

Genesis 18-23 — “Is Any Thing Too Hard for the Lord?”

Come, Follow Me 2026 — February 23–March 1

Parallel Accounts: JST Genesis 18–19 | Hebrews 11:8–19 | Hebrews 13:2 | James 2:21–23 | Jacob 4:5 | D&C 132:34–37 | Alma 13:14–19

Overview

Genesis 18–23 is one of the most emotionally layered and theologically rich sections in all of scripture. Spanning six chapters, it moves from the tender domesticity of Abraham’s tent on the plains of Mamre to the fiery destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, from the laughter of a miraculous birth to the agonizing silence of a father climbing Mount Moriah, and finally to the quiet grief of a husband burying his beloved wife.

The Come Follow Me manual for this week takes its title from Genesis 18:14 — a question the Lord asks when Sarah laughs at the promise of a son in her old age. Jared Halverson (Unshaken) traces the Hebrew behind “too hard” (*yippalé*) to a word that also means “surpassing” or “extraordinary” — the same root used later to describe the wonders of the Exodus and the magnificence of Solomon’s Temple. God is not simply answering whether something is difficult for Him; He is asking whether anything is too *wondrous*, too *shocking*, too far beyond the realm of the expected. The answer echoes across every chapter in this block: nothing is too wondrous for the Lord.

Emily Belle Freeman and David Butler (Don’t Miss This) frame the entire week around a single word: *provide*. God provides a son to a barren couple, an escape for Lot, a well for Hagar, a ram for Abraham. The naming of Mount Moriah as *Jehovah-jireh* — “the Lord will provide” — becomes the theological thesis statement for all six chapters.

Dr. Daniel C. Peterson (Follow Him) frames these chapters around the ancient Near Eastern virtue of hospitality. Abraham’s eager welcome of three divine visitors at Mamre stands in stark contrast to the violent inhospitality of Sodom. This contrast between welcoming the stranger and assaulting the stranger becomes the moral backbone of the entire narrative. Peterson also brings his expertise in Arabic and Islamic studies to illuminate Bedouin culture, Hebrew wordplay, and the deep connections between Abraham’s story and the traditions of his descendants in both Judaism and Islam.

Bradshaw, Bowen, and Thompson (*In God’s Image and Likeness 3*, 2025) and its companion *In the Beginning Vol 3 — Look unto Abraham and Sarah* now supply this guide’s scholarly spine: Abraham’s hospitality as covenant *hesed*, Maimonides’ full list of the **ten trials**, the theology of the **Abrahamic test** (Joseph Smith: God will “wrench your very heart strings”), Kierkegaard’s leap of faith, the ram/lamb typology in early

Christian and Jewish sources, and the Aqedah as the moment Abraham's **calling and election was made sure** — God swearing by Himself (Hebrews 6:13).

Key Concepts

1. Hakhnasat Orchim (הכנסת אורחים) — Sacred Hospitality

Hospitality in the ancient Near East was not a social nicety — it was a sacred obligation. The Hebrew concept *hakhnasat orchim* ("welcoming guests") was considered one of the highest virtues. Abraham embodies this when he runs to greet three strangers, bows to the ground, offers water for their feet, shade under the tree, and a lavish meal of freshly baked bread, butter, milk, and a dressed calf (Genesis 18:1–8). Dr. Peterson explains that in Bedouin culture, the Arabic greeting *ahlan wa sahlán* literally means "you have come to family and a good place to camp." When a guest entered your tent, you owed them protection with your life.

Bryce Dunford (Temple Symbols, Ep. 34 — The Law of Consecration) reframes Abraham's hospitality as *consecrated awareness* — the covenant ability to notice and respond to the needs of others. Dunford teaches: "When we are interrupted by someone in need, we don't view it as an interruption; we view it as the work we covenanted to do." Abraham wasn't merely polite; he was living the law of consecration by treating strangers as divine appointments.

Emily Belle Freeman (Don't Miss This) takes this into modern application: "How do I do about inviting holy men into my ordinary space? I listen every six months to the words of holy men, and do I bring that into my house, and do I haste to bring those words into my house, and do I stand over those words?" She reframes hospitality as how we receive prophetic counsel — with the same urgency Abraham showed his visitors.

2. Tsachaq (צחק) — The Many Faces of Laughter

The Hebrew root *tsachaq* — "to laugh" — runs through these chapters like a golden thread. Abraham laughs when told he will have a son at age one hundred (Genesis 17:17). Sarah laughs to herself when she overhears the same promise (Genesis 18:12). God names the child Isaac (*Yitzhak* — "he laughs," Genesis 21:3). Sarah declares at Isaac's birth that "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me" (Genesis 21:6). But then the laughter turns darker: Ishmael is seen *metsachek* — "laughing" or "Isaacing" — which is the same root, and Sarah interprets it as a threat to Isaac's inheritance (Genesis 21:9).

Jared Halverson (Unshaken) elevates this wordplay into a theological framework by invoking the literary categories of comedy and tragedy: "Tragedies are defined by the fact they end on a bad note, whereas comedies — no matter how many ups and downs there are throughout the story — always end with a smile on your face, in joy, in rejoicing, in laughter." His declaration: "Permanent bad news is against my religion. I do not believe that the Plan of Salvation ends in tragedy. I believe it ends in glorious triumph

— which makes life a comedy." Abraham and Sarah's story is ultimately a divine comedy: doubt-laughter becoming joy-laughter, a barren womb becoming a living child named "He Laughs."

Halverson also quotes Victor Frankl, the Jewish psychologist and Holocaust survivor, who described laughter as "one of the soul's weapons in the fight to preserve hope and life." To laugh is to declare: *I know this isn't all there is. I know there's something better.*

3. Edna (עֵדְנָה) — Eden East of Eden

One of the most distinctive insights from Halverson comes from Sarah's private reaction to the angelic promise. When Sarah says "shall I have pleasure?" (Genesis 18:12), the Hebrew word for "pleasure" is *edna* — and Halverson traces it directly to the same root as *Eden*. This creates a profound wordplay: "Is there any Eden this side of Eden?" Can a woman whose body has failed her still experience the garden-joy God intended? Sarah's answer becomes yes — and it is a source of laughter. Halverson's framework: "If any of you are struggling in your fallen state — physically or spiritually or mentally or emotionally — you will find pleasure no matter what situation you're in. You will find **Eden East of Eden.**"

4. El Roi (אֵל רֹאִי) — The God Who Sees

When Hagar is sent into the wilderness with Ishmael, she reaches the point of despair, placing her son under a bush so she won't have to watch him die (Genesis 21:15–16). But God hears the boy's voice and opens Hagar's eyes to a well of water. This echoes Hagar's earlier encounter with God (Genesis 16:13) when she became the only person in scripture to give God a title: *El Roi* — "the God who sees me."

Kerry Muhlestein (The Scriptures Are Real, S5 E16) highlights three theological truths about God revealed through Hagar: (1) He sees those society overlooks, (2) He hears the silent anguish of the heart, and (3) He sends angels to help in wilderness moments. Muhlestein also emphasizes that Hagar is the only woman in scripture who names God — a remarkable honor for someone who was a marginalized Egyptian servant.

Freeman (Don't Miss This) draws two study questions from Hagar's story: "Where is your wilderness right now?" and "Where is your well?" She teaches that God doesn't always remove the wilderness: "He didn't take away the wilderness... sometimes God doesn't remove the wilderness, but He will provide a well." And what the wilderness produces matters: "Ishmael became an archer. Isaac became a herdsman in the camp, but out in the wilderness Ishmael became an archer... I don't think he would have become that in the camp."

Your vault already has the beautiful block note God who sees me capturing how this experience connects to modern moments when we feel unseen by God.

5. The Aqedah (עֶקְדָּה) — The Binding of Isaac

Genesis 22 is known in Jewish tradition as the *Aqedah* (from *aqad*, "to bind"), referring to the moment Abraham binds Isaac on the altar of Mount Moriah. It is the supreme test of faith in all scripture and a profound typological foreshadowing of God the Father offering His Only Begotten Son. Jacob

4:5 makes this explicit: “Abraham... offering up his son Isaac... is a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son.”

Halverson (Unshaken) adds a crucial layer from Hebrews 11:17: “He that had received the promises offered the very personification of the promise.” It wasn’t just a son on the altar — it was the covenant itself. If Isaac dies, the promise of innumerable posterity dies with him. Abraham held the paradox: “Infinity times zero is still zero. If you’re promised infinity, you have to hold on to the one.” And yet Abraham obeyed, trusting that God could bring “life from death, comedy out of tragedy.”

Bryce Dunford (Temple Symbols, Ep. 25 — The Law of Sacrifice) reframes sacrifice not as giving up external things but as “getting the animal out of us” — removing the natural man (pride, lust, anger) from within. He identifies pride specifically: “It is easier to give \$1,000 than to admit we were wrong. The Law of Sacrifice demands the harder offering.” Abraham on Moriah was surrendering the deepest pride a father can hold: the certainty that *my* plan for *my* son is better than God’s.

Freeman (Don’t Miss This) quotes President Hugh B. Brown: “When asked why God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, it was because Abraham needed to learn something about Abraham.” She then adds Susan Tanner’s devastating observation: “Each time I walk with Abraham and Isaac on the road to Mount Moriah, I weep — knowing that Abraham does not know that there will be an angel and a ram in the thicket at the end of the journey.”

6. Sôd (סֹד) — The Divine Council

When the Lord decides to reveal His plans for Sodom to Abraham, He says, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” (Genesis 18:17). Dr. Peterson connects this to Amos 3:7 — “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” The Hebrew word for “secret” in Amos is *sôd*, which means not just a secret but a council — a divine assembly. Abraham, standing before the Lord and bargaining for Sodom, is being treated as a member of the divine council. He is not merely receiving information; he is invited into deliberation with God.

7. Sodom as Counterfeit Eden

Halverson (Unshaken) offers a striking reading of Sodom’s earlier description as a “well-watered plain” like “the garden of the Lord” (Genesis 13:10): “This is Eden 2.0 — well, it’s a counterfeit Eden, though. It receives all these blessings, it just never passes them on, because the Dead Sea is dead because the fresh water just evaporates leaving all this sediment.” Sodom was a city of consumption without consecration — receiving every blessing but sharing none. David Butler (Don’t Miss This) adds from Ezekiel 16:49 that Sodom’s actual sin was deeper than sexual violence: “They have plenty, they have lots of bread... but they’re oppressing the poor and the widows.” The contrast with Abraham — who hastens to share everything he has with strangers — could not be sharper.

Genesis 18:1-8: The Three Visitors at Mamre

“And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day”
(Genesis 18:1)

Hebrew Deep Dive

- **Mamre (מַמְרֵא)** — The oaks or terebinths of Mamre near Hebron, Abraham’s long-term encampment and the place where God had previously appeared to him (Genesis 13:18).
- **Va-yarots (וַיָּרֹץ)** — “And he ran.” Abraham doesn’t walk; he runs to greet the visitors. At his advanced age, this signals extraordinary eagerness and honor.
- **Hista’anenu (הִשְׁתַּעֲנֵנוּ)** — “Lean” or “rest” under the tree — Abraham invites them to recline, the posture of honored guests.
- **Ahlan wa sahan (أهلاً وسهلاً)** — Dr. Peterson explains this Arabic greeting meaning “you’ve come to family and a flat place to camp,” showing how Bedouin hospitality endures from Abraham’s era.

Podcast Insights

Halverson (Unshaken) introduces his “**Grammar of God**” approach here: by studying the verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in the text, we can uncover character and intent. Abraham’s verbs are all active and urgent — *ran, hastened, fetched*. The grammar itself tells us this man’s theology: the sacred deserves urgency.

Freeman (Don’t Miss This) adds a contemporary application: “The way that you respond to who’s coming is an indication of the way you feel about them and how important they are in your esteem.” She connects this directly to how we receive the words of prophets: do we hasten to bring conference addresses into our homes, or do we sit in the tent door?

Dr. Peterson (Follow Him) describes how Abraham’s hospitality follows a precise ancient protocol: washing the guests’ feet, offering shade, preparing bread (Sarah makes *ugot* — flat cakes on the hearth), and dressing a tender calf. Jewish tradition (from the *Midrash*) adds that Abraham would not eat until he had found travelers to serve in the desert, even on the hottest days.

Hospitality as *hesed* (Bradshaw, Bowen & Thompson, *IGIL 3*)

Bradshaw notes that the textual details show Abraham was *not* giving the visitors special treatment because he sensed they were divine — this was his standard welcome for **any stranger**. That is the point: his hospitality is evidence of *hesed* — covenant faithfulness and love — “*a divine character trait that will later lead him to plead and bargain with the Lord for the lives of the people of Sodom.*” The hospitality scene and the intercession scene are the same virtue in two registers.

Sarna catalogs the extravagance: “a morsel of bread” becomes a feast of *choice flour* (the same grade later used for sanctuary meal offerings), a tender calf (“*a rare delicacy and a sign of princely hospitality*”), curds and milk — with the hundred-year-old patriarch personally standing by to serve. Chouraqui

calculates the “three measures of fine meal” at some **forty liters** of flour. From this the midrash drew its famous lesson: “*The righteous say little but do much*” — Abraham promised a morsel and prepared a banquet — “*the wicked say much but do not do even a little,*” illustrated by **Ephron** in Genesis 23, who publicly offers Abraham the cave of Machpelah for free, then charges him four hundred shekels (see the Genesis 23 commentary below). The block begins and ends with the same test of generous speech.

The midrash even ties the scene to Genesis 17: Abraham, recovering from circumcision, worries that guests will stop coming — and God answers, “*Before you circumcised yourself, the uncircumcised would come to you. Now I and my retinue will appear to you.*” Hospitality is rewarded with theophany.

Doctrinal Connections

- **Hebrews 13:2** — “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”
- **Matthew 25:35** — “I was a stranger, and ye took me in.”
- **Mosiah 2:17** — “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.”
- **3 Nephi 17:4** — Christ’s compassion for those who need Him to stay, paralleling the Lord lingering at Abraham’s tent.

Come Follow Me Connection

The Come Follow Me manual invites us to consider how we welcome the Lord into our lives. Abraham ran to meet his visitors. Are we eager to welcome the sacred into our daily routines, or do we let the “heat of the day” — our busyness and fatigue — keep us sitting in the tent door?

Genesis 18:9-15: The Promise of Isaac and Sarah’s Laughter

“Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.” (Genesis 18:14)

Hebrew Deep Dive

- **Yippalé (יִפְּלֵא)** — “Too hard” or “too wondrous.” The root *pala* means to be extraordinary, wonderful, beyond human capacity. The same root appears in Isaiah 9:6, where the Messiah is called “Wonderful” (*Pele*). Halverson (Unshaken) traces this: “The same word translated here as ‘too hard’ is the same word we’ll see later about the Wonders and Marvels of the Exodus... the same word used to describe Solomon’s Temple when it is said that it is wonderful.”
- **Tsachaq (צַחֵק)** — Sarah “laughed within herself” (*vatitschaq bekirbah*). The phrase *bekirbah* (“within herself”) suggests silent, internal laughter — perhaps more wonder than mockery.
- **Edna (עֵדְנָה)** — “Pleasure” (v. 12). Halverson traces this to the same root as *Eden*, creating the framework of “Eden East of Eden.”

- **Mo'ed (מוֹעֵד)** — “Appointed time.” God’s promises operate on His timetable, not ours.

Podcast Insights

Dr. Peterson observes that the Lord’s question is rhetorical yet deeply personal. He knows Sarah can hear from inside the tent, and He addresses her doubt directly. Peterson also notes the Middle Eastern cultural detail: when the visitors ask for Sarah, Abraham says “she is in the tent” — a sign of honor, not exclusion.

Halverson elevates Sarah’s laughter into a faith act by quoting Victor Frankl: laughter as “one of the soul’s weapons in the fight to preserve hope and life.” He then distinguishes two types of faith displayed here. Abraham’s faith is faith to go forward with *revelation* — he received the command directly. Sarah’s faith, from Hebrews 11:11, is faith to move forward not with personal revelation but with “trust in someone else’s.” Her faith “produced strength to conceive seed” — faith literally generating physical power.

Doctrinal Connections

- **Luke 1:37** — “For with God nothing shall be impossible” — Gabriel’s words to Mary echo this very phrase.
- **1 Nephi 17:50** — “If God had commanded me to do all things I could do them.”
- **Ether 12:27** — “My grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me.”
- **Hebrews 11:11** — “Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed.”

Come Follow Me Connection

The manual asks: What “impossible” promises has the Lord made to you? We all have moments where we laugh — not with joy, but with disbelief — at the gap between what God has promised and what our circumstances seem to allow. Genesis 18:14 is an invitation to replace that laughter of doubt with a question: *Is anything too wondrous for the Lord?*

Genesis 18:16-33: Abraham Bargains for Sodom

“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25)

Hebrew Deep Dive

- **Sôd (סֹד)** — “Secret” or “council” (Amos 3:7). God is inviting Abraham into divine deliberation — the prophet as a member of the heavenly council.
- **Amad (עֲמַד)** — “Abraham stood yet before the Lord” (v. 22). Standing before a ruler implies bold access, even confrontation. This is not a cowering subject; it is a covenant partner in dialogue.
- **Aphar va-epher (עָפָר וָאֵפֶר)** — “Dust and ashes” (v. 27). Abraham’s profound humility — acknowledging his mortal nothingness while still daring to speak.

Podcast Insights

Dr. Peterson compares Abraham's negotiation to a scene from a Middle Eastern bazaar — the back-and-forth of respectful bargaining. He argues the Lord is not actually being "bargained down" — rather, He is allowing Abraham to demonstrate the compassion that qualifies him to be the father of all nations.

David Butler (Don't Miss This) observes that the negotiation (50 → 45 → 40 → 30 → 20 → 10) ends *incompleted* — and the silence is the point: "That conversation that's not there has so much Jesus... the unsaid part of it." Would God spare the city for the righteousness of *one*? The answer, left hanging, points to the One Righteous Man who would later save the entire world.

Doctrinal Connections

- **Amos 3:7** — "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."
- **D&C 121:45** — "Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men."
- **Alma 34:27** — "Let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually."
- **Moses 7:28** — Enoch's shock that God weeps over His children — divine compassion shared with a prophet.

Come Follow Me Connection

Abraham teaches us that intercessory prayer is not presumptuous. We are invited — even expected — to plead before God on behalf of others. Freeman (Don't Miss This) makes this deeply personal: "For those of us who are praying for people who maybe aren't in a good spot spiritually, just remember that God says He'll remember you and He'll remember that prayer, and there will come a day when angels will go in and grasp hold of them. We don't know when, but the power of our prayers and our consistent prayers will be remembered."

Genesis 19:1-29: The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

"But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." (Genesis 19:26)

Hebrew Deep Dive

- **Natsiv melach (נָצִיב מֶלַח)** — "Pillar of salt." The word *natsiv* means a standing monument or garrison. Lot's wife doesn't just glance backward; she becomes a permanent memorial to the cost of lingering between covenants.
- **Hitmahmecha (הִתְמַחְמָה)** — "He lingered" (v. 16). Lot's hesitation to leave Sodom even as fire is imminent reveals how deeply the world can grip even a righteous person.
- **Gopher va-goprith (גִּפְרִית)** — "Brimstone" (v. 24). Archaeological surveys at the southeast end of the Dead Sea have discovered sulfur ball deposits consistent with intense thermal events.

Podcast Insights

Freeman and Butler (Don't Miss This) develop the contrast between chapters 18 and 19 as a deliberate literary foil: same setup, different responses, vastly different outcomes. The key insight: "What was the same is what was given. What was different is how it was received." Both Abraham and Lot received divine visitors, but the *quality of receiving* determined the outcome.

Butler traces Lot's progressive compromise: first he pitched his tent *facing* Sodom (Genesis 13:12), then he moved *into* Sodom, and now angels must physically drag him out. Freeman names the deeper issue as *submission* — "a word we don't use very often, and maybe it's an art that our generation, our culture, our society is losing."

On Lot's wife, Freeman offers the reading that most scholars believe she didn't merely glance back but *went back*: "She was like, I actually would choose what the world is offering over the possibility of what they are suggesting." Freeman then traces "the degrees of submission" in Lot's family: "She doesn't get to live... he loses his wife... his daughters get to live but they don't get to live the kind of life that Abraham and Sarah get to live because they only came this far. You can see the degrees of submission and the degrees of God's power."

Halverson (Unshaken) connects Lot's desire to flee to a "little city" instead of the mountain to a spiritual avoidance pattern: "When I think of people like, 'No, I can't go to the temple, I can't live at that level' — it's like, no, you totally can. We're here to help. That's the place of safety."

Jeffrey R. Holland's BYU address "Remember Lot's Wife" powerfully warns against the danger of looking back — not to our sins, but to the worldly comforts we've been asked to leave behind.

Doctrinal Connections

- **Luke 17:32** — Jesus's terse warning: "Remember Lot's wife."
- **2 Nephi 9:30** — "Wo unto the rich... their hearts are upon their treasures."
- **D&C 133:14–15** — "Go ye out from Babylon... flee unto Zion."
- **1 Nephi 7:11** — Nephi references the destruction of Sodom as a pattern of God's justice.
- **Genesis 19:29** — "God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow" — the power of intercessory prayer.

Come Follow Me Connection

The manual asks us to consider: What are we lingering over? What do we keep glancing back at? Freeman's framework brings this into sharp focus: "What is making us hesitate? Why are we holding back? Why are we lingering? What is it — do we not trust Him?"

Hebrew Deep Dive

- **Abimelech (אַבִּימֶלֶךְ)** — “My father is king.” This Philistine ruler is portrayed more sympathetically than expected — God speaks to him in a dream and acknowledges his integrity of heart (*b’tom-levavekha*, v. 6).
- **Nevi’ (נָבִיא)** — “Prophet” (v. 7). This is the first time the word *navi* (“prophet”) appears in the Bible, applied to Abraham. The prophet’s role includes intercession — God tells Abimelech that Abraham will pray for him and he will live.

Podcast Insights

Dr. Peterson notes this repeat of the “sister” incident from Genesis 12 raises questions about Abraham’s judgment. However, the narrative reveals something important: even prophets are imperfect, yet God continues to work through them and protect the covenant. This is a comfort for anyone who has made the same mistake twice.

Doctrinal Connections

- **D&C 1:24–28** — God works through “the weak things of the world.”
 - **Ether 12:27** — Weakness and grace.
 - **2 Nephi 4:17–35** — Nephi’s psalm of wrestling with personal weakness.
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Genesis 21:1-21: The Birth of Isaac and the Expulsion of Hagar

“And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven.” (Genesis 21:17)

Hebrew Deep Dive

- **Yitzhak (יִצְחָק)** — “He laughs.” Isaac’s very name commemorates the laughter of disbelief turned to joy. Halverson (Unshaken) captures the wordplay: “Abraham called the name of his son Isaac — ‘this is my little laughter, this is my son of joy’ — and every time we call to him, honey, we can laugh together. Our tragedy has finally turned into comedy.”
- **Metsachek (מְצַחֵק)** — Ishmael “mocking” or “Isaacing” (v. 9). Same root as Isaac’s name. Halverson: “Mocking is a lot like laughter, just in a different key. Sarah was laughing in a good way; Ishmael is laughing in the wrong way.”
- **Garash (גָּרַשׁ)** — “Cast out” (v. 10). The same verb used for Adam and Eve being expelled from Eden (Genesis 3:24).
- **El Roi (אֵל רֹאִי)** — “The God who sees.” Hagar’s earlier name for God (Genesis 16:13) is fulfilled again as God opens her eyes to a well.

Podcast Insights

Kerry Muhlestein (The Scriptures Are Real, S5 E16) emphasizes that Ishmael receives the full Abrahamic covenant — multiplication, blessings, nations — while Isaac alone receives the *birthright*. This shows God’s inclusive covenantal design: the covenant family narrows for the birthright line, but the blessings radiate outward to all of Abraham’s descendants. Freeman (Don’t Miss This) extends this: “It doesn’t matter if you are a man or a woman, it doesn’t matter what your situation is — if you’re in the camp or if you’re in the wilderness — God is gonna hear the cry of any of His children, and He will answer and He will bless.”

Halverson traces the “life from death” motif: “The womb is as much a tomb as anything — that was death too — and yet she conceived, and from a dead body mine and from a dead womb Sarah’s, life came. Joy came. Rejoicing came. Laughter came. Life came out of death.” This becomes the faith principle that frames Genesis 22: God has already proven He can bring comedy out of tragedy.

Freeman on what the wilderness *produces*: “He became an archer... something that will bless his life perpetually. What will we become in that wilderness place if we stay there... instead of wanting to get out?”

Doctrinal Connections

- **1 Nephi 8:10–12** — The tree of life and the well of water — both symbols of God’s life-giving provision.
- **John 4:14** — “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”
- **D&C 88:67** — “If your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light” — Hagar’s eyes were opened.
- **Abraham 2:9–11** — God’s promise that through Abraham’s seed, all nations (including Ishmael’s) would be blessed.

Come Follow Me Connection

Hagar’s story teaches us that God sees us in our wilderness moments. When we feel cast out, overlooked, or forgotten, He is still *El Roi* — the God who sees. He doesn’t always remove us from the desert, but He opens our eyes to wells we didn’t know were there. Freeman’s two questions remain: *Where is your wilderness right now? And where is your well?*

Genesis 22:1-19: The Binding of Isaac (The Aqedah)

“And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.”
(Genesis 22:8)

Hebrew Deep Dive

- **Nasah (נָסָה)** — “Tempt” in KJV (v. 1), but Muhlestein (The Scriptures Are Real) emphasizes this means “to test, to try, to prove” — not temptation but sanctifying trial.
- **Hineni (הִנְנִי)** — “Here I am” (v. 1, 7, 11). Abraham says this three times — to God, to Isaac, and to the angel. It denotes total readiness, full spiritual presence, and willingness to respond. It is the covenant word of availability.
- **Yachad (יַחַד)** — “Together” (v. 6, 8). Abraham and Isaac “walked together.” This word implies deep unity and oneness — the same unity between Father and Son at the Atonement.
- **Aqad (עָקַד)** — “To bind.” Appears only here in the Bible. It gives the entire story its traditional Jewish name: the *Aqedah*.
- **Moriyah (מֹרְיָה)** — “The Lord will provide” or “the Lord will be seen.” 2 Chronicles 3:1 identifies Moriah as the Temple Mount — the very location where Solomon’s temple would stand and near where Christ would be crucified.
- **Jehovah-jireh (יְהוָה יִרְאֶה)** — “The Lord will provide” (v. 14). Abraham names the place prophetically. The Hebrew *yireh* can also mean “will see” — linking back to *El Roi* (the God who sees Hagar) and forward to the temple where God is “seen.”

Podcast Insights

Halverson (Unshaken) frames the paradox mathematically: “He that had received the promises offered the very personification of the promise. Infinity times zero is still zero. If you’re promised infinity, you have to hold on to the one. This is not just me trying to hold on to my son — this is me trying to help you hold on to your promise, which cannot happen if I slay your promise.” And yet Abraham obeyed, believing God could produce “life from death, comedy out of tragedy” — because He already had, with Sarah’s womb.

Dunford (Temple Symbols, Ep. 25) reframes the sacrifice inward: “Sacrifice is about getting that evil root out of us. Getting the animal out of us is step number one.” He names specific “beasts” to sacrifice: the Wolf (anger), the Peacock (pride), and the Pig (lust). Abraham’s outward test mirrors the inward covenant: are we willing to lay down the pride that says *my* plan for *my* life is better than God’s?

Freeman (Don’t Miss This) brings emotional depth. She quotes President Hugh B. Brown: “It was because Abraham needed to learn something about Abraham.” Then Susan Tanner: “Each time I walk with Abraham and Isaac on the road to Mount Moriah, I weep — knowing that Abraham does not know that there will be an angel and a ram in the thicket.” Freeman’s application: “We are each in the middle of our earthly path, and we don’t know the rest of our own stories — but we, as Abraham, are blessed with miracles.”

Butler (Don’t Miss This) draws the stunning Christological connection: Abraham says “God will provide himself a lamb,” but a *ram* appears — not a lamb. “You brought the wrong animal — you were supposed to provide a lamb... but not for a couple thousand years. That lamb would come.” Butler continues: “That mountain, a couple thousand years later, gets renamed as Calvary and Golgotha. That is the place where God will sacrifice His own Son, and where there won’t be an escape from it... He, God, will not

withhold even His Son, His only Son, whom He loves. There's no escape and there's no well. Mount Moriah teaches us that He will not withhold."

What Is an Abrahamic Test? (Bradshaw, Bowen & Thompson, *IGIL* 3)

The ten trials. Maimonides' traditional list: (1) leaving his homeland, (2) the famine, (3) Sarah taken by Pharaoh, (4) the battle to rescue Lot, (5) the marriage to Hagar, (6) circumcision at one hundred, (7) Sarah taken by Abimelech, (8) Hagar sent away, (9) Hagar and Ishmael sent away permanently, (10) the Akedah. Every chapter of this study block sits somewhere on that list — Genesis 18–23 contains trials 7 through 10.

Joseph Smith on the Abrahamic test. President John Taylor heard the Prophet tell the Twelve: *"You will have all kinds of trials to pass through. And it is quite as necessary for you to be tried as it was for Abraham and other men of God, and God will feel after you, and He will take hold of you and wrench your very heart strings, and if you cannot stand it you will not be fit for an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom of God."* Joseph also taught that *"if God had known any other way whereby he could have touched Abraham's feelings more acutely and more keenly he would have done so."* By this experience Abraham would feel *"something akin to what the Father felt when His only begotten Son suffered"* — the similitude runs through the father's heart, not just the son's altar. Elder Hafen's term for these is **divine tutorials** (D&C 101:4–5); Truman Madsen's warning: *"Many of us will say that we do not have that kind of faith. I submit to you that you do not have that kind of faith until you pass that test."*

Kierkegaard's dancer. Bradshaw retrieves Kierkegaard's image of Abraham's *leap by faith*: the most difficult feat for a dancer is *"to leap into a definite posture in such a way that there is not a second when he is grasping after the posture, but by the leap itself he stands fixed in that posture. Perhaps no dancer can do it — but Abraham does."* Most of us "vacillate an instant" when the call for faith comes; discipleship is the long training by which the leap becomes reflexive. And yet — Bradshaw notes the text's subtle signs that even Abraham's great soul *strained* under this last stretch. Terry Givens supplies the one resolution to the Akedah's moral vertigo: the obligation to *know* the directing voice is divine — *"Once we have that assurance, then the rationality [of the directive] is irrelevant."*

The Ram, the Lamb, and the Name of the Place (Bradshaw, Bowen & Thompson, *IGIL* 3)

Ephrem the Syrian on the ram: *"In the ram, which was hanging from the tree and was sacrificed as an offering in place of Abraham's son, was prefigured the day of [Jesus], who was hung from a tree like the ram and tasted death for the sake of the whole world."* Even Jewish midrash, without Christian theology, makes Isaac's willingness the *"prototype of all sacrifices"* whose merit extends *"even to the netherworld: 'Through the merits of Isaac, who offered himself upon the altar, the Holy One... shall raise the dead.'"*

Romans 8:32 and the Latter-day Saint resolution. Paul deliberately echoes Genesis 22 — God *"spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all."* Scholar Monica Pesthy-Simon sees a problem: if God takes Abraham's place, *to whom* does God offer His Son — to Himself? Bradshaw: *"Because Latter-day Saints*

believe that God and Jesus Christ are two separate beings, they see no dilemma... The parallel with Abraham is perfect."

Jehovah-jireh — seeing is providing. *Yireh* stems from *rā'â*, "to see," and Hebrew's "seeing" and "providing" meet exactly as in the English idiom "*seeing to*" something. The name gathers up the whole block's theology: *El Ro'i* (the God who sees Hagar), Moriah ("the Lord will see/be seen"), Abraham seeing the place "afar off," and God *seeing to* the ram — and, two millennia later, the Lamb.

Genesis 15 reversed. Remember the covenant of the pieces: the divided animals symbolized the fate of the covenant *violator*. At the Atonement the expected consequence is inverted — **the Lord Himself is cut, though we are the violators** (Moroni 10:33: sanctified "*through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father*"). The Akedah is where Abraham learns, in his own body, what that covenant will cost its Maker.

Abraham's Blessings Made Sure (Bradshaw, Bowen & Thompson, IGL 3)

Genesis 22:16–18 is the only place God swears the covenant **by Himself** — and Hebrews 6:13–15 reads it as the moment Abraham, having "*patiently endured, obtained the promise.*" E. Douglas Clark, gathering Joseph Smith's teachings: this was Abraham's **calling and election made sure** — the unconditional oath of eternal life that comes after "*the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve him at all hazards.*" Joseph Smith: it was "*the power of an endless life... which Abraham obtained by the offering of his son Isaac,*" showing that "*if a man would attain to the keys of the kingdom of an endless life, he must sacrifice all things.*" The midrash hears God's self-oath this way: "*Even as I live and endure for ever and to all eternity, so will My oath endure for ever and to all eternity.*"

Clark's summation deserves to be a block note of its own: "*Abraham's binding of Isaac for the sacrifice was revealed as the necessary prelude for God's binding of Isaac to Abraham for eternity.*" The Akedah ends not in loss but in sealing.

Doctrinal Connections

- **Jacob 4:5** — "Abraham... offering up his son Isaac, is a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son."
- **John 3:16** — "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."
- **Hebrews 11:17–19** — Abraham's faith in the resurrection.
- **D&C 132:36** — "Abraham was commanded to offer his son Isaac; nevertheless, it was written: Thou shalt not kill."
- **Mosiah 15:6–7** — Christ's dual nature as both Father and Son; the Akedah as a window into the Godhead's shared sacrifice.
- **Alma 7:11–12** — Christ descending below all things, which Abraham's offering only faintly shadows.

Come Follow Me Connection

The manual gently asks: What has the Lord asked you to lay on the altar? For most of us, it won't be a child — it may be a career plan, a relationship, a grudge, a comfort zone, or a version of our future that we've scripted for ourselves. The Aqedah teaches that God's "provide" (*jireh*) often comes only after our willingness to release what we hold most dear. Freeman's question lingers: "What am I holding back that I'm like, 'I think this is fine'?"

Genesis 23: The Death of Sarah and the Cave of Machpelah

"Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her." (Genesis 23:2)

Hebrew Deep Dive

- **Lispod (לִסְפֹּד)** — "To mourn," eulogize with formal lamentation.
- **Livkotah (לִבְכּוֹתָהּ)** — "And to weep for her." The Masoretic text writes the letter *kaf* in this word smaller than normal, which rabbinical tradition interprets as Abraham's grief being too deep for full expression.
- **Machpelah (מַכְפֶּלֶה)** — "The double cave." Abraham insists on buying this burial site at full price, establishing the first legally documented land ownership by the covenant family in the Promised Land.

Podcast Insights

Dr. Peterson emphasizes that Abraham's purchase of the Cave of Machpelah was not just a burial transaction — it was a faith statement. Despite owning no land in Canaan during his lifetime, Abraham purchases a permanent burial site, declaring his belief that this land belongs to his posterity. This is covenant faith expressed through real estate. Peterson also notes that to this day, the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron is one of the most sacred sites in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — a place where all three Abrahamic faiths converge around the same patriarch and matriarch.

Bradshaw adds the midrashic frame that binds this chapter back to Genesis 18: **Ephron is the anti-Abraham**. Abraham promised strangers "a morsel of bread" and delivered a princely feast; Ephron publicly offers the field and cave *for free* — "*the field I give thee*" — then extracts four hundred shekels of silver, more than it was worth. "*The righteous say little but do much; the wicked say much but do not do even a little.*" The study block opens and closes on the ethics of generous speech.

Freeman (Don't Miss This) references the artwork of Eva Timothy depicting the father grasping the son tight after the Aqedah — "In that moment of just, you know, it's over... there's another reunion of a father and a son. How sweet it must have been to just know — the family is saved. The family is saved now." The journey from Moriah to Machpelah is the journey from supreme testing to quiet permanence — faith landing in real ground.

Doctrinal Connections

- **Hebrews 11:9–10** — Abraham “sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country... for he looked for a city which hath foundations.”
 - **Ether 12:16** — “All those who wrought miracles wrought them by faith.”
 - **Abraham 2:6** — God’s promise: “I give unto thee... this land for an everlasting inheritance.”
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The Structure of Genesis 18-23 — Literary Analysis

These chapters exhibit a sophisticated chiastic and thematic structure:

A — Hospitality and divine visitation (ch. 18) — Abraham welcomes three visitors; the Lord appears in human form; promise of Isaac.

B — Intercession and judgment (ch. 18:16–33) — Abraham bargains for Sodom; the divine council scene.

C — Destruction and deliverance (ch. 19) — Sodom destroyed; Lot rescued; Lot’s wife looks back; Lot’s daughters.

D — Repeated test of faith (ch. 20) — Abraham and Abimelech; the “sister” episode revisited; God protects the covenant.

C’ — Birth and separation (ch. 21:1–21) — Isaac born; Ishmael and Hagar sent away; God provides a well.

B’ — Covenant confirmed through ultimate sacrifice (ch. 22) — Abraham offers Isaac; the angel intervenes; the oath renewed.

A’ — Death and burial (ch. 23) — Sarah dies; Abraham purchases Machpelah; faith in the land promise.

The structure moves from **promise** (a son will come) to **testing** (the son must be offered) to **permanence** (the land is purchased for burial), creating a narrative arc that mirrors the covenant pattern: God promises, we are tested, and the covenant is confirmed.

Insights from Podcasts and Sources

Follow Him Podcast (Episode 8 — Dr. Daniel C. Peterson)

Dr. Peterson brings his expertise in Arabic and Islamic studies to illuminate the cultural world of Abraham. Key insights include:

- **Hospitality as the defining virtue:** Ancient Bedouin hospitality was a sacred covenant between host and guest. Abraham’s eagerness to serve three strangers reflects the highest ideal of this tradition.
- **Abraham as a member of the Divine Council:** When God shares His plans for Sodom, Abraham enters the *sôd* — the divine council — as a prophetic participant, not just a passive recipient of revelation.

- **The Law of Consecration:** Peterson compares consecration to “a check with an unlimited number of zeroes” — we sign it in advance, and the Lord fills in the amount when the time comes. Abraham had signed that check, and Genesis 22 is the Lord filling it in.

Unshaken (Jared Halverson)

Halverson brings his signature deep-reading methodology to these chapters. Full transcript.

Key frameworks:

- **The Grammar of God:** Study verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in scripture to uncover character and intent. Abraham’s urgent verbs (*ran, hastened, fetched*) reveal his theology.
- **Comedy vs. Tragedy:** “Permanent bad news is against my religion.” Abraham’s story is a divine comedy — doubt-laughter becoming joy-laughter. Victor Frankl: laughter as “one of the soul’s weapons.”
- **Eden East of Eden:** Sarah’s *edna* = *Eden*. Even in a fallen state, the garden-joy God intended is available.
- **Life from Death:** Sarah’s dead womb producing Isaac establishes the faith precedent for the Aqedah — God already proved He can bring comedy out of tragedy.
- **Infinity times One:** Abraham holds the paradox — killing Isaac means killing the promise of innumerable posterity. Faith in the resurrection resolves it.
- **Sodom as Counterfeit Eden:** A city that receives every blessing but shares none. The Dead Sea as a symbol of consumption without consecration.
- **Two Types of Faith:** Abraham’s faith = faith with revelation. Sarah’s faith = trust in someone else’s revelation. Both are honored in Hebrews 11.

Don’t Miss This (Emily Belle Freeman & David Butler)

Freeman and Butler focus on trust, submission, and provision. Full transcript. Key insights:

- **Hastening vs. Linging:** Abraham *hastens* to serve, *rises early* to obey. Lot *lingers* and must be dragged from Sodom. The question: are we people who hasten or people who linger?
- **What was given vs. how it was received:** Both Abraham and Lot received divine visitors. The quality of receiving determined everything.
- **The Degrees of Submission:** Lot’s wife doesn’t survive (refused to leave), Lot survives but impoverished, his daughters live but diminished, Abraham and Sarah live in full covenant blessing. The degree of submission correlates to the degree of God’s power in our lives.
- **The Little City Problem:** Lot’s request to escape to a “little city” instead of the mountain — it’s the little things, the small compromises, that keep us from full submission.
- **Wilderness and Well:** “Where is your wilderness right now? Where is your well?” God doesn’t always remove the wilderness, but He provides a well.
- **The Lamb vs. the Ram:** Abraham said God would provide a lamb, but a ram appeared. The lamb wouldn’t come for two thousand more years — on the same mountain, renamed Calvary.
- **Trust as the Foundation for Submission:** “The level to which you trust that person is the level to which you will respond.”

The Scriptures Are Real (Kerry Muhlestein — S5 E16)

Muhlestein brings Egyptological expertise to the family dynamics. Full transcript. Key insights:

- **Hagar’s Unique Honor:** The only woman in scripture who names God (*El Roi*). Three truths: God sees the overlooked, hears silent anguish, sends angels in wilderness moments.
- **Covenantal Scope:** Ishmael receives the full Abrahamic covenant (multiplication, blessings, nations); Isaac alone receives the birthright. Inclusive design.
- **Nasah = Prove, Not Tempt:** Genesis 22:1’s “tempt” should be “prove” — God is revealing Abraham’s character to Abraham, not trying to trip him up.
- **Cultural Context:** Surrogate maternity practices, inheritance systems, and pastoral nomadism explain the human drama without diminishing the theological stakes.

Temple Symbols & Covenants (Bryce Dunford)

- **Ep. 25 — The Law of Sacrifice:** Sacrifice is “getting the animal out of us” — removing the natural man. Name your beast: the Wolf (anger), the Peacock (pride), the Pig (lust). “It is easier to give \$1,000 than to admit we were wrong.”
- **Ep. 34 — The Law of Consecration:** Consecration is “consecrated awareness” — the ability to notice and serve others’ needs. “When we are interrupted by someone in need, we don’t view it as an interruption; we view it as the work we covenanted to do.” Abraham’s hospitality as a lived example.

Ear to Hear — The Entire Life of Abraham on a Map

The Ear to Hear video provides geographical and archaeological context for these chapters, tracing Abraham’s movements from Mamre to Moriah and noting the sulfur deposits at likely Sodom sites. It also draws the powerful parallel between Isaac’s willing sacrifice on Moriah and Jesus’s crucifixion at or near the same location.

Bradshaw, Bowen & Thompson — *In God’s Image and Likeness 3* (Genesis 18-23)

Full verse-by-verse commentary on every chapter of this block, with Gleanings and excursions. Contributions woven into the commentary above: Abraham’s hospitality as *hesed* (the same virtue that fuels his intercession for Sodom); the midrash of the righteous who “*say little but do much*” — with **Ephron as the anti-Abraham** closing the block; Maimonides’ **ten trials**; the theology of the **Abrahamic test** (Joseph Smith’s “wrench your very heart strings,” Hafen’s divine tutorials, Madsen, Givens); **Kierkegaard’s dancer**; the **ram/lamb typology** (Ephrem the Syrian, the midrash of Isaac’s merit raising the dead, Pesthy-Simon’s Romans 8:32 problem resolved by Restoration theology); **Jehovah-jireh** as seeing-is-providing; the Akedah as the reversal of the Genesis 15 cutting; and Abraham’s **calling and election made sure** by God’s self-oath (E. Douglas Clark, Hebrews 6:13–15).

The volume’s conclusion on the Akedah, via Auerbach, explains why this story won’t leave us alone: scripture “*seeks to overcome our reality: we are to fit our own life into its world, feel ourselves to be elements in its structure of universal history.*” And its sober warning from Elder Maxwell: “*If we are serious about our*

discipleship, Jesus will eventually request each of us to do those very things which are the most difficult for us to do.”

Not only Abraham but **Sarah, Isaac, and Hagar** each passed Abrahamic tests — the volume is deliberately titled for all three members of the family.

Bradshaw — *In the Beginning Vol 3: Look unto Abraham and Sarah*

The narrative companion volume covering the same chapters in readable form, with excursions on the fulness of the priesthood and Melchizedek. Its preface names the heart of this block: the family's *“inspiring and heart-rending experiences and their personal encounters with God and his envoys in breathtaking intimacy.”*

Additional Sources

- **Interpreter Foundation** — Dr. Peterson’s “Old Testament Commentary: Genesis 18–20 Overview” provides scholarly context for the hospitality theme and the divine council.
 - **Religious Studies Center (BYU)** — RoseAnne Benson, “Reexamining Lot,” offers a nuanced reading of Lot as a man caught between covenant and culture. Daniel Belnap’s “How Excellent Is Thy Lovingkindness” explores *chesed* (covenant loyalty) as a lens for Abraham’s intercession.
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Personal Application & Discussion Questions

1. **Hospitality as consecration:** Abraham ran to serve three strangers. Dunford teaches that “interruptions” are the work we covenanted to do. How eager am I to welcome the unexpected — whether visitors, callings, or promptings — into my life? What would it look like to “run” toward opportunities to serve?
2. **Impossible promises:** Sarah laughed at God’s promise. Halverson asks: Is anything too *wondrous* for the Lord? What promises has the Lord made to you that seem impossible given your current circumstances? Can you find “Eden East of Eden” — garden-joy even in your fallen state?
3. **Intercessory prayer:** Abraham pleaded for strangers in Sodom. Freeman reminds us: “God says He’ll remember you and He’ll remember that prayer.” Who in your life needs someone to stand before the Lord on their behalf? Are you willing to be that intercessor?
4. **Hastening vs. lingering:** Abraham hastened to serve and rose early to obey. Lot lingered and had to be dragged from Sodom. Freeman asks: “What is making us hesitate? Why are we holding back? What is it — do we not trust Him?” Where in your discipleship are you lingering?
5. **The God who sees:** Hagar felt cast out and invisible, yet God heard her son’s voice and opened her eyes to water. Freeman’s two questions: “Where is your wilderness right now? Where is your well?”
6. **Laying it on the altar:** Dunford says the real sacrifice is “getting the animal out” — the pride, the anger, the appetite. Freeman asks: “What am I holding back that I’m like, ‘I think this is fine’?” What is your Isaac? What might God provide in its place?

7. **The lamb that came later:** Butler observes that Abraham was promised a lamb, but a ram came.

The true Lamb wouldn't appear for two thousand more years — on that same mountain. How does the Aqedah deepen your understanding of Calvary?

8. **Covenant permanence:** Abraham bought a burial plot in a land he didn't yet possess. What are you investing in today — with faith — for a future you can't yet see?

9. **Comedy, not tragedy:** Halverson declares, "Permanent bad news is against my religion." How does the comedy framework — that God's story always ends in laughter and joy — change how you read your own current chapter?

Key Quotes

"Permanent bad news is against my religion. I do not believe that the Plan of Salvation ends in tragedy. I believe it ends in glorious triumph — which makes life a comedy." — **Jared Halverson**, Unshaken

"The submission of one's will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God's altar. The many other things we 'give'... are actually the things He has already given or loaned to us." — **Elder Neal A. Maxwell**, "Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father," October 1995 General Conference

"Each time I walk with Abraham and Isaac on the road to Mount Moriah, I weep — knowing that Abraham does not know that there will be an angel and a ram in the thicket at the end of the journey." — **Susan Tanner**, quoted in Don't Miss This

"When we are interrupted by someone in need, we don't view it as an interruption; we view it as the work we covenanted to do." — **Bryce Dunford**, Temple Symbols Ep. 34

"It is easier to give \$1,000 than to admit we were wrong. The Law of Sacrifice demands the harder offering." — **Bryce Dunford**, Temple Symbols Ep. 25

"To those who have lost a loved one... or who struggle to believe because of... life's bitter ironies, I say, hold fast to the tender mercies of God. 'Is any thing too hard for the Lord?'" — **Jeffrey R. Holland**, "An High Priest of Good Things to Come," October 1999 General Conference

"What was the same is what was given. What was different is how it was received." — **Emily Belle Freeman**, Don't Miss This

"That mountain, a couple thousand years later, gets renamed as Calvary and Golgotha. That is the place where God will sacrifice His own Son, and where there won't be an escape from it." — **David Butler**, Don't Miss This

"Abraham... offering up his son Isaac... is a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son." — **Jacob 4:5**, Book of Mormon

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." —
Hebrews 13:2

"God will feel after you, and He will take hold of you and wrench your very heart strings, and if you cannot stand it you will not be fit for an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom of God." — **Joseph Smith**
(via John Taylor; in Bradshaw, Bowen & Thompson, *IGIL* 3)

"Abraham's binding of Isaac for the sacrifice was revealed as the necessary prelude for God's binding of Isaac to Abraham for eternity." — **E. Douglas Clark** (in Bradshaw, Bowen & Thompson, *IGIL* 3)

"Perhaps no dancer can do it — but Abraham does." — **Søren Kierkegaard**, on the leap of faith (in Bradshaw, Bowen & Thompson, *IGIL* 3)

Links to Existing Notes in This Vault

- Abraham Bible Connections
 - Abraham — People note on the patriarch
 - Mamre — The oaks of Mamre near Hebron, setting of the Genesis 18 theophany
 - Atonement — Concept note on the Atonement's nature and scope
 - Forgiveness — Concept on forgiveness
 - agency — Concept on moral agency
 - trust — Concept on trusting God
 - God who sees me — Block note on Hagar's encounter with El Roi
 - adam and eve by their own experience — Concept on learning through experience (parallel to Hagar's "casting out")
 - The Entire Life of Abraham on a Map - Ear to Hear — YouTube source tracing Abraham's life journey
 - The Call of Melchizedek — Poem by Joel Passey on priesthood ordination
 - The Melchizedek Priesthood — Book source on Melchizedek Priesthood
 - Genesis 18-23 - Dr Carli Anderson Notes — Follow Him notes from Dr. Carli Anderson on this week's chapters, including the Currant Bush and Percy Jackson/Lotus Casino analogies
 - Jeffrey R. Holland — People note
 - D. Todd Christofferson — People note
 - Unshaken — Genesis 18-23 — Full transcript
 - Don't Miss This — Genesis 18-23 — Full transcript
 - The Scriptures Are Real — S5 E16 — Full transcript
 - Genesis 12-17 — To Be a Greater Follower of Righteousness — Previous study guide
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Source Links & Further Reading

Podcasts

- Follow Him Podcast — Episode 8: Genesis 18–23 with Dr. Daniel C. Peterson [↗](#) — Hospitality, the divine council, the Aqedah, and Sarah’s cave
- Don’t Miss This — Genesis 18–23 [↗](#) — Emily Belle Freeman & David Butler on hastening vs. lingering
- Unshaken — Genesis 18–23 [↗](#) — Jared Halverson on comedy vs. tragedy, Grammar of God, Eden East of Eden
- The Scriptures Are Real — S5 E16 [↗](#) — Kerry Muhlestein on Hagar, sacrifice, and covenantal scope
- Temple Symbols — Ep. 25 & 34 [↗](#) — Bryce Dunford on the Law of Sacrifice and the Law of Consecration
- LDS Scripture Teachings — Ep 360: Genesis 18–23 [↗](#) — Come Follow Me 2026 episode

Church Resources

- Come Follow Me Manual — “Is Any Thing Too Hard for the Lord?” Genesis 18–23 [↗](#)
- Genesis 18 (KJV) [↗](#)
- Genesis 22 (KJV) [↗](#)
- Jeffrey R. Holland — “Remember Lot’s Wife” (BYU Speeches) [↗](#)

Scholarly

- Interpreter Foundation — Genesis 18–20 Commentary [↗](#)
- Religious Studies Center — “Reexamining Lot” by RoseAnne Benson [↗](#)
- Religious Studies Center — “How Excellent Is Thy Lovingkindness” by Daniel Belnap [↗](#)
- Scripture Central — Genesis 18–23 Faith Insights [↗](#)
- Religious Studies Center — “The Path of Angels” by Taylor Halverson [↗](#)
- Bradshaw, Bowen & Thompson — In God’s Image and Likeness 3: The Family of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar (verse-by-verse commentary on Genesis 18–23)
- Bradshaw — In the Beginning Vol 3: Look unto Abraham and Sarah (narrative companion)

Next Chapter

→ Genesis 24–27 — The Covenant Is Renewed
