

Gratitude & Giving Thanks: A Hebraic perspective

As we near Thanksgiving, I wanted to share with you a Hebraic perspective on the terms, “gratitude” and “giving thanks.” In Hebrew, the expressions are “*hoda’ah*” and “*hakarat hatov*.”

***Hoda’ah* (הודאה): Thanksgiving & Praise**

When the Bible beseeches us to “give thanks to our LORD, for He is good,” the Hebrew term used is most commonly “*hoda’ah*.” It varies in form due to grammar (commonly, “*hodu*”), but it comes from the same root “*yadah*”.

Here is an example of one of many instances where this term is used in the Bible:

[“Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good!
For His mercy endures forever.” Psalm 136:1, NKJV, emphasis added](#)



Here, *hoda'ah* is in command form and is pronounced "hodu."

Hodu, L'ADONAI Ki Tov. Give thanks to the LORD for He is good.

Here, it is to be understood that we must give thanks! It is a *command!* Give thanks!

Hodu is intertwined with the idea of "praise."

The *Tree of Live Version*, which is very true to the original Hebraic intent of the Scriptures, chose *not* to translate "hodu" as "give thanks," and instead translated it as "praise." This illumines the broad meaning of the word and teaches us this truth: our giving of thanks should always include the element of praise!

["Praise ADONAI, for He is good, for His lovingkindness endures forever." Psalm 136, TLV, emphasis added](#)

A Hebraic understanding of this verse is very holistic: we give the LORD our God thanks and praise as we confess our love for Him and acknowledge Him. **Our thanks cannot possibly exist apart from our praise.**

What's more, the root term "yadah" literally refers to having "outstretched arms," a demonstrative act of worship, of "throwing one's hands" out in thankfulness and in thanksgiving. Biblically, praise includes the outstretching of our arms and the lifting of our hands as a true expression of thanks. "Hodu" is the imperative form: telling us, we *must* give thanks! We *must* praise!

Want to learn a bit of Hebrew to impress your friends and families at the Thanksgiving table? ☐

Listen to these two songs based on [Psalm 136:1](#) and you will quickly learn how to say, "Give thanks to the LORD for He is good."

It is easy to pronounce. *Hodu l'Adonai ki tov.* הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי טוֹב
הוֹדוּ-לַיהוָה



The song by Barry & Batya Segal is so filled with shalom! I first heard this song on the [ADONAI](#) cd when I was very young, and those songs ministered to me in such a way that truly helped lead me to my Messiah Yeshua (Savior Lord Jesus

Christ). I hope it blesses you today, too, as you prepare your heart and home for Thanksgiving!

Hodu L'Adonai Ki Tov (Give Thanks to the LORD for He is good) [[Psalm 136:1](#)] חֲדָשׁ-חֲדָשׁ חֲדָשׁוֹתָיִם חֲדָשׁוֹתָיִם

Here is another beautiful song that includes the phrase, “Hodu L'Adonai Ki Tov.” It is called “Give Thanks (Hodu)” by Joshua Aaron:

“Hodu” Live at the Tower of David: Joshua Aaron

***HaKarat HaTov* (חֲדָשׁוֹתָיִם חֲדָשׁוֹתָיִם): “Recognizing the Good”**

“*HaKarat HaTov*” is a Hebrew expression that is often translated as “**gratitude**,” but more literally means “**recognizing the good**.”

Though somewhat cliché, having an “attitude of gratitude” is an integral part of the life of faith.

Are you able to list what you are grateful for?

Do you dwell on the negatives in life or do you focus on the things you are thankful for?

“Recognizing the good” is a spiritual practice, if you really think about it.

Rather than focusing on what we don't have, or what isn't going right, we are commissioned to be disciples of Messiah Yeshua (our Lord Jesus Christ): followers of the One who is our All in All. We don't need the world's goods or gains. We just need Him.

“Recognizing the good” means just that: recognize the good that is already yours.

If you are a child of God, recognize the goodness of this

truth!

If you know today that you are saved, recognize the goodness of salvation!

Of course, sometimes things don't go quite as we would like.

When your car has a flat tire, be grateful you have a car to begin with. Recognize the good. Recognize that you are blessed.

When your family is loud and boisterous when you are just wanting to take a nap, be grateful you have a family. *HaKarat haTov*: recognize the good. Recognize that you are indeed blessed!

Choosing to live your life in a way in which you are recognizing the good will change your perspective on everything. The spirit of bitterness will have to flee. The spirit of comparison will lose its power. The spirits of envy and all types of negativity will no longer have a place in your life.

So this Thanksgiving, choose true, godly gratitude. Recognize the good and be thankful for it.

HaTov The Good One, Infinite Compassion. This video is subtitled in Spanish, but there is an English translation available at this YouTube link:

[*HaTov The Good One, Infinite in Compassion*](#) *subtitled in English. I tried to paste the video here, but it wouldn't allow it (only the Spanish one if you happen to understand Spanish), so please follow this hyperlink and you will find it in English.*

Hodu: Turkey?!

Fun fact: In Hebrew, Hodu is used for both "giving thanks" as well as the word for "turkey!" The accent is changed, so *Hodú*

is “give thanks”, but *Hódu* is “turkey!” Even more attention-grabbing: *Hodu* is also the term used to describe the nation of India!

Israelis refer to a “turkey” as an “*Indian* chicken!” And we know Christopher Columbus thought he had landed in India! The Pilgrims knew better . . . but you decide: Is this all just a coincidence, that the Hebrew word for “thanksgiving” just so happens to be the word for “turkey,” too!?



There are also some interesting parallels between the traditional Thanksgiving feast and the traditions around [Sukkot](#), namely sharing an abundance of food and the command to be thankful and joyous.

Finally, the Jewish people are known as “*Yehudi*” in Hebrew (also translated in English as *Judah*): *Yehudi* is related also to “*hodu/hodaya*” (thanksgiving), so the very name of the people of God and tribe of Judah is rooted in Gratitude! The Grateful People, the People of Gratitude!

So be filled with thankfulness and gratitude today! The Scriptures are filled with so many linguistic treasures, but we must be diligent in our study and prayerful – that Ruach

haKodesh (the Holy Spirit) would reveal more of these wonderful revelations to us to help strengthen our faith and refresh our spirit!

Chag Ha'hodaya! Happy Thanksgiving!

Falling in love: Rivkah's tumble off a camel, head-over-heels for Yitzhak [Rebekah & Isaac]

Parashat Chayei Sarah ([B'reishit/Genesis 23-25:18](#)) 5783 B"H

Love at first sight: a personal story

A Language Barrier

When I first met my husband, we didn't even speak the same language!

We met at church, but I was part of the English-speaking ministry, and he, the Spanish-speaking. I would attend the Spanish language services from time to time to support the work they were doing, but I honestly did not understand much of anything.

I *could* decipher a few words here and there because I had studied French. (I had traveled to France and become quite fluent. I even minored in French in college.)

Yes, I did all of that work to marry a man who speaks *Spanish*.

I guess I missed the mark on hearing from God when we were selecting a foreign language to learn in the seventh grade. ☐



A man of God

Some of the sisters and brothers at the church had told me there was a young man in the Spanish congregation who was praying for me. They told me this guy would be my “prince.”

I told them they were crazy. It was sounding like an arranged marriage! I insisted that I didn’t speak Spanish, and that they should tell the poor fellow to find someone else!

Well, little did I know, this very good-looking young man really *was* praying for me.

He spent **6 months** praying and fasting to seek God about whether or not I was to be his *wife*.

Wife?!

For those 6 months, I didn’t even know who he was! Apparently,

he had seen me in a worship service and decided I was the one for him. (*aww!*)

He and several of the brothers in the church had agreed in prayer that if I was indeed to be his wife, the confirmation would be that I would begin to speak Spanish. *I didn't know about any of these plans about me until many months later.*

So one day, these “godly conspirators” introduced me to my now-husband.

Though I could not speak his language, I *could* see the anointing of the LORD in his eyes, and I knew I was going to marry that handsome man.

Through interpreters, he asked me to go out to eat with him at a local Mexican restaurant.

An interpreter from the church accompanied us on all our first dates!

So we were very well-chaperoned!

I prayed and asked the Holy Spirit (*Ruach haKodesh*) to teach me the Spanish language. I had learned French without much difficulty, and I spoke the heavenly language given to me by the Spirit, so I knew I was not asking too much.

Within two weeks, I was forming sentences in Spanish, and by 3 months, I was completely fluent in the language.

Love is a great motivator! ☐

We were married that year and this year we celebrated 15 years of marriage!

Rivkah & Yitzhak's Love

Are you married?

When you met your future spouse, was it love at first sight?

Did you have the deer-in-the-headlights look going on?

Did you develop two left feet and trip every time your honey glanced in your direction?

Rivkah (Rebekah) sure did.

When Rivkah (Rebekah) saw Yitzhak (Isaac) for the first time, it was love at first sight.

She fell so head-over-heels in love with him that she fell right off her camel!

In fact, if you are looking for a **sweet romantic comedy**, you really need look no further than this love story in [Genesis 24](#).

The Bible often gets a bad rap! Antagonistic people falsely characterize believers as uptight and rigid, lacking in humor. Having not read the Bible for themselves, these types of people ignorantly assume that the Bible is boring and irrelevant. But the Bible isn't boring at all!

Abraham sent his servant to find a young maiden for his [precious son, Yitzhak \(Isaac\)](#) to love and marry. This servant managed Abraham's wealth and was the oldest of the household, so he would have known Abraham's preferences very well. Abraham obligated his servant to promise, by oath, that he would not find him a Canaanite woman ([Genesis 24:3](#)).

The servant wisely sought the LORD about the matter ([Genesis 24:12-14](#)) and requested a sign as confirmation that the young woman was the one for Yitzhak (Isaac): the young woman would draw water and grant a drink to the servant as well as to his camels.

A Sign as Confirmation

Before the servant had even finished his prayer of supplication, Rivkah (Rebekah) appeared with her water jar and proceeded to fulfill that which was proposed as a confirmation.

Long story short, the servant speaks with Rivkah's (Rebekah's) family about marrying Yitzhak (Isaac).

It is worth noting (especially because the culture was very patriarchal) that Rivkah's family told the servant that they wanted to ask Rivkah's opinion ([Genesis 24:57-58](#)). She was not forced into an arranged marriage. She freely elected to go despite her young age. Her family blessed her with their love and also Abraham's servants before they departed ([Genesis 24:60](#)).

The Power of Prayer

Prayer is key in this passage. Abraham had demonstrated great faith, his servant was a praying man, Rivkah's family prayed and blessed them, and then we find Yitzhak (Isaac) praying in meditation when the caravan arrived ([Genesis 24:63](#)).

The Bible says that Yitzhak lifted his eyes and saw the camels coming.

And at the same time, Rivkah lifted up her eyes . . . saw Yitzhak . . . and yes, fell off her camel ([Genesis 24:64](#)).

"Rebekah also lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac.

Then she fell off her camel."

Genesis 24:64



How embarrassing, no?

She scrambled to fix her veil and make herself presentable as Abraham's servant informed Yitzhak that this young woman was to be his wife ([Genesis 24:65c-66](#))! The Word says that Yitzhak (Isaac) loved Rivkah (Rebekah) and she became his wife ([Genesis 24:67](#)).

The [Promise to Abraham](#) would be fulfilled, beginning with the love story of Yitzhak and Rivkah

The LORD had promised Abraham that he would make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand by the seashore. ([Genesis 22:17](#)) That promise began its fulfillment with the marriage of Yitzhak and Rivkah.

Abraham lived to be 175 years old and he "[died at a good old age, old and satisfied](#)" ([Genesis 25:8](#)).

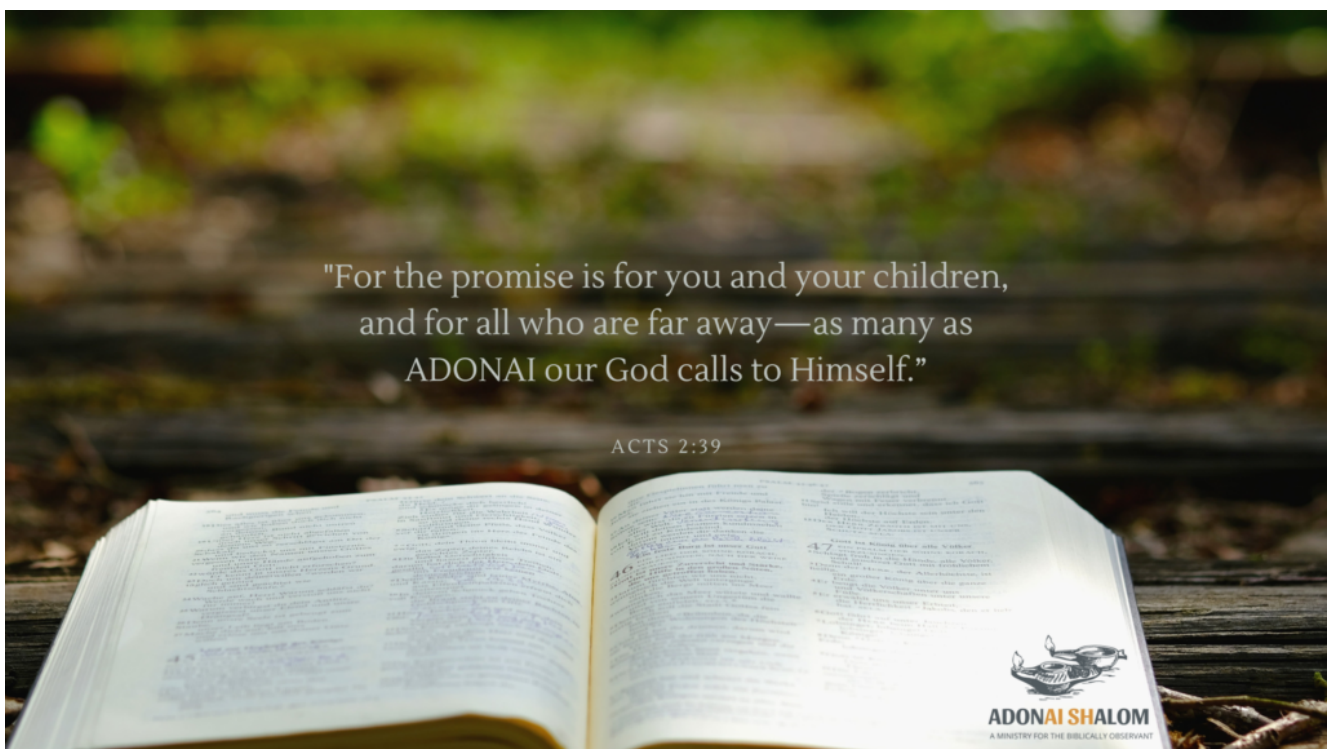
What has the LORD promised to you?

The Bible contains promises that apply to your life, too!

When you seek the LORD and love Him with all your heart, He will speak to you and reveal those promises to you.

Repent, believe in Messiah Yeshua (Jesus Christ our LORD), be baptized, and be filled with the Ruach haKodesh (the Holy Spirit)! As a child of God, by the mercy of our Savior, you are humbly entitled to the richness of His promises:

["For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far away—as many as ADONAI our God calls to Himself." Acts 2:39](#)



Would you like to share what God has spoken into your life? What promise of God particularly blesses and encourages you? Please leave a comment below!

Binding Love: Abraham & Isaac

Parashat Vayeira ([B'reishit/Genesis 18-22](#)) 5783 B"H

Isaac: A Beloved son

If you are a parent, you know firsthand the eager anticipation and joy that comes with pregnancy and the birth of a child.

[Abraham and Sarah](#) had waited *decades* hoping for a child and finally reached the conclusion that they were too advanced in years to keep on hoping.

Sarah laughed when she heard the news she would have a son ([Genesis 18:12](#)).

She was 90 years old, can you really blame her?

According to [Genesis 17:17](#), centenarian Abraham also laughed.

And the child's name would be Yitzhak יִצְחָק (Isaac) meaning, *"he who laughs."*

After waiting that many years, this son was truly *beloved*.

Any child is so dearly loved, but can you imagine the depth of love these new elderly parents would have felt toward their precious child Isaac?

Abraham and Sarah had waited, *given up*, and then, by the grace of the Almighty One, received such an unexpected bundle of joy!

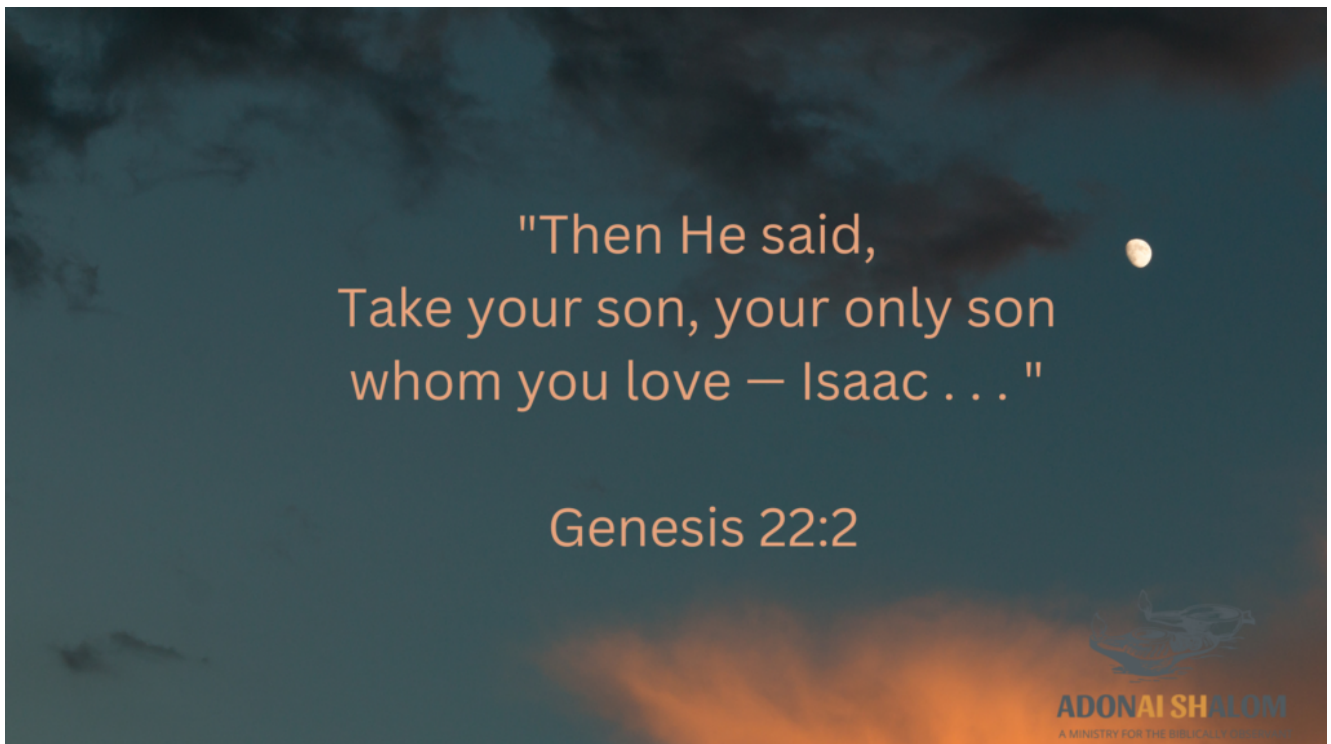
Messiah Yeshua (Jesus): our Heavenly Father's Beloved Son

Our Father in heaven sent His only begotten, beloved Son to earth.

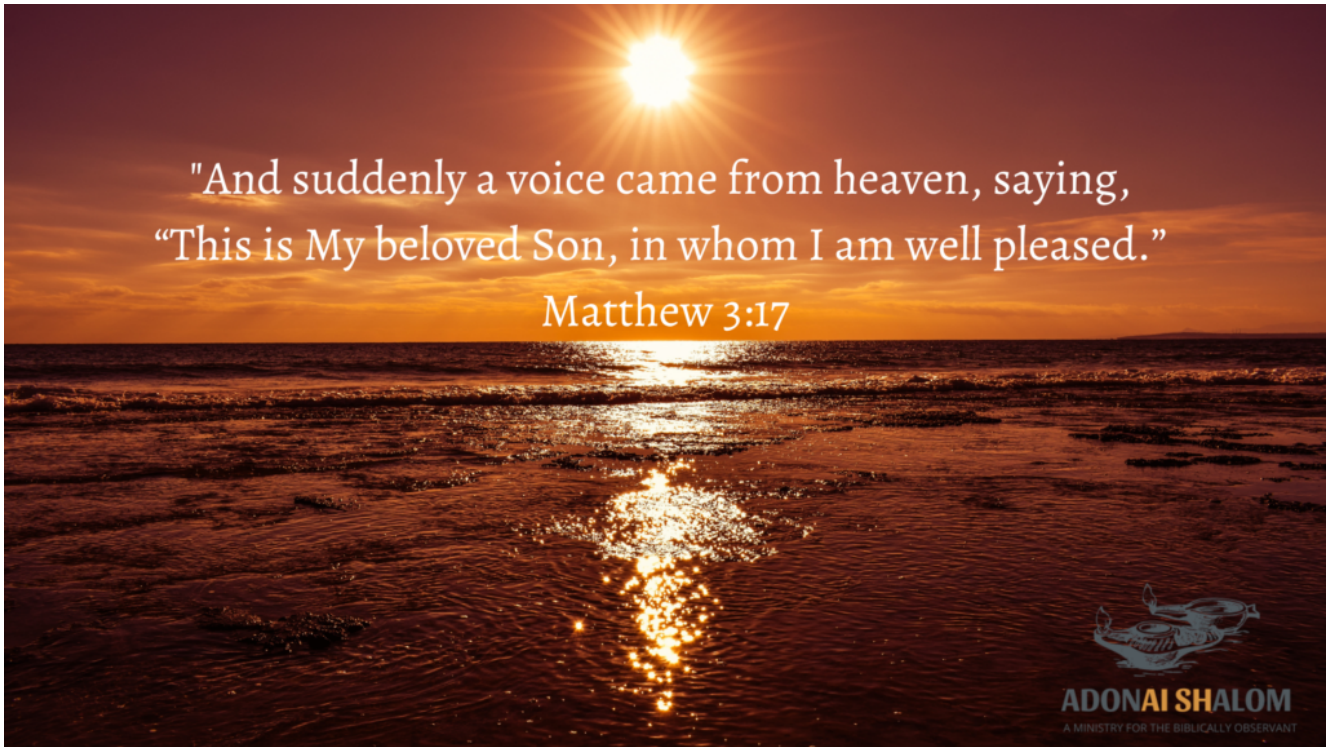
Yosef and Miryam (Joseph & Mary) were certainly surprised by the news that Mary would be the instrument through which Messiah would be born into this world.

There are many parallels between Abraham's son Isaac and our Messiah Yeshua (Jesus), God's Son:

"Then He said, Take your son, your only son whom you love—Isaac" Genesis 22:2, emphasis added



"And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17, emphasis added



Aqedah אָקֵדָה “binding”

The binding up of Isaac to be sacrificed is known in Hebrew as the *aqedah* (*akedah/akeidah*), which literally means “*binding*.”

Abraham was commanded to offer up his son Isaac as a burnt offering.

Isaac’s father would bind him up and place the boy upon the altar, but before it got to that point, Isaac asked a pivotal question:

“. . . [Where is the lamb . . . ?](#)” [Genesis 22:7](#)

"... Where is the lamb ... ?"

Genesis 22:7



The binding up of a beloved son would demonstrate the greatest of all love: one day the Lamb of God Himself would be bound and beaten, sacrificed in our place.

Do you know the Lamb of God today?

Where is the Lamb in your life?

Have you allowed the LORD to rescue you from bondage?

Isaac survived because of the intervention of a divine Messenger ([Genesis 22:11](#)).

Abraham's son would be unbound: Isaac was set free, saved from a horrific death.

The first time the word "love" is found in Scripture

The word "love" is not used in Scripture until [Genesis 22:2](#). The first time "love" is mentioned in the Bible occurs in this verse about Isaac, Abraham's beloved son. It might surprise you that a word so central to our faith and to the unfolding

of salvation history wouldn't appear right from the outset, such as with Adam and Eve.

God's Word is truly remarkable. The depth of love that Abraham had for Isaac could be compared to the profound love the Father has for His Son.

["By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. Yes, he who had received the promises was offering up his one and only son— the one about whom it was said, "Through Isaac offspring shall be named for you." He reasoned that God was able to raise him up even from the dead—and in a sense, he did receive him back from there."](#) Hebrews 11:17-19, *emphases added*

Certainly the binding of Isaac prefigures the crucifixion: Abraham had the confidence that the LORD His Provider – *YHVH Yireh* – would not fail him. The [Hebrews text](#) above tells us that Abraham even reasoned that *resurrection* was possible. ADONAI had promised Abraham that he would be the ["father of many nations"](#) ([Genesis 17:4](#)), so by having faith in resurrection, Abraham could reconcile killing Isaac if he truly had to follow through with God's demand. Abraham's hope was that Isaac would be resurrected and continue the lineage, fathering many nations.

Abraham is a model of faith for every generation. He passed the test by maintaining unwavering trust in the LORD. Isaac's father knew God and loved God, and knew first-hand nothing is impossible with God ([Matthew 19:26](#); [Luke 1:37](#)). He had also come to learn that the God of Israel was merciful: Abraham had no reason to doubt God's provision. Yet even so, it is one thing to have the willingness to forfeit one's own life; indeed Abraham was even willing to sacrifice his own self – for what parent could kill their child without losing a part of their own self? The emotional pain would have consumed him, but there was nothing Abraham wasn't willing to do for His LORD. But sacrificing of self is not quite the same as sacrificing one's life entirely. And it is another thing

altogether to have the faith to end one's own child's life if so required. Jewish midrash discusses many instances when God's people have been in situations which required self-sacrifice, or situations in which parents have had to make the difficult decision to encourage their children to give up their lives rather than renounce their faith in the God of Israel.

Is *your* love for God that intense?

Are you truly willing to sacrifice *anything* for Him?

Do you live with this type of faith?

Do you have an unwavering confidence that no matter what, the LORD will see you through?

["Then He said, "Do not reach out your hand against the young man—do nothing to him at all. For now I know that you are one who fears God—you did not withhold your son, your only son, from Me.'" Genesis 22:12](#)

Our children are on loan to us from the Holy One. We must entrust their well-being to the LORD, as He allows us to love and care for them.

Bound together in Love

Abraham loved his son. Surely, the events of the *aqedah* bound him and Isaac together with an even deeper love. The account of Abraham and Isaac (*Yitzhak*) should remind us today of the centrality of love. May we learn to reflect the virtue of Messiah's love to those who are still looking for the Lamb – to those who are bewildered and look all around them, but do not realize the nearness of their salvation.

["And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Colossians 3:14](#)

No matter what, always trust in our Loving Father who is full of compassion. He will provide for your every need, bind up the broken-hearted, and save you when you call upon His Name.

[“Then Abraham lifted up his eyes and behold, there was a ram, just caught in the thick bushes by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. Abraham named that place, ADONAI Yireh,—as it is said today, “On the mountain, ADONAI will provide.” Genesis 22:13-14](#)

The Binding of God’s Word

Have you bound God’s Word to your heart?

The first portion of the *Sh’ma* urges us to “bind” the Word of God to our hearts and hands; to walk in His ways at all times and to teach our children to do the same:

[“Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love ADONAI your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These words, which I am commanding you today, are to be on your heart. You are to teach them diligently to your children, and speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up. **Bind them** as a sign on your hand, they are to be as frontlets between your eyes, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:4-9, emphasis added](#)

I encourage you today to seek the LORD and His Word. He is the God of Abraham and Isaac! Worship Him and praise Him for His all-encompassing love! Here are two worship songs that you may enjoy today. The first one is one of my all-time favorites: LORD God of Abraham by Paul Wilbur:

Shalom!

Please leave a comment below and let us know your thoughts! We love hearing from you, friends!