

SCRIPTURE STUDY SHEET FOR SEPTEMBER 19, 2021 @ CAPC OAKLAND

Genesis 21:1-3; 22:1-14

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

21 ¹ The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised. ² Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. ³ Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him.

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¹ After these things God ~~tested~~ ~~tested~~ Abraham.

[God] said to him, "Abraham!"

And [Abraham] said, "*Here I am.*"

² [God] said, "**Take your son**, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of ~~Moriah~~ **and offer him there as a burnt offering** on one of the mountains that I shall show you."

³ So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you."

⁶ Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.

⁷ Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!"

And [Abraham] said, "*Here I am, my son.*"

He said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

⁸ Abraham said, "GOD HIMSELF WILL PROVIDE THE LAMB FOR A BURNT OFFERING, MY SON."

So the two of them walked on together.

⁹ When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son.

¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!"

And [Abraham] said, "*Here I am.*"

¹² [the angel of the Lord] said, "**Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son**, your only son, from me."

¹³ And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called that place "**THE LORD WILL PROVIDE**"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Genesis – the first book of the Hebrew Bible...pulls us into a sense of reality that is God-shaped and God-filled. It gives us a vocabulary for speaking accurately and comprehensively about our lives – where we come from and where we are going, what we think and what we do, the people we live with and how to get along with them, the troubles we find ourselves in and the blessings that keep arriving.

The book of Genesis doesn't present this to us as an abstract, bloodless truth or principle about who God is and what God is doing in and with the world. Rather, we are given a succession of stories with named people – people who loved and quarreled, believed and doubted, had children and married, experienced sin and grace. If we pay attention we find that we ourselves are living variations of the foundational stories told in Genesis from Creation to bondage in Egypt.

(adapted from the introduction to the Psalms in *The Message*)

Today's story is one of the hardest in the Bible. How do we understand the request of God? Is God cruel and all-powerful, not caring about how long Abraham has waited for a child, the destiny-gift that God gave to him and Sarah? How can God desire human sacrifice? Is God just playing with Abraham? It's a confusing text, so we have to look closely at the text in order to hear what is being said and what it might mean for us.

Moriah:: Jews identify the specific mountain mentioned here as the place where Solomon's Temple is said to have been built, and both these locations are also identified with the current Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

tested – In Hebrew it's the word נִסָּה pronounced *nasah*, meaning "To test, try, prove." It is only used twice in the Hebrew Bible; here, and in 1 Samuel 17:39 where it refers to armor that is too heavy for the young David to wear because he hasn't yet "tested" or tried it out.

³⁹ David strapped Saul's sword over the armor, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to the [armor]. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them." [נִסָּה I have not "tested" or "tried"] So David removed them.' - 1 Samuel 17:39

So is this a test for which God knows the answer in advance? Or is it something that God truly doesn't know, like the armor given to David with which he isn't familiar? How do you understand this word in the story?

Here I am! :: This is the standard greeting used throughout the stories of the scriptures. It's interesting as it's a greeting that physically situates the speaker as face-to-face; in a relationship or proximity with the one who first speaks the conversation into existence. It has a deeper connotation that just "yeah...what's up?"

THE LORD WILL PROVIDE:: In Hebrew this name is one of the less frequently used for God in the Hebrew Scriptures: YHWH-Yireh (Adonai-jireh) meaning "The LORD Will Provide" it comes directly from this verse.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in this text?
- The story contains 3 sections of dialogue. The first and the third involve an original speaker, a response and then a statement from the original speaker. The second dialogue has the person who is spoken to responds a second time. It's unique, standing out in the text. What does it contain?
- God first tells Abraham to take his son and offer him in sacrifice. The story then ends with God saying don't touch your son, or harm him. What changes in between the opening and closing comments of God? How does God change? Abraham?
- What invitation do you heard the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?