The Patriarchs from the book of Genesis Part 9 – September 3, 2023

With input from https://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Isaac.html; https://despair.com/collections/demotivators/failure; https://walterborolive.com/stories/abram-to-abraham-why-did-he-do-it-faith,32425;

https://reasonsforhopejesus.com/sarah-a-new-name-for-a-new-woman

Last week we saw the results of Abram and Sarai’s lack of patience and trust that God would do exactly as He said and give the both a son. Perhaps they were the first ones to subscribe to an unknown verse from an unknown place which reads “God helps those who help themselves.” All of human history from that point forward paid a price for that decision. It’s important that we realize some mistakes can have overwhelming consequences.



We now want to look at another detail when Hagar prays in **Genesis 16:13-14:**

*13 Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, “You are a God who sees me”; for she said, “Have I even seen Him here and lived after He saw me?” 14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.*

In her astonishment and gratitude that the Lord has seen and heard her in her distress, Hagar gives a commemorative name to the well where the Lord found her in the desert. She calls it Beer-lahai-roi, which means "well of the living who sees me." Putting the name of the well together with the meaning of God's name for Hagar's son, Ishmael, the troubling events of Hagar's life include the powerful declaration that God hears ("Ishmael") and God sees ("Beer-lahai-roi"). God is not silent or absent. He is paying attention. He cares and provides.

We're told the location of the well is between Kadesh and Bered, but the precise spot is currently unknown. However, we also see this place again after Abraham dies in **Genesis 25:11:** *It came about after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac lived by Beer-lahai-roi.* So it is Isaac himself who ends up living “where God sees” as declared by Hagar.

But before Isaac comes onto the scene we have Genesis 17. Chapter 16 closes with Abram being 86 when Ishmael is born.

**Genesis 17: 1-5**

*Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him,*

*“I am God Almighty;*

*Walk before Me, and be blameless.*

*2 I will make My covenant between Me and you,*

*And I will multiply you exceedingly.”*

*3 Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying,*

*4 “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you,*

*And you will be the father of a multitude of nations.*

*5 No longer shall you be named Abram,*

*But your name shall be Abraham;*

*For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.*

God is very involved with the names of Abraham, Sarah, Ishmael, and Isaac. Which means there is a purpose behind the names:

**Abraham:** (from Walter Boro) God promises that despite Abram’s advanced age, he will sire a son to be his rightful heir — a miracle in itself. After God revealed this to Abram, Moses records this: “[God] took [Abram] outside and said, ‘Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ And he said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ Then he believed in the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.” (Gen 15:5-6 NASB)

Now, fast forward two chapters. In chapter 17, God gives Abram the covenant of circumcision, to be an outward sign of this promise. But God does a strange thing here: he renames Abram to Abraham. Why? The answer is in the meaning of the name.

In the original Hebrew language of the Torah, which is the first five books of our Old Testament, the name Abram literally means “exalted father.” The name Abraham, however, contains another unused root word, which roughly means “multitude.” Abraham translated literally, then, means “father of a multitude.” Most modern Bibles that contain footnotes will annotate this literal meaning of the Hebrew in the margin.

Take note of this: the changing of Abraham’s name is a sign from God. By changing his name, the Lord not only confirmed that he would fully carry out the promise that he made to Abraham. He, as well, made Abraham the typological father of faith for all the saints (Jude 3). From the flesh of Abraham, a multitude did come, the Jewish people.

But Abraham is not only the father of a single ethnic nation, he is the spiritual “father of a multitude.” And this faithful multitude, comprised of both Jews and Gentiles, is too large to number (Rev 7:9). Through him, all the nations of the world are blessed (Gen 22:18).

But this blessing could not be possible if it were not for the one who came from Abraham’s line who would be the blessed one — the one who is called the Christ.

**Genesis 17: 6-14**

*I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7 I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.*

*8 And I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land where you live as a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”*

*9 God said further to Abraham, “Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. 10 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, including a slave who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants.*

*13 A slave who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall certainly be circumcised; so My covenant shall be in your flesh as an everlasting covenant. 14 But as for an uncircumcised male, one who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”*

This can be a confusing passage of scripture which some suggest there was a cultural norm that Jewish men would have been constantly exposing themselves to prove their circumcision. I think Dr. Henry Morris in his commentary on Genesis covers this somewhat uncomfortable topic with biblical accuracy:

**Henry Morris:** At first, the requirement of circumcision seems very strange. Circumcision was a sign only to the individual concerned, his parents and his wife and was not to be shown to people in general, but was uniquely personal.

To his parents it would confirm that they had been faithful in transmitting the seed to the son with whom God had blessed their union and that they were trying to follow God’s will in training him. To his wife, it would give assurance that he indeed was a descendant of Abraham, to whom she could joyfully submit in the marriage relation, in faith that God would bless their home and their children. To the man himself, it would be a daily testimony that he and his family were consecrated to the God of Abraham and that they shared in his calling and ministry to the world”

The sexual act and reproductive organs and processes were created by God to be enjoyed by both the man and the woman in marriage and received the full blessing of God (Gen. 1:28; 9:1).

But with the Fall of Adam and the Woman, the sex organs and sex act became vehicles of sin and corruption since Satan led man into sexual debauchery, corrupting the institution of marriage in every conceivable way in order to stop God’s purpose for man and his redemption.

Therefore, we see that another symbolic meaning of the act of circumcision where the cutting of the foreskin spoke of a surgical removal, a complete separation, from the sins of the flesh so widely prevalent in the world around Abraham and his descendants.

The nations and tribes around Abraham were involved in sins largely centered in the misuse of the male organ in adultery, fornication and sodomy.

Circumcision symbolized to the Jewish man that he was a member of an elect nation, a peculiar people, distinctly holy before God, in relation to sexual conduct, so it came indirectly to speak of holiness in every phase of life.

Leviticus 20:7, “You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the LORD your God.”

Therefore, the organ of the male body that was used for procreation is consecrated to God and failure to submit to circumcision demonstrated one’s overt unwillingness to obey the Lord.”

**Genesis 17: 15-19**

*Then God said to Abraham, “As for your wife Sarai, you shall not call her by the name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 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.”*

Once again, God added a “hey” (“h”) to a name. By changing Sarai’s name to Sarah, God added His breath into her name — making her a new woman with a new name.

Sarai means “honored mother,” but Sarah means “princess,” or more accurately “mother of a ruler of nations.” Again, God is signifying that He has chosen both Abram and Sarai (now Abraham and Sarah) for His service, and specifically for His purposes. These name changes are symbolically important.

*17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Will a child be born to a man a hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, give birth to a child?” 18 And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before You!” 19 But God said, “No, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.*

There is a great irony in verses 17 and 19. Abraham laughs, possibly out of astonishment and disbelief that this **could** happenor namely out of gladness for being promised a son. Then, in verse 19 God tells Abraham to name him Isaac. His name means “to laugh.”

Isaac’s name, the promised son to Abraham, meaning from the verbs צחק (sahaq) and שחק (sahaq), is to laugh or make fun. Interpreted: Laughter, He Will Laugh. He will be known to have a jovial spirit

Isaac is the second patriarch we study. Two thousand years after Isaac breathed his last, Jesus proclaimed him, his father and his son as being alive and well, and not dead (**Luke 20:37&38**: *But as for the fact that the dead are raised, even Moses revealed this in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 38 Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to Him.”*

In the New Testament Isaac is mentioned twice in relation to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice him on Mount Moriah (Hebrews 11:17, James 2:21), which is a difficult story that we'll look at when we get to chapter 22. He is celebrated as the child of the promise three times (Romans 9:7, Galatians 4:28, Hebrews 11:18).

Now God will address the future of Ishmael. Remember, God gave Ishmael his name too! It means “God hears” which is the reason Hagar praised the Lord, she knew God had heard her.

**Genesis 17:20:** As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and make him fruitful and multiply him exceedingly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation. 21 But I will establish My covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.” 22 When He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

Easton’s Bible Dictionary summarizes Ishmael’s life as this:

He grew up a true child of the desert, wild and wayward. On the occasion of the weaning of Isaac his rude and wayward spirit broke out in expressions of insult and mockery (Genesis 21:9 Genesis 21:10); and Sarah, discovering this, said to Abraham, "Expel this slave and her son." Influenced by a divine admonition, Abraham dismissed Hagar and her son with no more than a skin of water and some bread. The narrative describing this act is one of the most beautiful and touching incidents of patriarchal life (Genesis 21:14-16).

Ishmael settled in the land of Paran, a region lying between Canaan and the mountains of Sinai; and "God was with him, and he became a great archer" (Genesis 21:9-21). He became a great desert chief, but of his history little is recorded. He was about ninety years of age when his father Abraham died, in connection with whose burial he once more for a moment reappears. On this occasion the two brothers met after being long separated. "Isaac with his hundreds of household slaves, Ishmael with his troops of wild retainers and half-savage allies, in all the state of a Bedouin prince, gathered before the cave of Machpelah, in the midst of the men of Heth, to pay the last duties to the 'father of the faithful,' (Genesis 25:9).

Of the after events of his life but little is known. He died at the age of one hundred and thirty-seven years, but where and when are unknown (Genesis 25:17). He had twelve sons, who became the founders of so many Arab tribes or colonies, the Ishmaelites, who spread over the wide desert spaces of Northern Arabia from the Red Sea to the Euphrates (Genesis 37:25 Genesis 37:27 Genesis 37:28; 39:1), "their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them."

**Genesis 17:23-27:**

*Then Abraham took his son Ishmael, and all the slaves who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s household, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin on this very same day, as God had said to him. 24 Now Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.*

*25 And his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 On this very same day Abraham was circumcised, as well as his son Ishmael. 27 And all the men of his household, those who were born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.*