

Scripture Study



What Does it Mean to Know God?: Abraham's Greatest Test

By [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw](#) · February 18, 2022

This article is adapted from the detailed verse-by-verse commentary on Genesis 21–23 available at [the Interpreter Foundation website](#). Readers may also consult the commentary for the Book of Moses and Genesis [at Bible Central](#) or within the [ScripturePlus app](#). See also “[Abraham's Hebron: Then and Now, part 5: Mamre](#),”. Among other things, this video features Hugh Nibley's moving account of Abraham's encounter with the three messengers in Genesis 18.

Introduction

Several Jewish traditions speak of the “ten” tests of Abraham,^[i] but descriptions of what they were vary. A list compiled by the Jewish scholar Maimonides (also known by the acronym Rambam^[ii]) gives the tests as follows:^[iii]

1. Departure from Abraham’s homeland to become a stranger in Canaan (Genesis 12:1)
2. The famine in Canaan (Genesis 12:10)
3. Sarah taken by Pharaoh (Genesis 12:15)
4. The rescue of Lot in the battle of the kings (Genesis 14:14)
5. The marriage with Hagar after Sarah could not give birth (Genesis 16:3)
6. Abraham’s circumcision at one hundred years old (Genesis 17:24)
7. Sarah taken by Abimelech (Genesis 20:2)
8. Hagar sent away after Ishmael is born (Genesis 16:6)
9. Hagar and Ishmael sent away again, this time permanently (Genesis 21:12)
10. The near sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22:2)

All the traditions agree that God’s command to sacrifice Isaac was Abraham’s *greatest* test. In Hebrew this test is called the *akedah* (“binding”). Widespread appreciation of difficulty of Abraham’s test and the magnificence of his response have made the term “Abrahamic test” a synonym for the most difficult trials that believers may face as a consequence of their discipleship.



Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902): God's Promises to Abram.

What Is an Abrahamic Test?

An Abrahamic test is, as described in Doctrine and Covenants 101:4, to be “chastened and tried, even as Abraham, who was commanded to offer up his only son.” It is, as Elder Bruce C. Hafen termed it, to experience a “divine tutorial.”^[iv] Faithful responses to divine tutorials enable one’s faith to become “sufficiently strong to lay hold upon the promise of eternal life,”^[v] “knowing (not believing merely) that [one has claim on] a more enduring substance.”^[vi] Exercising such faith requires one to “submit cheerfully and with patience to

all the will of the Lord” (Mosiah 24:15), even when such submission flies in the face of logic or common sense. “Many of us will say that we do not have that kind of faith,” observed Truman G. Madsen. But “I submit to you that you do not have that kind of faith until you pass that test.”^[vii]

President John Taylor “heard the Prophet Joseph say, in speaking to the Twelve on one occasion: ‘You will have all kinds of trials to pass through. And it is quite as necessary for you to be tried as it was for Abraham and other men of God, and (said he) God will feel after you, and He will take hold of you and wrench your very heart strings, and if you cannot stand it you will not be fit for an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom of God.’”^[viii] Joseph Smith is also remembered as having said “that if God had known any other way whereby he could have touched Abraham’s feelings more acutely and more keenly he would have done so.”^[ix] The selfless, unflinching nature of his devotion to God had to be demonstrated beyond any doubt.^[x] By that experience Abraham would feel something akin to the love that the Father felt when His only begotten Son died for us all.

Sometimes the Abrahamic tests we ourselves encounter result from situations that expose or chasten our weakness (for example, Ether 12:27; Doctrine and Covenants 101:2–5). At other times they spring from the need to respond humbly, charitably, and patiently to the weakness or cruelty of others (for example, 1 Corinthians 8:9–13; Mosiah 24:15; Alma 27:29, 1 Nephi 19:9). They may also come from a call to confront tragic circumstances that seem impossible or incomprehensible (for example, Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–8; 122:5–7). Though we generally won’t be given the full picture in this life, it’s possible that some of these circumstances may be ours as the result of a premortal assignment (Abraham 3:23; Doctrine and Covenants 138:53–56^[xi]). Often such challenges come when we’re sincerely trying to do right (for example, Matthew 5:1–11; 1 Peter 2:20, 3:17). No matter the origins of our predicament, there is only one antidote to the paralysis of doubt.

According to Terryl L. Givens, we can be free of our dilemma only when we exercise “our obligation to know that [the] voice [that directs us] is emanating from a divine source.” “Once we have that assurance,” he continued, “then the rationality [of the heavenly directive] is irrelevant.”[\[xii\]](#)

What Can We Learn from Abraham's Response?

From Abraham, we learn that the sign of absolute faith is not found in the sequence of public motions that outwardly proclaim obedience, but rather in the perfect inner assurance that accompanies their performance, a faithful response to a divine call that cannot be seen by ordinary observers but is recognized by God.

Annika Sheaff performs the Grand Jeté with seeming effortlessnes[s](#)[\[xiii\]](#).

The great Danish Christian philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1814–1855) compared Abraham’s “leap *by* faith” to the leap of a skilled ballet dancer.[\[xiv\]](#) He wrote: “It is supposed to be the most difficult task for a dancer to leap into a definite posture in such a way that there is not a second when he is grasping after the posture but by the leap itself he stands fixed in that posture. Perhaps no dancer can do it—[but Abraham] does.”[\[xv\]](#)

Of course, the poetic hyperbole of Kierkegaard exaggerates when it implies that Abraham had already achieved “perfect” faith prior to the *akedah*. While standing in awe of his greatness, there seem to be subtle signs in the biblical text that the last major stretch of his great soul strains him. Remember that even the incomparably perfect Jesus Christ Himself said that His “suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink.” “Nevertheless,” He continues—in words that follow a long dash that, to me, suggests that His agonies were beyond expression—“glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men” (Doctrine and Covenants 19:18).

Our Savior, having now borne all, “will bear no more”;[\[xvi\]](#) continuing to work all things through an absolute and independent form of faith,[\[xvii\]](#) having become “perfect, even as [His] Father who is in heaven is perfect” (3 Nephi 12:48). Of course, we cannot hope in this life for such perfection, we can only strive for the ideal of faith that Kierkegaard describes. With the English poet Robert Browning, we can be comforted rather than discouraged by the thought that “a man’s reach should exceed his grasp, or what’s a heaven for?”[\[xviii\]](#) As we look at those of great faith around us who have through long experience conquered doubt in situations that would have daunted us, we realize, at least, that progress is possible, that faith can become knowledge in one “thing”[\[xix\]](#) at a time, and that practiced efforts

require less effort with each repetition.

In the meantime, we of lesser faith are unable to immediately assume the posture Kierkegaard describes when we are called to do so. We are shaken by such experiences and “vacillate an instant,”^[xx] and our wavering proclaims the imperfection of our pose. By way of contrast, the perfectly executed leap is not one of “bravura or virtuoso display,” but rather “a refined, technically demanding kind of dance; one that capture[s] a sense of lightness and the ethereal.”^[xxi] To the degree we continue to grow, our response to calls for faith will be, in this manner, more reflexive. Eventually, at least in smaller things, we will need no pause for preparation, no deep breath or sigh taken to muster courage and strength, but only what seems to be an immediate, effortless forward spring to bridge the chasm of earth and heaven^[xxii]—a flying embrace of divine futurity, with no looking back (see Luke 9:57–62; 17:31–32).

I love to read Genesis 22, because it gives me a glimpse of what that kind of faith looks like better than any event in scripture except, of course, the great atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ that Abraham’s experience foreshadows.

Jacques Joseph Tissot (1836-1902): God Renews His Promises to Abraham

God Tests Abraham (Genesis 22:1–2)

The opening of Genesis 22 [“God did tempt Abraham”] discloses to the reader something that Abraham did not know, namely that God’s request for him to sacrifice Isaac was a means to “tempt” (King James Version), “try” (Joseph Smith Translation), or “test”^[xxiii] him. By stating this purpose at the outset, the narrator of the chapter precluded “any possible misunderstanding [by the reader] that God requires human sacrifice as such.”^[xxiv] This point is especially relevant when we remember that Abraham, as a child, was nearly

sacrificed in a similar manner (Abraham 1:7–15).[\[xxv\]](#) The scriptures are clear that God abhors human sacrifice; what He wanted in this instance was for “Abraham ... to learn something about Abraham.”[\[xxvi\]](#)

Importantly, the Hebrew text implies that God couched his request as an entreaty rather than a command.[\[xxvii\]](#) This allowed Abraham to demonstrate that his willingness to comply sprang from love rather than obligation. In brief, because God has technically not commanded Abraham, Abraham “has absolute freedom of choice,”[\[xxviii\]](#) as did Adam when God said, immediately after giving the commandment about the forbidden fruit, “thou mayest choose for thyself” (Moses 3:17[\[xxix\]](#)). The choice is made more painful because it comes after God’s promises have all been fulfilled. Abraham had finally received his greatest blessing in Isaac, now he was asked to give him up.[\[xxx\]](#)

Abraham was prepared for this test. He knew God’s voice through repeated experience in his previous trials. Abraham’s faith in God’s word was sure, knowing that “Jehovah could raise his son from the dead, if necessary, in order to fulfill His promise”[\[xxxii\]](#) of posterity through Isaac. After God instructed Abraham to make the sacrifice, there were no long, agonizing soliloquies, no impassioned protests, no doleful mourning in anticipation of his presumed loss. Significantly, “he who was so daringly eloquent on behalf of the people of Sodom surrender[ed] in total silence to his own bitter personal destiny.”[\[xxxii\]](#)

Abraham’s simple response to God’s call “Here I am” (Hebrew *hinneni*) “expresses an attitude of attentiveness and receptivity. It is the only [recorded] word Abraham utters to God in the entire episode.”[\[xxxiii\]](#) Describing the silence and the spare dialogue of the account, André Chouraqui writes:[\[xxxiv\]](#)

The narrator creates an extraordinary dramatic effect through the silence of the actors in this tragedy. The question of Isaac, “Where is the lamb?” breaks the

silence for an instant to better highlight the horror of the situation. The heartbreak of Abraham is expressed by his three statements of “Here I am,” said twice to the Lord (vv. 1, 11) and once to his son (v. 7). He is fully present to each of them, but doubly present to the Lord, to whom he belongs, having given himself freely to Him.

Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669): Abraham Caressing Isaac

The command for Abraham to “Take now thy son” (Genesis 22:2) harkens back to the previous requirement that he take leave his family (Genesis 12). In Genesis 12, Abraham’s sudden engagement with his divine mission required a successive exit from each tie that

bound him to his former life: “Get thee out (*lekh lekha* “Go forth”) [from] thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house” (Genesis 12:1). Nahum Sarna notes that the elements of God’s directive are “arranged in ascending order according to the severity of the sacrifice involved: country, extended family, nuclear family.”[\[xxxv\]](#) Similarly, in Genesis 22, when Abraham reached the time of his greatest trial, there are “striking verbal echoes”[\[xxxvi\]](#) of his first call. Observe that God again uses the unusual expression for going forth (*lekh lekha*), which appears here for the second and last time in the Bible. God then tells Abraham describes the supreme sacrifice of Isaac in a sequence that, like his first call to leave his homeland, reflects an ascending order of emotional intensity: “your son, your *favored* son, *Isaac*, whom you *love*” (Genesis 22:2[\[xxxvii\]](#)).

Abraham is told to offer his son “for a burnt offering” (Genesis 22:2). In their rapid scan of this brief description, modern readers may not experience the vivid and no doubt traumatic mental picture that must have run through Abraham’s mind as he considered what the sacrifice of Isaac as a “burnt offering” (or “holocaust”) would entail. God’s command would require Abraham “to lift [the tightly bound] Isaac to the top of the altar, slit his throat, and burn him so completely that his body would be reduced to ashes.”[\[xxxviii\]](#)

The Journey to Moriah (Genesis 22:3–8)

The eminent BYU expert of literary style, Arthur Henry King, underlined the importance of considering what is included and what is omitted in the inspired telling of this brief and rich story:[\[xxxix\]](#)

Why ... are we told so much about Abraham’s preparations for the journey—the fuel, the knife, the donkey, the two young men that assisted—and nothing whatever about his state of mind? Could it be that he was not introspecting and worrying? We have one question from Isaac in that story, and only one, but it is a

very pregnant question—it is a weighed question: We have the knife, the fire, we have the wood, but where is the victim? Think how effective that question is when there is nothing whatever said about what Abraham or Isaac were thinking. Then, after the story is told, we get that bit of genealogy at the end of the chapter (vv. 20–24). Why? And why are we not told what Sarah felt? Perhaps she did not feel anything, for she may have been left in complete ignorance. Did it not occur to the writer to mention Sarah at all in that chapter? Or did he deliberately exclude Sarah from that chapter? Sarah made some important decisions in the life of Abraham, like the decision to send away Hagar. Abraham didn't want to send Hagar away. Sarah insisted, and the Lord spoke to Abraham in the night and told him that Sarah was right and that he must send Hagar away. So why isn't Sarah in the chapter about Isaac? I don't suppose a modern teller of that story would have dared to leave Sarah out, but she is left out and those genealogical details are in. If we try to figure out why these things are included or excluded, we give ourselves a better chance of understanding what the story is all about.

The first detail to note is that “Abraham rose up early in the morning” (Genesis 22:3). The Lord had issued his instructions in the night. At sunrise, Abraham carried them out, with no delay nor any word said to anyone.^[xi] A second detail seems to reveal something about Abraham's state of mind. The statement that he “saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood” (Genesis 22:3) is a hint, the only hint, of a temporary loss of composure by Abraham because the sequence of the actions taken seems abrupt and confused.^[xii] For example, normally the wood would have been chopped first and the ass would have been saddled last. In reading the verse, we are led to wonder whether Abraham delayed as long as possible the preparation of the wood intended to transform the body of his son to ashes.

We are told that the travelers reached their destination “on the third day” (Genesis 22:4). Claus Westermann notes that “three days is a typical period of preparation for something important” (compare Genesis 31:22; 40:20; 42:18).^[xlii] Westermann further notes that the mountain of God to which the Israelites sought to travel was three days’ journey (Exodus 3:18; 5:3). Indeed, the phrase “on the third day” occurs twice in the Sinai pericope (Exodus 19:11 [twice], 16).^[xliii] Significantly, Genesis 22 says nothing about the three-day journey itself. Any description of the journey would distract from the tight focus of the narrative.

Johann Heinrich Ferdinand Olivier: Abraham and Isaac ^[xliv]

In taking leave of the two young men that had accompanied them to this point, Abraham says, unexpectedly, “I and the lad will come again to you” (Genesis 22:5). The medieval Jewish sage Rashi wrote that in saying this Abraham “unknowingly prophesied that both of them would return.”^[xlv] Then, “Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son” (Genesis 22:6). Early Christian commentators saw Isaac’s bearing of the wood of the sacrifice as a type of Jesus, also an only son, carrying His cross.^[xlvi] Expositions of traditions such as those preserved by the Jewish contemporary of Jesus, Philo Judaeus, contrasting “Abraham, the man who learned,” to “Isaac the man who was born good by nature” w resonated to Christians as a foreshadowing of Jesus’ sinless nature.^[xlvii]

At last “Isaac spake unto Abraham his father” (Genesis 22:7). “The conversation between Abraham and Isaac on the way to the place of sacrifice is only an interruption of the heavy silence and makes it all the more burdensome. The two of them, Isaac carrying the wood and Abraham with fire and a knife, ‘went together.’ Hesitantly, Isaac ventures to ask about the ram, and Abraham gives the well-known answer. Then the text repeats: ‘So they went both of them together.’ Everything remains unexpressed.”^[xlviii]

Abraham’s answer to his son’s question is significant: “My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering” (Genesis 22:8). Old Testament scholar L. Michael Morales has summarized the “rich history of rabbinical interpretation ... clearly demonstrating that the sparing of Isaac was understood deeply as the sparing of Israel.”^[xlix] In similitude of Isaac’s willing consecration to God, the children of Israel were required to consecrate themselves in like manner if they themselves wished to be spared. In the temple sacrifices of ancient Israel—which pointed back to Isaac’s arrested sacrifice and pointed forward to Jesus’ *un*arrested sacrifice—Christians should see their own arrested sacrifice and redemption, having been spared the shedding of their *own* blood through the Atonement of Christ.^[l] Harold Attridge concluded that “Isaac’s rescue from virtual death^[li] on the

sacrificial pyre is symbolic of the deliverance that all the faithful can expect.”[\[ii\]](#)

Károly Ferenczy (1862-1917): Abraham's Sacrifice

The Binding of Isaac (Genesis 22:9–10)

In discussions of Genesis 22, Isaac is often treated as a passive foil to Abraham in his trial. But there is no doubt that in this experience Isaac—a man who possessed (we might suppose) the same apparent soberness of faith that belied the age of the young Mormon (see Mormon 1:2)—was also put to the test. Indeed, later rabbinical tradition saw explicit evidence that Abraham and Isaac were both meant to be tested in a grammatical detail of Genesis 22:2.[\[iii\]](#) Going further, Truman G. Madsen summarizes related extrabiblical

traditions to argue that Isaac's obedience was no less voluntary than Abraham's:[\[liv\]](#)

If we can trust the Apocrypha, there are three details that the present narrative omits. First, Isaac was not a mere boy. He was a youth, a stripling youth on the verge of manhood.[\[lv\]](#) Second, Abraham did not keep from him, finally, the commandment or the source of the commandment. But having made the heavy journey (how heavy!), he counseled with his son. Third, Isaac said in effect: "My father, if you alone had asked me to give my life for you, I would have been honored and would have given it. That both you and Jehovah ask only doubles my willingness."[\[lvi\]](#) It was at Isaac's request that his arms were bound, lest involuntarily but spontaneously he should resist the sinking of the knife.[\[lvii\]](#) Though many have assumed it to be so, only the Book of Mormon records a prophet's words saying that this was in "similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son" (Jacob 4:5).[\[lviii\]](#)

Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669): The Sacrifice of Isaac.

God Accepts the Sacrifice (Genesis 22:11–12)

Jewish tradition comments on an unusual detail in the description of the coming of the angel to stop the sacrifice: “And the angel of the Lord called unto him *out of heaven*” (Genesis 22:11). Nahum Sarna gives this conjecture for the reason the angel is depicted, not as having

appeared on earth, but rather having called Abraham from heaven:[\[lix\]](#)

Angels need to travel between heaven and earth, as is clear from 28:12, as well as from place to place on earth, as proved by 18:22. But the critical urgency of the moment precludes their usual personal appearance, such as made to Hagar (16:7ff.), and dictates this exceptional mode of angelic intervention, just as it did in 21:17.

The repetition of Abraham's name by the angel ("Abraham, Abraham") is sometimes seen as providing another indication that the narrator wanted to convey the haste required to stop Abraham from harming his son. "The repetition connotes both urgency and a special relationship between the one addressed and the One who calls."[\[lx\]](#)

Confirming that Abraham has passed the test, Abraham is told "For now I know that thou fearest God" (Genesis 22:12). But this statement should not be taken as an indication that God ever had any doubt about the outcome of the test. "As Ramban points out, it is not that God's foreknowledge is wanting but that, for Abraham's sake, the quality of character that now exists only potentially must be actualized. In the biblical view, the genuinely righteous man must deserve that status through demonstrated action."[\[lxi\]](#)

Did a figurative death and resurrection take place at Moriah?

In Hebrews 11:19, the evidence of the complete consecration of Abraham and Isaac is described using the language of death and resurrection.[\[lxii\]](#) In trying to make sense of this idea, we might remember that in some Jewish and early Christian creedal formulations bearing on accounts of Abraham's sacrifice, one finds the idea that Isaac actually died, ascended to heaven, and was resurrected[\[lxiii\]](#)—though perhaps this tradition makes more sense if we remember that the symbolism of death and resurrection fits not only actual

heavenly ascent but also the figurative context of temple ritual.^[lxiv] President David O. McKay is reported to have characterized the temple endowment as a “step-by-step ascent into the Eternal Presence.”^[lxv] Believing Latter-day Saints see the culminating moments of the endowment as a ritual anticipation of the eventual face-to-face meeting they hope to have with the Father when they are resurrected.

Detail from the Torah Shrine of the Dura Europos Synagogue^[lxvi]

As a more concrete example of this idea, consider the decorations located immediately above the *Torah* niche in the late second century Dura Europos synagogue.^[lxvii] The entire panel is rich with symbols of resurrection and eternal life. In one scene, Isaac is lying on an

altar and a ram caught in a tree is shown. In the background is someone entering a “tent sanctuary,” analogous to the later Tabernacle of Moses.

In light of the tradition that, in Isaac’s experience on Mount Moriah, he died, ascended to heaven, and was resurrected, Margaret Barker [\[lxviii\]](#) interprets the figure standing at an entrance as “going up behind a curtain held open by a disembodied hand— the symbol of the lord [shown immediately to the left of the curtain]. Since the temple curtain [veil] represented access to the presence of God, this seems to depict Isaac going to heaven.” [\[lxix\]](#) Note that Barker’s description raises three interpretive possibilities: 1. an actual death and resurrection; 2. a temporary ascent to the heavenly temple (as when Abraham received God’s sure promise); and 3. a figurative entry into God’s presence through ritual, similar to the modern Latter-day Saint temple endowment.

The Ram in the Thicket. [\[lxx\]](#)

A Ram Is Sacrificed (Genesis 22:13)

The “ram caught in a thicket” (Genesis 22:13) will substitute for Isaac as the burnt offering. Earlier, in verse 8, Abraham had identified the sacrificial victim differently, saying, “God will provide himself a *lamb* for a burnt offering.” This difference in terminology has led some modern readers to see Abraham’s prophecy as unfulfilled until the crucifixion of Christ. In contrast to the ram of Abraham’s day, Christ was seen, in this view, as the long-awaited “Lamb of God” (John 1:29).

However, while it is appropriate for Christians to see the story of Abraham’s near-sacrifice as a type of God’s sacrifice of His Only Begotten son, [\[lxxi\]](#) they should reject the common misreading of scripture that asserts a difference between the term “ram” and the term “lamb” in the two parallel accounts. As further evidence that this presumed difference is an illusion, note that early Christians equated the adult ram that was sacrificed by Abraham in verse 13 to the lamb that Abraham mentioned in verse 8. For example, Ephrem the Syrian wrote: “In the *ram*, which was hanging from the tree and was sacrificed as an offering in place of Abraham’s son, was prefigured the time of [Jesus], who was hung from a tree like the *ram* and tasted death for the sake of the whole world.” [\[lxxii\]](#)

Although Jewish tradition does not share the Christian belief in the redeeming power of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice, some Jewish texts resonate with Christian symbolism in associating the *akedah* with the Passover [\[lxxiii\]](#) and with the idea that Isaac’s willingness to die at Abraham’s hands [\[lxxiv\]](#)

suffices to save Israel from all their dangers and to obtain forgiveness for all their sins. ... [In midrash,] the redemptive value of Isaac’s merit is not limited to his

world but extends even to the netherworld: “Through the merits of Isaac, who offered himself upon the altar, the Holy One, blessed by He, shall raise the dead.”[\[lxxv\]](#) ... Rabbinic sources attribute an everlasting effect to Isaac’s sacrifice and make of it the prototype of all sacrifices.

Of course, in the New Testament the parallels between Abraham and Christ are explicit. For example, in the Gospel of John, we read that “Abraham rejoiced to see [Christ’s] day: and he saw it, and was glad” (John 8:56). Paul calls Christ “our Passover ... sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7. Compare 1 Peter 1:18–19; Revelation 5:9). Elsewhere, in Romans 8:32 he makes a deliberate allusion to Abraham when he refers to God not having “spared ... his only Son,” but rather “deliver[ing] him up for us all” (see Genesis 12:2, 12, 17).[\[lxxvi\]](#) But this verse in Romans creates a problem for Bible scholar Monica Pesthy-Simon:[\[lxxvii\]](#)

In the case of Abraham it is clear that he offered his only son to God. But if God takes the place of Abraham, to whom did he offer his son? To himself? Indeed, the same problem emerged in connection with all New Testament verses where it is said that God gives (up) or offers Jesus.

However, because Latter-day Saints believe that God and Jesus Christ are two separate beings, they see no dilemma in the Father’s giving of His only Son (John 3:16). The parallel with Abraham is a perfect one.

Section of Jerusalem map (1925) showing location of Mount Moriah according to Jewish sources. [\[lxxviii\]](#)

The Altar Is Named (Genesis 22:14)

Verse 14 tells us that “Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh.” A footnote in the Latter-day Saint edition of the Bible reads “Jehovah-jireh” as meaning “The Lord will see or provide (compare v. 8).” “Jireh” stems from the Hebrew root word *ra’ah*, “to see.”

The theme of “seeing” relates both to the name of Moriah (v. 2) and Abraham’s having previously seen the place “afar off” (v. 4). The theme of “providing” relates to Abraham’s comment in v. 8 that God would “provide himself a lamb.” The relationship between “seeing” and “providing” in Hebrew can be understood in connection with the English expression of “seeing to” (that is, “providing for”) something.

With the ram in the thicket, the Lord did indeed provide for Abraham. Christians also know that God later provided His only begotten Son as a substitute sacrifice for those of the covenant people who consecrate themselves to God in likeness of Isaac.[\[lxxix\]](#)

The explanation of the name of the place continues with an application of the phrase “In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen (Genesis 22:14). A footnote in the Latter-day Saint edition of the Bible reads the phrase as “In a mount the Lord shall be manifest (seen).” However, using a different but equally correct vocalization the phrase could be rendered in the present tense as “In a mount the Lord sees.” To preserve the ambiguity of the tenses, Robert Alter translates the phrase as “On the mount of the Lord there is sight.”[\[lxxx\]](#)

There are several typological interpretations of this verse that have to do with seeing or being seen by the Lord on a mountain. For example, Gordon J. Wenham notes that since the form of the verb *ra’ah* (Hebrew “to see”) in this verse is “regularly used of the Lord appearing to men (compare Genesis 12:7; 17:1; 18:1),” we can both make “a link backward with Abraham’s past experience and forward to Israel’s future experiences on the mountain of God [Sinai] (Exodus 3:1–2, 16; Leviticus 9:4, 6, etc.).”[\[lxxxii\]](#)

Another common typological interpretation of this phrase is the originally Jewish tradition, later adopted by many Christians, that Mount Moriah can be identified with the later site of sacrifice within the Jerusalem temple mount.[\[lxxxiii\]](#) Indeed, 2 Chronicles 3:1 calls the temple mount in Jerusalem “Moriah.” Though the exact location of Solomon’s temple in

Jerusalem is disputed, approximate site of Herod's temple is now occupied by the Islamic Dome of the Rock. For this and other reasons, Old Testament scholar L. Michael Morales is correct when he argues that Genesis 22 “probably served to prefigure the entire cultic economy—even as the foundation story for the Jerusalem temple.”[\[lxxxiii\]](#) Speaking of the Christian understanding of the role of sacrifice in salvation history, Morales writes:[\[lxxxiv\]](#)

The Jewish authors of the New Testament had come to understand Jesus' sacrifice on a Roman cross as *the* event that, on the one hand, had given the temple system of animal sacrifices its provisional acceptance and value and that, on the other hand, has made such sacrifices obsolete ever after, having fulfilled them.

God Solemnly Declares that Abraham's Blessings Have Been Made Sure (Genesis 22:15–18)

Abraham's response to the divine request enabled him to develop and demonstrate to the utmost degree his readiness to “patiently endure,” thus qualifying, according to Joseph Smith, to “obtain the promise” by a personal oath from the Father that he would attain eternal life (see Hebrews 6:13, 15), and that his beloved wives and sons would be “secured [to him] by the seal wherewith [he would be] sealed.”[\[lxxxv\]](#)

After emphasizing Abraham's status as a “friend” of God after demonstrating his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, Latter-day Saint scholar E. Douglas Clark summarizes scriptures and teachings of Joseph Smith confirming Abraham's “election sure” which occurred at that time:[\[lxxxvi\]](#)

[W]hen God announced the blessings, it was not just by promise but by oath, as emphasized by the letter to the Hebrews: “When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by Himself. . . . And so, after

[Abraham] had patiently endured, he obtained the promise” (Hebrews 6:13, 15). So what did it mean for the Almighty to swear by Himself? God was really saying, according to the Midrash, “Even as I live and endure for ever and to all eternity, so will My oath endure for ever and to all eternity.”[\[lxxxvii\]](#) It was the unconditional promise of eternal life, his calling and election made sure, which, says Joseph Smith, comes to a man after “the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve him at all hazards.”[\[lxxxviii\]](#) Accordingly, explained Joseph Smith, it was “the power of an endless life... which; Abraham obtained by the offering of his son Isaac,”[\[lxxxix\]](#) an event that “shows that if a man would attain to the keys of the kingdom of an endless life, he must sacrifice all things.”[\[xc\]](#)

The rabbis stated that at the beginning of the great trial, when God had first called Abraham’s name and he had answered “Here am I,” the real meaning was “Here am I—ready for priesthood, ready for kingship, and he attained priesthood and kingship.”[\[xci\]](#) Similarly, Joseph Smith stated that by the “oath of God unto our Father Abraham,” his children were “secured [to him] by the seal wherewith [Abraham had] been sealed.”[\[xcii\]](#)

In the end, Abraham’s binding of Isaac for the sacrifice was revealed as the necessary prelude for God’s binding of Isaac to Abraham for eternity.[\[xciii\]](#)

Conclusion

Are Abrahamic tests to be required sooner or later of every disciple? Elder Neal A. Maxwell answered this question affirmatively when he taught: “If we are serious about our discipleship, Jesus will eventually request each of us to do those very things which are the most difficult for us to do.”[\[xciv\]](#) Thus, “sometimes the best people have the worst

experiences because they are the most ready to learn.”[\[xcv\]](#)

Emphasizing at once the reality, urgency, and authority that the story of Abraham and Isaac imposes on believers while acknowledging the threatened loss of these qualities as modern culture distances itself socially and intellectually from the spirit of Abraham’s world, Erich Auerbach writes:[\[xcvi\]](#)

Far from seeking, [like fiction], merely to make us forget our own reality for a few hours, [the story] seeks to overcome our reality: we are to fit our own life into its world, feel ourselves to be elements in its structure of universal history. This becomes increasingly difficult the further our historical environment is removed from that of the Biblical books. . . . When, through too great a change in environment and through the awakening of a critical consciousness, this becomes impossible, the Biblical claim to absolute authority is jeopardized; the method of interpretation is scorned and rejected, the Biblical stories become ancient legends, and the doctrine they had contained, now dissevered from them, becomes a disembodied image.

Latter-day Saints who cherish the story of Abraham and Isaac as a divinely inspired reflection of historical and personal reality—not merely pious fiction—will find in it a source of endless spiritual nourishment and a supernal tutorial on discipleship. The significant lesson of the story of Abraham, who is mentioned by observant Jews daily in morning prayers and within the weekly liturgies of the synagogue, is summed up in *Lectures on Faith* 6:7:[\[xcvii\]](#)

From the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things: it was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy

eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things, that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has, for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice, because he seeks to do his will, he does know most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not nor will not seek his face in vain. Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life.

[i] Moshe Lieber (ed.), *The Pirkei Avos Treasury: Ethics of the Fathers. The Sages' Guide to Living, with an Anthologized Commentary and Anecdotes. Artscroll Mesorah Series.* Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1995, 5:4, pp. 303–305. Ten, of course, is a symbolic round number.

[ii] Rabbi Moses ben Maimon.

[iii] Moses Maimonides, Rambam on *Pirkei Avot*. In *Sefaria*.

https://www.sefaria.org/Rambam_on_Pirkei_Avot , 5:3.

[iv] Hafen, Bruce C. *Spiritually Anchored in Unsettled Times*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2009, 28–29.

[v] Lectures on Faith 6:11.

[vi] Lectures on Faith 6:3. See Hebrews 10:34.

[vii] Truman G. Madsen, “Power from Abrahamic Tests.” In *Five Classics by Truman G. Madsen*, edited by Truman G. Madsen, 232–240. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, Eagle Gate, 2001, 238.

[viii] John Taylor. “Discourse by President John Taylor. Delivered in the Bowery, Deseret, Monday, June 18, 1883.” In *Journal of Discourses*. 26 vols. Vol. 24, 194-202. Liverpool and London, England: Latter-day Saints Book Depot, 1853-1886. Reprint, Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1966, 197.

[ix] John Taylor. 1883. “Discourse by President John Taylor. Delivered at Parowan, Sunday Morning, June 24, 1883.” In *Journal of Discourses*. 26 vols. Vol. 24, 259-70. Liverpool and London, England: Latter-day Saints Book Depot, 1853-1886. Reprint, Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1966, 264.

[x] Nahum M. Sarna, ed. *Genesis. The JPS Torah Commentary*, ed. Nahum M. Sarna. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989, 393.

[xi] Apart from unique assignments for individuals, Elder John A. Widtsoe taught that those who kept their first estate all agreed in the premortal Council “to be not only saviors for ourselves but measurably, saviors for the whole human family” (cited in Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple*. Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1980, 216). According to President Spencer W. Kimball both men and women were “given certain assignments” to be carried out on earth (Spencer W. Kimball, “The role of righteous women.” *Ensign* 9, November 1979, 102-4, p. 102).

[xii] Terryl L. Givens and Blair Hodges. 2017. Feeding the Flock, with Terryl L. Givens (8 December 2017). In *MIPodcast #74*, Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University. <https://mi.byu.edu/mip-74-givens/>. Of course, one cannot allow room for acceptance of the seemingly irrational in God’s commands to sincere disciples without also opening the door to the illusions of the psychotic and the false pretensions of the conscious deceiver. See Soren Kierkegaard, 1843. *Fear and Trembling: A Dialectical Lyric*. Translated by Walter Lowrie. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941, 39–40.

[xiii] Annika Sheaff Grand Jeté. In *Riverside-Brookfield Landmark*.

<http://www.rblandmark.com/Directory/Resources/Academy-of-Movement-and-Music/Photos/11609/>. (accessed February 26, 2018).

[xiv] Kramer, Nathaniel. "August Bournonville: Kierkegaard's leap of faith and the 'noble art of terpsichore'." In *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries*, edited by Jon Bartley Stewart. Vol. 3: Literature, Drama, and Aesthetics, 70-81. Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2009, 80.

[xv] Kierkegaard, Soren. 1843. *Fear and Trembling: A Dialectical Lyric*. Translated by Walter Lowrie. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941, 56. See also N. Kramer, August Bournonville, 73.

[xvi] *Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985, #196, "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth," stanza 4.

[xvii] As to the absolute nature of the faith of the Father and the Son, we read: "There is nothing that the Lord thy God shall take in his heart to do but what he will do it" (Abraham 3:17). Regarding the independent nature of God's faith, we read: "God is the only supreme governor and independent being in whom all fulness and perfection dwell. ... In him the principle of faith dwells independently, and he is the object in whom the faith of all other rational and accountable beings centers for life and salvation" (Lectures on Faith 2:2).

[xviii] Browning, Robert. 1855. "Andrea del Sarto (Called the 'Faultless Painter')." In *Men and Women*, edited by Robert Browning. Reprint of First ed. The Temple Classics, ed. Israel Gollancz, 146-54. Aldine House, London, England: J. M. Dent, 1899.

<https://archive.org/details/menandwomen03browgoog/> .

[xix] Alma 32:34.

[xx] S. Kierkegaard, *Fear*, 57.

[xxi] N. Kramer, August Bournonville, 74.

[xxii] N. Kramer, August Bournonville, 78.

[xxiii] Sarna, Nahum M., ed. *Genesis. The JPS Torah Commentary*, ed. Nahum M. Sarna. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989, 151n22:1.

[xxiv] N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, 151n22:1.

[xxv] Monika Pesthy-Simon finds evidence that child sacrifice was offered to YHWH as well as to other gods in the 8th and 7th centuries BCE. This practice was prohibited after the Deuteronomic reform of Josiah (see Pesthy-Simon, Monika. *Isaac, Iphigeneia, Ignatius: Martyrdom and Human Sacrifice*. Budapest, Hungary: Central European Press, 2017, 13–17). In the Bible, two other passages besides Genesis 22 describe concrete cases of human sacrifice: the firstborn son of Mesha, the king of Moab (2 Kings 3:27) and Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11:30–40). Pesthy-Simon explores the various patterns of human sacrifice and finds the sacrifice of Isaac unique “because no human reason lies behind it. To put it somewhat crudely: Abraham expects nothing in return for his offering.” See M. Pesthy-Simon, *Isaac*, 17–29. For an earlier, detailed discussion of this and related topics, see Levenson, Jon D. *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son*. New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1993.

[xxvi] Hugh B. Brown, former First Presidency member, cited in Madsen, Truman G. “Power from Abrahamic Tests.” In *Five Classics by Truman G. Madsen*, edited by Truman G. Madsen, 232–40. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, Eagle Gate, 2001, 232.

[[xxvii](#)] Nahum Sarna explains that the Hebrew phrase translated in Genesis 22:1 as “Take now thy son” “adds the participle *na*’ to the imperative, which usually softens the command to an entreaty, as noted in Sanhedrin 89b, Genesis Rabba 55:7, and Rashi’s commentary.” (N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, 151n. *Take your son*).

[[xxviii](#)] N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, 151n. *Take your son*.

[[xxix](#)] See Bradshaw, Jeffrey M. *The First Days and the Last Days: A Verse-By-Verse Commentary on the Book of Moses and JS—Matthew in Light of the Temple*. Orem and Salt Lake City, UT: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2021, 57n *thou mayest choose*.

[[xxx](#)] See Chouraqui, André. *Entête (La Genèse). La Bible, Traduite et commenté par André Chouraqui*. Paris, France: Jean-Claude Lattès, 1992, 220.

[[xxxi](#)] T. G. Madsen, Power. See Hebrews 11:19.

[[xxxii](#)] N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, 151n3. Compare A. Chouraqui, *Entête*, 220.

[[xxxiii](#)] N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, 151n. *Here I am*.

[[xxxiv](#)] A. Chouraqui, *Entête*, 220.

[[xxxv](#)] N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, Genesis 12:1.

[[xxxvi](#)] N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, 150.

[[xxxvii](#)] Sarna’s translation as given in N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, 150.

[[xxxviii](#)] A. Chouraqui, *Entête*, 221–22.

[xxxix] King, Arthur Henry. "Rhetoric." In *Arm the Children: Faith's Response to a Violent World*, edited by Daryl Hague, 199-215. Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 1998, 207–8.

[xl] See Chouraqui, André. *Entête (La Genèse). La Bible, Traduite et commenté par André Chouraqui*. Paris, France: Jean-Claude Lattès, 1992, 222.

[xli] My appreciation to Arthur Henry King (1910-2000) for this unpublished insight concerning Genesis 22:3.

[xlii] Wenham, Gordon J., ed. *Genesis 16–50. Word Biblical Commentary 2*: Nelson Reference and Electronic, 1994, 106-7.

[xliii] Wenham, Gordon J., ed. *Genesis 16–50. Word Biblical Commentary 2*: Nelson Reference and Electronic, 1994, 106-7.

[xliv] <http://2.bp.blogspot.com/->

FACoAUGsyBc/T1abOuwAgQI/AAAAAAAAABgQ/ySM7zYihybU/s1600/Abraham+Isaac+JohannHeinrichFerdinandOlvier.jpg .

[xlv] Rashi, *The Torah with Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Vol. 1: Beresheis/Genesis. Translated by Rabbi Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg. *ArtScroll Series, Sapirstein Edition*. Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1995, 2:233n22:5.

[xlvi] A. Chouraqui, *Entête*, 223.

[xlvii] Philo. b. 20 BCE. "On Dreams." In *Philo*, edited by F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker. Revised ed. 12 vols. Vol. 5. Translated by F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker. The Loeb Classical Library 275, 283-579. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934, I, 170–72, pp. 386–89. Philo speaks of Jacob, having received "the impress of a nobler character and the name of 'Israel,' 'he that seeth God,'" ... no longer claims as his father

Abraham, the man who learned, but Isaac the man who was born good by nature.” See A. Chouraqui, *Entête*, 211.

[xlvi] Auerbach, Erich. 1946. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Translated by Willard R. Trask. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003, 11.

[xlix] Morales, L. Michael. *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*. *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 27. Downers Grove, IL: Apollos, InterVarsity Press, 2015, 226.

[1] Bradshaw, Jeffrey M., and Matthew L. Bowen. ““By the Blood Ye Are Sanctified”: The Symbolic, Salvific, Interrelated, Additive, Retrospective, and Anticipatory Nature of the Ordinances of Spiritual Rebirth in John 3 and Moses 6.” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 24 (2017): 123-316. Reprint, Updated and expanded in Stephen D. Ricks and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, eds. *Sacred Time, Sacred Space, and Sacred Meaning*. Proceedings of the Third Interpreter Foundation Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference, 5 November 2016, Temple on Mount Zion Series. Vol. 4. Orem and Salt Lake City, UT: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2020, pp. 43-237.

[http://www.templethemes.net/publications/Bradshaw%20and%20Bowen-By%20the%20Blood-from%20TMZ4%20\(2016\).pdf](http://www.templethemes.net/publications/Bradshaw%20and%20Bowen-By%20the%20Blood-from%20TMZ4%20(2016).pdf) .

<https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/by-the-blood-ye-are-sanctified-the-symbolic-salvific-interrelated-additive-retrospective-and-anticipatory-nature-of-the-ordinances-of-spiritual-rebirth-in-john-3-and-moses-6/> ;

[http://www.templethemes.net/publications/Bradshaw%20and%20Bowen-By%20the%20Blood-from%20TMZ4%20\(2016\).pdf](http://www.templethemes.net/publications/Bradshaw%20and%20Bowen-By%20the%20Blood-from%20TMZ4%20(2016).pdf) ;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Alu5UNtcMMk> ; (accessed January 10, 2018), 57–58, 96–99, 103–105.

[[li](#)] Eisenbaum, Pamela Michelle. *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context*. *Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series* 156, ed. Michael V. Fox and Pheme Perkins. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997, 162 observes that the motif of a “near-death experience” of the hero appears more than once in Hebrews 11. In the case of Isaac (p. 163): “What is stressed is that from one who was almost never born, and who after being born was almost killed, the descendants of Abraham, the descendants of God’s faithful ones, are born.”

[[lii](#)] Attridge, Harold W., and Helmut Koester, eds. *Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. *Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Klaus Baltzer, Paul D. Hanson, S. Dean McBride, Jr. and Roland E. Murphy. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1989, 335. For a Latter-day Saint perspective on this topic, see Bradshaw, Jeffrey M., and Matthew L. Bowen. ““By the Blood Ye Are Sanctified”: The Symbolic, Salvific, Interrelated, Additive, Retrospective, and Anticipatory Nature of the Ordinances of Spiritual Rebirth in John 3 and Moses 6.” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 24 (2017): 123-316. Reprint, Updated and expanded in Stephen D. Ricks and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, eds. *Sacred Time, Sacred Space, and Sacred Meaning*. Proceedings of the Third Interpreter Foundation Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference, 5 November 2016, Temple on Mount Zion Series. Vol. 4. Orem and Salt Lake City, UT: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2020, pp. 43-237.

[http://www.templethemes.net/publications/Bradshaw%20and%20Bowen-By%20the%20Blood-from%20TMZ4%20\(2016\).pdf](http://www.templethemes.net/publications/Bradshaw%20and%20Bowen-By%20the%20Blood-from%20TMZ4%20(2016).pdf) ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Alu5UNtcMMk> , 176-179.

[[liii](#)] Matt, Daniel C., ed. *The Zohar, Pritzker Edition*. Vol. 2. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004, 1:119b, p. 194 and n. 606. The textual evidence on which this reading depends springs from the presence of the Hebrew particle *et* that introduces the

direct complement of the direct object within the phrase “God tested *et* Abraham.” Though *et* has “no ascertainable independent sense” (Matt, *Zohar*, 2:194n606), it is sometimes translated as “with.” Hence, the inferred meaning that Isaac was tested “with” Abraham (Chouraqui, André. *Entête (La Genèse). La Bible, Traduite et commenté par André Chouraqui*. Paris, France: Jean-Claude Lattès, 1992, 220–221). The interpretation is seen as strengthened by the fact that it is conspicuously said that the father and son went “together” three times in Genesis 22 (see vv. 6, 8, 19).

[liv] Madsen, Truman G. “Power from Abrahamic Tests.” In *Five Classics by Truman G. Madsen*, edited by Truman G. Madsen, 232–40. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, Eagle Gate, 2001, 233.

[lv] Jewish tradition sometimes calculates Isaac’s age as thirty-seven years old. A listing of sources for this tradition is given in D. C. Matt, *Zohar*, 2:193n599.

[lvi] Several Jewish sources recount that Isaac was told by Abraham of his intent prior to their arrival at Moriah, and freely consented. Compare, for example, Berman, Samuel A., ed. *Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu: An English Translation of Genesis and Exodus from the Printed Version of Tanhuma-Yelammedenu with an Introduction, Notes, and Indexes*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing, 1996, 23, p. 146: “If [the Holy One] has chosen me, . . . I shall willingly surrender my soul to Him.” The phrasing in Madsen’s version of Isaac’s statement recalls the Passover Haggadah Thanksgiving litany where, after each element of a list of blessings is read, the audience repeats the Hebrew response *Dayenu* (“It would have been sufficient”) (Tabory, Joseph. *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 2008, 45–46). Thanks to Stephen T. Whitlock for this insight and others.

[lvii] See Maher, Michael, ed. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Genesis*. Vol. 1b. *Aramaic Bible*.

Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992, 22:10, p. 79. At that moment, Isaac is said to have seen the angels on high, who exclaimed: “Come see two unique ones who are in the world; one is slaughtering, and one is being slaughtered; the one who slaughters does not hesitate, and the one who is being slaughtered stretches for this neck” [that is, to make it easier for Abraham to slit it with his knife] (M. Maher, Targum, 22:10, p. 80). See also McNamara, Martin, ed. *Targum Neofiti I, Genesis, translated, with apparatus and notes*. Vol. 1a. *Aramaic Bible*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992, 22:10, p. 118; Berman, Samuel A., ed. *Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu: An English Translation of Genesis and Exodus from the Printed Version of Tanhuma-Yelammedenu with an Introduction, Notes, and Indexes*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing, 1996, 23, p. 147.

[lviii] For other insights relating to this statement in Jacob, see How Abraham’s Sacrifice of Isaac Illuminates the Atonement (KnoWhy #412, March 1, 2018). In *Book of Mormon Central*. <https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/knowhy/how-abrahams-sacrifice-of-isaac-illuminates-the-atonement>

[lix] Sarna, Nahum M., ed. *Genesis. The JPS Torah Commentary*, ed. Nahum M. Sarna. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989, 151n11.

[lx] N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, 153n11.

[lxi] N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, 153n12.â

[lxii] Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Hebrews: A Commentary. The New Testament Library*, ed. C. Clifton Black and John T. Carroll. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006, 295, explaining the Greek behind the phrase in Hebrews 11:9 stated that Abraham received Isaac “in a figure” (that is, “figuratively speaking”).

[lxiii] For a listing of such sources, see Bradshaw, Jeffrey M., David J. Larsen, and Stephen

T. Whitlock. “Moses 1 and the Apocalypse of Abraham: Twin sons of different mothers?” In *Tracing Ancient Threads in the Book of Moses: Inspired Origins, Temple Contexts, and Literary Qualities*, edited by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, David R. Seely, John W. Welch and Scott Gordon, 789–922. Orem, UT; Springville, UT; Redding, CA; Tooele, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, Book of Mormon Central, FAIR, and Eborn Books, 2021.

<https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/moses-1-and-the-apocalypse-of-abraham-twin-sons-of-different-mothers/> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-nyXh4JoAw> , 899–900n196. See, in addition, Levenson, Jon D. *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son*. New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1993, 196–99; Pesthy-Simon, Monika. *Isaac, Iphigeneia, Ignatius: Martyrdom and Human Sacrifice*. Budapest, Hungary: Central European Press, 2017, 90–92.

[lxiv] Nibley, Hugh W. “The sacrifice of Isaac.” In *Abraham in Egypt*, edited by Hugh W. Nibley and Gary P. Gillum. *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* 14. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2000.

[lxv] Cited in Truman G. Madsen, *The Presidents of the Church: Insights into their Lives and Teachings*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2004, 269.

[lxvi] Kraeling, Carl H., C. C. Torrey, C. B. Welles, and B. Geiger. *The Synagogue. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters: Final Report VIII, Part I*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1956, plate 51.

[lxvii] Bradshaw, Jeffrey M. “The Ezekiel Mural at Dura Europos: A tangible witness of Philo’s Jewish mysteries?” *BYU Studies* 49, no. 1 (2010): 4-49.

<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol49/iss1/2/> , 11–12.

[[lxviii](#)] Barker, Margaret. *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*. London, England: T&T Clark, 2008, 28.

[[lxix](#)] Others have interpreted the divine hand as “staying the sacrifice” of Isaac, as is clearly attested in the scene of the binding of Isaac in the Beth Alpha synagogue. But the Dura Europos and Beth Alpha scenes and their context differ in significant ways.

[[lxx](#)] <https://churchplants.com/daily-devotions/3430-the-ram-in-thicket-church-planting-devotional-jim-carpenter.html> .

[[lxxi](#)] For more on Christian typological interpretations of the near sacrifice of Isaac, see Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London: T and T Clark, 2008), 31; compare p. 28. See also James L. Kugel, *The Bible as It Was* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1997), 177–78; Kugel, James L. *Traditions of the Bible*. Revised ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998, 306–7, 324–25; Hebrews 11:17–19.

[[lxxii](#)] Emphasis added. Commentary on Genesis 20:3, cited in J. L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 324–25. Kugel also provides other examples of similar typological correspondences.

[[lxxiii](#)] Wintermute, O. S. “Jubilees.” In *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, edited by James H. Charlesworth. Vol. 2, 35-142. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1983, 17:15–18; 18:18–19, pp. 90–91.

[[lxxiv](#)] Pesthy-Simon, Monika. *Isaac, Iphigeneia, Ignatius: Martyrdom and Human Sacrifice*. Budapest, Hungary: Central European Press, 2017, 89–90.

[[lxxv](#)] Braude, William G., and Israel J. Kapstein, eds. 1975. *Pesikta De-Rab Kahana: R. Kahana's Compilation of Discourses for Sabbaths and Festal Days*. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2002, Supplement 1:20, pp. 613–14

[[lxxvi](#)] J. L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 324–25. See also M. Pesthy-Simon, *Isaac*, 109.

[[lxxvii](#)] M. Pesthy-Simon, *Isaac*, 109.

[[lxxviii](#)]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moriah#/media/File:Height_743_section_Jerusalem_map,_scale_10,000_scale,_1st_edition,_Survey_of_Palestine,_Jaffa,_August_1925,_Ordnance_Survey_Offices,_Southampton,_1926.png .

[[lxxix](#)] Bradshaw, Jeffrey M., and Matthew L. Bowen. ““By the Blood Ye Are Sanctified”: The Symbolic, Salvific, Interrelated, Additive, Retrospective, and Anticipatory Nature of the Ordinances of Spiritual Rebirth in John 3 and Moses 6.” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 24 (2017): 123-316. Reprint, Updated and expanded in Stephen D. Ricks and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, eds. *Sacred Time, Sacred Space, and Sacred Meaning*.

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[http://www.templethemes.net/publications/Bradshaw%20and%20Bowen-By%20the%20Blood-from%20TMZ4%20\(2016\).pdf](http://www.templethemes.net/publications/Bradshaw%20and%20Bowen-By%20the%20Blood-from%20TMZ4%20(2016).pdf) .

<https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/by-the-blood-ye-are-sanctified-the-symbolic-salvific-interrelated-additive-retrospective-and-anticipatory-nature-of-the-ordinances-of-spiritual-rebirth-in-john-3-and-moses-6/> ;

[http://www.templethemes.net/publications/Bradshaw%20and%20Bowen-By%20the%20Blood-from%20TMZ4%20\(2016\).pdf](http://www.templethemes.net/publications/Bradshaw%20and%20Bowen-By%20the%20Blood-from%20TMZ4%20(2016).pdf) ;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Alu5UNtcMMk> ; (accessed January 10, 2018), 57–58, 96–99, 103–105.

[[lxxx](#)] Alter, Robert, ed. *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*. New York City, NY: W. W. Norton, 2019, 1:74n14. N. M. Sarna translates similarly using “vision”

instead of “sight” (N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, 154).

[[lxxxix](#)] Wenham, Gordon J., ed. *Genesis 16–50. Word Biblical Commentary 2*: Nelson Reference and Electronic, 1994, 111.

[[lxxxii](#)] See, for example, Targum Neofiti 22:14, from Martin McNamara, trans., Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis, vol. 1a of The Aramaic Bible (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 119; Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky, eds., *The Book of Legends (Sefer Ha-Aggadah): Legends from the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. William G. Braude (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), 41; Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 5:253n253; Psalm 76:3, from William G. Braude, ed., *The Midrash on Psalms (Midrash Tehillim)* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959), 2:14–15; Genesis 22:15, from Rashi, *The Torah with Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated, Beresheis/Genesis*, trans. Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1995), vol. 2, p. 237; Genesis (Vayera) 22:14, from A. J. Rosenberg, ed., *Mikraot Gedolot*, vol. 1, *Genesis and Exodus* (Brooklyn: Judaica Press, 1993), 259; Genesis 22:14, from Meir Zlotowitz and Nosson Scherman, eds., *Bereishis/ Genesis: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic, and Rabbinic Sources* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1986), 1:806–7; Genesis (Vayera) 56:10, from Freedman and Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, 1:500–501.

[[lxxxiii](#)] Morales, L. Michael. *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus. New Studies in Biblical Theology 27*. Downers Grove, IL: Apollos, InterVarsity Press, 2015, 73. Morales also notes the presence of cultic terminology in the binding of Isaac on Mount Moriah that is “clustered together elsewhere only for the ordination of the Levitical priests (Leviticus 8–9) and for the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)” (p. 73). He observes that Isaac was offered up specifically “as an ascension offering (*’ōlā*), the same as that offered up by Noah at the foundation of the newly cleansed

world” (p. 74).

[lxxxiv] Morales, L. Michael. *Exodus Old and New: A Biblical Theology of Redemption. Essential Studies in Biblical Theology*, ed. Benjamin L. Gladd. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, InterVarsity Press, 2020, 31.

[lxxxv] Smith, Joseph, Jr., Andrew F. Ehat, and Lyndon W. Cook. *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980.

<https://rsc.byu.edu/book/words-joseph-smith> , 13 August 1843, 241. For a more detailed description of Joseph Smith’s teachings on this topic, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Now that we *have* the words of Joseph Smith, how shall we begin to *understand* them? Illustrations of selected challenges within the 21 May 1843 Discourse on 2 Peter 1.” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 20 (2016): 47-150. <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/now-that-we-have-the-words-of-joseph-smith-how-shall-we-begin-to-understand-them/>.

Sometimes, due to faulty interpretations of statements by the Prophet Joseph Smith, it has been mistakenly taught that the “temple sealing of worthy parents in marriage assures the salvation and exaltation of their children. However, this blessing is not conferred by the marriage sealing but rather through qualifying for an eventual “sealing [of] the blessing [of] the everlasting covenant, thereby making their calling and election sure” (Smith, Joseph, Jr. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1969.

<https://scriptures.byu.edu/tpjs/STPJS.pdf> , 13 August 1843, 321. Compare J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 241, 300n19). Prior to the marriage sealing of Benjamin F. Johnson to his wife, the Prophet Joseph Smith explained the difference between these two kinds of seals (*William Clayton’s Journal*, 20 October 1843, cited in Allen, James B. *No Toil Nor Labor Fear: The Story of William Clayton*. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2002, 408.

Punctuation and grammar modernized):

... there were two seals in the Priesthood. The first was that which was placed upon a man and a woman when they made the [marriage] covenant and the other was the seal which allotted to them their particular mansion.

See Bednar, David A. “Faithful parents and wayward children: Sustaining hope while overcoming misunderstanding.” *Ensign* 44, March 2014, 28-33.

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2014/03/faithful-parents-and-wayward-children-sustaining-hope-while-overcoming-misunderstanding?lang=eng> for an apostolic correction of this misunderstanding.

[lxxxvi] Clark, E. Douglas. *The Blessings of Abraham: Becoming a Zion People*. American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2005, 217–18.

[lxxxvii] Kasher, Menachem Mendel. *Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation: A Millennial Anthology*. 9 vols. Translated by Harry Freedman. Monsey, NY: American Biblical Encyclopedia Society, 1957, 3:160, drawing on *Midrash Rabbah*, Exodus 44, 8; *Mishnah*, Sheni 5.

[lxxxviii] J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 27 June 1839, 150.

[lxxxix] J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 27 August 1843, 245.

[xc] J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 27 August 1843, 322.

[xci] Freedman, H., and Maurice Simon, eds. 1939. *Midrash Rabbah* 3rd ed. 10 vols. London, England: Soncino Press, 1983, Vayera 55:6, 1:486.

[xcii] J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 13 August 1843, 241.

[xciii] Paraphrasing E. D. Clark, *Blessings*, 218.

[xciv] Maxwell, Neal A. *A Time to Choose*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1972, 46.

[xcv] Cited in Hafen, Bruce C. *A Disciple's Life: The Biography of Neal A. Maxwell*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2002, 20.

[xcvi] Auerbach, Erich. 1946. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Translated by Willard R. Trask. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003, 15–16.

[xcvii] Dahl, Larry E., and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds. *The Lectures on Faith in Historical Perspective. Religious Studies Specialized Monograph Series 15*. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1990, 6:7, 93.

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