

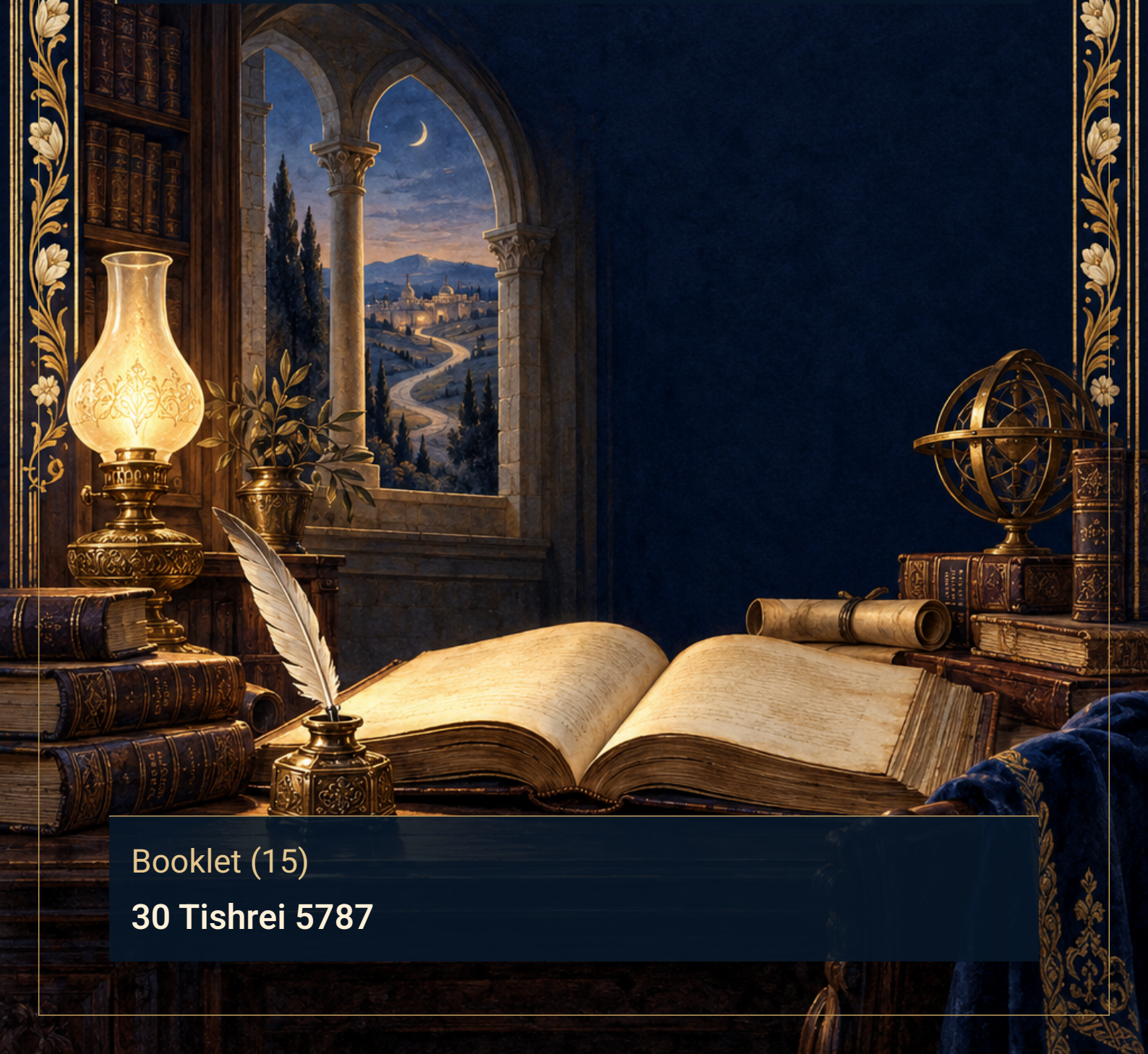
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Beit Midrash YeshivahAI

Daily Chumash Study Series

Tubal Cain

Name, Continuity and Rectification



Booklet (15)

30 Tishrei 5787

One name, several ways to carry Cain forward

Jabal, Jubal, Tubal Cain. Within this list of family members, one name brings us back to someone we already know: Cain, the ancestor of the line. The Torah tells us of his work on the land and his killing of his brother Abel. Which of these do we hear again in the name Tubal Cain?

The Torah presents Tubal Cain as a metalworker: “**a sharpener of every implement of copper and iron.**”¹ Does his name commemorate the ancestor of the family, or suggest that he continues his way? And how does it relate to the midrashic tradition that he was killed when young by his father Lamech?

The commentators give this connection to Cain different meanings. Radak suggests commemoration; Rashi emphasizes the improvement of instruments of killing; and the Netziv points to tools for working the land. In Kabbalah and Chassidus, we will also encounter a discussion of the power of the evil inclination and the possibility of its rectification.

Our guiding question is: what passes from Cain to Tubal Cain, and what can be done with the power one has received? We will first consider what is distinctive about the name, then what is told about its bearer, and finally what we can learn about power and purpose. The tradition of his death will be considered alongside other interpretations of Lamech’s song.

1. Genesis 4:22; for his brothers Jabal and Jubal, see verses 20–21.

This booklet grew out of the study and comparison of sources, with the assistance of artificial intelligence tools and human editing.

A guide to the booklet

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1. Is the name double and unique?

The word “double” can mean three different things. (1) A name written as two words: in this sense, Tubal Cain is not unique. Ben Ammi, Ben Oni, Malki Tzedek, Baal Chanan, Tzafnat Paneach and Poti Phera are also written as two words. These names do not all belong to the same category, but they are enough to show that being written as two words is not exclusive to this name.²

(2) Two personal names combined for one person. Radak does suggest this understanding of Tubal Cain. Yet the same commentator offers a parallel: he suggests that Damesek was Eliezer’s earlier name, that Abram called him Eliezer, and that sometimes one name was used and sometimes both.³ This definition, too, has a parallel in the commentaries; Tubal Cain cannot therefore be declared unique.

(3) A name that deliberately includes an ancestor’s name to express a connection to him. This is closest to our question. Several commentators do indeed connect Tubal Cain to Cain

2. Genesis 19:38; 35:18; 14:18; 36:38; 41:45. Aruch HaShulchan, Yoreh Deah 275:24, discusses writing two-word combinations on the same line in a Torah scroll; this is not a discussion of two personal names.

3. Radak, Genesis 15:2. This is one possibility in his commentary, alongside the explanation that “Damesek” means “Damascene,” indicating Eliezer’s place of origin.

in this way. He is striking in this respect, but it has not been established that there is no other such case in the Torah.

One further distinction: **a meaningful name can still be a personal name.** When a commentator interprets a name in terms of someone's deeds, this does not cancel its status as a name. Tubal Cain is the person's name in Scripture; our question is what meaning the commentators find within it.

2. A name in memory of Cain

Radak suggests a possibility: the mother first called her son Tubal; when Cain died around that time, she added his name in his memory.⁴ According to this suggestion, the name joins the son's name to the memory of the ancestor of the line. The Torah does not describe two stages of naming; this is Radak's proposed explanation.

This is an interpretation of commemoration. The name preserves a memory without establishing that the son bears his ancestor's guilt or repeats his actions. Here a difference between approaches begins to emerge: someone may be carried forward through the memory of his name, or through a continuation of his conduct. Rashi and the Midrash emphasize the second approach.

In section 5, we will also encounter Radak's version of Lamech's hunting story. We will distinguish it from the tradition in which Tubal Cain himself is present when Cain is killed.

4. Radak, Genesis 4:22. The suggestion opens with "possibly." Later, he distinguishes improving metalwork from inventing it, and raises the possibility that Adah and Tzillah had other sons who were not listed.

3. Refining the means of killing

Rashi explains: **“He seasoned and refined Cain’s craft, making weapons for murderers.”**⁵ The language of seasoning describes an addition and an improvement: Tubal Cain supplied the way of killing with more sophisticated means.

Bereishis Rabbah speaks of seasoning Cain’s transgression. Cain had already murdered Abel; with Tubal Cain, the craft of making implements used for killing develops. The innovation is therefore an expansion of the capacity to kill, rather than the beginning of murder in the world.

The expression “Cain’s craft” does not establish that the first Cain was a smith. Rashi’s context is weapons for murderers. Nor does it necessarily follow that Tubal Cain himself killed anyone. There is a distinction between committing murder and making an implement that enables it.

On this reading, the meaning of the name concerns the use of talent. Tubal Cain does not introduce murder into the world; he develops implements with which people can kill. The central comparison to Cain concerns the purpose of the craft, rather than an identical profession or necessarily a personal act of murder.

4. Tools for working the land

The Netziv, in Haamek Davar, proposes a different focus: Tubal Cain continues Cain’s occupation of working the land. Copper and iron tools make plowing and harvesting possible.⁶

5. Rashi, Genesis 4:22, s.v. Tubal Cain. Compare Bereishis Rabbah 23:3, which interprets the name as seasoning Cain’s transgression. “Seasoned” here is an exposition of the name, not linguistic proof of its historical root.
[Related text]

6. Haamek Davar, Genesis 4:22. The continuation connects the good aspect in Cain to the building of the world through the woman; the interpretation of the name should be read together with the discussion of Naamah.

Here Cain is remembered as a worker of the land, rather than only as a murderer.

For the Netziv, the same raw materials are connected to work that supports human life. Cain the farmer stands in the background, and Tubal Cain carries on his work by means of tools.

Both readings connect the descendant to Cain, but emphasize different purposes: one stresses instruments of killing, the other tools for work. Reading them side by side broadens our understanding of the name.

5. Who is the “child” in Lamech’s song?

So far, we have asked which aspect of Cain’s way continues in the name and the craft. We now turn to Tubal Cain’s end.

Lamech’s song says: “For I have killed a man for my wound, and a child for my bruise.” There are different readings of this verse; not all tell of the killing of the son.

Tubal Cain, in the tradition of Tanchuma and Rashi. Rashi relates a story in which Lamech is blind and Tubal Cain leads him. The son sees Cain and thinks he is an animal; Lamech shoots an arrow and kills Cain. When he discovers his mistake, he strikes his hands together, and his son is struck and killed.⁷

In Tanchuma, the child is called a tinok, a young child, and is later identified as Tubal Cain, the son of Lamech and Tzillah.⁸ Here there is a basis for the tradition that he died young, but no numerical age is given.

⁷. Rashi, Genesis 4:23, s.v. Shema’an koli. Tubal Cain’s age is not given. The arrow kills Cain; the son’s death is described as resulting from the movement of Lamech’s hands.

⁸. Tanchuma, Bereishis 11. The same passage describes four families being swallowed: Enoch, Irad, Mechuyael and Metushael. It does not state that Jabal and Jubal were killed in the event.

Abel, in the interpretation of Bereishis Rabbah. Alongside this story, Rashi gives an interpretation in which Lamech did not kill anyone. The “child” is Abel, who was a man in stature but a child in years; Lamech says that he did not kill Abel and should not be held responsible for that sin.⁹

An unnamed child, in Radak’s version. Radak also relates a hunting story involving a child whose name is not given, who is killed by being struck against the ground. The child’s identity and the manner of his death differ from the first tradition.

The tradition of Tubal Cain’s death in youth thus belongs to Tanchuma and Rashi’s first interpretation. It is not a statement shared by all interpretations of Lamech’s song.

6. The end of the list, and Naamah

Cain’s genealogy in Genesis 4 runs from Cain through Enoch, Irad, Mechuyael, Metushael and Lamech, and ends with Lamech’s children: Jabal, Jubal, Tubal Cain and Naamah. If Cain is counted as the first generation, Lamech’s children are the seventh; if the count begins with Adam, they are the eighth.

Tubal Cain therefore belongs to the last generation detailed in this list. He is not the only member of that generation. Nor does the end of a biblical list prove that the people named in it had no further descendants.

Tanchuma also tells of four families being swallowed by the earth. Lamech’s household is not included among them, and there is no account there of Jabal and Jubal dying. The narrative does not detail what happened to everyone outside

⁹ Rashi, Genesis 4:24, in the interpretation cited in the name of Bereishis Rabbah 23:4. This is an alternative reading of Lamech’s song, not an additional detail in the story of the killings.

its description. It therefore offers no basis for declaring that the entire male line became extinct when Tubal Cain died. Alongside the question of who appears at the end of the list, there is the question of who might continue the family. Here Naamah enters the picture. According to the interpretation cited by Rashi, she is Noah's wife; Ramban explains that, if this identification is accepted, a trace of Cain remains in the world.¹⁰ The family thus continues even after the Flood, through the sister.

The sources also give other identifications of Naamah, including kabbalistic descriptions of the mother of demons. These are different traditions. The continuation of Cain's descendants through Noah's wife depends on identifying Naamah as that woman.

7. The name in Kabbalah

So far, we have read interpretations of a person's name and stories about his family. In the following sources, the name also appears in discussions of spirits and the powers of the soul. In each passage, we will distinguish an explanation of an event in the life of Lamech's son from a spiritual exposition that incorporates his name.

The Zohar: the name in the world of spirits

In the section on Acharei Mos, the Zohar connects the name Tubal Cain to a spirit from Cain's side and to the introduction of instruments of killing into the world.¹¹ The context

10. Rashi and Ramban, Genesis 4:22. Ramban uses conditional language, "if so," and also cites other traditions about Naamah. Her identification as Noah's wife appears in Bereishis Rabbah 23:3 in the name of R. Abba bar Kahana.

11. Zohar III, Acharei Mos, 76b. Read the passage within its discussion of Adam's separation from his wife and spirits born during that period, not as an isolated biographical account. Compare the reading as a male spirit in Nishmas Chaim, in the excerpt cited on Genesis 4:22. [Related text]

includes spirits, beings that are not human, and not only a list of Lamech's children.

Nishmas Chaim reads the passage as describing a male spirit born from Cain's spirit and called Tubal Cain. The name's appearance on the spiritual plane is thus distinguished from the person mentioned in Scripture. This passage does not tell us the age of Lamech's son or the cause of his death, nor does it establish that Cain's entire soul was reincarnated in him.

Tikkunei Zohar: the inclination in the study hall

In Tikkunei Zohar, Tubal Cain is interpreted as the evil inclination, and dealing with it is connected to drawing it into the house of study. The image of hardness like stone and iron also appears in the context of Torah study.¹²

Iron here also serves to describe the inclination. Its hardness illustrates a power whose way is difficult to change; the exposition directs the response toward Torah.

The passage in Kiddushin states that G-d created Torah as a "seasoning" for the evil inclination, and that even an inclination as hard as iron "shatters" in the house of study. The same passage also cites a verse addressed to Cain.¹³

Our reflection: a verbal echo may be heard here. In Rashi, Tubal Cain "seasoned" Cain's power for evil; in the Gemara, Torah is a "seasoning" for dealing with the inclination. This verbal connection is the booklet's suggestion, rather than an early interpretation of the double name.

¹². Tikkunei Zohar 119a, in the complete text. The source interprets Lamech's verses on an inward plane; not every action in the exposition should be transferred to the biography of Lamech's son.

¹³. Kiddushin 30b, in the teachings on the inclination and Torah. The comparison between "seasoned" in Rashi and "Torah as a seasoning" is the booklet's reflection; the Gemara does not interpret Tubal Cain there.

8. A hard power and its refinement in Chassidus

How can a hard power be directed toward holiness? In Toras Chaim by the Mitteler Rebbe, in the discourse “Vateled Adah es Yaval,” Tubal Cain is explained within a discussion of the soul’s powers and their spiritual root. The discourse describes a power appearing in instruments of murder, and then its transformation into holiness through repentance and good deeds.¹⁴

To understand the discussion, we will clarify the terms in their order: from the root to its expression, and from that expression to its refinement. These are brief explanations to assist the reader.

Gevurah in holiness. A power of firmness, boundaries and discipline. Firmness can serve perseverance, responsibility and maintaining a proper boundary. Gevurah itself is not evil.

The waste of the gevuros. A flawed expression of the power as it descends. The discourse distinguishes the higher gevuros from their waste, which descends into harsh gevuros and appears in instruments of murder. This is the aspect it connects to Tubal Cain.

The animal soul and kelipas nogah. The discussion here concerns a person’s natural powers and impulses. The discourse speaks of the animal soul, whose root is in kelipas nogah: a level containing a mixture of good and evil. This is why the possibility of refining the power and directing it toward holiness is discussed.

Birur, refinement. The work through which the power’s direction changes, by means of repentance and good deeds.

¹⁴. Toras Chaim, Bereishis, “Vateled Adah es Yaval,” end of section 50. Kehot, sixth edition, 5753 (1993), p. 46, column 2. The section also includes an exposition of Naamah and Noah within its account of refinement.

The distinction is between the root of the power and its destructive expression, and between that expression and the possibility of rectifying it.

Our illustration: a stubborn person may prolong an argument because he is unwilling to listen. That same firmness can serve keeping a promise and persevering in study even when it is difficult. The example illustrates a change in the power's purpose; it is not a parable quoted from the discourse.

Toras Chaim explains a spiritual aspect and its rectification. It does not relate that Tubal Cain himself repented before his death. The lesson for a person's service of G-d is drawn from the explanation, without adding an event to the character's life.

9. Craft, death and the removal of evil

After discussing the rectification of a spiritual power, we return to the accounts of death. The following two expositions differ even in the identity of the person killed: Beis Yaakov discusses Tubal Cain, and Be'er Mayim Chaim discusses Cain.

Beis Yaakov: the killing of Tubal Cain

Beis Yaakov of Izhbitz reads the craft of making weapons as revealing, in retrospect, the root of Cain's murderousness. This is a "clarification in retrospect": what developed in the descendant reveals something about the path that preceded him. Lamech's remorse is interpreted as repentance, and the killing of Tubal Cain as the removal of the evil that had emerged from him.¹⁵

¹⁵. Beis Yaakov, Genesis 70:3. The passage interprets Tubal Cain's killing as a deliberate act of removing evil; this is an independent exposition, rather than merely a psychological explanation of the accident.

This is an exposition of the act's meaning and intention. It differs from describing the son's killing as an accident, and does not explain why he was young or why his name had two words. We study it alongside Rashi's account, with each source giving Lamech's act its own meaning.

Be'er Mayim Chaim: the death of Cain

Here the person whose death is discussed changes: the mitigation concerns Cain. Be'er Mayim Chaim interprets Tubal Cain as coming **“to sweeten and season Cain's death.”**¹⁶ The crafted implements make death by an instrument possible, instead of a “degrading death” from a blow by hand, meaning a death involving humiliation. Seasoning is understood as a certain mitigation of the punishment.

Beis Yaakov connects the craft to Tubal Cain's killing and the removal of evil. Be'er Mayim Chaim connects the name to Cain's death. Both expositions enrich the study of the name and death, but neither explains Tubal Cain's age.

10. Reish Lakish and the rectification of power

Gilgulei Neshamos, the work attributed to R. Menachem Azariah of Fano, states of Tubal Cain: **“Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish is his rectification.”**¹⁷ Here rectification is connected to a particular person: Reish Lakish.

Bava Metzia tells of Reish Lakish's entry into a life of Torah, and later discusses his knowledge of the craft of making weapons. The call “Your strength should be for Torah” directs

16. Be'er Mayim Chaim, Genesis 4:22. In this exposition, crafted implements allow Cain to die by an instrument instead of a degrading death from a blow by hand. The subject is Cain, not the death of Lamech's son.

17. Gilgulei Neshamos, letter Tav, section 2. The work itself connects the rectification to the passage on weapons and Reish Lakish's knowledge of the craft. Do not cite the statement as a direct quotation from the Arizal without a precise source in his writings.

his power toward Torah study.¹⁸ The Gemara itself does not mention Tubal Cain; the connection to him is made in Gilgulei Neshamos.

The word “rectification” here denotes something different from the refinement we studied in Toras Chaim. There the discussion concerns a spiritual power and the possibility of changing its direction; here it concerns a connection of rectification between two individuals. The themes are related, but each source explains them in its own way, without detailing in this passage the entire mechanism of reincarnation.

11. What have we learned from the name?

We began with two words and arrived at several questions: how a person is remembered, how a craft is carried forward, and where a power is directed. The table brings together what the sources contribute to these questions, without reducing them all to one interpretation.

Source	What does it add to the question?
Radak	The possibility of adding Cain’s name in his memory.
Rashi and Bereishis Rabbah	The improvement of instruments of killing.
The Netziv	Continuing work on the land through tools.
The Zohar	The name appearing in the context of the world of spirits.
Tikkunei Zohar	An exposition of the inclination and dealing with it through Torah.
Toras Chaim	Refining the power through repentance and good deeds.

¹⁸. Bava Metzia 84a. Tubal Cain is not mentioned in the Gemara; his connection to Reish Lakish is the interpretation of the passage in Gilgulei Neshamos.

Source	What does it add to the question?
Beis Yaakov	Tubal Cain's killing as an expression of removing evil.
Be'er Mayim Chaim	An interpretation of the name in connection with mitigating Cain's death.
Gilgulei Neshamos	The tradition of Tubal Cain's rectification through Reish Lakish.

Answers to the four questions

Is this the only double name? Not in the sense of two words. Even two names combined have a parallel in Radak's interpretation: Damesek Eliezer. Absolute uniqueness in combining an ancestor's name has not been established.

Is the name based on Cain? Yes, according to several commentators. The connection is understood as commemoration, continuing a craft, improving the means of killing, or a spiritual aspect.

Did he die young, and did the line end with him? Death in youth belongs to a particular tradition; no numerical age is given. There is no proof that the entire line ended with his death. If Naamah is identified as Noah's wife, Cain's descendants continue through her.

Is there an explanation in Chassidus and Kabbalah? There are explanations concerning the inclination, the removal of evil and the rectification of power. Beis Yaakov connects the craft to Tubal Cain's killing; Be'er Mayim Chaim connects the name to Cain's death. The sources discussed offer no explanation that the two words of the name themselves required death in youth.

Our reflection: let us return to the opening question: what passes from Cain to Tubal Cain, and what can be done with the power received? From the interpretations we learn to

distinguish memory, ability and purpose. The chassidic explanation adds the possibility of changing the direction of that power.

The name thus opens a question each student can ask: what have I received, and for what purpose am I using it? This is a suggested connection between the parts of our study, preserving the differences between the sources.

For further study in the sources

Six passages to study inside, deepening the distinctions developed here:

Bereishis Rabbah 23:3–4

How is Tubal Cain's craft interpreted, and how is Lamech's song read without an account of killings?

Tikkunei Zohar 119a

The transition from Lamech's verses to the struggle with the inclination, hardness of heart and Torah study.

Radak, Genesis 4:22–23; 15:2

The language of possibility in commemorating Cain, the unnamed child, and the parallel of Damesek Eliezer.

Be'er Mayim Chaim, Genesis 4:22

Seasoning as mitigating Cain's death: how does this differ from improving the means of transgression?

Toras Chaim, "Vateled Adah es Yaval," end of section 50

The distinction between the root of the gevuros, their waste and their refinement; Naamah's place at the discourse's close.

Beis Yaakov, Genesis 70:3

Clarification in retrospect, Lamech's repentance and the meaning of Tubal Cain's killing in this exposition.