



# PHF ELITE SCHOOLS

EDUCATION SKILLS FOR ALL

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### **Abraham - The Father of all who Believe**

Whenever the Bible looks back to God's choice or election of Israel, it speaks first of Abraham. Indeed prior to the revelation of the Divine Name to Moses, God is referred to as "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" and "the God of our fathers." Similarly, when St. Paul seeks to ground the Gospel in the Old Testament, he argues: "What then shall we say of our father Abraham?" (Rom 4:1)

### **The Covenant Promise - For Faith Alone**

- The covenant is a central feature of Biblical revelation.
- Besides associating the covenant with Moses at Mount Sinai (Chapter 4),
- Abraham also received the promise in the form of a covenant.
- God "cuts a covenant" with Abraham in an elaborate ritual looking forward to the Temple sacrifices.
- The crucial response to the covenant offer is not the ceremony but faith
- "Abraham believed God, and he reckoned it to him as righteousness."

No specific ritual is equal to the greatness of God's promise except to believe!

## The Covenant Sign of Obedience – Circumcision

- God's first restatement of the promise in **Genesis 15** emphasizes faith,
- His second repetition in **Genesis 17** faith must be joined to obedience: "...walk before me and be blameless" (17:1).
- This obedience is **engraved**, as it were, in the flesh of every son of the covenant by circumcision.

Abraham's plea for his uncircumcised son Ishmael (v 18) was a statement more of doubt than faith. Humanly, he knew his wife was advanced in age and biologically could not get pregnant. However, God in his wisdom, He overcame Sarah's age and she was able to conceive and produce the promised child to Abraham.

## THE COVENANT SACRIFICE - THE BINDING OF ISAAC

The "binding of Isaac," as it is known to Jews, is the supreme example of faith in [the Old Testament](#). The Promise to Abraham began with a call out of the blue: "Go..." Now at the pinnacle of his life, having received a son miraculously by his wife Sarah, Abraham is extremely tested: "Take your son and go..."

- Abraham's feelings are not explained only his methodical actions and brief conversation with Isaac.
- Abraham without questioning intends to follow through with the sacrifice.

[Genesis 22](#), records the account of how God tested Abraham's faith. He was asked to sacrifice the promised son Isaac. When they were set to go to the place of sacrifice, Isaac realised the absence of the lamb for sacrifice. When he asked about it, Abraham answered "God would provide".

***Abraham said this perhaps because he did not want to scare the child off by informing him that he was the sacrificial animal, or perhaps he believed that God who caused the birth of the child would do miracles to provide. Indeed God provided a ram at the last moment to substitute for Isaac.***

### **For Theological Reflection**

Serious theology must look at the sacrifice in the face and ask: “What does faith cost?” and “What kind of God would call for such a sacrifice?” The apostle Paul looked at the depths of sin and death and could fathom Abraham’s sacrifice only in terms of God’s own self-offering: If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? (Rom 8:31-32) Abraham, for all his weaknesses, becomes the supreme example of one who learned obedience through what he suffered (Heb. 5:8). Just as Cross leads to Resurrection, Abraham’s test leads to reward. The word of promise is now confirmed by God’s oath. For this reason, Abraham is known not only as Father of the nation but as Friend of God (Isa 41:8).