

**SOURCE SHEET**

**Narratives of Healing: Akeidat Yitchok and Mechirat Yosef**

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## 1. Breishit 22:1-19

(1) It happened after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" He said, "Here I am." (2) He said, "Now take your son, your only son, whom you love, even Isaac, and go into the land of Moriah. Offer him there for a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I will tell you of." (3) Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went to the place of which God had told him. (4) On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place far off. (5) Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go yonder. We will worship, and come back to you." (6) Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. He took in his hand the fire and the knife. They both went together. (7) Isaac spoke to Abraham his father, and said, "My father?" He said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (8) Abraham said, "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they both went together. (9) They came to the place which God had told him of. Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, on the wood. (10) Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to kill his son. (11) The angel of Hashem called to him out of the sky, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" He said, "Here I am." (12) He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy, neither do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." (13) Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and saw that behind him was a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering instead of his son.  
(14)

וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם שְׁם־הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא יְהוָה אֵלֵינוּ אָמַר הַיּוֹם בְּתַר יְהוָה יִרְאֶה:

And Abraham named that site Adonai-yireh (Hashem will see), as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD there is vision." (15) The angel of Hashem called to Abraham a second time out of the sky, (16) and said, "I have sworn by myself, says Hashem, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, (17) that I will bless you greatly, and I will multiply your seed greatly like the stars of the heavens, and like the sand which is on the seashore. Your seed will possess the gate of his enemies. (18) In your seed will all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." (19) So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba. Abraham lived at Beersheba.

## 2. Breishit, Ch. 37

(1) Jacob lived in the land of his father's travels, in the land of Canaan. (2) This is the history of the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. Joseph brought an evil report of them to their father. (3) Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colors. (4) His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, and they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him. (5) Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brothers, and they hated him all the more. (6) He said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: (7) for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves came around, and bowed down to my sheaf." (8) His brothers said to him, "Will you indeed reign over us? Or will you indeed have dominion over us?" They hated him all the more for his dreams and for his words. (9) He dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brothers, and said, "Behold, I have dreamed yet another dream: and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to me." (10) He told it to his father and to his brothers. His father rebuked him, and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Will I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves down to you to the earth?" (11) His brothers envied him, but his father kept this saying in mind. (12) His brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. (13) Israel said to Joseph, "Aren't your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them." He said to him, "Here I am." (14) He said to him, "Go now, see whether it is well with your brothers, and well with the flock; and bring me word again." So he sent him out of the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. (15) A certain man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field. The man asked him, "What are you looking for?" (16) He said, "I am looking for my brothers. Tell me, please, where they are feeding the flock." (17) The man said, "They have left here, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" Joseph went after his brothers, and found them in Dothan. (18) They saw him afar off, and before he came near to them, they conspired against him to kill him. (19) They said one to another, "Behold, this dreamer comes. (20) Come now therefore, and let's kill him, and cast him into one of the pits, and we will say, 'An evil animal has devoured him.' We will see what will become of his dreams." (21) Reuben heard it, and delivered him out of their hand, and said, "Let's not take his life." (22) Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him" — that he might deliver him out of their hand, to restore him to his father. (23) It happened, when Joseph came to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his coat, the coat of many colors that was on him; (24) and they took him, and threw him into the pit. The pit was empty. There was no water in it. (25) They sat down to eat bread, and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing spices and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. (26) Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? (27) Come, and let's sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not let our hand be on him; for he is our brother, our flesh." His

brothers listened to him. (28) Midianites who were merchants passed by, and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. They brought Joseph into Egypt. (29) Reuben returned to the pit; and saw that Joseph was not in the pit; and he tore his clothes. (30) He returned to his brothers, and said, "The child is no more; and I, where will I go?" (31) They took Joseph's coat, and killed a male goat, and dipped the coat in the blood. (32) They took the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father, and said, "We have found this. Examine it, now, whether it is your son's coat or not." (33) He recognized it, and said, "It is my son's coat. An evil animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces." (34) Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. (35) All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. He said, "For I will go down to Sheol to my son mourning." His father wept for him. (36) The Midianites sold him into Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, the captain of the guard.

3. *Abraham's Journey*, pp. 11-12, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik ("the Rav"), 1903-1993  
(italics added)

Of course, the idea of sacrifice is a cornerstone of Judaism, and the Akeida has inevitably introduced sacrificial action as a part of our historical drama. Yet, as we have said, the drama of the Akeida is multi-semantic, lending itself to many interpretations. G-d demands that man bring the supreme sacrifice, but the fashion in which the challenge is met is for man to determine.

There are two ways in which the total sacrifice is implemented-- the physical and the experiential. The choice of method is up to man. The need for sacrifice was established as an iron law in Jewish history. However, whether man should sacrifice on a physical altar atop some mountain the way G-d summoned Abraham to do or *in the recesses of his personality is man's privilege to determine*. G-d wills man to choose the altar and the sacrifice.

Abraham implemented the sacrifice of Isaac not on Mount Moriah but in *the depths of his heart*. He gave up Isaac the very instant G-d addressed Himself to him and asked him to return his most precious possession to its legitimate master and owner. Immediately, with no arguing or pleading, Abraham surrendered Isaac. He gave him up as soon as the command "and offer him there as a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:2) was issued. Inwardly, the sacrificial act was consummated at once. Isaac no longer belonged to Abraham. Isaac was dead as far as Abraham was concerned.

4. *Community, Covenant and Commitment* (pp. 298-99) by the Rav

The precept of sacrifice is a central motif in Judaism. To live in accord with G-d's will is identical with living a sacrificial life. To act morally is synonymous with sacrificial action...

What did man bring as an offering? What was man called upon to sacrifice? Judaism gave a straightforward answer to this basic theological and ethical question. Man must offer everything he possesses. Nothing is to be spared and nothing is saved for man. The logic of this answer is self-evident. ... Since there is nothing within reach of man which he does not have in trust for an from G-d, there is nothing from whose return to G-d would not be considered a hallowed sacrificial service.

5. *The Emergence of Ethical Man* (pp. 156-57), by the Rav

When reading the Torah's account of the Akeida, we marvel at Abraham's sedateness, complacency and peace of mind. The enormity of his feat was demonstrated not in his actual compliance with Divine order, but in the manner in which he behaved in the face of this most puzzling Divine command. ... Abraham seemingly did not even realize the absurdity of the Divine order, which effectively canceled all previous promises and covenants. Naively, almost irrationally, he perceived the demand as somehow compatible with the eternal covenant. By acting this way, Abraham unconsciously relieved his tension and reconciled himself with G-d.

Faith represents this peculiar attitude of leading a life fraught with realities which contradict the very ideal for which the faithful suffer, believing in the covenant notwithstanding all crises and retreats.

6. Breishit Rabbah (Medrash)

"On the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes..." (Gen. 22:4). It is written, "He will revive us from the two days, on the third day He will set us up, and we will live before Him." (Hoshea 6:22) On the third day of the tribes it is written "On the third day, Joseph said to them ..." (Gen. 42:18) On the third day of the spies, as it says "and hide yourselves there three days" (Joshua 2:16) On the third day of the giving of the Torah, as it says "It came to pass on the third day" (Ex. 19:16) On the third day of Jonah, as it is written, "and Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights." (Jonah 2:1) On the third day of those who came up from exile, as it is written "and stayed there three days." (Ezra 8:32) On the third day of the resurrection of the dead, as it is written "He will revive us from the two days, on the third day He will set us up, and we will live before Him (Hoshea 6:2) On Esther's third day "Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther clothed herself regally" (Esther 5:1) The royalty of her father's house. In what merit? This is an argument of the Rabbis and Rabbi Levi. The Rabbis say: in the merit of the third day of the giving of the Torah, as it says "It came to pass on the third day when it was morning..." (Ex. 19:16)

Rabbi Levi said: in the merit of the third day of our father Avraham, as it says "On the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar (Gen. 22:4) What did he see? He saw a cloud attached to the mountain.

## 7. Breishit Ch. 38

(1)

וַיְהִי בַעֲתָהּ הַהִוא בְּנִרְדֵי יְהוֹנָדָה מֵאֵת אֶחָיו בִּישַׁע עַד־אִישׁ עַד־לְמִי וְשָׁמוֹ הִירָהּ:

It happened at that time, that **Judah went down** from his brothers, and visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. (2) Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her, and went in to her. (3) She conceived, and bore a son; and he named him Er. (4) She conceived again, and bore a son; and she named him Onan. (5) She yet again bore a son, and named him Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bore him. (6) Judah took a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. (7) Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of Hashem. Hashem killed him. (8) Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her, and raise up seed to your brother." (9) Onan knew that the seed would not be his; and it happened, when he went in to his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest he should give seed to his brother. (10) The thing which he did was evil in the sight of Hashem, and he killed him also. (11) Then Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, "Remain a widow in your father's house, until Shelah, my son, is grown up"; for he said, "Lest he also die, like his brothers." Tamar went and lived in her father's house. (12) After many days, Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died. Judah was comforted, and went up to his sheepshearers to Timnah, he and his friend Hirah, the Adullamite. (13) It was told Tamar, saying, "Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." (14) She took off of her the garments of her widowhood, and covered herself with her veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gate of Enaim, which is by the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she was not given to him as a wife. (15) When Judah saw her, he thought that she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. (16) He turned to her by the way, and said, "Please come, let me come in to you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?" (17) He said, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." She said, "Will you give me a pledge, until you send it?" (18) He said, "What pledge will I give you?" She said, "Your signet and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand." He gave them to her, and came in to her, and she conceived by him. (19) She arose, and went away, and put off her veil from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood. (20) Judah sent the young goat by the hand of his friend, the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman's hand, but he did not find her. (21) Then he asked the men of her place, saying, "Where is the prostitute, that was at Enaim by the road?" They said, "There has been no prostitute here." (22) He returned to Judah, and said, "I have not found her; and also the men of the place said, 'There has been no prostitute here.'" (23) Judah said, "Let her keep it, lest we be shamed. Behold, I sent this young goat, and you have not found her." (24) It happened about three months later, that it was told Judah, saying, "Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has played the

prostitute; and moreover, behold, she is with child by prostitution.” Judah said, “Bring her out, and let her be burnt.” (25) When she was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law saying, “By the man, whose these are, I am with child.” She also said, “*Please discern whose are these — the signet, and the cords, and the staff.*” (26) **Judah acknowledged them, and said, “She is more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah, my son.”** He knew her again no more. (27) It happened in the time of her travail, that behold, twins were in her womb. (28) When she travailed, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, “This came out first.” (29) It happened, as he drew back his hand, that behold, his brother came out, and she said, “Why have you made a breach for yourself?” Therefore his name was called Perez. (30) Afterward his brother came out, that had the scarlet thread on his hand, and his name was called Zerah.

8. R. Yosef Bekhor Shor (12th cent. France)

And Yehudah went down from his brothers- Since he saw the suffering of his father and his crying, he was not able to stand it, so separated from his father's house and from his brothers.

9. R. Bahya Ibn Pekuda, 11th-c. Spain

If people speak of bad things he did which are true, he will admit his failings and will not seek false excuses to absolve and justify himself, as Yehudah said "She has been more righteous than I" and he won't attempt to shame the speaker and make him out a liar, nor condemn him or having exposed him.

10. Breishit, Chapter 44, v. 18-24, 30-34

(18) Then Judah came near to him, and said, “Oh, my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord’s ears, and do not let your anger burn against your servant; for you are even as Pharaoh. (19) My lord asked his servants, saying, ‘Have you a father, or a brother?’ (20) We said to my lord, ‘We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother; and his father loves him.’ (21) You said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.’ (22) We said to my lord, ‘The boy cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die.’ (23) You said to your servants, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will see my face no more.’ (24) It happened when we came up to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. . . . (30) **Now therefore when I come to your servant my father, and the boy is not with us; since his life is bound up in the boy’s life; (31) it will happen, when he sees that the boy is no more, that he will die. Your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant, our father, with sorrow to Sheol.** (32) For your servant became collateral for the boy to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him to you, then I will bear the blame to my father forever.’ (33) Now therefore, please let your servant stay instead of the boy, a bondservant to my lord; and let the boy go up with

his brothers. (34) For how will I go up to my father, if the boy is not with me? lest I see the evil that will come on my father."

11. Ramban, 12-13th cent. Spain, Israel

And [Yehudah] said "for how can I go up to my father" to let [Yosef] know that he would choose to be a permanent slave rather than go up to his father without the lad, because [Yehudah] could not see [Yaakov's] tragedy, because [Yaakov] would cry always and complain about [Yosef] all day. And [Yehudah] mentioned this so that [Yosef] would not suspect that [Yehudah] was planning to trick [Yosef] because [Yehudah] knew how to escape better than the lad.

12. *Yemei Zikaron*, pp. 73-74, the Rav

In contrast to Yosef, who was born as a moral man by nature, Yehudah was the opposite. Many of the natural strengths of Yehudah were actually negative, and sometimes even destructive. Yehudah was full of contradictions and complexities; only through ... self-discipline, self-abnegation, and great spiritual exertion did Yehudah arrive at the honored status that he occupies in the history of the Jewish people.

13. Breishit, Ch. 27, v. 1

וַיְהִי כִּי־נָקַו יִצְחָק וּמִתְקַדֵּינְ עֵינָיו מִרְאֵת וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־עֵשָׂו אָבְנֵוּ הַגָּדוֹל וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו

בְּנֵי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנְנִי:

(1) It happened, that when Isaac was old, and **his eyes were dim [from seeing]**, so that he could not see, he called Esau his elder son, and said to him, "My son?" He said to him, "Here I am."

14. Breishit Rabbah (Medrash)

And his eyes dimmed from seeing ... Another explanation: "From seeing" -- from the strength of that seeing. For at the time that Avraham Avinu bound his son on the altar, the angels cried, and tears fell into his eyes, and they were impressed upon his eyes, and when he grew older his eyes dimmed, as it says, "And it was when Yitzchak grew old, etc." Another explanation: "From seeing" -- from the strength of that seeing, for at the time that Avraham Avinu bound Yitzchak his son on the altar, he [Yitzchak] fixed his eyes upon the heavens and looked at the Divine Presence.

15. R. Chizkiyahu ben Manoah, 13th-14th-c. France

And Avraham returned to his lads - And where did Yitzchak go? He was hidden in Gan Eden for three years. Another explanation: he went to the yeshiva of Ever to learn Torah.

16. *Yemei Zikaron*, p. 196, the Rav

One would be mistaken to assert that the sacrifice of Isaac never actually occurred. At the moment that G-d told Abraham to take his son and bring him up as an offering, Abraham no longer saw Isaac as his own, but as G-d's. Abraham considered Isaac as if he were already sacrificed. When the angel later told Abraham, "Do not stretch forth your hand to the lad nor do the slightest to him," it was as if Isaac were born anew at that point.

17. Breishit, Ch. 45, v. 4-5; Ch. 50, v. 16-20

(4) Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." They came near. "He said, I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. (5) Now do not be grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.

(16) They sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father commanded before he died, saying, (17) 'You shall tell Joseph, "Now please forgive the disobedience of your brothers, and their sin, because they did evil to you.'" Now, please forgive the disobedience of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. (18) His brothers also went and fell down before his face; and they said, "Behold, we are your servants." (19) Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? (20) As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save many people alive.

18. R. Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz, 16th-17th c. Poland, Prague

And [the Torah] said that [Pharoah] did not know Yosef- for he did not know what had happened to Yosef, that his brothers had tried with all their strength to destroy him and to annul his dreams, but all their plots did not help them, because G-d's will was with Yosef to advance him and G-d's word will always be established. So, too, Pharoah said "lest they multiply," against the will of G-d Who said "they will multiply," and he made plans against them and it did not work for him just as it did not work for the brothers of Yosef...

19. Vayikrah Rabbah (Medrash)

Know that it is so, for Yitzchak returned to his mother, and she said to him, "Where were you, my son?" He said, "My father took me and led me up mountains and down valleys, etc." She said, "Woe upon the son of an unfortunate woman! If not for the angel, you would already have been slaughtered." He said, "Yes." At that time she let out six cries that are parallel to six *tekiyot*, and they said that she did not finish before she died. This is as it says, "And Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to mourn her." From where did he come? Rabbi Yehuda ben Rabbi Simon said, "He came from Har Moriah."

20. Breishit Rabbah (Medrash)

That night, Sarah stretched out on her face [in prayer] and said: "Master of the world, Avraham left [his homeland] with a promise, and I left with faith. Avraham is outside of the boat, and I am inside the boat [in other words, subject to danger]. Hashem said to her: "All that I do I do for you, and everyone will say. "For the sake of Sarai the wife of Avraham."

21. Breishit Chapter 37, v. 34-35

(34) Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. (35) All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. He said, "For I will go down to Sheol to my son mourning." His father wept for him.

22. R. Ovadya ben Yaakov Seforno, 15th-16th c. Italy

He refused to listen to words of comfort in order not to become guilty of forgetting to mourn.

He vowed to remain in mourning for the balance of his life. His reason was that he blamed himself for what had happened because he had sent his beloved son on such a dangerous errand.

Yitzchak wept over Yaakov's decision to remain in mourning for the rest of his life. As a result of being in mourning, he would forfeit the Divine inspiration also.

23. Breishit, Chapter 47, v. 8-9

(8) Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How many are the days of the years of your life?" (9) Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred thirty years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

24. R. Shlomo ben Meir (Rashbam), 11th-12th c. France

Seeing that Pharaoh's question of how old he was appeared to Yaakov as being motivated by his extremely old appearance, he told him that he was not nearly as old as he might look, but that the various troubles in his life he had endured had left their mark on his appearance.

25. Rashi on Breishit, Chapter 46, v. 29

וַיֵּאָסֶר יוֹסֵף מִרְכָבָתוֹ בַּיַּעַל לִקְרַאת־יִשְׂרָאֵל אָבִיו גְּשֵׁנָה וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו וַיִּפֹּל עַל־צַוֵּןָ

רְיֹו וַיִּכְרַךְ עַל־צַוֵּאָרְיוֹ עוֹד:

Joseph prepared his chariot, and went up to meet Israel, his father, in Goshen. He presented himself to him, and fell on his neck, **and wept on his neck a good while.**

AND WEPT ON HIS NECK A GOOD WHILE-- The phrase signifies weeping copiously. So, too, [the word] *od* has the same meaning in (Job 34:23) "for He doth not place upon a man *od*-- which means something more than is proper: G-d does not place on him accusations additional to his sins (the sins he has really committed). Here, also, he wept greatly and continuously-- more than is usual. Jacob, however, did not fall upon Joseph's neck nor did he kiss him. Our Rabbis say: the reason was that he was reciting the *Shema*.