

An analysis of the genesis 22 religion essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The chapter begins with a pattern of introduction that usually suggests a new wave in the trend of events. 'And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham...'. In verse 20, the same introduction is used in stating that Abraham's brother Nahor had been born children by Milcah. It is known from the onset that God is testing Abraham. The primary aim of the test is to teach Abraham that obedience and commitment are vital to keeping covenants. Obedience to covenant obligations brings guarantee of the fulfilment of God's promises and fresh bestowal of the blessings that go with covenant keeping.

God calls Abraham to take his son Isaac, whom he loves very much to a land which he will show him and offer him for a burnt offering (verse 2). The practice of human sacrifice in ancient near-eastern society is here revealed.

In verse 3, Abraham obeys God's command without any grudges, rising up early in the morning and taking along with him the persons and materials needed to perform the sacrifice. His response to God's call 'Behold, here I am' shows Abraham has entrusted his future and life into God's hands. He makes himself totally available for God's purpose. The prophet Isaiah showed a similar attitude in his vision. Abraham surrenders totally to God knowing he was going to be the founding father of Israel.

An important truth is learnt about what happens when God's word is followed-up with obedience in verse 4. He lifted up his eyes and sees the place of the sacrifice from a distance. He did not need God to speak again for him to ascertain the place. Revelation and divine knowledge and insight follow obedience to the word. Verse 5 shows Abraham leaving his servants

behind in the Journey and moving on with Isaac. It seems true worship is a personal thing that often involves the individual going beyond the point where most people can or are willing to go. His faith is unshaken in his confession that he and the lad will go, worship and come back. He understands this is a test and so far, he seems to be doing well. Isaac, the object of the worship is not oblivious of the happenings around him. He is aware a burnt offering is to be performed but does not see any lamb for it. This makes him curious, and even though he was later bound up by his father for the sacrifice, he did not resist (7-10). Abraham demonstrates his faith once again in God by assuring Isaac of God's providence (verse 8). In some way, the whole story is allegorical. Isaac is portrayed as a type of the Christ to come, for as Jesus carried his cross to the place of his crucifixion so Isaac carries the wood for the sacrifice demanded by God(22: 6). Abraham is seen often assuming the status of a god-figure. Twice he is called upon, both by God and Isaac and he responds, 'here I am'(1). His response with this phrase is reminiscent of the revelation of God(Yahweh) when He speaks to Moses(Ex. 3: 14). In Jesus' confrontation with the Pharisees, the same title he uses pitches him against them because they taught of him as a blasphemer equating himself with God. This same statement by Abraham is not only indicative of his total availability to God. It in some way makes the parallel of Abraham as a God-figure tenable in the same way that Isaac, the object of the sacrifice is representative of the true lamb in the new testament, Jesus Christ. Isaac carries the wood for the burnt offering (6), as Christ carries his cross.

The place of the sacrifice in the land of Moriah(verse 2) is later seen in the mountain of Jerusalem where Solomon eventually built the temple of the Lord (2 Chron. 3: 1). It plays on the Hebrew word " to see" (ra'a) used by Abraham in verses 8 and 14 as " to provide". The fact that Abraham was the first to offer a sacrifice there when he eventually offered the ram caught in the ticket shows that he first instituted true worship to God. He was the first to worship God there. It took Abraham three days to find the place of worship. This is probably a half-way point of the entire journey to and fro that would take about seven days. In verse 9, Isaac is bound by Abraham, ready to be slain, yet he does not resist even though his father had already told him that God will provide a lamb for the sacrifice. He is a type of the Christ described in Isaiah 53: 7 who as a lamb brought to the slaughter, opened not his mouth. Abraham's reply to Isaac's question that God will provide himself a lamb for the sacrifice (verse 8) is an act of his faith in God. He had earlier obeyed God's command to go somewhere to sacrifice his son. Now, he has to assure his son that the object of the sacrifice will be provided.

In verse 10, Abraham demonstrates his faith totally by stretching forth his hand with the knife to slay the lad. God sees Abraham's heart that he truly fears him and speaks through his angel from heaven. God is pleased with Abraham's willingness to entrust all his future into his hands. Verse 13 shows Abraham's faith yielding fruits. He had told his son that God will provide a lamb for the burnt offering. Now, the Lord has indeed provided. He sees a ram caught in a bush by its horns and uses it for the sacrifice. Abraham later calls the name of the place Jehovah-jireh, acknowledging that God had indeed seen to or provided.

Verses 15- 18 is a re-affirmation of covenant promise by the same angel of the Lord that spoke earlier on. God gives his word through his angel in promise to Abraham that he will bless him and multiply his seed as the stars of the heaven because he has obeyed his voice, trusted him and was willing to sacrifice for covenant. His seed shall possess the gate of their enemies and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed through them. Covenant promise earlier made demands obedience and faithfulness. Now faithfulness in that covenant walk has brought more assurance of more blessings. In verse 19, Abraham returns to his servants and they go and dwell in Beersheba.

The underlying theme in the story is the fact that human sacrifice which was a core part of societal life is here seen to be abolished and replaced with animal sacrifice. Infant sacrifice was customary to the nations that dwelt about Abraham and would later become an important practice in Israel (2 Kings 16: 3). Israel's realization that the first born belongs to the Lord resulted in their seeking alternative sacrifice that would redeem the first born. Abraham pioneers Israel's change from the practice of the other nations through God's direction to redeem his son by the ram.

In verses 21 to 24, the writer notes that Abraham receives news of the children that have been born to his brother Nahor through Milcah. Perhaps the news of multiple bodily fruitfulness is a sign of the promise by the angel of the Lord. The children born to Nahor are Huz, Buz, Kemuel, Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlah, and Bethuel. Rebekah, the wife Abraham's servant would later choose for Isaac is the daughter of Bethuel mentioned here. Kemuel is the father of Aram. Nahor's concubine Reumah also bore him four children by name Tebah, Gaham, Thahash, and Maachah. This part of the chapter

completes the genealogy to the second generation of the children of Terah, besides the children born to Abraham by Keturah (25: 1-6). Abraham had fathered Isaac. Now, the younger brother Nahor has twelve children; eight by his wife Milcah, and four by his concubine Reumah. Jacob, Abraham's grandson would later have the same number of children by his wives and concubines.

Out of the twelve children born to Nahor, three would become names of places or nations. In Genesis 10: 23, Uz is mentioned as a son of Aram. It is the homeland of Job (Job 1: 1). This is probably northern Edom. The country of Buz is the homeland of one of the friends of Job (32: 2). In Genesis 24: 15, Bethuel is seen as a personage. Buz is home to one of Job's friends (Job32: 2). Hazu (and Bazu) are mentioned by the 7th century Assyrian king Esarhaddon. In short, Abraham's entire family is blessed even though his youngest sibling Ur, who had fathered Lot had died in Haran.

Conclusion

Faithfulness is key to keeping covenants. Afterwards, blessings follow. God is faithful. The question is; are we ready to walk in faith with him as Abraham did?