

took sheep and oxen and gave to Abimelek, and the two of them made a covenant. <sup>28</sup>And Abraham stood seven ewes of the sheep by themselves. <sup>29</sup>And Abimelek said to Abraham, “What are these seven ewes that you’ve stood by themselves?”

<sup>30</sup>And he said, “Because you’ll take these seven ewes from my hand so that it will be evidence for me that I dug this well.” <sup>31</sup>On account of this he called that place Beer-sheba, because the two of them swore there <sup>32</sup>and made a covenant in Beer-sheba. And Abimelek and Phichol, the commander of his army, got up and went to the land of the Philistines.

<sup>33</sup>And he planted a tamarisk in Beer-sheba and he called the name of YHWH El Olam. <sup>34</sup>And Abraham resided in the land of the Philistines many days.

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<sup>1</sup>And it was after these things, and God tested Abraham.

And He said to him, “Abraham.”

And he said, “I’m here.”

<sup>2</sup>And He said, “Take your son, your only one, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah and make him a burnt offering there on one of the mountains that I’ll say to you.”

<sup>3</sup>And Abraham got up early in the morning and harnessed his ass and took his two boys with him and Isaac, his son. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and he got up and went to the place that God had said to him.

<sup>4</sup>On the third day: and Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. <sup>5</sup>And Abraham said to his boys, “Sit here with the ass; and I and the boy: we’ll go over there, and we’ll bow, and we’ll come back to you.” <sup>6</sup>And Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on Isaac, his son, and took the fire and the knife in his hand.

And the two of them went together.

<sup>7</sup>And Isaac said to Abraham, his father; and he said, “My father.”

And he said, “I’m here, my son.”

And he said, “Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?”

<sup>8</sup>And Abraham said, “God will see to the sheep for the burnt offering, my son.”

And the two of them went together.

<sup>9</sup>And they came to the place that God had said to him. And Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and he bound Isaac, his son, and put him on the altar on top of the wood. <sup>10</sup>And Abraham put out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.

<sup>11</sup>And an angel of YHWH called to him from the skies and said, “Abraham! Abraham!”

And he said, “I’m here.”

<sup>12</sup>And he said, “Don’t put your hand out toward the boy, and don’t do anything to him, because now I know that you fear God, and you didn’t withhold your son, your only one, from me.” <sup>13</sup>And Abraham raised his eyes and saw, and here was a ram behind, caught in the thicket by its horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and made it a burnt offering instead of his son. <sup>14</sup>And Abraham called the name of that place “YHWH Yir’eh,” as is said today: “In YHWH’s mountain it will be seen.”

<sup>15</sup>And an angel of YHWH called to Abraham a second time from the skies.\* <sup>16</sup>And He\*\* said, “I swear by me—word of YHWH—that because you did this thing and didn’t withhold your son, your only one, <sup>17</sup>that I’ll bless you and multiply your seed like the stars of the skies and like the sand that’s on the seashore, and your seed will possess its enemies’ gate. <sup>18</sup>And all the nations of the earth will be blessed through your seed because you listened to my voice.”

<sup>19</sup>And Abraham went back to his boys, and they got up and went together to Beer-sheba, and Abraham lived in Beer-sheba.

<sup>20</sup>And it was after these things, and it was told to Abraham, saying, “Here Milcah has given birth, she also, to sons for your brother Nahor: <sup>21</sup>Uz, his firstborn, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel, the father of Aram,

\*It is possible that in the original old E story, Abraham actually carries out the sacrifice of Isaac. The evidence that vv. 11–14, in which the sacrifice is stopped, were added by RJE is as follows: (1) This is an E text, referring to the deity as God (Elohim) in narration three times (vv. 1,3,9), but suddenly, as Abraham takes the knife in his hand, the text switches to an angel of YHWH. (2) Verses 11–15, which describe the angel’s instructions to Abraham not to sacrifice his son after all, are enclosed in a resumptive repetition in which the angel calls out two times. (3) Following this resumptive repetition, the angel (or God) says, “because you *did* this thing and *didn’t* withhold your son.” (4) The story concludes, “And Abraham went back to his boys.” Isaac is not mentioned—even though Abraham had explicitly told the boys, “We’ll come back to you.” (5) Isaac never again appears in E after this. (6) In the E story of a revelation at Mount Horeb in Exodus 24, there is a chain of eighteen parallels of language with this story of Isaac, but not one of those parallels comes solely from these verses (11–15). See the note on Exod 24:1. (7) There is a group of midrashic sources that say that Isaac was in fact sacrificed.

In light of these factors, it is possible that in the E story Abraham sacrifices Isaac, but that later this idea of a human sacrifice was repugnant, and so RJE added the lines in which Isaac is spared and a ram is substituted. It is not possible to say how the original E version accounted for the introduction of Jacob. Notably, though, it is in E (in the very next passage that is traced to E) that Abraham later has another wife, Keturah, and has more children. (See *Who Wrote the Bible?* pp. 256–257.)

\*\*In the original E text it is God who speaks; but, as the text is edited by RJE, it now appears to be the angel who says this.