

## Abraham and Isaac

Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, "Abraham," and he answered, "Here I am." And He said, "Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah,<sup>1</sup> and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you." So early next morning Abraham saddled his ass and took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and he set out for the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his servants, "You stay here with the ass. The boy and I will go up there; we will worship and we will return to you."

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on his son Isaac. He himself took the firestone and the knife; and the two walked off together. Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he answered, "Yes, my son." And he said, "Here are the firestone and the wood; but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" And Abraham said, "God will see to the sheep for His burnt offering, my son." And the two of them walked on together.

They arrived at the place of which God had told him. Abraham built an altar there; he laid out the wood; he bound his son Isaac; he laid him on the

altar, on top of the wood. And Abraham picked up the knife to slay his son. Then an angel of the Lord called to him from heaven: "Abraham! Abraham!" And he answered, "Here I am." And he said, "Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me."

When Abraham looked up, his eye fell upon a ram, caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son. And Abraham named that site Adonai-yireh,<sup>2</sup> whence the present saying, "On the mount of the Lord there is vision."

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By Myself I swear, the Lord declares: Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favored one, I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore; and your descendants shall seize the gates of their foes. All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed My command." Abraham then returned to his servants, and they departed together for Beer-sheba; and Abraham stayed in Beer-sheba.

1. the land of Moriah: the exact location is unknown, but according to tradition it is Mount Moriah, one of the hills of Jerusalem on which Solomon built his temple.

2. Adonai-yireh: the Lord will see, or the Lord will provide.

## Responding to the Narrative

### Analyzing the Narrative

#### Identifying Facts

1. The account begins: "Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test." Describe this test, and explain why God tests Abraham.
2. Does Abraham pass or fail the test? Explain.
3. What is the **climax** of this episode?
4. What does God promise Abraham after the test?

### Interpreting Meanings

5. What would you say is the essential **conflict** in this brief account? Is it primarily an **external** or an **internal** conflict? Is the conflict dealt with directly in the story, or must we imagine it? Explain.
6. This narrative is remarkable for its spare style. Much is told in very few words with a minimum of detail. What details are missing from the ac-