

April - June 2013, Issue #017

# *Hebrew Heritage Learning Center*

## Online Magazine

In this issue of the HHLC online magazine we will take another brief look at Abraham and the three patriarchs of Judaism—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Since these three individuals are doubtless the most important figures for the Jewish and Christian religions they require further explanation.

—David D. Mahoney

### Contents of this Issue

1. Monthly Topic: The Promise of Abraham
2. Patriarch Biography: Isaac
3. Products
4. Bibliography

---

Copyright © 2013 David D. Mahoney, *Hebrew Heritage Learning Center*

[www.HHLC.info](http://www.HHLC.info)

You are encouraged to use and distribute any information in this magazine, but only for non-profit purposes. This copyright statement must accompany the material. Thank You.

---

## 1. Monthly Topic: The Promise of Abraham

Without argument, the most significant characters of the biblical narrative are the trio of patriarchs—sometimes referred to collectively as “The Patriarchs”—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The student of the Bible and the religions of Judaism and Christianity (and even Islam) must know, at depth, the traditions and beliefs surrounding these three individuals. Thus, though they were discussed in the previous issue, the discussion will continue in this issue and the next. The goal here is to identify the traditions, beliefs, and biblical anecdotes which make them significant within religion.

The importance of these three men begins in the Bible with the promise God gives to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), which states that he would make Abraham a great nation, a great name, and make him a blessing to all the nations of the earth. In lieu of this blessing is the promise of a son: even in his old age Abraham was childless. Finally, through many trials, Abraham has his promised son, Isaac, confirming *the* Promise.

How the promise of Abraham is interpreted varies with religion, denomination, and particular cult creed; but the biblical implications are fairly clear. The Bible appears to indicate that God would make him a famous progenitor of many nationalities, the founder of a politically ruling nation on earth, and empower him (and his descendants) to empower others.

According to religious interpretation all of these have been fulfilled in some way. If the biblical account be true, Abraham surely was the father of many nations, not the least of which are the Jewish people; and even though the concept of Israel being the holy nation has shrouded also being the politically ruling nation, one can find the fulfillment of this in the reign of King Solomon. As far as Abraham being blessed to bless others (or empowered to empower others) one may take this in a religious sense, that the three major Western religions have been formed out of Abraham’s personal move to monotheism. However, the traditions may go even deeper. For instance, Josephus, the first century Jewish historian says in chapter eight of his *Antiquities of the Jews* that Abraham was responsible for teaching the Egyptians arithmetic and the science of astronomy. Since the origins of some of the fundamentals of mathematics still used today, like geometry, are attributed to the Egyptians, Josephus is circuitously giving Abraham the credit for giving the world the fundamentals of mathematics.

In summary, however one wishes to interpret or understand the blessing of Abraham, one cannot deny that it is the basis for the Jewish and even Christian faith. Aside from all else, the basic proposition is that Abraham gave to the world the true revelation of the Creator, how to live in his will (and perhaps more), and the personal living heritage to represent it.

## 2. Patriarch Biography: Isaac

Being the promised son of Abraham, Isaac takes center stage in the biblical narrative of the founding of the people of Israel. Though he is very significant, there is less emphasis placed on him in the Bible than on his father, Abraham, or his son, Jacob. He is not depicted as being as heroic or as revolutionary as they were.

There are, however, a few comparisons that can be drawn between Isaac and the other two members of the patriarch trio which set him apart in distinctive ways. First, he was the promised son of Abraham who embodied the full promise. Second, the covenant God made with Abraham was not only ratified in the blood of sacrifices, but of the blood of circumcision: Isaac was the first to be circumcised on the eighth day as God had commanded. Third, he is the only one of the three who did not venture down to Egypt, because he was commanded not to go just as the children of Israel would also later be commanded not to go back to Egypt. Fourth, he is also the only one of the three to have been a cultivator of the ground as well as a livestock breeder.

Finally, he was the symbolic sacrifice of the covenant himself when Abraham was commanded to sacrifice him to the Creator. Although God stopped the event before blood was spilled, the act of Isaac's acquiescence to the commandment of God sealed the covenant for eternity. This event is known in Judaism as the *Akedah*, or the *binding*, because Isaac was bound on the altar. The significance, one could safely assume, of this event receiving this name has to do with a covenant being kind of a *binding* act of agreement. Further, the place he was sacrificed on, Mount Moriah, is believed in tradition to be the same place for the building of the Temple of Solomon hundreds of years later: the place where the Creator connects with mankind.

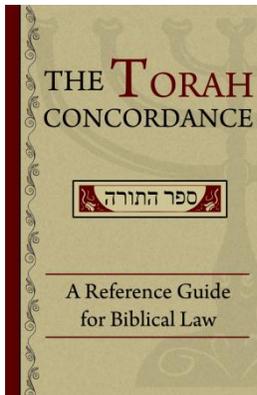
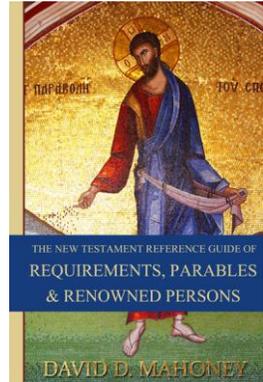
In Jewish traditional literature, such as the Midrash and the Book of Jasher, Isaac is portrayed as bringing on his own head the commandment to Abraham to sacrifice him due to rivalry between himself and Ishmael, his step brother. This indicates the role of Isaac in the *Akedah* event to be more significant than even Abraham. Due to this significance, Christians have commonly interpreted the sacrifice of Isaac to be a type and shadow of the coming Christ's death and resurrection. For Judaism, however, the binding of Isaac is no less significant: if Isaac had not complied with the commandment, the covenant and promise would not have been continued, and thus their relationship with the Creator would not exist.

Finally, Isaac is pronounced in Hebrew as *Yitschak*, which means laughter. This name was given him because Abraham and Sarah laughed at having a child in their old age, which was indicative of his miraculous and providential role in God's plan for humanity.

### 3. Products

***The New Testament Reference Guide of Requirements, Parables & Renowned Persons*** carefully documents the essential teachings of the New Testament and the major players and books of the earliest centuries of Church history.

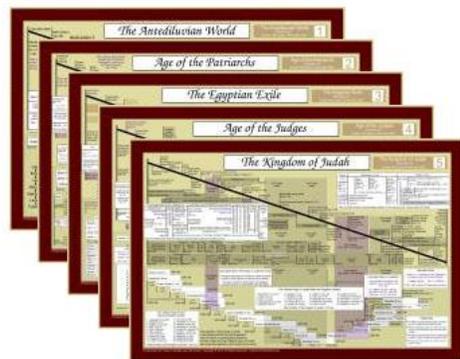
ISBN: 978-1479115273



***The Torah Concordance: A Reference Guide for Biblical Law*** is indispensable for studying the commandments of the Old Testament. It contains a catalog of all commands put upon the people of Israel in the first five books of the Bible. For ease of use, the laws have been arranged under relevant categories and subheadings, complete with biblical references.

ISBN: 978-1479128242

***The Chronology of the Hebrew Bible Charts***, gloss printed on 17x11 inch poster stock, detail each successive period of the Old Testament in chronological order, with dates indicating the year from creation. They can be purchased as a set or individually.



**For more information on these products or to purchase, please visit the *Hebrew Heritage Learning Center* website:  
[www.HHLC.info](http://www.HHLC.info)**

## 4. Bibliography

### BIBLE VERSIONS AND COMMENTARY

- The Holy Bible. *New King James Version*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1982.
- The Holy Bible. *King James Version*.
- *The New American Bible*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1970.
- *The Stone Edition Tanach*. Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1996, 1998.
- Bullinger, E.W. *The Companion Bible*.
- Hertz, Dr. J.H. *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*. London: Soncino Press, 5751-1990.
- *The Stone Edition Chumash*. Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1998, 2000.

### REFERENCE MATERIAL

- Strong, James. *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990.
- Wigram, George V. *The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, (1843) 2009.
- Green, Jay P. Sr. *The Interlinear Bible, 4 volumes*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985.
- *The BDB Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005.
- Holladay, William L. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988.
- Benner, Jeff A. *Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible*. College Station TX: Virtualbookworm.com Publishing, 2005.
- *The Oxford Pocket Dictionary and Thesaurus*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2004.
- Price, Simon; and Kearns, Emily (Editors). *The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth & Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

### SOURCES FOR HEBREW LANGUAGE EDUCATION

- Dobson, John H. *Learn Biblical Hebrew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999, 2005.
- Fuller, Russell T. *Invitation to Biblical Hebrew: A Beginning Grammar*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006.
- Kelley, Page H. *Biblical Hebrew: An Introductory Grammar*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992.
- Simon, Ethelyn; Resnikoff, Irene; and Motzkin, Linda. *The First Hebrew Primer (Third Edition)*. Oakland, CA: EKS Publishing Co., 2005.
- Arnold, Bill T. & Choi, John H. *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

### BIBLICAL TRANSMISSION AND TRANSLATION

- Lightfoot, Neil R. *How We Got the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003.
- Comfort, Philip W. *Essential Guide to Bible Versions*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2000.
- Dewey, David. *A User's Guide to Bible Translations*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.
- Vance, Laurence M. *A Brief History of English Bible Translations*. Pensacola, FL: 1993.
- Sysling, Harry (Executive Editor). *MIKRA: Text, Translation, Reading & Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism & Early Christianity*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988, 2004.

### RESEARCH AND SOURCE MATERIAL

- *The Book of Jasher*. Muskogee, OK: Artisan, 1988. (A reprint of the J.H. Parry publication, 1887. Originally translated from the Hebrew, 1840.)
- Guggenheimer, Heinrich W. *Seder Olam: The Rabbinic View of Biblical Chronology*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998.
- *Midrash Seder Olam. A Photostatic Reproduction of Ber Ratner's edition of the text, notes and introduction*. Brooklyn, NY: Moznaim Publishing Corporation.
- Gardiner, Alan. *The Egyptians*. London: The Folio Society (Oxford University Press 1961), 2002.
- Translated by William Whiston. *The Works of Josephus*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987.
- *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*. Ten Volumes. 1939, 1948.