



Message 10-27-18
VaYera-And He Appeared
Genesis 18:1-22:24
2 Kings 4:1-37
Hebrews 13:2-14

Introduction

Now comes one of the most difficult moments in the whole of the Bible. God tests Abraham, telling him to sacrifice his son, "*Isaac, whom you love.*" While we know so much about Abraham, we know very little about Isaac. While we know about the test the Lord gave to Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering, what do we really know about Isaac? Isaac is defined by one event in his life. It is called the *Akedah* or the *Binding*. Abraham was not the only one affected by this command from God. So, was Isaac.

The Torah presents, in the story of Isaac, an opportunity for us to grow in perspective without having to lay under the knife as Isaac did. Isaac offers us a role model not often followed. Quietly, and without pretensions to greatness, Isaac spent his time building relationships – with his wife, with his heritage, with himself, and with the Almighty. By insisting on living a meaningful life, Isaac makes it possible for each of us to do the same. Let us claim his insight while we can.

Genesis 22:1-8

1 After these things, God tested Avraham. He said to him, "Avraham!" and he answered, "Here I am." **2** He said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love, Yitz'chak; and go to the land of Moriyah. There you are to offer him as a burnt offering on a mountain that I will point out to you." **3** Avraham got up early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, together with Yitz'chak his son. He cut the wood for the burnt offering, departed and went toward the place God had told him about. **4** On the third day, Avraham raised his eyes and saw the place in the distance. **5** Avraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey. I and the boy will go there, worship and return to you." **6** Avraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on Yitz'chak his son. Then he took in his hand the fire and the knife, and they both went on together. **7** Yitz'chak spoke to Avraham his father: "My father?" He answered, "Here I am, my son." He said, "I see the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" **8** Avraham replied, "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son"; and they both went on together. (CJB)

I have always thought Isaac was missing from the connected stories of his father Abraham and his son Jacob. In many ways, it seems like Isaac becomes an afterthought to the

narrative when in fact he is a very integral part of the story. While the focus on Abraham and Isaac is on Abraham and his faith in following the Almighty's instructions regarding his willingness to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, what about Isaac's faith in following his father's instructions and taking it upon himself the willingness to die by the hand of his father Abraham by the command of the Holy One of Israel. This is faith as strong as Abraham's and something we should want to emulate. How many of us could do what Abraham was asked to do and what Isaac was called to do? It has been surmised by the rabbis of old that Isaac may have been thirty-seven years old at the time of the *Akedah*. Isaac was no child and could have stopped his father from sacrificing him because Abraham was no longer a young man. Yet, in this narrative, we get to see a picture of the relationship, not just between Abraham and Isaac, but between Yeshua and His Father. Yeshua had been asked by His Father to empty Himself of all that had made Him the Son of God and to become like one of us. He poured out Himself in order that He could take our sins upon Himself, so we could be reconciled to our heavenly Father and become one with our Father as Yeshua is one with Him.

Isaac is not just a passing thought in the story but the bridge between Abraham and Jacob. He brings them together and is there to bury his father and to send Jacob away to protect him from his brother Esau.

Genesis 25:7 These are the days of the years of Abraham's life, 175 years. ⁸ Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. ⁹ **Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah**, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, ¹⁰ the field that Abraham purchased from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried, with Sarah his wife. ¹¹ After the death of Abraham, God blessed Isaac his son. And Isaac settled at Beer-lahai-roi. (ESV)

I wonder if any of Isaac's faith rubbed off on his sons who parted in anger. Isaac favored Esau the eldest, but when Jacob received the birthright of the firstborn, there was nothing left for Esau. In the end when Jacob returned from his exile, Esau retreated and moved away from the inheritance that belonged to Jacob because it was the Almighty's doing that Jacob would become the firstborn instead of Esau. Esau desired to be a part of the world, while Jacob grew into a man of God following in the footsteps of his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac. Isaac was a man of faith but still could be tempted by the world because he followed in the footsteps of his father in lying who his wife was as Abraham had done. Even men and women of faith make mistakes, but in the story of Isaac, we see that we can come back to the Holy One of Israel. Why? Because the Son of the Almighty took our sins upon Himself and died a sinner's death the same as we can if we don't change our ways.

2 Kings 4:14-17

14 He said, "What, then, is to be done for her?" Geichazi answered, "There's one thing-she doesn't have a son; and her husband is old. ¹⁵ Elisha said, "Call her." After he called her, she stood in the doorway. ¹⁶ He said, "Next year, when the season comes around, you will be holding a son." "No, my lord," she answered. "Man, of God, don't lie to your

servant!" ¹⁷ But the woman conceived and gave birth to a son the following year when the season came around, just as Elisha had said to her. (CJB)

The Haftarah portion follows the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac. Abraham and Sarah could not have children, and Abraham was worried about who his heir would be. Abraham showed us his humanity and his weakness in his faith in the same way we are weak. No one ever said that faith is perfect. Only God is perfect as is His Son Yeshua. That is why Yeshua was able to offer Himself up as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. We are all weak, and unless we turn to Messiah and confess our sins, we are lost. Yet, faith is not enough. As God blessed Abraham with a son, so too did He bless the woman who also had no son. He sent her word of the miracle through the Prophet Elisha just as Yochanan the Immerser brought us the message of the coming of the Son of God – Yeshua! As the woman's son died and was brought back to life, so our heavenly Father brought His Son Yeshua back from the dead. As Isaac had faith, so too, did Yeshua. You might be wondering what I mean by Yeshua having faith. Think about it for a moment. Yeshua gave up everything that made Him the Son of God. He emptied Himself of all the things that made Him the Son of God, so He could offer Himself up as a sacrifice for all of mankind.

Yeshua came to take away the sin of the world and to pave the way between man and His Father. He had the faith to believe His Father would raise Him from the dead and restore to Him all that He was, is, and will be.

Hebrews 11:17-19

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; ¹⁸ *it was he* to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." ¹⁹ He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type. (NAU)

Confirmation, my friends. In Isaac, your descendants shall be called. Abraham was tested and had passed the test. Isaac had been tested, and he passed the test. How do you think you would do when your time of testing comes?

James 2:17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself. ¹⁸ But someone may *well* say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." ¹⁹ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. ²⁰ But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. (NAU)

Abraham was not justified only by faith but by the works he had done in being willing to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering. That moment when he held the knife to Isaac's throat was their moment, together as father and son, one as God and His Son are one.

Romans 9:6 But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel; ⁷ nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." ⁸ That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. (NAU)

Who are Isaac's descendants? The Apostle Shaul is very clear about this. Not all who are descended from Israel are the children of Abraham. Flesh and blood do not a descendant make. Faith in Messiah Yeshua and walking in Torah – the covenant between God and man – make us children of the Holy One of Israel. Torah can show us the way to Messiah because it shows us what the Father considers to be sin. The same can be said after coming to Messiah that we must walk in Torah to know the path we must take. The Torah, with the help of the *Ruach HaKodesh*, points the way to Messiah, and once we accept Him as our Redeemer, the Spirit lives within us to help us along the way to take the journey of a lifetime.

Torah Man says, "God chastens us with many instruments, but they are all held in His ever-loving hand."

Blessings in Messiah Yeshua,

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