

Choosing Good or Evil

The effects of having the ability to choose good or evil was manifested with Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:1-3). As these two men grew to maturity, they understood that Jehovah had a right to a portion of that which God had given. Offering is defined as, "meat [cereal] offering; offering; tribute; present; gift; sacrifice; oblation" (Vine's). The term "offering" comes from the Hebrew, *Minchah*. *Minchah* is found in all periods of Hebrew, although in modern Hebrew, while it is commonly used in the sense of "gift," it also is used to refer to "afternoon prayers." This latter use is an obvious echo of the Old Testament liturgy connected with sacrifices. It appears in other Semitic languages such as Arabic and Phoenician, and seems to be used in ancient Ugaritic in the sense of "tribute/gift." *Minchah* occurs for the first time in the Old Testament in Gen_4:3 (Vine's).

In the case of Cain and Abel, Jehovah had "respect" unto Abel's offering. How would this respect be received by Abel? Since nothing is specifically stated there is a great deal stated about Cain's offering, of which the scriptures say, "but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect" (Gen. 4:5). The resulting disposition of Cain will help, i.e., "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell" (ibid).

Consider — 1) **Wroth** (*qatsap*): The word is used in rabbinic Hebrew, but its use in modern Hebrew has been displaced by other verbs. It is an ancient Canaanite word; as a gloss it appeared in the Amarna Tablets with the meaning "to become worried," or according to others, "to be embittered..." "The general meaning of *qatsap* is a strong emotional outburst of anger, especially when man is the subject of the reaction. The first usage of the word brings this out: Moses became bitterly angry with the disobedient Israelites (Exo_16:20)" (Vine's). 2) **Countenance**, i.e., the *face*: in short, facial expression, i.e., "Literally, the contents of a body; the outline and extent which constitutes the whole figure or external appearance. Appropriately, the human face; the whole form of the face, or system of features visage" (Webster's 1828). 3) **Fell**: "*be cast down*" (BDB); "To cause to fall; to prostrate; to bring to the ground" (ibid).

When considering the effects of obedience and disobedience, the scriptures indicate they will have external as well as internal consequences. To restore Cain to a condition of acceptance, Jehovah said unto Cain... "If thou doest well, shall it (countenance) not be lifted up?" (Gen. 4:7). As each action has its own consequences, Cain now had another choice to make, i.e., "if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door; and unto thee shall be its desire; but do thou rule over it" (ibid). Rather than taking advantage of Jehovah's admonition, Cain allowed his anger to control his actions and he "rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him" (Gen. 4:8). A simple resolution, however, "Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 Jn. 3:11-12).

It appears, in my limited space and time, that individuals are generally pleased with their good or evil behavior, until (when evil), their actions fall short of what is acceptable and anger rises, and the countenance falls. Should we not rather do well and, "find favor and good understanding In the sight of God and man"? (Prov. 3:4) ret