



# Carnegie Shul Chatter

## October 22, 2020



*Shabbat Shalom*

Light candles 6:09pm Shabbas Services 9:20am

## The Big Question

In last week's Torah portion, Bereishis, we read about the birth of Cain and Abel and of Cain's slaying of Abel. We also read that Cain and Abel married and had children.

I have been asked many times by those who question the story of creation as told in the Book of Genesis, "Where did Cain and Abel's wives come from?" Some think that there were other creations not mentioned in the Torah and perhaps they married someone who did not descend from Adam and Eve. And some say that they must have married sisters, and if so how many children did Adam and Eve actually have? And some say that since the Torah

## Never Forget

Some things we never forget. We all remember exactly where we were when they happened. I remember, for instance, exactly where I was when President Kennedy was assassinated, and when Neil Armstrong first stepped onto the surface of the moon. And I remember exactly where I was two years ago when a lunatic opened fire at Tree of Life in Pittsburgh.

I remember how devastating it was to watch that horrific event as it unfolded live on television. I remember how relieved I was when I learned that people who I feared might have been there were not there and were safe and sound. And I remember how agonizing it was to learn that my wife knew many of the victims. And I remember how our Jewish community in Pittsburgh and other Jewish communities around the world gathered together to support one another.

What happened that day is something I will never forget. And it is something I do not want to forget for two reasons. First, what happened at Tree of Life tells us that anti-Semitism is not just something that happens somewhere else, but is also something that happens in our own backyard and for which we must constantly be vigilant. And secondly, and more importantly, that eleven of our Jewish brothers and sisters lost their lives for no other reason than because, like us, they were Jewish. And it happened while they were praying in shul. And we must never, ever forget them.

does not specifically mention where the wives came from, the Torah story cannot be believed.

Researching this question on-line one can find many answers from a Christian perspective, but very few from a Jewish perspective. The *Works of Josephus* does state: “The number of Adam’s children, as says the old tradition, was 33 sons and 23 daughters.” So there must have been sisters for Cain and Abel to marry, but is that the answer to the question?

Here is a good Jewish answer from chabad.org:

# Whom did Cain and Abel marry?

By Menachem Posner

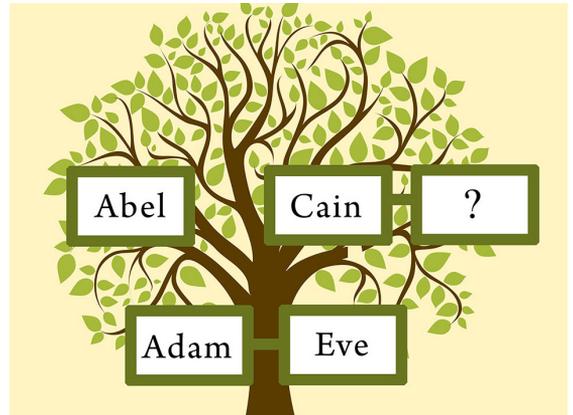
## Question:

How did Cain and Abel have children? Did they marry their sisters?

## Answer:

Indeed, Cain and Abel<sup>1</sup> had to marry their sisters, considering that there were no other women around. King David writes,<sup>2</sup> “The world was built with kindness.” Our sages explain that this verse is referring to G d’s kindness in allowing Adam and Eve’s children to marry their own sisters in order to populate the species.<sup>3</sup>

The Midrash tells us that Cain was born with a twin sister and Abel was born with two sisters.<sup>4</sup> They each married the sister who was born with them. According to one opinion, it was actually a quarrel over who would get to marry the third sister that led to Cain slaying Abel.<sup>5</sup>



The third generations of humans had no need for this loophole, because marriage between first cousins is not considered incest according to Torah law.

So why are these daughters not mentioned in the Torah? They are. Later in Genesis<sup>6</sup> we are told, “And the days of Adam after he fathered Seth were eight hundred years, and he fathered sons and daughters” — though we are not informed of their identities. The Torah only records the names of those who were leaders of note, those who played a role in the biblical narrative, or the men who formed the chain of lineage connecting Adam to Noah (and later Noah to Abraham).

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Adam’s third son, Seth, possibly married one of his nieces (uncle-niece marriage is not forbidden according to Torah law).

<sup>2</sup> Psalms 89:3.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Rashi’s commentary on Leviticus 20:17. There Rashi explains that this is the reason

why the Torah employs the unusual term “chesed,” which is usually translated as kindness, to describe the prohibition against brother-sister incest.

<sup>4</sup> Genesis Rabbah 22:2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 7. Cain claimed the right to this sister because he was the firstborn. Abel maintained that he should marry her because she was his triplet.

<sup>6</sup> 5:4.

## We Will Never Forget Them



Next Tuesday, October 27, will be the two year anniversary of the horrific murders that took place at Tree of Life in Pittsburgh. We all know the story of what happened all too well. As this anniversary approaches, let us never forget those who lost their lives on that sad, sad morning. They were Joyce Fienberg, Richard Gottfried, Rose Mallinger, Jerry Rabinowitz, Cecil Rosenthal, David Rosenthal, Bernice Simon, Sylvan Simon, Daniel Stein, Melvin Wax, and Irving Younger. May their memories be for a blessing.