



## Return to the Garden

**Reuven Goldfarb**

**A**DAM, THE FIRST MAN, HAD A SISTER, EVE. SHE was Adam's duplicate, a female copy, cloned from his bone marrow.

They mated and had children – which wasn't a problem, because there were no recessive genes to worry about. Their offspring didn't turn out perfectly, but we have no way of knowing whether this had to do with their genetic material or environmental influences.

Adam and Eve, the primal brother and sister, had three children, all boys. The firstborn, Cain, killed the second-born, Abel. Cain was apparently a vegetarian, or so we surmise, because on the altar he built, wherewith to thank God, he offered produce of the field. Abel, presumably, was a carnivore, as we surmise on the same basis: lambs from his flock went up in smoke from his altar as a pleasing savor to the Almighty. And Seth, the third one, as in all the fairy tales, came out the best of the lot. He merited begetting the lineage that peaked in Noah and again in Abraham.

Now if a clone marries a clone, will their children also be clones? Is there any hope for genetic diversity? I think we can assume that many types of humans flowed out of this primal union. After all, the Bible tells us so. And even if we don't regard the Bible as an authoritative document on human development or on evolution (even though it is one of our earliest sourcebooks), we can, by simple observation and through various forms of historical record-keeping, note that diversity is part of our birthright (to use another charged biblical term).

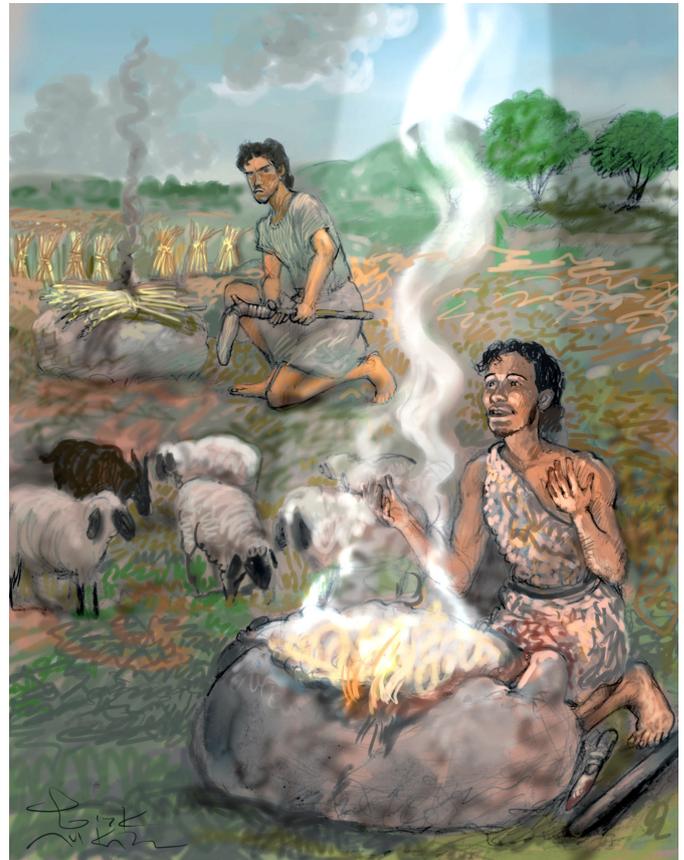
Earlier I referred to the murder of Abel by his brother Cain as the Torah's earliest example of man's inhumanity to man. Indeed, the Torah and history teach us that man is a murderous animal. When we speak of a humane act, such as giving charity, or an inhumane one, such as stealing from the community fund for widows and orphans, we are advocating adherence to a set of standards, whether we believe these were invented and perpetuated by human societies through the ages or brought down from Heaven by divinely-inspired messengers – even if these norms are honored more in the breach than in the observance.

We may surmise that the primal pair must have had some weak points. We cite Adam's imposition of unnecessary strictures in promulgating rules for Eve, such as "do not even touch the tree." God told them only that they may not eat from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge; by creating a fence around this particular rule, Adam unwittingly gave the serpent a way to trick Eve into doubting the whole corpus of the law.

And Eve was gullible. She had no experience with shrewd salesmen and no defenses against the serpent's wiles. And once Adam saw that Eve had eaten from the tree with no apparent ill effect, he willingly chose to share her fate. It was only after they had both eaten that their eyes were opened and they realized that they were naked.

When God comes looking for them, they hide. We all know now – and especially following numerous recent scandals – that denial and concealment can be worse than the original crimes. Forced out into the open, they then blame others. Adam points the finger at both Eve and God, saying, "The woman Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me what I ate from the tree." And Eve blames the serpent, who is also God's creation.

So before Adam and Eve have even had children, they've disobeyed God, implicated others in their offense, been thrown out of paradise, and been forced to embrace a life of hardship, including



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hardscrabble farming and painful childbearing, as a consequence of their misdeeds and self-serving attitudes.

This is a complex legacy to bequeath to their children. Perhaps, then, environmental influences explain the different behaviors of their first two sons.

Cain followed his father's profession and made a living as a farmer, anguishing over the uncertainty endemic to a farmer's life, with worry about rain, soil, and seed haunting him continually as thorns and thistles sprung up in his carefully tended fields and meadows. Still, he brought forth sufficient abundance through his labors to bring a portion of it as an offering to God.

But God was not pleased. A midrash tells us that Cain did not give God the best of his produce; he held back, just as his father and mother were at first unwilling to admit their misdeeds. Like his parents, Cain was sent into exile – only his was an even greater exile, an exile from human society itself.

Abel evidently offered God the best of his flock and was rewarded with God's approval. God "paid heed" to Abel's sheep, perhaps by sending down a fire to consume them. Then a fire of jealousy overcame his brother Cain and consumed Abel.

So now we know. We're flawed almost from the beginning. Our laws and regulations are designed to shore up the weak points in our character – a kind of moral seismic retrofitting – and to encourage our potential altruism. These guidelines give us hope that someday we will return to the Garden or, at least, we will make a Paradise of our own scarred earth and heal our wounded human family. ●

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