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0521835429 - Bound by the Bible: Jews, Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac

Edward Kessler

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BOUND BY THE BIBLE

The Sacrifice of Isaac is one of the most well-known stories in the Bible. It is also a shocking account of how Abraham's faith in God was demonstrated by a willingness to sacrifice his long-awaited son at God's command. This story has been a source of fascination for Jews and Christians for many centuries, and here Edward Kessler offers an enthralling account of Jewish and Christian interpretations of this biblical story. For understandable reasons, it has been assumed that Judaism influenced Christian interpretation, but relatively little attention has been given to the question of the influence of Christianity upon Judaism. Kessler provides an insight into this absorbing two-way encounter and argues that neither Jewish nor Christian interpretations can be understood properly without reference to the other. As Jews and Christians lived, and continue to live, in a biblically orientated culture, Kessler shows how both were 'bound by the Bible'.

EDWARD KESSLER is a Founding and Executive Director of the Cambridge Centre for Jewish–Christian Relations. He is the author of *An English Jew: The Life and Writings of Claude Montefiore* (1989, new edition 2002) and co-editor of *Jews and Christians in Conversation: Crossing Cultures and Generations* (2002).

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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge, CB2 2RU, UK
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
 Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 2004

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeface Adobe Garamond 11/12.5 pt. *System* L^AT_EX 2_ε [T_B]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data
 Kessler, Edward

Bound by the Bible : Jews, Christians and the sacrifice of Isaac / Edward Kessler.
 p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 83542 9 – ISBN 0 521 54313 4 (pbk.)

1. Isaac (Biblical patriarch) – Sacrifice. 2. Bible. O.T. Genesis XXII, 1–19 – Criticism, interpretation, etc. – History – Early church, ca. 30–600. 3. Bible. O.T. Genesis XXII, 1–19 – Criticism, interpretation, etc., Jewish – History – To 1500. 4. Christianity and other religions – Judaism – History – To 1500. 5. Judaism – Relations – Christianity – History – To 1500. I. Title.

BS1238.S24K47 2004

222./11092 – dc22 2003069571

ISBN 0 521 83542 9 hardback

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*To Trish, Shoshana, Asher and Eliana
who exemplify George Santayana's saying that
the family is one of nature's masterpieces.*

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Preface

This book has been in and on my mind for seven years. During that time I have felt as if I had accompanied Abraham and Isaac on their journey to and from Moriah.

I would like to thank my colleagues at the Centre for Jewish–Christian Relations (CJCR), especially Deborah Patterson-Jones, Melanie Wright, Lucia Faltin, Maty Matychak and Tunde Formadi. CJCR provides a wonderful forum to engage in the study and teaching of Jewish–Christian relations. I also acknowledge with gratitude the students at CJCR, especially those who elected to study my course on Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation. They have helped me think through the ideas discussed in this book.

I would like to acknowledge the support of other colleagues who have been kind enough to offer constructive comments. They include James Carleton Paget, William Horbury and Robert Hayward. During my PhD research I was guided by Nicholas de Lange, to whom I am most grateful, and was taught patristic Greek by Liz Irwin, whose patience was beyond measure.

The support of my fellow Trustees at the CJCR has also been a great help in the writing of this book, especially Martin Forward and Julius Lipner who cajoled me into completing the manuscript, as well as Barry Fenton, Bob Glatter, Leslie Griffiths, Peter Halban, David Leibowitz and Clemens Nathan.

Thanks also to Kevin Taylor and Kate Brett of Cambridge University Press who have been most encouraging. I also appreciated the positive comments offered by the anonymous CUP readers in their reviews of the original manuscript.

A number of scholars from overseas have also taken the time to respond to queries, especially Jo Milgrom, John Pawlikowski, Peter Ochs and Gunter Stemberger.

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Preface

Finally, this book would not have been written without the support of my family, my parents, my wife Trisha, and my children Shoshana, Asher and Eliana. Together they remind me daily of the priorities in my life and I am deeply grateful for their love and affection. This book is dedicated to them.

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NAMES

Aq.	Aquila
Athan.	Athanasius
Basil of Sel.	Basil of Seleucia
Cyril of Alex.	Cyril of Alexandria
Chry.	John Chrysostom
Diod.	Diodore of Tarsus
Eph. Grae.	Ephrem Graecus
Euseb.	Eusebius of Caesarea
Greg. of Nys.	Gregory of Nyssa
Greg. of Naz.	Gregory of Nazianzen
Iren.	Irenaeus of Lyons
Jos.	Flavius Josephus
Onk.	Onkelos
Ps.-Chr.	Pseudo-Chrysostom
Ps.-Eph. Grae	Pseudo-Ephrem Graecus
Ps.-Greg. Nys.	Pseudo-Gregory of Nyssa
Ps.-Ph.	Pseudo-Philo
Rom.	Romanos
Sym.	Symmachus
Succen.	Succensus of Diocaesarie

WORKS

<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>Adv. Iud.</i>	<i>Adversus Iudaeos</i>
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
<i>ARN</i>	<i>Avot de Rabbi Nathan</i>
<i>Barn.</i>	<i>Barnabas</i>

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List of abbreviations

<i>BT</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud</i>
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
<i>Ecc. Rab.</i>	<i>Ecclesiastes Rabbah</i>
<i>EJ</i>	<i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i>
<i>Ex. Rab.</i>	<i>Exodus Rabbah</i>
<i>Frg. Tg.</i>	<i>Fragmentary Targum</i>
<i>Gen. Rab.</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>
<i>JT</i>	<i>Jerusalem Talmud</i>
<i>LAB</i>	<i>Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum</i>
<i>Lam. Rab.</i>	<i>Lamentations Rabbah</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
<i>Lev. Rab.</i>	<i>Leviticus Rabbah</i>
LXX	Septuagint
<i>M.</i>	<i>Mishnah</i>
<i>MHG</i>	<i>Midrash ha-Gadol</i>
<i>MdRI</i>	<i>Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael</i>
<i>MdRSbY</i>	<i>Mekhilta de Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai</i>
<i>Mid. Tan. on Deut.</i>	<i>Midrash Tannaim on Deuteronomy</i>
<i>Mid. Teh.</i>	<i>Midrash Tehillim</i>
<i>Paed.</i>	<i>Paedagogus</i>
<i>PG</i>	J.-P. Migne (ed.), <i>Patrologiae cursus completus. Serie Graece</i> . Paris, Petit-Montrouge, 1857–83.
<i>Pes. R.</i>	<i>Pesikta Rabbati</i>
<i>PP</i>	<i>Peri Pascha</i>
<i>PRE</i>	<i>Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer</i>
<i>PRK</i>	<i>Pesikta de Rab Kahana</i>
<i>REJ</i>	<i>Revue des études juives</i>
<i>RHS</i>	<i>Rosh ha-Shana</i>
<i>San.</i>	<i>Sanhedrin</i>
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
<i>Stroma.</i>	<i>Stromata</i>
<i>Tan. Eli.</i>	<i>Tanna debe Eliyahu</i>
<i>Tan. B.</i>	<i>Tanhuma</i> (Buber Edition)
<i>Tan. Y.</i>	<i>Tanhuma</i> (Yelamdenu)
<i>Tg. Ps.-Jon</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i>
<i>Tos.</i>	<i>Tosefta</i>
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum neuen Testament