

Your Wife Sarah Will Bear You a Son, and You Will Call Him Isaac

17: 15-22

DIG: In what special way did God let Sarai know that she was still an important part of His promise? How does Avraham respond initially?

REFLECT: From what trouble would you like to be rescued? When was the last time the Lord overruled your mistake and brought blessing out of trouble?

ADONAI had brought Abraham and Sarai to the end of themselves to show them that His promises rested on Him and on Him alone. Most of God's communication had been with Abraham, but his wife would not be ignored. It seems that the LORD wasn't through with Sarai yet. She was part of His plan right from the start. God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai or my princess; her name will be Sarah or the princess" (17:15).

Elohim said: I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. For the first time it was announced that Sarah was to be the mother of the son of promise. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her (17:16). As the mother of nations it would be entirely proper for her to be called *the princess*. The rabbis teach that she gave birth and rose up from her child without pain. Three nations did come from her, Judah, Isra'el, and Edom. God had promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations, and kings will come from him (17:5-6); now those same promises were made to Sarah.

Abraham fell face down when he heard the incredible announcement and laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old (he would be a hundred when the child was born)? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety" (17:17)? They were both well past childbearing years. Abraham's laugh was not a laugh of unbelief, but of faith which he, while taking God at His word, considers it almost too good to be true.²⁹² The rabbis teach that Abraham laughed with joy, whereas Sarah's laughter (18:12) was in derision; therefore, God was angry with Sarah but not so with Abraham. But there was still a shadow hanging over the scene.

Abraham loved his growing son **Ishmael** and he pleaded with the **LORD**, "If only **Ishmael** might live under Your blessing" (17:18)! After all, the boy's name meant *God hears*. But not even **Abraham's** intense appeal could stand before the purposes of **God**. Earlier **Abraham** was prepared to suggest that his servant **Eliezer** serve as a surrogate son and be his heir. Now he is suggesting that **Ishmael** be his heir. **God** had spoken to **Abraham** and it was a possibility that he did not mention the birth of the coming son to **Sarah**. She had been through enough. Why raise her hopes that the sorrow and shame of childlessness might end at this late date in her life?

God knew better than **Abraham** and gave His answer at once: **Yes, He** would continue to bless **Ishmael**, but your wife **Sarah** will bear you a son, and you will call him **Isaac**. Because **Abraham** laughed, he is instructed to name his son **Isaac**, which means *he laughs*. I will establish My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him (17:19). **God** is very clear in this passage that **Isaac** will be the son of promise, not **Ishmael**. I am of the opinion that **Abraham** thought many, many times, "I made a mistake in taking **Hagar**." You see, that was a sin that not only plagued him, but there has also been trouble in the Land from the beginning because of it. Don't tell me that sin is a little thing or that sin is something you can get by with. **Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows (Galatians 6:7).**²⁹³

Even though he would not be the son of promise, **Ishmael** would not be forgotten. For **God** said that he would have many descendants also: **I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers**. And we see the great Arab population today. **He will be the father of twelve rulers (25:12-18), and I will make him into a great nation (17:20)**. He would receive promises, but he would not be the son of promise.

Because Muslims twist the Bible to suit their own purposes, today they teach, "The first Muslim on earth was not Muhammad but **Abraham** who submitted totally to Allah. Their belief is that Islam, as a way of life, had been revealed to other prophets like Adam and Noah prior to **Abraham**." They teach that because **Abraham** was born in Ur of the Chaldeans, in Mesopotamia that is now part of Iraq, he was really an Arab. But however confused the Muslims are, **God** is very clear. He says: **But My covenant I will establish with Isaac (Hebrew: Yitz'chak) whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year (17:21)**. This would give **Abraham** time to heal from his circumcision before **Sarah** would become pregnant. During this three-month period, the stories of **Sodom and Gomorrah**, and **Abraham and Abimelech** will take place in **Chapters 18 to 20**.

When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him (17:22). God had made up His mind about this and Abraham was not going to change it. ADONAI was going to hear and answer other prayers of Abraham, but this issue was closed. Isaac, not Ishmael, would be the son of promise.

Thus the LORD overrides the mistakes of His children, and in loving fellowship and tender mercy, brings blessing out of trouble.