



The Sacrificed Seed

Further Thoughts on the Akedah

By John J. Parsons

The first occurrence of the word “love” in the Bible is connected with Abraham’s love for his “only” son Isaac, whom he offered as a sacrifice on Moriah. Abraham “built the altar,” “laid the wood in order,” “bound his son,” and “laid him on top of the wood” to foreshadow the sacrifice of the Promised Seed to come...



THE VERY FIRST OCCURRENCE OF THE WORD “love” in the Scriptures refers to Abraham’s passion for his son Isaac (i.e., the word *ahavah*: אָהָבָה, in Gen. 22:2). Isaac was the long-awaited heir, Abraham’s “miracle boy,” his only child of his beloved wife Sarah. God Himself named the child Yizchak (יִצְחָק) before his birth in anticipation of the “laughter” and great hope he would bring to Abraham and Sarah. Indeed, it was this very hope in God’s promise that moved God to rename Abram to Abraham, and Sarai to Sarah... In short, Isaac represented all the dreams and aspirations of Abraham’s heart. In light of this, imagine the inner agony, the unspeakable heartache, and the great turmoil Abraham experienced when God asked him to *sacrifice* his beloved and irreplaceable son as a burnt offering.... Would Abraham be willing to obey - even if that meant destroying his dream for Isaac - and indeed all his hopes? More radically, would Abraham be able to trust God - even if that meant surrendering his understanding and rationality?

In Jewish tradition, the drama of the mind-blowing sacrifice of Abraham’s beloved son is called the Akedah (עֲקֵדָה, “binding”), which is universally regarded as the supreme test of Abraham’s obedience and faith. The Akedah is so important that it is read each morning as a prelude to the Shacharit (morning) service. It is also read during Rosh Hashanah, since tradition says that Abraham sacrificed his son during this time. The blast of the shofar is intended to remind us of God’s gracious atonement provided through the substitutionary sacrifice of the lamb (as well as to “drown out” the voice of the accuser). In this way, the Akedah represents the truth of the message of the cross of Yeshua the Messiah, and how God’s attribute of justice was “overcome” by His attribute of compassion at the cross (Psalm 85:10).



“After these things...”

The story of the offering of Isaac, Abraham’s “promised seed,” begins with the statement, “After these things God tested Abraham...” (Gen. 22:1). Notice that the phrase, “after these things” (וַיְהִי אֶחָד הַיָּמִים) grammatically connects the preceding narrative of Abraham’s expulsion of his son Ishmael at God’s command (Gen. 21:12-14) and the covenant he made with Abimelech at Beersheba (Gen. 21:-22-32). The verses that immediately precede the account of the Akedah, however, read: “Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God (אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם). And Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines” (Gen. 21:33-34). Since Abraham was in the godly line of Seth and Shem, he undoubtedly believed in the promise of the coming “seed of the woman” who would “reverse the curse” originally given to humanity (Gen. 3:15). Did the “tamarisk tree” recall the original Tree of Life that the LORD promised would be restored by the promised seed? Did Abraham believe that his son Isaac was the Redeemer to come?

“God tested Abraham...”

“After these things God *tested* Abraham...” Pirke Avot 5:3 says, “With ten tests our father Abraham was tested and he withstood them all -- in order to make known how great was our father Abraham’s love for God.” The sages list these tests as:

1. Rejecting the religion (idolatry) of his father Terach (Josh. 24:2).
2. Leaving the country of his birth for an unknown land (Gen. 12:1).
3. Being tested with famine upon entry to the Promised Land (Gen. 12:10).
4. Dealing with Sarah’s abductions (Gen. 12:14-15; 20:2).
5. Interceding for Lot and fighting against the four kings (Gen. 14:12-16).
6. Experiencing the dreadful vision of future captivity (Gen. 15:1-21).
7. Undergoing painful circumcision at age 99 (Gen. 17:10).
8. Enduring the infertility of Sarah, despite the promise of an heir (Gen. 11:30; 15:3).
9. Evicting his wife Hagar and his firstborn son Ishmael (Gen. 21:9-14).
10. Sacrificing his beloved son Isaac as a burnt offering (Gen. 22:1-19). The sages universally agree that the sacrifice of Isaac was the most difficult test (*nissayon*) Abraham faced (see below for more).



“Here I am...”

So the story of the Akedah begins: “After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I” (Gen. 22:1). After some 30 years of silence, living as a sojourner among the Philistines, God finally called to faithful Abraham, who simply answered, “Here I am” (i.e., *hineini*: הֵנִינִי). What is remarkable about this “hineini” is that it is Abraham’s *only* recorded response to God’s forthcoming request: “Take your son, your only son, whom you love, even Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Gen. 21:2).

The midrash adds some imaginary dialog between God and Abraham in order to explain the rhetoric used in this verse of the Torah: “Take your son, your only son, whom you love, even Isaac”:

God (אֱלֹהִים) said: “Take your *son* (בֵּן).” Abraham answered, “Which one? I have two sons.” So God said, “Your *only* (יָחִיד) son.” Abraham answered, “But each one of the two is the only one of his mother.” So God said, “Whom *you love* (אֲשֶׁר-אָהַבְתָּ).” Abraham answered, “I love both.” So God finally named the son directly: “Take *Isaac* (אִתְּ-יִצְחָק).” (Midrash Rabbah, Bereshit)

Despite the speculation provided by midrash, the written Torah records that when God called out to Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son, Abraham replied with only one word: *hineini*, “Here I am,” and began immediately preparing for the sacrifice. And as we will see in the subsequent narrative, three days would pass from the time God asked Abraham until they arrived at Moriah, and the Torah only records that Abraham said this one word: *hineini*. Both God and Abraham were silent during this awful test of faith...

“Go to the land of Moriah...”

“*Please* take (קַח-נָא) your son, your only son, whom you love, even Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah (הַמֹּרְיָה), and offer him there as a burnt offering (עֹלָה) on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Gen. 21:2). Notice that the phrase “go to the land of Moriah” uses the same verb that God used to call Abraham to leave for the Promised Land (i.e., *lekh-lekha*: לֶךְ-לְךָ in Gen. 12:1). So the progression is first “go for yourself” from the land of your origin (i.e., the realm of the flesh, of natural human life), and then “go for yourself” to the place of atonement and substitutionary sacrifice (i.e., the realm of the spirit, of eternal life).



The land of Moriah (אֶרֶץ הַמִּזְרֵיחַ) was not unknown to Abraham, since it was understood from the time of Adam and Eve to have been the place where God created the universe. The dust of Moriah is said to have been used to create Adam, and Mount Moriah was said to have been the place that Adam first offered sacrifice, as did his sons Cain and Abel. After the Great Flood, Noah commission his firstborn son Shem to be the family high priest (i.e., *Malki-Tzedek*). Shem later established a school at Moriah that became the central place of Torah study for the post-flood generation. According to tradition, Shem called the place *Shalayim* (i.e., Shelem, “perfect”), since the bedrock at Moriah was called *Even ha-Shetiyah*, “the Foundation Stone,” referring to the creation of the earth on the First Day (Isa. 28:16). Later, Abraham called the place *Adonai Yireh* (“God will see”), and subsequently Moriah was renamed by combining these two to form “Jerusalem.” At any rate, the mountain which God would show Abraham was none other than Zion, the Mountain of the LORD, and the site of the future Temple (as well as the crucifixion of Yeshua).

It should be noted here that some commentators claim that Abraham actually misunderstood God’s commandment to offer up his son. When God said, “Take your son... and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there” (Gen. 22:2), God did not intend for Abraham to kill Isaac, but only that he should “dedicate” him upon the altar at Moriah. The Hebrew verb *alah* (עָלָה) can mean “to ascend” or “to climb” in addition to turning something into smoke (i.e., via burnt offering). Understood in this way, the command could be rendered, “Take your son... and go to the land of Moriah and cause him to *ascend* [הִעֲלֵהוּ] there for an ascent [לְעֹלָה] upon one of the mountains which I will tell you.” In other words, the Hebrew verb translated “offer him up” [הִעֲלֵהוּ] should have been understood as “cause him to ascend,” perhaps in a way similar to Jacob’s vision of the ladder that ascended toward heaven. Rashi notes that when God said, “Which [i.e., the sacrifice of humans] I commanded not, nor did it come into My mind” (Jer. 7:31) refers to Isaac, whom God never intended to slaughter, but only to be tested (Ta’anit 4a).

Abraham, however, understood God’s instruction to mean that Isaac was to be offered as a human sacrifice (i.e., a whole burnt offering (עֹלָה), a cult practice not uncommon among the pagan cultures immersed in Molech idolatry. Some have speculated that the test given to Abraham centered primarily on renouncing such pagan conceptions of God. The temptation to elevate blind obedience to an arbitrary deity (אֱלֹהִים) above the dictates of compassion and conscience had to be overcome. Abraham’s temptation, so to speak, was whether to listen to the voice of God (אֱלֹהִים) or to heed the voice of the LORD.



Why didn't Abraham argue with God (אֱלֹהִים) by remembering Him as the LORD (יהוה), the Compassionate Source of life? Earlier he had argued with God regarding the destruction of Sodom. So why didn't he argue to save his own son? Might this have been Abraham's test, namely, that God wanted Abraham to argue and to challenge the command to perform child sacrifice? Or why didn't he ask, "Why do you taunt me by giving me a son in my old age only to have him taken away?" Why didn't Abraham protest that his descendants could never inherit the Promised Land if his heir were killed? Indeed, how could Abraham have been in his right mind during this test? As Soren Kierkegaard reminds us in his book *Fear and Trembling*, this is *yirat Elohim* - the fear of God - taken to point of sheer madness.

“He arose early...”

“So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him” (Gen. 22:3).

Instead of arguing with God about the rightness of the request, Abraham immediately began preparing for the sacrifice. He did not question God's instructions, nor, as we know from New Testament Scripture, did he doubt that God would be able to fulfill His promise that Isaac would be the heir of a multitude of people. Abraham “saddled his donkey,” indicating that he took personal responsibility for his mission. The midrash states that the two young men were Ishmael and Eliezer, respectively. Abraham cut the wood for the burnt offering ahead of time, though this is left unexplained in the text of the Torah (a midrash states that it was to ensure that the wood was “kosher,” that is, worm-free). Another possibility is that the wood was considered sacred to Abraham, perhaps cut from the terebinth tree he had earlier planted at Beersheba.

The Miracle of the Test

There are countless commentaries written about the Akedah, with various theories about what it all means or why the test was administered. Some of the sages link “after these things” (Gen. 22:1) with the treaty Abraham had earlier made with Abimelech (Gen. 21:27). God was angry at Abraham for making this covenant since He had promised to give all the land of Canaan to his descendants. Now Abraham's children would be unable to conquer the land until Abimelech's grandson would die. In effect, Abraham's decision to covenant with the Philistines resulted in the exile to Egypt, and the test of the Akedah was meant to refine Abraham's faith and obedience...



A midrash states that after Isaac had become a wealthy man, his older brother Ishmael visited him and taunted him regarding the virtue of circumcision. “I was thirteen years old when God commanded my father to circumcise us. I willingly submitted to this painful operation in obedience to my father and to God. But you, on the other hand, were a mere baby, before you had the intelligence to protest.” Isaac replied, “You praise yourself because of one organ of your body, but I swear that if God commanded my father to sacrifice my entire body, I would do so joyfully.” God heard Isaac’s remark and took note of it. He would one day test Abraham with just such a command...

Another midrash (quoting from Sanhedrin 89b) says that the sacrifice of Isaac was similar to God’s test of the prophet Job. One day the angels came to minister before God and Satan was among them. The LORD said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it” (Job 1:7). And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant *Abraham*, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Abraham fear God for no reason? He had no sons for a long time and he built altars to please you, but after his request for a child was granted, he has long forgotten you. He sacrificed many cattle for a feast for Isaac, but he did not offer you a gift of thanks. Now many years have passed since then and he has yet to offer you a single sacrifice!” God answered that Abraham had made the feast in honor of his son, yet if He asked him to kill his son for the sake of God, he would gladly do so. That is what the words, “After these things God tested Abraham” means: after Satan’s words of challenge were uttered, God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Rashi suggests that God prefaced the test with the word “please” (i.e., “Please take [אֶת־יִצְחָק] your son, your only son, whom you love, even Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah and offer him up as a burnt offering.” God modified His request with “please” [אֲנִי] because the sacrifice of Isaac was not a command, and therefore Abraham was in a position to refuse.

Immediately after Abraham agreed to fulfill God’s will, Satan began scheming of ways to defeat him. He placed numerous obstacles in Abraham’s way to prevent him from fulfilling God’s request, such as causing a surging river to appear directly on the path. He whispered into Isaac’s ears that Abraham had gone insane. He tried to make Abraham question whether he had actually heard the voice of God. He disguised himself as an old man to Abraham who insinuated that Abraham had listened to a devil rather than God. Satan later disguised himself as a distressed Isaac and appeared to torment Sarah, hoping that she would somehow intervene and divert Abraham’s mission. Throughout the journey to Moriah, Satan tried his best to dissuade Abraham, but God gave him grace to prevail (for more on this, see the “Midrash of the White Ram”).



Other commentators speculate as to whether there was an “Ishmael connection” with the Akedah. According to Rashi, the sacrifice of Isaac was *middah keneged middah* (“like for like”) justice applied to Abraham’s unjust eviction of Hagar and his firstborn son. After all, despite his wealth and power, Abraham had sent them away to a certain death in the desert.... Indeed, Isaac later seemed to understand this, and many of his spiritual encounters with God occurred at *Beer-lehai-roi*, the place where Ishmael was first named - and later abandoned.

I should add that Abraham’s test was also *Sarah’s* test. Abraham realized he would have to gain Sarah’s assent to let Isaac go off to Moriah, so he convinced her that sending Isaac to Shem’s school would be the best thing for him. Sarah was apprehensive and clothed her son with special garments. She followed the men as far as Hebron, where Abraham finally told her to turn back. “Who knows if I shall ever look upon you again?” she said in parting to her son. It is a provocative thought that *Sarah* - not Isaac - was the real victim of the Akedah. She, not Isaac, is the one who died, after all. Jewish tradition has associated the cries of Sarah with the blasts of the shofar during Rosh Hashanah. The broken notes of the shofar are thought to recall her crying for her son (for more on this, see “The Akedah of Sarah” on the web site).

Many commentators link the idea of a test (i.e., *nissayon*: נִסָּיוֹן) with that of a “banner” or “miracle” (i.e., *nes*: נֶס). Since God already knows the outcome of the test, its purpose is to “raise up” the righteous by lifting them up to a new spiritual level. In other words, the test is for the individual’s benefit - certainly not to impart any new information to God. The sages note that God tests someone to enable him or her to become aware of their own capabilities (or limitations). Testing is therefore inherently *soul-building*. In addition, God tests people in order to demonstrate their capabilities to others. In the case of Abraham, the test of the Akedah functioned as a “banner” of his righteousness and faithful obedience. He is rightly regarded as the “father of faith” to all who believe (Rom. 4:11,16).

“On the Third Day...”

“On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place *from afar*” (Gen. 22:4). The midrash says that God deliberately prolonged the journey so that the nations should not later claim, “Abraham only sacrificed his son because he was taken by surprise when God gave him the command. No man would ever agree to an order to slaughter his own son, provided he were given ample time for reflection.” Therefore God gave him three full days to consider the matter, and during that entire time Satan did his best to convince both Abraham and Isaac that it was a mistake to continue on their way.



Nonetheless Abraham and Isaac pressed on and traveled *together*. On the third day, Abraham saw a mountain bathed in a light that extended from earth to heaven, with the Shekhinah Glory resting above it. He then asked Isaac, “What do you see?” Isaac answered, “I see a lovely hill with a beautiful cloud rising over it.” Abraham then asked his two servants what they saw, and they answered they saw nothing. Abraham then told his two servants, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and we will return to you” (Gen. 22:5). According to midrash, since the two servants could not see the Shekhinah on the mountain, Abraham left them with the donkey. Then the two servants began to quarrel. Ishmael said that after Isaac’s sacrifice he would be heir, whereas Eliezer said that he would be the heir. A heavenly voice finally said, “Neither of you will be heir, for in Isaac shall the Seed come.”

Notice that Abraham had told the servants that “we will return to you” (נְשׁוּבָה אֵלֵיכֶם). Rashi states this was a prophecy of Isaac’s *resurrection*, though other sages say that it meant that Abraham would return with his ashes. The New Testament comments that this was evidence that Abraham believed that God would resurrect Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19). Abraham believed that - despite the coming sacrifice of his son - both of them would return.

“They Went Together...”

“And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together” (Gen. 22:6). Isaac carried the wood and Abraham carried the fire and knife. According to Jewish tradition, Isaac was a 37 year old man who suspected that he was indeed going to be offered up as a sacrifice (Seder Olam Rabbah). Nevertheless, he did not flee from his father but continued to trust in him... They ascended the mountain together.

But Isaac needed to make sure of what was really happening. He needed to understand what was being asked of him. “And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here am I, my son.” And he said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” (Gen. 22:7). This is the *first* word of dialog recorded over the three day journey... It is hard to imagine Isaac’s pathos during this exchange. The grammar of the dialog is somewhat odd. Why does the Torah say that Isaac said to his father Abraham? And why does Isaac call out to Abraham as *my father* (אָבִי)? You can almost hear Isaac’s faltering words to his father: “he said ... [silence] ... he said, ‘my father....’ he said, ‘...but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ (for more on this, see the “Passion of Isaac”). “Isaac called out to his father, “Father,” in order to arouse his mercy, not so that Abraham would be overcome with emotion and change his plans, but rather so that his love would be offered upon the altar” (Imrei Emes).



Abraham replied, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together (Gen. 22:8). Notice that the Hebrew could be read: “God will provide the lamb for the burnt offering -- my son!” (אלהים יראה-לו השם לעלה בני) - making it plain that Isaac was himself to be offered upon the altar. According to midrash, upon hearing this, Isaac put his face between his hands and wept. “Is this the Torah about which you spoke to mother?” he sobbed. When Abraham heard this, he wept also. But Isaac controlled himself and sought to comfort his father: “Do not feel distressed, my father. Fulfill your Creator’s will through me! May my blood be an atonement for the future Jewish people” (Bereshit Rabbah). The Torah then repeats the phrase, “and they both walked on together,” indicating that Isaac had accepted his sacrificial death. Isaac had yielded his strength in perfect surrender and trust to his father, while Abraham held his beloved son’s hand, afraid that he might lose courage and run away.

Love’s Great Sacrifice...

“When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood” (Gen. 22:9). Here we are reaching the climax of the narrative. Abraham built the altar on Moriah and “arranged the wood in order.” According to tradition, this altar was in the very same place as the one built by Adam and later destroyed by the flood. It was rebuilt by Noah but later destroyed by Nimrod after the Dispersion of Babel. Now it was rebuilt by Abraham. Isaac presumably watched all of this in dreadful anticipation, yet he submitted to his father in complete trust. The aged Abraham then “bound Isaac his son” (בָּנוּ וַיַּעֲקֹד אֶת-יִצְחָק) and carefully laid him on the altar, “on top of the wood.” According to the Talmud, Isaac asked his father to make the knots on his hands and feet tighter - not out of fear that he would change his mind and begin to resist - but in order to encourage his father to offer the sacrifice properly (Bereshit Rabbah 56:8). Since kosher slaughtering required the sacrificial victim’s throat to be cut quickly, Isaac wanted to ensure that he did not flinch and thereby invalidate the sacrifice... Like the Suffering Servant who would come after him, Isaac “set his face like a flint” to fulfill God’s will (Isa. 50:7).

Isaac kept his eyes directed toward heaven as he lay tightly bound and motionless upon the altar. He awaited the final blow and wanted it to fall with love and obedience within his heart. It was to be a shared sacrifice between the beloved son and his father. Finally “Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slaughter (i.e., לַשְׁחַט, from *shechitah*) his son” (Gen. 22:10). The Talmud says that when Abraham “stretched out” his hand, he briefly examined the knife to determine if it was ritually fit, and this delay was the precise moment when the Angel of the LORD (מַלְאֲכַי יְהוָה) called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” (Gen. 22:11). According to various midrashim,



when Abraham put his knife to his son's neck, Isaac's soul departed from him, but it returned when the Angel of the LORD said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me" (Gen. 22:12). Abraham then immediately released Isaac and recited the blessing, "Blessed are You, LORD, who revives the dead."

The Lamb of God

"And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son" (Gen. 22:13). The ram was offered *tachat b'no* (תַּחַת בְּנוֹ, lit. "underneath" or "in exchange" for his son), which is the key idea of *substitutionary atonement* (i.e., the Korban Principle). The midrash says that throughout each step of the sacrifice of the ram, Abraham prayed, "May God regard this as though it were my son..." Abraham then said, "Master of the Universe, when you commanded me to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, I could have contradicted you, but I suppressed all arguments in order to do Your will. If my sons sin in future times, remember Isaac's binding, suppress your anger, and forgive them." Here again is the Rosh Hashanah connection. As the Talmud says, "The Holy One, blessed be He, said, 'Sound before Me the ram's horn so that I may remember on your behalf the binding of Isaac and account it to you as if you had bound yourselves before Me'" (Rosh Hashanah 16a).



"The Mount of the LORD..."

So Abraham called the name of that place, Adonai Yireh ("The LORD will See"); as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD He shall be seen" (Gen. 22:14).

Interestingly, the name Moriah (מֹרִיָּה) comes from the same verb *ra'ah* (רָאָה), "to see" (with the divine Yah- [יָהּ] suffix). There is a play on words here. It was at *Moriah* (lit. "seen by YHVH") that Abraham called the LORD Adonai Yireh (אֲדֹנָי יִרְאֶה), "the LORD will see [our need]" in reference to the provision of substitutionary sacrifice in Isaac's place. Mount Moriah (i.e., Zion) is central to Jewish history. It is the place where Jacob dreamed of the ladder to heaven, it is the site of the Holy Temple, and it is the place



where Yeshua our Messiah was crucified and raised from the dead. The account of the Akedah may rightly be regarded as the “Gospel according to Moses” (Luke 24:27; John 5:46). Therefore it became an adage after the sacrifice of Isaac to say, “On the mount of the LORD he shall be seen.” אֱלֹהִים יִרְאֶה-לוֹ תִשָּׂא / *Elohim yireh-lo haseh* (“God Himself will provide a lamb”).

Reaffirmation of Love

As the smoke of the sacrificial ram ascended in place of Abraham’s son, the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice” (Gen. 22:15-18). The phrase, “by myself have I sworn” is the most solemn oath God could make and must be regarded as an inviolable vow (see also Isa. 45:23, Jer. 22:5, 49:13, 51:14; Amos 6:8; Heb. 6:13-14). Because of Abraham’s great faith and obedience (“because you have obeyed my voice”), God personally vowed to establish His covenant with Abraham and his descendants forever.

The promise of the “Gospel in the Garden,” originally given to Adam and Eve, was preserved through godly line of Seth to Noah, and then again (after the Flood) from Shem to the promised Seed of Abraham. Isaac was a picture of the greater Seed to come, the Eternal Redeemer who would be sacrificed as a blessing to all the families of the earth” (Gen. 12:3). God’s plan was always to bring the Promised Redeemer to Moriah for the salvation of the human race...

Resurrection of Isaac...

“So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba” (Gen. 22:19). There is a tradition that Abraham actually went through with the act of sacrifice on Moriah. After all, the subsequent text shows Abraham returning alone from the mountain (the verb describing Abraham’s return is singular). So where was Isaac? According to this tradition he was left “as ash” upon the altar -- though later God miraculously brought him back to life. In other words, Isaac suffered martyrdom and was resurrected from the dead. Another midrash says that though Abraham did not actually go through with the sacrifice (his hand was stayed by the Angel), the trauma caused Isaac to flee from his father and to seek refuge with Noah’s son Shem (who was considered “Malki-Tzedek” and the high priest of Salem).



The Midrash Hagadol states, “Although Isaac did not die, Scripture regards him as though he had died. And his ashes lay piled on the altar. That is why the text mentions Abraham and not Isaac.”

“I will go...”

It is fascinating that we hear nothing about Isaac after the Akedah until we read of Abraham’s commissioning of Eliezer to find Isaac a bride. Isaac is not even mentioned during the time of the death of his mother Sarah. Is this an analogy of the *hiddenness* of Yeshua to the Jewish people? Abraham returned to his servants alone, while Isaac remained out of sight until a Gentile bride (i.e., Rebekah) was brought to him. Rebekah was willing to leave her family - all that she knew - based on an “otherworldly” promise. Her response to the invitation was simply: “I will go”(Gen. 24:58). This courageous willingness was likewise a characteristic of Abraham who was willing to leave his homeland in search of the greater things of God. Like Abraham, Rebekah was *ger v’toshav* - a “stranger and a sojourner” - who left everything behind in order to become part of God’s chosen family... She is therefore a “picture” of those who likewise say “I will go” to become joined to our beloved Messiah.

