

# Genesis 21 Commentary

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Summary Chart of The Book of Genesis								
<b>Focus</b>	<b>Foundation Events</b> (Four Events) (Events Predominant)				<b>Foundation People</b> (Four People) (People Predominant)			
<b>Divisions</b>	Creation (Ge 1-2)	Fall (Ge 3-5)	Flood (Ge 6-9)	Nations (Ge 10-12)	Abraham's Faith (Ge 12-24)	Isaac's Family (Ge 25-26)	Jacob's Conflicts (Ge 27-36)	Joseph's Calamity (Ge 37-50)
<b>Topics</b>	Beginning of the Human Race (Race As A Whole)				Beginning of the Hebrew Race (Family of Abraham)			
	Faithfulness of Mankind (Noah)				Faithfulness of One Man's Family (Abraham)			
	Historical				Biographical			
<b>Place</b>	Eastward From Eden to Ur				Westward From Canaan to Egypt			

<b>Time</b>	~2000+ Years (20% of Genesis) (~4004-2090BC)	About 300 Years 193 Yr in Canaan, 93 Yr in Egypt (80% of Genesis) (2090-1804BC)
	Primeval History of Humanity	Patriarchal History of Israel
<b>Author</b>	Moses	

#### BEGINNINGS

- Ge 1:1-25 - The Universe (Everything)
- Ge 1:26-2:25 - The Human Race
- Ge 3:1-7 - Sin Enters the World
- Ge 3:8-24- God Promises Redemption from Bondage to Sin
- Ge 4:1-15 - Family Life
- Ge 4:16ff - Civilization
- Ge 10:1-11:32 - The Nations of the World
- Ge 12:1ff - The Story of Israel and the Jews



Abraham believed God (Gal 3:6+, Ge 15:5,6+)

**Genesis 21:1 Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised.**

- **took note:** Ge 50:24 Ex 3:16 4:31 20:5 Ru 1:6 1Sa 2:21 Ps 106:4 Lu 1:68 19:44 Ro 4:17-20
- **Sarah as:** Ge 17:19 Ge 18:10,14 Ps 12:6 Mt 24:35 Ga 4:23,28 Titus 1:2
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Luke 1:68+ "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For (term of explanation - why He is to be blessed!) **He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,** (YHWH VISITING SARAH WOULD BE THE FIRST STEP ON THE ROAD TO REDEMPTION FINALLY ACCOMPLISHED IN THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH). '

Genesis 17:16+ (**GOD'S PROMISE OF A SON**) "I will bless her, and indeed **I will give you a son by her.** Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."....21 "But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom **Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.**"

Genesis 18:10; 14+ (**GOD'S PROMISE OF A SON**) He said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, **Sarah your wife will have a son.**" And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him.....14 "Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, **at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.**"

### THE PROMISE KEEPING GOD

**Paul Apple** has an interesting introduction to Genesis 21 - For those that find the doctrine of the [sovereignty of God](#) distasteful or offensive (due to their understanding of free will or what they think is fair), this passage will be unsettling. To say that God determines the destiny of the elect is quite a theological mountain to climb. But to add to that conviction, the understanding that God also determines the **destiny of the non-elect** is more than many Christians are willing to swallow. Yet, as we have taught before, "a God who does not control everything, cannot control anything." It is an all-or-nothing proposition. We have already witnessed God's sovereign choice in these early chapters of the first book of the bible: Remember God being pleased with the sacrifice of Abel but not of Cain – then we have the designation of the descendants of both Seth, the favored line, and Cain. Remember the choosing of Noah and his family as the only ones to enter the ark; Then we have the descendants that flow from the 3 sons of Noah with the line of Shem being singled out.....Definition of Destiny - "the events that will necessarily happen to a particular person or thing in the future." "your future or the pre-ordained path of your life." **How is God's Control Demonstrated as we work our way through the passage?** (Paul Apple goes on to make 14 observations in answer to his question. [See his Genesis Commentary - pdf - scroll to page 271](#))

Genesis 21 could be titled **a time to laugh and a time to weep** because of the birth of one son and the departure of the other son.

**Parunak** adds that "Genesis is a history of successive election, as God repeatedly distinguishes between the chosen line and those not chosen. Ge 11:27, God chooses Terah from the other descendants of Noah. Ge 12:1, God chooses Abraham from the family of Terah. Abraham's nephew Lot comes along, and it seems as though he might become the heir of the childless patriarch. Ge 13:11, Lot departs, leaving Abraham. Now in our story for today, we see the favor shown to Isaac over Ishmael. Yet we also see that God controls the destiny of both individuals. ([Notes on Gen 21](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [How does the sovereignty of God impact my everyday life? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How do God's sovereignty and humanity's free will work together in salvation? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does it mean that God is sovereign? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How does God's sovereignty work together with free will? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Is God sovereign over death? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Then** - Always pause and ask "when" is **then**? It usually marks progression in a narrative. In this context we have just finished the Abimelech narrative....

Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children. For the LORD had closed fast all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife. (Ge 20:17-18+).

Note the LORD who opened the wombs of Abimelech's wife and maids will now do the same for Sarah.

**Derek Kidner** - So ends the suspense maintained since chapter 12 and heightened by the last episode. The matter-of-fact style and the emphasis on what God has said ... spoken ... spoken (1, 2) express the quiet precision of his control. (Borrow [Genesis page 138](#))

**The LORD (Jehovah) took note of Sarah as He had said** - God has not forgotten Sarah. **Took note** is [paqad](#) which is translated in the Septuagint with the verb [episkeptomai](#) literally means to look upon, to go to see, to examine closely, to inspect, to examine the state of affairs of something, to look after or to oversee. It depicts one going to see another with the intent to render help, an understatement in the present context! It does not mean simply to "drop in," but always implies purposeful intervention in someone's life. [Episkeptomai](#) can also mean to have regard for, care for or be concerned about (Acts 15:14+, He 2:6+). In the Septuagint [episkeptomai](#) speaks of a visitation from God, most often a visitation for good (cf use in Ge 50:24, 25). In Jewish usage, it commonly denoted to visit with the aim of caring for and supplying the needs of those visited. Sarah had need of her womb to be opened so she could become pregnant.

We see a similar use of [paqad](#) when God took note of or visited Hannah in 1Sa 2:21 "The LORD **visited** Hannah (BARREN); and she conceived and gave birth."

**NET NOTE on took note** - The Hebrew verb translated "visit" (״ׁׁׁׁ, [paqad](#)) often describes divine intervention for blessing or cursing; it indicates God's special attention to an individual or a matter, always with respect to his people's destiny. He may visit (that is, destroy) the Amalekites; he may visit (that is, deliver) his people in Egypt. Here he visits Sarah, to allow her to have the promised child. One's destiny is changed when the LORD "visits." For a more detailed study of the term, see G. André, Determining the Destiny (Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series).

**And the LORD (Jehovah) did for Sarah as He had promised** (spoken) - Here we see the attribute of [God's faithfulness](#). **Did for Sarah** describes God's miracle of creation, because Sarah was post-menopausal and normally could not have conceived (Ge 18:11). **Promised** is a translation of the Hebrew *dabar* which means to speak and is apropos for God's spoken Word is His promise. God had spoken the promise to Abraham on more than one occasion (Ge 17:19 Ge 18:10,14). The "God Who cannot lie promised" (Titus 1:2+) Abraham and Sarah a child, despite the fact that Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 (Ge 17:17). Now God will miraculously fulfill His promise made 25 years earlier (Ge 12:4,7+), where the use of the word "**descendants**" in chapter 12 implies that Abraham had to have a son in order to have **descendants**. Not only was God true to His promise, but He fulfilled it at the **appointed time** He had promised (Ge 18:14). God kept His promises, followed His schedule, and did not fail.

**Steven Cole** rightly says that "The Christian life is a process of discovering, unwrapping, and enjoying the many promises of God that are scattered throughout His Word. It's like looking for hidden treasures. The apostle Paul wrote, "For as many as may be the promises of God, in Him [Christ] they are yes" (2Co 1:20+). ([The Joy and Pain of a Life of Faith -- Genesis 21:1-21](#))

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**Took note** (06485) ([pequddah/pāqadh/paqad](#)) conveys the root idea of something that is attended to or set in order -- fighting men under an officer (2 Chr. 17:14), priests in an order (1 Chr. 23:11; 24:19); arrangement of Tabernacle (Nu 4:16[2x]). Office of one in charge of something (Ps 109:8) or officers (2 Ki. 11:18; Isa. 60:17). Usually *pequddah* means accounting when God attended to people's actions, usually to call them to account for their sins (Nu 16:29; Jer. 48:44). In Job 10:12 God's attention was for Job's good. **Paqad** describes God intervening to save the Israelites from Egyptian bondage (Ge 50:24-25; Exodus 4:31) Ruth 1:6 = Naomi "had heard in the land of Moab that the LORD **had visited** His people in giving them food" Jeremiah 29:10 = "When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, **I will visit** you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place." Thus its presence here highlights the major significance of Isaac's birth. When God "**visits**," it indicates his special interest in a person, whether for judgment on sin (e.g., Exod 20:5; 32:34) or to describe "the LORD's salvific attention to an individual or his people Israel

Paqad - Gen. 21:1; Gen. 39:4-5 "**made him overseer**"; Gen. 40:4; Gen. 41:34; Gen. 50:24-25 = "God will surely **take care** of you and bring you up from this land"; Exod. 3:16 = "I am **indeed concerned** about you"; Exod. 4:31; Exod. 13:19; Exod. 20:5; Exod. 30:12; Exod. 30:13; Exod. 30:14; Exod. 32:34; Exod. 34:7; Exod. 38:21; Exod. 38:25; Exod. 38:26; Lev. 6:4; Lev. 18:25; Lev. 26:16;

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#### Allen Ross on - Paqad "Visit, Appoint, Oversee"

The verb *paqad*, usually translated "visit" in older translations, has a wide range of meanings that call for special attention. The older translation of "visit" is somewhat misleading if that is understood in the contemporary sense of a social visit; and so a contextual study of the passages where this word occurs is in order.

#### Etymology

## Hebrew Words

The dictionaries list the basic meaning of the verb as "attend to, visit, muster, entrust." In addition to the verb there are several derived forms to consider. One noun, *pequddah*, means "visitation," but more specifically the kind of visitation intended, such as "punishment" in Hosea 9:7 and "prison" in Jeremiah 52:11. It also has the meaning of "store" or "storage" in Isaiah 15:7, "overseeing" in 1 Chronicles 26:30, and "mustering" fighters in 2 Chronicles 17:14. This range of meanings for the noun parallels the verb.

There is also a word *paqid* which means "overseer" (Gen. 41:34; Jdg. 9:29).

The idea of "appointing" is also attested with related words. *Piqqud* is a "precept," that is, something appointed to be obeyed (Ps. 19:8). The noun *mipqad* is "appointment" in 2 Chronicles 31:13, and an "appointed place" in Ezekiel 43:21. It is also translated "muster" in 2 Samuel 24:9. *Piqqadon* is a "deposit" or "store" in Genesis 41:36.

## Cognate Languages

The root *paqad* is well attested in the cognate languages. The dictionaries record that it occurs in Akkadian with essentially the same meanings as Hebrew. In the Ugaritic texts *pqd* has the meaning "to give orders." In Phoenician it means "to attend to, to provide." The Syriac cognate means "to visit." Arabic has the meanings "to lose, miss, give attention to." And Ethiopic has the word with the meanings "to muster, to visit, to desire, to need." All these meanings in the cognate languages parallel the Hebrew meanings, with a few of them developing the meanings further in later times.

## Usage

It is necessary, given the wide range of definitions, to survey the uses and then try to explain the connections between the meanings. The following are the main categories of meaning.

### 1. To Attend To

The word occurs in passages where the expected meaning has something to do with "attending to" something or someone. Translations may vary a bit here to suit the immediate contexts.

For example, it may have the meaning "to pay attention to, to observe." In a few passages the idea is that of a close examination or observation, with the intent to do something to benefit or punish. The psalmist says, "What is man that you are mindful ('*zakar*) of him, or the son of man that you visit ('*paqad*) him?" (Ps. 8:4).

Or, "I remember (*paqadti*) that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait" (1 Sam. 15:2). In spite of the various ways that the English versions have rendered the verb in these passages, the idea is clearly that of observing or paying attention to something with the intent to act.

Some passages take the meaning a little further, having the sense of the intended action and not just the examination; here we would have the idea of "to see to something." An example is found in Zechariah 11:16, which says, "I will raise up a shepherd in the land who shall not attend to (*yipqod*) those who are cut off."

Also connected to the idea of looking for or taking note of something is the meaning "to seek." Here the word may be used to convey the idea of looking for a remedy or for something missing. For example, Isaiah says, "Yahweh, in trouble have they sought you (*pequduka*); they poured out a prayer when your chastening hand was upon them" (Isa. 26:16). Similarly we read, "If your father at all miss me (*paqod yipqedeni*) . . ." (1 Sam. 20:6). The first sample uses the verb for seeking that finds expression in prayer; the second sample uses it for seeking something in vain.

All the samples in this first category of meaning, then, have the idea of paying attention to, looking after, looking for, or remembering with the intent of doing something.

### 2. To Visit

The second category of meaning includes uses that describe some kind of intervention (usually by God) for blessing or for punishment. The translation "visit" may be somewhat archaic in view of modern English usage, but it still is retained in several of the English translations. Moreover, Webster's Dictionary, The American Heritage Dictionary, The Oxford English Dictionary, and The American College Dictionary all include as part of the usage of "visit" the concepts found in these passages, that is, to come to comfort or aid, to assail, to plague, or to afflict with suffering. The use of "visit" for this category is therefore acceptable, although each passage may be given a more precise meaning and translation.

In many passages the word describes "intervention for good" or for blessing. One type of blessing is childbirth--the speaker attributes the birth of a long-awaited child as the work of God. Genesis 21:1 reports that Yahweh "visited" Sarah so that she gave birth to Isaac. And 1 Samuel 2:21 reports the same with regard to Hannah.

Another blessing that comes through a divine intervention is growth in the fields. Ruth 1:6 says, "She had heard that Yahweh had visited (*paqad*) his people by giving them bread." It had rained, the crops had grown and been harvested, and bread was abundant--Yahweh visited them. Likewise the psalmist says, "You visit (*paqadta*) the earth and water it" (Ps. 65:9).

A third blessing that this word introduces is deliverance from oppression. Two passages clearly show it to be the means of escaping from bondage. Joseph said, "God will surely visit (*paqod yipqod*) you and will bring you out of this place" (Gen. 50:24-25). And, "after seventy years have been accomplished in Babylon, I will visit ('*epqod*) you and perform my good word to you in causing you to return to this place" (Jer. 29:10).

The idea of deliverance can also be personal when God "visits" his servant. The psalmist says, "O visit me (*poqdeni*) with your salvation" (Ps. 106:4); and Jeremiah says, "O Yahweh, you knew; remember me and visit me (*u-poqdeni*) and revenge me of my persecutors" (Jer. 15:15).

When *paqad* is used to describe Yahweh's intervention for good, some deliverance or benefit will be granted. It is interesting to note that the concept of "remembering" appears in some of these passages, as it did in those under the first category; "to remember" means to act upon what is remembered.

A second group of passages uses the word to describe "intervention for punishment." Punishment for sin is clearly expressed in the first example from Exodus: "I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting (*poqed*) the iniquity of the fathers on the children" (Exod. 20:5). The verse is saying that the children often pay for the sins of the fathers if they do not turn to the Lord. Another passage that expresses punishment concerns the sin of the golden

calf: "when I visit (paqdi) . . . I will visit (u-paqadti) their sin on them" (Exod. 32:34). The verb seems to have two slightly different senses here: when the Lord intervenes in their life (a neutral connotation), it will be for punishment for sin (a negative connotation).

In some contexts the emphasis is more on the judgment that is the punishment. For example, Hosea says, "Now will he remember their iniquities and visit (weyipqod) their sins, and they shall return to Egypt" (Hos. 8:13). Amos says, "When I visit the transgression of Israel upon him, I will visit (u-paqadti) the altars of Bethel as well"--and the horns of the altar will be cut off and fall to the ground (Amos 3:14). Isaiah says, "In that day Yahweh with his awesome and great strong sword will punish (yipqod 'al) Leviathan" (Isa. 27:1). The verse declares that God will destroy Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt, by destroying these "gods" that empowered them. And again Isaiah says that the Lord will water and keep a vineyard "lest any harm (pen yipqod) it" (Isa. 27:3). In all these samples the verb depicts punishment inflicted in some way by intervention.

A third sub-group here has the idea of "intervention for testing." The word describes suffering at the hand of God as a form of testing, not punishment. Job asks, "What is man that you should visit him (wattipqedennu) every morning and test him (tibkhanennu) every moment?" (Job 7:17-18).

### 3. To Number

A third main category may have developed out of the first category of observing or examining with preparation in mind--usually for war. Numbers records, "You shall number (tipqedu) them [males, twenty years old and able to fight] by their armies" (Num. 1:3). And later David said to Joab, "Go through all the tribes . . . And number (u-piqdu) the people . . . that I may know the number of them" (2 Sam. 24:2).

### 4. To Appoint

The fourth category of meaning is close to that of "seeing to" something; but these passages emphasize the appointing of someone. For example, Genesis says, "And the captain of the guard charged (wayyipqod) Joseph with them, and he served them" (Gen. 40:4). The Law prescribed, "They shall make (u-paqedu) captains of the armies to lead the people" (Deut. 20:9). And finally, Cyrus says of Yahweh, "And he has charged me (paqad 'alay) to build a house in Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 36:23).

Summarizing the usage of the verb in the qal and niphil verbal systems, we may say that the basic ideas are "to attend to" something, examine or observe it, see to it, look for it; "to intervene," used of God's visiting with benefits or punishments or sufferings; "to number" by examining or observing for the purpose of warfare; or "to appoint" or entrust with the responsibility of overseeing or attending to someone.

### 5. To Entrust

This category is very close to the last one, except that the emphasis in these passages is more of entrusting than appointing; besides these passages use the verb in the hiphil and hophal verbal systems. The basic idea seems to be that of entrusting something or someone into another's care. The following uses show the range of this category of meaning. Genesis records that Potiphar made Joseph overseer (wayyapqidehu) over his house (Gen. 39:4). Or, the Law instructed: "You shall appoint (hapqed) the Levites over the Tabernacle of the Testimony" (Num. 1:50). Or, the prophet-historian reported that Rehoboam made shields "and committed them" (wehipqid) to the chief of the guard (1 Kings 14:27). And finally, Isaiah says, "At Michmash he will store up (yapqid) his implements" (Isa. 10:28).

### 6. To Muster

A couple of passages use the verb in the piel-hithpael verbal systems with the idea of mustering armies. This sense is clearly related to the qal system's idea of numbering the armies for the purpose of fighting, but appears to be more intensive, more immediate, that is, rousing the troops to fight. Isaiah, for example, says, "Yahweh of armies musters (mepaqqed) the army for the battle" (Isa. 13:4).

### The Old Greek Translations

The categories of meaning are too diverse for any one word to be used throughout an ancient version. In the Greek Old Testament, however, one of the basic terms used is episkeptomai, episkopeo, "to look at, take care of, oversee," and the noun episkope, "a visitation" (see Gen. 50:24, which in the Greek reads "In the visitation with which God shall visit . . ."). This verb is even used in passages like Numbers 1:3 for "taking account" or "numbering" the tribes). There is also the noun episkopos, "an overseer" (from which we get "bishop, overseer" in the New Testament, and then the derived "Episcopal" for the Church). But in some of the more developed meanings other Greek words were used as would be expected.

### Conclusion

It should be clear from this brief survey of the usage of paqad that there are common motifs than run through the uses--ideas of attending to something or seeing to something--which lead to the ideas of intervening for blessing or punishing, the enlisting of people for military intervention, or the appointing or entrusting of such responsibilities to individuals. It should be clear that no one English word can be used to translate all the uses of this verb.

Gunnel Andre, in his book [Determining the Destiny](#): PQD in the Old Testament, proposes that the basic idea behind the word is

### "to determine the destiny."

This understanding fits very well many of the passages, especially where the Lord is said to visit people for one reason or another.

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**Matthew Henry Concise - Ge 21:1-8.** Few under the Old Testament were brought into the world with such expectations as Isaac. He was in this a type of Christ, that Seed which the holy God so long promised, and holy men so long expected. He was born according to the promise, at the set time of which God had spoken. God's promised mercies will certainly come at the time which He sets, and that is the best time. Isaac means "laughter," and there was good reason for the name, Genesis 17:17; 18:13. When the Sun of comfort is risen upon the soul, it is good to remember how welcome the dawning of the day was. When Sarah received the promise, she laughed with distrust and doubt. When God gives us the mercies we began to despair of, we ought to remember with sorrow and shame our sinful distrust of his power and promise, when we were in pursuit of them. This mercy filled Sarah with joy and wonder. God's favours to his covenant people are such as surpass their own and others' thoughts and expectations: who could imagine that he should do so much for those that deserve so little, nay, for those that deserve so ill? Who would have said that God should send his Son to die for us, his Spirit to make us holy, his angels to attend us? Who would have said that such great sins should be pardoned, such mean services accepted, and such worthless worms taken into covenant? A short account of Isaac's infancy is given. God's blessing upon the nursing of children, and the preservation of them through the perils of the infant age, are to be acknowledged as signal instances of the care and tenderness of the Divine providence. See Psalms 22:9,10; Hosea 11:1,2.

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## Daily Light on the Daily Path - MORNING

The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised.

Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.—David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.—“God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”—“I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them.’ This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years.”—Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

He who promised is faithful.—Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?—“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”—The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Gen. 21:1; Ps. 62:8; 1 Sam. 30:6; Gen. 50:24; Acts 7:34, 36; Josh. 21:45; Heb. 10:23; Num. 23:19; Matt. 24:35; Isa. 40:8

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### TOO HARD FOR THE LORD? READING: Genesis 17:1–8; 18:9–15 TOO HARD FOR THE LORD?

SARAH'S INCREDULOUS laugh, 18:12, occasioned one of the great rhetorical questions of Scripture, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”, v. 14. That nothing is too difficult for the Lord is the claim not only of the historical section of the O.T., but also of the poetical and prophetic sections, Job. 42:2; Jer. 32:27. The same glorious truth is explicitly stated in the N.T. as well, Matt. 19:23–25; Mark 14:36; Luke 1:37. To the Lord, only that is impossible which is contrary to His nature. Abraham had, therefore, at least a twofold reason for believing God’s promises: (i) his God was omnipotent, and (ii) “it was impossible for God to lie”, Heb. 6:18. In Abraham’s case, God bound Himself by a covenant; see Gen. 15:18. Note the sevenfold “I will” of the Almighty God, who affirmed His covenant, 17:1–8, and compare the sevenfold “I will” of Jehovah, Exod. 6:2–8, of the Lord of hosts, 2 Sam. 7:8–14, and in connection with the new covenant, Jer. 31:31–34 R.V.

Abraham’s wife had always been barren, 11:30, but, in any case, it had now “ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women”, 18:11. But Abraham and Sarah proved that it was not too hard for the Lord to give them a son, 21:1, for He was able to bring life out of “death”, Gen. 17:17; 18:12; Rom. 4:19; Heb. 11:12. Nor was it too hard for Him to cause that the promised seed should be born exactly to time, Gen. 17:21; 18:14; 21:2. Earlier Abraham and Sarah had attempted to hurry things along, 16:1–4a. Just as Abraham had once been willing to share Sarah with other men to save his life, 12:10–16; cf. 20:2, so she had been willing to share Abraham with another woman to secure a child. But God did not need human schemes to help Him accomplish His purpose. It is significant that, after Abraham had attempted to run before God, he was told, “walk before me, and be thou perfect”, 17:1.

Abraham also discovered that it was not too hard for God to deal with the “very grievous” sin of the cities of the plain, 18:20; 19:24–28. Nor was it too hard for the Lord to save His own, for, when He turned “the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes”, He “delivered just Lot”, 2 Pet. 2:6–9. As we pray today, let us take encouragement from Jeremiah’s words, “... there is nothing too hard for thee”, Jer. 32:17.

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### Ray Pritchard on lessons Abraham learned in Genesis 21 ([Genesis 21:1-21 God's Good vs. God's Best](#))

#### What Abraham Learned From The Birth of Isaac Ge 21:1-7

##### A. He Learned That God Keeps His Word.

The most important verse in the whole chapter is verse 1. Here is what it says in the Living Bible: “Then God did as he had promised, and Sarah became pregnant and Abraham a baby son in his old age, at the time God had said.” Did you notice where God is in that verse? He’s at the beginning at he’s at the end: “Then God did as he had promised” ... “at the time God had said.” That’s why Sarah got pregnant and why Abraham is now changing diapers at the age of 100.

##### B. He Learned that God’s Timing is Always Perfect.

Approximately 25 years have passed since God first spoke to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees. During that time Abraham had many adventures and many spiritual ups and downs. Sometimes he fervently believed God, but often he doubted. Time and again God appeared to him to remind him of his promise. I’m sure he often wondered why God was taking so long to keep his Word. Let the story of Isaac’s birth remind you of this truth: God is never early and he is never late. He’s also not in a hurry and he doesn’t work according to our timetable. How often do we fret and fuss and fume when God delays his answers to our prayers. How much better to say, “Lord, let your will be done in your own time in your own way.”

##### C. He Learned that God’s Power is Unlimited.

This is Paul’s point in Romans 4:21, where he says that Abraham believed God’s promise because he was “fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.” To use Paul’s terms he wanted both Abraham and Sarah to be “as good as dead” physically so that when the child was born, only God could get the credit. No one could say to Abraham at the age of 100, “Oh, you rascal!” because Abraham did nothing but believe what God had said. When Abraham held little Isaac in his arms, he knew that nothing was too hard for the Lord.

##### He Learned That God Can Turn Sorrow Into Joy.

In Genesis 17 & 18 we are told that both Abraham and Sarah laughed in unbelief when God promised that within a year Sarah would give birth to child. But when the year had passed, Isaac was born. His name means “laughter.” It was both a statement of total joy and a reminder that God’s promises are no laughing matter. Has God made a promise to you? If so, you may be sure that he will keep it. You may waver, but he will not waver. You may doubt but that will not stop God. This morning your eyes may fill with tears, but remember the word of the Lord: “Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy” (Psalm 126:5).

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**UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS** - A couple was expecting their first child. The wife was given a test that would reveal the baby’s sex. The doctor asked the mother-to-be if she wanted to be called with the news. “Just mail it,” she said. “My husband and I want to share this moment together.” A few days later an envelope from the doctor arrived. The couple made a special evening of it and dined at their favorite restaurant. Finally they opened the letter. It was the doctor’s bill! We’ve all faced the disappointment of unfulfilled expectations, but Abraham and Sarah were about to have their expectations finally fulfilled.

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## Rod Mattoon - Genesis Examples of Waiting on God

Waiting for a Sign to Leave—God shut Noah in the ark and Noah waited on God for the time to exit. 7:16  
Waiting for a Son to Love—Abraham waited for God to give him a son. 21:5  
Waiting for a Spouse for a Lord—Abraham's servant waited on God to show him the wife for Isaac. 24:14  
Waiting for a Seed from the Lord—Rachel waited on God to open her womb. 30:22

## The Faithfulness of God in Genesis

In Protecting—God promises not to destroy the earth again with a world wide flood. 9:15  
In Persevering—God will keep His covenant with Abraham. 18:19  
In Providing—God is faithful in giving Sarah a child as He said. 21:1  
In Performing—God is faithful to keep His word with Jacob. 28:15  
In Presenting Himself—Joseph tells his brothers that God will visit them. 50:24

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## Gregory Brown summarizes Genesis 21 - HOW TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S PROMISES

- [Click here for exposition of Genesis 21 and an explanation of each of the 8 points listed below](#)

God has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2Pe 1:3+), and one of the things he gave us is many great and precious promises (2Pe 1:4+). The Christian life should be a continual unwrapping of these promises to the glory of God and the benefit of others and ourselves. In Genesis 21, we learn many principles about experiencing God's promises:

1. We Experience God's Promises because of the Lord's Graciousness
2. We Experience God's Promises because God Is Faithful to His Word
3. We Experience God's Promises in God's Timing
4. We Experience God's Promises When We Are Obedient
5. We Experience God's Promises When We Are Weak
6. We Experience God's Promises When We Deny Our Flesh
7. We Experience God's Promises to Glorify God among Unbelievers
8. We Experience God's Promises to Increase Our Worship of Him

## Genesis 21:2 So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him.

- **conceived:** 2Ki 4:16,17 Lu 1:24,25,36 Ac 7:8 Ga 4:22 Heb 11:11
- **at the appointed time:** Ge 17:19,21, Ge 18:10,14 Ro 9:9
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## THE GREAT PHYSICIAN NEVER MISSES AN APPOINTMENT

**So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him-** God does not work according to our human timetable, but His sovereign timetable, so now God shows up some 25 years later!

Hebrews 11:11+ says "By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful Who had promised." Her faith was in the Faithful One! There were some times when her faith was at low ebb, but in the end she held fast to God's faithfulness and His promise. As recorded earlier, God had asked Abraham "Is anything too difficult for the LORD? **At the appointed time I will return to you**, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son." (Ge 18:14+, cf Ge 17:19,21, Ge 18:10). God kept His Word, like He always does and He fulfilled His promise in His perfect timing (which is not always our "timing")! They had to wait some 25 years, but their faith was rewarded (Heb 6:12+, cf Heb 10:36+). Isaac would be Sarah's only son, but he was the son of promise who would assure that the line of Messiah would remain intact. Abraham is finally beginning to live up to the meaning of his name "Father of a multitude" as at least he now had two sons!

**Parunak on old age** (zaqun) - This word occurs only in Genesis, here and in Ge 21:7 (with reference to Abraham at the birth of Isaac), and Ge 37:3; 44:20 (describing Joseph and Benjamin respectively as dear to Jacob). The issue here is not childlessness. The references to Jacob show that it was considered a special blessing for a man to have a son in his old age, independent of whether the man had other sons already or not. It would be a comfort to him as he grows feeble to see the continuity of life. ([Notes on Gen 21](#))

The phrase **at the appointed time** reminds me of Galatians 4:4+ which says "when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law." So here in Genesis we see the promised son who will be in the line of the Promised One, the Messiah! All perfectly timed according to God's sovereign orchestration.

**THOUGHT** - God is always on time, even though from our perspective we sometimes think He is late in moving in our lives. I was born again at age 39 and many times have wondered, "Lord, why not sooner? It would have saved me a lot of sinful behavior!" But 39 was His perfect timing. His timing is perfect in your life too beloved, whatever you may be going through. As Isaiah wrote "Yet **those who WAIT FOR** the LORD Will gain new strength (MEANS EXCHANGE OUR STRENGTH FOR HIS STRENGTH); They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary." (Isaiah 40:31+)

**Bob Deffinbaugh:** I have a friend who is an insurance agent, and he would be quick to tell me that an "act of God" in his line of work is a disaster over

which man has no control. Isaac was an "act of God" in a very different sense. He was the result of divine intervention in the lives of Abraham and Sarah, both of whom were too old to bear children. It was the fulfillment of a promise made long before the birth of the child and often reiterated to Abraham (cf. Genesis 12:2; 15:4; 17:15-16; 18:10) ([Genesis 21:1-34 - What Happens When Christians Mess Up?](#))

**W H Griffith-Thomas** writes "Abraham "Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated ([katanoeo](#) - speaks of intense perception - giving attentive or careful scrutiny to the fact )" implying that his faith disregarded the physical circumstances which, humanly speaking, might make it impossible for God to do as He had promised. According to the Revised Version, which omits the negative, and reads, "He considered his own body now dead," we have a still more striking suggestion as to his faith, for it implies that he deliberately thought on the subject of his own age and circumstances, and, notwithstanding this careful consideration, he exercised faith in God and His Word. And now at length this faith was justified, and God was true to His promise." ([Genesis 21:1-21 Joy and Sorrow](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** writes that "Trusting God's promises not only gives you a blessing at the end, but it gives you a blessing while you are waiting. Just as Olympic athletes develop their skills as they practice hard and long before the big event, so God's children grow in godliness and faith as they wait for the fulfillment of God's promises. Faith is a journey, and each happy destination is the beginning of a new journey. When God wants to build our patience, He gives us promises, sends us trials, and tells us to trust Him (James 1:1-8+).....Abraham and Sarah experienced God's resurrection power in their lives because they yielded to Him and believed His Word. Faith in God's promises releases God's power (Eph. 3:20-21; Phil. 3:10), "for no word from God shall be void of power" (Luke 1:37ASV).....You may wonder if what you do is really important to God and His work in this world; but it is, if you are faithful to trust His Word and do His will. The next time you feel defeated and discouraged, remember Abraham and Sarah; and remind yourself that *faith* and *promise* go together. God keeps His promises and gives you the power you need to do what He wants you to do. No matter how long you may have to wait, you can trust God to accomplish His purposes."

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**Charles Swindoll - PERFECT TIMING** ([Faith for the Journey](#))

He that believes does not make haste,  
but waits patiently till the times of refreshment come,  
and dares trust God for the morrow.  
JEREMY TAYLOR

The LORD kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised. She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God had said it would. Ge 21:1-2

GOD ISN'T in a hurry, so He didn't have a problem waiting a quarter century before fulfilling His promise and allowing Abraham and Sarah to conceive. Who knows why He waited that long? It was His call; His timing is perfect. Personally, I believe Abraham would not have been ready any earlier. Abraham needed spiritual maturity, so the Lord waited.

We view all events from the limited perspective of time. It's like trying to drive a car while looking through a straw. We're down here at street level, and our vision barely takes in the landscape. God, however, isn't constrained by time or human perspective. He views events on earth from above, taking in the whole panorama of time from Genesis 1:1 to the end of things, and He sees all events at once. While we hurry because we might be late for something, the Lord doesn't need to rush, because He maintains complete control over time. He has prearranged the unfolding of His plans down to less than a nanosecond.

For us, within the flow of time, waiting often feels like an eternity. When I'm with people I don't know well, I sometimes ask, "Are you waiting for anything?" Invariably, they have an answer. Everybody I know is waiting for something. Waiting for relief. Waiting for an answer to prayer. Waiting for a dream to be fulfilled. The people who have grown deep in their relationship with God have learned to wait with anticipation instead of worry. They know that God keeps His promises, so they don't fret over whether the fulfillment will come but only when it will take place.

REFLECT What are you waiting for right now? What does it mean to you that God is always on time?

This is what the LORD says: "At just the right time, I will respond to you. On the day of salvation I will help you." Isa 49:8

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## **Promises, Promises**

Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. —Genesis 21:2

Today's Scripture : Ge 12:1-4; 21:1-7

When people say with a sigh, "Promises, promises," it's often when they've been disappointed by someone who failed to keep a commitment. The more it happens, the greater the sadness and the deeper the sigh.

Have you ever felt that God doesn't keep His promises? It's an attitude that can subtly develop over time.

After God promised Abraham, "I will make you a great nation" (Gen. 12:2), 25 years elapsed before the birth of his son Isaac (Ge 21:5). During that period, Abraham questioned God about his lack of a child (Ge 15:2), and he even resorted to fathering a son through his wife's handmaiden (Ge 16:15).

Yet, through the ups and downs, God kept reminding Abraham of His promise to give him a child, while urging him to walk faithfully with Him and believe (Ge 17:1-2).

When we claim one of God's promises in the Bible, whether it is for peace of mind, courage, or provision of our needs, we place ourselves in His hands and on His schedule. As we wait, it may at times seem as if the Lord has forgotten us. But trust embraces the reality that when we stand on a promise of God, He remains faithful. The assurance is in our hearts, and the timing is in His hands. By: David C. McCasland (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Standing on the promises that cannot fail,



When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,  
By the living Word of God I shall prevail,  
Standing on the promises of God.  
—Carter

All of God's promises are backed by His wisdom, love, and power.

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## ISAAC'S BIRTH

Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age (Genesis 21:2).

In John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, [Giant Despair captured Christian](#) and Hopeful and held them as prisoners in Doubting Castle. They escaped when Christian remembered he had the key called Promise.

Like Christian, we forget God's guarantees. We can't imagine a world without wordmongers who write worthless warranties and politicians who separate promise and performance.

God made promises in the garden and after the Flood, but his words to senior citizens Abraham and Sarah make up the opening chapter of God's promise book to Israel. God assured them that they would be proud parents and that from their lone child a great nation would be born.

Isaac and the nation of Israel escaped the womb a long time ago, and it might be easy to dismiss a God who announces his intentions only to those very old and hard of hearing. We might accuse Him of empty promises except for another child of promise—Jesus Christ.

The long-awaited Bethlehem Baby was the official heir to God's kingdom, and He unselfishly passed on the key called Promise.

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## Theodore Epp - GOD LOVES ORDINARY PEOPLE Genesis 21:1-7

The birth of Isaac was the second great step toward the fulfillment of God's purpose. The first was the selection of Abraham to be the father of the chosen nation.

Isaac's birth marked a crisis in connection with the history of the chosen line of Christ. Even though Ishmael had been born 13 years earlier, God made it clear to Abraham that "in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Gen. 21:12).

This was the crisis concerning the line of Christ. God had promised Abraham a son, but none had been given.

Abraham had gone in to Hagar, Sarah's handmaid, and a son had resulted from their union—but not the son of God's choice. But at this time in Genesis, God provided the son He had promised.

Isaac led a quiet, peaceful life. He was the ordinary son of a great father, and he was the ordinary father of a great son. Thus, God calls Himself the God of Isaac. The God of Isaac is the God of ordinary people—those involved in the routine of daily living.

Isaac's life was not filled with glory and spectacular events. Yet he had a very meaningful life. He filled his place in life with complete contentment, not looking for the spectacular.

Therefore, a study of Isaac's life will greatly benefit us because most of us are ordinary people desiring to please God in the routine of daily living.

"For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

## Related Devotionals from Theodore Epp...

### LESSONS FROM ISAAC'S BIRTH Romans 8:31-39

From the account of Isaac's birth there are many important lessons we should learn. Five are extremely significant.

First, God is in no hurry to work out His plans. He is never too late; He is always on time. Man frets and worries and is always in a hurry to work out his plans.

Second, God is almighty. Nothing can hinder or thwart the outworking of God's purpose. Abraham was old and Sarah was barren, but these obstacles presented no difficulty to God.

Third, God is faithful. He promised Sarah a son. From the standpoint of human reasoning, it seemed like a foolish promise. However, the promise of God was sure because He is always faithful in keeping His promises.

Because God's word is absolutely sure, in times of doubt and discouragement we need to come to the Word of God to check our spiritual lives and to remind ourselves of His faithfulness.

Although we may not be able to understand how God can fulfill His promises to us, our attitude should be: If God says it, that settles it.

Fourth, faith is tested so it might be proven to be genuine. A faith that cannot endure trial is really no faith at all.

Fifth, God has a set time for everything. It is important that we learn this lesson well. God has an appointed time for accomplishing His will. Nothing is left to chance.

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born" (Eccles. 3:1,2).

### GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES Luke 1:26-38

Isaac was the child of promise. There were progressive promises made to Abraham, and at first there was some doubting on his part.

But in the New Testament, when God recounted Abraham's life, He completely passed over the fact that Abraham doubted at first (see Heb. 11:11). So also, our sins are blotted out once they have come under the blood of Jesus Christ.

Isaac was a child of miracle because Sarah's womb was "dead." In describing Abraham, the Apostle Paul said, "Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither the deadness of Sarah's womb" (Rom. 4:19).

At first Sarah did not think there was any possibility she could bear a child, but God asked, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14).

This reminds us of the virgin birth of Christ. When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her she would have a son and that she should call His name Jesus, Mary asked, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luke 1:34).

Gabriel assured Mary, "With God nothing shall be impossible" (Lk 1:37). Then Mary responded, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Lk 1:38). Let us also count on the fact that God is able to do what He has promised.

"Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant" (1 Kings 8:56).

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## Streams in the Desert - May 24

"Sarah bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him." (Gen. 21:2.)

THE counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations" (Psalm 33:11). But we must be prepared to wait God's time. God has His set times. It is not for us to know them; indeed, we cannot know them; we must wait for them.

If God had told Abraham in Haran that he must wait for thirty years until he pressed the promised child to his bosom, his heart would have failed him. So, in gracious love, the length of the weary years was hidden, and only as they were nearly spent, and there were only a few more months to wait, God told him that "according to the time of life, Sarah shall have a son." (Gen. 18:14.)

The set time came at last; and then the laughter that filled the patriarch's home made the aged pair forget the long and weary vigil.

Take heart, waiting one, thou waitest for One who cannot disappoint thee; and who will not be five minutes behind the appointed moment: ere long "your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

Ah, happy soul, when God makes thee laugh! Then sorrow and crying shall flee away forever, as darkness before the dawn.—Selected.

It is not for us who are passengers, to meddle with the chart and with the compass. Let that all-skilled Pilot alone with His own work.—Hall.

"Some things cannot be done in a day. God does not make a sunset glory in a moment, but for days may be massing the mist out of which He builds His palaces beautiful in the west."

"Some glorious morn—but when? Ah, who shall say?  
The steepest mountain will become a plain,  
And the parched land be satisfied with rain.  
The gates of brass all broken; iron bars,  
Transfigured, form a ladder to the stars.  
Rough places plain, and crooked ways all straight,  
For him who with a patient heart can wait.  
These things shall be on God's appointed day:  
It may not be tomorrow—yet it may."

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## Genesis 21:3 Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac.

- Ge 21:6,12 Ge 17:19 22:2 Jos 24:3 Mt 1:2 Ac 7:8 Ro 9:7 Heb 11:18
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## ABRAHAM NAMES HIS SON ISAAC

**Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac** ([Yitschaq](#)) - Abraham, not Sarah, gave him the name **Isaac**, but in actuality, God named him. Abraham was simply being obedient to God's instruction that "you shall call his name Isaac." (Ge 17:19, 21). Isaac's name would be a continual reminder to Sarah of her faithless laugh (Ge 18:12), but even more it would be a reminder of her joy filled laugh at God's faithfulness (Ge 21:6).

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**Isaac** ([03327](#))(Yitschaq from [tsachaq](#) - to laugh. His name means "he laughs" "While the name "Isaac" (Genesis 17:19) arose out of Abraham's incredulity, way-yiṣḥāq (Genesis 17:17), it could yet become a symbol of blessing (Genesis 21:6) and ultimately an identification for the entire nation of Israel (Amos 7:9, 16)." (J Barton Payne)

**Gilbrant** - Isaac was the only son of Abraham and Sarah, and was chosen by God as the receiver of the covenant promises. His name is derived from tsāchaq, a verb that means "to laugh" and is explained as a play on words. When God announced that Sarah would become pregnant and have a child at age ninety, both she (Ge 18:12f) and Abraham (Ge 17:17) responded with laughter. But when the promise was fulfilled, Sarah exclaimed, "God has made laughter for me, so that all who hear will laugh with me" (Ge 21:6).

The story of Isaac began before his birth, when the Lord promised Abram that he would become the father of a great nation (Gen. 12:2). Although God repeated and expanded the promise several times over the next few years, it was not until Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 that the child was actually born to her of her own body. (Ishmael legally was her child, though not biologically.) Isaac was circumcised at the age of eight days, as God had commanded (Gen. 21:4), the first person to be circumcised on the eighth day according to God's instructions.

Later, at the time of Isaac's weaning (perhaps at the age of two or three), Abraham gave a great feast in celebration. This, however, led to a split in the household, because Ishmael was mocking his younger half-brother, perhaps resentful over being displaced as the eldest offspring. Ishmael and his mother Hagar were eventually dismissed from Abraham's camp and left to become the start of another group of tribes (Gen. 21:8-21).

The central incident in the life of Isaac took place when God asked Abraham to offer his son as a sacrifice on a mountain in the land of Moriah (Gen. 22:1-19). Isaac's age is not given, although Josephus (*Antiquities* 1:13:2) says he was twenty-five. Many commentators think he was in his teenage years, because he was described as a "lad," able to carry the wood for the offering up the mountainside. He was probably old enough to put up some resistance, but he seems to have submitted willingly, even when Abraham bound him and prepared to kill him. The whole episode served as the final test of Abraham's faith, demonstrating that he was willing to give up even his son at God's request. Hebrews 11:19 points out that Abraham believed God could raise Isaac from the dead, had the sacrifice been carried out.

Sarah died at Hebron when Isaac was thirty-six years old (Gen. 23:1). The next event recorded was the arrangement for a wife for Isaac, one selected by God, who guided Abraham's oldest, most trusted servant to the right woman (Gen. 24). In a poignant note, Gen. 24:67 records the fact that Isaac took Rebekah as his wife and loved her, and was then comforted after his mother's death. His marriage took place when he was forty years old (Gen. 25:20).

Before his death, Abraham devolved his estate, giving the bulk of his possessions to Isaac, while sending Ishmael and the sons of Keturah away with generous presents (Gen. 25:5f). When Abraham passed away, Isaac and Ishmael met for the last time recorded in the OT, to bury their father in the cave at Machpelah (Gen. 25:9).

Like his parents, Isaac did not find it easy to produce children. It took concentrated times of prayer to enable Rebekah to conceive a child—then God gave her twins (Gen. 25:21f). Esau and Jacob were born when Isaac was sixty years old (Gen. 25:26) and developed into young men with drastically different personalities. Esau was a robust man who loved the outdoors, and he became Isaac's favorite, though a prophecy at their birth had designated Jacob as the leader of the two (Gen. 25:23). Jacob was content to stay around the tents, though he had a more aggressive desire for the place of prominence. He became his mother's favorite. The rivalry surfaced when Esau bartered his birthright to Jacob for a pot of stew (Gen. 25:29-34).

Some of the events of Abraham's life played out again in the story of Isaac. Like his father, Isaac reacted to a famine by moving to a more prosperous spot. He chose Gerar, anachronistically called a city of the Philistines (in an area which would later be politically dominated by the Philistines). He evidently considered a move to Egypt, but God appeared to him (the first time recorded) and warned against such a course. The Lord also repeated the basic elements of his Covenant with Abraham (Gen. 26:1-5). Like Abraham, Isaac was afraid that the political leader of Gerar, Abimelech, would murder him to take his wife for himself. So he introduced Rebekah as his sister (which was partially true) and maintained the ruse until Abimelech saw him caressing his wife. It was undoubtedly humiliating to be lectured on integrity by a pagan king (Gen. 26:9ff).

Despite his lack of faith, Isaac enjoyed God's blessing during his stay at Gerar. His flocks and herds increased so much that he became an object of envy among the locals. Eventually, the king asked him to move on (Gen. 26:16), revoking his status as resident alien. The herdsmen of Gerar had begun filling in some of the wells which Abraham had dug (which legally belonged to Isaac), as a campaign of harassment against Isaac. Rather than start a conflict, Isaac moved farther away until his tormenters no longer bothered the wells (Gen. 26:15-22). Eventually, he returned to [Beersheba](#), where God appeared to him once again and reaffirmed his Covenant (Gen. 26:23ff). He built an altar there and seems to have prospered, to the point where the leaders of Gerar came and asked to make a formal peace treaty (Gen. 26:25-33).

His happiness was marred by the marriage of Esau to two Hittite young women (Gen. 26:34f). By this time, Isaac was at least 100 years old. He had grown blind, and he suspected that the time of his death was near. So he made arrangements to give his final blessing to his sons, his legal devolution of property statement. Though God had made it clear that Jacob was to be the head of the family in the next generation, Isaac planned to give that blessing to Esau. This was likely in accord with the normal method of inheritance, in which two portions went to the firstborn, perhaps simply because of his favoritism toward Esau. But a hastily arranged stratagem devised by Rebekah fooled Isaac into giving the blessing to Jacob instead (Gen. 27).

When Esau discovered what had happened, he swore to wait for Isaac's death, then kill Jacob (Gen. 27:41). To prevent this, Rebekah persuaded Isaac to allow Jacob to go away to Haran, where he could find a wife from among their relatives.

The final appearance of Isaac in the account is in Gen. 35:27ff, where it notes that Isaac apparently lived many years longer, long enough to be with Jacob again when he returned from Haran. He died at the age of 180, the most of any patriarch. Esau and Jacob helped in his burial (Gen. 35:29).

A distinctive name for God appears in connection with Isaac. In Gen. 31:42, 53, He is called the "Fear of Isaac." This evidently refers to the deep reverence and fear with which Isaac approached the Lord.

Isaac is mentioned frequently in later portions of the OT, almost always in connection with Abraham and Jacob. The combination of the three names occurs twenty-three times in the OT and seven times in the NT. The descendants of Isaac were to live in the constant awareness that the God who had made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Israel was still faithful to his word, unchanging in character. Elijah, for instance, prayed for fire to fall from heaven by saying, "O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word" (1 Ki. 18:36).

Isaac appears several times in the NT. Hebrews 11:20 lists him as an example of faith. His sacrifice by Abraham is mentioned twice, with most of the emphasis laid on Abraham's faith (Heb. 11:17f; Jam. 2:21). Isaac is contrasted with Ishmael as the child of God's promise, rather than the child produced by fleshly plan (Rom. 9:7, 10; Gal. 4:28). And in Luke 20:37, Jesus uses Isaac as part of the argument for the resurrection, since God is described in Exo. 3:6 as Isaac's God in the present tense.

**Yitschaq - 112x/105 verses** - Gen. 17:19; Gen. 17:21; Gen. 21:3; Gen. 21:4; Gen. 21:5; Gen. 21:8; Gen. 21:10; Gen. 21:12; Gen. 22:2; Gen. 22:3; Gen. 22:6; Gen. 22:7; Gen. 22:9; Gen. 24:4; Gen. 24:14; Gen. 24:62; Gen. 24:63; Gen. 24:64; Gen. 24:66; Gen.

24:67; Gen. 25:5; Gen. 25:6; Gen. 25:9; Gen. 25:11; Gen. 25:19; Gen. 25:20; Gen. 25:21; Gen. 25:26; Gen. 25:28; Gen. 26:1; Gen. 26:6; Gen. 26:8; Gen. 26:9; Gen. 26:12; Gen. 26:16; Gen. 26:17; Gen. 26:18; Gen. 26:19; Gen. 26:20; Gen. 26:25; Gen. 26:27; Gen. 26:31; Gen. 26:32; Gen. 26:35; Gen. 27:1; Gen. 27:5; Gen. 27:20; Gen. 27:21; Gen. 27:22; Gen. 27:26; Gen. 27:30; Gen. 27:32; Gen. 27:33; Gen. 27:37; Gen. 27:39; Gen. 27:46; Gen. 28:1; Gen. 28:5; Gen. 28:6; Gen. 28:8; Gen. 28:13; Gen. 31:18; Gen. 31:42; Gen. 31:53; Gen. 32:9; Gen. 35:12; Gen. 35:27; Gen. 35:28; Gen. 35:29; Gen. 46:1; Gen. 48:15; Gen. 48:16; Gen. 49:31; Gen. 50:24; Exod. 2:24; Exod. 3:6; Exod. 3:15; Exod. 3:16; Exod. 4:5; Exod. 6:3; Exod. 6:8; Exod. 32:13; Exod. 33:1; Lev. 26:42; Num. 32:11; Deut. 1:8; Deut. 6:10; Deut. 9:5; Deut. 9:27; Deut. 29:13; Deut. 30:20; Deut. 34:4; Jos. 24:3; Jos. 24:4; 1 Ki. 18:36; 2 Ki. 13:23; 1 Chr. 1:28; 1 Chr. 1:34; 1 Chr. 16:16; 1 Chr. 29:18; 2 Chr. 30:6; Ps. 105:9; Jer. 33:26; Amos 7:9; Amos 7:16

**Isaac in the NT** - Matt. 1:2; Matt. 8:11; Matt. 22:32; Mk. 12:26; Lk. 3:34; Lk. 13:28; Lk. 20:37; Acts 3:13; Acts 7:8; Acts 7:32; Rom. 9:7; Rom. 9:10; Gal. 4:28; Heb. 11:9; Heb. 11:17; Heb. 11:18; Heb. 11:20; Jas. 2:21

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## **Allen Ross - Biblical Names Genesis 21 "Isaac"**

The record of the birth and naming of Isaac is found in Genesis 21. According to the Bible, after waiting for ages for an heir, Abraham and Sarah finally have a child, a son. The event was filled with joy, as almost all births are; but since these parents were beyond the age of having a child, this birth was truly a Godsend.

The name "Isaac" sounds a little different in Hebrew: Yiskhaq, pronounced Yits-khok. It is a form of the verb, as most names were in the Old Testament. The "root" is the verb sahaq (tsah-khak), "to laugh." The verb form of the name is an imperfect tense form, and could be translated "he laughs," or even "may he laugh." In some uses of the name a subject 'el is added, meaning "God laughs." The idea would be that God was taking great pleasure in the birth of the child.

But the motif of laughter in the Abraham stories is brought into the account of the naming more specifically. Sarah says "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me" (Ge 21:6). The very idea that Sarah in her old age would have had the pleasure of having a child! It was not simply a joyous occasion, it was amazing--and people would laugh with Sarah about the turn of events. So the name came to signify the joy of the parents as well as the basic meaning of God's joy.

And yet there was a darker side to the meaning of the name as well. The name is the verb, "he laughs," but Sarah explains the significance of the name with the noun "laughter." The actual spelling of the name, this verb, shows up in the stories of the announcement of the birth to Abraham (Ge 17:17) and to Abraham with Sarah listening (Ge 18:12). The verb form "he laughs" and with the conjunction "and he laughed" is the one that is used for Abraham (Ge 17:17). "She laughs" or "and she laughed" would spell the verb with a "t"--tishaq. But in both passages the point is made--a word from God was laughed at by Abraham and Sarah. To them it was impossible, even ludicrous. But God had the last laugh, fulfilling his word to them. He is able to do the impossible.

In the 18th chapter Sarah laughed within herself. But the supernatural visitor, the Lord, asked, "Why did Sarah laugh?" This is a gentle, but firm rebuke. Why should anyone laugh at what God says he is going to do? Of course, Sarah denied it, because she was afraid. Then the Lord said, "No, you did laugh." And his rebuke explained with the rhetorical question that nothing was too hard for the Lord (Ge 18:14). The verb translated "hard" is literally "extraordinary, surpassing, wonderful." Is anything too amazing for the Lord? He delights in doing the impossible. And he desires to tell us what he is about to do. But like Abraham and Sarah we laugh at the word--we may not actually laugh, but we shake our heads in amazement and in a certain amount of disbelief, and live on without much expectation. We think, "Would that it were true." And when it happens, we are surprised and amazed--and if spiritually sensitive, rebuked for our unbelief.

The name Isaac reminds us all as it did the parents that God is able to do the impossible, and so people should trust him. Abraham and Sarah were believers, but they staggered at the prospect. We have the records from centuries of events of how God has answered prayer and fulfilled his will. And yet we still stagger at his word, not fully convinced he can do or will do the impossible. But when it happens, we are filled with joy. This is the significance of "Isaac"--"he laughs."

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## **QUESTION - [Who was Isaac in the Bible?](#)**

**ANSWER:** The name Isaac, which means "he laughs," was derived from his parents' reaction when God told Abraham that he, at 100 years old, and his wife Sarah, at the age of 90, would have a son (Genesis 17:17; 18:12). Isaac was Abraham's second son; his first, Ishmael, was by Sarah's maidservant, Hagar, as a result of Sarah's impatience to give Abraham a family (Genesis 16:1-2). As soon as Isaac was weaned, Sarah insisted that Abraham send Hagar and her son away, ensuring the family inheritance would go to Isaac (Genesis 21:3-12).

Many years later, Isaac was taken by his father up a mountain where Abraham, in obedience to God, prepared to sacrifice him (Genesis 22:1-14). Abraham, Isaac, and two of Abraham's servants loaded up donkeys and made a three-day journey to Mount Moriah. Leaving his servants behind, Abraham and Isaac carried up the wood, knife, and materials for the fire, saying they would worship and then return. Curious, Isaac asked about the location of the lamb for the offering. Abraham told Isaac that God Himself would provide the lamb. Abraham proceeded to build the altar and tie up Isaac to lay atop it. The Bible gives no indication that Isaac resisted. As Abraham prepared to kill Isaac, an angel stopped him. Abraham then saw a ram in a thicket and offered it instead. There is an interesting analogy in this account that mirrors God giving up His only Son, Jesus, to be sacrificed. God did indeed provide the Lamb—literally for Abraham and Isaac then and figuratively for all of humanity willing to accept the sacrifice of Jesus (John 1:29; Hebrews 10).

Sarah died when Isaac was in his late thirties. After her death, Abraham sent one of his servants to find a wife for Isaac from their clan, as Abraham was determined his son should not have a Canaanite for a wife (Genesis 24:1-51). Abraham's servant prayed to have success in finding a suitable wife, and God directed his quest. When he was forty, Isaac married his cousin Rebekah (Genesis 25:20). The Bible tells us that "he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" (Genesis 24:67).

At age sixty, Isaac became the father of twins—Jacob and Esau. While Isaac favored his elder son, Esau, Rebekah's favorite was Jacob. This caused great rivalry within the family and led to Jacob, the younger son, receiving the inheritance and his father's blessing that should have gone to Esau, the older son, after Isaac and Esau were deceived by Rebekah and Jacob. Isaac became aware of the deceit but could not revoke his blessing on Jacob (Genesis 27).

Rebekah learned of Esau's plan to kill Jacob after Isaac's death and convinced Isaac to send Jacob to her brother Laban to find a wife among her relatives. Isaac again blessed Jacob before sending him on his way, praying that God would give Jacob the blessing given to Abraham.

Abraham died when Isaac was about seventy-five and left everything to him (Genesis 25:5). Though Ishmael had been sent away when Isaac was weaned, both Isaac and Ishmael buried Abraham (Genesis 25:9). The Bible does not talk specifically about their relationship, and the descendants of Ishmael and those of Isaac have historically been enemies; animosity remains to this day. But it is interesting to note that the two men apparently united in mourning their father.

When there was a famine in the land, God appeared to Isaac and told him not to go to Egypt but to remain in the land. God promised to be with Isaac and bless him and give the land to Isaac's descendants. God reaffirmed the covenant He had made with Abraham, saying that He would make his descendants as numerous as the stars and bless all the nations of the earth through them (Genesis 26:1–6).

Isaac remained in the land of Canaan. But, similar to what his father had done years before his birth, in fear, Isaac presented Rebekah as his sister rather than his wife (Genesis 26:7–11). But, just as God had protected Sarah, He also protected Rebekah. God blessed Isaac with bountiful crops and wealth, so much so that the Philistines became jealous and stopped up the water wells Abraham had dug. The Philistine king asked Isaac to move, and Isaac complied, moving from place to place digging new wells when his enemies quarreled with him over the water. The Philistine king soon recognized that Isaac had been blessed by God and made a treaty of peace between them (Genesis 26:26–31).

Isaac died at the age of 180 and was buried by both his sons. God affirmed His covenant with Isaac's son, Jacob, whom He renamed Israel.

Though much of Isaac's story is narrative without many readily applicable lessons to our lives, we do see in Isaac a heart surrendered to God's will. For example, he was obedient to Abraham and Sarah and apparently trusting of their guidance. He obeyed when God told him to remain in the land despite the famine and the attacks of his enemies. When Isaac discovered that he had been deceived by his son Jacob, he accepted and submitted to what he recognized as God's will, in spite of it being completely against the accepted tradition at the time. Just as Isaac discovered, we, too, must remember that God's ways are not our ways or His thoughts the same as ours (Isaiah 55:8). Isaac's story also demonstrates God's faithfulness to His promises—He had made a covenant with Abraham and would continue to uphold it with Isaac and with Isaac's son Jacob.

Though there are no great achievements to speak of concerning Isaac's life, it was Isaac whom God chose to continue the covenant line, the same line that would produce the Messiah, Jesus. And for many generations the Jewish nation described their God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Indeed, there are several passages of Scripture where God describes Himself in the same manner (e.g., Exodus 3:6). Isaac is listed with the other patriarchs and has a place in God's kingdom (Luke 13:28). And there is no greater honor we can hope to achieve. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### **Oswald Chambers - God's Programme for His Progeny** (Genesis 21:3-8) (from Not Knowing Where)

What Abraham did for his son was in accordance with God's programme for him, not according to Abraham's ways for him (cf. Proverbs 22:6). God has a distinct programme for every child born into this world, legitimately or illegitimately. If the programme is unheeded, the reason is that parents do not care about God's programme being fulfilled, but it will be fulfilled all the same. In spiritual matters be careful to note God's programme for His progeny in you. Is the Son of God formed in me? Have I heard God's promise about Him? He "shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35), that is, He has nothing to do with my natural abilities. There is no relation between the promise of God for the life He forms in us by regeneration and our personal private ambitions, those ambitions are completely transfigured. I have to heed the promise of God for my child, be it a child of nature or of grace, and see that I do not try and make God's gift fulfil my own ends. If I do, I become cruel in my judgment of God and God has to be very severe with me.

Suppose that God sees fit to put you into desolation when He begins the forming of His Son in you, what does it matter to you, and what ought it to matter? God's programme was to look after Sarah only until the child of His promise was born, and all He is after in you and me is the forming of His Son in us. When He drives the sword through the natural, we begin to whine and say "Oh, I can't go through that," but we must go through it. If we refuse to make our natural life obedient to the Son of God in us, the Son of God will be put to death in us. We have to put on the new man† in our human nature to fit the life of the Son of God in us, and see that in the outer courts of our bodily lives we conduct our life for Him.

"God hath made me to laugh." Sarah's hilarity is the joy of God sounding through the upset equilibrium of a mind that scarcely expected the promise to be fulfilled. The son of Sarah is himself a type of the Son of Mary, and in each case the promise is limited through a particular woman, and through an apparently impossible, yet actual birth. Fancy making everything depend on that haughty, inclined-to-be unstable, not amazingly-superb-in-rectitude Sarah! How haphazard God seems, not sometimes but always. God's ways turn man's thinking upside down.

Verse 7 is indicative of the amazement that comes when God's promise is fulfilled. What is known as the dark side of Christian experience is not really Christian experience at all, it is God putting the rot of sacramental death through the natural virtues in order to produce something in keeping with His Son, and all our whining and misery ought to be the laughter of Sarah—Now I see what God wants! Instead of that, we moon in corners and gloom before God, and say "I am afraid I am not sanctified." If you fight against the desolation, you will kill the life of God in you; yield to it, and God's fulfilment will amaze you. It is in the periods of desolation that the sickly pietists talk about "What I am suffering!" They are in the initial stages and have not begun to realise God's purpose. God is working out the manifestation of the fulfilment of His promise, and when it is fulfilled there is never any thought of self or of self-consideration anywhere.

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#### **Genesis 21:4 Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.**

- Ge 17:10-12 Ex 12:48 Lev 12:3 De 10:16 Lu 1:6,59 2:21 Joh 7:22,23 Ac 7:8
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### **Related Passages:**

Genesis 17:10-12+ "This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male

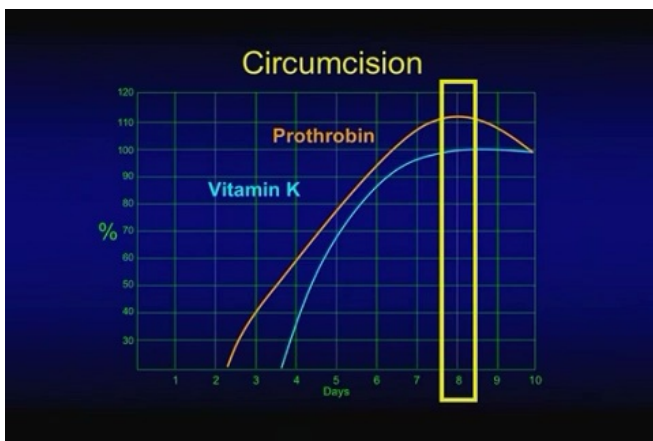
among you shall be circumcised. 11 "And **you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.** 12 "And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants.



A mohel performing circumcision

## ABRAHAM'S OBEDIENCE

Then Abraham circumcised ([mul](#); Lxx = [peritemno](#)) his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him (Ge 17:10-12+) - Don't miss the point that Abraham again obeys God's command. First he obeyed in naming Isaac (Ge 17:19+) and now he obeys in regard to the timing of circumcision (8 days) and in carrying out the actual act of circumcising Isaac. Why did God command circumcision on the eighth day? See the diagram below which shows that the clotting factors in a newborn are not fully developed until the 8th day. Therefore circumcision prior to that time could potentially result in uncontrollable bleeding (and even death from exsanguination). God invented the complex coagulation system of the human body and here He demonstrates the perfect inspiration of His word -- the 8th day and not before!



**Henry Morris** - The act of circumcision was not only the sign of the Abrahamic covenant (Ge 17:11) but was also a significant contribution to the health of both husband and wife, as modern medical knowledge confirms. It is also well established that as far as the health of the infant is concerned, the eighth day is the optimum time for performing the operation.

**Bob Utley** - From Gen. 17:25, the Arabs developed the practice of circumcising their children at age thirteen, in line with the circumcision of Ishmael. All of the people of the Ancient Near East circumcised their children, but at different ages and for different purposes. Only the Philistines and Hivites were uncircumcised (i.e., Genesis 34).

**Circumcised** ([04135](#)) ([mul](#)) to cut short, to cut off, to circumcise with most uses in the Torah (Pentateuch) with 17 uses in Genesis but 8 uses are found in Joshua (see below). Its usage is continued in rabbinic and modern Hebrew. However, the verb "to cut off" is not found in other Semitic languages. The only derivative of **mul** is **mûlôt** found in Ex. 4:26 "So He let him alone. At that time she said, "You are a bridegroom of blood"--because of the **circumcision**." The physical act of circumcision was introduced by God as a sign of the Abrahamic covenant (see Ge 17:10ff above) **W E Vine** - The special act of circumcision was a sign of God's gracious promise. With the promise and covenantal relations, God expected that His people would joyously and willingly live up to His expectations, and thus demonstrate His rule on earth. To describe the "heart" attitude, several writers of Scripture use the verb "to circumcise." The "circumcision" of the flesh is a physical sign of commitment to God. (See also [Circumcision of the Heart](#))

**Genesis 21:5** Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

- Ge 17:1,17 Ro 4:19-20
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## Related Passages:

Romans 4:19-20+ Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; 20 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,

## ANCIENT ABRAHAM'S NEWBORN SON

**Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him-** In Ge 17:1 he was 99 and in next chapter in Ge 18:10 God said "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son." Abraham's age (Ge 17:17) is reiterated to show the grace (unmerited favor) of God and His faithfulness to keep His promise, independent of human strength or effort. Grace still flows down the same way. As James 4:6+ says "He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

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You know you're growing older when ...

- ... you know all the answers but nobody asks you the questions.
- ... you sink your teeth into a steak and they stay there.
- ... all the names in your contacts list end in M.D.

When you get to chapter 21 after reading about the many adventures of Abraham, you may be surprised to learn that he is already 100 years old. Yet the most important and productive years of his life are still ahead. Before he dies at the age of 175 (Ge 25:7-8), Abraham will father at least eight children, face his severest test on Mount Moriah (Ge 22:2), and arrange for a godly wife for Isaac. Clearly, being a senior citizen didn't alter Abraham's zeal for God. Neither should it for you.

No matter our age, God still has a plan for our lives. He can still use us for His glory, for His kingdom. Ask Him what you can do for Him today.

"Teach us to number our days aright" (Psalm 90:12).

If being born did not bring much satisfaction, try being born again.

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## Charles Swindoll - FULFILLMENT OF THE IMPOSSIBLE ([Faith for the Journey](#))

Being built by God and made in His own image, man possesses a hunger within his heart to know the vastness and eternity of [His] plan.

WALTER KAISER

Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. And Sarah declared, "God has brought me laughter. All who hear about this will laugh with me."  
GENESIS 21:5-6

AT LONG LAST, at the appointed time, Abraham and Sarah received the fulfillment of God's promise. Ninety-year-old Sarah gave birth to a son and, in obedience to God, named him Isaac, which means "he laughs." Years earlier, when God had told Abraham that Sarah would give birth to a son, he fell over laughing. When God came again to announce, "I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!" (Genesis 18:10), Sarah, too, laughed in disbelief. She was the age of most great-grandmothers by that time. Neither she nor Abraham could imagine her birthing and nursing her own infant.

When God accomplished the impossible through this aging couple, their disbelieving snickering became joyful laughter . . . laughter of pleasure and praise. They now saw greater meaning in the name Isaac.

Nothing occurs outside God's plan, and everything happens exactly at the time He planned it to happen. That's what theologians mean when they apply the term sovereignty to God. He has a plan, and He has the power and the will to carry it out.

Some people don't like the concept of sovereignty and the existence of a foreordained, divine plan. It makes them feel unimportant, as though they don't have a say in their own destiny. But God's foreordained plan does not reduce us to robots who must follow a program.

We grow up when we look at God's plan not as something that diminishes humanity by taking away our free will but as a means by which He will restore true freedom—and carry out His impossible plans.

REFLECT What impossible things has God done in your life in the past? What does it mean to you that God is sovereign?

I have made the Sovereign LORD my shelter, and I will tell everyone about the wonderful things you do. Ps 73:28

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**Genesis 21:6 Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me."**

- **God:** Ge 17:17 Ge 18:12-15 1Sa 1:26-28 2:1-10 Ps 113:9 126:2 Isa 49:15,21 Isa 54:1 Lu 1:46-55 Joh 16:21,22 Ga 4:27,28 Heb 11:11
- **will laugh:** Lu 1:14,58 Ro 12:15
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## Related Passages:

Genesis 18:12+ Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"

Matthew 1:1-2+ **The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:** 2 Abraham was the

father of **Isaac**, **Isaac** the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.

## JOYFUL LAUGHTER

*A time to weep and a time to laugh*

--Ecclesiastes 3:4

**Sarah said, "God has made laughter (tsechoq) for me; everyone who hears will laugh (tsachaq) with me** - Literally the Hebrew reads "Laughter God has made for me." This time, Sarah's laughter was open and sincere, not hidden and skeptical (Ge 18:12-). The name Isaac means "laughter," and the boy brought much joy to the aged couple. Through Isaac, the Messiah would come and bring joy to the world ([see above](#)). Once again we see that God makes "everything beautiful in its time" (Eccl 3:11KJV).

**Derek Kidner on laughter...laugh** and the name Isaac - so the name, potentially a reproach (Ge 18:15), now conveys only joy (Borrow [Genesis page 138](#))

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**Laugh (06711) tsachaq** means to laugh, toy with, make sport (Ge 39:14,17). To laugh outright in merriment or scorn, mockery or derision (Ge 21:9). Tsacaq conveys the idea of laughter, whether in joy or incredulity. Laughter is used in a negative sense in Ge 21:9 of Ishmael's attitude toward Isaac

**Tsachaq - 13x/12v - caressing(1), entertained\*(1), jesting(1), laugh(4), laughed(2), make sport(2), mocking(1), play(1).** Gen. 17:17; Gen. 18:12; Gen. 18:13; Gen. 18:15; Gen. 19:14; Gen. 21:6; Gen. 21:9; Gen. 26:8; Gen. 39:14; Gen. 39:17; Exod. 32:6; Jdg. 16:25

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### C H Spurgeon - Morning, June 15

"And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me." —Genesis 21:6

It was far above the power of nature, and even contrary to its laws, that the aged Sarah should be honoured with a son; and even so it is beyond all ordinary rules that I, a poor, helpless, undone sinner, should find grace to bear about in my soul the indwelling Spirit of the Lord Jesus. I, who once despaired, as well I might, for my nature was as dry, and withered, and barren, and accursed as a howling wilderness, even I have been made to bring forth fruit unto holiness. Well may my mouth be filled with joyous laughter, because of the singular, surprising grace which I have received of the Lord, for I have found Jesus, the promised seed, and he is mine for ever. This day will I lift up psalms of triumph unto the Lord who has remembered my low estate, for "my heart rejoiceth in the Lord; mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies, because I rejoice in thy salvation."

I would have all those that hear of my great deliverance from hell, and my most blessed visitation from on high, laugh for joy with me. I would surprise my family with my abundant peace; I would delight my friends with my ever-increasing happiness; I would edify the Church with my grateful confessions; and even impress the world with the cheerfulness of my daily conversation. Bunyan tells us that Mercy laughed in her sleep, and no wonder when she dreamed of Jesus; my joy shall not stop short of hers while my Beloved is the theme of my daily thoughts. The Lord Jesus is a deep sea of joy: my soul shall dive therein, shall be swallowed up in the delights of his society. Sarah looked on her Isaac, and laughed with excess of rapture, and all her friends laughed with her; and thou, my soul, look on thy Jesus, and bid heaven and earth unite in thy joy unspeakable.

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### [Laughing Out Loud](#)

God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me. Genesis 21:6

Today's Scripture & Insight : Genesis 21:1-7

Comedian John Branyan said, "We didn't think up laughter; that wasn't our idea. That was given to us by [God who] knew we were going to need it to get through life. [Because] He knew we were going to have hardship, He knew we were going to have struggles, He knew . . . stuff was going to happen. . . . Laughter is a gift."

A quick look at the creatures God made can bring laughter, whether because of their oddities (such as duck-billed platypuses) or antics (such as playful otters). He made mammals that live in the ocean and long-legged birds that can't fly. God clearly has a sense of humor; and because we're created in His image, we too have the joy of laughter.

We first see the word laughter in the Bible in the story of Abraham and Sarah. God promised this elderly couple a child: "A son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir" (Genesis 15:4). And God had said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars . . . So shall your offspring be" (v. 5). When Sarah finally gave birth at ninety, Abraham named their son Isaac, which means "laughter." As Sarah exclaimed, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me" (21:6). It amazed her that she could nurse a child at her age! God transformed her skeptical laughter when she'd heard she'd give birth (18:12) into laughter of sheer joy.

Thank God for the gift of laughter! By: Alyson Kieda Sign in to track your progress!

When has laughter been "good medicine"? How can finding humor in your life help even in the most difficult times?

Dear God, thank You for giving me the gift of laughter.

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### Laughing Matters

Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." GENESIS 21:6

You don't hear a lot about Christian comedians. That's strange, because being a Christian gives you plenty to laugh about.

If Christians are anything, we're human, which means we will inevitably find ourselves in laughable situations. Sarah even named her son "Isaac," or



"Laughter," remembering that God's promise of a son had initially sounded quite comical to her. We repeat the same sins over and over; we sing lines like "Let it be a sweet, sweet sound to your ear" off-key; we turn beet-red as we debate which worship songs should be sung in our church. It can all be pretty funny when you think about it.

It's entirely possible that many of us will see no serious spiritual breakthroughs in our lives until we learn to laugh at ourselves. And that's funny, in a sad sort of way.

JOURNAL: What in your Christian life would have less power over you if you could laugh at it? What prevents you from laughing at it? David A. Zimmerman

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### Unexpected Laughter

God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me. —Genesis 21:6

Sarah and Abraham's son was born when they were in their old age. They named him Isaac, meaning laughter. When they thought all hope of having a baby was gone, God surprised them and gave them a son. Sarah understood God's power, but she did not expect God's best. She laughed because, like the rest of the world, she was caught up in what she could see. But God's gift changed what she believed God would do for her. Her faith in Him became so strong that she used her life as a testimony so that others would join in with her laughter. Her life also let people know that God is a God who can do the impossible. All we have to do is allow Him to handle those things for which we hope.

So let us join in with Sarah, laughing because of God's goodness. Sarah erased her past disappointments when she laughed at herself. The first laugh was a snicker of unbelief, but that soon turned to joy. It is good to celebrate unexpected news that holds hope and joy. When something happens that seems illogical or unbelievable, laugh with hope, and rejoice that God can do the impossible in your life too.

Dear God, I believe you can do the impossible. Help me to believe you can make change in my life. Amen. (365 Devotions for Hope)

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**Spurgeon** - Some of you are enduring deep affliction. In your extraordinary trial, remember the depth of divine faithfulness. You may be unable to comprehend why, but I urge you to believe in the firmness and stability of divine affection. You will have comfort in proportion to your trials. If you have shallow sorrows you will receive shallow graces. If you have deep afflictions you will obtain deeper proof of God's faithfulness.

**I could lay down and die when I think of life's trials, but like Sarah** (Gen. 21:6) I recover and laugh when I remember that the eternal God is our refuge and that underneath are the everlasting arms (Deut. 33:27). God will not fail. God will not take away His hand until He has finished His purpose concerning us.

Great trials bring great promises. Much afflicted one, there are great and mighty words that are not meant for saints of easier experiences. You will drink from the deep golden goblets reserved for those giants who can drink a great portion of wormwood, but God will also supply deep drinks of the well-refined wines on the lees (Is. 25:6).

Trials greatly enlarge the soul. Thus I do not want, in my better mind, to escape great trials, since they involve great graces. If my strength shall be as my days (Deut. 33:25), then let my days be long and dark, for my strength will be mighty, God will be glorified, and I will be blessed. I earnestly urge every tested Christian to dwell on this truth, for it may be a great comfort.

There is love, immortal and unchanging love, in heaven toward you, which will never grow cold. You will be helped. God would sooner cease to be than cease to be faithful. Be of good courage, for today He will strengthen your heart.

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### [The Power of a Name](#)

Your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. Genesis 17:5

Today's Scripture & Insight : Genesis 17:1–8, 15–16

Seeking to affirm some children who live on the streets in Mumbai, India, Ranjit created a song of their names. Coming up with a unique melody for each name, he taught them the tune, hoping to give them a positive memory related to what they're called. For children who don't regularly hear their name spoken in love, he bestowed on them a gift of respect.

Names are important in the Bible, often reflecting a person's character traits or new role. For instance, God changed the names of Abram and Sarai when He made a covenant of love with them, promising that He would be their God and they would be His people. Abram, which means "exalted father," became Abraham, which means "father of many." And Sarai, which means "princess," became Sarah, which means "princess of many" (see Genesis 17:5, 15).

God's new names included the gracious promise that they would no longer be childless. When Sarah gave birth to their son, they were overjoyed and named him Isaac, which means "he laughs": "Sarah said, 'God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me' " (Genesis 21:6).

We show honor and respect to people when we call them by name and affirm who God has created them to be. A loving nickname that affirms someone's unique qualities as one created in the image of God can do the same. By: Amy Boucher Pye (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

How do you feel about your name? When have you been able to name something in a friend or family member that reflects who they are?

God of all names, You made me in Your image and love me.  
Shape me and mold me to be more like You.

**Genesis 21:7** And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

- **Who:** Nu 23:23 De 4:32-34 Ps 86:8,10 Isa 49:21 66:8 Eph 3:10 2Th 1:10
- **yet!** Ge 18:11,12
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## SARAH'S AMAZEMENT

**And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children?"** - This is rhetorical and the answer is no one speaking from a humanistic perspective. Sarah's question highlights God's grace (unmerited favor) and power (to create). Note not only did God miraculously enable Sarah to bear a son, but also to be able to nurse him, which is significant as Sarah could not send Abraham to the corner store to buy baby formula and baby bottles! It is interesting that the Hebrew uses the word **children** (child in plural) because Sarah had only one child, Isaac!

**Life Application Study note** - Because of her doubt, worry, and fear, she had forfeited the peace she could have felt in God's wonderful promise to her. The way to bring peace to a troubled heart is to focus on God's promises. Trust him to do what he says.

**Yet I have borne him a son in his old age** - **Yet** marks the contrast with humanistic reasoning and the miraculous provision from God to a woman who was 90 and past child bearing age! And she emphasizes Abraham's **old age**. Sarah's reproach was turned by God into rejoicing.

**Henry Morris** - When God heals miraculously, he does it instantly and completely. Sarah's body was so rejuvenated that although she was 90 years old, she was able both to bear a child and to nurse him. **Abraham** was so "young" again that even at 100 years of age, he could father six more sons of [Keturah](#) many years later, after Sarah's death (Ge 25:1-2). (Borrow [The Defender's Study Bible](#)) (See also [How many wives did Abraham have? | GotQuestions.org](#); [How many sons did Abraham have? | GotQuestions.org](#))

**Charles Swindoll - UNANSWERED PRAYERS** ([Faith for the Journey](#))

The doing of the will of God leaves me no time for disputing about His plans.  
GEORGE MACDONALD

[Sarah said,] "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!" Ge 21:7

LONG AFTER Abraham and Sarah had given up hope of experiencing this joy, they held their very own son in their arms. It would have been easy for them to lose hope when the fulfillment of the promise didn't come about in the way or the timing they expected. But their trust in the Lord went deeper than their human perspective, deeper than their doubts.

As I look back on my life, I recall many prayers I'm thankful the Lord chose to set aside. He gave me instead what I needed. And what He gave brought me even greater long-term happiness and more deep-down joy.

But when we're in the midst of a trial or a time of waiting, it can be difficult to have that perspective. What can we do when we find ourselves in such a season?

First, we can ask the Lord for sustaining strength and divine wisdom. I know that sounds elementary, but we often forget that we can't do life on our own. We need divine help from one day to the next. In addition, we need supernatural strength and divine wisdom to wait for God's plan to unfold. Good things come to those who wait.

Second, we can forgive yourself for being shortsighted and for missing the big picture. Forgive yourself for clinging when you should have released. Forgive yourself for failing to be excited about what's ahead when God's plan doesn't include your plans. Repent of your failings, receive God's forgiveness, and then forgive yourself.

I've learned this in my lifetime: the last one we forgive on this earth is ourselves. God forgives you, so why don't you?  
In time, you will come to realize, as Abraham did, that in God's appointed plan, the best is yet to come.

REFLECT Are there any areas in your life where you've given up hope? Ask the Lord for His strength and seek His perspective on the situation.

The LORD will work out his plans for my life—for your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever. Ps 138:8

**Genesis 21:8 The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.**

- **and was:** 1Sa 1:22 Ps 131:2 Ho 1:8
- **feast:** Ge 19:3 26:30 29:22 40:20 Judges 14:10,12 1Sa 25:36 2Sa 3:20 1Ki 3:15 Es 1:3
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## ISAAC GROWS TO A YOUNG BOY

**The child grew ([gadal](#)) and was weaned ([gamal](#)), and Abraham made a great feast ([mishteh](#)) on the day that Isaac was weaned ([gamal](#)),** - Weaning according to Eastern custom occurred generally at a much later date than in Western lands. So Isaac was probably weaned in his second or third year (or even later) and his weaning was marked by a day of celebration. The idea of **weaned** is of bringing to an end which describes a child who comes to the end of need for nursing, because they have matured or "ripened" so to speak. **Weaned ([gamal](#))** in the Septuagint is the verb apogalaktizo which conveys the picture of to remove from milk. Weaning also means that the child leaves the immediate area around its mother and is set free to play with other children, which would prove to be disastrous for Hagar and Ishmael.

One reason for celebrating is the well known fact that there was a high rate of infant mortality in the ancient world. The following article suggests that up to 30% of infants did not live to maturity. (See [Infant Mortality in The Land of Israel](#))

**ISBE** adds this note on **Wean - Gamal** has a much wider force than merely “to wean,” signifying “to deal fully with,” as in Ps 13:6, etc. Hence, as applied to a child, [gamal] covers the whole period of nursing and care until the weaning is complete (1 Ki 11:20). This period in ancient Israel extended to about 3 years, and when it was finished the child was mature enough to be entrusted to strangers (1 Sam 1:24). And, as the completion of the period marked the end of the most critical stage of the child’s life, it was celebrated with a feast (Gen 21:8), a custom still observed in the Orient. The weaned child, no longer fretting for the breast and satisfied with its mother’s affection, is used in Ps 131:2 as a figure for Israel’s contentment with God’s care, despite the smallness of earthly possessions. In Isa 28:9 there is an ironical question, “Is God to teach you knowledge as if you were children? You should have learned His will long ago!”

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**Wean** (01580) **gamal** basically means to render either good or evil to someone. Gamal means to deal fully or adequately with, deal out to, to recompense another, to wean, to bring to completion or to ripen. Meaning of wean appears five times in the Qal stem (1Sa 1:23-24; Hos. 1:8; 1Ki. 11:20; Isa. 28:9), and in all three of its Niphal (passive) occurrences, it means “to be weaned” (Ge 21:8; 1 Sa 1:22). The idea of bringing to an end is demonstrated in verses that describe a child who is weaned (Ge 21:8).

**Gamal meaning to wean** - Ge 21:8; 1Sa 1:22 ff.; 1Ki 11:20; Ps 131:2; Isa 11:8; 28:9; Hos. 1: 8

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#### **QUESTION - [What was the significance of weaning a child in the Bible \(Genesis 21:8\)?](#)**

**ANSWER** - According to Jewish custom, the time when a child is weaned is cause for celebration. A weaned child has survived the fragile stage of infancy and can now eat solid food rather than breastfeed from his or her mother.

In Genesis 21:8, we read, “And the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.” Though Ishmael laughed at the celebration (Genesis 21:9), Isaac’s parents considered this event an important occasion. They had a son who had survived the most difficult stage of childhood and could now eat on his own.

According to Jewish rabbinical traditions, weaning could take place anywhere between 18 months and 5 years of age. In one important biblical parallel, Samuel was weaned prior to being taken to Eli the priest to serve the Lord. First Samuel 1:24 says, “And when she had weaned him . . . she brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. And the child was young.” No exact age is given, but the weaning is mentioned, and Samuel’s youth is emphasized, so he was likely between 2 and 4 years old.

High infant mortality rates existed in ancient cultures. One reason for large families was the fact that many young children did not live to adulthood. Because of the risks that infants faced, the celebration of a child’s weaning was a natural and important part of the culture. If a child had developed past the need for the physical support of a mother, then he or she had reached a new stage of life that greatly increased the likelihood of good health.

Today, Jewish tradition continues the practice of celebrating the weaning of a child. Psalm 104 is often read during this time; part of that psalm says, “Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering yourself with light as with a garment, stretching out the heavens like a tent. He lays the beams of his chambers on the waters; he makes the clouds his chariot; he rides on the wings of the wind; he makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire” (Psalm 104:1–4). [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### **Ray Pritchard on lessons Abraham learned in Genesis 21 ([Genesis 21:1-21 God's Good vs. God's Best](#))**

##### **What Abraham Learned From the Dismissal of Ishmael Ge 21:8-21**

This is one the strangest and saddest portions of the Bible.....Of all the things that Abraham learned from this sad event, two stand out above the rest:

##### **A. He Learned That Choices Have Consequences.**

No one made him sleep with Hagar 15 years earlier. True, it seemed like a good idea at the time, but his motivation was wrong. He wanted to please Sarah and he wanted to “help God out.” But Sarah was wrong to suggest the idea and Abraham was doubly wrong to act on it. If he had been the proper kind of spiritual leader, so much heartache would have been avoided.

Here is a lesson that our children must learn early in life. Choices have consequences. You can’t turn left and right at the same time. You can’t get married and also stay single. You can’t move away and also stay where you are. You can’t take Algebra and French during the same class period. I’m sure that Abraham never dreamed that sleeping with Hagar would lead to so much heartache and confusion. In fact, I’m sure he justified it in his own mind as the best way to make his wife happy and also to “help” God keep his promise. But it didn’t work out that way. When we compromise our standards, lower our convictions, or when we try to take a moral or ethical shortcut, it never works out in the end. Choices have consequences. Abraham learned that the hard way as he watched his son Ishmael walk down the lonely road toward the desert.

##### **B. He Learned That the Good Must Go in Order That the Best May Come.**

Many people reading this story have wondered about the fairness of God. On one level, it’s easy to understand why Sarah and Hagar didn’t get along and it’s also easy to see why Ishmael and Isaac probably wouldn’t grow up to be best friends. But why would God literally order to Abraham to cast off Ishmael and Hagar in such a seemingly cold way? There are two answers to that question. **One** is that God knew something Abraham didn’t know. He knew he (God) was going to take special care of Ishmael out in the desert. God never intended to see Hagar and Ishmael die in the hot sun. **The other** answer is that God wanted to protect Isaac because he was the promised seed of Abraham. That’s the reason God gives in Ge 21:12. As long as Ishmael remained in the house, he would be a threat to God’s plan. He had to go, even though it meant hardship and deep sorrow and even though he and Hagar probably never understood why it happened. They felt rejected by Sarah and Abraham—as indeed they were.....

##### **Giving Up the Good**

To accomplish anything in life you’ve got to give up the good in order to achieve the best. That means that some good things have to go in order that better things may come. This touches so many areas of life—how we spend our time, especially our leisure hours. It ought to cause us to examine our habits and

the friends we hang around with. Some things may not be wrong, but they just aren't good for us. And some friendships may not be bad, but they keep pulling us in the wrong direction or they us from going where we want to go.

This principle certainly applies to the "hidden" area of life, the part of your life that no one else ever sees. If you want to grow as a Christian, the good must go in order that the best may come. Sometimes God says, "I want that thing to go, because I have something better in mind for you." Often times when God says that we won't understand the reason and God won't always explain it to us in advance. We simply have to obey without having full understanding. That's what trusting God is all about.....

### **Ishamael Must Go!**

Ishmael must go! The good must go in order that the best may come. Think about my words. What is God saying to you in these moments? What is the "good" in your life—your habits, your dreams, your cherished friendships, your secret thoughts—that must go? I do not know the answer, but God does. And by his Spirit he speaks the truth to your heart.

One final word. What if we give up the "good"? How can we be sure that we will then receive God's "best"? Our Lord did not leave us to wonder about that question. Hear his words in Mark 10:29-30, "I tell you the truth, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them persecutions)—and in the age to come, eternal life."

God will be no one's debtor. You'll never regret anything you give up for Jesus. Not in this life or in the life to come. But the saddest people in the all the world are those who cling stubbornly to what they have because they dare not give it up for God.

I do not know exactly how God wants to apply this message to your heart, but if you are open and honest I believe he has something to say to you. Just remember this: God never takes away anything we hold dear without giving us something better in return. He never takes away Ishmael without also giving us Isaac. I challenge you to choose God's best.

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### **Theodore Epp - GOING ON TO MATURITY Genesis 21:8; 1 Samuel 1:22-28**

The Scriptures say that after Isaac was born, he "grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned" (Gen. 21:8).

During Old Testament times, weaning referred to the time in a child's life when he was old enough to be entrusted to strangers. This took place between three and five years of age--and sometimes older.

Samuel is a biblical example. The Scriptures say that when Hannah "had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh: and the child was young" (1 Sam. 1:24).

Growth is also important to the Christian. The Bible instructs believers: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2).

While the milk of the Word is needed for young Christians, older Christians should be feeding on the meat of the Word.

When Isaac had matured enough to be weaned, Abraham made a great feast "the same day that Isaac was weaned" (Gen. 21:8). This significant time in a child's life was celebrated with a feast.

So also, it is a time of much rejoicing when a believer passes from the "milk stage" into the "meat stage" in his walk with the Lord. It is at this time that the believer leaves his dependence on others and depends on the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

"I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation" (Ps. 119:99).

### **Genesis 21:9 Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking.**

- **Sarah:** Ge 16:3-6,15 17:20
- **Egyptian:** Ge 16:1,15
- **mocking:** 2Ki 2:23,24 2Ch 30:10 36:16 Ne 4:1-5 Job 30:1 Ps 22:6 42:10 Ps 44:13,14 Pr 20:11 La 1:7 Ga 4:22,29 Heb 11:36
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### **Related Passages:**

Genesis 19:14+ Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, "Up, get out of this place, for the LORD will destroy the city." But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be **jesting** ([tsachaq](#)).

## **ISHMAEL THE "PARTY POOPER"**

**Now** - When is **now**? Clearly this was at the celebration of the weaning of Isaac.

*"Nobody's family can hang out the sign 'Nothing the matter here'"*

-- Chinese Proverb

**Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking** ([tsachaq](#)) - Sarah's joy over the birth of Isaac would be relatively short-lived! **ESV** says "laughing" but that rendering misses the sense of this action which was more malicious (as supported by Gal 4:29+ where Ishmael

"persecuted" Isaac). Note the play on words for Ishmael is described as **mocking**, which is the same Hebrew word [tsachaq](#) which Sarah had used for **laugh** in Ge 21:6 and is the root word from which the name Isaac ([Yitschq](#)) is derived. The Septuagint translates [tsachaq](#) with the verb *paizo* which means to make sport of or to mock and is in the present tense, describing Ishmael as continually **mocking** Isaac. Ishmael's **mocking** clearly got Sarah's attention, so the [sparks were sure to soon to fly](#)

Centuries later Paul gives a commentary on this verse writing "the son (ISHMAEL) by the bondwoman (HAGAR) was born according to the flesh, and the son (ISAAC) by the free woman (SARAH) through the promise (FROM GOD)" adding that "at that time he (ISHMAEL) who was born according to the flesh persecuted him (ISAAC) who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also." (Gal 4:23, 29+)

**Steven Cole** - God chose Isaac so that we would know that the life of faith requires total dependence on God, so that all the fruit comes from Him. That which stems from our flesh, which we can do apart from God, can never please Him. It exalts human pride and robs God of His glory. That which the Spirit produces in and through us brings God the glory due His name. So even though it seems unfair that Hagar and Ishmael be expelled, it was necessary for God's purpose and glory. This story teaches us that the joy of the life of faith comes from obtaining what only God can do; the pain comes from separating from what I can do in my own power. ([The Joy and Pain of a Life of Faith -- Genesis 21:1-21](#))

**Matthew Henry Concise - Ge 21:9-13.** Let us not overlook the manner in which this family matter instructs us not to rest in outward privileges, or in our own doings. And let us seek the blessings of the new covenant by faith in its Divine Surety. Ishmael's conduct was persecution, being done in profane contempt of the covenant and promise, and with malice against Isaac. God takes notice of what children say and do in their play; and will reckon with them, if they say or do amiss, though their parents do not. Mocking is a great sin, and very provoking to God. And the children of promise must expect to be mocked. Abraham was grieved that Ishmael should misbehave, and Sarah demand so severe a punishment. But God showed him that Isaac must be the father of the promised Seed; therefore, send Ishmael away, lest he corrupt the manners, or try to take the rights of Isaac. The covenant seed of Abraham must be a people by themselves, not mingled with those who were out of covenant: Sarah little thought of this; but God turned aright what she said.

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#### QUESTION - [Who was Ishmael in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Simply put, the Ishmaelites were the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abram by his wife's handmaiden, Hagar (Genesis 16:1–12). From small beginnings, the Ishmaelites became a numerous and mighty people.

The origin of the Ishmaelites was fraught with difficulty. When Sarai was unable to produce a child with Abram, she followed the common cultural practice and gave Hagar to him, and Hagar conceived his child. But Sarai later became jealous and mistreated Hagar, who fled from her mistress into the wilderness. There Hagar met the Angel of the Lord who pronounced the first of three prophecies concerning the child she was bearing. She would give birth to a son, and his descendants would multiply greatly. It was at this time that God told Hagar to name him Ishmael, which means "God hears" (Genesis 16:10–11).

In the wilderness the Angel of the Lord also predicted that Ishmael—and therefore the Ishmaelites—would be stubborn, untamable, and warlike: "He will be a wild donkey of a man; / his hand will be against everyone / and everyone's hand against him, / and he will live in hostility / toward all his brothers" (Genesis 16:12). After hearing the angel's words, Hagar returned to her mistress and eventually gave birth to Ishmael.

Later, God changed the names of Sarai and Abram to Sarah and Abraham and established a covenant with Abraham's son Isaac. But Ishmael also had a promise from God: he would be blessed, too, and he would be the father of a great nation, beginning with twelve sons, the first of the Ishmaelites (Genesis 17:20). The names of the twelve are listed in Genesis 25:12–16; it is from the Ishmaelites that the Arab nations descended.

Ishmael was about fourteen years old when Isaac was born. A year or a few later, when Isaac was weaned, Sarah saw Ishmael mocking her son. Sarah asked Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away, and God told Abraham to comply. The Angel of God met Hagar and her son once again and predicted for the third time that Ishmael would father a great nation (Genesis 21:18).

Later in Israel's history, the Ishmaelites were also called Midianites (although not all Midianites were descendants of Ishmael), and they engaged in the buying and selling of slaves (Genesis 37:28; 39:1). Judges 8:24 tells us that it was a custom for the Ishmaelites to wear gold earrings.

During the reign of King David, the Ishmaelites joined a confederacy against God and against His people, Israel (Psalm 83:5–6). Their goal was to "destroy them as a nation, / so that Israel's name is remembered no more" (verse 4). Considering the current turmoil in the Middle East and the hatred often directed against Israel by her neighbors, the prophecies concerning the descendants of Ishmael continue to prove true. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### **James Butler - Persecuting Isaac**

"And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking." (Genesis 21:9)

THAT this mocking of Isaac was persecution is verified in the New Testament when Paul speaks of this as Isaac being "persecuted" by Ishmael (Galatians 4:29). This mocking involved a good deal more than just Isaac. It also involved an attack upon the people, the power, the promises, and the provision of God.

Attacking the people of God. Isaac represents the Jewish nation. The Jews are of the seed of Isaac. Ishmael's descendents comprise many of the Muslim people today. The Muslims are still attacking the Jews. The Middle East hostilities today go back to this mocking of Isaac by Ishmael. But Israel will be delivered from all this mocking when Christ returns.

Attacking the power of God. Isaac was a result of a miracle of Divine power. Therefore, in mocking Isaac, Ishmael evidenced no respect for the great work God had accomplished through Abraham and Sarah. This is always the habit of the evil world. It is forever belittling the work of God and discrediting the miracles of God. Anything God does the world mocks. Therefore, do not be surprised when they mock the power of the Gospel (Romans 1:16). But mocking does not enfeeble the Gospel, it only indicts the mocker.

Attacking the promises of God. God promised that Isaac would be the progenitor of a great nation and a provider of great blessings to the world. Thus in mocking Isaac, Ishmael mocked the promises of God. The world is ever mocking Divine promises. They mock the promises of Christ's return, the promise of Divine judgment upon evil, and the promise of Israel's restoration. But be assured that no mocking ever stopped any promise of God from being fulfilled.

Attacking the provision of God. The great provision involved in Isaac's birth was the Savior, Jesus Christ. Thus, Ishmael's mocking involved a mocking of Jesus Christ. People are still mocking Christ. He was mocked at Calvary, and He has been mocked ever since He was born. But no mocking will get you in more trouble than mocking Jesus Christ. ([Daily Bible Reading](#))

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**Donald Cantrell - It's Time to Say Goodbye to Our Ishmaels** (Online [Jewels for the Journey](#) 194 full page sermon starters - daily devotions)

Gen 21:9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.

Gen 21:10 Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, [even] with Isaac.

Gen 21:11 And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.

In this passage something extremely hard was being asked of Abraham, he was required to send his first born son away. The boy was birthed due to the haste of Abraham; he ignorantly listened to Sarah his wife and ran ahead of God, in doing so he had a son out of God's will. The handmaiden of Sarah, being named Hagar, conceived a son, his name was Ishmael, and this boy would only bring grief to his family. Ishmael had a mixed heritage, his mother was an Egyptian and his father was a Hebrew, one represented the worldly walk, the other represented spiritual walk.

In the process of time Sarah conceived a son with her husband Abraham, his name would be called Isaac, he was the chosen son, the one sent and promised by God. As little Isaac began to grow, Ishmael started mocking him, Ishmael felt that because he was the first son he had greater privileges, he most likely thought that his father loved him more than Isaac. Upon seeing the mocking of Ishmael, Sarah approached her husband and demanded that the handmaiden and her son be sent away, this was very grievous to the aged Abraham. He truly loved this boy, he had grown to share his affection between the two sons, but upon talking to God, the Lord informed him to listen to Sarah, Why? The time comes when we have to get rid of the things from Egypt, we must cast them away, this dear friend will be a test of great magnitude, and this bidding from God will challenge you like you have never been challenged.

1. The Worldly Birth "His Divided Affection"
2. The Woeful Banishment "His Designed Affliction"
3. The Wonderful Benefits "His Delightful Admiration"

As we inspect our lives, do we have some Ishmaels hidden away, nobody knows but the Lord. We tenderly divide our affection between loving the worldly and the spiritual. This was one of two major tests that Abraham had to pass; the second test also involved his son, only it required the death of his precious son Isaac. As the Lord shows you things in your life, will you be willing to expose and expel the Ishmaels from your life? In the following space I will list some or all of my Ishmaels:

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#### **J J Knapp - Mocking Gen. 21:9**

The birth of Isaac, the son of the promise, was a bitter disappointment for Ishmael and his mother. While before he could have expected to become Abraham's heir, he saw that hope disappear like a cloud of smoke, when Isaac was born in due time. The boy could not handle it. When Isaac was weaned and the whole household was steeped in the joy of feasting, the pent-up rage came out and he teased the small boy with his evil mocking. The New Testament says that he pursued him, and that it was not the somewhat harmless teasing of a mocking heart, but that it was intended to hurt. The more it hurt, the better it was. He could not stand that half-brother at all, who was the bearer of the richest promises of God. Now he would hurt him and his old mother with a vengeance, and so it went on with gestures or words towards poisonous mocking.

Let us not assume that this only happened in Abraham's tent. There are still homes in which brothers and sisters know thoroughly the art of teasing and mocking. They don't dare to attack each other because in that case father will get involved. However, they know well how to quietly pester. Behind father's back to jest and to denigrate. To mock each other about the colour of the hair or of a stuttering speech. To gloat when brother once again cannot express himself properly and then to try and imitate him,—this is a deeply sinful characteristic of many a child's heart. Fortunate, if a mother is at hand to take it up for the reviled one. We can fully understand that Sarah flew up in indignation and said to her husband: "Cast out this bondwoman and her son,"—that was what she was a mother for. She mentioned the servant first, because the boy had obviously learned the mocking from his mother. It makes the story so sad, because Hagar knew, of course, that Isaac faced a great future, since once Christ would be born from him.

If she bore knowledge of this, the mocking was double venomous. In that case it was almost a mocking with the holy thing that was hidden in Isaac and that would come forth from him at a later century; a mocking such as Jesus had to endure, when they mocked Him on the cross and made light of Him, saying, or rather mocking: "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross!" The spirit of mocking must be purged from our heart, just like any desire to mock. Like in Abraham's tent Ishmael could not live peaceably with Isaac, so no mocking Ishmael may remain in our heart, but the great miracle Child, Jesus Christ, must be the only Ruler there, who animates all our expressions of life, and who replaces the jealousy with a tender sense of love.

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#### **Oswald Chambers - Which? Genesis 21:9-21 (Not Knowing Where)**

Profit?—Loss?

Who shall declare this good—that ill?

When good and ill so intertwine

But to fulfil the vast design

Of an Omniscient Will?—

When seeming gain but turns to loss,—

When earthly treasure proves but dross,—

And what seemed loss but turns again

To high, eternal gain?

John Oxenham\*

And God said, . . . Let it not be grievous in thy sight. Genesis 21:12

The dilemmas of our personal life with God are few if we obey and many if we are wilful. Spiritually the dilemma arises from the disinclination for discipline; every time I refuse to discipline my natural self, I become less and less of a person and more and more of an independent, impertinent individual.

Individuality is the characteristic of the natural man; personality is the characteristic of the spiritual man. That is why Our Lord can never be defined in terms of individuality, but only in terms of personality. Individuality is the characteristic of the child, it is the husk of the personal life. It is all “elbows,” it separates and isolates; personality can merge and be blended. The shell of individuality is God’s created covering for the protection of the personal life, but individuality must go in order that the personal life may be brought out into fellowship with God—“that they may be one, even as We are one.”

### **1. The Offence of the Natural (Genesis 21:6-10)**

Sarah is full of indignation when she sees the mocking of Ishmael, and begs Abraham to “cast out this bondwoman and her son.” God tells Abraham to hearken to what Sarah says, and Ishmael is cast out. We have to remember, however, that Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to be his wife; we always become anxious when we take our own self-chosen ways. In the Epistle to the Galatians the Apostle Paul makes his great revelation regarding that which was “born after the flesh” and that which was “born after the Spirit.” He is dealing not with sin, but with the relationship between the natural and the spiritual. The natural must be disciplined and turned into the spiritual by sacrifice (cf. Galatians 5:24), otherwise it will produce a tremendous divorce in the life. Why did God make it necessary for the natural to be sacrificed to the spiritual? God did not. God’s order was that the natural should be transformed into the spiritual by obedience; sin made it necessary for the natural to be sacrificed to the spiritual, and that after sanctification, remember. We have the idea that sanctification means deliverance from sin only; it means much more, it means that we start on a life of discipline such as nine out of every ten of us will have nothing to do with.

The offence of the natural is its robust ridicule of the spiritual, and if the natural is not “cast out”† it will not only perish itself but will lead the whole personal life astray. “I was not disciplined when I was a child.” You must discipline yourself now, if you do not, you will ruin your life for God. If the natural is not sacrificed to the spiritual by me, not by God, it will mock at the life of the Son of God in me and produce a continual “swither,” which is always the result of an undisciplined nature. Instead of “I can’t,” say “I won’t,” and you have it exactly, it is the Ishmael jeer. People go wrong spiritually because they stubbornly refuse to discipline themselves physically, mentally or in any way, and after a while they become that most contemptible and objectionable thing, a petted man or woman, and their own greatest cause of suffering. There is no suffering to equal the suffering of self-love arising from independent individuality which refuses to submit either to God or to its nobler self.

### **2. The Offering of the Natural (Genesis 21:11-13)**

The casting out of the bondwoman and her son† was necessary not only for the line of promise but for the welfare of Ishmael himself. All the problems regarding civilisation and organisation and the natural virtues arise along this line. If I put the civilised organisation to which I belong, or my natural virtues, on the throne, they will make a mock of the Son of God Who is formed in me. These things are the outcome of the natural life and I have to resolutely put them under, not because they are wrong, but because they are individual protests against the life of the Son of God in me. The natural life is not spiritual, it can only be made spiritual by deliberately casting it out and making it the slave instead of the ruler. My business is to make independent individuality conform to the Son of God in me by severity. We are apt to deify wilfulness and independence and call them by the wrong name; what we call strength of will God looks upon as contemptible weakness. The Being with the greatest will who ever lived on the earth was Our Lord Jesus Christ, and yet He never exercised His will, as We think of will; His life was one of meekness and submission (see John 5:19, 30). Our Lord was the antipodes of the individual, there was nothing independent or wilful or self-assertive about Him, and He says “Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.” Jesus Christ cannot give me a meek and quiet spirit, I have to take His yoke upon me; that is, I have to deliberately discipline myself. The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is the destruction of individuality and the exaltation of personality. When the personal life is merged with God, it will manifest the characteristics of God. Individuality never exhibits the characteristics of God but natural characteristics, the characteristics of Ishmael, or of Esau, or of Saul of Tarsus, that mock at the meek and lowly Son of God. What is it that begins to mock in you? “Meek? Do you think I am going to bow my neck to that? Be loyal there, in my home? Obey a passing sentiment that came to me in a prayer meeting?” Cast out “the bondwoman and her son”—the natural life and all that nourishes it, or it will lead your personal life to ruin. The casting out must be done by you, then God will bring it back into its rightful inheritance. The natural life can only be brought into union by being cast out (cf. Matthew 5:29, 48).

If we do not resolutely cast out the natural, the supernatural can never become natural in us. There are some Christians in whom the supernatural and the natural seem one and the same, and you say—Well, they are not one with me, I find the natural at “loggerheads” with the spiritual. The reason is that the other life has gone through the fanatical stage of cutting off the right arm, gone through the discipline of maiming the natural, completely casting it out, and God has brought it back into its right relationship with the spiritual on top, and the spiritual manifests itself in a life which knows no division into sacred and secular. There is no royal road there, each one has it entirely in his own hands; it is not a question of praying but of performing.

### **3. The Ostracism of the Natural (Genesis 21:14)**

The casting out of Hagar and Ishmael† is necessary, but Hagar is not divorced. Divorce stands for apostasy (cf. Isaiah 1:1). We must be divorced from sin, not separated from sin. Sin belongs to hell and the devil; I, as a child of God, belong to heaven and God, and I must have nothing to do with sin in any shape or form. The separation which goes on all through the life of faith is alluded to by Paul in Galatians 2:20—“I have been crucified with Christ” (rv); and again in Romans 12:1—“Present your bodies a living sacrifice”—go to the funeral of your own independence. It is not a question of giving up sin, but of giving up my right to myself, my natural independence and self-assertiveness. Immediately I do, the natural cries out and goes through terrific suffering. There are things in me which must go through death or they will abide alone and ruin the personal life (cf. John 12:24). But if I sternly put them through death, God will bring them back into the right inheritance. Jesus says If any man will be My disciple, “let him deny himself,”†† i.e., deny his right to himself, and a man has to realise Who Jesus Christ is before he will do it. It is the things that are right and noble and good from the natural standpoint that keep us back from God’s best. To discern that the natural virtues antagonise surrender to God, is to begin to see where the battle lies. It is going to cost the natural everything, not something.

### **4. The Ordeal of the Natural (Genesis 21:15-16)**

Beware of blaspheming the Creator by calling the natural sinful. The natural is not sinful, but un-moral and un-spiritual. It is the home of all the vagrant vices and virtues, and must be disciplined with the utmost severity until it learns its true position in the providence of God. Remember, Abraham had to offer up Ishmael before he offered up Isaac. Some of us are trying to offer spiritual sacrifices before we have sacrificed the natural. The only way we can offer a spiritual sacrifice to God is to do what He tells us to do, discipline what He tells us to discipline. Under no consideration must we dictate to God on the basis of the natural life. When God’s Son tells me to do a thing, I have no business to allow the natural to dictate and say—I cannot do that because I get so tired. What does it matter if it kills the natural? God’s purpose for the natural will be fulfilled, I have to be absolutely stern with it and not make God wait on my

natural inclinations.

## 5. The Outrance of the Natural (Genesis 21:19-21)

“Outrance”—the utmost extremity or bitter end. Verse 20 is striking—“God was with the lad,” as long as he remained in the straits of the desert, and he found his home in the oases and by the wells. After Ishmael had learned by experience that he was not a fellow heir with Isaac, he was richly endowed by Abraham, and he also remained in friendly relationship with Isaac (Genesis 25:6, 9). God is not with my natural life as long as I pamper it and pander to it, but when I put it out in the desert, resolutely cast it out and keep it under, then God is with it and He opens up wells and oases, and fulfils His promise for it. It must be stern discipline, rigorous severity to the last degree on my part (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:27), then God will be with the natural life and bring it to its full purpose.

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### Theodore Epp - CONFLICT IS INEVITABLE Genesis 21:9-21

After the birth of Isaac, the true nature of Ishmael was revealed. Nothing of his life is known before Isaac's birth.

Even this points out a significant truth for the believer. It is not until a person receives the new nature, through receiving Christ as Saviour, that he discovers the real character of his old nature.

The discovery is a painful one and even causes some to doubt their salvation as they see the struggle taking place in their lives. However, the very fact that there is conflict is proof of salvation.

There is no conflict when there is only the old nature. But when the new nature comes in to control the life, the old nature sets up an intense conflict.

Paul referred to this conflict when he said, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17).

This is the condition that results when a person receives Christ as Saviour. He receives a new nature, which is in opposition to the old nature. There is conflict between the spirit of liberty and the spirit of bondage.

Even as in the case of Ishmael and Isaac, where one had to be expelled, the believer cannot yield to both natures but must choose the one he will obey.

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (John 5:4).

**Genesis 21:10 Therefore she said to Abraham, “Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac.”**

- **Drive out this maid:** Ge 25:6,19 17:19,21 20:11 22:10 36:6,7 Mt 8:11,12 22:13 Joh 8:35 Ga 4:22-31 1Jn 2:19
- **this maid shall not be an heir with my son:** Joh 8:35 Ga 3:18 Gal 4:7 1Pe 1:4 1Jn 2:19
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### Related Passages:

Galatians 4:22-31+ (PAUL USES THIS RIFT BETWEEN SARAH AND HAGAR ALLEGORICALLY IN GALATIANS) For it is written (REFERRING TO GENESIS) that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. 23 But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. 24 **This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.** 25 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. 27 For it is written, “REJOICE, BARREN WOMAN WHO DOES NOT BEAR; BREAK FORTH AND SHOUT, YOU WHO ARE NOT IN LABOR; FOR MORE NUMEROUS ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE DESOLATE THAN OF THE ONE WHO HAS A HUSBAND.” 28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit (**AS IN Genesis 21:9**), so it is now also. 30 But what does the Scripture say? (NOTE THAT SCRIPTURE IS PERSONIFIED HERE INDICATING THAT THIS WAS AN INSPIRED DEMAND) **“CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON, FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN.”** 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

## SARAH SAYS "DIVORCE HAGAR"

Why do I say "divorce"? The word rendered "cast out," signifies divorce in Lev 21:7 where it describes "a woman **divorced** ([garash](#); Lxx = [ekbállō](#)) from her husband," and in a sense that is what Sarah is commanding Abraham to do in this passage.

**Therefore she said to Abraham, “Drive out ([garash](#); Lxx = [ekbállō](#)) this maid and her son** - In Sarah's last recorded words she commands her husband to throw out Hagar and Ishmael (note she does not even use their names seems to speak with [derision](#)).

**For** - Term of explanation. What is God explaining to Abraham? He is giving the reason Abraham must cast Ishmael and Hagar out of his tent, in essence out of his life!

**The son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac** - Sarah seems to speak condescendingly in calling Ishmael not Abraham's son, but the **son of this maid**. And she calls Isaac **my son**, not your son. Sarah had either forgotten or did not trust God's earlier promise about Isaac as the sole recipient of the covenant (Ge 17:21), but wants to make absolutely sure Ishmael never becomes Abraham's heir. In one sense, she is not completely wrong, for normally the firstborn son would be the heir of his father.



It is interesting that the verb **drive out** ([garash](#)) is also used to describe God's expulsion of Adam from the Garden (Ge 3:24+) and [Cain's](#) expulsion from His presence after he murdered Abel (Ge 4:14+).

Sarah's charge to Abraham to drive out Hagar compares with Ge 16:6 where "Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence." Now this is 14 years or more later and Sarah is ready for Hagar to leave. Peaceful coexistence was not possible. This conflict between Sarah and Hagar is a picture of what Paul described in Galatians 5:17 writing "the flesh (present tense - continually) sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are (present tense - continually) in opposition to one another." Those must have been a tense 14 years in the Abraham household!

*There is always conflict between the flesh and the Spirit,  
the old nature and the new...*

**Warren Wiersbe** applies this to the believer's ongoing struggle between our **unholy flesh** and the **Holy Spirit** - Ishmael was a child of the flesh (Ge 16:1-16), while Isaac was a child of promise, born miraculously. Isaac's presence in the home was not due to Abraham's strength (for Abraham was as good as dead, Ro 4:19-20), but to God's promise and power. There is always conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, the old nature and the new, (Gal. 5:16-24). Salvation does not change the old nature, nor can the old nature be improved or disciplined (see Ro 6-7). The only way to overcome the old nature is to accept God's estimate of it and obey God's Word. Abraham loved Ishmael and longed to hold to him (Ge 21:10-11, and see Ge 17:18); but God said, "**Cast him out!**" Romans 6 informs us that our only victory over the flesh is crucifixion—reckoning ourselves dead (Ro 6:11+). Christians who cater to the old nature (Ro 13:14b+, cf 1Pe 2:11+) will **ALWAYS** have conflict and trouble (**ED**: SEE NOTES ON Galatians 5:15,17). (Borrow [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#) page 52)

**Steven Cole** has a comment similar to Wiersbe writing that "In practical terms, this involves the painful obedience of saying no to myself and yes to God. (**ED**: I THINK IT WOULD BE BETTER TO REVERSE THAT STATEMENT - SAY **"YES"** TO GOD, AND THEN YOU CAN SAY **"NO"** TO YOUR FLESH - SEE expulsive power of a new affection) It means denying my pride, my sinful desires, and all that stems from my old self, and consciously depending on God's Spirit to produce His fruit in me. It is an ongoing process of submitting to God's pruning my flesh so that He can accomplish His purpose through me. It hurts, and often I won't understand. But my part is to obey. (**ED**: REALIZING THAT EVEN OUR DESIRE AND POWER TO OBEY ARE THE RESULT OF THE SPIRIT "ENERGIZING" US! SEE Php 2:13NLT+) ([The Joy and Pain of a Life of Faith -- Genesis 21:1-21](#))

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**Drive out** ([01644](#)) [garas/qarash](#) is a verb that means to cast out, drive out. Jonah was expelled from God's sight (Jonah 2:4), Pharaoh driving out the Israelites (Ex 6:1; 12:39), Pharaoh driving Moses and Aaron from his presence (Ex. 10:11), repeatedly used of God driving out Israel's enemies (Ex 23:28-31, 33:2, 34:11, Dt 33:27, Jos. 24:12, Ps. 78:55, Ps. 80:8 contrast result because of Israel's disobedience - Jdg 2:3, Hos. 9:15) . It is used in the general sense of banishing outcasts from society (Job 30:5). In its figurative usage, it indicates **divorcing one's wife** (Lev. 21:7) describing a woman that is "put away from her husband." It describes the sea or a river as driven and tossed (Isa. 57:20; Amos 8:8).

**Garash - 45v** - Gen. 3:24; Gen. 4:14; Gen. 21:10; Exod. 2:17; Exod. 6:1; Exod. 10:11; Exod. 11:1; Exod. 12:39; Exod. 23:28; Exod. 23:29; Exod. 23:30; Exod. 23:31; Exod. 33:2; Exod. 34:11; Lev. 21:7; Lev. 21:14; Lev. 22:13; Num. 22:6; Num. 22:11; Num. 30:9; Deut. 33:27; Jos. 24:12; Jos. 24:18; Jdg. 2:3; Jdg. 6:9; Jdg. 9:41; Jdg. 11:2; Jdg. 11:7; 1 Sam. 26:19; 1 Ki. 2:27; 1 Chr. 17:21; 2 Chr. 20:11; Job 30:5; Ps. 78:55; Ps. 80:8; Prov. 22:10; Isa. 57:20; Ezek. 31:11; Ezek. 36:5; Ezek. 44:22; Hos. 9:15; Amos 8:8; Jon. 2:4; Mic. 2:9; Zeph. 2:4

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#### QUESTION - [Why is the birthright so emphasized in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - The birthright is emphasized in the Bible because it honored the rights or privileges of the family's firstborn son. After the father died, or in the father's absence, the firstborn son assumed the father's authority and responsibilities. However, the Bible also shows that the father could rescind the birthright and pass it on to a younger son. A good example of this is the case of Jacob and his twelve sons. Reuben was the eldest, but the birthright was given to Joseph's sons. Even then, Jacob blessed the younger son, Ephraim, above the elder, Manasseh (Genesis 37:19-22; Genesis 49:1-4; Genesis 49:22-26).

In addition to assuming the leadership role in the family, the recipient of the birthright inherited twice that received by the other sons. In cases where a husband might have more than one wife, the birthright always went to the firstborn son of the father and could not be awarded to the son of a favorite wife without proper justification (Deuteronomy 21:15-17) or if the firstborn son's mother was a concubine or a slave (Genesis 21:9-13; Judges 11:1-2).

The birthright of a king's firstborn son included his succession to the throne (2 Chronicles 21:1-3). King Rehoboam of Judah violated this tradition by passing the birthright to Abijah, his favorite son. However, to avoid trouble with the older sons, the king paid them off (2 Chronicles 11:18-23).

As New Testament Christians, we have an inherited "birthright" status through Jesus Christ as the firstborn Son of God (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15; Revelation 1:5). As God's only begotten Son, Jesus received the kingdom from His Father and is Lord of all (Acts 2:36; Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 19:16). Christ promises to share with us His kingdom and inheritance (Romans 4:13; Galatians 3:29; Ephesians 1:18; Hebrews 11:16).

Christians are warned not to imitate Esau who, on impulse, gave away his birthright for a bowl of stew (Hebrews 12:16-17; Genesis 25:19-34). Because of his foolishness, Esau lost his birthright and the blessings of his father (Genesis 27). The lesson for us is to respect what is holy. We should never throw away what is important, godly, or honorable for the sake of temporary pleasure.

Our focus is to remain on Jesus, the appointed heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2; Psalm 2:7-8; Matthew 28:18). And we, through His grace and our faith in Him, are counted as joint heirs (Romans 8:17; Galatians 3:29; Titus 3:7). [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### **Charles Swindoll - CONSEQUENCES** ([Faith for the Journey](#))

People are satisfied when you preach about the sins of the patriarchs,  
but they don't like it when you touch upon the sins of today.

DWIGHT L. MOODY

[Sarah] turned to Abraham and demanded, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won't have it!" This upset Abraham very much because Ishmael was his son. Genesis 21:10-11

GENESIS 21 gives the account of a man whose previous sin now haunts him and harms the people he loves. The birth of Abraham's long-awaited heir, Isaac, gave him and Sarah great joy, but their delight became tinged with regret.

Roughly fifteen years earlier, they had tried to rush God's plan. In their haste to receive the fulfillment of God's promise, they schemed to have a son on their own terms and according to their own timing. So Sarah's Egyptian handmaid, Hagar, gave birth to a son named Ishmael—a child of Abraham, but not the long-awaited promised child.

Ishmael represented the compromise; Isaac was the true child of promise. And for three years, conflict brewed. It finally came to a head at a family celebration, and by the time it was all over, Sarah demanded that Abraham send Hagar and Ishmael into the wilderness.

One of the most comforting truths in Scripture is that God forgives our sins. The psalmist communicates that truth in these powerful words: "He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12). Yet while it's true that God forgives our sins and wipes the slate clean in terms of our relationship with Him, our wrongdoing may have lingering consequences with others. God forgave the sin, but He didn't change events to reverse the effect of our sin in the world.

All of this points to a difficult yet helpful truth: Though every act of sin is forgivable, the effects of some sins are not erasable. We can learn a lesson from Abraham's life, recognizing that the shock wave of sin can reverberate down through generations, even causing harm to people not yet born.

**REFLECT** What consequences of other people's sin have you experienced? What negative consequences might your own sin have on others?

You show unfailing love to thousands, but you also bring the consequences of one generation's sin upon the next. Jeremiah 32:18

### Genesis 21:11 The matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son.

- because: Ge 17:18 22:1,2 2Sa 18:33 Mt 10:37 Heb 12:11
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## GOD'S HARD WORD TO ABRAHAM

**Paul Apple** - God's Control is Shown in Overriding Abraham's Paternal Instincts

**The matter distressed** (Lxx - [skleros](#)) **Abraham greatly because of his son** - The Lxx is interesting for it says "The word (OF THE LORD) appeared very (exceedingly) hard ([skleros](#) - harsh, unpleasant, hard to take) to him." I can understand Abraham's reaction. As a father with 2 sons, if God told me to cast out one (even if there was a good reason as in Abraham's case), this would be a very painful command to obey. It is almost as if God's command to drive out Ishmael is preparation of his faith to obey an even more difficult command in Ge 22:2+ to offer Isaac as a burnt offering! I am reminded of Paul's words in 1Co 10:13+ that "No temptation (TEST) has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, Who will not allow you to be tempted (TESTED) beyond what you are able, but with the temptation (TEST) will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." So with each test, Abraham's faith grows.

**THOUGHT** - Do we (I) really understand the great value of the tests God allows (sends) into our (my) lives (live), that they are providentially orchestrated not to make us bitter to make us better, to strengthen our trust in God? That's a rhetorical question of course!

### Theodore Epp - THE BASIS OF UNITY Genesis 21:11; Ephesians 2:11-16

The Scriptures say that when Sarah demanded that Ishmael be expelled from the household, "the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son" (Gen. 21:11). The word "grievous" means "bad" or "evil."

Abraham viewed the conflict between his two sons as something evil. No doubt he was also grieved over the necessity of having to send Ishmael away. Perhaps Abraham thought that Ishmael and Isaac would someday be able to live together in harmony.

This is the way many believers view the conflict between their old and new natures. They mistakenly think that the old nature will improve with time and they will have less conflict.

There are also those who think that believers and unbelievers can dwell in harmony and even cooperate in promoting the same organization. This is what the proponents of the ecumenical movement are trying to tell us today.

They stress organizational unity and peace, but they do not emphasize salvation by faith in Christ, which is the only thing that can bring about spiritual unity and lasting peace.

"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matt. 12:30).

### Genesis 21:12 But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named.

- **Listen:** 1Sa 8:7,9 Isa 46:10

- **Through Isaac:** Ge 17:19,21 Ro 9:7,8 Heb 11:18
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## ABRAHAM'S SPIRITUAL DESCENDANTS THRU ISAAC NOT ISHMAEL

But God said to Abraham, “Do not be distressed ([jussive sense](#) ~ command) because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, **listen** ([shama](#)) to her - Note that this is a test of Abraham. Will he obey God and **not be distressed** (In the Lxx it is rendered as a [present imperative with a negative](#))? Will he listen to Sarah. The answer is "Yes" Abraham will pass these tests, even though it will be emotionally painful. The literal Hebrew of the phrase “Do not be distressed” reads “*Let it not be evil in your eyes.*” Notice God calls Hagar **your maid**, not Sarah’s maid, indicating God knows she is near and dear to him. **Tells** is in the imperfect picturing Sarah’s words as already being spoken to Abraham. While some of Sarah’s motivation was surely jealousy, God’s command to Abraham clearly does not signify He approved of Sarah’s attitude. God’s command was based on His sovereignty, for He had the right to chose who would be the heir and for that reason Ishmael had to leave. God’s command **listen** ([shama](#) - it could be translated “**Obey**”) meant that Abraham was to give his undivided attention to what Sarah was saying.

**NET NOTE** - “**listen to her voice.**” The idiomatic expression means “obey; comply.” Here her advice, though harsh, is necessary and conforms to the will of God. Later when Abraham has other sons, he sends them all away as well. (Ge 25:6)

**For** - Term of explanation. What is God explaining to Abraham again in a slightly different way? He is reiterating the reason Abraham is to cast out Ishmael.

*Sometimes the good must go in order that the best can come.*

--Ray Pritchard

**Through Isaac your descendants shall be named** - The essence of God’s word here is that His covenant promises to Abraham would be fulfilled through Isaac and not through Ishmael. This reflects God’s sovereign choice beyond any doubt and is picked up by Paul in Romans 9.

This passage in the Septuagint is quoted verbatim by Paul in the New Testament in defense of the doctrine of God’s sovereignty in election...

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are (PHYSICALLY) descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants (E.G., LOOK AT OVER 1 BILLION MUSLIMS WHO ARE “THROUGH ISHMAEL”), but: “**THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED.**” 8 That is, it is not the **children of the flesh** who are children of God, but the **children of the promise** are regarded as descendants. 9 For this is the word of promise: “AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON.”(Ro 9:6-9+)

### QUESTION - [Was Hagar Abraham’s wife or his concubine?](#)

**ANSWER** - Hagar is properly considered a [concubine](#) of Abraham’s, although the Bible does call her a “wife” of Abraham in Genesis 16:3: “So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife” (ESV). A wife and a concubine held distinct roles in a family, but a concubine was still considered a wife of sorts.

[Hagar](#) had been Sarah’s servant, but she was raised in status to be a second wife to [Abraham](#). This action was required for Abraham to have a child with Hagar, but it did not place Hagar on a par with Sarah (see Genesis 25:5–6); Hagar remained a secondary wife—a “slave wife,” as it were (cf. Galatians 4:21–31).

The Hebrew words for “wife” and “concubine” are different, but the word for “wife” has a broad range of meanings and can be translated as “woman,” “wife,” or “female.” The word was not always used with precision. That’s why, in Genesis 16:3, both [Sarah and Hagar](#) are called a “wife” of Abraham, using different forms of the same Hebrew word. The broad definition of the word in question means we have to use context clues to more precisely define it. In Hagar’s case, her status as Sarah’s slave means that she was a “wife” of a lesser class. In biblical times there were various rankings of wives, but the first wife always had seniority.

It is worth noting that, after Sarah died, Abraham married again: “Abraham had taken another wife, whose name was Keturah” (Genesis 25:1). Elsewhere, [Keturah](#) is called Abraham’s “concubine” (1 Chronicles 1:32); so, Keturah was both. She was a wife, but she was of an inferior status to Sarah. The same could be said of Hagar.

Abraham had a principal wife, [Sarah](#), and two secondary wives, Hagar and Keturah. Sarah alone possessed legal rights and social standing as Abraham’s wife, and only her child, Isaac, was the rightful heir to the family inheritance (see Genesis 25:5). Sarah, who had been unable to bear children, gave her Egyptian servant, Hagar, to Abraham as a concubine/wife. Taking a concubine was a common solution to childlessness in ancient times. But a concubine only held “secondary wife status.”

God had plans for Hagar and her child by Abraham. God dealt kindly with both Hagar and Ishmael, preserving their lives and making Ishmael the father of a great nation (Genesis 21:8–21). [GotQuestions.org](#)

### Vance Havner - Good intentions

What God looks for is the intent of the heart and, when in our hearts we have already made the sacrifice required, God may sometimes not ask us to actually finish what we meant to do. Abraham put God first, not Isaac, and we read, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Gen. 21:12). Our testimony is perpetuated by the Isaac we offer at God’s command, whether consummated actually or intentionally.

### Theodore Epp - PARTING WITH THE DESIRES OF THE FLESH Genesis 21:12; Romans 6:6-14

Although the situation was grievous to Abraham, God said to him, “Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Gen. 21:12).

Abraham was to depend on what God had done for him and had given him in the person of Isaac. This had to do primarily with Isaac's being the covenant heir and being in the lineage of Christ.

Abraham was grieved about having to part with Ishmael, so God emphasized to him again that "in Isaac shall thy seed be called."

Present-day believers also find it exceedingly difficult to part with the desires of the flesh. The struggle is intense, but to cling to the flesh only results in bondage.

God has provided a way for the believer to be free from bondage to the flesh. Paul explained it when he said, "Knowing this, that our old man is [was] crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:6).

Verse 11 of this same chapter says, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

We need to recognize what has been done for us, count it as a fact, appropriate its benefits and continually live for God.

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

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### **Vance Havner - MIRACLES**

In Isaac shall thy seed be called. Genesis 21:12.

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.... Isaiah 7:14.

Born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:13.

Every Jew is a miracle, descended from Isaac, who was born to Abraham and Sarah long past the age of parenthood. Jesus was a miracle baby born of a virgin. The true Church is made of people born again through faith in Christ. The Bible is a miracle book written by divine inspiration. No Christian has any business asking like Gideon, "Where be all the miracles?" We are part of the miracle business, the supernatural work of God.

### **Vance Havner - AS GOOD AS DONE**

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac.... Hebrews 11:17.

Abraham did not actually slay Isaac upon the altar, but God knew his heart and took the will for the deed. It was as good as done. God sometimes asks of us a sacrifice which He may not let us actually make even as the Lord stayed Abraham's hand. The angel said, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Genesis 22:12). What God looks for is the intent of the heart and, when in our hearts we have already made the sacrifice required, God may sometimes not ask us to actually finish what we meant to do. Abraham put God first, not Isaac, and we read,

"In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Genesis 21:12).

Our testimony is perpetuated by the Isaac we offer at God's command, whether consummated actually or intentionally.

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### **Today in the Word - Galatians 4 Background Genesis 21:1-14**

It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. - Genesis 21:12

#### **TODAY IN THE WORD**

If you miss the beginning of a movie, you risk missing the opening scene, which often provides a lot of context for what's happening in the film. Neither is it a good idea to skip the opening chapter of a novel. You might miss out on an introduction to a major character or conflict of the book.

We're jumping out of Galatians today and back into Genesis, simply to provide some of the back story for Paul's forthcoming arguments. If we don't return to Genesis, we might find ourselves somewhat confused. In the last ten verses of Galatians 4, which we'll read tomorrow, Paul introduces a lengthy and complicated argument comparing Ishmael and Isaac, the two sons of Abraham. Today we'll read more about these two sons in Genesis, which will help us with tomorrow's reading.

We know that Ishmael was a son born to Abraham but not to Sarah. Sarah, who had spent many years grieving her inability to have children, had concocted what she thought was a no-fail plan.

Abraham would impregnate her servant, Hagar, and through Hagar, Sarah would bear children (see Genesis 16). It never worked as well as Sarah had hoped. Contempt and jealousy abounded on both sides once Ishmael was born.

In today's reading, Sarah had now also conceived and given birth to a son, Isaac. He was the son of promise, the culmination of everything that God had been telling Abraham and Sarah for decades now. You will bear a son from your own bodies, and you will become a great nation. Now Isaac was the flesh and blood proof that God has kept His word.

Isaac and Ishmael were no different in the sign of circumcision. Both sons were circumcised. Both sons were Abraham's biological children. But it was through Isaac that God plans to "reckon the offspring" of Abraham. Don't forget that in Galatians 3 we saw the word "seed," meaning "offspring," referred to Jesus Christ. The children of Isaac are the children of Abraham are the children of Christ!

#### **APPLY THE WORD**

The story of Ishmael and Isaac portrays what happens when we foolishly take matters into our own hands. God had promised children to Abraham and Sarah, but when Sarah got tired of waiting on God, she made her own plan. And the effects of that plan were disastrous! If you know for certain that God has given you direction about an area of your life, wait on Him and trust that He'll confirm what He wants you to do next and when.

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### **Vance Havner - The Miracle of Israel**

From the balcony of my hotel room on the edge of Tel Aviv I watch early this morning the Mediterranean waves play along the shore. Everywhere I behold

the miracle of Israel back in the land: the thriving city, the desert blossoming as the rose, the fabulous transformation of rocks and rubble into orange groves, opulent farms, and the phenomenon of a people gathered from many lands back to the homeland (which someone has described as "not a melting pot but a pressure cooker!").

Thirty years ago a college president said,

"Israel will never return to Palestine. Jews love the cities where they can make money. They would never go back to that rock pile."

Back at the turn of the century some Bible scholars saw Israel's return when it was as unlikely (to quote Dr. Carl Henry) as a Swiss navy. They put it into the Scofield Bible which is laughed at in some circles. They were right about it as they were about the rise of Russia as a commanding figure in the last days. True, Israel is back in unbelief but it is there and the stage is set.

Anyone who can sit where I sit this morning and not be moved as he watches Scripture being fulfilled would have to be blind in both eyes and bereft of his brains. Such ignorance abounds even in church circles and it is that wilful ignorance Peter wrote about (see 1 Peter 1:14). Here is the reassembling of God's chosen people promised to the Old Testament prophets. God made a promise that must be fulfilled. It cannot be transferred to the church as some have believed. There is no other nation on earth comparable to this little country that lives in a sort of desperation. They must win or else—there is no second choice. Every day is an emergency, every citizen is ready to die for his homeland. James Reston wrote: "These people have acted as if the life of the nation was everything and their personal lives were incidental."

What impresses me most is not this miracle in Israel but the miracle of Israel itself. **Let it not be forgotten that Israel was a miracle to begin with! Isaac was born of aged parents and we read, "... in Isaac shall thy seed be called"** (Genesis 21:12; Romans 9:7). Likewise, the church began with a miracle—the virgin birth of our Lord—and every Christian begins with the new birth. In all three cases there is a miracle.

Something of the utter dedication and desperation that characterizes Israel ought to mark the church—the purchased people of God. Israel has maintained her identity century after century in many lands speaking many languages and now dwells in her native land, speaking Hebrew, her native tongue. Never assimilated but always different, how like that the church should be! Alas, we are so anxious to "identify" that we have merged into the world around us. The salt is so mixed with the elements of this age that it has lost its savor. We are to infiltrate the world but the world has assimilated us. When are we going to learn to be in it but not of it? When will we regain our pilgrim character as exiles and aliens on the earth? In our well-intentioned identification with the world, we do not mold it—it molds us. We are not to be isolated but insulated, moving in the midst of evil but untouched by it.

So I wish this morning here in Israel that we could learn a lesson from this compact little land so utterly consumed by its magnificent obsession. No other nation could have defeated a ring of foes in a few days. If the church could stand as resolutely no confederation of men or demons could defeat such an overwhelming minority.

And we could say like that old captain when he was told that his little band was surrounded, "Don't let one of them escape!"

**Genesis 21:13 "And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant."**

- Ge 21:18 16:10 17:20 25:12-18
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### YAHWEH'S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM REGARDING ISHMAEL

**And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also**- Note the "and" which links this promise with the two commands in the previous verse. God knows Abraham is hurting deeply at having to depart with his first son. So God tenderly consoles Abraham with this "I WILL" prophetic promise. Ishmael would become a nation which fulfills His earlier promise "I have made you **the father of a multitude of nations**." (Ge 17:5+) Notice that promise in Ge 17:5 is in the **past tense** ("have made"), because the fulfillment is absolutely certain, so it is stated as if it had already taken place (See [Prolepsis](#)). In Ge 17:6 Yahweh promised Abraham "I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and **I will make nations of you**, and kings will come forth from you."

*As long as Ishmael remained in the house,  
he would be a threat to God's plan.*

-- Ray Pritchard

**Because he is your descendant** - Yahweh explains why He will make Ishmael into a **nation**. God would make Ishmael a nation, because He had given Abraham the covenant promises mentioned above. God is always faithful to keep His covenant!

**Genesis 21:14 So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder, and gave her the boy, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba.**

- **So Abraham rose early**: Ge 19:27 22:3 24:54 26:31 Ps 119:60 Pr 27:14 Ec 9:10
- **took**: Ge 25:6 36:6,7
- **sent her away**: Joh 8:35
- **wandered**: Ge 16:7 Ge 37:15 Ps 107:4 Isa 16:8 Ga 4:23-25
- **Beersheba**: So called when Moses wrote; but not before Abraham's covenant with Abimelech, ver. 31. Such instances of the figure prolepsis are not infrequent in the Pentateuch. Ge 21:33 22:19 26:33 46:1 1Ki 19:3
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## A DIFFICULT DAY FOR ABRAHAM

**So Abraham rose early in the morning** - (Other early mornings for Abraham = Ge 19:27; 20:8; 22:3) One has to believe this morning was after a fitful night of sleep. In this chapter we see Abraham's joy at gaining a son, but now we see his sorrow for losing a son. But even in his sorrow, he will not hesitate to obey God's instructions.

**And took bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder, and gave her the boy, and sent her away**- The amount of water was not much for the desert but one waterskin (a goatskin would hold about 3 gallons, weighing about 30 pounds) is all that Hagar would have been able to carry on foot. And while some commentators insist Hagar also carried Ishmael (the Septuagint reads "he put the child on her shoulder"), this seems far fetched considering he would have been a robust teenager at this time. It is surprising that Abraham was not more generous in the send off. He was wealthy with manpower and animals and could have provided a bearer and guide as well as several beasts of burden to allow more supplies for Hagar and his son. One has to see this as God's providence, for the result was that her soon to be reached extremity gave her the unspeakable privilege of having a second personal encounter with God. Had she been fully supplied, she would not have needed God's help.

**THOUGHT** - Abraham's minimalistic send off of bread and water opened the door for God to open Hagar's eyes and speak a blessing over her son Hagar. Oh, for us to have the spiritual eyes to see that at times our adverse circumstances many have been orchestrated by God, so that we might be allowed to experience a close encounter with Him when we have reached the end of our sufficiency and ourselves! Let this be true in our lives Lord. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

**Wenham** notes that "**Send her off**" (piel נלש) (ED: [shalach](#) - translated "divorce" 4x out of >790 uses) is a softer term than "drive out" ([garash](#), cf. Ge 18:16; 19:29; 3:23). It is used of divorce (e.g., Dt 22:19; 24:1, 3) and the release of slaves with a generous provision (Ex 11:1-2; Deut 15:13)." (BORROW [Genesis 16-50 page 84](#))

**And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba** - Parting is such sweet sorrow and this was surely a sorrow filled day for this great saint. His son Ishmael would have been about 13-16 yo at this time and clearly Abraham loved him. But we do not hear Abraham complaining to God! This recalls the words of Job 1:21-22

He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." **Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God**

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, what "wilderness" are you wandering through as you read this note? Or perhaps you have just come out the "wilderness." Is your attitude toward God like that of Abraham and Job, or are you blaming God for the adversity you experienced? Paul tells us "In **EVERYTHING give thanks** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)), for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus." (1Th 5:18+)

**Henry Morris** - This provision, considering his sincere concern for Hagar and Ishmael, can best be understood as a sure confidence that God, who had instructed him to send them away, would care for them. Hagar also needed to learn this

**Larry Richards** writes that it was a "Well-established custom in the Patriarchal Age protected the rights of any child born to a man by a slave woman. Though the son of the wife was a man's legal heir, his child by a concubine was guaranteed an inheritance. Sarah's demand that Abraham send Ishmael away was doubly distressing. Abraham loved Ishmael. And he believed that sending Ishmael away was morally wrong. Only God's direct intervention, and God's promise to guarantee Ishmael's future, finally moved Abraham to banish Hagar and his son. Abraham would surely understand the pain of those who lose their children through divorce. How desperately we need to remember that God cares for our loved ones, even when we cannot. (BORROW [The Bible reader's companion page 38](#))

**Matthew Henry Concise - Ge 21:14-21.** If Hagar and Ishmael had behaved well in Abraham's family, they might have continued there; but they were justly punished. By abusing privileges, we forfeit them. Those who know not when they are well off, will be made to know the worth of mercies by the want of them. They were brought to distress in the wilderness. It is not said that the provisions were spent, or that Abraham sent them away without money. But the water was spent; and having lost their way, in that hot climate Ishmael was soon overcome with fatigue and thirst. God's readiness to help us when we are in trouble, must not slacken, but quicken our endeavours to help ourselves. The promise concerning her son is repeated, as a reason why Hagar should bestir herself to help him. It should engage our care and pains about children and young people, to consider that we know not what great use God has designed them for, and may make of them. The angel directs her to a present supply. Many who have reason to be comforted, go mourning from day to day, because they do not see the reason they have for comfort. There is a well of water near them in the covenant of grace, but they are not aware of it, till the same God that opened their eyes to see their wound, opens them to see their remedy. Paran was a wild place, fit for a wild man; such as Ishmael. Those who are born after the flesh, take up with the wilderness of this world, while the children of the promise aim at the heavenly Canaan, and cannot be at rest till they are there. Yet God was with the lad; his outward welfare was owing to this.

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### James Smith - THE LORD WILL PROVIDE Genesis 21:14 (margin)

#### I. The Provider. The Lord.

1. In Him is infinite WISDOM to know our need.
2. In Him are infinite RICHES to meet all our need.
3. In Him is infinite GRACE to give us all we need.

#### II. The Provision. "The Lord will provide." He has provided—

1. REDEMPTION in His Son.
2. SANCTIFICATION in His Spirit.

### James Smith - HAGAR THE HELPLESS Genesis 21:14–19

“What aileth thee, Hagar?” Human ailments are very many, and may overtake us, as they did Hagar, in a very unexpected way. Who could be happier than she while nursing the son of Abraham? But the birth of Isaac (type of that which is born of the Spirit) brings trouble and separation to Ishmael (that which is born of the flesh). Poor Hagar, crushed in spirit, wanders forth into the wilderness, where, like the weary dove outside the ark, she is ready to perish, but the merciful hand of God is stretched out, and she is received into the favour of Him who seeks to save the lost. Notice—

**I. Divine Question.** God called, and said, “What aileth thee, Hagar?” (Ge 21:17). How timely and tender is the sympathy of God! This is no formal question of curiosity, but the loving inquiry of One whose heart yearns to help the needy. When Jesus said, “What will thou that I shall do unto thee?” (Luke 18:41) He was opening the door into His own divine fulness. Hagar’s ailment, in a typical sense, is a very common one.

**1. SHE WAS AN OUTCAST.** “Cast out this bondwoman” (Ge 21:10). “Abraham sent her away” (Ge 21:14). She was shut out from the Master’s house and presence. Why? Because her son mocked at Isaac—the gift of God. Those who were found sneering at the Word of Christ were all put outside, “And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise” (Luke 8:54). Sin always separates and leads from the house of blessing to the desert of sorrow and misery.

**2. SHE WAS DESTITUTE.** “The water was spent in the bottle” (Ge 21:15). The resources of an outcast are speedily exhausted. The prodigal’s fortune was soon spent (Luke 15). When the sinner gets to an end of himself he has nothing left but prayer. His wit’s end is often his best end. It is when all self-created streams are dried that the longing eye seeks the Living Fountain.

**3. SHE WAS HELPLESS AND HOPELESS.** “She went a good way off, and said, Let me not see the death of the child” (Ge 21:16). She now sees nothing but the grim face of death before her. Her parting with the lad must have been like wringing the last drop of blood out of her agonising heart. It is possible to see and feel the greatness of our needs, so that we are afraid to listen to their voice. Stifling their cry does not improve our condition. She is a true and painful picture of one who is “without strength.” “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:6).

**II. Divine Word of Comfort.** “The angel of God said, Fear not, for God hath heard.” What a beautiful fulfilment of “He knows how to speak a word in season to them that are weary” (Isa. 50:4). Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity. It was “while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). The divine “Fear not” is always accompanied with the divine fulness (Isa. 41:10).

**1. THE PROVISION.** “She saw a well of water” (Ge 21:19). She was sitting perishing in an agony of thirst while a well of salvation was close at hand. Spiritually this is the state and condition of many perishing for lack of knowledge while the Word of Truth is lying at their side, and even ringing in their ears.

**2. THE PREPARATION.** “God opened her eyes.” It was not enough that the well was there; her eyes must be opened to see it. The great provision of the Gospel is twofold:

- 1, The outward work of Christ on the Cross;
- 2, the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. The well of atonement cannot satisfy without the eye-opening power of the Spirit of God. “Open Thou mine eyes” (Psa. 119:18).

**3. THE ACCEPTANCE.** “She went and filled the bottle with water.” She could not make the well, but she could take the water freely offered to her. We are not asked to make salvation, but to take it (Rev. 22:17). What a revelation this was to Hagar:

- 1, Of her own blindness. It was only when her eyes were opened that she discovered how blind she had been.
- 2, Of the goodness of God. He made the provision, and imparted to the needy one the very capacity to apprehend it. God opened her eyes, but she must fill the bottle. It is an awful responsibility to have the opened eye and yet to refuse the blessings revealed. In the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness there is enough to fill every bottle to satisfy every heart.

**4. THE RESULT.** “She gave the lad drink.” In accepting the divine provision she saved both herself and her son. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31).

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### QUESTION - [Why did Abraham banish Ishmael \(Genesis 21:14\)?](#)

**ANSWER** - Hagar was an Egyptian girl who was a slave to Abram’s (Abraham’s) wife, Sarah. We find most of the information about Hagar in [Genesis 16](#). After God had appeared to [Abram](#) and promised him a homeland and a heritage ([Genesis 12:1–4](#)), ten years went by, and he and [Sarah](#) still had no baby ([Genesis 16:1](#)). In her impatience, Sarah took matters into her own hands and gave her maid to her husband, saying, “Go sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her” (verses 2–3). So Abram did as she said, and Hagar became pregnant.

Despite the fact that this adulterous situation was of her own doing, Sarah became jealous when the younger, fertile slave girl began to flaunt her expanding waistline (Genesis 16:4). In anger, Sarah started treating Hagar harshly, causing Hagar to run away into the desert (Ge 16:5–6). The angel of the Lord found her there and comforted her, telling her to return to her mistress and giving her a prophecy concerning her son: “You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery. He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers” (Ge 16:11–12). This was Hagar’s first encounter with Abram’s God, and she called Him “the God who sees me” (Ge 16:13).

Later, Hagar bore a son to Abram and named him [Ishmael](#), as the Lord had told her to (Genesis 16:15). Hagar’s story resumes fourteen years later when Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 21). Shortly after Isaac was weaned, Sarah saw Ishmael taunting him and took the matter to Abraham: “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac” (Genesis 21:10). Although it grieved Abraham to do so, he gave Hagar and Ishmael some provisions and sent them away, and Ishmael and his mother wandered in the desert (Ge 21:14).

When Hagar's food and water ran out, she did not know what to do. She put Ishmael under a bush for shade and then went a few paces away so she would not have to watch him die (Genesis 21:16). As Hagar wept, the Lord called to her from heaven with words of comfort (Ge 21:17); God then gave her a promise: "Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation" (Ge 21:18). The Bible says that God "opened her eyes and she saw a well of water" that she had not seen in her distress (Ge 21:19). God rescued Hagar and gave her hope and direction. God was with Ishmael as he grew up in the desert (Ge 21:20).

**Abraham's sin with Hagar has resulted in centuries of sorrow and bloodshed, as the descendants of Isaac (the Jews) and Ishmael (the Arabs) have been mortal enemies since Bible days. Mohammed, the father of Islam, is said to have been from the line of Ishmael, which is one reason Muslims claim a right to the Promised Land, Israel. Hagar is a revered woman in Islam since Ishmael is the father of the Arabic people. The Qur'anic version of the Genesis account twists the story to make Hagar the heroine of the story and her son, Ishmael, the child of promise instead of Isaac.**

The apostle Paul uses the story of [Hagar and Sarah](#) to teach a spiritual truth concerning our salvation. In Galatians 4, Hagar represents the Old Covenant, based on the Law (given at Sinai in Arabia) and human works. Sarah represents the New Covenant, based on grace and the saving work of God. In Paul's analogy, believers in Christ are like the child born of Sarah—we are free, products of the Spirit. Those who try to earn their salvation by their own works are like the child born of Hagar—they are slaves, products of the flesh. "Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman" (Galatians 4:31). Paul counsels believers to "get rid of the slave woman" (Gal 4:30)—that is, cease trying to earn salvation, because the inheritance of the children of promise can never be shared with those who live under the dictates of the flesh.

The story of Hagar is full of God's goodness, and we can learn from the way God worked in Hagar's life. She was a nobody, a foreign slave girl. Yet the Lord of Heaven saw her in her distress, provided for her need, and blessed her son because he was the child of Abraham. Hagar gave us the term *El Roi*, which means "the God who sees." And her story reminds us that, no matter who we are or where we are, the Lord God sees us and cares about us. He will comfort and provide for anyone who turns to Him, and He always keeps His promises. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### Walter Kaiser - [Hard Sayings of the Bible](#) - Was It Wrong for Abraham to Send Hagar Away?

Was it not wrong and heartless of Abraham to turn out Hagar, whom he had taken as a wife? In fact, was it not even contrary to the social conventions of the day to refuse food and lodging in his own dwelling to a woman who had honored him by bearing him a son? And was it not all the more reprehensible since the boy was so young that he had to be carried on the shoulders of Hagar as they left?

A number of commentators have insisted on the fact that Ishmael was placed on the shoulders of Hagar when she left. This would imply that at the time the boy was a mere infant who needed to be carried by his mother. Then in Genesis 21:15 he is spoken of as being cast or placed under a bush. Now after these interpreters have reached these conclusions about Ishmael being a mere infant, they go on to declare that this assessment is in conflict with Genesis 16:16, 17:25 and 21:5, where the boy seems to be at least thirteen or fourteen years old, and that this is the mark of multiple sources, for the texts were not edited as carefully as they should have been.

The solution to the question of the boy's age is rather straightforward. There is no basis for the translation of the Septuagint or the Peshitta: "and laid the boy on her shoulder." If this were the correct reading, there would be no way to explain the present Hebrew text, which does not make "the boy" the object of the verb "lay" or "set"; instead, it is the object of the verb "gave." The literal rendering of the Hebrew is: "And Abraham rose up early in the morning and he took bread and a skin of water, and he gave [them] unto Hagar putting [them] on her shoulder, and he gave [her] the boy, and he sent her away, and she went and she wandered in the wilderness of [Beersheba](#)."

Since Abraham was living at the time in Gerar between Kadesh and Shur, Hagar wandered in the desert far to the north of Abraham, rather than heading south to Egypt, as she had done when she fled from Sarah on a previous occasion (Gen 16:7). There is no basis for insisting, as some have, that Abraham was at Hebron at the time, and therefore Hagar was on her way to Egypt when her location was given at [Beersheba](#).

But what of Abraham's action? Can it be justified?

It is clear that God instructed Abraham to follow Sarah's wishes (Gen 21:12–13), even though it grieved Abraham greatly (Gen 21:11). But as George Bush commented, "God does not require Abraham to acquiesce in Sarah's proposal because he approved the spirit which prompted it, but because it accorded with his counsel and his repeated declarations that all the blessings of the covenant were to belong pre-eminently to Isaac."<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, there is more here than a mere domestic scuffle. Surely it demonstrates how much evil can come from a polygamous marriage. But it also demonstrates that the promise made to Abraham in the covenant could not be abandoned, even when it was due to the unwise actions of the one to whom the promise had been made.

God requires that Abraham deny his natural feelings, based on the promise that he would also make the son of the maidservant the ancestor of a nation because he came from Abraham and because God would perform his word. And from what follows, it appears that Hagar met with no great difficulty in providing for herself or her son, whether it came indirectly from Abraham or from some other means that God had provided.

Thus Sarah sinned in recommending that Abraham take Hagar as his wife and sinned again in the attitude that prompted her to urge Abraham to send her away. But just as in the case of Joseph, where his brothers intended him harm, God meant it for good—the good of both Isaac and Ishmael.

See also comment on GENESIS 29:25–28; 50:19–21.

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#### QUESTION - [Who was Hagar in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Hagar was an Egyptian girl who was a slave to Abram's (Abraham's) wife, Sarah. We find most of the information about Hagar in Genesis 16. After God had appeared to [Abram](#) and promised him a homeland and a heritage (Genesis 12:1–4), ten years went by, and he and Sarah still had no baby (Genesis 16:1). In her impatience, Sarah took matters into her own hands and gave her maid to her husband, saying, "Go sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her" (Ge 16:2–3). So Abram did as she said, and Hagar became pregnant.



Despite the fact that this adulterous situation was of her own doing, Sarah became jealous when the younger, fertile slave girl began to flaunt her expanding waistline (Genesis 16:4). In anger, Sarah started treating Hagar harshly, causing Hagar to run away into the desert (Ge 16:5–6). The angel of the Lord found her there and comforted her, telling her to return to her mistress and giving her a prophecy concerning her son: “You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery. He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers” (Ge 16:11–12). This was Hagar’s first encounter with Abram’s God, and she called Him “the God who sees me” (Ge 16:13).

Later, Hagar bore a son to Abram and named him [Ishmael](#), as the Lord had told her to (Genesis 16:15). Hagar’s story resumes fourteen years later when [Isaac](#) was born to Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 21). Shortly after Isaac was weaned, Sarah saw Ishmael taunting him and took the matter to Abraham: “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac” (Genesis 21:10). Although it grieved Abraham to do so, he gave Hagar and Ishmael some provisions and [sent them away](#), and Ishmael and his mother wandered in the desert (verse 14).

When Hagar’s food and water ran out, she did not know what to do. She put Ishmael under a bush for shade and then went a few paces away so she would not have to watch him die ([Genesis 21:16](#)). As Hagar wept, the Lord called to her from heaven with words of comfort (verse 17); God then gave her a promise: “Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation” (verse 18). The Bible says that God “opened her eyes and she saw a well of water” that she had not seen in her distress (verse 19). God rescued Hagar and gave her hope and direction. God was with Ishmael as he grew up in the desert (verse 20).

Abraham’s sin with Hagar has resulted in centuries of sorrow and bloodshed, as the descendants of Isaac (the Jews) and Ishmael (the Arabs) have been mortal enemies since Bible days. Mohammed, the father of [Islam](#), is said to have been from the line of Ishmael, which is one reason Muslims claim a right to the Promised Land, Israel. Hagar is a revered woman in Islam since Ishmael is the father of the Arabic people. The Qur’anic version of the Genesis account twists the story to make Hagar the heroine of the story and her son, Ishmael, the child of promise instead of Isaac.

The apostle Paul uses the story of [Hagar and Sarah](#) to teach a spiritual truth concerning our salvation. In [Galatians 4](#), Hagar represents the Old Covenant, based on the Law (given at Sinai in Arabia) and human works. Sarah represents the New Covenant, based on grace and the saving work of God. In Paul’s analogy, believers in Christ are like the child born of Sarah—we are free, products of the Spirit. Those who try to earn their salvation by their own works are like the child born of Hagar—they are slaves, products of the flesh. “Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman” ([Galatians 4:31](#)). Paul counsels believers to “get rid of the slave woman” (verse 30)—that is, cease trying to earn salvation, because the inheritance of the children of promise can never be shared with those who live under the dictates of the flesh.

The story of Hagar is full of God’s goodness, and we can learn from the way God worked in Hagar’s life. She was a nobody, a foreign slave girl. Yet the Lord of Heaven saw her in her distress, provided for her need, and blessed her son because he was the child of Abraham. Hagar gave us the term *El Roi*, which means “the God who sees.” And her story reminds us that, no matter who we are or where we are, the Lord God sees us and cares about us. He will comfort and provide for anyone who turns to Him, and He always keeps His promises. [GotQuestions.org](#)

#### Related Resources:

- [What is the story of Sarah and Hagar? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Was Hagar Abraham’s wife or his concubine? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why does Hagar call God “the God Who Sees” \(Genesis 16:13\)? | GotQuestions.org](#)

#### Genesis 21:15 When the water in the skin was used up, she left the boy under one of the bushes.

- **the water:** Ge 21:14 Ex 15:22-25 17:1-3 2Ki 3:9 Ps 63:1 Isa 44:12 Jer 14:3
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

**When the water in the skin was used up, she left the boy under one of the bushes-** If you have ever been to Israel, you know that the guides always give a stern warning to make sure you drink plenty of water to hydrate because dehydration and serious sequelae can occur quickly in the desert-like conditions. **Left** is probably not the best translation of the Hebrew verb [shalak/salak](#) which normally means to cast or throw (used of casting Joseph into a pit - Ge 37:20, 22, 24) and is translated in the Septuagint with the verb [rhipto](#) which means to throw (Mt 27:5 Judas **threw** the pieces of silver into the sanctuary.) Since Ishmael would have been a teenager Hagar was not carrying him, so she surely did not literally throw him. However, presumably Ishmael had become so dehydrated that he was weakened and so “she shoved” (NET rendering) him under one of the bushes to get him out of the heat of the sun.

**Donald Cantrell - “The Empty Water Bottle”** (Online [Jewels for the Journey](#) 194 full page sermon starters - daily devotions)

Gen 21:15—And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs.

The water bottle was empty; it seemed as if Hagar and Ishmael had reached the end of their Journey. The young lad was birthed by Hagar and Abraham due to Abraham failing to trust God and wait for him to come through. In spite of the circumstances surrounding this lad’s birth, he was here and nothing could change this fact. Hagar and her son were sent off on their journey with a bit of bread and a bottle of water. I can see them as they make their journey, it must have been one of fear and turmoil. I dare say that with each bite of bread and each drink from the bottle hastened her fear, the bread would not last much longer and the water was nearing the bottom of the bottle. On top of all of this, the two weary travelers had wandered into the wilderness, in the wilderness food and water would be hard to find. The woman looked down into the bottle and her fears had come to fruition, the bottle was completely empty and the lad was troubled in his body due to fatigue and a mighty thirst. Hagar had reached her wits end, what could she do to help her son, what would she do? In this story we find a mother doing the most unnatural deed a mother could do, she hid her son under some bushes and went off down the road to watch him die. The woman began to cry loudly and she was weeping uncontrollably, she could not bear the thought of her son suffering, up the trail her son was crying and calling out for his mother. Then the most wonderful thing occurred, the bible says that the Lord heard the voice of the child, as he does all of

his dear children. It must never be said that our God is not a God of tender and timely compassion; he is adequate and available to meet the need of any crying child.

The Lord sent his angel and the angel told Hagar that all was well, for the Lord heard the cry of the child right from where the child was located, so it is today dear friend. In the midst of your trouble God will see your empty water bottle and he will see that it gets filled up. The Lord opened the eyes of Hagar and showed her a well that had plenty of water, enough to fill up her water bottle. I don't know what you may be facing today; if your bottle is empty you must cry out to God, ask him to fill your water bottle. On this day many of the dear readers of this devotion are facing dire circumstances; they are facing empty water bottles and must have the Lord's help. I don't know what your empty water bottle may be, but the Lord knows where you are located and he has many wells that are available to fill up your bottle. Is your empty bottle a physical need, is it a spiritual need, is it a personal need, is it a monumental need, nevertheless it is a need and God must come through, right? If you are running on empty and feel as if God has forsaken you, let me tell you God has not ever forsaken any of his dear children, it never has happened and it never will happen!!! The Lord loves you and will help you fill up your empty bottle.

1. The Lonely Journey of Hagar
2. The Looming Jeopardy of Hagar
3. The Lasting Joy of Hagar
4. The Lovely Justifying of Hagar

In the space below ask God to help you refill your water bottle; ask him to come to where you are. The Lord absolutely loves you dear friend and is aware of all of your needs:

**Genesis 21:16 Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, "Do not let me see the boy die." And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and wept.**

- **Let:** Ge 44:34 1Ki 3:26 Es 8:6 Isa 49:15 Zec 12:10 Lu 15:20
- **lifted:** Ge 27:38 29:11 Judges 2:4 Ru 1:9 1Sa 24:16 30:4
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### HAGAR'S PRAYER

**Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, "Do not let me see the boy die." And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and wept** - And at this point Hagar in her last recorded words seems resolved to the fact that Ishmael was going to die of dehydration and did not want to see this take place. She takes a place presumably far enough away that she cannot hear her son's agonizing cries, which surely tore at her heart.

What promises of God had Hagar forgotten from her previous encounter with the [Angel of the LORD](#), some 14 years earlier? She had forgotten the prophetic promise that actually was very similar to the promise given to Abraham regarding countless descendants. Clearly, if Ishmael died, this promise could not be fulfilled. Moses records...

Moreover, the [Angel of the LORD](#) said to her, **"I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count"**  
The [Angel of the LORD](#) said to her further, **"Behold**, you are with child, And you will bear a son; And you shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has given heed to your affliction. "He will be a wild donkey of a man, His hand will be against everyone, And everyone's hand will be against him; And he will live to the east of all his brothers." (Ge 16:10-12+)

It would be easy to be critical of Hagar forgetting God's promise but 14 years is a long time and she is now in a wilderness and out of water. She is definitely at the [at the end of her rope](#).

**Rod Mattoon** - There may be times in our life when our resources dry up like the bread and water of Hagar. There may be moments in our life when people we love and depend upon turn their backs upon us it seems. Our back may be against the wall and we don't know what to do or where to turn. All we can do is cry it seems as Hagar did (**ED: OR ISHMAEL IN VERSE 17**). It is in times like these that we as Christians have a loving Lord we can turn to who is concerned about our needs and is able to help us through our trials. He can give us peace and strength in our tribulations. The times of our helplessness are God's opportunities to show Himself strong. May we learn to trust the Lord always, especially when our back is against the wall.

**THOUGHT** - I am reminded of the great passage in Hebrews 2:18+ which says "For since He (JESUS) Himself was tempted (TESTED, TRIED) in that which He has suffered, He is able ([dunamai](#) in present tense - continually able) to come to the aid ([boetheo](#) from boe = cry + théo = run) of those who are (present tense - continually being) tempted." **First** note, Jesus has gone through a similar trial. **Second** note that he is continually able to come to your aid. **Third** note the word **"aid"** which which literally pictures one running to the aid of another who cries for help! So what is the application? When you are being tried, tested, tempted, don't forget to **cry out!** In this case it appears that the one who cried out was Ishmael (Ge 21:17). There is a great old Maranatha song entitled [Cry Out](#). If you are [at the end of your rope](#) like Hagar and Ishmael, you might take a moment and listen to this song.

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#### [C H Spurgeon - Compassion for souls](#)

'She went, and sat down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot; for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept.' Genesis 21:16

If we did really know what souls are, and what it is for them to be cast away, those of us who have done very little or nothing would begin to work for Christ directly. It is said in an old story that a certain king of Lydia had a son who had been dumb from birth, but when Lydia was captured, a soldier was about to kill the king, when the young man suddenly found his tongue and cried out, 'Soldier, would you kill the king?' He had never spoken a word before, but his

astonishment and fear gave him speech. I think if you had been dumb to that moment, if you indeed saw your own children and neighbours going down into the pit, you would cry out, 'Though I never spoke before, I will speak now. Poor souls, believe in Christ, and you shall be saved.' You do not know how such an utterance as that, however simple, might be blessed. A very little child once found herself in company with an old man in his eighties, a fine old man who loved little children and who took the child upon his knee. Turning round to him, the little one said, 'Sir, I got a grandpa just like you, and my grandpa love Jesus Christ. Does you?' He said, 'I was eighty-four years of age and had always lived among Christian people, but nobody ever thought it worth his while to say as much as that to me.' That little child was the instrument of the old man's conversion. He knew he had not loved the Saviour, and he began to seek him, and in his old age he found salvation. If as much as that is possible for a child, it is possible for you. If you love Jesus, burst the bonds of timidity or, it may be, supineness; snap all fetters, and from this day feel that you cannot bear to think of the ruin of a soul, and must seek its salvation if there be in earth or heaven ways and means by which you can bring a blessing to it.

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### Charles Swindoll - NOT ALONE ([Faith for the Journey](#))

The will of God will never take us where the grace of God cannot sustain us.

BILLY GRAHAM

[Hagar] went and sat down by herself about a hundred yards away. "I don't want to watch the boy die," she said, as she burst into tears. But God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, "Hagar, what's wrong? Do not be afraid! God has heard the boy crying as he lies there." Ge 21:16-17

WHEN HAGAR was forced to leave Abraham's camp, she wandered in the wilderness of [Beersheba](#), a region roughly thirty miles southwest of Hebron. Hagar, like most suddenly single parents, faced the challenge of having to survive alone, having to make too little provision cover too many needs, and wondering if God still cared.

Perhaps you're experiencing a time in your life when you feel absolutely alone. Your future is bleak, and you can't remember the last time you really laughed. Your soul is parched, and you don't know where to turn.

At the risk of sounding like a preacher, may I offer a few words of hope?

You need to know that while you feel all alone, you are not alone. God sees you. He hears your weeping. He will care for you and turn your sorrow into dancing. The nights are long, but God will sustain you and restore you. He will see you through the barrenness of Beersheba. You will be whole again—and sooner than you think.

If you identify with Hagar, take heart. When your life has recovered from this dark time, the strength you will have gained will compensate for those desperately difficult days. In the meantime, I repeat: please know that God has not left you alone. As Hagar lay weeping in despair and the young man lay dying of thirst, God heard their sorrow. He knows that you're trapped between deep regret and gnawing bitterness. He understands you. And He will never leave you alone.

REFLECT What reminders has God given you that you are not alone? Take a moment to thank Him for hearing your cries.

Fear not; you will no longer live in shame.

Don't be afraid; there is no more disgrace for you. . . .

For the LORD has called you back from your grief.

Isa 54:4, 6

**Genesis 21:17 God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.**

- **God heard the lad crying:** Ge 16:11 Ex 3:7 22:23,27 2Ki 13:4,23 Ps 50:15 65:2 91:15 Mt 15:32
- **Angel of God** Ge 16:9,11
- **What is the matter with you:** Judges 18:23 1Sa 11:5 Isa 22:1
- **Do not fear:** Ge 15:1 46:3 Ex 14:13 Ps 107:4-6 Isa 41:10,13,14 43:1,2 Mk 5:36
- **Genesis 21 Resources** - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Genesis 16:9; 11+ Then the [Angel of the LORD](#) said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority."....11 The [Angel of the LORD](#) said to her further, "Behold, you are with child, And you will bear a son; And you shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has given heed to your affliction.

## HAGAR'S SECOND GOD ENCOUNTER

God ([Elohim](#)) heard ([shama](#)) the lad crying; and the [Angel of God](#) called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar? **Do not fear**, ([jussive sense](#) ~ command) for God has heard ([shama](#)) the voice of the lad where he is- As an aside, this is still the same God, [El Roi](#), the One Who met Hagar's need in Ge 16:13+, the "God Who sees!" Here he sees Hagar and He hears Ishmael! Ishmael cried and God spoke to Hagar. God heard (*wayishma 'elohim*) is clearly a play on words here for Ishmael's name (*yishma 'el*) is derived from [shama](#) (hear) + [el](#) (God) and thus means "Heard of God" or "God will hear" (Ge 16:11+)! **Do not fear** in the Septuagint is [present imperative with a negative](#) which means stop what you are doing! Did you see the repeated thought in this passage? **God heard...God has heard**. And who did he hear? A teenage lad! **Heard** ([shama](#)) in the Septuagint is *eisakouo* which means God listened attentively to Ishmael! The second use of **heard** ([shama](#)) is translated with a different verb *epakouo* which

also means listened attentively and favorably. God is not unaffected by Ishmael's cries. Note that not everyone agrees [Angel of God](#) in this context is a [THEOPHANY](#). I think it is because of the "I will" promise in Ge 21:18. Note the similar phrase at the point of Abraham's greatest need in Ge 22:11 where "the [Angel of the LORD](#) called to him from Heaven!" In both scenarios God arrives ["in the nick of time"](#) which reminds me of the exhortation in Hebrews 4:16+ "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help **in time of need** (aka ["in the nick of time!"](#)) Are you in need? Draw near to His throne of grace now!

**THOUGHT** - Dear teenager or parent of teenager, see this story of Ishmael as an example to motivate a young person to cry out to God. God hears the prayers of teenagers! So cry out to Him in your time of need. He hears you just like He heard Ishmael! This reminds me of the movie ["Letters to God"](#) about a young boy named Tyler who has cancer and whose prayers take the form of letters he sends to his ultimate pen pal, God.

**Wenham** has an interesting comment on the **lad crying** - "His behavior led to their expulsion and his prayer to their salvation." (BORROW [Genesis 16-50 page 84](#))

**Wiersbe** - "Ishmael and Hagar got lost in the wilderness, their water ran out, and they gave up in despair. This experience was quite different from the time Hagar first met God in the wilderness (Gen. 16:7ff). Sixteen years before, she had found a fountain of water; but now she saw no hope at all. Apparently Hagar had forgotten the promises God had made concerning her son; but Ishmael must have remembered them, for he called on the Lord for help. (**ED**: THAT IS INTERESTING BUT HE WAS IN UTERO WHEN GOD GAVE HER THOSE PROMISES, ALTHOUGH OF COURSE SHE COULD HAVE TOLD HIM ABOUT THE PROMISES WHEN HE WAS OF AGE. BUT THEN IT IS SURPRISING THAT NOW SHE SEEMS TO FORGET!) God heard the lad's cries and rescued them both for Abraham's sake. **So often in the trials of life we fail to see the divine provisions God has made for us, and we forget the promises He has made to us. We open our hands to receive what we think we need instead of asking Him to open our eyes to see what we already have.** The answer to most problems is close at hand, if only we have eyes to see (John 6:1–13; 21:1–6). Hagar is certainly a picture of the needy multitudes in the world today: wandering, weary, thirsty, blind, and giving up in despair. How we need to tell them the good news that the water of life is available and the well is not far away! (John 4:10–14; 7:37–39) God is kind and gracious to all who call on Him, because of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"Behold, I freely give  
The living water; thirsty one,  
Stoop down, and drink, and live."  
I came to Jesus, and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in Him.  
--- Horatius Bonar

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#### **G Campbell Morgan - God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is.—Gen. 21.17.**

This was the word of the Angel of God (**ED**: CLEARLY MORGAN ALSO FAVORS THIS AS A [THEOPHANY](#)) about Ishmael, and it is one which we do well to ponder. Ishmael was the son of the bond-woman, the offspring of a failure of faith. When Isaac, the child of faith, was born, the bond-woman mocked. That is a suggestive statement. It was necessary that Hagar and Ishmael should be sent forth. They could have no part in the purposes of God, which were being wrought out through the chosen people. But when thus sent out, they had not passed out of the sight of God, nor beyond His care and government. God provided for him what he needed at the moment to preserve his life; God was with the lad, and he grew; God made of him a great nation. This story, rightly apprehended, will help us to that view of all history which is necessary to intelligent understanding thereof. God's elections never mean His abandonment of those not elected. There is no nation which He has not made. There is no people which He has excluded from the purposes of His goodness. Those elected are elected to serve the others. When at last His city is built, all the nations shall walk in the light thereof. When the seed, called in Isaac, has won the final triumph, Ishmael will share in the glorious results. A remembrance of that fact will purge our hearts from the possibility of all contempt for any "less-favoured" peoples. We shall see in them those whom God sees, for whom God cares, and for whose ultimate recovery and blessedness God is ever working

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#### **All Alone?**

God heard the boy crying. Genesis 21:17

Today's Scripture & Insight :Genesis 21:9–19

Sue's family was falling apart before her eyes. Her husband had suddenly left the home, and she and her children were confused and angry. She asked him to go for marriage counseling with her, but he wouldn't because he claimed the problems were hers. Panic and hopelessness set in when she realized he might never come back. Would she be able to care for herself and her children alone?

Hagar, a servant of Abraham and Sarah, faced those thoughts as well. Impatient for God to give them a son as promised (Genesis 12, 15), Sarah gave Hagar to her husband, and Hagar gave birth to Ishmael (16:1–4, 15). However, when God fulfilled His promise and Sarah gave birth to Isaac, family tensions erupted such that Abraham sent Hagar away with their son Ishmael with just some water and food (21:–21). Can you imagine her desperation? Soon they ran out of provisions in the desert. Not knowing what to do and not wanting to see her son die, Hagar put Ishmael under a bush and walked a distance away. They both began to sob. But "God heard the boy crying" (v. 17). He heard their cries, provided for their needs, and was with them.

Times of desperation when we feel all alone cause us to cry out to God. What a comfort to know that during those moments and throughout our lives, He hears us, provides for us, and stays near to us. By: Anne Cetas (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

How has God provided for you when you've felt alone? How have you responded to Him?

I'm grateful, God, that I never really walk alone. Help me in my desperation.

Learn more about [communicating with God](#).

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### J J Knapp - The Voice of the Lad Gen. 21:17

It had been a moving farewell early in the morning between Abraham and Hagar. Nothing was said at it,—only superficial hearts fill the last moments with a multitude of words, while deep natures know how to express their whole soul in a glance or a handshake. However, love was shown when Abraham himself put the bread and the water bottle upon Hagar's shoulder and gave her the boy. This was a carefulness that betrayed how heavy the separation was to him,—just like our fathers and mothers show their great love in small services to the leaving child. What must have moved in the mother heart, when the water supply was depleted, and Hagar made her son to lie down in the shadow of one of the spindly desert bushes to not see him perish from thirst, while she sat down at a distance of a bow's shot, wailing with a loud voice? Comforting is the commentary of the Holy Scripture concerning that groaning boy: "And God heard the voice of the lad." More comforting yet was the assurance that the mother received from heaven: "God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is."

This is a truth to think upon when there is a suffering child in our home. Oh, those little sufferers, who lie upon a sickbed, stir our compassion. At first we don't take it too seriously, and we speak with encouraging words to keep the little one brave. However, when the doctor comes every day and soon twice or three times a day, fear enters the heart and the voice stalls in our throat, when someone comes to ask how brother or sister is doing. Particularly mother suffers greatly under it. Once the fever rages in the blood and the little boy lies there, heaving and gasping, with dry lips and a parched throat, and sometimes uttering gibberish, or if it screams in agony, then the mother's heart skips a beat, and the terrible thing is that she is as impotent as Hagar had to watch,—the groaning goes through the marrow of her soul.

Mothers, remember in such instances the word that is written down here, "And God heard the voice of the lad." That groaning, even the softest moaning, is not hidden for Him, but He hears in those incoherent sounds a voice, He hears in it the voice of prayer. Think of it, when there is a little sufferer in the home. It is not too little for the high God to listen to it. He sent for that one small moaning child under the bush the Angel of the Covenant from heaven to comfort the mother and to save the child. How should the heart overflow with joy and praise when it pleases God to give us our dear child again: "Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand."

**Genesis 21:18 "Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him."**

- **I will:** Ge 21:13 Ge 16:10 17:20 25:12-18 1Ch 1:29-31
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### YAHWEH'S PROPHETIC PROMISE TO HAGAR

**Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him** - Note the 3 commands. First, she is told to get up and then get Ishmael up and hold him, these latter two commands indicating he was definitely in a weakened condition from dehydration. God's promise would have greatly encouraged Hagar. Whether Abraham had related this truth to Hagar is uncertain, but twice God had given him this same promise in Ge 17:20+ and Ge 21:13. Recall that God had some 15 years promised Hagar "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count." (Ge 16:10+).

As noted above I believe this is the same speaker as the "angel" in verse 17, which would support the premise that this [Angel of God](#) is a [THEOPHANY](#) (in my opinion).

**Genesis 21:19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the skin with water and gave the lad a drink.**

- Nu 22:31 2Ki 6:17-20 Isa 35:5,6 Lu 24:16-31
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

2 Kings 6:17; 20 Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, **open his eyes** that he may see." And the LORD **opened the servant's eyes** and he saw; and **behold**, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.....(20) When they had come into Samaria, Elisha said, "O LORD, **open the eyes of these men**, that they may see." So the LORD **opened their eyes** and they saw; and **behold**, they were in the midst of Samaria.

Genesis 22:13 Then Abraham **raised his eyes and looked**, and **behold**, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.

### GOD PROVIDES WATER FOR HAGAR & ISHMAEL

**Then** - This time sensitive word marks progression in a narrative and always begs the simple question "When **isthen**?" In this case it was when she and Ishmael were at the end of themselves and in great need of help.

*God does not only make promises,*

*He also makes provision.*

**God opened her eyes and she saw a well** ([beer](#); Lxx- [phrear](#)) **of water; and she went and filled the skin with water and gave the lad a drink** - Notice that the description would indicate that God did not create this well. Apparently the well was there but she simply could not see it. So God enabled her to see the well of water that was already there!

**THOUGHT** - Are you going through a difficult time like Hagar and Ishmael? Have you tried asking God to open your eyes and show you the solution that He has already provided?

In this same chapter we encounter a new name for Jehovah, [El Olam: Everlasting God](#), and the words from Chris Tomlin's related song "Everlasting God" are so apropos to God's provision for Hagar and Ishmael....

***You're the defender of the weak***

***You comfort those in need***

**THOUGHT** - Could we not all say an "Amen" to the words of that chorus, for we too have been continually in need of our great Defender to protect us from our enemies the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#). And has not the Spirit of the Living God time after time led us to words of comfort in His precious Word? And so Lord, we join together and say "Thank You our Everlasting God. Amen!"

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**F B Meyer - Genesis 21:19 And God opened her eyes, and she saw.**

Poor Hagar! There was no help for it; and she, who a little before had thought she was giving Abraham his heir, found herself and her boy homeless wayfarers on the desert sands. Their one need was water; they little deemed it was so near. No need to create a new fountain, but to open their eyes.

**We need the opened eye to see:—**

**The finished work of Christ.** — The work of propitiation for sin is complete. We are not required to add to it one tear, or prayer, or vow. "It is finished." To go to heaven to bring Christ down, or to the deep to bring Him up, is alike superfluous. All we need is the opened eye to see what Jesus has done, and recognize that it is all that was demanded to meet the claims of God's holy law.

**The things freely given to us of God.** — God hath given us in Jesus all things that pertain to life and godliness. There is no possible gift or grace, in which we are deficient, that is not stored in Him, in whom the fullness of God abides. But we are blind; the eyes of our heart have not been opened to see the hope of our calling, the riches of our inheritance, the greatness of God's power. Did we know these things, surely not a moment would elapse without our availing ourselves of God's rich provision.

**The alleviations which God provides against excessive sorrow.** — Hagar's anguish, as Mary's at the sepulcher in after years, blinded her to available comfort. So grief puts a bandage over our eyes. Life is sad, and lonely, and dark, but God is near and if you ask, He will show springs of consolation of which you may drink. There is no desert without its spring; no dying child without the angel of the Lord.

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**Chris Tiegreen - (The One Year Hearing His Voice Devotional)**

God opened her eyes and she saw a well. Ge 21:19, NIV

The couple had walked far across the field and back again, only to find that the keys to their car were missing. They weren't locked in the car, and they weren't in their pockets or purse. Miles away from the nearest town, the couple turned around and looked at the vast field in front of them, knowing that somewhere in the grass lay their only means to get back to civilization before dark. And they didn't know where to begin to look.

They tried to retrace their steps because there was no other choice, but the situation looked hopeless. But they also knew no situation is hopeless with God, so they prayed, "Lord, lead us to the keys. Open our eyes to see them." The woman was even more specific. "Lord, which direction should I go?" She sensed that she should concentrate on the right side of the field, so she headed in that direction. After a few minutes, which seemed more like hours, she stumbled, and in catching herself, her eyes fell on a glimmer in the grass. There were the keys. A skeptic could call it a coincidence, but to a couple who prayed, it was an answer. God had guided their steps and helped them in a time of need.

God is concerned even for the minor details of our lives. A prayer for a lost item in a much less serious situation would still have been answered. God has led people to lost jewelry, glasses, credit cards, and even toys. He doesn't always eliminate the search, but He very often rewards it. He knows how to guide our steps and open our eyes, even when we aren't consciously aware He's doing it. He comes to our aid when we ask.

Lord, thank You for Your attention to detail. You care about the things that are precious to us, and You offer Your help. May I never try to solve a problem without You.

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**[C H Spurgeon - Eyes opened](#)**

'And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water.' Genesis 21:19

'And their eyes were opened, and they knew him.' Luke 24:31

Through the fall the spiritual taste of man became perverted, so that he puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter; he chooses the poison of hell and loathes the bread of heaven; he licks the dust of the serpent and rejects the food of angels. The spiritual hearing became grievously injured, for man naturally no longer hears God's word, but stops his ears at the Maker's voice. Let the gospel minister charm never so wisely, yet is the unconverted soul like the deaf adder which hears not the charmer's voice. The spiritual feeling by virtue of our depravity is fearfully deadened. Whether the thunders of Sinai or the turtle notes of Calvary claim his attention, man is resolutely deaf to both. Even the spiritual smell with which man should discern between that which is pure and holy and that which is unsavoury to the Most High has become defiled, and now man's spiritual nostril while unrenewed derives no enjoyment from the sweet savour which is in Christ Jesus, but seeks after the putrid joys of sin. As with other senses so is it with man's sight. He is so spiritually blind that things most plain and clear he cannot and will not see. The understanding, which is the soul's eye, is covered with scales of ignorance, and when these are

removed by the finger of instruction, the visual orb is still so affected that it sees men as trees walking. Our condition is thus most terrible, but at the same time it affords ample room for a display of the splendours of divine grace. Dear friends, we are naturally so entirely ruined, that if saved the whole work must be of God, and the whole glory must crown the head of the Triune Jehovah.

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### [C H Spurgeon - Eyes opened](#)

'And God opened her eyes.' Genesis 21:19

God has been pleased to open the natural eyes of mankind by the invention of optical instruments. What a discovery it was when first of all certain pieces of glass were arranged in connection with each other and men began to peer into the stars! What a change has come over the knowledge of our race by the invention of the telescope! How much of truly devout, adoring thought, and of deep, intense, unutterable reverence has been born into the world by the Lord's having in this sense opened men's eyes! When he turned his telescope upon the nebulae and discovered that these were innumerable stars, what a hymn of praise must have burst from the reverent astronomer's heart. How infinite thou art, most gracious Lord! What wonders hast thou created! Let thy name be held in reverence for ever and ever. Equally marvellous was the effect upon human knowledge when the microscope was invented. We could never have imagined what wonders of skill and of taste would be revealed by the magnifying glass, and what marvels of beauty would be found compressed within a space too small to measure. Who dreamed that a butterfly's wing would display art, wisdom and a delicacy never to be rivalled by human workmanship? The most delicate work of art is rough, crude and raw compared with the commonest object in nature; the one is the production of man, the other the handiwork of God. Spend an evening with the microscope and, if your heart be right, you will lift your eye away from the glass to heaven and exclaim, 'Great God, thou art as wonderful in the little as thou art in the great, and as much to be praised for the minute as for the magnificent.' While we say, 'Great art thou, O God, for thou madest the great and wide sea, and the leviathan whose lot it is to play therein', we feel that we must also say, 'Great art thou, O Lord, for thou madest the drop of water and hast filled it with living things innumerable.'

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### [C H Spurgeon - A welcome discovery](#)

'God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.' Genesis 21:19

Sometimes holy scripture has its well near to the troubled heart, not so much in the form of doctrine, as in the form of promise. There was never a trouble yet in human experience among God's people, without there being a promise to meet it. You have only to look long enough and you shall find the counterfoil; you shall discover that God has in his book that which exactly meets your case. 'Oh,' said Christian in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, 'what a thousand fools have I been to lie rotting in this stinking dungeon all these weeks, when I have a key in my bosom which, I am persuaded, would fit the locks of all the doors in Doubting Castle. Come, good brother, let us try it.' And so Christian plucked up courage, and he found his key of promise, though it grated a little; and Bunyan says that one of the doors went, as he puts it in his old edition, 'damnably hard'. He did not know how to put it strong enough until he used that word. Yet the key did open every single door, and even the iron gate itself, the external gate of the castle, opened by the help of that key. Some of you have laid, fretting and worrying yourselves about things which God has dealt with already in his own word. You have said, 'Would God he would do that!' and he has done it. You have asked him to give you something, and you have got it. I have used sometimes the simile of a man in the dark dying of hunger, and yet he is shut up in the pantry. There is the food all round him, if he could only put out his hand and take it. Did he know it to be there and would he grasp it, there is just what he wants. I am persuaded, if you search the scriptures well, there is not one child of God that need despair of finding that the Master has opened a well of promise for him.

**Genesis 21:20 God was with the lad, and he grew; and he lived in the wilderness and became an archer.**

- **God:** Ge 17:20 28:15 39:2,3,21 Judges 6:12 13:24,25 Lu 1:80 2:40
- **an archer:** Ge 10:9 16:12 25:27 27:3 49:23,24
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## GOD SUSTAINS ISHMAEL IN THE WILD

**God was with the lad** - Later we read Abimelech acknowledge ""God is with you in all that you do" (Ge 21:22). Ishmael shared in the blessing of Abraham! **God** being **with** a person is the same description is used of Isaac (Ge 26:28, 28:15), Jacob (Ge 28:15, 1:3, 46:4) and Joseph (Gen. 39:2,3,21). It expresses YHWH's personal care and presence.

**And he grew and he lived in the wilderness and became an archer.** Moses summarizes Ishmael's life. Despite the fact that Ishmael remained in the wilderness, God provided for him and nourished him to an active, skilled man able to hunt food (cf Ge 27:3).

Recall that in Ge 16:12+ God also predicted that Ishmael "will be a wild donkey of a man, His hand will be against everyone, And everyone's hand will be against him; And he will live to the east of all his brothers."

**Genesis 21:21 He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.**

- **in the wilderness:** Nu 10:12 12:16 13:3,26 1Sa 25:1
- **in the wilderness:** Ge 24:3,4 26:34,35 27:46 28:1,2 Judges 14:2 1Co 7:38
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries



Wilderness of Paran

## ISHMAEL MARRIES AN EGYPTIAN

**He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt-** See map above for Paran. We should not be surprised that Hagar took a wife from Egypt, for this was Hagar's original home country. Hagar knew he was to be a great nation and thus procured him a wife who bore him 12 sons (presumably all from the same mother) (Ge 25:13–16).

**Wilderness of Paran** - wilderness area bounded on the north by Palestine, on the west by the wilderness of Etham, on the south by the desert of Sinai, and on the east by the valley of Arabah; the exodus was through this area and probably all 18 stops were in this area. It bears the modern name of Badiet et-Tih, i.e., "the desert of the wanderings." This district, through which the children of Israel wandered, lay three days' march from Sinai (Nu 10:12, 33). From Kadesh, in this wilderness, spies (q.v.) were sent to spy the land (Nu 13:3, 26). Here, long afterwards, David found refuge from Saul (1Sa 25:1, 4).

### QUESTION - [What happened to Ishmael in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - [Ishmael](#) is the son of Abraham and Hagar, the Egyptian slave-girl belonging to Sarah, Abraham's wife. Abraham gave him the name *Ishmael*, which means "God hears," presumably because he and Sarah had thought he was the son of God's promise. Ishmael became the father of the Arab nations.

God had promised [Abraham](#) that he would have a son (Genesis 15:4) and that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. But as time passed, and God had not fulfilled that promise, [Sarah](#) devised a plan, and Abraham agreed. She gave her Egyptian maidservant, [Hagar](#), to Abraham. Hagar conceived a child and gave birth to Ishmael when Abraham was 86 years old (Genesis 16:16). Before Ishmael was born, the angel of the Lord told Hagar, "This son of yours will be a wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives" (Genesis 16:12NLT).

Ishmael was raised in his father's house, but when he was 13 years old, God returned to Abraham to re-affirm His covenant and assure Abraham that the child of promise would come through Sarah (Genesis 17:16–19; 18:10), not Hagar. God told Abraham, "As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year" (Genesis 17:20–21, NLT). As a symbol of His covenant pledge, the Lord instituted the rite of circumcision. Both Abraham and Ishmael were circumcised that day.

A year later, when Abraham was 100 years old, Isaac was born to Sarah. When the boy was two or three years old, around the time he was to be weaned, Abraham held a huge feast to celebrate the occasion. Ishmael was probably 16 years old by then. At the banquet, Ishmael mocked Isaac, angering Sarah. She demanded that Abraham get rid of Hagar and Ishmael. (Genesis 21:8–10). Sarah was determined that Ishmael have no part in Isaac's inheritance.

Abraham was deeply troubled by the idea of sending Ishmael away, but God reassured him: "Do not be upset over the boy and your servant. Do whatever Sarah tells you, for Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted. But I will also make a nation of the descendants of Hagar's son because he is your son, too" (Genesis 21:12–13NLT). So Abraham gave Hagar a little food and water and sent them away.

Mother and son wandered aimlessly in the wilderness of Beersheba until their provisions ran out. Then Hagar put Ishmael under the shade of a bush and stepped away, not wanting to watch him die. As she sat down at a distance and wept, the angel of God came to comfort Hagar and reassure her that Ishmael would survive and prosper (Genesis 21:14–18NLT).

The Bible says God was with Ishmael as he grew up in the eastern Sinai Peninsula: "He became a skillful archer, and he settled in the wilderness of Paran. His mother arranged for him to marry a woman from the land of Egypt" (Genesis 21:20–21NLT). When Abraham died, Ishmael attended his funeral (Genesis 25:9), proving that at least occasional and civil communications were maintained between him and his father's household.

Ishmael fathered 12 sons and a daughter who married Esau (Genesis 28:9; 36:2–3). He lived to the ripe old age of 137 (Genesis 25:17). Scripture says Ishmael's numerous [descendants](#) settled near the eastern border of Egypt and lived in hostility toward all of their relatives (Genesis 25:18). [GotQuestions.org](#)

### QUESTION - [Who are the descendants of Ishmael?](#)



**ANSWER** - [Ishmael](#) was a son of Abraham, born of Sarah's maidservant Hagar in an attempt to bring into the world the son God had promised to [Abraham and Sarah](#). Later, Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah, and Hagar and Ishmael were driven away because of Ishmael's attitude toward Isaac (Genesis 21:9–10, 14). But God still had plans for Ishmael.

God promised [Hagar](#) that Ishmael, as a son of Abraham, would become a great nation (Genesis 21:17–18). The fulfillment is recorded in Genesis 25:12–18—Ishmael had twelve sons who became great rulers and eventually a nation of people. That came about in this way: Hagar, who was Egyptian herself, found a wife from Egypt for her son, and Ishmael settled in the desert of Paran (Genesis 21:21). Ishmael's descendants "settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the border of Egypt as you go toward Ashur" (Genesis 25:18). The Bible lists Ishmael's sons as Nebaioth, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah (Ge 25:13–15).

*The descendants of Ishmael became known as Arabs, which basically means "nomads."*

The area of Havilah where Ishmael's descendants lived is in the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula; Shur is a wilderness area between Beersheba in the Negev Desert and Egypt. Isaiah 60:7 mentions the descendants of Nebaioth and Kedar as those who raise flocks. The descendants of Ishmael became known as Arabs, which basically means "nomads." From the beginning, the descendants of Ishmael were a warlike people, as "they lived in hostility toward all the tribes related to them" (Genesis 25:18). This fulfilled God's earlier word that Ishmael would be "a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers" (Genesis 16:12).

Later, others settled in the Arabian Peninsula as well, including the descendants of [Keturah's](#) sons (1 Chronicles 1:32–33) and some of [Esau's](#) descendants, among them the Amalekites (Genesis 36:12).

**There is a popular theory common among Muslims and some Christians that Arabian Muslims are direct descendants of Ishmael. In fact, Muhammad was a major proponent of this idea, claiming to be a descendant of Ishmael according to the Quran. There is most likely some truth in this theory.** According to missionary and author Kenneth Fleming, "what we know for certain seems to support the theory that the Ishmaelites are, at the very least, a major element in the Arab genetic line. Old records clearly link the north Arabians with Ishmael's descendants" ("[Ishmael and the Bible.](#)" *Emmaus Journal* 13:2, 2004). But it's unlikely that all of those in Arabia are descendants of Ishmael, as the descendants of Keturah and the children of Esau also lived in the Arabian Peninsula.

Although some modern Arabians could trace their lineage back to Ishmael, not all Arabians are descendants of Ishmael as Muslims try to claim. We know from the Bible that God made Ishmael into a great nation. His descendants can share in the blessings of Abraham by putting their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### **QUESTION** - [Who were the Ishmaelites?](#)

**ANSWER** - Simply put, the Ishmaelites were the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abram by his wife's handmaiden, Hagar (Genesis 16:1–12). From small beginnings, the Ishmaelites became a numerous and mighty people.

The origin of the Ishmaelites was fraught with difficulty. When Sarai was unable to produce a child with Abram, she followed the common cultural practice and gave Hagar to him, and Hagar conceived his child. But Sarai later became jealous and mistreated Hagar, who fled from her mistress into the wilderness. There Hagar met the Angel of the Lord who pronounced the first of three prophecies concerning the child she was bearing. She would give birth to a son, and his descendants would multiply greatly. It was at this time that God told Hagar to name him Ishmael, which means "God hears" (Genesis 16:10–11).

In the wilderness the Angel of the Lord also predicted that Ishmael—and therefore the Ishmaelites—would be stubborn, untamable, and warlike: "He will be a wild donkey of a man; / his hand will be against everyone / and everyone's hand against him, / and he will live in hostility / toward all his brothers" (Genesis 16:12). After hearing the angel's words, Hagar returned to her mistress and eventually gave birth to Ishmael.

Later, God changed the names of Sarai and Abram to Sarah and Abraham and established a covenant with Abraham's son Isaac. But Ishmael also had a promise from God: he would be blessed, too, and he would be the father of a great nation, beginning with twelve sons, the first of the Ishmaelites (Genesis 17:20). The names of the twelve are listed in Genesis 25:12–16; it is from the Ishmaelites that the Arab nations descended.

Ishmael was about fourteen years old when Isaac was born. A year or a few later, when Isaac was weaned, Sarah saw Ishmael mocking her son. Sarah asked Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away, and God told Abraham to comply. The Angel of God met Hagar and her son once again and predicted for the third time that Ishmael would father a great nation (Genesis 21:18).

Later in Israel's history, the Ishmaelites were also called Midianites (although not all Midianites were descendants of Ishmael), and they engaged in the buying and selling of slaves (Genesis 37:28; 39:1). Judges 8:24 tells us that it was a custom for the Ishmaelites to wear gold earrings.

During the reign of King David, the Ishmaelites joined a confederacy against God and against His people, Israel (Psalm 83:5–6). Their goal was to "destroy them as a nation, / so that Israel's name is remembered no more" (verse 4). Considering the current turmoil in the Middle East and the hatred often directed against Israel by her neighbors, the prophecies concerning the descendants of Ishmael continue to prove true. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### **Genesis 21:22–34 A COVENANT AT BEER-SHEBA - John Bennett - Day by Day**

'The ordinary uneventful days of a believer's life are usually a better test of his true character than an emergency or crisis. It is sometimes possible to face a great occasion with wisdom and courage, and yet to fail in some simple, average experiences of daily living', W. H. GRIFFITH THOMAS.

It is in this passage that we see Abimelech's assessment of Abraham's life, 'God is with thee in all that thou doest', v. 22.

'His consistent walk of separation is admired, and God's personal blessings acknowledged', WARREN HENDERSON.

This is quite a confession from Abimelech but also a testimony to Abraham's faith evident in his daily life.

The event described in the verses of today's reading surrounds what is little more than a disagreement between neighbours over a well, v. 25. This watering hole had been taken over by Abimelech's men without his knowledge and it was depriving Abraham and his flocks of their necessary water. How should this matter be resolved? It is clear from the comments of verse 22 that Abraham's testimony could have been damaged or lost if this matter were not handled sensitively. The fact that Abimelech sought peace gave Abraham the opportunity to resolve the matter and demonstrate his goodwill by setting 'seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves', v. 28. How important to handle these 'simple' things with acumen: 'Walk in wisdom toward them that are without', Col. 4:5. It was the Lord who taught His disciples, 'But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil', Matt. 5:37. May we, in every way, 'walk reputably towards those without', 1 Thess. 4:12 JND.

The results of the covenant that was sworn that day was peace between Abimelech and Abraham, v. 34, and the maintenance of Abraham's testimony. But, from verse 33, we might suggest that there was also a deepening of Abraham's relationship with his God. It was there that he 'called ... on the name of the Lord'. It was there that he also came to know 'the everlasting God', one who changes not. Don't underestimate the importance of 'little things'!

**Genesis 21:22 Now it came about at that time that Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, "God is with you in all that you do;**

- **Abimelech:** Ge 20:2 Ge 26:26
- **God:** Ge 20:17 26:28 28:15 30:27 39:2,3 Jos 3:7 2Ch 1:1 Isa 8:10 45:14 Zec 8:23 Mt 1:23 Ro 8:31 1Co 14:25 Heb 13:5 Rev 3:9

#### Related Passages:

Genesis 26:26-28 (PRESUMABLY THE SAME ABIMELECH AND PHICOL THAT MEET ABRAHAM) Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with his adviser Ahuzzath and **Phicol** the commander of his army. 27 Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?" 28 They said, "We see plainly that **the LORD has been with you**; so we said, 'Let there now be an oath between us, even between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you

[Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### PAGAN KING RECOGNIZES GOD IS WITH ABRAHAM

**R Kent Hughes** entitles Genesis 21:22-34 "Grace at [Beersheba](#)."...There had been grace in the birth of Isaac, grace in the departure of Ishmael, and grace in the treaty of Beersheba."

**Now it came about at that time that Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, "God is with you in all that you do** - The Septuagint adds a third person to Abimelech's retinue, "and Ochozath his friend." (Ahuzzath in Ge 26:26) Note that this is the same Abimelech that we met in Genesis 20. Here we read that this powerful pagan leader recognized that the "[good hand of the Lord](#)" was on His servant Abraham. One reason **Abimelech** would have known God was with him is because earlier "Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children." (Ge 20:17)

**Wiersbe** - What a testimony: "God is with you in all that you do" (Ge 21:22 nkjv). Abraham did not permit one lapse of faith to cripple him; he got right with God and made a new beginning. **James Strahan** said, "Men are not to be judged by the presence or absence of faults, but by the **direction** of their lives" (See [Hebrew Ideals, page 146](#)). God is willing to bless when we are in the place of blessing (Ps. 1:1-3+). (**ED:** ONE OF MY FAVORITE EXPRESSIONS IS THAT GOD IS NOT LOOKING FOR **PERFECTION** BUT FOR **DIRECTION** IN OUR LIVES. POSITIONALLY WE ARE PERFECT IN CHRIST, BUT EXPERIENTIALLY WE STILL GRAPPLE WITH OUR FALLEN FLESH.).

Repeatedly in Genesis we see that others recognized God's hand on His covenant people - Isaac (Ge 26:28, 28:15), Jacob (Ge 30:27, 31:3, 46:4), and Joseph (Ge 39:2,3,21). Similarly we also see God was with Moses (Ex 3:12), Joshua (Josh 1:5, 17; 3:7), and David (2Sa 7:3). Beloved, wherever you are, whatever you are doing, you can know that God is with you! His Name [Immanuel](#). God with us, testifies to that sure truth which should strengthen your faith and stimulate your walk for His glory and honor during your short stay on earth (Jas 4:14+, Ps 90:12).

**THOUGHT** - Are you an "[incognito disciple](#)" of Jesus? Or do those people with whom you interact on a daily basis know that God is with you in all that you do? They should! If not, then you are disobeying your Lord and your eternal reward in heaven will be little (cf 2Co 5:10+, 1Co 3:10-15+, 1Ti 4:7-8+)! Jesus calls us as His disciples to be salt and light in the midst of this spiritually dark world (Mt 5:13, 14-16+, cf Php 2:14-15+). Beloved, how "salty" are you (cf Col 4:5-6+, 1Pe 3:15+)? How brightly does the Spirit of Jesus shine through you? Does your life give off an aroma of Jesus? (2Co 2:14,15,16+).

**Matthew Henry Concise - Ge 21:22-34.** Abimelech felt sure that the promises of God would be fulfilled to Abraham. It is wise to connect ourselves with those who are blessed of God; and we ought to requite kindness to those who have been kind to us. Wells of water are scarce and valuable in eastern countries. Abraham took care to have his title to the well allowed, to prevent disputes in future. No more can be expected from an honest man than that he be ready to do right, as soon as he knows he has done wrong. Abraham, being now in a good neighbourhood, stayed a great while there. There he made, not only a constant practice, but an open profession of his religion. There he called on the name of the Lord, as the everlasting God; probably in the grove he planted, which was his place of prayer. Abraham kept up public worship, in which his neighbours might join. Good men should do all they can to make others so. Wherever we sojourn, we must neither neglect nor be ashamed of the worship of Jehovah.

**Genesis 21:23 now therefore, swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my offspring or with my posterity, but according to the kindness that I have shown to you, you shall show to me and to the land in which you have sojourned."**

- **swear:** Ge 14:22,23 24:3 26:28 31:44,53 De 6:13 Jos 2:12 1Sa 20:13,17,42 1Sa 24:21,22 30:15 Jer 4:2 2Co 1:23 Heb 6:16
- **I have:** Ge 20:14
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION BEGINS

**Now therefore** - Based on the truth that God was with Abraham.

**Swear** (*shaba*; Lxx - *omnuo*) **to me here by God** (*Elohim*) **that you will not deal falsely with me** (deceive, cheat or trick me) **or with my offspring or with my posterity, but according to the kindness** (*hesed*) **that I have shown to you, you shall show to me and to the land in which you have sojourned** (*gur* to stay but without ownership rights ~ an alien) - Abimelech proposes a nonaggression pact with Abraham. Notice that this pagan [Philistine](#) ruler initiates the offer to Abraham. He calls him to **swear by God** (*Elohim*), and although he does not call Him "my God," clearly he recognizes His existence and His importance in Abraham's life. Next note that one of the conditions is that Abraham would **not deal falsely** with him. Why might he say that? Assuming this is the same Abimelech (some think not) as in Genesis 20, surely he has not forgotten the time Abraham deceived him (Ge 20:1-2+) almost costing him his life (see Ge 20:7+)! Notice also Abimelech desires this to be a lasting agreement, not just with him but with his offspring. Finally, notice Abimelech uses the word **kindness** which is the great Hebrew word *hesed*, a word that is frequently associated with covenant and in this context speaks of loyalty to the oath. He is appealing to Abraham to treat him kindly just as he had treated Abraham kindly (see Ge 20:14-16+).

What seems to be Abimelech's motivation? From Ge 21:22 we detect that there might be an element of fear in Abimelech's proposal, because he knew that God was with Abraham and he had already experienced a display of His power in shutting and then opening the wombs of all his wife and maids in answer to Abraham's intercession (Ge 20:17,18+). There is also a practical motivation, which is assure water rights which was of vital importance in the arid conditions in this region (cf Ge 21:25).

### Genesis 21:24 Abraham said, "I swear it."

- Ge 14:13 Ro 12:18 Heb 6:16
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## ABRAHAM TAKES AN OATH

**Abraham said, "I swear** (*shaba*; Lxx - *omnuo*) **it."** - Hebrew word to **swear** (or take an oath) is *shaba* which is related to the Hebrew word **sheba** which means seven and thus swear means "to bind by seven things." This would seem to explain Abraham's subsequent interactions with Abimelech, especially giving him seven ewe lambs and naming the well where they cut covenant as "well of the seven" or [Beersheba](#) (Beer = well + sheba = seven). To **swear** (*shaba*) is translated in the Septuagint with *omnuo* which means to affirm the veracity of one's statement by invoking a transcendent entity (Abimelech had asked "swear to me by God" in Ge 21:23), and frequently includes the implied invitation of punishment to come upon the one swearing the oath if he proves untruthful and/or fails to keep the oath. So Abraham is making a solemn agreement with Abimelech, but it was not yet a ratified covenant as they would cut in Ge 21:27!

**Swear** (take an oath)(07650) *shaba* from *sheba* = seven) to swear, to take an oath, to make or swear an oath, swearing to someone, thus putting oneself under obligation to someone. **"In general, shāva' is employed in mainly these contexts covenant making**, where the parties involved made vows, **oaths or promises** to one another (Deut. 4:31; 1 Sa 20:42); **oath taking**, which was a serious transaction in Israel and involved a person's taking upon himself (and possibly others) **a curse** if that person did not carry out his oath faithfully; **vow making**, which was solemn and not to be broken (cf. Nu 30:2)." ([CBL](#))

**Shaba in the Pentateuch** - Gen. 21:23; Gen. 21:24; Gen. 21:31; Gen. 22:16; Gen. 24:3; Gen. 24:7; Gen. 24:9; Gen. 24:37; Gen. 25:33; Gen. 26:3; Gen. 26:31; Gen. 31:53; Gen. 47:31; Gen. 50:5; Gen. 50:6; Gen. 50:24; Gen. 50:25; Exod. 13:5; Exod. 13:11; Exod. 13:19; Exod. 32:13; Exod. 33:1; Lev. 5:4; Lev. 6:3; Lev. 6:5; Lev. 19:12; Num. 5:19; Num. 5:21; Num. 11:12; Num. 14:16; Num. 14:23; Num. 30:2; Num. 32:10; Num. 32:11; Deut. 1:8; Deut. 1:34; Deut. 1:35; Deut. 2:14; Deut. 4:21; Deut. 4:31; Deut. 6:10; Deut. 6:13; Deut. 6:18; Deut. 6:23; Deut. 7:8; Deut. 7:12; Deut. 7:13; Deut. 8:1; Deut. 8:18; Deut. 9:5; Deut. 10:11; Deut. 10:20; Deut. 11:9; Deut. 11:21; Deut. 13:17; Deut. 19:8; Deut. 26:3; Deut. 26:15; Deut. 28:9; Deut. 28:11; Deut. 29:13; Deut. 30:20; Deut. 31:7; Deut. 31:20; Deut. 31:21; Deut. 31:23; Deut. 34:4;

### Genesis 21:25 But Abraham complained to Abimelech because of the well of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized.

- **Abraham complained to Abimelech:** Ge 26:15-22 29:8 Ex 2:15-17 Judges 1:15 Pr 17:10 25:9 27:5 Mt 18:15
- **servants:** Ge 13:7 26:15-22 Ex 2:16,17
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## ABRAHAM'S COMPLAINT REGARDING WELL SEIZURE

**But Abraham complained to Abimelech because of the well** (*beer*; Lxx- *phrear*) **of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized** - Abraham charges Abimelech's servants with breaking the nonaggression pact by seizing one of his wells. **Seized** (robbed) describes forceful tearing away of an object

from its owner and usually doing so illegally (cf Ge 31:31; Lev 19:13; Job 20:19; Mic 2:2). Wells of water were of great consequence in those hot countries, especially where the flocks were numerous, because water was scarce, and digging to find it was attended with the expense of much time and labor.

**Genesis 21:26 And Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor did I hear of it until today."**

- **I do not know** Ge 13:7 2Ki 5:20-24
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### ABIMELECH CLAIMS INNOCENCE

**And Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor did I hear of it until today-** Abimelech is being honest. The boss does not always know what the hired help is doing, whether it is good or bad, honest or dishonest. Notice Abimelech did not puff up like a rooster and flatly deny Abraham's charge. And as we see Abraham accepted Abimelech's response. Note the phrase **you did not tell me** implies Abraham had delayed to making his complaint to Abimelech.

**Genesis 21:27 Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant.**

- **took:** Ge 14:22,23 Pr 17:8 18:16,24 21:14 Isa 32:8
- **made a covenant:** Ge 26:28-31 31:44 1Sa 18:3 Eze 17:13 Ro 1:31 Ga 3:15
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### ABRAHAM CUTS COVENANT WITH ABIMELECH

**Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made (karath - cut) a covenant (beriyth)** - Abraham is content with Abimelech's response and appears to accept it as "[gospel truth](#)." But now he seeks not just to have Abimelech's word, but to enter into an actual covenant, which more solemn and binding than a oath. And so he gives **sheep and oxen** to Abimelech. These animals were presumably given as part of their covenant agreement. When God cut covenant with Abraham in Ge 15:9-18+, it was ratified (so to speak) with blood, as symbolized by killing and cutting animals in half and God then in the form of a smoking oven and a flaming torch "walking" between the pieces of the slain animals.

It is interesting to note that this covenant between Abraham and an apparent pagan would later become forbidden by God after the institution of the Mosaic Covenant (Ex 23:32-33+, Dt 7:2+).

Normally in cutting a covenant the two parties would kill the animals and walk between them (in the Abrahamic covenant alluded to above, God Alone "walked" through, establishing it as an unconditional covenant) and they would say something like "May it happen to me as it has to these slain animals if I fail to keep the covenant terms." While that actual act is not described in this passage, the fact that Abraham gave **sheep and oxen** does suggest that he and Abimelech may have walked between the flesh of these slain animals as they "cut covenant," thus sealing their covenant in the blood of the animals.

**BACKGROUND** - The act of passing between the slain animal is described in Jer 34:18-20 in which the officials had cut a covenant and then afterwards transgressed the covenant, which prompts Jehovah to declare "I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not fulfilled the words of the covenant which they made before Me, **when they cut the calf in two and passed between its parts**— the officials of Judah and the officials of Jerusalem, the court officers and the priests and all the people of the land **who passed between the parts of the calf**— I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life (IN OTHER WORDS THESE MEN HAD WALKED THROUGH THE PARTS OF THE CALF SAYING IN ESSENCE DO UNTO ME AS TO THIS CALF IF I FAIL TO KEEP THE COVENANT STIPULATIONS). And their dead bodies will be food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth. ([See illustration of cutting covenant in pagan culture](#))

**Covenant** can be summarized as follows (SEE ALSO CHART BELOW)

- (1) Between two parties (sometimes equal, other times superior to inferior) -- (a) **nations** -- (peace) treaty, alliance of friendship
- (b) **individuals** -- a pledge or agreement with mutual obligations to each other (c) **monarch and subjects** (2Sa 3:21, 5:3, 1Chr 11:3) -- a constitution (d) **God and man** -- Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New Covenants. **TWOT** adds that...

Apart from blood ties the covenant was the way people of the ancient world formed wider relationships with each other The accounts of the relationship between David and Jonathan are the only unequivocal mention of a compact between two individuals in the Old Testament (1Sa 18:3; 20:8; 23:18). It is spoken of as "a covenant of the Lord" because the Lord witnessed the transaction and protected the legal order.

- (2) Accompanied by (a) **signs** (also witnesses, memorials, shared meals) (b) **sacrifices**, (c) **solemn, binding oaths** -- sealing the relationship with promises of blessing for keeping the covenant and curses for breaking the covenant (d) Sometimes with written document on which the words of the covenant, its terms in the form of promises and stipulations were spelled out, witnessed to, signed and sealed. **Behm** (TDNT) notes that in ancient times "There is no firmer guarantee of legal security peace or personal loyalty than the covenant (e.g., Amos 1:9)."

- (3) Is depicted in the idiomatic phrase "**make (cut) a covenant**" in which there is was a blood sacrifice as part of the covenant ritual.

Almost 100 years ago, **Andrew Murray** motivated by a waning understanding regarding the truth and power inherent in the Biblical truth of **covenant** wrote

that...

One of the words of Scripture, which is almost going out of fashion, is the word **Covenant**. There was a time when it was the keynote of the theology and the Christian life of strong and holy men. We know how deep in Scotland it entered into the national life and thought. It made mighty men, to whom God, and His promise and power were wonderfully real. It will be found still to bring strength and purpose to those who will take the trouble to bring all their life (**Ed**: and their marriages) under control of the inspiring assurance that they are living in **covenant** with a God who has sworn faithfully to fulfill in them every promise He has given. ([Two Covenants - Index - Andrew Murray](#))

The majority of the the OT uses of **beriyth** are translated as **covenant** (275/285 uses) and the majority of these are translated into Greek using the word **diatheke**, which was a common technical word used in the Greco-Roman law to describe the settlement of an inheritance (i.e., a "last will and testament") and used in the NT to describe the "*self-commitment, promises, and conditions by which*[God] *entered into relationship with man*" (Friberg).

**Vine** says this about the use of **diatheke** used in the Greek Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word **Beriyth** "The wholly gracious and effective character of God's "covenant" is confirmed in the Septuagint by the choice of diatheke to translate **berit/beriyth**. A diatheke is a will that distributes one's property after death according to the owner's wishes. It is completely unilateral."

## COVENANT -- SUMMARY OF FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS

COVENANT IN SCRIPTURE Hebrew: Beriyth/ Berit Greek: Diatheke	WHO IS INITIATOR	WHO ARE PARTIES INVOLVED	WHAT REASON FOR <u>COVENANT</u>	IS THERE <u>SACRIFICE</u>	ARE OFFSPRING AFFECTED?	IS THERE <u>PROMISE</u> OR <u>OATH</u> ?	IS THERE A <u>SIGN</u> OR <u>WITNESS</u> ?	WHAT IS LENGTH OF COVENANT?	IS THERE A MEAL, AN <u>ALTAR</u> A NAME CHANGE?
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<p><b>Noahic</b></p> <p><b>GOD &gt; MAN</b></p> <p>Ge 6:18 (1st mention of covenant)</p> <p>Ge 9:11</p> <p><b>Unconditional</b></p>	<p><b>God "I Myself"</b> Ge 9:9</p> <p><b>Unconditional covenant</b> = declares God's purpose will be fulfilled regardless of man's response. This does not mean man makes no response but man's response doesn't leave fulfillment of covenant in doubt. Noah obeyed - he built ark in faith (<b>Lesson</b> - True faith obeys!) Heb 11:7-note</p> <p><b>Even an unconditional Covenant entails responsibility!</b></p>	<p><b>God &amp; Noah</b></p> <p>Noah means rest, relief, quiet</p> <p>Ge 5:29 "rest from our work"</p> <p>"There it is: God obligating Himself to preserve man in the midst of judgment. Without anything on Noah's part without any commitment, pledge, or guarantee-God obligated Himself -- Do you catch the faint but sweet scent of grace wafting in the wind?" (Arthur)</p>	<p><b>Context: Divine Judgment</b></p> <p>Read Ge 6:1, 2, 3, 4, 5</p> <p>Wickedness of man was great warranting</p> <p>Ge 6:11, 12, 13</p> <p>--<b>Corrupt</b> = 3x</p> <p>--<b>Filled with violence</b> = 2x</p> <p>God sorry He made man...</p> <p>He was <b>grieved</b></p> <p>"It broke His heart" (NLT)</p> <p><b>Preserve life</b></p> <p><b>Why?</b> To fulfill His <b>promise</b> in Ge 3:15 to bring forth Messiah who would bruise the head of Satan (cp Ro 16:20-note)</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p>'every clean animal...' (<b>blood</b>) Ge 8:20</p> <p><b>(Costly-sacrificial)</b> = 1/7 of his clean animals - Ge 7:2)</p> <p><b>Why?</b></p> <p>This was an <b>act of worship &amp; gratitude</b> in response to God's covenant faithfulness in sparing Noah and his family.</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p><b>Sons...wife... son's wives</b> Ge 6:18</p> <p><b>descendants</b> Ge 9:9</p> <p><b>every living creature</b> Ge 9:12</p> <p><b>the earth</b> Ge 9:13</p>	<p><b>To keep alive</b></p> <p>Ge 6:19</p> <p>This is the reason for this covenant - if all died God could not keep Ge 3:15</p> <p><b>I will never again destroy every living thing x3</b></p> <p>Ge 8:21, 9:11, 15</p> <p><b>Will not curse ground again</b></p> <p>Ge 8:21</p> <p><b>Seasons, day/night shall not cease</b></p> <p>Ge 8:22</p> <p><b>No Global Flood</b></p> <p>Ge 9:11</p>	<p><b>RAINBOW</b></p> <p>'My <b>bow</b> in the cloud' Ge 9:13</p> <p>The <b>Rainbow</b> "is the sign of the covenant" Ge 9:12</p> <p>Hebrew for "<b>bow</b>" also describes the weapon of war ("<b>bow</b> and arrow")!</p>	<p><b>EVERLASTING</b></p> <p>"I will look upon it to <b>remember</b> the everlasting covenant" Ge 9:16</p> <p>(cf "all successive generations" Ge 9:12)</p> <p><b>Application:</b> God will not forget any of His covenants.</p> <p>When man looked at the <b>bow</b> he remembers the covenant - be mindful that God is also looking at the <b>bow</b> and as He looks He too remembers!</p> <p>Could that be why we see a rainbow in Rev 4:3-note?</p>	<p>"Noah built an <b>altar</b> to Jehovah" Ge 8:20 (See <b>Altar</b>)</p> <p>(Hebrew word for <b>altar</b> means "place of sacrifice" - <b>NB:</b> Use of this word implies blood)</p> <p><b>Application:</b> Speaks of (1) Expresses gratitude for salvation (2) Sacrificial - offered 1/7th of clean animals (cp Ge 7:2) (3) Emphasis on <b>blood</b> as way to approach God (cp Ge 3:21, 4:4) (4) Consecration to God (surrender) (cp NT parallel in Ro 12:1-note)</p>
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<p><b>Abrahamic</b> (see below for the repeating of this covenant to Isaac &amp; Jacob)</p> <p><b>GOD &gt; MAN</b> Ge 15:18 Ge 17:2,4</p> <p><b>Unconditional</b></p>	<p><b>God</b> Ge 17:7, 15:18</p> <p>God Alone (symbolized by "a smoking oven &amp; a flaming torch" Ge 15:17) passed through the pieces of flesh Abram was in a <b>deep sleep</b> (LXX = ekstasis = trance)</p> <p>Ge 15:12</p>	<p><b>God &amp; Abraham</b></p>	<p>In you (Abram) all the families of the earth shall be blessed = prophecy of the <b>Messiah</b></p> <p>Ge 12:1, 2, 3</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p>Abram cut animals in two, each half laid opposite other (<b>blood</b>) Ge 15:10</p> <p>Compare Je 34:18, 19, 20</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p>I will give the land to your descendants forever. Ge 13:15</p> <p>Jehovah cut covenant "to your seed I <b>have given</b> this land" (note past tense - God promised it - it is as good as done!) Ge 15:18</p>	<p><b>The Lord God's promises to Abraham:</b> Descendant or "The Seed" (Masc. Sing. ~ Messiah) Ge 22:17,18 (cf Ga 3:16, Ac 3:25)</p> <p><b>Descendants as numerous as stars</b> Ge 15:5</p> <p><b>Land</b> Ge 13:15, 15:7, 18</p> <p><b>Be their God</b> Ge 17:8</p>	<p><b>Circumcision</b> (or see here) "And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be the <b>sign</b> of the covenant between Me and you. Ge 17:11</p>	<p><b>EVERLASTING</b> Ge 17:7,8</p> <p>----- El Shaddai promises "I will establish My covenant between Me &amp; you &amp; your descendants (seed) after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant."  Isaac, <b>Abraham's</b> seed, is prophesied &amp; granted the covenant promises.  Ge 17:19, 20, 21</p>	<p><b>NAME CHANGE</b></p> <p>1) <b>Abram</b> ("exalted father") to <b>Abraham</b> ("father of a multitude")</p> <p>2) <b>Sarai</b> (meaning ? some say "contentious", others "princess") to <b>Sarah</b> ("princess") Ge 17:5,15</p>
<p><b>MAN &gt; MAN</b> Ge 21:27,32</p>	<p><b>Abimelech</b> This man was a <b>Philistine</b> ruler over a pagan people, and yet <b>he was the initiator</b> of the covenant. Implication? Pagans understood the solemn and binding nature of covenant</p>	<p><b>Abraham &amp; Abimelech</b></p>	<p><b>FEAR</b></p> <p>God was with Abe Ge 21:22</p> <p>Water Rights Ge 21:25</p>	<p>Not Stated but see Ge 21:27</p> <p>"the two of them <b>made (Karath - cut) a covenant</b>".</p> <p>The fact that <b>Abraham</b> had given him sheep and oxen in the same verse strongly suggests they walked between the flesh of these slain animals as they "cut covenant" (<b>blood</b>)</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p>"Swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me, or with my <b>offspring</b>, or with my <b>posterity</b>..." Ge 21:23</p>	<p><b>Abraham</b> would not deal falsely with Abimelech (read <b>Genesis 20</b> for why he may have prescribed this condition) but in <b>kindness</b> (a covenant word) Ge 21:23</p> <p>The two of them <b>took an oath</b> Ge 21:31,32</p>	<p><b>Abraham</b> gave Abimelech <b>seven ewe lambs</b> Ge 21:28, 29, 30</p> <p>Abraham planted a <b>Tamarisk</b> Ge 21:33 (See ill. in pagan culture)</p>	<p><b>EVERLASTING</b> Ge 21:23</p> <p><b>Abraham</b> "called on the name of the LORD, the <b>Everlasting God</b>" (El Olam)</p> <p>Everlasting is implied in Ge 21:23</p>	<p><b>Beersheba</b> ("well of seven fold oath" or "well of the oath") Ge 21:31</p>

<p><b>MAN &gt; MAN</b></p> <p>Ge 26:28</p>	<p><b>Abimelech</b></p> <p>This is probably the same one who cut covenant with <b>Abraham</b> (<b>Ahuzzath</b> &amp; <b>Phicol</b>)</p> <p>Ge 26:26</p>	<p><b>Isaac &amp; Abimelech</b></p> <p>(et. al.)</p>	<p><b>FEAR:</b></p> <p>Abimelech saw that the Lord was with Isaac</p> <p>Ge 26:28</p> <p><b>'Do us no harm'</b></p> <p>Ge 26:29</p> <p>In essence a "peace treaty"</p>	<p>The phrase "let us make (cut) a covenant" (suggests <b>blood</b>)</p> <p>Ge 26:28</p>	<p><b>Not Stated:</b></p> <p>Note that if this Abimelech is the same king the covenant he cut with Isaac's father <b>Abraham</b> should have been sufficient to ensure peace, pointing that men's covenants are not as trustworthy as God's covenants to men!</p>	<p>(Abimelech) said, 'Let there now be an <b>oath</b> between us, even between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, Ge 26:28</p> <p><b>They exchanged oaths</b></p> <p>Ge 26:31</p> <p>(See ill. in <a href="#">pagan culture</a>)</p>	<p>--</p>	<p>--</p>	<p><b>Isaac</b> 'made them a feast'</p> <p>Ge 26:30</p>
<p><b>Abrahamic</b></p> <p><b>GOD &gt; ISAAC</b></p> <p>Ge 26:24,25</p> <p><b>Unconditional</b></p>	<p><b>God</b></p> <p>Reaffirms the Abrahamic Covenant to Abraham's <b>Seed</b></p>	<p><b>God &amp; Isaac</b></p> <p>Ge 26:24,25</p>	<p><b>Preservation of the seed</b></p> <p>I am with you, I will bless you &amp; multiply your seed</p> <p>Ge 26:24</p>	<p>Not clear</p> <p>Hebrew for <b>Altar</b> = "place of sacrifice" (suggests <b>blood</b>)</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p>	<p>Jehovah promises Isaac "I will establish the <b>oath</b> which I <b>swore</b> to your father <b>Abraham</b></p> <p>Ge 26:3</p>	<p>--</p>	<p>"multiply your descendants" in Ge 26:24 implies <b>Everlasting</b></p>	<p>Isaac built an <b>altar</b> at <b>Beersheba</b></p> <p>Ge 26:25</p>
<p><b>Abrahamic</b></p> <p><b>GOD &gt; JACOB</b></p> <p>Ge 28:13-15</p> <p><b>Unconditional</b></p>	<p><b>God</b></p> <p>Reaffirms the Abrahamic Covenant</p>	<p><b>God &amp; Jacob</b></p>	<p>Reaffirms God's Covenant with <b>Abraham</b></p> <p>To do what God had He had promised</p> <p>Ge 28:15</p>	<p>--</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p>Ge 28:13, 14, 15</p>	<p>Ge 28:15</p> <p>See also Abrahamic Covenant</p>	<p><b>Pillar</b></p> <p>Jacob set it up as a <b>pillar</b>, and poured oil on its top</p> <p>Ge 28:18</p>	<p><b>Everlasting</b></p>	<p><b>Name change</b></p> <p>Luz called <b>Bethel</b> (House of God)</p> <p>Ge 28:19</p>
<p><b>MAN &gt; MAN</b></p> <p>Ge 31:44-55</p>	<p><b>Laban</b></p> <p>"So now come let us make a covenant you &amp; I &amp; let it be a <b>witness</b> between you &amp; me"</p> <p>Ge 31:44</p>	<p><b>Jacob &amp; Laban</b></p>	<p><b>FEAR</b></p> <p>(distrust)</p> <p>I will not pass by this heap to you for <b>harm</b>... you will not pass by this heap &amp; this pillar to me for <b>harm</b>.</p> <p>Ge 31:52</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p>"Then Jacob offered a <b>sacrifice</b> (<b>blood</b>) on the mountain &amp; called his kinsmen to the meal &amp; they ate the meal &amp; spent the night on the mountain"</p> <p>Ge 31:54</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p>"If you mistreat my daughters or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us see God is <b>witness</b> between you &amp; me."</p> <p>Ge 31:50</p>	<p><b>Not to mistreat</b></p> <p>daughters or take other wives</p> <p><b>Ge 31:50</b></p> <p>Jacob <b>swore</b> by the <b>fear</b> (God) of his father Isaac.</p> <p>Ge 31:53</p>	<p><b>Four Witnesses!</b></p> <p><b>Covenant</b> a <b>witness</b> Ge 31:44</p> <p><b>God</b> is <b>witness</b> Ge 31:50</p> <p><b>Heap-witness</b></p> <p><b>Pillar-witness</b> Ge 31:51, 52</p>	<p>--</p>	<p><b>1 ) Jegar-sahadutha</b></p> <p>(heap of <b>witness</b>)</p> <p><b>2) Jacob</b> called it <b>Galeed</b> (heap of <b>witness</b>)</p> <p><b>3) Mizpah</b> = Watch tower</p> <p>Ge 31:47, 48, 49</p> <p><b>Meal</b></p> <p>Ge 31:54</p>



<b>Mosaic</b>  <b>GOD &gt; MAN</b>  Ex 24:1-8 Ex 34:27,28  <b>Conditional</b>	<b>God</b> Ex 34:27	<b>God, Moses &amp; Israel</b> Ex 34:27  <b>Conditional</b> = fulfillment depends on recipients obeying	--	<b>YES</b> 1/2 of <b>blood</b> on <b>altar</b> ; 1/2 <b>blood</b> in basins sprinkled on people (swore to obey) Ex 24:6, 7, 8  <b>"the blood of the covenant"</b>	--	<b>Israel Made a Promise:</b> "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." Ex 24:3,7	Twelve <b>pillars</b> at the foot of Mt Sinai Ex 24:4  One of the purposes of <b>"pillars"</b> is to help remember the covenant conditions	--	<b>Altar</b> at foot of Mt Sinai Ex 24:4  <b>Meal</b> Ex 24:11  Shared a common meal
<b>New Covenant</b>  <b>GOD &gt; MAN</b>  Mt 26:26-28 Lk 22:20 ("New covenant")  <b>Unconditional</b>	Jesus instituted with His disciples at time of the <b>Passover Meal</b> the night before He was crucified (Mt 26:19-28)	<b>God/Man</b> Isa 42:6 Messiah = <b>Covenant Messenger</b> of covenant to His Temple =1st advent  Mal 3:1  "refiner's fire" =2nd advent  Mal 3:2	For the <b>forgiveness</b> of sins Mt 26:28	<b>YES</b> 'My body' 'My <b>blood of the covenant</b> ' Mt 26:28	<b>YES</b>	<b>THE NEW COVENANT</b> (promised - promised) Jer 31:31, 32, 33, 34  <b>THE NEW COVENANT</b> (promise fulfilled) Lk 22:20	"This is My body which is given for you; do this in <b>remembrance</b> (memorial) of Me." Lk 22:19  Reminds us of costliness of Covenant	<b>Eternal Covenant</b> He 13:20-note	<b>NEW COVENANT MEAL</b> Mt 26:26, 27,28 1Co 11:23, 24, 25, 26  Shared a common meal

**Made** (or cut) ([03772](#)) **karath** literally means to cut, to cut off or to sever an object from its source or cut into parts and implies a violent action. For example, Zipporah "cut off her son's foreskin." (Ex 4:25) or the Jews "cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes." (Nu 13:2-24, cf Dt 19:5, 20:19-20, Jdg 9:48-49, 1Sa 5:4, 17:51, 24:4-5,11, 31:9, 2Sa 10:4, 2Sa 20:22) In another literal use as punishment to Israel for breaking the Mosaic covenant (cf Dt 29:25, 31:16), God says He will "cut down (karath) your incense altars" (Lev 26:30, cf Jdg 6:25-26, cf 1Sa 28:9). A sacrificial animal was not to be offered if it was "cut" (karath) (Lev 22:24). Karath means "chewed" (cutting food with teeth) in Nu 11:33.

**Karath** is used with **beriyth** meaning to "cut a covenant" or establish a covenant between two parties, either between God and men (Abrahamic Covenant = Ge 15:18, Mosaic Covenant = Ex 24:8, Dt 5:2-3, 9:9; see [Abrahamic versus Mosaic](#) and [Abrahamic vs Old vs New](#)) or between men (Ge 21:27, 32, 26:28, 31:44, 2Sa 3:12-13, 21, 5:3; 1Sa 18:3, 20:15-16, 22:8, 23:18 between Jonathan and David [[See discussion of their Covenant - Exchanging of Robes](#)]. Israel's cutting covenant with the pagans was prohibited by God (Ex 23:32, Dt 7:2, Jdg 2:2, an instruction which Joshua disobeyed - Josh 9:6-7,11).

#### Resources Related to Covenant:

- [Covenant: As It Relates to Marriage](#)
- [Covenant: Why Study It?](#)
- [Covenant: Introduction](#)
- [Lesson 1 Covenant: Summary Table](#)
- [Lesson 2 Covenant: The Exchange of Robes](#)
- [Lesson 3 Covenant: The Exchange of Armor and Belts](#)
- [Lesson 4 Covenant: Solemn and Binding](#)
- [Lesson 5 Covenant: A Walk Into Death](#)
- [Lesson 6 Covenant: The Oneness of Covenant](#)
- [Covenant: Oneness Notes](#)
- [Lesson 7 Covenant: Withholding Nothing from God](#)
- [Lesson 8 Covenant: Abrahamic versus Mosaic](#)
- [Lesson 9 Covenant: New Covenant in the Old Testament](#)
- [Lesson 10 Covenant: Why the New is Better](#)
- [Lesson 11 Covenant: Abrahamic vs Old vs New](#)
- [New Covenant in the Old Testament](#)
- [Name change](#)
- [Covenant Meal](#)
- [Friend a covenant word \(notes\)](#)
- [Covenant memorial](#)
- [Phylacteries in OT](#)
- [Commingleing of blood \(notes\)](#)
- [Common life of covenant](#)

- [Striking of hands](#)

Genesis 21:28 Then Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.

- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### ABRAHAM'S GIFT TO ABIMELECH

**Then** (NASB, NET) - This indicates progression in the narrative and thus would support the premise that the animals in this passage are in addition to those mentioned in Ge 21:27.

**Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves**- These animals were a special gift and not specifically a part of the ratification of their covenant. Their meaning is explained in the following passages.

Genesis 21:29 Abimelech said to Abraham, "What do these seven ewe lambs mean, which you have set by themselves?"

- Ge 33:8 Ex 12:26 1Sa 15:14
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### ABIMELECH'S QUERY OVER THE 7 LAMBS

**Abimelech said to Abraham, "What do these seven ewe lambs mean, which you have set by themselves?"** Abimelech had not asked what the **sheep and oxen** meant in Ge 21:27, presumably because he understood their purpose in cutting of the covenant. But now he is uncertain as to the meaning of the seven ewe lambs.

Genesis 21:30 He said, "You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand so that it may be a witness to me, that I dug this well."

- **a witness:** Ge 31:44-48,52 Jos 22:27,28 24:27
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### SEVEN EWE LAMBS TO BE A WITNESS

**He said, "You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand so that it may be a witness('edah; Lxx - [marturion/martyrion](#)) to me, that I dug this well ([beer](#); Lxx- [phrear](#))** - Note the purpose clause **so that** clearly explains to Abimelech the significance of the **seven ewe lambs**. They are to be a **witness**. Actually they were to be living witnesses to testify to Abimelech that Abraham had dug the well and it belonged to him! Typically when covenants were cut, there was either a "sign" or a "witness." ([see chart](#)) For example, in God's covenant with Noah the sign (witness) was the rainbow (Ge 9:13+). In the Abrahamic Covenant circumcision was the sign (Ge 17:11+). In addition to the seven (a number which speaks of completion or perfection) ewe lambs, Abraham also planted a tamarisk tree at [Beersheba](#), the place they had cut covenant. It undoubtedly also served as a witness or sign of their covenant. Here in Ge 21:30 by accepting Abraham's gift of ewe lambs, Abimelech acknowledged the truth of Abraham's statement about the ownership of the well at Beersheba.

[Wiersbe](#) adds the **seven ewe lambs** "were like "receipts" guaranteeing that Abraham owned the well. The name of the well [Beersheba](#) means "well of the oath") was another witness to the transaction. Both men swore to uphold the covenant, and the problem was settled. This entire transaction involved three elements: sacrifices (Ge 21:27), witnesses (Ge 21:28-30), and promises (Ge 21:31-32). You find these same elements in God's covenant with us through our Lord Jesus Christ, as outlined in Hebrews 10:1-18. First, there is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross (Heb 10:1-14); then, the witness of the Spirit within the believer (Heb 10:15); and finally, the promise of God's Word (Heb 10:16-18). Abraham's covenant with Abimelech only guaranteed possession of a well that provides water to sustain life. God's covenant with His people guarantees that we have the living water that gives everlasting life to all who will trust the Savior!

[See the chart](#) below for other "witnesses" to covenant agreements such as the heap of stones that was a witness to the boundary agreement reached between Jacob and Laban (Ge 31:52). Joshua placed a large stone for Israel as an inanimate "witness" before all Israel declaring "**Behold**, this stone shall be for a **witness** against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for **awitness** against you, so that you do not deny your God." (Josh 24:27+)

**Witness** (05713) '**edah** from **ud** = return, do again) means a witness or a testimony. Testimony which in English is a solemn statement made under oath, an assertion offering first-hand authentication of a fact or something that serves as evidence. The origin of the idea of testimony from **ud** is that a witness is one, who by repetition (**ud** = "do again") emphatically affirms his testimony. Or stated another way the word "ud" denotes permanence. A testimony can be a solemn statement made under oath or as part of a covenant. God's testimonies are what come forth from His heart to indicate His will.

'**Edah** - 25v - in KJV = testimonies 22, witness 4 - Gen. 21:30; Gen. 31:52; Deut. 4:45; Deut. 6:17; Deut. 6:20; Jos. 24:27; Ps. 25:10; Ps. 78:56; Ps. 93:5; Ps. 99:7; Ps. 119:2; Ps. 119:22; Ps. 119:24; Ps. 119:46; Ps. 119:59; Ps. 119:79; Ps. 119:95; Ps. 119:119; Ps.

**Well** (0875)(beer from baar - to make distinct but connection is uncertain) means a well or a pit. For water either occurring naturally (Ge 16:14, Ex 2:15) or dug out (Ge. 21:25, 30; 26:15, 18; Nu 21:16-18). Joseph was thrown into a "pit" by his brothers (Ge 37:20), and the "dungeon" by Potiphar (Ge 40:15), both places being designated by be'er. **Beer** can be a pit with tar or bitumen (Ge 14:10). Metaphorically beers refer to **apit** of destruction (Ps. 55:23). An unusual figurative use is to describe one's wife ("cistern" - Pr 5:15) as opposed to a strange, adulterous woman! Beer can refer to underground water sources or even the underworld (Ps. 69:15) and in Nu 21:16 refers to a specific desert location. Water had to be drawn from a well, and this was usually done by a woman. Abraham's servant met Rebekah when she went to the well to draw water (Gen. 24:11f.). Sometimes wells were a source of contention, as when Isaac's servants struggled with the men of Gerar over the ownership of wells (Gen. 26:17-22).

**Jack Lewis** - Wells for water were dug in the earth (Genesis 21:30; Genesis 26:18, 21-22, 25) and the discovery of water was an occasion for rejoicing, celebrated in song (Genesis 26:32; Numbers 21:17-18). Ordinarily water had to be drawn (Genesis 24:11, 20), and so a flowing well ("living water") was a particularly good fortune (Genesis 26:19). In a land where water was scarce, wells were a source of contention (Genesis 26:19-21). Israel promised that they would drink no water from the wells of Edom and Ammon if they were allowed to pass through their territory (Numbers 20:17). When not in use, the well could be protected with a stone covering (Genesis 29:2ff.). So covered, the well served as a hiding place for David's informers (2 Samuel 17:18-21). Water was drawn by women, and so the well served as a meeting place for the servant of Abraham and Rebekah (Genesis 24:11ff.), Jacob and Rachel (Genesis 29:2ff.), and Moses and Zipporah (Exodus 2:15ff.). be'er also designates slime or bitumen pit (Genesis 14:10) and the pit as a place of destruction (Psalm 55:23; Psalm 69:15). be'er is also used figuratively. The strange woman is like a pit (Proverbs 23:27), but one's beloved is a well of living water (Song 4:15). A man's wife is his own well (Proverbs 5:15). The noun is also used in place names such as Beersheba, Beer (Numbers 21:16), and Beerelim (Isaiah 15:8). ([TWOT](#) online)

**Beer** - 36x/33v - **pit(2), pits(1), well(29), well's(1), wells(3)**. Gen. 14:10; Gen. 16:14; Gen. 21:19; Gen. 21:25; Gen. 21:30; Gen. 24:11; Gen. 24:20; Gen. 26:15; Gen. 26:18; Gen. 26:19; Gen. 26:20; Gen. 26:21; Gen. 26:22; Gen. 26:25; Gen. 26:32; Gen. 29:2; Gen. 29:3; Gen. 29:8; Gen. 29:10; Exod. 2:15; Num. 20:17; Num. 21:16; Num. 21:17; Num. 21:18; Num. 21:22; 2 Sam. 17:18; 2 Sam. 17:19; 2 Sam. 17:21; Ps. 55:23; Ps. 69:15; Prov. 5:15; Prov. 23:27; Cant. 4:15

**Genesis 21:31 Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because there the two of them took an oath.**

- **called:** Ge 26:33
- **Beersheba:** Ge 21:14 26:23 Jos 15:28 Judges 20:1 2Sa 17:11 1Ki 4:25
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries



Source: [Abraham: Following God's Promise](#)

### BEERSHEBA THE PLACE OF THE COVENANT

**Therefore** - Term of conclusion. Based on what had just transpired in the cutting of the covenant.

**He called that place Beersheba** ([Beer Sheba-see note](#) & see map below), **because there the two of them took an oath** - **Because** is a term of explanation which gives us the reason for the specific name Beersheba. Beersheba is from **Beer** meaning well and **sheba** meaning seven and thus means "well of the seven" or "well of the oath."

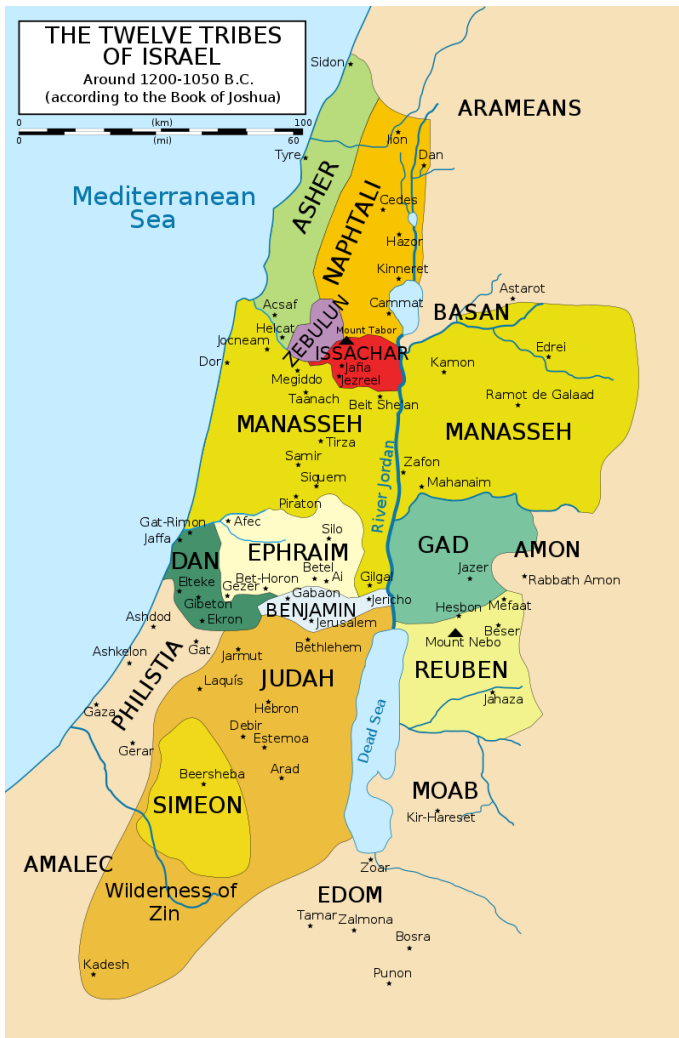
**Morris** writes that "Even though it was on land claimed by the Philistines, it was commonly understood at the time that the man who dug a well was its owner." Abraham had a claim to at least one well in the land of Canaan.

**Beersheba** (Beer Sheba) all uses in the Bible - 34x/33v - Gen. 21:14; Gen. 21:31; Gen. 21:32; Gen. 21:33; Gen. 22:19; Gen. 26:23; Gen. 26:33; Gen. 28:10; Gen. 46:1; Gen. 46:5; Jos. 15:28; Jos. 19:2; Jdg. 20:1; 1 Sam. 3:20; 1 Sam. 8:2; 2 Sam. 3:10; 2 Sam. 17:11; 2 Sam. 24:2; 2 Sam. 24:7; 2 Sam. 24:15; 1 Ki. 4:25; 1 Ki. 19:3; 2 Ki. 12:1; 2 Ki. 23:8; 1 Chr. 4:28; 1 Chr. 21:2; 2 Chr. 19:4; 2 Chr. 24:1; 2 Chr. 30:5; Neh. 11:27; Neh. 11:30; Amos 5:5; Amos 8:14

**Genesis 21:32 So they made a covenant at Beersheba; and Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, arose and returned to the land of the Philistines.**

- Ge 21:27 14:13 31:53 1Sa 18:3

- the Philistines: Ge 10:14 26:8,14 Ex 13:17 Judges 13:1
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries



See Land later given to Simeon with Beersheba Centrally Located

### ABIMELECH AND ABRAHAM'S COVENANT AT BEERSHEBA

So they made ([karath](#) - cut) a covenant ([beriyth](#)) at Beersheba ([Beer Sheba-see note](#)); and Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, arose and returned to the land of the Philistines - Notice that Moses repeats the fact that they made ([karath](#) - cut) a covenant ([beriyth](#)), so clearly everything that transpired in those 6 verses is related to this covenant. It is notable that this is the first covenant in the Bible between men, the previous two covenants (Noah, Abraham) being between Yahweh and man. If you click this map ([Philistia - land of the Philistines](#)), you can locate Beersheba and then just to the west is Philistia which, while not having that name at this time in the Biblical narrative, is clearly the general location of the destination of **Abimelech and Phicol** as they returned to their homeland.

#### Ray Pritchard - The Path to Peace Genesis 21:22-34

From this small and often-overlooked story we may find five steps that will lead us on the path of peace.

##### A. Humility

Someone has to take the first step. In our text, the pagan king Abimelech makes the first move. Think about the strained relationships in your own life. Someone has to make the first move.

- Will you be the one to pick up the phone?
- Will you take the time to write a letter?
- Will you stop making excuses?
- Will you make the first move?

Jesus made the first move when he "humbled himself" by leaving heaven to be born as a tiny baby. He showed us what it means to take the initiative to heal a broken relationship.

As long as you sit where you are, things will never change. But you say, "It's not my fault things." Maybe it's not but Jesus said, "If you brother has anything against you, leave your gift at the altar, go and be reconciled, then come back and offer your gift to God." (See Matthew 5:23-24).

Someone has to make the first move. Why not you?

Let me put it this way. Is there someone in your life you really don't want to see right now? That's probably the first person you need to talk to.

## B. Courage

Peacemaking also takes courage because you never know how the other person is going to respond. There aren't any guarantees. Sometimes your best efforts will be rejected. In our case, Abimelech didn't know how Abraham would respond. If he got angry, it might lead to war. The same is true for you. If you make that phone call, or if you go see your boss, or if you write a letter to your mother, you're taking a big chance. The other person might not understand, or they might take it as a sign of weakness, or they may try to twist your motives.

Peacemaking is risky business. That's why so few people try to do it. And that's why it often fails.

But if you have a broken relationship in your life, it's not going to get better by itself. If you do nothing, things will only get worse.

## C. Honesty

Peacemaking also requires honesty. In our text Abraham brought up the matter of the well that Abimelech's servants that seized from Abraham. They made peace and immediately Abraham starts complaining. But he's perfectly justified because if he lets that issue fester, pretty soon the whole peace treaty will go up in smoke. So he has to mention it even though it might have been easier to overlook it.

Many of us shy away from this kind of open confrontation. We'd rather just look the other way when problems come. But I learned years ago that the first price you pay is always the cheapest. When you don't deal with relational problems, the price for solving those problems always goes up. It never goes down.

That's why Proverbs 24:26 says "An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips." The truth may hurt but it is always more satisfying in the end. Without honesty in relationships, peace is impossible.

## D. Patience

Peacemaking requires patience because attitudes don't change overnight. You can't overcome years of hostility and mistrust over one quick lunch at Denny's. In this case, both Abimelech and Abraham had to learn to live together despite their differences in background and religion.

*Patience is the willingness to wait for God to solve my problems.*

Would you like a definition of patience? Here's one that works for me. Patience is the willingness to wait for God to solve my problems. So many times we get frustrated with other people because they aren't changing fast enough to suit us. Parents get angry at their children, husbands at wives and wives at husbands, adult children get frustrated with their elderly parents, workers with their bosses, bosses with their employees, students with their teachers, friends with friends, relatives with relatives, and church members get frustrated with each other all the time.

We throw up our hands and say, "What's wrong with those people?" That's the wrong question because it focuses all the attention on others when we really ought to throw the spotlight on our own sinful impatience. What we ought to ask is, "Am I willing to wait for God to solve my problems?" Proverbs 21:1 reminds us that the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord. If that's true, and if we have committed the people who frustrate us to the Lord, then we can simply sit back and wait for God to do His work. Sooner or later, even the hardest heart must bend to His will.

## E. Kindness

The final aspect of peacemaking is kindness. We see a glimpse of that when Abimelech reminds Abraham of the kindness he has already shown him. We see a much greater glimpse in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Romans 2:4 tells us that it is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance. Ephesians 2:7 says that God showed kindness to us in Jesus Christ. Titus 3:4 declares that Jesus Christ is the ultimate demonstration of the kindness of God.

Go with me to bloody Calvary. Gaze on the disfigured body of the Jesus of Nazareth. Listen! Can you hear the howling mob? They scream for his blood, they cheer his pain, they laugh at his suffering. Chanting, laughing, jeering, mocking, the mob enjoys every moment of this tragedy. A man dies and the world cheers. The Son of God offers Himself and humanity mocks his pain. And from the Cross come the words that have echoed across the ages, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Now we know. If we never knew before, now we know. We know the price, we know the pain, we know the agony. The Prince of Peace came to the earth and was murdered for his trouble. If you want to see the real face of love, look to the Cross. If you want to see kindness, gaze on the contorted face of the crucified Redeemer. Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). First he said it, then he showed us how to do it when he died on the Cross. Would you like to make peace with your enemies? You can, but it won't be easy. If you would rather live in anger and bitterness, that option is always open to you. Or you can follow Jesus to the Cross and die there. The choice is yours. ([Genesis 21:22-34 How to Make Peace with Your Enemies](#))

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**QUESTION - [What is the significance of Beersheba in the Bible?](#) (SEE also [Wikipedia](#))**

**ANSWER - [Beersheba](#)** was a city in ancient Israel in the southern part of the land. To the south of Beersheba was the Negev Desert, so Beersheba marked the southernmost boundary of cultivated land in Israel. The proverbial phrase *from Dan to Beersheba* is used nine times in the Old Testament to describe whole of the [Promised Land](#)—Dan being in the north, and [Beersheba](#) in the south (Judges 20:1; 1 Samuel 3:20; 2 Samuel 3:10; 17:11; 24:2, 15; 1 Kings 4:25; 1 Chronicles 21:2; 2 Chronicles 30:5). The distance from Dan to Beersheba was approximately 270 miles.

[Beersheba](#) is mentioned in Genesis 21:31 as the place where [Abraham](#) made a treaty with [Abimelech](#), king of the Philistines in Gerar. Abraham had moved his family to the "region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a time he stayed at Gerar" (Genesis 20:1). Abimelech saw that Abraham's wife, Sarah, was beautiful and took her into his harem, not knowing that she was married to Abraham. Because of this, God put a curse on Abimelech's household and warned him in a dream that Sarah was married (Genesis 20:3, 17–18). Abimelech quickly returned Sarah to her husband along with bountiful peace offerings (Genesis 20:14–15).

Abimelech and Abraham eventually formed an alliance wherein Abimelech said to Abraham, "God is with you in everything you do. Now swear to me here before God that you will not deal falsely with me or my children or my descendants. Show to me and the country where you now reside as a foreigner the

same kindness I have shown to you" (Genesis 21:22–23). Abraham agreed.

A short time later, Abraham complained to Abimelech that the king's servants had taken over a well in [Beersheba](#) that belonged to Abraham's people. So Abimelech gave the well back to Abraham, who gave the king seven ewe lambs as a seal of their covenant. This happened at [Beersheba](#), and it was the treaty that gave the place its name: **Beersheba** means "the well of the seven" or "the well of the treaty." At that time, "

Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the Lord, the Eternal God. And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines for a long time" (Genesis 21:33–34).

[Beersheba](#) also figures into the story of Abraham's son, Isaac. Following in his father's footsteps, Isaac moved into the land of the Philistines when there was a famine in Canaan (Genesis 26). When he began to settle there, he found that all the wells his father's servants had dug had been filled up with dirt by the Philistines. He reopened those wells and dug some new ones (Genesis 26:18–22). After that, Isaac went to [Beersheba](#). There the Lord appeared to him as He had done to his father Abraham and made him the same promise of a multitude of descendants (Genesis 26:23–24). As Abraham had done, Isaac built an altar and called upon the name of the Lord. In a repeat performance, Abimelech arrived and asked for another treaty with Isaac, identical to the one made with Abraham. Isaac agreed. He prepared a feast for the king, and the two swore an oath of peace to each other (Genesis 26:30–31). On the same day, Isaac's servants discovered water in a new well they were digging (Genesis 26:32), and Isaac called the place Shibah, which means "oath" or "seven" (Genesis 26:33). In this way, Isaac perpetuated the name his father had given the place, and [Beersheba](#) became the name of the town that would later be built near the wells that Abraham and Isaac had named.

Years later, in the division of the Promised Land, the area around [Beersheba](#) was part of the inheritance of the tribes of Simeon (**ED**: SEE MAP ABOVE) and Judah (Joshua 15:20–28; 19:1–2). [Beersheba](#) was a place where several people came into contact with God. Isaac (Genesis 26:24) and Jacob (Genesis 46:2) both heard from God in dreams they had at [Beersheba](#). Hagar (Genesis 21:17) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:5) were in the wilderness of [Beersheba](#) when God spoke to them.

[Beersheba](#) was also the place where [Samuel's](#) two wicked sons served as leaders (1 Samuel 8:1–3). It was this perversion of the judgeship that led Israel to demand a king (1 Samuel 8:6–9). By the time of the prophet Amos, in the reign of King Uzziah, Beersheba seems to have become a center of false worship, and the prophet warns those who would truly worship the Lord, "Do not journey to Beersheba" (Amos 5:5). Today, the spot where Beersheba once stood is marked by ancient ruins; several ancient wells have been discovered in the area, and they still produce water.

**Beersheba** can be seen as symbolizing those events in our lives that cause us to call upon the name of the Lord. Tragedy strikes, heartaches happen, and the Lord shows Himself strong on our behalf (2 Chronicles 16:9). The date or place where we experienced a turning point becomes a memorial in our hearts, much as Beersheba's altar, well, and tamarisk tree were to Abraham and Isaac. When God reveals His will to us or rescues us in some way, we can create a personal "Beersheba" in our hearts. Then, when times of doubt or conflict come, we can return there over and over in our hearts for assurance that God is fulfilling His plan. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### Norman Geisler - [When Critics Ask](#) - GENESIS 21:32, 34—Did the Bible mistakenly place the Philistines in Palestine at the time of Abraham?

**PROBLEM:** The earliest allusion to Philistines by Palestinian or Egyptian sources is the twelfth century B.C., yet these verses place them in the area some 800 years earlier.

**SOLUTION:** This is not the first time critics have come to false conclusions based on the general lack of historical knowledge concerning this period. Sodom and Gomorrah are examples of cities the Bible mentioned that were supposedly not historical. When the Ebla tablets were discovered, the charge of myth was refuted. These tablets contained references to both cities. It may just be a matter of time before similar evidence turns up to confirm the biblical testimony here regarding the Philistines. Until then, we can rest assured that the biblical record is accurate in this case, having confidence in the Scriptures based on its past record of trustworthiness. Furthermore, the critics' argument is the traditional fallacious argument from ignorance. Simply because we lack evidence from extrabiblical sources of the earlier date for the Philistines does not mean they didn't exist then. It simply means we lack the information.

#### Related Resource:

- [New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties - see page 98](#) Were there Philistines in Palestine by Abraham's time?

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#### Genesis 21:33 Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.

- **Abraham planted a tamarisk tree**, Am 8:14
- **Beersheba**: De 16:21 Judges 3:7
- **called**: Ge 4:26 12:8 26:23,25,33
- **El Olam: Everlasting God**: De 33:27 Ps 90:2 Isa 40:28 57:15 Jer 10:10 Ro 1:20 16:26 1Ti 1:17
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

[Tamarix aphylla](#)

### ABRAHAM WORSHIPS EL OLAM

Abraham planted a tamarisk tree ([Tamarix aphylla](#)) at [Beersheba](#). The original word {eshel,} has been variously translated a grove, a plantation, an orchard, a cultivated field, and an oak; but it may denote a kind of tamarisk, as it is rendered by Gesenius, the same with the Arabic {athl.}

**Kenneth Matthews** - Abraham memorialized God as the source of his prosperity.

**And there he called on the name of the LORD**([Jehovah](#)), **the Everlasting** ([olam](#)) **God** - To call on the Name was to worship the One behind the name, in

this case [El Olam the Everlasting God](#). Abraham already knew God as [El Elyon](#) and [EL Shaddai](#), but now God reveals He is **El Olam**. Abraham's response to this new revelation was to worship.

**THOUGHT:** When God's Spirit illuminates the Scripture showing us something about God we heretofore did not know or understand, the proper response is to worship! Indeed, progressive revelation (more accurately "progressive illumination" for Biblical revelation is complete in Genesis to Revelation) should be the saints desire and experience - as we go through life (and grow in spiritual maturity) we, like Abraham, should learn more and more about God, so that we might worship Him with a greater awareness and awe even as did the Psalmist David....

(A Psalm of Praise, of David.)

I will extol Thee, my God, O King;

And **I will bless Thy Name forever and ever.**

Every day I will bless Thee,

And **I will praise Thy Name forever and ever.**

My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD...

And **all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever.**

Psalm 145:1-2, 21+

[Wiersbe](#) - You could follow Abraham's journey by looking for the wells he dug and the altars he built (Ge 12:7-8; 13:4, 18). He was not ashamed to build his altar in the presence of his neighbors and offer his worship to the Lord. A new name for God is introduced here: El Olam, "the Everlasting God." Abraham already knew **El Elyon** ("God Most High"—Ge 14:19, 22) and **El Shaddai** ("God Almighty, the All-Sufficient One"—Ge 17:1), but now he had a new name to use in his worship. It is important as we go through life that we learn more and more about God so we can worship Him better. What an encouragement to know "the Everlasting God"! Wells would disappear, trees would be cut down, ewe lambs would grow up and die, altars would crumble, and treaties would perish, but the Everlasting God would remain. This Everlasting God had made an everlasting covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Ge 17:7, 13, 19), and He had given them the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession (Ge 17:8; 48:4). As Abraham faced the coming years, he knew that God would not change and that "underneath [were] the everlasting arms" (Deut. 33:27)

One has to believe that part of the reason Abraham called God the Everlasting God is because here in Genesis 21 he saw the "first step" in the propagation (so to speak) of the covenant with the birth of the promised son Isaac. Only an everlasting God could make and keep an everlasting covenant.

Genesis 13:15 for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever **EVERLASTING** - [olam](#)).

Genesis 17:7 "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an (**EVERLASTING** - [olam](#)) covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.

Genesis 17:8 "I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an (**EVERLASTING** - [olam](#)) possession; and I will be their God."

Genesis 17:13 "A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an (**EVERLASTING** - [olam](#)) covenant.

Genesis 17:19 But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an (**EVERLASTING** - [olam](#)) covenant for his descendants after him.

**R Kent Hughes** comments that Abraham's...

planting of the (tamarisk) tree was a symbol of fruitfulness and prosperity. Abraham memorialized God as the source of his prosperity. It also demonstrated his rootedness in the land where he indeed stayed "many days." The title "**Everlasting God**" (el olam) as a divine designation is unique in the Bible. Abraham's use of it has to do with the eternal nature of the events in Genesis 20, 21—namely, Isaac's birth and a covenant relationship that is eternal. Abraham's God was the Everlasting One whose will for man cannot be thwarted. This awesome view of God would now inform all of Abraham's dealings. It was this exalted understanding that would be tested in his offering up of Isaac, and that also would help him to stand. (Genesis : Beginning and blessing. Preaching the Word)

**Pulpit Commentary**...the everlasting God—literally, the God of eternity (LXX., Vulgate, Onkelos); not in contrast to heathen deities, who are born and die (Clericus), but "as the everlasting Vindicator of the faith of treaties, and as the infallible Source of the believer's rest and peace" (Murphy).

**Matthew Henry** describes El Olam as...The Everlasting God, Who was, before all worlds, and will be, when time and days shall be no more.

**W H Griffith-Thomas** comments on Abraham's receipt of a special revelation of God...

Abraham now adds on his own account another testimony to his recent experiences. He plants a grove, probably a tamarisk tree, one of the evergreens of the East, and a fit memorial of the perfect peace which he desired between himself, his God, and his fellow-men. But now there came a new revelation of the meaning of his relation to God. In the course of his prayer and communion he learned a new Name of God, and the new Name was no mere additional title, but contained a new truth about God; '**the Everlasting God**' (**El Olam**). He was thus reminded of God's unchangeableness and his dependableness. This was a distinct advance on his previous knowledge of God as 'Most High' ([Ge 14:22](#)), and 'Almighty' ([Ge 17:1](#)). Thus, in the course of Abraham's daily life and his faithful attitude to those around him, came fresh mercies and blessings and new experiences of his God....

**The unspeakable blessedness of new experiences of God.**—A profound satisfaction is realised by the believer as he discovers more and more of the glories of God and His grace. The believer is 'ever learning,' and from the moment of his conversion, **in proportion to his faithful obedience day by day** (see following note for discussion of this vital principle), God becomes better known in all the fulness and manifold variety of His revelation. These new experiences as they come are, however, not merely a matter of personal satisfaction, blessed though that is; they tend to prepare the soul for still greater accomplishments.

(**THOUGHT**) God's revelations are not mere luxuries for personal enjoyment, but are given for the purpose of preparing the soul for

fuller service and still clearer testimony for God.

We shall see how this new revelation of God to Abraham was a distinct preparation for a crisis that was to come in his life. It is the same today. God reveals Himself more and more fully in order that we may be more and more thoroughly equipped for greater efforts in the kingdom of God. ([Genesis 21:22-34 The Daily Round](#))

[Warren Wiersbe](#) comments on the **Everlasting God**...

What an encouragement to know "**the Everlasting God**"! Wells would disappear, trees would be cut down, ewe lambs would grow up and die, altars would crumble, and treaties would perish; but the **Everlasting God** would remain. This Everlasting God had made an **everlasting covenant** with Abraham and his descendants (Ge 17:7, 13, 19), and He had given them the land of Canaan as an **everlasting possession** (Ge 17:8; 48:4). As Abraham faced the coming years, he knew that God would not change and that "**underneath [were] the everlasting arms**" (Deut 33:27+).

**Waiting** (Ge 21:34). The "**many days**" of this verse could mean as much as ten to fifteen years, because Isaac was a young man when he accompanied Abraham to Mount Moriah (Genesis 22). It must have been a peaceful time for Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac, and a time of great happiness as they watched their precious son grow up. Little did they know the great test that lay before them, but God was preparing them, and they would be ready.

**Alexander Maclaren** writes...that the Everlasting God is the...

unchanged, unchangeable, inexhaustible Being, (Who) spends, and is unspent; (Who) gives, and is none the poorer; (Who) works, and is never wearied; (Who) lives, and with no tendency to death in His life; (Who) flames with no tendency to extinction in the blaze. (**Ed**: And "Why not?" Because He is Everlasting in every aspect and attribute of His Divine Being!)

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For much more discussion of **Ei Olam** see the following topics which exhibit some overlap:

[\(I\) Ei Olam is the God of History](#)

[\(II\) Ei Olam is Self Existent](#)

[\(III\) Ei Olam has Everlasting "Energy"](#)

[\(IV\) Ei Olam Lives Forever](#)

[\(V\) Ei Olam Knows the Beginning from the End](#)

[\(VI\) Ei Olam's Ways are Everlasting](#)

[\(VII\) Ei Olam Never Changes](#)

[\(VIII\) Ei Olam's Covenant is Everlasting](#)

[\(IX\) Ei Olam's Lovingkindness is Forever](#)

[\(X\) Ei Olam is Jesus Christ](#)

[\(XI\) Ei Olam is Our Protector](#)

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**Lord of Eternity**  
**by Fernando Ortega**

Lord of Eternity  
Blessed is the man  
Who walks in Your favor  
Who loves all Your words  
And hides them like treasure  
In the darkest place  
Of his desperate heart,  
They are a light  
A strong, sure light.

Sometimes I call out Your name  
But I cannot find You.  
I look for Your face,  
But You are not there.  
By my sorrows, Lord,  
Lift me to You,  
Lift me to Your side.

Lord of Eternity,  
Father of mercy,  
Look on my fainting soul.  
Keeper of all the stars,  
Friend of the poorest heart  
Touch me and make me whole.



If You are my defender,  
Who is against me?  
No one can trouble or harm me  
If You are my strength .  
All I ask, all I desire  
Is to live in Your house all my days.  
[repeat chorus]

### **EVERLASTING GOD**

(Chris Tomlin)

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord  
We will wait upon the Lord  
We will wait upon the Lord (repeat)

Our God, You reign forever  
Our hope, our Strong Deliverer

You are the everlasting God  
The everlasting God  
You do not faint You won't grow weary

You're the defender of the weak  
You comfort those in need  
You lift us up on wings like eagles

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### **The Grove—Genesis 21:33 John Kitto - Daily Bible Illustrations**

In the history of Abraham's descendants, the use of groves is continually represented as objectionable and idolatrous; and on entering the land of Canaan, they are particularly enjoined to cut down the groves of the inhabitants, or to burn them with fire. It is named among the most serious offences of the kings of Israel, and some of those of Judah, that they planted groves, or did not cut down the groves;<sup>91</sup> and those kings by whom groves were destroyed, are greatly applauded.<sup>92</sup>

Yet we see Abraham planting a grove at [Beersheba](#) , where his camp had for some time been established, and which became afterwards one of the chief stations of his tribe. What can be more natural, it may be asked, than that a man should plant a grove for shade and refreshment near his camp, Yet it is not so. Planting trees is among the very last objects that a pastoral chief would think of, had he no farther views. And, indeed, it is expressly stated, that he had a religious object. "Abraham planted a grove in [Beersheba](#) , and called there upon the name of the Lord, the everlasting God." How, then, did that, which was harmless or laudable in Abraham, become a crime to his descendants? The answer is not difficult to find.

We must regard Abraham, not as an isolated individual, but as the chief and master of many hundred persons, who worshipped God with him by sacrifice and prayer. They must have met together for these acts of worship, which the patriarch doubtless himself conducted. One tent could not have contained them all; but a grove of trees would afford all the shade and shelter required. Hence, when men had no fixed abodes, or afterwards, when they had not yet learned how to construct edifices large enough for many to join them in an act of worship, groves of trees became their temples—the first temples of mankind. It was also, it would seem, regarded as becomingly reverent, that the altar appropriated to sacrificial worship should not stand out among the common objects of the way-side, but should be decently veiled from careless notice by a screen of trees.

This seems obvious and natural, and is alone sufficient to account for the use of groves in worship. But as things rapidly tended to corruption in those early ages, the worship in groves became idolatrous, and ideas came to be connected with them which were in the eyes of God abominable. It was then as with the brazen serpent, which in the first instance was preserved as a monument of a memorable transaction, but which, when it began to be looked to by the people with idolatrous eyes, was very properly destroyed by the good king Hezekiah. II Kings 18:4.

So, the worship in groves was no harm in itself. It was even usefully solemnizing; and it appears to have involved a recollection of Eden, to which, as simply understood, it would be difficult to ascribe any other than a salutary and useful influence. But when gross idols arose around, and the groves were considered proper to their worship, it behoved God to make a distinction between his worship and theirs; and to show that he had no fellowship with the powers of darkness. Therefore groves were forbidden to be planted near his sanctuary or altar, and those which had been polluted by idol worship were to be destroyed. Let it also be recollected that it was in the highest degree important to check, among the Israelites, the universal tendency to multiply gods, and to localize them—which would have unfitted them for that testimony to the Divine unity which it was their special calling to bear, and for which they had been set apart among the nations. It was, therefore, strictly enjoined that there should be in their land but one altar, and one place of ritual service. Had groves and altars been allowed to be set up in every place that men thought proper, it is not difficult to see that a separate and distinct god would soon be assigned to every shrine; and the great doctrine, to uphold which Israel was made a nation, would in no long time have been utterly lost, so far as their agency in its conservation was concerned. Nothing but a stringent and absolute interdiction could have met the danger. Looking at the subject in this view, we find ample reasons; not only for the prohibition of groves near the altar of God, but for their general suppression throughout the land. With regard to the former interdiction, it may be added, that the existence of a grove near the sanctuary might not only have seemed to assimilate the Lord with the idols of neighboring lands, but may have tended to bring down his worship to a level with theirs. Nothing is more notorious than the shameful orgies that were celebrated in these sacred groves; and it might well be feared that the presence of a grove would soon bring around the sanctuary a crowd of idle devotees, coming, not to worship, but to enjoy themselves, and where the leafy screen and the cool and pleasant shade would soon allure to all kinds of licentious freedom. The many allusions to the subject in Scripture, show how general and how ancient was this addiction to worship in groves; and the difficulty with which the Israelites were kept from it appears throughout the sacred history. Indeed, so common was the practice, that the geographer Strabo, who lived in the century before Christ, states that in his time "all sacred places, even where no trees were to be seen, were called groves."

That this practice probably originated in the traditions of the garden of Eden, and of the trees of life and of knowledge, we have had a former occasion of indicating,<sup>93</sup> and some remarkable corroborations of this were then pointed out. From the nature of the case, the analogies of this kind are to be sought in the actual practices of the heathen, and not in the short allusions, mostly prohibitive, of Scripture. There is, indeed, one text which has been thought to bear strongly on this view. It is in Isaiah 66:17. "They that sanctify themselves and purify themselves in the gardens, behind one tree in the midst." But the text will not bear this stress. The very word ("tree") which is most important to this view, is not in the original, but is supplied; and the "one in the midst" does not appear to be a tree, but a person, behind whom the other worshippers in the grove arranged themselves, and whose worship he conducted, it is still the usual practice of worship in the East for a person to set himself in advance of the others, as a sort of fogleman, whose acts and motions are imitated by the others. In this, as in many other cases, support for particular views has often been sought in texts, which are seen to have a wholly different meaning when they come to be rightly understood.

It claims to be noticed that, although [Beersheba](#) is the only one of Abraham's stations in Canaan where he is said to have planted a grove, yet there is evidence that there were trees at two of the three other stations which he frequented in that land. His first station on entering the land was near Shechem, under or hard by some great and famous tree, or collection of trees; for the place called the plain of Moreh, means properly the terebinth tree (or grove) of Moreh; and there is evidence to show that this spot was regarded as a place peculiarly appropriate to the worship of God. To this source may, indeed, be traced the figure which Shechem makes in the sacerdotal history of the Old Testament—probably long after the original terebinth grove in the neighborhood had ceased to exist, and when any attention to the place as a grove would have been against the law.

Then, again, at Mamre, by Hebron, the presence of a grove is clearly indicated. In Genesis 13:18, it is said, "Abram removed his tent and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre." The word translated "the plain" is plural, and accordingly, in Genesis 18:1, we read, "the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre." The plural would be awkward if the word really meant plains; but it means trees—the same as at Moreh, that is terebinth trees—though some think oaks. In fact, immediately after, we read that the patriarch invited his guests to rest "under the tree"—that is, as we may conceive, the nearest, and probably the most conspicuous, near which his tent was pitched. In fact, the tree of Abraham at this place is historically famous; and on the spot there is still a most noble tree, locally regarded as representing that beneath which the angels were entertained by the patriarch.

#### Genesis 21:34 And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days.

- Ge 20:1 1Ch 29:15 Ps 39:12 Heb 11:9,13 1Pe 2:11
- [Genesis 21 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### ABRAHAM'S PEACEFUL PHILISTINE COEXISTENCE

**And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days.**- The next chapter depicts Isaac as a grown lad, so here the many days could be 15 years (+/-). The presence of Philistines in Palestine at this period has sometimes been called an inaccuracy in the narrative, since the great invasion of the Philistines did not occur until about 1200 B.C. However, as Genesis declares (Ge 21:32,34; 26:15,18; etc.) there were smaller groups of the Philistines in Palestine at an earlier time.

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**SOLUTION:** This is not the first time critics have come to false conclusions based on the general lack of historical knowledge concerning this period. Sodom and Gomorrah are examples of cities the Bible mentioned that were supposedly not historical. When the Ebla tablets were discovered, the charge of myth was refuted. These tablets contained references to both cities. It may just be a matter of time before similar evidence turns up to confirm the biblical testimony here regarding the Philistines. Until then, we can rest assured that the biblical record is accurate in this case, having confidence in the Scriptures based on its past record of trustworthiness. Furthermore, the critics' argument is the traditional fallacious argument from ignorance. Simply because we lack evidence from extrabiblical sources of the earlier date for the Philistines does not mean they didn't exist then. It simply means we lack the information.

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