

Isaac's Sacrifice

"O, do Thou regard the ashes of Father Isaac heaped up on top of the altar, and deal with Thy children in accordance with the Mercy Attribute"

(Supplication prior to sounding the ram's horn, *Heidenheim Mahzor*, Vienna, 1827)

Isaac said to him: "Father have no fears. May it be His will that one quarter of my blood Serve as an atonement for all Israel.

(*Bereshit Rabbati*, ed. Albeck, p. 90)

Were there sexual relations?

Genesis 12:14 When Abram entered Egypt the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. 15 When the officials of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. 16 And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female slaves, female donkeys, and camels. 17 But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. 18 So Pharaoh called Abram, and said, 'What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? 19 Why did you say, "She is my sister", so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and be gone.

Isaac's Paternity in the Midrash

"[These are the generations of Isaac the son of Abraham], **Abraham begat Isaac** (Gen 25:19)" – For people would have said that Isaac was the son of Abimelech. Thus, the Holy One, blessed be He, made Isaac's face similar to Abraham's so that it would be known that **Isaac was Abraham's son** and not Abimelech's son. For this reason it says: "**Abraham begat Isaac**," and everyone that would see Isaac would say he is surely **the son of Abraham** since "**Abraham begat Isaac**" (*Midrash Aggadah* [Buber], Genesis 25 [19]).

GENESIS 20: THE CANONICAL TEXT

1 Abraham traveled from there toward the land of the South, and lived between Kadesh and Shur. He lived as a foreigner in Gerar. 2 Abraham said about Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. 3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man, because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife." 4 Now Abimelech had not come near her. He said, "Lord, will you kill even a righteous nation? 5 Didn't he tell me, 'She is my sister?' She, even she herself, said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands have I done this." 6 God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also withheld you from sinning against me. Therefore I didn't allow you to touch her. 7 Now therefore, restore the man's wife. For he is a prophet, and he will pray for you, and you will live. If you don't restore her, know for sure that you will die, you, and all who are yours." 8 Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ear. The men were very scared. 9 Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said to him, "What have you done to us? How have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done!" 10 Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you see, that you have done this thing?" 11 Abraham said, "Because I thought, 'Surely the fear of God is not in this place. They will kill me for my wife's sake.'" 12 Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. 13 When God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, "This is your kindness which you shall show to me. Everywhere that we go, say of me, 'He is my brother.'" 14 Abimelech took sheep and cattle, male servants and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and restored Sarah, his wife, to him. 15 Abimelech said, "Behold, my land is before you. Dwell where it pleases you." 16 To Sarah he said, "Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. Behold, it is for you a covering of the eyes to all that are with you. In front of all you are vindicated." 17 Abraham prayed to God. God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his female servants, and they bore children. 18 For Yahweh had closed up tight all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

GENESIS 20: THE KERNEL

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GENESIS 21

3 Abraham called **his son** who was **born to him**, whom Sarah **bore to him**, Isaac. 4 Abraham circumcised **his son**, Isaac, when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 Abraham was one hundred years old when **his son**, Isaac, was **born to him**.

GENESIS 22: THE CANONICAL TEXT

1 After these things, God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" He said, "Here I am." 2 He said, "Now take your son, your only son, whom you love, even Isaac, and go into the land of Moriah. Offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I will tell you of." 3 Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place far off. 5 Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go yonder. We will worship, and come back to you." 6 Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. He took in his hand the fire and the knife. They both went together. 7 Isaac spoke to Abraham his father, and said, "My father?" He said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 Abraham said, "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they both went together. 9 They came to the place which God had told him of. Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, on the wood. 10 Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to kill his son. 11 Yahweh's angel called to him out of the sky, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" He said, "Here I am." 12 He said, "Don't lay your hand on the boy, neither 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 Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and saw that behind him was a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 Abraham called the name of that place Yahweh Will Provide. As it is said to this day, "On Yahweh's mountain, it will be provided." 15 Yahweh's angel called to Abraham a second time out of the sky, 16 and said, "I have sworn by myself, says Yahweh, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 that I will bless you greatly, and I will multiply your offspring greatly like the stars of the heavens, and like the sand which is on the seashore. Your offspring will possess the gate of his enemies. 18 All the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring because you have obeyed my voice." 19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba. Abraham lived at Beersheba.

GENESIS 22: THE KERNEL

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