

Assignment 1 Section 1 - Genesis 4:8-10 Arthur Hay

NKJV Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against his brother and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, "where is your brother?" He said, "I don't know. Am I my Brother's keeper?" And He said "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground".

New English Bible Cain said to his brother Abel, "let us go in to the open country". While they were there, Cain attacked his brother Abel and murdered him. Then the Lord said to Cain, "where is your brother Abel?" Cain answered, "I do not know. Am I my Brother's keeper?" The Lord said, "what have you done? Hark! Your Brother's blood that has been shed is crying out to me from the ground.

The Living Bible One day Cain suggested to his brother, "let's go out in to the fields". And while they were together there, Cain attacked and killed his brother. But afterwards the Lord asked Cain, "where is your brother? Where is Abel?" "How should I know?" Cain retorted "am I supposed to keep track of him wherever he goes?" But the Lord said, "Your Brother's blood calls to me from the ground. What have you done?"

Holy Bible - the self interpreting Bible c1875 And Cain talked with Abel his brother and it came to pass when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the Lord said to Cain, where is Abel thy brother?" And he said, "I know not. Am I my Brother's keeper?" And He said, "what hast thou done? the voice of thy Brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

NIV Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field". And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I do not know" he replied. "Am I my Brother's keeper?" The Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your Brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.

Differences In some versions Cain and Abel were already out in the fields and in other versions Cain suggested to Abel that they go out in to the fields. One version called the fields the open country, but as the World's population was so low in those days the 2 terms were probably used interchangeably. Sometimes names are mentioned more often in some versions and in 2 versions the Lord called Cain to attention before explaining that Abel's blood was crying out to him from the ground. God asks Cain a straight question and Cain acts very guilty, firstly by lying and then asking the Lord a question to ask why he was asked that question in the first place.

The Living Bible puts that conversation in a lot more words, while that does emphasise the story in a certain direction it could be one person's amplification of the text, someone else might take it a different way.

Yes, I agree with you about the “fields” translation – the Hebrew “Shedeh” has a broad meaning – and in context and time I think here it means “open country”

The New English, Living and NIV as you observe add that Cain initiates the meeting with his brother out in the “paddock” as Aussies might say.

This meaning is endorsed by the Young’s literal translation - ⁸ And Cain saith unto Abel his brother, [‘Let us go into the field;’] and it cometh to pass in their being in the field, that Cain riseth up against Abel his brother, and slayeth him.

Cain was cooking a grudge, with anger and hatred (as we are told not to do in Lev 19:17). If it was a chance meeting, then the murder would have been based on the emotions of the moment – but if not, then pre-meditation was involved – a much more serious evil if this was the case – even though the outcome was the same.

I find the Lord God’s approach to Cain illuminating – He questions him, rather than coming in “boots and all” with accusation (applying principle in Gal 6:1). God wants Cain to think about what he’s done. Cain’s response comes across to me as defensive and self-justifying – hiding from the truth of what he’d done. Adam had the same response to God – first off, he tried to hide. God asking him “where are you?” had the same gentle approach – but Adam sought to blame it on Eve, and also on God Himself for giving her to him! Cain’s response to God – “am I my brother’s keeper”- was an attempt to make God to appear unreasonable by grossly exaggerating what was expected of him. Cain was not Abel’s keeper (or nursemaid). He twisted God’s simple question – “where is your brother” - to make it out to seem unreasonable. He was not being straight and truthful with God as David was Ps 51. “To be your brother’s keeper” – is often quoted as an example of what our responsibility is to our brothers, failing to understand the context in which it was said –that it was an attempt by Cain to make God out to be the unreasonable one. We are to love our brother, but we are not his keeper, unless he’s a toddler or child placed in our care.

“Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground” is very powerful and understandable – obviously not literal. It cries out to us today simply and clearly, that we should love our brothers – and not harbour grudges or hatred towards them (1John 3:10-12)

Part 2

1. Yes I do, I believe men wrote the Bible at God's inspiration and prompting, so while it was actually written by men the words came from God. Succinctly put – and in line with 2 Peter 1:20-21.

2. Textual criticism is making sure you are working from the original and most authentic text. The original text is the Word of God and when translating it is the message that must get across, it is too easy to lose context or to get the wrong point when something is "lost in translation". That can also happen within a language, Australian English and UK English use different words and phrases at times, I remember Ruth once thinking I made up words because I was saying words used in England and not Australia, I was later vindicated when we were watching a BBC tv programme. Sometimes words are changed to convey the same message.

None of us can work from the original text – they don't exist. Textual criticism, and honest, competent scholars enable us to ascertain what was in the originals. Refer to Mike Baran's explanation of this – I think he explains it well.

3. Bible translation - putting Gold's word from the original text into another language. Translation is not simple because words can convey different meanings, some words might not exist in another language, like the German word Gemutlichkeit, and the culture can affect how the same word can be used. Two approaches - formal and functional.

Formal tries to be word for word the same as much as possible while functional will put the text in to everyday language to convey the same meaning. With formal the reader may lose the thread of the message getting bogged down in words. In functional there could be 2 or more versions of the same translation. My preference is functional as that conveys what you need to know but a copy of the formal is necessary if you need to look up the original text to see what the original word was. I was not always good at scripture in school because we used the Old KJV written in Shakespearian language, not my everyday vernacular and I had trouble understanding it. Another Christian once challenged me for not using the Old KJV which he thought was the only valid translation, I told him I like to read a Bible in a language I can understand and refer to another version if I need to clarify something.

The problem with functional translation is that it is done through the understanding and “eye glasses” of the translator – which may be distorted in some way. Paraphrase is a step further along that path with this. Language meaning can change over time, which can impact our understanding of what the ancient translator meant – something you've experienced.

I like to look at this online interlinear - [Online Hebrew Interlinear Bible](#) – in which one can see, word for word, how the Hebrew or Greek is translated – and also using Blue letter Bible - <https://www.blueletterbible.org/> - or a Greek or Hebrew lexicon, one can find the range of possible words the Hebrew or Greek can be reasonably translated into. For example, King James and the chairmen of the translation committees made sure the language they chose tended towards supporting church hierarchy and power. Many modern translations have been influenced by this, but also come from an anti- law (“antinomian”) slant, and one has to beware of this (The Scripture Mike Baran chose is a good example)

One has to be very aware of one's own limitations – particularly in understanding the ancient grammar and idioms in the original languages. My understanding is limited – but there are experts one can consult when one has specific questions. As long as we are aware of our own limitations, we will be ok.

The most important thing is to desire to understand what God is teaching us through what was written, and to avoid interpreting it to fit in with our thinking and philosophies – to be corrected and instructed by it (John 7:16-19).