

UNIT 2A: OLD TESTAMENT

(all quotations are from the Septuagint translation)

31: Ancestors and Patriarchs

(mainly focusing on the Patriarch Abraham)

What is the beginning of the Old Testament? This is by no means an easy question to answer. The beginning in one sense is the earliest referenced event in the first chapter of the first book ... the creation of heaven and earth in Genesis. However, since this is revealed truth, there being no witnesses to the creation of the Cosmos and life; the writing represents Israel's faith perception in creation's goodness and absolute dependence on the Creator from Whom it is utterly distinct.

Maybe we could say, therefore, that the Old Testament begins with the first *written* document; yet establishing that is by no means an easy task. Literacy and scribal copying probably did not arise in Israel until the time of the monarchy and the first Temple, some 700 years after the era of the first patriarchs. This preceding period was a time, primarily, of oral tradition as the people called by Yahweh handed down stories and sayings from one generation to the next.

We can safely say, though, that the beginning of salvation history *is* marked by the election, calling and vocation of a covenanted people in relation to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The social organisation of these first patriarchal communities was tribal and dated from before the 18th century BC when we first encounter Abraham. After the Exodus from Egypt and the settling in the Promised Land in the 13th century BC, the tribal confederacy was governed by judges and inspired and corrected by prophets. The compilation of Scripture as *writings* began with the ascendancy of Judah and its monarchy in the 10th century BC but the first authorisation of a canon of Scripture only occurred after the restoration of the Jews from Babylonian exile in the time of Ezra (5th century BC) when the prophetic writings and wisdom literature were largely complete. Henceforth it was the Torah and the Messianic kingdom to come that guided, inspired and energised the Jews, the country itself suffering the occupation of the Greeks (Seleucid Dynasty, 2nd century BC) and the Romans immediately before the time of Christ.

Although the time of the ancestors and the patriarchs marks the true beginnings of Israel, the Church of the Old Covenant, the Exodus was arguably the key event that sustained the Hebrews in succeeding centuries as a gathered people and indeed until the resurrection of Christ. This event, the Exodus,

was celebrated especially at Passover as God's liberation of his people from slavery in Egypt and their settling in the Promised Land. The Church, particularly in her patristic writings and hymns, interpreted the resurrection of Christ as a New Passover, an Exodus of Jew and Gentile alike from the oppression of sin, evil and death into the eternal kingdom of Christ, the Messiah, the Incarnate Word of God. There is no "end" therefore of the Old Testament because its promise has been fulfilled in Christ.

A Christian interpretation of the Old Testament, therefore, must be both Christocentric and based on the Scriptures actually in use at the time of Christ, which means here the Septuagint rather than the Masoretic text which at Jamnia (late 1st century AD) and subsequently was amended by the Jews to obscure or even to remove some of its messianic references.

We must return though now to the earliest strand in the oral Tradition that prepares the ground for the Exodus, namely the history of the Patriarchs covered by Genesis Chapters 12 to 50. Before we evaluate the spiritual dimension of this history we need to put the key events in their social and historical context without which such an evaluation becomes distorted and untrue to the Bible itself which sees God as active precisely in and through the lives of peoples and nations. Happily we have extra-biblical records, artefacts and archaeological finds upon which to corroborate and contextualise the persons, peoples and events of the Old Testament in general and even the tribal and patriarchal period in particular. This primal history has a geography comprising the so-called Fertile Crescent of modern day Iraq through Syria and into Palestine then known as Canaan. Exodus 3:17 neatly summarises retrospectively the competing peoples that vied over centuries for control of these territories. God speaks:-

" (and) I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Gergesites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey."

It is now important that we place these peoples in their historical context for they have more to do with the later emergence of Israel than we might think.

Sometimes it is easy to cross reference these biblical references with archaeological data. For instance the Hittites, long a mysterious footnote in history, burst into modern consciousness and

appreciation with the astonishing finds at the site of Boghazkoy, the ancient Hittite capital in 1907. The Arameans, however, are regarded in the Old Testament as contemporaries of the Hittites and indeed Abraham, yet they did not come into their own until 1200 BC, some 500 years later, following the collapse of the Hittite and Egyptian Empires. However, there is textual evidence for proto-Aramean peoples of Amorite lineage from the earlier period of biblical testimony. It was these ancestral Amorites, a Semitic people, who overran Mesopotamia from Arabia after the collapse of the Third Ur Dynasty from 2000 BC onwards. The Amorites moved their capital from Mari in the north to Babylon and so began the First Babylonian Dynasty whose most famous ruler was Hammurabi (1728 - 1686 BC). Over the next 800 years the Amorites extended their influence north into Syria and then south into Canaan where they and their compatriots were to clash with the incursive Israelites after the Exodus.

After World War II, an archaeological excavation in Mari revealed a magnificent palace of over 300 rooms and covering several acres. Also found were some 25,000 clay tablets inscribed with affairs of business and administration. It is these tablets that have provided independent corroboration of biblical tribes that were only previously known to us from the Bible itself. Since the end of the Mari period of the Amorites before the ascendancy of Hammurabi in Babylon coincides with the period of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob this is especially noteworthy. Ishmael, Levi (?), Abram, Jacob, Benjamin are mentioned together with the cities of Peleg, Serug and Nahor in neighbouring Haran. In Genesis 11:10-16 these three are names in the genealogy of Abraham who, we recall moved from Ur to Canaan through Haran. These Amorite ancestors of the Israelites also doubtless influenced the biblical account of primal history in Genesis 1-11 for they also had similar epics and creation narratives in the *Enuma Elish* and a Great Flood story in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. They were after all a Semite people of similar ultimate origin in Mesopotamia. The Amorites did not hold this area all to themselves, however. First the Hittites from the north (remember that Abraham purchased his burial cave from them in Canaan - Genesis 23) and then the Hurrians (possibly the Hivites of the Old Testament) pushed from Armenia into northern Mesopotamia, consolidated a power base there in 1500 BC and then migrated into Canaan where they frequently clashed with Egyptians expanding northwards.

If these expanding and contracting empires were not enough, slicing as it were through the patriarchal period, we also have the enigmatic 'Apiru or Habiru. These were marginal nomadic peoples of many ethnic origins, similar perhaps to the travelling folk of today. Numbered among

them almost certainly was Abraham and his progeny. Until the Exodus they moved through the empires that surged north and south from city to city across their caravan trails. If drought or famine struck they would move into the cities, sometimes of far off lands, as eventually did Jacob and his family in Egypt. They had lived this nomadic existence for hundreds of years and Jacob was probably not the first of their number to seek sometimes temporary safety in Egypt as the famous fresco from Beni-hasan attests, complete with nomads wearing many coloured coats! ... (dated earlier from the time of Abraham).

When Jacob and his family followed the same route into Egypt in the 17th century BC they did so as guests of the Hyskos Egyptian pharaohs who had invaded Egypt from the north. The Hyskos were a mixed group comprising Hittites, Hurrians and other Semitic peoples who might have been well disposed towards the Israelites and only later after an extended settlement of 300 years did a restored Egyptian pharaonic dynasty turn against them, (Exodus 1:8), leading of course to the Exodus. (The Hyskos conjecture is largely speculative, but they had moved the capital from Thebes to Avaris in Goshen in eastern Egypt when the Israelites had settled). With the historical context firmly now in our minds, we can proceed to evaluate the spiritual significance of the patriarchal period for Israel before Christ and Israel after Christ, the Church.

The broad agreement of biblical history and extra-biblical sources is notable but not, as we have seen, without such unresolved issues. However, the scriptures are not presented as simple historical records but rather the events relating thereto are theologised into stories concerning God's dealings with His People. The Bible is concerned, therefore, with the sense revelation makes of history in the covenant community and it is with this hermeneutic therefore that Church concerns herself for she is that covenant community with whom God has both spoken and acted. So, Abraham, the father of many nations (Genesis 17:4-5) sets out from a particular place, Ur of the Chaldeans (Genesis 11:31) to a land (as yet unknown - Canaan) that will be shown to him (Genesis 12:1). It is the universal dimension of this calling (Genesis 12:2) and response of faith, however, that concerns Genesis, (15:6) not so much the journey itself. The Abraham saga is unintelligible or in a reductionist sense totally unremarkable except for the faith that is forged, (the promise of Isaac, Genesis 18:10, tested and refined (the "sacrifice" of Isaac, Genesis 22:1-19) and sealed with a covenant of universal blessing for all peoples from Abraham and his innumerable seed, (Genesis 22:17-18). Take away the promise of God and the response of faith and you have the unremarkable story of a tribesman and his family fortunes in the Bronze Age of the Middle East. Secular readings of sacred history miss the point

entirely, which might be framed by the questions: *“What is God doing here?”* and *“How are his people responding?”*.

There is another vital question that all Christians must ask of the text and this concerns either the symbolic or realistic anticipation of the Messiah: *“How does this speak of Christ?”* A key example that demands this question is the offering or binding of Isaac. For example, Hebrews compares Isaac with Christ but mainly in the context of faith rather than sacrifice per se, (11:17-19):-

“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.”

The fathers on the other hand strongly develop the theme of sacrifice as between Isaac and Christ, (the Letter of Barnabas, Melito of Sardis, Irenaeus, Tertullian, John Chrysostom, Efreem the Syrian). Nonetheless the anticipation of Christ’s sacrifice is a typological interpretation that cannot be pressed too far. For example, Isaac is compliant but passive; except that is for carrying the wood for sacrifice and in this some say that he also he prefigures Christ carrying the wood of his cross to Golgotha (Melito of Sardis). Also, Abraham cannot simply be the Father typologically for it was not the Father who sacrificed Christ but Christ who voluntarily offered His own life for all, the *offering* being the Father’s will, not the killing. In the later Latin thought, particularly in the presentation of Christ’s sacrifice as vicarious (Anselm) or substitutionary (Protestantism) the provision of the Lord for sacrifice (Genesis 22:13) is strained to breaking point for the ram replaces Isaac thereby disallowing Christ replacing anyone since Isaac is supposed to be a type of Christ. We are some way distant here from the Orthodox understanding of God offering himself as a sacrifice of love for the world which lies in the grip of death and, therefore, sin. Once one starts from *that* point it is also far easier and more necessary that we take into account the religious context of child sacrifice in the period in question. The offering of Isaac then becomes a key point of transition as Israel under divine revelation repudiates child sacrifice (finally and definitively in 2 Kings 3:27 and Micah 6:7-8) in favour of animal sacrifice. Eventually Christ’s sacrifice will replace animal sacrifices as well, but for now God commends this, Abraham’s obedience - albeit this costly offering is NOT required - and He therefore stays Abraham’s hand through the angelic voice. (See Appendix “B”)

Clearly, a Christian exegesis of the Old Testament cannot and must not be conducted as if Christ was not the Messiah, as if God had not appeared in the flesh, as if death had not been undone. We cannot read the Old Testament as if we were not Christians. From this position we must also recognise that revelation is progressive throughout both oral tradition and the scriptures. The clearest example of this in the Old Testament as concerning God in relation to other faiths strongly makes its first appearance here in the patriarchal narratives.

Projecting forwards it was the Exodus and its aftermath that required that the people abandon once and for all the idolatrous adulteration of their ancestors' belief in false gods, (Joshua 24:2, 14b). The implications are clear; monotheism was not uncomplicated in the patriarchal period. Mostly we see the rejection of henotheism (that the one God is simply superior to other gods who do actually exist) in favour of a classical monotheism, represented by the patriarchs themselves, that there is only one God and that this God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, (Exodus 3:6, 15) - albeit that this confession has been profoundly influenced by the later Mosaic and Sinaitic traditions within the text itself. Nonetheless, we do see remnants here of the older henotheistic views where primitive tribal deities, notably the "El" variants of the Canaanite pantheon (Genesis 14:18-20, 16:13, 21:33, 31:12) and "Shaddai" (Genesis 17:1, 23:3, 35:11, 43:14, 48:3) get assimilated to Yahweh ... which contextualises the overriding importance of God's self-revelation to Moses at the Burning Bush, again in the context of the forthcoming Exodus.

There is much more to the patriarchal history of course concerning Isaac for whom the references are slight; Jacob, whose foundational role in the emergence of Israel's self-consciousness as a tribal people is emphasised and the Joseph saga which raises the curtain on divine providence in relation to divine action, reminiscent perhaps of the later tradition of wisdom literature. We shall revisit this national religious epic in a later lecture but for now we should reflect on the importance of the material in Genesis 12-50 for the developing consciousness of a people who in a later period traced their origins to those archetypal believers, the patriarchs, who stood distinctively over and against the surrounding religious culture for the God whom they had encountered and known as the Holy One of Israel; a jealous God, a single God, a God with no equal, a God of blessing, promise and judgement.

Appendices: "A" - Hermeneutical Grid Template and "B" - a prepared Grid for Genesis 22:1-18 >>>

Appendix “A”: A Template for the Orthodox Interpretation of Biblical Texts

In accordance with the proposal of Fr. Theodore G. Stylianopoulos that Orthodox biblical interpretation ought to be approached on three levels, the following template is offered for preachers, teachers, bible study leaders, catechists and students of the Scriptures generally:¹

Level	Process	In Tradition / Fathers (Theoria)	Applicable Now (Praxis)
Exegetical	Historical / Contextual <i>(using the full range of critical tools)</i>		
	Allegorical / Typological <i>(as derived from Tradition)</i>		
Interpretative	Spiritual / Ethical		
	Personal / Social		
Transformative	The Call to Holiness		
	The Call to Witness		

¹ In “*The New Testament, An Orthodox Perspective, Volume 1: Scripture, Tradition, Hermeneutics*,” (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1997, Ch. 7), Fr. Theodore sets out three levels serving a sound Orthodox hermeneutical process. These are: **1. Exegetical** - using all critical, contextual, textual and literary methods to determine “the level of understanding of the biblical text in its historical context of literary form and conceptuality ...” (p. 190). **2. Interpretative** – evaluating means derived from the exegetical stage as applicable contextually to the reader’s contemporary issues and concerns (p. 197). **3. Transformative** – experiencing life changing practical applications of insights derived from the previous two stages. In ALL of these three levels, the Orthodox context must be the Church as the locus of divine revelation and inspiration. Here the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth as manifested in the biblical text, the teachings of the Fathers and the liturgical context. In Ch. 4, p. 115f, Fr. Theodore explains the historical and spiritual exegetical approaches which, following the Fathers, must be applied throughout. Classically, these have concerned the Antiochian emphasis on the “literal” or historical approach and the Alexandrian emphasis on the allegorical and typological interpretations that reveal the inter-connectedness of all Scripture in Tradition at deeper levels of understanding.

Appendix “B”: A Grid for the Orthodox Interpretation of Genesis 22:1-18

Level	Process	In Tradition / Fathers (Theoria)	Applicable Now (Praxis)
<p style="color: red; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">Exegetical</p> <p style="margin: 0;"><u>Text:</u></p> <p style="margin: 0;">The “Sacrifice” of Isaac, specifically, the Akedah or the Binding of Isaac (Genesis 22:1-18)</p>	<p>Historical / Contextual</p> <p><i>(using the full range of critical tools)</i></p>	<p>The preparedness of Abraham, in obedience to God, to sacrifice his son Isaac must be seen in the context of the prevalence of child sacrifice in the religions of antiquity, primarily outside Judaism. As late as in the time of Hezekiah, however, there was a prophetic denunciation of this lingering practice (Micah 6:7). It is reasonable to suppose that due weight should be given to Abraham’s <i>perception</i> that God required this ultimate sacrifice from him. In fact, the point is that God had other plans! (Genesis 22:11-13)</p>	<p>We want to offer the best to God if we are true believers. However, God does not need our sacrifices, but we need HIS. We also need to sacrifice ourselves in His service if that sacrifice of Christ is to bear fruit in our lives.</p>
	<p>Allegorical / Typological</p> <p><i>(as derived from Tradition)</i></p>	<p>It is unlikely that Romans 8:32 (“He who did not spare His own Son”) is a typological allusion by St. Paul connecting the sacrifice of Christ with that of Isaac because the text does not suggest it and the correspondence is inexact to say the least. St. Paul is only interested in Isaac in relation to the covenant promise (Galatians 4:24-31). However, the Fathers often do use this typology though, for example: <i>The Letter of Barnabas</i> 7:3; St. Melito of Sardis <i>On Pascha and Frag. 9</i>; St. Irenaeus <i>Against the Heresies</i> 4.5.4, St. Ephraim the Syrian <i>Hymns Nat</i> 8.13; St. Augustine <i>City of God</i> 16.32; St. John Chrysostom <i>Homily Genesis</i> 47. Some have noted that that Abraham’s words in Genesis 22: 8, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering,” can be interpreted in the context that the ram caught in the thicket is “an immediate fulfilment” to Abraham, while “the ultimate fulfilment [for humanity] is the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36).” This modern interpretation certainly supports the Fathers’ typology connecting the sacrifice of Christ with that of Isaac.</p>	<p>The scarlet thread of sacrifice unites Old and New Testaments. It also unites our obedience to God’s outpouring of Himself without diminution or change. This reciprocal self-giving love between God and humankind is what saves the world and restores creation. Taking up one’s cross is a typological fulfilment of the sacrificial “wood-carrying” of Isaac and Christ.</p>
<p style="color: green; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">Interpretative</p>	<p>Spiritual / Ethical</p>	<p>The importance of the Akedah in tradition is twofold. It shows the radical (if misconceived) obedience of Abraham and the progressive abandonment of child, then animal sacrifice culminating in the voluntary sacrifice of Christ. Hebrews 11:19 refers explicitly to Abraham’s voluntary offering up of Isaac in faith; and a note in <i>The Orthodox Study Bible</i> on Genesis 22:12 reads: “Abraham received Isaac back alive. This prefigured the Resurrection of Christ and the future resurrection from the dead in which Abraham believed.”</p>	<p>Obedience to God as Life-Giver, even when our ideas about Him might be misconceived, is the only safe route to salvation.</p>
	<p>Personal / Social</p>	<p>The readiness of Abraham to sacrifice even his very best is followed in verses 15-19 with a promise of fruitfulness in descendants and blessing. Our identity is to be found in this covenanted People of God, the Church of the Old and New Covenants.</p>	<p>We discover our Christian identity in the People of Promise, the Church and it is validated by our willing to do God’s will.</p>
<p style="color: blue; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">Transformative</p>	<p>The Call to Holiness</p>	<p>There is no growth in holiness without a radical obedience to God incorporating the sacrifice of oneself - that is, of pride and self-concern - so that love and justice might flourish. Consider the martyrs.</p>	<p>Develop a life of prayer and service that puts God and His will first, with our own comfort and survival very much second.</p>
	<p>The Call to Witness</p>	<p>Abraham built an altar at that place and named it after the appearance of the Lord. None of these events are private. They are a witness to the world of the promise of God to build His Church, His People.</p>	<p>Do not be apologetic or cowardly about what God has done in your life. Build an altar and name that place.</p>

Genesis 22:1-18 Septuagint LXX (NETS Translation)	Genesis 22:1-18 Masoretic Text (NKJV)
<p>22 And it came about after these matters that God tested Abraam and said to him, "Abraam, Abraam!" And he said, "Here I am." ²And he said, "Take your beloved son Isaac, whom you love, and go into the high land, and offer him as a whole burnt offering on one of the mountains, whichever I mention to you." ³And when Abraam had risen in the morning, he saddled his donkey. Now he took along with himself two servants and his son Isaac, and after he had split wood for a whole burnt offering and risen, he went and came to the place that God had mentioned to him, ⁽⁴⁾on the third day. ⁴And when Abraam looked up with his eyes, he saw the place far away. ⁵Then Abraam said to his servants, "Sit right here with the donkey, and the youngster and I will go through hither, and after we have done obeisance, we will come back to you." ⁶And Abraam took the wood of the whole burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac; then he took both the fire and the knife in hand, and the two walked on together. ⁷And Isaac spoke to his father Abraam (when he had said, "Father!" and he had said, "What is it, child?"), saying, "Look, the fire and the wood! Where is the sheep for a whole burnt offering?" ⁸And Abraam said, "God will see to a sheep as a whole burnt offering for himself, child."</p> <p>And as both walked on together ⁹they came to the place that God had mentioned to him. And Abraam built the altar there and laid on the wood, and when he had bound his son Isaac hand and foot, he laid him on the altar atop the wood. ¹⁰Then Abraam reached out his hand to take the knife to slay his son. ¹¹And the Lord's angel called him from the sky and said to him, "Abraam, Abraam!" And he said, "Here I am." ¹²And he said, "Do not lay your hand on the youngster nor do anything to him. For now I know that you do fear God, and for my sake you have not spared your beloved son." ¹³And as Abraam looked up with his eyes he saw, and see, a ram held fast in a sabek plant by the horns. And Abraam went and took the ram and offered it up as a whole burnt offering instead of his son Isaac. ¹⁴And Abraam called the name of that place "The Lord saw," that they might say today, "On the mountain the Lord appeared."</p> <p>¹⁵ And the Lord's angel called Abraam a second time from the sky, ⁽¹⁶⁾saying, ¹⁶"By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Inasmuch as you have carried out this matter and for my sake have not spared your beloved son, ¹⁷I will indeed bless you with blessings, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and as the sand that is by the seashore, and your offspring shall possess the cities of their adversaries, ¹⁸and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."</p>	<p>Genesis 22:1-18 New King James Version (NKJV)</p> <p>Abraham's Faith Confirmed</p> <p>22 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!"</p> <p>And he said, "Here I am."</p> <p>²Then He said, "Take now your son, your only <i>son</i> Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."</p> <p>³So 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 the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.</p> <p>⁴Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. ⁵And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad^(a) and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."</p> <p>⁶So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid <i>it</i> on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. ⁷But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!"</p> <p>And he said, "Here I am, my son."</p> <p>Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where <i>is</i> the lamb for a burnt offering?"</p> <p>⁸And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.</p> <p>⁹Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. ¹⁰And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.</p> <p>¹¹But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!"</p> <p>So he said, "Here I am."</p> <p>¹²And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only <i>son</i>, from Me."</p> <p>¹³Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind <i>him</i> was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide;^(b) as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided."</p> <p>¹⁵Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, ¹⁶and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only <i>son</i>— ¹⁷blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which <i>is</i> on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."</p>

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