

Genesis 22:1-3

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*God tells Abraham to travel to Mt. Moriah and offer Isaac as a sacrifice.
Abraham takes Isaac on the three-day journey to the mountain.*

It came about after these things (the birth of Isaac, the banishment of Ishmael and Hagar, the treaty with Abimelek) that God tested Abraham. This test was for Abraham's faith in God. God spoke, Abraham! and Abraham answered, Here I am.

God's test is this, for Abraham to *Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.* God had granted Isaac to Abraham and Sarai as the child of promise:

Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."
([Genesis 17:15-16](#))

God's promise is clear, that this son, Isaac, will be the vehicle through which Sarai will become the mother of nations. And now God tells Abraham to take the *only son* he has from Sarai. The *only son* of promise. The son of his old age, whom he loves, and go to *offer him as a burnt offering*.

A burnt offering was an offering that was completely consumed upon the fire of an altar.

Abraham had already lost one child, Ishmael. Abraham appeared to love Ishmael ([Genesis 17:18](#)). But Ishmael was exiled at the request of Sarai. God instructed Abraham to listen to Sarai, because it was through Isaac that Abraham's descendants would be named ([Genesis 21:12](#)).

Now, his son born by his wife, the child of promise, is required by God to be a *burnt offering*. Interestingly, [Genesis 22:2](#) is the first place in the Bible where the word "love" appears. Abraham is being asked to give up the son he loves, the son from whom a great nation would come, according to God's promise

([Genesis 17:16](#)). The verb *tested* is the Hebrew word “nasah.” It means “to test or to prove.” Testing someone does not mean “tempting” them or enticing them to sin or do evil. God often tests our faith. It is a way to prove our faith, to grow and be refined ([James 1:2-4](#)). But God never tempts anyone to sin: “No one is to say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone” ([James 1:13](#)). James goes on to say that temptation comes from within, from our passions, what Paul calls the flesh or sin nature.

God often tests someone to confirm their faith and the motivations of their heart, i.e. their commitment ([Exodus 15:25, 16:4, 20:20](#); [Deuteronomy 8:2,16, 33:8](#); [2 Chronicles 32:31](#); [Psalm 26:2](#)). In this case God does it to Abraham, who is called the “friend of God” ([James 2:23](#)). In the book of Job, God did the same to Job, who was clearly someone of whom God thought exceedingly highly. God tested the children of Israel in the wilderness ([Deuteronomy 8:3](#)). And the Spirit led Jesus to be tempted by Satan ([Matthew 4:1](#)) even though in the verse just prior it makes clear that Jesus was Someone in whom God was very pleased ([Matthew 3:17](#)).

God guides Abraham step by step, asking Abraham to follow and depend on Him. This is nothing new. God did likewise when He first called Abraham, telling him to “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you” ([Genesis 12:1](#)). At that time, Abraham obeyed partially, leaving the land of Ur, but not leaving his father and his father’s house. Eventually, Abraham fully obeyed, finally leaving the last of his father’s house when he parted from his nephew Lot. It took years for Abraham to get to full obedience, and God was patient with him all along the way. In this case, Abraham obeyed immediately. He seems to have learned his lesson that fully obeying was in his best interest.

Here, God is leading Abraham to *the land of Moriah*. The word *Moriah* appears in [2 Chronicles 3:1](#) where Solomon built the temple “in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah.” Many believe the location of Isaac’s sacrifice was the future site of the temple, though there is no direct evidence this is the case. Here in Genesis, *Moriah* is a region of mountains, and the specific site of Isaac’s sacrifice is *on one of the mountains* which God would *tell* Abraham to climb once he arrived in *Moriah*. Wherever the location was, it was a three day journey from Abraham’s home (v. 4).

Without hesitation, Abraham obeys God’s command. He *rose early in the morning* to begin the journey. Along with *Isaac his son*, Abraham *saddled his*

donkey and took two of his young men with him, servants. Abraham made sure to split wood for the burnt offering before they started their journey.

Biblical Text:

¹ Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” ² He said, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.” ³ So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.