

THE PRICE

"BUT ABRAHAM BROUGHT HIS REASON INTO CAPTIVITY TO THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH."

(KEIL & DELITZSCH)

by
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

1
2 The setting for this sketch is Genesis 22—specifically, 22:6-8

3 Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took
4 in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac spoke to
5 Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said,
6 "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham
7 said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of
8 them walked on together.

9
10 Abraham and his teenage son, Isaac, have traveled with servants and a donkey for about three
11 days, from Beersheba to what would later be Jerusalem—the "land of Moriah." Now the two are
12 on their own, climbing the mountain toward the place where they will erect a stone altar, lay
13 the wood for the fire, and, according to God's command, sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering.

14 This sketch is approximately eight minutes long.

CHARACTERS

14 Abraham, about 115
15 Isaac, about 15

PROPERTIES

19 Walking stick
20 Metal fire carrier
21 Large bundle of wood (small, narrow branches)
22 Length of twine to tie bundle (after Isaac has picked them up)
23 Two dark stones (flint and pyrite)
24 Water bag
25 Knife

SCENE

26
27 **The Time: c.2051 BC**

28 **The Place: Land of Moriah (later, Jerusalem; specifically, the**
29 **approach to the temple mount)**

30
31 **House lights down.**

32 **Stage lights up.**
33
34
35
36

1 **Enter Abraham and Isaac (in that order).**

2

3 **Isaac**
4 *(wearily)*

5 Father?

6

7 **Abraham**
8 *(distractedly)*

9 Yes.

10

11 **Isaac**

12 My feet hurt.

13

14 **Abraham**
15 *(absentmindedly)*

16 Yes.

17

18 **Isaac**
19 *(emphatically)*

20 Father?

21

22 **Abraham**

23 Yes.

24

25 **Isaac**

26 My back hurts.

27

28 **Abraham**

29 Yes.

30

31 **Isaac**
32 *(even more emphatically)*

33 Father?

34

35

36

1 **Abraham**

2 *(irritated)*

3 Yes!

4

5 **Isaac**

6 *(desperately)*

7 Your donkey is giving out!

8

9 **Abraham**

10 *(now paying attention)*

11 Yes, yes—of course. The donkey's father is giving out as well. Let's rest a
12 while.

13

14 ***Isaac immediately drops his load—which sends the wood flying in***
15 ***all directions—then helps Abraham down onto a rock.***

16

17 **Abraham**

18 *(once seated; testing)*

19 How far have we come?

20

21 **Isaac**

22 *(looking up at the sun)*

23 About three hours since we left the servants.

24

25 **Abraham**

26 And before that?

27

28 **Isaac**

29 *(calculating)*

30 About three-and-a-half days.

31

32 **Abraham**

33 *(pleased)*

34 Good. You're remembering your lessons.

35

(removing a stone from his belt)

36

1 Tell me, what sort of stone is this?

2

3 **Isaac**

4 Flint.

5

6 **Abraham**

7 *(removing another)*

8 And this?

9

10 **Isaac**

11 Uh, pyrite.

12

13 **Abraham**

14 Good. Well done.

15 *(holding up the fire holder)*

16 And, should the fire go out—?

17

18 **Isaac**

19 I would gather dried moss and kindling, and strike one stone against
20 the other to create a spark.

21

22 **Abraham**

23 *(after waiting expectantly for a few seconds)*

24 And what have you left out? Quickly—quickly now.

25

26 **Isaac**

27 *(struggling to remember)*

28 Uh, uh—

29

30 **Abraham**

31 Isaac—

32

33 **Isaac**

34 Oh! to have the larger pieces of wood ready to add to the kindling.

35

36

1 **Abraham**

2 *(nodding)*

3 One does not risk the beginnings by failing to prepare for what
4 follows.

5
6 **Isaac**

7 Yes, father.

8
9 **Abraham**

10 Which would include picking up what has already been scattered.

11
12 ***Isaac doesn't catch the reference right away, but then notices the***
13 ***sticks of wood lying about haphazardly.***

14
15 **Isaac**
16 *(beginning to gather the wood)*

17 Oh, right.

18
19 ***Abraham leans back and takes a drink from his water bag, while***
20 ***Isaac collects the sticks of wood and ties them together with the***
21 ***twine. After a moment, Isaac speaks.***

22
23 **Isaac**

24 Father?

25
26 **Abraham**
27 *(distractedly)*

28 Yes.

29
30 **Isaac**
31 *(hesitantly)*

32 Why is it you test me—but no one ever tests you? Have you become
33 too old for such things?

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Abraham

(after a moment's thought; with a sigh)

Old men are tested in ways far different than children.

Isaac

(quickly reminding; proudly)

I am fifteen years, Father.

Abraham

(with warm humor)

My mistake. Old men are tested in ways far different than young men.

(beat)

As one ages, life becomes more—complicated. The young learn how to create fire; the old must know how to control it. The young are filled to overflowing with life; the old must learn how to make the most of the little they have left. The young may be tested on their knowledge of the sun and stars, on how to prepare a meal—

(wearily)

—the old are tested down to their bones, to their very soul.

Isaac

It sounds as if the young have the better end of the bargain.

Abraham

(nodding his head; smiling)

Oh, indeed.

Isaac

(being silly for effect)

I think I would prefer not to grow old, thank you.

Abraham

(instantly, unexpectedly serious; after a moment; looking away)

We have no say in the number of our years.

(pause)

1 The measure of a man is not in the number of his years, but in what
2 he does with the ones given him.

3

4 **Isaac**

5 Given?

6

7 **Abraham**

8 They're all in God's hand. From time to time He tests us—as I test
9 you. But there is a difference. You are tested to expand and retain
10 knowledge. Practical, earth-bound reasons.

11

12 **Isaac**

13 But God?

14

15 **Abraham**

16 *(with a heavy sigh)*

17 Ah, God's reasons. That is another thing altogether.

18 *(pause)*

19 We cannot know. His reasons are His own—and He does not always
20 share them.

21

22 **Isaac**

23 *(after a moment's thought;*

24 *haltingly, working through thoughts beyond his years)*

25 If I didn't know the end—the reason—I believe I might resent the
26 testing. It's hard; sometimes I struggle. If I didn't know why, I would
27 choose something more profitable—more enjoyable.

28

29 **Abraham**

30 Perhaps.

31 *(with intensity)*

32 But that, precisely, is what God tests: Will we continue in His way,
33 even when the end—the reason—is unknown. And unknowable.

34 *(pause)*

35 God calls it "faith." Man calls it "obedience."

36

1 **Isaac**

2 There's a difference?

3

4 **Abraham**

5 A man's faith is demonstrated in his obedience.

6 *(becoming more troubled)*

7 That is what God tests: our faith. Our obedience—to Him.

8

9 **Isaac**

10 And what if we fail?

11

12 **Abraham**

13 God is just, but He does not compromise. There is a price to pay when
14 we fail Him.

15 *(deeply troubled)*

16 And there may be a price to pay even when we do not fail.

17

18 **Isaac**

19 *(seeing that Abraham is moved by something he (Isaac) does not understand)*
20 Father?

21

22 **Abraham**

23 My son, in time you may forget what you know about the sun and
24 stars, how to prepare a meal, or strike a fire from stones. These are
25 valuable, but earth-bound.

26 *(pause; looking deeply into the eyes of his son)*

27 But one thing you must never forget. We have a God. You may not
28 always know the end—the reason—but you must obey Him. Without
29 that, nothing else matters.

30 *(pause; looking away)*

31 Without that, there is nothing else.

32

33 **Isaac is silent, but slowly nods his head. He understands.**

34

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Abraham

(struggling to get up)

Now we must continue. The Lord has beckoned us to worship Him. He is waiting.

Isaac picks up the bundle of wood. Abraham picks up his walking stick and begins moving toward the exit. Isaac pauses, looking at the wood in his arms, and realizes something is missing.

Isaac

Father?

Abraham

Yes.

Isaac

We have brought the fire and the wood, but we've forgotten the lamb for the burnt offering!

Abraham

(turning to look at his son)

No, my son. We've not forgotten. God Himself will provide the lamb.

They exit.

Stage lights down.

House lights up.

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