An artistic illustration of Abraham and Isaac from the Bible. They are shown from behind, kneeling on the ground in a desert setting. Abraham, on the left, is an older man with white hair, wearing a long yellow robe. Isaac, on the right, is a younger man with brown hair, also in a yellow robe. They are looking at a large, bright bonfire built on a stone structure. The landscape is arid with rocky hills, sparse green and yellow vegetation, and a clear blue sky with a few clouds. In the background, there are more hills and a small evergreen tree on the left. The overall scene is peaceful and contemplative.

# **Genesis: A Living Conversation**

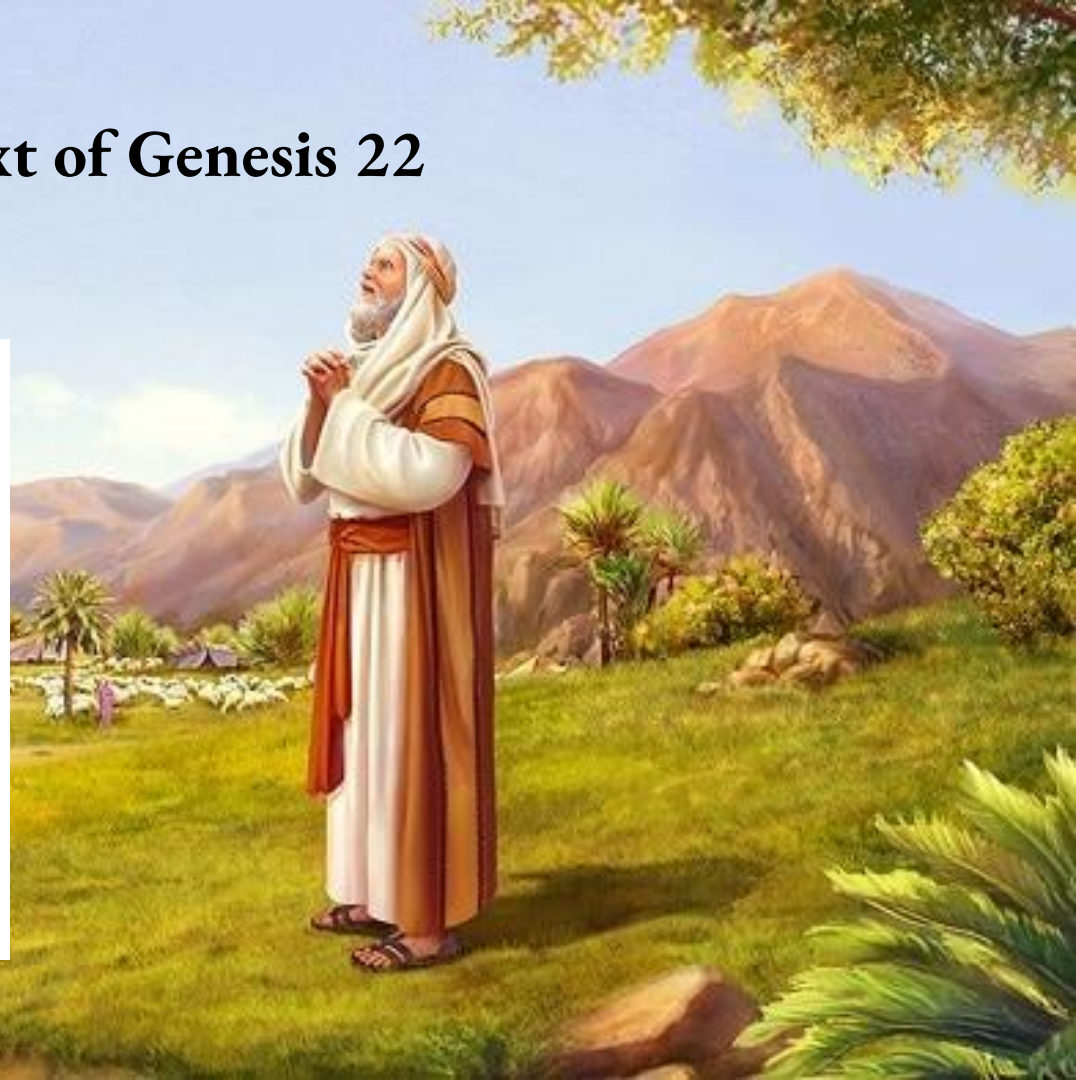
## **The Test**

### **Genesis 22**

**By Veronica Manso and Alejandro Perez**

## Context of Genesis 22

- In the beginning of chapter 22, God speaks to Abraham and says to him “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you (Gen 22.2).





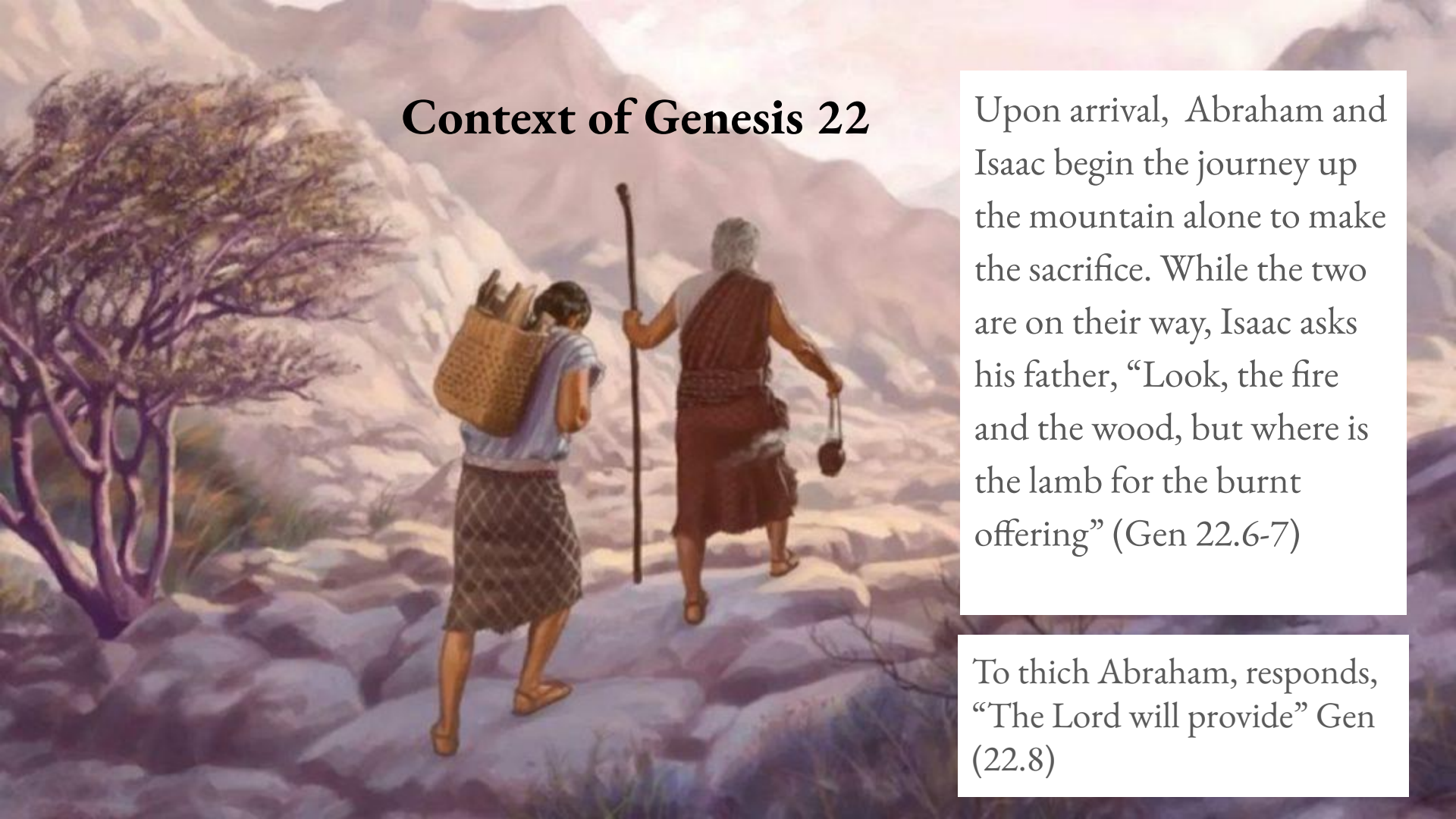
## Context of Genesis 22

- In the verses that proceed, the story goes on to describe Abraham willfully obeying God's request. Abraham along with Isaac and two of his servants set off to mount Moriah where the sacrifice will occur (Gen 22.3-5)

## Context of Genesis 22

Upon arrival, Abraham and Isaac begin the journey up the mountain alone to make the sacrifice. While the two are on their way, Isaac asks his father, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering” (Gen 22.6-7)

To which Abraham, responds, “The Lord will provide” Gen (22.8)





## Context of Genesis 22

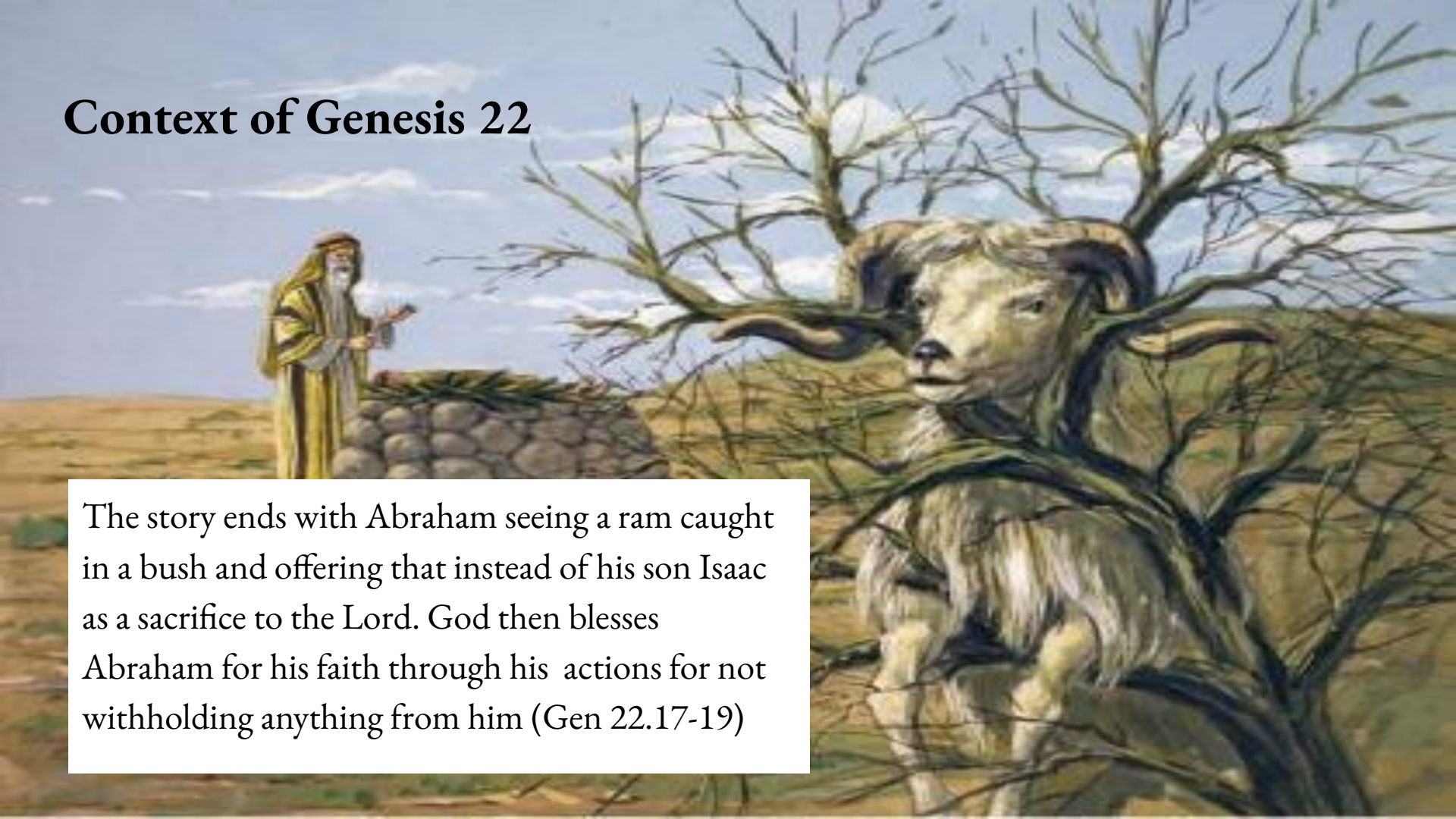
In the climax moment of the story, Abraham lays his son Isaac upon the Altar bound in rope so he can not move. As he raises his sword to go through with the sacrifice an angel of the Lord appears to him before he can harm his son (Gen 22.9-10).



The verses say the the angel tells Abraham, “Do not lay your hand on the boy, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me” (Gen 22.12).

## Context of Genesis 22

The story ends with Abraham seeing a ram caught in a bush and offering that instead of his son Isaac as a sacrifice to the Lord. God then blesses Abraham for his faith through his actions for not withholding anything from him (Gen 22.17-19)



## Introduction to the beginning points from conversation

- At the beginning of the conversation, all participants agree that the story of Abraham's test of faith is an unfathomable horrific test God puts Abraham through.
- **FRANCISCO GARCIA-TRETO:** I have a problem with that story that I will always have. I think that this is quite literally a terrifying story. When — when we pray in the Lord's prayer, “lead us not into temptation,” which in Greek literally says — do not bring us to the test — this is what comes to mind. And — and at the heart of my faith is the conviction that God would never put me in this situation. If this is a test, I'd flunk it.
- **DIANNE BERGANT:** You asked — if it's a terrifying story before. I think it is a terrifying story. But for what purpose? Why is — why is the story teller telling the story that way? And that's why... I don't want to get God off the hook. I wanna know why does the author tell the story that way?

## The Theories Shared as to why God Tests Abraham

- **PHYLLIS TRIBLE:** What — my understanding is that the story has something to do basically with idolatry. The idolatry of the son — of the story is take your son, your only son whom you love Isaac. Now you don't need all of that language to say, "Take Isaac and sacrifice him." But it's heavy laden language that is telling us something. It's the accumulation of attachment. Isaac is the promised child once the giver has given the gift God has given Isaac then does Abraham focus on Isaac and forget the giver? And — and the climatic line is, "Now I know that you worship God, implied that you do not worship your son."



# The theory of disproving Abraham's Idolatry

- **Idolatry** : the worship of someone or something other than God as though it were God.
- In Phyllis's theory as to why God tests Abraham she states that God wanted to be sure in knowing that after Abraham received the blessing of his promised child, would he still put God first.
- Others in attendance added on to this by saying that God was also testing if Abraham would be willing to give up the blessing he was also promised through Isaac and ultimately his sacrifice his ego.

-What about the trust between God and his father?-

BURTON VISOTZKY: What kind of relationship could Isaac have with God, let alone with his father? ...

SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR: “Isaac is a prophet. And as a prophet, he does not have the ordinary human consciousness that we have. And to read our own sentiments or reactions into what Isaac experienced, would totally misunderstand what the heart of the story is. His surrender to the will of God is no less than that of Abraham. And therefore he participates in this act which is perfection of the surrender to the will of God”.

-Therefore not only is there this question of complete faith and surrender, but as a surrender of a person who's God's friend. And therefore ultimately he would know that God will always remain his friend.

## -Religion Has to Lead us to People and Relationships-

NORMAN COHEN: “If religion leads to human suffering and human self-denial, then it’s not a religion I wanna be part of. I think ultimately that’s the question here as we read the story. And I can read it on-two different levels. On one level... it’s anyone who is impregnated or—seems to be impregnated by God’s spirit, and it leads to just human misery—” (Examples of Massacres, Holocaust, Ect.)

-“But on the more subtle level of our sacrificing that which is precious to us, or those whom we love, there’s a subtlety there I think that this story begs us to address. And if we don’t, I think that ultimately religion falls flat in terms of what it means.” (Religion→ People)