

33 And Cain gloried in that which he had done, saying: I am free; **surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands.**

34 And the Lord said unto Cain: **Where is Abel, thy brother? And he said: I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?**

ghanam, which is our word “gain”... *Ghaniy* is “to be rich.” The land Ghana means ‘rich land.’ A *ghanuuun* is a rich person (plural *aghniyau*). That’s the way you measured it.”⁵⁷³

34 a **Where is Abel, thy brother?** “[T]he question is a means of opening the conversation, perhaps eliciting confession and contrition.”⁵⁷⁴ Sarna notes 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.”⁵⁷⁵ 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.”⁵⁷⁶ Unlike his parents, however, he will not repent and begin a return to the presence of God. Like Satan and the fallen angels, Cain and those who persist in following his ways are cast out of Paradise forever.⁵⁷⁷

b **I know not.** Once more the term “know” recurs in the story of Cain.⁵⁷⁸ His renewed effort at 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.”⁵⁷⁹

Though Cain disavowed knowledge of his brother’s fate, the crime was not hid from the Lord, who lamented: “The voice of thy brother’s blood cries unto me from the ground.”⁵⁸⁰ Elder Spencer W. Kimball wrote: “When Cain’s great sin was conceived in his heart and the propitious moment had arrived for the foul deed, undoubtedly he looked to the right and to the left and behind him and was certain there was no eye and no ear; he perpetrated his heinous crime and left his righteous brother lying in his blood. The Lord perceived it all—the sights and sounds and thinking and malice and intents and desires and urges.”⁵⁸¹

c **Am I my brother’s keeper?** It is no coincidence that 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.⁵⁸² Following Daube, Hamilton notes that keeper is “a legal term for a person entrusted with the custody and care of an object.”⁵⁸³ Though, apart from this verse, it is never used in scripture in connection with a responsibility of one person for another, the verbal form of “keep” “often appears in the OT to describe God’s relationship to Israel.”⁵⁸⁴ Israel is His peculiar treasure. “He is its keeper and as such he never slumbers or sleeps.”⁵⁸⁵ Moses’ prayer for the people of Israel is that the Lord bless them and keep them.”⁵⁸⁶ Abraham’s blessings are confirmed upon him because he “obeyed my voice, and kept my charge” (= “kept my keeping”⁵⁸⁷—repeating the Hebrew root twice for emphasis).⁵⁸⁸

573 H. W. Nibley, *Teachings of the PGP*, 19, p. 243. See *Commentary* 5:31-c, p. 379.

574 N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 34; cf. W. L. Lipscomb, *Abel*, 36, p. 165.

575 See *Commentary* 4:15-b, p. 261.

576 N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 31; see also J. H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, p. 65.

577 Moses 5:41.

578 See *Commentary* 5:16-b, p. 367 and 5:16-h, p. 369.

579 Alma 10:6.

580 Moses 5:35.

581 S. W. Kimball, *Temptation*, p. 243.

582 See *Commentary* 3:15-b, p. 173.

583 V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis*, p. 230.

584 *Ibid.*, p. 231.

585 Psalm 121:4-8, where five times God is called the one who “keeps” Israel.

586 V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis*, p. 231. See Numbers 6:24.

587 Genesis 26:5.

588 R. E. Friedman, *Commentary*, p. 28.