

**IS HE GOING TO KILL HIMSELF?:  
THE WILLING SELF-SACRIFICE OF JESUS AND THE AKEDAH  
IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL**

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**Abstract.** This study examines the passages in which the *Akedah* is tacitly referenced by the Fourth Evangelist to explain who Christ was for his community. It identifies a plethora of thematic and linguistic expressions in John that are parallel to the developing tradition of Isaac's willing sacrifice. This analysis begins with a linguistic examination of Jewish texts that speak of an "only"/"beloved" child in the context of sacrifice (Gen 22; Judg 11:29–40; and 2 Kgs 2:26–27), and explores the translation of these terms into Greek (ἰδιὸς to μονογενής/ἀγαπητός). Secondly, key thematic developments in the evolution of the *Akedah* are explored in relation to John's Gospel. This study concludes that John consciously employed an Isaac-typology, and its characteristic vocabulary, to elaborate upon the meaning of Jesus' sacrifice.

**Keywords:** *Akedah*, Gospel of John, Isaac, Lamb of God, Passover

**Introduction**

In the history of Judaism, the *Akedah* story was told and retold to such an extent that it came to include multifarious understandings not initially expressed in Gen 22. Even the New Testament authors partook in the development of this tradition when they chose to find foreshadowings of the sacrifice of Christ in Old Testament stories. This use of Scripture falls not into the scholarly category of "rewritten Bible"<sup>2</sup> precisely, but into what I want to call "prefigured Scripture."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Works such as *Jubilees* and Philo's *De Abrahamo* are examples of biblical retellings that were composed in order to bring clarity and understanding for the day in which they were composed. James L. KUGEL, "The Beginnings of Biblical Interpretation", in Matthias HENZE (ed.), *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism*, Grand Rapids, 2012, 11 concisely states: "Retelling, it should be said, was actually the preferred form of biblical commentary in this period. That is, instead of citing a particular verse and explaining its meaning (as our modern-day,