A man with grey hair, wearing a yellow robe, and a young boy in a white robe are kneeling on the ground, facing a large, bright bonfire. The fire is built on a stone structure and is consuming logs. The scene is set in a desert landscape with rocky terrain, sparse vegetation, and a blue sky with scattered clouds. In the background, there are mountains and a large yucca plant on the right.

Genesis: A Living Conversation

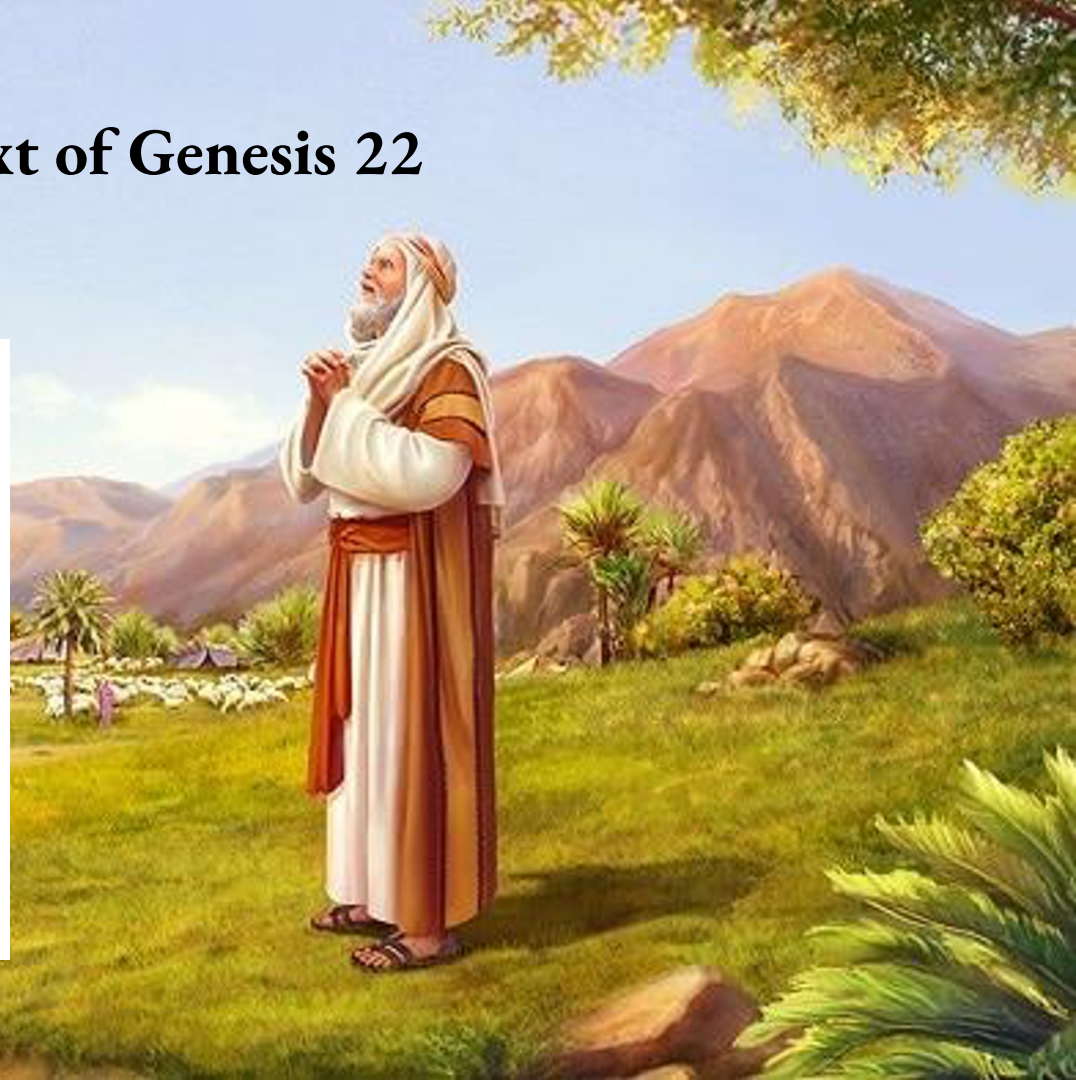
The Test

Genesis 22

**By Veronica Manso, Alejandro Perez, and Jeff
Singer**

Context of Genesis 22

- In the beginning of chapter 22, God speaks to Abraham and says to him “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you (Gen 22.2).



Context of Genesis 22

- In the verses that proceed, the story goes on to describe Abraham willfully obeying God's request. Abraham along with Isaac and two of his servants set off to mount Moriah where the sacrifice will occur (Gen 22:3-5)

Context of Genesis 22

Upon arrival, Abraham and Isaac begin the journey up the mountain alone to make the sacrifice. While the two are on their way, Isaac asks his father, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering” (Gen 22.6-7)

To which Abraham, responds, “The Lord will provide” Gen (22.8)

Context of Genesis 22

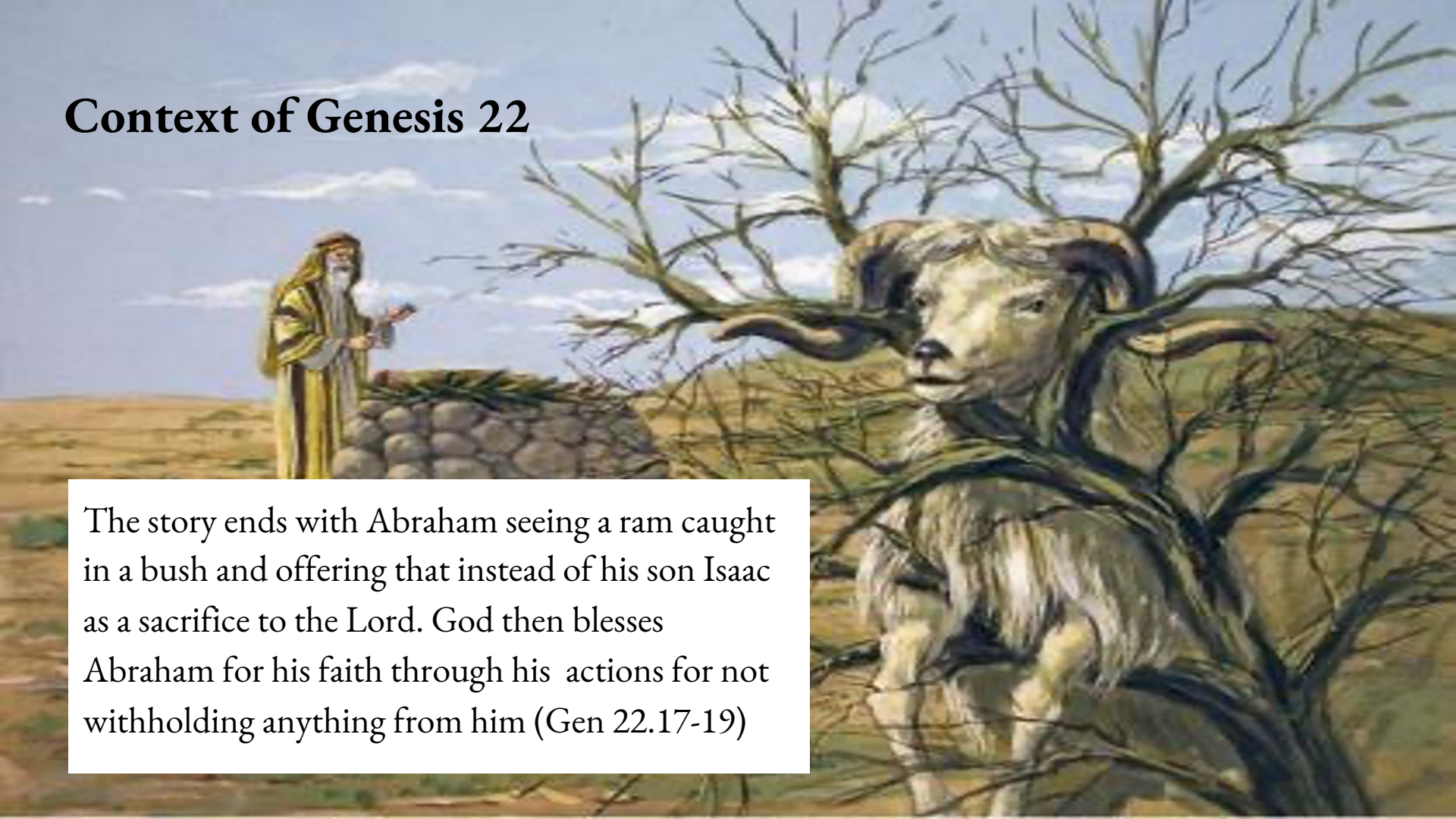
In the climax moment of the story, Abraham lays his son Isaac upon the Altar bound in rope so he can not move. As he raises his sword to go through with the sacrifice an angel of the Lord appears to him before he can harm his son (Gen 22.9-10).



The verses say the the angel tells Abraham, “Do not lay your hand on the boy, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me” (Gen 22.12).

Context of Genesis 22

The story ends with Abraham seeing a ram caught in a bush and offering that instead of his son Isaac as a sacrifice to the Lord. God then blesses Abraham for his faith through his actions for not withholding anything from him (Gen 22.17-19)



Introduction to the beginning points from conversation

- At the beginning of the conversation, all participants agree that the story of Abraham's test of faith is an unfathomable horrific test God puts Abraham through.
- **FRANCISCO GARCIA-TRETO:** I have a problem with that story that I will always have. I think that this is quite literally a terrifying story. When — when we pray in the Lord's prayer, "lead us not into temptation," which in Greek literally says — do not bring us to the test — this is what comes to mind. And — and at the heart of my faith is the conviction that God would never put me in this situation. If this is a test, I'd flunk it.
- **DIANNE BERGANT:** You asked — if it's a terrifying story before. I think it is a terrifying story. But for what purpose? Why is — why is the story teller telling the story that way? And that's why... I don't want to get God off the hook. I wanna know why does the author tell the story that way?

The Theories Shared as to why God Tests Abraham

- **PHYLLIS TRIBLE:** What — my understanding is that the story has something to do basically with idolatry. The idolatry of the son — of the story is take your son, your only son whom you love Isaac. Now you don't need all of that language to say, "Take Isaac and sacrifice him." But it's heavy laden language that is telling us something. It's the accumulation of attachment. Isaac is the promised child once the giver has given the gift God has given Isaac then does Abraham focus on Isaac and forget the giver? And — and the climatic line is, "Now I know that you worship God, implied that you do not worship your son."

The theory of disproving Abraham's Idolatry

- **Idolatry** : the worship of someone or something other than God as though it were God.
- In Phyllis's theory as to why God tests Abraham she states that God wanted to be sure in knowing that after Abraham received the blessing of his promised child, would he still put God first.
- Others in attendance added on to this by saying that God was also testing if Abraham would be willing to give up the blessing he was also promised through Isaac and ultimately his sacrifice his ego.

-What about the trust between God and his father?-

BURTON VISOTZKY: What kind of relationship could Isaac have with God, let alone with his father? ...

SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR: “Isaac is a prophet. And as a prophet, he does not have the ordinary human consciousness that we have. And to read our own sentiments or reactions into what Isaac experienced, would totally misunderstand what the heart of the story is. His surrender to the will of God is no less than that of Abraham. And therefore he participates in this act which is perfection of the surrender to the will of God”.

-Therefore not only is there this question of complete faith and surrender, but as a surrender of a person who's God's friend. And therefore ultimately he would know that God will always remain his friend.

-Religion Has to Lead us to People and Relationships-

NORMAN COHEN: “If religion leads to human suffering and human self-denial, then it’s not a religion I wanna be part of. I think ultimately that’s the question here as we read the story. And I can read it on-two different levels. On one level... it’s anyone who is impregnated or—seems to be impregnated by God’s spirit, and it leads to just human misery—” (Examples of Massacres, Holocaust, Ect.)

-“But on the more subtle level of our sacrificing that which is precious to us, or those whom we love, there’s a subtlety there I think that this story begs us to address. And if we don’t, I think that ultimately religion falls flat in terms of what it means.” (Religion→ People)

-The Role of Faith

FRANCISCO GARCIA-TRETO: I have a problem with that story that I will always have...at the heart of my faith is the conviction that God would never put me in this situation. If this is a test, I'd flunk it.

BILL MOYERS: And why does God do this kind of cruelty to a variety of people in order to test our faith?

BURTON VISOTZKY: If it's faith it's a kind of faith I don't want to subscribe to. That is to say, I think there's *intelligent faith*. And I think there's blind faith. I would prefer to believe that what God demands is a faith that requires the intellect to be engaged, rather than just say, "Yes sir."

-The Role of Faith

PHYLLIS TRIBLE: I have problems with the phrase, “to have faith. “Faith is not a possession and it bothers me — to ask, “Does Isaac have faith?” or “Does Abraham have faith?” Faith is a mode of being in the world that is — the realization that God provides. The story itself has an unresolved tension or a paradox between the God who tests and the God who provides.

-The Role of Faith

FRANCISCO GARCIA-TRETO: I want to be — I want to be even more — more proactive in my definition of faith than that though. I think that — that — that faith is a commitment you make, it's more than a realization because sometimes it's hard to realize that God provides. It's a commitment you make.

-The Role of Faith

DIANNE BERGANT: But from — why does the story teller tell the story that way? I mean, that — I think is the issue that constantly challenges me. There is a struggle between the faith in God and the faith in the tradition that we had that helps us — you know, to talk about and understand God. And this may sound like some kind of an esoteric struggle, but it's not. I think — I — the way we understand God in our religious tradition changes. It certainly has changed within the Roman Catholic church.

-Early Interpretation

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation... By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

-Early Interpretation

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

-Early Interpretation

A father brings his son, a son that was promised by God Himself, to die on top of mount Moriah, the eventual site of Jerusalem, and has the son carry on his back the wood that was to be used for the sacrifice. “God Himself will provide the Lamb”, and to be sure, the sacrifice that God provides has thorns in its head. The father slays the sacrifice, which acts as a substitute.