

Who is the Tanakh's Favorite Ancestor?

349			
175/236			
108			
47			
38			
34			
30			

What does this week's *sidrah* tell us about Abraham?

1. He left his homeland at God's behest
2. He sojourned in Egypt and prospered
3. He separated from Lot
4. He rescued Lot from Mesopotamian marauders
5. God forged a covenant with him
6. He was very concerned about his legacy
7. He fathered a son with his concubine
8. He performed the covenant of circumcision

Here is an assortment of verses from the Prophets that could have been included as a Haftarah:

• ויאמר יהושע אל כל העם כה אמר ה' אלהי ישראל בעבר הנהר ישבו אבותיכם מעולם תרח אבי אברהם ואבי נחור ויעבדו אלהים אחרים. יהושע כ"ד:ב ואקח את אביכם את אברהם מעבר הנהר ואולף אתו בכל ארץ כנען וארבה את זרעו ואתן לו את יצחק. יהושע כ"ד:ג

(2) And Joshua said unto all the people: 'Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: Your fathers dwelt of old time beyond the River, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods. (3) And I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.

• לכן כה אמר ה' אל בית יעקב אשר פדה את אברהם לא עתה יבוש יעקב ולא עתה פניו יחורו. ישעיהו כ"ט:כ"ב

Therefore thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: Jacob shall not now be ashamed, Neither shall his face now wax pale

• הביטו אל אברהם אביכם ואל שרה תחוללכם כי אחד קראתיו ואברהם ואברהם. ישעיהו נ"א:ב

Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bore you; For when he was but one I called him, and I blessed him, and made him many.

• בן אדם ישבי החרבות האלה על אדמת ישראל אמרים לאמר אחד היה אברהם ויירש את הארץ ואנחנו רבים לנו נתנה הארץ למורשה יחזקאל ל"ג:כ"ד

'Son of man, they that inhabit those waste places in the land of Israel speak, saying: Abraham was one, and he inherited the land; but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance.

40:27-31 Do not despair

in power, Not one faileth. (27) Why sayest thou, O Jacob, And speakest, O Israel: 'My way is hid from the Lord, And my right is passed over from my God'? (28) Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard That the everlasting God, the Lord, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Fainteth not, neither is weary? His discernment is past searching out. (29) He giveth power to the faint; And to him that hath no might He increaseth strength. (30) Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall; (31) But they that wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings as eagles; They shall run, and not be weary; They shall walk, and not faint.

וְאִמִּין כַּח אִישׁ לֹא נִעְדָּר. (כז) לָמָּה
תֹּאמַר יַעֲקֹב וּתְדַבֵּר יִשְׂרָאֵל נִסְתָּרָה
דַּרְכֵי מִיָּי וּמֵאֱלֹהֵי מְשַׁפְּטֵי יַעֲבֹר.
(כח) הֲלוֹא יִדְעַתָּ אִם לֹא שָׁמַעְתָּ
אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם יָי בּוֹרֵא קְצוֹת הָאָרֶץ לֹא
יִיָּעַף וְלֹא יִיָּגַע אִין חֶקֶר לְתַבּוּנָתוֹ. (כט)
נָתַן לִיָּעַף כַּח וּלְאִין אֹנִים עֲצָמָה
יִרְבֶּה. (ל) וַיַּעֲפוּ נְעָרִים וַיִּגְעוּ וּבַחֲוָרִים
כָּשׁוּל יִבְשָׁלוּ. (לא) וְקוֹי יָי יַחֲלִיפוּ כַח
יַעֲלוּ אֶבֶר כְּנִשְׁרִים יִרוּצוּ וְלֹא יִיָּגְעוּ
יִלְכוּ וְלֹא יִיָּעֲפוּ.

נוסח המקרא מבוסס על מהדורת
מקרא על פי המסורה (CC BY-SA)
(3.0), המבוססת על כתר ארם צובה
וכתבי יד נוספים

The substantive content of the *haftarah* emphasizes God's **altruism** towards a population drained of its strength, weary from misfortune and oppression. The *haftarah*, in noting that the nation of Israel descends from Abraham (41:8), serves as a reminder that it was Abraham who demonstrated a worthiness to receive such a bounteous benevolence towards his descendants because of his exquisite emulation of this very same trait. After all, as described in *Parashat Lekh Lekha*, Avraham risked his own life and sacrificed his personal security in order to rescue his nephew Lot from the four mighty kings. Upon defeating the kings, Avraham not only eschewed any gift from the king of Sodom whom he had rescued, but even gave tithes to Malki-Tzedek, the resident "priest." In fact, Avraham is viewed as the paradigm of "*chessed*" (loving-kindness).

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ישעיהו מ"א

(1) Keep silence before Me, O islands, And let the peoples renew their strength; Let them draw near, then let them speak; Let us come near together to judgment. (2) Who hath raised up one from the east, At whose steps victory attendeth? He giveth nations before him, And maketh him rule over kings; His sword maketh them as the dust, His bow as the driven stubble. (3) He pursueth them, and passeth on safely; The way with his feet he treadeth not. (4) Who hath wrought and done it? He that called the generations from the beginning. I, the Lord, who am the first, And with the last am the same. (5) The isles saw, and feared; The ends of the earth trembled; They drew near, and came. (6) They helped every one his neighbour; And every one said to his brother: 'Be of good courage.' (7) So the carpenter encouraged the

(א) הַחֲרִישׁוּ אֵלַי אַיִם וְלְאֻמִּים יַחְלִיפוּ כַחַת יִגְשׁוּ אֶזְו יִדְבְּרוּ יַחְדָּו לְמִשְׁפָּט נִקְרְבָה. (ב) מִי הָעִיר מִמְּזֶרֶח צְדָק יִקְרָאֶהוּ לְרַגְלוֹ יִתֵּן לְפָנָיו גּוֹיִם וּמַלְכִים יִרְדֵּי יִתֵּן כְּעַפְרָה חֲרָבוֹ כְּקֶשֶׁת נִדְף קִשְׁתּוֹ. (ג) יִרְדָּפֵם יַעֲבֹר שְׁלוֹם אֶרֶץ בְּרַגְלָיו לֹא יָבוֹא. (ד) מִי פָעַל וְעָשָׂה קִרְא הַדְּרוֹת מִרֹאשׁ אֲנִי יְיָ רֹאשׁוֹן וְאֵת אֲחֵרָנִים אֲנִי הוּא. (ה) רָאוּ אַיִם וַיִּרְאוּ קִצּוֹת הָאָרֶץ יַחְרְדוּ קָרְבוֹ וַיֵּאֲתִיּוּ. (ו) אִישׁ אֶת רֵעֵהוּ יַעֲזֹרוּ וְלֹאֲחָיו יֹאמְרוּ חֲזַק. (ז) וַיַּחֲזֵק חֲרָשׁ אֶת צִרְף מַחְלִיק פָּטִישׁ אֶת הוֹלֵם פָּעַם אָמַר לְדַבֵּק טוֹב הוּא וַיַּחֲזִקֵהוּ בְּמַסְמְרִים לֹא יִמוּט. (ח) וְאֶתְהָ יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדֵי יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר בְּחִרְתִּידָּ זָרַע אֲבָרָהָם אֲהַבִּי. (ט) אֲשֶׁר הַחֲזַקְתִּידָּ מִקִּצּוֹת הָאָרֶץ וּמֵאֲצִילֶיהָ קִרְאֲתִידָּ וְאָמַר לְךָ עֲבָדֵי אֶתְהָ בְּחִרְתִּידָּ וְלֹא מֵאֲסִתִּידָּ. (י) אֵל

"כי הלבישני
בגדי-ישע,
מעיל צדקה
יעטני"

רש"י מי העיר ממזרח – אותו שצדק יקראהו לרגלו מי העיר את אברהם להביאו מארם שהוא במזרח וצדק שהיה עושה היא היתה לקראת רגליו בכל אשר הלך. יתן לפניו גוים – מי שהעירו ממקומו להסיע הוא נתן לפניו ארבעה מלכים וחיילותיהם.

Who aroused the victorious one—who awakened Abraham to bring him from Aram in the east, who performed righteously with every step he took. Who aroused him to leave his place and placed four kings and their armed before him...

In my opinion, it refers to Cyrus... ולפי דעתי שהוא רמז על כורש אבן עזרא

רש"י מי העיר ממזרח – והוא אברהם אבינו שהעיר אותו האל לצאת מארץ מזרח שהיתה ארץ מולדתו... והעיר אותו האל מבית עובדי פסילים.

This is the Patriarch Abraham who was aroused to leave his home in the east... aroused to leave a place of idolatry

Although no extra-biblical information exists regarding this episode, we can make several informed guesses about its participants and its objectives.

Amrafel, king of Shankhar	אַמְרַפֵּל מֶלֶךְ שַׁנְכָר
Arriwuk, king of Illasura (in Mari) [son of Zimri-lim]	אַרְיוּךְ מֶלֶךְ אֶלְסַר
Kuttir-lagamar [servant of god Lagamar], king of Elam	כְּדֻרְלַעְמַר מֶלֶךְ עֵילָם
Tudhaliya (Hittite), king of the Umman-manda [northern hordes]	תְּדַעַל מֶלֶךְ גּוֹיִם

The common denominator is opposition to the rule of Hammurabi of Babylon, whose greatest adversary was Zimri-lim (aka, Rim-Si king of Mari).

Bera, king of Sodom	בְּרַע מֶלֶךְ סֹדֶם
Birsha, king of Gomorrah	בִּרְשָׁע מֶלֶךְ עֲמֹרָה
Shinab, king of Admah	שִׁנָּב מֶלֶךְ אַדְמָה
Shemeber, king of Zeboiim	שְׁמֵאֲבֵר מֶלֶךְ צְבוִיִּים
The king of Bela, which is Tzoar	מֶלֶךְ בְּלַע הִיא צֹר

Canaan seems to have been organized along lines of pentapolis (cf. Philistia).

The names of these kings were interpreted, homiletically, as indicative of their base characters.

Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim	רְפָאִים בְּעַשְׁתְּרֵת קַרְנַיִם
Zuzim in Ham	זֻזִים בְּחָם
Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim	אֵימִים בְּשָׁוֶה קִרְיָתַיִם
Horites in their Mount Seir	הַחֲרִי בְּהַרְרֵם שֵׁעִיר
all the country of the Amalekites	כָּל־שְׂדֵה הָעַמְלָקִי
Amorites, that lived in Hazazon Tamar	הָאֲמֹרִי הַיֹּשֵׁב בְּחֲצֹצֵן תָּמָר

Rephaim were aboriginal giants who lived in the Bashan (Dt. 3:13).

Ashterot (Dt. 1:4, capital of the Bashan) and Karnayim (Joshua 9:10) were adjacent cities.

Zuzim, arguably, are the Zamzumin, another name for the Rephaim (Dt. 2:20).

Ham may be Tel-Ham, 30 km. east of Beit-Shean and 6 km, south of Irbid (Jordan).

Emim were a race of giants like the Rephaim (Dt. 2:10 ff.), so-called by the Moabites.

Shaveh, see v. 17: “the Valley of Shaveh, which is the Valley of the King” (2 Sam. 18:18, unknown).

Kiriathaim, formerly Moabite, later Reuben (Nu. 32:37)=Khirbet el-Qureiye 10 km. west of Medeba

Horites=Hurrians, non-Semitic people with large cultural impact on Hittites. Cf. Dt. 2:12,22.

Amalekites here are NOT the arch-enemy, who was later descended of Esau

Hazon Tamar. Tamar in 1 Kings 9:18 in Judean desert=Ein Husb 30 km. sw Dead Sea.

X

דברים ב'

wilderness of Moab. (9) Hashem said to me, "Don't bother Moab, neither contend with them in battle; for I will not give you of his land for a possession; because I have given Ar to the children of Lot for a possession." (10) The Emim lived therein before, a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakim: (11) these also are accounted Rephaim, as the Anakim; but the Moabites call them Emim. (12) The Horites also lived in Seir before, but the children of Esau succeeded them; and they destroyed them from before them, and lived in their place; as Israel did to the land of his possession, which Hashem gave to them. (13) "Now rise

(ט) וַיֹּאמֶר יְיָ אֵלַי אַל תִּצְרֶה אֶת מוֹאָב וְאַל תִּתְגַּר בָּם מִלְחָמָה כִּי לֹא אֶתֶן לְךָ מֵאַרְצוֹ יִרְשָׁה כִּי לִבְנֵי לוֹט נָתַתִּי אֶת עַר יִרְשָׁה. (י) הָאֲמִים לְפָנִים יֵשְׁבוּ בָּהּ עִם גְּדוֹל וְרַב וְרַם כְּעִנְקִים. (יא) רִפְאִים יִחְשְׁבוּ אִף הֵם כְּעִנְקִים וְהַמְּאָבִים יִקְרְאוּ לָהֶם אֲמִים. (יב) וּבְשֵׁעִיר יֵשְׁבוּ הַחֲרִים לְפָנִים וּבְנֵי עֵשָׂו יִירָשׁוּם וַיִּשְׁמִידוּם מִפְּנֵיהֶם וַיֵּשְׁבוּ תַּחְתָּם כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֶרֶץ יִרְשָׁתוֹ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן יְיָ לָהֶם. (יג) עָתָה קָמוּ וְעִבְרוּ לָכֶם אֶת נַחַל זָרַד וְנִעְבְּרוּ אֶת נַחַל זָרַד. (יד) וְהֵימִים אֲשֶׁר הִלְכְּנוּ מִקְדָּשׁ בְּרַנְעַע עַד אֲשֶׁר עִבְרָנוּ אֶת נַחַל זָרַד שְׁלֹשִׁים וּשְׁמֹנֶה שָׁנָה עַד תִּם

X

דברים ב'

of Moab: (19) and when you come near over against the children of Ammon, don't bother them, nor contend with them; for I will not give you of the land of the children of Ammon for a possession; because I have given it to the children of Lot for a possession." (20) That also is accounted a land of Rephaim: Rephaim lived therein before; but the Ammonites call them Zamzummim, (21) a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakim; but Hashem destroyed them before them; and they succeeded them, and lived in their place; (22) as He did for the children of Esau, who dwell in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites from before them; and they succeeded them, and lived in their place even to this day: (23) and the Avvim, who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorim, who came forth out of Caphtor, destroyed them, and lived in their place. (24) "Rise up, take your

עַר. (ט) וְקִרְבַּת מוֹל בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן אֶל תִּצְרֶם וְאַל תִּתְגַּר בָּם כִּי לֹא אֶתֶן מֵאַרְצוֹ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן לְךָ יִרְשָׁה כִּי לִבְנֵי לוֹט נָתַתִּיהָ יִרְשָׁה. (כ) אֶרֶץ רִפְאִים תִּחְשַׁב אִף הוּא רִפְאִים יֵשְׁבוּ בָּהּ לְפָנִים וְהָעַמְנִים יִקְרְאוּ לָהֶם זַמְזוּמִים. (כא) עִם גְּדוֹל וְרַב וְרַם כְּעִנְקִים וַיִּשְׁמִידֵם יְיָ מִפְּנֵיהֶם וַיִּירָשֵׁם וַיֵּשְׁבוּ תַּחְתָּם. (כב) כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לִבְנֵי עֵשָׂו הַיִּשְׁבִּים בְּשֵׁעִיר אֲשֶׁר הִשְׁמִיד אֶת הַחֲרִי מִפְּנֵיהֶם וַיִּירָשֵׁם וַיֵּשְׁבוּ תַּחְתָּם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה. (כג) וְהָעִוִּים הַיִּשְׁבִּים בְּחֻצְרוֹת עַד עַזָּה כִּפְתָרִים הַיִּצְאִים מִכְּפַתֵּר הִשְׁמִידֵם וַיֵּשְׁבוּ תַּחְתָּם. (כד) קוּמוּ סַעוּ וְעִבְרוּ אֶת נַחַל אֲרָגָן רְאֵה נָתַתִּי בְיָדְךָ אֶת סִיחֹן מִלְּךְ הַשְּׁבוֹן הָאֲמֹרִי וְאֶת אֲרָצוֹ הַחֵל רֶשֶׁת וְהַתְּגַר בּוֹ מִלְחָמָה. (כה) הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֶחָל תֵּת פַּתְדָּד וַיִּרְאֶתְךָ עַל פְּנֵי הָעַמִּים תַּחַת רַל הַעֲמִיט אֲנִי וְנִימְנִי וְנִימְנִי וְנִימְנִי וְנִימְנִי

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ישעיהו מ"א

goldsmith, And he that smootheth with the hammer him that smiteth the anvil, Saying of the soldering: 'It is good'; And he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved. (8) But thou, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, The seed of Abraham My friend; (9) Thou whom I have taken hold of from the ends of the earth, And called thee from the uttermost parts thereof, And said unto thee: 'Thou art My servant, I have chosen thee and not cast thee away'; (10) Fear thou not, for I am with thee, Be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I strengthen thee, yea, I help thee; Yea, I uphold thee with My victorious right hand. (11) Behold, all they that were incensed against thee Shall be ashamed and confounded; They that strove with thee Shall be

אתה בחרתיך ולא מאסתיך. (י) אל תירא כי עמך אני אל תשתע כי אני אלהיך אמצתיך אף עזרתיך אף תמכתיד בימין צדקי. (יא) הן יבשו ויכלמו כל הנחרים בך יהיו כאין ויאבדו אנשי ריבך. (יב) תבקשם ולא תמצאם אנשי מצתך יהיו כאין וכאפס אנשי מלחמתך. (יג) כי אני יי אלהיך מחזיק ימינך האמר לך אל תירא אני עזרתיך. (יד) אל תיראי תולעת יעקב מתי ישראל אני עזרתיך נאם יי וגאלך קדוש ישראל. (טו) הנה שמתיך למורג חרוץ חדש בעל פיפיות תדוש הרים ותדק וגבעות כמץ תשים. (טז) תזרם ורוח תשאם וסערה תפיץ אותם ואתה תגיל ביי בקדוש ישראל תתהלל.

unto thee: 'Fear not, I help thee.' (14) Fear not, thou worm Jacob, And ye men of Israel; I help thee, saith the Lord, And thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. (15) Behold, I make thee a new threshing-sledge Having sharp teeth; Thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, And shalt make the hills as chaff. (16) Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, And the whirlwind shall scatter them; And thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, Thou shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

In chapter 41, Isaiah spoke to the people of the coastlands (*'iyyim*), invoking them to recover from the trauma of the war against Assyria. While he attributed their victory to God's assistance, he also praised them for their mutual assistance (6), which he described, rhetorically, as:

"The woodworker (*charash*) encourages the smith (*tzoref*); he who flattens with the hammer [encourages] him who pounds the anvil. He says of the riveting (*devek*), 'It is good!' and he fixes it with nails, that it may not topple" (7).

ילקוט שמעוני ישעיהו רמז תמז

אמר רבי ראובן: ישנים היו אומות העולם מלבוא תחת כנפיו של הקב"ה. ומי העירן לבוא תחת כנפיו? אברהם, שנאמר "מי העיר." אמר ליה שם רבא לאלעזר: כי אתו עלייכו מלכי מזרח ומערב היכי עבדיתו? א"ל אייתיה קוב"ה לאברהם ואותיביה מימיניה, וחזינא שדי עפרא והווי חרבי, גילי והווי גירי. שנאמר "נאם ה' לאדוני שב לימיני" וגו' וכתוב "מי העיר ממזרח" וגו' "יתן לפניו גוים" וגו'.

ילקוט שמעוני ישעיהו רמז תמט

איש את רעהו יעזורו, זה [מלכיצדק/ שם] עוזר את זה [אברהם] בברכות - שנאמר "ויברכהו ויאמר ברוך אברם לאל עליון" וגו', וזה עוזר את זה במתנות - שנאמר "ויתן לו מעשר מכל." **ויחזק חרש**, זה שם, שהיה חרש ועשה את התיבה. **את צורף**, זה אברהם, שנצרך בתוך כבשן האש. **מחליק פטיש את הולם פעם**, שהחליק פטישו והולם את כל באי עולם פעם אחת. **אומר לדבק טוב הוא**, אלו עובדי אלילים שאומרים מוטב לידבק באלוהו של אברהם ולא לידבק באלילים של נמרוד. **ויחזקהו במסמרים לא ימוט**, ויחזק אברהם את שם במצות ובמעשים טובים ולא ימוט אברהם:

While the peshat assigns these actions to the fashioning of idolatrous statues, and the Midrash transposes them into positive deeds performed by Abraham, Malbim placed them in an entirely different context.

The *charash* is the one who manufactures weapons. The *tzoref* mines the iron and the *charash* must wait until the *tzoref* completes his work. However, they will rush to prepare weapons and ammunition to the extent that the *charash*, whose work is usually delayed, will assist the *tzoref* to mine the iron and smelt it, so they can make swords and spears from it. Similarly, the one "who flattens" the instrument with the hammer when the process is completed will assist him "who pounds the anvil" at its inception without waiting until he completes his own activity.

Likewise the one who "says of the riveting 'it is good'" will attach two pieces of a broken sword together temporarily, strengthen them "with nails" for an impermanent bond so they do not collapse or come apart and declare "it is good." On account of their haste to do battle, even a sword that was broken and reattached with nails will suffice them. [The prophet] thereby described: (a) the gathering of all the nations; (b) their mutual assistance; and (c) their hasty preparations for battle.

Given the appearance of "struggle" (11), "battle" (12), and "right hand" (13, the symbol of physical strength), Malbim's association of the text with military preparations does appear to be more contextually accurate.