

Writing Assignment
The Binding of Isaac

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BIB329: Literature Between the Old and New Testament (NZ/NLS)

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Professor: Jeffrey Garcia

The Binding of Isaac

- 1. What is the work about? Summarize. Pretend that you are trying to explain a movie to your friends, but you must give the most important features.**
- 2. What changes are there to the biblical text? Why might the authors have made some of these changes? Give some examples.**

The Aqedah also known as “The Binding of Isaac” is the narrative found in the first book of the Torah (Genesis) where it describes God’s command to Abraham to offer his only son Isaac as a sacrifice. This story provides a window into God’s redemptive tool used to redeem humanity from their sins. This story was also redacted by other translators to depict the same meaning as in the Genesis account. In the reading the material offered on the subject, we see in most of the biblical text God's ultimate trial of Abraham's reverence and trust in Him. The Binding of Isaac was retold in parallel fashion in “Josephus retelling of Aqedah” while other texts referred to Abraham’s faith in the attempt to sacrifice Isaac along with the significance of God’s ultimate sacrifice of His son as an atonement for humanity’s sin.

In the Genesis 22: 1-19 account, God instructed Abraham to take Isaac from their home and go to a specific place in the land of Moriah and offer up his son to God as a burnt offering. Abraham conformed to God's request, and he took Isaac. When they arrived at the location, Isaac recognized that there was no lamb for the burnt offering and posed the question about the missing lamb to his father. Abraham responded with the confidence that God would provide one. As Abraham was about to take Isaac's life, an angel of God stopped him and acknowledged Abraham's reverence to God. A ram was then provided instead of Isaac for the burnt offering, and God bestowed the blessing on Abraham as cited in Genesis 22:17-18. This trial of Abraham's faith led to the ultimate litmus test of his obedience and commitment to God. In the other biblical texts such as “Josephus’ Retelling of Aqedah” as related in “The Antiquities of the

Jews” Chapter 13:1-4, we find the author providing a similar content of the testing of Abraham’s faith by his attempt to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Other biblical texts offer parallel references to the testing of Abraham’s faith along with a correlation to God’s ultimate sacrifice of His only begotten son to save humanity, as cited in The Book of Jubilees 17:15-18. In addition, in the script of Targum Neofiti Lev 22:27, the author draws upon the Genesis 22:1:19 chronicle and other passages in Genesis like the story of Jacob to deliver the message of atonement. In the New Testament, the Gospel writers and Paul used “The Binding of Isaac” in their teachings and following up by referring to God’s actions of offering up His only son.

While the biblical text may provide comparable content and offers the same conclusion, the writers of the apocrypha and the pseudepigrapha made some changes. In the Genesis narrative the author provided an interpretation that was void of some of the details presented in Josephus Antiquities. For example, the Genesis account focused on the core elements of the saga while Josephus Antiquities gave a greater comprehensive detailed account of the same narrative. The Genesis version did not disclose much about Isaac and his relationship with his parents or his age or his personality, nor did Abraham explain to Isaac that God had requested him as the sacrifice. On the other hand, in the Antiquities tale Josephus noted Isaac’s age to be 25 years old and added the fact that Abraham related to Isaac God’s request with which Isaac was ready to comply. Josephus cited that both Abraham and Isaac received the blessing whereas in Genesis it is stated that God bequeathed the blessing unto Abraham alone. In reading a similar offering of the subject in The Book of Jubilees, the writer presents the circumstances in a more suggestive manner. Here, we read that Abraham’s faithfulness was being discussed by the Prince Mastema who posed to God that He should request that Abraham offer up his son. The other two versions, however, viewed the matter from an external point of view.

It is my thought that some of the authors may have changed the biblical text based on the interpretation of the translations they had access to at that time. Since some of the noncanonical literature are pseudepigraphs the writers may have had the liberty to embellish some of the content of the work. Another reason for this could be period the text was written in, what was occurring at the time and its source content from which they drew their information. For example, The Book of Jubilees was written about 100 BC, Josephus wrote his Antiquities around 93 CE while Genesis had been completed by Moses around 1450 BCE to 1400 BCE. The lengthy time span can account for the changes made by the later authors.

Bibliography

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