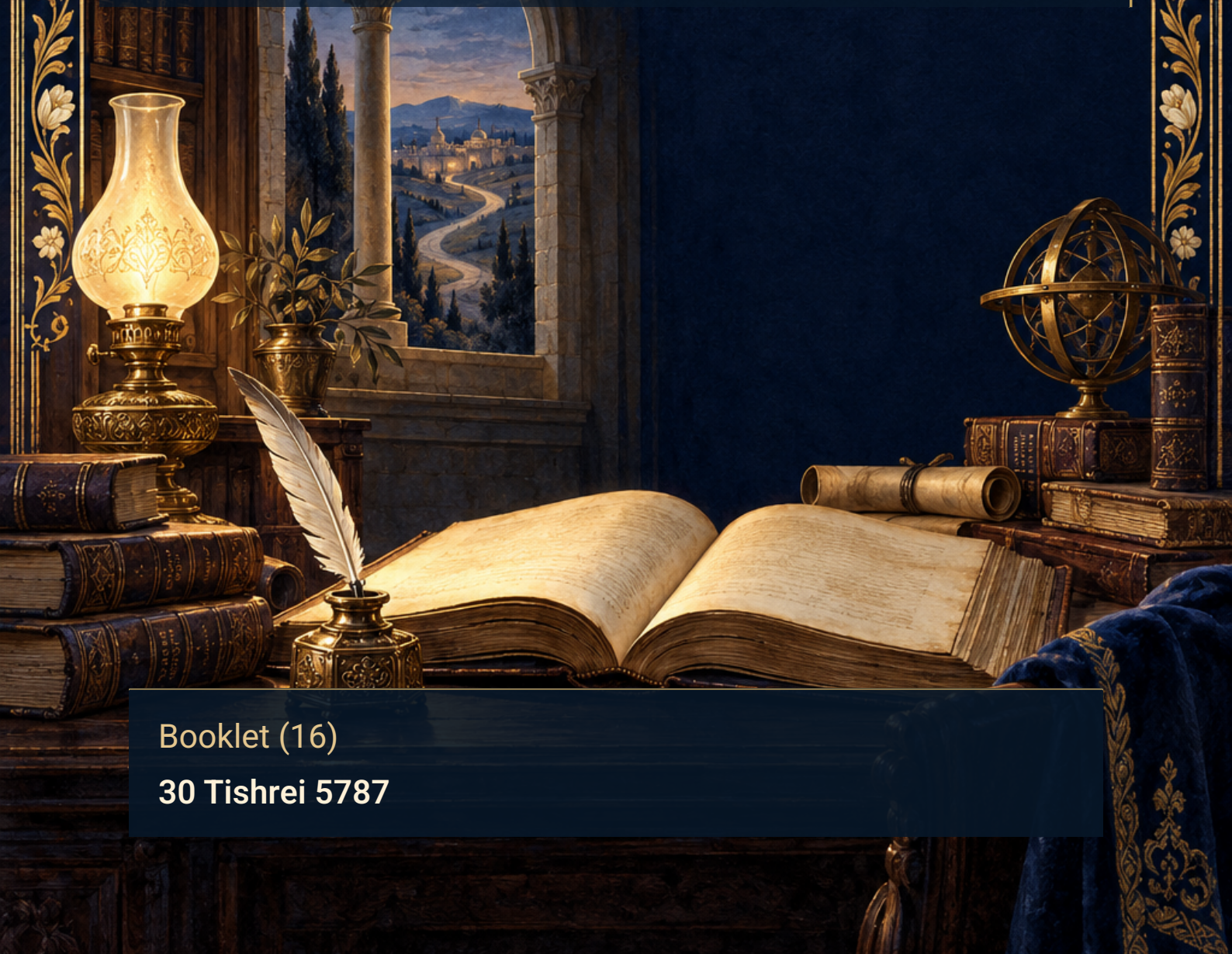


Beit Midrash YeshivahAI
Daily Rashi Study Series

How Was Cain Murdered?

Was Lamech blind?
How could he aim his bow?
Textual variants and more



Booklet (16)

30 Tishrei 5787

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1. When a familiar story stops making sense

Some stories have been familiar since childhood. Only when we read them slowly do we notice how much remains unexplained. Lamech's story is one of them. Rashi relates that Lamech was blind and that his son Tubal-Cain led him. The son saw Cain and mistook him for an animal. He told his father to draw his bow; the father shot and killed Cain. When the mistake became known, Lamech struck his hands together, and his son was killed between them.

A first reading moves quickly through mistaken identity, accidental killing, remorse, and a second disaster. On a second reading, however, we stop before the mistake. How could a blind man go hunting with a bow? Someone who cannot see does not know where the target is, how far away it is, at what height it stands, or whether it has moved. How could the son's instruction, "Draw your bow," be enough?

To sharpen the question, recall the joke: a blind man and a man without legs traveled by car. The blind man gave directions, and the man without legs pressed the accelerator and the brakes. That was how they drove. The joke rests on a seemingly absurd allocation of tasks: each man receives precisely the task he cannot perform.

Lamech's story sounds like this when we read it without supplying missing details. The one who sees does not shoot, and the one who shoots does not see. The difficulty also resembles putting a blind man behind the wheel with the promise that someone will tell him where to drive. The presence of a sighted person does not explain how the blind man's hands perform the precise action required.

The joke sharpens the question. It does not pass judgment on the Midrash. To understand the story, we must clarify the help the son gave his father: what the source says, and what we supply ourselves while reading.

Nor need we claim that the shot required accuracy to the millimeter. The target's size, distance, and surrounding terrain are not given. The question remains strong without that exaggeration: an arrow must reach a particular body in the field, and "There is an animal over there" does not by itself convey everything needed to hit it.

2. Three questions, rather than one

The first question is practical: how was the bow aimed? This requires a horizontal direction, an elevation appropriate to the distance, a steady hold, and a properly timed release.

Identifying an animal's location does not yet explain how someone who cannot see can hit it.

The second concerns the allocation of tasks. Even if the father's hands can be guided, why does the sighted son not shoot himself? An answer about aiming is not necessarily an answer about the choice of archer.

The third concerns the story's meaning. Why must Lamech be blind? What does blindness add to the mistake, the killing, and his argument to his wives? We can understand the meaning of his blindness without yet knowing how the shot was made.

Further questions surround these three: why does a blind man go hunting; what causes the son to mistake a person for an animal; why hunt before eating meat was permitted; and how does the son die when his father strikes his hands together? We will examine each separately. Answers to questions surrounding the story cannot substitute for an answer to its central difficulty.

3. What Rashi says, and the status of the account

The verse reads: "Lamech said to his wives, Adah and Zillah: Hear my voice, wives of Lamech; listen to my words, for I have killed a man for my wound, and a child for my bruise" (Genesis

4:23). The speech is brief; the circumstances of the killing are not related in the verse.

In his comment on "Hear my voice," Rashi explains why Lamech's wives withdrew from him:

"Because he had killed Cain and his son Tubal-Cain. Lamech was blind, and Tubal-Cain led him. He saw Cain, who appeared to him to be an animal, and told his father to draw his bow, and he killed him. When he realized that it was Cain, his ancestor, he struck one hand against the other, caught his son between them, and killed him." ¹

The word *moshekho*, "led him," describes the guidance of the blind father. It does not explicitly say that the son held the bow or directed the archer's hands. Rashi also gives neither the son's age nor Cain's horn, the distance, or the method of aiming. These distinctions matter when explaining Rashi's particular wording.

In the next comment, Rashi reads Lamech's words as a rhetorical question: did he kill deliberately, so that the wound should be attributed to him? Lamech argues that he acted unintentionally. In verse 24 he compares himself with Cain: if punishment was postponed for Cain, who killed deliberately, how much more so for him, who killed unintentionally. ¹

This explains the story's central role in Rashi. The two victims explain "man" and "child," while the two unintended killings explain Lamech's argument. Explaining the verse's meaning, however, does not yet explain the hunting procedure.

We must also be precise about describing Rashi's account as the verse's plain meaning. The Rebbe mentions blind Lamech in *Likkutei Sichos*, volume 15, Toldos III, page 212, note 11*. He notes three points: Rashi concludes, "Thus Rabbi Tanchuma expounded," and that conclusion refers to the entire

1. Rashi, Genesis 4:23-24.

explanation; Lamech's blindness is not stated in Scripture; and Rashi also offers another interpretation. ²

The note compares this case with Isaac's blindness. It clarifies the account's status in Rashi without answering how the bow was aimed or saying that the event did not occur. Our question concerns understanding the Midrash that Rashi brings, rather than reconstructing a detail explicitly stated in Scripture. ³

4. The question has already been asked

The author of *Birkas Asher*, commenting on Genesis 4:23, pauses at precisely this point. He describes the son leading his blind father and telling him to draw the bow, then asks: "Is this really something a blind man does?" No answer is offered in that note. ⁴

This is a valuable finding. The difficulty is more than the impression of a reader who has failed to understand the story. A commentator questioned the scene Rashi describes. But this does not establish that no answer exists: we have found an explicit formulation of the question, rather than an exhaustive investigation resolving it.

No practical explanation of a blind man's aiming was found in the passages examined in Mizrachi, *Gur Aryeh*, and *Sifsei Chachamim*. Mizrachi discusses the wives' withdrawal, and *Sifsei Chachamim* also discusses the inference from Cain's case. This examination is limited to the commentaries and passages read; it does not show that no answer exists elsewhere. ⁵

5. Returning to Tanchuma

In *Tanchuma*, Bereishis 11, the account is more detailed. Lamech is blind and goes hunting, with his son holding his hand. The son is called a *tinok*, a child. He reports seeing something like

2. Likkutei Sichos 15, Toldos III, p. 212, note 11*.

3. Rashi, Genesis 4:24; see also note 2.

4. Birkas Asher, Genesis 4:23, Bereishis 5749.

5. Mizrachi, Gur Aryeh, and Sifsei Chachamim on Genesis 4; the passages examined.

an animal; Lamech draws the bow toward it and kills Cain. The child then identifies a dead human figure with a horn on its forehead. Lamech understands that this is his ancestor, strikes his hands together in remorse, and hits the child's head.⁶

Compared with Rashi, three details are added: the son holds his father's hand, the son is young, and the dead Cain has a horn on his forehead. But "holding his hand" may describe guidance while walking. Moving from that guidance to aiming during the shot is a reasonable possibility, rather than something stated in Tanchuma.

Similarly, "he drew the bow toward him" tells us that the shot was directed at the target. It does not explain how the bow was positioned. We cannot infer the entire procedure from a description of the result. This is precisely why the sources need to be read slowly.

6. An explicit explanation: Imrei Binah

In *Imrei Binah* by Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad, the Ben Ish Chai, in the section *Chikrei Lev*, paragraph 7, a brief parenthetical remark appears within the story:

"It seems that the son directed the hands of his father Lamech toward the animal, and his father shot with the bow."⁷

Here we find a direct answer about the allocation of the action. According to this proposal, the son does more than report an animal: he participates in directing his father's hands, while the father shoots. The blind man need not locate the target himself. The sighted son helps aim, rather than merely reporting an animal without explaining how his father aims toward it. The context matters as well. The passage occurs in an answer about the value of the Torah's narratives, rather than a

6. Tanchuma, Bereishis 11.

7. Rabbi Yosef Chaim, *Imrei Binah*, *Chikrei Lev* 7. The sentence and parentheses occur in printed scans, according to examinations reported to the editor.

discussion devoted to the aiming difficulty. It is an incidental interpretive remark. "It seems" marks its status: a proposed completion of the account, rather than a detail quoted from Tanchuma.

Examinations of scans reported to the editor found both the sentence and its parentheses in two printed editions. They are not an addition made by the transcription website. The note identifies the copies and the remaining uncertainty about whether the parentheses originated with the author or an editor.

This finding changes the explanation's standing. We have an explicit proposal printed in an identifiable work. Directing the father's hands need not be presented as an invention of this study, nor need we claim that every version of the Midrash states it explicitly.

7. What the explanation resolves, and what it leaves undescribed

"Directed his father's hands" offers a reasonable division of the action: the son supplies the aim through his father's hands, and the father operates the bow. The person drawing and releasing need not necessarily see, if someone sighted helps direct the weapon he holds. This gives an interpretive answer to the central difficulty.

The source nevertheless does not describe how aim was adjusted for distance and height, maintained through drawing and release, or adapted to a moving target. It mentions neither a command to release nor a short distance or a stationary animal. Any such details must be presented as possible reconstructions. Their absence does not prove the explanation impossible. A reasonable proposal is not an established historical reconstruction, and the absence of a technical description does not refute it. We have an answer about dividing the action, alongside details of execution that have not been supplied.

In *Midrash Aggadah*, hunting is described as a repeated practice: "He would hunt animals." This description assumes that the cooperation worked. *Imrei Binah* proposes understanding it as physical guidance of the father's hands. This is an interpretive proposal, rather than a detail quoted from the Midrash.⁸

"Shooting is a single action" is insufficient by itself: the shot includes aiming, drawing, and maintaining stability.

Cooperation is the explanation's essential point, rather than the action's brevity. According to the proposal in *Imrei Binah*, the opening joke also takes on a different relationship to the story. The sighted person does the aiming, and the blind person shoots. We need no longer picture each person receiving precisely the task he cannot perform.

8. Blind archers today: an example and its limits

Adapted archery demonstrates that seeing the target is not an irreplaceable requirement in every setting. A 2015 World Archery article describes a tactile sight, a device positioning the archer's feet, and a target at a fixed distance. Touch enables the archer to reproduce the aiming position.⁹

The British Blind Sport spotters' guide adds a useful distinction. A helper may assist in adjusting the tactile sight outside a scoring end. During the end, the helper may not change the sight, but may report where each arrow landed and provide safety and timing information. During the preliminary sighting arrows, there is no restriction on what the helper may say to the archer. These are rules of fairness in competition, rather than limits of physical ability. The guide presents an informal summary of the rules.

A restriction on assistance during competition therefore does not show that a sighted person cannot help prepare the aim.

8. Radak and Midrash Aggadah (Buber), Genesis 4:23.

9. World Archery, 22 August 2015; British Blind Sport, Spotters Guidebook. Competition conditions differ from hunting.

This is an example of translating visual information into a shooting position usable by a blind person.

The mechanism differs from directing the father's hands in *Imrei Binah*, and competition conditions differ from hunting. The example is useful against an absolute claim of impossibility; it does not establish how Lamech shot in the field.

9. Why does the father shoot, rather than the son?

Radak describes Lamech as a blind hunter. In *Midrash Aggadah*, the father shoots and the son accompanies him and shows him the animal's location. One may infer an advantage of experience for the father, and perhaps the strength required to draw the bow. But "hunter" is neither a measurement of his strength nor an explicit comparison with his son's skill. ⁸

An advantage of experience or strength is therefore possible. No source examined says that the son did not shoot because he was too weak. The reason for choosing the father remains unstated.

The son's age also requires care. In *Tanchuma* he is a *tinok*; in *Sefer HaYashar* he is a very young boy. Yet *tinok* need not mean a toddler: the Sages also speak of teachers of *tinokos* and of children aged six and seven. This does not establish Tubal-Cain's particular age. ¹⁰

The difficulty becomes sharp if we picture a very small child. He dies in the same incident; when, then, was he "a forger of every implement of copper and iron"? We cannot answer that he would grow up and become a craftsman afterward. On the other hand, Scripture gives no age, and Rashi does not call him a *tinok* in the hunting account. We need not attribute the entire picture of his age in other versions to Rashi.

8. Radak and Midrash Aggadah (Buber), Genesis 4:23.

10. Bava Basra 21a, teachers of children aged about six or seven.

No commentator explicitly reconciling his age with his metalworking was found in the material assembled.

"Craftsman" also does not prove that he was a skilled archer or stronger than his father. Both opposing assertions, a child without strength and a craftsman who must have shot himself, go beyond the information supplied.

Sefer HaYashar adds the background of an elderly father with failing eyesight and a young son. It can be read as a hunter growing old and relying on his son. This background comes from another source; it should not be transferred into Rashi without identifying that move. ¹¹

10. Was Lamech completely blind?

Tanchuma and Rashi say *suma*, "blind," without qualification. Neither says that Lamech retained partial sight that enabled him to complete the aiming himself. An explanation faithful to their wording must address his blindness, rather than remove it by importing another source.

Sefer HaYashar uses differing expressions: dimmed eyes through old age, an inability to see, and weak eyesight in another formulation. We cannot select only the least restrictive expression and declare that he has been proved not completely blind. At most, this version allows such a reading; its other expressions must also be considered. ¹¹

In *Imrei Binah*, too, Lamech is described after the disaster as unable to return home because he cannot see the way. The proposal about directing his hands does not depend there on partial sight. ⁷

"Lamech was not really blind" therefore does not answer the question in Rashi. It is a possible reading of another work, and even there it is not free of difficulty.

7. Rabbi Yosef Chaim, *Imrei Binah*, Chikrei Lev 7. The sentence and parentheses occur in printed scans, according to examinations reported to the editor.

11. *Sefer HaYashar* (narrative midrashic work), Genesis, Bereishis.

11. Why does the story need blindness?

Until now we have asked how Lamech could shoot without seeing. We now ask why the tradition emphasizes his blindness: what does it add to understanding the mistake and his argument before his wives?

In Rashi, blindness fits into the claim of unintentional killing. Lamech did not see Cain and therefore did not recognize him as a person before shooting. He acted upon his son's mistaken identification. This explains his protest: he did not kill deliberately, and the wound should not be attributed to him in the sense he rejects. ¹

This does not mean that he did not perform the act himself, or that every shot by a blind person necessarily constitutes an unavoidable accident. Rashi describes his intention in this particular story. Neither the care required before shooting nor legal culpability is resolved simply by dividing the action between two people.

Alshich emphasizes blindness further. He reads "for my wound" as referring to Lamech's own impairment. In explaining Lamech's reckoning, he adds something beyond the distinction between deliberate and unintentional killing: Lamech's act was close to an unavoidable accident. This explicitly explains the meaning of his blindness, but still gives no practical instruction about shooting. ¹²

Unintentional killing is not a concept imported from outside: Tanchuma itself says "he killed him unintentionally," and Rashi says "I acted unintentionally." The halachic discussion in Makkos supplies a parallel: Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Meir disagree about exile for a blind person who kills unintentionally. Exemption from exile does not imply exemption from all responsibility. Nor can the post-Sinai laws

1. Rashi, Genesis 4:23-24.

12. Alshich, Toras Moshe, Genesis 4:24.

of exile simply be applied to a figure from before the Flood. The parallel shows that blindness may affect the classification of the killing; it is not a source describing the hunt. ¹³

12. The decree is fulfilled even through a blind man

Already in Genesis 4:15, Rashi connects Cain's death with Lamech. Later he explains why the account of Lamech's family was written: it culminates in fulfillment of the promise concerning retribution for Cain after seven generations. The story is more than a hunting accident; it completes a sequence beginning with Abel's murder. ¹⁴

In his *Chiddushei Aggados* to Nedarim 41a, Maharsha reads "whoever finds me will kill me" as referring to the many agents available to the Almighty, and mentions Cain's being killed by blind Lamech. The blindness emphasizes that even someone seemingly unsuited to an action can serve as an agent of judgment. ¹⁵

This explains the significance of choosing Lamech. Maharsha does not say that the arrow was miraculously aimed, or that supernatural intervention resolved every practical difficulty. A heavenly decree may be fulfilled through a natural sequence of events; mentioning Providence does not describe that sequence. Counting the generations requires its own precision. If Adam is first, Lamech is seventh. If Cain is first, Lamech is sixth and his children seventh. Rashi therefore emphasizes in verse 19: "After he had fathered children and brought the seventh generation into being." The two counts must not be confused, nor numbers added to the story without specifying the starting point.

¹³. Mishnah Makkos 2:3; Makkos 9b. The dispute concerns exile.

¹⁴. Rashi, Genesis 4:15, 19.

¹⁵. Maharsha, *Chiddushei Aggados*, Nedarim 41a.

13. The mark on the forehead: an appealing but unproven proposal

"The L-rd set a sign for Cain, so that whoever found him would not strike him" (4:15). On this basis, a suggestion arose during the study: the sign prevents someone who recognizes Cain from harming him; a blind person, assisted by a child who does not understand what he sees, could therefore be the killer. The horn version also contains a striking reversal: the protective sign becomes the source of mistaken identity.

The idea has literary force, but no explicit commentary supporting it was found. It also assumes that the sign works specifically through the killer's visual recognition. Rashi does not describe such a mechanism. He explains the sign as a letter from the Almighty's Name, and his account of the killing contains no horn. ¹⁴

The proposal cannot be rejected by asserting that the sign's protection had already expired. Rashi gives the time of retribution without explicitly saying what happened to the protection. The explanation concerning fear of animals is also marked as an alternative text in the Sefaria edition, so it is not a firm basis for a conclusion by itself.

The conclusion is narrow. The idea may be offered as a reading of the story's construction, particularly in the horn versions. We cannot say that the decree could be fulfilled only through a blind person, or attribute the proposal to Maharsha. It concerns the significance of blindness, rather than the operation of the bow.

14. The child saw an animal: what misled him?

In Tanchuma, a horn is discovered on the dead man's forehead. Radak explicitly says that the horn caused the mistaken identification from a distance. *Midrash Aggadah* also mentions

¹⁴. Rashi, Genesis 4:15, 19.

the horn. Rashi says only that Cain appeared to the son to be an animal, without explaining why. ⁶⁸

Abarbanel paints a different scene: Cain hides among the trees, and his hair makes the boy think he is an animal. A young boy leads the blind man, but Abarbanel does not identify him here as Tubal-Cain. After the killing, Lamech strikes the boy with the bow for misleading him. ¹⁶

Abarbanel first says that he also found the story in Roman writings, which he says took it from *Yosippon* and a "book of the ancients." This does not explicitly attribute every detail of the following account to those writings. We may note the proximity and a possible connection with another tradition; we may not assign him a source identification he did not make. The precise work and passage have also not been settled here.

In *Torah Shelemah*, passage 146, a version says that the child saw "Cain's horn between two mountains, but did not see Cain." The passage is attributed there to Tanchuma, Bereishis 11. The partial view explains how mistaken identification could arise. It does not describe how Lamech's hands were aimed. The sentence about the two mountains is absent from the Tanchuma transcription in Sefaria; the versions must be distinguished. ¹⁷

15. Hunting before the Flood, and death between the hands

The permission granted to Noah to eat meat raises a question about the purpose of hunting, but hunting and eating are distinct. Abarbanel proposes two purposes: enjoyment of the hunt or obtaining skins for clothing. This explicitly answers why one might hunt without eating the animal. He does not say that Rashi necessarily intended either possibility. ¹⁶

6. Tanchuma, Bereishis 11.

8. Radak and Midrash Aggadah (Buber), Genesis 4:23.

16. Abarbanel, Genesis 4, on Lamech's speech; transcription requiring comparison with print.

17. *Torah Shelemah* 2, pp. 337-338, passage 146; textual details from reported scan examinations.

For the background of an aging hunter relying on his son, see section 9. That background may explain the habit, but does not establish how the shot was executed.

The son's death is not described uniformly either. In Rashi, he is caught between the hands. Tanchuma says that the father strikes his hands together in remorse and hits the child's head. Radak says that he strikes the child against the ground. Abarbanel describes a blow with the bow. These accounts must not be combined into a single practical description. **16816**

Tanchuma's reference to a child and a blow to his head provides some context for death from the impact. It gives no dimensions, force, or posture. The older we picture the son, the harder it becomes to understand his dying between two hands. Making him very young eases this detail but sharpens the question about Tubal-Cain's craftsmanship. One difficulty does not authorize us to supply all the others as we please.

16. "For my wound" and "for my bruise": four readings

Rashi associates a wound, *petza*, with a sword or arrow, and reads Lamech's words as denying deliberate killing: the wound should not be attributed to him in the sense he rejects. The story thus fits the verse's language, even though the shooting method is not described. ¹

Alshich reads "for my wound" as referring to Lamech's own impairment, his blindness. Sforno understands the killing as injury to Lamech because the victims are his relatives. Both give meaning to the verse's personal language without adding a description of aiming. **1218**

1. Rashi, Genesis 4:23-24.

6. Tanchuma, Bereishis 11.

8. Radak and Midrash Aggadah (Buber), Genesis 4:23.

12. Alshich, Toras Moshe, Genesis 4:24.

16. Abarbanel, Genesis 4, on Lamech's speech; transcription requiring comparison with print.

18. Sforno, Genesis 4:23-24.

In *Beis Yaakov* by Rabbi Yaakov of Izbica, Bereishis 70:3, *petza* means injury from a distance, while *chaburah*, a bruise or injury, is linked with *chibbur*, connection through contact. Cain's killing is read as unintentional, but Tubal-Cain's as deliberately removing evil and the manufacture of weapons for murderers. This is an inward interpretation of the story, differing from Rashi's account of two unintended killings.¹⁹

Paragraph 71 develops another explanation of blindness as a habit that has taken control of a person. Each reading must be studied in context. We cannot take an interpretation of "blind" from one passage and the son's killing from another to construct a uniform factual account. These interpretations address what happens in the soul and at the root of the act, rather than a shooting technique for someone without sight.

17. The lame man and the blind man: a limited parallel

Sanhedrin 91a-b presents the parable of a lame man and a blind man. One sees fruit but cannot walk; the other can walk but cannot see. They combine their abilities, and the king judges them together. The structure resembles the proposal about Lamech: information belongs to one person, physical ability to the other.²⁰

The parable explains how two people can complement each other. It does not prove that this works for every action at every level of precision. Walking toward a fruit and grasping it are different from directing an arrow's trajectory. This is a conceptual parallel about sharing abilities, rather than practical evidence for successful hunting.

Nor does the parable imply that responsibility disappears in Lamech's case because the action is divided. The two are combined in judgment because they participated together. In

¹⁹. *Beis Yaakov*, Bereishis 70:3; 71:1.

²⁰. Sanhedrin 91a-b.

Lamech's case, according to Rashi, the unintentional element is mistaken identification and the absence of an intention to kill a person. The parable can help explain cooperation without becoming the basis of an exemption it does not state.

18. Interpretations without the hunting account

Rashi himself subsequently brings the interpretation in *Bereishis Rabbah*, according to which Lamech killed no one. His wives fear the decree, and he answers by comparing himself with Cain. Onkelos and the Targum attributed to Yonasan read his words as denying killing. These do not repair the blind man's hunting; they interpret the speech differently. ²¹

Ibn Ezra reads the killing as a threat or a future possibility in response to injury. Ramban connects the speech with fear of weapons and their manufacture. Radak also offers an interpretation involving the wives' quarrelling. *Paaneach Raza* attributes the quarrelling interpretation to Rabbi Yosef Kara; *Tur HaArokh* attributes a similar interpretation to Rabbi Yosef Kimchi. The difference in attribution must be preserved. ²²

Malbim describes Lamech intimidating his wives through his power and actions: a man injured him, and he also killed that man's child. Netziv describes unintentional killing following the use of metal implements. Neither needs the scene of a blind man's companion aiming his bow. ²³

HaKesav VeHaKabbalah sharply criticizes stories that commentators add without grounding in the verse, and chooses a different moral interpretation of the killing language. His criticism must be read within his proposed interpretation. It does not show that he examined the technical difficulty of a blind man's shooting, nor should it be expanded into an

21. Bereishis Rabbah 23:4; Rashi 4:24; Onkelos and the Targum attributed to Yonasan.

22. Ibn Ezra, Ramban, Radak; Paaneach Raza and Tur HaArokh, Genesis 4:23.

23. Malbim and Haamek Davar, Genesis 4:23-24.

unstated general pronouncement about the status of all rabbinic Midrashim. ²⁴

By contrast, Abarbanel considers the midrashic tradition the fitting explanation of the obscure verse. The disagreement itself shows that Lamech's speech admits more than one interpretive approach. Choosing another approach may bypass the difficulty; it does not explain the Midrash Rashi brings. ¹⁶

19. Torah Shelemah: further traditions about the event

Torah Shelemah, volume 2, Genesis 4, passage 146, pages 337-338, brings a version of the account and cites Tanchuma, Bereishis 11, at its end. The horn "between two mountains" appears in the main compilation. It is not attributed there to *Yelammedenu*. This is Rabbi Kasher's text; its underlying printed or manuscript tradition has not been established here. ¹⁷

The note to passage 145 brings a manuscript version Rabbi Kasher calls *Midrash HaBiur*. In the volume's introduction, he corrects the identification to *Midrash Or HaAfelah*. The particulars are supplied in the note. ¹⁷

In this version, Lamech encounters Cain and his young companion and reviles them. They strike and wound him, and he kills them. Adam justifies him as having saved himself. "His young companion" does not necessarily mean "his servant." There is no blind man or bow: this is another tradition about wounds, bruises, and self-preservation.

Rabbi Kasher proposes understanding the Septuagint in connection with this interpretation. His Hebrew wording, killing because of the wound and bruise, is an interpretive presentation rather than a literal quotation from the Greek. The Greek mentions a man and a young man, killing in the first

16. Abarbanel, Genesis 4, on Lamech's speech; transcription requiring comparison with print.

17. Torah Shelemah 2, pp. 337-338, passage 146; textual details from reported scan examinations.

24. HaKesav VeHaKabbalah, Genesis 4:23-24.

person, a wound and a bruise. It does not explicitly relate Cain and his companion, a hearing before Adam, or self-defense. In note 148, pages 339-340, Kasher also brings "because he wounded me" in the name of Aquila, adding that it accords with the understanding of the Septuagint. The two attributions must not be confused. ²⁵

These traditions offer other interpretations of the speech, rather than a practical solution to the hunting account.

20. A map of the account and its interpretations

The table compares details that change the question. Its rows are not independent testimonies to an event; some works transmit and adapt earlier traditions. ²⁶

Source	Sight and companion	Aiming	Mistaken identity and the companion's death
Rashi, 4:23	Blind; Tubal-Cain leads him; no age	Son says to draw the bow	Appears animal-like; son caught between hands
Tanchuma, Bereishis 11	Blind; child holds his hand	Father draws toward target	Horn; child's head struck as hands clap
Midrash Aggadah, 4:23	Blind; son accompanies him	Father asks where; son shows him	Horn; hands struck together
Radak, 4:23	Blind hunter; child guides him	Told to draw toward a location	Horn and distance; child struck against ground
Sefer HaYashar, Bereishis	Aging, failing eyes; young boy	Told to draw bow	Distant figure; clapping hands
Abarbanel, Genesis 4	Blind; unnamed young boy	Told to shoot in Cain's direction	Hair and trees; bow strikes boy's head
Imrei Binah, Chikrei Lev 7	Blind; Tubal-Cain	Proposes son directs father's hands	Transmits account and explains aiming
Torah Shelemah, passage 146	Blind; son; version cited as Tanchuma	Son reports sighting; no explicit hand guidance	Horn between mountains; Cain himself unseen

²⁵. Septuagint, Genesis 4:23; Torah Shelemah, pp. 338-340.

²⁶. Comparison of the sources in notes 1, 6, 7, 8, 11, 16, and 17.

21. Limits of the proposals raised in this study

Suggestions do not become sources merely through repetition. Not every version says that the son directs his father's hands. *Sefer HaYashar* does not establish the extent of Lamech's blindness in Rashi, and no explicit reason establishes that the son did not shoot because he was weak.

Attributions to Reggio and to an article by Fohrman remain reports whose original sources have not been fully verified here. Hiding among trees and the event's being brought about by G-d were reported in Reggio's name; a connection between blindness and raising a wicked son was reported in Fohrman's. These concern the story's significance and do not form the basis of this booklet's conclusion.

Pardes Yosef discusses a blind person's exemption from mitzvos according to Rabbi Yehudah and its application to Lamech, qualifying the discussion with "the Midrashim differ." This is a legal discussion of differing traditions, rather than an explanation of aiming or the son's age. It cannot be turned into a claim that every blind person is exempt from all responsibility. ²⁷

The modern discussion on the Mi Yodeya forum is mentioned in the note for completeness. It does not form the basis of the booklet's conclusion. ²⁸

The investigation thus rests on identifiable sources and the distinction between their statements and the possible completions we propose.

22. What can be said at the end of the inquiry?

An explicit explanation is printed in Rabbi Yosef Chaim's *Imrei Binah*: the son directs the father's hands, and the father shoots. "It seems" marks it as a proposal. It offers a reasonable answer

²⁷. Pardes Yosef, Genesis 4:23.

²⁸. Mi Yodeya, 16 June 2024, on Lamech's bow.

to the difficulty about dividing the action: the sighted person supplies the aim, and the blind person executes the shot.

Details of execution in the field have not been supplied, and we have no reconstruction of the hunting method. This is a limit to our knowledge, rather than proof that the explanation is impossible. Nor was an explicit reason found for the father's being the archer. Experience or strength remains a possibility. The sources found do not explicitly reconcile Tubal-Cain's age with his occupation.

The explanations concerning unintentional killing, circumstances approaching an unavoidable accident, and fulfillment of the decree each explain the significance of blindness in their own way. Alternative interpretations of Lamech's speech show other ways of reading the verse; they do not explain the particular Midrash Rashi brings.

The opening joke made us stop: how could each person perform precisely what he cannot do? After the proposal in *Imrei Binah*, this is no longer the only way to picture the event. According to that proposal, the sighted person aims and the blind person shoots. The question has not been erased. An interpretive answer has been found, and the limits of what we may supply in the source's name have become clear.

Sources and their evidential status

1. Rashi, Genesis 4:23-24: comments beginning 'Hear my voice,' 'For I have killed a man,' 'For my wound,' 'Wound,' and 'For sevenfold.' Rashi's wording was supplied with the research materials and compared with an online transcription. Denial of deliberate intent must not be turned into denial of the act itself.

[Source 1]

2. Likkutei Sichos, volume 15, Toldos III, page 212, note 11* (with an asterisk); the talk occupies pages 211-216 and derives from the Toldos and Vayishlach talks of 5728. The content was read in the Or Ein Sof website's transcription; the location and asterisk were supplied by reported scan examinations. The note compares Isaac's blindness: Rashi's

concluding attribution to Tanchuma applies to the whole explanation; blindness is not explicit in Scripture; and Rashi gives another interpretation. It neither explains aiming nor denies that the event occurred. [Source 1] [Source 2]

3. Rashi, Genesis 4:24, the end of the first interpretation and the interpretation cited from Bereishis Rabbah. See also note 2 on the account's status. Calling it Midrash does not decide its historicity.

4. Birkas Asher, Genesis 4:23, the note dated Parashas Bereishis 5749. The question was found in a transcription of the chapter; that note supplies no answer. [Source 1]

5. Mizrachi, Gur Aryeh, and Sifsei Chachamim on Genesis 4, in the passages concerning the

wives' withdrawal and the inference from Cain. The finding is limited to the commentaries examined in this study, rather than every work on Rashi. See also the chapter commentaries on the 'Tanakh al HaPerek' website. [Source 1]

[Source 2]

6. The printed Tanchuma, Bereishis 11. Verified in transcription; the entire manuscript tradition was not compared. The account includes a horn and distance, but does not explicitly describe directing the father's hands. [Source 1]

7. Rabbi Yosef Chaim, Imrei Binah, part 1, Chikrei Lev, paragraph 7, folio 89a, right column; the account begins on folio 88b. The transcription was read during the study. According to scan examinations reported to the editor, the sentence and parentheses occur in two copies: the National Library copy (image n187), printed in Jerusalem with no year on the title page and catalogued as [5668?]; and the Jerusalem 5691 edition edited by Rabbi Yaakov Shaul Kassin, HebrewBooks 31373, file page 181. No manuscript examination establishes whether the parentheses originated with the author or editor. [Source 1] [Source 2] [Source 3] [Source 4]

8. Radak, Genesis 4:23; Midrash Aggadah (Buber), Genesis 4:23, the alternative explanation. In Midrash Aggadah the son shows the location; it does not explicitly say that he moves his father's hands. These versions were read in transcription; a review additionally reports the Daat transcription based on the Vienna 5654 edition. [Source 1] [Source 2] [Source 3]

9. World Archery, 'Visually impaired archery: It's about personal challenges,' 22 August 2015; British Blind Sport Archery, Spotters Guidebook, sections 'Informal Summary of Rules for Spotters' and 'Communicating with Your Archer' (updated August 2024). Both online accounts were read. The guide allows adjustment outside a scoring end, reports of arrow landing and safety and timing information during it, and unrestricted speech during sighting arrows; it calls itself an informal summary. This does not verify a 2026 rulebook or document hunting. [Source 1] [Source 2]

10. Bava Basra 21a: teachers of tinokos and ages 'about six or seven.' The example rules out an obligatory identification of tinok with toddler; it does not determine Tubal-Cain's age. 'A child taken captive' is not clear evidence that the word itself denotes an adult, since it may refer to age at capture. [Source 1]

11. Sefer HaYashar, the narrative midrashic work rather than Rabbeinu Tam's book, Book of Genesis, Bereishis. It is not an established early rabbinic source for this account; its dating is not decided here. Its language about aging and eyesight was examined in the online transcription and must be read together.

[Source 1]

12. Alshich's Toras Moshe, Genesis 4:24. The reckoning of seventy-seven is presented as a possible explanation of Lamech's own calculation, and the blind man's act as close to an unavoidable accident. Verified in transcription. [Source 1]

13. Mishnah Makkos 2:3; Makkos 9b, the exposition of 'without seeing.' The dispute concerns liability to exile. The comparison with the Midrash is for study, rather than a legal ruling about Lamech or proof that using a bow involves no negligence. [Source 1]

14. Rashi, Genesis 4:15 and 4:19. The generations are Adam, Cain, Enoch, Irad, Mehujael, Methushael, and Lamech. Lamech's children are seventh if Cain is counted first. Verse 19 says 'after he had fathered children and brought the seventh generation into being.' Rashi does not explicitly say that the sign's protection expired at the time of retribution. The explanation concerning fear of animals is marked as an alternative text in the Sefaria edition. [Source 1] [Source 2]

15. Maharsha, Chiddushei Aggados, Nedarim 41a, comment beginning 'When a person's end has arrived.' The transcription was checked for the Almighty's agents and the mention of blind Lamech. It describes no miracle in aiming the arrow. [Source 1]

16. Abarbanel, Genesis 4, explanation of Lamech's speech following the discussion of his children: a young boy, hair and concealment, the purpose of hunting, a blow with the bow, and the preliminary mention of Roman writings. Read in a transcription that the site marks as requiring proofreading; extended quotation for distribution should be compared with print. [Source 1]

17. Rabbi Menachem Mendel Kasher, Torah Shelemah, volume 2, Genesis 4, passage 146, printed pages 337-338; HebrewBooks 51452, file pages 165-166. According to scan examinations reported to the editor, the horn between the mountains appears in the body of passage 146, which concludes by citing Tanchuma, Bereishis 11. The correction from 'Midrash HaBiur' to 'Or HaAfelah' was reported from the introduction,

'Devarim Achadim,' section 3, file page 5. The manuscript extract is in the note to passage 145 on page 338; no shelfmark is given. The passage numbers were read in an enlarged examination reported to the editor, rather than an independent scan examination by him. [Source 1] [Source 2] [Source 3]

18. Sforno, Genesis 4:23-24, on the killings as injuries to Lamech himself and the identification of Cain and his son. It is not a source for blindness or the aiming method. [Source 1]

19. Beis Yaakov, Bereishis 70:3 and 71:1. Read in transcription on Ashoova. The inward reading and intentional killing of Tubal-Cain belong to this work's interpretation; they should not be attributed to Rashi or treated as details of Tanchuma's text. [Source 1] [Source 2]

20. Sanhedrin 91a-b, the parable of the lame man and the blind man. Its comparison with the structure of Lamech's account is proposed by this study; it does not identify the account's source. [Source 1]

21. Bereishis Rabbah 23:4; Rashi 4:24; Onkelos and the Targum attributed to Yonasan, Genesis 4:23. These are alternative readings of the speech, rather than a determination that every other tradition is untrue. [Source 1]

22. Ibn Ezra, Ramban, and Radak, Genesis 4:23-24. Transcription checks reported an attribution of the wives' quarrelling interpretation to Rabbi Yosef Kara in Paaneach Raza, Bereishis 66. Tur HaArokh, 4:23, attributes a similar interpretation to Rabbi Yosef Kimchi. The two names must not be identified without evidence. Another transcription examination reported to the editor found an additional attribution to Rabbi Yosef Kara in Bechor Shor. [Source 1] [Source 2] [Source 3] [Source 4]

23. Malbim and Haamek Davar, Genesis 4:23-24. Verified in transcription. Netziv emphasizes using metal implements without knowing their

lethal power; a bow and blindness should not be added to his explanation. [Source 1] [Source 2]

24. HaKesav VeHaKabbalah, Genesis 4:23-24, the end of his discussion. His criticism was verified in transcription and read in the context of the alternative interpretation he proposes. [Source 1]

25. Septuagint, Genesis 4:23, Greek text read online. It mentions a man, a young man, a wound, and a bruise, but the detailed causal wording is Rabbi Kasher's interpretation. Tubal-Cain is not named here; 'young man' therefore does not establish the son's age in the hunting account. See Torah Shelema, page 338, note to passage 145, and note 148, pages 339-340 (file pages 167-168). According to a scan examination reported to the editor, in the continuation of note 148 Kasher brings 'because he wounded me' from another source in the name of Aquila's translation, adding that it accords with the understanding of the Septuagint. This wording must not be presented as a literal Septuagint quotation. [Source 1] [Source 2]

26. The comparison summarizes the sources in notes 1, 6, 7, 8, 11, 16, and 17. Midrash Aggadah is a compilation in Buber's edition; Imrei Binah is a later interpretation; Sefer HaYashar is a later narrative work. They should not all be classified as 'seven rabbinic Midrashim.'

27. Pardes Yosef, Genesis 4:23. 'The Midrashim differ' was located in an identifiable transcription result and also reported from transcription and OCR. There is no independent scan verification here. The discussion concerns a blind person's exemption from mitzvos and the relationship between Midrashim, rather than the mechanics of shooting. [Source 1]

28. Mi Yodeya, 'Why was blind Lamech carrying a bow?', 16 June 2024. The page was examined and contains an answer. It is not a classical source or a complete solution to the hunting question. [Source 1]

Edition note: The notes distinguish transcriptions read from scan examinations reported to the editor. Independent viewing that has not been completed should not be attributed to him. An online check does not compare every printing and manuscript; a suggestion remains a suggestion. This edition incorporates source corrections and refinement of the argument.