

### Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

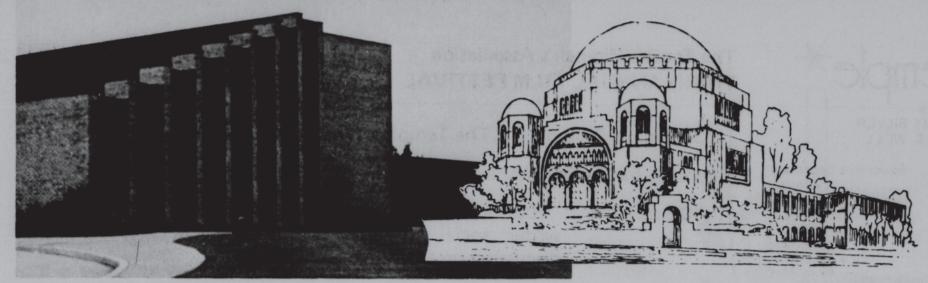
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#### MS-4850: Daniel Jeremy Silver Papers, 1972-1993.

Series III: The Temple Tifereth-Israel, 1946-1993, undated. Sub-series B: Sermons, 1950-1989, undated.

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Crime in America, 1983.



April 3, 1983 Vol. LXVIX, No. 15

# The Temple Bulletin

From the Rabbi's Desk: CRIME IN AMERICA

The sermon of March 6, 1983 is produced here in response to numerous requests.

Crime and violence are constant subjects of conversation. We're fascinated by the theme. Some of us read a seemingly endless number of murder mysteries and suspense stories full of blood and gore. In most book shops Agatha Christie outsells the Bible. The way newspapers define news proves our predilection. Papers sell when the front page features the details of the most recent mass murder or hostage crises. Television follows the press in this respect and the six o'clock news always features a major crime story, preferably with pictures of the body or the captured criminal. Truman Capote's In Cold Blood sold millions of copies and America has devoured reams of type about the Manson cult. One can hardly spend a social evening without someone talking about the latest electric sensor that they have put in their homes.

The details of crime and violence fascinate us. We follow avidly the search for the Son of Sam. Hitchcock movies became a cult. We are anxious for details about break-ins in the neighborhood and quickly pass on rumors about a rape at the local shopping center. And yet, when I try to talk about crime and violence rather than about a crime or a specific act of violence I find, surprisingly, that most people pull back from the discussion.

Some weeks ago I tried again with a good lady who was bemoaning the fact that she no longer felt safe on her streets. When I tried to talk about the causes of crime, she stopped me short: "Don't, it's too sad a subject to think about." I dropped the subject, but ten minutes later I overheard her discussing with a friend what she would serve her neighbors at an organization meeting for a block group who were meeting to counter a rash of break-ins.

There's one exception to our reticence. We're willing to talk about the problems of the criminal justice system as it relates to crime and violence. Most of us have some ideas, generally half-formed,

about what could be done by the police, the courts, and correctional authorities to improve the system and in so doing presumedly increase our safety. One line of opinion has the virtue of simplicity: lock up the bastards and throw the key away. These people are convinced that if the police would simply round up all delinquents and criminals and store them in jails our problems would be at an end. When you talk to them of constitutional rights and due process, they either snicker or talk about an emergency situation.

Others argue that we need more certain punishment. They believe that the criminal justice system doesn't work because the criminal feels, and with some justification, that he will not be caught and that if he is caught he will either escape punishment or be slapped on the wrist. The crime solving rate is, in fact, fairly low and sentences are not standardized. Presumedly, if we could guarantee that crime would be found out and appropriately punished, potential criminals would think twice.

A third group, a more kind-hearted group, argues that it's really not the criminal's fault, but ours. They argue that society has created an economic and social system which does not provide employment or provide poor children an adequate and meaningful education, and that until such injustices are corrected, until we reform society, we cannot expect any significant reduction in the crime rate.

Each of these positions is argued by some with passion. Unfortunately, none of these ideas are sustained by social research. If we were to round up all the delinquents and all who commit street crimes and lock them up we would not be helping with their rehabilitation and we would be burdening the society with an overwhelming and unnecessary cost since we would be keeping in jail people (Continued inside)

#### **SERVICES**

Sunday, April 3, 1983 10:30 a.m. The Temple Branch

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver will speak on THE RIVER AND THE TREE

Concluding Passover Service Monday, April 4, 1983 10:30 a.m. The Temple Branch

Conducted by Hebrew School Graduates

Sharon Joan Abrams
Joan Frances Berger
Laurence Ari Friedman
David Henry Seed
Halli Lynn Small

Sunday, April 10, 1983 10:30 a.m. The Temple Branch

Sarah Austin, Executive Director, The Cleveland Round Table will speak on OUR CITY

Friday Evening Service
5:30 - 6:10 — The Temple Chapel
Sabbath Service
9:00 a.m. - The Branch

#### **CRIME IN AMERICA**

(continued)

who are unlikely to commit further crime. An unexpected fact about crime and violence is that most crime - most street crime, most violent crime is committed by those in their teen ages and their twenties. Most who have been involved in such criminal activity fall out of it when they pass through their early thirties and join the straight society. We don't quite know why, but we do know that only a hardened minority remain at their criminal trade beyond that point, Perhaps it's that the emotional strain of being young and adolescent is finally over. Perhaps the realities of adult life have become all encompassing. Whatever the reason, if we threw away the key we would be keeping tens of thousands behind bars who no longer presented any danger to the society.

What about the idea that the crime rate would fall if every crime were solved and every convicted criminal guaranteed a particular sentence. The assumptions of this argument are obviously utopian. Moreover, though deterrence is a factor in the control of crime, no one is quite sure to what degree. Then, too, locking up a person in a socalled correctional institution does not guarantee that we help them adjust to the society. Those who take this line respond that America has never invested the money or the necessary human service skills in the rehabilitation of the criminal; that our jails are schools in crime rather than rehabilitation institutions. There's truth to this charge; but money and professional skill will not solve the crime problem. In Sweden where a great deal of money and attention has been paid to rehabilitation, the limits of the rehabilitation approach have become apparent. In America the rate of those in the 15 to 30 age bracket who, once imprisoned, return to prison is 8 out of 10. In Sweden, despite a prodigous human and financial service, they have been able to reduce the recidivist rate only slightly - to 7 out of 10.

And what about those who argue that the crime problem is really the society's problem because the society is unjust? There is poverty and unemployment. Many are poorly educated. But here again, research does not bear out the augument that economic reform would reduce the crime rate. During the Great Depression the crime rate in America went down, not up. The crime rate exploded in the 50's and 60's, precisely during that era when the unemployment rate was the lowest, the society the most prosperous, and the opportunities available to the young in the society the greatest they had ever seen. If you have followed the saga of crime rates these last years you'll have noticed that they have fallen, not risen, during the recession. Poverty is a factor in crime but not the immediate cause many think it to be.

What is? How should we begin to think about crime?

When we do think about crime most of us echo, consciously or not, the thinking of the 16th century English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes argued that human nature is governed by three great passions: a passion for wealth which may lead to theft; a passion for glory which may lead to the ruthless pursuit of power; and a passion for life, the fear of death, which may lead to a willingness to kill to protect oneself and all we possess. According to Hobbes, since these drives are part of our nature, people would be at each other's throats were it not for the restraining hand of the state. If the state, which he calls the Leviathan, did not impose its authority on us and restrict our actions, each of us would grab ruthlessly for possessions and power. The state necessarily imposes its power and sets the rules of community life so that we know that we can violate them only at great peril and cost. Under these necessary restraints, we learn to limit the degree to which we give our passions free rein; and, ultimately, we develop habits which direct these energies constructively. Hobbes didn't know the modern term, sublimation, but that's the phenomenon he was suggesting. All of us have found ways to redirect aggressive drives and to use them in societally acceptable ways.

In any case, Hobbes convinced many that we must look to the state and to its police power to effect law and order. In line with this thinking, most of us expect the criminal justice system not only to solve crime and punish the criminal, but to handle the larger question of the causes of crime.

The criminal justice system can be more effectively organized, but, however well structured it becomes, it cannot get to the root of the crime-violence problem. In societies where the criminal justice system operates more efficiently than it does here, let's say in England, where a case against a car thief or a purse snatcher will not be postponed time after time until the witnesses can no longer appear, the crime rate has risen in recent years much as it has in the United States.

The problem of crime is ultimately a problem of human nature and if we want to deal with the problem of crime we have to look at ourselves and at our cultural values and not just at the criminal justice system.

Let me illustrate my point with a quick look at some facts from American history. During the American Revolution there were some folk who agreed that English taxation was ruining the colonies but who did not subscribe to the cause of revolution because they were afraid that once people learned to defy legitimate authority they would never again submit willingly to it. Crime, they said, would be encouraged because the legitimacy of state authority would have been brought into question. Their analysis was not borne out by events. The crime rate did not rise during or after the American Revolution. Crime did not begin to rise at a significant rate until the

decades between 1820 and 1840, that is until the first period of rapid urbanization. (Incidentally, Most of us remain convinced that there is a direct relationship between urbanization and crime). Young men came from abroad or from the farms to the cities alone, adrift; and the city did not yet have in place any institutions which could provide them roots and community. They lived wherever they could. They mixed with others as footloose as they. There was frustration and loneliness. Alcoholism was rampant. Full of energy, without guidance, alone, some fell into what were then called 'bad ways.' A significant rise in crime was noted.

But the crime rate did not rise throughout the whole period of urbanization. Indeed, from about 1840 to the second World War, the crime rate did not rise significantly despite the fact that this was a period of massive immigration, of industrial abuse, of sweat shops and scab labor, or urban poverty and overcrowding, a period when for the first time an urban proletariat developed in America and the division between the haves and the have-nots widened considerably. Despite all this, as far as researchers can discover working from the limited records available, no significant rise in the crime rate occurred. The question is why the crime rate did not rise at some predictable rate during this long period so full of dislocation - the Civil War and World War I and innumerable cycles of boom and bust. A further question: why did the crime rate begin to rise at a significant rate after more than a century of urbanization and precisely when America entered a period of remarkable prosperity, when increasing numbers were able to move out of poverty into the middle class and when, by every standard, America enjoyed the broadest sharing of wealth this society has ever known?

Some who have thought about these unexpected findings argue that the flat crime rate during most of the 19th century represents a response to the impact of a particular morality and cultural ethos which was broadly shared by the society. This ethos emphasized self-discipline, thrift, industry and personal responsibility. It assumed that if you worked hard you would get ahead. It emphasized the virtue of delaying one's gratifications. In church it was called the protestant work ethic: "As you sow so shall you reap." It showed even in one's dress. There was always a proper costume. Standards were generally agreed on; failure to abide them was summarily punished; and people looked in punishment as only fair when someone broke the rules. Most people felt that their responsibility to the public order lay not only in being law-abiding but in not becoming a public nuisance. Call these victorian ethics. Call these bourgois values. Call them what you will, these values were shared by the majority of the society. During the 19th century, education, child rearing, family management, all emphasized these

(Continued)

(continued)

values. Mothers and fathers expected to raise their children according to the prescription I read to you this morning from the book of Proverbs: "Train up your child in the way that he shall go and he will follow you the rest of his life." He will follow you the rest of his life. What parent today expects his child to be like him or to share his sense of values? Education was looked on not simply as mastery of the three R's but as character formation. civics. Schools emphasized self-discipline. There was a way to write your letters. There was a way to spell every word. A child dressed a certain way for school. Those who have analyzed the popular magazines of the time have found that most articles on child-rearing offered advice on how to teach honesty, how to teach clean speech - wash out their mouths; how to teach responsibility - give them an allowance and no more; how to punish them for mischief - with a switch before the society punish them with prison.

During this period cities developed at all levels popular institutions which reflected these values. This was the heyday of adult Sunday schools, YMCA type programs, evening adult education classes, all kinds of self-improvement groups. In almost everything it did, the society encouraged responsibility, character, self-discipline, and the cultural had an impact on crime rates. One went to work buttoned up, in uniform, Oh yes, there was crime and there was violence. I'm not describing utopia. There was the drunkenness of Saturday night and regular bar room brawls, but crime was not rampant and violence was generally limited to certain times and places. Despite urbanization, most Americans felt safe in their homes and in the street. It was the era when Americans did not lock the doors of their homes and expected to be able to stroll on the streets and the parks of their cities.

Why did this situation change after World War II? Many things happened: the spread of drugs; the spread of guns; an increase in functional illiteracy; racial tension; elements which were to a certain degree unique to American life; but if we look at the industrialized world we find a sharp rise in the crime rate in every industrialized society beginning at the same time.

Why? One answer which non-Marxist historians offer with increasing confidency touches on the radical cultural changes which have reshaped Western mores. Our century has seen a revolutionary change of attitude toward social and personal values. As this century wore on, more and more people began to look with scorn at the uplift values of the 19th century. They were put down as hypocritical, as based on a double standard, its restrictive and hopelessly bourgois. Instead of industry and self-discipline, our century has emphasized self-expression and self-realization. The new rule was do that which seems right in your eyes as long as you do not harm someone else. Where the 19th century had spoken of duties, the

20th century spoke of rights. Where the 19th century spoke of responsibilities, the 20th century spoke of opportunities. Where the 19th century spoke of deferred gratification, our century has encouraged us to seize the moment. No one was going to tell us what we were to do. A youth culture emerged, untrammeled, free. Parents encouraged this openness and this new freedom, not only because they wanted their children to have every opportunity but because many shared a common misinterpretation of Freud which insisted that all restrictions are somehow inhibiting and, therefore unwarranted and unhealthy.

The earlier approach conditioned people to say: 'wait a minute, don't do that.' Today's approach no longer shapes that kind of super ego. Our children are not taught in school, or out, to say: 'wait a minute, don't do that;' but to say: 'Why can't I do it?" "I'll make up my own mind. I'm a free person, aren't 1?' 'I won't be restricted by your rules, I'm going to do my own thing.' This philosophy of self-expression has permeated at all levels of the society and all of us have found our sense of right and wrong become hazy. Punishment is no longer accepted as deserved. Who set up the rules anyway? Paradoxically, at that moment when the society is freest, we and our children face the future without a clear sense of direction, with only a hazy sense of what is right and what is wrong; and so we have no confidence that we will use our freedom intelligently.

Oh, we wouldn't steal, at least we wouldn't snatch a purse, but what about creative accounting? "everybody does it." 'who gets hurt?' We have a treasury of ready rationalizations. 'If I don't look after myself, others will take advantage of me.'

We see this especially when it comes to those human relationships which were once clearly defined but where we accept today every possible manner of exceptions. Is adultery a crime? Is homosexuality a crime? Is using parental authority a crime? Is it a crime to play the radio loudly over the neighborhood? To make a public nuisance of ourselves? To hoot down a speaker we don't agree with?

Our society has not yet worked out a set of commandments. We are like the tribes of Israel after they had crossed the Red Sea and left the Egyptians behind, but before they had accepted the Sinai covenant. They were free from the slave master. We are free from the restrictions and customs of the past. Schools no longer tell us what we must learn. Parents no longer tell us what we must learn. Parents no longer tell us what we must do. Society no longer imposes its values on us. But though free of the Egyptians, the tribes were not yet a free people. They were leaderless and aimless. Within days they fell to bickering. Some wanted to return to Egypt. They couldn't use their freedom effectively and were not and wouldn't be able to until they accepted the

covenant at Sinai.

We, too, are free from. What we lack is a Sinai, commitment to a set of appropriate commandments. We lack broadly accepted do's and don'ts and a broadly shared sense of purpose. Our crime rate is where it is because we're a society of selfserving individuals, not a community. We can't help the young through their inevitable confusions, because there are no ground rules. We don't know the permissable limits of freedom or how to develop purpose in their lives because there is no broad agreement on these issues. We haven't faced up to the ultimate questions: what is right, absolutely; and what is wrong without question. We explain away. We justify. We rationalize. We find exceptions. We accept all kinds of behavior and not a community of moral commitments.

Crime, I am convinced, will continue to metastasize in the society as long as and until our society decides it's time for Sinai, that it's time to talk of duties as well as of rights, of self-discipline as well as of self-realization.

Let's be honest with ourselves. Our literature isn't a value-related literature but an exploration of sensations and the emotional frontiers. Our school systems wrestle with the basic problems of literacy and provide technical skills, but stay away from questions of character. They'd rather not discipline. Civics is no longer taught. Deportment standards are minimal. How many of our homes provide and maintain clear standards? How many parents are exploring their own freedoms rather than worrying about the values their children are internalizing?

The rise of crime in our century is related to the moral confusions which we have allowed to spread throughout our communities. Many individuals have tried to fight their own good fight, but when they have they're generally overwhelmed by the pell mell rush of the society for materialist rewards and hedonistic pleasures. And our institutions, including the school, the church and the synagogue, have often been as "tolerant of the intolerable" as any other group. Certainly, they've not clearly defined and defended clear standards.

Our society has not yet worked out a set of commandments. We are like the tribes of Israel after they had crossed the Red Sea and left the Egyptians behind, but before they had accepted the Sinai covenant. They were free from the slave master. We are free from the restrictions and customs of the past and the experience of our times; but forge it we must unless we want the crime rate to climb ever higher and our lives and homes to between the past. Schools no longer tell us what we must

Daniel Jeremy Silver

## YOUR TEMPLE CALENDAR — Clip and Save

26000 SHAKER BOULEVARD 831-3233

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
SERVICE 10:30 a.m. The Temple Branch Dr. Martin J. Plax will speak on IS SCIENTIFIC CREATIONISM SOLELY A RELIGIOUS ISSUE?	7th & 8th Grade Jr. Youth Group Noon Lunch & "Showtime"	TWA Activities 10:00 a.m Branch  Fellowship & Study Group Rabbi Jonathan S. Woll 10:30 a.m Branch	LUNCH WITH THE RABBI Uptown Garden Room Somerset Inn 12:00 noon - 1:30 p.m.	24	Service - 5:30 p.m. The Temple Chapel	Shabbat Service 9:00 a.m. The Temple Branch
SERVICE 10:30 a.m. The Temple Branch Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver will speak on FROM ESTHER TO NOW: THE CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN  Purim Carnival 2-5:30 p.m Branch  Purim	TMC LECTURE SERIES MARC CHAGALL Ori Z. Soltes 8:00 p.m Branch	MARCH  TWA FIRST TUESDAY Bruce Shewitz Musical Director of Temple 12 Noon - Lunch 12:45 p.m Program  Fellowship & Study Group Rabbi Jonathan S. Woll 10:30 a.m Branch  Temple Young Associates Board Meeting - 8:00 p.m.	HS A	RICAN JEWISH CHIVES  ARTS WEEKEND PREVIEW 8 - 10 p.m Branch	i ili ili ili ili ili ili ili ili ili i	Shabbat Service 9:00 a.m. The Temple Branch  Bat Mitzvah STEPHANIE ROSEN 11:00 a.m. The Temple Chapel  Bar Mitzvah JAMES MARGOLIS 4:30 p.m. The Temple Chapel  WEEKEND
SERVICE 10:30 a.m. The Temple Branch Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver will speak on CRIME IN AMERICA  TMC ART	TMC LECTURE SERIES SIGMUND FREUD Dr. David Ariel 8:00 p.m Branch	TWA Activities 10:00 a.m Branch Fellowship & Study Group Rabbi Jonathan S. Woll 10:30 a.m Branch  Temple Board Meeting 8:00 p.m Branch	96	10	Service - 5:30 p.m. The Temple Chapel	Shabbat Service 9:00 a.m. The Temple Branch  Bat Mitzvah TARA JOHNSON 11:00 a.m. The Temple Chapel
SERVICE 10:30 a.m. The Temple Branch Temple Women's Assn. Creative Service JEWISH WOMEN IN LITERATURE	TMC LECTURE SERIES ALBERT EINSTEIN Kennee Switzer Rakos 8:00 p.m Branch	TWA Activities 10:00 a.m Branch Fellowship & Study Group Rabbi Jonathan S. Woll 10:30 a.m Branch Lunch With The Rabbi Downtown - City Club Noon - 1:30 p.m. TMC Board Meeting 8:00 p.m Branch	TWA Board Meeting 10:00 a.m Branch  Religious School Board Meeting - 8 p.m Branch	17	Service - 5:30 p.m. The Temple Chapel  THIRD FRIDAY SERVICE 7:45 p.m Branch	Shabbat Service 9:00 a.m. The Temple Branch  Model Seder  Bar Mitzvah DARYL PEARLSTEIN 4:30 p.m. The Temple Chapel

# Kaddish

Friday \_\_\_

Sunday MARCH 6

## Those who passed away this week

BERTHA NEIGER ANITA GOLDRICH IDA JACOBS ROSE REINFELD

## Hahrzeits

HERMAN GIMP SAMUEL WEISS HARRY H. KOZMAN DR. HERMAN C. SMITH MINNETTE S. LIEBENTHAL RUTH G. KLAUS SIDNEY B. ROSENBAUM PHILIP LESTER STERN HERMAN LEFFERT DR. HENRY B.STEUER ROSE K. SAKS PHILIP DAVID KENDIS CHARLES H. MANDELKORN JEROME S. MALEVAN EDITH G. KENDIS EDYTHE G. REESE FANNIE LEVINE LENA BROWN UNGER FREDERICK H. HEIBER JEROME H. SOUIRES SAM ROGOFF ELMER M. KRAMER FRANK I. KLEIN ARTHUR FRIEDMAN SAM RINGLE ROSA E.WEINGARDEN HILDA K.REICH DR.WILLIAM B.LEVENSON

נָפָלוּ פָנֵיף: הַלוֹא אָם־תַּיטִיב שָאַת וְאָם לֹא תַיטִיב לַפֶּתַח חַטָּאת רבץ וְאֵלֶיף תְשׁיּקָתוֹ וְאַתָּה תִּמְשָׁל־ בו: וַיָּאמֶר קַיִן אֶל־הֶבֶל אָחִיוֹ וַיְהַיֵּ בְּהְיֵוֹתָם בַּשֶּׁרָה וַיָּקָם קַיִן אֶל־הֶבֶל אָחִיו וַיַּהַרְגַהוּ: וַיְּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־ קַיָן אֵי הֶבֶל אָחַיף וַיָּאמֶר לֹא יָדַעְתִּי הַשֹּׁמֵר אָחִי אָנָכִי: וַיָּאמֶר מָה עָשְׂיתָ קוֹל דְּמֵי אָחִיךּ צֹצֵקִים אַלַי מְן־הָאַדָמָה: וְעַתָּה אָרוּר אָתָּה מִן־הָאַדָמָה יי אַלַי מִן־הָאַדָמָה אַשֶּׁר פָּצְתָה אֶת־פִּיהָ לָקַחַת אֶת־דָּמֵי אָחִיךּ מִיָדַךּ:

וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אָת־חַנָּה אִשְׁתוֹ וַתַּהַר וַתַּלֶּד אָת־קַיִן וַהְּאמֶר קָנְיִתִי אִישׁ אֶת־יְהוָה: וַהִּטְּף לָלֶדֶת אֶת־ אָחִיו אָת־הָבֶל וַיְהִי־הָבֶל רְעֵה צֹאן וְקַיִן הָיָה עֹבֵד אָדָמָה: וַיְהִי מִקַץ יָמִים וַיָּבֵא קַיִן מִפְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה מְנְחָה לֵיהנָה: וְהֶבֶל הַבִיא גַם־הוּא מִבְּכֹרוֹת צֹאנוֹ ומַחָלְבַהָן וַיָּשֵׁע יְהֹוָה אָל־הֶבֶל וְאָל־מִנְחָתוֹ: וְאֶל־ קַיִן וְאֶל־מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שֶׁעָה וַיַּחַר לְקַיִן מְאֹד וַיִּפְּלוּ פָּנָיו: וַיָּאמֶר יְהוָה אָל־קֵיִן לָמָה חֶרָה לָךְ וְלָמָה

1] Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gained a male child with the help of the LORD." 2] She then bore his brother Abel. Abel became a keeper of sheep, and Cain became a tiller of the soil. 3] In the course of time, Cain brought an offering to the LORD from the fruit of the soil; 4] and Abel, for his part, brought the choicest of the firstlings of his flock. The LORD paid heed to Abel and his offering, 5] but to Cain and his offering He paid no heed. Cain was much distressed and his face fell. 6] And the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you distressed, / And why is your face fallen? / 7] Surely, if you do right, / There is uplift. / But if you do not do right / Sin couches at the door; / Its urge is toward you, / Yet you can be its master." diffND Daleling

8] Cain said to his brother Abel... and when they were in the field, Cain set upon his brother Abel and killed him. 9] The LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" 10] Then He said, "What have you done? Hark, your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground! 11] Therefore, you shall be more cursed than the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from

of sexual experience, see commentary to Gen. days are as a passing shadow," or as in Job 7:16: "My 2:25-3:24, "Sexual Interpretation."

Cain. The name is explained in the text by a word play (קין-קניתי, kayin-kaniti)—"I have gained [or made] a male child with the help of the Lord."

/Others: "I have bought a male offspring from the Lord," reflecting the idea that the first-born belongs to God and must be bought from Him (see Num. 3:46-47 and note the surviving ceremony of pidyon ha-ben, redemption of the first-born son). Some commentators see in Cain the ancestor of the Kenites, nomadic tribesmen in the Negev who earned their living as itinerant tinkers and smiths (kenaya in Aramaic, kaynum in Arabic). Thus the lowly status of the Kenites in later days would be explained by the curse put upon their progenitor [1]./

2] Abel. The name is not explained in the text. /The Hebrew הֶבֶל usually means "breath" or "puff"

4:1] Knew. On the use of יְדַע (yada) in the sense or "vanity" as in Ps. 144:4: "Man is like a breath, his days are as a breath."/

4] Choicest. An idiomatic rendering of the Hebrew, literally, "the fat of" [2].

7] There is uplift. From your distress. Or, from the descent into evil. The meaning of the Hebrew is not clear, and any translation is merely an educated guess.

Sin couches at the door. Others translate as "sin is the demon at the door." Cain is free to choose good or evil.

The suggestion is that 727 is connected with the Akkadian word for demon [3]./

8] Cain said to his brother Abel. The text does not quote what was said. The Septuagint and Targum supply these words: "Come, let us go out into the

/However, the omission of what Cain said may be a purposeful ellipsis [5]./

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