

THE PHANTOM *AKEIDAH*
AND OTHER BIBLICAL SURPRISES
AN ONLINE SERIES OF CLASSES
BY RABBI DAVID FOHRMAN

OUTLINE

LECTURE ONE: “THE SEARCH FOR A PHANTOM *AKEIDAH*”

1. Introduction
 - a. Format of Class¹: Lectures, Outlines, Source Notes, Powerpoints and Discussion Boards.
 - b. Methodology
 - i. The Bible as a minimalist document.
 - ii. The Problem: Concision may be elegant, but how do you convey deep meaning in a mere nine sentences?
 - iii. Layered Meaning
 - (1) The DNA analogy
 - iv. Two Literary Devices that Contribute to Layered Meaning²
 - (1) “Where Have I Heard These Words Before?”
 - (2) Chiasms
 - c. Examples of These Two Literary Devices
 - i. “Where Have I Heard These Words Before?”
 - (1) “Desire Unto You...” – Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel³
 - (2) A More Elaborate Example: “The Cloud” at the Tabernacle and at

¹ An audio introduction to the format of the class is available as a separate audio file, in Week One at our online class portal.

² See Powerpoint Companion.

³ See Source Notes, Selection I.

Sinai.⁴

- ii. Chiasms
 - (1) Chiasms in the Book of Esther
 - (a) The horses and horsemen
 - (b) “all that befell him” – Mordechai and Haman⁵
 - (2) Why are chiasms significant?⁶
 - (a) Each element sheds light on its counterpart
 - (b) They help identify the “center” of a story
 - (i) Example: “That night the king couldn’t sleep” in the story of Esther.
- d. Question that forms the centerpiece of our series:⁷
 - i. What happens when these two literary devices are used together?
 - ii. That is, what happens when “chiasms” intersect with “where have we heard these words before”.

2. The Search for a Phantom *Akeidah*

- a. Echoes of the Akeidah: The Four “vayehi hayom” stories:
 - i. The Shunamite Woman⁸
 - ii. Jonathan and Saul against the Philistines (I Samuel, chapter 14).
 - iii. The Beginning of Job (Job chapter 1).
 - iv. Chanah and Eli at the Beginning of I Samuel (I Samuel, chapter 1).
- b. Focus on one Example: II Kings, Chapter 4: The Story of Elisha and the

⁴ See Source Notes, Selections 2 and 3; see also Powerpoint companion to “Shattered Tablets and a Calf of Gold”, by Rabbi David Fohrman, Lecture Twelve. (This class ran last spring and is available in the “archives” section).

⁵ See Source Notes, selection IV.

⁶ See powerpoint companion to this lecture.

⁷ See powerpoint companion to this lecture.

⁸ See Source Notes Selection V.

Shunamite Woman⁹

- i. Echoes of the Birth of Isaac
 - ii. Echoes of the Akeidah
 - iii. Meaning?
 - (1) A possible mirror of the Akeidah: A “demand” that God give back what He has taken.
3. Homework: Is There a “Phantom Akeidah” story lurking in the Expulsion of Ishmael? (See Genesis, chapter 21).

⁹ See Source Notes, Selection V.

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LECTURE TWO: “THE BINDING OF ISHMAEL”

1. Introduction to “the Binding of Ishmael”
 - a. Understanding Genesis Chapter 16 – Hagar is Given to Sarah, Conceive, and Runs Away.¹
 - i. How do we understand Sarah’s behavior towards Hagar, and her anger at Abraham?
 - ii. Looking at Chapter 16 in light of chapter 15: The promise of children to Abraham.²
 - iii. Rashi on the roots of Sarah’s anger³
2. Reading Genesis chapter 21: The Second Hagar and Ishmael Story⁴
 - a. Points to Notice:
 - i. Sarah’s prophetic, but ambiguous declaration that “all who hear will laugh for / at me”...
 - ii. The rather wordy introduction to Ishmael, the child who laughs.
 - iii. Laughter as a double edge sword: The mask that allows us to penetrate our own armor, and the armor of others...
 - iv. The Sages’ comments on Ishmael’s laughter⁵
 - b. Conclusion: The rivalry continues in the next generation...

¹ See Source Notes, selection I.

² See Source Notes, Selection II.

³ See Source Notes, Selection III.

⁴ See Source Notes, Selection IV.

⁵ See Source Notes, Selection V.

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- c. The Decision to Expel Hagar
- i. Understanding God's response: A Look at the request for a king in the Book of Samuel, and God's response there -- Making Lemonade out of Lemons.⁶
 - (1) Language parallels / Conceptual parallels.
 - ii. The Implication of God's Words: "All that Sarah tells you, listen to her". Is this a backhanded reference to Abraham's having listened to Sarah earlier, back in chapter 16?⁷
3. The Expulsion of Ishmael and the Akeidah Parallels Inherent in the Story.⁸
- a. General Parallel: A child of Abraham experiences a near-death episode, in the presence of a parent.
 - b. Specific Parallels:⁹
 - i. Abraham wakes up early in the morning to prepare for his journey / Hagar's journey.
 - ii. Branches atop a child – the branches of Isaac's offering, and the branches of the bush on top of Ishmael.
 - iii. "Vatashlech" – Abraham "send forth" his hand to slaughter Isaac; Hagar "casts" Ishmael beneath the bush.
 - iv. The angel calls out to Hagar / Abraham. Only two times in the Bible this language is used.
 - v. "Eyes are opened" as both Abraham and Hagar find an alternative to death: The life giving well, and the ram that will be the sacrifice instead of Isaac.
 - vi. The presence of "Be'er Sheva" – the place Isaac returns to, and the place Ishmael sets out from.
 - vii. Epilogue to both stories: The finding of a wife for Isaac / Ishmael.
 - c. [There are a number of other parallels not enumerated here. We will get to them next week, as their significance is illuminated by a closer study of the chiasmic

⁶ See Source Notes, Selection VI.

⁷ See Source Notes, *ibid.*

⁸ See Source Notes, Selection VII for the text of the *Akeidah*

⁹ See accompanying powerpoint presentation.

elements in the Akeidah.]

4. Linger Questions:
 - a. Why did Abraham provision Hagar so sparsely? His actions seem cruel, at the face of it. Even if God ratified the plan to expel Hagar, He didn't say that she needed to be sent with so little. Abraham was a rich man. What was the justification of sending Hagar out with so little food that her son was in such a precarious position later that afternoon in the desert?
 - b. What is the significance of the Akeidah parallel in our story? What is it meant to teach us?
5. **Back to our second methodological tool: Chiasms.** There seems to be a chiasm hiding in the akeidah story. If we can find it, we may be in a better position to understand the Akeidah more deeply – as well as the reflection we find of that story in the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael. More on that next week.

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LECTURE THREE

“CHIASM AND COUNTERPOINT”

1. **Seeing the Beginning of a Chiasm in the Binding of Isaac Story.** We will flesh this chiasm out later – but here are the beginnings¹
 - a. Wood atop Child / Child Atop Wood
 - b. A Doubled Phrase: And they Both Walked Together
 - c. 3 Hineini's – Beginning, Middle and End _____
2. A Closer Look at the Center: Carefully Reading the Conversation between Isaac and Abraham
 - a. The only conversation between them in the entire Torah.
 - b. Emphasis on “father and son”.
 - c. The extra “Vayomer” – “and he said” – and its significance: Interrupted Conversation.
 - d. *Rashi* on the Significance of the Conversation²“
 - e. Further Elaboration
 - f. Is there such thing as an “Impossible Test”?
3. Finding a Counterpoint to the Center of the Akeidah's Chiasm in the “Binding of Ishmael Story.”
 - a. Is there a doubled phrase in the “Binding of Ishmael” story that seems comparable to “And they both walked together”?
 - b. “And she Stood from Afar”...³
 - c. What is in Between the two phrases “And she Stood from Afar”?

¹ See accompanying powerpoint presentation.

² See Source Notes, selection I

³ See Source Notes, Selection IV

- i. *Al era...* ...saying [to herself] let me not see the death of the child

4. Comparing the Two “Centers”: Seeing / Fearing vs. Not Seeing / Fearing

- a. In Hebrew, the word for “see” and “fear” can be the same: yir’eh. The phrase appears in both “centers”.
- b. Abraham says “God will show for himself a lamb – elokim yireh...
- c. She says: “Let me not see...”*al era...*

5. Reading the Epilogue to the Binding of Ishmael: Focus on Relationship⁴

- a. And she lifted up her voice and cried. Significance of the phrase.⁵
- b. “What’s With You Hagar?” / *Mah Lach Hagar?*
- c. Hold his hand...
- d. God responds to Ishmael, not Hagar, despite the fact that it is Hagar, not Ishmael, who is crying.
- e. Ishmael becomes an archer...
 - i. His mother had been a “bowshot” away.

⁴ See source notes, selection IV.

⁵ See source notes, selection II.

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LECTURE FOUR

“HERE I AM”: MAN’S *HINEINI* AND GOD’S *HINEINI*

1. A Chiasm in the “Binding of Ishmael” Story Too?
 - a. Last week, we indentified a chiasm in the Akeidah story and looked for a counterpart to its center in the Binding of Ishamel story. But is there a chiasm in the “Binding of Ishmael” story, too? Machla, one of our students, thinks there is.
 - b. Fleshing out the possible chiasm.
 - c. Looking for the chiasms center, and its contrast to the Akeidah story: “And she raised her voice and wept; and God heard the voice of the child...”.
 - i. The fundamental obligation of parent towards child: Abraham and Hagar.
 - ii. Mourning a child before its death...
 - iii. Saul and Samuel...
2. Clarifying Abraham’s Trial: A Three Pronged Balancing Act¹
 - a. The three ‘hineini’s” each pull at each other...
 - b. Clarifying the difficulty in the third Hineini: Abraham’s response to the angel.
 - c. Explaining Rashi’s comments to Genesis 22:12 – “do not send forth your hand against the child, and do not do anything to him...”.²
3. The Word “*Hineini*” and Its Implications
 - a. **Man’s *Hineini*, as expressed by Abraham:**
 - i. Rashi: “This is how the righteous answer God... the language of humility, and the language of preparedness.”³
 - ii. Understanding the relationship of humility and preparedness.

¹ See accompanying powerpoint presentation, “the Hidden Dimensions of Abraham’s Struggle”.

² See source notes, selection V. See also accompanying powerpoint presentation.

³ See source notes, selection I.

- iii. “I am”: Discerning who you are in relation to who it is that you are talking to.
- iv. Seeing the first three blessing of the “Shemoneh Esrei” in this light: Who is it, really, that we are talking to? We achieve three successive levels in this understanding.
 - (1) God has a relationship with our forefathers (the blessing of the “forefathers”)
 - (2) God is powerful (The blessing of “power”).
 - (3) God is holy (The blessing of “holiness”)
- b. **God’s *Hineini*, as expressed by God to Moses at the Burning Bush⁴**
 - i. Looking at the expression “I will be with you” in God’s speech to Moses:
 - (1) The phrase appears in God’s response to Moses’ question: “Who am I to go to Pharaoh?”...
 - (2) ...and then re-appears in God’s next response to Moses’ follow up question: “What is Your Name?”
 - ii. The peculiarities concerning God’s explanation of His Name. Three responses, apparently at variance with one another:
 - (1) I am that which I am
 - (2) I am
 - (3) The God of your forefathers sent me.
 - iii. *Rashi’s* explanation: “The God that is with you during this travail...”.⁵
 - (1) Understanding *Rashi’s* explanation.
 - (2) The distinction between Absolute truth vs. That Which the Jews are Prepared to Hear.
 - iv. Relating *Rashi’s* Midrashic interpretation to the simple meaning of the verse.
 - (1) The simple meaning of “I am that which I am” = I am definable only in terms of myself; i.e. “I am utterly removed from your experience”...
 - (2) **God as Holy; “removed” from our experience.**

⁴ See source notes, selection II.

⁵ See source notes, selection III.

- (a) The angels' declaration of God's Holiness.⁶
 - (b) Back to the first three blessings of the Shemoneh Esrei – from “easiest” definition of God to hardest” but most real. Holiness is the last of these blessings.
- (3) YHVH: God as timeless, while we are within time...⁷
- (a) Three modes of existence, Was, Is, and Will Be, simultaneously overlaid on each other.
- (4) **...but I still can have a relationship with you**, in which “I am”; i.e. I am here for you [and forever] experiencing vicariously the pain which you are experiencing. *You may only be able to relate to a part of this – my being with you in the here and now – but the truth is greater than you can understand...*

⁶ See source notes, selection IV.

⁷ See second half of accompanying powerpoint presentation [“Understanding the Implications of YHVH].

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LECTURE FIVE – OUTLINE

“THE SHUNAMITE WOMAN AND THE SHADOWS OF ISHMAEL”

1. **Introduction:**

- a. Here’s a thesis: Stories elsewhere in Tanach that resonate linguistically and conceptually with the Akeidah, seem to resonate with the “Expulsion of Yishmael” story as well.
- b. It is as if stories with “major” overtones of the Akeidah, also include “minor” overtones of the Phantom Akeidah, the Binding of Ishmael...
- c. Some examples:

2. **The Shunamite Woman and the Akeidah: A Review¹**

- a. The Birth of Isaac and the Birth of the Shunamite Woman’s Child.
- b. The Akeidah and the Death of the Shunamite Woman’s Child
 - i. **The laughter of the Isaac vs. the “joke” the Shunamite woman speaks about.** The same laughter that lets one give himself *to* God, allows another to demand a child back *from* God.
 - (1) Isaac and justice: A strange pair?
 - (2) Laughter as a symbol of justice: Recognition of subtle incongruity where no one else sees it.
 - (3) Laughter and Isaac; Laughter as the force behind the Akeidah: What was Isaac “laughing about” on the way up the mountain? The absurdity, in a world of “justice”, of the undeserved gift we call life.
 - (4) The Reverse Perspective: Laughter and the Shunamite Woman: “I said don’t joke with me.”

3. **The Binding of Ishmael and the Shunamite Woman in II Kings, chapter 4.** As just noted, the “Shunamite woman” story bears sharp echoes of the Akeidah [see Outline to

¹ For a detailed summary, see Outline to Lecture 1 in the series, where these parallels were first treated.

Lecture 1 for a more extensive list], but it seems to echo, in smaller ways, the Phantom Akeidah – the ordeal of Ishmael – as well:

- a. **Re-Reading the Story of the Shunamite Woman.**²
 - i. Vatisgor Ba'ado – echoes of the flood; echoes of Ehud and Eglon.
 - (1) The significance of these echoes.
 - ii. End of the story mirrors the beginning
 - (1) Two "callings" at beginning of story; two "callings" at end of story. [Each pair is a command and response].
 - (2) Two instances of "pick up the child" at the beginning of the story; two at end of the story. [Each pair is a command and response].
 - iii. The abrupt end of the story: Woman takes the child and wordlessly leaves.
 - (1) the Akeidah and the Shunamite woman: Two "justice" narratives.
- b. **"Take the child to his mother".** In both stories we seem to have the following pattern: father places child with mother; dying child with mother???.³ restored child re-united with mother by "man of God".
 - i. With the Shunamite Woman:
 - (1) The father says, when the boy says "my father, my father" – **sa'ehu el imo** – go carry him to his mother. An echo of kumi s'e'i et hayeled.
 - (2) Furthermore, the child sits on the mother's lap until the afternoon, then dies.
 - (3) then, at the end of the story, Elisha says "se'i benech".
 - ii. With the Expulsion of Ishmael:
 - (1) Father (Abraham) places boy with mother (Hagar)
 - (2) Child is distanced from Hagar while dying.
 - (3) Boy is back with mother, as Elisha commands her to "pick up her child".
 - iii. **The Language: "se'i benech".** The first time "s'ei is ever used in the

² See source notes, Selection I.

³ See accompanying powerpoint presentation.

Torah is with reference to Hagar. The second time it is used is in the Shunamite woman story, when Elisha tells her to pick up her child.

- c. **Vatelech Vatashev Mineged** – the core of the “reflected chiasm” from the Akeidah – finds an echo in the story of the Shunamite Woman: Vatelech vatavo... vayehi kirot mineged (II Kings 4:25). Is this echo a key to understanding our story as well?⁴
 - i. These are the only two times the combinations *vatelech... mineged* appear in Tanach.
 - ii. Contrast between the two⁵:
 - (1) Vatelech Vatashev mineged vs. Vatelech vatavo mineged...
 - (2) Mother distanced from child vs. Mother distanced from “man of God”
 - (a) Geichazi’s response and Elisha’s rebuke: “she is of embittered soul...”.
 - d. Conclusions.
4. **Examining Another Story with Echoes of the Akeidah: The Sale of Joseph.** As we will see next week, the story of the Sale of Joseph seems to resonate with the Akeidah. The really eerie thing, is that – like the Shunamite Woman story – it also seems to resonate with the Expulsion of Ishmael, too. We’ll talk about that when we come back next week.

⁴ See accompanying powerpoint presentation.

⁵ See accompanying powerpoint presentation.

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LECTURE SIX

“THE RAM, THE PIT AND THE COAT: JOSEPH’S ORDEAL AND THE BINDING OF ISAAC”

1. **The Problems in Understanding the Sale of Joseph.** What was everyone thinking?
 - a. The Brothers
 - b. Jacob
 - c. Joseph
 - d. God
2. Some apparently trivial difficulties with the text:
 - i. Why “Aren’t Your Brothers Shepherding in Shechem”
 - ii. Why the geography lesson: Shechem - Dotan, and the conversation with “the man”?
 - iii. Why does Jacob break up his suggestion to Joseph into two different speeches?
 - a. To see Jacob’s perspective more clearly, we need to re-read the prelude to the sale of Joseph. But first, let’s switch hats and look at the brother’s perspective on the story.
3. Jacob’s Perspective.
 - a. Is Jacob a “player” here, or is he pretty much someone who is victimized and acted upon, without much of an active role?
 - b. At face value, Jacob’s actions and intentions seem hopelessly naive. But were they?
 - i. The verse before Jacob sends Joseph on his mission indicates that Jacob was not in the dark, but was aware of the tensions. Why, then, did he send him on this mission
4. **Re-Reading the Prelude to the Sale of Joseph with An Eye Towards Jacob’s Role.**¹

¹ See Source Notes, Selection XIV.

- a. These are the generations of Yaakov – Yosef...²
- b. Charting the build-up of tensions in the family.³
 - i. The initial reason the brothers hate Joseph: He brings bad tidings about them back to Dad.
 - ii. Jacob loves Joseph more / the brothers see that father loves Joseph more.
 - iii. Joseph’s First Dream.
 - (1) Repetitive phrase: “And they hated him even more”
 - (2) “...for his dreams and for his words...” *Ramban’s* interpretation.⁴
 - iv. [*Pattern: Tension arises from Jacob’s attitudes being translated into actions; from Joseph’s attitude being translated into actions.*]
 - v. Joseph’s Second Dream
- c. Fathers’ Reaction to Second Dream
 - i. “Will your *mother* and I come...?”. *Rashi’s* interpretation.⁵
 - ii. He is angry...
 - iii. ...and he “watches” over the thing... What does this phrase mean?
 - (1) Two interpretations.
 - (2) *Rashi’s* view⁶

² See Source Notes, Selection IX.

³ See accompanying powerpoint presentation.

⁴ See source notes, Selection XI

⁵ See source notes, Selection XVII.

5. **Understanding Jacob's Actions: Daniel Stahl's Theory**⁷
- a. The nature of Joseph's mission:
 - i. To bring back reports about brothers.
 - ii. To check on the "shalom" (welfare) of the brothers and the sheep.
 - b. Joseph's "Hineini"
 - c. A mission to Shechem

⁶ See Source Notes, Selection I.

⁷ Based on "*Yosef's Test? An Analysis of the Sale of Joseph and its Comparisons to the Akeidah*", by Daniel Stahl, available for download in our "Sources" section.

- i. The history of Shechem; the future of Shechem.⁸
- d. From Emek Chevron to Shechem; Rashi and the Ramban.⁹
- e. Remaining Questions:
 - i. Jacob's two part statement to Joseph.
 - ii. Aren't Your Brothers in Shechem? Why the question?
- f. Beyond *Hineini*: Other Akeidah Parallels in the Story
 - i. *Vayiru oto merachok*
 - ii. Let's throw him in one of the pits [B'achad haborot] / sacrifice Isaac on one of the mountains I will show you.
 - iii. Al tishlach yadcha el hana'ar
 - iv. Vayisu eineihem vayiru
 - v. Yaakov's rhetorical question and God's command to "bring Isaac up" on a mountain.
 - (1) Rashi's explanation of God's words "bring Isaac up".¹⁰
- g. The identity of the mystery man who guides Joseph to Dotan.
 - i. Ramban on the identity of the mystery man.¹¹
 - ii. Ramban's interpretation of the man's words.¹²

6. **God's Perspective:**

⁸ See Rashi, Source Notes, Selection V.

⁹ See Source Notes, Selections III and IV.

¹⁰ See Source Notes, Selection XVIII.

¹¹ See Source Notes, Selection VII.

¹² See Source Notes, Selection VIII.

- a. Observation: Most of the Akeidah parallels take place *after* the story is already out of Jacob's control.
 - b. Conclusions: God works with the flow of history. Jacob plotted an Akeidah story; God went with that, and we have an Akeidah story. God just gives it a gentle nudge, which changes everything.
7. Remaining Questions
- a. Jacob's motivation
 - b. We've seen echoes of the Akeidah in this story. But it seems there are echoes of the "Phantom Akeidah" – the expulsion of Ishmael – as well...

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LECTURE SEVEN

“ALL IN THE FAMILY”

1. **Remaining Question from Last Lecture: What Was Jacob’s Motivation for his “Simulated Akeidah”?**
2. The Brothers’ Perspective on the Sale of Joseph.
 - a. The meaning of “Ben Zekunim”. Rashi’s interpretation.¹
 - b. “And they stripped Joseph of His Coat: *Rashi* on the significance of the Coat of Many Colors.²
 - i. The connection between “ben zekunim” and the coat, evident in 37:3.
 - c. Back to: “These are the generations of Jacob – Joseph”.
 - i. Rashi’s interpretation, based on the *Midrash*.³
 - d. Further Indications:
 - i. Why did Jacob leave *Lavan*’s House the moment Joseph was born? The language of the verse seems to connect these two events...
 - ii. R’ Soleveichik’s Theory on Jacob’s decision to leave Lavan’s House.
 - iii. “*When a Man Shall Have Two Wives...*”⁴. The verses in Deuteronomy as a

¹ See Source Notes, Selection X.

² See Source Notes, Selection XII.

³ See Source Notes, Selection IXX.

commentary on the brothers' motivation in selling Joseph.⁵

3. **Conclusions: Setting the Stage for the Sale of Joseph.**

- a. Jacob's point of view.
 - i. The impact of the second dream on Jacob's assessment of Joseph's place in the family.
 - ii. The cross-currents in Jacob's reaction to this dream: Is the dream a prophecy, or the product of Joseph's ego?
 - iii. Back to the "Akeidah test" – Jacob's test of Joseph: We now understand the rationale for a test: What kind of son are you? Are you my first-born or not?
 - b. The Brother's point of view.
 - i. They are responding to Jacob's "test" as well: Is Joseph the first-born is on their minds as well. This explains the connections to Deuteronomy here ["when a man shall have two wives..."]: "Joseph isn't your firstborn; it's a biological fact, regardless of Joseph's loyalty to you".
 - c. The Interplay of the Brother's point of view and the Father's point of view:
 - i. The brothers' hatred turns to jealousy, based on father's reaction to Joseph's second dream. When Jacob takes the second dream as seriously as he does, it becomes a family issue; not just a fraternal issue. It is not just personal anymore; the future of the family is at stake.
4. Next week we'll look at the Echoes of the Phantom Akeidah in the Story of Joseph...

⁴ See Source Notes, Selection XIII.

⁵ See Source Notes, Selections XIII to XVI. Pay attention to the red highlights, which point out the words which Deuteronomy seems to "borrow" from Genesis.

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LECTURE EIGHT

“EVERY GOOD *AKEIDAH* STORY COMES WITH AN ANGEL”

1. Remaining Questions
 - a. What is the real significance of the Akeidah-Expulsion of Ishmael connection?
 - b. Why does Abraham send Hagar and Ishmael into the desert with nothing more than a loaf of bread and a canteen of water?
 - c. The Rabbis’ statements regarding the prelude to the Akeidah: ¹.
 - i. God’s conversation with Satan
 - ii. The Sages’ comments on “please” take Isaac.
 - iii. What do these mean?
2. The Expulsion of Ishmael and the Sale of Joseph
 - a. Three Connections in the space of a line: *sending; shechem; wandering*.²
 - i. Sending, Shechem and Wandering in the Sale of Joseph may shed light on Sending Shechem and Wandering in the Expulsion of Ishmael...
 - b. Three More Connections in the Space of a line³:
 - i. Casting; No water, but bread; Sitting from afar...
 - c. Plus: who should come along and bail Joseph out of the pit? A Caravan of Ishmaelites...
3. The Meaning of the Second Set of Connections
 - a. Background: Brotherhood in the story of the Sale of Joseph
 - i. Judah’s Speech: His four mentions of brothers and brotherhood.
 - ii. Joseph’s request of the angel: Where are my brothers?
 - iii. The angel’s response according to the Midrash: They have left “that...”⁴
 1. the grammatical problem with “that” instead of “here”.
 - iv. The brothers’ discuss their guilt.⁵

1 See Source Notes, Selection I.

2 See accompanying powerpoint presentation.

3 See accompanying powerpoint presentation.

4 See source notes, selection III.

1. Emphasis on brotherhood.
 2. Emphasis on not listening to his cries as he pleaded with them (as opposed to original sale). Abandonment is what is emphasized, much as it is emphasized in the Torah's treatment of the expulsion of Ishmael, with reference to Hagar.
- b. Conclusion: Brothers abandoned Joseph, shirking from their responsibility as brothers to act in a brotherly way towards him, just as Hagar abandoned Ishmael.
- i. Ishmael was being disinherited; but he was also being abandoned on an emotional level, in his time of need, by his mother.
 - ii. Joseph was being disinherited, but he was also being abandoned on an emotional level, in his time of need, by his brothers.
4. Revisiting the First Set of Connections Between the Expulsion of Ishmael and the Sale of Joseph. But first, some background:
- a. The strangeness of God's "reassuring" words to Abraham: "Don't worry; Isaac will be your progeny." But why not say: "don't worry; I'll take care of them in the desert?"
 - b. The strangeness of Abraham's concern: He is worried about disinheriting his son; not the chances of survival of Hagar and Ishmael...
 - c. Why? Apparently because survival isn't an issue. Abraham can easily provide enough for them if he likes... The real issue in his mind is legacy.
 - d. Sarah's Request: Garesch / Expel Hagar and her son.
 - e. Abraham doesn't like it; appeals to God.
 - f. God's response.
 - g. Reassures Abraham about loss of heir; God will make him, too, into a great people.
 - i. Abraham's prior connection to Ishmael: "If only Ishmael would live before you... [there is no need for another son; can be my legacy...].
 - h. Abraham's response: *Sends* Ishmael and Hagar away, with meager possessions, just enough to carry on her *shoulder [shechem]*but then they start *wandering*....
 - i. Interpreting each of these three key words, by referencing their meaning in the sale of Joseph
 - i. Sending – not permanent; an expectation that the person being sent will come back.

5 See source notes, selection II.

- ii. Shoulder / Shechem – The place you are supposed to go to, then come back from.
 - iii. Wandering. What the sent person does instead of coming back.
 - j. Conclusions: Abraham listens to God and Sarah in sending away Hagar, but perhaps not quite...; he seems to have hoped that Ishmael would return.
 - k. The tragic consequences of Abraham’s decision.
 - i. Consequences with respect to his relationship with God...
 - ii. ...but also consequences in terms of what happens to Hagar and Ishmael. Hagar is placed in a test she can’t possibly succeed in.
- 5. Back to the Akeidah: Understanding the Akeidah in light of these new developments.
 - a. Back to the Sages’ statements about what provoked the Akeidah.
 - i. The Satan’s bet: Resonances with the Book of Job⁶
 1. A man who is “tam” and one who fears God.
 2. Job has lots of sheep; Abraham has “mikneh rav”; lots of sheep.
 3. A Party -- “mishteh”.
 4. Job wakes up early; Abraham wakes up early...
 5. Job wakes up to offer protective offerings to keep God from taking away his children; Abraham wakes up early to send away Ishmael (but only with enough food and water for the day, thereby protecting him from being taken away by God...).
 - ii. If Abraham is protecting Ishmael from being taken away, maybe this is what provokes the Akeidah. What if I tell you I’m taking away Isaac?
 - iii. Enter the Satan, in the eyes of the Talmud: The Satan makes a cameo appearance, borrowed from the Book of Job, and makes a bet with God much like the one God made with him in Job...
 - iv. **Back to the Akeidah:** “Please take your son, your only son...” The Sages’ analysis of “please”: “Do this so that people won’t say the first tests were nothing...”. This is where Abraham proves that he did not fail the ninth test...
 - b. The question God has about Abraham is the same as the question Jacob will later on have about Joseph.
 - i. Abraham will lead a nation that will become God’s “bechor” in the world; the destiny of that nation will be to teach the world about God. But the

⁶ See Source Notes, Selection IV. Red highlights denote connections to Abraham; purple highlight denotes connection to Midrashic elaboration of the Abraham story.

agenda of that nation must be absolute fealty to God, not to their own grandeur.

- ii. How does Abraham view his own child, who will be the beginning of that nation? Is that child an expression of his own self-hood; or is it a chance for him to carry out his mission in life, to spread the word of God? After the expulsion of Ishmael – when Abraham didn't want to let go even when God reassured him that he would have his legacy in another child – this is now open to question.
 - iii. The Aeidah is meant to resolve this question. It is a more extreme version of the ninth test. Now you have to let go of your legacy, without any guarantees that there will be a replacement.
 1. This, I think, is what the angel means when he says: *Now, I know that you have not withheld your *only* son from me...*
 - c. **The complex nature of the Akeidah:** The Akeidah as an attempt to resolve two outstanding issues created by Abraham's conduct in the expulsion of Ishmael: Will he part with his legacy; plus, Abraham's unwitting role in putting Hagar through a test she couldn't possibly handle.
 - i. **Lose your legacy.** In the last test, I told you there would be a replacement, and you still had a hard time. Now, I'm telling you to get rid even of the replacement.
 - ii. **Can You Be With This Child Even When He Faces Death at Your Hands?** In the last test, Hagar was unable to be with the child when he faced death. But that was relatively easy; death would come from an external source. Will you be able to be with your child when he dies, when you are the one who will have to kill him?
 - iii. **Abraham passes both tests simultaneously, balancing the Hineini to God with the Hineini to Isaac.**
6. **Jacob's Akeidah Test.** Back to the Akeidah parallels in the sale of Joseph story. How do we integrate these with the expulsion of Ishmael parallels in the same story. Perhaps the message is as follows:
- a. **Jacob tries to initiate an Akeidah story.**
 - b. **God says: Oh, are we playing Akeidah?** Every good Akeidah story comes with an angel who reverses the plans of the sender...
 - c. **God hijacks Jacob's Akeidah, and Uses it For His Own Ends.** God completes the Akeidah story with all the flourishes – “seeing the place from afar”; “let not our hand be upon him; “lifting up eyes and seeing”; etc. Its just that all these events are now far out of control of Jacob.
 - d. **In Effect, Then, Jacob is Not Playing God in the Akeidah Story, He is**

Playing Abraham in the Expulsion of Isaac Story. He is unwittingly expelling a child from his family...

7. Prelude and Epilogue. Directions for our new upcoming series...
 - a. The rest of Genesis may be an epilogue to this.
 - i. Just as the Akeidah was the way God sewed up the problems created by the expulsion of Ishmael, so too, the rest of Genesis may be seen as an attempt to sew up the problems created by the failed Akeidah – and expulsion story – of Jacob and Joseph.
 - ii. There are several key unsolved questions raised by that event. All of these questions are dealt with in the end of Genesis.
 1. How does Joseph view what happened in the pit? Was his father complicit? [upcoming series].
 2. Jacob wants Joseph as his heir. Is he worthy of that? We don't know yet. If he was worthy once, will he still be worthy after Jacob has – in his eyes -- been complicit in throwing him out of the family? [upcoming series].
 3. The brothers were put through a test they weren't ready for yet... They listened to Joseph's screams and didn't respond. Can they ever reconcile with Joseph? [for more on this, see our "Did Joseph and His Brothers Ever Reconcile" series in the archives.]
 4. Judah and the Brothers put their father through a lifetime of anguish. Can they ever make up for that? [for more on this, see our "Judah and Tamar" series in the archives.]
 - b. The earlier part of Genesis – from Creation through chapter 22 -- may be a prologue to this. We'll get to this in an upcoming series...