

BBH Workbook p. 181 # 1
(Gen 4:9)

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־קַיִן אֵי הֶבֶל אָחִיךָ
וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יָדַעְתִּי הֲשֹׁמֵר אָחִי אֲנֹכִי

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־קַיִן

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־קַיִן “And the LORD said to Cain...” is composed of the Qal Imperfect 3ms of אָמַר with the Waw Conversive, the Tetragram, and the prepositional phrase.

אֵי הֶבֶל אָחִיךָ

אֵי הֶבֶל אָחִיךָ “... where is Abel your brother?” The interrogative אֵי asks where¹ is Abel? אָחִיךָ is אָח with the 2ms pronominal suffix (BBH §9.9, p. 252). אָח, like אָב, adds an Hireq Yod before a pronominal suffix. Do not confuse this with the Type II suffix.

¹ The Brown, Driver Briggs Lexicon reports the more usual form is אֵיָה an interrogative adverb “where?” When used alone, or with other adverbs it contracts to אֵי.

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יָדַעְתִּי

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יָדַעְתִּי “... And he (Cain) said, ‘I do not know...’.” This is the Qal Imperfect 3ms of אָמַר, the negative particle (*BBH* §13.12, p. 145 and §15.9, p. 170) and the Qal Perfect 1cs of יָדַע.

הֲשֹׁמֵר אָחִי אֲנִכִּי

הֲשֹׁמֵר אָחִי אֲנִכִּי “... am I the one keeping my brother?” or “...am I my brother’s keeper?” The interrogative particle הֲ is prefixed to the Qal (active) ms participle of שָׁמַר, (predicative use) which is in construct to אָחִי, “my brother.” The verb “to be” is implied between אָחִי and אֲנִכִּי lit. “... the keeper of my brother am I?”

FINAL TRANSLATION

“And the LORD said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ And he replied, ‘I do not know, am I my brother’s keeper?’”