

THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC LIBRETTO

Translations of Texts by Jonathan Leshnoff

Abraham: Baritone

Isaac: Tenor

Word of G-d: Countertenor

PART I

Aria 1: "May G-d bless you and watch you"

Source: based on Jewish Liturgy: Parent's Prayer before Yom Kippur

Baritone Solo (Abraham)

May it be the will of your Father, who dwells in heaven,
that He puts in your heart the love and fear of Him.
Your mouth should speak wisdom and your heart
should rest with truth,
may your feet run to do His will
May the L-rd bless you. May He watch you.
May He favor you. May He lift up His face to you.
and give you peace.
May G-d give you sons and daughters,
O, G-d, give them food! with tranquility!
May your womb be blessed!
May the L-rd bless you. May He watch you.
May He favor you. May He lift up His face to you.
and give you peace.

Aria 2: "And Sarah will have a son"

Source: based on Genesis 18:2, 9-13 and Psalms 30:11

Choir, countertenor (Word of G-d)

And he lifted his eyes and saw three men were
standing beside him and said:
"I will return and Sarah will have a son, she will have
a son!"
Now Abraham and Sarah were advanced in days; the
manner of women had ceased with Sarah.
Sarah, she laughed, "Ha, ha!"
I am old and I'll have a child? Hear me, be kind to me,
help me (based on Psalms 30:11).
I am old and I'll have a child? Hear me! Help me!"
And G-d said:
"Is anything too difficult for G-d?
... I will return to you,
And Sarah will have a son." (Genesis 18)

Aria 3: "And G-d visited Sarah"

Source: Genesis 20: 1-3

choir

And G-d visited Sarah as He had said, and G-d fulfilled
His promise.
Sarah became pregnant, and gave birth to a son in his
old age,
And Abraham called the name of his son that Sarah
bore to him ... Isaac.

PART II

Aria 4: "Take your son, your only son"

Source: Genesis 22: 1-2

Baritone (Abraham), countertenor (Word of G-d)

[G-d]: "Abraham."
[Abraham:] "Here I am."
[G-d]: "Take now your son, your only one, that you love,
Isaac!
And bring him for a burnt offering on one of the
mountains which I will show you."

Aria 5: "Abraham saw the place off afar"

Source: Genesis 22: 4, 7

Tenor (Isaac), Baritone (Abraham), Choir

On the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw
the place off afar.
Abraham took the wood for the sacrifice,
And put it on Isaac.
[Isaac:] "Father!"
[Abraham:] "Here am I, my son."
[Isaac:] "Here's the fire and the wood, where is the
lamb?"
[Abraham:] "My son, G-d will provide a lamb for the
sacrifice."

Aria 6: "It's unnatural!"

Source: Midrash Rabbah, Genesis, Va'aerah 56: 7

Choir

[The angels said:] "It's unnatural!
That he should slay his son!
Is Abraham not hospitable to guests?
Does Abraham have no merit?
It's unnatural! Cruelty! Strange!
That he should slay his son with his own hand!"

Aria 7: "Wretched son of a wretched woman"

Source: Midrash, Tanhuma, Vayera, 22

Satan [choir]: "Wretched son of a wretched woman!"
Isaac: "Father, look at what Satan is saying to me!"
Satan: "How many fasts did your mother fast until you
were born?
Now the old man has gone mad!"
Isaac: "Father, look at what Satan is saying to me!"
Satan: "And now he is going to slaughter you!"
Isaac: "Father!"

THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC LIBRETTO CONTINUED

Translations of Texts by Jonathan Leshnoff

Aria 8: "You are called merciful"

Source: Pirke d'Rebbe Eliezer 31 and Genesis 22: 10

Choir

[Angels:] You are called merciful,
whose mercy is upon all His works.
Have mercy upon Isaac,
for he is a human being,
and the son of a human being,
and is bound before You like an animal!
Abraham stretched forth his hand,
and took the knife to slaughter his son.

Aria 9: "Yedid Nefesh"

Source: liturgical song by Elazar Ezkari, 17th century and Confession before death (Vidui), liturgy (the following sung in original Hebrew, translation below):

Tenor (Isaac)

Beloved of the soul, merciful Father, draw Your servant to Your will.
He will come running to you as fast as a deer and will bow before Your greatness. He is bound to you in closeness and, to You, his love will be sweeter than honey
Radiance of the World! My soul thirsts for You. Please, G-d, heal her by showing her Your splendor. Only then will she be strengthened and healed, and she will have eternal happiness.
Ancient One, let Your mercy be aroused, and have pity on your beloved child. It has been so long that I have yearned to see Your splendor! This is the wish of my heart! Have pity and do not hide Yourself!
(in English) My life and death are in Your hands. If I die, may it be an atonement for me.

Aria 10: "Lay not your hand"

Source: Genesis 22: 11, 12, 16, 17

Countertenor (Word of G-d)
Baritone (Abraham)

[Word of G-d:] "Abraham, Abraham."
[Abraham:] "Here I am."
[Word of G-d:] "For now I know that you fear G-d, since you have not withheld your son.
Lay not your hand upon the child,
Nor do anything unto him.
By Myself, I have sworn,
Since you did this, I will bless you.
Lay not your hand upon the child,
Nor do anything unto him."

Aria 11: "Remember us!"

Source: Liturgy for Rosh HaShana, Musaf prayer

Choir

Remember us for mercy!
When Abraham bound Isaac on the altar
he suppressed his mercy to do Your will,
So, too, suppress Your anger from Your people, from Your city, and
Your heritage.
Remember us!
May You see the sacrifice of Isaac!
Remember us for goodness! Remember us!
Remember us for goodness, from the heights of heaven with
compassion,
As there is no forgetting before your honored throne.

Aria 12: "May G-d bless you and watch you"

Source: based on Jewish Liturgy, Parent's Prayer before Yom Kippur

Baritone (Abraham), Tenor (Isaac), Countertenor (Word of G-d)

May it be the will of your Father, who dwells in heaven, that He puts in your heart the love and fear of Him.
Your mouth should speak wisdom and your heart should rest with truth,
may your feet run to do His will
May the L-rd bless you. May He watch you.
May He favor you. May He lift up His face to you.
and give you peace.
[Word of G-d:] "Abraham. Abraham."