

The Birth of Isaac

21: 1-7

DIG: What does this story reveal about God's patience and faithfulness? Abraham's obedience (see 17:12, 19)? How did the birth of Isaac once again show that the LORD is El Shaddai, God Almighty? What are the **nine ways** that Isaac is a type of Christ?

REFLECT: What promises has the LORD kept in your life? What personal dream would you like to see fulfilled in your lifetime? Does God need us to carry out His plan?

The birth of Isaac (Hebrew: Yitz'chak) marked a pivotal point in the outworking of God's eternal purpose. After the call of Abraham to be the father of the faithful, the birth of Isaac was the second great step toward the fulfillment of the LORD's plan. His eternal desire was to have a people of His own, separate from the surrounding nations; a people who should be trusted with His Word; a people through whom the Savior was to be born; and a people who, ultimately, would become the means of blessing to the entire earth.³³⁸

Now the appointed time for the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham and Sarah had come and ADONAI, *the giver of blessings*, kept His promise. He was gracious to Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what He had promised in 17:19 and 18:10. This is the bedrock in the life of a believer. God is faithful. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Avraham in his old age. There is a striking similarity between the birth of Isaac and the birth of the Messiah. Isaac was to be born at the very time Elohim, *the God of creation*, had promised him (21:1-2). More is said about Isaac's birth than any other birth in the Bible except for the birth of Jesus Christ. Therefore, **Isaac is a type of Christ and his birth foreshadowed the birth of the Lord, because when the time had fully come, God sent His Son** (Galatians 4:4a; Mark 1:15; Romans 5-6; Ephesians 1:10).

Abraham gave the name Isaac, or Yitz'chak, to the son Sarah bore him. For the second time Abraham names a son. Ishmael was Abraham's choice for the name of his son of the flesh, but Isaac was God's choice for the name of the son of promise. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Avraham circumcised him, as God commanded him (21:3-4). Isaac was greatly loved by his parents, who taught him in the ways of righteousness (18:19), and no doubt, rehearsed over and over again all the great promises that God had in store for him. In turn, Isaac was an obedient son, fulfilling his parents' hopes and dreams.

Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Yitz'chak was born to him (21:5). The age of the patriarchs are given at the important turning points in their lives. The bodies of Abraham and Sarah had been miraculously rejuvenated. Sarah not only gave birth at ninety, but she also nursed Isaac. Abraham not only fathered Isaac, but also six other sons of his wife Keturah after Sarah died (25:2).³³⁹

Sarah said to him, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh *with me*," compared to the past when Hagar had laughed *at her*. And she also said: Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? In fact, God had said several times to Abraham that his wife would bear a son. Sarah was aware of that promise. What she wishes Elohim would have said is that she would mother children, and not just one son.³⁴⁰ Yet, I have borne him a son in his old age (21:6-7).

The birth of Isaac foreshadowed the birth of Jesus Christ in nine ways. God did not suddenly spring the virgin birth on mankind. He had prepared us by several miraculous births before this, including the birth of John the Baptizer, the birth of even Samson, and here, the birth of Isaac. The foreshadowing between the birth of Isaac and the birth of Christ is truly remarkable.³⁴¹

First, the birth of Isaac and the birth of the Meshiach had both been promised. When God called Avraham out of Ur of the Chaldean's twenty-five years earlier, God said to him, "I am going to give a son to you and Sarah." And after all that time, ADONAI has made good on His promise. God also said to the nation of Israel: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a Son, and will call Him Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14; also see Matthew 1:23). When Yeshua was finally born in Bethlehem, it was a fulfillment of prophecy (Micah 5:2). In fact, both births had been promised.

Secondly, with both births there was a long interval between the promise and the fulfillment. Twenty-five years passed from the time God promised that Isaac would be born until it came to pass (12:2). There were also many generations between the prophecies in the TANAKH and the birth of Yeshua. For example, a thousand years before Christ was born, God had promised that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David, so both had long intervals of time between the promise of their coming and their births.

Thirdly, the announcement of the births seemed amazing to both Sarah and Mary. You will recall that two angels and the Lord visited Abraham on the way to Sodom, and they announced the birth of Isaac. It seemed so amazing that Sarah laughed to herself (18:10-12). And Miryam was just as amazed. When the angel Gabriel announced the virgin birth to Mary she said: How can this be, since I am a virgin (Luke 1:34)?

Fourth, both Isaac and Jesus were named before their births. Avraham and Sarah were told they were going to have a son and they were going to call him Isaac (17:19). And with the birth of the Lord Jesus, we find that He was also named beforehand. The angel said to Joseph: You are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21b).

Fifth, both births occurred at God's appointed time. Earlier in this chapter we were told that Yitz'chak was born at the very time God had promised him (21:2), and regarding the birth of Jesus, we note that Paul says: But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son (Galatians 4:4a).

Sixth, both births were miraculous. The birth of Isaac was a miraculous birth because Avraham's body was as good as dead and Sarah's womb was also dead (Romans 4:19), and certainly the virgin birth of the LORD was a miracle (Luke 1:34-35).

Seventh, both sons were a particular joy to their fathers. Abraham gave the name Isaac, or laughter, to the son Sarah bore him (21:3). Both Avraham and Sarah laughed when she heard they would have a son; she laughed because of the sheer joy of it all. When Yeshua was baptized, God the Father spoke out of heaven and said: This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased (Matthew 3:16). Both sons were a joy to their fathers.

Eighth, both sons were obedient to their fathers, even to the point of death. In the next chapter we are going to see that his father offered Yitz'chak as a sacrifice. Isaac was not a young boy of seven or eight years, but a full grown man in his early thirties, and he was obedient even to the point of death. That was true of Isaac and it was true of Jesus Christ. Isaac foreshadows the birth, life and death of Messiah.

Finally, the miraculous birth of Isaac is a picture of the resurrection of Christ. As Paul stated above, Avraham's body was as good as dead and Sarah's womb was also dead (Romans 4:19). The resurrection brings life out of death. Then Rabbi Sha'ul goes on to say that Yeshua was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification (Romans 4:25).³⁴²

But soon after Yitz'chak was born, opposition was aroused.