

# Rembrandt, Caravaggio & The Art of the Akeidah

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# Torah Reading for 2nd Day of Rosh Hashanah

Genesis 22:1-18

בראשית כ"ב:א'-י"ח

**(1) Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test.** He said to him, "Abraham," and he answered, "Here I am." (2) And He said, "Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you." (3) So early next morning, Abraham saddled his ass and took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and he set out for the place of which God had told him. (4) On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place from afar. (5) Then Abraham said to his servants, "You stay here with the ass. The boy and I will go up there; we will worship and we will return to you." (6) Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on his son Isaac. He himself took the firestone and the knife; and the two walked off together. (7) Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he answered, "Yes, my son." And he said, "Here are the firestone and the wood; but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" (8) And Abraham said, "God will see to the sheep for His burnt offering, my son." And the two of them walked on together. (9) They arrived at the place of which God had told him. Abraham built an altar there; he laid out the wood; he bound his son Isaac; he laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. (10) And Abraham picked up the knife to slay his son. (11) Then an angel of the LORD called to him from heaven: "Abraham! Abraham!" And he answered, "Here I am." (12) And he said, "Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me." (13) When Abraham looked up, his eye fell upon a ram, caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son. (14) And Abraham named that site Adonai-yireh, whence the present saying, "On the mount of the LORD there is vision." (15) The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, (16) and said, "By Myself I swear, the LORD declares: Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favored one, (17) I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore; and your descendants shall seize the gates of their foes. (18) All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed My command."

**(א) ויהי אחר הדברים האלה והאלקים נסה את-אברהם** ויאמר אליו אברהם ויאמר הגוי: (ב) ויאמר קח-נא את-בנך אשר-אהבת את-יצימך ודד-לך אל-ארץ המריה והעלהו שם לעלה על אחד ההרים אשר אמר אליך: (ג) וישכם אברהם בבקר ויחבל את-חמרו וילחך את-שני נערו איתו ואת יצחק בנו ויבסע עצי עלה ויקם וילך אל-המקום אשר-אמר-לו האלקים: (ד) ביום השלישי וישא אברהם את-יעגיו וירא את-המקום מרחק: (ה) ויאמר אברהם אל-נערו שבו-לכם פה עמ-החמור ואני והזער נלכה עד-כה וגשפתנה ונשובה אליכם: (ו) ויקח אברהם את-עצי העלה וישם עלי-יצחק בנו ויקח בנו את-האש ואת-המאכלת וילכו שניהם יחדו: (ז) ויאמר יצחק אל-אברהם אביו ויאמר אבי ויאמר הגוי כני ויאמר הגו האש והעצים ואנה השא לעלה: (ח) ויאמר אברהם אלקים יראה-לו השא לעלה בני וילכו שניהם יחדו: (ט) ויבאו אל-המקום אשר אמר-לו האלקים ויבן שם אברהם את-המזבח ויערף את-העצים ויעקד את-יצחק בנו וישם אתו על-המזבח ממעל לעצים: (י) וישלח אברהם את-ילדו ויקח את-המאכלת לשחט את-בנו: (יא) ויקרא אליו מלאך ה' מן השמים ויאמר אברהם ו אברהם ויאמר הגוי: (יב) ויאמר אל-תשלה נדך אל-הזער ואל-תעש לו מאיפה כי ועתה ידעתי כי-נרא אלקים ולא חשכת את-בנך את-יחידיך ממני: (יג) וישא אברהם את-יעגיו ורא והנה-איל אחר נאחו בסבך בקרניו וילך אברהם ויקח את-האיל והעלהו לעלה תחת בנו: (יד) ויקרא אברהם שם-המקום ההוא ה' וראו אשר אמר היום בנה ה' יראה: (טו) ויקרא מלאך ה' אל-אברהם שגית מן-השמים: (טז) ויאמר בני נשבעתי נא-מה' כי-יעז אשר עשית את-דבר ה' ולא חשכת את-בנך את-יחידיך: (יז) כי-ברך אברהם וחרבה ארבה את-ורעה ככוכבי השמים וכחול אשר על-שפת הים וירש ורעה את-שער אביו: (יח) והתברכו בורעה כל גויי הארץ עקב אשר שמעת בקלי:

# The Art of the Akeidah

*Elements to consider:*

1. Age of Yitzchak
2. Emotion of Avraham
3. Emotion of Yitzchak
4. Position of Yitzchak
5. Position of Avraham



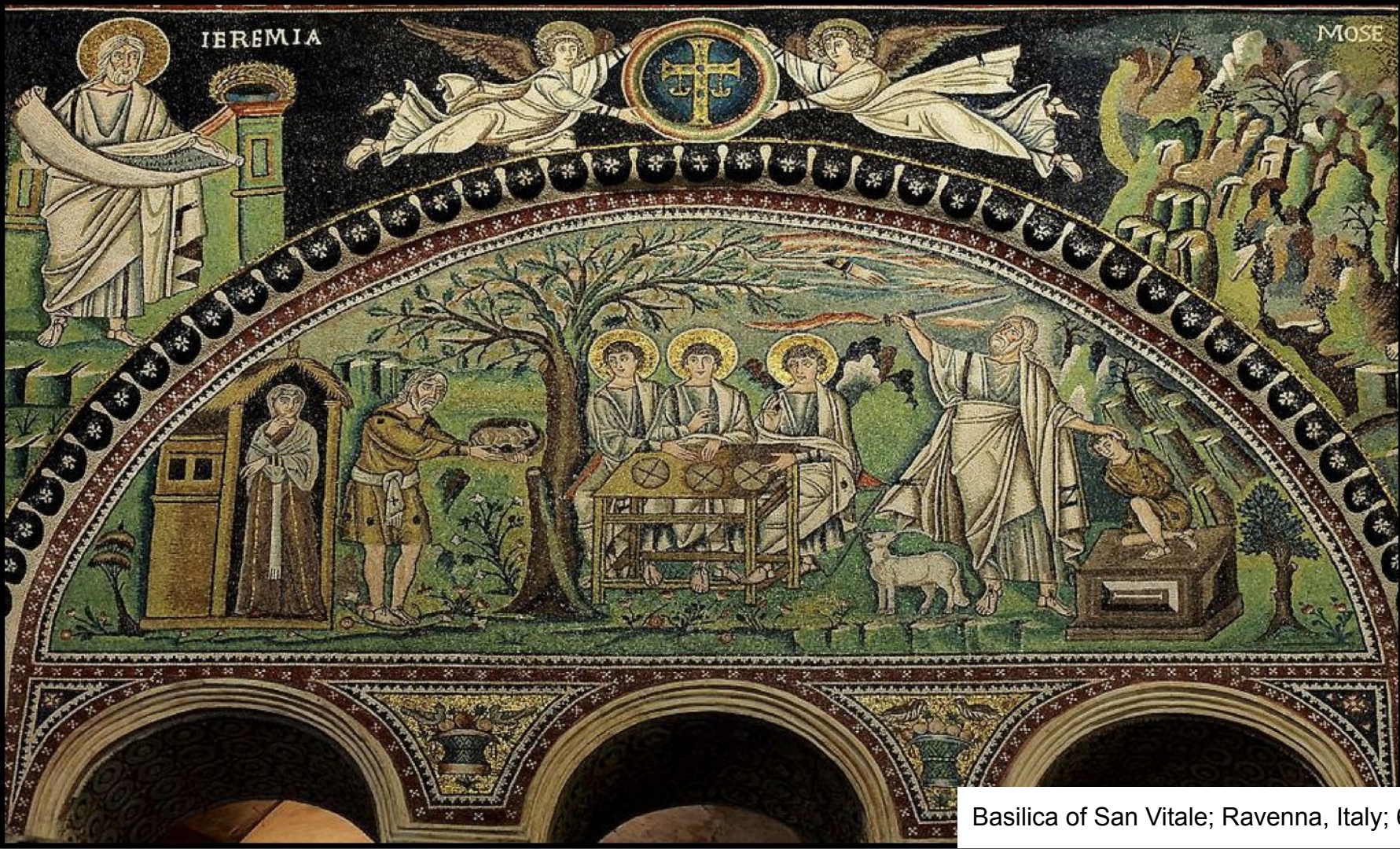
Beit Alfa Synagogue (Near Beit She'an, 6th CE)



Elements to consider:

1. Age of Yitzchak
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Beit Alfa Synagogue (Near Beit She'an, 6th CE)



Basilica of San Vitale; Ravenna, Italy; 6th CE



*Elements to consider:*

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4. Position of Yitzchak
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Basilica of San Vitale; Ravenna, Italy; 6th CE





Florence Cathedral (Duomo)



Baptistry of the Florence Cathedral (Duomo)



Filippo Brunelleschi, 1402

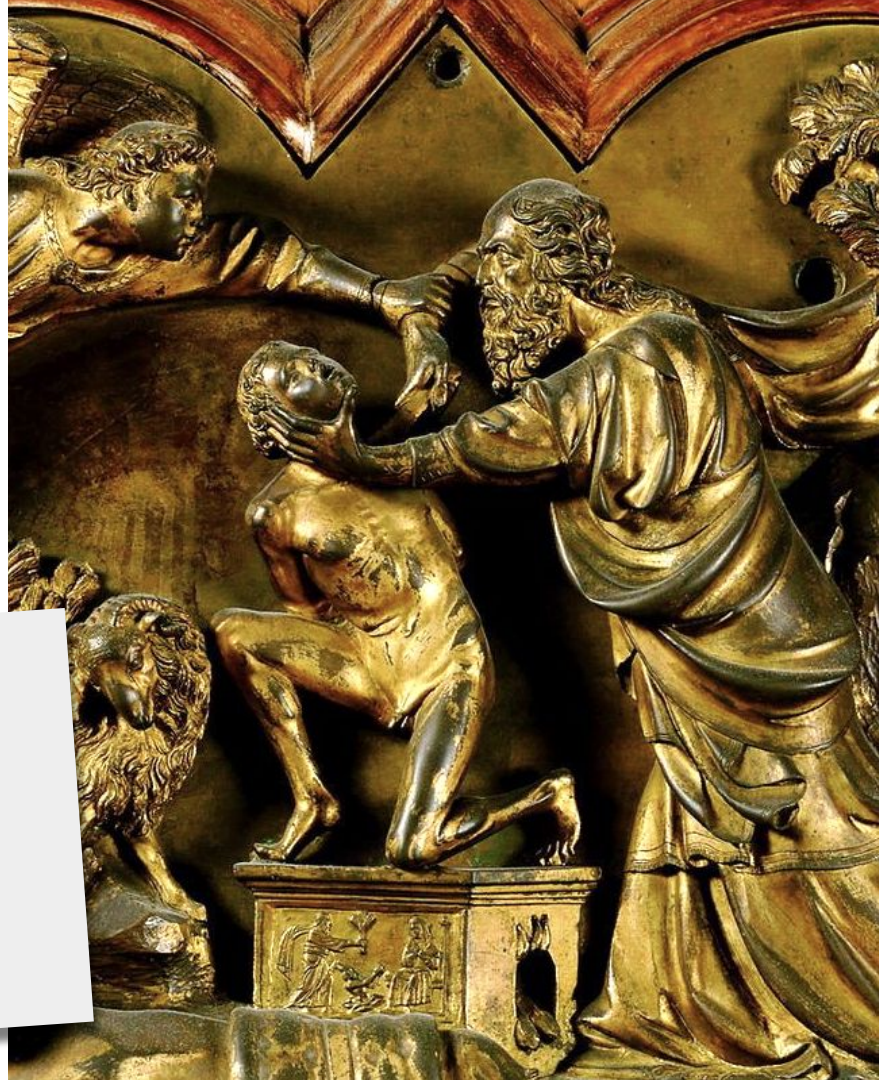


Lorenzo Ghiberti, 1402



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Paolo Veronese, "Sacrifice of Isaac" 1586



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Caravaggio, "Sacrifice of Isaac" 1603





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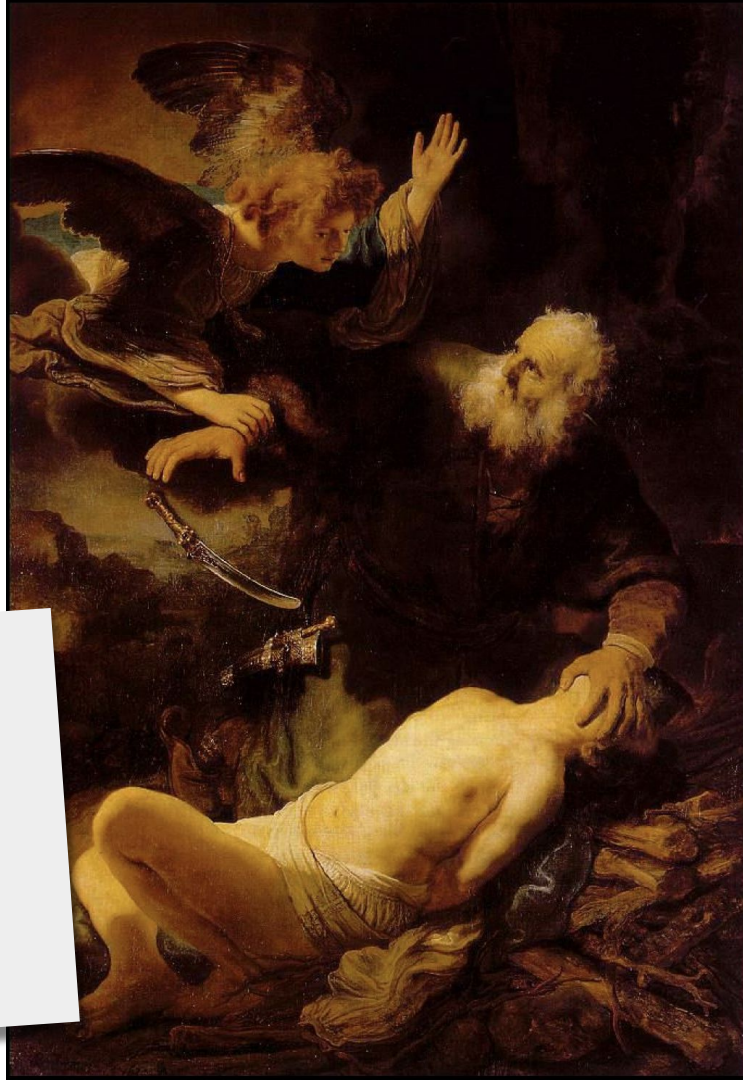
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Rembrandt, "Sacrifice of Isaac," 1635



Rembrandt, "Sacrifice of Isaac," 1635



Rembrandt, "Sacrifice of Isaac," 1635

Rembrandt, "Abraham's Sacrifice," 1655





Rembrandt, "Abraham's Sacrifice," 1655



# Is it Jewish?

<b>1. Age of Yitzchak</b>	A child / teen	OR	An adult
<b>2. Emotion of Avraham</b>	Stoic / focused	OR	Confused
<b>3. Emotion of Yitzchak</b>	Stoic / happy	OR	Terrified
<b>4. Position of Yitzchak</b>	Stretching his neck	OR	Needing restraint
<b>5. Position of Avraham</b>	Looking forward	OR	Turned around

# Yitzchak's Age

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## Ibn Ezra on Genesis 22:5:1

...Our rabbis said that when Isaac was bound he was **37 years old**. If that's what the tradition says, then we accept it. (But) by way of reason, this isn't correct: For it would (then) be fitting that the righteousness of Isaac that would be revealed and it would be that his reward would be two times the reward of his father, because he gave up himself in his willingness to be sacrificed. But, nothing is written about Isaac in the scripture. And others say that he was **5 years old**. This also isn't possible, for he lifted the wood for the offering. And those close to the knowledge (the most likely thing) (is) that he was close to **13 years old**, and his father forced him, and bound him, for it wasn't his will. And the evidence is that his father hid the secret from him: "And he said, God will see to the sheep." Because, if he said to him, "you are the sacrifice" it is possible he would have fled.

## אבן עזרא על בראשית כ"ב:ה'א'

... ורבותינו ז"ל אמרו שהיה יצחק כאשר נעקד **בן שלשים ושבע שנים**. ואם דברי קבלה נקבל. ומדרך סברא אין זה נכון. שהיה ראוי שתהיה צדקת יצחק גלוי' ויהיה שכרו כפול משכר אביו שמסר עצמו ברצונו לשחיטה ואין בכתוב מאומה על יצחק. ואחרים אמרו שהיה **בן חמש שנים** גם זה לא יתכן בעבור שישא עצי העולה. והקרוב אל הדעת שהי' קרוב **ל"ג שנים**. והכריחו אביו ועקדו שלא ברצונו והעד שאביו הסתיר הסוד ממנו ואמר אלהים יראה לו השה כי אילו אמר לו אתה העולה יתכן שיברה

# Avraham and Yitzchak As Willing Participants

## Eicha Rabba, Introduction #24

Immediately Abraham opened up before The Holy One blessed is He and said, 'Master of the world, at one hundred years [of age] you gave me a son, and when he became an adult and was a lad of thirty seven years, you said to me, "bring him as a burnt offering before me." I acted upon him with cruelty and I did not pity him, rather I myself forced him. [Yet] you will not remember this for me, and you will not have mercy upon my children!' Isaac opened up and said, 'Master of the world, when Dad told me (Genesis 22:8) "*G-d will see to the sheep for His burnt offering, my son.*" I did not hesitate on his words, and I bound myself with the will of my heart upon the altar and I stretched my neck under the knife. [Yet] you will not remember this for me and you will not have mercy for my children.'

## איכה רבה, פתיחתא כ"ד

מִיָּד פָּתַח אַבְרָהָם לִפְנֵי הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא וְאָמַר רַבּוֹנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם לְמַעַן שְׁנֵה נִתַּתָּ לִי בֶן, וְכִשְׁעָמַד עַל דְּעֵתוֹ וְהָיָה בְּחוּר בֶּן שְׁלֹשִׁים וְשִׁבְעֵי שָׁנִים אָמַרְתָּ לִי הַעֲלֵהוּ עוֹלָה לִפְנֵי, וְנִעַשִׂיתִי עָלָיו כְּאַכְזָרִי וְלֹא רַחֲמֵי עָלָיו, אֲלֵא אֲנִי בְּעֶצְמִי כִּפְתַתִּי אוֹתוֹ, וְלֹא תִזְכֹּר לִי זֹאת וְלֹא תִרְחַם עַל בְּנִי. פָּתַח יִצְחָק וְאָמַר רַבּוֹנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, כִּשְׁאָמַר לִי אָבִא (בְּרַאשִׁית כב, ח): אֱלֹהִים יִרְאֶה לוֹ הַשָּׂה לְעֹלָה בְּנִי, לֹא עֲכַבְתִּי עַל דְּבַרֶיךָ וְנִעַקְדַתִּי בְּרִצּוֹן לִבִּי עַל גְּבִי הַמְזוּבָּה וּפְשֻטְתִּי אֶת צְנֹאֲרֵי תַחַת הַסַּכִּינִי, וְלֹא תִזְכֹּר לִי זֹאת וְלֹא תִרְחַם עַל בְּנִי.

### Rashi on Genesis 22:8:1

השה — יראה לו השה — this means as much as: He will look out for and choose a lamb for Himself, and if there will be no lamb for a burnt offering, then, בני MY SON will be the offering. Although Isaac then understood that he was travelling on to be slain, yet.

### Rashi on Genesis 22:8:2

וילכו שניהם יחדיו THEY WENT BOTH OF THEM TOGETHER — with the same ready heart (Genesis Rabbah 56:4).

### Rashi on Genesis 22:12:1

LAY NOT THINE HAND [UPON THE LAD] to slay him. Then he (Abraham) said to God, “If this be so, I have come here for nothing; let me at least inflict a wound on him and draw some blood from him”. God replied, “Neither do thou anything (מאומה) to him” — inflict no blemish (מום) on him (Genesis Rabbah 56:7).

רש"י על בראשית כ"ב:ח':א'

יראה לו השה. פלומר יראה ויבחר לו השה, ואם אין ששה, לעולה בני. ואף על פי שהבין יצחק שהוא הולך להשחט,

רש"י על בראשית כ"ב:ח':ב'

וילכו שניהם יחדיו. בלב ששה:

רש"י על בראשית כ"ב:י"ב:א'

אל תשלה. לשחט; אמר לו אם פן לתנם באתי לכאן, אעשה בו חבלה ואוציא ממנו מעט דם, אמר לו אל תעש לו מאומה – אל תעש בו מום:

# Avraham and Yitzchak As Resistors

## Mishnah Taanit 2:4

For the conclusion of the first blessing he recites: **He Who answered Abraham on Mount Moriah** (see Genesis 22:11–18), He will answer you and hear the sound of your cry on this day. Blessed are You, Lord, Redeemer of Israel. For the second blessing, (to which he adds the verses of Remembrances) he recites: He Who answered our forefathers at the Red Sea (see Exodus 14:15–31), He will answer you and hear the sound of your cry on this day. Blessed are You, Lord, Who remembers the forgotten. For the third blessing (which includes the verses of *Shofarot*) he recites: ...

## Selichot Service, Ashkenaz and Sefard

**He who answered Abraham our Father on Mount Moriah, He shall answer us. He who answered his son Isaac when he was bound upon on the Altar, He shall answer us.** He who answered Jacob in Beit El, He shall answer us. He who answered Joseph in jail, He shall answer us.

## משנה תענית ב'ד'

על הראשונה הוא אומר, **מי שענה את אברהם בהר המוריה**, הוא יענה אתכם וישמע בקול צעקתכם היום הזה, ברוך אתה ה' גואל ישראל. על השנייה הוא אומר, **מי שענה את אבותינו על ים סוף**, הוא יענה אתכם וישמע קול צעקתכם היום הזה, ברוך אתה ה' זוכר הנשפחות. על השלישית הוא אומר, ...

## סליחות, נוסח אשכנז ונוסח ספרד

**מי שענה לאברהם אבינו בהר המוריה** הוא יעננו. **מי שענה ליצחק בנו כשנעקד על גבי המזבח** הוא יעננו. **מי שענה ליעקב בבית אל** הוא יעננו. **מי שענה ליוסף בבית האסורים** הוא יעננו. **מי שענה לאבותינו על ים סוף** הוא יעננו. ...

## Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Torah Shebikhtav, Vayera, Torah Ohr 2

שני לוחות הברית, תורה שבכתב, וירא, תורה אור ב'

...The commandment to Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice is terribly difficult to understand. Especially so the fact that it is called מאכלת, "something that feeds," i.e. that the people of Israel still "feed" on the merit accumulated by our patriarch Abraham who took his only son and pre-ordained successor in order to slaughter him with his own hands because G-d had commanded him. Also the merit accumulated by Isaac who went along with this cheerfully, viz: Genesis 22,8: וילכו שניהם יחדו, is totally astounding. **However, when you examine the text carefully, you will find that both Abraham and Isaac made efforts to escape this particular death, as has been pointed out by our sages.** When Abraham answers his son's question "where is the lamb for the offering?" by saying: G-d will select the lamb for Himself, my son," this is to be understood as a prayer to G-d to select a different offering (22,7-8). We must read the verse as: "If G-d does not select a different lamb, then לעולה בני, "my son will be the offering." Thus we find that Abraham prayed for a miracle by G-d. Because of Abraham's prayer and the fact that G-d responded favorably, we say nowadays in our תפילות prayers that "May the One who answered Abraham at Mount Moriah, also answer our prayers."

... כי יש קושיא גדולה ועצומה בענין מעשה העקידה הנקרא (בראשית כב, ו) מאכלת שאוכלין ישראל בזכותה כי רב הוא מאוד, לקח את בנו יחידו הממלא את מקומו לשוחטו בידיו בשביל ציווי המקום ב"ה, וילכו שניהם יחדיו באהבה בשמחה לעשות רצון אבינו שבשמים, ועמד בנסיון הגדול הזה. **אמנם כי דייקת שפיר, תמצא בפסוק ובדברי רז"ל שהיה אב ובנו מצדדים ליפטר ממותה זו.** אם בפסוק, כתיב (שם ח) ויאמר אברהם אלהים יראה לו השם, וזה היה תפלה ממנו שימציא הש"י שה במקומו, וסיים אח"כ, ואם לא ימציא לו הש"י שה אזי לעולה בני, מכל מקום התפלל הוא שיעשה לו הש"י נס, ושעל זה אנו אומרים (בסליחות) מי שענה לאברהם אבינו בהר המוריה הוא יעננו כי הוא נענה על תפלתו.

...The Holy One Blessed Be He immediately said to [the angel] Michael "What are standing there for?! Don't let him (kill Yitzchak)!"

Michael began to call out to him (as it says): "And the Angel of Hashem called out to him from the heavens saying Avraham! Avraham!" He said it twice because he [Avraham] was hurrying to slaughter him [Yitzchak] and he [Michael] shouted like a man who is screaming due to danger saying "what are you doing?!"

**And so Avraham turned his head toward him [Michael].**

He [Michael] said to him [Avraham]: "What are you doing? *Don't cast your hand against the boy!*" He [Avraham] responded: "Should I strangle him [instead]?" He [Michael] replied: "*Don't do anything to him!*" **Avraham said to him: Which one is it?! The Holy One Blessed Be He told me to sacrifice him and you are telling me not to?!**

Immediately [The Holy One Blessed Be He] jumped in and said: "My son, *by Myself I swear, the LORD declares: Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favored one, [I will bestow My blessing upon you]...*

מיד אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למיכאל: מה אתה עומד?! אל תניחנו!

התחיל מיכאל קורא אותו: "ויקרא אליו מלאך ה' מן השמים ויאמר אברהם אברהם", ב' פעמים שהיה ממחר לשוחטו והיה צווח בו כאדם הצועק מתוך צרה "מה אתה עושה???"

**אברהם הופך פניו אצלו.**

אמר לו [מיכאל לאברהם]: מה אתה עושה?! אל תשלה ירך אל הנער!!! אמר לו: ואחנקנו? ואמר: ואל תעש לו מאומה! אמר לו אברהם: חוץ מזו ומזו? הקב"ה אמר לי לקרב בני ואתה אומר לא תקרבנו?!

מיד קפץ עליו [הקדוש ברוך הוא] ויאמר: בני, בי נשבעתי נאם ה' כי יען אשר לא חשכת את בנך את יחידך...".

## Pesikta Rabati 40:1

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He [Michael] said to him [Avraham]: “What are you doing? *Don’t cast your hand against the boy!*” He [Avraham] responded: “Should I strangle him [instead]?” He [Michael] replied: “*Don’t do anything to him!*” **Avraham said to him: Which one is it?! The Holy One Blessed Be He told me to sacrifice him and you are telling me not to?!**

Immediately [The Holy One Blessed Be He] jumped in and said: “My son, *by Myself I swear, the LORD declares: Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favored one, [I will bestow My blessing upon you].*...





## Bereishit Rabbah 56:8

Another explanation: Rabbi Itzchak said, "At the time that Avraham sought to bind Itzchak, his son, [the latter] said to him, 'Father, I am a just a boy and I am worried that **my body will shake from fear of the knife** and I will trouble you, and the slaughtering will become invalid and it will not be considered a sacrifice for you. Rather, **tie me up very well.**'

Immediately, 'and he bound Itzchak.' Could he really tie up a man of thirty-seven (a different version: of twenty six years)? Rather, it was with his agreement. Immediately. 'And Avraham sent his hand.' He sends his hand to take the knife and his eyes brings down tears and the tears fall onto the eyes of Itzchak from the mercy of his father. And nonetheless, the heart was happy to do the will of his Maker.

...Rabbi Acha said, "Avraham started to become confused, **These words are confusing.** Yesterday, you told me (Genesis 21:12), "Because in Itzchak will your seed be called." And [then] you went back and said, "Please take your son." And now You say to me, "Do not send your hand to the youth." It is a confusing!' The Holy One, blessed be He, said, 'Avraham, "I will not profane My covenant and the utterances of My lips, I will not change" (Psalms 89:35) – When I said, "Please take your son," I did not say, "slaughter him," but rather, "and bring him up." For the sake of love did I say [it] to you: I said to you, "Bring him up," and you have fulfilled My words. And now, bring him down.'

## בראשית רבה נ"ו:ח'

דבר אחר, אמר רבי יצחק ב'שעה שבקש אברהם לעקד יצחק בנו, אמר לו אבא בחור אני וח'ששני ש'מא י'דעזע גופי מפחדה של ספין ואצ'ערה, וש'מא תפסל השחיטה ולא תעלה לה לקרבן, אלא פ'תני י'פה י'פה

, מ'י'ד וי'עקד את יצחק, פ'לום יכול אדם ל'פות בן שלשים וש'בע [נסח אחר: בן עשרים ושיש שנה] אלא ל'דעתו. מ'י'ד וי'שלח אברהם את י'דו, הוא שולח י'ד לטל את הספין ועיניו מורידות דמעות ונ'ופלות דמעות לעיניו של יצחק מרחמנותו של אבא, וא'ף על פי כן הלב ש'מח לעשות רצון יוצ'רו...

אמר רבי א'חא התחיל אברהם תמה, אין הדברים הללו אלא דברים של תמה, א'תמול א'מרת (בראשית כא, יב): פי ב'יצחק יקרא לה זרע, ק'זרת וא'מרת (בראשית כב, ב): קח נא את בנך, ועכ'שיו את אמר לי (בראשית כב, יב): אל תשלח י'דך אל הנער, א'תמ'הא. אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא אברהם (תהלים פט, לה): לא א'חלל ב'ריתי ומוצא ש'פתי לא א'שנה. ב'ש'אמ'רתי לה קח נא את בנך, לא אמ'רתי ש'חטהו, אלא ו'העלהו, ל'שם ח'בה א'מ'רתי לה, א'ס'ק'תיה ו'ק'נ'מת ד'ב'רי, ו'ע'תה א'ח'ת'י'ניה.

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סליחות, נוסח אשכנז ונוסח ספרד

מי שְׁעָנָה לְאַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ בְּהַר הַמֹּרִיָּה הוּא  
יַעֲנֵנוּ. מי שְׁעָנָה לְיִצְחָק בְּנוֹ כְּשֶׁנֶּעֱקֵד עַל גְּבִי  
הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הוּא יַעֲנֵנוּ. מי שְׁעָנָה לְיַעֲקֹב בְּבֵית אֵל  
הוּא יַעֲנֵנוּ. מי שְׁעָנָה לְיוֹסֵף בְּבֵית הָאֲסוּרִים הוּא  
יַעֲנֵנוּ. מי שְׁעָנָה לְאַבְרָהָם עַל יַם סוּף הוּא יַעֲנֵנוּ.

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## Selichot Service, Ashkenaz and Sefard

**He who answered Abraham our  
Father on Mount Moriah, He  
shall answer us. He who  
answered his son Isaac when  
he was bound upon on the  
Altar, He shall answer us. He  
who answered Jacob in Beit El,  
He shall answer us. He who  
answered Joseph in jail, He shall  
answer us.**