

Sarah, Abraham and Ishmael

Genesis 21:1-21



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Abram was a faithful man of God. One day, while Abram was talking to God, he asked, "I have no children. Who will receive my inheritance?"

God replied that Abram and his wife, Sarai, would one day be parents even though they were very old. That night, God took Abram outside and questioned, "Do you see all the stars in the sky? Try to count them." (The sky was full of stars, so many that he would never have been able to count them.) God continued, "Like the stars in the sky, your descendants will be many."



With this promise in mind, God changed Abram's name to Abraham (meaning 'father of many') and Sarai's name to Sarah (meaning 'princess'). Abraham was ninety-nine years old, but again God said that they would be parents and that they would have a boy.

One day, three visitors came by. Abraham encouraged them to stop a while and invited them to eat. While the visitors were eating, they asked Abraham where Sarah was and reminded him of God's promise, "I will come back to see you at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son." Sarah laughed when she overheard this. It was hard to still have faith because of their old age.



Abraham and Sarah realised that the man who had told them this was God. Sure enough, as they had been told, a year later Sarah did have a son.

They named him Isaac, which means 'he laughs'. Abraham was one hundred years old at the time of Isaac's birth and they were both full of joy and knew that everyone would rejoice with them." God has made laughter for me," said Sarah and they thanked God for the birth of their son.



Thirteen years before Isaac was born, Abraham had another son. This son, Ishmael, had been born to Sarah's slave, Hagar. Sarah witnessed Ishmael mocking Isaac and asked Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away so that the inheritance would not be shared.



Sending his son away was hard, but God told Abraham to do as Sarah had asked and promised that Ishmael would also inherit a nation as one of Abraham's offspring. So, Abraham did as God had instructed and sent Hagar and Ishmael away with some bread and water.



Hagar and Ishmael walked through the desert for miles. Eventually, the water ran out. They were both so weary and weak that they stopped. Hagar lay Ishmael under a tree and sat a short distance away crying, "Don't let me see the death of my child!"



God heard their cries and spoke to Hagar saying, "Fear not for God has heard the voice of the boy. I will make him a great nation." God opened Hagar's eyes and she saw a well. She hurried to fill their bottle with water and rushed to help Ishmael. They lived in the wilderness, but from that day on God was with Ishmael.



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