

Bible Stories

ABRAHAM and ISAAC

Genesis 22:7-8

June 11, 2022

The genealogy of Shem in Genesis 11:10-32 marks an important change in Genesis. From this point onward, the Old Testament will, almost exclusively, tell the story of one family – the family of Abraham.

Abram was born in Ur {not far from Babel} just 5 generations after the events of Genesis 11:1-9. His 3x's great grandpa Peleg would have still been alive to tell the story of that crazy day. As a matter of fact, his 8x's great grandpa Noah would have still been alive to share the stories of the Antediluvian world and the flood that destroyed it.

After Abram's brother, Haran died, the family moved to the city of Charan, 600 miles north of Ur and it was there that God called Abram into a special relationship with Himself.

- **Genesis 12:1-2** - Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; ² and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so, you shall be a blessing;

We all know the story – moments of triumph and great faith – it occupies a bit over 14 chapters in Genesis {12-25:8}.

- **Genesis 12:4** - So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.
- **Genesis 14:14-16** - When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan. ¹⁵ During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶ He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.
- **Genesis 15:5-6** - He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars -- if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Which brings us to our story today {Genesis 22:1-14} –

Abraham was 120 years old. He was an old man - no longer strong and vigorous – his veins no longer coursing with the courage of youth.

He was also rich – very rich. Thousands of sheep and cattle dotted the hillsides. Isaac – the son of promise - was now a young man of 20. Life was good ... that was about to change:

- **Genesis 22:1-14** - Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ² And 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. ⁴ On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. ⁵ And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and return to you." ⁶ And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. **7 And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 And Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.** ⁹ Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there, and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰ And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ¹² And he said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." ¹³ Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind *him* a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided."

What do we do with this story?

Genesis 22 gets people worked up – not because of the ending – but because of the beginning – that command, *"take your son, your ONLY son, and offer him as a burnt offering."*

Why THIS test?

Reason 1:

What is important to note is that God never intended for Abraham to actually kill Isaac. The substitutionary sacrifice had already been chosen, so what then, was the point?

Our focus should not be on what God asked Abraham to do, but with how Abraham responded.

God had called Abraham to be the father of the faithful and his life was to be an example for all those who came after him. As we have noted, he had great triumphs of faith, but he also had moments of great distrust and great failure.

- He had shown distrust in God by leaving the land of promise when a famine threatened and in hiding the fact that Sarai was his wife before the Pharaoh of Egypt {Genesis 12:10-13}.
- He had accepted, without question, the promise of a son in his old age, BUT he didn't wait around for God to fulfill that promise. When God did immediately act, both Abram and Sarai began to distrust God's power to actually do what He had promised to do. This act of distrust led Abram to take matters into his own hands {Genesis 16:1-2}.
- Having not learned his lesson, Abraham again distrusted in God when he hid the truth of his relationship with Sarah from king Abimelech {Genesis 20:1-2}.

Abraham had failed in some basic areas of trust, so just like a refiner of silver puts the ore in the hottest part of the furnace – so God would test Abraham with the severest of tests to see if he would ring true – to see if the refiner's reflection would finally be seen – to see if faith would conquer unimaginable fear.

That day -- the longest that Abraham had ever experienced -- dragged slowly to its close. While his son and the young men were sleeping, he spent the night in prayer, still hoping that some heavenly messenger might come to say that the trial was enough, that the youth might return unharmed to his mother. But no relief came to his tortured soul. Another long day, another night of humiliation and prayer, while ever the command that was to leave him childless was ringing in his ears. Satan was near to whisper doubts and unbelief, but Abraham resisted his suggestions. As they were about to begin the journey of the third day, the patriarch, looking northward, saw the promised sign, a cloud of glory hovering over Mount Moriah, and he knew that the voice which had spoken to him was from heaven.

Even now he did not murmur against God, but strengthened his soul by dwelling upon the evidences of the Lord's goodness and faithfulness. This son had been unexpectedly given; and had not He who bestowed the precious gift a right to recall His own? Then faith repeated the promise, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" -- a seed numberless as the grains of sand upon the shore. Isaac was the child of a miracle, and could not the power that gave him life restore it? Looking beyond that which was seen, Abraham grasped the divine word, "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." – Hebrews 11:19

Abraham's great act of faith stands like a pillar of light, illuminating the pathway of God's servants in all succeeding ages. Abraham did not seek to excuse himself from doing the will of God....

The sacrifice required of Abraham was not alone for his own good, nor solely for the benefit of succeeding generations; but it was also for the instruction of the sinless intelligences of heaven and of other worlds. The field of the controversy between Christ and Satan--the field on which the plan of redemption is wrought out--is the lesson book of the universe. Because Abraham had shown a lack of faith in God's promises, Satan had accused him before the angels and before God of having failed to comply with the conditions of the covenant, and as unworthy of its blessings. God desired to prove the loyalty of His servant before all heaven, to demonstrate that nothing less than perfect obedience can be accepted, and to open more fully before them the plan of salvation. {Ellen White - PP 151, 153.3, 154.3}

Reason 2

The story within the story points us beyond Abraham and Isaac to the truth of what our redemption cost and the willingness of both God and Jesus to pay the price.

Let's look at the parallels between Abraham/Isaac and God/Jesus:

- Both sons were **"beloved sons"** who had been long-awaited and who were born under miraculous circumstances {Genesis 22:1 and Matthew 3:17}
- Both carried the wood on which they would be sacrificed {Genesis 22:6 and John 19:17}
- The father led the son and the son obediently followed - submitting to the will of the father {Genesis 22:3, Matthew 26:39, John 3:16, Romans 8:31 and Philipians 2:5-8}
- In both stories an exchange occurs: the lamb took Isaac's place on the altar and Jesus took humanities place on the cross {Genesis 22:8, Isaiah 53 and John 1:29}

It was to impress Abraham's mind with the reality of the gospel, as well as to test his faith, that God commanded him to slay his son. The agony which he endured during the dark days of that fearful trial was permitted that he might understand from his own experience something of the greatness of the sacrifice made by the infinite God for man's redemption. No other test could have caused Abraham

such torture of soul as did the offering of his son. God gave His Son to a death of agony and shame. The angels who witnessed the humiliation and soul anguish of the Son of God were not permitted to interpose, as in the case of Isaac. There was no voice to cry, "It is enough." To save the fallen race, the King of glory yielded up His life. What stronger proof can be given of the infinite compassion and love of God? "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32. {Ellen White - PP 154.2}

This story is absolutely vital to our understanding of God's solution to the sin problem. At great personal cost, "God, Himself, would provide the sacrifice."

.... The center of salvation in the cross of Jesus, and the reason it is so easy to obtain salvation is because it cost God so much. The cross is the point where God and sinful man merge with a crash and the way to life is opened – but the crash is on the heart of God. {Oswald Chambers - My Utmost for His Highest - April 6}