

# THE HEBREW STORY OF ABRAHAM AND ISAAC



*new*

Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg

**THE HEBREW  
STORY OF  
ABRAHAM  
& ISAAC**

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JEWISH STUDIES  
FOR CHRISTIANS

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# Introduction

In this short book, I invite you to journey with me through the life of Abraham and his son Isaac.

This is indeed a story of great faith that was “penned” in the Hebrew language, and so through this little book, we will be consulting the underlining Hebrew text of these ancient stories to see what may have been lost in translation. I hope you will be inspired by what comes to the surface, at least as I was when I slowly walked through this amazing story of despair and survival, hope and justice, and then, finally, peace.

So, without further ado, let us begin.

# Chapter 1: Abraham's Story

Abraham is one of the Bible's favorite characters. He is considered to be "the father" of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, since Abraham plays a central and, in many ways, founding role in the narrative of each religious tradition. Despite his character flaws, he was able to exercise faith and trust towards his covenant God, especially at the critical moments in his life.

The story of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9) precedes the story of Abraham and his origins. It is an important bridge that establishes the consistency of God in His merciful dealings with a frail and sinful humanity. Just as God, in His mercy, exiled Adam and Eve from the Garden where their corrupt status could have been sealed forever (by eating from the Tree of Life), here, too, God displayed mercy towards the children of

Adam and Eve as they attempted to build a tower that would make their name great by reaching into the very abode of God (Gen. 11:4). Human beings erected the highest building they could, but even to see it, the LORD must “descend” from His heavenly dwelling place. Just as the ground was cursed/limited/restricted in the case of Adam, so too the ability of the children of Adam to communicate was now cursed/limited/restricted. This tower forever became known as the “Tower of Babel” מִגְדַּל בָּבֶל (*migdal bavel*), or literally “the tower of confused speech.”

God’s merciful dealings with the line of Shem continue, and in Genesis 11:10-25 we are told about the generations that God blessed with posterity, leading to the birth of Terah, Abraham’s father. We are told of three children of his, of whom Abram was the oldest (Abram, Nahor and Haran). The youngest brother, Haran, had a son named Lot – Abram’s

nephew. In ancient Hebrew vocabulary, the Abram-Lot relationship could be described as “brotherhood” (Gen. 14:14). Terah outlived his son Haran, who died while Abram was still living in Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen. 11:28). Both Abram and his second brother Nahor were married. Sarai became the wife of Abram, while Milcah, the daughter of their deceased brother Haran, married Nahor. Before the storyteller continues with his narrative about Abram and his life, we are told that young Sarai was barren. (Gen. 11:30).

We are not told why the patriarch of this household (Terah) took his son Abram and his wife Sarai, and also his grandson Lot, and began making his way toward the Land of Canaan, leaving behind what we now know to be one of the most advanced ancient civilizations known to man – the city of the Chaldeans called Ur. Terah died in Haran, where the clan settled on the way to the Land of Canaan. According to the following chapter, Abram received a call to continue on to



the Promised Land, seemingly while in Haran. The accounts certainly lack detail and are presented in a truncated fashion; this sometimes gives them the impression of self-contradiction. That realization has led a great many modern Torah scholars to conclude that many of the texts in the Torah were not simply edited or updated from time to time, but were once separate texts that were pieced together at a later time by an authorized community of editor/editors. Others retain the belief that the entire Torah can be explained without assuming any major editing.

## Chapter 2: Abram's Call and Obedience

The universalism that marked Genesis chapters 1-11 had now failed. The LORD begins anew, singling out one Mesopotamian, Abram, and promising to make of him a great nation, not numbered among the seventy nations of Genesis 10. We read in Genesis 12:1-3 that the Lord said to Abram:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם לֵךְ־לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ־ךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ  
וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל־הָאֲרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֹרְאָךְ:

*The Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you. (Gen. 12:1)*

וְאֶעֱשֶׂה לְךָ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְאֶבְרַכְךָ וְאֶגְדָּלְךָ וְשָׂמָךְ וְהָיָה  
בְּרִכָּה:

*I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. (Gen. 12:2)*

וְאַבְרָמָה מְבָרְכֶיךָ וּמְקַלְלֶיךָ אָאָר וְנִבְרָכוּ בְּךָ כָּל  
מִשְׁפַּחַת הָאָדָמָה:

*I will bless those who bless you and curse him that curses you; And all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you.” (Gen. 12:3)*

God promised to make Abram into a great nation. This Hebrew phrase is significant: גוי גדול (*goy gadol*), literally “big or great nation.” As you may know, Hebrew places adjectives after nouns, not before, as in many other languages. So, while in English we say “big nation,” in Hebrew it is גוי גדול (*goy gadol*) – “nation big.” The plural of the Hebrew word for “nation” is גוים (*goyim*), often translated as “Gentiles” (“the [other] nations”). In Hebrew the verb “to bless” is בָּרַךְ (*barakh*), which is related to the word for

“knee” בָּרַךְ (*berekeh*). The meaning might therefore be connected to “bending the knee,” possibly implying rendering service to someone. If so, one possible interpretation of this verse (12:3) could be: “I will serve those who serve you!” To “serve” implies doing good to someone, which will in turn result in a benefit for the recipient.

God also promises Abraham that “whoever curses him” מְקַלְלֵהוּ (*mekallekha*) will in turn “be cursed” אָרַר (*aor*). The strength of this promise, however, is lost in translation. The first word for “cursing” מְקַלְלֵהוּ (*mekallekha*) comes from a root that relates to “lightness.” Hence, the background meaning might be “to make light of something heavy.” The second word for “cursing” אָרַר (*aor*) actually comes from a completely different root that has connotations of “damaging/destroying utterly.” Taking into consideration these insights from Hebrew, an alternative translation could

be presented as follows: “I will serve those who will serve you; and the one who makes light of you, I will utterly destroy.”

Here begins the life of trust – the character quality for which Abram/Abraham will become most known. Abram must leave his home and begin making his way to a place that God promised to show him at a later time. In response to the trust demanded, God promises three things: 1) to make Abram into a great nation; 2) to bless Abram; and 3) to make Abram’s name great. As a result of the Abram-God cooperation, the nations of the world will also receive God’s blessings. God’s promise to Abram is sure, and his safety, in spite of perilous surroundings, is guaranteed. God’s blessing of Abram is not the culmination, but merely the beginning. Ultimately, all nations of the earth will be blessed through him.

Like Noah, the father of Shem, before him, Abraham too obeys God's call. Together with his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot, and along with the wealth, animals and slaves they had acquired in Haran, they set out for Canaan together. Abram's clan reached Shechem – the oak of Moreh (which in Hebrew means “teacher”). We are told by a later editor of the text that this took place when the Canaanites were living in the land (Gen. 12:6).

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Here is how: 1. Go to Amazon.com and search for the title of this book – “The Hebrew Story of Abraham and Isaac.” 2. Click on the title, click on the “ratings” link (right under the author’s name) and click the “Write a customer review” button. 3. Rate the book and leave a few words.

This will help me a lot, especially if you genuinely love this book! After writing a review, please drop me a personal note and let me know - [dr.eli.israel@gmail.com](mailto:dr.eli.israel@gmail.com). I would appreciate your help with this.

Dr. Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg

## Chapter 3: The Promise of the Land

Apart from choosing a particular family, God also assigned a section of His created order, a particular piece of land, to Abram and his offspring. This connection of Abram to the land was meant to invoke the history and failure of Adam in a particular land we now call the Garden of Eden. In so doing, the author may have intended to connect the promised redemptive future of Abram's children to the hope of Noah himself. After all, Noah had recently been portrayed as the second Adam from the righteous line of Seth. Abraham continues this same trajectory. Regardless of whether or not we should consider Abraham as a third Adam, the connection between Adam, Noah and Abram is clear. Like Noah (Gen. 8:20-21), Abram too set up an altar to the Lord (Gen. 12:7). It is intriguing to note that Abram settles to



the east of Bethel (house of God), just as Adam was apparently situated east of the Garden of Eden (where God walked). It is there that the cherubim were placed to guard the entrance to the Garden (Gen. 3:24). God's redemptive plan continues in spite of the consistent failings of the frail children of Adam and Eve. From this point on the relationship of God to the children of Abram will dominate the remainder of the Bible, in spite of the fact that the Bible also makes it clear that the ultimate purpose of this relationship is the restoration of the entire world (Is. 65:17).

Because of a famine, Abram's family migrates to nearby Egypt. Being fearful for his life and the consequences of an undesirable outcome for his entire family, he asks Sarai not to reveal that she is his wife, but to inform the Egyptians that she is his sister. As expected, Sarai's beauty did not go unnoticed and she was quickly taken to join the imperial harem. Pharaoh

and his household were immediately afflicted with widespread plagues (a precursor of the future event involving the children of Israel, for whom this book was originally written). It was quickly discerned that the plagues were connected to the new woman joining his harem – Sarai. Pharaoh confronted Abram about the matter and commanded him to take his wife and all that he had and leave Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20). We read in Genesis 13:3-4:

וַיֵּלֶךְ לְמִסְעָיו מִנֶּגֶב וְעַד־בֵּית־אֵל עַד־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־  
הָיָה שָׁם אָהֳלָה בְּתַחֲלָה בֵּין בֵּית־אֵל וּבֵין הָעֵי:

*And he proceeded by stages from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had formerly been, between Bethel and Ai... (Gen. 13:3)*

אֶל־מָקוֹם הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה שָׁם בְּרֵאשִׁיטָה וַיִּקְרָא  
שָׁם אַבְרָם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה:

*... the site of the altar that he had built there at first; and there Abram invoked the LORD by name (Gen. 13:4).*

We will discuss the meaning of the word יהוה (or as is it depicted in English transliteration – YHWH) later, when we discuss God’s revelation to Moses. In this section of Genesis, suffice to say, sometimes the name of God is specified as יהוה (*yod-hey-vav-hey*), usually translated as “LORD” (in capitals), while at other times God is referred to as אֲדֹנָי (*Adonai*), also translated as “Lord.” Abram’s family left Egypt with much wealth because the gifts that were given to Abram for Sarai were apparently not taken back. From the wilderness of the Negev (direct connection point with Egypt) Abram returned to the place east of Bethel where he first set up an altar to the Lord (Gen. 13:1-4). Just like Noah and Enosh, son of Seth (Gen. 4:26) Abram called upon the Lord by His name. The righteous line that

the Lord had established is preserved, as history continues to unfold.

Not only did Abram's family grow in wealth, but Lot also benefited tremendously from his association with his uncle, becoming very wealthy in his own right (Gen. 13:5-7). After ongoing quarrelling between Lot's herdsmen and Abram's herdsmen over pasture land for the sheep, Abram proposed a wise solution to his beloved nephew (Gen. 13:8-9): So there would be no more quarrelling, for they are "brothers," they will separate and Abram gives Lot first choice of the land. Abram is full of trust and confidence in his God, whom he does not see; Lot trusts only in what he does see. This was a deal Lot could not refuse. Judging only by appearance, Lot chose for himself a piece of land that reminded him of both the prosperity of Egypt and the fabled Garden of the Lord where his forefather Adam once dwelt (Gen. 13:10-11). Thus Abram remained

in Canaan, but Lot settled near Sodom. According to the text, the prosperity of Sodom was equal only to the level of its wickedness. Nevertheless, that was the place Lot chose to settle with his family (Gen. 13:12-13).

The Lord reaffirmed the promise of the land to Abram and his offspring, asking Abram to raise his eyes and look in each direction. We read this in Genesis 13:14-17, along with the promise of innumerable offspring:

וַיְהוֹה אָמַר אֶל־אַבְרָם אַחֲרֵי הַפָּרֶד־לוֹט מֵעִמּוֹ שָׂא  
נָא עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵה מִן־הַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה שָׂם צַפְנָה  
בְּנִגְבָּה וּבְקֶדְמָה וּבְיָמָה:

*And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had parted from him, "Raise your eyes and look out from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. (Gen. 13:14)*

כִּי אֶת־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה רֹאֶה לְךָ אֶתְנַנֶּה  
וּלְזַרְעֲךָ, עַד־עוֹלָם:

*For I give all the land that you see to you and  
your offspring forever. (Gen. 13:15)*

וְשָׂמֵתִי אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ כְּעֹפֶר הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אִם־יֹכֵל אִישׁ  
לְמִנּוֹת אֶת־עֹפֶר הָאָרֶץ גַּם־זַרְעֲךָ יִמְנָה:

*I will make your offspring as the dust of the  
earth, so that if one can count the dust of the  
earth, then your offspring too can be counted.  
(Gen. 13:16)*

The Hebrew words used of the four directions where Abram was asked to direct his gaze were: “North” צָפֹנָה (*tsafonah*), “South” נֶגְבָּה (*negbah*), “East” קֶדְמָה (*kedmah*) and “West” יָמָה (*yamah*). In English, these words signify exclusive and very specific directions, but given Hebrew’s intense physicality as a language we are able to see the origin of these

words. Grammatically, the ending ה- (*hey*) when attached to a word signifying location shows the directional movement, similar to English “to the....” The Hebrew phrase נִגְבָּה (negbah), translated as “to the South” literally means “to the Negev” (the wilderness of Negev). The phrase יָמָה (*yamah*) translated as “to the West” literally means “to the sea.” Similarly, קִדְמָה (*kedmah*), translated as “to the east,” evokes an image of “going back to something from an earlier time.” Its root is connected to the idea of “antiquity” or the distant past. From a Biblical perspective, this suggests the Garden of Eden that God planted “in the east” at the beginning of history (Gen. 2:8), as well as the direction of the rising sun. The Hebrew phrase translated as “to the North” צַפְנָה (*tsafonah*) is connected to is connected to Mt. Tsafon or Zaphon (see Isa. 14:13), now known as Jebel Aqra on the border of Syria and Turkey. This mountain lay to Abram’s north when God told him to look in all directions.

Whilst we moderns consider north to be our main orientation point, ancient Israelites oriented themselves towards the east. It was a very different world from ours, where the physical landmarks took on real meaning, giving reference points to the language people used. For us to understand the world of the Bible, it is important to try to grasp how people thought in their original context.

When the Lord told Abram to walk through the length and breadth of the land, like Noah, he obeyed God's command, and he came to the vicinity of the famed oaks of Mamre in Hebron, where again he built an altar to the Lord.

We read about this in the last verse of Genesis 13:

וַיֵּאָהֶל אַבְרָם וַיְבֹא וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּאֵלֵנִי מִמְּרָא אֲשֶׁר  
בְּחֶבְרוֹן וַיִּכְוֶן־שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה:



*And Abram moved his tent, and came to dwell  
at the terebinths of Mamre, which are in  
Hebron; and he built an altar there to the  
LORD. (Gen. 13:18)*

The Hebrew word used for altar is מִזְבֵּחַ (*mizbeach*). It is connected with the verb “to slaughter” and “to sacrifice.” Hebrew often forms nouns from verb stems prefixed by -מ (*mem*). For example, the verb “to fight” is לָחַם (*lachim*), but when מ (*mem*) is added it becomes the noun מִלְחָמָה (*milchamah*) “battle, war.” Abram was no longer to think of this land as a place where he dwelled among welcoming people. Instead it was promised to him and, like Adam and Noah before him, he was now given both the privilege and the responsibility associated with God’s gift and grace.

## Chapter 4: War and Blessing

The story of the capture of Lot (who now headed a separate “clan”) is told in considerable detail in Genesis 14:1-12. When a rebellion between local vassal servant kings and a regional imperial power broke out, Lot and his family were captured, together with everyone else who stood in the way of the winning party. It appears that Abram had excellent people and life skills. He developed a true friendship and military alliance with Eshkol and Aner, who were his neighbors. His man came from the field of battle and reported to Abram at the oaks of Mamre (Mamre was apparently the name of the person who owned the land, as inferred from Gen. 14:24) that Lot had been captured. This was the perfect opportunity for Abram to mimic Cain’s response – “Am I my brother’s keeper?!”

Unlike Cain, and at great personal risk to himself and his entire household (from whom Lot had separated) Abram responded decisively and set out on a daring rescue mission. His young men were fully trained soldiers. He knew, given the dangers of living in the Middle East at that time (and nothing has really changed), that sooner or later their training would pay off. So he summoned over three hundred of his men, born in his household, along with the men of his military allies Aner, Eshkol and Mamre, and set out towards the very north of what would one day become Israel – the future territory of the tribe of Dan. This essentially continues to fulfill God's command to explore the entire land he was given as inheritance (Gen. 14:13-14).

Let us read carefully how Moses and the editors formulate the result of Abram's daring short-term military operation. We read in Genesis 14:16:

וַיָּשֵׁב אֶת כָּל-הָרְכָשׁ וְגַם אֶת-לוֹט אָחִיו וְרָכְשׁוֹ  
הַיָּשִׁיב וְגַם אֶת-הַנָּשִׁים וְאֶת-הָעָם:

*He brought back all the possessions; he also brought back his kinsman Lot and his possessions, and the women and the rest of the people (Gen. 14:16)*

The word אֶת (*et*) is the most frequent word in Hebrew. That is, it is a structural word that tells us something about the grammar of the sentence. The preposition אֶת (*et*) comes just before a direct object and has no equivalent in English. There are also other uses of the word אֶת (*et*). It can also mean “with.” In Modern Hebrew it rarely appears by itself with that meaning, but that meaning is still very common in combined forms, such as the word אִתּוֹ (*ito*) “with him” or אִתָּהּ (*itah*) “with her.” However, in the Torah אֶת (*et*) can stand alone with this meaning. There is also another word in Hebrew

that means “with” – **עִם** (*im*). How we interpret these words can have a significant influence on our reading of the text.

Abram put Lot’s captors to flight and drove them out of the land which God had now promised would belong to him (Gen. 13:14-17, 14:15). What is interesting is that we see here, with the rescue of Lot’s clan, the direct benefit of being connected to Abram even if not part of his immediate family. We might remember that Lot’s children will one day become part of the nations of the world living around Israel. In seeking to understand the Torah’s positive assessment of the life of Abram, we are also forced to face his imperfections. Nevertheless, he is characterized by Moses, and later editors of the Torah, by his trust in God, despite his imperfect behavior. Abram showed himself to be a reliable friend, a loyal relative, and a

committed worshiper of the LORD at almost every critical point in his life.

It is after Abram showed himself to be a loyal relative, a quality still highly valued in the Middle East, he was welcomed back home by both the King of Sodom and the King of Salem, whom the Torah later depicts as a priest of the Most High God (Most High God meaning the God of gods). The King's name was Melchizedek, and he offered Abram two very significant welcome gifts – bread and wine (Gen. 14:17-18) – the symbols of joy and sustenance. Melchizedek also spoke to Abram, as follows:

וַיְבָרֶכְהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר בְּרוּךְ אַבְרָם לֵאלֹהֵי עֶלְיוֹן קִנְהַ שְׁמַיִם  
וְאַרְצָ:

*“Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Creator  
of heaven and earth. (Gen. 14:19)*

וַבְּרוּךְ אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן אֲשֶׁר-מָגַן צָרֶיךָ בְּיַדְּךָ וַיִּתֶּן-לוֹ  
מַעֲשֵׂר מִכָּל:

*And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your foes into your hand.” And [Abram] gave him a tenth of everything. (Gen.14:20)*

The English word “Melchizedek” is a transliteration of the Hebrew phrase מַלְכֵי צְדָק (*malki-tsedek*) which can be translated as “my king is righteousness.” In Hebrew, in order to assign possessive quality to the word, a special suffix is often added to the word. In this case the י- (*yod*) attached to “king” becomes מַלְכִי (*malki*) and makes it mean “my king.” If a different suffix were added נו- (*-nu*), for example, then the result מַלְכֵנו (*malkenu*) would mean “our king.” Sometimes, however, the י- (*yod*) is simply a connector, so that a different translation of the name could be “king of righteousness.” Notice in verse 20 it is not exactly clear if it was Abram

who gave Melchizedek the tenth of everything. The Hebrew simply says “and he gave him” וַיִּתֵּן־לוֹ (*va-yiten lo*).

Grammatically speaking, it could be possible that the pronoun “he” refers to Melchizedek who gave a tenth of everything he owned to Abram, and not the other way around (but see also Heb. 7:4).

The blessing on Abram by Melchizedek, king of Salem (probably the same as Jerusalem, as in Psalm 76.2), abruptly interrupts the approach of the king of Sodom, which resumes later. In the Book of Genesis, it is not unusual to find a foreigner revering the God of Israel, although that is less common in the remainder of the Hebrew Bible. It is likely that the account of Abram's interaction with the priest-king of Salem may have served to establish the antiquity of Israel's holiest site and the priestly and royal dynasties associated with it. (Jerusalem is never again mentioned by name in the Torah/Pentateuch.) Note that,



technically, it is not Abram himself who is blessed by Melchizedek, but Abram's God. In the ancient world the master-servant identity was so strong that to bless the God of Abram amounted to blessing Abram himself, in our modern terms.

Refusing the offer of the king of Sodom to split the booty 50/50 (which would have been fair), Abram displays his generosity, graciousness, and also his understanding that he has a greater purpose than to provide an exceptional lifestyle for his clan. In Genesis 14:22, he employs almost the same depiction of God as Melchizedek did before him (Gen. 14:19). Like Melchizedek, he clearly equates the LORD with the Most High God already known and worshiped in this area of the world. This text underscores Abram's true faith in God and also his faithfulness to his neighbor. Abram was persuaded that, while he himself acted wisely and bravely, the ultimate hero of

this victorious campaign was not himself, but “the LORD God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.”

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Dr. Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg

## Chapter 5: Great Promise and Assurance

Chapter 15 begins with a vision of God in which the Word of the LORD came to Abram, assuring him that he has nothing to fear because God will protect him and reward him greatly. We read in Genesis 15:1:

אֶחָד הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָם  
בְּמַחְזָה לֵאמֹר אֶל־תִּירָא אַבְרָם אֲנִכִי מִגֹּן לִךְ שְׂכָרְךָ  
הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד:

*Sometime later, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision. He said, “Fear not, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.” (Gen. 15:1)*

There are different ways to say “I” in Biblical Hebrew. One way is still in use in Modern Hebrew: אֲנִי (*ani*). Another more

archaic term with the same meaning is used in the text above: אָנֹכִי (*anokhi*). The Hebrew literally reads “I [am a] shield to you; your pay, very much.” Abram responded to God by verbalizing his ultimate pain, and challenging the real value of the promised blessing in the face of his ultimate limitation – childlessness. Abram then added that he has accepted his lot in life and is willing to leave all that he now owns, not to his child, but to his steward-servant – Eliezer of Damascus. In response, God assures him that this will not be so, then, to give him a real visual impression we read in Genesis 15:5-6:

וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הִבְטַחְנָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְסַפֵּר  
הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם-תּוּכַל לְסַפֵּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ פֹּה יִהְיֶה  
וַיִּרְעֶד:

*He took him outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He added, “So shall your offspring be.” (Gen. 15:5)*

When God took Abram outside he said, “look towards heaven and count the stars.” It is interesting that the phrase “look towards heaven” הִבֵּט־נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה (*hebet na ha-shamaymah*) includes a very interesting word – נָא (*na*) – which is hard to translate. There is a semantic and pragmatic distinction between an utterance in which נָא is used, and an utterance in which it is not used. The word נָא (*na*) is typically used to emphasize the action of the verb, indicating the importance the speaker attaches to it. It can express an emotional request. Here God uses this language to stress the importance of Abram looking up.

וְהָאֱמֵן בִּיהוָה וַיִּחְשְׁבֶהָ לוֹ צְדָקָה:

*And because he put his trust in the LORD, He reckoned it to his merit. (Gen. 15:6)*

The Hebrew word צְדָקָה (*tsedakah*) can be variously translated as “justice, righteousness, vindication, equity.” In Modern Hebrew, *tsedakah* has come to mean “charitable giving” (since true charity is a righteous deed). Today a person who is referred to as a “righteous/just person” is called a צַדִּיק (*tsadik*), while someone who is simply in the right in a disagreement is צוֹדֵק (*tsodek*). The Hebrew word וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ (*vayachsheveh*) is actually a phrase that can also be translated as “and he counted it/her” (in this case, the righteousness). It could also be translated “and he accounted it” or “and he reckoned it.” For example, in Modern Hebrew a word from the same root is חֶשְׁבּוֹן (*cheshbon*) “bill” or “account” (as with a bank).

God reminded Abram that He had already promised him the gift of the land. At this point Abram asked a very simple question: How can I know this will indeed be so? (Since the Land was

promised not only to him, but to his seed.) God then told him to do something that people in the Ancient Near East were very familiar with – to prepare everything for making a formal agreement – a covenant between Abram and God himself. The idea was simple: the representative of the animal life was to be cut into half and left on the floor; literally cut, torn apart. As both parties passed between of the pieces of flesh, they would make an oath to each other that would bind them by a sacred vow. The symbolism here is unavoidable – if one of the parties was unfaithful to the covenant promise, an awful curse would fall upon him – he would be torn apart – just like the animal that was laid on the floor.

In Genesis 15:13-16 God told Abram about the Egyptian slavery that was to come upon the children of Israel and last for four hundred years. Upon leaving the land of oppression, Israel would receive

great wealth as reparation for their slavery. Abram was assured that he would not see this suffering in his lifetime, but that he would live a long and rewarding life. Possession of the land was still far into the future and would only happen in the fourth generation of the sons of Abraham. God could not simply remove the people already living in the Promised Land, for their iniquity had not yet reached its full measure before Him. Abram was put into a deep asleep, and a smoking pot and fiery torch appeared and walked in-between the two sides of the torn apart animals.

The implication of the words in Genesis 15:18-19 makes it clear that it was God alone who passed between the pieces. The covenant was therefore unilateral, because Abram did not take part in the ceremony. Before the Torah goes on to tell us about the drama that will develop between Hagar and Sarai over childbearing (Genesis 16), Abram was



clearly assigned his territorial domain – it was a land that was large; indeed, it covered all the territory between a river in the center of Egypt (Nile) and the river Euphrates (touching the area of Haran from where the second leg of Abram’s journey to the Promised Land originated). Nothing in the promises given to Abram to date specified the matriarch of the great promised Nation.

Convinced of her inability to give Abraham a son, Sarai takes matters into her own hands and, in accordance with documented ancient Near Eastern practice, offers her slave woman to Abram as a surrogate mother. Abram accepts. Given the high esteem for motherhood in biblical culture, the status of Sarai and Hagar is now in a sense reversed. According to the book of Proverbs, among the four things at which “the earth shudders,” is: “a slave-girl who supplants her mistress” (Prov. 30:23). Understandably, Sarai demands justice

from Abram, but instead of offering her the justice she asked for, he gives her a *carte blanche*, essentially causing injustice to Hagar. This time the oppressor is Israelite, the slave is Egyptian (in opposition to other stories). This is reminiscent of Adam hearing bad advice from Eve and thrusting humanity into consequent havoc. Abraham is both the son of Adam and the son of Noah. He resembles both their significant failures and their great strengths.

At the age of 99 God appears to Abram as *El Shaddai*, and exhorts him to live up to the high standard of the covenant that was made with him. We read in Genesis 17:1-8:

וַיְהִי אַבְרָם בֶּן-תְּשָׁעִים שָׁנָה וַתִּשְׁעַ שָׁנִים וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה  
אֶל-אַבְרָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי-אל שְׁדֵי הַתְּהֵלֶךְ לְפָנַי  
וַיְהִיהָ תָמִים:

*When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am El Shaddai. Walk in My ways and be blameless. (Gen. 17:1)*

The words אֱלֹהֵי שָׁדַי (*El Shaddai*), usually translated as “God Almighty” are of uncertain origin. It is possible that the root of *Shaddai* is the same as of שָׁדַד (*shad*) “breast.” If so, the origin of this name of God might have to do with provision and sustenance. The female breast does symbolize sustenance and life-provision, fertility and offspring. So we can see how *El Shaddai* can also be translated as “God my provider.”

וְאֶתְנֶנָּה בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ וְאֶרְבֶּה אוֹתְךָ בְּמֵאֵד מְאֹד:

*I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will make you exceedingly numerous.”*  
(Gen. 17:2)

וַיִּפֹּל אַבְרָם עַל-פָּנָיו וַיְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר:

*Abram threw himself on his face; and God spoke to him further, (Gen. 17:3)*

אָנִי הִנֵּה בְרִיתִי אִתָּךְ וְהָיִיתָ לְאָב הַמֶּוֹן גּוֹיִם:

*“As for Me, this is My covenant with you: You shall be the father of a multitude of nations.  
(Gen. 17:4)*

וְלֹא-יִקְרָא עוֹד אֶת-שְׁמֶךָ אַבְרָם וְהָיָה שְׁמֶךָ אַבְרָהָם  
כִּי אֲבֵ-הַמֶּוֹן גּוֹיִם נִתְּתִיךָ:

*And you shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I make you the father of a multitude of nations. (Gen. 17:5)*

וְהִפְרַתִּי אִתָּךְ בְּמֵאד מְאֹד וְנִתְּתִיךָ לְגוֹיִם וּמְלָכִים  
מִמֶּךָ יֵצְאוּ:

*I will make you exceedingly fertile, and make nations of you; and kings shall come forth from you. (Gen. 17:6)*

וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ וּבֵין זַרְעֶךָ אֶתְרִיךָ  
לְדֹרֹתָם לְבְרִית עוֹלָם לִהְיוֹת לְךָ לֵאלֹהִים וּלְזַרְעֶךָ  
אֶתְרִיךָ:

*I will maintain My covenant between Me and you, and your offspring to come, as an ever lasting covenant throughout the ages, to be God to you and to your offspring to come. (Gen. 17:7)*

וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ וּלְזַרְעֶךָ אֶתְרִיךָ אֶת אֶרֶץ מְגֻרְיֶךָ אֶת כָּל־  
אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן לְאֶחְזַת עוֹלָם וְהִיִּיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים:

*I assign the land you sojourn into you and your offspring to come, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting holding. I will be their God.” (Gen. 17:8)*

The name “Abram” אַבְרָם (*Avram*) is composed of two words, *Av* and *Ram*,

and means something like “father is lofty.” “Abraham” אַבְרָהָם (*Avraham*), on the other hand, contains the words אב (*av*) and הַמּוֹן (*hamon*) within it. This refers to the phrase כִּי אֲבֹהֶם הַמּוֹן גּוֹיִם נְתַתִּיקָהּ (*ki av hamon goyim netatikha*) “because I have made you a father of a many nations” (Gen. 17:5). The change is very minor; only one letter – ה (*hey*). But this letter inserted into the middle of the word רָם (*ram*), essentially turns “lofty” into “multitude” or “many.” The change is minor but the impact is major. The emphasis is no longer on the individual distinction of one leader, but on the collective greatness of the entire multitude of his descendants.

This theme will continue throughout the entire Hebrew Bible. God continues to address Abraham, and in Genesis 17:9-14 we are told that, as with Noah, there will be a covenantal sign present in all Abraham’s children. This sign will be circumcision. When Abraham is

circumcised, his future is marked as belonging to the Lord. Abraham's children would no longer belong to him, but to the God who brought him into the covenant relationship with Himself.

## Chapter 6: The Promise of Isaac

It is clear that when Abram heard God's promise of fertility, he did not understand what was to come – a son through the womb of Sarah, who was now well past child-bearing age. The Torah goes on to speak of the nature of this very interesting communication between God and Abraham (Gen. 17:15-22). God now tells Abraham that he is not the only one in the family to change names. Sarai, his wife, would now be known as Sarah. God further promised that she would also bear Abraham a son; indeed a multiplicity of people groups and nations will descend from her. When Abraham laughed at God's promise, he made his own proposal to God: "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!" God responded in the negative, saying that it would be through the son of his wife Sarah that the covenant blessing would flow.



His name will be called “Isaac” יִצְחָק (*Yitschak*), which in Hebrew means “he laughs” or “he will laugh” (Gen. 17:19, 21-22). God’s choice of Isaac did not discount his love and care for “Ishmael” יִשְׁמָעֵאל (*Yishmael*), whose name means “God will hear” or “God hears.” God stated that because of Abraham’s request the blessings on Ishmael would also come into effect. He too will become a great nation and father twelve princes. (Gen. 17:20). That very day, in radical Noah-like obedience, Abraham circumcised Ishmael and every male in his household (Gen. 17:23-27).

In Genesis 18 we are invited to consider a crucial encounter between Abraham and Sarah, and three “men” who come to Abraham’s tent and are welcomed by him as honored guests. This happened at the above-mentioned oaks of Mamre.

At their sudden appearance Abraham quickly approached them and begged them to allow him to show them hospitality. The three men agree (Gen. 18:1-5). Abraham hurried to request Sarah to bake cakes to feed their guests, then ran to the herd, chose a calf, and delegated a servant to prepare it. He then placed the prepared food before his guests while acting as a waiter, catering to their every need (Gen. 18:6-8). They asked him where Sarah was. When Abraham answered that she was in the tent, the LORD, one of the three, told Abraham that when He returned about the same time next year, Sarah will have a son. Sarah was eavesdropping and when she heard this, she laughed, just as Abraham had done previously, since her menstrual cycle had long since ceased (Gen. 18:9-12).

We continue reading in Genesis 18:13-15:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־אַבְרָהָם לָמָּה זֶה צָחָקָה שָׂרָה  
לֵאמֹר הֲאֵף אֲמַנָּם אֶלֶד וְאֲנִי זָקְנָתִי:

*Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I in truth bear a child, old as I am?'" (Gen. 18:13)*

הֲיִפְלֵא מִיְהוָה דְּבַר לְמוֹעֵד אָשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כְּעֵת חַיָּה  
וּלְשָׂרָה בֵּן:

*Is anything too wondrous for the LORD? I will return to you at the same season next year, and Sarah shall have a son."* (Gen. 18:14)

וַתִּכְחַשׁ שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר לֹא צָחָקְתִּי כִּי יִרְאֶה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא  
כִּי צָחָקְתִּי:

*Sarah lied, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was frightened. But He replied, "You did laugh."*  
(Gen. 18:15)

## Chapter 7: Abraham and God's Secrets

Abraham's hospitality is once again highlighted as he walks with them to escort them on their way (Gen. 18:16). In Genesis 18:17-19 we read about God questioning Himself as to whether He should keep secrets from Abraham, given his glorious future:

וַיְהוּה אָמַר הַמְכַסֶּה אֲנִי מֵאַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה:

*Now the LORD had said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do (Gen. 18:17)*

וְאַבְרָהָם הָיוּ יְהִיָּה לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְעַצְמוֹם וְנִבְרָכוּ בוֹ כָּל  
גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ:

*Since Abraham is to become a great and populous nation and all the nations of the earth are to bless themselves by him? (Gen. 18:18)*

כִּי יִדְעַתְּוּ לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יִצְוֶה אֶת־בְּנָיו וְאֶת־בָּתוּלָתוֹ  
אֲחֵרָיו וְשִׁמְרוּ דְרָוֹ יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט  
לְמַעַן הִבִּיא יְהוָה עַל־אַבְרָהָם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר עָלָיו:

*For I have singled him out, that he may instruct his children and his posterity to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is just and right, in order that the LORD may bring about for Abraham what He has promised him.” (Gen. 18:19)*

God’s conclusion is positive, and he proceeds to explain to Abraham the true nature of His mission – to inspect the alleged evil-doing of the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:21-22).

As the three “men” depart (he now seems to understand that they are heavenly visitors), Abraham appeals to the righteousness and justice of God’s own nature, pleading that surely He would not destroy the righteous together with the wicked. This leads to a fascinating

dialogue, which became one of the key texts for Rabbinic Judaism's development of the idea of *minyan* – the quorum of ten men needed for certain communal prayers (Gen. 18:23-33). We read in Genesis 18:25-26:

חָלָלָהּ לָךְ מִעֲשֹׂת פְּדָבָר הַזֶּה לְהַמִּית צְדִיק עִם-רָשָׁע  
וְהָיָה כְצִדִיק כְּרָשָׁע חָלָלָהּ לָךְ הַשֹּׁפֵט כָּל-הָאָרֶץ לֹא  
יַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט:

*Far be it from You to do such a thing, to bring death upon the innocent as well as the guilty, so that innocent and guilty fare alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Gen. 18:25)*

The phrase translated as “far it be from you” is the Hebrew חָלָלָהּ לָךְ (*chalilah lekha*). The meaning is something like “may it never be,” “God forbid” or “far it be from you!” The simple meaning of this is that the one who pronounces these words believes that something is really

not a good idea to do. In this context, the meaning connotes the idea of Abram saying something like this: “Don’t do it! It is so out of character for You!”

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אִם־אֶמְצָא בְּסֹדֶם חֲמִשִּׁים צְדִיקִים בְּתוֹךְ  
הָעִיר וְנִשְׁאַתִּי לְכָל־הַמָּקוֹם בְּעִבּוּרָם:

*And the LORD answered, “If I find within the city of Sodom fifty innocent ones, I will forgive the whole place for their sake.” (Gen. 18:26)*

וַיַּעַן אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הֲיֵה־נָא הוֹאֵלְתִּי לְדַבֵּר אֶל־  
אֲדֹנָי וְאֲנֹכִי עָפָר וָאֵפֶר:

*Abraham spoke up, saying, “Here I venture to speak to my Lord, I who am but dust and ashes: (Gen. 18:27)*

אוּלַּי יִחְסְרוּן חֲמִשִּׁים הַצְדִּיקִים חֲמִשָּׁה הַתְּשׁוּחִית  
בְּחִמּוּשָׁה אֶת־כָּל־הָעִיר וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲשַׁחִית אִם־  
אֶמְצָא שָׁם אַרְבָּעִים וּחֲמִשָּׁה:

*What if the fifty innocent should lack five? Will You destroy the whole city for want of the five?" And He answered, "I will not destroy if I find forty-five there." (Gen. 18:28)*

As Abraham realizes the gravity of the situation (after all he is arguing with the supreme judge of the whole earth), he acknowledges his essential connection to the first Adam. The phrase אֲנֹכִי עֶפֶר וָאֶפֶר (*anokhi afar ve-efer*) is more or less accurately translated as “dust and ashes.” Clearly a connection is being made to Adam’s origins in Genesis 2:7. There the sentence וַיִּצֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עֶפֶר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה (*va-yitser YHWH Elohim et ha-adam afar min ha-adamah*) is translated as: “And the LORD God formed man from the עֶפֶר (*afar*) dust of the earth.” Abraham, like Noah before him, continues to be connected in a typological sense to the figure of Adam (among others). Notice also that Abraham's demand is not that the guilty be destroyed and the innocent spared, but rather that the LORD spares



the entire city for the sake of the righteous who live in it. This point is made more explicit in verse 26. The underlying theology here asserts that a righteous minority can effect deliverance for the entire community.

Genesis 19 deals largely with the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah brought about by the three visitors who had previously been hospitably received at the tent of Abraham. As in the account of the judgment against wicked humanity in the story of Noah, here too God remembered his conversation with Abraham, and spared his nephew Lot and his family from the fire that rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah. We read about it in Genesis 19:27-29:

וַיִּשְׁפֹּם אֲבָרָהֶם בַּבֹּקֶר אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־עָמַד שָׁם  
אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָה:

*Next morning, Abraham hurried to the place where he had stood before the LORD. (Gen. 19:27)*

וַיִּשְׁקֹף עַל־פְּנֵי סֹדֶם וְעַמְרָה וְעַל־כָּל־פְּנֵי אֶרֶץ  
הַכְּפָר וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה עָלָה קִיטֹר הָאֶרֶץ כְּקִיטֹר הַכְּבֹשֶׁן:

*And, looking down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and all the land of the Plain, he saw the smoke of the land rising like the smoke of a kiln. (Gen. 19:28)*

The phrase translated: “before the LORD” אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָה (*et pene YHWH*) in Genesis 19:27 might serve to make a connection with two other uses of the word פְּנִים (*panim*), which literally means “face”: עַל־פְּנֵי סֹדֶם וְעַמְרָה (*al pene Sedom ve-Amorah*) “upon Sodom and Gomorrah”; and וְעַל־כָּל־פְּנֵי אֶרֶץ (*ve-al kol pene erets*) “and upon all the land of the Plain.”

וַיְהִי בְּשֹׁחַת אֱלֹהִים אֶת־עָרֵי הַכְּפָר וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים  
אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־לוֹט מִתּוֹךְ הַהִפְכָּה בְּהִפּוֹךְ  
אֶת־הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר־יָשַׁב בָּהֶן לוֹט:

*Thus it was, that when God destroyed the cities  
of the Plain and annihilated the cities where Lot  
dwelt, He was mindful of Abraham and removed  
Lot from the midst of the upheaval (Gen.  
19:29).*

## MY REQUEST

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This will help me a lot, especially if you genuinely love this book! After writing a review, please drop me a personal note and let me know - [dr.eli.israel@gmail.com](mailto:dr.eli.israel@gmail.com). I would appreciate your help with this.

Dr. Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg

## Chapter 8: Abraham and Abimelech

The previous time that Abram said his wife Sarah was his sister, he was in Egypt fleeing the famine in the Promised Land. At some point after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham made his way towards the region of the Negev (which includes the modern city of Beer Sheva) and stayed some time in Gerar, again asserting that Sarah was his sister (a half-truth). Abimelech, the King of Gerar, sent for Sarah and took her to his residence. After God's gracious intervention, Sarah is returned to her family. We read about the ironic description relating to the fear of God in the court of Abimelech and the explanation Abraham gives for his actions in Genesis 20:8-13:

וַיִּשְׁפֹּם אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּקְרָא לְכָל־עֲבָדָיו וַיַּדְבֵּר  
אֶת־כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם וַיִּירָאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים  
מְאֹד:

*Early next morning, Abimelech called his  
servants and told them all that had happened;  
and the men were greatly frightened. (Gen. 20:8)*

וַיִּקְרָא אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ לְאַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מָה־עָשִׂיתָ לָּנוּ  
וּמָה־חָטָאתִי לָךְ כִּי־הִבֵּאתָ עָלַי וְעַל־מִמְלַכְתִּי חֲטָאָה  
גְּדוֹלָה מֵעֲשִׂים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יַעֲשׂוּ עֲשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי:

*Then Abimelech summoned Abraham and said  
to him, “What have you done to us? (Gen.  
20:10)*

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם כִּי אָמַרְתִּי רַק אִין־יִרְאֵת אֱלֹהִים  
בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה וַהֲרַגוּנִי עַל־דְּבַר אִשְׁתִּי:

*“I thought,” said Abraham, “surely there is no  
fear of God in this place, and they will kill me  
because of my wife. (Gen. 20:11)*

The irony of this story is that Abimelech and his men were truly terrified of the wrath of Abraham's God, whilst Abraham was persuaded that there was no fear of God among them. Like Noah, Abraham is shown as a fully righteous, but nevertheless imperfect, man. Like Noah, he certainly does not live up to the perfection of pre-fall humanity and yet, in spite of his shortcomings, it is clear that Abraham does display the real trust and faithfulness important in any close relationship. When Abimelech returns Sarah, he blesses both her and Abraham with many gifts, thus vindicating himself and clearing Sarah of any wrong-doing by her, or to her (Gen. 20:14-22). While we may concentrate on whether or not Abraham did what is right, the text shows no concern with our moral dilemma. Rather, it highlights the priestly, intercessory power of Abraham the prophet (Gen. 20:7, 17).

As the tension between Sarah and Hagar developed over time, Abraham found himself in a very difficult position. His wife Sarah has developed a real animosity towards Ishmael and has requested that Abraham remove Ishmael from the borders of their family settlement. Abraham was devastated because he loved Ishmael (Gen. 21:1-11). God told Abraham, however, to go ahead and to do what Sarah asked him to do. This command also specified that while the covenantal promise will be carried through the line of Isaac, Ishmael too will be greatly blessed because he, too, is Abraham's son. Despite the intense emotional agony Abraham felt, in obedience he hurriedly prepared for their departure. What he did not yet know was that more emotional agony was awaiting him regarding his son Isaac. He too, like Ishmael, will be offered up to the Lord, albeit in a very different and far more significant way.



Because of his early experience with Abraham, Abimelech is certain that Abraham is truly blessed by God. He has seen that Abraham is successful in all he does, so God must surely be on his side. He therefore asks Abraham to promise him that the goodwill and loyalty that Abimelech showed to Abraham will not be betrayed by him. He seeks assurance that, if and when the time comes for Abraham to show his loyalty to Abimelech, he will do so. Without hesitation Abraham swore an oath, that indeed he would always deal honestly and kindly with Abimelech and his descendants (Gen. 21:22-24). Sometime later, Abraham tells Abimelech that a well he had dug had been confiscated by Abimelech's servants. When Abimelech pleaded ignorance, Abraham offered him animals from his herd, after which a pact was made between the two. Abraham, however, did not stop there.

He took another seven fully grown sheep and asked Abimelech, probably in a

public ceremony, to accept them as proof that he did indeed dig the well and therefore it belonged to him. Abimelech agreed, and from this point on the place where Abraham dwelled among Philistines for a very long time, was called Beer Sheva. It is there, as with Noah before him, that Abraham invoked the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God (Gen. 21:25-34). The modern city of Beer Sheva is built in the general vicinity of this very place where the ceremony involving the seven fully grown sheep to secure Abraham's claim on the ownership of the well, took place. The names of both the ancient and modern cities makes the connection clear to the careful reader of this Torah narrative in Hebrew – בְּאֵר (beer) means “well,” and שְׁבַע (sheva) means “swearing” (i.e., an oath) or “seven.”

## Chapter 9: Abraham's Ultimate Test

Abraham was no stranger to challenges, but everything he had gone through up to this point only prepared him for the ultimate challenge that his God would ask of him – offering to God his son, Isaac. As we have seen, Abraham is no stranger to challenging tests of faith to carry out his God's instructions, even to the point of anguish and failure to grasp the reasoning in God's mind. Yet it is here, in Genesis 22, that the ultimate test of Abraham's trust is spelled out: When God called Abraham's name, he responded – “Here I am.” (Gen. 22:1). Like Noah, Abraham was willing and ready to answer God's call immediately. He was his servant, ever-ready to do his God's bidding. This story would come to epitomize the determination of every true Israelite to serve his God, no matter what the circumstances. Indeed, this faithful

service to God is the ultimate reason for Israel's existence. The difficulty of this tenth and final test lay not only in Abraham's love for his son Isaac, but also in the promises that God had given Abraham in connection with him. If Isaac was to die, those promises could never be fulfilled. What is Abraham to make of the words of his God?

We read in Genesis 22:2-4:

וַיֹּאמֶר קַח-נָא אֶת-בְּנֶךָ אֶת-יִחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר-אָהַבְתָּ אֶת-  
יִצְחָק וְלֶךְ-לְךָ אֶל-אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרְיָה וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם לְעֹלָה  
עַל אֶחָד הַהָרִים אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלַיךְ:

*And He said, "Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you."  
(Gen. 22:2)*

The order of the Hebrew is "your son, your favored one, the one whom you love, Isaac," indicating increasing tension. The expression "go" or "get going" לך-לך (lekh lekha), which previously occurred only in Genesis 12:1, the initial divine command to Abraham, connects this story to the very beginning of Abraham's dealings with his God. Note also the parallel between "on one of the heights that I will point out to you" in this verse with "to the land that I will show you" in Genesis 12:1. All these stories form one coherent narrative of the faith and trust relationship between Israel and her God. Of course, Isaac was not the only son of Abraham. Ishmael was both his son, and was acknowledged by God as such, but here Abraham is told to take his son, the only son, whom he loves – Isaac. While Ishmael was also blessed by God due to being Abraham's son, it was Isaac who was the sign of God's ultimate commitment to him.

The giving of Isaac to Abraham in the most improbable of circumstances possibly produced in Abraham (along with prophetic statements about Isaac) an exceptional love and hope for this son born to Sarah. Will the child of “laughter” now turn into the child of “sadness”? Were Abraham and his family simply part of some crude, heavenly experiment? Abraham did not know. But he trusted God. So early the next morning, Abraham saddled his ass and took with him his two servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and set out for the place that God had told him about (Gen. 22:3). It is clear that Isaac is singled out as Abraham’s most “treasured possession.” Now he faced his greatest test – to give up the son he loved; the one he had hoped and waited for, for so long. Yet, it was not just the giving up that was difficult for Abraham – he had passed similar tests before. This time the righteousness, faithfulness and goodness

of Abraham's God – his reputation – was at stake.

בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וַיִּשָּׂא אֲבֶרְהָם אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא אֶת־  
הַמָּקוֹם מֵרְחוֹק:

*On the third day Abraham looked up and saw  
the place from afar. (Gen. 22:4)*

The journey to the mountain of God's choosing, "Moriah" מֹרְיָה (*Moriah*), took three days. The third day must have been the most difficult. Abraham actually saw the very place where he needed to kill his Isaac, just as he would an animal sacrifice, and offer him to God. About a thousand years later, at this very location, King David bought the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite and built an altar to the Lord so that a "plague may be held back from the people" (2 Sam. 24:18-21). After David's death, his son King Solomon built a glorious temple on the same site. We read in 2 Chronicles 3:1:

“Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah...” The story of the significance of this place will not stop here, but we must return and continue with the story of Abraham and Isaac as they continued their journey to Mount Moriah.



## Chapter 10: The Challenge of Faith

When they arrived at the foot of the mountain Abraham told his servants to stay while he and the young man continued together. So he put the wood for fire on the back of Isaac (adding enormous tension to the story), while he took the stones he used to set fire and the knife for the killing of Isaac (Gen. 22:5-6). We continue reading in Genesis 22:7-8:

וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל־אֲבִרְהָם אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר  
הַנְּנִי בְנִי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה הָאֵשׁ וְהָעֵצִים וְאַיִה הַשֶּׁה  
לְעֹלָה:

*Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, “Father!” And he answered, “Yes, my son.” And he said, “Here are the firestone and the wood; but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?” (Gen. 22:7)*

The text emphasizes the pain Abraham must have experienced when the word “Father!” (אָבִי) were uttered by Isaac. Since the ancient text did not have punctuation marks, we must practice reading original Hebrew very slowly and with holy imagination, in order to feel together with Abraham, the redemptive pain of Isaac’s address, recalling perhaps all the faithfulness and goodness of Abraham’s God. This pain and sensitivity from an old warrior is epitomized in his immediate and tender response: “Here am I, my son” הִנְנִי בְנִי (*hineni beni*). The ancient Hebrew divides up the dialogue with repetitions of the simple: “and he said” וַיֹּאמֶר (*va-yomer*), whereas today we might use different words.

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהִים יְרֵאֵה־לּוֹ הַשָּׂה לַעֲלֵה בְנִי  
וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו:

*And Abraham said, “God will see to the sheep for His burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them walked on together. (Gen. 22:8)*

Abraham’s response continues with firm, consistent and modern mind-boggling faith that earned him his fame. Literally the text says, reflecting the Hebraic structure of the language, “God will see for him the lamb” or “God will see for himself the lamb” אֱלֹהִים יִרְאֶה-לוֹ הַשֶּׁה (Elohim yireh lo ha-seh). This binding of the father and the son under the enormous challenge of God is evoked in the phrase “and the two of them walked on together” וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו (va-yelkhu sheneyhem yakhdav). While nothing in the text indicates the age of Isaac, it seems he could have been anywhere from a teenager to a grown adult. Either way, he appears to be a willing participant, together with Abraham, in the sacrifice that his God has demanded (to whatever extent he understands the proceedings).

As we have already seen, wherever the great men of God of Genesis went they built altars consecrating new places to the worship of their God. This is no exception. What is different here is the intensity and difficulty of God's demand.

וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָמַר־לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּבֶן שָׁם  
אֲבְרָהָם אֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַיַּעֲרוֹף אֶת־הָעֵצִים וַיַּעֲקֹד אֶת־  
יִצְחָק בְּנֹו וַיִּשֶׂם אֹתוֹ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ מִמַּעַל לָעֵצִים:

*They arrived at the place of which God had told him. Abraham built an altar there; he laid out the wood; he bound his son Isaac; he laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. (Gen. 22:9)*

וַיִּשְׁלַח אֲבְרָהָם אֶת־יָדוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הַמַּאֲכָלֶת לְשַׁחֵט  
אֶת־בְּנֹו:

*And Abraham picked up the knife to slay his son. (Gen. 22:10)*

It is interesting to see how beautifully the author speeds up and slows down the narrative presentation. The relatively slow development of the story as they travelled to Mount Moriah took eight verses to cover (Gen. 22:1-8). The action picks up in verse 9, with the building of the altar and binding of Isaac upon wood, being described quite quickly. Then, in verse 10, the narrative motion slows considerably as it describes Abraham lifting up the knife. This is masked in some English translations (as in NJPS that we are using here), where the first part of the sentence is missing in translation altogether: וַיִּשְׁלַח אַבְרָהָם אֶת-יָדוֹ (*va-yishlach Avraham et yado*), literally something like “and Abraham sent out his hand.” Only after this does the text continue וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הַמַּאֲכֶלֶת לִישְׁחֹט וְאֶת-בְּנוֹ (*va-yikach et ha-maachelet lishchot et beno*), which means “and he picked up the knife to slay his son.”

So, whilst those translations do not really lose any of the basic meaning by omitting the first part, the literary skill and

intention of the author who intended the text to have a slower, fast, and extra-slow tempo, goes unnoticed. The specific word used for the knife Abraham lifted up – מֵאֶכֶלֶת (*maakhelet*) – probably meant “slaughtering knife” and is connected by root to אֶכֶל (*okhel*) “food.” Yet that kind of knife does not simply prepare food for consumption, but is actually meant to end the life of an animal.

Hebrew is a root language, so we can see how words that are unconnected in other languages, like “slaughtering knife” and “food,” can be etymologically connected in Hebrew. In the language of worship, a sacrifice is just that – “food” offered to God for His “consumption.”

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Dr. Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg

## Chapter 11: Replacement Sacrifice and Blessing

So Abraham prepared the instrument of food for action as he stretched out his hand with a knife in it.

וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו מֵלֶאֱדָיָה יְהוָה מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם  
אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי:

*Then an angel of the LORD called to him from heaven: “Abraham! Abraham!” And he answered, “Here I am!” (Gen. 22:11)*

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־תִּשְׁלַח יָדְךָ אֶל־הַנֶּעֱר וְאֶל־תַּעַשׂ לוֹ  
מֵאוּמָה כִּי עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־יְרֵא אֱלֹהִים אֶתָּה וְלֹא  
חָשַׁכְתָּ אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ מִמֶּנִּי:

*And he said, “Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld*



*your son, your favored one, from Me.” (Gen.  
22:12)*

There are many instances in the Bible where the figure of a very special messenger of God’s presence appears. He is referred to in verse 11 as מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה (*malakh YHWH*) “the angel/messenger of the LORD,” when he calls on Abraham to cease the intended sacrifice of Isaac. Most Bibles translate this phrase as “the angel of the LORD,” though some translations, such as the NJPS translation, using the indefinite article (“a”) rather than the definite article (“the”). However, the Hebrew for “angel” and “messenger” are one and the same word – מַלְאָךְ (*malakh*). So, while the translation “a/the messenger of the LORD” is probably the most accurate, the designation “angel of the Lord” is less helpful, because in our minds the word “angel” immediately conjures up a particular extra-biblical and culture-specific image.

“The angel of the LORD” speaks from the first person, as if he is God (as we will see below in vs. 12). In other biblical usage of this term, “the angel of the LORD” executes judgment on behalf of God Himself, slaying 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in their camp, saving Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:35). “The angel of the LORD” is the commander of the Lord's army who commissions Joshua to undertake the Lord's battles for Canaan (Josh. 5:1-15), just as Moses had been commissioned to confront Pharaoh.

“The angel of the LORD” also carries out priestly duties of reconciliation. He asks how long God will withhold mercy from Jerusalem and Judah (Zech. 1:12). After Manoah meets “the angel of the LORD,” he declares that he has seen *Elohim* – i.e., God or angels. The messenger/angel accepts blood-sacrifice worship from Manoah (Judges 13:9-22). “The angel of the LORD” apparently even has authority to forgive sins (Ex. 23:20-21). Historic Christian tradition has

largely understood this “angel of the LORD” to be the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus, while Rabbinic Judaism has branded him with a Judeo-Greek word מטטרון (*Metatron*), which in Hebraized Greek means something like “the one next to the throne,” being made up of two Greek words μετά (*meta*) “between, beside” and θρόνος (*thronos*) “throne.”

וַיִּשָׂא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא וְהִנֵּה־אֵיל אַחַר נְאֻחֹז  
בְּסֹבֵב בְּקִרְנָיו וַיִּלֶּךְ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָאֵיל וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ  
לְעֹלָה תַחַת בְּנוֹ:

*When Abraham looked up, his eye fell upon a ram, caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son. (Gen. 22:13)*

וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם שְׁמֵה־מְקוֹם הַהוּא יְהוָה יִרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר  
אָמַר הַיּוֹם בְּהַר יְהוָה יִרְאֶה:

*And Abraham named that site Adonai-Yireh, hence the present saying, “On the mount of the LORD there is vision.” (Gen. 22:14)*

The substitution of a male sheep for the firstborn son has parallels in the ancient Near East and foreshadows the story of the paschal lamb (Ex. 12.1-42) in both its temporary and ultimate fulfillments. The story is not about the superiority of animal to human sacrifice; nor is it a polemic against human sacrifice. Note that God commands the sacrifice of Isaac at the beginning of the story (Gen. 22:2) and commends and rewards Abraham for being willing to carry it through at the end (Gen. 22:12-18).

וַיִּקְרָא מֵלֶאֱיָ יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָהָם שְׁנִית מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם:

*The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven (Gen. 22:15).*

One of the names of God in the Bible is יהוה יִרְאֶה (YHWH *yireh*). It appears in Genesis 22:14, and most Bibles translate it as “the LORD will provide.” The four-letter name of God comes first, but the יִרְאֶה (*yireh*) part comes from the Hebrew verb רָאָה (*raah*), which means “to see, to perceive, to look.” This same root is used to describe someone who has an ability to see things others cannot, a רוֹאֶה (*roeh*) “seer” or “prophet.” So the phrase can be translated more literally to say “the LORD will (fore)see” instead of the usual “The Lord will provide.” The comparison of “providing” vs. “seeing,” although not identical, is actually not dissimilar. In Genesis 22, this verb is used several times where God is being described as “one who will see to it” or “one who will look out for his interest.” When God sees His people in need, He acts to provide for them all that is needed. There may also be a play on words here, as the Messenger of the Lord in a sense *saw* that Abraham feared God יִרְאֵ אֱלֹהִים (*yere Elohim*). The

word יָרָא (*yere*) means “feared,” but the similar-sounding word יִרְאֶה (*yireh*) used in יהוה יִרְאֶה (*YHWH Yireh*) means “sees.”

וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי נְאֻם־יְהוָה כִּי יַעַן אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ  
אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וְלֹא חָשַׁכְתָּ אֶת־בְּנֶךָ אֶת־יְחִידְךָ:

*And said, “By Myself I swear, the LORD declares: Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favored one (Gen. 22:16)*

כִּי־בָרַךְ אֲבָרְכֶךָ וְהִרְבֵּה אַרְבֵּה אֶת־זַרְעֶךָ כְּכּוֹכְבֵי  
הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכַחֹל אֲשֶׁר עַל־שֹׁפַת הַיָּם וַיִּרְשׁ זַרְעֶךָ אֶת  
שַׁעַר אֹיְבָיו:

*I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore; and your descendants shall seize the gates of their foes. (Gen. 22:17)*

וְהַתְּבָרְכוּ בְּזִרְעֵךָ כָּל גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ עֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְתָּ  
בְּקִלִּי:

*All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed My command.” (Gen. 22:18)*

The second angelic address conveys the LORD's final blessing on Abraham, using language similar to previous blessings (Gen. 12:3; 13:16; 15:5). However, this time the earlier promises are restated as a consequence of Abraham's obedience to the voice of God. A further promise is also added: “Your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies.” This definitive response from God establishes absolute and final approval of Abraham in this covenantal relationship, secured by the surety of the vow sworn by God to Himself.

Abraham has passed the ultimate test — he has given all to the One who will

Himself one day give all to the children of Abraham. Because Abraham did not spare his one and only son, God confirms His promise to multiply Abraham's seed into a great nation, too numerous to count. The promise of blessing upon the nations of the earth through Abram is now confirmed to Abraham.

וַיָּשָׁב אַבְרָהָם אֶל־נְעָרָיו וַיִּקְמוּ וַיֵּלְכוּ יחדוֹ אֶל־בְּאֵר  
שֶׁבַע וַיָּשָׁב אַבְרָהָם בְּבֵאֵר שֶׁבַע:

*Abraham returned to his servants, and they departed together for Beer-sheva; and Abraham stayed in Beer-Sheva. (Gen. 22:19)*

This verse closes the *inclusio* that began in verse 1. The story of faith will now turn to Isaac and Jacob, the direct descendants of Abraham's covenantal relationship with his God.



## Chapter 12: Isaac's Story

Like an excellent book or a great movie, the Torah moves back and forth in time shedding light on the fascinating events in the life of the person we call Isaac.

Although the story of Isaac formally begins in Genesis 25:19, where we read the words: “This is the story of Isaac, Son of Abraham,” we have already been introduced to Isaac’s miraculous conception by post-menopausal Sarah (Gen. 21), and even him becoming the focal point of God’s testing of Abraham (Gen. 22). The Hebrew word יִצְחָק (*Yitshak*) translated as “Isaac” literally means “he laughed” (or “he will laugh,” “he laughs). It is an unmistakable reference to three laughs that were heard surrounding the events connected with the birth of Isaac. First, the laugh of Abraham, when God first broke the news to him (Gen. 17:17); second, the laugh of Sarah when she heard of it from the

heavenly delegation that was entertained by Abraham in his tent (Gen. 18:11-13); and third (we may presume) was of course the good-natured laugh of God Himself when Sarah did become pregnant and gave birth nine months later.

As the story begins to switch gears away from Abraham and Sarah, it first moves, not to Isaac, but to Rebekah the daughter of Bethuel and sister of Laban (Gen. 23-25). The narrative now develops around her willingness to leave her father's house and join Isaac, whom Abraham does not want to let leave the Promised Land. Yet at the same time, Abraham made his senior servant swear not to allow Isaac to take a wife from the local daughters of the Canaanites (24:2-4). We read of Abraham's response to the reluctant agreement by Eliezer, Abraham's trusted servant, in Genesis 24:6-7:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אַבְרָהָם הַשָּׂמֶר לְךָ פְּנֵי־תַשְׁיב אֶת־בְּנִי  
שָׁמָּה:

*Abraham answered him, "On no account must  
you take my son back there!" (Gen. 24:6)*

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם אֲשֶׁר לָקַחְנִי מִבֵּית אָבִי וּמֵאֶרֶץ  
מּוֹלַדְתִּי וְאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר־לִי וְאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע־לִי לֵאמֹר  
לְזַרְעֶךָ אֶתֶּן אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת הוּא יִשְׁלַח מִלְּאָכּוֹ  
לְפָנֶיךָ וּלְקַחְתָּ אִשָּׁה לְבְנִי מִשָּׁם:

*The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me  
from my father's house and from my native land,  
who promised me on oath, saying, "I will assign  
this land to your offspring" – He will send His  
angel before you, and you will get a wife for my  
son from there. (Gen. 24:7)*

Abraham was emphatic, *הַשָּׂמֶר לְךָ פְּנֵי־תַשְׁיב*  
(*hishamer lekha pen tashiv*), literally "guard  
yourself, lest you return (him)." It was  
extremely important to Abraham that  
Isaac secure the promise already made.  
He must stay in the land God has

promised to him and his children. Based on Abraham's previous experience in Genesis 22, when the promise of God (a nation through Isaac), which seemed to run against God's commandment (to offer up Isaac), was resolved by the appearance of the Lord's heavenly messenger (the Angel of the Lord), now Abraham trusts that Eliezer's mission to bring a wife to the Promised Land will be successful because God's angel is sure to prepare the way before him. As we read above in verse 7, Abraham said **הוּא יִשְׁלַח מַלְאָכּוֹ** (*hu yishlach malakho*) "He will send his angel/messenger." After the providentially guided meeting of Rebekah by Abraham's servant, we read of the blessing upon Rebekah's departure, along with her maids, to meet her husband Isaac, of whose miraculous birth and God's sure blessing she has already heard so much (24:35-41). We read in Genesis 24:60:

וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת־רִבְקָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהּ אַחֲתַנּוּ אֶת־הָיָי  
לְאַלְפֵי רִבְבָה וַיִּירֶשׁ זָרְעָהּ אֶת־שַׁעַר שְׂנְאָיו:

*And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, “O sister! May you grow into thousands of myriads; may your offspring seize the gates of their foes.”*  
(Gen. 24:60)

The meaning of the name רִבְקָה (*Rivkah*) “Rebekah” is unclear. It’s possible that the meaning may be derived from a word for “tying up,” “securing” or “capturing” something or someone. It may be connected with the noun מַרְבֵּק (*marbek*) which means a “stall” or “place for securing animals” in Amos 6:4. Notice that in the blessing she is called אַחֲתַנּוּ (*achotenu*), which means “our sister.” She was no longer just a daughter, but a daughter of their people, probably highlighting her coming of age, being old enough to marry and to start her own family unit.

What is interesting is that Abraham did not cut all ties with his family and the place of his origin. After all, it is from there that Abraham commends the wife for Isaac to be selected. We read in Genesis 24:15 about Eliezer's first meeting with Rebekah:

וַיְהִי־הוּא טָרַם כְּלָה לְדַבֵּר וְהִנֵּה רִבְקָה יֹצֵאת אִשָּׁר  
יִלְדָה לְבְתוּאֵל בְּן־מִלְכָּה אִשְׁתַּ נְחֹר אָחִי אַבְרָהָם  
וְכֵדָה עַל־שִׁכְמָהּ:

*He had scarcely finished speaking, when Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, the son of Milcah the wife of Abraham's brother Nabor, came out with her jar on her shoulder. (Gen. 24:15)*

This can be seen in stark contrast with Abraham's unwillingness for his son to be united with the indigenious people of Canaan (Gen. 24:2-4). The phrase used in Rebekah's blessing, וַיִּירַשׁ זָרְעוֹ אֶת שְׂעָר וַיִּנָּאִיו (*ve-yirash z'arekh et shaar sonav*),

literally means something like “and your seed will conquer the gate of their haters.” The gate of a city was considered to be the seat of power, so to burn the gates of the city meant to destroy the city itself. It is possible that this blessing was given in the hope that Rebekah’s blessing would be similar to the kind of blessing with which Abraham himself was blessed by God at his call: “And I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 12:3).

Isaac had been in Beer-lahai-roi (בְּאֵר לַחַי רֹאִי) and was coming from there when the caravan carrying Rebekah approached. We read in Genesis 24:63-67:

וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לְשׁוּחַ בְּשָׂדֵה לַפְּנוֹת עָרֵב וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו  
וַיִּרְא וְהִנֵּה גַמְלִים בְּאֵיִם:

*And Isaac went out walking in the field toward evening and, looking up, he saw camels approaching. (Gen. 24:63)*

וַתִּשָּׂא רֵבֶקָה אֶת-עֵינֶיהָ וַתֵּרָא אֶת-יִצְחָק וַתִּפְּל מֵעַל  
הַגָּמֶל:

*Raising her eyes, Rebekah saw Isaac. She alighted from the camel (Gen. 24:64)*

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל-הָעֶבֶד מִי-הָאִישׁ הַלֹּזֵה הַהֶלֶךְ בַּשָּׂדֶה  
לִקְרֹאתֵנוּ וַיֹּאמֶר הָעֶבֶד הוּא אֲדֹנָי וַתִּקַּח הַצָּעִירָה  
וַתִּתְּכַס:

*and said to the servant, "Who is that man walking in the field toward us?" And the servant said, "That is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself. (Gen. 24:65)*

וַיִּסְפֹּר הָעֶבֶד לְיִצְחָק אֶת כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:



*The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. (Gen. 24:66)*

וַיְבִאֶהָ יִצְחָק הָאֵלֶּלֶה שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־רֵבֶקָה  
וַתְּהִי־לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַיֵּאֱהָבֶהָ וַיִּנְחָם יִצְחָק אַחֲרֵי אִמּוֹ:

*Isaac then brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he took Rebekah as his wife. Isaac loved her, and thus found comfort after his mother's death. (Gen. 24:67)*

In Genesis 25:19 we are told that it is here in this section that the formal telling of Isaac's story commences. Isaac was 40 years old when he took Rebekah to be his wife but, like Sarah, Rebekah was barren. Again God gave a promise, but the reality on the ground was different. This mention of Rebekah's barrenness is certainly reminiscent of Abraham and Sarah's struggle with not being able to bring posterity into the world. We are told in Genesis 25:21:

וַיַּעֲתַר יִצְחָק לַיהוָה לְנִכְחַ אִשְׁתּוֹ כִּי עֲקָרָה הִוא  
וַיַּעֲתַר לוֹ יְהוָה וַתַּהַר רֵבֶקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ:

*Isaac pleaded with the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD responded to his plea, and his wife Rebekah conceived. (Gen. 25:21)*

The Hebrew word for “and he pleaded/entreated/petitioned” וַיַּעֲתַר (*va-ye’etar*) carries the sense of a passionate plea and commitment to continue until the desired result is achieved. Notice that וַיַּעֲתַר לַיהוָה (*va-ye’etar Yitschak la-YHWH*) “and Isaac pleaded with the LORD” and וַיַּעֲתַר לוֹ יְהוָה (*va-ye’ater lo Adonai*) “the LORD responded to his plea” actually use different forms of the same Hebrew verb. The literal meaning would be that when Isaac pleaded to the LORD, the LORD accepted the plea or “allowed himself to be entreated” and replied with an affirmative answer. The word עֲקָרָה (*akarah*) means “barren.”

Interestingly this word carries not only a meaning as “unfruitful”, but also relates to “displaced,” “destroyed” and “uprooted.”

The ancient linguistic logic goes as follows: If a woman has no children, she has no roots, and therefore embodies a type of displacement. On the other hand, the word for “womb” is רֶחֶם (*rechem*) and beautifully connects with another Hebrew word רַחֲמִים (*rachamim*), which means “mercy/mercies.” The connection seems to indicate that a woman who becomes pregnant has received mercy from above. Another connection may be understood from the “compassion” typically felt by a mother for her own offspring, the “fruit of her womb” (Isaiah 49:15).

Rebekah conceived and after some months began to feel unusually strong and harsh movements within her womb. It felt like there was a war going on in her

womb. To her and to other woman that she most likely consulted concerning this turmoil, it may have seemed like something that could result in miscarriage. Remember that she had been barren. Rebekah was truly discouraged, so she inquired of the LORD (Gen. 25:22).

וַיִּתְרָצְצוּ הַבָּנִים בְּקֶרֶבָּהּ וַתֹּאמֶר אִם־כֵּן לָמָּה זֶה  
אֲנֹכִי וַתִּלְוֶה לְדָרֹשׁ אֶת־יְהוָה:

*But the children struggled in her womb, and she said, "If so, why do I exist?" She went to inquire of the LORD. (Gen. 25:22).*

The word וַיִּתְרָצְצוּ (*va-yitrotsetsu*), usually translated “and they struggled” does not really convey the full meaning. The root רָצַץ (*ratsats*) communicates the idea of “breaking,” “crushing” and “oppressing.” Alternatively, the root might be רוץ (*ruts*) “running.” In either case, what she felt inside her was no small struggle; it was a great contest or even war.

The story then quickly moves to introducing the future “struggle” between Esau and Jacob – the two sons of Rebekah who warred with each other prophetically within her womb. We will return to this story and the Lord’s answer later when we look at the person of Jacob, but for now, let us stay with the life of Isaac.

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Dr. Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg

## Chapter 13: Like Father, Like Son

Like his father Abraham before him, Isaac experienced a famine in the land and decided to go to Abimelech, the king of the Philistines in Gerar (not far from the modern city of Beer Sheva). This was exactly the same place where Abraham stayed for a short time when he sought to pass Sarah off as his sister. It is possible that it was the very same king that now ruled Gerar, but it is likely that the Abimelech mentioned here is actually the son of Abimelech in Abraham's story. Although this is not mentioned, the Lord's warning and commandment not to travel to Egypt presupposes the fact that Isaac wanted to move to Egypt, just as Abram once did under very similar circumstances.

We read in Genesis 26:2-5 of the renewed promise of God to Isaac, which caused him to reconsider his plans and stay in the place chosen by God for His clan – Gerar of the Philistines:

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו תֵּרַד מִצְרָיִם שָׁכֵן  
בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

*The LORD had appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land.” (Gen. 26:2)*

גֹּר בְּאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְאֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ וְאֶבְרַכְךָ כִּי־לֹךְ  
וּלְזַרְעֶךָ אֶתֵּן אֶת־כָּל־הָאֲרָצוֹת הָאֵל וְהִקְמַתִי אֶת־  
הַשְּׂבֵעָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם אָבִיךָ:

*Reside in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; I will assign all these lands to you and to your heirs, fulfilling the oath that I swore to your father Abraham. (Gen. 26:3)*



וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶת־בְּרָעָהּ כְּכֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנָתַתִּי לְוִרְעָהּ  
אֵת כָּל־הָאָרֶצֶת הָאֵל וְהִתְבָּרְכוּ בְּוִרְעָהּ כָּל גּוֹיֵי  
הָאָרֶץ:

*I will make your heirs as numerous as the stars of heaven, and assign to your heirs all these lands, so that all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your heirs (Gen. 26:4)*

עֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַע אֲבִרָהֶם בְּקִלִּי וַיִּשְׁמַר מִשְׁמֵרָתִי  
מִצְוֹתַי חֻקֹּתַי וְתוֹרָתִי:

*Inasmuch as Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge: My commandments, My laws, and My teachings.” (Gen. 26:5)*

Like his father before him, Isaac too was assured of God’s presence with him and of the much-needed help to sustain his family and survive the famine. While it was because of Abraham’s faithfulness and his merits that the covenant is now being transferred to Isaac, Isaac himself

also needed to be tested and tried through his own trials, albeit not as dramatic as those of his father. The close correlation between the events in the lives of Isaac and Abraham are not coincidental. The Book of Genesis goes out of its way to highlight how similar some of these stories are. The reason for this is that the original audience had in many ways encountered the same challenges as their forefathers. They needed to be shown that God remained faithful to His promises and carried the forefathers of Israel through every imaginable difficulty. Since this was so, the presumption was that He would do the same for their covenant children – the Children of Israel who left Egypt and were the original recipients of the Book of Genesis.

These parallels are even more numerous between the lives of Abraham and Jacob, and their families as well as other key figures (and people groups) of the biblical

narrative. This may mean that there is a broader purpose across the Torah of narrative typology and its purpose is far beyond simple similarity of challenges for each generation. For example, the descent to Egypt and return by Abraham is a harbinger of Israel's descent and return to the same place. The Torah narratives, therefore, are connected to form one narrative of God's engagement with both Israel in particular and humanity in general. In Genesis 26:6 we read that in obedience to God's instruction, Isaac stayed in Gerar during the time of the famine: וַיֵּשֶׁב יִצְחָק בְּגֵרָר (*va-yeshav Yitschak bi-Gerar*) "And Isaac dwelt in Gerar."

The word יָשַׁב (*yashav*) is usually translated as "to dwell." Its root relates to words for "seating," "being located," "populating," "residing," "colonizing," and "exercising dominion." For example, even in Modern Hebrew when someone asks where a particular office staff is located, we answer (literally) they are "sitting" in such

and such a place. While readers should not get the erroneous idea that Modern Hebrew usage serves as a legitimate lens through which biblical meanings can be understood, we are, nevertheless, justified in considering the modern use that may have some connection to the ancient one as something that may shed further light on the issues at hand.

The name of the place גֵרָר (*Gerar*) “Gerar” is of unknown origin. It may mean simply “a place of living.” Interestingly, however, the Hebrew verb גָרַר (*garar*) can mean “to drag (away).” People are “dragged away” like fish in nets (Hab. 1:15), strong winds “sweep through” (Jer. 30:23), and violent people are “dragged off” by their own violence (Prov. 21:7). It is certainly intriguing to think that both Abraham and Isaac were afraid that their wives, Sarah and Rebekah, would be “dragged away” from them when they dwelt amongst the Philistines; maybe the name of the place

in the story helped to evoke such associations among early hearers.

We are also told that Isaac, too, just like Abraham, decided to tell everyone that Rebekah was his sister, failing to mention that she was also his wife. He feared that his wife could have been taken from him and he be murdered to clear the way for her remarriage or concubine status to someone locally important and powerful. But, as the story has it, Abimelech king of Philistines noticed the romantic relationship between Isaac and Rebekah and realized that she was more to Isaac than he had admitted.

Abimelech confronted Isaac about his lie. Isaac gave his justification. It was exactly the same justification as the one given by Abraham to Abimelech's father. The king reacted in anger and disbelief. Sleeping with another man's wife (as long as the man was still alive) was rightly considered

a grave sin in that time and place.  
Therefore, Abimelech's accusation was  
justified:

מה־זאת עָשִׂיתָ לָנוּ כַּמְעַט שָׁכַב אֶחָד הָעָם אֶת־  
אִשְׁתְּךָ וְהִבֵּאתָ עָלֵינוּ אָשָׁם:

*“What have you done to us! One of the people  
might have lain with your wife, and you would  
have brought guilt upon us.” (Gen. 26:10)*

Ancient Hebrew, both original paleo-  
Hebrew and later Hebrew, did not use  
punctuation, so there was no way to  
identify that something was a question  
other than by looking at the text and its  
contexts. An example is מה־זאת עָשִׂיתָ לָנוּ  
(*mah zot asita lanu*), which translated  
means “What (is) this you did to us?”  
When we read our Bibles in the English  
language, we must not blindly trust the  
translation committee's placement of  
commas and periods in the text, nor  
especially trust the parsing of literary

units into chapter and paragraph sections, since the meaning of the text may in some cases be changed dramatically by these insertions. The translation decisions are justified most of the time, although sometimes they are purely arbitrary. Translation is essentially a work of interpretation as well.

In Genesis 26:11 we read:

וַיִּצַו אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ אֶת־כָּל־הָעָם לֵאמֹר הַנִּגַּע בְּאִישׁ הַזֶּה  
וּבְאִשְׁתּוֹ מוֹת יוּמָת:

*And Abimelech charged all the people, saying:  
'He that touches this man or his wife shall surely  
be put to death.'* (Gen. 26:11)

Notice how differently people in ancient times thought of communal vs. individual responsibility. There was absolutely no doubt in Abimelech's mind that if one of his men violated Rebekah, everyone in

Gerar would have experienced the curses of the carefully watching God/gods. Therefore, Abimelech issued a very stern warning to any individual who will be found guilty of it, exposing everyone to real danger. We have trouble thinking of it in this corporate way. We believe in the individual responsibility of each person, unless that person is an official representative of a greater number of people. But this was not so in the ancient world.

Another line of reasoning may have been coming from Abimelech's father who had dealings with Abram many years before if he had warned his son ahead of time to be very careful with any member of Abram's household. Surely Isaac as Abram's direct descendent would have been included in that fatherly warning. Having relations with a married woman was forbidden in the ancient society not because of great respect for the woman, but because the woman literally belonged



to a man. She was his possession. She was his and his alone. Ancient societies by and large respected and held this idea in high regard.

Just like Abram before him, Isaac, too, is shown to be truly blessed by God. In every way he became exceedingly wealthy, as his father before him, as to invoke the envy of those around. The blessings upon Isaac are summarized in Genesis 26:12-14, where we read:

וַיִּזְרַע יִצְחָק בְּאֶרֶץ הַהוּא וַיִּמְצָא בַּשָּׁנָה הַהוּא מֵאָה  
שָׁעָרִים וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ יְהוָה:

*And Isaac sowed in that land, and found in the same year a hundredfold; and the LORD blessed him. (Gen. 26:12)*

וַיִּגְדֵּל הָאִישׁ וַיִּלְוֶה הָלוֹף וַיִּגְדֵּל עַד כִּי־גָדֵל מְאֹד:

*And the man grew, and going he went, and he grew until he became very great. (Gen. 26:13)*

וַיִּהְיֶה-לּוֹ מִקְנֵה-צֹאן וּמִקְנֵה בְּקָר וְעֶבְדָּה רַבָּה וַיִּקְנֶא  
אֶתוֹ פְּלִשְׁתִּים:

*And he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and a great household; and the Philistines envied him. (Gen. 26:14)*

The פְּלִשְׁתִּים (*Pelishtim*) “Philistines” were an ancient people group whose name was eventually adapted by the Romans to refer to much of the Land of Israel (as “Palestine”). Modern Palestinians are not the same people as the ancient Philistines, but their name derives from the Biblical term. The Modern Hebrew word for “Palestinians” is פְּלִסְטִינִים (*Palestinim*), a transformed loan word from English (i.e., “Palestinian” with Hebrew plural ending -ים). In the Bible the פְּלִשְׁתִּים (*Pelishtim*) “Philistines” never ruled the whole Land of Israel, and their name referred to a smaller area. The southwestern coastal

area of the territory that would become Israel was called Philistia, while the central highlands constituted Canaan. Both the Canaanites and the Philistines disappeared as distinct peoples by the time of the Babylonian Captivity of Judea (586 B.C.E.), most likely assimilating with other people groups in the region.

Before 135 C.E., the Romans used the terms Judea, Samaria and Galilee to refer to the Land of Israel as a whole. When Titus destroyed Jerusalem in 70 C.E., the Roman government produced coins with the phrase *Judea Capta* (“Judea Captive”).

The term “Palestine” was not used at this time. It was only when the Romans brutally crushed the second Jewish revolt against Rome in 135 C.E. (the Bar Kochba uprising) that Emperor Hadrian applied the term “Palestine” to the entire Land of Israel. He took the name of the ancient enemies of Israel, the Philistines, Latinized it, and applied it to the Land of

Israel. He hoped to erase the name of Israel from all memory.

The Philistines were afraid and took measures to cut the water supplies of Isaac's clan, filling up with earth the wells used by Isaac's people. It was clear Isaac's time in Gerar was up. Abimelech told Isaac, "Go away from us, for you have become far too big for us." The Book of Genesis was not written during the life of Abraham and Isaac, but (according to my view) much later when the Israelites had just left Egypt. It gives direction and inspiration to the Israelites in the wilderness, showing them how in many ways the struggles and wonderings of the Israelites resembled those of Abraham and Isaac. The children of Israel were not disconnected from the origins and their history. While the history moved forward, it clearly repeated itself many times over. What happened to Abraham and Isaac, will happen to them, too. They should be prepared and not taken by surprise by the

suffering and unpredictability of life ahead of them. Instead, they must remember that God will be faithful to them just as He was faithful to their forefathers – Abraham and Isaac.

## Chapter 14: A New Beginning

Isaac moved away from the city of Gerar and pitched his tents in the wadi of Gerar. There he dug again the very wells that his father Abraham had dug, before the Philistines of his time filled them up with earth seeking to destroy Abraham's source of drinking water. Isaac restored the wells symbolically giving them the same names that were once given to them by his father (Gen. 26:17-18). Isaac was a man who sought uncontested peace with his neighbors. When his newly-dug wells (and digging a well was a very expensive construction project) were unfairly challenged by the men from Gerar as belonging to them, he did not fight them but moved away from two wells that he dug.

We must understand that digging of wells was a very serious financial and time investment. This non-confrontational attitude by Isaac came to him at a high cost. The third well was uncontested so he named it *Rechovot* (today it is the name of a modern Israeli city), saying, “Now at last the Lord has granted us ample space to increase in the land” (Gen. 26:22). We read about it as follows:

וַיִּעָתֵק מִשָּׁם וַיַּחְפֹּר בְּאֵר אַחֶרֶת וְלֹא רָבוּ עָלֶיהָ  
וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ רְחֹבוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־עָתָה הִרְחִיב יְהוָה  
לָנוּ וַיִּפְרִינֵנוּ בְּאֶרֶץ:

*And he removed from thence, and dug another well; and for that they strove not. And he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said: 'For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.'* (Gen. 26:22)

There are thousands of names of people and places in the Bible that are connected to some kind of event (like this one) or an

idea. When the men of Gerar “did not argue about the third well” that he dug *וְלֹא רָבוּ עָלָיָהּ* (*ve-lo ravu aleah*), Isaac called the place *רְחֹבוֹת* (*Rechovot*), *כִּי־עָתָה הִרְחִיב יְהוָה לָנוּ* (*ki ata hirchiv YHWH lanu*), which literally means “because now the LORD has widened (it) for us/on our behalf.” In Modern Hebrew *רְחוֹב* (*rechov*) means “street” (literally a widened place), translated correctly as a city square in Nehemiah 8:1.

When Isaac moved from there to Beer Sheva the Lord appeared to him, confirming to him that He was the God of his father Abraham and that he must not fear because He would be present with him every step of the way. God also reminded him of the promise to bless and increase in number his offspring, because of the proven faithfulness of his father. (Gen. 26:23-25). Just like Abraham and other holy men before him, Isaac built an altar there and evoked the name of the Lord (Gen. 26:25).



Immediately after the Lord appeared to him and promised to be with him, Isaac and his men pitched their tents and began the work to acquire drinking water in Beer Sheva. Abimelech, with his chief consular and the chief commander arrived to meet with Isaac. Isaac, expressing bewilderment at their arrival, asked them why they would come to him now, given their hostile actions towards him in the not so distant past. We read in Genesis 26:28-30:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ רָאוּ רָאֵינוּ כִּי־הָיָה יְהוָה עִמָּךְ וַנֹּאמֶר תְּהִי  
נָא אֵלֶּה בְּיִנּוּתֵינוּ בְּיַיְנוּ וּבְיִנְךָ וּנְכַרְתָּה בְּרִית עִמָּךְ:

*And they said: 'We saw plainly that the LORD was with thee; and we said: Let there now be an oath between us, even between us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee. (Gen. 26:28)*

אִם־תַּעֲשֶׂה עִמָּנוּ רָעָה כַּאֲשֶׁר לֹא נִגַּעְנוּךָ וְכַאֲשֶׁר  
עָשִׂינוּ עִמָּךָ רַק־טוֹב וְנִשְׁלַחְךָ בְּשָׁלוֹם אֶתָּה עִתָּה  
בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה:

*That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not  
touched thee, and as we have done unto thee  
nothing but good, and have sent thee away in  
peace; thou art now the blessed of the LORD.'*  
(Gen. 26:29)

וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם מִשְׁתֶּה וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ:

*And he made them a feast, and they did eat and  
drink. (Gen. 26:30)*

On the following morning, both parties held a covenant-making ceremony. Then the delegation departed back to Gerar. On that same day Isaac's men brought him a piece of excellent news. They had found water! He named the new well שְׁבַעַה (*shivah*) (Gen. 26:31-33). This event parallels a previous covenant between

Abraham and Abimelech (presumably the father of Isaac's Abimelech), when Abraham told that king that a well he had dug had been confiscated by the ruler's servants.

At that time Abraham took שֶׁבַע (*sheva*) “seven” fully grown sheep and asked Abimelech, probably in a public ceremony, to accept them as proof of the king's acknowledgement that Abraham had indeed dug that well – and thus it belonged to him. Abimelech agreed, and from this point on the place where Abraham dwelled for some time among the Philistines was called בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע (*Beer Sheva*) “the well of an oath [or: of seven]” (Gen. 21:25-34).

Hebrew שְׁבוּעָה (*shevuah*) “oath, curse” seems to share a root with the word שֶׁבַע (*sheva*) “seven” and may have originated from the practice of using sets of seven in maledictions (cf. Lev. 26:18, 21, 24).

Thus, the sense of swearing an oath may originally have been “to lay curses in sevens on someone” or “to be willing to accept seven curses upon oneself” should the oath be broken. In this way an oath could become a curse.

In Genesis 26:34 we are told that Esau’s marriage to Judith, the Hittite, was a source of bitterness for Isaac and Rebekah. While we are not told the exact reason behind this was, we can clearly see that Isaac’s life was certainly not a life of bliss and ease, but rather blessing and victory. Chapter 27 of Genesis tells the story of Jacob – one of Isaac’s children – deceiving his father and receiving the blessing that Isaac meant for Esau. While we will study this in-depth when we get to the story of Jacob’s life, it is important to point out that the deceptive events in the life of Isaac (in particular his dealings with Abimelech concerning Rebekah) come back to haunt him. It is now someone else that through deception,

gets his way. (This applies to both Jacob and to Isaac's wife Rebekah herself, who no doubt learned the acceptability of deception from her husband Isaac in critical cases). The anguish of Isaac after painful realization that he has blessed "the wrong" son is explicitly described in the story. He is, however, able to accept the inevitability of God's will (the blessing already granted) and bless Jacob, now knowingly and instruct him about his future life choices (Gen. 28:1-5). When Isaac was at Mamre (now Hebron) at hundred and eighty years old, he passed away. He was buried by his sons Esau and Jacob (Gen. 35:27-29).

## Conclusion

The story of Abraham and Isaac does not end here. It continues in the story of their descendants - Jacob and his children. In many ways, this story repeats itself through some stunning parallels that you will see as you continue your journey with the Hebrew patriarchs.

I invite you to move on to the next book in this series entitled “The Hebrew Story of Jacob.” You will enjoy it just as much. I guarantee it.

## MY REQUEST

Dear reader, may I ask you for a favor? Would you take three minutes of your time and provide encouraging feedback to other people shopping on Amazon.com about this book (assuming you like it, of course!)?

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This will help me a lot, especially if you genuinely love this book! After writing a review, please drop me a personal note and let me know - [dr.eli.israel@gmail.com](mailto:dr.eli.israel@gmail.com). I would appreciate your help with this.

Dr. Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg

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