

YeshivahAI Beit Midrash

Daily Chumash Study Series

Naamah, Wife of Noach

Identity, age, and fertility: questions and approaches

Reader edition (20)

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Naamah: her name, family, and deeds

Naamah is the fourth woman named in the Torah, in the order of the verses: Chavah (Bereishis 3:20), Adah and Tzillah, Lemech's two wives (4:19), then Naamah (4:22). Other women, such as Kayin's wife, are mentioned without their names. This brief detail places Naamah among the first women whom the Torah chose to name.

In chapter 5 the Torah repeatedly says “he fathered sons and daughters” without naming them. Here, within Kayin's descendants, Naamah is named as Tuval Kayin's sister, without a separate account of her deeds. Unlike her brothers, Scripture does not connect her to a craft or invention.

Why is she mentioned? Ramban (4:22) explains her identification as Noah's wife through her righteousness and the righteous children she bore. According to Rabbi Abba bar Kahana in Bereishis Rabbah (23:3), her name reflects her pleasant deeds. On this reading, her mention connects Kayin's family to humanity's continuation after the Flood.

In the Flood narrative too, Noah's wife is unnamed: “Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives with him entered the Ark” (Bereishis 7:7). The identification as Naamah rests on Rashi and the Midrash. Yefeh To'ar on Bereishis Rabbah 23:3 emphasizes, according to Rabbi Abba bar Kahana, that although Tuval Kayin was wicked, his sister's deeds were pleasant and she did not learn from him. Family closeness does not mean the same way of life.

Why weapons with Tuval Kayin, but plowing tools with Noah?

Rashi describes Tuval Kayin as improving Kayin's craft by making “weapons for murderers” (4:22). Of Noah, he says that he prepared plowing tools (5:29). A question arises: if Lemech's family already possessed metalworking skill, why does Rashi emphasize instruments of killing with Tuval Kayin, but attribute relief from agricultural toil to Noah? The need for bread and working the soil did not begin in Noah's time.

First distinguish the three brothers: Yaval is linked to tents and livestock, Yuval to the harp and pipe, and Tuval Kayin to copper and iron working (Bereishis 4:20-22). Yuval is the first person in the Torah's sequence explicitly linked to musical instruments, called the father of those who play them. This is early biblical testimony to instrumental music's beginnings, without an explicit invention year. Alongside the plain sense, Rashi 4:20 cites a Midrash connecting Yaval and Yuval's activities to idolatry. Tuval Kayin is not the Torah's first inventor;

earlier it tells of Kayin building a city (4:17). Radak 4:22 suggests that metalworking existed before Tuval Kayin, whose innovation was improving polishing and making tools. Ramban 4:23 adds that making a sword is not itself a sin: its use is decisive.¹

Netziv reads the passage differently. In Ha'amek Davar 4:21 he explains that Yuval developed musical instruments for livestock needs. At 4:22 he interprets Tuval Kayin as continuing Kayin's agricultural work and making plowing and harvesting tools. In the same verse he describes Naamah's way as fitting life's necessities, explaining that the good in Kayin continued through the woman to sustain the world. The heading's question therefore rests on Rashi's emphases; the negative picture must not be presented as shared by all commentators, or Netziv's words as a continuation of the same interpretation.²

Of Noach it first says “he fathered a son,” with the name given in the next verse. This is a notable change in chapter 5's birth sequence; Rashi 5:28 interprets it: “from him the world was built.” This is not the Torah's first statement that a son was born: it says so of Sheis and Enosh at 4:25-26. Tanchuma, Bereishis 11 attributes to Noach the preparation of plows, sickles, axes, and work tools. This was a major change in labor and livelihood. Alongside the tools, Rashi 5:29 also mentions the earth's relief from the thorns and thistles it produced when wheat was sown.³

By way of a possible interpretation: Naamah, creative power, and the time for wisdom to emerge

The difference between weapons and plows presents two directions for creative power: increasing destruction or easing human labor and building the world. According to Rabbi Abba bar Kahana, as explained by Yefeh To'ar, Naamah did not learn from her brother's deeds. Joining Noach's household, she links the families and embodies a redirection of Tuval Kayin's creative power: from destruction to building. Netziv emphasizes another side of this connection: continuing the good in Kayin's family.

Why did the relief described by Rashi come specifically through Noach? Need and talent alone do not tell the whole story. “He made everything beautiful in its time” (Koheles 3:11): human talent and effort work within the Creator's governance, and the revelation of knowledge has

1. Rashi 4:20-22; Radak 4:22; Ramban 4:23. Commentators' texts in Mikra'os Gedolos HaKeter; Ramban on the chapter.

2. Ha'amek Davar, Bereishis 4:22, Tuval Kayin and “the sister of Tuval Kayin was Naamah,” full text.

3. Rashi, Bereishis 5:28-29; Tanchuma, Bereishis 11.

its time. We do not know why a particular discovery awaited a particular generation, but can contemplate its timing as part of Divine providence.

Artificial intelligence provides another example. In the Dartmouth project of summer 1956, researchers sought to give computers learning and language capabilities. Rules programmed in advance helped with narrow tasks but struggled with language and unfamiliar situations. Computing and available information were limited too. Disappointment with the results led to funding cuts and periods of slowdown: “AI winters.”

Research continued. Stronger computers, abundant information, and neural networks expanded learning from examples: rather than programming each answer, systems were trained to recognize patterns. Language models developed in this way, learning from texts and responding according to context. On November 30, 2022, ChatGPT was launched publicly, opening a simple conversation with a language model to a broad audience: questions, explanations, and follow-up questions.

To the user, inanimate material appeared to become “speaking,” answering in human language. Decades of research reached a public breakthrough at a particular time. From a perspective of faith, this timing too belongs to the Creator's governance; our task is to direct the capability toward learning, rectification, and building.⁴

From the identification to the question of age

The Torah says: “And the sister of Tuval Kayin was Naamah.” Rashi adds four Hebrew words: “She is Noach's wife.” This seems a small family detail. But Rashi on the same parashah tells of Lemech and his wives approaching Adam HaRishon. At the conversation's end Adam returned to Chavah and Sheis was born. “Adam lived 130 years and fathered” (Bereishis 5:3) connects the visit to the end of the 130-year separation and year 130 from Creation. Noach was born only in 1056. If Naamah was already born at that conversation, she preceded his birth by more than 900 years.⁵

The difficulty grows if Naamah is also the mother of Noach's sons: their births begin when Noach is 500. Both exceptional longevity and childbearing at an exceptional age therefore need explanation. The commentators know the difficulty; some change the woman's identity or birth time, while others seek to retain the earlier Naamah as Noach's wife.

4. Dartmouth proposal, 1955-1956; IBM, The History of Artificial Intelligence; OpenAI, Introducing ChatGPT, November 30, 2022.

5. Rashi, Bereishis 4:22-25; 5:3. Naamah's birth year is not explicit; Rashi in context appears in the research edition. Further discussion: research edition, pp. 4-5, 17-18.

Reading map

Key: A — age/fertility · G — generations · F — flood timing · D — decree

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1. Three questions to separate

Question	What needs explaining
Naamah's age	How did she live so long, and bear children so late?
Kayin's generational pace	How did his line reach Lemech and his children within 130 years?
“Tomorrow the flood will come”	Why did Lemech's wives fear a flood so long before Noach's Flood?

One question can be resolved without resolving the others. Early childbearing explains many generations in a short period, not childbearing in old age. Interpreting “tomorrow” explains the women's fear, not Naamah's birth year. This distinction accompanies the entire inquiry.⁶

2. Was Naamah really born before year 130?

“130” is the number represented by the Hebrew letters kuf-lamed. An “interpretation” here means a consistent reading of Lemech's story without mixing contradictory accounts. Rashi does not say that Naamah was born in year 130 or was a twin, so the birth date must not be presented as though written in the verse. Nevertheless, early birth has genuine interpretive support.

In one interpretation Rashi gives, Lemech accidentally killed Kayin and Tuval Kayin. In another, from the Midrash, “Lemech killed no one”; his wives separated after fulfilling procreation, because of the decree to destroy Kayin's descendants after seven generations. Killing

6. Further discussion: research edition, p. 3, the questions and assumptions.

and non-killing must not be merged into one story. Rashi 4:25 gives the visit to Adam and the 130 years of separation. Tanchuma too places the killing and visit in one sequence. Each interpretation's difficulty can therefore be examined separately; another link is needed to place Naamah earlier, such as her birth with Tuval Kayin.⁷

How the commentators place her birth earlier

Chizkuni interprets Yaval and Yuval as twins and applies that explanation to “the sister of Tuval Kayin was Naamah.” Agra DeKallah says Naamah was born with Tuval Kayin. Accepting this, if Tuval Kayin was born before the visit to Adam, his twin was too; she cannot have been born centuries after him.

Maskil LeDavid suggests another possibility: Beis Shammai holds that procreation is fulfilled with two males, Beis Hillel with a male and female. He suggests that Adah, with two sons, relied on Beis Shammai, and Tzillah, with a son and daughter, on Beis Hillel. Both therefore separated after fulfilling the mitzvah. On this reading, Tzillah's daughter is Naamah. The Re'em discusses births before reconciliation; the full Yefeh To'ar places Naamah's birth before Sheis's. Early birth thus has genuine interpretive support, though Rashi's wording alone does not require it. In this account, where Lemech's children were already born before the visit, the creative family of Yaval, Yuval, and Tuval Kayin belongs to the first 130 years from Creation. Panim Yafos 4:22 also places Sheis's birth after Lemech's act; its subject is Kayin's decree, not Naamah's age.⁸

“After they had fulfilled procreation” is Rashi's wording at 4:24; it is absent from Bereishis Rabbah's text before us. Sifsei Chachamim, citing Nachalas Yaakov, discusses Rashi's addition to explain why the women had previously borne children for the mitzvah. The words alone do not prove Naamah was among those already born; the commentators make that connection. Maskil LeDavid's “after fulfilling is not exact” concerns whether the mitzvah's obligation is attributed to the women or husband, not a statement that the children were unborn.

3. The calculation: known and conditional

The reproductive ages in chapter 5 place Noach's birth in 1056. His sons begin to be born in 1556; Shem's birth, calculated from “100 years old ... two years after the Flood,” falls in 1558.

7. Tanchuma, Bereishis 11; Rashi 4:23-25. Do not combine contradictory traditions. Rashi's full wording: research edition, pp. 5, 17-18.

8. Chizkuni 4:21; Maskil LeDavid 4:24; Agra DeKallah 508; Re'em and Yefeh To'ar. Further discussion: research edition, pp. 4-5.

The Flood begins in 1656; leaving the Ark occurs in 1657. If, for the calculation, we assume Naamah was born in 130, the results are:

Age table — conditional calculation, not a stated birth date

Event	Year from Creation	Naamah's age if born in 130
Noach's birth	1056	926
His sons begin to be born	1556	1426
Shem's birth	1558	1428
Beginning of the Flood	1656	1526
Year of leaving the Ark	1657	1527

This is a conditional calculation, not a reported birth date; her marriage age is unknown. If Naamah was born earlier, she was older. Some frame the difficulty assuming birth no later than 129, because the visit preceded the pregnancy with Sheis. That adds a year to each age. But the pregnancy's duration does not establish year 129; it is only an arithmetical scenario. The calculation does not establish age in months.⁹

Rashi's account gives no explicit marriage date. Age 926 at Noach's birth is not her marriage age. Nor is 1527 necessarily an error: it may refer to the Flood's beginning if born in 129, or the year of leaving if born in 130. The event and assumed birth year must always be specified.

Did Naamah outlive Serach daughter of Asher?

Serach is known for exceptional longevity: she is counted among those descending to Egypt (Bereishis 46:17), named again in the wilderness family census (Bamidbar 26:46), and identified in Midrash with the wise woman addressing Yoav in David's days (Bereishis Rabbah 94:9; Rashi, Shmuel II 20:19). If Naamah was born in 130, she was 1526 at the Flood's beginning: 1656 minus 130. Earlier birth increases the age. This span far exceeds the period from the descent to Egypt to David, but does not prove Naamah's entire life exceeded Serach's.

Why not declare who lived longest? Identification with the woman in David's days is not Serach's death date. In Pesikta DeRav Kahana, Vayehi Beshalach 11:13,

9. Bereishis 5; 7-8; 11:10. Conditional scenarios and arithmetic: research edition, p. 6.

Serach even appears in conversation with Rabbi Yochanan about the splitting of the sea. Kallah Rabbasi, chapter 3 lists her among those entering Gan Eden alive. We must distinguish a conditional age calculation for Naamah at one event from traditions setting no end to Serach's life. The question illustrates Naamah's extraordinary calculated age; it does not establish that she lived longer than every other woman.¹⁰

4. Changing identity, motherhood, or chronology

A different Naamah

Bereishis Rabbah records a dispute. Rabbi Abba bar Kahana identifies Naamah as Noach's wife; the Sages do not accept this identification. Yefeh To'ar explains their view through the age gap: Noach would have married a woman much older than himself. This answers the other opinion, but the view brought by Rashi still needs explanation.

The narrative Sefer HaYashar describes Noach's wife as Naamah daughter of Chanoch: she is 580 and Noach 498 at marriage, a gap of 82 years. This is a different woman in a different tradition; her age cannot be transferred to Lemech's daughter. A gloss cited in Seder HaDoros suggests a tradition about Noach's wife's name, with identification as the biblical Naamah arising from the shared name. This is an interpretive possibility, not a proven historical fact.

Toldos Yitzchak offers another reason for mentioning Naamah, involving song and her brothers' crafts, without requiring identification as Noach's wife.¹¹

An Ibn Ezra reference was also submitted suggesting that she was one of Noach's sons' wives. Its exact wording was not verified; it remains a reference, not a view that the report alone can establish.¹²

Noach's wife, but not his sons' mother

Abarbanel suggests that Noach first married Naamah, who died before the Flood without sons. Late fertility and survival in the Ark no longer need explanation. But if she was born before 130, the age gap remains. Abarbanel

10. Rashi, Shmuel II 20:19; Pesikta DeRav Kahana 11:13; Kallah Rabbasi, ch. 3, those entering Gan Eden alive.

11. Bereishis Rabbah and Yefeh To'ar; Sefer HaYashar and Seder HaDoros; Toldos Yitzchak. Research edition, pp. 7-8.

12. An identity alternative submitted only as a reference. Research edition, pp. 13-14.

explains his interpretation through the continuation of Kayin's line, not her age; he also does not say Noach's second wife was Chanoch's daughter.

Ramban, by contrast, explains her mention through motherhood: without being the three sons' mother, that reason for mentioning her is absent. These interpretations must not be merged as though they say the same thing.¹³

Ramban: a different timeline

Ramban discusses Kayin's line continuing until the Flood. His framework does not require compressing every generation before Sheis's birth. This may ease the question, but gives no alternative birth date for Naamah. It is another framework, not a solution preserving every constraint under discussion.

Birchas Asher: generational intervals and late birth

Birchas Asher asks about the number of generations: Naamah is the seventh generation from Kayin and Noach the ninth from Sheis, so she seems much older. Citing Rabbi Eitan Shandorfi, he says this is not necessary: perhaps each member of Kayin's line was born in his father's old age. Generations are not a clock; reproductive ages decide. But accepting Naamah's birth before 130, the intervals no longer change her birth date. The answer addresses a difficulty from generational counts, not the 130-year anchor.

We can also suggest that Naamah herself was born centuries after the visit to Adam. Rashi gives no birth year; this could preserve her identity as Tuval Kayin's sister and Noach's sons' mother while significantly reducing the gap. Its cost is assuming Lemech and Tzillah lived and bore children centuries later, and relinquishing the twins and commentators' early-birth readings. Birth close to 130 scarcely helps. No commentator explicitly proposing the large delay in this context was found here; it is a suggested alternative reading, not an explicit solution.¹⁴

5. Retaining the earlier Naamah: longevity

Another direction retains Rashi's identification and early birth. Rabbi Yechiel HaLevi Novick explicitly raises her age and suggests that Kayin's descendants lived exceptionally long

13. Abarbanel 4:17, Kayin's descendants; Ramban 4:22. Motherhood: also P6 in the research. Research edition, pp. 3, 7-8.

14. Birchas Asher and late birth: usefulness and cost; Ramban's framework also on p. 8. Research edition, pp. 8-9.

because Kayin was born before the sin. He qualifies it: "It is possible that his descendants lived longer." There is therefore an author explicitly proposing a direction toward a resolution, though in qualified language.

This proposal addresses Naamah's longevity but specifies neither its exact extent nor preserved fertility. The printed numbers are also inconsistent: assuming birth in 130, the relevant ages are 926, 1426, and 1526. Correcting the figures does not erase the interpretive proposal.¹⁵

In the background stands a general dispute: Rambam, Moreh Nevuchim II:47, distinguishes the exceptionally long-lived named individuals from their contemporaries. Ramban 5:4 extends longevity to those generations. This is a framework dispute, not a targeted solution for Naamah. Centuries of life do not automatically establish more than 1500 years or preserved fertility.¹⁶

6. Agra DeKallah: two different birth miracles

Agra DeKallah first discusses Naamah's own birth. According to the Midrash and Rashi, Lemech took one wife for procreation and one for marital pleasure, giving Tzillah a sterilizing potion. Naamah was nevertheless born, miraculously according to Agra DeKallah. He connects this to her exemption from the decree against Kayin's descendants. This is the miracle of Naamah being born, not the miracle of her bearing Noach's sons.

Elsewhere he discusses her own childbearing. He calls her "by nature an aylonis" - lacking natural reproductive capacity in his account - and explains her sons' birth through the imparting to Noach of "female sparks." This is a Kabbalistic account of exceptional fertility, not merely family attribution. He also states separately that she was Tuval Kayin's twin.¹⁷

The limit matters: being an aylonis is not old age. He does not say she was 1400 or 1500, or that his explanation overcomes such aging. He explains unusual fertility; applying it to the calculated age is our further step.

15. Novick, Nechashvah, Bereishis 19, Melech Machsheves, Noach 5782, PDF 15-16. Research edition, p. 9.

16. Framework of longevity and limits of application to Naamah. Research edition, pp. 13-14.

17. Rashi 4:19; Agra DeKallah, Bereishis 507-508; 532-533. Research edition, pp. 9-10.

7. Our proposal: combining longevity and exceptional fertility

We can suggest joining the two directions: Novick offers an account of longevity; Agra DeKallah explains exceptional fertility. Naamah remains Tuval Kayin's sister, Noach's wife, and his sons' mother, even if born early. This is our possible resolution; no author making this combination was found in the material examined.

What must still be assumed?

First, that the longevity advantage reached the required number of years. Second, that the explanation of an aylonis's fertility can also apply to extreme old age. Third, that both explanations can be combined although each author spoke in his own context. None of these additions is an explicit statement in the sources.

Objection and reply

One might object: Novick connects longevity to Kayin's family, while Agra DeKallah describes exemption from its decree. But exemption need not cancel family connection; the author still identifies her as Lemech's daughter and Tuval Kayin's sister. No necessary contradiction was therefore found.

This removes one objection only. It does not prove the familial advantage lasted 1500 years, or that the aylonis explanation suffices for aging. The combination is neither proved nor disproved: it remains a reasoned possibility, based on two explicit explanations with our additions identified openly.¹⁸

8. Seven generations in a short period

Generational pace has a separate answer. In Beis Elokim, Mabit says that seven generations of Kayin were born before Sheis, within 130 years, and suggests childbearing at 15 or 20. This explains how many generations fit a short period.

“Seventh generation” has different counts. Tanchuma calls Lemech seventh in a count including Adam; Kayin to Lemech has five reproductive links. Kayin to Lemech's children has six; six links of 20 years span 120 years. This illustrates

18. Combination test: added assumptions, objection, and limited reply; further discussion also on p. 20. Research edition, pp. 10-11, 20.

possibility, not reported reproductive ages. Kayin and Hevel's immediate birth in Sanhedrin 38b and Maharzu's account of their growth do not prove that all their descendants grew and reproduced likewise.

Mabit resolves generational pace, not Naamah's longevity or fertility. In context he says no remnant of Kayin survived; his view therefore cannot automatically be joined to the view that Naamah of Kayin's line mothered all Noach's sons.¹⁹

9. Why “tomorrow the flood will come”?

Confusing two Lemechs

Chizkuni and Sifsei Chachamim explain that the women confused the Lemech associated with the calamity: their husband, Lemech son of Mesushael, of Kayin's line, rather than Lemech son of Mesushelach, Noach's father. They therefore feared it was close, in their own time.

Bereishis 5 places Noach's father's birth in 874 and his life at 777 years; he died in 1651, five years before the Flood. This is our calculation from the verses. “In the days of Lemech's descendants” distinguishes Noach's father from his descendants; it does not establish every edition's wording.

Sea inundation

The Re'em, Gur Aryeh, and Maskil LeDavid interpret the feared flood as the ocean's inundation. Yefeh To'ar objects: it was linked to the sin of Enosh's generation, not the decree against Kayin's line. This is a dispute; “local flood” must not be presented as the commentators' wording.

Reprieve until generation seven; “tomorrow” as future

Yefeh To'ar offers his own approach: a reprieve until the seventh generation, after which Kayin's descendants were liable to destruction when the generation deserved punishment. The women feared immediate calamity; it waited until Noach's days.

“Tomorrow” can mean the future, as in “When your son asks you tomorrow.” The visit to Adam need not be moved to Noach's time.²⁰

All three answer the women's fear alone. They do not change Naamah's birth year or explain fertility. Etz Yosef's explanation of their fear of losing descendants

19. Beis Elokim, Sha'ar HaYesodos 21; two generational counts and contextual limit. Research edition, pp. 11-12.

20. Three approaches to timing; full Yefeh To'ar versus Re'em. Research edition, pp. 12-13.

does not require them to have lived near the Flood; the cited passage offers no fourth approach.

10. Kayin's decree is not the age question

If Naamah mothered Noach's sons, Kayin's line seemingly continued through her. Panim Yafos explains that the decree applies to the paternal family, and Noach's wife's descendants are not named after Kayin. Ramban and Ha'amek Davar emphasize good continuing through the woman. Agra DeKallah explains her exemption differently. Resolving the decree still leaves longevity and fertility to examine.

Maharsha, mentioned in the discussions, addresses identifying a woman through her brother and uses Naamah as an example. He does not resolve Kayin's decree or her age there. Nezer HaKodesh remains an unread reference. "Ichud BeChidud," citing Moshav Zekeinim, says Tzillah raised her sister's children; the newsletter author infers Naamah was Adah's daughter. This is secondhand, without verification in Moshav Zekeinim itself. It supplies neither a birth date nor proof of late birth.²¹

Precedents such as Chirah of Adullam, identified by the Sages with Chiram in Bereishis Rabbah 85:4, show that tradition recognizes exceptional lives. They do not specifically explain Naamah's age or childbearing in old age. Reincarnation suggestions and unread references do not become explicit tradition merely by being mentioned.

11. What can we conclude?

Alternatives ease the difficulty by changing identity, motherhood, or chronology; each must be assessed on its own terms.

For the earlier Naamah, there is an explicit qualified longevity proposal and an explicit account of exceptional fertility.

Combining them may offer a resolution, but applying the account to such aging and connecting the authors is our proposal.

Generational pace and "tomorrow" have separate answers.

Rashi's interpretation supplies neither birth year nor marriage date. No author making the complete combination was found in the examined material; this does not deny the existence of such a source elsewhere in the literature.²²

21. Panim Yafos 4:22; Maharsha, Bava Basra 110a; maternal-line alternative. Research edition, pp. 13-14.

22. Approaches and conclusion with open questions. Research edition, pp. 14-16.

Central sources for further study

Source	Contribution
Rashi 4:20-25; 5:28-29; Tanchuma, Bereishis 11	Lemech's family, Noach's plowing tools, identification of his wife, and two Lemech narratives.
Chizkuni 4:21-24; Maskil LeDavid 4:24	Twins, Tzillah's son and daughter, fulfilling the mitzvah, and the two Lemechs.
Full Yefeh To'ar, Bereishis Rabbah 23	Age difficulty explaining the Sages; reprieve until generation seven; “tomorrow” as future.
Ramban and Abarbanel, Bereishis 4	Different approaches to motherhood and continuity of Kayin's line.
Novick, Nechashvah, Bereishis 19	Qualified longevity proposal; printed numbers require correction.
Agra DeKallah 507-508; 532-533	Miraculous birth, twins, and an aylonis's fertility: three distinct subjects.
Mabit, Beis Elokim, Yesodos 21	Early childbearing to explain seven generations in 130 years.
Re'em; Gur Aryeh; Sifsei Chachamim; Panim Yafos	Birth order, sea inundation, two Lemechs, and the decree against Kayin's descendants.