

# **The Faith of Abraham**

by  
Neil Snyder

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# About the Author

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In 2009, he created *SnyderTalk*, a blog that focuses on Israel and the Middle East. The URL for *SnyderTalk* is [www.snydertalk.com](http://www.snydertalk.com).

Snyder is the author of many books including *His Name is Yahweh*, *His Name is Yahweh: Revised Edition*, *Must Jewish People Convert to Christianity to be Saved?*, *Press on to Maturity*, *What Will You Do with the Rest of Your Life?*, *Stand!*, *Falsely Accused*, *Vision, Values & Courage*, and *The Will to Lead*.

# The Faith of Abraham

My journey with Yahweh began in McRae, Georgia when I was a young boy. It picked up a head of steam about two decades ago in Charlottesville, Virginia when He led me to write *His Name is Yahweh*.

Yahweh is Elohim's<sup>1</sup> Personal Name. It's referred to as the Divine Name and the Unspeakable Name, but Yahweh's Name is not unspeakable. In fact, He said that He wants us to remember Him by the Name Yahweh and to call Him Yahweh forever.<sup>2</sup>

## We have Salvation in Yahweh's Name

Yahweh is the only Name in which we have salvation. That's what Yahweh told Joel. Years later, Peter and Paul delivered that message to believers in the early days of the church:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Elohim is a Hebrew word that means "strong one". In most Bibles, it's translated inaccurately as "GOD" (all caps) when it refers to Yahweh. It's translated as "god" (no caps) when it refers to humans, false deities, and inanimate objects of worship. Although "GOD" has become a substitute for Yahweh's Name, it's the name of a pagan deity that is also spelled Gad, Gaud, and Gawd. "LORD" (all caps) is also used inappropriately as a substitute for Yahweh's Name.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 3: 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ekklesia* is the Greek word that's translated as "church". It refers to people who believe in and follow Yahweh. It does not mean an institution or a religion. Literally, it means "called out ones".

“Everyone who calls on the Name of Yahweh will be saved/delivered.” (Joel 2: 32, Acts 2: 21, and Romans 10: 13)

This is how Yahweh explained it to Isaiah:

“I, even I, am Yahweh, and there is no savior besides Me.” (Isaiah 43: 11)

Peter explained it this way:

“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4: 12)

### **The Messiah is Yahweh**

Acts 4: 12 is arguably the most misunderstood verse in the New Testament. Peter was referring to the Name “Yahweh”.<sup>4</sup> He could not have been referring to any other name. Since Peter was talking about the Messiah, he was also saying that the Messiah is Yahweh.

The fact that the Messiah is Yahweh is not a New Testament revelation. It’s all over the Tanach/Old Testament. For instance, this is what Yahweh told Jeremiah:

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<sup>4</sup> The misunderstanding of Acts 4: 12 stems from the fact that believers have elevated the name Jesus and think Peter was talking about that name. He was not. The Messiah’s Name at birth was Y’shua. It was never Jesus. Y’shua means “Yahweh saves” or “Yahweh is salvation”. For more details, see *His Name is Yahweh: Revised Edition*.

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His Name by which He will be called, ‘Yahweh our righteousness.’” (Jeremiah 23: 5-6)

### **The Messiah is the Supreme Sovereign and the Creator**

More than anything else, the Tanach/Old Testament is about the Messiah. He is the Supreme Sovereign and the Creator.

Genesis 1: 1 is the first verse in the Tanach/Old Testament that talks about Him:

“In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1: 1)

Elohim is a plural word. Thus, Genesis 1: 1 points to the fact that Yahweh has more than one manifestation.

El is the singular form of Elohim. If Yahweh had just one manifestation, “El” would have been used in Genesis 1: 1 instead of “Elohim”.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> El and Elohim are not names. They are titles. Yahweh is a Name.

The Messiah is the human manifestation of Yahweh. He appears in Person throughout the Tanach/Old Testament. That's especially relevant for this discussion since Yahweh appeared in Person to make the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob/Israel that all believers rely on for salvation. The fact that Yahweh has human form is irrefutable.<sup>6</sup>

The Tanach/Old Testament also refers to Ruach Yahweh, or the Spirit of Yahweh.<sup>7</sup> He is another manifestation of the Creator. The Father, Son, and Spirit are One.<sup>8</sup> The three of them were together at the creation. Hence, the use of the word "Elohim" in Genesis 1: 1.

The New Testament emphasizes the Messiah's role as our Sovereign *and* His role as our Savior and Redeemer. This is how Paul explained His role as Sovereign:

"For this reason also, Elohim highly exalted Him [the Messiah], and bestowed on Him the Name which is above every name [Yahweh], so that at the Name of the Messiah [Yahweh] every knee

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<sup>6</sup> See *His Name is Yahweh: Revised Edition* chapter 5 for a detailed explanation.

<sup>7</sup> Most Christians refer to Ruach Yahweh as the "Holy Spirit". In Hebrew, it's Ruach haKodesh. He is also called Ruach Yahweh or the Spirit of Yahweh.

<sup>8</sup> The word "Trinity" is used by many believers to explain the three manifestations of Yahweh, but that's not correct. The word "Trinity" does not appear in the Scriptures. The correct Hebrew word is Echad. It means "One". Yahweh is One, Echad. He is a singular Being with three manifestations. See *His Name is Yahweh: Revised Edition* for more details.

will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Y'shua the Messiah is Yahweh, to the glory of Elohim the Father." (Philippians 2: 9-11)

Yahweh is the Name that is above every name. Yahweh bestowed His Name on the Messiah.<sup>9</sup> He is Yahweh the Son. The Messiah is the One to whom every knee will bow, and He is the only Yahweh that anyone will ever see.

### **GOD is not a Substitute for Yahweh**

Several years after I wrote *His Name is Yahweh*, Yahweh's Spirit led me to revise the book so that it would reflect the extent to which He detests the use of the word "GOD" when it's applied to Him.

Traditionally, LORD and GOD are used as substitutes for Yahweh's Name,<sup>10</sup> but GOD is particularly problematic because it's the name of a pagan deity. *His Name is Yahweh: Revised Edition* addresses that problem.

Later, Yahweh led me to explain several other important but controversial truths. The most important of them are

1. True Christianity isn't a religion.

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<sup>9</sup> Jeremiah 23: 5-6.

<sup>10</sup> To understand why this happened, see *His Name is Yahweh: Revised Edition* chapter 2.

## 2. The New Testament isn't Scripture.<sup>11</sup>

### **Tradition doesn't make it Right**

Because of tradition dating back almost 1,700 years, those truths are difficult for many churchgoers<sup>12</sup> to accept. I wrote *Must Jewish People Convert to Christianity to be Saved?* to address that problem.

In the book, I showed that the Christian religion was created by the Roman Emperor Constantine in the 300s AD for political reasons. Contemporary Christianity descends from the Roman Catholic Church, and it remains a vestige of Constantine's creation to this day.

Interestingly, Constantine's mother, Helena, probably was a believer, but Constantine was not. He was a sun worshiper.

It's rumored that Constantine made a deathbed confession of faith, but his eternal destiny remains a mystery. This much is certain, though: Constantine's religion, Roman Catholicism, was not sanctioned by Yahweh.

The Catholic Church elevated to "Scripture" historical documents and letters explaining that Y'shua

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<sup>11</sup> Revelation is Scripture, but the rest of the New Testament is not.

<sup>12</sup> I used the word "churchgoers" instead of "believers". Contemporary churches are loaded with unbelievers who call themselves "Christians". Because of tradition, even believers have a difficult time letting go of false teaching. That must change.

is the Messiah referred to in the Tanach/Old Testament. Leaders in the Catholic Church called those documents collectively “the New Testament”.

Except for Revelation, the New Testament isn’t Scripture. It’s important and inspired, but it’s not Scripture.

Only Yahweh has the authority to elevate anything to Scripture. He did not delegate that authority to anyone.

The Protestant Reformation was an attempt to come out from under the Catholic umbrella, but it didn’t go far enough. To this day, Protestantism carries a lot of Catholic baggage.

What we call “Christianity” today diverges from Yahweh’s word so much that it barely resembles what He has in mind for His children. That’s beginning to change as more and more believers are being led by Yahweh’s Spirit to search for and accept the truth.

*In Must Jewish People Convert to Christianity to be Saved?*, I showed that Jewish people do not have to convert to Christianity to be saved. Anyone who wants to be saved, Jews or Gentiles, must demonstrate *the faith of Abraham*.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Calling on the Name of Yahweh means more than saying His Name. It means demonstrating faith, i.e. believing that He rewards those who seek Him. Saving faith comes from the heart, and it involves action that is consistent with believing.

This is the heart of the matter: salvation is not about religion. It's about faith. More precisely, it's about faith with legs. That's been true all along. I call it *the faith of Abraham*.

### **The Faith of Abraham**

Next, Yahweh led me to explain that the obedience He requires is not about strict devotion to traditions and laws. Some of those traditions and laws come from the Scriptures so they are important, but most of them are nothing more than man-made tradition.

Most of those traditions are unimportant. In fact, they stand in the way of progress because it's so easy for people to see them as substitutes for faith. Many people have done that to their own detriment.

Yahweh did not create us to obey rules. He created us to love Him and to work with Him on the implementation of His plan.

I wrote the book *Press on to Maturity* to address those issues. Our participation with Yahweh on the implementation of His plan is called "following the leading of Yahweh's Spirit". That's the highest form of obedience, and it's the kind of obedience that Yahweh requires.

This is how Paul explained it:

“For all who are being led by the Spirit of Elohim, these are sons of Elohim.” (Romans 8: 14)

The Messiah explained it this way:

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of Elohim abides on him." (John 3: 36)

Obedying the Son means following the leading of Yahweh’s Spirit. Stated another way, it means doing what Yahweh tells you to do.

According to the Messiah, the penalty for not obeying the Son is severe, so this is a serious matter.

### **There is No Substitute for Faith**

Obedying Yahweh’s written commands is important and Yahweh’s Spirit will never lead us to do otherwise. Even so, devotion to rules is not a substitute for faith in Yahweh or for following the leading of His Spirit.

Think about it this way. We are not good citizens simply because we don’t lie, cheat, steal, or murder, for example. We are good citizens if we contribute something to society.

In other words, good citizenship is more about doing than not doing.

Conforming our actions to the rudimentary principles of good behavior is the bare minimum that's expected of anyone. It keeps us out of jail, so to speak, but little else. To make a difference in society and to add value, we must do things that improve people's lives.

The same is true about faith. It's more about doing than not doing. Abraham was regarded highly by Yahweh because of what he did, not because of what he didn't do.

Abraham is one of three people mentioned in the Bible who stand out in my mind because of what Yahweh said about them, and Abraham was the first. Yahweh called Abraham His "friend".<sup>14</sup> That indicates a special bond between them.

Moses<sup>15</sup> was called Yahweh's friend as well, and David was called a man after Yahweh's own heart.<sup>16</sup> According to Paul, this is what Yahweh said about David:

"I have found David son of Jesse, a man after My own heart; he will do everything I want him to do." (Acts 13: 22)

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<sup>14</sup> Isaiah 41:8, II Chronicles 20:7, and James 2:23.

<sup>15</sup> Exodus 33: 11.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Samuel 13: 14.

Abraham, Moses, and David were willing to do what Yahweh wanted them to do and to go where Yahweh wanted them to go. In other words, they heard Yahweh's voice, and they acted on it. That requires faith, the faith of Abraham.

There were no written rules for Abraham to obey. Yahweh gave us the Torah<sup>17</sup> hundreds of years after he died. Abraham had to follow Yahweh's leading each step of the way. That's what every child of Elohim must do.

Stated simply, the faith of Abraham has legs that are willing to go where Yahweh leads. It's not about religion. It's about faith, the faith of Abraham.

### **The Hall of Faith**

Hebrews 11 talks about people mentioned in the Tanach/Old Testament who possessed the faith of Abraham. It's not an exhaustive list, but it's a good one. I call it "The Hall of Faith".

Before providing that list of Yahweh's faithful followers, Paul admonished his readers not to follow the example set by the Children of Israel as they were coming out of Egypt during the Exodus. They lacked faith in Yahweh and were not willing to follow Him. As a result, they had to spend 40 years in the wilderness.

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<sup>17</sup> The Torah is the 5 books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. They are the first 5 books in the Tanach/Old Testament.

Only two adults traveling with Moses during the Exodus were permitted to enter the Promised Land: Joshua and Caleb. They stood out because they demonstrated faith in Yahweh.

Hebrews 11 is below in its entirety:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval.

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of Elohim, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

By faith Abel offered to Elohim a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, Elohim testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; and he was not found because Elohim took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to Elohim.

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to Elohim must

believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

By faith Noah, being warned by Elohim about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is Elohim.

By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on

the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore Elohim is not ashamed to be called their Elohim; for He has prepared a city for them.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called." He considered that Elohim is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type [of the Messiah].

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come. By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones.

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of Elohim than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of the Messiah greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.

By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.

By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.

And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by

faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because Elohim had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11: 1-40)

### **The Faith of Abraham Sets Us Apart**

Yahweh made promises to Abraham that every believer relies on for salvation. He extended those promises to us through Isaac and Jacob/Israel. Yahweh appeared in Person to make those promises, and those

promises secure the future of the Israeli people, the Promised Land, and the salvation of all believers.

Now, let's turn our attention to Yahweh's promises. They are crucial.

### **Abraham's Call and Yahweh's Promise to Bless all the Families of the Earth**

Yahweh told Abraham to leave his home and his country and go to a place that He would show him,<sup>18</sup> and Abraham obeyed. Then Yahweh said,

"I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12: 2-3)

Yahweh's promise to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham refers to the Messiah and His redemptive work on our behalf. It also refers to the Children of Israel who have been a special blessing to all humanity.

Throughout history, the willingness of men and women to ignore the odds against them and do what Yahweh told them to do has resulted in tremendous blessings for all of us. The next time you catch yourself thinking that nothing you do matters, remember

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<sup>18</sup> Genesis 12: 1.

Abraham. He may have had similar thoughts, but he did not let his fear and insecurity prevent him from obeying Yahweh.

Abraham was an ordinary man that Yahweh used to do extraordinary things. His life made an enormous difference. Yours can too.

### **Yahweh Explains His Covenant with Abraham Further**

When Abraham entered the Promised Land, he was traveling with his nephew, Lot. Both had large herds of animals. Since the land could not support the herds of both men traveling together, Abraham suggested that they separate, and he told Lot to take the land he wanted.

Lot looked at the valley below the hills on which Jerusalem rests and saw that it was well-watered and fertile. Thus, he took the valley for his possession. Abraham took the hilly region that includes Mount Moriah—the hill beside which Jerusalem was built. Today, we know Mount Moriah as the Temple Mount.

After Abraham and Lot parted company, Yahweh made this promise to Abraham:

“Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. I will make your

descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.” (Genesis 13: 14-17)

In Genesis 15: 18-21, Yahweh gave Abraham a more precise description of the Promised Land’s boundaries:

“To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt [the Nile River] as far as the great river Euphrates; the land of the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite.” (Genesis 15: 18-21)

Later, Yahweh told Abraham that he would become the father of many nations, and He confirmed that the Promised Land would belong to his descendants forever:

“For My part, this is My covenant with you: you will become the father of many nations. And you are no longer to be called Abram; your name is to be Abraham, for I am making you father of many nations, and your issue will be kings. And I shall maintain my covenant between Myself and you, and your descendants after you, generation after generation, as a

covenant in perpetuity, to be your Elohim and the Elohim of your descendants after you. And to you and to your descendants after you, I shall give the country where you are now immigrants, the entire land of Canaan, to own in perpetuity. And I will be their Elohim.” (Genesis 17: 4-8)

Then Yahweh explained that even though Abraham would become the father of many nations, His covenant would pass to future generations through Isaac’s descendants:

“As regards your wife...Sarah....I shall bless her and moreover give you a son by her. I shall bless her and she will become nations: kings of peoples will issue from her....Yes, your wife Sarah will bear you a son whom you must name Isaac. And I shall maintain My covenant with him, a covenant in perpetuity, to be his Elohim and the Elohim of his descendants after him. For Ishmael too I grant you your request. I hereby bless him and will make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous. He will be the father of twelve princes, and I shall make him into a great nation. But my covenant I shall maintain with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear you....” (Genesis 17: 15-16 and 19-21)

A “covenant in perpetuity” is eternally binding. Yahweh bestowed those blessings on Abraham because

he heard Yahweh's voice and obeyed Him. I call that "the faith of Abraham".

Nothing has changed. Yahweh still requires faith and obedience.

### **Yahweh Extends His Covenant to Isaac**

In Genesis 26: 2-5, Yahweh confirmed His covenant to Isaac:

"Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My Laws." (Genesis 26: 2-5)

Yahweh made clear that Isaac was the beneficiary of His promises "because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My Laws." In other words, the faith of Abraham is key.

## **Yahweh Extends His Covenant to Jacob/Israel**

In Genesis 28: 13-15, Yahweh said that the Promised Land belongs to Abraham's descendants through Jacob:

"I am Yahweh, the Elohim of your father Abraham and the Elohim of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give to you and your descendants. Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised." (Genesis 28: 13-15)

Yahweh told Jacob who He is by Name. Then, He explained that He is "the Elohim of your father Abraham and the Elohim of Isaac". That means Abraham and Isaac had the faith of Abraham.

Yahweh repeated His promise in Genesis 35: 10-12:

"You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name....I am El Shaddai; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you. The land which I gave to

Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you." (Genesis 35: 10-12)

### **Yahweh Extends His Covenant to the Children of Israel**

Yahweh told Moses that He would rescue the Children of Israel from bondage in Egypt and bring them to the Promised Land, and He tied that promise to His Name:

"I am Yahweh, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your Elohim; and you shall know that I am Yahweh your Elohim, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a permanent possession; I am Yahweh." (Exodus 6: 6-8)

As the Children of Israel were preparing to leave Mount Sinai and go to the Promised Land, Yahweh told them that He would send His Angel before them.

That Angel was no ordinary messenger. The Angel of Yahweh referred to in Exodus 6: 6-8 is the same

Angel who appeared to Moses in the burning bush.<sup>19</sup> In other words, He is Yahweh, and He established Israel as a nation:

“Behold, I am going to send an Angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Be on your guard before Him and obey His voice; do not be rebellious toward Him, for He will not pardon your transgression, since My Name is in Him. But if you will truly obey His voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them. You shall not worship their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their deeds; but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their sacred pillars in pieces. But you shall serve Yahweh your Elohim, and He will bless your bread and your water; and I will remove sickness from your midst.” (Exodus 23: 20-25)

In Exodus 23: 27-31, Yahweh explained how He would drive out the early inhabitants of the Promised Land, and He gave another description of its boundaries:

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<sup>19</sup> Exodus 3: 2.

“I will send My terror ahead of you, and throw into confusion all the people among whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. I will send hornets ahead of you that they may drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites before you. I will not drive them out before you in a single year, that the land may not become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. I will drive them out before you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land. I will fix your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines [i.e., the Mediterranean Sea], and from the wilderness to the River Euphrates; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you will drive them out before you.” (Exodus 23: 27-31)

We know that Isaac, Jacob/Israel, and Moses had the faith of Abraham. All of them were willing to go where Yahweh told them to go and to do what He told them to do.

That wasn't true for all the Children of Israel in Egypt. Many of them lacked faith. That would become evident during the Exodus.

Yahweh extended His promises to those who had the faith of Abraham, not to those who didn't. Most of the book of Exodus tells about Yahweh showing the

Children of Israel that they could have faith in Him and that He would bless them if they demonstrated faith.

Again, faith is key, the faith of Abraham.

### **The Covenant of Yahweh**

If I made a list of the most important chapters in the Bible, Genesis 15 would be at the top of my list. It presents Yahweh's Covenant with His people. As you will see, a covenant is a special kind of promise, and the Covenant is really special.

The Covenant in Genesis 15 has never changed, and it points to the Renewed Covenant.<sup>20</sup> Genesis 22 also provides essential insights into the Renewed Covenant. It portrays Isaac as a type of the Messiah renewing Yahweh's Covenant with His children.

Genesis 15 begins with this statement:

"The Word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision...." (Genesis 15: 1)

Genesis 15: 1 does not mean that Abraham only heard the spoken Words of Yahweh. The "Word of Yahweh" referred to in Genesis 15: 1 is the Messiah.

The Messiah is Yahweh's human manifestation. He appeared to Abraham in a vision, and He ratified the

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<sup>20</sup> Jeremiah 31: 31-34.

Covenant on which we all depend for our redemption and salvation.

Yahweh told Abraham,

“Do not fear...I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great.” (Genesis 15: 1)

Abraham responded by saying, “I have no children. How can this be?”<sup>21</sup>

Look at what happened next:

And He [Yahweh] took him [Abraham] outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He [Yahweh] said to him [Abraham], “So shall your descendants be.” Then he [Abraham] believed in Yahweh; and He [Yahweh] reckoned it to him [Abraham] as righteousness. (Genesis 15: 5-6)

Obviously, literal words didn’t take Abraham outside. Yahweh did, and He confirmed the promise that He made to Abraham earlier.

When Yahweh said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars if you are able to count them...So shall your descendants be,”<sup>22</sup> He was telling Abraham that despite the fact he was childless at that

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<sup>21</sup> This is a paraphrase of Genesis 15: 2-3.

<sup>22</sup> Genesis 15: 5.

moment, he would have many descendants. Eventually, Abraham learned that he would have a son, the child of the Covenant (Isaac) through whom the Messiah would come into the world. In Genesis 22, Abraham learned that the Messiah would become the sin offering for all mankind.

Genesis 15: 6 tells us that Abraham believed Yahweh and that Yahweh declared him righteous. Abraham's righteousness was based on his faith in Yahweh and nothing else. His obedience flowed from his faith. Saving faith is the faith of Abraham.

The Covenant that Yahweh made with His children is not dependent on our effort in any way whatsoever. Faith in Yahweh and His sacrifice on our behalf are essential. Our willingness to obey Him simply proves that we have the kind of faith that He expects and requires: the faith of Abraham.

### **Ratification of the Covenant**

Most believers do not have a good understanding of the Covenant that Yahweh ratified with Abraham. Thus, most of us do not fully appreciate what Yahweh did for us or what He expects from us.

In Genesis 15: 9-10, Yahweh told Abraham,

“Bring me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. Then he

brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds.” (Genesis 15: 9-10)

In Abraham’s day, people ratified covenants in the following way. First, they would slaughter animals and cut them in two. Next, they would place the parts of the slaughtered animals in two lines on the ground, and the people entering into the covenant would walk between the lines of animal parts together.

Ratification of a covenant signifies that the people walking between the animal parts are committing themselves to fulfill the covenant’s terms—every one of them no matter what happens.

For instance, if you and your friend enter into a covenant such as the one that Yahweh entered into with Abraham, both of you are agreeing to live up to the covenant’s terms even if the other one fails to keep his word. Ratifying a covenant this way also indicates that you are inviting Yahweh to slaughter you the way the animals were slaughtered if you break your promise.<sup>23</sup>

Today, we do not enter into covenants so most of us are unfamiliar with the concept. Instead, we enter into contracts, and covenants and contracts are very different.

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<sup>23</sup> Read Jeremiah 34: 8-22 to understand how important it is for us to live up to the terms of a covenant. Yahweh expects us to live up to our word, and He also expects us to obey His Word. Failure on our part to honor our word or to obey Yahweh’s Word is inviting disaster. Covenants are binding agreements no matter what happens.

If you and your friend enter into a contractual relationship and you fail to live up to your end of the bargain, then the contract's provisions are no longer binding on your friend. As I said, in a covenant the terms of the agreement never cease to apply.<sup>24</sup> This distinction is key.

Furthermore, the covenant that Yahweh ratified with Abraham was not a typical covenant. Look at Genesis 15: 12 and Genesis 15: 17-18 and see what I mean:

“Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him (Genesis 15: 12)...It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. On that day Yahweh made a covenant with Abram...” (Genesis 15: 17-18)

The “smoking oven” and the “flaming torch” were two manifestations of Yahweh. He caused Abraham to fall asleep when He ratified the Covenant. Therefore, the Covenant that we refer to as the Covenant that Yahweh made with Abraham is actually a Covenant between Yahweh and Yahweh. Abraham and his

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<sup>24</sup> McVey, Steve. *Grace Land*, Harvest House, Eugene, Oregon, 2001, p. 81.

descendants are the beneficiaries of Yahweh's work on our behalf.

Since Abraham was asleep when Yahweh ratified the Covenant, Yahweh assumed sole responsibility for fulfilling the Covenant's terms. Stated another way, Yahweh's Covenant with us is not dependent on our doing anything for Him.

Please do not undervalue the significance of that point. The Children of Israel misunderstood it. They lacked faith in Yahweh and had to spend 40 years in the wilderness instead of going directly to the Promised Land.<sup>25</sup>

Steve McVey has written several books dealing with the importance of grace in the lives of Yahweh's people.<sup>26</sup> In his book *Grace Land*, McVey explains the Covenant's ratification this way:

“When the time came for the covenant to be ratified, God [Elohim] caused Abraham to fall asleep....There was no way that Abraham could live up to the promises he would have been making....It was as if God [Elohim] were saying, ‘Abraham, I know you have good intentions, but there is nothing you could ever do for Me. You would only break any promises you make. So for that reason, I want you to lie down and rest

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<sup>25</sup> Psalm 78: 22, Psalm 78: 32, and Psalm 78: 59-62.

<sup>26</sup> The three books on grace written by Steve McVey are *Grace Walk*, *Grace Rules*, and *Grace Land*, and Harvest House published all of them.

while I ratify the covenant. I'll do the work. You simply trust Me as the recipient of all I do."<sup>27</sup>

Yahweh's Covenant is "a unilateral pact [between Yahweh and Abraham and his descendants], a divine initiative, a solemn promise sealed with an imprecatory oath."<sup>28</sup>

Yahweh called down curses on Himself if He fails to deliver on every one of His promises. Yahweh knew that Abraham could not live up to the terms of the Covenant no matter how hard he tried, and neither can we.

The Law requires the death of anyone who violates even one of the Covenant's provisions. Thus, every one of us deserves to die because all of us have violated the Covenant. However, by ratifying it single-handedly Yahweh agreed to take upon Himself the penalty for our sins and to die<sup>29</sup> in our place. That fact is alluded to in Genesis chapter 22.

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<sup>27</sup> McVey, Steve. *Grace Land*, Harvest House, Eugene, Oregon, 2001, p. 82.

<sup>28</sup> *The New Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday, New York, 1985, p. 35.

<sup>29</sup> Yahweh cannot die, because then the universe would stop running. The human form of Yahweh did die when He was hung on a tree, but His divine nature inside the Messiah did not and cannot die (see Isaiah 11:1-12, Isaiah chapter 53, Isaiah 63:1-14, and Psalm 51:1-11). In a nutshell, the Messiah, who is Yahweh the Son, laid down his life voluntarily in submission to Yahweh the Father (see John chapter 10) to atone for our sins. Thanks to Andrew Roth for suggesting this clarification.

When they nailed the Messiah to a tree, He paid the price for our sins, redeemed us, fulfilled the Old Covenant, and sealed the Renewed Covenant with His own blood. That is true love.

### **The Messiah is Yahweh's Human Form**

Yahweh appeared in Person to make His promises. Most of the time He appeared in human form. Therefore, we know that Yahweh has a human form. The Messiah is Yahweh's human manifestation.

Let's take another look at Yahweh's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob/Israel since He appeared in Person to make them.

### **Yahweh Appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob/Israel in Human Form**

Yahweh has appeared to men and women in human form many times since the creation to declare His Word and to make certain that all His promises are fulfilled. The first time we know that Yahweh appeared in human form was when He walked in the Garden of Eden with Adam.<sup>30</sup>

The Bible refers to Yahweh's human form as the Angel of Yahweh. It refers to Him in other ways, too, but the fact that He has appeared in human form is evident from what He did and said and from people's

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<sup>30</sup> Genesis 3: 8.

reactions to Him. Since He never changes, Yahweh always has had a human form.

Many people throughout history have met with and spoken to Yahweh in Person. Abraham, Moses, and many others even shared meals with Him.

Since Yahweh appeared in human form to make His promises, there will be some overlap between the next few sections and previous sections.

### **Yahweh Appears to Abraham**

Abraham was born in Ur in the land of the Chaldees. Abraham's father took him, Abraham's wife Sarah, and Abraham's nephew Lot, and they went to Haran, a city that is in Iraq. While he was in Haran, Yahweh told Abraham to take Sarah, Lot, and all his possessions and go to a land He would show him.<sup>31</sup>

Abraham obeyed Yahweh. When he arrived in the land of Canaan in a city called Shechem, Yahweh appeared to him in human form and said, "To your descendants I will give this land."<sup>32</sup>

Yahweh was talking about the land we know today as Israel. That is why we call Israel the Promised Land. Yahweh promised to give the Land of Israel to Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob/Israel as a permanent possession.

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<sup>31</sup> Genesis 11: 27-32.

<sup>32</sup> Genesis 12: 7.

Although Abraham did not obey Yahweh perfectly, his heart was right before Him, and Yahweh used Abraham to bless all the nations of the world.

### **Yahweh Appears to Abraham Again**

When Abraham was 99 years old, Yahweh appeared to him<sup>33</sup> and said,

“I am El Shaddai; walk before Me, and be blameless. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly.” (Genesis 17: 1-2)

When Abraham saw Yahweh, he knew immediately that he was in the presence of Elohim. Abraham fell on his face before Him.<sup>34</sup>

Yahweh told Abraham that circumcision would be the sign of the covenant between them and that his wife Sarah would have a son through whom the covenant would pass to future generations. Abraham fell on his face and laughed<sup>35</sup> when Yahweh told him that Sarah would have a son because Sarah was about 90 years old at the time—well past childbearing years.

Ishmael, Abraham’s son by Hagar (Sarah’s maid and Abraham’s concubine) was 13 years old at the time.

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<sup>33</sup> Genesis 17: 1.

<sup>34</sup> Genesis 17: 3.

<sup>35</sup> Genesis 17: 17.

Abraham asked Yahweh to fulfill His promise through Ishmael instead, but Yahweh said,

“No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him....” (Genesis 17: 19)

Yahweh made clear that His covenant would not pass through Ishmael. He was the product of Sarah’s desire to have a son, Abraham’s willingness to oblige Sarah, and Hagar’s consent to become the mother of Abraham’s child. They simply took it upon themselves to solve Sarah’s problem.

It’s possible, even probable, that Abraham thought he needed to take matters into his own hands to fulfill Yahweh’s promise to give the Promised Land to his descendants. If he did, he was wrong. Yahweh does not need anyone’s help to fulfill His promises. He graciously gives us the opportunity to assist Him if we have faith.

Isaac’s birth was a miracle—a gift from Yahweh. He spoke to Abraham face-to-face to emphasize that everything pertaining to the Covenant was, and is, based on His promises and His desires. All that Yahweh required from Abraham was faith in Him and obedience to His word and the leading of His Spirit.

Although Yahweh made clear that Isaac was the child of the Covenant, He made several promises to Abraham about Ishmael:

“As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac....When He finished talking with him, Elohim went up from Abraham.” (Genesis 17: 20-22)

There can be no doubt that Yahweh appeared in Person to make those points.

### **Yahweh Tells Abraham about Isaac’s Birth**

Later, Yahweh and two angels appeared<sup>36</sup> to Abraham near Hebron, a city in Israel. Abraham invited Yahweh to stay and share a meal with him, and He agreed. While they were eating,<sup>37</sup> Yahweh told Abraham that He would return in a year and by that time Sarah would have a child.

Sarah was inside the tent listening, and she overheard the conversation. When she heard Yahweh say that she would have a child, she laughed to herself saying,

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<sup>36</sup> Genesis 18: 1.

<sup>37</sup> Genesis 18: 8.

“After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?” (Genesis 18: 12)

Yahweh knew Sarah’s thoughts, and He said,

“Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?’ Is anything too difficult for Yahweh? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.” (Genesis 18: 13-14)

Once again, Yahweh confirmed that He would fulfill His promises through Isaac—a child who had not been born yet. He concluded His conversation with Abraham by asking a question that is actually a statement: “Is anything too difficult for Yahweh?”

The answer is no.

### **Yahweh Appears to Isaac Twice**

Yahweh told Abraham that He would extend His promises through Isaac and Jacob/Israel, so they had to demonstrate the faith of Abraham, too. Yahweh appeared to them in Person to confirm what He told Abraham.

There was a famine in the land of Canaan, and Isaac was tempted to go down to Egypt where food was plentiful. But Yahweh appeared to him in Person to confirm His promise. He said,

“Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My Laws.” (Genesis 26: 2-5)

Yahweh made clear that He was doing through Isaac what He had promised Abraham He would do because of Abraham’s faith.

Later, Isaac experienced problems with his neighbors who were concerned that his wealth was a threat to their security. They made life difficult enough for him to make him move on.

Isaac kept moving until he found a place where he and his family could live in peace. That place is called Rehoboth. It means “plenty of room”.<sup>38</sup>

From there Isaac went to Beersheba, and Yahweh appeared to him in human form and said,

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<sup>38</sup> Ryrie, Charles. *Ryrie Study Bible Expanded Edition*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1995, p. 45.

“I am the Elohim of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and multiply your descendants, for the sake of my servant Abraham.” (Genesis 26: 24)

Yahweh told Isaac, “Do not fear.” That statement suggests Isaac was afraid and that he needed reassurance. Thus, Yahweh appeared to him in Person and repeated the message He has been giving His children since the beginning:

“I am Yahweh, and I will watch over my word to perform it. You can have faith in Me, and I will bless you if you obey Me.”

### **Yahweh Appears to Jacob in a Dream**

Isaac’s first-born son, Esau, was willing to trade his birthright for a meal.<sup>39</sup> Since his birthright included the promise of the coming Messiah, in effect Esau traded the honor and privilege of being in the Messiah’s lineage for a single meal because for a fleeting moment he was hungry.

Esau traded away his part in the greatest gift ever bestowed on mankind, and Yahweh hated him for it before he was born.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Yahweh would not allow Esau to obtain the birthright of the first-born

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<sup>39</sup> Genesis 25: 34.

<sup>40</sup> Malachi 1: 2-3.

even though he wept bitterly when the time came for Isaac to bless his sons.<sup>41</sup>

It's obvious that Esau still wanted the blessing of the first-born, but he had treated it so lightly when he was younger that Yahweh would not allow him to have it.

Isaac loved Esau and intended to bestow the blessing of the first-born on him contrary to Yahweh's desire.<sup>42</sup> Rebekah, his wife, and Jacob, his second son, intervened to secure Isaac's blessing for Jacob.

Many people have said that Rebekah and Jacob deceived Isaac and stole Esau's birthright. Maybe they did, but they did it with Yahweh's blessing, and they kept Isaac from making a tragic mistake.

Before her sons were born, Yahweh told Rebekah that Jacob was the child of the promise,<sup>43</sup> not Esau. Thus, Rebekah helped Jacob obtain the blessing of the first-born over Isaac's objections.

When Esau learned what had happened, he was furious and threatened to kill his brother. Thus, Rebekah and Isaac urged Jacob to flee to Haran, to her relatives, and to take a wife from among her relatives. He obeyed his parents, and along the way he stopped to sleep at a place called Bethel.

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<sup>41</sup> Genesis 27: 38.

<sup>42</sup> Genesis 25: 28.

<sup>43</sup> Genesis 25: 23.

This Bethel is very likely Mount Moriah in Jerusalem,<sup>44</sup> not the town of Bethel in Israel today. Bethel in Israel today is a town about 12 miles north of Jerusalem. The literal meaning of Bethel is “House of Elohim”.

While he was sleeping, Yahweh appeared to Jacob in a dream and said,

“I am Yahweh, the Elohim of your father Abraham and the Elohim of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you.” (Genesis 28: 13-15)

### **Yahweh Appears to Reassure Jacob**

Years later when Jacob returned to Canaan with his wives, his children, and all of his belongings, he was afraid that Esau would still hold a grudge against him and kill his entire family. His faith in Yahweh at that

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<sup>44</sup> For a complete explanation of this interpretation, see Peter Michas’ book *The Rod of an Almond Tree in God’s Master Plan*, Winepress Publishing, Enumclaw, WA, 2001, p. 113.

moment was not strong. He did everything that was humanly possible to protect his family from Esau, but he was still afraid that it would not be enough.

The night before he met Esau, Jacob separated himself from his family, and “a Man wrestled with him until daybreak”.<sup>45</sup> The Bible tells us that the Man was Yahweh and that He used this occasion to change Jacob’s name to Israel.<sup>46</sup>

Jacob knew that he had had a personal encounter with Yahweh, and he said, “I have seen Elohim face to face, yet my life has been preserved.”<sup>47</sup>

Yahweh allowed Jacob to win the wrestling match that night and said,

“....you have striven with Elohim and with men and have prevailed.” (Genesis 32: 28)

At that moment, Jacob (whose name was now Israel) knew that Yahweh was on his side. If Yahweh had wanted to win the wrestling match, He could have with no difficulty, but He was making a point. He was showing Jacob that he had nothing to fear because Yahweh was with him. If Yahweh is involved, we can, and should, be fearless.

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<sup>45</sup> Genesis 32: 24.

<sup>46</sup> Genesis 32: 28.

<sup>47</sup> Genesis 32: 30.

## The Messiah Son of Joseph

The Messiah's identity remains the source of much confusion and controversy. That problem must be solved, because faith in Him determines our eternal well-being.

Somewhere between 1010 BC and 970 BC, King David prophesied that the Messiah would be crucified. In Psalm 22: 16 he wrote,

"For dogs have surrounded Me; a band of evildoers has encompassed Me; they pierced My hands and My feet." (Psalm 22: 16)

Crucifixion is a form of capital punishment invented by the Romans in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. In David's day, stoning was the accepted method for capital punishment, so his prophecy that the Messiah would be crucified at least 800 years before crucifixion was invented is remarkable. David could not have foretold the Messiah's crucifixion unless Yahweh explained it to him.

Many Jewish people today believe Christians have misinterpreted the Hebrew word in Psalm 22: 16 that is translated as "pierced." The Hebrew word is *ariy* (ar-ee'). Its literal meaning suggests violence, and it seems to involve a lion or a young lion.

Based on that fact Samuel Levine, author of *You Take Jesus, I'll Take God*, has said,

“That verse of ‘they pierced my hands and feet,’ which seems to point to Jesus, is a mistranslation, according to all the classical Jewish scholars, who knew Hebrew perfectly. In fact, the Christians have invented a new word in the process, which is still not in the Hebrew dictionary.”<sup>48</sup>

Even though the contemporary meaning of *ariy* seems to indicate something other than “piercing,” Mr. Levine is mistaken. Here’s why.

The Jewish authorized Greek Septuagint Tanach<sup>49</sup> that was translated by 70 rabbis in 285 BC—i.e., 285 years before Y’shua was born—and Targums<sup>50</sup> written at that time interpret *ariy* as “pierced” exactly the way Christians have translated the word.<sup>51</sup>

No one alive today has a better understanding of the Hebrew used in the Tanach than that group of

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<sup>48</sup> Levine, Samuel. *You Take Jesus, I'll Take God*, Hamoroh Press, 1980, p. 34.

<sup>49</sup> Brenton, Sir Lancelot C. L. *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English, 9<sup>th</sup> Printing*, originally published by Samuel Bagster & Sons, Ltd., London, 1851. This version published by Hendrickson Publishers, 2001.

<sup>50</sup> A Targum is a Jewish commentary on the Old Testament. It means translation.

<sup>51</sup> Eastman, Mark and Chuck Missler, *The Search for Messiah*, Fountain Valley: Joy Publishing, 1996, pp. 31-33.

rabbis. I defer to them and rely on their translation of ariy to support my conclusion.

Furthermore, Zechariah 12: 10 refers to the “piercing” of the Messiah. The Hebrew word translated as “pierced” in that verse is *daqar* (daw-kar’). It means to stab or to thrust through.

This is what the Babylonian Talmud says about Zechariah 12: 10:

“What is the cause of the mourning? It is well according to him who explains that the cause is the slaying of Messiah, the son of Joseph, since that well agrees with the Scriptural verse, ‘And they shall look upon me because they have thrust Him through, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son.’”<sup>52</sup>

Many sages and rabbis over the millennia since Psalm 22 and Zechariah were written have had difficulty accepting the fact that the Messiah Son of David had to suffer for His people. They understood that the Tanach describes a suffering Messiah, but they could not believe that He was the Messiah referred to as the Son of David. Therefore, they called Him by another name—the Messiah son of Joseph.

According to Raphael Patai, a Jewish Bible scholar,

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<sup>52</sup> *Babylonian Talmud*, Sukkah 52a.

“When the death of the Messiah became an established tenet in Talmudic times,<sup>53</sup> this was felt to be irreconcilable with the belief in the Messiah as the Redeemer who would usher in the blissful millennium of the Messianic age. The dilemma was solved by splitting the person of the Messiah in two: one of them, called Messiah ben Joseph...would fall victim....The other, Messiah ben David, will come after him...and will lead Israel to ultimate victory, the triumph, and the Messianic era of bliss.”<sup>54</sup>

As you can see, it is perfectly clear that *all* classical Jewish scholars do not agree with Mr. Levine. Obviously, the 70 rabbis who translated the Greek Septuagint Tanach in 285 BC do not agree with him. It would be foolish to accept his interpretation over theirs.

The weight of evidence confirms that there is (and can be) only one Messiah. He is the Messiah Son of David; He is the suffering Messiah described in Isaiah 53; and He is the victorious King Messiah described throughout the Tanach. Faith in Him is essential.

### **The Saddest Verse in the New Testament**

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<sup>53</sup> Talmudic times” refers to an era between the Babylonian captivity that began in 586 BC and about 400 AD. During Talmudic times, Jewish Sages wrote about virtually every area of life, religion, custom, folklore, and law. Their writings in Hebrew and Aramaic contain approximately 2,500,000 words that are published as books called the Talmud, and they are studied today. The Babylonian Talmud is the best known and most authoritative of all the Talmud writings.

<sup>54</sup> Patai, Raphael. *The Messiah Texts*, Wayne State University Press: Detroit, 1979, pp. 166-167.

At the time of the Messiah's birth, many Jewish religious leaders expected His arrival. Some of them were full of anticipation but others were threatened. Virtually all of them had been indoctrinated. They expected the King Messiah, but He came to them in the form of the Suffering Messiah.

Their misunderstanding of the Messiah's identity led them to reject Him when it became obvious that He would be executed. In their minds, that could not have happened to the Messiah, but Yahweh told us all along that it would happen.

I think the Messiah's lament over Jerusalem is the saddest part of the New Testament. As the time for His crucifixion was drawing near, He looked out over Yahweh's holy city and said,

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the Name of Yahweh!'" (Matthew 23: 37-39)

The Messiah came to save/deliver them, but they turned their backs on Him and had Him killed. The pain He felt as He looked out over the city must have

been excruciating. He knew that He had to die, but He also knew that His children would suffer greatly because they rejected Him.

Luke provides a bit of detail about that occasion that I think is the saddest verse in the New Testament. According to Luke, the Messiah said:

"They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of Elohim's coming to you."  
(Luke 19:44)

The penalty for rejecting Yahweh is more horrific than anyone can imagine. He is the Savior and Redeemer, but He is also the Judge. He will reject those who stubbornly refuse to accept Him. This is how King David explained it to his son Solomon:

"As for you, my son Solomon, know the Elohim of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for Yahweh searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever." (1 Chronicles 28: 9)

**Yahweh will Deny Anyone Who Denies Him**

Faith in Yahweh is essential. Meer words are not enough. Intellectual acceptance of Yahweh's existence is not enough, either.

The faith of Abraham is required. It's a faith that is willing to go where Yahweh leads and to do what Yahweh says. Lacking the faith of Abraham is the same as rejecting Yahweh.

This is how the Messiah explained it:

"But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven."  
(Matthew 10: 33)

Obviously, this is a serious matter. Yahweh couldn't have made it any clearer. He will reject those who reject Him. It couldn't be more serious.

### **Closing Comment**

In this book, I presented Yahweh's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob/Israel. All those promises apply equally to Israel's 12 children, not to Judah alone.

Today in the State of Israel, Judah has control, and they want it to be a Jewish state. On the surface, that sounds good, but it is contrary to Yahweh's promises. That should be clear. Again, Judah is only one of Jacob's 12 sons.

The Faith of Abraham

I think I will have more to say about this later.  
Yahweh knows for sure.