

The Book of

# Hebrews

מֵאַנֶשׁ מִנִּמְדָּא דֵּא מִנִּי תֵּאֲקֵלָא  
צִמְאֵל לֵּל נִתְּאֲתַצְרַח דְּרִתְסֵנִי סְק  
אֵת פִּקְלָא תֵּסֵנִי סְרְבָּאֵל  
רֵדֵי תֵּאֲסֵדֵי תֵּאֲקֵסֵנִי דִּמְמֵצ  
תֵּאֲתַפְלֵשׁ נִתְּרִדְנֵהֶרְפֵּר נִרְלֵד  
תֵּאֲנֵשׁ רֵלֵד מִלְּלֵצ סֵס תֵּלֵשׁ



# Outline of Hebrews

## “Jesus is Better”

- I. Jesus Is Better Than the OT Prophets (1:1-4)
- II. Jesus Is Better Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)
- III. Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)
- IV. Jesus' Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)
- V. Concluding Exhortations and Warnings (10:19-12:29)**
- VI. Epilogue: Final Exhortations (13:1-25)

# Outline of Hebrews

## V. Concluding Exhortations and Warnings (10:19-12:29)

- A. Exhortation to Draw Near, Hold Fast, and Encourage One Another (10:19-25)
- B. Warning: No Hope of Forgiveness for Those Who Turn from Christ (10:26-31)
- C. Call to Persevere in Faith (10:32-12:3)
  - 1. Don't Abandon Confidence but Persevere in Faith (10:32-39)
  - 2. The "Hall of Faith" – Description and Examples of Persevering Faith (11:1-12:3)
- D. Exhortations to Readers to Endure (12:4-29)

# Outline of Hebrews

2. The “Hall of Faith” – Description and Examples of Persevering Faith (11:1-12:3)
  - a. Prologue: The Nature of Faith (11:1-3)
  - b. The Faith of Those Prior to the Flood (11:4-7)
  - c. The Faith of Abraham and His Heirs (11:8-22)
  - d. The Faith of Moses and Those Entering the Land (11:23-31)
  - e. A Closing Catalog of Faith (11:32-40)
  - f. Run the Race Looking to Jesus as the Supreme Example of Faith (12:1-3)

# The Faith of Abraham and His Heirs – Part 3 (11:17-22)

<sup>17</sup> *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, <sup>18</sup> of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named” [Gen 21:12]. <sup>19</sup> He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. <sup>20</sup> By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. <sup>21</sup> By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. <sup>22</sup> By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.*

<sup>17</sup> *By faith Abraham, when he was **tested**, offered up Isaac, and he who **had received the promises** was in the act of offering up his only son,* <sup>18</sup> *of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your **offspring** be named” [Gen 21:12].*

- The author now turns to one of the most significant events in the Old Testament: Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22).
- The author here notes that God “**tested**” Abraham.
- Abraham “**had received the promises**” from God, in which God pledged to give him **land, offspring, and blessing** (Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-16; 15:4-5, 16; 17:5-6, 15-21; 18:18; 21:10-12; 22:16-18).
- **Central** to these promises was the promise of an “**offspring**”, and the texts cited above (in which these promises were given) make it clear that the promise would become a reality through “**Isaac**”, **not** Ishmael.

<sup>17</sup> *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his **only son**,<sup>18</sup> of whom it was said, “**Through Isaac shall your offspring be named**” [Gen 21:12].*

- In **this** sense Isaac was Abraham’s “**only son**”.
- If Abraham were to **sacrifice** his son Isaac, then the promises couldn’t be fulfilled, since the promises could **only** be fulfilled “*through Isaac*”.
- Hence, the Lord’s command to Abraham seemed to **contradict** everything God had promised to Abraham.
- Nevertheless, Abraham **trusted** God and faithfully carried out his instructions.

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- The author here **confirms** that the promises were **exclusively** given to Isaac by citing Gen 21:12.
- The **background** to this citation is the time when Sarah, wanting to evict Ishmael from the house because he was mocking Isaac, said, “*the son of this slave woman [Ishmael] shall **not** be heir with my son Isaac*” (Gen 21:9-10).
- But Abraham was **displeased** with his wife’s request and didn’t want to evict Ishmael (Gen 21:11).
- But God told Abraham to **listen** to Sarah because she was right – the promise was to be given “*through Isaac*”, **not** Ishmael.



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- Interestingly, Paul cites the **identical** account to make the **same** basic point in both Rom 9:7 and Gal 4:30.
- Back in Genesis 17, when the Lord promised Abraham and Sarah a son, Abraham wasn't really interested (Gen 17:15-18). He was satisfied with the promise becoming a reality through **Ishmael**.
- But the Lord **rejected** Abraham's perspective.
- Though the Lord promised to also **bless** Ishmael, his covenant promise would be with and through Isaac **alone** (Gen 17:19-21).

<sup>17</sup> *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his **only son**,<sup>18</sup> of whom it was said, “**Through Isaac shall your offspring be named**” [Gen 21:12].*

- The promises, then, **must** be secured through **Isaac**, and yet God demanded that Abraham sacrifice him.
- If the original readers of the letter Hebrews are doubting God, if their circumstances make them wonder if they will receive **their** final reward, the author reminds them of **Abraham’s** situation.
- In the case of Abraham, it almost seemed as if God was contradicting and nullifying his own promise!

<sup>19</sup> ***[Abraham] considered that God was able even to raise [Isaac] from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.***

- And yet, faced with such a daunting situation, Abraham ***never doubted*** God's promise.
- He remained convinced that God would fulfill his promise ***through Isaac***.
- By that point in his life, Abraham had ***repeatedly*** seen God's faithfulness in delivering him:
  - God had rescued his wife from the clutches of both Pharaoh (Gen 12:10-20) and Abimelech (Gen 20:1-18).
  - When Abraham trusted God and let Lot choose the "best" land for himself, Abraham ***actually*** got the better land, and Lot ended up in Sodom which was destroyed (Gen 13).
  - When Abraham attempted to rescue Lot with a paltry number of men (318) against kings who had just won a major victory against many other kings, he succeeded (Gen 14:1-24).
  - Most striking of all, God had given Abraham and Sarah the power to procreate ***long after*** the age of childbearing. Isaac was their ***miracle*** child (Gen 17:14-17; 18:9-15; 21:1-7).

<sup>19</sup> *[Abraham] considered that God was able even to raise [Isaac] from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.*

- So Abraham **never doubted** God's pledge. He was convinced that even if he **sacrificed** Isaac, God would, if need be, "*raise [Isaac] from the dead*" and fulfill his promises to him through a **miracle**.
- The narrative in Genesis **supports** this idea. When Abraham was getting ready to **sacrifice** Isaac, he said to his servants who were there with him:
  - *Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and [we both will] come again to you.* (Gen 22:5)
- The words of the narrative here are not accidental; they are included for a **reason**.
- Abraham was **convinced** Isaac would return. Somehow God **would** fulfill his promise through Isaac.

<sup>19</sup> *He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, **figuratively** speaking, he did receive him back.*

- Isaac, then, functions “*figuratively*” (Greek: παραβολή – *parabole*) as a **type** or figure of the resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.
- Abraham received Isaac back from the dead, so to speak, but that event anticipated **another** Son and **another** Father.
- In the case of the Father and **his** son, **Jesus**, the Father actually **handed over** and **sacrificed** his Son, and the Son **gladly and willingly** gave his life for the salvation of his brothers and sisters (Heb 2:10-18).
- **Then** the Father raised his Son from the dead.
- So, Isaac’s return **typologically** points to and anticipates that **greater** resurrection.

<sup>19</sup> *He considered that **God was able even to raise him from the dead**, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.*

- In reminding us of this account in the life of Abraham, the author is demonstrating to us that, like Abraham, we **must trust** God – even when it looks as if everything we are seeing seems to go against the fulfillment of all that God has promised us.
- God’s word **always** comes true, even if it takes a resurrection to bring it to pass.
- For if God **fulfilled** his promise to Abraham and was **faithful** to Jesus, he will be faithful to **us** as well.

## <sup>20</sup> *By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.*

- Over the years, a number of Jewish interpreters have considered the attitude of Isaac **himself**, by submitting to being bound by his father with the expectation of being sacrificed, to be a commendable example of obedience, not **only** to his father, Abraham, but to **God**.
- But our author says **nothing** about this.
- The **one** incident from Isaac's career, which he mentions as a token of his "**faith**", is the fact that he "**invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau**".
- **Nothing** is said here about the fact that Isaac was **deceived** by Jacob and his wife, so that he ended up giving **Jacob** the blessing that he had intended to give to Esau.

## <sup>20</sup> *By faith Isaac invoked **future blessings** on Jacob and Esau.*

- As Isaac himself had received from God a reaffirmation of the promised blessings after Abraham's death, so he passed those "*blessings*" on to the next generation.
- When he learned that **Jacob** had received the blessing intended for **Esau**, Isaac made no attempt to revoke it; instead he **confirmed** it: "*Yes, and [Jacob] shall be blessed.*" (Gen 27:33).
- But Isaac did reserve **a** blessing for Esau, and although it was not the blessing bound up with the covenant promises made to Abraham, it was as much a "*future*" blessing as the blessing given to Jacob.
- Isaac, like his father, believed God, and his faith too was an "*assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.*"



<sup>21</sup> *By faith Jacob, when dying, **blessed each of the sons of Joseph**, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.*

- Jacob in his turn demonstrated a similar “*faith*”.
- As we just noted, Isaac was *misled* by the plotting of his wife and Jacob into giving the *younger* son the blessing which he had intended to give to the older son.
- But when Jacob was on *his* deathbed and blessed the two sons of Joseph, he *deliberately* bestowed the *greater* blessing on Ephraim, the *younger* son.
- Jacob’s *earlier* career showed very *little* evidence of “*faith*”, as he repeatedly endeavored by his own scheming to gain advantages for himself.
- But here we see, at the end of his days, Jacob had come to recognize the *futility* of all his scheming, and learned instead to rely on the faithfulness of the “*Mighty One of Jacob*” (Gen 49:22).

<sup>21</sup> *By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, **bowing in worship over the head of his staff.***

- The statement that he was “*bowing in worship over the head of his staff,*” is based on the **Septuagint** version of Gen 47:31.
- The Hebrew Masoretic text says that “*Israel bowed himself upon the head of his **bed***”.
- The Septuagint translators read the Hebrew *mtth* as *matteh*, “*staff,*” while the Masoretic text read it as *mittah*, “*bed.*”
- If you want to include **both** ideas, it’s not hard to imagine the patriarch sitting at the head of his bed while leaning on his staff.

<sup>22</sup> *By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.*

- What is said about the “*faith*” of Joseph is ***similar*** to what is said about Isaac and Jacob.
- When we think of all that could be commented on in the life of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, it is ***remarkable*** that in every case the author reflects on what they said in their ***old age*** when they were on their ***deathbed!***
- He doesn’t comment on anything these people ***did*** in their lives that manifested faith.
- Instead, he zeros in on what they ***said***, and how they prophesied about the future ***when they were about to die.***

<sup>22</sup> *By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and **gave directions concerning his bones.***

- In every case, they **continued** to believe in the promises at the time of their death, even when it was **apparent** those promises would not be fulfilled in their lifetimes.
- Joseph at his death (Gen 50:24-25) reminds his hearers about the promised exodus of Israel.
- God had promised to deliver Israel from Egypt and bring them to Canaan, and Joseph wants his bones to be brought with them when that happens.
- Joseph is in effect saying that Egypt is not his home. Canaan is his home.

<sup>22</sup> *By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.*

- The lesson for the reader of Hebrews is clear.
- Like Joseph we should be looking forward to and trusting in what God will do in the future.
- He will ***certainly*** deliver his people.
- Furthermore, our home is ***not*** on earth.
- Even though Joseph was a ruler in Egypt, he recognized that he was an ***exile***, and that his ***true*** home was Canaan.
- So too, we should recognize that ***our*** true home is the ***heavenly city***; like Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph we should trust God's promises even in death.

# Class Discussion Time



## \*Class Discussion Time

- When God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his only promised son, it almost seemed as if God was contradicting and nullifying his own earlier promises to Abraham.
- Have you ever faced a situation in your life where the thing you thought God expected of you seemed to conflict with God's previous expectations for you? Would you be willing to share your experience with the class this morning?
- Why do you suppose the author of Hebrews chose to focus on the faith that the patriarchs had on their ***deathbed***, rather than all the demonstrations of faith that had taken place during the course of their life?

## **\*Class Discussion Time**

- By the time God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham had a long list of experiences that he could look back on and see where God had been faithful to him over the years, thus giving him the courage to trust what God was telling him to do at that point.
- As you look back over your Christian life, can you think of an number of experiences that you have had that demonstrate God's faithfulness to you personally, giving you confidence to continue in obedience to him. Would you be willing to share some of these experiences with the class this morning?