

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

CHARACTERS

Abraham

Isaac

Angel/Servant (doubled)

Enter ABRAHAM, alone.

ABRAHAM

Great God, that all this world has wrought

And wisely wote both good and ille,

knows

I thank him thrally in my thought

fully

Of all his love he lends me tille.

gives to me

That thus from barrenhead has me brought,

barrenness

A hundreth winter to fulfille,

Thou grant me might so that I mowght

might

Ordain my works after thy wille,

For in this earthly life

Are none to God more bound

Then is I and my wife,

For friendship we have found.

Unto me told God on a tide

one time

Where I was telde under a tree,

camped

He said my seed should be multiplied

Like to the gravel of the sea,

And als the stars were strewèd wide,

as; strewn

So said he that my seed should be.

taught

In world wherso we wonne

live

He sends us riches rive.

abundant

Als far as shines the sun,
He is stinter of strive.

*as
healer; strife*

Abraham first named was I,
And sithen he set a syllypp ma,
And my wife hight Sarai
And sithen was she named Sara.

*after; syllable more
is called
after*

But Sara was uncertain then
That ever our seed should sagates yield
Because herself she was barren,
And we were both gone in great eeld.
But she wrought as a wise woman.
To have a barne us for to beelde,
Her servant privily she won
Unto my bed my will to wield.
Soon after then befell
When God our deed would dight,
She brought forth Ismael,
A son seemly to sight.

*in this way

old age
acted like
child; protect
secretly

wished to determine

beautiful to look at*

Than afterward when we waxed old,
My wife she fell in fear for same,
Our God needs tythynges till us told
Where we were in our house at home,
Till have a son we should be bold,
And Isaak should be his name,
And his seed should spring manifold.
If I were blithe, who would me blame,
And for I trowed this tythyng
That God told to me then,

*grew
became afraid that
necessarily told us tidings

trusted these tidings*

The ground and the beginning
Of trowthe that time began.

truth at that time

Now owe I greatly God to yield
That so would tell me his intent,
And nought gaynestanding our great eelde,
A seemly son he has us sent.
Now is he wight hymself to wield,
And from me is all wightness went;
Therefore shall he be my beelde.
I love him that this loan has lent,
For he may stint our strive
And fend us from all ill.
I love him as my life
With all mine heart and will.

sacrifice

notwithstanding; age

beautiful

a grown man

strength gone

protector

stop our strife

Enter ANGEL.

ANGEL

Abraham, Abraham!

ABRAHAM

Lo, I am here.

ANGEL

Now bodeword unto thee I bring:
God will assay thy will and cheer,
If thou will bow till his bidding.
Isaak, thy son, that is thee dear,
Whom thou loves over all thing,
To the land of Vision wend in feere,

message

wishes to test

bow to

(With) Isaak; (to) thee

together

And there of him thou make offering.
 I shall thee show full soon,
 The stead of sacrifice.
 God will this deed be done,
 And therefore thee advise.

*place
 wishes
 directs you*

Exit ANGEL.

ABRAHAM

Lord God, that lends aye last and light,
 This is a fearful fare to feel;
 Till have a son seemly to sight,
 Isaac, that I love full well.
 He is of eeldest, to reckon right,
 Thirty year and more sumdele,
 And unto death him bus be dight:
 God has said me so for my seele,
 And bids me wend on all wise
 To the land of Vision
 There to make sacrifice
 Of Isaac that is my son.

*gives everlasting
 unexpected thing to find out
 to have a beautiful son
 well
 age; count correctly
 somewhat
 he must be put to death
 well-being
 go*

And that is within three days' journey,
 The nearest gate that I can go,
 And certes, I shall not say him nay
 If God command me myself to slay.
 But to my son I will nought say
 But take him and my servants two,
 And with our ass wend forth our way.
 As God has said, it shall be so.

*hither
 fastest way; can
 certainly
 slay*

(Calling) Isaac, son, *(ISAAC enters)* I understand

To wilderness now wend will we
 Therefore to make our offerand,
 For so has God commanded me.

offering

ISAAC

Father, I am ever at your will,
 As worthy is withouten trayne,
 God's commandment to fulfill
 Owe all folk forto be fain.

without deceit

all people ought to be eager

ABRAHAM

Son, thou says me full good skill,
 But all the sooth is nought to sayn.
 Go we sen we shall theretil,
 I pray God send us well again.

good sense

all the truth is not to be said

let's go there since we must

return us

ISAAC

Child! (*Enter SERVANT.*) Lead forth our ass
 With wood that we shall burn;
 Even as God ordained has
 To work we will begin.

servant

as God has told us

SERVANT

At your bidding I will be bound
 What way in world that ye will wend.

wherever in the world you wish to go

They set off.

ABRAHAM

Noye you nought in no degree
 So for to deem here of our deed,

do not fuss at all

to understand what we do

For als God commanded so work will we
Until his tales us bus take heed.

*as
we must heed his words*

SERVANT

All those that will his servants be,
Full specially he will them speed.

*wish to
he will help them most*

ISAAC

Child, with all the might in me
I love that Lorde of ilk a lede,
And worship him certain;
My will is ever unto.

of every people

thereto

SERVANT

God give you might and main
Right here so for to do.

*strength
to do this*

ABRAHAM

Son, if our Lord God Almighty
Of myself would have his offerand,
I would be glad for him to die,
For all our heal hangs in his hand.

*offering
to die for him
health*

ISAAC

Father, forsooth, right so would I,
Lever than long to live in land.

*in truth
rather than live long*

ABRAHAM

Ah, son, thou says full well, forthy
God give thee grace grathely to stand.

plainly

They have reached the mountain and stop.

Child, bide ye here still.

servant; wait

No further shall ye go,

For yonder I see the hill

That we shall wend unto.

ISAAC

Keep well our ass and all our gear

look after

To time we come again you till.

till when we come back

ABRAHAM

My son, this wood behoves thee bear

makes sense for you to carry

Till thou come high upon yon hill.

yonder

He passes ISAAC the bundle of wood and ISAAC places it on his back.

ISAAC

Father, that may do no dare

harm

God's commandment to fullfil,

For from all wathes he will us werre

dangers; defend

Whereso we wend to work his will.

wherever we go

ABRAHAM

Ah, son, that was well said.

Lay down that wood even here

Till our altar be grathed.

set up

And, my son, make good cheer.

ISAAC

Father, I see here wood and fire,

But whereof shall our offerand be?

offering

ABRAHAM

Certes, son, good God our suffraynd sire

certainly; suffering

Shall ordain it in good degree,

For son, and we do his desire,

if we do what he wants

Full good reward therefore get we.

In heaven there mon we have our hire,

we must have our reward

For unto us so hight has he.

he has promised it to us

Therefore, son, let us pray

To God, both thou and I,

That we may make this day

Our offerand here duly.

offering

They kneel together and pray.

Great God that all this world has wrought

And grathely governs good and ill,

honestly

Thou grant me might so that I mowght

might

Thy commandments to fullfil.

And if my flesh grouch or grieve ought

rebel; at all

Or certes my soul assent theretill,

even though; certainly; thereto

To burn all that I hither brought

I shall nought spare if I should spill.

I will spare nothing if I must lay waste

ISAAC

Lord God, of great pousty,

power

To whom all people prays,

Grant both my father and me

To work thy will always.

But, father, now would I frayne full fain
Whereof our offerand should be grathed?

*gladly hear
offering; made*

ABRAHAM

Certes, son, I may no longer layn,
Thyself should bide that bitter brayd.

*certainly; lie
endure; affliction*

ISAAC

Why, father, will God that I be slain?

does God wish

ABRAHAM

Yea soothly, son, so has he said.

yes, truly

ISAAC

And I shall nought grouch there again;
To work his will I am well-paid.
Sen it is his desire
I shall be bayne to be
Brittened and brenned in fire,
And therefore mourn not for me.

I will not complain again

since

willing

torched and burned

ABRAHAM

Nay, son, this gates most needs be gone,
My Lord God will I not gainsay,
Nor never make mourns nor moan
To make offerand of thee this day.
offering

this way must be followed

ISAAC

Father, sen God our Lorde alone
Vouchsafe to send when ye gon pray

since

did

A son to you when ye had none,
 And now will that he wend his way,
 Therefore faynde me to fell *go on and kill me*
 Till offerand in this place, *for an offering*
 But first I shall you tell
 My counsel in this case. *advice*

I know myself be course of kind, *course of nature*
 My flesh for dead will be dredande; *my body will be afraid to die*
 I am feared that ye shall find
 My force your forward to withstand. *my strength will resist your promise*
 Therefore is best that ye me bind
 In bonds fast, both foot and hand. *secure*
 Now whilst I am in might and mind,
 So shall ye safely make offerand,
 For father, when I am bound
 My might may nought avail. *my strength will not help me*
 Here shall no fault be found
 To make your forward fail. *oath/promise (to God)*

For ye are old and all unwield, *weak*
 And I am wight and wild of thought. *strong/manly; impetuous*

ABRAHAM

To bind him that should be my beelde, *protection*
 Outtane God's will, that would I not. (*Binds him hand and foot*) *except for God's will*
 But lo, here shall no force be feelde,
 So shall God have what he has sought.
 Farewell, my son, I shall thee yield,
 Till him that all this world has wrought.

Now kiss me heartily, I thee pray,
 Isaak, I take my leave for ay,
 Me bus thee miss.
 My blessing have thou entirely,
 And I beseech God Almighty
 He give thee his.

*forever
 I will miss you*

Thus aren we samen assent
 After thy words wise.
 Lord God, to this take tent:
 Receive thy sacrifice.

*together in assent
 pay attention*

(aside) This is to me a peerless pyne,
 To see mine own dear child thus bound.
 Me had well lever my life to tyne
 Than see this sight, thus of my son.
 It is God's will, it shall be mine,
 Against his saande shall I never shone;
 To God's commandment I shall encline
 That in me fault none be found.

*unequalled pain
 rather; lose
 I will never hesitate to follow his command*

(to ISAAC) Therefore my son so dear,
 If thou will anything say,
 Thy death it draws near.
 Farewell, for once and ay.

for once and all

ISAAC

Now, my dear father, I would you pray,
 Hear me three words, grant me my boon,
 Sen I from this shall pass for ay.
 I see mine hour is come full soon.

since I will pass on forever

In word, in work, or any way
 That I have trespassed or ought misdome,
 Forgive me, father, or I die this day,
 For his love that made both sun and moon.
 Here sen we two shall twynne,
 First God I ask mercy
 And you in more and mynne
 This day or ever I die.

done wrong

since; parted

more and less

before I die forever

ABRAHAM

Now my great God Adonai,
 That all this world has worthily wrought,
 Forgive the son, for his mercy,
 In word, in work, in deed, and thought.
 Now, son, as we are lered
 Our time may not miscarry.

learned (taught)

ISAAC

Now farewell, all middle-erde,
 My flesh waxes faint for ferde.
 Now, father, take your sword,
 Methink full longe ye tarry.

middle-earth

grows; fear

ABRAHAM

Nay, nay, son, nay, I thee behete
 That do I not, withouten were.
 Thy words makes me my wanges to wet
 And changes, child, full often my cheer.
 Therefore lie down, hand and feet;
 Now may thou wit thine hour is near.

I promise you

without a doubt

cheeks (ie. he is crying)

you know

ISAAC

Ah, dear father, life is full sweet,
 The dread of dead does all my dear.
 As I am here your son,
 To God I take me till.
 Now am I laid here bound,
 Do with me what ye will.

death; frightens me

For father, I ask no more respite
 But hear a word what I would mean:
 I beseech you or that ye smite
 Lay down this kerchief on mine eyen.
 Than may your offerand be parfit
 If ye will work thus as I wene.
 And here to God my soul I wite,
 And all my body to burn bidene.
 Now, father, be not missing
 But smite fast as ye may.

*advise
 before you strike
 my eyes
 offering; perfect
 advise
 commend
 entirely
 don't fail*

ABRAHAM

Farewell, in God's dear blessing
 And mine for ever and ay.

forever and ever

That peerless prince I pray
 Myn offerand heretill have it,
 My sacrifice this day:
 I pray the Lord receive it.

take my offering

ABRAHAM *raises the knife. Enter ANGEL.*

ANGEL

Abraham, Abraham!

ABRAHAM

Lo, here iwys!

here indeed

ANGEL

Abraham, abide, and hold thee still.

halt

Slay not thy son, do him no miss.

harm

Take here a sheep thy offerand till,

for your offering

Is sent thee from the king of bliss

That faithfull ay to thee is fone.

always; found

He bids thee make offerrand of this

offering

Here at this time, and save thy son.

ABRAHAM

I love that Lord with heart entire

That of his love this loan me lent,

To save my son, my darling dear,

And sent this sheep to this intent

That we shall offer it to thee here;

So shall it be as thou has meant.

(Taking off the blindfold) My son, be glad and make good cheer,

God has till us good comfort sent.

He will not thou be dead,

But till his laws take keep.

follow his laws

And see, son, in thy stead,

God has sent us a sheep.

ISAAC

To make our offerand at his wille

All for our sake he has it sent.

To love that Lord I hold great skill
 That till his many thus has meant.
 This deed I would have ta'en me till
 Full gladly, Lord, to thine intent.

praise
company in heaven; intended

ABRAHAM

(Undoing ISAAC's bonds) Ah, son, thy blood would he not spill,
 Forthy this sheep thus has he sent,
 And, son, I am full fain
 Of our speed in this place,
 But go we home again
 And love God of his grace.

therefore

ANGEL

Abraham, Abraham!

ABRAHAM

Lo, here indeed.
 Hark, son, some salving of our sore.

remedy

ANGEL

God says thou shall have mikill mead,
 For this good will that thou in ware;
 Sen thou for him would do this deed
 To spill thy son and not to spare
 He means to multiply your seed
 On sides seere, as he said ere.
 And yet he hight you this
 That of your seed shall rise
 Through help of him and his
 Overhand of all enemies.

great reward
promised
since
kill

in many ways; before
promises
triumph
over

Look ye him love, this is his list,
 And lelly live after his lay,
 For in your seed all mon be blessed
 That there bese born by night or day.
 If ye will in him trow or trist,
 He will be with you ever and ay.

*wish
 loyally; his law
 may be
 that is born
 believe; trust
 forever and always*

ABRAHAM

Full well were us and we it wist
 How we should work his will alway.

if we could learn

ISAAC

Father, that shall we frayn
 At wiser men than we,
 And fulfill it full fain
 Indeed after our degree.

*hear
 from wiser men than us
 gladly*

ABRAHAM

Now, son, sen we thus well has speed,
 That God has granted me thy life,
 It is my will that thou be wed
 And wield a woman to thy wife;
 So shall thy seed spring and be spread
 In the laws of God by reason rife.
 I wot in what steed she is stede
 That thou shall wed, withouten strife.
 Rebecca, that damsel,
 Her fairer is none fone,
 The daughter of Bethuel,
 That was my brother's son.

since; have succeeded

have

abundantly

*I know in what place she lives
 without trouble*

found

ISAAC

Father, as thou likes my life to spend,
I shall assent unto the same.

as you wish

ABRAHAM

One of my servants soon shall I send
Unto that bird to bring her home.

The gainest gates now will we wend.

we will go the quickest ways

My barnes, ye are not to blame

young men

If ye think long that we here lende.

linger

Gather same our gear, in God's name,

together

And go we home again

Even unto Barshebe.

God that is most of main

mightiest

Us wiss and with you be.

direct us