

Chester Cycle 1572/2010**Play 5****The Sacrifice of Isaac; Moses and the Law**

Cast: GOD, ABRAHAM, ISAAC, ANGEL, MESSENGER, MOSES, EXPOSITOR

GOD Abraham, my servant Abraham!

ABRAHAM Lo, Lord, all ready here I am.

GOD Take Isaac, thy son by name,
that thou lovest the best of all,
5 and in sacrifice offer him to me
upon that hill there beside thee.
Abraham, I will that it so be,
for ought that may befall.

ABRAHAM My Lord, to thee is mine intent
10 ever to be obedient.
That son that thou to me has sent
offer I will to thee,
and fulfill thy commandment
with heartfelt will as I am kent
15 high God, Lord omnipotent.
Thy bidding, Lord, done shall be.

taught

20 My household and my children each one
remain at home, both all and one,
save Isaac. My son with me shall go
to a hill here beside.

Here Abraham, turning to his son Isaac, saith:

25 Make thee ready, my dear darling,
for we must do a little thing.
This wood do thou on thy back bring;
we may no longer bide.
A sword and fire that will I take,
for the sacrifice I have to make
God's bidding will I not forsake,
but ever obedient be.

stay

Abraham taketh a sword and fire.

Here Isaac speaks to his father, taketh the bundle of sticks, and beareth after his father.

ISAAC Father, I am all ready
30 to do your bidding most meekly,
and to bear this wood obedient am I,
as ye command me.

ABRAHAM O Isaac, Isaac, my darling dear,
my blessing now I give thee here.
35 Take up this faggot with good cheer
and on thy back it bring.
And fire with us I will take.

ISAAC Your bidding I will not forsake;

40 father, I will never slake
to fulfill your bidding. *cease*

ABRAHAM Now Isaac, son, go we our way
to yonder mount, if that we may.

Here they go both to the place to do sacrifice.

ISAAC My dear father, I will assay
to gladly follow if I may. *try*

Abraham being minded to slay his son, lifts up his hands to heaven and saith:

ABRAHAM O, my heart will break in three!
46 hearing thy words I have pity.
As thou wilt, Lord, so must it be;
to thee will I be obedient.

Lay down thy faggot, my own son dear.

Isaac layeth down the wood and goeth to his father and saith:

ISAAC All ready, father – lo, it is here!
51 But why make ye so heavy cheer?
Are you of anything in dread?
Father, if it be your will,
Where is the beast that we shall kill?

ABRAHAM None such, son, is on this hill
56 that I see here in this stead *place*

Isaac, fearing lest his father will slay him, saith:

ISAAC Father, I am full sore afraid
to see you bear that drawn sword.
60 I hope for all the world
you will not slay your child.

Abraham, comforting his son, saith:

ABRAHAM Dread thee not, my child, I say
Our Lord will send from his Godhead
some manner of beast to come this way
either tame or wild.

ISAAC Father tell me before I go
66 Whether I shall have harm or no.

ABRAHAM Ah, dear God, I am full of woe
Thou breakest my heart in sunder.

ISAAC Father, tell me of this case
70 why you your sword drawn has
and bear it naked in this place.
At that I have great wonder. *about this situation*

ABRAHAM Isaac, son, peace, I pray thee!
Thou break'st my heart at once in three.

ISAAC I pray you, father, conceal nothing from me,
76 but tell me what you think.

- ABRAHAM Ah, Isaac, Isaac, I must thee kill.
- ISAAC Alas, father, is that your will?
Your own child for to spill
80 upon this hill's brink? *destroy*
- If that I have done wrong in any degree,
with a stick you may beat me.
Put up your sword, if your will it be,
for I am but a child.
- ABRAHAM Oh, my dear son, I am sorry
86 to do thee this great annoy. *harm*
God's commandment do must I;
his works are always most mild, *merciful*
- ISAAC Would God my mother were here with me!
90 She would kneel down upon her knee,
praying you, father, if it might be,
for to save my life.
- ABRAHAM Oh fair creature unless I thee kill
95 I grieve God and that full ill . *most sorely*
I may not act against his will
but ever obedient be.
O, Isaac, son, to thee I say
God has commanded today
sacrifice – this I can't deny –
100 to make of thy body.
- ISAAC Is it God's will I shall be slain?
- ABRAHAM Yea, son, to lie is no gain;
to his bidding I will be obedient
trying ever to him to be pleasing.
105 Unless I do this doleful deed
My Lord will not repay me my meed *reward*
- ISAAC Marry, father, God forbid
other than you make your offering.
- 110 Father, at home your sons you shall find
that you must love by force of kind. *nature*
Be I once out of your mind;
your sorrow may soon cease.
But yet you must do God's bidding.
Father – tell my mother nothing.
- Here Abraham wringing his hands, saith:*
- ABRAHAM For sorrow I may my hand wring;
116 thy mother I cannot please.
- Oh Isaac, Isaac, blessed may thou be!
Almost my wit I lose for thee.
120 The blood of thy body so free *beautiful*
I am full loath to shed.
- Here Isaac, asking his father's blessing on his knees, saith:*
- ISAAC Father, since you must needs do so,
let it pass quickly and away go.

As I kneel on my knees two,
your blessing on me spread.

ABRAHAM
126 My blessing, dear son, give I thee,
and thy mother's with heart so free. *willing*
The blessing of the Trinity,
my dear son, on thee light.

ISAAC
130 Father, I pray you hide my een
that I see not the sword so keen. *eyes*
Your stroke, father would I not see
Lest against it I complain.

ABRAHAM
My dear son, Isaac, speak no more;
thy words make my heart full sore.

ISAAC
136 Oh dear father, wherefore, wherefore,
since I must needs be dead?
Of one thing I would you pray,
since I must die the death today:
as few strokes as ye well may *possibly can*
140 when you smite off my head!

ABRAHAM
Thy meekness, child, makes me afraid.
My song may be 'Alas, away.'

ISAAC
145 Oh, dear father, do away, do away
your making of so much moan.
Now truly, father, this talking
doth but make long tarrying.
I pray you, be quick and make ending
and let me hence be gone.

ABRAHAM
150 Come hither, my child, thou art so sweet!
Thou must be bound both hand and feet.

Here Isaac riseth and cometh to his father, and he taketh and bindeth him.

ISAAC
155 Father, we may no more meet
by ought that I can see.
But do to me as thou will;
I must obey, and that is skill, *right*
God's commandment to fulfill,
for needs so must it be.

160 Upon the purpose that you have set you,
truly, father, I will not hinder you;
but evermore to you bow
while that ever I may.
Father, greet well my brethren young,
and pray my mother for her blessing;
I may come no more under her wing.
Farewell, for ever and ay.

165 But father, I cry you mercy
for all that ever I have trespassed to thee,
forgiven, father, so that it may be
until Doomsday.

ABRAHAM
170 My dear son, let be thy moans;
my child, thou grieves me more than once.
Blessed be thou, body and bones,

and I forgive thee here.
 Now, my dear son, here shalt thou lie.
 Unto my task now must I hie.
 175 I had rather myself to die
 as thou, my darling dear.

ISAAC Father, if ye be to me kind
 about my head a kerchief bind;
 and let me pass easily from your mind;
 180 and let it be soon that I am sped!

ABRAHAM Farewell, my sweet son of grace.

Here kiss him, and bind the kerchief about his head; and let him [Isaac] kneel down and speak.

ISAAC I pray you, father turn down my face
 a little while, while you have space,
 for I am sore adread.

ABRAHAM To do this deed I am sorry.

ISAAC Yea, Lord, to thee I call and cry!
 187 On my soul thou have mercy,
 heartily I thee pray.

ABRAHAM Lord, I would fain work thy will.
 190 This young innocent that lies so still
 full loath am I him to kill
 by any manner of way.

ISAAC My dear father, I thee pray,
 let me take my clothes away,
 195 to spare shedding blood on them today
 at my last ending.

ABRAHAM Heart, if thou would break in three,
 thou shall never master me!
 I will no longer delay for thee;
 200 my God I may not grieve.

ISAAC Ah, mercy, father! Why tarry ye so?
 Smite off my head, and let me go.
 I pray you rid me of my woe,
 for now I take my leave.

ABRAHAM My son, my heart will break in three
 206 To hear thee speak such words to me.
 Jesu, on me thou have pity,
 that I have most in mind.

ISAAC Now, father, I see that I shall die.
 210 Almighty God in majesty,
 my soul I offer unto thee.
 Lord, to it be kind.

Here let Abraham take and bind his son Isaac upon the altar, and let him make a sign as though he would cut off his head with a sword. Then let the Angel come, and take the sword by the end and stay it saying:

ANGEL Abraham, my servant dear!

ABRAHAM Lo, Lord, I am all ready here.

- ANGEL
216 Lay not thy sword in any manner
on Isaac, thy dear darling,
and do to him no more annoy. *harm*
That thou dreads't God, well know I
since upon thy son thou hast no mercy
220 in order to fulfill his bidding.
- And, because his bidding thou dost ay,
and sparest neither for fear nor fray
to do thy son to death today – *dread*
Isaac, to thee full dear –
225 therefore God hath sent by me truly
a lamb that is both good and gay,
into this place, as thou see may.
Lo, find him right here.
- ABRAHAM
230 Ah, Lord of Heaven and king of bliss,
thy bidding shall be done iwiss.
Sacrifice here me sent is,
and all, Lord, through thy grace.
An horned wether here I see
235 Among the briars tied is he.
To thee offered now shall he be
immediately in this place.
- Then let Abraham take the lamb and kill him; and let God say:*
- GOD
240 Abraham, by myself I swear:
for thou hast been obedient ever,
and spared not thy son to tear
to fulfill my bidding,
thou shall be blessed that pleased me.
Thy seed I shall so multiply
as stars and sand, so many promised I,
of thy body coming.
- 245 Over enemies thou shalt have power,
and thy kin also together.
Thou hast been meek and bonere
agreeable
to do as I thee bede. *command*
And of all nations, believe thou me,
250 blessed evermore you shall be
through fruit that shall come of thee,
and saved be through thy seed.
- Here the Expositor saith:*
- EXPOSITOR
255 Lordings, the signification
of this deed of devotion –
if you wish, know you can –
may turn you much to good.
This deed ye see done in here in this place,
in example of Jesus done it was,
that for to win Mankind grace
260 was sacrificed on the rood.
- By Abraham I may understand
the Father of Heaven a way found
with his Son's blood to break that bond
the Devil had brought us to.

265 By Isaac understand I may
 Jesus that was obedient alway
 his Father's will to work alway,
 and death to undergo

[Here Moses shall enter]

GOD
 270 Moses, my servant true and dear,
 and all my people that are here,
 ye know in Egypt when ye were
 out of slavery I you brought.
 I will have no God but me;
 no false gods none make ye,
 275 for that liketh me nought.

I will you hold your holy day
 and honour it also alway,
 honour father and mother all that you may,
 and slay no man nowhere.
 280 Fornication ye shall flee. *shun*
 No men's goods steal ye,
 nor in no place stay nor be
 false witness for to bear.

Your neighbour's wife desire you nought,
 285 servant, nor goods that he hath bought,
 ox nor ass, in deed nor thought,
 nor nothing that is his,
 nor long wrongfully to have his things
 against his desire and his liking.
 290 In all these matters keep my bidding,
 that ye do not amiss.

MOSES
 Good Lord that art ever so good,
 I will fulfill with mild mood *humble heart*
 thy commandments, for I stood
 295 to hear thee now full still.
 Forty days now fasted have I,
 that I might be the more worthy
 to understand this sign truly.
 Now will I work thy will.

Then Moses on the mountain shall speak to the people.

300 Good folk, dread ye nought.
 To test you God hath this wrought.
 Take these words in your thought;
 now you know what makes a sin.
 By this sight now ye may see
 305 that God is unrivalled in posty. *power*
 Therefore these acts shun do ye
 salvation for to win.

EXPOSITOR
 Lordings, this commandment
 was the first law ever God sent;
 310 ten points there be – that takes intent –
 that most importance is in.
 But that story, though it be strong,
 to play this month it were too long!
 Therefore most fruitful ever among
 315 shortly we shall min. *recall*

Afterwards we read in this story
 that in this Mount of Sinai
 God gave the law certainly
 written with his hand
 320 in stony tables, as read I,
 before men turned to idolatry –
 Moses broke them hastily
 Idolatry he could not stand.

 But later, played as ye shall see,
 325 other tables carved out he,
 which God bade inscribed should be
 with the words he said before.
 These tables enshrined were
 afterwards as God will teach here;
 330 and that shrine to him as dear
 thereafter evermore.

Here God appeareth again to Moses

GOD Moses, my servant, go anon
 and carve out of the rock of stone
 tables to write my bidding upon,
 335 such as thou had before.
 And in the morning look thou hie
 into the Mount of Sinai. *hasten*
 Let no man know but thou only,
 with company no more.

MOSES Lord, thy bidding shall be done
 341 and tables carved out full soon.
 But tell me – I ask thee this boon –
 what words I shall write.

GOD Thou shalt write the same lore *teaching*
 345 that in the tables was before.
 It shall be kept for evermore,
 for that is my delight.

*The Moses shall make a sign as if he were carving out the tables from the mountain and,
writing upon them, shall say to the people:*

MOSES God's folk of Israel,
 harken you all to my spell. *words*
 350 God bade ye should keep well
 this that I shall say.
 Six days, bodily, work all;
 the seventh 'Sabbath' ye shall call.
 That day, for ought that may befall,
 355 kept holy always shall be.

Who doth not this, die shall he.
 In houses fire shall no man see.
 First-fruits to God offer ye –
 for so himself bede – *commands*
 360 purple and silk both two
 to him that shall save you from woe
 and help you in your need.

Then he shall come down from the mount.