

11-11-23 To Roeh Israel Abilene – Akaidah Yitzhak, part 2
Torah Portion; Staying in VaYera, Gen 18:1 – 22:24 Chaye Sarah is Gen 23:1 – 25:18
Haftarah: Chaye Sarah is I Kings 1:1-31
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: Eph 5:1-2

The Akaidah Yitzhak part 2

Central question of this message: Are you following the pattern of Abraham as you go out in service to G-d?

Today's parasha is *chaye Sarah*, which means "life of Sarah."

Gen 23:1-4

23 Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. 2 And Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. 3 Then Abraham rose from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, 4 "I am a stranger and a sojourner among you; give me a burial site among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

וַיְהִי וְשָׁנָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה מֵאָה שָׁרָה חַיִּי 23:1
 and seven and twenty years an hundred Sarah old: And was
7651 8141 6242 8141 3967 8283 2416 1961

שָׁנִים שָׁנָה חַיִּי
 the years of Sarah. the life of the years of these were
8141 8141 9999

וַתָּמָת שָׁרָה בְּקִרְיַת אַרְבַּע הִוא חֶבְרוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ 2
 And died Sarah in Kirjath-arba; is the same Hebron in the land of
4191 8283 7153 1931 9999 2275 776

כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹא אַבְרָהָם לְסַפֵּד לְשָׂרָה וּלְבַכְתָּהּ:
 Canaan: and came Abraham to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.
3667 935 85 5594 8283 1058

וַיָּקָם אַבְרָהָם מֵעַל פָּנָיו מֵתוֹ וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל- 3
 And stood up Abraham from before his dead, and spake unto
6965 85 6440 5921 4191 1696 413

בְּנֵי-חֶת לֵאמֹר:
 the sons of Heth, saying,
1121 2845 559

Although I find many compelling lessons to be found in this parasha, I wish to continue the series we have begun on the *Akaidah Yitzhak*, or the “Binding of Isaac”, which is found in last week’s parasha, *VaYera*.

This passage is incredibly important to Jewish theology, and that it is so famous that it can be invoked by merely stating the words, “*the akaidah*”. Our sages have identified this passage as prophetic of the Messiah, and they are correct in that assessment.

There are so many important lessons in this passage. We are now in the midst of a series. This is the second message in that series, and I will pick up where I left off last week.

Let's first review the part of the passage that gets us to where we are in our study.

Gen 22:1-3

22 Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 And He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

Don't Let the Length of the Journey Turn You From the Mission.

When Abraham got the call, he was located at a place called the “Oaks of Mamre.” You might wonder where the “Oaks of Mamre” are located. Many scholars have several opinions. Available maps show different locations. One is near Hebron, but that seems to be less than three days’ journey to the “land of Moreh”.¹ Another shows it at the location of the current city of Kanawat, Syria – near Damascus – which could easily be more than three days’ journey. I personally favor the idea that the trip began near Hebron.

I don't guess its actual location on the earth matters. Because the journey being three days long is the point. But when Abraham set out, did he know how long the journey would be? Clearly not. He was going to a place that G-d would show him.

Often when we get a call from G-d, we can be required to go somewhere else to answer that call. Or if not, we might be required to wait a period of time to begin the new calling because we still need to fulfill our current calling in the place where we are planted.

¹ Of course, considering one of the travelers is of advanced age, it might well take three days from this location.

Parents have heard their children, snug in their seats in the back of the family car, ask, “Are we there yet?” That is because children want immediacy in everything. They don’t have a long view of life, because their life has been so short, and all their needs seem to magically appear just as they need them. We call them “children” because they are not adults. As adults, we have a long-view of life. We develop patience. That valuable discipline helps us greatly in being part of G-d’s special missions team. G-d has a long-view of His battle as well.

A number of sweet believers have complained to me that they have been ready for many years to do more for G-d, but it seems that their desire for service is frustrated. My response to them is consistent.

Their job is to learn what type of tool they are in the toolbox, and to work hard to become the best tool they can be, so that when G-d reaches into His holy toolbox to get the right tool for the job, you can find His hand close around you, as you are placed into service in the best way.

But if you are a broken hammer, a twisted screwdriver, or a dull saw, why would G-d choose you for that special task? Study to show yourself approved. Learn Scripture, sit under the tutelage of a mentor, grow in your faith and in your spiritual strength. As you become the best you can be, wait on the hand of G-d. He is in charge of the timing.

But be persistent in seeking a position of service. You won't be put onto the field unless you are available, and let the Coach know you want to be in the game.

The long-view principle applies as well to times when you have been withdrawn from the toolbox, and are on the mission. Sometimes it seems that your efforts are producing little or no visible results. That is when patience is tested. Know that you might not see any result at all for much of the time you are working, but you might be preparing the way for a victory later on.

William Wilberforce, the English parliamentarian, came to faith in G-d in 1784. He was mentored by John Newton, the former slave ship captain who wrote the song *Amazing Grace*. In 1787 Wilberforce began his fight against the slave trade in England. For the next 15 years he introduced abolitionist legislation with no effect. Finally, in 1807, his efforts prevailed, and England abolished the slave trade entirely. But his efforts to achieve freedom for all the slaves did not prevail until 1833. Wilberforce died one month later.

There is the familiar story of Jim Elliot, Pete Fleming, Roger Youderian and pilot Nate Saint. They wished to reach the Auca (Huarorani) indians of the Ecuadorian jungle. These natives had a reputation of killing

anyone who came into their territory, including neighboring tribes. These missionaries' first contact was in 1955. They seemed to be making progress, but then only days after first contact, they were ambushed and murdered by the Auca, and left in the river where they fell.

But the mission was not finished. In less than two years, Jim's wife Elizabeth Elliot and daughter Rachel continued the work, and finally were able to move into one the Auca villages. I understand Nate Saint's son now lives in the village as well. Most in this Auca tribe have now come to faith, and are no longer hostile.

Alex Yalenga has for many years gone into hostile tribal areas of Africa, and has seen many come to faith. As I have joined him there, we are taking the Word of G-d deeper into the bush, and reaching not only the villagers, but the kings and queens as well. This success has been over 20 years in the making.

Yes, the trip from the time and place of your calling to the end of your mission might be long, and you may not see the final victory. But the effort to advance G-d's kingdom is worth it.

And remember that He chose you to undertake this mission because you are ideally suited for it.

When You Arrive, You Will Know It

Gen 22:4-6

4 On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. 5 And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and return to you." 6 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 the two of them walked on together.

Remember that Abraham had never been to the place he was going. G-d knew where he was sending him, and that was enough. But how did Abraham know the location when he saw it?

The sages have various speculations about this issue, and suggest that there was something that distinguished that place in a visible way, but was not seen by others. I agree.

It seems that Abraham could see something that others could not. That even from a great distance, the particular mountain which G-d had chosen,

although not the highest one in that area, was still set apart in the eyes of Abraham. How was that possible? I believe it was because Abraham was connected to the heart of G-d, and the Spirit gave Abraham sight that others did not have.

This is important for us who are called on a mission for G-d's kingdom as well. If you are the team leader, then know that G-d will find a way to guide you to the right place at the right time to accomplish the mission.

By the same token, if you are a part of the team, and not the team leader, you may not receive the vision of the course-corrections, or of the end goal that the team leader gets. Don't let that bother you.

If the team you are part of is on a truly holy mission, and if you trust that G-d is leading the team leader, then be a good team member and remain loyal to the leader. Satan will try to whisper in your ear things that will divide the team. Don't listen to him.

Yitzhak not a Young Boy

As you read the passage, you may ask, "How old was Yitzhak when all this happened?"

I believe the most reliable chronology places Yitzhak in his 30s. Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra, the revered Spanish sage, reports that in Bereshit Rabbah 56:11 the sages say he was 37, but Ibn Ezra speculates that the boy was actually only 13. He bases that conclusion on the concept that Abraham must have had the ability to overpower the boy in order to bind him and lay him on the altar.

Remember that Abraham was 100 years of age when Yitzhak was born, and even if we take the lowest number possible (assuming the boy is only 13), then Abraham is between 113 and 137 years of age when he embarked on this journey. What man of this advanced age would have the strength to overpower even a 13 year-old boy?

I have a different analysis from that of Ibn Ezra. Yitzhak was certainly powerful enough to carry a heavy load of split wood up a mountain which was to be the firewood for the sacrifice. Those of us who have carried sufficient firewood to make a proper sacrificial fire have a hard time believing that Yitzhak was anything less than in his 30s, and quite muscular, at that.

Assuming my idea of the age of Yitzhak is correct, this changes much in how we view the remainder of the story, because most people in the body agree with Ibn Ezra and presume Yitzhak to be a young teen at this time,

and also depict Abraham as a man in his 50s. Thus, they assume, it would be pretty easy to overpower emotionally and physically by the older Abraham. So, how much did Yitzhak cooperate in this whole event? That we will discuss later.

Child Sacrifice?

The third question is one you must have already contemplated. “Why does G-d command Abraham to engage in child sacrifice, when this is *precisely the opposite* of what G-d desires?” See Lev 18:21.

This question leads us to a deeper lesson of this passage. The point of this exercise was *not* to have Yitzhak die as a sacrifice. If that were the will of G-d, it would have been done, and the family line of promised salvation would have come to an early end. There must be a deeper spiritual lesson here. And there certainly is.

For a better understanding, let me set the stage of history. The family traditions of the nations at that time in history were well settled. The wife and children belonged *as property* to the father in the family, until the father died.

In pagan society, the father could marry as many wives as he wanted, and have as many children as he wanted. And he could have any of them killed any time he wanted, for any reason. It was a rough time to be a girl.

Likewise, the king of any nation owned all the people in that nation as his property as well. It was a very male-centric paradigm.

G-d began with Abraham to turn all that around, but it was going to take some time. Some would argue that the job isn't done even today. But we can see in Scripture that process begin.

Sarai (meaning "my Sara") was changed by G-d to be Sarah. This signified in her name that she was no longer a possession, but a matriarch who belonged to G-d. Every time Abraham spoke her new name, he was reminded of that fact.

And if you look closely at it, the entire story of Yitzhak, from birth to today's parashah, is witness to the concept that the child is *not the property* of the father.

But, in this passage, one might argue that G-d agrees with the pagan customs in a breathtaking reversal of what we know about Him. When hearing this directive from G-d to offer his son as a sacrificial lamb, why

does Abraham not speak up, or complain? Our people have wondered about that for generations.

Regardless, during the three days' journey from the Oaks of *Mamre* to Mount *Moriah*, Abraham would have a lot to think about.

I don't think Abraham fully understood what G-d's plan was. Most certainly Yitzhak didn't understand what was happening until a bit later on.

Gen 22:7-8

7 And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 And Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

Our Rabbis have noticed that this passage is capable of two interpretations. One is that Abraham is telling Yitzhak that G-d will select a lamb for the offering, and he should just watch and wait for that moment where the lamb is miraculously brought to them. But the other seems

more to the point: G-d will select the “sheep” for the offering, and who is that offering? It is “my son.” If you read the passage with a longer pause before the words, “my son” then you will start to see this.

These Rabbis believe that it was at this juncture Yitzhak fully understood that he was to be the sacrifice. That explains the silence that follows as the men continue to climb. Notice that the text says that the two of them “walked on together.”

The root of the Hebrew word translated as “together” is *yachad*.

OT:3162 יָחַד **yachad** (yakh'-ad); from OT:3161; properly, a unit, i.e. (adverb) unitedly: -alike, at all (once), both, likewise, only, (al-) together, withal.

It is the same word which we see in Ps 133:1.

Ps 133:1

133 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brothers to dwell together in unity!

And we see that also in Yeshua's prayer that His followers be characterized by unity.

John 17:22-23

22 "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

That unity in this world is what tells the world that we are G-d's and that He sent Yeshua. That unity between Abraham and Yitzhak presents that level of unity to the reader as well.

Realization of the Cost of Submission

We've all heard it at least once in our lives. "Hey, this *isn't at all* what I signed up for!" That sentence is spoken at the intersection of the mission and the realization of the actual cost of achieving that mission.

Yitzhak heard these words, and I believe it was at this point he must have known that he was to be the sacrifice. Yet, he went on up the mountain

with his father, submitted to the will of G-d. Thus, they “walked on together” in *unity*. This suggests that now both men were fully committed to carrying out the will of G-d for this event, no matter what that meant.

There would be no struggle, no fight, although Yitzhak had the power to overcome his aged father and return alone to the young men at the foot of the mountain. Or he might have bound his father and led him back to the young men as a captive, to be charged for attempted murder in court.

In Rashi’s commentary on Genesis 22, (Midrash Tanchuma, Vayera 22) he says Abraham prophesied that both he and Yitzhak would return to be with the attendants.

This is consistent with the account of the faith of Abraham as presented in Hebrews 11, which makes it clear that Abraham believed that if G-d did allow this son of promise to die at his hand, then somehow Yitzhak was going to come down that mountain with him at the end of it all, by whatever means G-d chose.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear to us today that G-d was *not* ordering the murder of the child of promise.

I believe part of the plan of G-d in this event was to etch into the Hebrew psyche for all time a significant concept: Abraham was going to have to fully give Yitzhak to G-d, *as G-d's property*.

I can tell you from personal experience, giving over your child to G-d is not easy. For their early years, my children were just that... *mine*. But one by one, I was required to open my arms, and allow them to fly freely. I had to recognize they now belonged to G-d. That concept is still difficult for me, even today.

That Special Place

Abraham is to take Yitzhak to a special place, called the “land of *Moriah*”. Where is this land?

We are given a strong hint of its location in the previous parashah, *Lech Lecha*.

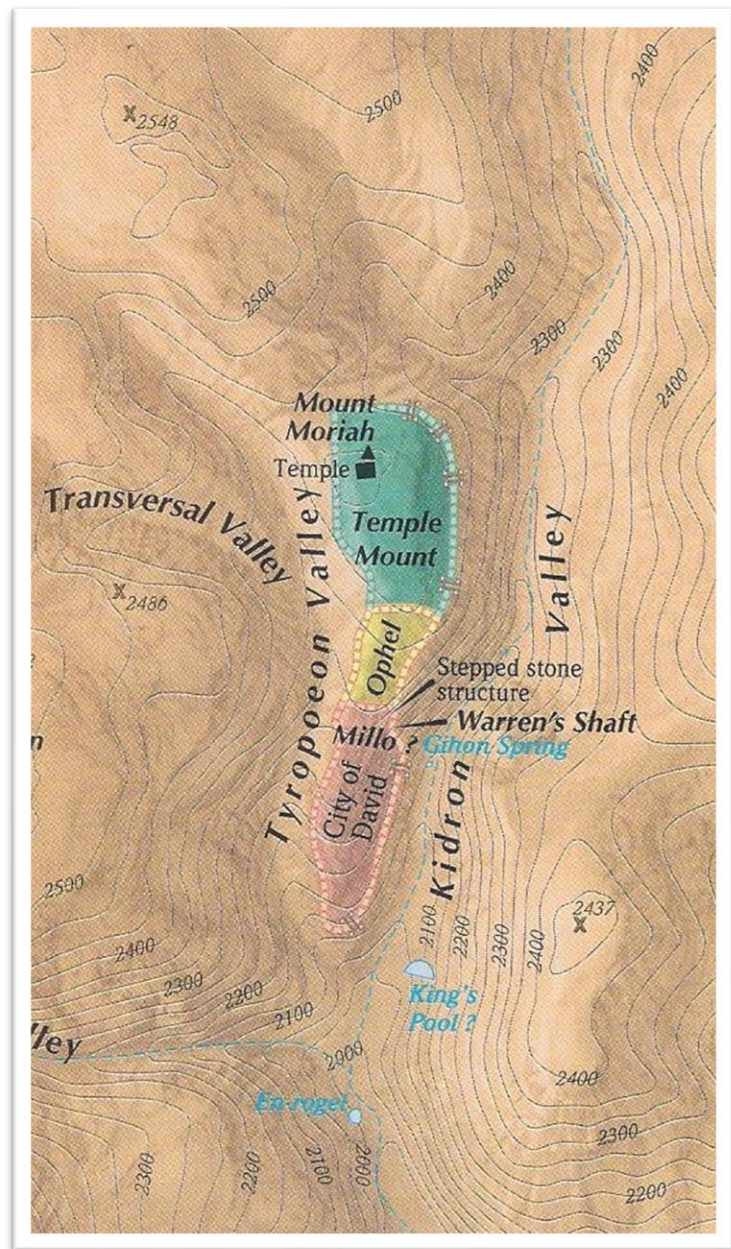
You recall from our last study there, that Abraham encountered Yeshua at the place he called the “oak of *Moreh*” (see Gen 12:5).

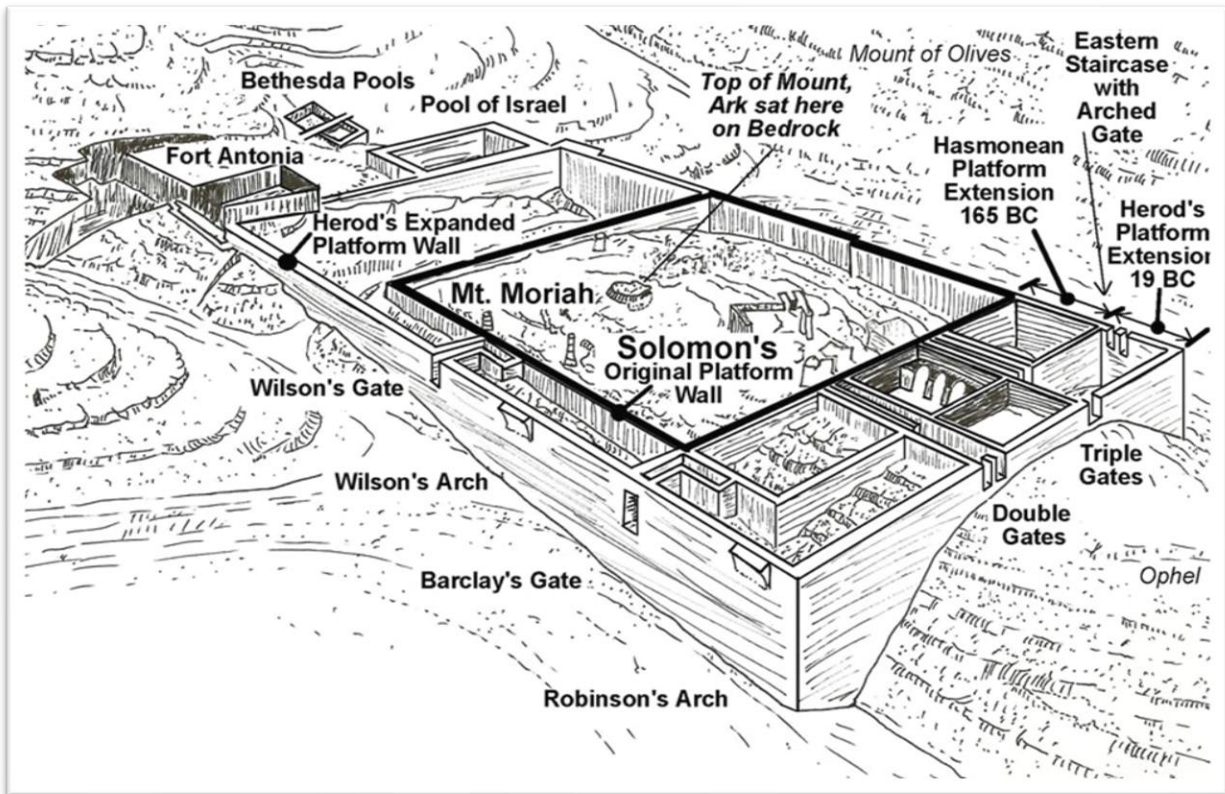
We know that the word *moreh* describes “light”, and in *Lech Lecha*, it refers directly to Yeshua as the light of the world.

Is the Oak of *Moreh* at or near the same place that Abraham is now instructed to go? I suggest it was.

It is because of the name of the place. Do you see the similarity between “oak of *Moreh*” and “land of *Moriah*”? The root is the same. The difference between the two is that *moreh* only means “light”, but *moriah* means “light of G-d”. I suspect the name of the place got changed because G-d kept showing up there so many times. And truth be told, in this passage G-d is going to show up there again.

We know, from ancient history, where the “land of *Moriah*” was, and we can find it easily on a map.





It is the location that we call today “the Temple Mount”. And so the passage tells us that once Abraham reaches this special location, he is to sacrifice Yitzhak as a “burnt offering”. Or so the English renders.

But the English doesn’t catch the deepest meaning of the Hebrew term used here. Let’s look further.

The Olah

Yitzhak is described as becoming the “*olah*” sacrifice. In Tanach, there are 286 occurrences of the word, *olah*, where it is used to describe sacrifice.

[OT:5930](#) **עֹלָה** *`olah* (o-law'); or
`owlah (o-law'); feminine active
participle of [OT:5927](#); a step or
(collectively, stairs, as ascending);
usually a holocaust (as going up
in smoke):

It signifies “going up,” and is the same root for one who ascends. Being called up to the Torah for reading is “receiving an *aliyah*.” The one who has come up to the Torah and gives the blessing (and is given permission to read from the Torah scroll itself) is called the *oleh*.

One is also said to be “making *aliyah*” when one goes to Israel to live, for one always “goes up” to Israel, and particularly, Jerusalem (regardless of how much higher in altitude we are than Jerusalem).

The use of the word *olah* meaning regarding sacrifices combines the concept of “go up” with the idea that as one burns an offering, smoke “goes up.” The concept of the *olah* offering represents complete submission to the will of G-d.

With the *olah*, the worshipper didn’t merely bring the offering to the Temple and depart. We were to put our hands on the head of the animal,

and say, “This one dies in my place”. Then we, with our own hand, were to kill the animal and put its blood on the altar.

Other offerings can be waved, or roasted, and then the one making the offering, or the priests, can eat it. But not the *olah*. The *olah* is totally consumed by the fire. Thus, the *olah* offering is totally, completely, and finally dedicated *only* to G-d.

It is said that the *olah* (smoke) of the sacrifice would rise to heaven as a pleasing aroma before G-d’s throne.

Most certainly G-d is pleased when we bring Him a sacrifice. In doing so, we recognize who we are, and who G-d is. But much more than that, G-d is looking at the heart.

So, what sacrifice did Yitzhak present to G-d with Abraham? It was in essence a sacrifice of everything he was, to include his future – in the supreme act of love.

Eph 5:1-2

5 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself

up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

We speak of the “faith of Abraham” but few speak of the “faith of Yitzhak.” I think that is unfortunate. If you begin to live-out this passage through the eyes of Yitzhak, then you will see that he likely needed greater faith than did his father.

We will continue this discussion next week, as we continue on the topic of how our hearts are the best *olah* sacrifices we can offer to the L-rd in this age.