lesson-96-alma-39>.

48 Joseph Smith Jr., in *History of the Church* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1978), 6:314.

49 Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price*, 241.

50 Hugh W. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 2* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 175–176.

51 Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, *New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 40.

## **Source**

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

## **Related verses**

Moses 5:22–27; Genesis 4:6–7

## **Moses 5:28–31. Cain Swears a Pact with Satan**

**5:28.** “*Cain took one of his brothers’ daughters to wife, and they loved Satan more than God.*” The mention of Cain’s brothers in verse 27 coupled with the statement that the couple loved Satan more than God (see also verse 13) makes it reasonable to suppose that Cain’s wife was the daughter of one of the unbelieving sons of Adam rather than of the righteous Abel. Note the later Old Testament custom for men to marry someone in their kin network, often a niece, as in the case of Nahor, brother of Abraham.

**5:29.** “*Swear unto me by thy throat.*” Anciently, discretion in the revealing of sacred religious knowledge was solemnly accompanied by the symbolic enactment of self-cursing. For example, in the Aramaic Sefire treaty, an eighth-century BC document drawn up between two kings of the Assyrian empire, we read a description of the consequences of treaty violation: “As this calf is cut up, thus [the one making the oath] . . . shall be cut up.”<sup>52</sup> BYU professors Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes observed, “The throat is one of the most vulnerable parts of the body to an ancient weapon such as a knife or a spear. Hence, it is vital to the continuation of life. In addition, cutting the throat of a sacrificial animal began the process of a sacred offering. It seems plain that Satan’s oaths gain credibility not through his name but only through repeating the divine name [‘swear . . . by the living God’] and, possibly, mimicking genuinely sacred covenants made in God’s name.”<sup>53</sup>

**5:29.** “*by the living God.*” Nibley commented, “Notice . . . , who do they swear by? By the living God. They don’t swear by anybody else.”<sup>54</sup> Similarly, we read in 1 Enoch 69:13 that the wicked angel “Kasbeel . . . requested [the archangel] Michael to show him the hidden name, that he might enunciate it in the oath, so that those might quake before that name and oath who revealed all that was in secret to the children of men.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Sefire treaty, cited in Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 114–115.

<sup>53</sup> Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price: A Verse-by-Verse Commentary* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2005), 67–68.

<sup>54</sup> Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 2004), 242.

<sup>55</sup> Hugh W. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 2 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 182.

**5:30. “Satan sware unto Cain.”** Nibley pointed out the illusory nature of Satan’s seeming subservience: “Cain rule over Satan? Yes, that is the arrangement—the Devil serves his client, gratifies his slightest whim, pampers his appetites, and is at his beck and call throughout his earthly life, putting unlimited power and influence at his disposal through his command of the treasures of the earth, gold, and silver. But in exchange the victim must keep his part of the agreement, following Satan’s instructions on earth and remaining in his power thereafter.”<sup>56</sup>

**5:31. “Truly I am Mahan.”** Draper, Brown, and Rhodes commented, “Cain takes a new name as an indicator of his new status, also a later characteristic of righteous persons (Abram becomes Abraham; and so on).”<sup>57</sup>

**5:31. “that I may murder and get gain.”** The essence of the great secret of Cain is what Nibley called “converting life into property. Cain got the degree of Master Mahan, tried the system out on his brother, and gloried in its brilliant success, declaring that at last he could be free, as only property makes free, and that Abel had been a loser in a free competition.”<sup>58</sup>

### **Source**

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

### **Related verses**

Moses 5:28–31

## **Moses 5:32–33; Genesis 4:8. Cain Slays Abel**

**5:32; 4:8. “Cain went.”** Gordon J. Wenham observed, “The awfulness of the deed is accentuated by the stark brevity of the description. . . . [T]he terseness conveys the feel of the story hastening to its climax.”<sup>59</sup>

**5:32; 4:8. “into the field.”** Nahum Sarna noted: “The Hebrew [term for wilderness,] *sadeh*, refers to the open, uninhabited country away from the settled areas. It was often the scene of crime.”<sup>60</sup> Later in the Old Testament, the word “field” will appear in several other stories of sibling rivalry and fratricide: in

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<sup>56</sup> Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 175.

<sup>57</sup> Draper et al., *Pearl of Great Price*, 68.

<sup>58</sup> Hugh W. Hugh, “How Firm a Foundation! What Makes It So,” in *Approaching Zion*, ed. Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 9 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1989), 166.

<sup>59</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 106.

<sup>60</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 33.

the stories of Jacob and Esau (Genesis 24–27); of Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37); of Abimelech, who killed seventy of his brothers (Judges 9); and of the war between the tribe of Benjamin and his brothers' tribes (Judges 20:31).

**5:32; 4:8. “Abel, his brother.”** The word “brother” is repeated seven times in Moses 5:32–36, mercifully highlighting the grim treachery of Cain’s crime.

**5:32; 4:8. “slew him.”** The Hebrew term translated as “slew” here is *harag*, which signifies intentional murder. This contrasts with the sixth commandment’s *rasah*, a broader term that includes involuntary manslaughter. Sarna commented: “The transgression in the Garden was an offense against God; now it is man against his brother, which is also an offense against God. It was the ‘fruit of the tree’ that led to the downfall of Adam and Eve; it is the ‘fruit of the soil’ that leads to Cain’s undoing. The first human was worried about death; now the experience of death becomes a reality.”<sup>61</sup>

**5:33. “Cain gloried.”** Cain was previously described as “very wroth” and of a fallen countenance (Moses 5:21–22, 26). According to an Armenian text, after he “killed his brother he went away cheerfully.”<sup>62</sup> In a perverted counterpoint to Moses 1:39 where God gloried in the prospect of *eternal life* for His children, Cain has now made the work of *death* the object of his glorying.

**5:33. “I am free.”** Elder Neal A. Maxwell observed: “A confused Cain, a vain Cain, not only murdered his brother while they conversed together in the field, but also gloried in the murder of Abel, when Cain said (probably shouted), ‘I am free.’ So often violence creates the illusion of freedom or possession. So often sin creates a momentary illusion which those involved are taken in by. . . . [It seems] that the raucousness and the shouting of sin, the Cain-like glorying in it, is also the sound of pain trying to erase itself.”<sup>63</sup> Hugh Nibley commented: “Recently this gospel was proclaimed by one of the richest Americans addressing the student body of Ohio State University. . . . ‘There is nothing that gives freedom,’ he said, ‘like bucks in the bank.’ This seems to be the policy we are following today, and there is no doubt whose policy it is.”<sup>64</sup>

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61 Sarna, *Genesis*, 31.

62 W. Lowndes Lipscomb, “History of Abel and Cain, the Sons of Adam,” in *The Armenian Apocryphal Adam Literature* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 1990), 165.

63 Neal A. Maxwell, “Insights from My Life (BYU Devotional, October 26, 1976),” in *The Inexhaustible Gospel: A Retrospective of Twenty-One Firesides and Devotionals at Brigham Young University 1974–2004* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2004), 50.

64 Hugh W. Nibley, “Work We Must, but the Lunch Is Free,” in *Approaching Zion*, ed. Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 9 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1989), 230.

## Source

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

## Related verses

Moses 5:32–33; Genesis 4:8

### **Moses 5:34–38; Genesis 4:9–12. Consequences of Cain’s Murder of Abel**

**5:34; 4:9. “Where is Abel, thy brother?”** Nahum Sarna observed that this verse “virtually reproduces” the Lord’s question to the fleeing Adam in the Garden of Eden: “the divine question to the culprit in each case—‘Where?’—receives an evasive reply in both chapters.” The wording of the curse is similar too: “the son, like his parents in the previous chapter, is ‘banished’ and settles to the east of Eden.”<sup>65</sup> Unlike his parents, however, Cain is not contrite and refuses to begin a return to the presence of God through repentance. Like Satan, Cain freely and knowingly made choices that meant he would be cast out of the presence of the Lord forever (Moses 5:41).

**5:34; 4:9. “I know not.”** Again the word “know” recurs in the story of Cain. His self-deception recalls the confession of Amulek: “I did harden my heart, for I was called many times and I would not hear; therefore, I knew concerning these things, yet *I would not know*” (Alma 10:6; emphasis added).

**5:34; 4:9. “Am I my brother’s keeper?”** The Hebrew stem for “keeper” is the same one used in the Lord’s commandment to Adam and Eve that they should dress and keep the Garden of Eden (Moses 3:15). Latter-day Saint scholar Royal Skousen remarked that our English translation fails to fully convey the haughty impudence of Cain’s reply, which he paraphrases as “How should I know [where he is]? Am I my brother’s baby-sitter?”<sup>66</sup> BYU professor Chauncey Riddle suggested an answer to Cain’s question: “No, Cain, you are not expected to be your brother’s keeper. But you are expected to be your brother’s brother.”<sup>67</sup>

**5:36; 4:11. “thou shalt be cursed.”** Claus Westermann pointed out that “in [the previous chapter] neither the man nor the woman are cursed but only the serpent. In [this chapter], however, the man Cain is cursed.”<sup>68</sup>

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65 Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 34, 31.

66 Royal Skousen, “Through a Glass Darkly: Trying to Understand the Scriptures,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1986): 9.

67 Chauncey Riddle, quoted in Jeffrey R. Holland, “O Lord, Keep My Rudder True,” in *On Earth as It Is in Heaven*, ed. Jeffrey R. Holland and Patricia T. Holland (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1989), 142.

68 Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Continental Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 306.

**5:36; 4:11. “from the earth.”** “From” can be translated as “by,” “of,” or “more than.” Thus, the medieval Jewish scholar Rashi took this phrase to mean that Cain is now cursed *more than* the ground—the ground having been cursed for man’s sake at the end of the Eden story.<sup>69</sup> As the serpent who was “more *subtle* than any beast of the field” (Moses 4:5) became “more *cursed*” than all cattle and beasts (4:20), so in another case of poetic justice will the one who “loved Satan more than God” (5:18) be cursed “more than” the earth from which he greedily wrested his living (4:23).

### **Source**

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

### **Related verses**

Moses 5:34–38; Genesis 4:9–12

## **Moses 5:39–40; Genesis 4:13–15. The Mark of Cain**

**5:39; 4:14. “a fugitive and a vagabond.”** We can read these two words as a single idea, thus making Cain a wandering fugitive. The barrenness of the ground and the new lifestyle imposed on Cain would make it impossible for him to continue as a successful tiller of the soil. Yet more devastating is the fact that, like Ishmael and Esau, Cain “is now ousted from civilization. . . . Rootlessness is the punishment, and the wilderness is the refuge of the sinner.”<sup>70</sup>

**5:39; 4:14. “he that findeth me will slay me, because of mine iniquities.”** Cain turned on one of his relatives and now must be on guard lest any of his relatives decide to exact blood vengeance.<sup>71</sup>

**5:40; 4:15. “Whosoever slayeth thee.”** This phrase begins a formal announcement by the Lord, declaring that even a murderer such as Cain will still be under His protection: “I promise, if anyone kills Cain . . .”<sup>72</sup> Thus, we can infer that blood-revenge is not endorsed by God.

**5:40; 4:15. “I the Lord set a mark upon Cain.”** Richard Draper and his colleagues noted that “the mark is not the same as the curse, which carried multiple penalties,”<sup>73</sup> the most serious of which is being

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69 Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003), 143n27.

70 Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 232.

71 See Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 233; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 35.

72 Sarna, *Genesis*, 35

73 Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price: A Verse-by-Verse Commentary* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2005), 73.

“shut out from the presence of the Lord” (Moses 5:41). Indeed, the mark was a sign of divine protection and, as Hugh Nibley observed, “a warning to all the rest of us—hands off! If Cain must be punished, God does not solicit our services for the job: ‘Behold, the judgments of God will overtake the wicked; and it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished’ (Mormon 4:5).”<sup>74</sup>

Victor Hamilton noted that the function of the mark or sign is paralleled in “Exodus 12:13 (the blood on the doors at Passover which identifies the occupants); Genesis 1:14 (the heavenly lights which identify time periods); Numbers 2:2 (the banners in the Israelite camp which identify the various families); Joshua 2:12 (the sign which identifies Rahab’s house).” As Adam and Eve are clothed with coats of skins before being driven from the garden and as God “announces the post-Flood covenant even before the Flood commences,” so “Cain is marked before he is exiled.”<sup>75</sup> However, while Adam and Eve’s clothing provided a comforting sign of God’s unfailing solicitude, Cain’s mark is a constant reminder of his isolation from God and others.

Though some readers have jumped to the conclusion that the mark was dark skin, the verse itself fails to give warrant for any specific description of the mark given to Cain, nor does the verse say whether the mark was passed on to Cain’s descendants. Of possible relevance to this question is Moses 7:22, which states that “the seed of Cain were black.” Alma Allred, however, finds even this statement inconclusive, arguing that it could be a figurative expression referring to “those who followed Cain in his wicked practices,” referring to them “in the same manner that the Jews were called the children of the Devil.”<sup>76</sup> Similarly, it has been argued that, as with the four horsemen of Revelation 6:1–8, the blackness depicted in 1 Enoch and other ancient Near Eastern sources is used in a purely symbolic fashion to represent evil and exclusion from the covenant community. Early Church leaders and most other Americans in the nineteenth century believed that Cain’s descendants were Black. Modern Church leaders have specifically disavowed previous racial theories.

Consistent with this view is Al-Kisa’i’s report of a tradition that Lamech (the son of the Sethite Methuselah—not to be confused with the Cainite Lamech of Moses 5:43–54) married Methuselcha, a descendant of Cain. Though mentioning the fact that “enmity . . . existed between the children of Seth and the children of Cain,” the story implies that there was nothing in their outward appearance that would identify them as being of different lineages since Lamech had to reveal his parentage explicitly. Described in wholly positive terms, Methuselcha was said in this tradition to have become the mother of Noah.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Hugh W. Nibley, “The Best Possible Test,” in *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, ed. Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 12 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1992), 537–538.

<sup>75</sup> Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, 207.

<sup>76</sup> Alma Allred, “The Traditions of Their Fathers: Myth versus Reality in LDS Scriptural Writings,” in *Black and Mormon*, ed. Newell G. Bringhurst and Darron T. Smith (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 49. See John 8:44.

<sup>77</sup> See Muhammad ibn Abd Allah al-Kisa’i, *Tales of the Prophets (Qisas al-anbiya)*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston Jr., Great Books of the Islamic World (Chicago, IL: KAZI Publications, 1997), 91–93.

Regardless of the exact nature of the mark imposed upon Cain, it seems reasonable to suppose that the separation between the Sethites and the Cainites paralleled the situation of the Nephites and the Lamanites where even though the original distinction was lineage-based, it is known that each group eventually came to include not only actual descendants but also like-minded associates.<sup>78</sup>

### **Source**

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

### **Related verses**

Moses 5:39–40; Genesis 4:13–15

## **Moses 5:41–46; Genesis 4:16–22. The Pursuits of Cain’s Posterity**

**5:41; 4:16. “in the land of Nod.”** In Hebrew, *nod* means “wandering”—thus Cain the wanderer is exiled to the land of wandering.

**5:41; 4:16. “on the east of Eden.”** By the phrase “on the east of Eden,” we are meant to understand that the place where Cain came to live was even farther removed from the presence of God than was the land where Adam and Eve and their righteous descendants lived after the Fall. This idea ties to later Israelite practices—for example, when Moses set aside cities of refuge located eastward for murderers.

**5:42; 4:17. “Enoch.”** This verse does not refer to the prophet Enoch, whose story will be told later. A succession of Cain’s descendants—seven first-born sons—is given here, after which the genealogy branches. Neither Cain nor his descendants are mentioned again in the Bible.

**5:42; 4:17. “he builded a city.”** Victor Hamilton suggested, “Perhaps Cain’s act is one of defiance. He has had enough of the life of the nomad. He refuses any longer to abide under God’s terms.”<sup>79</sup>

**5:42; 4:17. “he called the name of the city . . . Enoch.”** This wicked city of Enoch stands in ironic parallel to the later righteous city of Enoch (see Moses 7:19, 69). Indeed, it is no coincidence that the descendants of the Sethites “run in seven lines with almost the same names [as the descendants of Cain]. But,” observed Hugh Nibley, “they are read differently as if you were punning on them, like twin names.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> See Jacob 1:13–14; Alma 3:13–19; 24:29; 43:13; 47:35; Helaman 11:24; 4 Nephi 1:35–38.

<sup>79</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 238.

<sup>80</sup> Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 2004), 249.

**5:43; 4:18. “unto Enoch was born Irad.”** In Sumerian tradition, the first city was Eridu (= Irad; now Tell abu Shahrain) in southern Mesopotamia, the oldest site in that part of the world.

**5:44; 4:19. “Lamech took unto himself.”** The wording “took unto himself” is paralleled in the description of the illicit relationships of the wicked husbands in the days of Noah (see Moses 8:14, 21).

**5:44; 4:19. “Two wives.”** This mention of Lamech’s wives may constitute an implicit condemnation of unauthorized polygamy.

### **Source**

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

### **Related verses**

Moses 5:41–46; Genesis 4:16–22

## **Moses 5:47–55; Genesis 4:23–24. Works of Darkness Spread to All from Cain’s Posterity**

**5:47; 4:23. “Lamech said unto his wives.”** The purpose of Lamech’s argument was to show his wives that according to the regulations of the wicked brotherhood to which he belonged, he had not shed innocent blood as Cain had done. Rather his act of murder was justified because he had been previously wounded and injured by the one slain. Proud and cynical, Lamech’s so-called sword song was not only a statement of self-justification but also self-praise of his prowess. It was the sort of “taunts, threats, and boastings, which are of the kind customarily uttered in ancient times by those about to engage in combat”<sup>81</sup>—or in other words, evil words that compound ill deeds.<sup>82</sup> One is reminded of Korihor, who proudly proclaimed that “every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime” (Alma 30:17). Songs such as these were regularly sung in bloody contests as part of the new-year rites performed in virtually all ancient cultures. As in all such hero tales, skilled poets exercise their craft in order to glorify actions “which, were it not for [their] poetry, would appear as merely violent.”<sup>83</sup>

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81 Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 39.

82 William Shakespeare, “The Comedy of Errors,” in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), 92, act 3, scene 2, line 20.

83 Robert Sacks, cited in Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003), 146n32.

**5:47; 4:23. “wounding . . . hurt.”** Hugh Nibley commented: “If we look up these words that are used here for killing and slaying, we will find what they mean. This *patza* for ‘wounding me’ . . . doesn’t mean wound. It means ‘to place a cut or mark upon, to put a ritual mark.’ The other, *khabura*, we are told, is the mark or stroke of a wound on the skin. There’s a conflict in which ritual wounds are inflicted. We are told that Satan showed Cain the blows of death. . . . He taught them to him before he could have his showdown with Abel.”<sup>84</sup> The idea of Cain’s having administered the “blows of death” in the manner of Satan may lie behind the rabbinic tradition that “Cain pelted all parts of Abel’s body, inflicting many blows and wounds, until he killed him by striking him on the neck.”<sup>85</sup> Ironically, just as Cain is said to have placed gruesome ritual marks on Abel at his death, so the Lord sets a mark upon Cain to preserve his life.

**5:49. “Irad . . . began to reveal it.”** Apparently Irad betrayed the oath he had made not to reveal the “great secret . . . administered to Cain by Satan” (Moses 5:49).

**5:49. “sons of Adam.”** Secret combinations spread from the posterity of Cain to the covenant sons of Adam, who are elsewhere referred to as the “sons of God” (8:13–14).

**5:50. “he slew him for the oath’s sake.”** This phrase, unique to the book of Moses, confirms that the “wounding” and “hurt” that Lamech used to justify his act of murder were not merely the result of a chance brawl with Irad or a scheme to acquire his possessions. The fact that the victim was slain “for the oath’s sake” evidences a carefully calculated assassination to protect the interests of the secret combination to which Lamech had pledged his allegiance (see verse 29).

**5:51. “secret combination.”** In the Book of Mormon, the oaths that were later administered to those who formed secret combinations among the Jaredites were said to have been “handed down even from Cain, who was a murderer from the beginning . . . [and] are had among all people” (Ether 8:15, 20).

**5:52. “sons of men.”** In the book of Moses this term is always used to designate those who reject the gospel and follow Satan. In this verse, it most likely refers to the male descendants of Cain and his associates.

**5:53. “Lamech had spoken the secret unto his wives.”** The damaging results of Lamech’s wives “[rebell[ing]] against him, and [declari[ng]] these things abroad” triggered an absolute clamp-down among the rest of the sons of men on speaking to their wives (that is, “the daughters of men”) about their secret affairs.

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<sup>84</sup> Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 2004), 253.

<sup>85</sup> Talmud, Sanhedrin 37b, cited in Meir Zlotowitz, *Bereishis/Genesis: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (New York, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1986), 1:151.

## **Source**

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

## **Related verses**

Moses 5:47–55; Genesis 4:23–24

## **Moses 5:56–59. The Law of the Gospel Preached in Response to Encroaching Evils**

**5:58. “And thus.”** In a manner with which readers of the Book of Mormon are well acquainted, this phrase in verse 58 signals the beginning of the solemn summary contained in the final two verses of Moses 5. The importance of the events of this chapter and the promise that the fullness of the gospel given to Adam will “be in the world until the end thereof” is highlighted by the threefold repetition of “and thus,” terminating in the concluding phrase “And thus it was. Amen.”

**5:58. “the Gospel began to be preached, from the beginning.”** Phrases similar to this one appear all throughout scripture.<sup>86</sup> However, it is significant that the term “Gospel” is mentioned in only two places in the book of Moses: here, immediately preceding the implicit nod to the *law of chastity* in the description of the righteous family line of Adam in chapter 6; and in an analogous context in 8:19, just prior to Noah’s encounter with the “sons of men” who persuaded the granddaughters of Noah to marry scoffers *outside* the covenant.

**5:58. “being declared by holy angels . . . , and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost.”** Mormon taught that the “office of [the] ministry [of angels] is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfill and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him” (Moroni 7:31).

**5:59. “And thus.”** The term “thus” in the last sentence of verse 59 is subordinate to its prior usage in the verse. Here at the beginning of the verse it signifies “in this manner” or “by this means,” referring to the fact that it was through angels (see Moses 5:6) and of God’s own voice (see verse 4) and of the gift of the Holy Ghost (see verse 9) that “all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance” (verse 59).

**5:59. “all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance.”** A contrast is drawn between Adam’s having had all things confirmed by a holy ordinance from God and Cain’s and Lamech’s

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<sup>86</sup> See, for example, John 8:56; Hebrews 1:1–2; 11:13; Jacob 4:4–5; 7:10–11; Doctrine and Covenants 29:41–42.

having sworn allegiance to Satan. Details about the holy ordinance referred to are not given, though it is probably no coincidence that Moses 6 will focus on Adam's role as the "first father" in the order of the patriarchal priesthood.

**5:59. "a decree sent forth, that it should be in the world, until the end thereof; and thus it was. Amen."** As the decree in Moses 5:15 parallels a passage near the end of the Gospel of Mark, so this declaration is echoed by the final words of the Savior in Matthew: "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:20).

### **Source**

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

### **Related verses**

Moses 5:56–59

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