

## The Irrationality of Sin

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Traditional interpretations of Genesis fantasize that as a result of eating from the tree of knowledge humans and God became bitter enemies with God looking for every opportunity to strike humans dead and punish them for their *disobedience*. For these absurdities there is not even the slightest evidence in the text. Genesis does not explain how Adam and Eve survived after being driven out of the garden of Eden and when no such information is provided, it is because the writer expected an intelligent reader to use common sense to infer the details. When animals are driven out of their environment that is their only source of food, their only option is to starve to death, but that is not what is expected of beings endowed with the ability to develop knowledge. Yes, in a garden with abundance of water trees may grow by themselves because God has created them with the ability to grow naturally wherever there are favorable conditions, but humans who have acquired knowledge similar to God's, they can create those favorable conditions wherever they are lacking so that they can have a garden of Eden anywhere they want. Since we are not told that Adam and Eve died with God triumphantly officiating their funeral, it follows that Adam and Eve managed to plant their own trees and grow their own food. Not only they managed to grow their own food, but they discovered that they could grow much more than they could possibly consume. That is the fundamental difference between beings with the ability to know like humans and the other animals; while the other animals depend on an abundance that exists naturally without the ability to influence it, humans can create as much abundance as they want and almost anywhere. With hard work, it did not take long before abundance of fruit was lying everywhere and Adam and Eve must have felt the putrid smell of Eden getting stronger every day all around them. It is no wonder that they reached out, this time towards each other, for new knowledge: "Now the man *knew* his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, 'I have produced a man with the help of the LORD'" (Gen 4:1; emphasis mine).

In this passage we find for the first time the word "to know" (יָדָע, *yāda'*) referring to sexual intercourse. Since sex is instinctual so that even the simplest animals can perform it without any training, what does *sex* have to do with knowledge? Since Adam recognized Eve as his wife and that she had even been taken from his body when he gave her the name Eve, what did he learn about her as a result of having intercourse with her?

In order to see how strange and unique this association of sex and knowledge is in the Bible, it is helpful to compare root meanings of vulgar words for sex in different modern languages. Unfortunately, because such words have been forbidden to be written down in modern times, they are poorly documented and their etymology is uncertain. For instance, in the Romanian language, the curse word for sex comes from the Greek word "to plant," which may mean that originally it was borrowed as a foreign language euphemism to replace whatever native word was used and was considered vulgar. Eventually the euphemism became the vulgar term and other euphemisms are used now. The root idea is that of planting or seeding a field and clearly is a male term. Apparently, the case is similar in other Latin languages such as French and Italian. As far as English is concerned, the word "fac" apparently comes from the Latin "facere" which means "to make" and may indicate that the sexual act is viewed as that of "making" another human being and therefore of creation. In German and other Nordic languages it seems that the basic word is "ficken" and the idea is that "to strike," but that may be a secondary meaning taking into account that in all languages to have sexual intercourse has also a secondary meaning of violence, and as it was pointed out in a previous article, the word for sex is used in curse words to refer to violence and not to sex. I am not aware of any studies but I doubt that in any language the vulgar word for sexual intercourse is related to the words "to know" or "knowledge" as is the case in the Bible. Moreover, the word "to know" meaning "sexual intercourse" is used in the Bible strictly to human intercourse and never to animals. For instance, when referring to the conception of animals, a word with the basic meaning of "heat" or "become warm" is used (Gen 30:38-39). Another word used for rams breeding with the sheep is from the word עָלָה, which means "to go up," referring to rams that mount the sheep when breeding. For cattle, another word used is the *piel* form of the verb עָבַר with the basic meaning "to pass over" implying that in a sexual intercourse a bull is passing over semen to the cow (Job 21:10). This association of sexual intercourse and knowledge is stranger as ancient people must have noticed that sexual intercourse was done involving body parts that have no relationship to intellectual activity. One possible connection is that, unlike animals, when humans engage in sexual intercourse they *know* that the result is pregnancy for women and the birth of children and therefore the sexual act is a deliberate choice and decision to give birth to other human beings. Although this may be true and is definitely one aspect of it, the truth may be deeper. We noticed that for animals there is only objective reality and therefore for animals, sex belongs to objective reality only. Since for humans there is both an objective reality as well as a reasoned reality, we already noticed that sexual language is used to describe both realities and mainly to refer to the reasoned reality of violence. Although human sex belongs to objective reality in the sense that humans have body parts that objectively are involved and used for sexual intercourse, at the same time human sex belongs to the reasoned reality so that it is not governed just by instincts, but primarily

by the mind. In other words, although sexual organs are involved in sex, it does not occur primarily in the sexual organs themselves, but rather in the mind. That may sound strange, but it is obvious that human sex is different from the sex of all other beings because it can happen any time and as many times humans want it regardless of any specific season when procreation is possible. Therefore, humans have sex any time they decide and want to, and that makes sex belong to reasoned reality such as watching a movie, reading a book, or playing an instrument. Not only the decision, but even the pleasure of sex seems to be mind related rather than caused by the sensations experienced in the sexual organs themselves. The enjoyment of sex does not seem to be related to the objective performance of the body parts involved but rather by what the partners think. There is a story which I suspect is based on a real occurrence that a husband fell in love with his neighbor's wife and made arrangements with her to meet together in his cellar at midnight and have sex. Somehow his wife figured out what was going on and sent word to her neighbor to keep her ass at home if she cared about it. At midnight she slipped into the cellar and sure enough, her husband came, and after having passionate intercourse with her, he said: "Why isn't my wife as good as you?" At that point his wife turned on the light and said to her stunned husband: "That's exactly what I would like to know myself, why isn't your wife as good as me?" If the husband had had sex with his wife in bed he would have thought that that was pretty lousy sex, but when having it over boxes or on a humid dirt floor, that turned out to be the best sex of his life just because he *thought* that he had it with his neighbor's wife with whom he had never had sex and had no idea what it would be like. But one does not need to resort to such stories to understand that it is the mind that is involved in sex more than the sexual organs. Often a couple after having a busy day at work do not feel like having sex when they come home and if someone asked them why, they would say that they are *tired*. But what is really *tired*? One would come to the conclusion that their sexual organs are tired and unable to perform, but how could sexual organs get tired at work when not only they are not involved, but people spend almost all the time sitting on a chair in front of a computer? If human sex had to do only with sexual organs, one would expect humans after a busy day at work to feel the need for some physical exercise in bed, but because the mind is tired, there is no interest in sexual pleasures either. It is well documented that when the relationship between spouses deteriorate, the sexual activity suffers although there may be no disability as far as the sexual organs is concerned. Because human sex happens in the mind, humans can have sex with anything, even with objects, and apparently someone was convicted for having sex with a bicycle.<sup>1</sup> While people with *scientific* thinking believe that sex is decided by the genes,

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<sup>1</sup> "Bike Sex Man Placed on Probation" (BBC: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7095134.stm>, accessed January 6, 2012).

the biblical genius knew that human sex is primarily an intellectual experience and can only be done with a partner with whom there is an intellectual relationship.

Although Genesis makes clear that Adam *knew* his wife in the sense of having sex with her after eating from the tree of knowledge and therefore the two kinds of knowledge must be related, we are not told when exactly they had their first intercourse. If the sequence of relating events in a story follows the timeline typical for Greek thinking, then Adam and Eve had their first intercourse sometime after they were driven out of the garden of Eden. We know by now that biblical writers do not follow necessarily a timeline so that events that are announced earlier are described much later and events that are described later actually occurred earlier. Sometimes it is helpful to look at how other biblical passages understood Genesis. Although Eve and the garden of Eden occur in many places all over the Bible, a clear reference to Eve and her giving birth is found in Revelation 12:1-6:

A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birthpangs, in the agony of giving birth. Then another portent appeared in heaven: a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born. And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. But her child was snatched away and taken to God and to his throne; and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there she can be nourished for one thousand two hundred sixty days.

Who are the sun, the moon, and the twelve stars I will discuss at a later time but it is obvious that the woman described in this passage is Eve and the setting is that of the garden of Eden when she gave birth to her first child. That this passage is a description of the garden of Eden is clearly indicated by the presence of this “dragon” which in Greek is *drakōn* (δράκων) and which simply means “serpent” although scholars have chosen to transliterate the word rather than translate it in order to obscure the reference to Genesis and create the impression that Revelation talks about imaginary creatures in order to make this book look like pure fantasy. According to Revelation, however, Eve’s sexual intercourse, pregnancy, and birth did not take place after she was driven out of the garden of Eden, but before. Although we are told that Eve fled in the wilderness, we are not told where she fled from, but common sense would suggest that she must have fled from the opposite of wilderness, that is, from a luxuriant place like the garden of Eden. Moreover, she fled the garden of Eden not because God drove her out angry that humans had disobeyed him, but in order to escape the anger of the serpent as a result of eating from the tree of knowledge when God declared that there would be now enmity

between the two and the serpent would try to bite the heel of the woman implying that she would be on the run. Because God's sovereignty is absolute in the Bible, regularly God is described as doing what his opponents are doing either because he does not want to interfere in order to hold them accountable, or because their actions do not thwart his long-term plans, and it is for this reason that Eve's flight from the garden of Eden out of fear for her life is described as being God's decision. Having failed to win Adam and Eve on his side to refuse to eat from the tree of knowledge, now the serpent targets the "seed" of the woman, that is, her descendants. That God is on the side of the woman and her descendants Revelation makes abundantly clear because God protects both the woman and her child. Although Genesis does not describe the cosmic battle between God and the serpent as Revelation does, that there is such a battle and that God was on her side helping her, Eve recognized when she had her first child: "Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, 'I have produced a man with the help of the LORD'" (Gen 4:1). The word translated "produced" actually means "to acquire" and a better translation would be: "I have *acquired* a man with the help of the LORD." Although Eve must have experienced pain at birth, she did not understand the birth and the pains as some kind of punishment from an angry deity, but saw the first child as a "help" or blessing from God. As far as the name of the deity is concerned, we see a transition that may not be insignificant: from Elohim in chapter 1 when God created the natural world, to Yahweh Elohim in chapter 2 when the deity shaped human beings and endowed them with life, to Yahweh in chapter 4 where the deity is mentioned for the first time as engaged in helping humans in their battle with the forces of evil. If Revelation is a guide about how ancient readers understood Genesis, then Adam and Eve were forced out of the garden of Eden as a result of eating from the tree of knowledge and their sexual relationship may have taken place soon after eating from the tree and developing shame and therefore it is possible that when God came to visit the couple and they hid themselves explaining that they had been naked and not having their loincloths on, implied that they had been engaged in sex. Regardless of whether Adam and Eve had had sexual relationships before their meeting with God and being driven out of the garden of Eden or not, the idea that human sex has primarily an intellectual dimension that humans acquired as a result of eating from the tree of knowledge is emphasized by using the word "to know" in order to describe human sex.

By now we begin to see a pattern: knowledge leads to more knowledge and one kind of knowledge leads to a different kind of knowledge. The birth of Cain and the pain of birth must have reminded Eve about God's promise before leaving the garden of Eden that her birth pangs would be greatly multiplied, not in the sense of intensity, but in the sense of numbers and that she would have more than one child. And the pain of giving



birth was increased twofold because she had another child: "Next she bore his brother Abel" (Gen 4:2).

We do not know how Adam earned his existence but we do learn that their two sons developed skills which their parents must not have had: "Now Abel was keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground" (Gen 4:2). Knowledge developed very fast: Cain developed the knowledge to cultivate crops and his younger brother developed the knowledge of raising animals. Clearly Genesis teaches that the domestication of plants occurred before the domestication of animals so that modern sociological theories do not teach something that the ancient writer of Genesis did not know. Within one generation, using knowledge, humans were able to provide such a variety of food compared to which Eden's constant diet of fruit must have looked appalling.

At this point humans started a practice that is without parallel in the animal world: "In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions" (Gen 4:3-4). Although sacrifices are found in many cultures, the idea behind those sacrifices is that of appeasing a normally angry deity with food, but this first mention of a sacrifice in the Bible cannot be linked to any displeasure of God because so far humans have not done anything wrong, particularly the children. In sacrifices humans give up some of their food, usually some of their best food, including drinks. Why would humans want to do that? And the answer must be the same as the answer to the question why Adam and Eve decided to have shame and cover up their private parts with loin coverings: because they can afford to. As a result of their knowledge, humans can produce much more food than they need. Cain and Abel decided to bring sacrifices from what they produced when they discovered that they were able to make food way beyond what they could possibly consume, not only as a recognition that humans never need to worry that they cannot feed themselves, but that they owe this amazing ability to a deity with whom they are related. Sacrifices meant a recognition that Cain and Abel had much more than they needed so that they could give up some of their best food without fear of death through starvation, while at the same time recognizing that their abundance was not just their own accomplishment, but ultimately the credit had to be given to God. While in the garden of Eden food and fear of death were the means by which the serpent kept humans under complete control, outside the garden of Eden sacrifices become statements that food and fear of death have no place in their relationship with the deity, therefore humans serve God out of pure gratitude. If God had been so gracious to endow humans with abilities that belonged only to God, then humans understand that they need to show the same gratitude to God and respond to a gracious deity with grace. While pagan religions are full of sacrifices ordered by deities, some of them extremely painful and gruesome such as the sacrifice of Iphigenia, in the

Bible, God nowhere ordered any sacrifices to Adam and Eve or to their descendants. The only sacrifice that God supposedly ordered was that of Isaac, but as we have seen, it is a sacrifice that never took place precisely because God did not want it. As far as Jesus is concerned, although he said that he did not want to die but rather wanted to do what God wanted, there was no indication that God ordered the sacrifice or that he needed it or even appreciated it, but rather through an angel, Jesus was strengthened to be able to carry out the sacrifice implying that the sacrifice was decided and caused by the forces of evil and God had nothing to do with it. Since God endowed humans with divine-like abilities without humans to ask for them and therefore out of pure grace, so also humans had to respond to such grace with graceful sacrifices without being asked, that is, out of pure grace. We come now to two different fundamental principles that govern the two reasoned realities envisioned by the two cosmic forces represented by the two opponents: God and the serpent. On the one hand we have the concept of the garden of Eden ruled by the serpent in which the relationship is controlled through ignorance and fear of death, and on the other hand, a society in which the relationship between humans and the deity and among humans is based on pure grace. Even if Cain and Abel discovered that they were smart and could develop the skills which they had, they recognized that their abilities were the result of having been created in the image of God and they needed to give God that credit. We need to remember that humans had been taken out of the garden of Eden and placed in an arid place with the real prospect of death through starvation with their only hope of survival in their ability to figure out how to produce food. Cain and Abel discovered that human knowledge was such a powerful resource that went way beyond mere survival to provide an abundance which went way beyond their needs. They understood that their ability to achieve more than they needed was the result of God's decision to create them in his own image and decided to give some of their best food back to God. Because God did not actually need any food and could not physically consume it, they used fire to consume the food as if the deity himself had consumed it. They did not decide to give away or destroy some of the excess or the left overs, but used for sacrifice only what was produced first and was best. The decision to refrain from using or even destroy through fire the first products and therefore the best part of their crop is unnatural and is without parallel in the natural world. Humans, who had left the garden of Eden with the specter of dying of starvation, have overcome the fear of death to the point not only of giving up some of their food, but refraining from consuming what was produced first and what was best. Therefore, sacrifices in the Bible were statements that the fear of death was no longer a controlling factor. Death and hunger no longer decided what humans were doing because they had overcome both. By giving food to God as sacrifices humans professed that death – the controlling power in the garden of Eden – had become irrelevant.

With so much food around God gets picky: “And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard” (Gen 4:4-5). We are not told how God disregarded Cain’s offering but probably the fire no longer consumed whatever was placed on the altar or Cain had trouble to set it on fire. In spite of so much abundance and giving, God noticed that there was something terribly wrong which this picture: the two brothers were busy sharing their products with God who did not need them but not with one another. Not having to live just on fruit alone all the time was no doubt a great dietary improvement, but for Abel to add some vegetables to his dairy products and for Cain to add some dairy products to his vegetable diet would have made an even bigger difference. The very nature of knowledge is sharing; it benefits not just you, but others as well. We noticed that the very first thing Eve did after *taking* from the tree of knowledge was to *give* to her husband from what she had acquired and when they decided to use loincloths, it was also a joint decision. Although Abel seems to have been as selfish as Cain, the reason God showed his displeasure with Cain and not with Abel is no doubt because Cain, being the older brother, God expected him to understand better what God wanted and take the initiative in sharing. For God to receive gifts from humans while he did not need any gifts and see brothers not give to one another when they both badly needed whatever the other had and even in excess, must have seemed a terribly wrong way in which humanity was developing.

Although we do not know how God expressed his displeasure with Cain’s offering, in trying to figure out God’s thoughts behind his actions Cain concluded that God disliked him and liked Abel: “So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell” (Gen 4:5). Consequently, Cain became angry with his brother, and instead of turning toward him, Cain turned against him. Realizing that Cain missed the point, God tried to help him: “The LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin [חַטָּאת] is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it’” (Gen 4:6-7). Now God makes it plain that Cain’s offering was not accepted not because he had done anything wrong, but simply for failing to do something that was positively good, and warns him that failing to do what is good paves the way for doing what is evil or “sin.” Here occurs for the first time this word “sin,” and although it is mentioned for the first time in the text, God makes clear that it had not occurred or entered the world yet, but rather was “lurking” at the door waiting for an opportunity to be committed for the first time. How a tradition developed of misreading Genesis so that eating from the tree of knowledge is understood as sin when even in chapter four the text specifically states that “sin” had not entered the world yet cannot be attributed to mere stupidity since there is no other writings in human history that have been so blatantly misread, therefore a more sinister explanation must be found.



Although Genesis does not relate eating from the tree of knowledge to any sin, the first occurrence of the word “sin” does make clear what a first “sin” must be, that is, killing another human being because this was what Cain was planning to do. And in spite of the warning, Cain went ahead and carried out his plan: “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” (Gen 4:8). This is the moment when sin entered the world and when the original sin was committed, a “sin” that has nothing to do with Eve or with eating from the tree of knowledge.

Since all conscious human actions are done for a reason and this was clearly not an accident, what could be the reason for the first human being to kill another human being? When it comes to animals, killing is necessary because for some species meat is the only food that they can use. Moreover, scavengers are necessary to dispose of dead bodies as animals cannot bury themselves. Although humans do use meat as food, the meat almost never comes from other human beings, but rather from animals. Even when animal bodies are not used for food but for other products such as leather, soap, glue, fabrics, and so on, human bodies are never used for such products. If not buried, human corpses are sometimes burned, something which is never done with animal meat if it is not contaminated and unfit for food. Therefore, if human corpses are not consumed by fire, eventually they are consumed by worms, and that is the only kind of food humans can be. So, how can Cain’s killing of his brother be justified? One possible reason is that he was jealous on his younger brother that he was favored by God and killing was meant to win God’s favor. If God liked Abel and did not like Cain, then the only way to force God to love Cain was for Cain to kill Abel and then God would have no choice but to love Cain because had no one else to love. That may be a rational reason for Cain to kill, but that presupposes a highly irrational God because for God to love the one who kills the person whom he loves would be like a mother who would love the killer of her children because has no children left to love.

Although God had made clear that he did not want Abel to be killed and would not end up loving Cain if he committed “sin” or did not do what was “good,” winning the favor of the deity has been the primary justification for all human killings in history, whether as sacrifices or in war. Whether it was in ancient Greece or on the American continents where gruesome human sacrifices were practiced on a large scale, human beings were killed based on the assumption that gods took great pleasure in the killing of human beings and rewarded the killers by being favorable to them and granting their wishes either by sending rain or making them succeed in battles or in other enterprises. For gods, however, to take pleasure in human sacrifices is highly irrational because they are supposed to be far superior in power and intelligence to human beings and to find any satisfaction in seeing them killed when humans pose no threat to gods in any way is

without any justification. Sometimes human sacrifices were justified as necessary in order to appease an angry deity who had been offended by humans and now had to be offered something nice such as a human sacrifice in return to compensate for the offense. A good example is the sacrifice of Iphigenia, probably the most celebrated human sacrifice in history. According to Euripides, the Greek fleet that had been assembled by Agamemnon to attack Troy and restore Helen to his brother Menelaus could not set sail because the goddess Artemisia<sup>2</sup> stopped the winds in order to punish Agamemnon for killing her beloved stag. So, the killing of Iphigenia seemed like a tit for tat, but was it? Is it rational to kill a human being in order to compensate for the killing of an animal? Now we come to the relativity of rationality in the sense that what may seem rational for humans may be irrational for deities, and vice versa. If Artemisia loved animals more than she loved humans, then killing a human being in order to compensate for killing an animal seems quite rational – from the divine perspective. That Greek deities often enjoyed sex with animals more than with human beings is widely described in Greek mythology where Zeus himself took the form of animals such as swans or bulls in order to have sex with his numerous lovers, or some of his lovers are turned into animals such as cows with whom he had sex, or females enticed bulls into having sex with as the wife of the Cretan king Minos did who hid in a wooden cow built by the ancient engineer Daedalus in order to entice a bull to copulate with her and give birth to the mixed creature known as the Minotaur. That Artemisia may have felt quite attracted to a stag and found human males quite repulsive is quite understandable taking into account not only that she never had any human or divine lover, but when a man, Actaeon, who himself was a hunter, happened to see her bath while hunting with his hounds, Artemisia was so offended that she turned him into a stag so that Actaeon was ripped to pieces by his own hunting dogs much to the delight of the goddess. Since sex for rational beings is a matter of mind and not instinct, just as humans find sex with beasts repulsive and call it bestiality, so also gods may find sex with humans repulsive and call it humaniality or whatever. Therefore, if Artemisia thought that being torn to pieces by his own dogs was a just punishment for Actaeon for seeing her naked, the killing of Agamemnon's daughter in order to punish him for killing her favorite stag would have seemed quite rational for pagans like the Greeks. But was it? Let us remember that rationality as we have defined so far means consistency. If Artemisia loved wild beasts so much and found humans repulsive just to look at her, why was she a huntress, dressed as a hunter, carrying a bow and arrows, and was worshiped as a hunter? If she thought that Agamemnon committed such a terrible crime to kill an impressive stag and boast to be a great hunter using the stag as a trophy – something that even modern hunters do - why was Artemisia offended that someone did exactly what she was famous for? If she loved stags and other animals and

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<sup>2</sup> Ancient Romans referred to Artemisia as Diana.

never killed any, then why was she carrying a bow and arrows all the time, and how could she prove to be a huntress if she never killed any animals? Although the legends claim that she developed her great skill by shooting at trees, a great hunter can only prove his great skill as a hunter by shooting moving targets such as animals and not trees. Therefore, a great huntress like her to punish a hunter like Agamemnon for practicing what she herself claimed to be her greatest passion and pleasure is quite irrational. But probably her greater irrationality can be seen in her request to punish Agamemnon by requiring him to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia. Ironically, Artemisia was worshipped as a helper of women and if she wanted a child of Agamemnon to be killed to propitiate for the killing of a stag, one would have expected her to ask for the sacrifice of Orestes, Agamemnon's son, and not one of his daughters. How could a deity enjoy the killing of a woman whom she was supposed to help? But the irrationality of the gods goes further. Even if Artemisia wanted Agamemnon to kill his daughter in order to propitiate for the killing of a stag, for her to eventually decide to send favorable winds after the sacrifice of Iphigenia so that the Greek fleet could sail to Troy and destroy the city raises serious questions about the rationality of the gods. As those who are familiar with the Greek mythology should know, the gods were divided as far as supporting the Greeks and the Trojans, and among the gods who supported the Trojans were, besides Zeus, ... surprise, surprise ... Apollo and his twin sister Artemisia. One may remember that it was Apollo who guided the arrow shot by Paris to hit Achilles in the heel and cause his demise as a punishment for killing Hector, the Trojan hero whom Apollo favored. Even if Artemisia enjoyed very much the killing of a young lady to compensate for her loss of a stag, for her to reward such killing with helping the Greek army reach Troy and destroy the very city whose patron she and her twin brother were does not make any sense. To reward a killing of a young lady with the killing of thousands of Trojans who are your own worshippers is stupidity at its best. But to top this irrationality of the gods, after Agamemnon returns home to Argos and is butchered by his wife Clytemnestra, the same Apollo is so outraged by this murder that orders Orestes, Agamemnon's son, to kill his mother and her lover to avenge the killing of the one who had destroyed his favorite city and had killed thousands and thousands of the very people who worshipped him. Why ask for a revenge of the killing of such a killer like Agamemnon when any Trojan or Trojan deity would have found such killing plain justice? If gods have any brains, they must be completely deprived of any common sense. Although in pagan religions killing of humans are ultimately justified as requested by the gods whose reasoning is never questioned, in the Bible, when the first human killing is contemplated, God specifically comes to the potential murderer to persuade him to give up such thoughts because he would strongly condemn it.

Since Cain could not claim to have killed his brother in order to gain favor with a deity, he must have had another justification for his murder. Although God did not tell

specifically what “good” he expected Cain to do, taking into account that he rejected Cain’s sacrifice that was supposed to be a gift, that is, an act of grace, it follows that God expected him to offer such a gift to the only other human being with whom he was in relationship, that is, to his brother. Of course, God could have told Cain to give to his brother some of what he was offering to God, but a gift that is given because it is ordered is no longer a gift. Just as God expected Eve to use her reasoning to figure out whether God wanted her or not to eat from the tree of knowledge, so also, he expected Cain to use his reasoning to understand what God expected of him. Apparently, God reasoned that if Cain took the initiative and offered his brother some of his produce, Abel would also reciprocate so that the cycle of sharing would be started. And if Abel would not have responded by reciprocating, then God could have looked with displeasure to his sacrifice next time and would have tried to stir him in the right direction using the same language as the one used with Cain. That Cain did not understand what God expected is highly unlikely, therefore the reason he decided to kill his brother was no doubt because he thought that he found a much more attractive idea than that of sharing. While in sharing you only receive part of what someone else has and you need to give something else in return, when you kill others you take everything and give nothing in return. That means 100% gain and 0% loss. That is the ultimate rationale for all killing caused by humans to other human beings. As we have noticed, names are very significant in the Bible and at this point is important to remember that the name Cain comes from the Hebrew word קַיִן which means - as Eve explained it - “to acquire,” “to accumulate,” and therefore Cain means the one who acquires, the one who accumulates, and as his killing of his brother makes clear, he is the one who acquires and accumulates by conquering, therefore it means the conqueror. While in the garden of Eden fruit grew by itself, in human societies hardly anything that humans need and use grows by itself and therefore has to be produced by someone. Consequently, killing other human beings in order to acquire what you want without producing it becomes the only way of acquiring and accumulating wealth. This must have been the reasoning behind Cain’s killing of his brother and is the reasoning for all wars and killings of which the human history is full.

Killing human beings in order to appropriate what they have is the reason used to justify the killing of human beings on a scale impossible to imagine not only in history, but even today, so that it seems such common sense so that only an idiot would dare to question the need to kill. But was killing of Abel such a gain? It may be true that overnight Cain acquired all the animals that Abel had, but taking into account that he was a farmer and that he would not have been able to tend the flocks among his fields even if he had had the knowledge how to do it, all he could do with the animals was to use them for food and soon remain without any source of meat or dairy products. By killing his brother, he did gain everything but was a gain that was short lived. While

animals cooperate only to catch the food or to gather the food, humans, due to their knowledge, can cooperate in order to produce whatever they need. Because humans have developed so many needs besides mere survival, the production of all the things that humans need can be accomplished only through cooperation. Even if people decide to grow their own food in their back yard, it is virtually impossible for them to live only on what they produce themselves. Even in the production of the most ordinary loaf of bread, thousands of people have been involved, some probably from other continents. If one thinks about those involved in creating the seeds, those involved in the manufacturing of the equipment to till the ground, to sow the seeds, to remove the weeds, to irrigate the crop, to harvest it, to make the flour, to produce the ingredients to make and knead the dough, to bake the bread, to package it, to take it to the store, to shelf it and sell it, there are clearly uncountable people involved. If a more complex product is considered such as a car, the people involved in designing, testing, producing the raw materials, making the equipment and the machinery, manufacturing each component, selling the car, and so on, no doubt the number of people involved would exceed millions and would be scattered over several continents. All this cooperation is possible because humans are endowed with minds that have the ability to develop knowledge and use rationality to coordinate their actions so that their products are ever more complex and of better quality. While a human is useless for another human as a source of food, is a tremendous partner and enabler as a resource to do what no human can do alone. It is this dimension of human beings as resource that all killers and conquerors miss and is illustrated by Cain's answer to God: "Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?' He said, 'I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?'" (Gen 4:9). Cain's answer reveals that he did not see his brother as a resource or partner and the only relationship with his brother he could conceive of was that of a burden, and of course, he felt it was completely unjustified for him to "keep" or take care of his brother. Since Abel raised animals, it was obvious not only that he was able to "keep" or take care of animals, but more so of himself, therefore Cain takes God's suggestion that he should share with his brother some of his produce as a request to feed a social parasite. Cain may have thought that by killing his brother he could gain everything and lose nothing, but God made him aware that he was completely wrong because the killing of a human being is not over when it is over: "And the LORD said, 'What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground!'" (Gen 4:10). So, how can human blood talk? Again, it is the human rationality that makes the difference. When animals kill other animals, those that are killed are eaten and all the other animals move on as if nothing happened. Because of their rationality, however, when humans are killed by other human beings, because there is no rational justification for such killing, human rationality cannot move on as if nothing had happened. It was this implication that Cain discovered when it was too late: "'And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your



brother's blood from your hand. 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'" (Gen 4:11–12). It is for the first time when God is cursing a human being. What Cain realizes is that by giving up his rationality and committing the ultimate irrationality, he started the spiral of irrationality in the world to which he himself can become a victim: "Cain said to the LORD, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear! 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'" (Gen 4:13–14). By surrendering his rationality, Cain made himself unfit for living in association with other human beings because it is rationality that is the basis for human interaction and cooperation. Having given up his rationality, Cain made himself unfit for human societies and his only option was to be a wanderer avoiding human contacts. Precisely because other human beings are rational, they would see a killer as someone dangerous to be around and therefore he could expect to be killed at any time. Those who give up their rationality are perceived as a danger to anyone because no one knows what to expect from such a person just as Abel accepted to go out into a field with what he believed was his brother only to discover a murderer. As we saw, even Judas was avoided by the very religious leaders who paid him to betray Jesus because they knew that Judas was dangerous not only for Jesus, but for themselves as well because once a traitor, always a traitor. When humans are dealing with killers, some do not accept the risk of having such people around and would want to eliminate them first before they get a chance to kill again. This shows that sin and irrationality is contagious. Once killing is started, it breeds further killing, often without any relationship to the original killing. It is the spiral of killing that God wanted to stop when responded to Cain's complaint that he might be killed at any time and by anyone without any warning just as he killed his brother: "Then the LORD said to him, 'Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance.' And the LORD put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him" (Gen 4:15). One would have expected God not only to endorse the killing of Cain but even to encourage it, and instead, God takes steps to protect his life. Why would a God who is against evil and sin protect the sinner rather than eliminate him? As the text indicates, God knew about the spiral of evil so that, when sin is eliminated by eliminating the sinner, sin and sinners are not eliminated but multiplied. The one who killed Cain would make seven of Cain's relatives want to kill him not only in order to avenge the killing of Cain, but for their own *safety* to protect themselves from a dangerous killer. We do not know what sign God set up for Cain so that he could be identified and not killed, but the spiral of violence continued because later, one of Cain's descendants boasts: "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. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold'" (Gen 4:23–24). The spiral of violence occurs not only because with

every killing the number of people involved in killing increases exponentially, but the level of violence goes up dramatically. Because Cain never gave up violence, when he hit again and wounded his great-great-grandson Lamech, he was killed by him.<sup>3</sup> In other words, death for wounds. The reasoning is that if someone wounds you today, you better kill him because next time he may not just wound you, but kill you. By killing Abel, Cain has made seven more people to be afraid of him and not feel safe until they killed him, and by killing Cain, Lamech has multiplied sevenfold the number of people afraid of him and wanting to kill him in order to feel safe. This is the paradox or the irrationality of violence as the guarantee for safety. The more violent you are, the safer you feel because you think that fewer people would dare to attack you and kill you, but the more violent you are, the more insecure the others feel around you and the more motivated they would be to join and become violent themselves in order to eliminate you hoping to feel secure. In violence, as long as there is a winner, no one feels secure and violence ends when all those involved in violence manage to eliminate each other. Because sin and irrationality are self-destructive, God does not need to resort to violence in order to eliminate them because evil people eventually destroy themselves.

As we saw, the reasoned reality based on violence as the source of prosperity and security was the ideology of the garden of Eden which Adam and Eve rejected when they ate from the tree of knowledge and chose to live according to a reasoned reality that promotes good and rejects evil. Because the serpent failed to win Adam and Eve for his ideology, eventually they were driven out of the garden of Eden, and according to Revelation, the serpent tried to win Eve's descendants to create a human society based on the ideology of the garden of Eden, that is, on violence as the source of prosperity and security. Because the ideology of violence is highly irrational and involves a paradox, only humans who do not develop clear knowledge about good and evil can be fooled to adopt it, unable to use even common sense that would tell them that it ends in complete ruin. As Genesis makes clear, God tried to protect Cain, not only by warning him again killing his brother, but even after he became a murderer by showing that he did not want his death. Unfortunately, in the long run, the serpent won so that Cain became the first human who introduced in the world the reasoned reality of the garden of Eden based on violence as the source of prosperity and security, an ideology that has dominated human society until now and on which all so-called civilizations are based.

In the development of this reasoned reality of violence, Genesis mentions briefly several key developments which are known today as key markers of civilization and were introduced by the descendants of Can. The first major achievement of Cain and his

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<sup>3</sup> How Cain could still be "young" when killed by his great-great-grandson I will explain later.

descendants was the invention of cities: “Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch; and he built a city, and named it Enoch after his son Enoch” (Gen 4:17). Cities are enclosures just like the garden of Eden and for humans to place themselves in an enclosure when even animals would find that kind of life torture is completely irrational. Once Cain killed his brother, not only he no longer felt safe, but no one else felt safe anymore and his solution was to barricade himself behind city walls in order to be able to go to sleep. All gardens of Eden have walls or borders that are heavily reinforced and defended because behind them there are always powerful killers who never have enough power to kill and therefore never feel safe.

Another development as a result of violence is polygamy: “Lamech took two wives; the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah” (Gen 4:19). It cannot be mere coincidence that the first polygamous man is the super killer who killed the first killer. The reason polygamy and violence are related is because violence always claims young men or, to use the language of Samson’s riddle, “young lions.” Because violence is primarily carried out by young men, no matter who is the winner, there are always a great number of young wives who are still fertile but cannot marry because there is a shortage of young males. That polygamy is the result of the death of young men who are killed in wars can be documented even today. For instance, as a result of the great number of widows that the Iraq war created, many widows have to accept to marry men who are already married because they do not have any other choices.<sup>4</sup> Because violence and wars decimate the male population, polygamy enables women to continue to give birth to children and produce more cannon fodder. We may remember that in the previous article a Sadducee came to Jesus to test his ability to answer difficult questions by presenting a scenario in which the oldest son married and died and the younger had to marry his sister in law only to die himself so that the next brother had to marry his wives until all six brothers died and the last one had to marry all the wives of his older brothers so that eventually he ended up with seven wives. Although this rule is mentioned in the Bible and was practiced not only in ancient Israel but all over ancient Middle East, it was not instituted by God, but was considered necessary as a result of the fact that violence had been the basis of human societies from all times. The fact that the brothers died in the order in which they had been born and while their wives were still young, is proof that they died either in battles or in vendettas as the primary responsibility of young men was to fulfill their belligerent duties when becoming mature. The rule that the widow had to marry a younger brother and not a stranger was meant to keep the property in the family. The reason males have always been valued by all human societies is not because females are hated by men as feminists

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<sup>4</sup> Roula Ayoubi, “Iraq Toys with Polygamy as Solution for War Widows” (BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12266986>, accessed January 6, 2012).

claim, but because power and violence are so highly valued even by feminists, that men are needed because they can be better killers and ideal cannon fodder.

Another important contribution of Cain's descendants to *civilization* is the development of technology: "Zillah bore Tubal-cain, who made all kinds of bronze and iron tools" (Gen 4:22). Although we are not told what kind of implements were made out of bronze and iron, archaeology abundantly proves that most ancient artifacts made out of bronze and iron were weapons. The ancient author of Genesis knew what can be widely documented today that the main function of technology in all societies is to create weapons that can cause as much human deaths as possible. One of the important gods in the Greek pantheon was Hephaestus<sup>5</sup>, who was the god of metallurgy and whose primary responsibility was to make weapons for the gods. Although some of the technological discoveries end up having civilian applications, they are primarily developed for military purposes and the most blatant example is the nuclear power. Although a small amount of nuclear material is used in power plants for civilian purposes, most of it is used for nuclear bombs, and although there is a world-wide movement to ban nuclear energy to produce electricity because is supposed to be dangerous in spite of the fact that few people can die as a result of a reactor meltdown, there is no outrage against the stockpile of nuclear weapons and the incalculable danger that they pose. Although atomic energy is probably the most obvious example, even the internet that we are using now for this open classroom was developed for military purposes and only what became obsolete for the military was made available for civilian uses. Even inventions that were made first for civilian uses eventually they were taken over by the military and an example is these powerful modern killing machines that are called *tanks*. As their name still makes clear, they were originally "tanks," that is, large containers to carry water off roads in the fields in order to water the plants, but eventually they were equipped with powerful weapons to carry troupes on any terrain in order to kill enemies. But probably no story proves the horrors that technology can create when is subordinated to domination and killing of other human beings as the story of the German Jew Fritz Haber.<sup>6</sup> He was a brilliant chemist who discovered the process to synthesize fertilizer by using nitrogen from the air so that greater crops could be produced to feed a larger population. Because he used nitrogen from the atmosphere, his discovery was dubbed "bread from the air." Unfortunately, he was fascinated with Germany's desire to use its superior technology in order to conquer and dominate the world and he developed the lethal gas known as Zyklon B that was used to kill millions of innocent people, and ironically, many of his own fellow Jews. The ancient author of Genesis may not have known how to create fertilizer from air, but

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<sup>5</sup> Ancient Romans referred to him as Vulcan.

<sup>6</sup> Chris Bowlby, "Fritz Haber: Jewish Chemist Whose Work Led to Zyklon B" (BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-13015210>, accessed January 6, 2012).

understood the horrors that technology can create when is used by the society to dominate and kill.

Finally, the descendants of Cain are credited with what we would label today entertainment: “His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the ancestor of all those who play the lyre and pipe” (Gen 4:21). Although human activity requires periods of rest and relaxation when entertainment is legitimate, entertainment becomes a major preoccupation in affluent societies in which what is consumed is taken from others and there is plenty of time *to kill*. Those who find productive activities degrading, discover that boredom is a major problem that is overcome with entertainment, alcohol, and ultimately with drugs. As we remember, *rest* was instituted by God at creation as a human need to restore energies and to set aside time for creativity in order for humans to replicate God’s image as a creator in them, but since killing and acquiring what others produce involves no creativity, *civilized* societies develop entertainment as a major industry *to kill* that time of *rest* that becomes a burden. Moreover, entertainment is precisely cultivating and extolling violence so that even the time of rest is used to contemplate violence and prepare for it.

Before concluding, we noticed that God did not want Cain to be killed and that makes clear that God does not consider that killing a sinner is the way to deal with sin, and that leaves us with the question as to how does God see the solution to sin? Although Genesis does not explain, we need to turn to other Bible passages in order to find the answer. And indeed, in the Bible God repeatedly indicates that he does not want the death of the sinners, but rather their repentance. As far as what repentance is, the New Testament explains by using the Greek term *μετάνοια* (*metanoia*), which means “changing of the mind” (Mark 1:15). Since human actions are based on reasoning and sin is basically a failure at the level of reasoning, it follows that the elimination of sin or evil cannot take place by killing the body, but by a change at the level of reasoning, that is, where the origin of the problem was. In other words, since by sin humans lose their rationality, repentance means to reclaim it by recognizing that the evil actions did not have any justification and in the future to reject such actions. God did not want the death of Cain because he wanted Cain to understand that violence has no place in human life and eliminate it from his life. Unfortunately, Cain not only he did not repent, but thought that he could build his own security by barricading himself behind city walls and thought that his sword would keep anyone away. Because he never gave up violence, eventually he got killed by one of his descendants, that is, by someone from inside his own city. He thought that the sword of the garden of Eden was turned against others and provided him with security, and did not realize that the same sword would turn one day against himself as well. Eve chose to eat from the tree of knowledge fully aware that she might die, but Cain chose to kill his brother thinking that his life



was absolutely secure when no one else could threaten him. And Eve was right, absolute security is not achieved by trying to avoid death, but by trying to be like God, using knowledge to do what is good and resist evil at all costs.

## Index

Abel, 6–9, 12–15  
acquire(d), 1, 5, 8, 12  
Actaeon, 10  
Adah, 14, 16  
Adam, 1, 4–7, 15  
Agamemnon, 10–11  
Apollo, 11  
archaeology, 17  
Argos, 11  
Artemisia, 10–11  
battle(s), 5, 9, 16  
bestiality, 10  
Bible, 2, 4–7, 11–12, 16, 18  
birth, 2, 4–6, 10, 16  
blessing, 5  
blood, 13–14  
bombs, 17  
book, 3–4  
bronze, 17  
brother(s), 6, 8–16, 18–19  
Cain, 1, 5–9, 11–19  
cannon fodder, 16–17  
child(ren), 2, 4–6, 9, 11, 16  
city(ies), 11, 16–17, 18  
civilian, 17  
civilization, 15, 17  
Clytemnestra, 11  
common sense, 1, 4, 11–12, 15  
conceive(d), 1, 5, 13, 16  
corpses, 9  
creation, 2–3, 18  
cultures, 6  
curse(ing), 2, 13–14

**Daedalus**, 10  
**dairy**, 8, 12  
**death**, 1, 6–7, 15–19  
**deity**, 5–7, 9–11  
**descendant(s)**, 5, 7, 14–18  
**dragon**, 4  
**eating**, 1, 4–5, 8–9  
**Eden**, 1, 4–7, 12, 15–16, 18  
**Elohim**, 5  
**enmity**, 4  
**Enoch**, 16  
**entertainment**, 18  
**euphemism**, 2  
**Euripides**, 10  
**Eve**, 1, 4–9, 12, 15, 19  
**evil**, 5, 7–8, 14–15, 18–19  
**fac**, 2  
**fear**, 5–7  
**fertilizer**, 17  
**fire**, 7–9  
**food**, 1, 6–9, 12–13  
**French**, 2  
**Fritz Haber**, 17  
**fruit**, 1, 6, 8, 12  
**Genesis**, 1, 4–6, 8–9, 15, 17–18  
**German**, 2, 17  
**gift(s)**, 8, 12  
**give(ing)**, 2, 4–8, 10–12, 14, 16  
**God**, 1, 4–9, 11–16, 18–19  
**god(s)/goddess**, 10–11, 17  
**good**, 3, 8–10, 12, 15, 19  
**grace**, 1–7, 12  
**gratitude**, 6  
**Greek**, 2, 4, 10–11, 17–18  
**Hebrew**, 12  
**heel**, 5, 11  
**Helen**, 10  
**Hephaestus**, 17  
**humanity**, 8

hunter(s)/huntress, 10–11  
husband, 3, 8  
ideology, 15  
ignorance, 7  
image, 7, 18  
intelligence, 9  
intercourse, 1–4  
invention(s), 16–17  
Iphigenia, 6, 10–11  
iron, 4, 17  
irrational(ity), 9–11, 14–16  
Isaac, 7  
Israel, 16  
Italian, 2  
Jesus, 7, 14, 16  
Jews, 17  
Jubal, 18  
Judas, 14  
kill(ing)/killer, 9–19  
know, 1–4, 6, 8, 14  
knowledge, 1–2, 4–9, 12–13, 15, 19  
Lamech, 14–16  
language(s), 2, 12, 16  
Latin, 2  
leader(s), 14  
loin/loincloths, 5–6, 8  
LORD, 1, 5–6, 8, 13–14  
man/men, 1, 5, 14, 17  
meaning(s), 2  
Menelaus, 10  
Middle East, 16  
military, 17  
mind(s), 3, 10, 13, 18  
Minos, 10  
Minotaur, 10  
murder(er), 11, 14–15  
mythology, 10–11  
New Testament, 18  
nuclear power, 17

**objective**, *see* **reality**, objective  
**offering**, 6–8, 12  
**Orestes**, 11  
**pagan(s)**, 6, 10–11  
**pain(s)**, 5  
**polygamy**, 16  
**power**, 7, 9, 16–17  
**pregnancy**, 2, 4  
**private parts**, 6  
**procreation**, 3  
**punishment**, 5, 10–11, 14  
**rain**, 9  
**rational(ity)**, 9–13, 18  
**reader(s)**, 1, 5  
**reality**,  
    objective, 2  
    reasoned, 2–3, 15  
**reason(ing)**, 5, 8–9, 11–12, 15–16, 18  
**reasoned reality**, *see* **reality**, reasoned  
**religion(s)**, 6, 11  
**repentance**, 18  
**rest**, 18  
**Revelation**, 4–5, 15  
**sacrifice(s)**, 6–7, 9–12  
**Sadducee**, 16  
**Samson**, 16  
**scholars**, 4  
**scientific**, 3  
**seed(s)/seeding**, 2, 5, 13  
**serpent**, 4–7, 15  
**sex(ual)**, 1–5, 10  
**shame**, 5–6  
**sharing**, 8, 12  
**sign**, 14  
**sin**, 8–9, 14–15, 18  
**sinner**, 14–18  
**skill(s)**, 6–7, 11  
**society(ies)**, 7, 12, 14–18  
**starvation**, 6–7



**story(ies)**, 3–4, 8–10, 17  
**stranger**, 2, 16  
**survival**, 7, 13  
**sword**, 18  
**tank(s)**, 17  
**technology**, 17–18  
**text**, 1, 8, 14  
**thinking**, 3–4, 19  
**tool(s)**, 1, 17  
**traitor**, 14  
**tree**, 1, 4–5, 8–9, 11–12, 15, 19  
**Trojans**, 11  
**Troy**, 10–11  
**Tubal-cain**, 17  
**violence**, 2, 14–18  
**vulgar**, 2  
**war(s)**, 10, 12, 16  
**weapon(s)**, 17  
**wife/wives**, 1, 3–5, 10–11, 14, 16  
**wilderness**, 4  
**woman/women**, 2, 4–5, 11, 16  
**word(s)**, 1–5, 8–9, 12, 15, 18  
**world**, 5–9, 14–15, 17  
**worms**, 9  
**writer(s)**, 1, 4, 6  
**Yahweh**, 5  
**Zeus**, 10–11  
**Zillah**, 14–17  
**Zyklon B**, 17

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