

A SOURCEBOOK of
GREEK,
ROMAN, and
NEAR EASTERN
MYTHS

2nd Edition

† in Translation †

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GODS,
HEROES,
AND
MONSTERS

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heaven. But, the one who built it, him the fooli[sh wall] began to curse in return, "He who built me, if only his hand would bre[a]k off, [a]nd his [right] tendon would wither away!" The craftsman heard, and his heart f[elt] bad inside him. [The craftsman] says before his mind, "Why does the tower which I built curse me?" The craftsman spoke a curse [against the tower], "Let Tarhun also strike it, the tower, let him pull up its foundations. Let [X] fall down into the canal, and let the brickwork fall down into the river."

(rev. 50–52) [It is not] a tower. That one is a man, a son who is an enemy before his father. He grew up, and [he] reached to (the age of) [s]ense, and he was no longer paying attention to his father, and the gods of his father [. . .] have cursed him.

(rev. 54) [L]eave [aside] that [w]ord; I will tell you another word. Listen to the message, and I will tell you wisdom.

(rev. 55–65, lower edge 66–71, left edge 1–7) (*Hurrian version*:) [W]ood [. . .] a saw [. . .] the one who places (it) [. . .] so that [. . .] struck (it) repeatedly, so that a donkey transported (it). The [r]aiser stacked the woodpile near a canal. (Its) base?-ed the [ea]rth below; (its) ?-ed them (to) heave[n] above. The [fo]olish wood cursed the one who erected (it), "If only I could brea[k] the hand of the one who stacked me, and I could [paral]yze his right hand within." The raiser, hearing, w[as] sickened on his inside. The raiser said, he spoke to his [i]nside, "Why does the wood which was raised by me keep cursing me?" The raise[r] said a [curs]e against the wood. (*Combining the Hittite and Hurrian versions*): "Let [Tarhun] also strike it, [the wood . . .]. Let the roots (?) fall into the canal, and [let] the leaves [be] scattered into the water. It is not wood, it is a man. He is an apprentice (?). He ?-ed. He grew up, and he reached to (the age of) sense, and he ?-es his master. [. . .]. He will die in [. . .]. Lik[e] a dog [. . .] under a [ch]air he will die [. . .].

ISRAELITE

4.3. CAIN AND ABEL: GENESIS 4

This passage follows the Eden story in Genesis (see Part 2, document 3). It is interesting to note that it belongs to the Jahwistic redaction, but it is followed by an alternate Priestly account of the descendants of Adam until Noah (Gen. 5), which does not include Cain and Abel and which precedes the Flood. The Cain and Abel genealogy, on the contrary, does not lead to Noah and does not anticipate the Flood. Notice, for instance, that in Genesis 4.17 Cain goes on to marry, which presumes the existence of other people, so the brothers' story might not have been initially about the first descendants of Adam and Eve.

SOURCE: The Hebrew Bible, Genesis 4, New Revised Standard Version, with minor modifications.

(1) Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have produced a man with the help of Yahweh." (2) Next she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground. (3) In the course of time Cain brought to Yahweh an offering of the fruit of the ground, (4) and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And Yahweh had

regard for Abel and his offering, (5) but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. (6) Yahweh said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? (7) If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

(8) Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field." And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Then Yahweh said to Cain, (9) "Where is your brother Abel?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" (10) And Yahweh said, "What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground! (11) And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. (12) When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." (13) Cain said to Yahweh, "My punishment is greater than I can bear! (14) Today you have driven me away from the soil, and I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and anyone who meets me may kill me." (15) Then Yahweh said to him, "Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance." And Yahweh put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him. (16) Then Cain went away from the presence of Yahweh, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

(17) Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch; and he built a city, and named it Enoch after his son Enoch. (18) To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad was the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael the father of Methushael, and Methushael the father of Lamech. (19) Lamech took two wives; the name of one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. (20) Adah bore Jabal; he was the ancestor of those who live in tents and have livestock. (21) His brother's name was Jubal; he was the ancestor of all those who play the lyre and pipe. (22) Zillah bore Tubalcain, who made all kinds of bronze and iron tools. The sister of Tubalcain was Naamah.

(23) Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. (24) If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

(25) Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel, because Cain killed him." (26) To Seth also a son was born, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to invoke the name of Yahweh.

4.4. THE TOWER OF BABEL: GENESIS 11

The story of the Tower of Babel follows the Flood story and the account of the genealogies of the descendants of Noah and the peoples who populated the earth after the Flood (the so-called Table of Nations in Gen. 10). The story explains the dispersion of peoples into groups with different languages, hence undermining their capacity to unite their strength and become too powerful. The theme echoes the previous preoccupation of God and the different solutions he implemented in the Eden and Flood episodes, all connected by the emphasis on the necessary boundaries between human beings and God. As has