

Isaac's story



People have always said that I was spoilt as a child. I suppose I was, but who was to blame my parents. I mean, I was their only child, and their only son at that. I was their hope for a future. I am not surprised that I was spoilt. My name? Oh, sorry, I forgot to introduce myself, I am Isaac, son of Abraham and his wife Sarah.

I have a brother, or to be accurate a half-brother. His name is Ishmael. His mother is Hagar, she was my Mother's slave. I can vaguely remember Ishmael playing with me. I wish he was around now, but my Mother got jealous of the attention my Father played

to him, so she insisted that he and Hagar be sent away. The servants tell me that Father was in a turmoil for days, but he eventually complied, and sent Hagar and Ishmael out into the desert. I hope they are still alive. I am sure they are. I would like to have him for my friend again.

Sometimes my Father did the strangest things. He was always praying to Yahweh. Well, I pray to Yahweh, but Yahweh doesn't seem to have told me to do as many odd things as he has told my Father. I remember the time we set off on a journey. We weren't going to be gone for very long, so we just packed a couple of bits of bread, a little oil and some dried meat. Father packed the sacrificial knife. It is a really big, wicked looking knife, which we only ever use when we are sacrificing animals to Yahweh. I couldn't imagine why he wanted to pack that for a short journey, so I asked him. He put on one of his ' I am a wise man ' and ' You will have to wait and see ' faces, and I couldn't get any sensible answer out of him. Still, we have done odder things, so I wasn't too bothered.

It was a nice day when we set out. We took a couple of servants to help carry the food, the fire, which we kept going in its travelling pot and the wood. Father had insisted on splitting that himself. He said we were going to need when we got to the end of our journey. I

began to get the impression that we were going somewhere special to make a sacrifice. I was really pleased when Father suggested that I come with him. He had never let me go with him before. I was really proud when we set off. It made me feel really grown up. One thing did bother me a bit, and that was we had wood, we had the fire, we had the knife, but we had nothing to sacrifice. I presumed that we were going to pick up the beast for sacrifice on the way, it was a bit strange, but as I say, I was used to strange things happening.

We travelled for three days to the region of Moriah. Father rode on his Ass most of the time. Near the end of the day when I got a bit tired he would let me go on it for a little while, while he walked. On the third day Father seemed to recognise where we were, and he stopped us, while he went off to consult Yahweh. When he came back he told the servants to stop where they were and sit and wait for us. He unpacked the food and shared it out so that we would all have enough for several days. He then picked up the fire pot and the knife, and told me to pick up the wood.

Have you ever tried carrying a whole pile of wood? It wasn't so much that it was heavy, although it was, it was the fact that little bits kept on sticking into my back. I tried carrying it on my shoulder, but that was

just as bad. Father doesn't like me to complain when we are doing Yahweh's work, as we obviously were now, so I just had to content myself with muttering under my breath. I found it very hard going up the mountain, it was very difficult to keep my balance, still we made it eventually.

We found ourselves in a clearing and sat down for a few minutes to catch our breath. I tried to ask Father about the sacrificial animal, but all he said was that Yahweh would provide it. I couldn't hear any animals anywhere around, let alone see any.

Still, Father has a good communication line to Yahweh, so who was I to worry about that. If I had known what was going to happen I would have pressed him further. But ignorance is bliss, so they say. When he had got his breath back, Father set about building an Altar to Yahweh. We managed to find some big pieces of wood which we laid together to make quite a big surface to make the sacrifice on. Then we put the wood which I had so carefully carried up the mountain around the altar, so that when the beast had been killed we could burn it as a holocaust, as Yahweh demanded when we made a sacrifice.

Thinking back on it, Father had not looked at all happy since we started, which was most unusual. He was usually at his happiest when he was doing things

for Yahweh. Then I discovered why! He asked me to put my hands behind my back, and he then tied them there. When I asked him what he was doing he said he was sorry, but Yahweh had demanded that he sacrifice me. He was sorry ! How did he think that I felt ? I went totally numb. If I had had time to think about it I might have shouted and cursed or pleaded or cried or anything, but my mind went a total blank. I let him lead me to the Altar, and meek as a lamb I climbed up and laid down.

Father picked up the knife and held it up. The sunlight caught it and sent a ray of light shining down on my face, so I had to close my eyes. All I could think of was 'Does this mean I am never going to taste Mother's lamb stew again?' Its funny the things that run through your mind when you think you are going to die.

I lay there with my eyes closed for what seemed like hours. Then I realised that there was a noise going on somewhere. I hadn't felt any pain, so I wondered whether Yahweh had been kind to me and let me die easily. Then I slowly opened my eyes and looked around. I realised that the noise was coming from my Father. He was just standing there with his head bowed and the knife held loosely in his hand by his side, and he was crying. He looked up at me and smiled. I didn't understand what was going on. One

minute he had to sacrifice me, the next minute he seemed glad that he hadn't. He didn't say a word, he just pointed his hand towards one of the bushes near by, and there struggling to get out of the bush was a ram which had managed to get itself caught by the horns.

It was a magnificent beast. I have never seen one better. 'Yahweh is pleased with me' said Father. 'I can sacrifice that instead'. I clambered off the Altar and Father undid my bonds. It took a few minutes of rubbing to get the sensations back in my fingers, but then I gladly helped Father free the Ram and drag it to the Altar. I was glad to be able to watch the knife fall on him and not on me. Father seemed so happy when it was over. He even came over and hugged me and he never usually did that!

I will say this about Father, he never tries to hide what he has been up to. Can you imagine the response my Mother gave him when we arrived back at the tents, and he calmly announced to her, 'By the way I nearly sacrificed Isaac while I was away, but luckily Yahweh sent a Ram instead, so I didn't have to.' She nearly hit the roof. She gave him such a telling off. She went on at him for days about irresponsibility, and how she

had left me in his care, and look what had nearly happened.

It was several days before Father could actually tell her the story of what had happened. Even then she wasn't mollified much. Yahweh has given her some bad shocks before, and she is a bit wary of him really. It will be a long while before Father is allowed to forget what happened.

Still, as far as I am concerned it had a happy ending. Mother was so concerned about the state of my health that she made me a big bowl of her best lamb stew! It has made me think you know. I hope that if God decides to try sacrificing anyone else again, that he might at least ask his permission first!