Before long his inordinately long sermons, his refusal to compromise on matters of principle and his growing interest in prophetic subjects diminished his popularity and marked him out as a leader of radical evangelicals. The complaints of his critics resulted in a trial in 1830 when he was found guilty of christological heresy and deposed, though a large number of his congregation followed him when he moved his ministry to other premises. This coincided with his encouragement of prophesyings and glossolalia in his congregation, in the context of which there began to emerge the "Catholic Apostolic Church." Although his followers were often referred to as Irvingites, he himself was only the "angel" of this community, and, in the last three years of his life was upstaged by the "Apostles" with whom he was not always in agreement. He died in 1834.

Irving was prepared to take the Scriptures as he found them and to go wherever they might take him. His preaching was uncompromising and in his early work *For the Oracles of God* (1823) he insisted that in preferring the writings of "unhallowed" poets, scientists and politicians to the Scriptures his audience were evading the truth. In his famous sermon *For Missionaries after the Apostolic School* (1825) he upset many of his hearers by taking the biblical example of faith, sacrifice and martyrdom as the norm rather than the "prudent" expedience of the world. Adopting the primitive simplicity of the NT he was consciously rejecting the sophistication of his surroundings.

Influenced by Coleridge, Irving moved away from the earlier apologetic based on prophecy-fulfillment and the gospel miracles, and insisted that the truth of the Scriptures was validated by its capacity "to speak to the inner man" and the reader's "experience of the truth of what it contains." It was probably this insistence on the experimental understanding of Scripture that led Irving into his heterodox Christology. For the humanity of Jesus to be real to his hearers, the Savior had to be "tempted in all points as we are." Not only had he to suffer and weep, but he had to be *capable* of sinning (*peccable*) even though he did not sin. In stressing that capability, Irving crossed the line by saying that Christ had come "in the sinful flesh of humanity." In that respect he was prepared to put the witness of Scripture above a man-made formulary like the Westminster Confession.

Like so many evangelicals born in the shadow of the French Revolution Irving was fascinated by the prophetic page of Scripture but in that context too, although his premillennial (and pessimistic) stance was initially historicist he was ready to adopt a futurist interpretation as his ecclesiastical isolation increased. This perspective readily accompanied the primitive ideal noted above, causing him to expect a restoration of the miraculous signs and wonders of the apostolic era. Such an emphasis has resulted in a growing resurgence of interest in his work. While some modern thinkers are skeptical of an Apollinarian miracle-working Christ, and are drawn to Irving's emphasis on Christ's humanity, in contrast, modern charismatics are attracted to his proto-pentecostalism, albeit turning a blind eye to the ecclesiastical *cul-de-sac* of the "catholic apostolic church."

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Timothy Stunt

Isaac (Patriarch)

I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
II. New Testament
III. Judaism
IV. Christianity
V. Islam
VI. Literature
VII. Visual Arts
VIII. Music
IX. Film

I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

Among the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose stories are told in Gen 12–50, Isaac is the least profiled figure. There are more stories about him as the son of Abraham and the father of Jacob and Esau than about his adventures as a patriarch, which are limited to one chapter (Gen 26). The same holds true for the mention of Isaac in the HB/OT outside the book of Genesis. Contrary to Abraham and especially Jacob, Isaac appears almost exclusively in the patriarchal triad ("the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," etc.). Only Amos 7 : 9, 16 mention him alone (the late genealogical records in 1 Chr 1 : 28 and 34 presuppose the book of Genesis and the patriarchal triad).

1. The Name. The name Isaac (*Yiṣḥāq* more than 110 times; *Yiśḥāq* four times) derives from the root *ṣ–ḥ–q* (*ś–ḥ–q*), meaning to "to laugh," " to have fun," "to mock." It is generally explained as an abbreviated form of *Yiṣḥāq-ʾEl* ("El laughs/is favorable" or "May El laugh/be favorable"; Thompson: 36 with bibliography). There is, contrary to Jacob and Abram, no extra-biblical attestation for such a name. In Ugaritic texts the root *ṣ–ḥ–q* is well attested, also with El as subject (KTU 1.12 I 12), but it is not used for personal names.

In Gen 17–26 several stories allude to the name of Isaac. In Gen 17 : 17 Abraham laughs when God announces he will have a son through Sarah; in

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18:12 it is Sarah who laughs upon hearing the divine promise. In 21:6 after having given birth to Isaac she predicts that those who will hear about her giving birth will laugh (mock?) at her. In 21:9 Ishmael is "playing" (*mĕṣaḥēq*) with Isaac (or making him laugh), and in 26:8 Isaac is "having fun" (*mĕṣaḥēq*) with (fondling) his wife Rebekah. These constant plays with the root *ṣ–ḥ–q*, which occur in different literary layers, show that the name was somewhat intriguing for the tradents, which apparently did not understand the name as a theophoric one.

2. The Stories about Isaac. ***a. Isaac, Son of Abraham.*** Isaac's birth is announced twice. In Gen 17 (assigned to P), God informs Abraham that, in addition to Ishmael, his wife Sarah will give birth to a son whom Abraham shall call Isaac. This announcement provokes Abraham's laughter, but God tells him how he will bless both sons, although Isaac will be the son of the covenant. In the story of the visit of the three mysterious men, who are the manifestation of YHWH, Abraham's hospitality is rewarded with the promise of a son (Gen 18:1–15). This story does not mention Ishmael, because Abraham and Sarah are presented as an old and childless couple. Although the name of the son is not revealed here, it is clear for the audience that the son must be Isaac, because of Sarah's incredulous laughter. The birth of Isaac is related in the Priestly text 21:1–7, which may include fragments of an older birth-story. This story is followed by a narrative about Hagar's and Ishmael's expulsion, which is initiated by Sarah's displeasure over Ishmael playing (*mĕṣaḥēq*) with the little Isaac (21:9–10). Genesis 21:8–21 is a late midrash (Knauf) that prepares the story of the Aqedah, where Isaac appears as Abraham's only beloved son (22:2). In this story Isaac appears as a docile and obedient *naʿar* (adolescent). After Abraham has been prevented by YHWH's angel from sacrificing his son Isaac, Isaac does not appear anymore along with Abraham. In Gen 24 Abraham orders his servant to find a woman for Isaac in Aram, where he has family (see 11:31–32, P). When the servant returns with Rebekah, she is met immediately by Isaac and Abraham is not mentioned. In the Priestly account of Abraham's death, Isaac and Ishmael appear together in order to bury their father (Gen 25:8–9).

b. Isaac, Father of Jacob and Esau. Genesis 25:19–28 takes up the end of Gen 24 and tells of the marriage of Isaac to Rebekah. The reader learns that Rebekah, like Sarah, is barren. But her problem is solved much quicker because of Isaac's prayer to YHWH. She gives birth to twins, Jacob and Esau, who are immediately in conflict with one another. Isaac prefers his elder son, Esau, a skillful hunter, whereas Rebekah sides with Jacob. Two parallel stories tell how the trickster Jacob outwits his brother Esau. In the second one (Gen 27:1–45), Isaac is depicted as an old blind man, who is cheated by his wife and Jacob. Disguised as Esau, Jacob steals from Isaac the blessing of the firstborn and has to flee to Aram, Rebekah's homeland. In the P-narrative 28:1–9 it is Isaac who sends Jacob to Paddan-Aram in order to find a wife there and no allusion to a stolen blessing is made. On the contrary, Isaac blesses Jacob (again) of his own initiative.

Isaac's death is reported briefly in a P-passage in Gen 35:28–29, parallel to Abraham's death. Here again, the two sons, Esau and Jacob bury their father together.

c. Isaac, Patriarch and Man of Wealth. In the different episodes of Gen 26, Isaac appears along with his wife Rebekah, but without children. In the first story (26:1–14a), which parallels Gen 12:10–20 and Gen 20, Isaac settles in Gerar because of a famine and presents Rebekah, his wife, to the Philistines and their king Abimelech as his sister. Although Abimelech discovers the lie when observing Isaac "having fun" (*mĕṣaḥēq*) with Rebekah, he does not expel him and as a result, Isaac becomes a wealthy man. At the end of the story Isaac appears as a large-scale farmer practicing crop and livestock farming.

In 26:14b–22 Isaac enters in conflict with Philistine herders on the use of different wells, until he digs a well that he names "Rehoboth" ("broad space").

In 26:23–25 Isaac arrives in Beer-sheba, where he erects an altar and invokes YHWH who has appeared to him there.

In 26:26–31 however, Isaac still seems to be close to Gerar. Abimelech meets him with two high officers in order to conclude a covenant (or an "oath") with Isaac. Abimelech, as in Gen 20, is depicted as a pagan who fears YHWH. After the conclusion of the covenant Abimelech and his men depart peacefully (26:31).

In 26:32–33, however, Isaac is again in Beer-sheba and names the well and the site. Verse 32 is related to v. 25 by way of the comment by Isaac's servants who tell him that they found water in the well they dug. It is therefore possible that 26:23–25 and 32–33 originally belonged together and that the passage was broken up by the insertion of the pact between Isaac and Abimelech.

3. The Origin of the Isaac Traditions. According to Gen 26 and other texts in the patriarchal narratives, it seems that the origins of the Isaac traditions are to be located in Beer-sheba. However, the only two independent mentions of Isaac outside the book of Genesis (1 Chr 1:34 presupposes the book of Genesis) in Amos 7:9 and 16, linked "the high places of Isaac" to the "sanctuaries of Israel" and the "house of Isaac" to "Israel." For this reason many scholars have postulated that "Isaac" was originally a figure from the North (or more specifically from Bethel) who later, for whatever reason,

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migrated to the South (see the overview in Schmid 1991: 25–28). However, the two mentions of Isaac in Amos belong to later redactions. Amos 7 : 9 is quite unconnected to its context, and the introduction in 7 : 16 is at odds with the introduction of the divine oracle in 7 : 17. Furthermore, "Isaac" is written here with a *Śin*, and this form occurs, besides in Amos 7, only in Jer 33 : 26 and Ps 105 : 9, which are both texts that stem at the earliest from the late Persian period. Therefore the mentions of Isaac in Amos should not be used to reconstruct a Northern patriarch. Rather, the two passages mentioning him had been added together with the polemics against Beer-sheba in Amos 5 : 5 and 8 : 14, which belong to later revisions (Jeremias: 111).

Isaac was therefore an ancestor from the area around Beer-sheba. There was probably a sanctuary in which this ancestor was commemorated (as also hinted to by Gen 46 : 1). The fact that there are so few traditions about Isaac, in comparison to Abraham, can be explained by the hypothesis that Isaac was very soon subordinated under the authority of Abraham. This can be seen in the fact that already in the oldest written Abraham narrative that comprised Gen 13*; 18–19* (this theory is widely accepted since Gunkel; see Blum, Fischer, Carr, Köckert, etc.) the promised son can only be Isaac. Isaac must have become Abraham's son quite early. The author of the story of the divine visitors in Gen 18 : 1–15, in which Abraham's hospitality is rewarded with the gift of a son, already makes a pun of the name of Isaac by introducing the theme of Sarah's laughter (18 : 12–15, see also 21 : 6). Genesis 18* does not know the tradition about Ishmael as Abraham's son; on the contrary the whole plot necessitates a childless man or couple (Finkelstein/Römer). That means that the author of this story wanted to show that the region around Beer-sheba also belongs to the zone of influence of Hebron.

Interestingly, most of the sparse Isaac traditions gathered in Gen 26 have parallels in the Abraham narrative (Gen 26 : 1–14 par. Gen 12 : 10–20 and 20; Gen 26 : 26–33 par. Gen 21 : 22–34). Only Gen 26 : 14–25 has no direct parallel in the Abraham narrative. The parallels could be explained by the assumption that the tradents had no material on Isaac and therefore copied traditions related to Abraham (Van Seters; Thompson; Fischer). But this leaves open the question about the well traditions in 26 : 14–25. It seems therefore more plausible to imagine that Abraham who became the most important ancestoral figure in the South took over the Isaac traditions (Noth, Lutz, Schmidt, and many others) and for that reason, the redactors also made him dwell not only in Mamre, but also in Beer-sheba.

Isaac's "subordination" to Abraham is quite clear if one looks at Gen 26 in its final form. YHWH's speeches to Isaac in 26 : 2–5 and 26 : 24, which the majority of scholars understand as very late insertions, insist on the fact that YHWH blesses Isaac because of his father Abraham. The overall theme in the final form of Gen 26, which was edited during the Persian period, is indeed Isaac's blessing due to Abraham.

The relations between Isaac and the Philistines seem however more original than those that are narrated about Abraham in Gen 20–21. First of all, from a geographical point of view, Gerar, which should be identified as Tel Haror (Aharoni, Finkelstein) is more logically associated with Beer-sheba. This is also the case in the list in 1 Chr 4, where in vv. 28 and 39–40 (here MT reads Gedor, but this is an error for Gerar, as shown by the Greek version; see Blum: 306 and many others) both places are associated with the Simeonites.

The theme of the patriarch who, sojourning in a foreign land, presents his wife as his sister in order to avoid harassment or death is narrated three times (Gen 12 : 10–20; 20; 26 : 1–14) in Genesis. The story of Abraham and Abimelech in Gen 20 is probably the latest of all (Blum, Köckert) and inspired by Gen 26. The relation of Gen 12 : 10–20 to Gen 26 is complex. Genesis 26 : 1 clearly alludes to this text, but it is possible that originally both texts were variants of a popular oral tradition (Schmidt). In any case, the connection to the Philistines belongs originally to the Isaac tradition. No Philistine king Abimelech is known otherwise. Assyrian documents mention however a king of Ashdod named Ahimilki who paid tribute to Assyria in the days of both Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. It is possible that this king inspired the first author of the Isaac narrative. This ties in well with the results of the excavations of Tel Haror, which was an important (Assyrian) administrative center in the 8th and 7th centuries BCE (Oren). A major theme of the first edition of Gen 26 was then probably the question of the territory of the tradents of the Isaac traditions (Blum). They acknowledged that Gerar (a name which allows a nice word-play with the noun *gēr* [sojourner]) did not belong to "Isaac," but they also stress the fact that it was possible to have good (economic) relationships with the authorities living there, provided that one could conclude arrangements ("covenants") with them. According to biblical (2 Kgs 18 : 8) and extra-biblical (Neo-Assyrian) sources, the reign of Hezekiah was a time of military conflicts between Judah and the Philistine territories. Apparently, Hezekiah tried to control the Philistine coast, but the Assyrians aborted this attempt (Naʾaman). Put in this context, the Isaac tradition could be understood as an (anti-Jerusalemite?) plea for a peaceful cohabitation. Although there were conflicts between the people of Gerar and Isaac's herders these conflicts are finally resolved and Isaac's wealth is recognized and accepted by the "Philistines."

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Unfortunately the names of the wells (Esek, v. 20; Sitnah, v. 21; Rehoboth, v. 22) have not been able to be identified so far. The place Tel er-Ruḥebe is not the original Rehobot; the name is probably influenced by the biblical tradition (Schmid 1991: 46). If the names of the wells are not the result of intellectual speculations, they may indeed reflect old memories of wells in the neighborhood of Gerar and Beer-sheba. The fact that Gen 26 ends with an etiology of Beer-sheba given by Isaac confirms the link between the tradents of the Isaac traditions and this site. The note in Gen 26 : 25 about the building of an altar (without sacrifice) comes from the same redactor as Gen 12 : 7–8. It is an attempt to recognize the cultic importance of Beer-sheba without speaking of a sanctuary. In this respect, the parallel in Gen 21 : 32 that speaks of a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba may reflect an old memory of a holy tree at the shrine of Beer-sheba (similar to the holy oak of Mamre of the Abraham tradition). Some scholars think that Isaac was an ancestor of the Simeonites but, besides the very late text of 1 Chr 4, there is sparse evidence for such an assumption (Schmid 1991: 26–28). The origins of the Isaac tradition that was kept and probably also written down at Beer-sheba cannot be reconstructed with certainty. The oldest written version of Gen 26 fits well in the South during the 8th or 7th centuries BCE. Later redactors reworked the stories in order to underline the link between Abraham and Isaac and to demonstrate that Isaac's wealth and blessings are the consequence of this father's behavior.

4. Isaac, Son and Father. The most important reception of the figure of Isaac is however not grounded in Gen 26, but in texts in which Isaac appears as Abraham's son. The story of the Aqedah in Gen 22 is certainly the most used, represented, and commented on text about Isaac. In this story he appears as an obedient son and a willing victim. The narration that was composed during the Persian period (Veijola, Schmid 2004) focuses, however, more on Abraham's faith and obedience. There is some discussion as to whether this text should be seen as a polemic against child sacrifice (Römer) or whether it should be understood as a theological parable reflecting the interrogation of a post-exilic Judean community (Schmid 2004). The story is also one of the separation between Abraham and Isaac because, intriguingly enough, according to 22 : 19, only Abraham returns with his servants to Beer-sheba.

The other role for which Isaac became famous is that of the old and almost blind father who is deceived by his son Jacob to whom he unknowingly gives the blessing of the firstborn (Gen 27). This narrative has provoked comments and interpretations on the difficult relationship between parents and children, but also on the problem of God's apparent tolerance for trickery and lying.

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Thomas Römer

II. New Testament

Explicit references to Isaac (Gk. Ἰσαάκ) are relatively rare in the NT, found most often as part of the patriarchal triad; it is allusion that mediates his implicit presence in significant ways, particularly in the Gospels.

In the Gospels and Acts Isaac appears explicitly as part of the patriarchal triad, which functions either covenantally, showing that salvation history culminates in Jesus and the church (Matt 1 : 2; Luke 3 : 34; Acts 3 : 13; 7 : 8, 32), or eschatologically,

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where the patriarchs reside in heaven to welcome the elect (Luke 13 : 28) or prove the reality of the resurrection (Matt 8 : 11; 22 : 32; Mark 12 : 26; Luke 20 : 37).

Matthew, Mark, and John present strong Isaac typologies in service of sacrificial Christologies through allusion; Isaac's presence in Luke-Acts is less certain. "Son of Abraham" in Matt 1 : 1 may allude to the figure of Isaac and introduce a sacrificial Christology complementing Messianic Christology established by "Son of David" (Huizenga: 139–43). The forty-two generations in the Matthean genealogy (Matt 1 : 2–17) refer to Isaac, as *Jub.* 13 : 16; 17 : 15, and 19 : 1 imply the Aqedah happened at the forty-second jubilee (Huizenga: 143–44). The angelic announcement in Matt 1 : 20–21 alludes to Gen 17 : 19 LXX (Erickson), establishing typologies between God and the angel, Abraham and Joseph, Sarah and Mary, and Isaac and Jesus in rhetorical support of the virgin birth (Huizenga: 144–51). The phrase ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός in the synoptic baptism and transfiguration pericopes (Matt 3 : 17 and 17 : 5 par. but not Luke 9 : 35) alludes to Gen 22 : 2, 12, and 16, as does the same phrase in the parable of the wicked tenants in Mark 12 : 6 and Luke 20 : 13 (the omission of ἀγαπητός in Matt 21 : 37 emphasizes a Joseph typology, Matt 21 : 38 par. alluding to Gen 37 : 20 LXX). In the Gethsemane and arrest sequence, the crowd comes μετὰ μαχαιρῶν καὶ ξύλων (Matt 26 : 47, 55), while Abraham wields a "knife" (μάχαιρα, Gen 22: 6, 10) and "wood" (ξύλον, Gen 22 : 3, 6, 7, 9) for Isaac's holocaust. For Matthew, the Isaac typology presents Jesus as the fulfillment of all Jewish sacrifice, whereas for Mark, Isaac typology presents a theology of lament in which God is estranged from his Son at the moment of sacrifice, like Abraham and Isaac (Rindge; Dowd/ Struthers Malbon). John associates Jesus with Isaac as Jewish tradition bound Isaac to the Passover and its lambs: Jesus is the "lamb of God" (John 1 : 29, 36); the crucifixion occurs during the slaughter of the Passover lambs (John 19 : 14, 31); John 19 : 36 finds fulfillment of Exod 12 : 46 in Jesus' unbroken bones; and John 8 : 31-59 draws on "seeing" in Gen 22 : 4, 8, and 14 as Abraham "saw" Jesus' day at the Aqedah (Hunt; Moessner).

For Paul, Isaac foreshadows Christ as the ultimate heir of the covenantal promises made to Abraham, while the Aqedah may ground Pauline soteriology. In Gal 3 : 15–18 Paul alludes to the specific form of the covenant in Gen 22 : 15–18 to support the superiority of the Abrahamic promises to the Mosaic covenant, promises now raised to a formal bilateral covenant ratified by Abraham's obedient ritual actions at the Aqedah, all in service of presenting Jesus as the true "offspring" in whom Gentiles may inherit the promises (Hahn); indeed, εἰς τὰ ἔθνη ἡ εὐλογία … γενήται ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in Gal 3 : 14 ("the blessing to the nations … might come in Christ Jesus") alludes to ἐνευλογηθήσοντα ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου πάντα τὰ ἔθνη in Gen 22 : 18 ("in your offspring shall all the nations be blessed"). Romans 9 : 6–13 and Gal 4 : 28 thus also suggest the locus of divine inheritance is Christ as a new, ultimate Isaac. Romans 8 : 32 alludes to Gen 22 : 16 as each has the verb φείδομαι ("spare"), God not sparing but handing over his Son Jesus as Abraham did not spare but handed over his son Isaac, perhaps suggesting that Paul's God does so as a reward for Abraham's fidelity in Gen 22 (Dahl). Finally, τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ in 1 Cor 15 : 4 may allude to Gen 22 : 4 if one assumes a death-resurrection motif in Gen 22.

Hebrews 11 : 9 presents Isaac as part of the patriarchal triad receiving promises and passing on blessings, as does Heb 11 : 17–20. Moreover, Heb 11 : 17–20 also claims Abraham obeyed the command in confidence of the resurrection and presents a typological foreshadowing of Jesus' resurrection (Swetnam: 29–31). James 2 : 18–24 asserts that Abraham was justified by his actions in offering Isaac on the altar, not by his faith alone.

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Leroy Huizenga

III. Judaism

▪ Second Temple and Hellenistic Judaism ▪ Rabbinic Judaism ▪ Medieval Judaism ▪ Modern Judaism

A. Second Temple and Hellenistic Judaism

The portraits of Isaac in early Judaism testify to the interpretive creativity of exegetes seeking to connect canonical text with contemporary context. Whereas the canonical Isaac is arguably the least of the patriarchs, at best replicating Abraham's life and at worst displaying blind ignorance (Gen 27), the reinterpreted Isaacs of early Judaism are models of virtue. While many authors focus on reinterpreting the near-sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22 (see

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"Aqedah. II. Judaism A. Second Temple and Hellenistic Judaism") the rest of Isaac's life also provides fruitful material for interpretive reconfiguration. Second Temple exegetes achieve this transformation by omitting problematic details, explaining dubious actions and adding telling material.

Jubilees (ca. 160–50 BCE) recasts Isaac to fit its vision of a righteous and ritually pure people set apart from the Gentiles (Vanderkam), affirming both Isaac's endogamy and lack of travel outside the land given by God (*Jub.* 24 : 8–13). Perceived shortcomings (e.g., Isaac's lie stating that his wife Rebekah was his sister [*Jub.* 24 : 12–13; cf. Gen 26 : 6–11]) are omitted, and questionable actions are explained and justified (e.g., the mistaken choice of Esau is attributed to a heavenly distraction [*Jub.* 26 : 18]). Additional material makes Isaac the recipient of Abraham's instructions for priestly sacrifices (*Jub.* 21), as well as a prophet who regains his sight and blesses the priesthood descending from Levi and the kingdom descending from Isaac (*Jub.* 15 : 16) through Judah (*Jub.* 31 : 11–20). Moreover, Isaac's covenant of peace with the Philistines (Gen 26 : 26–31) is superseded by an eternal curse of complete destruction upon them, first by the Kittim and then by the righteous people (*Jub.* 24 : 25–33).

Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BCE–45 CE) also transforms Isaac, consistent with his allegorical approach to Scripture. Regretfully, Philo's *On Isaac* no longer survives, nor do the sections on Isaac's birth and sacrifice in *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, leading Goodenough to speculate that Christian scribes deliberately suppressed these texts for their competing claims vis-à-vis Jesus' incarnation and sacrifice (Goodenough: 107). Nonetheless, a rough outline can be adumbrated from the dispersed references that remain. Philo interprets Isaac as the embodiment of joyful faith and self-taught wisdom (*Mut.* 88; *Praem.* 31–55; *Det.* 29–31). For Philo, Isaac's monogamy (*Mut.* 88), endurance in the land (*Migr.* 27–29) and lack of name change indicate that Isaac was perfect in virtue. Philo's Isaac transcends mere humanity, being the foremost of a race of immortal and perfect beings (*Sacr.* 7). God's visit to Sarah (Gen 18 : 10–14) is taken to indicate that God is Isaac's true father (*Cher.* 45; cf. *Det.* 60; *Somn.* 173). Likewise, Sarah's proclamation that "The Lord has caused me laughter" (Gen 21 : 6) shows God as the causality behind Isaac's conception, inasmuch as "Isaac" means "laughter" (*Mut.* 137; cf. *Det.* 124). Philo also asserts Isaac's pre-existence (cf. *Prayer of Joseph*), for God could not promise Isaac to Abraham before his birth (Gen 17 : 17) if he had not already been excellently disposed beforehand (*Leg.* 3.85–87). In this quasi-apotheosis of Isaac we witness the apogee of Philo's allegory.

In *Jewish Antiquities* (ca. 93 CE) Josephus characteristically reconfigures Isaac into a hero accessible to Jews and Romans (Feldman). He omits Isaac's deceit and downplays critiques of exogamy. Conversely, Josephus lauds Isaac's noble lineage (*Ant.* 1.229–32), as well as his filial piety and obedience (*Ant.* 1.222). Isaac's wisdom comes to the fore in Josephus' retelling of the conflict with Abimelech (Gen 26), where Isaac secures peace via deliberation rather than conflict (*Ant.* 1.262). Isaac's devotion to God and "zeal for worship" (*Ant.* 1.222) is also portrayed, ranging from his proto-priestly construction of the altar of sacrifice (*Ant.* 1.227) to his unrestrained rush to the altar to give his life in faithfulness to God's command (*Ant.* 1.232).

As this brief overview reveals, though the least of the canonical patriarchs, Isaac was nonetheless a figure who could be reinterpreted to convey a host of perspectives relevant to Second Temple interpreters. While all tend to minimize his shortcomings, more fascinating are the attempts to employ Isaac in the cause of Jewish separatism (*Jubilees*), Jewish integration (Josephus), or Jewish spirituality (Philo).

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Jason J. Ripley

B. Rabbinic Judaism

According to rabbinic tradition, Isaac was born on the first day of Passover (*bRH* 10b) and at his birth the deaf, blind, and mute were healed and the light of the sun and the moon was intensified (*PesRK* 22.1; *PesRab* 42.4). The name Yitsḥaq signifies that law had gone forth (*yatsa ḥoq*) as a gift to the world (*BerR* 53 : 7). His face was given the exact appearance of Abraham in order to refute slanderers who doubted Abraham's paternity (*bBM* 87a). At the time Isaac was bound on the altar to be sacrificed he gazed up at the divine presence and as a result his eyesight grew dim (*BerR* 65 : 10; *DevR* 11 : 3; *PRE* 32).

The rabbis' interest in Isaac focuses mainly on the story of his binding in Gen 22. Following 1st-century sources they maintain that he was a knowing and willing victim (*SifDev* 32; *BerR* 56 : 4; *WayR* 2 : 10; *ShemR* 1 : 1; *DevR* 9 : 4; *TNeof*, *TFrag* to Gen 22 : 8, 10; *TPsJ* to Gen 22 : 10; *bSan* 89b; *TanVayera* 23; *PRE* 31; *MHGBer* 22 : 8), emphasizing this by statements such as, "he [Isaac] cast himself before his father as a lamb to be sacrificed" (*WayR* 2 : 10), and they further developed the idea of the beneficial effects of his binding on future generations. Because of the binding of Isaac, God saved the Israelites from Egypt (*MekhYPisḥa* 7) and from drowning in the Red Sea (*MekhYBeshallaḥ* 4), and whenever his descendants are in trouble they may ask God to "remember, answer and redeem them" (*TPsJ* Gen 22 : 14), and "rescue them from every distress" (*TFrag* Gen 22 : 14) for the sake of the binding of

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their father Isaac (*BerR* 56:10; *TNeof* Gen 22:14; *bRH* 16a).

Isaac's willingness to give up his life procures forgiveness and atonement for Israel (*WayR* 29:9; *ShemR* 44:5; *ShirR* 1:14; *MHGBer* 22:8). Numerous sources refer to the "ashes of Isaac" (*BerR* 94:5; *WayR* 36:5; *TanVayera* 23; *bTaan* 16a; *bBer* 62b; *bZev* 62a; *MHGBer* 22:19), while according to others it is the shedding of some of his blood that has saving and atoning effect (*MekhYPisḥa* 7; *MekhSh Sanya* 2; *Tan Vayera* 23). In *MHGBer* 22:8 Isaac says to Abraham: "Do not grieve. Do with me, as is the will of your father in heaven. May it be his will that a quarter of my blood [serve as] atonement for all Israel." Another late source even hints that he actually died and was revived (*PRE* 31).

The numerous similarities between the rabbinic Isaac and Jesus are evident, and while it seems clear that 1st-century Jewish ideas about Isaac were the model for the early Christian interpretation of Jesus, it is quite possible that some of the characteristics attributed to Isaac by later rabbinic sources are the result of a rabbinic re-appropriation of ideas usurped and developed by Jesus-oriented groups and a consequence of interaction and blurred boundaries between rabbinic Jews, and Jesus-oriented Jews and Gentiles in the early centuries CE.

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Karin Hedner Zetterholm

C. Medieval Judaism

One basis for the medieval Jewish understanding of Isaac is embedded in the midrashic principle taken up by Naḥmanides ([1194-1270]; comm. on Gen 12:6), that everything which happened to the ancestors (lit. fathers) is a "sign" for the descendants (lit. sons; Heb. *maʿaśeh avot siman la-banim*). This determination sustains two simultaneous meanings, a deterministic one (what happened to the ancestors – shall surely happen to the descendants), and a symbolic-educational one (it is appropriate for the descendants to learn from the deeds of the ancestors). This is how the story of Isaac's "binding" (see "Aqedah") was conceived, the story in which God commanded Abraham to "offer" Isaac as "a burnt offering"; in the end father and son returned home, but not "together." This story became a formative Jewish text, a precursor to the martyrly character of Judaism's two monotheistic daughter religions. On the background of the suffering of the Jews, medieval Jewish Bible exegesis turned Isaac into a symbol of "the Sanctification of God's Name." Thus Isaac, in contrast to what we find in the Bible, became a more dominant figure than Abraham. Throughout their exile, the Jews had been oppressed by foreign rulers, and had been forced to choose between life and death and between their religious faith and conversion. They mostly chose faith. The main ethos to which they clung being the story of Isaac's binding with its two severe conflicts (between faith and ethics and between autonomy and obedience). Thus, the Midrash ties the story of Isaac's binding to "the Sanctification of God's Name" already at the time of the Roman conquest of the Land of Israel. The Babylonian Talmud explains why "ash" should be placed on the heads of fasting persons (on public fasts imposed during times of national distress): "That it may remind us of the dust of Isaac" (*bTaan* 16a). Various midrashim relate, in opposition to the biblical story, that Isaac did not emerge physically unscathed from the binding, and two main variant tales are: (1) Isaac was slaughtered by Abraham but was resurrected in one way or another; (2) Isaac was only cut by Abraham and lost "a quarter of a *hin* of blood" (and maybe this reflects an ancient pagan myth, that was rejected by the new Israelite faith, which substituted human sacrifices for animal sacrifices). These descriptions were elaborated in detail in the Midrash, and intensified in the religious poetry of the Middle Ages and in Jewish exegesis on the Pentateuch. They were also immortalized in synagogue paintings and decorated manuscripts of the canonical texts (especially the Bible, the Talmud, and the Passover Haggadah), especially from the 11th century onwards, after the crusades, in which entire communities had preferred to slaughter themselves and die for the sake of "the Sanctification of God's Name," rather than converting (like the communities of Speyer, Mainz, and Worms in the Ashkenazi sphere; see Spiegel on the poetry of Ephraim of Bonn). The martyrical ethos was tied to the character of Isaac, who was now transformed from a passive boy who was bound by his father and survived, into a young adult who took an active part in the trial and the deed, and out of devout faith asked to be slaughtered by his father or one of his close associates, and even insisted that it be done with a "kosher" knife.

In contrast to the Ashkenazic ethos, the Sephardic tradition offers both mystical and rational approaches. According to Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1164) Isaac was close to thirteen years old, and bound against his will (comm. on Gen 22:4). Furthermore, he would have fled, if Abraham had told him that he was the sacrifice (ibid.).

Considering Isaac as a prophet, Ibn Ezra understands Isaac's blessing (Gen 27:29) as prophecy, because "the prophet's blessing is similar to prayer" (on Gen 27:40), which was answered, because in biblical times Edom indeed was under control of Judah until the times of Joram (re 1 Kgs 8:22). Another highlight in the narrative accounts of Isaac in

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the HB is his love for Rebekah, which Naḥmanides stresses in the context of Gen 24 : 67: the tent of Isaac's mother Sarah was not taken down after her death, but only Rebekah was honored by being brought into this tent; it was there that Isaac married her, and his grief for his mother was soothed just through his love for Rebekah, which is, according to Naḥmanides, the only reason that Scripture mentions such a routine matter like the love of a man for his wife (comm. on Gen 24 : 67). Solomon ben Isaac Levi (1532–1600), rabbi of the Portuguese exiles in Salonika, explains that this couple was "whole," and the Land of Israel "their inheritance forever" (Ps 37 : 18); in addition, he linked the fact that only Isaac was commanded by God not to leave the Land of Israel (Gen 26 : 3) – in contrast to the other two patriarchs – again with the Aqedah: it was the necessary requirement for "an unblemished offering," that the victim "must not go beyond the Temple enclosure" (re *GenR* 64 : 3), for otherwise the offering would have been disqualified (see Saperstein: 248).

The mystical interpretations with regard to Isaac include the aggadic tradition of his miraculous birth (Zohar 1 : 11a, re *bBM* 87a), and the designation for God as "fear (or terror) of Isaac" (*paḥad Yitsḥaq*; Gen 31 : 42, 53). According to the kabbalistic understanding of the patriarchs, the three of them represent the fourth to the sixth *sefirot* within the mystical shape of the Godhead, with Isaac taking the part of "strong judgment" (*Din*, the fifth *sefirah*), which is opposed to love (the *sefirah Ḥesed*, symbolized by Abraham). This characterization is grounded on the "terror" (*Paḥad* is used synonymously for the names *Din* and *Gevurah* [power] of the fifth *sefirah*) Isaac felt when bound by his father, as explained in *Midrash Śekhel tov* (Zohar 1 : 180a, Matt: 91).

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Amnon Shapira

D. Modern Judaism

Like the other two patriarchs, Abraham and Jacob (as well as the matriarchs, Sarah, Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel), Isaac has evoked strong reactions from Jews in the modern period. Isaac evokes a range of feelings that range from pity to admiration. His personality has been evaluated, he has been judged for what he did or failed to do, and he continues to figure as a symbol in Judaism's sacred history.

1. Isaac as Victim. As in the Middle Ages, so again in the post-Holocaust world, Isaac has been seen by many Jews worldwide, and likewise in Israeli culture, as the quintessential hapless and helpless object of the negative forces of history. For others, he is an honored and honorable martyr. In the majority view, Isaac represents those caught up in the Shoah, innocent and powerless victims, abandoned by an indifferent society, or ignored by an uncaring or an inactive God. For example, the International School of Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem has put out a "teacher's guide" on the topic of the sacrifice of Isaac, featuring poems by Haim Gouri, Yehuda Amichai, T. Carmi, Amir Gilboa, and Uri Tsevi Grinberg. The poems do not refer to the Holocaust directly (that connection is supplied by the guide), and they reflect a full range of responses, from Isaac saved to Isaac sacrificed on the altar (Metzger; see also Kartun-Blum). Likewise in a poem by the American Jewish writer Marge Piercy, "Fathers and Sons," Isaac, who represents the Jewish people, apparently is slain; he is not spared by the Angel of God (Piercy: 103).

2. Isaac Dismissed. Modern Bible commentators, following the lead of classical Jewish commentators, often regard Isaac as a required but uninspiring link between Abraham and Jacob. Fox terms Isaac "practically a noncharacter," someone who "has almost no personality of his own" (Fox: 111). Alter describes Isaac as "the pale … patriarch … preceded by the exemplary founder, [and] followed by the vivid struggler" (Alter: 131; cf. Sarna).

3. Isaac as an Essential Link in the Patriarchal Lineage. Isaac continues to claim his own worth in the daily prayers, for in the ʿ*Amidah* prayer, recited three times a day, he holds parity, as God is addressed as "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob." No one gainsays his necessary presence as the grandfather of the twelve tribes, i.e., the Jewish people.

4. Isaac Reevaluated. Isaac is also sometimes celebrated as a strong personality in his own right, especially as a man who needs to overcome the trauma of nearly having been killed by his own father. In place of the blind old man duped by his deceptive wife and cunning son, Isaac is seen as an equal co-conspirator with Rebekah in the famous theft of the blessing (Gen 27), for it is Jacob who is in the dark, not Isaac (Zucker 2004; Zucker 2012a). Alternatively Isaac may be seen as having fully intended for Jacob to be blessed and only differing with Rebekah on the nature of the blessing. "Isaac shows himself worthy of respect…. [H]e … deserves more admiration than many are willing to give him" (Rackman: 41).

5. Isaac and Ishmael (or Isaac vs. Ishmael: Ancestors of Great Peoples). Another persona of Isaac's is that of Abraham's son whose inheritance is challenged by his older brother, Ishmael. Isaac is seen as personifying Israel (the land and the people) just as Ishmael personifies Arabs or Muslims. Arabs

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in later Jewish literature, even into the early part of the modern period, are termed Ishmaelites (Firestone: 3–4). But that usage eventually disappeared in modern Hebrew, and some recent interpreters suggest that the perceived Isaac/Ishmael conflict reflects only a later *realpolitik* that was (mis-)read back in time (Zucker 2012b).

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David J. Zucker

IV. Christianity

Isaac has been understood in the history of Christian reception primarily in light of his role in Gen 22, where God commands Abraham to offer him as a burnt offering. There are two primary ways that Isaac's part in the story has been taken: (1) as a type of Christ; and (2) as an instrument God uses to test Abraham's faith and obedience. Along with the other patriarchs, the Catholic Church considers Isaac to be a saint (*Catechism of Catholic Church*: 61).

Early church fathers developed their understanding of the Aqedah (the story of the binding of Isaac) with an awareness of how rabbis interpreted it (Kessler: 188). While rabbinic sources focus on Isaac as a sacrificial victim, the early fathers emphasized that only Christ, Isaac's typological fulfillment, truly suffered (ibid.: 182). Irenaeus claims God rewarded Abraham's willingness to sacrifice with the sacrifice of Christ (ibid.: 67). Cyril of Alexandria sees in the implied willingness of Isaac to die a type of Christ's willingness to die (ibid.: 116). Origen sees in Isaac's carrying of the wood on which to place an offering (Gen 22 : 6) a type of Christ carrying his cross (ibid.: 112).

This tradition of interpreting Isaac as a type of Christ continues into the Middle Ages, as the following example shows. In an 8th-century interfaith conversation between a monk at the Bet Hale monastery in Iraq and a Muslim Arab functionary, the monk points to Isaac as a type of Christ: Isaac's suffering as a type of Christ's passion; the wood Isaac carries as a type of Christ carrying his cross; and the angel's command to Abraham not to harm Isaac as a type of the fact that the Godhead was not harmed by the crucifixion (Noort: 109–14).

With the Reformation, the Isaac story figures crucially in a new interpretive context, namely that of election. In his lectures on Rom 9, Luther argues that God's promise of redemption was realized through Isaac, the younger son of Sarah, rather than through Ismael the eldest. This reversal of patrilineage gives support to Luther's idea of justification – that God's election is grounded in the divine will and not human merit. Luther applies this interpretation with an anti-Jewish polemic, stating that unless Jews believe in Christ, they have no salvation, despite their relation to the patriarchs (Luther: 138). Calvin similarly interprets Isaac in the context of election, but does so in speculative fashion. Had Abraham killed Isaac, Calvin writes, he would have killed the one through whom God promised to bring redemption. Thus hope for humanity's salvation would have been terminated. Calvin also sees in Isaac's life an example of faith in eternal life that Christians must emulate (Calvin: 2.10.11–13).

Another way of reading the Aqedah is represented by Søren Kierkegaard's existentialist interpretation. In *Fear and Trembling* (*Frygt og Bæven*, 1843), Kierkegaard points out that modern Christianity has ignored the radical faith called for in the Aqedah, seeing the story only as a moral message encouraging generosity to God (Kierkegaard: 28). God's command to Abraham to kill Isaac transcends rational criteria for morality so that Abraham's consequent actions are inexplicable using the categories of ethics as a means of striving for the goal of the good. Kierkegaard calls this a "teleological suspension of the ethical" (ibid.: 66).

While in Christian theology the Aqedah has been regarded as a foreshadowing of Christ's sacrifice, one strand of modern critical scholarship takes the story as a paradigm of Levitical priestly sacrifice. This thesis has been challenged by Christian Eberhart, who distinguishes between "cultic" sacrifice found in Leviticus, the central component of which is the consecration of profane material to God (Eberhart: 54), and the commonly held notion of sacrifice found in the Aqedah, meaning the loss of something, in this case Isaac (ibid.: 49). While there is a hint of Levitical sacrifice in the image of the ram (Gen 22 : 13), Eberhart argues that the story is mainly about secular sacrifice, in which Isaac must be given up to God. Thus the story should not be considered a paradigm for interpreting cultic sacrifices in the HB (ibid.: 55).

The concept of gift is central in contemporary philosophy following Marcel Mauss' famous 1925 essay *The Gift,* and the Aqedah is prominent in this discussion. Both Derrida and Marion agree that the economy of exchange deconstructs the idea of gift. Derrida situates Isaac as instrument within the broader framework of an ethical economy (Derrida: 66–67). Marion believes it is possible to preserve the

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character of gift by reorienting it away from exchange towards "givenness." Marion argues that Isaac is a God-given gift to Abraham. When God commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham can preserve Isaac's status as gift by offering Isaac back to God, rather than by claiming Isaac's life for himself. God prevents Abraham from killing Isaac because Abraham has acknowledged Isaac as gift rather than possession (Marion: 86–89).

Rebekah and her arranged marriage to Isaac in Gen 24 is a topic for modern feminist interpretation. Analysis of Isaac's relationship to Rebekah focuses on Rebekah's portrayal in Gen 24 as a woman that fits the patriarchal ideals assumed to be God's intent for a wife, her active role as a replacement of Isaac's mother, as well as her role as "the adequate link in the promise of the Abrahamic line" (Schottroff/Wacker: 22).

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William A. Jordan

V. Islam

The biblical Isaac (Arabic *Isḥāq*) is mentioned by name on seventeen occasions in the Qurʾān, frequently in combination with Jacob and Ishmael. He is called a prophet who is in receipt of revelation (S 2 : 136; 3 : 84, "what We sent down on … Isaac"; also S 4 : 163, "We revealed to … Isaac") and guidance (S 6 : 84) in keeping with qurʾānic prophetology in general, and his birth is the outcome of the divine promise given to Abraham to have a son in his old age (S 11 : 71). Little is told of Isaac specifically beyond the fact of his relationship to Abraham; the audience of the Qurʾān is apparently assumed to know the overall story.

Isaac figures prominently in the Muslim discussion of the sacrificial son, who is not named in the Qurʾān even though the story is outlined (S 37 : 99–113). It became common for Muslims to argue for the son being Ishmael who was also identified as the progenitor of the Arabs; thus the lesson of the exemplary faith demonstrated by the willingness to be sacrificed was to be associated with Islam. This position then was a rejection of both Jewish and Christian claims regarding Isaac. Early Muslim exegetes knew that the biblical tradition stated the son was Isaac and occasionally supported that interpretation of the qurʾānic passage, though the emphasis on Ishmael matched the Muslim sense of reclaiming the true Abrahamic tradition against Judaism and Christianity, and that identity won out in the end. A tendency by early Persian converts to Islam to see Isaac as their forefather also likely fed into internal Muslim disputes but the general view of Ishmael as sacrificial victim prevailed.

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Andrew Rippin

VI. Literature

Images of Isaac in literature may occasionally focus on the unusual circumstances of his birth and of his betrothal to Rebekah, but Isaac's dominant literary theme is the Mount Moriah experience where Abraham intended to offer Isaac as a sacrifice in obedience to God's command. Narratives may employ Mount Moriah images as reflecting obedience and faith, or they may work variations from the event or recast the story from Isaac's point of view. The intentions of the father and the experience of the son in the story are often intertwined, especially where the incident is read and interpreted through Christian eyes.

Isaac's sacrifice, popular in Spanish folklore since medieval times, found direction expression in the 16th-century Judeo-Spanish ballad *El sacrificio de Isaac* (The Sacrifice of Isaac) and its various Sephardic receptions. A valuable survey of Isaac's binding as a theme in Jewish literature is Mishael M. Caspi's *Take Now Thy Son*, which includes an appendix of selected poetry in English or English translations. The theme appears in modern Hebrew literature, as in S. Y. Agnon's 1938 novel, *A Guest for the Night* (*Ore'aḥ natah lalun*) where it informs the idea of a suffering victim in an unjust world.

In Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1893) Mr. Clare, reflecting on his denial to his son Angel of the same financial support as he provided for his other sons, because of Angel's religious views, compares his mixed feelings to Abraham's part of the Mount Moriah experience. "Nevertheless, he loved his misnamed Angel, and in secret mourned over this treatment of him as Abraham might have mourned over the doomed Isaac while they went up the hill together" (Hardy: 388).

Joseph Fielding in *Joseph Andrews* (1742) puts the Mount Moriah story to a harsher tone when Parson

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Adams admonishes Joseph that love, important though it is, must be subservient to duty. "Had Abraham so loved his son Isaac as to refuse the sacrifice required, is there any of us who would not condemn him?" (Fielding: 240).

Several works employ Mount Moriah images in conjunction with the idea of capital punishment. In Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*, when Captain Vere communicates to Billy his death sentence, the narrative speculates that Vere, moved with compassion may "have caught Billy to his heart, even as Abraham may have caught young Isaac on the brink of resolutely offering him up in obedience to the exacting behest" (Melville: 115). But the compassion will not prevent the execution. On the other hand, John Greenleaf Whittier favors mercy over duty by concluding his poem against capital punishment, "The Human Sacrifice" (1843), with images drawn from Isaac's interrupted sacrifice:

> My brother man, Beware!
> With that deep voice, which from the skies
> Forbade the Patriarch's sacrifice,
> God's angel cries, Forebear! (Whittier: 357)

Alluding to the last-minute interruption of the sacrifice when a ram is presented as a substitute for Isaac, Samuel Butler in *The Way of All Flesh* (1903) has Ernest, whose aunt willed an inheritance to him rather than to his still-living parents, employ a reversed image of the Isaac sacrifice story to explain why he refuses to tell his parents about his aunt's bequest: "It would be too cruel, it would be like Isaac offering up Abraham and no thicket with a ram in it near at hand" (Butler: 501).

Henry Vaughan, quoting Gen 24:63, ponders the place of religion within the larger context of life and marriage in his poem "Isaac's Marriage" (1650).

Among biblical historical novels centered on Isaac are Jenny Diski's *After These Things* (2004). Isaac's experience of being nearly sacrificed made him acutely aware of his mortality – "He had been killed that day" (Diski: 27) – and cripples him for the rest of his life. "And once he had discovered so convincingly that death was just an instant away, he was unable to learn anything else" (7). His sense of vulnerability is exacerbated because he is not Abraham's first born, nor does God speak to him as he did to Abraham (28). This marginalization of Isaac within a biblical narrative where Abraham plays the major role is also reflected in Søren Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* (*Frygt og Bæven*, 1843) where the examination of the psychological, ethical, and moral questions of the Mount Moriah experience are almost completely from Abraham's point of view, leaving Isaac as a minor character.

D. H. Lawrence, in the short story "England, My England" (1915), employs the Mount Moriah experience as an illustrative symbol for the authority that a father can hold over his children, describing Godfrey Marshall as "a man who had kept alive the old red flame of fatherhood, fatherhood that had even the right to sacrifice the child to God, like Isaac" (Lawrence: 314–15).

In Ivan G. Goldman's speculative novel, *Isaac: a Modern Fable* (2012), Isaac has survived throughout the centuries in a manner reminiscent of the Wandering Jew, and in the modern world is a musician in present-day Los Angeles.

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John Kissinger

VII. Visual Arts

The depictions of Isaac in the context of the patriarchal narratives fall into three main groups: Isaac as the son of Abraham; Isaac's life; and Isaac as a father and patriarch. Within the context of Isaac as the son of Abraham, the depiction of the Aqedah is prevalent. The binding represents a preparation for the sacrifice that God commanded Abraham to offer. From a theological and art historical perspective, the dramatic events surrounding Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son represent the most significant narrative from the life of Isaac. As such, these are the images of Isaac most frequently depicted in art. Only rarely are other aspects of Isaac's life illustrated. However, one of the images that does occur in art is the mission of Abraham's servant, unnamed in the Bible, but commonly identified as Eliezer, whom Abraham sent to his relatives in order to find a wife for Isaac. The servant went to Aram-Naharaim, to the city of Nahor, and found Rebekah. The depiction of Isaac as father, blessing Esau and Jacob, is the second most frequently represented image of Isaac.

The binding of Isaac as part of Abraham's sacrifice is found in Jewish art from late antiquity. A depiction of the Aqedah dated to 245 was discovered in the synagogue of Dura Europos, a fortified city on the Euphrates close to the border of what is now Syria and Iraq. The image is located in an image field above the Torah niche, the arch of which crosses the image. Thus, three areas are distinguished: the front of the temple at the center, the menorah to the left, and the binding of Isaac to the right. The binding is depicted in an as yet non-canonical manner: at the bottom, the ram is bound to a tree; above the ram is depicted Abraham, who turns his back to the viewer and holds a knife in

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his right hand. To Abraham's left stands the altar, upon which sits an object that cannot be identified with certainty, though it could be the figure of Isaac on top of wood for the fire; above this is the right hand of God. To the right side of the image is a tent, at the entrance of which a small figure can be perceived – again, in backview. The immediate relation of this scene to the Torah niche is evident. In other synagogues – such as Beth Alpha or Sepphoris – the motif appears as part of an iconographic program of a floor mosaic in the center nave. In this case, the depiction of the binding is – unlike in Dura Europos – not located in the area of or before the Torah niche, but in the western part of the synagogue, directly at the entrance of the center nave. In these contexts the depiction of the binding of Isaac is closely connected with the hope of salvation in Judaism.

The sacrifice of Isaac occurs in early Christian art as well. It already appears in the catacombs of Rome (e.g., a few times on the Via Latina dating to the first half of the 4th cent.). Likewise, it represents a consistent part of early Christian imagery on sarcophagi (cf. sarcophagus of a married couple, ca. 320, Musée lapidaire d'art chrétien, Arles). Through all of those images – just as in Jewish art – a hope for salvation is expressed. However, in early Christian art, the image also was typologically associated with Christ's sacrifice and, thus, the liturgy. This association is made clear, e.g., in the depiction of the sacrifice carved on the 5th-century templon from the church of Saint-Maximin at Sainte-Baume, France. The same liturgical connection can be perceived when the image is located in the sanctuary itself, thus creating an immediate proximity with the altar (cf. mosaic, the Sacrifice of Isaac, sancturary of San Vitale, ca. 545, Ravenna; mosaic, Abraham presenting Isaac at the altar table, San Apollinare in Classe, 7th cent., Ravenna).

The binding – or sacrifice – is also frequently integrated in Byzantine iconographic programs. However, in these cases the background against which the binding needs to be understood differs: while in western art a mere typology is created between the binding of Isaac and the death of Jesus, Byzantine art emphasizes the non-execution of the sacrifice. Thus, the binding is associated with the prothesis, the church area, where the eucharistic gifts are prepared, but not consecrated (cf. fresco of the Sacrifice of Isaac in the prothesis, Hagia Pelagia, 1360, Ano Biannos, Crete).

Owing to the drama inherent in the motif, the binding/sacrifice of Isaac not only enjoyed great popularity in late antiquity and the Middle Ages, but also in the early modern and modern eras. Albrecht Altdorfer (*Sacrifice of Isaac*, woodcut, ca. 1520–25, Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin), Peter Paul Rubens (after Titian's *Sacrifice of Isaac*, pencil and chalk, ca. 1600–1608, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna) and Marc Chagall (oil on canvas, ca. 1965, Musée national message biblique Marc Chagall, Nice; 1985, St. Stephan, Mainz) assumed the topic and, as a rule, visualized that dramatic moment in which Abraham – holding down Isaac with his left hand – is just about to offer his son in sacrifice when an angel comes down and reaches for the knife in his right hand.

Fig. 2 Rembrandt, *Abraham Caressing Isaac* (ca. 1637)

The subject is treated differently by Gustave Doré, who depicts Isaac himself as shouldering the wood, on which he is going to be sacrificed (illustration from the Holy Bible, ca. 1866). Rembrandt captured the tragic nature of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Isaac, when he depicted Abraham involved in a conversation with his son (*Abraham and Isaac*, etching, ca. 1637, coll. J. de Bruijn) or while Isaac clings to his father (*Abraham Caressing Isaac*, ca. 1637, Liszt Collection, see fig. 2). With such a depiction, Rembrandt abandoned the unemotional, liturgical aspect in favor of an introspection that focuses on the human tragedy resulting from Abraham's strong faith.

Another aspect from the life of Isaac that has frequently been depicted in art is the mission of Abraham's servant to find Isaac a wife, in the context of which Isaac himself does not appear. The mission was visualized already in early Christian art (cf. the Vienna Genesis, 6th cent., Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. theol. gr., fols. 6v–7v). The servant, sent out by Abraham to find a wife for his son, meets Rebekah at a well. This latter

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image has frequently been adopted, not least in modern art (cf. Bartolomé Esteban Perez Murillo, second decade of the 17th cent., Prado, Madrid). The meeting of Rebekah and Isaac and their wedding, on the other hand, have attracted but little attention (cf. Claude Lorrain, *Landscape with the Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca*, 1648, National Gallery, London).

Other, although rather rare depictions of episodes of Isaac's life are, for instance, his birth, as is found in the church of Sancta Maria in Lyskirchen, in Cologne (mid-13th cent.). The fresco there is situated in the eastern part of the southern field of the eastern groin vault. On the opposite field, there is a depiction of the birth of Jesus, obviously echoing the typology of the Aqedah, which expresses the relationship between Jesus and Isaac. In addition, the inscription accompanying Sarah is rather interesting; it states that she was laughing. This alludes to her laughter at the announcement of Isaac's birth by the three men at Mamre, and to Isaac's name, derived from the Hebrew root for "to laugh" *ṣ–ḥ–q*.

Another rarely attested scene in visual art is that of Abimelech eavesdropping on the couple Isaac and Rebekah, e.g., depicted in the Vienna Genesis (6th cent., Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. theol. gr. 31, fol. 6v). Here, Abimelech peers out of a window down on the couple. Raphael provides a similar arrangement of these figures in his fresco of the subject in the Palazzo Pontifici, Vatican (1518/19).

By contrast, the blessing that Isaac gave to Jacob instead of Esau has been a popular subject since the early centuries of Christian art (cf. mosaic, Santa Maria Maggiore, 432–40, Rome). One reason for its popularity is the theological importance that the stolen blessing bears. Another reason lies in the parallel between this blessing and the blessing that Jacob himself gives to his grandsons (cf. wall painting, first half of the 4th cent., catacomb of the Via Latina, Rome; Vienna Genesis, fol. 23r). To distinguish the blessings, an unambiguous pattern was developed. In images where Jacob is blessed, only his parents appear with him, while Esau is missing. In images illustrating the blessing of Jacob's grandsons, Jacob is portrayed as the one blessing his grandsons, the sons of Joseph. In spite of Joseph's intervention, Jacob's right hand rests on the head of the second-born, Ephraim, who is given the greater blessing and, thus, receives preference over his older brother, Manasseh.

While the motif of blessing hardly occurs in early Christian art, it becomes more frequent in medieval biblical images (cf. Cathedral of Monreale, 1180–90) and rather popular in modern modern art (cf. José de Ribera, 1637, Prado, Madrid; *see* → plate 2).

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Michael Altripp

VIII. Music

In music, the character of Isaac is rarely, if ever, depicted as a character in his own right. More often than not he is portrayed as the son of Abraham who was offered as a sacrifice in the biblical story known also as the Aqedah (see "Aqedah VIII. Music"). In some of these works, librettists/composers fill a gap in the biblical narrative by scoring vocal parts for Isaac and his mother Sarah who verbalize their thoughts and feelings in response to various happenings. As is the case of works based on the prophecy of Isaac's birth and weaning party (Gen 21 : 1–8), the story of Isaac's betrothal and marriage to Rebekah (Gen 24) is treated in a small portion of 19th-century works.

The story of Abraham's long-awaited heir is told in Bernhard Molique's oratorio *Abraham* (Op. 65, 1861), in a setting of texts inspired by the life of Abraham from Gen 12–22. The angel's recitative (no. 10) brings together texts from Gen 15 : 1, 2, 5 and 17 : 9 for the angel's birth announcement to Abraham and Sarah. Perhaps to avoid casting Abraham in a negative light, Molique omitted references to Abraham's laughter at this news (Gen 17 : 17). In a more recent work, Arvo Pärt highlighted Sarah's pain over her protracted barrenness (Gen 16 : 1–2) in *Sarah was Ninety Years Old* (1976/1990). The soprano's tender vocalization at the end, accompanied by organ and bells, suggests Sarah's joy at Isaac's conception and birth. Another work, *Clemency* (2011) by James MacMillan is a one-act chamber opera for five voices and string orchestra, to a libretto

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by Michael Symmons, based on the story of the visitation of the three angels to Abraham and Sarah. A contemporary reworking of Gen 18, it includes Sarah's reflections on the news of her impending pregnancy, and at the end, her reflection on her child's future amid the destruction of Sodom and Gormorrah, here called the Twin Towns.

Returning to Bernhard Molique's oratorio, the next reference to Isaac occurs in Sarah and Abraham's duet (no. 29), in the scene of Hagar and Ishmael's expulsion from the Abrahamic household. Inspired by Gen 21:10; 15:5; Jer 31:20; and Job 16:3; 19:7, Sarah's speech to Abraham casts the pair in a negative light, and highlights the fraught relationship between the two women and their sons. The libretto includes a reference to Ishmael's mockery of Isaac (Gen 21:10), including an extra-biblical reference to Sarah's pain brought about by Hagar's contempt for her mistress. This speech also includes an extra-biblical detail telling of Ishmael's mockery of Sarah. The story was also set to music by Alessandro Scarlatti in the oratorio/opera *Agar et Ishmaele Esiliati* (Gen 21:9).

The number of works composed on the Aqedah far outweighs any others composed on any other aspect of Isaac's life (Gen 22:1–19). It features prominently in the sung and spoken liturgies of the Jewish and Christian traditions. In Jewish tradition, the sound of the shofar, the hallmark of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, is a reminder of the Aqedah. In Christian tradition, Isaac is presented primarily as a type of Christ, and as a passive victim. A prime example of the latter is the renowned Metastasian libretto, *Isacco figura del Redentore* (1776), glossed with references to the church fathers, it was set to music by many notable 18th-century composers. This work also includes a prominent role for Isaac's mother Sarah, whose voice and presence are notably absent from the biblical story. Other works such as Giacomo Carissimi's oratorio latino, *Historia di Abraham et Isaac* (date unknown; before 1674) and Benjamin Britten's *Canticle II Abraham and Isaac*, Op. 51 (1952), based on the 15th-century Chester Mystery play of the same name, emphasize the dialogue between Abraham and Isaac (Gen 22:7–8) including the terror, obedience, and joy of the father and son before, during, and after God's test of the patriarch and patriarch elect. American Jewish composer, Judith Lang Zaimont, also composed a work entitled *Parable: A Tale of Abram and Isaac* (1986) based on Wilfred Owen's poetic text, *Parable of the Old Man and the Young* (1918) and the Jewish prayer, the *Mourner's Qaddish*.

Two well-known works that treat Isaac's betrothal to Rebekah include *Rébecca: scène biblique* for soloists, chorus and, orchestra (FWV54, 1881/1911, Paris) by César Franck to a libretto by Paul Collin (1843–1915) based on the story of the mission of Abraham's servant (usually identified as Eliezer) to Aram Naharaim and his meeting with Rebekah (Gen 24:1–58). As Isaac was not present for this important event, the work includes no sung part for Isaac. A second work, *Rebekah: A Sacred Idyll* (1899) in two scenes with music by Joseph Barnby to a libretto by Arthur Mattison includes a part for Isaac, scored for a tenor to suggest a young man. Scene one inspired by Gen 24:1–58 describes the scene of the betrothal in Isaac's absence and scene two documents Isaac's first meeting with Rebekah, whose vocal part is scored for a treble to suggest a young maiden (Gen 24: 62, 66, 67b). Set in a field, scene two opens with an instrumental (no. 8) marked Adagio/Placidamente. This opening number sets the mood for Isaac's quiet meditation in a field (Gen 24:63) in the next number. Here Isaac sings a song of praise in the recitative, "With overflowing heart, O Lord" (no.9), and a prayer of thanksgiving to God in the air, "The Soft Southern Breeze" (no.10). It is followed by "The Bride's March" (no. 11) to illustrate the arrival of Rebekah and her entourage, Eliezer's recitative which is scored for a bass, Isaac and Rebekah's tender love duet, and a concluding chorus that bestows a blessing on the married couple. The story of Rebekah and Jacob's deception of Isaac is rarely, if ever, set in music.

Other works based on Isaac's children (see "Jacob [Patriarch] VIII. Music") and grandchildren (see "Joseph [Son of Jacob] VIII. Music") rarely, if ever, mention or indeed score a part for Isaac. A work by Arvo Pärt for a cappella chorus, *Which was the son of …* (2000), based on the genealogy of Jesus from Luke 3: 23–38 relates the theme of the promise to Abraham to the coming of Christ (Gal 3:16; 4:28). The richer and fuller texture of the vocal lines (SATB divisi) at "Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham …" suggests the growth of the nation and the fulfillment of that promise to Abraham in Christ (Gal 3:16; Rom 4:16–25).

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Siobhán Dowling Long

IX. Film

Isaac is present in the movies not as a leading protagonist, but as Abraham's son and Jacob's (and Esau's) father.

1. Biblical Films. In the early cinema, Henri Andréani in *Le sacrifice d'Abraham* (1911, FR) focused on the sacrifice of Isaac. In the short Israeli film *Isaac and Rebecca* (dir. Ben Oyserman, 1952), old Abraham sends his servant Eliezer to find wife for his son. In this naively acted movie, Isaac actually appears only in the beginning and in the final scene, when he meets Rebekah; together they receive Abraham's

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blessing. *The Bible: In the Beginning* (dir. John Huston, 1966, US/IT) covers Gen 1–22; in the closing part it shows the birth of Isaac, announced by the mysterious visitors, the conflict between Sarah and Hagar, and Isaac's near sacrifice on God's orders. In the final scene, the boy aware of the sacrifice obeys his father who lights the fire and covers his son's eyes just before God's voice stops him from killing the frightened boy. In The Bible Collection's *Abraham* (dir. Joseph Sargent, 1993, US/IT/DE), the birth of Isaac leads to conflict between Sarah and Hagar. The preparation to sacrifice Isaac, as demanded by God, is similar to the scene in Huston's movie; but after the tormented father and the boy embrace, the conclusion informs audiences of a reconciliation between Isaac and Ishmael at Abraham's tomb, implying a political connotation. In the opening sequence of the next installment of The Bible Collection, *Jacob* (dir. Peter Hall, 1994, CZ/FR/UK/IT/DE/US/NL), old Isaac is tricked by Rebekah and Jacob and blesses him instead of Esau. Following his wife's suggestion, Isaac advises Jacob to flee to her brother Laban. Isaac appears also in: *Rachel's Man* (dir. Moshe Mizrahi, 1976, IL), *The Story of Jacob and Joseph* (dir. Michael Cacoyannis, 1974, US), *Greatest Heroes of the Bible: Abraham's Sacrifice* (dir. Jack Hively, 1978, US), and *In the Beginning* (dir. Kevin Connor, 2000, US), where in the scene of the sacrifice he is played by an adult actor.

Isaac has also been featured in biblical films staged as irreverent comedies: in *Year One* (dir. Harold Ramis, 2009, US) two hunter-gatherers banished from their tribe encounter biblical characters and stop Abraham's sacrifice; in *The Story of Abraham and Isaac According to Richard Dawkins* (dir. Collin J. Fleming/Adrian Parks, 2009, CA) God forgets to send the angel down in time to save Isaac; in the parody *Ha-Yehudim baʾim* (dir. Kobi Havia, 2014–15, IL, "The Jews Are Coming") Abraham is overly eager to perform the sacrifice and resents God's last minute interference.

2. Figurative Interpretations. The sacrifice of Isaac is a common trope in Israeli cinema, for example, in *Givʿah 24 enah ʿonah* (dir. Thorold Dickinson, 1954; *Hill 24 Doesn't Answer*), *Hu halakh baśadot* (dir. Yosef Milo, 1967, *He Walked through the Fields*), *ʿOnat ha-duvdevanim* (dir. Haim Buzaglo, 1991, *Time of the Cherries*), and *Beaufort* (dir. Yosef Cedar, 2006). In recent years this trope has been used to imply criticism of the father for his willingness to sacrifice the son (Zanger): e.g., *Bet-lehem* (dir. Yuval Adler, 2013, IL; *Bethlehem*), *Hatufim* (dir. Gideon Raff, 2009–12, IL; *Prisoners of War*), and *Ḥufshat qayits* (dir. David Volach, 2007, IL; *My Father My Lord*).

Isaac has also been recalled in the biblical flashbacks in *Le berceau de Dieu* (dir. Fred Leroy-Granville, 1926, FR, *The Cradle of God*) and from the perspective of rural black Americans in *The Green Pastures* (dir. Marc Connelly/William Keighley, 1936, US). An Isaac-figure can be found in *Decalogue Eight* (dir. Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1988, PL): a little Jewish girl Elżbieta, whom Zofia refused to shelter during World War II, was thus condemned to almost certain death (but ultimately saved).

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Marek Lis

See also →Abraham; →Aqedah; →Jacob (Patriarch); →Moriah

Isaac, Binding of

→Aqedah

Isaac, Testament of

The *Testament of Isaac* is often included together with the *Testament of Abraham* and the *Testament of Jacob*. Its author knew and was dependent on the *Testament of Abraham* for his theology and values. The text was preserved in Christian churches and is extant in Coptic (both in Sahidic and Bohairic), Ethiopic, and Arabic, although a Greek original seems probable. Most scholars agree that although in its present form the *Testament* is Christian – see the references to the Virgin Mary and "Jesus the Messiah" in 3.18–19 – it is most likely a product of Egyptian Judaism. No clear evidence of a Jewish original has survived however, and the question must remain open. A date for the work is difficult to determine, but since it must postdate the *Testament of Abraham* (1st–2nd cent. CE), it seems safe to place it in the 3rd or 4th centuries CE.

Unlike the *Testament of Abraham*, which doe not take the form of a testament, the *Testament of Isaac* is framed as the patriarch's testament and instruction to Jacob "and all those who were gathered together" (1.4 in the translation of Stinespring). When it comes time for Isaac to die, God sends Michael to the patriarch, as he had to Abraham. The angel assures Isaac that all will be well, that Jacob will become "the father of many nations" (2.22) and that Abraham is waiting for him. After the angel departs, Isaac relates these matters to Jacob, who is distressed and desires to go with Isaac. The patriarch's reply explains the decree that God has given for all human beings (that they will die). He then relates to Jacob a short genealogy that begins with Adam and ends with Jesus the Messiah. There follows a description of Isaac's extreme asceticism, es-

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