

The Book of Beginnings – Studies in Genesis

LESSON XXVI : GENESIS 4:25, 26 – SIXTH PARAGRAPH: THE BIRTH OF SETH AND ENOSH

“The beginnings of civilized life show a characteristic potentiality for good and evil, with the arts that will bless mankind flanked by abuses (19, 23, 24) that will curse it. Culture, used or abused, offers no redemption; the one gleam of hope is in God’s gift and man’s belated response, recorded in the chapter’s closing pair of verses.” [Kidner, 76]

“By tracing the lineage of Cain immediately following God’s promise (vv. 15-16), the mercy and faithfulness of the Lord are aptly demonstrated. Cain survives and founds an impressive posterity. But lest we forget the evil character of Adam’s firstborn, his progeny will also testify to the villainy of Cain. This contrasts with the following lineage of Seth, which is presented twice – an abbreviated form (vv. 25-26) and its fuller, formal presentation (chap. 5). In both cases the righteous conduct of the appointed line versus that of Cain’s family is accentuated. Whereas Cain’s progeny founded the civilized arts, Seth’s era is remembered at the time mankind worshiped the Lord (v. 26b). Also chaps. 4 and 5 intentionally contrast the parade examples of each lineage: Lamech, the polygamist and murderer, verses righteous Enoch, who walked with God (5:22).” [Mathews, 1:279]

Sixth Paragraph – The Birth of Seth and Enosh:

‘²⁵ And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, “For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.” ²⁶ And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the Lord.’ (Gen 4:25, 26 NKJV)

Rabbi Cassuto’s translation:

***v. 25 – And again Adam knew / his wife,
add she bore a son / and called his name Seth:***

***‘For God has appointed for me / another child [she said]
instead of Abel, / for Cain slew him.’***

***v. 26 – And to Seth, to him also, a son was born / and he called his name Enosh.
Then men began once more / to call upon the name of the Lord.***

v. 25 – And again Adam knew his wife, add she bore a son — “There is a marked change of emphasis in the record of the descendants of Adam through Seth. No more do we read of human accomplishments and boasting, but, rather, of men *‘calling upon the name of the Lord.’* ***If the Cainites revealed the flowering of the Serpent’s seed in the life of mankind, God was still maintaining the integrity of the promised Seed of the woman.***” [Morris, 149]

There are distinct parallels between this section and the previous. “The verbal resemblances are indicative of the similarity of the subject-matter.” [Cassuto, 1:245]

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore (4:1)	And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore (4:25)
the child is named by the mother (4:1)	the child is named by the mother (4:25)

the name is explained by reference to the LORD
[YHWH] (4:1)

Cain and Abel are mentioned (4:2)
‘together with the LORD’ (4:1)

the name is explained by reference to God
[’elōhîm] (4:25)

Cain and Abel are mentioned (4:25)
‘upon the name of the LORD’ (4:26)

“This concluding remark to the *tôl’dhōth* section (2:4-4:26) serves as a linkage with the following genealogy, which formally presents Adam’s lineage through Seth down to the flood survivor, Noah (5:1-32).” [Mathews, 1:291]

and called his name Seth: — **Seth**, Hebrew, *shēth*, meaning either *‘appointed, substituted’* or *‘foundation.’* “The birth of Seth is interpreted by Eve as God’s response to the loss of righteous Abel. By bearing *‘again,’* the hope of a *‘another seed’* (literally) born to Eve meant a righteous lineage is possible through Adam’s son Seth (cf. 3:15). Abel was dead, and Cain was disqualified. As in the case of naming *‘Cain,’* Eve explains theologically the choice of Seth’s name. *‘Seth’* (*shēth*) is related by sound (if not etymology) to *‘granted’* (*shāth*).” [Mathews, 1:290]

‘For God has appointed for me another child [she said] [Cassuto]; ‘For God has appointed another seed for me [NKJV] — The purpose of the verse is similar to that which we noted in earlier lessons with the names of Eve and Abel, where each name was appropriate to the person concerned not only in that it reflected the intention of the one who assigned it in the first instance but also in the light of the subsequent destiny of the individual. “Eve had called the newborn Cain a *‘man’* (4:2), but she calls Seth an *‘offspring’* (Hebrew, *zera’*, literally, *‘seed’*), which reminds one of the promise made to Eve in 3:15 about *‘her seed.’* The possibilities for life that are wrapped up in this seed are enormous.” [Hamilton, 1:242]

GOD [’Elōhîm] — “This time Eve does not give voice to feelings of joy and pride such as she expressed when her eldest son was born. Her mood is one of mourning and sorrow for the family calamity, and her words are uttered meekly, with humility and modesty. On the first occasion, she gloried in her creative power and her collaboration with the Lord; this son she now regards purely as a gift vouchsafed to her by Heaven. *In the former instance, she mentioned the name of the Lord, the Tetragrammaton, which signifies the Godhead in His personal aspect and direct relationship to His creatures; now, in the hour of her mourning, it seems as if God is far removed from her, in the supernal heights of Heaven, as the supranatural Creator of nature, as that transcendental Power denoted by the appellation ’Elōhîm. Hence, she uses only the name ’Elōhîm.*” [Cassuto, 1:245f]

instead of Abel, for Cain slew him.’ — “*She can as little forget the murdered as the murderer, for both were her children and in one sentence she mentions the name of all three sons.*” [Wenham, 1:115]

v. 26 – And to Seth, to him also, a son was born and he called his name Enosh. — **Enosh**, Hebrew, *’enôsh*, **a synonym of Adam**; his name means *‘man, weak one, faint one’* (cf. Ps 8:4a, 5a), perhaps with a tinge of emphasis on his frailty, mortality and distance from God. *‘Enosh’* occurs 42 times with the meaning of *‘man’* and only in poetic texts, whereas *‘adam’* appears 554 times. **But it may also be used in quite a general neutral sense and it is hard to distinguish any semantic difference between ‘adam’ and ‘enosh.’** “The name *‘Enosh’* in Hebrew can function both as a common noun and as the name of an individual, like the word for *‘man’* and *‘Adam.’* As a common noun it may indicate an individual *‘man’* in a general sense (e.g., Job 5:17) or collective *‘mankind,’* where it is synonymous with *’ādām* (e.g., Job 36:25; Ps 8:4). **‘Enosh’ then is the new**

‘Adam’ who heads a new line that will receive the blessing and survive the flood (5:1-11, 29).” [Mathews, 1:290f] Note this is the first time recorded that the man names the child.

Then men began once more to call upon the name of the Lord. [Cassuto], Then men began to call on the name of the Lord. [NKJV] — Many have been the expositions of this verse. Realizing this is not something which will be answered in this class, let us first look at the details of the verse and then we will consider the different opinions.

THE HEBREW HAS AN INDEFINITE CONSTRUCTION — The Hebrew construction is *‘then began to call on the name of YHWH,’* with the subject being supplied by the translators. The Bible Gateway website lists fifty-seven different translations, the vast majority of which insert the subject *‘men’* (e.g., KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB 1995, AMP, Geneva, RSV, et. al.) or *‘people’* (e.g., ESV, Holman Christian Standard Bible, NASB, NET, NIV, NLT, NRSV, et. al.; note the Message, *‘men and women’*). A few relates the subject back to Enosh: *‘this man began to call...’* (Douay-Rheims 1899) and *‘At that time he began to call...’* (Lexham English Bible). According to Kenneth Mathews, this is based upon the LXX and Vulgate that *‘requires a minor change in our Hebrew text but may represent a different Hebrew textual history.’* [Mathews, 1:291] A couple translations, attempting to be as literal as possible, leave the subject open: *‘this began to call inwardly the name of the Lord,’* or *‘and his generation began to inwardly call on the Lord’s name’* (World English Bible), and *‘then a beginning was made of preaching in the name of Jehovah’* (Young’s Literal Translation). John Currid suggests it could refer back to the *‘seed’* of the preceding verse. [Currid, 1:159]

‘TO CALL’ COULD BE AN INVOCATION OR A PROCLAMATION — *‘To call,’* Hebrew, *qārā* (as written in our verse, *liq’rō*) and is a form of the same word earlier, *‘and he called his name Enosh.’* The New Wilson’s OT Word Studies [Kregel, Grand Rapids MI; reprinted 1987; William Wilson died in 1873] lists the following as possible meanings:

- *‘to call out, to shout’*
- *‘to call upon, to invoke’*
- *‘to proclaim, to publish, to praise, to celebrate.’*

“The verb qārā‘ , ‘call,’ can be used for naming (cf. 4:17, 25), reading, proclaiming, summoning, and praying. Usage of this expression in the Pentateuch supports the idea of proclamation more than praying.” [Ross, 169] ***“It is a general phrase that conveys only the idea of calling, without indicating either the significance or the purpose of the invocation.*** These may vary with circumstances and can be determined only by reference to the context. It is possible to say even of God Himself that He *‘calls upon [E.V. proclaims] the name of the Lord’* (Exod 33:19; 34:5, 6), and it is obvious that such an invocation has not the same character as that uttered by human beings. In the present case, too, the expression is to be understood according to the context. Cain could not teach his offspring to know the *‘Lord’* and to *‘call’* upon His name, that is, to address Him by His particular designation and to feel His personal proximity, for he was compelled, as stated, to *‘hide himself’* constantly *‘from the face of the Lord.’* The antithesis seen by the Israelites between *‘calling upon the name of the Lord’* and *‘being estranged from the Lord’s face’* (i.e., presence) is demonstrated by Isa 44:7: *‘There is no one that calls upon Thy name ... for Thou hast hid Thy face from us.’*” [Cassuto, 1:247]

THE DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS — Let us now look at the different interpretations put forth. *As we take note of the different translations, we are reminded once again that even our English translations are to one degree or another a commentary, reflecting the views of the translators. This is true of all translations and is neither good nor bad, just a fact.*

● **TRADITIONALLY THE JEWS CONSIDER THIS NEGATIVELY** — Jewish Targum and a Midrashic explanation connects the word ‘began’ with the term meaning ‘*profane, secular things*’ and sees in the verse a reference to the inception of idol-worship. *To those Jews, Enosh defiled the name of Yahweh by making an idol and giving it the sacred name.* This is reflected in the following translation: ‘*At that time, profaning the name of the Lord began.*’ (International Standard Version). “The Jews give a very different sense of these words; the Targum of Onkelos is, ‘*then in his days the children of men ceased from praying in the name of the Lord;*’ and the Targum of Jonathan is, ‘*this was the age, in the days of which they began to err, and they made themselves idols, and surnamed their idols by the name of the Word of the Lord;*’ with which agrees the note of Jarchi, ‘*then they began to call the names of men, and the names of herbs, by the name of the blessed God, to make idols of them.*’” [Gill, 1:40] “The generation of Enosh introduced idolatry, which was to become the blight of humanity for thousands of years. By ascribing God-like qualities to man and lifeless objects, they created the abominable situation in which ‘*to call in the name of HASHEM became profaned.*’ (Rashi).” [Rabbi Nosson Scherman, *The Chumash: The Stone Edition*, or *The Five Books of Moses* in book form (Mehorah Publications LTD, Brooklyn NY) 2011, page 23]

● **‘ADAM AND EVE BEGAN “ONCE AGAIN” TO CALL UPON THE LORD’** — Rabbi Cassuto has a unique understanding of this verse, noting the Hebrew verb may include both the sense of ‘*began, commence*’ as well as ‘*begin again, recommence*’ (as the Hebrew verb *bānā* can mean both ‘*build*’ and ‘*rebuild*’). *Thus Adam and Eve, disheartened by the death of their firstborn son and thus feeling distant to their God who is now ‘Elōhîm to them, is now encouraged by the birth of not only a son to replace the son that was taken from them, but a grandson which formed a hope in a new generation. They once more were able to ‘call upon the name of YHWH’ with religious joy in the time of their grandson.* [Cassuto, 1:247]

● **‘BEGAN’ IS PASSIVE, THUS ‘MEN BEGAN TO BE CALLED BY THE NAME OF YAHWEH’** — “[The] word ‘began’ is a passive verb and, thus, it indicates being on the receiving end of action and not the doing of it. *So the sense of the verse may be that the seed of the woman is now being called by the name Yahweh – that is, they are the sons of God or Yahweh [this is an early view held by some as Aquila, Irenaeus, Grotius]. That would be an interpretation more in line with the overall thrust of Genesis: there is a holy, godly line and it is known by Yahweh’s name* [this interpretation requires the verb ‘to call’ to be understood as a Pual infinitive – but that is no problem; see BDB, p. 896; cf. Isa 48:8; Ezek 10:13]!” [Currid, 1:159] Note the following translation: ‘*It was during his lifetime that men first began to call themselves “the Lord’s people.”*’ (The Living Bible) “*Seeing the Cainites incorporating themselves, and joining families together, and building cities, and carrying on with their civil and religious affairs among themselves, they also formed themselves into distinct bodies; and not only separated from them, but called themselves by a different name; for so the words may be rendered: ‘then began men to call themselves,’ or ‘to be called by the name of the Lord;’ the sons of God, as distinct from the sons of men; which distinction may be observed in ch. 6:2, and has been retained more or less ever since.*” [Gill, 1:40]

● **‘THIS IS WHEN PEOPLE BEGAN USING THE HOLY TETRAGRAMMATON IN WORSHIP’** — Some understand this as the first time when people began to use the name YHWH in worship. “*‘He was the first to call on the name of Yahwe,’* i.e. he was the founder of the worship of Yahwe; cf. 12:9; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25.... The expression [in Hebrew] lit. *‘call by [means of] the name of Yahwe,’* denotes the essential act in worship, the invocation (or rather ‘evocation’) of the Deity by the solemn utterance of His name.” [Skinner, 126f] This then may be traced through the Patriarchs:

‘And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.’ (Gen 12:8)

‘to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD.’ (Gen 13:4)

‘Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.’ (Gen 21:33)

‘So he built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD, and he pitched his tent there; and there Isaac’s servants dug a well.’ (Gen 26:25)

This is also reflected in several translations: *‘At that time men began to call [upon God] by the name of the LORD.’* (Amplified Bible, Classic Edition); *‘At that time, people began to use the name of the LORD to worship him.’* (Easy English Bible); *‘It was then that people began using the LORD’s holy name in worship.’* (Good News Translation); *‘At that time people began to invoke the LORD by name.’* (New American Bible, Revised Edition); *‘At that time people first began to worship the LORD by name.’* (New Living Translation).

● **‘MEN BEGAN TO PROCLAIM THE NATURE OF THE LORD’** — As mentioned above of *‘to proclaim’* as a possible rendering of the verb *‘to call,’* this verse could be understood as the time men began to make the Lord known to others (especially relevant as the ungodly line was becoming more prevalent). “The word *‘name’* often refers to characteristics or attributes (see Isa 9:6). ***The idea of this line is that people began to make proclamation about the nature of the Lord (‘began to make proclamation of the Lord by name’).***” [Ross, 170] Note the following translations: *‘This is when people began to proclaim the name of the Lord.’* (Evangelical Heritage Version); *‘then a beginning was made of preaching in the name of Jehovah.’* (Young’s Literal Translation).

● **‘GEN 4:26 MARKS A NEW DIRECTION IN FORMAL WORSHIP, THE COMMENCEMENT OF PUBLIC WORSHIP CONSISTING OF PRAYER, PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING’** — This is the most commonly accepted view amongst the commentators I am studying. “***‘To call on the name of the LORD’ is used elsewhere in Genesis of the patriarchs 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25, and it seems to be an umbrella phrase for worship, most obviously prayer and sacrifice. On this view Gen 4:26 is noting the origin of regular divine worship, just as the preceding verses have noted the origins of farming, music, and metallurgy.***” [Wenham, 1:116] “Literally, *‘to call in (or by) the name of Jehovah,’* is used for a solemn calling of the name of God. When applied to men, it denotes invocation (here and chap. 12:8; 13:4; etc.); to God, calling out or proclaiming His name (Ex. 33:19, 34:5). The *‘name of God’* signifies in general ‘the whole nature of God, by which He attests His personal presence in the relation into which He has entered with

man, the divine self-manifestation, or the whole of that revealed side of the divine nature, which is turned towards man.’ *We have here an account of the commencement of that worship of God which consists in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, or in the acknowledgment and celebration of the mercy and help of Jehovah. While the family of Cainites, by the erection of a city, and the invention and development of worldly arts and business, were laying the foundation for the kingdom of this world; the family of the Sethites began, by united invocation of the name of the God of grace, to found and to erect the kingdom of God.*” [Keil, 1:119f] “‘Began’ (*chālāl*) appears in Genesis 1-11 to mark strategic new features in the progress of the narrative (6:1; 9:20; 10:8; 11:6). Although worship through offerings was practiced by Cain and Abel (4:1-4), Gen 4:26b announces a new direction in formal worship as in Abram’s building of an altar upon arriving in Canaan, where the same descriptive phrase, ‘called on the name of the LORD,’ occurs. By inaugurating altar worship in Canaan, a historic significance for the family of faith occurred. Even so, worship at the birth of Enosh was not new to the Adamic family, and ‘Yahweh’ was already heard from the lips of Eve (4:1); but it was taken up in a decisive way for the Sethite generations.” [Mathews, 1:292] Many of our English translations place this in their rendering of the verse: ‘At that time people began to worship the Lord.’ (NET, God’s Word Translation); ‘This was about the time when people began to worship and call on the name of the Eternal One.’ (The Voice); ‘That’s when men and women began praying and worshiping in the name of God.’ (The Message); ‘At that [same] time men began to call on the name of the Lord [in worship through prayer, praise, and thanksgiving].’ (Amplified Bible)

‘MOSES IS CONTRASTING THE TWO LINES OF GEN 3:15’ — *Regardless of the nuances different commentators may place upon this verse, one of the reasons for this statement is the obvious contrast between the line of Seth with the preceding line of Cain. Cain’s firstborn and successors pioneered cities and the civilized arts, but Seth’s firstborn and successors pioneered worship. It is not that everyone in the line of Seth would be what we would call today true believers, nor would every single person in the line of Cain be rejected without exception (that was one of the problems the Jews of Jesus’ day had). But there were consequences when Cain walked away from the Lord: his progeny would on the whole be those who showed disdain for holiness, as epitomized in the person of Lamech. In contrast Seth’s heritage was on the whole one of holiness and dependancy upon the Lord. Cain’s line glorified human accomplishments, Seth’s line glorified God.* “‘Called on the name of the LORD’ in 4:26b unites the Lord of the patriarchs and of Moses with the Lord of the antediluvian line of promise through Seth and shows thereby that the spiritual ancestors of Abraham’s family were those descended through Noah, the survivor of the flood’s purge. Whereas Cain was alienated from the ‘LORD’s presence’ (4:16), the Sethite clan practiced and declared the word of the LORD. The account infers that the Cainite family perished altogether in the catastrophic flood, but the tiny remnant of the Sethite line emerged from the ark to perpetuate its spiritual birthright (9:1-17). This final note in the *tôlêdhôth* section of 2:4-4:26 offers at last a bright spot among the dim accounts of sin and death that have dominated the garden story. There is yet hope for sinful humanity.” [Mathews, 1:292f] *An obvious lesson for us each: our relationship with the Lord is not just about us, as blessed or condemned as that may be; but it is also about those who follow in our footsteps. May that truth be before our eyes in our every decision!*

HOW ARE WE TO RECONCILE THIS VERSE WITH EXOD 6:2,3? — A problem frequently cited in Gen 4:26b is how to correlate what appears to be the introduction of the name ‘LORD’ (Yahweh) here with its use as early as 2:4 and routinely in the garden narrative (2:4-3:24), as well as the apparent contradiction with the revelation of the Lord to Moses at Sinai: *‘And God spoke to Moses and said to him: “I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name LORD I was not known to them.”’* (Exod 6:2, 3) ***“Jewish interpretation, as well as Christian, understood the revelation at Sinai as concerning a special aspect of divine power and character, not the name ‘Yahweh’ itself. Contextually, the issue is not the name of the deity per se (e.g., Exod 7:5) but rather the nature of God. Revelation of the ‘name’ to Moses concerned the content and meaning of ‘Yahweh’ that was not as fully understood by the patriarchs. The LORD’s ‘name’ in Moses’ experience was related to God’s unique self-disclosure of his goodness, mercy, and majesty (cf. Exod 33:19; 34:5; Deut 32:3). Hence to mis-speak the ‘name’ was considered an affront to his holy character (Exod 20:7; Deut 5:11) and was punishable by death (Lev 24:15-16). For Israel, bearing the ‘name of the LORD’ indicated covenant identity with God and their distinctive place among the nations (Deut 28:10). Far more than a mere name was at stake in the revelation to Moses. Neither can we say that Gen 4:26b itself concerns only the appellative ‘Yahweh.’ ‘Called on the name of the LORD’ in Genesis is related to God’s self-revelation to Abraham (12:7-8), Hagar (16:13), and Isaac (26:24-25). Also this phrase is commonly connected with the formal worship of altar building (13:4; 16:13; 21:33; 26:25), as was also the practice of Moses before the construction of the tabernacle (Exod 17:15; 20:24).” [Mathews, 1:294] “In Genesis it is one of the various divine names on people’s lips, but still a ‘mere’ name, not yet revealing any of God’s characteristics as other terms did (e.g., El ‘Elyon, ‘God most high’). In this sense God was not made ‘known’ by the name Yahweh until He gave content to it in the message at the burning bush (Exod 3:13b, 14; 6:3).” [Kidner, 78f]***