

Isaac

Isaac was the only son of Abraham and Sarah, and the father of Esau and of Jacob, who God renamed *Israel*. The patriarchs are often named together in both the Old Testament and New Testament, eg, when speaking to Moses, God said, "I Am The God of your father, The God of Abraham, The God of Isaac, and The God of Jacob.". Jesus Christ quoted that very Scripture while He was discussing the resurrection with the Sadducees.

Isaac's birth came about from a miracle - Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. Sarah found herself a mother at age 90, having been unable to have children until then. For a Jewish wife, to be barren was just about the worst thing that could happen. "Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish My Covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him."

Isaac was not Abraham's firstborn, or only son, however. Fourteen years before, when Abraham was 86, Sarah (then called Sarai) had arranged for a child to be born to Abraham through her own Egyptian maidservant, Hagar. Ishmael was born from the arrangement.

The promise did not go through Ishmael because the covenant had already been made with Abraham, with a yet-unborn Isaac the designated heir, before Ishmael was born. While God does not play favourites, He was also not bound to any other arrangements for children that Abraham and Sarah had taken upon themselves to bring about *after* the matter had been firmly decided by God.

Nevertheless, God did see that Hagar and Ishmael would be greatly blessed - "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count." The Arab nations of today, as they themselves will correctly tell you, are the descendants of Ishmael. *Both* the Jews and Arabs are descendants of Abraham. That is why they struggle, with often bloody and tragic results, over control of the Tomb of The Patriarchs in Hebron, in which Abraham is buried, right to this very day. Both, *correctly* claim descent from him - the Jews through Isaac, the Arabs through Ishmael.

Abraham's greatest test of obedience to God involved Isaac. "Then God said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." (Genesis 22:2). Abraham passed the test, while God stopped it before any actual harm could come to Isaac - "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from Me your son, your only son."

Abraham had been willing to give up his son to God, just as God Himself would later give up His own Son to a sacrifice that *was* allowed to happen. An interesting point is that the place where Abraham was sent to sacrifice Isaac, Mount Moriah, is today known as the Temple Mount in Jerusalem - Isaac would have been sacrificed very near the place that Jesus Christ was crucified.

At the age of 40, Isaac married Rebekah. After they had been married for 20 years, they had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob eventually became the sole heir of the promise - a very hungry Esau foolishly sold his birthright for a bowl of stew, and Jacob obtained the blessing through deception of the then nearly blind Isaac. It was while he was fleeing Esau's wrath for that deception that Jacob had his Stairway To Heaven dream.

Isaac lived a very long life before dying at Hebron. There, he was buried by Jacob and Esau in what is today known as the "Tomb of The Patriarchs" - the burial place of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob/Israel and Leah.

Fact Finder: What did Abraham believe that God would do if he had actually gone through with the sacrifice of Isaac? *Hebrews 11:17-19*