

Kids' Chronicle

Abraham offers a sacrifice

BY JOE SARNICOLA

"Abraham, Abraham."
Abraham awoke from a sound sleep at the sound of someone calling him.
"Who is it?" he asked. "Who wants Abraham while the sky is still dark?"
"It is I, the Lord."

Abraham immediately sat up and answered, "Lord, what do you wish from me? You have only to ask and I will be your servant."

Abraham's tent filled with a cloud that glowed with a blue swirling light. Sarah slept peacefully, unaware of anything unusual happening. Abraham was not afraid, but he knew he was in the presence of God, so he knelt on the ground.

"Abraham, my son," the Lord said. "Today I will test your love for me. I must take away that which you hold most dear."

"I would give my life for you, Lord," Abraham said.

"It is not your life that I must take, Abraham."

Abraham looked over at his sleeping wife and said, "Sarah? She has been a good wife, and a good companion. If it is your wish that her life end, she was faithful to you always. I rejoice that she would be in your presence, even though it means she would no longer be in my own."

"No, Abraham, not Sarah."

"Not Sarah? Who then?"

"Isaac."

Abraham clutched his hand to his heart and leaned back.

"Isaac?" he cried. "My son? You gave him to me through a miracle. And now you would take him back? He is but a boy."

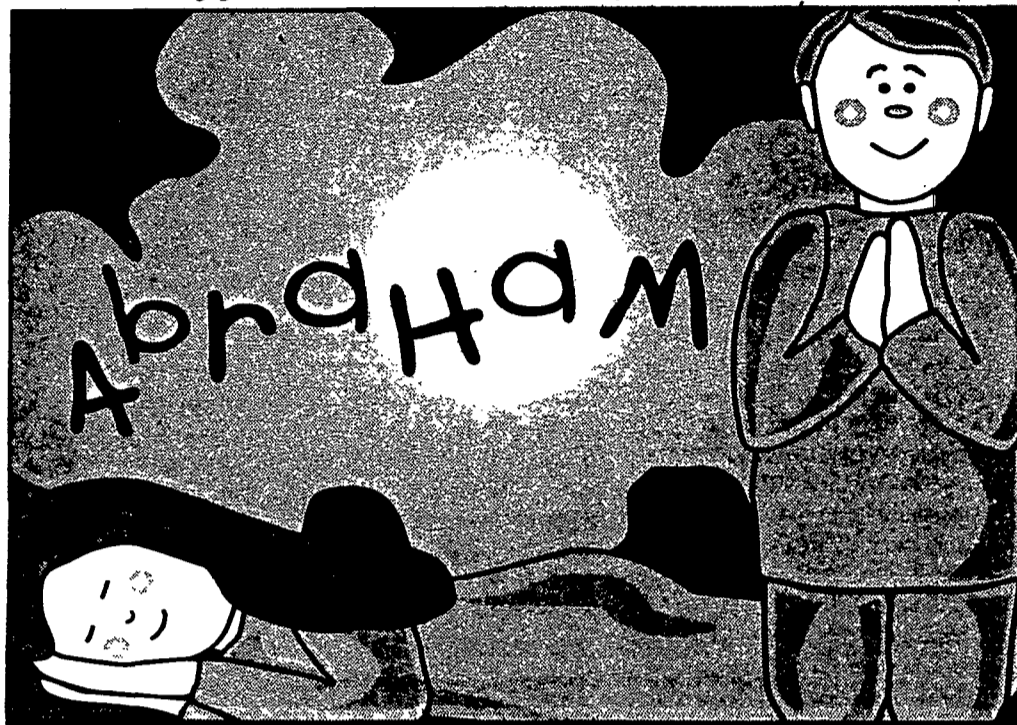


Illustration by Zoe Woodruff

The cloud in the room became more dense and brighter in intensity.

"At the first light of this day you are to take Isaac to the mountain and offer him to me as a sacrifice. You must kill him with your own hands."

"I must take his life? Lord, why?"

The cloud only dissipated. The light of the rising sun pierced the flaps of Abraham's tent. He prepared himself for what he was about to do. Abraham gathered wood for the sacrificial fire and ordered his servants to load up the donkeys. He kept his knife under his cloak. The blade felt as heavy as a load of firewood.

"Come, Isaac," Abraham said. "The Lord desires a sacrifice from us."

After they had traveled for three days, they came to the mountain that was their

destination. Abraham leaned over and put his arms around his son.

"Father," Isaac asked, "we have all the preparations for a sacrifice except a lamb. What are we to sacrifice?"

"God will provide what we need," was all Abraham could say.

Abraham told the servants to set up camp while he and Isaac headed for the mountains. When they reached the top, Abraham withdrew a rope from his robe and tied Isaac with it. He placed his frightened and confused son on the altar and pulled the knife out of its scabbard. Then he raised the knife.

"Stop!" a voice commanded.

Abraham looked through tear-filled eyes to see an angel standing next to Isaac.

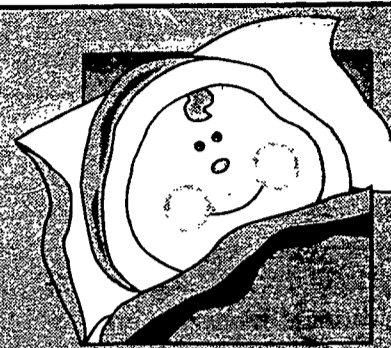
"Do not hurt the boy," the angel said. "You have proven your devotion to God. God will bless you and your descendants because of your faith."

As the angel disappeared, a ram could be heard bleating nearby. Abraham offered it as a sacrifice instead. Then he returned to the camp with his son.

Q&A

READ MORE ABOUT IT: Genesis 22

1. Who spoke to Abraham?
2. What was Abraham's reward for his faith?



Bible Accent

The name Isaac means "laughter." God told Abraham through one of his messengers that Sarah would give birth to a son. Abraham was 100 years old at the time. Sarah overheard the messenger telling Abraham the news and she laughed. She believed she was much too old to have children. Yet, within a year, Sarah brought a handsome baby boy into the world.

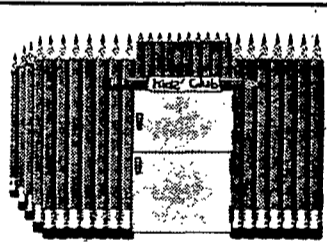
Isaac became an important figure in the Bible. He was the father of Jacob, who fathered the men after whom the 12 tribes of Israel were named. Many scholars believe the story of Abraham's offer of Isaac as a sacrifice prefigures God sacrificing Jesus, who was his only son.

St. Peter Damien

St. Peter Damien had two older brothers, one cruel and one kind. When his parents died, he lived with the cruel brother for a time. That brother treated him like a slave. The kind brother could not tolerate the way the cruel brother treated Peter, so he took Peter into his own household and sent him to good schools. He excelled in school, particularly in religious studies, and eventually became a cardinal.

Peter led the life of a spiritual hermit, spending most of his time praying, reading and writing. He believed the clergymen of his time, the 11th century, should spend more time in devotion and less in pursuing pleasure or other habits he believed were a waste of valuable time.

Peter's faithfulness to God did not go unnoticed, and he was named an adviser to the pope. We honor him on Feb. 21.



Essay

You can win a \$50 savings bond by writing an essay (100 or fewer words) answering this question:

What can we learn from Abraham's demonstration of faith in God?

Send your essay - including name, home address, telephone number, school and grade - to Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Deadline for entries is Feb. 27, 1997. The winner will be notified by phone and receive the savings bond by mail. In addition, the winner's essay will be published in an upcoming issue of Kids' Chronicle.

Last month's winner was Andrew Veith, a sixth-grade student at Newark's St. Michael's School. In response to the question Samuel's mother was faithful to God. What are some of the ways your parents show their faithfulness to God? he wrote:

My parents are faithful to God by going to church whenever they possibly can. My parents are kind and helpful to strangers. If my parents make a mistake they make up or apologize for it. My dad works hard building houses for people and my mom works hard at First Federal bank. Sometimes my mom works at the bank 1 1/2 to 2 hours after closing time to help get everything where it should be and ready for the next day. My parents are also honest and very trustworthy. This is how my parents show their faithfulness to God.

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Bible Numbers Puzzle

Answers can be found on Page 11.

1. The earth was created in _____ days. (Genesis 1 & 2)
2. How many Psalms are collected in the Bible? _____
3. How many men did Nebuchadnezzar see in the furnace? _____ (Daniel 3)
4. How many generations were between Abraham and David? _____ (Matthew 1)
5. How many disciples did Jesus have? _____ (Matthew 10)



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