



PROFESSOR MODE

Your argument about patriarchy through Abraham is sharp. The "values package" framing is genuinely original. Push harder on the Kierkegaard takedown.

Abraham: The Sacrificer

Jews, Christians, and Muslims, while they disagree between and among themselves on a great many things, all identify Abraham as the father of their faith. But what kind of father was he to his children? ★ This question matters not only religiously, but also practically, because Abraham's story continues to shape how we understand fatherhood, sacrifice, and what we owe to those we claim to love, as it has done in every generation from biblical times to the present day.

* Strong opening move. Question hooks immediately.

The fact that I'm writing about Abraham in a book called *Ten Bad Dads* means I've already tipped my hand. ☺ To me it's clear: Abraham may have passed a test of faith in Genesis, chapter 22 when he raised the knife to kill his son Isaac, an act that secures his position as patriarch to three major world religions. In doing so, however, it seems obvious that he fails another test: the test of fatherhood. 🔞 What's more, this failure has too often been praised as a success by Jewish, Christian, Islamic, agnostic, and even atheistic thinkers who have sought in turns to celebrate, justify, or at least to rationalize the baleful decision of our shared patriarch to submit to the apparent will of God rather than do the work and take the risks of love.

↳ Core thesis. "Do the work and take the risks of love" = your ethical baseline.

There are outliers, of course: Emmanuel Levinas, predictably; Emmanuel Kant, more surprisingly; numerous feminist scholars; Barack Obama.

SP (Immanuel, not Emmanuel)

Endorsement has instead been the norm: for Maimonides and other Jewish sages, Abraham's offering exemplifies the utmost love of God; for Aquinas it symbolizes perfect obedience; for Calvin, it is the epitome of faith; for al-Ghazālī and many Muslim theologians, it is the apotheosis of surrender; even for a secular critic like René Girard, it serves a social value

as the origin of the scapegoat mechanism.  We are still living (and still parenting) in the shadow of this failure: every time an authority figure demands sacrifice for abstractions, any time a parent confuses obedience for love or demands their children live out their own unfulfilled dreams.

 **WOW This sentence is the hinge. Everything before builds to it, everything after unpacks it. Premium real estate perfectly used.**

These are not claims I make lightly. Billions of people around the world revere Abraham and circulate his story - if not from the book of Genesis, in which materials associated with Abraham take up almost a quarter of the text - then from the Christian Gospels, where he is revered as "our father Abraham" (Romans, 4.12), or from the Qur'an, in which he figures prominently as the first monotheist and builder of the Ka'bah in Mecca. His birth name, Abram, is a compound of two words: the Hebrew "av" for "father," and "ram," meaning "exalted," a name God modifies by adding an "H," changing this exalted father into a "father of multitudes" in Genesis chapter 26. 

 **Etymology does work here. Establishes your command of source material.**

It is Abraham with whom God forges their covenant and Abraham who God entrusts with a clear mission: "I have embraced him so that he will charge his sons and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord to do righteousness and justice" (My italics. Genesis 18.16).  In other words, while Adam is the bible's universal father, Abraham is the father of ethical monotheism. Both of those terms are crucial: this God is not only the "one" god, creator of the universe out of chaos by divine dictate as we see in Genesis 1; God is also concerned with matters of "righteousness" (tzedakah) and "justice" (mishpat), an exact pairing that recurs numerous times throughout the Hebrew Testament.

 **You're setting up the irony: God charges Abraham with righteousness and justice, then demands child murder. Make this tension more explicit.**

For most of those who have written about Abraham, the important questions raised by his narrative center on the nature of faith and on the proper structure of the relationship between divine and human. The episode of Abraham's near murder of his son, known in studies of the Hebrew scripture as the "akedah" or "binding" - a formula used uniquely in this section of Genesis and appearing nowhere else in the biblical ritual lexicon - has been celebrated in this context as the ultimate test of faith, cementing Abraham's obedience to divine command and proper fear of God.  Passing this test might prove that Abraham deserves to be called a "Knight of Faith," as the philosopher Soren Kierkegaard styles him, but it also makes him a dud of a dad. !

✖ Long sentence getting tangled. Consider breaking after "divine and human."

! "Dad of a dad" = bold stylistic choice. Risks undercutting gravity but earns it through prior buildup.

Again, my intention here is not to score an easy point. After all, the God of this story ostensibly knows Abraham's nature prior to choosing him as a covenantal partner. Indeed, it seems pretty clear this whole thing was a set-up. Abraham was groomed to make precisely this mistake and then trapped between the rock of his faith and the proverbial hard place of his role as a father.

↳ "Groomed" and "trapped" = victim language. Does this undercut your argument about Abraham's agency? You're arguing he's a bad dad, but here you're excusing him. Tension worth exploring.

It is my hope that coming to understand Abraham as a failed father, examining the process leading to that failure, and taking a closer look at Abraham's character (paying close attention to the damaged nature of his masculinity) can help us to clarify some of the basic features, as well as some of the internal contradictions, of the patriarchal values package. I use the term "patriarchal values package" rather than the more familiar "patriarchal ideology" or "the patriarchy" full stop because I want to emphasize several features of how these values operate. ☺ Most importantly, we're talking not about a monolithic entity - there is no there there, no "the" to the capital "p" "Patriarchy") - but instead pointing to a bundled set of scripts and norms; next, the phrase calls attention to the way individuals pass down, modify, and exchange a complex set of cultural memes.

☺ NOW "Values package" is precise and original. This theoretical move distinguishes your work. Could you give it even more space? A full paragraph defining terms?

In this chapter I summon us back to Abraham's story in order to crack open three paradoxes of the patriarchal values package: a predilection to conflate the threat of violence with the promise of a stable order, a confusion of love for a person with ownership of that person, and the replacement of intimacy with emotional illiteracy. ☺ Above all, I hope to show that it takes a great deal of work - training in detachment from interpersonal bonds and from the community, practice in the deadening of emotion and in the hardening of one's heart (to use a biblical idiom) - in order to bring Abraham into the time and place where he can accept God's demand to kill his son.

☺ Three paradoxes clearly stated. Road map is set. Strong argumentative architecture.

For Kierkegaard, who elevates the akedah to the apotheosis of faith,

Abraham is ineluctably enigmatic, inspiring terror and awe through a paradox that is the well-spring of the religious itself: "Abraham I cannot understand," his narrator, the pseudonymous Johannes de Silentio maintains, adding that, "in a certain sense, there is nothing I can learn from him but astonishment" (28).  In the course of this chapter I hope to bring us to a very different set of conclusions: Abraham's attempt to sacrifice his son is all too easy to understand; ironically, there is still much (too much, in fact) we can learn from his story about the deep cultural roots and profound human costs of patriarchy.

 **WOW** End of intro. You've directly contradicted Kierkegaard ("easy to understand" vs "cannot understand"). This is the boldest claim in the chapter. Everything that follows must prove it.

EDITOR'S NOTES:

1. **The Kierkegaard Challenge:** You claim Abraham is "easy to understand" while Kierkegaard says he's incomprehensible. This sets up your entire book's methodology. But you need to actually demonstrate this ease of understanding, not just assert it. The chapter that follows must deliver on this promise.
2. **Agency vs. Victimhood:** You call Abraham a "bad dad" but also say he was "groomed" and "trapped." Which is it? If he's a victim of divine manipulation, does calling him a bad father still hold? This tension could be productive—patriarchy as a trap that men construct and fall into—but right now it reads as contradiction.
3. **"Values Package" Needs More:** This is your best theoretical innovation. The term distinguishes your work from standard feminist critique. Consider expanding this to a full paragraph with examples of how the package gets transmitted. Right now it's buried mid-paragraph when it deserves spotlight treatment.

KEY:

○ error ??? unclear ☺ weak ≈ boring ☹ repetitive
★ strong ☺ good ! bold ☷ strong claim ☷ precise **WOW** exceptional
☞ attention → move [] important __ key phrase ≈ trim **NOW** potential
■ thesis ☷ evidence ☷ premium real estate ☷ low-hanging fruit ☷ margins
SP spelling PUNC punctuation CAP capitalization AGR agreement