Hans-Christoph Aurin

Your urge shall be for your husband?
A new translation of Genesis 3:16b
and a new interpretation of Genesis 4:7

Abstract
Der Aufsatz legt dar, dass Genesis 3:16b und 4:7b als Bedingungssätze zu verstehen sind. Als Bedingungssätze reden die beiden Vershälften davon, dass zwei Menschen sich gegenseitig von Übertretungen abhalten sollen. 3:16b meint daher weniger eine Strafe als vielmehr eine göttliche Belehrung, die sowohl an die Frau als auch an den Mann gerichtet ist. Diese Belehrung ist ganz eng auf die in Genesis 3:6 erzählte Über-
seitigen Verhinderung von Übertretungen sprechen, damit negative Folgen gar nicht erst
entstehen, geht es in 4:7a um gegenseitige Hilfe beim Tragen der Lasten (ועבד), die
durch bereits geschehene Übertretungen entstanden sind. Viele bisherige Interpretation-
en denken bei 4:7a zu sehr an Kains eigene Sünden, da dieser kurz darauf zum Mörder
wird. Im Unterschied dazu richtet diese Interpretation ihr Augenmerk besonders auf die
vorausgegangenen Verse und verstehst Kain wesentlich als den Diener des seit 3:17 ver-
fluchten Erdbodens, der somit an den Folgen der Übertretung anderer zu tragen hat
(ענ). In der neuen Übersetzung von 4:7a lagert nicht mehr die Sünde, sondern Kain
darf trotz Übertretungen ausruhen (ירב).1

1 This article represents a summary of parts of my MA-thesis (Gen 3:16 und 4:7 im Rahmen der harmoni-
stischen Interpretation der Urgeschichte von Benno Jacob) written at the Institute for Jewish Studies at
Freie Universität Berlin under the supervision of Prof. Tal Ilan.
I want to thank my translators Beatriz Gamboa and Andrew Moss.
1. Problem

3:16b: מָאָלַת הַשָּׁוְאֵה תַּשְׁוָא Your urge shall be for your husband, but he shall rule over you.
4:7a: Surely, if you do right, there is uplift, but if you do not do right, Sin couches at the door,
4:7b: וַאֲלֹף הַשָּׁוְאֵה its urge is toward you, but you shall rule over it.

Genesis 3:16b and 4:7 are two of the most difficult verses in the Primeval History. Even if 3:16b does not provoke a patriarchal offence, the exact meaning of the verse remains vague. How is the urge/desire (בשתקה) of the woman to be defined? What is the nature of male rule (מלשה)? In the punishment of the snake it reads, because you did this (3:14), and in the punishment of the man it reads, because you listened to the voice of your wife (3:17). Unlike these statements there does not appear to be a direct connection between the punishment of the woman and the transgression in 3:6. What is the relationship between 3:16b and 3:6? Is 3:16b meant to be prescriptive (Your urge shall be for your husband, but he shall rule over you) or descriptive (Your urge is for your husband, and he does rule over you)? Did the relationship between the sexes change because of the transgression (e.g. in opposition to 2:23 flesh of my flesh)?

4:7 is no less puzzling. In אַלְמָא מִשְּלָבְךָ there is no object. What is it that Cain has to bear? המאה is feminine and therefore should not be connected to the masculine רבי. The common translation assumes a personified sin, couching at the door. In the midrash (Bereshit Rabba 22:5) it is named, “drive toward evil” (.innerText). Modern interpreta-

3 According to Benno Jacob, Das erste Buch der Tora — Genesis, Berlin 1934, p. 117, and Christoph Dohmen, Schöpfung und Tod. Die Entfaltung theologischer und anthropologischer Konzeptionen in Gen 2/3, Stuttgart 1996, p. 120, there is no reference back to 3:6 in 3:16 at all.
tions suppose a connection to a group of demons, called rābiṣu in Accadian, who were believed to be couching at doors. But such a concept of sin seems nonsensical in divine speech and does not appear elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Additionally, it must be asked whose is the urge directed at Cain in 4:7b? Is it the urge of the couching sin or the urge of Abel? And lastly, 4:7b represents nearly an exact repetition of 3:16b, hence the need for an inner connection between the two verses.

2. Basic Assumptions of this Interpretation

Traditional and new interpretations of 3:16b and 4:7 lead me to the following five assumptions which assist in the search for answers to the aforementioned questions:

- 3:16b and 4:7b are conditional clauses and as such speak about mutual prevention of transgressions;
- אָסְרַהְתֵּיךְ שָאָת has its most important reference in hardship (3:16, 3:17, 5:29). In other words, אָסְרַהְתֵּיךְ שָאָת speaks about Cain’s capability and willingness to bear parts of the burden that originated in the curse of the ground (3:17). In a broader sense it talks about his willingness to carry the burden of others;
- The crux לָפְתָה הָשָּׁאָת רֵבִּין is to be divided in the two sentences, לָפְתָה הָשָּׁאָת and רֵבִּין;
- לָפְתָה הָשָּׁאָת is an extremely short phrase for return, that is, for the inner confession of transgressions, and if necessary, for the open acknowledgment of them. Like other verses in Scripture this sentence speaks about taking sin into the open and about the removal of sin;
- The subject of לָפְתָה הָשָּׁאָת רֵבִּין means to repose, despite own transgressions. It represents the exact counterpart to שָאָת רֵבִּין. Contrary to present interpretations, רֵבִּין has a markedly positive connotation.

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3. Conditional Clauses with ąż

To my knowledge an attempt has not yet been made at translating 3:16b and 4:7b as conditional clauses, although it is possible offhand. I would like to cite three examples of conditional clauses which begin only with ąż (instead of א or ב): 9

Judges 6:13

If the Lord is with us, why has all this befallen us?

1Samuel 16:2

Samuel replied, how can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.

Genesis 44:22

The boy cannot leave his father, if he were to leave his father (his father) would die.

Accordingly, Genesis 3:16b and 4:7b can be translated as follows:

3:16b

And if your drive is against your husband, then he shall dominate you!

4:7b

And if his drive is against you, then you shall dominate him!

At first glance this translation may not seem very different from the first one presented above, but it is noteworthy that 4:7b as a conditional clause forms a fluent continuation of its two predecessors which are introduced with אמ:

... if you do it right... if you do not do it right... and if his drive is against you...

4:7 can be regarded as a chain consisting of three conditional clauses. At this point I may anticipate and paraphrase the third sentence in order to stress the inner connection of the three clauses:

if you do it right...
if you do not do it right...
and if he intends to do something that is not right...

Next I will take a closer look at 3:16b and its relation to 3:6 since new ideas for the interpretation of 4:7 arise from there.

9 P. Joüon, T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, Vol. 2, Rom 2005, p. 628, “The relationship between the two clauses can be expressed by a Waw. In this case it is common for the protasis also to begin with Waw...the first Waw [in Genesis 44:22] can be explained only as intended to bring out the correlation of the two clauses.”

A better understanding of 3:16b can be gained by a close comparison to 3:6 which narrates the transgression:

3:6 The woman saw that the tree was good for eating and a delight to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise.
She took of its fruit and ate and gave some to her husband and he ate.
3:16b And if your drive is against your husband, then he shall dominate you!

The allurement of the tree and its effect on the woman is emphasized in 3:6 by several expressions of pleasure (והָיָהּ לְעִיָּנָּי, הוּא לְעִיָּנָּי, הוּא לְשֻׁמִּיךְ). The woman is deeply touched and is unable to restrain herself. She forgets about the prohibition (2:16f) and eats the fruit. 3:16b refers to this with the single word, לְשֻׁמִּיךְ desire/drive, which likewise has a connotation of pleasure (see Song of Songs 7:11). Furthermore, the woman gave the man the fruit (והָיָהּ גֶּרֶנְלָאָרָּשְׁתָּה עָמָה). This too reappears in 3:16b namely as לאָלְיָאָסְכ. The same word לְשֻׁמִּיךְ is used, while only the preposition ל is altered to לאָל. As soon as לאָלְיָאָסְכ is translated as a protasis it becomes visible that these words allude to the behaviour of the woman in 3:6. 3:16b is indeed closely connected to 3:6. In 3:6 the drive of the woman has been against her husband. In this context לְשֻׁמִּיךְ receives a negative tone because it is linked to the transgression of the divine commandment (2:16f – 3:6 – 3:16b).10

In order to understand the apodosis, והָיָהּ לְמָשֵׁלְבִּך, the behaviour of the man is to be observed. He has allowed the woman to give him the fruit. In other words, the man has let the woman dominate him and he is therefore responsible for the transgression alike. According to God’s commandment he was not allowed to let her give him the fruit and he was not allowed to eat it by himself. He shall rule over you says what the man in 3:6 should have done. Therefore 3:16b contains a rebuke towards the man because of his neglect in 3:6.

Despite the precise reference to 3:6, the phrasing of 3:16b is as general as possible and is targeted at preventing future misconducts. 3:6 serves 3:16b as a model for transgressions which may take place similarly.11 3:16b can be translated and interpreted as fol-

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10 The understanding of 2:16f is of no importance for this interpretation.
11 See Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes by Hermann Samuel Reimarus from 1767/68, in Martin Metzger, Die Paradieseserzählung. Die Geschichte ihrer Auslegung von J. Cle-
lows: *And if in the future your drive will be once more against your husband, (i.e. you intend to tempt him to violate one of my commandments), then he shall dominate you, (i.e. he shall prevent you from the transgression and not let you tempt him) because then, you will not have to bear the consequences.*

This understanding narrows the meaning of מְשָׁלִית and מָשָׁל down sufficiently.12 מָשָׁל points directly to the transgression of a divine commandment. מְשָׁל is a ruling that is in the service of the prevention of transgressions. 3:16b forms a definition of leadership among humans according to the divine will and is clearly meant in a prescriptive manner. Who is governed by whom is secondary. Therefore the relationship between Cain and Abel can be described with the very words in 4:7b.13 The observation of the divine commandment is essential as it must be the eminent concern of the divine legislator.

The tone of punishment is not very distinct in 3:16b. It lies in the fact that it is unpleasing to be rebuked (although it is better to be rebuked than to bear the consequences of the transgression).14

3:16b is first and foremost an instruction. It contains a universal and basic principle of human behaviour. As a conditional clause, 3:16b says that two humans shall prevent each other from transgressions instead of instigating one another. Even if one person has lost self-restraint, transgressions can still be prevented so that no negative con-

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12 Although Carol L. Meyers does not translate 3:16b as a conditional clause, she does write, “whatever the particular nature of the dominion in Gen. 3:16 may be, it does not come about by inherent right. It is a conditional and sometimes a temporary authority”, “Gender Roles and Genesis 3:16 revisited”, in Carol L. Meyers, M. O’Connor (Ed.), *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth; Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday*, Winona Lake 1983, pp. 337-354, 347.

13 See 1Samuel 25:32. David lets Abigail prevent him from a momentous transgression. It also has to be pointed out that in Genesis 3:16b מָשָׁל is used and not מְשָׁל בֵּית as in Genesis 1:28 which talks about human rule over animals. מְשָׁל seems to describe rule among equal beings; to conform someone to the divine will. Schmitt is right to a certain extent by proposing to translate מְשָׁל, contrary to the exact wording, as a Nifal to equal. John J. Schmitt, “Like Eve, Like Adam: mšl in Gen. 3,16”, in *Biblica* 72 (1991), pp. 1-22, 16. Walter Vogels, “The Power Struggle between Man and Woman (Gen. 3,16b)”, in *Biblica* 77 (1996), pp. 197-209, 206, is right in criticizing Schmitt’s assumption because מֶשָׁל בֵּית clearly means to rule over.

14 See e.g. Proverbs 28:23, *He who reproves a man will in the end find more favor than he who flatters him.*
sequences are to be endured.15

5. Notes on the Interpretation of 4:7b

וַאלֶלֶךָ תְשַׁוַּקְתַּהּ הַגָּזֶה המּשֶלֶבֶּה And if his drive is against you, then you shall dominate him! Since 4:7b forms a variation of 3:16b, and because of the fact that there is no demon “sin” in the Hebrew Bible, several scholars are convinced that 4:7b, like 3:16b, is about the relationship between humans, namely between Cain and Abel.16 This reading seems probable to me.

תְשַׁוַּקְתַּהּ in 3:16b reminds the reader of the transgression in 3:6 with regard to future misbehaviour. Accordingly, תְשַׁוַּקְתַּהּ in 4:7b carries a hint of a future misconduct of Abel which has to be prevented by Cain, much like the man should have prevented the transgression of the woman in 3:6.

The story remains silent about the mistake of Abel, but it tells of Cain’s attempt to dominate his brother, he killed him (4:8). Obviously, Cain is incapable to act on the divine advice and to rule Abel in a way which will preserve the blessing according to the intention of מֶשֶל Cain’s extreme behaviour represents the opposite of Adam’s passiveness in 3:6. Adam did nothing to prevent the transgression, Cain in contrast kills Abel and the curse of Cain (4:11) amounts to the curse of the ground (3:17).

The obscurity of 4:7b lies in the fact that no past or future misbehaviour of Abel is told explicitly to which תְשַׁוַּקְתַּהּ could be linked.18 On the contrary, the story bestows the image of moral integrity upon Abel. God pays heed to Abel and his offering (4:4). Furthermore, Abel can be

15 Possibly all of the three punishments consist of a punitive and of an instructive part. This means that besides 3:16b, 3:15b and 3:18 can also be understood as conditional clauses. 3:15b (the punishment of the serpent): He shall strike at your head if you strike at his heel! It is a fight between the occasions to new transgressions and the human ability to identify these sort of dangers in time. 3:15b says that humans shall come out on top in this everlasting fight, so that the burdens caused by transgressions remain at a bearable size. 3:18 (the punishment of the man): And if it sprouts thorns and thistles for you, then the grass of the field shall be your food! According to Benno Jacob grass of the field is an expression for animal food (Genesis, p. 121). This would mean, And if tilling the ground becomes too hard, you may switch to cattle-breeding (see Isaiah 7:23ff). 3:18 would already point at Abel’s profession.


17 See Leviticus 19:17: You shall not hate your brother in your heart: you shall in any wise rebuke your neighbour, and not bear sin upon him.

18 Even though 4:7b as a conditional clause does not demand it.
sure of the sympathy and compassion of the readers because he is the victim in Cain’s murder (Matthew 23:35 Hebrews 11:4). I would like to add some thoughts on Abel’s mistake as I understand it.

In contrast to Abel’s perfect image, infallibility is not an attribute of biblical characters, as it is shown by the other stories about dispute between brothers in Genesis. Joseph tells his brothers his dreams which have a tone of arrogance in them and he thereby does not contribute to the easing of the conflict (37:5ff they hated him even more). In the story of Jacob and Esau the matter is elaborated more clearly. Jacob exploits a moment of weakness and tries to get Esau’s birth-right (25:29-34). Later he betrays him and takes the blessing which was meant for Esau. As a consequence Esau intends to kill him (27:8ff). These stories of dispute between brothers indicate that there is a contribution made by the potential victims to their fate. In the extremely short story of Cain and Abel it is only the negative tone of התשונתם which indicates a mistake expected to be made by Abel.

A misbehaviour of Abel would suit the story of Cain and Abel well. Cain has already accumulated a considerable amount of hatred within himself (4:5) so that it takes only a slight mistake in the hands of his brother for Cain to release this hatred violently (4:8).

Which typical human mistake might the story have in mind (which would deserve the name הבול voidness)? I would like to suggest a comparison to the stories of Sarah and Hagar. In Genesis 16 Sarah gives her maid to Abraham as a wife. While Sarah waited for children over ten years Hagar becomes pregnant immediately. To put it in terms of the story of Cain and Abel, God paid heed to Hagar but did not pay heed to Sarah. It is this point especially which becomes Hagar’s temptation against her childless mistress, When she saw that she was pregnant, her mistress was lowered in her esteem.19 Sarah turns to Abraham and he replies, Your maid is in your hands. Deal with her as you think right (16:6a). But the relationship between Sarah and Hagar will never be fixed (16:6b 21:10). Transcribed to the unsuccessful Cain and the successful Abel one could phrase the sentence: When Abel saw that the Lord paid heed to him and to his offering but paid no heed to Cain and his offering, his elder brother was lowered in his esteem. The divine instruction 4:7b suits as an answer, and if his drive is against you, then you shall dominate him.

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19 Transgressions happen easily in situations of plentifulness: of every tree of the garden you may freely eat (Genesis 2:16f). Deuteronomy 8:11-14: Beware that you forget not the Lord your God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command you this day: Lest when you have eaten and art full, and have built goody houses, and dwelt therein; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.
6. Interpretation of 4:7a

a) Considerations on the Structure of 4:7a

The problem of the different genders of רבי and רבִּין in 4:7 may be dealt with by understanding לפלותת והשאת רבי and לפלותת והשאת רבִּין as two separate sentences. The apodosis, לפלותת והשאת, will be analysed later. First of all, the following complex sentence has to be examined:

These sentences consist of two pairs of opposites. The dichotomy between אסתרתב רבִּין and ואס לְתַתֵּב is obvious because of the negation לא. But the apodosis רבי (to rest/to lie down, in other words not to carry) is also meant as an opposite to השאת (to bear/to carry/to lift).  

The sentence: If you do it right, then bear it, and if you do not do it right, you may rest sounds paradoxical. This is because the two pairs of opposites are connected in a questionable way. It would seem that to rest and to bear have been interchanged accidentally: If you do it right, then you may rest, and if you do not do it right, then you will have to bear (the consequences). But if one thinks of mutual help (2:18 עזר הנב�) with all kinds of troubles the sentence makes sense without any change: If you can do it right, then bear (the burden of others), and if you do not do it right, you may rest (because others will help you).  

Now the basic principle of 3:16b can be remembered: two humans shall prevent each other from transgressions so that no consequences are to be borne. But if this fails and there are burdens to be carried, the principle of 4:7a comes into effect: humans shall help each other to carry burdens. If everyone carries what he can carry best (אסתרתב), the amount of burdens can be reduced to a bearable degree and everybody can rest (לְתַתֵּב) despite transgressions (רבי). And because mutual help is self-evident the whole sentence is introduced witholah (Is it not). While 3:16b and 4:7b define rule ac-

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20 See Genesis 49:14f and Exodus 23:5. The dichotomy of והשאת ורבי in 4:7 has been noticed so far, see e.g. Benno Jacob, Genesis p. 139 and Rashbam’s interpretation.
cording to the divine will (משל), 4:7a defines what it means to do good (הטב). The common denominator is the reduction of burdens.

b) Consideration of the Context

I will now elaborate these ideas in the context of the story of Cain and Abel. How can the ambiguity of שאה והטב be narrowed down according to the context of Genesis 3 and 4? Because Cain is a tiller of the soil (4:2) and thus already has to bear the consequences of a transgression he did not commit, it is reasonable to think of the consequences of transgressions, and especially of those of others, in אמתחת שאה. In the punishments 3:14-19 the readers for the first time experience a divine thunderstorm. Eve and Adam learn of the consequences of the transgression which they will have to bear (班组). But the reader is not told how the first humans coped with the burdens of the cursed soil. To this end, in 4:2 the professions of Cain and Abel are told because they differ in their relationship to the soil. Cain as a tiller of the soil directly bears the burden of its curse. He has to deal with thorns and thistles firsthand. In Abel’s profession sheep and goats do the job. Abel uses animals to mitigate the burden of the cursed soil and God approves of him doing so (4:4). Abel’s “harvesting” of animals is closer to Adam and Eve’s fruit picking in the garden than Cain’s work with the soil is. As a shepherd Abel can farm areas much too difficult for Cain’s agriculture. The successful Abel can give his offering out of plentifulness and thankfulness and he may be content with his lot. This is not the case with Cain.

If Cain, as a tiller of the soil, bears the burden of the curse, why should God say with שאה והטב, that he shall continue to carry the burden? This would only make sense if Cain did not want to carry the burden any longer (or if it became too heavy). In my opinion there are at least three indications in the story that this is indeed the case.

In 4:3 there is the inconspicuous phrase, it happened at the end of some days (ויהי מימים). How does this come to be known by the reader? Other occurrences of מימים might help to explain this: In Genesis 8:6 Noah is sitting in the Ark, waiting for the waters to run off. At the end (מימים) of forty days he sends out the raven. In Genesis 16:3 Sarah

22 There is a connection to Genesis 1. In Genesis 1 creation is constantly defined as good. Human doing good can add nothing good to this absolutely perfect creation. It can only prevent transgressions and help to bear the burden of human mistakes. Genesis 4:7a complements the absolute divine good-doing of Genesis 1 with the relative human good-doing.

23 The murder which happens immediately after 4:7 functions like a mental blockade. The reader thinks only of Cain’s own sins and not of the fact that he bears the burden of Adam’s and Eve’s mistake.

wants to have a child, and *at the end* of ten years she cannot wait any longer and gives her maid, Hagar, to Abraham as a wife. In Genesis 41:1 Joseph has been jailed innocently and awaits his release until *at the end* of two years the Pharaoh has a dream finally leading to Joseph’s discharge. In Exodus 12:41 the bondage of the people of Israel comes to an end, *at the end* of the four hundred and thirtieth year when all the ranks of the Lord depart from the Land of Egypt. In 2Samuel 15:7 Abshalom cannot await the death of his father David, he wants to become King before. *At the end* of the forty years he tries to bring him down. When in Genesis 4:3 it reads, *it happened at the end of some days*, this alludes to the fact that someone is waiting for the end of a certain era. The keyword *days* is reminiscent of *all days of your life* (כָּל יָמֵי חָיֶיךָ) in 3:17. It therefore seems to me that Cain, the tiller of the soil, was waiting impatiently for the end of the curse (or at least for an attenuation of it) and that his offering is associated with it.\(^5\)

This leads to the second notion. At the end of some days Cain brings an *offering*, or *present*, from the *fruit of the soil* (4:3). Not only is the keyword *fruit* reminiscent of the transgression in 3:6,\(^6\) but it may also be the case that the choice of the word מנה is not accidental. מנה sometimes functions as a request for mercy or forgiveness. In Genesis 32 Jacob sends several *presents* to Esau because he hopes to soothe his anger:

\begin{verbatim}
32:12 Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; else, I fear, he may come and strike me down, mothers and children alike...
32:14 He spent the night there and he took of that which came to his hand a present (מנה) for Esau his brother:
32:15 Two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats;
   two hundred ewes and twenty rams...
\end{verbatim}

The soothing tendency of the word מנה fits well in the context of an angry God as shown in Genesis 3:14-19. Genesis 3:17b can be compared directly to Cain’s voluntary action in 4:3:

\begin{verbatim}
3:17b ...cursed be the soil because of you,
    by hardship shall you eat of it *all the days* of your life.
4:3 It happened at the end of some days,
    Cain brought from the fruit of the soil an offering (מנה) to the Lord.
\end{verbatim}

Cain did not bring about the curse of the soil and therefore may think that he can ask with his present for a lessening of the burden. But God insists exactly on what he has

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\(^5\) I would ascribe to Cain a kind of waiting which appears in Genesis 5:29. In the year 1056, not long after Adam’s death in 930, the father of Noah longs for a relief from the toil (see Benno Jacob, *Der Pentateuch*, Leipzig 1905, p. 6). It seems that the burden of the curse of the soil has become severe through additional transgressions. Lamech sets his hope in his son, *And he named him Noah, saying: This one will provide us relief from our work and from the hardship of our hands out of the very soil which the Lord placed under a curse. And after Noah’s offering* (Genesis 8:21f) God indeed assures a certain relief.

said to Adam, all the days of your life (מַלְכֵי חַיָּיו), and pays no heed to Cain’s offering, meaning that he does not reduce the curse of the soil. Cain feels that he has been treated unjustly and this feeling is strengthened by the contrast to Abel’s success. Cain becomes very angry, and furthermore his face fell (4:5).

This takes me to the third point, that Cain’s offering implies a request. This is reminiscent of the biblical phrase, to lift someone’s face (נשא乌鲁 מני). Shortly before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot asks that he may flee to Zoar and the angel expresses his approval with the words, I lift your face (Genesis 19:21). When Abigail pleaded to David that he may refrain from his plan to kill all males in Nabal’s line, and David respects her will, he answers, I lift your face (1 Samuel 25:35). In the story of Jacob and Esau the lifting of the face appears together with the acceptance of the lift

Genesis 32:20b

כַּאֲמָר כָּלָּה חֵמָּה
does not nil
בָּאָרָה מִלָּה לֹא מִל
וְיוֹשָׁב קָרָא פַּנּוֹ
may he will uplift my countenance.

Cain’s fallen face seems to be an expression of his great disappointment with God who does not respect the request for a mitigation of the curse which lies in the offering. God’s question Why is your face fallen? may be translated as Why are you so disappointed?

Although God maintains the curse of the soil, the answer אַשָּׁמֵת שָׁמָּה, implies a relaxation: only if or as far as Cain can do it right shall he bear the burden.

1) לְפָתָחַת שָׁמָּה as an Expression of the inner and open Acknowledgment of Failures

Now I will take a closer look at אָמַר לָא חִטְּבָה – לְפָתָחַת שָׁמָּה – רבינ. If someone does something not right or is confronted with difficulties and wants others to help him, he must be made to or become aware of the mistakes, he has to admit them to himself or if

---

27 This would answer the question of how Cain recognized that God paid no heed to his offering. It is possible that only Cain himself recognized it because only he connected this special hope with his offering.

28 Therefore many scholars connect אַשָּׁמֵת שָׁמָּה to Cain’s face which is not surprising due to the foregoing question Why is your face fallen? But it does not answer the question of what 4:7 is all about and it provides no explanation for the opposition of אָמַר לָא חִטְּבָה and רבינ.

29 See Leviticus 19:15.

30 When Cain and Abel are to be found in the field together this may indicate an attempt at mutual help which lead to the deadly argument. 4:8 does not say that Cain lead Abel into the field with the object to murder him undisturbed, but, It happened when they were in the field (4:8).
necessary to others and he must be willing to change his behaviour. This is the precondition for others to be able or willing to help. In 4:7αβ Levah tevah is placed between the doing, which is not right (אשם לא חטא), and the ability to rest ( Hebri). It therefore seems to me that Levah tevah must be an extremely short phrase of return (i.e. of the inner and open acknowledgment of mistakes).

There are several possibilities to translate Levah tevah as a sentence. It could be translated as The sin belongs to the door. However, it seems to me that in Levah tevah the verb to bring (הביא) has been omitted, that Levah tevah is a shortened form of הביא Levah tevah. The sentence would then have to be translated as Put the sin to the door! or, Bring the sin into the open! Sin would become the object. Cain has to do something with the sin. He shall no longer hide it from himself or from others.

Unfortunately, the exact phrase Levah tevah does not appear again. It is therefore necessary to understand it with biblical analogies. 4:7αβ consists of three steps: 1 not to do it right – 2 acknowledgment of the failure – 3 relief. These three steps appear in longer versions in other biblical books:

(tables are from right to left)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Levah tevah</th>
<th>אשם לא חטא</th>
<th>And if you do not do it right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(bring the) sin to the door!</td>
<td>Levah tevah</td>
<td>then you can rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>then you can rest</td>
<td>ריבּ</td>
<td>Levah tevah</td>
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(See Leviticus 4 as a whole, Numbers 15:22ff) Leviticus 4:13f

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<th>Levah tevah</th>
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See Proverbs 23:12: Purveya Levah tevah Cable. Apply your mind to discipline! Levah tevah is used in Genesis 4:3 for Cain’s mind.
Psalms 32:3-5

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<td>&quot;כרייהתרשביה בֶּלָּעָנָנָי</td>
<td>&quot;and you carried the guilt of my sin&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;לְאָכָלְכֶּנָה &quot;</td>
<td>&quot;and, entrenched, you will rest secure, you will lie down no one will make you afraid, many will appease your countenance.&quot;</td>
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| "אָמָרְתָּ הַאַוְּדָה עַל פְּשֵׁעַ לִי הָוה | "Then I acknowledged my sin to you, I did not cover up my guilt, I resolved: I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"
| "כִּי תִמָּסְלָה בְּבָכֵר עַל יַד | "As long as I said nothing, my limbs wasted away from my anguished roaring all day long. For night and day your hand lay heavy on me. My vigor waned as in the summer drought." |
| "זֶרֶד לָשָׁר בָּחָרְבָּן קִמָּן | (See Job 22:23) Job 11:14ff |

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| "יסיָמָא בּוּדָּך | "If iniquity be in your hand,"
| "רָמְתָּ לְבָטָה תַּשְׁכִּב | "If injustice reside in your tent..."
| "וְאָלָּתְשֶׁב וְבָאֵלְךָל דָּעַל | "and, entrenched, you will rest secure, you will lie down no one will make you afraid, many will appease your countenance." |
| "רָמְתָּ הַרְחֲקָה | "and, entrenched, you will rest secure, you will lie down no one will make you afraid, many will appease your countenance." |

is reminiscent of expressions which describe return as the putting away of sin, like for example, Deuteronomy 13:6: בֶּרֶשֶׁת הָרֶעֶם thus you will sweep out evil from your midst (17:7,12 19:13,19 21:9,21 22:21f,24 24:7).

The use of the word הָטָא can be understood according to Job 31:33f. These verses speak of the confession of mistakes in front of others, Did I hide my transgressions like humans do, did I bury my wrongdoing in my bosom? Did I fear a great multitude, or did the contempt of families terrify me, that I kept silence, and went not out to the door? (לָאָמָצְא פֵּתָה).

Since the meaning of הָטָא is both sin and sin offering it leads to the idea of a sin offering in הָטָא, to think about an acknowledgment of sin as it is done with a sin offering in front of the Tent of Meeting (e.g. Leviticus 4). It could be that God is asking Cain for a sin offering with הָטָא. However, it seems to me that the cultic ring of הָטָא is more a criticism of Cain’s maneuvers that has been refused by God moments before. The phrase הָטָא may be a contrast to the phrase מִנְהָה הָטָא in 4:3. The appearance of הָטָא shortly after a refused offering, and the ambiguity of
whether it is meant as a sin or as a sin offering, seems to be a prophetic criticism of sacrifices without either a real acknowledgment of wrongdoing or a real change of action (Leviticus 26:31) because the crucial point is not the sin offering but the sin. The sin offering can only be a symbol for it.

d) On the Continuation of the Story

Cain’s further fate to stray restlessly, רבנ הר (Genesis 4:12,14), forms a contrast to his father, סהינ (Genesis 4:13). In Genesis 4:7, Joseph, גאודס (Genesis 50:16f: "Before his death your father left this instruction: So shall you say to Joseph, ‘Forgive I urge you (נינ ונש), the offense and guilt of your brothers who treated you so harshly.’ Therefore, please forgive (נינ ונש) the offense of the servants of the God of your father…” At the beginning of Genesis there is the catastrophe of fratricide and Genesis ends with the reconciliation of Joseph with his brothers. According to Eve’s words in 4:25, Seth is a compensation for Abel. When Adam, the father of mankind, has lived 130 years (5:3) he gains a compensation for the killed Abel. When Jacob, the father of the people of Israel, has lived 130 years (47:9) he is reunited with Joseph. Seth replaces Abel but Joseph replaces Jo-

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<th>אפרתשים ישראל אספיחו אלי תשובה</th>
<th>גאודס אנה מבוקש הוא</th>
<th>ויטוב וריכבום ומשלחתים</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>you will not have to stray.</td>
<td>If you return, o Israel</td>
<td>and I will let you dwell in this place.</td>
<td>Mend your ways and your actions,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the murder of his brother, Cain achieved the opposite of what he wanted to bring about with his offering. The soil will give him nothing, If you till the soil, it shall no longer yield its strength to you (4:12). Cain produced a burden of sin that he himself, and nobody else, is able to bear, Is my guilt too great to be carried? (4:13) and, Anyone who meets me may kill me (4:14).32

32 The first two appearances of the verb נמשל to carry (Genesis 4:7 and 4:13) insofar as they are reminiscent of the carrying of the sins of others (of forgiveness), may be a part of the connections to the story of Joseph and may form a frame around the book of Genesis. Genesis 50:16f: So they sent this message to Joseph, “Before his death your father left this instruction: So shall you say to Joseph, ‘Forgive I urge you (נינ ונש), the offense and guilt of your brothers who treated you so harshly.’ Therefore, please forgive (נינ ונש) the offense of the servants of the God of your father…” At the beginning of Genesis there is the catastrophe of fratricide and Genesis ends with the reconciliation of Joseph with his brothers. According to Eve’s words in 4:25, Seth is a compensation for Abel. When Adam, the father of mankind, has lived 130 years (5:3) he gains a compensation for the killed Abel. When Jacob, the father of the people of Israel, has lived 130 years (47:9) he is reunited with Joseph. Seth replaces Abel but Joseph replaces Jo-
Finally, the complete new translation of Genesis 3:16b and 4:7:

3:16b If your drive is against your husband, then he shall dominate you!

4:7a Is it not, if you can do it right, then bear it, and if you cannot do it right, (bring) the sin to the door! and you may rest,

4:7b and if his drive is against you, then you shall dominate him!

seph. And because he is not dead he can carry the sins of his brothers who have been driven away from their soil, almost like Cain, because the soil failed to supply them with food. The successful Joseph can feed them because he wisely compensates the lack of food of the seven years of famine with the seven years of great abundance.
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Hans-Christoph Aurin is a 2007 graduate of Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt Universität Berlin. His dual major was Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology.