

1. Even though we have expanded this verse to demonstrate that faith is a transitive concept which demands a working object, there is more than one working object.
2. John 3:16 contains the verb **πιστεύω (pisteúō)**: “to believe” which has God’s “only begotten Son,” Jesus Christ, as the working object of that faith.
3. For example, when an unbeliever places his personal faith in Jesus Christ, he is said to have been justified before the Supreme Court of Heaven. Jesus Christ was the working object of his faith.

Romans 5:1 Having been justified
[δικαιόω (*dikaiōō*)] by means of faith, let us
have prosperity with God through our Lord Jesus
Christ. (EXT)

4. Jesus in His true humanity was sinless. Because of the virgin birth, He did not possess a genetically formed sin nature. Therefore, Adam’s original sin “did not have a working object” to which it could be imputed. During Jesus’ life, He never committed one personal sin. He was thus qualified in His true humanity to be our substitutionary sacrifice on the cross.
5. Paul indicates in Romans 5:1 that when a believer’s personal faith is directed toward Jesus Christ as its working Object, it results in being justified before the Supreme Court of Heaven.
6. This believer is justified when God imputes to him His Own righteousness creating a grace pipeline through which divine blessings follow.
7. The verb *justified* in Romans 5:1 is in the passive voice. The person who had believed in Christ in the past, received justification at that moment.
8. On the other hand, since we are justified through faith in Jesus Christ for our salvation, God is justified in providing our logistics to His imputed righteousness resident in us.
9. Paul uses the term, “justified by means of faith” in Jesus Christ. James uses Abraham as an example for “justification by works” with regard to his conscientious preparation to sacrifice Isaac (James 2:21).
10. In verse 23, James cites Genesis 15:6 which refers to Abraham’s justification by faith in Messiah for salvation:

Genesis 15:6 The he [Abram] believed
[אָמַן (*’aman*)] in the Lord; and He reckoned
[חָשַׁב (*chashav*)] it to him as righteousness
[שֶׁתָּאָחַד (*sethaqah*)]. (NASB)

11. Notice that the verb *believed* (*'aman*) is transitive whose working object is “the Lord.” Because of Abram’s faith alone in “the Lord” alone, God “reckoned” it (*chashav*), an accounting term, to Abram as “righteousness” (*sethaqah*). The result was Abram’s justification by God the Father.

The Hebrew verb *chashav* exhibits two basic semantic elements. The first is the element of calculation, with its modifications “account, compute, charge, settle (accounts),” thus “count, value, calculate.” The second is the element of planning: “think out, conceive, invent.” (p. 230)

“Calculate can be understood as the center or a semantic field that comprises primarily the verbs of counting. But *chashav* goes beyond the meaning of reckoning with numbers and quantities, referring rather to values and factors in general: weighing, evaluating, calculating, rational assignment of place and rank, the technical accounting of a merchant. (p. 231)

A fixed idiom meaning “reckon something to someone’s account” (Genesis 15:6). (p. 234)

The act of accepting faith is finally reckoned as a deciding factor in the relationship with Yahweh. The expression calls the outcome of the events depicted a settlement of accounts in a theological sense, deliberately echoing commercial language. The interpretation of the promise to Abraham found in Genesis 15:1–6 uses such expressions and ideas throughout. The reckoning of belief as *sethaqah* documents the conclusion of the transaction.¹ (p. 243)

12. It is also important to note that the verb, *'aman*, is the Hiphil stem indicating causative action. Abram was caused to believe in *Yahweh* by hearing the gospel presented. It is an active voice. Abram produced the action of believing the gospel. It is a perfect tense specifying the action is completed.
13. This verse makes it abundantly clear that at this point Abram was saved by expressing his personal faith in the working object of *Yahweh*, aka Messiah, or Christ, resulting in the imputation of divine righteousness.
14. James’s example in James 2:21–24 refers to a sequence of events that occurred in Genesis following Abram’s salvation noted in Genesis 15:6.
15. Years later, Abram committed adultery with Hagar resulting in the birth of an illegitimate son, Ishmael. Later, his son Isaac was born to him and Sarah at his age of 100 (Genesis 21:1–5).

¹ K. Seybold, “אָמַן,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans., David E. Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 5:230–31, 234, 243.



16. Scripture does not indicate exactly how old Isaac was when the Lord ordered Abraham to take the lad and offer him as a sacrifice. In Genesis 22:5, Abraham refers to him as a “lad,” the Hebrew masculine noun נֶעָר (*na‘ar*): “a young person; one old enough to serve in battle.”² To be conscripted by the Israeli army one had to be at least twenty years of age (Numbers 1:45).
17. The typology of the event is abundantly clear. Isaac is the bloodline of the promised Messiah. Isaac must marry and have his own children in order for that bloodline to continue, specifically through his son, Jacob. Abraham knew these things and thus decided that God had good reason to order the execution and would provide a divine solution.
18. Abraham resolved that he was given direct orders to go to Mount Moriah and sacrifice his son, his only son, on an altar. He made every effort to carry this out down to the moment before he intended to slice Isaac’s carotid artery.
19. In the book of Hebrews, the writer presents a list of faith-rest heroes in which Abraham is introduced in Hebrews 11:17–19. We will exegete verses 17 and 18 since their content contributes to our better understanding of James’s reference to God’s commandment to Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac.

Hebrews 11:17

By means of faith

[πίστις (*pístis*)] Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises [**Genesis 12:1–3**] was offering up his only begotten son; (NASB)

1. The phrase, “By means of faith,” refers to the working object of faith which is mentioned later in the verse by the word, “promises.” These promises are associated with the unconditional covenant to Abraham:

Genesis 12:1

Now *Yahweh* said to Abram, “Get out from of your country, Ur of Chaldea, and from your relatives, and from your father Terah’s house, unto a land that I will show you.

v. 2

I will make out from you a great nation, and I will bless you personally, and make your reputation great. You shall be a blessing.

² Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, “נֶעָר,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 742.



Genesis 12:3 “And I will bless them that bless you, and curse the one that curses you. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” (EXT)

2. **The Abrahamic Covenant** is part of the doctrine of Unconditional covenants granted by God to Abraham, Isaac, Judah, David, and the Jews in general. In Genesis 12:1–3, the promise is genetic. It guarantees Abraham’s bloodline will last for all time and even into eternity.
3. **The Palestinian Covenant** refers to the promise of real estate to the Jewish people as their homeland. In the millennial kingdom, it will include southeastern Turkey, most of Syria, all of Lebanon, Jordan, and present-day Israel, most of Iraq and Saudi Arabia, and all of Kuwait. (Genesis 15:18)

Genesis 15:18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. (NASB)

4. **The Davidic Covenant** is the promise to David that his dynasty will rule Israel forever. The Tribe of Judah is the kingly tribe culminating with the House of David containing the Judaic chart pedigree down to Christ Who will ultimately reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. (2 Samuel 7:8–17)
5. **The New Covenant** to Israel guarantees its restoration following the Second Advent of Christ. It will restore Israel to its covenant boundaries as the millennial kingdom’s client nation. Jeremiah describes the millennial restoration in Jeremiah 31:31–34.
6. In Hebrews 11:17, the writer indicates that Abraham was “tested” with regard to the covenant given to Him. The word “tried,” is the present passive participle of **πειράζω (peirázō)**. The verb, “to try,” is designed to “see what you think: test, examine, appraise, evaluate, assess.”³
7. The passive voice indicates that Abraham receives the action of this examination. He is now around 120 years old. Isaac is his only legitimate son. Isaac is a full-blooded Jew.
8. Abraham is being ordered to bind his “only begotten son” onto a wooden altar as if he were a lamb. He is to sacrifice him by slitting his carotid artery and he is to do it on Mount Moriah (future site of Jerusalem, the temple, and Golgotha).

³ Oxford’s American Writer’s Thesaurus, 3d ed., comp. Christine A. Lindberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), s.v. “Try, verb 2.”



9. This process is indicated by the imperfect active indicative of the verb **προσφέρω (prosphérō)**: “to offer a sacrifice unto God.” The imperfect tense is inceptive which indicates the initiation of a process, but without implying anything as to its completion. The active voice reveals that Abraham performs the action of the verb. The indicative mood verifies this is a description of what was really taking place.
10. Probably the most familiar phrase used in the Lord’s comments to Nicodemus in John 3:16, is “his ‘only begotten Son.’” It is clear that Jesus references Himself as “God’s only begotten Son.”
11. Isaac is therefore being presented as a type of Christ. He is not the *only* begotten son of Abraham’s. Ishmael was the firstborn and only son of Abram’s although illegitimate. Abram was the patriarch’s name until it was changed to Abraham in Genesis 17:5. Abram means, “exalted father.”
12. Ishmael was born when his father was known by the name, Abram. Abram was a Semitic. Ishmael was Semitic. When Ishmael was born, Abram was eighty-six years old after which he and Sarai became sterile.
13. At age 99, the Lord approached Abram and changed his name to Abraham, which means, “father of a multitude.” To fulfill this prophecy, both Abraham and Sarah must once again become fertile. A miracle by the Lord provided this requirement.
14. At this point the gametes of Abraham were not Semitic as they once were but instead were now Jewish. Isaac was history’s first natural born, purebred Jew.
15. Therefore, Isaac was indeed Abraham’s “only begotten purebred, Jewish son.” His bloodline continued through Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, his twelve sons, including the kingly tribe of Judah, the bloodline of David, who’s House continued the chart pedigree of Judah down to the birth of the Messiah, Christ.
16. The verse continues by reflecting back on what we have been noting, “Abraham who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son.” The thought continues in:

Hebrews 11:18 it was he to whom it was said,
“In Isaac your descendants shall be called”
[**Genesis 21:12**]. (NASB)

1. The sentence continues from verse 17 with the preposition **πρός (prós)** plus the accusative of the pronoun **ὃς (hós)**: “toward whom,” referring to Abraham.