

#9: Symbols and Types from the Time of Abraham

Monte F. Shelley, 14 Mar 2010

Quotes

- Be grateful for tests in life. If you are not tested, it means you are not worth testing. — Theodore M. Burton
- Blessed are the flexible...for they shall not be bent out of shape

1. Abraham on the altar in Ur (Abr 1)

It was the custom of the priest of Pharaoh ... to offer up upon the altar which was built in the land of Chaldea, for the offering unto these strange gods, men, women, and children. ... This priest had offered upon this altar three virgins at one time ... because ... they would not bow down to worship gods of wood or of stone. ... The priests laid violence upon me, that they might slay me also ... upon this altar [lion-couch]. ... And as they lifted up their hands upon me ... I lifted up my voice unto the Lord ... and the angel of his presence stood by me, and immediately unloosed my bands; ... [and said] Abraham ... my name is Jehovah, and I ... have come down to deliver thee, and to take thee away ... into a strange land (Abr 1: 8–16)

Years later an angel delivered Sarah who was on Pharaoh's lion couch in Egypt. An angel also delivered Isaac who was on an altar.



Hebron. An ancient city of Judah, 3,040 feet above the Mediterranean, 20 miles south of Jerusalem; known also as Mamre and Kirjath-Arba (Gen. 13:18; 35:27). It was the burying place of Abraham and his family (23:2, 19; 49:29–32). ... It was one of the six cities of refuge (Josh. 20:7), a Levitical city (Josh. 21:11, 13), and David's capital during the earlier part of his reign (2 Sam. 5:3–5). (BD Hebron)

2. The LORD “cut” a covenant with Abraham (Gen 15)

The LORD said to Abraham “I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, [Author] to give thee this land” and a numberless posterity [Blessing]. “Take me an heifer ... a she goat ... a ram ... a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ... [Abraham] divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another. ... When ... it was dark, ... a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. ¹⁸ In the same day the LORD made [HEB cut] a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates. (Gen 15:1–18)

One of every species suitable for sacrifice (KD 1:213)

Made a covenant lit. HEB *karat berith* = *cut a covenant* (made by passing between *pieces* of flesh). → he who breaks his promise will be treated like the dead animal(s) (KD 8:2:87 on Jer 34:18)

Modern idiom: “Cut a deal”

“The peculiar phrase ‘to cut a covenant’ is derived from the practice of severing animals as the seal of a treaty. This custom is widely attested in ancient times. ... It is generally believed that when the contracting parties passed between the severed pieces they thereby accepted the covenant obligations and invoked upon themselves the fate of the animals if the terms of the pact were violated. ... The smoke and flame are frequent symbols of the divine presence ... and it is only these that ‘passed between the pieces.’ ... Only God bound Himself to a solemn obligation.” (Sarna 126)

There are types of ancient covenants:

(1) **Obligatory covenants** (suzerain-vassal): blessings are conditional on fulfilling duties. The Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants specify: Author, Blessings, Curses, Duties, Entering method, and Remembering methods.

(2) **Promissory covenants** (royal grants): blessings are promised for past loyal service. Future loyalty is presupposed but not required. “Abraham is promised the land because he obeyed God ... (Gen. 26:5; cf. 22:16–18), and similarly David is rewarded with dynastic posterity because he served God with truth, righteousness, and loyalty (I Kings 3:6; 9:4; 11:4, 6; 14:8; 15:3).” (*Encyclopedia Judaica*, “Covenant”)

3. Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 16)

Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. ² And Sarai said unto Abram, ... the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. ... ³ Sarai ... took Hagar ... and gave her to ... Abram to be his wife. ... ⁴ When she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. ... ⁶ And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

“In her old age, Sarah gave Hagar, her maid, to Abraham. Modern revelation indicates that Sarah thereby ‘administered unto Abraham according to the law’ (D&C 132:65), and more recent scholarship has confirmed the widespread legal obligation of the childless wife in the ancient Near East to provide her husband with a second wife.” (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1260)

“God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because this was the law; and from Hagar sprang many people. This, therefore, was fulfilling, among other things, the promises. Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it. ... Sarah ... administered unto Abraham according to the law when I commanded Abraham to take Hagar to wife. (D&C 132: 34–35, 65)

OT-I According to the custom of the time, Sarah's giving her handmaid, Hagar, to be a wife to Abraham was an expected and logical act (see Clarke, *Bible Commentary*, 1:109–11; D&C 132:1–2, 29–30, 34–35).

Assumed pregnancy= blessing; barren= curse

⁷ And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness. ... ⁸ And he said, ... Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. ¹⁰ ... I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered. ... ¹¹ Thou ... shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael [HEB God hears]; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction. ¹² And he will be a ^a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

¹⁵ Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name ... Ishmael. ¹⁶ And Abram was [86] years old.

NIV He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward* all his brothers." [7 brothers]

* Or live to the east / of

God said unto [Nephi]: [The Lamanites] shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in remembrance of me; and ... [if] they will not remember me, and hearken unto my words, they shall scourge them even unto destruction. (2 Ne 5:25)

12a HEB wild ass (metaphorical here for freedom-loving; probably a nomad). Gen. 21:20; Moses 6:38.

Sarah had Isaac. After Sarah died, Abraham had 6 sons by his wife Keturah (Gen 25:1-2)

"The [12] sons of Ishmael peopled the north and west of the Arabian peninsula and supposedly formed the chief element of the Arab nation, the wandering Bedouin tribes. They are now mostly Mohammedans." (Mormon Doctrine, 389)

4. God's Covenant with Abraham (Gen 17)

When Abram was [99], the LORD appeared to Abram, and said ... I am the Almighty God [HEB El Shaddai]; walk before me, and be thou perfect. ⁴ ... thou shalt be a father of many nations. ⁵ ... Thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. ... ⁸ And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed ... all the land of Canaan. ... ¹⁰ Every man child among you shall be circumcised. ¹⁵ ... As for Sarai thy wife, ... Sarah shall her name be. ¹⁶ And I will ... give thee a son also of her: ... and she shall be a mother of nations. ...

¹⁷ Then Abraham ... laughed [JST rejoiced], and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is [100] years old? and shall Sarah, that is [90] years old, bear? ¹⁸ And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

17a HEB (also) rejoiced. JST Gen. 17:23 ... rejoiced ...

19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac [HEB he laughs or rejoices]: and I will establish my covenant with him ... and with his seed. ... ²⁰ And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, ... twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. ²¹ But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

²³ Abraham took Ishmael his son, and ..., every male ... of ... [his] house; and circumcised ... [them] in the selfsame day. ²⁴ And Abraham was [99] ... ²⁵ And Ishmael his son was [13].

5. Law of Hospitality (Gen 18)

[Abraham] sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; ² And ... when he saw [three men], he ran to meet them ... and bowed ... ³ And said, ... ⁴ Let a little water ... be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest ... under the tree: ⁵ [NIV Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way]. ... And they

said, So do. ... ⁶ Abraham hastened ... unto Sarah, and said, [NIV Quick ... make some bread.] ⁷ And Abraham ran ... [NIV selected a choice ... calf and ... a servant ... hurried to prepare it.] ... ⁸ And he took butter, and milk, and the calf ... and set it before them; ... and they did eat.

18:1-8 Duties of hospitality done before purpose revealed

Middle Eastern hospitality: "Men of the East believe that a person who becomes their guest is sent to them by God. Thus their hospitality becomes a sacred duty. ... One remarkable feature of Oriental hospitality is that sometimes an enemy is received as a guest, and as long as he remains in that relationship, he is perfectly safe and treated as a friend. There are certain Oriental tribes of tent-dwellers who have a rule that an enemy who has 'once dismounted and touched the rope of a single tent, is safe.'" When a guest enters a home, bowing is common. Guests are greeted with a kiss and words like "peace be on you." The guest removes his shoes and is offered water to wash his feet. The guest's head is anointed with oil, given water to drink (→pledge of friendship), served a meal of bread and salt (→covenant of peace and fidelity). "A foe will not 'taste the salt' of his adversary unless he is ready to be reconciled to him." A host will defend his guest from all enemies. It is considered a terrible sin to do evil to a person after accepting their hospitality. "When a covenant of friendship has been once broken, it may be renewed by those involved once again eating together." The host will do his best to delay the departure of a guest. (Wight, 69-79)

A Turkish governor gave a piece of roast mutton to an American missionary. "By that act I have pledged you every drop of my blood, that while you are in my territory no evil shall come to you. For that space of time we are brothers." A shaykh in Palestine dipped bread in molasses, gave it to a missionary, and said "There is bread and salt between us. We are brothers and allies. You are at liberty to travel among us wherever you please; and so far as my power extends, I am to aid, befriend, and succor you, even to the loss of my life."

"To give a drink of water to a guest is to recognize him as worthy of a peaceable reception. To share food with another is to covenant with him in amity for the period of his stay as a guest in the domain of the host. To partake of salt with another is to enter into a brotherhood as of very life with him."

A thief broke into a home and before leaving the home tasted what he thought was sugar. When he realized it was salt, he left the goods and the house. Later he became a head servant of the home because the master learned that he would not break the covenant of salt. (Trumbull, *The Covenant of Salt*, 26)

"A stranger, nay even an enemy, touches the tent of the Bedoui, and from that instant his person becomes inviolable. It would be reckoned a disgraceful meanness, an indelible shame, to satisfy even a just vengeance at the expense of hospitality."

"When a man has slain another, it is ... the imperative duty of the relatives ... to pursue the murderer ... until his blood, or its agreed price, be given as an equivalent of the life he has taken. ... But if a murderer enters the tent of the avenger of blood who is seeking his life, the law of Oriental hospitality requires that the right of sanctuary shall be accorded to him, in spite of the forfeiture of his life by his crime. ...

[Anciently] a murderer flying from justice came, without knowing it, to the house of a son of the man whom he had murdered, and was there welcomed as a guest. After a while it was disclosed to the son that the murderer of his father, whose life

he had been seeking, was his guest. The guest admitted the crime, and was ready to meet his doom. 'A violent trembling then seized the rich man ... his eyes alternately sparkled with fury and overflowed with tears. ... At length ... [he said] Tomorrow ... destiny shall join thee to my father. ... But as for me, how can I violate the sacred laws of hospitality? Wretched stranger, fly from my presence! There, take these hundred sequins [coins]. Be gone quickly.' ...

A man "pursued by Arabs, lost his way, and was overtaken by night near the enemy's camp. Coming upon a tent he entered it boldly, and by that very act he was under protection as a guest. As he talked pleasantly with his host, ... he noticed a sudden paleness cover the face of his host, who at once left the presence of his guest, and soon after sent word that he was unable to return, but had made every provision for his guest's safety and repose. Before daylight the next morning, the guest was aroused, and invited to take refreshment, in preparation for his departure. At the entrance of the tent stood a fresh horse in exchange for his exhausted one, all ready for his mounting. There also stood his host, in accordance with Arab etiquette. When the guest was in his saddle, the host told him that the benighted wayfarer had no enemy so much to be dreaded as the man whose tent he had entered. ... Last night ... [I learned that you murdered my father.] The sun has not yet risen; the sun will be no more than risen when I pursue you, after you have in safety quitted my tent, where, fortunately for you, it is against our religion to molest you. ... but all my obligations cease as soon as we part. ... You have not mounted a horse inferior to the one that stands ready for myself." ... Profiting by the start thus given him, the guest was enabled to reach ... safety. (SOSL 110–120)

6. Sarah shall have a son (Gen 18)

¹⁰ And [the Lord] said ... Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard *it* in the tent door. ... ¹¹ [NIV] Abraham and Sarah were already old ... and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?" ¹³ Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?'" ¹⁴ Is any thing too hard for the LORD? ... Sarah shall have a son.

Russell M. Nelson: Everyone "knows" that old women do not bear children. So upon whom did the Lord call to bear Abraham's birthright son? Sarah, at age ninety! When told this was to be, she asked a logical question: "Shall I [which am old] of a surety bear a child?" (Gen. 18:13). From heaven came this reply: "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14). So decreed, she gave birth to Isaac, to carry the crucial Abrahamic covenant into the second generation (see Gen. 26:1–4, 24).

Later, for one of the most important events ever to occur, the other extreme was chosen. As all knew that an elderly woman could not bear children, it was just as obvious that a virgin could not have children. But Isaiah had made this prophetic utterance: "The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14).

When Mary was notified of her sacred responsibility, the announcing angel reassured, "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37). ("With God Nothing Shall Be Impossible," *Ensign*, May 1988, 33)

7. Abraham pleads for the righteous (Gen 18)

[NIV] ¹⁶ When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way.] ... ²⁰ The LORD said, ... the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and ... their sin is very grievous. ... ²³ Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴ Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city. ... ²⁶ The LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty ... then I will spare all the place for their sakes. ²⁷ And Abraham ... said, ... ²⁸ Peradventure there ... [45 ... 40 ... 30 ... 20 ... 10] shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for ten's sake. ³³ And the LORD went his way ... and Abraham returned unto his place.

Mediator: How many were saved 4 (Lot, wife, 2 daughters)

8. Lot's Hospitality in Sodom (Gen 19; JST Gen 19:9–15)

¹ There came [JST three] angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed ... ² And he said ... turn in ... into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. ³ And he pressed upon them greatly; and they ... entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat. ⁴ [NIV] Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. ⁵ They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them."]

⁶ And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, ⁷ And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. ...

⁹ *They were angry.* ... ¹⁰ And they said *among themselves*, This one *man* came in to sojourn *among us*, and he will needs *now make himself to be a judge*; now we will deal worse with him than with them. ¹¹ *Wherefore they said unto the man, we will have the men, and thy daughters also; and we will do with them as seemeth us good.* ¹² *Now this was after the wickedness of Sodom.*

¹³ And Lot said, Behold now, I have two daughters ... let me ... *plead with my brethren that I may not bring them out unto you; and ye shall not do unto them as seemeth good in your eyes;* ¹⁴ For God will not justify his servant in this thing; *wherefore, let me plead with my brethren, this once only, that unto these men ye do nothing, that they may have peace in my house.* ...

¹⁵ *And they were angry with Lot and came near to break the door, but the angels of God ... pulled Lot into the house ... and shut the door.* ¹¹ And they smote the men ... at the door ... with blindness... so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

See Judges 19:22+ (similar event where men abused a concubine all night and were later destroyed)

Lot's wife "killed by the fiery and sulphurous vapour with which the air was filled, and afterwards encrusted with salt, she resembled an actual statue of salt." (KD 1:236)

9. The Sins of Sodom

The men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. (Gen 13:13)

This was the iniquity of ... Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness ... neither did she ... [help] the poor and needy. ⁵⁰ And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away. (Ezek 16:49–50)

^{18:20} The LORD said, ... the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and ... their sin is very grievous.

Josephus: “The Sodomites grew proud, on account of their riches and great wealth; they became unjust towards men, and impious towards God . . . : they hated strangers, and abused themselves with Sodomitical practices” (*Antiquities* 1.11.1,3 — circa AD 96).

“To the Oriental mind, the surpassing sin of Sodom . . . was the disregard of the rights of hospitality in the purposed ill-treatment of the strangers whom Lot . . . had welcomed to his home, and was ready to shield from harm even by surrender of the members of his own family—as he was bound to do by the Oriental standard of right. To this day a traditional site of Sodom . . . is pointed out by the Arabs as the place where stones from heaven were hurled against a people who misused ‘some travelers seeking hospitality there.’” (*SOSL* 133)

Aggadah (Aramaic ܐܓܘܕܐ: tales, lore . . .) refers to the homiletic and non-legalistic exegetical texts in the classical rabbinic literature of Judaism — particularly as recorded in the **Talmud and Midrash**. In general, Aggadah is a compendium of rabbinic homilies that incorporates folklore, historical anecdotes, moral exhortations, and practical advice in various spheres, from business to medicine. . . . The Aggadah is part of Judaism’s Oral law . . . the traditions providing the authoritative interpretation of the Written Law. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aggadah)

“All the people of Sodom and Gomorrah went there four times in the year, with their wives and children . . . and they rejoiced there with timbrels and dances. ¹⁴ And . . . they would all rise and lay hold of their neighbor’s wives, and some, the virgin daughters of their neighbors, and they enjoyed them, and each man saw his wife and daughter in the hands of his neighbor and did not say a word. ¹⁵ And they did so from morning to night, and they afterward returned home.” (Book of Jasher 18:13–15)

In the Aggadah (Jewish traditions; *Encyclopedia Judaica*)

Sodom was the incarnation of wickedness, but wickedness of a special type. It was an evil-mindedness and hard-heartedness which consisted of the inhabitants basing their actions on the strict letter of the law. For instance, when a stranger passed through their territory, he was besieged and robbed of whatever he possessed. However, each Sodomite was careful to take only a trifle, so that when the victim remonstrated with the thieves each would claim that he had taken a mere pittance . . . which was not worth discussion. After a while, they decided . . . to discourage wayfarers whom they felt were only coming to deplete their wealth, which God had lavished upon them . . . (Job 28:6; Sanh. 109a). If a lost soul did occasionally wander into Sodom, they fulfilled the dictates of hospitality by giving lodging to the stranger. They had standard-sized beds on which travelers slept. If the stranger was too long for the bed, they shortened him by lopping off his feet — if too short, they stretched him out. . . . If a poor man happened to come there, every resident gave him charity, bricks of gold and silver, upon which he had written his name, but no bread was given to him. When he died of starvation, each came and took his gold and silver back.

There were four judges in Sodom who meted out justice in a unique fashion. Their names were Shakrai (“liar”), Shakurai (“awful liar”), Zayyafi (“forger”), and Mazle Dina (“perverter of justice”). If a man assaulted his neighbor, the judges required the victim to pay the assailant a medical fee for the “bleeding” he received. The judges also ruled that a man had to pay eight *zuzim* for crossing through the waters of a river although the fee was only four *zuzim* when he crossed by ferry. On another occasion they ruled in favor of a Sodomite who stole a carpet from a

traveler, and insisted that the stranger had only dreamed that he possessed it. In addition, the outsider was charged three pieces of silver for having his dream interpreted. If a man assaulted his neighbor’s wife and caused her to miscarry, the judges ruled that the woman had to be given to the assailant so she would become pregnant from him to compensate for the lost child (Sanh. 109a–b; *Sefer ha-Yashar*, Va-Yera). Charity was forbidden on penalty of death, since it was felt that its practice encouraged the proliferation of beggars. Paltit, the daughter of Lot, secretly sustained a wandering beggar. The Sodomites could not understand why the beggar did not perish and they suspected that he was being given food in secret. Three men concealed themselves near the beggar and Paltit was caught in the act of giving him sustenance. She was put to death by being burned upon a pyre. The doom of Sodom was sealed when a young maiden was caught giving bread, which she had hidden in her pitcher, to a poor man. Once her crime became known, they daubed her with honey and placed her on the parapet of the wall and the bees came and consumed her. The cries of the unfortunate girl finally made God resolve to destroy these sinners (Sanh. 109b; *Sefer ha-Yashar*; Va-Yera; Gen. R. 49:6). God destroyed the city at dawn of the 16th day of Nisan [Passover] when both the moon and sun were in the heavens, since there were both moon and sun worshipers in Sodom (Gen. R. 50:12).

Eliezer & bloodletting, Abraham’s servant, went to visit Lot in Sodom and got in a dispute with a Sodomite over a beggar, and was hit in the forehead with a stone, making him bleed. The Sodomite demanded Eliezer pay him for the service of bloodletting, and a Sodomite judge sided with the Sodomite. Eliezer then struck the judge in the forehead with a stone and asked the judge to pay the Sodomite. [*Jasher* 19:11–22]

* * * * * **SINS OF SODOM** * * * * *

Murder; robbery, stealing, criminal lies; homo and heterosexual rape, adultery, fornication; bearing false witness, corrupting laws; not helping the poor and needy, abusing strangers, and disregarding rights of hospitality. These were not peaceful, law abiding people having consensual sex with others of the same or opposite gender.

[Gaddianton robbers] seduced the more part of the righteous until they had come down to believe in their works and partake of their spoils, and to join with them in their secret murders and combinations. ³⁹ And thus they did obtain the sole management of the government, insomuch that they did . . . smite and rend and turn their backs upon the poor and the meek, and the humble followers of God. . . . Gadianton robbers [filled] the judgment-seats . . . laying aside the commandments of God, . . . doing no justice unto the children of men; ⁵ Condemning the righteous because of their righteousness; letting the guilty and the wicked go unpunished because of their money; and moreover to be held in office at the head of government, to rule and do according to their wills, that they might get gain and glory of the world, and, moreover, that they might the more easily commit adultery, and steal, and kill, and do according to their own wills (Hel 6:38–39; 7:4–5)

10. Isaac’s Birth and Early Years (Gen 21)

² Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age. . . . ³ Abraham called the name of his son . . . Isaac. ⁴ And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. ⁵ And Abraham was [100], when his son Isaac was born. . . . ⁶ Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. . . .

HEB he laughs or rejoices

Gen 16:16 Ishmael born when Abraham was 86 → 14 when Isaac was born.

In the Aggadah (Jewish traditions; *Encyclopedia Judaica*) Isaac was born on the first day of Passover (RH 11a). At his birth, many other barren women were also blessed with children. The sun shone with unparalleled splendor, the like of which will only be seen again in the messianic age (Tanh. B, Gen. 107; PR 42:177a–177b). To silence the accusations of slanderers who questioned Abraham’s paternity, which they ascribed to Abimelech, Isaac was given the exact appearance of his father (BM 87a). As his name was given by God before his birth (Gen. 17:19), he was the only one of the patriarchs whose name was not later changed (TJ, Ber. 1:9, 4a). (EJ)

⁸ Abraham made a great feast the ... day that Isaac was weaned. ⁹ And Sarah saw the son of Hagar ... mocking. ¹⁰ Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son ... Isaac.

Ishmael has been called Abraham’s son 5 times. “According to the laws of Hammurabi [king of Babylon, 1792–1750 BC], the sons of a slave-wife share the inheritance equally with the sons of the free woman, provided the father ... legitimates them. Should he not recognize them as his sons, the slave and her children are given their freedom. ... Abraham had undoubtedly recognized Ishmael as his son... The laws of Lipit-Ishtar, about [150] years earlier than Hammurabi, stipulate that the offspring of a slave-wife relinquish their inheritance rights in return for their freedom.” (Sarna, 156)

¹¹ The thing was very grievous in Abraham’s sight because of his son. ¹² And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and ... thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. ¹³ And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he *is* thy seed.

¹⁴ And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle [NIV skin] of water, and gave *it* unto Hagar ... and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. ¹⁵ And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child [NIV put the boy] under one of the shrubs.

NIV When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes.

SOED *Bottle*: a vessel with a narrow neck for holding liquids; orig. of leather.

OED *cast*, v.

V. To put, or place, with haste, violence, force, or power, so that the effect resembles throwing.

31. a. To lay, place, put, with an action of force, decisiveness, or haste. (Now usually *throw*.)

OED *child*, n.

2b. In the Bible, as rendering Heb. *yeled* ‘child’, ‘bairn’, extended to youths approaching or entering upon manhood.

HEB *yeledh*; h3206 — something *born*, i.e., a *lad* or *offspring*. KJV boy, child, fruit, son, young man (one)

¹⁶ [NIV] Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, “I cannot watch the boy die.” And as she sat there nearby, she {LXX the child} began to sob.]

Adversity causes us to turn to God.

“The difficulties we face in life can be an act of love, as the challenges themselves invite us to cry heavenward and allow us to return again to the Father who longs for our return. ... In our own empty bottles lie the seeds of our salvation, for it is in our struggles that we turn to Him who is the source of everlasting water.” (James L. Ferrell, *The Hidden Christ* 54)

OED (over) *against*: **1. a.** Directly opposite; facing, in front of, in full view of. Now generally *over against*. †**2.** In the sight of, in presence of; with (L. *apud*). *Obs.*

¹⁷ God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar ... and said ... What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad. ... ¹⁸ Arise ... and hold him ... for I will make him a great nation. ¹⁹ And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. ²⁰ And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. ²¹ ... and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

Provided life giving water

11. Abraham commanded to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22) God did tempt [*JST try*; HEB test, or prove] Abraham, and said unto him ... ² Take ... thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest ... into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

Abraham’s willingness to offer up Isaac is “a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son” (Jacob 4:5).

Isaac was 37 (Jasher) or 25 (Josephus Ant i:13:2). Some say he was definitely not a teenager because it would not have been a sacrifice.

“It was that mountain upon which king David [Solomon] afterwards built the temple.” (Josephus Ant i:13:2)

Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where *the LORD* appeared unto David his father (2 Chr 3:1)

³ And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two ... young men ... and Isaac his son, and clave [or cut] the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. ⁴ Then on the third day Abraham ... saw the place afar off. ⁵ And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. ⁶ And Abraham took the wood ... and laid *it* upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire ... and a knife; and they went ... together.

⁷ And Isaac ... said, ... where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering? ⁸ And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb. ... ⁹ And they came to the place ... and Abraham built an altar ... and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. ¹⁰ And Abraham ... took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ And the angel of the LORD [see Abr 1:15–16] ... said, Abraham. ... ¹² Lay not thine hand upon the lad ... for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld ... thine only son from me.

¹⁵ As they lifted up their hands ... [to] take away my life, ... I lifted up my voice unto the Lord ... and the Lord ... heard ... and the angel of his presence stood by me, and immediately unloosed my bands; ¹⁶ And ... [said] ... my name is Jehovah, and I have heard thee, and have come down to deliver thee, and to take thee away ... into a strange land ... (Abr 1:15–16)

NOT BLIND OBEDIENCE: trust based on experience. He and Sarah saved by angel, miraculous birth, resurrect Isaac.

¹³ And Abraham ... [saw] a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh [HEB The LORD will see, or provide]: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

By his horns → unblemished

“The Hebrew term for sacrifice, *korban*, is from a root meaning ‘to draw near,’ and originally denoted that which was brought near, or offered, to God. It is also possible that the term signified ‘that which brings man near to God’ and, indeed, a late aggadic source interprets sacrifices in this sense.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*, quoted by Daniel Rona, www.israelrevealed.com/comp-sup-r.htm)

¹⁵ And the angel of the LORD ... ¹⁶ said... because thou ... hast not withheld ... thine only son: ¹⁷ ... I will bless thee, and ... I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven ... ¹⁸ In thy seed shall all the nations ... be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishmael>

The Qur’an states that Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his son. The son is not named in the Qur’an (see 37:99–113) and in early Islam, there was a controversy over the son’s identity. However the belief that the son was Ishmael prevailed, and this view is continued to be endorsed by Muslim scholars. The argument of those Muslims who believed in the Ishmael theory was that “the promise to Sarah of Isaac followed by Jacob (Qur’an 11:71–74) excluded the possibility of a sacrifice of Isaac.” The other party held that the son of sacrifice was Isaac since “God’s perfecting his mercy on Abraham and Isaac (in Qur’an 12:6) referred to his making Abraham his friend and saving him from the burning bush and to his rescuing Isaac.”

<http://www.muslim.org/islam/sacrifice.htm>

Of Abraham’s act of sacrifice ... the Holy Quran says: “(Abraham prayed:) My Lord, grant me a doer of good deeds. So We gave him the good news of a forbearing son. But when he became of age to work with him, he said: O my son, I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you; so consider what is your view. He said: O my father, do as you are commanded; if Allah please you will find me patient. So when they had both submitted and he had thrown him down upon his forehead, and We called out to him saying, O Abraham, you have indeed fulfilled the vision. Thus do We reward the doers of good. Surely this is a manifest trial. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.” (37:100–107)

12. Symbolism: Types, Shadows, and Similitudes

“To use something as a likeness or image of another thing. Symbolism in the scriptures uses a familiar object, event, or circumstance to represent a principle or teaching of the gospel. For example, the Book of Mormon prophet Alma used a seed to represent the word of God (Alma 32).

Prophets throughout the scriptures used symbolism to teach about Jesus Christ. Some of these symbols include ceremonies and ordinances (Moses 6:63), sacrifices (Heb. 9:11–15; Moses 5:7–8), the sacrament (Luke 22:13–20; JST, Mark 14:20–24), and baptism (Rom. 6:1–6; D&C 128:12–13). Many biblical names are symbolic. The Old Testament tabernacle ceremony and the law of Moses represented eternal truths (Heb. 8–10; Mosiah 13:29–32; Alma 25:15; Hel. 8:14–15). For other examples, see Matthew 5:13–16; John 3:14–15; Jacob 4:5; Alma 37:38–45. (Guide to the Scriptures, “Symbolism)

Christ’s apostles did not understand many of the Old Testament prophecies about Christ’s death and resurrection until after he was resurrected and explained the prophecies (Luke 24:27, 45, 13–51). “If everything given of God from the beginning bears record of Christ, then it follows that our understanding of any particular matter is incomplete until we see how it bears record of Christ. So of every scriptural element and story, we should ask, ‘How does this typify or bear record of the Savior?’” (*Hidden 3*)

Bruce R. McConkie: “It is wholesome and proper to look for similitudes of Christ everywhere and to use them repeatedly in keeping him and his laws uppermost in our minds.”

Symbols and types point our souls to Christ. The following are adapted from *The Hidden Christ* (pp. 50–56, 148–49, 248).

Melchizedek: “king of righteousness”

1. A great high priest (D&C 107:2)
2. None were greater (Alma 13:19)
3. Offered the Lord’s Supper (Gen 14:18–20; JST Gen 14:17–20)
4. Established righteousness among followers (JST Gen 14:33–4)
5. Known as the “prince of peace” (JST Gen 14:33)
6. Known as the “king of heaven” (JST Gen 14:36)
7. Known as the “king of peace” (JST Gen 14:36)
8. The holy priesthood was named after him (D&C 107:2–4)

Isaac: “he laughs or rejoices”

1. Long wait for his birth (17:17)
2. His name and birth foretold by an angel (17:16, 19)
3. His mother conceived miraculously and had a son (21:2, 6–7)
4. He was born and died on Passover (Jewish tradition).
In 1 BC April 6th was Passover (see D&C 21:1).
5. He was called the “only begotten son” (Heb 11:17)
6. Traveled to Jerusalem on a donkey (22:3)
7. Those with him were asked to wait while he went yonder to worship/pray (22:5)
8. Was to be sacrificed on a hill in the area of Moriah (22:2)
9. Carried the wood to be instrumental in his death (22:6)
10. Was one with his father (22:6, 8)
11. Was in the similitude of his father (Abr 1:5–16; Gen 26:1–4, 24)
12. Voluntarily submitted to the will of his father (22:8–9)
13. Those who accept the gospel become his seed—his sons and daughters (Abr 2:10; Gen 26:1–4, 24)

Ishmael: “God hears”

1. Ishmael walked and talked with his father
2. His father taught him the commandments. (17:23)
3. Ishmael transgressed. (21:9)
4. He was cast out of his father’s presence as a result. (21:10,12)
5. He was not the heir of his father. (17:20–21; 21:10)
6. Heir would be his only begotten son (17:19; 22:2; Heb 11:17)
7. Lived in a lone and dreary world. (21:14)
8. Subject to death. (21:15–16)
9. Recognized his dependence on God. (21:16)
10. God heard his cry in time of need. (21:17)
11. Lived life of hardship. (16:12)
12. God sent messengers (angels) to teach him. (21:17)
13. God rescued him from death. (21:19)

Abraham: “father of a great multitude”; *Abram:* “exalted father”

1. Known as father of the faithful (D&C 138:41)
2. All nations of the earth blessed through him (Abr 2:9)
3. Mediator between God and man (Gen 18:20–33)
4. Believers are known as his children or seed (Gal 3:29)
5. Saw visions and talked “face to face” with God (Abr 3:11)
6. Promptly obeyed God’s commandments (Gen 17:25; 21:14)
7. Offered by his father as a sacrifice (Abr Fac. 1)
8. Comforted by an angel in his greatest hour of need (Abr 1:15)
9. Shares the blessings of his covenant with all who accept the gospel (Gen 11:31; 17:18; Abr 2:15)

Abraham’s Two Sacrifices (type of God’s love)

1. Abraham loved Ishmael and Isaac.
2. Abraham commanded to cast out one and kill the other.
3. “the thing was very grievous in Abraham’s sight.” (21:11)
4. “Abraham rose up early in the morning” to prepare.
5. Abraham sent Ishmael away with little and laid Isaac on altar.
6. Ishmael and Isaac were about to die.
7. Ishmael and Isaac were saved by angel.
8. God provided water and a ram that each might live.
9. Isaac returned to his father’s presence but Ishmael did not.
10. Ishmaelites would stir up Israelites to a remembrance of God.
11. Both attended Abraham’s funeral.

All the holy prophets ... believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name. And for this intent we keep the law of Moses, it pointing our souls to him; and for this cause it is sanctified unto us for righteousness, even as it was accounted unto Abraham in the wilderness to be obedient unto the commands of God in offering up his son Isaac, which is a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son. (Jac 4:4–5)

Abraham died and “his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah ... [with] Sarah his wife.” (Gen 25:6)

Esau married a daughter of Ishmael and some daughters of Canaan (Gen 28:9; 36:2)

Conclusion **Read President Uchtdorf quote.**

The scriptures have many types or symbols that point our souls to Christ. Abraham sought the priesthood blessings of the fathers and proved his love of God by keeping his commandments. May we follow his example by seeking to make, understand, and keep our covenants that we may help establish righteousness or Zion, and obtain the promised “blessings of the fathers.”

Quotes

Dieter F. Uchtdorf: God the Eternal Father did not give [the] first great commandment because He needs us to love Him. His power and glory are not diminished should we disregard, deny, or even defile His name. His ... dominion ... [is] independent of our acceptance, approval, or admiration. No, God does not need us to love Him. But oh, how we need to love God! For what we love determines what we seek. What we seek determines what we think and do. What we think and do determines who we are—and who we will become. (*Ensign*, Nov. 2009, 21–22)

Dallin H. Oaks: This story ... shows the goodness of God in protecting Isaac and in providing a substitute so he would not have to die. Because of our sins and our mortality, we, like Isaac, are condemned to death. When all other hope is gone, our Father in Heaven provides the Lamb of God, and we are saved by his sacrifice (*Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 37).

Truman G. Madsen: Modern revelation indicates at least three times that each of us who seeks eternal life must one day be tried, even as Abraham. I put the question once to President Hugh B. Brown, when we were in Israel: Why was Abraham commanded to go up on that mountain (traditionally Mount Moriah in Jerusalem) and offer as a sacrifice his only hope for the promised posterity? President Brown wisely replied, ‘Abraham needed to learn something about Abraham.’ By being tested, all of us will one day know how much our hearts are really set on the kingdom of God. (*Joseph Smith the Prophet*, 92)

James L. Ferrell: The difficulties we face in life can be an act of love, as the challenges themselves invite us to cry heavenward and allow us to return again to the Father who longs for our return. ... In our own empty bottles lie the seeds of our salvation, for it is in our struggles that we turn to Him who is the source of everlasting water. (*The Hidden Christ* 54)

Abraham's Trial and Seven Blessings

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Hebrews 11:17

In one of his talks, C. H. Spurgeon notes **seven blessings** that came to Abraham through this trial of his faith.

First, the trial was withdrawn and Isaac was unharmed. **Second**, Abraham received the highest approval of God or not withholding anything from Him. **Third**, Abraham saw God in a new light, as one who would be willing to sacrifice his own Son, Jesus, for the sins of us all. **Fourth**, More of God’s nature was revealed. He became known as *Jehovah Jireh*, the God who provides. **Fifth**, God confirmed His covenant with Abraham because Abraham proved himself faithful at all costs. **Sixth**, God reemphasized his promise to Abraham about his offspring. “*I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.*” (Gen. 22:17) And **finally**, God gave Abraham a distinct and personal blessing that has never been repeated.

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. Gen. 22:18”

(donna-connections.blogspot.com, 11 Mar. 2010)

Sources:

- HC = History of the Church
- OT-I = Old Testament Institute manual
- PGP-I = Pearl of Great Price Institute manual
- JMB = Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *In God’s Image and Likeness: Ancient and Modern Perspectives on the Book of Moses.*
- KD = Keil-Delitzsch *Commentary on the Old Testament*
- SOSL = Trumbull, *Studies in Oriental Social Life.*
- Sarna = Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*
- *Hidden* = James L. Ferrell, *The Hidden Christ*
- EJ = *Encyclopedia Judaica*
- Wight = Fred H. Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands,*
- EOM = *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*