

Vicarious Sacrifice: The Offering of Isaac: *Anaphērō* in Genesis 22; the Mandate to Sacrifice Isaac, vv. 1–2; the Trip to Mt. Moriah, vv. 3–4; Abraham’s 1st Use of Faith-Rest, v. 5; Isaac Takes the Wood, Abraham the Fire & Knife, v. 6; Isaac Notices No Lamb for Sacrifice, Abram’s 2d Use of Faith-Rest, vv. 7–8; Abraham Prepares Isaac for Sacrifice, v. 9; the Lord Intervenes, vv. 10–12; the Lord Provides a Ram for the Offering (*Anaphērō*), v. 13; the Lord, Abraham, & the Divine Decree; Rams in Jewish Sacrifices

Genesis 22:1 - It came about ... that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

Genesis 22:2 - God said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him [LXX: [ἀναφέρω (*anaphērō*)] there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.”

- (1) This passage contains numerous pictures of Jesus Christ. Here we see the phrase, “your only son,” a reference to Jesus Christ as the uniquely-born Son of God.
- (2) God orders Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering: *anaphērō*, to lift up as an offering to God.
- (3) The place of this sacrifice is stated as “one of the mountains” in the “land of Moriah.”
- (4) Mount Moriah became the site of David’s City of Jerusalem. It was just outside its walls that the Lord was crucified at a place referred to as Golgotha.
- (5) It is highly likely that where Abraham will build an altar to sacrifice Isaac is at the very place that Messiah was crucified.

Genesis 22:3 - So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

v. 4 - On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance.

- (6) Notice that Abraham was accompanied by two servants and his son Isaac. On arrival at Moriah, Abraham express his application of the faith-rest drill:

Genesis 22:5 - Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad [נַעַר] (*na’ar*)] will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.

- (7) In this verse and in verse 12, Abraham refers to Isaac as a “lad” or *na’ar* in Hebrew. The definition of this word varies so the age of Isaac requires some investigation.

A *na’ar* is “actually in transition to puberty, when the voice changes, someone who speaks with a rasp.” (p. 475)

Na’ar clearly refers to youth. The upper boundary varies: 20 (Exodus 30:14; Numbers 1:3, 18; 14:29; 26:2; 32:11), 25 (Numbers 8:24), 30 (Numbers 4:3, 23). The rabbis reflect similar uncertainty: *Midrash Proverbs* on 1:4 states that one is a *na’ar* until age 25 (R. Meir), 30 (R. Akibu), or 20 R. Ishmael), because from the age of 20 one is held accountable for his sins. (p. 480)

The story of Hagar's expulsion (Genesis 21:8–21) sometimes calls Ishmael a *yeled* (vv. 14–16), sometimes *na'ar* (12, 17 [2], 18–20). The *na'ar* Isaac is somewhat older (22:5, 12); he walks next to his father and carries the wood for the burnt offering.¹ (p. 481)

- (8) *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* defines *na'ar* as "a young person, a boy; one old enough to serve in battle or as a personal private force, or as a helper in the army" (p.742).
- (9) From these sources we can estimate Isaac's age to be in the late teens or early twenties.
- (10) Abraham instructs his two servants to remain with the donkey and that both he and his son will return to them after they worship.
- (11) This is Abraham's application of the faith-rest drill:

Stage 1: Claims a promise: Genesis 21:12, "through Isaac your descendants will be named."

Stage 2: A doctrinal rationale applied to the circumstance: the Plan of God rational: If the Abrahamic Covenant is to be fulfilled, then if after having sacrificed his son, God is obligated to resuscitate him from the dead. A picture of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, followed by the resurrection.

Stage 3: Faith execution: the spiritual courage to make a tough choice based on confidence in the integrity of God: "Being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform" (Romans 4:21).

Genesis 22:6 - Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire [שֵׁן ('esh)] and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.

- (12) The imagery of Jesus carrying His cross through the streets of Jerusalem is depicted by Isaac carrying the wood that would be ignited beneath him on the spot that would be called Golgotha.
- (13) Abraham took the supplies including the fire and the knife which were essentials in a ritual sacrifice.

Abraham apparently carried a piece of burning fire with him when he went to offer Isaac (Genesis 22:6).²

- (14) The knife was going to be used to slit Isaac's throat although Abraham had confidence he would not be required by God to do so, but should it be, he was also confident Isaac would, by virtue of the Abrahamic Covenant, be resuscitated by God.

Genesis 22:7 - Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

v. 8 - Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

¹ H. F. Fuhs, "נַעַר," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 9:475, 480–81.

² Jackie A. Naudé, "שֵׁן," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, gen. ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1:533.

- (15) Abraham's doctrinal conclusion is now stated: God will provide the Lamb, His uniquely-born Son, the Lamb without spot or blemish, the sinless Substitute for the entire human race.
- (16) In the meantime, the two walk side by side up Moriah to the place of sacrifice, Abraham confident that God would intervene in some way.

Genesis 22:9 - Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

- (17) Abraham faithfully continues the process required by the instructions from God, even the gruesome obligation to bind his son and affix him to the awaiting wood.
- (18) On the other hand, Isaac shows his submission to the will of God. He is a strong young man of around twenty years of age. He could resist, but did not. He submitted to the knife and the fire without protest.
- (19) Neither did Christ recoil from the fate that was placed upon Him. He willingly went to the cross, willingly agreed to receive the imputation of every sin of human history, and willingly received the judgment of them.

Genesis 22:10 - Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

v. 11 - But the angel of the Lord [a theophany of Jesus Christ] called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

v. 12 - He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

- (20) This is a theophany of Jesus Christ Who intervenes to halt the sacrifice of Isaac. This is not God speaking, but Jesus. The doubling of the name Abraham is divine recognition of the patriarch's spiritual maturity.

The sacrifice was already accomplished in his heart, and he had fully satisfied the requirements of God. He was not to slay his son: therefore God [Jesus Christ] prevented the outward fulfilment of the sacrifice by an immediate interposition.³

- (21) Having been stopped in the process of sacrificing his only son, Abraham, after withdrawing the knife, has his attention drawn to a ram caught in some brambles.

Genesis 22:13 - Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram [אֵילִם ('ayil)] caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up [עָלָה ('alah); LXX: ἀναφέρω (anaphérō): to offer or lift up] for a burnt offering in the place of his son.

- (22) Having proved by means of doctrine in his soul that he was willing to go through with the sacrifice, the Lord stopped the process. He never intended for Abraham to go through with it.
- (23) Abraham's decision was logged in the PROM chip of the computer of the divine decree. The test was designed for Abraham to learn that when he obeyed the Lord, the Lord would take care of the details.

³ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch*, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 1:250.

- (24) The major detail was a substitute for Isaac. That substitute was the ram which represented the ultimate sacrifice of the coming Messiah and was a common participant in two of the Israelites major feasts as well as the most sacred of its holy days:
- (1) **Passover.** Portrayed the work of Christ on the cross with emphasis on redemption. Egypt symbolized life as an unbeliever in slavery to the sin nature. The Exodus was freedom from that slavery through faith in the Passover lamb's sacrifice. "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7b).
 - (2) **Pentecost.** For the Israelites it marked the first of the summer harvests. Since the Church Age began on Pentecost, it marks the beginning of the harvest of souls into the Body of Christ, the universal church, and the royal family of God.
 - (3) **Yom Kippur or Day of Atonement.** For the Israelites, it was the annual sacrifice that covered the people's sins committed over the previous year. It was a teaching aid for the ultimate sacrifice by the innocent Messiah who would be judged for the sins of the world by removing the barrier between God and man.
- (25) The ram was one of the animals sacrificed in each of these observances:
- 'ayil. Rams were offered as regular sacrifices throughout the year. Only a ram was to be used for a guilt offering (Leviticus 5:15f.; 19:21–22), called a "ram of atonement" (Numbers 5:8). Often rams were among the burnt offerings, linked with bulls and lambs. The order is usually given as bulls, rams, and lambs (Numbers 28:11; 1 Chronicles 29:21). Rams for burnt offerings were accompanied with grain offering and liquid offerings. They were offered at Passover (Numbers 28:19–20), Pentecost (Leviticus 23:18), and the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:3, 5).⁴**
- (26) The ram in Genesis 22:13 served as an illustration of the sacrifice of the Messiah, God's only Son.
- (27) Abraham was a believer. His submission to the Lord's directive to sacrifice his only son was used not only to confirm to Abraham the advantages of trusting God, but also it served as an illustration of how sin would be managed for the entire world.

⁴ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, "'ayil," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1980), 21.