

The present

The story of Abraham and Isaac, from Genesis 22

GOD KNEW that his Secret Rescue Plan could only work if Abraham trusted him completely. God had to make sure Abraham would do whatever he asked. So, a few years later, God asked Abraham to give him a present.

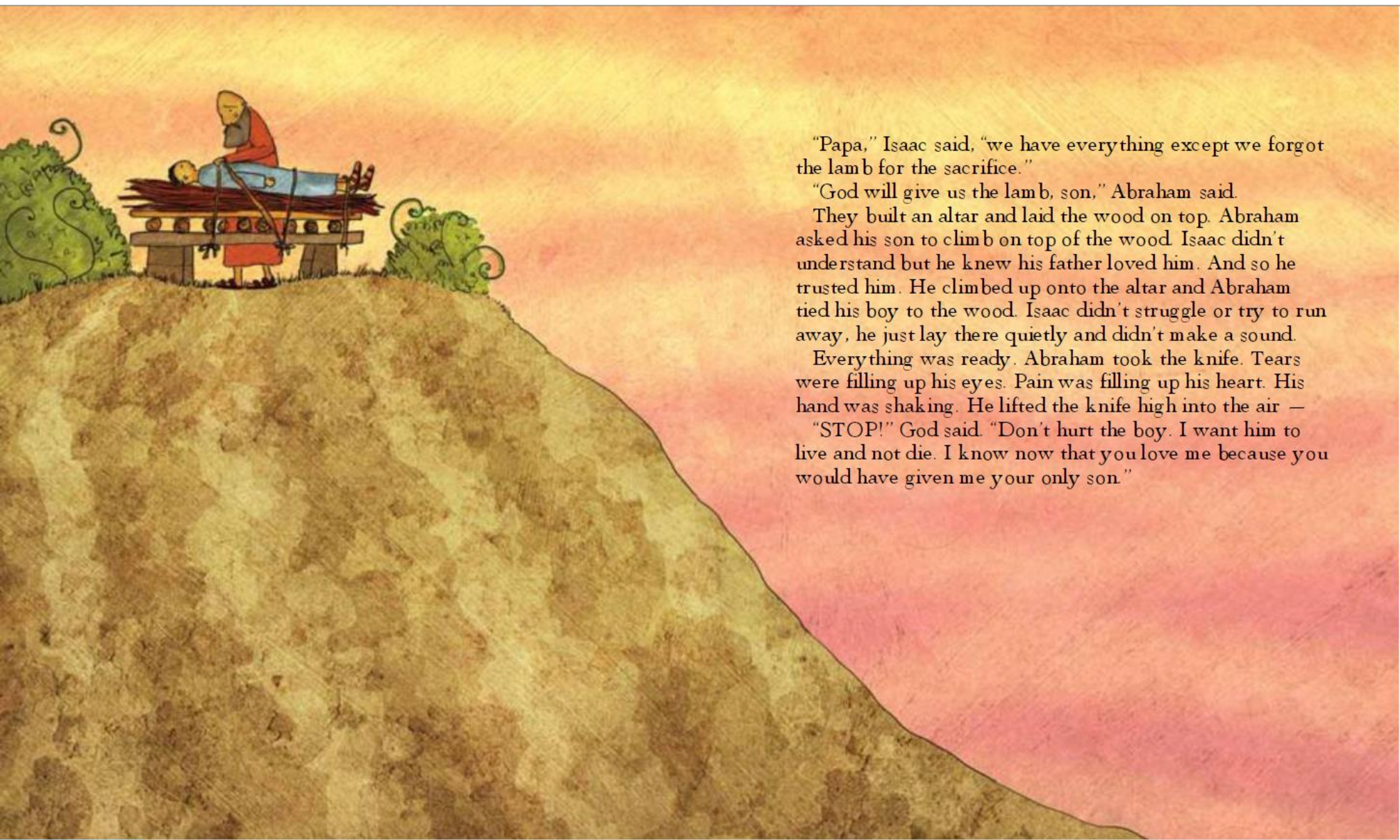
Abraham liked giving presents to God. He gave God his animals. They were called "sacrifices" and they were a way to say "I love you" to God.

But this time God didn't want a lamb or a goat, God wanted Abraham to give him something more — much more. He wanted Abraham to give him his son, his only son, the son he loved — Isaac.

Put his boy on the altar and kill him as the sacrifice? How could God want him to do such a terrible thing? Abraham didn't understand. But he knew that God was his father who loved him. And so Abraham trusted him.

Early the next morning, Abraham and Isaac set off. They climbed the steep, stony trail up the mountain. Isaac carried the wood on his back. His father carried the knife and the coals.





"Papa," Isaac said, "we have everything except we forgot the lamb for the sacrifice."

"God will give us the lamb, son," Abraham said.

They built an altar and laid the wood on top. Abraham asked his son to climb on top of the wood. Isaac didn't understand but he knew his father loved him. And so he trusted him. He climbed up onto the altar and Abraham tied his boy to the wood. Isaac didn't struggle or try to run away, he just lay there quietly and didn't make a sound.

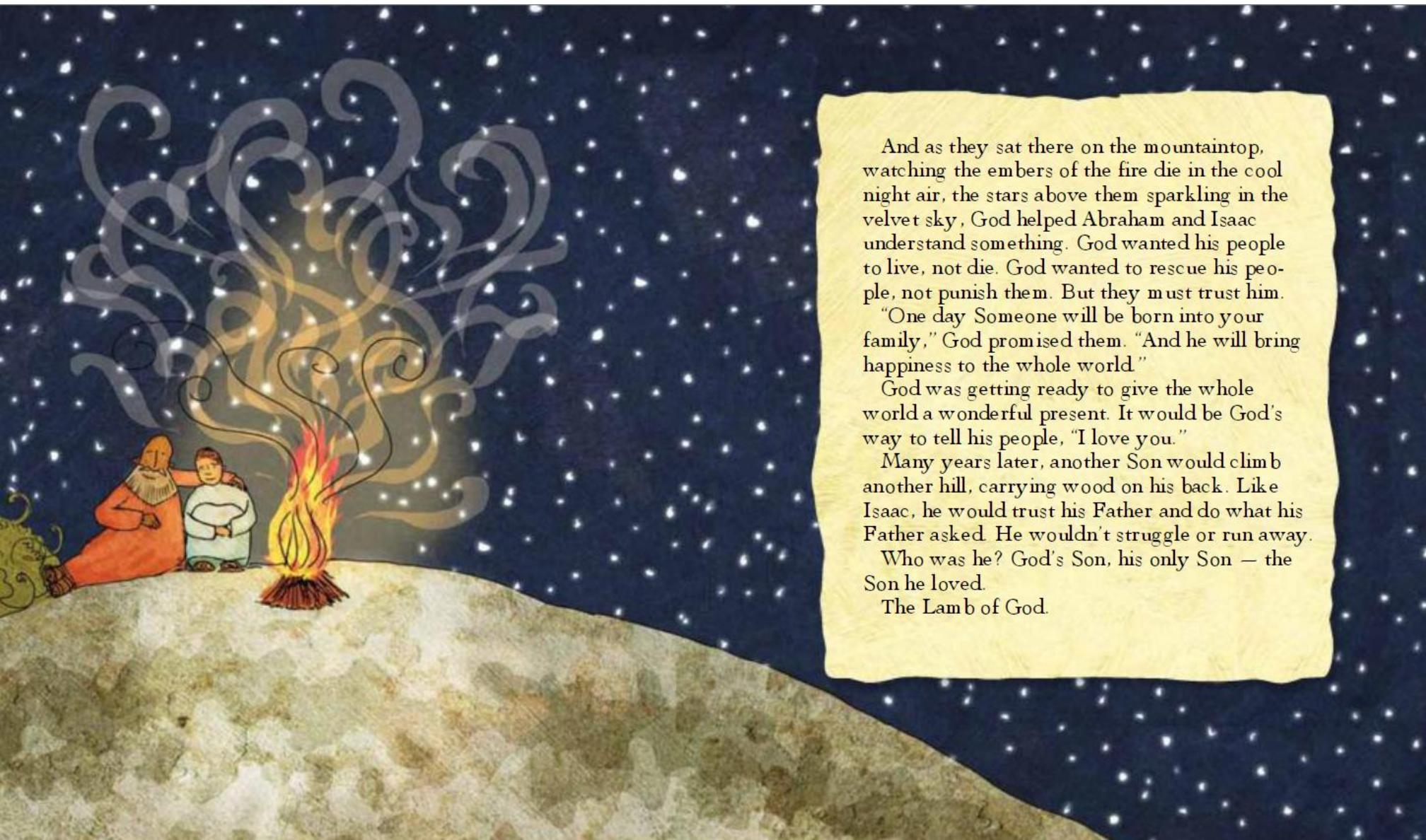
Everything was ready. Abraham took the knife. Tears were filling up his eyes. Pain was filling up his heart. His hand was shaking. He lifted the knife high into the air —

"STOP!" God said. "Don't hurt the boy. I want him to live and not die. I know now that you love me because you would have given me your only son."

Abraham felt his heart leap with joy. He unbound Isaac and folded him in his arms. Great sobs shook the old man's whole body. Scalding tears filled his eyes. And for a long time, they stayed there like that, in each other's arms, the boy and his dad.

Suddenly, Abraham saw a ram caught in some brambles — the sacrifice. God had given them what they needed just in time. The ram would die so Isaac didn't have to. And so Abraham sacrificed the ram, instead of his son.





And as they sat there on the mountaintop, watching the embers of the fire die in the cool night air, the stars above them sparkling in the velvet sky, God helped Abraham and Isaac understand something. God wanted his people to live, not die. God wanted to rescue his people, not punish them. But they must trust him. "One day Someone will be born into your family," God promised them. "And he will bring happiness to the whole world."

God was getting ready to give the whole world a wonderful present. It would be God's way to tell his people, "I love you."

Many years later, another Son would climb another hill, carrying wood on his back. Like Isaac, he would trust his Father and do what his Father asked. He wouldn't struggle or run away.

Who was he? God's Son, his only Son — the Son he loved.

The Lamb of God.