

No Human Sacrifices

The Akedah
Genesis 22:6-13

Intro to the name and lexical structure of the Akedah

Chapter 22 is known as the Akedah (*‘ăqedâ*), or the “binding”. Obviously, it refers to the binding of Isaac. The name is taken from the word “bound” (*wayya ‘ăqōd*) which is found in v. 9.

vv. 1b–6	“Here I am”	(<i>hinnēnî</i> , v. 1b)
	“the two of them went on together”	(<i>wayyēlēkû šēnēhem yaḥdāw</i> , v. 6b)
vv. 7–8	“Here I am, my son”	(<i>hinnennî bēnî</i> , v. 7a)
	“and the two of them went on together”	(<i>wayyēlēkû šēnēhem yaḥdāw</i> , v. 8b)
vv. 9–19a	“Here I am”	(<i>hinnēnî</i> , v. 11b)
	“and they went on together”	(<i>wayyēlēkû yaḥdāw</i> , v. 19a)

The narrative possesses three movements, each ending with the same clause, “and ... went on together” (vv. 6b, 8b, 19a). Abraham’s responses, “Here I am” (vv. 1b, 7a, 11b), appear in the three dialogues, each in one of the narrative movements.

God’s view of human sacrifice

Halakha, which is Biblical law, condemns child sacrifice.¹ It particularly condemns the practice associated with the worship of Molech.² It’s true that later the practice did appear in the Southern Kingdom³ but was eliminated by Josiah⁴ and condemned by the prophets.⁵

The apparent conflict between orthodox Adonism and the Akedah, however, is only on the surface because Moses alerted us that the story was a “test” in Genesis 22:1, and thus it must be evaluated provisionally.

⁶There are many allusions in this chapter to the promises issued in previous events. By bringing up all these back references, Moses effectively brings forward all of Abraham’s preceding history of interaction with the Lord. At this point the Lord required Abraham to relinquish his future by offering Isaac as a sacrifice and (just like our brother Job) the patriarch chose the Giver over the gift, relying on the Lord to make good on his promise.

God routinely tests us

That God “tests” (*nissâ* in Hebrew) His people should not be surprising. He has used it as a means for revealing their **obedience**.

- **Exodus 15:25 HCSB** So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he threw it into the water, the water became drinkable. He made a statute and ordinance for them at Marah and He tested them there.
- **Exodus 16:4 HCSB** Then the LORD said to Moses, “I am going to rain bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. This way I will test them to see whether or not they will follow My instructions.
- **Judges 2:22 HCSB** I did this to test Israel and to see whether they would keep the LORD’s way by walking in it, as their fathers had.”

¹ Deuteronomy 12:31; 18:10

² Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5

³ 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6

⁴ 2 Kings 23:10

⁵ Jeremiah 7:31-32; Ezekiel 16:20-21

⁶ (e.g., 12:2–3; 13:14–16; 15:4–5; 16:10; 17:2, 5–6, 16, 20; 18:18; 21:18)

- **Psalms 11:5 HCSB** The LORD examines the righteous and the wicked. He hates the lover of violence.

Sometimes He does it to engender **piety-producing fear**.

- **Exodus 20:20 HCSB** Moses responded to the people, "Don't be afraid, for God has come to test you, so that you will fear Him and will not sin."

At times He has as His purpose an intent to discover their **authenticity**.

- **Deuteronomy 8:2 HCSB** Remember that the LORD your God led you on the entire journey these 40 years in the wilderness, so that He might humble you and test you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands.
- **Deuteronomy 13:1-3 HCSB** "If a prophet or someone who has dreams arises among you and proclaims a sign or wonder to you, (2) and that sign or wonder he has promised you comes about, but he says, 'Let us follow other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us worship them,' (3) do not listen to that prophet's words or to that dreamer. For the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul.
- **2 Chronicles 32:31 HCSB** When the ambassadors of Babylon's rulers were sent to him to inquire about the miraculous sign that happened in the land, God left him to test him and discover what was in his heart.
- **Psalms 26:2 HCSB** Test me, LORD, and try me; examine my heart and mind.

But Hashem is ALWAYS seeking to produce our well-being.

- **Deuteronomy 8:16 HCSB** He fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers had not known, in order to humble and test you, so that in the end He might cause you to prosper.

Though the Lord God may *test* us, He never *tempts* us toward evil.

- **James 1:13-15 HCSB** No one undergoing a trial should say, "I am being tempted by God." For God is not tempted by evil, and He Himself doesn't tempt anyone. (14) But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desires. (15) Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death.

So, if we have fallen, we can rest assured that we are fully responsible for our condition and the ensuing consequences.

Historicity of the Akedah

The Akedah influenced New Testament writers. I believe that it is critical that we note that the Gospels and Acts uniformly treat Isaac as a historical figure. He appears as a historical figure in James 2:21 and Hebrews 11:17.

I say that it is critical because there are many today, Muslims in particular, but even many liberal, "cultural Christians" who want to deny the historicity of this passage. However, if you deny Genesis 22 as a literal, historical event, then you deny all the other biblical passages as well. Like everything else in the Holy Scriptures, it is take it all or leave it all.

New Covenant treatment of the Akedah

However, the author of Hebrews (I personally think it was Paul) does take a literal, historical event and then uses Isaac's survival as a *parabola*, or a "figure" of resurrection.

- **Hebrews 11:19 HCSB** He considered God to be able even to raise someone from the dead, from which he also got him back as an illustration.

Through the Spirit's inspiration, Paul knew that Abraham believed the boy would return. This is reflected in the original text:

- **Genesis 22:5 HCSB** Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship; then we'll come back to you."

This can only mean that Abraham trusted the Lord to raise him from the dead to fulfill His promise. This is what God in fact did when the angel halted the knife, for the lad was as good as dead in the mind of his father—as well as in the reckoning of God. Yahweh said Abraham had not "withheld" his son in verses 12 and 16.

In both Hebrews and James, the mention of Isaac is overshadowed by the faith and obedience of his father. However, Isaac does receive a brief commendation for his faith in blessing his sons.

- **Hebrews 11:20 HCSB** By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

Paul mentioned Isaac collaterally as a historical illustration buttressing his argument in Romans 9:7, 10 regarding Israel's election.

Galatians 4:28 includes Isaac as a type in his figurative comparison⁷ of the two covenants represented by Hagar and Sarah.⁸

Comparisons that may be drawn

Allow me to draw some parallels between the Akedah and the Messiah's sacrifice:

1. As Isaac was the only begotten son of the promise (Genesis 22:2), so Christ is the only begotten Son of God.
2. As the Akedah took place on top of a mountain (Genesis 22:2), so the Messiah's sacrifice.
3. As Abraham had to be willing to give up his son (Genesis 22:3), so God the Father was willing to give up Jesus.
4. As Abraham considered his son dead for three days (Genesis 22:4), so the Messiah was dead for three days.
5. As Abraham predicted that they would return (Genesis 22:5), so Jesus predicted that He would return.
6. The Akedah was public in the sense that the servants waited at the foot of the hill and the Holy Spirit had it all recorded for the rest of humanity. However the Akedah was ultimately only witnessed by Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22:5). Similarly, the Messiah's crucifixion was publicly done and recorded for all, but darkness hid the Messiah's sacrifice from the prying eyes of the world for three hours. (Matthew 27:45-46)
7. As Isaac bore the wood up the mountain (Genesis 22:6), so Jesus bore the cross up Golgotha.
8. As Abraham bore the fire (symbol of judgment) and knife (symbol of execution of judgment and sacrifice) (Genesis 22:6), so the Father was the one who ultimately was the One who sacrificed the son.
9. As Isaac questioned his father about the sacrifice but ultimately yielded (Genesis 22:7), so Jesus struggled with questions yet without sin.
10. As Abraham gave comfort to his son by suggesting faith (Genesis 22:8), so Jesus was comforted.

⁷ *allēgoroumena* "speaking figuratively," v. 24

⁸ Galatians 4:24-31

11. As Abraham built the altar and laid out the wood (Genesis 22:9), so God prepared the atoning sacrifice long before the foundation of the world.
12. As Abraham's work was ultimately unnecessary for an atoning sacrifice (Genesis 22:11 cp 15:6), so too the cross makes all our work and sacrifice unnecessary for salvation.
13. As Abraham did not withhold his son (Genesis 22:12, 16), so God did not withhold His Son for our sakes.
14. As Abraham's living, saving faith led to blessed works, so our faith, if equally living should produce works of righteousness. (James 2:20-23)

Remez: May I point out an interesting point in this passage? Note verse 28.

- [Genesis 22:8 HCSB](#) Abraham answered, "God Himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." Then the two of them walked on together.

Note what it is Abraham, by faith, says that Yahweh will provide – a lamb. Now look at

- [Genesis 22:13 HCSB](#) Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son.

Was it a lamb that God provided for the Akedah? No. It was a ram. I believe this is a deliberate action to point up Abraham's faith in an ultimate Lamb, an ultimate Messiah. As it says in

- [John 1:29 HCSB](#) The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Lest you feel I'm exaggerating Abraham's faith allow me to point out Who it was that stopped his hand as he was about to execute Isaac.

- [Genesis 22:11 HCSB](#) But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" He replied, "Here I am."

Will someone please tell me who the Angel of the Lord is? And what doctrine does that reflect? What is the name of this type of appearance? So Abraham was face to face with the Angel of the Lord, who deliberately provoked the entire Akedah as a type or prefigure of His own future sacrifice. You don't think that was an "AHA!" moment for Abraham? It rather sheds light on:

- [John 8:56-58 HCSB](#) Your father Abraham was overjoyed that he would see My day; he saw it and rejoiced." (57) The Jews replied, "You aren't 50 years old yet, and You've seen Abraham?" (58) Jesus said to them, "I assure you: Before Abraham was, I am."

Conclusion

Many of us just celebrated Rosh Hashanah in honor of God's command to set that day aside as a day of commemoration and jubilation.⁹ Many of Hashem's holidays, like Purim for instance, point to a specific event or give a specific reason to party. Rosh Hashanah doesn't. It's simply a day Hashem wants us to celebrate.

"What reason would we have to celebrate?" Some may ask. How about the fact that as Abraham didn't have to sacrifice Isaac but instead used God's provided ram, so we don't need to earn our way into heaven because God has provided a Lamb for our sakes? We have much to celebrate – thus Rosh Hashanah!

⁹ Leviticus 23:24; Numbers 29:1; Nehemiah 8:1-12; Ezekiel 40:1