

*Sunday School Lesson*  
**Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7**  
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**Surprised by Motherhood**



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The "first lady" of the Old Testament is Abraham's wife, Sarah. Despite her weaknesses and failures on occasion, she stood tall as model for early Christian women, as is declared in 1 Peter 3:3-6:

3 Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, and by wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing; 4 rather, let your adornment be the inner self with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God's sight. 5 It was in this way long ago that the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by accepting the authority of their husbands. 6 Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. You have become her daughters as long as you do what is good and never let fears alarm you.

The focus of this character study on Sarah is the announcement of her impending pregnancy (chap. 18) and the birth of her son Isaac (chap. 21) at 90 years of age. Surprise is too mild a word to describe the reaction of this husband and wife. Shock may not even be sufficiently strong to accurately portray their reaction. But joy certainly depicts their experience.

Thus we take a look at this important figure in the Old Testament. She has much to teach us.



## I. Context

As is the case when [previous studies](#) have been done, we will draw most of the background materials from earlier studies in Genesis. New material will supplement this particularly as it is relevant to the passages under consideration.

### a. Historical

**External History.** The compositional origin of the document called Genesis in the English Bible is like the other OT documents; its origin is clouded in mystery. This document is the first of five documents which together are called the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Frequently down through interpretative history they have simply been called the 'books of Moses.' This because Moses has been closely associated with these documents by virtue of his leadership of the Israelite people in their move from slaves to nation. These documents have also been labeled the Law of Moses as well.

Although Moses certainly had a lot to do with the materials found in these documents, several indicators inside them suggest that at least in their present form they came into existence much later than the lifetime of Moses himself. References such as to the Canaanites being in the land 'at that time' (Gen. 12:6) suggesting that 'now' they were no longer in that land, as well as Moses' own death narrated in Deut. 34 which is obviously narrated from another person's perspective rather than Moses' -- all these and many more began suggesting to Bible students -- both Jewish and Christian -- as early as the middle ages that the compositional history is more complex than simply assigning it to Moses would allow.

Beginning in the late 1500s Christian scholars began probing the origins intensely in light of the emerging emphasis on study of history, especially ancient history, in western culture. This intense analysis led to the development of the viewpoint that the Pentateuch emerged in its present form in the period from the late exile to the post-exilic era during the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. Numerous sources of material were utilized in the composing of these five OT documents, leading to the most commonly adopted view of the J, E, D, P sources as being dominate. This, of course, doesn't deny that much of the source material goes back to Moses himself, but does demonstrate that the book we know as Genesis owes its present form to editors who lived and worked many centuries after the stories themselves

took place. Their intent was to carefully preserve the story of 'beginnings,' beginnings of both humanity in general and of the Israelite people in particular. For that we can give thanks to God who providentially guided this process through to its culmination in this first document of our Bible.



**Internal History.** The time and place markers inside our two passages are somewhat limited. The text material on either side of these passages provides additional indications of where and when these events took place.

In 18:1, the visit to Abraham's tent by the three angels took place "by the oaks of Mamre." This reference surfaces in 13:18, 14:13, and here. In 13:18 the location is identified as being "at Hebron." This was one of the major settling places for Abraham. Note this description of Hebron in the online [Bible Encyclopedia.com](#):

A city in the south end of the valley of Eshcol, about midway between Jerusalem and Beersheba, from which it is distant about 20 miles in a straight line. It was built "seven years before Zoan in Egypt" (Gen. 13:18; Num. 13:22). It still exists under the same name, and is one of the most ancient cities in the world. Its earlier name was Kirjath-arba (Gen. 23:2; Josh. 14:15; 15:3). But "Hebron would appear to have been the original

name of the city, and it was not till after Abraham's stay there that it received the name Kirjath-arba, who [i.e., Arba] was not the founder but the conqueror of the city, having led thither the tribe of the Anakim, to which he belonged. It retained this name till it came into the possession of Caleb, when the Israelites restored the original name Hebron" (Keil, Com.). The name of this city does not occur in any of the prophets or in the New Testament. It is found about forty times in the Old. It was the favorite home of Abraham. Here he pitched his tent under the oaks of Mamre, by which name it came afterwards to be known; and here Sarah



**View of region of modern Gerar**

"Abraham's oak."

The geographical setting for the second episode in chapter 21 is set in 20:1, "From there Abraham journeyed toward the region of the Negeb, and settled between Kadesh and Shur. While residing in Gerar as an alien,..." This was located to the south and west of Hebron quite some distance. Note the brief description of [Gerar](#) in Wikipedia:

Gerar - meaning lodging-place - was a Philistine town and district in what is today south-central Israel. Archaeological evidence points to the town having come into existence with the arrival of the Philistines at around 1200 BCE and having been little more than a village until 800-700 BCE.

Biblically, the town features in two of the three wife-sister narratives in Genesis. The Bible records that Abraham and Isaac each stayed at Gerar, and that each passed their wife off as their sister, leading to romantic complications involving Gerar's king, Abimelech (Genesis 20-21, and 26)....The biblical valley of Gerar (Gen. 26:17) is probably the modern Wadi el-Jerdr.

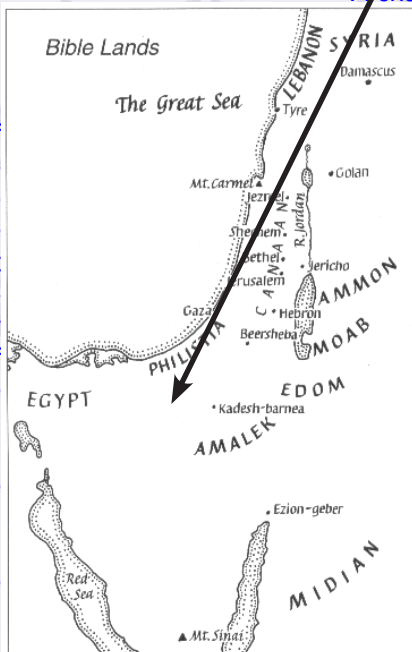
The time markers in the two passages do not provide significant detail regarding when these events took place. Some general understanding can, however, be gleaned from surrounding passages. Together these will provide at least a general time frame for these events.

In 18:1-15, the primary time marker

died, and was buried in the cave of Machpelah (Gen. 23:17-20), which he bought from Ephron the Hittite. From this place the patriarch departed for Egypt by way of Beersheba (37:14; 46:1). It was taken by Joshua and given to Caleb (Josh. 10:36, 37; 12:10; 14:13). It became a Levitical city and a city of refuge (20:7; 21:11). When David became king of Judah this was his royal residence, and he resided here for seven and a half years (2 Sam. 5:5); and here he was anointed as king over all Israel (2 Sam. 2:1-4, 11; 1 Kings 2:11). It became the residence also of the rebellious Absalom (2 Sam. 15:10), who probably expected to find his chief support in the tribe of Judah, now called el-Khulil.

In one part of the modern city is a great mosque, which is built over the grave of Machpelah. The first European who was permitted to enter this mosque was the Prince of Wales in 1862. It was also visited by the Marquis of Bute in 1866, and by the late Emperor Frederick of Germany (then Crown-Prince of Prussia) in 1869.

One of the largest oaks in Palestine is found in the valley of Eshcol, about 3 miles north of the town. It is supposed by some to be the tree under which Abraham pitched his tent, and is called



comes at the beginning: “The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day.” The visit with Abraham begins in the middle of the day, its hottest part. Abraham was sitting in



the shade under the front flap of the tent in order to enjoy what breezes that might be blowing that time of day. The visit extends through the evening meal after the extensive preparation of a large welcoming meal. According to 18:16, the three angels, accompanied by Abraham, “set out from there, and they looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to set them on their way.” Abraham followed traditional hospitality patterns by accompanying his guests a ways in order to insure that they knew how to get to their next intended destination. But, no time frame is given for this. Most likely it took place the following day, since they were traveling to the NE through rather barren, mountainous territory.

The timing of this visit is generally situated when Abraham was approaching 100 years of age. In 17:1 the covenant renewal appearance of the Lord to Abraham (17:1-27) took place “when Abram was ninety-nine years old...” How much after this appearance

was this next appearance in 18:1-15, the text doesn't indicate. But according to 21:5, Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. So the events of chaps 17, 18, 19, 20, 21:1-5 transpired over no more than a two year period of time.

The second episode in 21:1-5 focuses on the birth of Isaac. At this point Abraham has left Hebron and migrated SW to Gerar. (See map on page 3 for geographical identification of Gerar.) Within the above described time frame this event occurred during Abraham's 100th year, and probably toward the end of that year.

Thus we can conclude from these time markers that both episodes took place over a period of no more than two years, and probably less than that. Since Abraham was 75 years when he first came into this region (cf. Gen. 12:4), our passages focus on events approximately a quarter of a century later. With his death coming at age 175 years (Gen. 25:7), these events also took place in the earlier stages of the time that he lived in the region of Canaan, about one fourth of the way through his life there.

**b. Literary**

**Genre.** Again, both passages represent episodic narrative literary material. The first one, 18:1-15, covers a single day of time. But the other, 21:1-7, covers a period of approximately nine months by telescoping it down into a single event portrayal.

Generally, the issue of sources for both these passages has occasioned the greatest amount of scholarly discussion and diverse viewpoint. Gen. 18-19 traditionally have been attributed to the J source in the Documentary Hypothesis perspective: “J (the Jahwist or Jerusalem source) uses the Tetragrammaton as God's name. This source's interests indicate it was active in the southern Kingdom of Judah in the time of the divided Kingdom. J is responsible for most of Genesis.” Although some recent scholars have challenged this the majority of the evidence seems to support the view.

The debate is more diverse with 21:1-7, as G.J. Wenham (“Genesis 16-50,” *Word Biblical Commentary*, Logos Systems) describes:

Traditional source critics are divided about the analysis

of vv 1–2 and 6–7. For example, v 1a is J according to Skinner, but E according to Procksch; v 1b is P according to Skinner, Coats, and Speiser, but J according to Procksch. A majority tend to regard vv 1–2a as J, v 2b as P, and vv 6–7 as J or E. vv 3–5, with their strong connections with chap. 17, have usually been assigned to P, while vv 8–21, which have been construed as a doublet to chap. 16, have often been assigned to E. Apart from the divine-names Yahweh in v 1 and Elohim elsewhere, the only clues to guide the source critic are similarities in phraseology with other sources. Since even the divine-names criterion is not regarded as infallible in v 1, this leads to a diversity of views among older commentators. More recent critics, who see E as one of the sources used by J (Van Seters, Abraham) or as an expansion of J (Westermann), argue that this is the case with vv 8–21. Coats sees the whole section (vv 1–21) as J or JE (save for 1b–5 P). Westermann regards vv 1–7 as the work of the final redactor, who incorporated J and P (vv 3–5) into his work. “The middle part, vv 3–5, is an untouched piece of P which is really the genealogical conclusion of ch 17; this is set between two J passages, vv 1–2 and 6–7, in such a way as to form a self-contained string of events. vv 1–2 are common to both J and P” (2:331).

Westermann's analysis does justice to the interconnections between the diverse materials here but is probably too complicated. As elsewhere in Genesis, I prefer to suppose that the main editor J has introduced and arranged earlier materials, conventionally denoted P and E, to fit in with the overall theme of the narrative. J's hand is most clear in the introductory v 1 (note the double mention of the Lord; cf. 17:1) and possibly in the wording of the promises (vv 13, 17-18).

Wenham's proposal provides an appealing alternative.

**Literary Setting.** The literary context of both passages has several layers of perspective. At the broadest level, both passages are a part of the Abraham story, essentially chaps. 12-25, which begins the second half of the book of Genesis, the patriarchal section in chaps 12-50.

The block of material in chaps 18-21 is made up of smaller units that often have parallels to units outside the block.

Chaps 18-19 hang together as two parallel "hospitality" stories, one about Abraham in Hebron (chap. 18) and the other concerning Lot in Sodom (chap. 19). Chapter 18 describes the visit of three angels in three distinct scenes: 1 - vv. 1-8, the arrival of the angels; 2 - vv. 9-15, entertaining the angels; 3 - vv. 16-33, escorting the angels on their travels. In somewhat parallel fashion, the story of Lot in chapter nineteen is divided out.

Chapters 20-21 describe the migration of Abraham from Hebron to Gerar. Chapter 20 describes the second "endangerment of Sarah" with king Abimelech. Earlier Abraham had also passed off Sarah as his sister rather than his wife with the Egyptian Pharaoh, chap. 13. In both stories Sarah's true identity is revealed before serious violation of marital traditions is violated. This will set the stage for the birth of Isaac and his early growing up years in chapter 21. The latter part of the chapter details the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael from Abraham's tent.

Thus our passages, 18:1-15 and 21:1-7, stand as the beginning segments of two larger blocks of text material. They focus on the promised birth of Isaac (18:1-15) and his subsequent birth (21:1-7). In between is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (chap. 19) and Abraham's second endangerment of Sarah at Gerar (chap. 20).



## II. Message

**Literary Structure.** The internal thought structure of the two segments of the Sarah story, 18:1-15 and 21:1-7, are fairly simple, since they are units of larger blocks of materials as described above in the Literary Setting section. We will focus our study on these two units centering on the promised birth and then the birth of Isaac.

### a. A birth promised, 18:1-15

#### LXX

18:1 ὤφθη δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς πρὸς τῆ δρυὶ τῆ Μαμβρη καθημένου αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς θύρας τῆς σκηνῆς αὐτοῦ μεσημβρίας <sup>2</sup> ἀναβλέψας δὲ τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτοῦ εἶδεν καὶ ἰδοὺ τρεῖς ἄνδρες εἰστήκεισαν ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ καὶ ἰδὼν προσέδραμεν εἰς συνάντησιν αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς θύρας τῆς σκηνῆς

#### NASB

18.1 Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. 2 When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth, 3 and said,

#### NRSV

18.1 The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. 2 He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. 3 He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not

#### NLT

18.1 The LORD appeared again to Abraham while he was camped near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day about noon, as Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent, 2 he suddenly noticed three men standing nearby. He got up and ran to meet them, welcoming them by bowing low to the

αὐτοῦ καὶ προσεκύνησεν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν <sup>3</sup> καὶ εἶπεν κύριε εἰ ἄρα εὗρον χάριν ἐναντίον σου μὴ παρέλθῃς τὸν παιδά σου <sup>4</sup> λημφθήτω δὴ ὕδωρ καὶ νιψάτωσαν τοὺς πόδας ὑμῶν καὶ καταψύξατε ὑπὸ τὸ δένδρον <sup>5</sup> καὶ λήψομαι ἄρτον καὶ φάγεσθε καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο παρελεύσεσθε εἰς τὴν ὁδὸν ὑμῶν οὐ εἶνεκεν ἐξεκλίνατε πρὸς τὸν παῖδα ὑμῶν καὶ εἶπαν οὕτως ποίησον καθὼς εἶρηκας <sup>6</sup> καὶ ἔσπευσεν Ἀβραὰμ ἐπὶ τὴν σκηνὴν πρὸς Σαρρα καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ σπεύσον καὶ φύρασον τρία μέτρα σεμιδάλεως καὶ ποίησον ἐγκρυφίας <sup>7</sup> καὶ εἰς τὰς βόας ἔδραμεν Ἀβραὰμ καὶ ἔλαβεν μοσχάριον ἀπαλὸν καὶ καλὸν καὶ ἔδωκεν τῷ παιδί καὶ ἐτάχυνεν τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτό <sup>8</sup> ἔλαβεν δὲ βούτυρον καὶ γάλα καὶ τὸ μοσχάριον ὃ ἐποίησεν καὶ παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐφάγασαν αὐτὸς δὲ παρειστήκει αὐτοῖς ὑπὸ τὸ δένδρον <sup>9</sup> εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτόν ποῦ Σαρρα ἡ γυνὴ σου ὃ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν ἰδοὺ ἐν τῇ σκηνῇ <sup>10</sup> εἶπεν δὲ ἐπαναστρέφων ἦξω πρὸς σὲ κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον εἰς ὥρας καὶ ἔξει υἱὸν Σαρρα ἡ γυνὴ σου Σαρρα δὲ ἤκουσεν πρὸς τῇ θύρᾳ τῆς σκηνῆς οὐσα ὀπισθεν αὐτοῦ <sup>11</sup> Ἀβραὰμ δὲ καὶ Σαρρα πρεσβύτεροι προβεβηκότες ἡμερῶν

“My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant by. <sup>4</sup> “Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree; <sup>5</sup> and I will bring a piece of bread, that you may refresh yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant.” And they said, “So do, as you have said.” <sup>6</sup> So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, “Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead *it* and make bread cakes.” <sup>7</sup> Abraham also ran to the herd, and took a tender and choice calf and gave *it* to the servant, and he hurried to prepare it. <sup>8</sup> He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed *it* before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate.

<sup>9</sup> Then they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. <sup>12</sup> Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?” <sup>13</sup> And

pass by your servant. <sup>4</sup> Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. <sup>5</sup> Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on, since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.” <sup>6</sup> And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, “Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.” <sup>7</sup> Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. <sup>8</sup> Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

<sup>9</sup> They said to him, “Where is your wife Sarah?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” <sup>10</sup> Then one said, “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. <sup>11</sup> Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. <sup>12</sup> So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?” <sup>13</sup> The Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, “Shall I indeed

ground. <sup>3</sup> “My lord,” he said, “if it pleases you, stop here for a while. <sup>4</sup> Rest in the shade of this tree while my servants get some water to wash your feet. <sup>5</sup> Let me prepare some food to refresh you. Please stay awhile before continuing on your journey.” “All right,” they said. “Do as you have said.” <sup>6</sup> So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, “Quick! Get three measures of your best flour, and bake some bread.” <sup>7</sup> Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a fat calf and told a servant to hurry and butcher it. <sup>8</sup> When the food was ready, he took some cheese curds and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them there beneath the trees.

<sup>9</sup> “Where is Sarah, your wife?” they asked him. “In the tent,” Abraham replied. <sup>10</sup> Then one of them said, “About this time next year I will return, and your wife Sarah will have a son.” Now Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent nearby. <sup>11</sup> And since Abraham and Sarah were both very old, and Sarah was long past the age of having children, <sup>12</sup> she laughed silently to herself. “How could a worn-out woman like me have a baby?” she thought. “And when my master, my husband, is also so old?” <sup>13</sup> Then

ν ἐξέλιπεν δὲ Σαρρα γίνεσθαι τὰ γυναικεῖα 12 ἐγέλασεν δὲ Σαρρα ἐν ἑαυτῇ λέγουσα οὐπω μὲν μοι γέγονεν ἕως τοῦ νῦν ὁ δὲ κύριός μου πρεσβύτερος 13 καὶ εἶπεν κύριος πρὸς Αβρααμ τί ὅτι ἐγέλασεν Σαρρα ἐν ἑαυτῇ λέγουσα ἄρά γε ἀληθῶς τέξομαι ἐγὼ δὲ γεγήρακα 14 μὴ ἀδυνά τεῖ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ ῥῆμα εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον ἀναστρέψω πρὸς σὲ εἰς ὥρας καὶ ἔσται τῇ Σαρρα υἱός 15 ἠρνήσατο δὲ Σαρρα λέγουσα οὐκ ἐγέλασα ἐφοβήθη γάρ καὶ εἶπεν οὐχὶ ἀλλὰ ἐγέλασας

#### Notes:

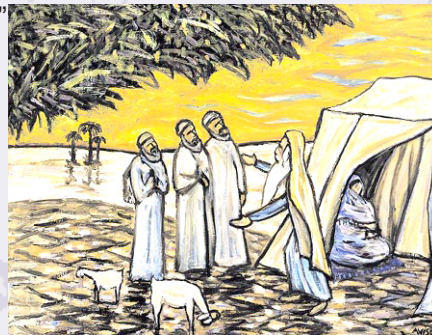
These verses naturally fall into two units: 1. the arrival of the visitors, vv. 1-8, and the conversation of the visitors about Sarah, vv. 9-15.

The first scene depicts the arrival of the visitors and Abraham's offer of traditional hospitality to strangers. The visitors are described as "three men." But the scene is introduced by the statement as "the Lord appeared to Abraham" [literally "to him."] When Abraham speaks to the men, he addresses only one as "My lord." Throughout the larger narratives in chapter 18, the conversations revolve back and forth between they said and Abraham said, until verse 13. Then the conversations narrows to the Lord said and Abraham said. At the end of this bargaining over saving Sodom, the Lord goes His way, Abraham returns home, and the two angels go into Sodom (18:33-19:1).

While in the Abraham narratives generally, either the Lord appears to Abraham or an angel who represents the Lord appears. But here three individuals, one referred to as the Lord and the other two as angels play an important role in the divine appearance to Abraham. This emphasis may very well be intended to set Abraham's importance to God over against that of Lot in the parallel hospitality scene in 19:1-11, where just the two angels appear to Lot.

The beginning verses play a game with the reader. Abraham doesn't see the men coming until they are already present. He simply looked up and saw

the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?' 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." 15 Sarah denied it however, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh."



bear a child, now that I am old?' 14 Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son." 15 But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "Oh yes, you did laugh."

the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, 'Can an old woman like me have a baby?' 14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? About a year from now, just as I told you, I will return, and Sarah will have a son." 15 Sarah was afraid, so she denied that she had laughed. But he said, "That is not true. You did laugh."

them standing near him. Was it because he had dozed off in the midday heat? Or was it because these supernatural individuals simply appeared

in front of him? The text leaves us in doubt. Although Abraham's hospitality actions were entirely within traditional patterns of greeting regular people who showed up as visitors, much of the language reflects terminology appropriate for worshipping deity as well. Abraham addresses the one whom he perceived as the leader with terms of hospitable politeness, but most of these terms could also be used in reference to polite address of God as well. Obviously Abraham doesn't not recognize the divine nature of these visitors until well into the second of the three scenes (18:13) in chapter 18.

Perhaps the editors of the narrative are attempting to signal to readers that one can never know just who those strangers might be that show up on our front door. Abraham's treating them with not only traditional respect, but even beyond reflected well on his character and integrity as a worshipper of God. The blessing coming out of this was a major experience for him that would change his life profoundly.

The pattern of hospitality shown to the visitors has several aspects. (1) Abraham went out to them and bowed down before them as a symbol of respect and welcoming (v. 2). The symbolism of the bowing was the offer to be their servants during their stay with him. (2) Abraham gives them an eloquent verbal invitation to come stay with him, rather than passing by in continuation of their journey (vv. 3-5). He offers

the traditional washing of their dusty feet with water. Also he invites them to rest under the shade of the tree just outside his tent. And finally he offers them a meal before they continue their trip. He charms them a bit with his comment “since you have come to your servant” (v. 5). This reflects Abraham’s eagerness to entertain these strangers. In contrast to our world where we tend to look with suspicion on unknown people who ring our doorbell, living the nomadic life of a shepherd made Abraham all the more anxious to spend time with people traveling from other regions.

The three men agree (v. 5b), and Abraham goes inside the tent to instruct Sarah to supervise the preparation of a banquet meal for these visitors (v. 6). A calf is slaughtered, and meat cooked. In addition to the tender meat served to them Abraham also provides curds (yogurt) and milk. He sets everything in front of them under the tree in front of the tent, and -- according to the custom of that day -- he as host stands while his guests eat the meal.

The quantity of the food prepared is enormous considering it was meant to feed three strangers. “Three measures” of flour was about six gallons of flour, since a “seah” equaled about two plus gallons or 7.3 liters. The Hebrew text suggests that a full grown bull, rather than a calf, was slaughtered and cooked for the meal. Thus these three men were served huge amounts of meat, bread, yogurt (called lebben), and milk. All of this highlights the generosity and anxiousness of Abraham to provide the best possible hospitality to these individuals.

After dinner typically conversation between the guests and the hosts would take place over a wide array to topics of common interests. In vv. 9-15, the after dinner conver-



sation between Abraham and these men centered on Abraham’s wife Sarah.

The conversation (vv. 9-15) unfolds as follows:

**Angels:** “Where is your wife Sarah?”

**Abraham:** “There, in the tent.”

**One of the angels:** “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.”

**Sarah inside tent:** she laughed at the idea because of hers and Abraham’s old age.

**Lord said to Abraham:** “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.”

**Sarah’s denial out of fear.** “I did not laugh.”

**Lord’s response:** “Oh yes, you did laugh.”

With that, the conversation ends, and the next scene (vv. 16-33) has the three men leaving to continue their journey. Abraham, as custom dictated, goes with them for a ways in order to insure that they are going the right direction for their destination.

The after dinner conversation reveals the purpose behind the visit. Years before God had promised innumerable descendants to Abraham. The abortive attempt with the Egyptian slave girl resulting in the birth of Ishmael had proven to not be God’s intended way of keeping this promise to Abraham (17:19-21).

Now after the covenant renewal experience described in chapter 17, the Lord comes back to





Abraham to reassure him that the promise of a son born to Sarah would indeed be kept, even though humanly speaking it appeared impossible to keep.

The promise takes the shape of a promised return visit of the Lord “at the set time” and “in due season” (v. 14). At that time Sarah would give birth to a son. This ambiguous time marker could imply a short duration or a long one. From our previous discussion of time markers under Internal History (see [page 4](#)), we can determine that the birth of Isaac would be no more than two years later, and probably less than that.

What did Sarah’s laugh mean? Was it an expression of unbelief? Of distrust in God? Was it like Abraham’s earlier laughter at being told the same thing? See 17:17. A quick overview of that prior announcement can help put Sarah’s laughter in better context.

In the prior appearance of the Lord to Abraham, God made the promise of a son to him and Sarah (17:15-22):

15 God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.” 17 *Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, “Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?”* 18 And Abraham said to God, “O that Ishmael might live in your sight!” 19 God said, “No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. 20 As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year.” 22 And when he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

From that experience Abraham instituted circumcision within his clan as a religious symbol of this encounter with God (17:23-27). We see his response of laughter to the promise of a son through Sarah. The name Isaac means “he laughed” and thus plays a role in all this as well. Thus all their remaining days their son’s name would remind both parents of their response to God’s promise of a son to them. This adopts a common view of the etymology of the Hebrew name Isaac. Wenham (*WBC*, Logos Systems) discusses the possible understandings of this name in his comments on 17:19:

The name Isaac is typical of early second-millennium Amorite names, consisting of a verb in the imperfect and a divine name (cf. Ishmael or Israel). Thus it is usually

surmised that the full name of Isaac was Isaac-el, just as the full name of Jacob was probably Jacob-el. If לֹא קָחַי is the correct full name of Isaac, then it may be translated “The god El laughs/smiles/looks with favor” (cf. Berger, *UF* 1 [1969] 216). Like the name Ishmael, it records divine mercy in granting the child’s birth. Another possibility is that Isaac is not a shortening of Isaac-el but a name in its own right and refers to the laughter and pleasure of the parents over the child. Hence it could be interpreted “(The father) laughs/smiles.” However, as usual with names, the Bible is not interested in a historic etymology so much as in the associations evoked by the name. Wherever the name Isaac is discussed, it is associated with the verb עָחַק “to laugh” or in the piel “make sport of” and reflects the skeptical laughter of his parents when told of his birth (v 17; 18:12–15) or Ishmael’s mistreatment of him (21:9).



Wenham’s comments (*WBC*, Logos Systems) provide helpful analysis of the Hebrew text in vv. 11-15:

11 17:17 has already said that Sarah is ninety, so it seems superfluous to tell us again that she is “old.” This repetition is easily explained if chap. 17 comes from a tradition different from that of chap. 18. But in the context of Genesis, ninety is no great age (cf. Noah, who became a father at 500 [5:32]), and 12:11 has said she is very attractive, a point assumed in chap. 20 also. Thus the new piece of information given here, “Sarah was past the menopause,” may not have seemed so self-evident to the original readers as it does to us. It certainly underlines the magnitude of the miracle of Isaac’s birth: it was not simply that Sarah had long been infertile but that she was well past the menopause too. Conception, let alone birth, was impossible.

12 Knowing these personal details about Sarah, we tend to excuse her laughter, and this is no doubt the writer’s intention: he wants to explain why someone who laughed at God’s promise suffered so mild a rebuke. It was something very hard to believe. Abraham had apparently laughed aloud but kept his doubts to himself or at least only expressed them indirectly (17:17–18). Sarah keeps all her emotions hidden. “So Sarah laughed to herself thinking, ‘After I am worn out, shall I have pleasure?’”

When the narrator spoke of Sarah being past the menopause, he was quite matter-of-fact about her situation. Sarah describes herself as “worn out,” a decrepit old woman. She could certainly not expect to enjoy the pleasures of younger women in being a mother or perhaps even of sexual intercourse with her husband, for he too is quite old.

These remarks of Sarah’s show us the basis of her doubts. She laughed not out of cocky arrogance but because a life of long disappointment had taught her not to clutch at straws. Hopelessness, not pride, underlay her

unbelief. Her self-restraint in not openly expressing her doubts and the sadness behind them go far to explain the gentleness of the divine rebuke.

**13** The Lord continues to speak to Abraham, but really to Sarah. If Sarah was astonished at the promise of a child, the Lord professes astonishment that she should not have believed him. The phraseology of the Hebrew (see Notes and Translation) expresses the divine surprise. The way he phrases Sarah's doubts is instructive. The narrator was direct—"past the menopause"; Sarah was pathetic and blamed her husband, "I am worn out and my husband is old," but the Lord is kindly. He does not describe Sarah as "worn out" or her husband as too old; rather, he simply says that Sarah said, "Shall I even I really give birth as I am old?" But what is most significant is that he knows that Sarah had laughed and what she thought even though he had his back to her and she was inside the tent. This proves who he is and is the foundation for his next remark.

**14** "Is anything too difficult for the Lord?" is a rhetorical question that demands the answer no. God, this passage teaches, is both omniscient and omnipotent. As Sternberg points out, these beliefs inform the whole of biblical narrative, but rarely are they quite so explicit as here.

"Too difficult" (niph'al of פלא) is used elsewhere of lawsuits too difficult for lower judges to handle (Deut 17:8), of the impossibility of Amnon marrying Tamar (2 Sam 13:2), and of the unimaginable future peace of Jerusalem (Zech 8:6). But Jer 32:17 and 27 offer the closest parallels to Gen 18:14. In both, God's almighty power is explicitly affirmed.

"At the set time next year I shall come back to you, and Sarah will have a son." The original assurance of v 10 is repeated. But note the addition of "at the set time" from 17:21, thereby reaffirming both that promise to Abraham and the one just made to Sarah.

**15** Sarah's denial is surprising, and the narrator therefore explains that "she was frightened" by the nature of the messenger and by the substance of his message. But if she now recognized that she was dealing with a divine messenger, why try to deny what he knew? Does this reflect an inadequate theology? The gods of the ancient Orient were not all credited with omniscience. Or is she just

telling a half-truth, "She had laughed to herself" (lit. "inside herself," v 12), so to say "I did not laugh" was inexact but not absolutely false. Whatever the thinking, her denial allowed her to pronounce, albeit in jumbled form, the name of her future son (*sāhaqtī* "I laughed"; *yīshaq* "Isaac"). In this way, Sarah unwittingly confirms the divine promise and provides a simple reiteration. "Not so, you did laugh" (*sāhaqt*) clinches the discussion. There is no room for doubt. Sarah will have a son, and he will be called Isaac.

What does this event have to do with us today? Mostly it reminds us of the dependability of God's promises.

God had promised a son to Abraham and Sarah many years before, and as the years passed by their confidence in God to keep His promise wavered. The mistake with Hagar and Ishmael should have taught them better, but it didn't. Now that God had reappeared first to Abraham alone with renewal of that promise, he was profoundly surprised and responded probably that way any 100 year old man would when told he was going to sire a child at this age: he laughed. In like fashion, Sarah responded the same way sometime later when she overheard the promise being made again to Abraham. The idea of sexual intimacy and pleasure with her husband at such an advanced age was appealing, but not realistic to anticipate. Giving birth to a son was even more unreal. Laughter seemed the only appropriate response.

Sometimes God's promises can seem just as unrealistic. In a world saturated with evil and death, the promise of transforming love seems utter impossible. Walking through the dark valleys of illness and disease challenges us to trust God's promise of always being there with us to sustain us. Indeed, God's promises to His people are wonderful. Humanly speaking, "too wonderful for the Lord"? (cf. 18:14)

**b. A birth that took place, 21:1-7**

**LXX**

21:1 καὶ κύριος ἐπεσκέψατο τὴν Σαρραν καθὰ εἶπεν καὶ ἐποίησεν κύριος τῇ Σαρρα καθὰ ἐλάλησεν <sup>2</sup> καὶ συλλὰ βοῦσα ἔτεκεν Σαρρα τῷ Ἀβρααμ υἷον εἰς τὸ γῆρας εἰς τὸν καιρὸν καθὰ ἐλάλησεν αὐτῷ κύριος <sup>3</sup> καὶ ἐκάλεσεν Ἀβρααμ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐ

**NASB**

21.1 Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised. 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. 3 Abraham called the name of his son who was born to

**NRSV**

21.1 The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised. 2 Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. 3 Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. 4 And Abra-

**NLT**

21.1 Then the LORD did exactly what he had promised. 2 Sarah became pregnant, and she gave a son to Abraham in his old age. It all happened at the time God had said it would. 3 And Abraham named his son Isaac. 4 Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised

τοῦ τοῦ γενομένου αὐτῷ ὃν ἔτεκεν αὐτῷ Σαρρα Ἰσαακ 4 περιέτεμεν δὲ Ἀβρααμ τὸν Ἰσαακ τῇ ὀγδόῃ ἡμέρᾳ καθὰ ἐνετείλατο αὐτῷ ὁ θεός 5 Ἀβρααμ δὲ ἦν ἑκατὸν ἔτων ἡνίκα ἐγένετο αὐτῷ Ἰσαακ ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ 6 εἶπεν δὲ Σαρρα γέλωτά μοι ἐποίησεν κύριος ὃς γὰρ ἂν ἀκούσῃ συγχαρεῖταί μοι 7 καὶ εἶπεν τίς ἀναγγελεῖ τῷ Ἀβρααμ ὅτι θηλάζει παιδίον Σαρρα ὅτι ἔτεκεν υἱὸν ἐν τῷ γήρει μου

him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. 4 Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. 6 Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." 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."

ham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. 6 Now Sarah said, "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." 7 And she said, "Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

him as God had commanded. 5 Abraham was one hundred years old at the time. 6 And Sarah declared, "God has brought me laughter! All who hear about this will laugh with me. 7 For who would have dreamed that I would ever have a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!"



**"Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."**

To be sure, the birth narrative is intended to set the stage for the more dramatically told story of the expulsion of Ishmael and Hagar from the tent of Abraham in vv. 8-21 as the young Isaac grows into childhood.

Again, the lasting truths from the birth narrative in 21:1-7 are similar to those gleaned from 18:1-15.

Both hospitality to strangers and profound confidence in God to keep His promises stand as timeless insights from this experience of Abraham and Sarah. Sometimes the incredulity of God's promises can prompt a "laugh" from us today. Hopefully, it will not be the laugh of scorn and disbelief. But, rather the laugh of "Wow! That's way beyond my expectations!"

When God works in our lives without us hemming Him in, absolutely wonderful and surprising things happen that enrich us beyond our dreams



**Notes:**

Within two years the promise made to this elderly couple was realized in the birth of a son. But in the meanwhile God had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their immorality, particularly for their homosexual practices (chap. 19). Afterwards, Abraham had left Hebron and migrated southwest to Gerar in the territory of King Abimelech of Gerar (chap. 20). He passed Sarah off as his sister again, just as he had earlier done on a trip to Egypt (cf. 12:10-20). God protected her from sexual violation by exposing Abraham's deceit. But this time Abraham continues living in the region after the situation is corrected.

The birth narrative is introduced as an unbroken narrative from 18:15, **"The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised."** God stood absolutely trustworthy to do just as He had said He would. The narrator wants the readers to understand this. Thus the fulfillment of divine promise sets the tone for the narrative.

The description of Isaac's birth is routine, given the circumstances. At the time earlier indicated by the "angel" of the Lord (18:14), Sarah became pregnant. A normal birth followed at the end of the pregnancy. The name Isaac was given to the infant just as had been indicated earlier in the previous appearance of the Lord to Abraham: cf. 17:19. Following the pattern set in that previous encounter in chapter 17, Abraham had Isaac circumcised on the eighth day after birth. The dominant aspect of the birth narrative returns to the laughter theme with the comments of Sarah:

**6 Now Sarah said, "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." 7 And she said,**

**LXX**

18:1 ὤφθη δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς πρὸς τῆ ὄρου τῆ Μαμβρη καθημένου αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς θύρας τῆς σκηνῆς αὐτοῦ μεσημβρίας <sup>2</sup> ἀναβλέψας δὲ τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτοῦ εἶδεν καὶ ἰδοὺ τρεῖς ἄνδρες εἰσπήκεισαν ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ καὶ ἰδὼν προσέδραμεν εἰς συνάντησιν αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς θύρας τῆς σκηνῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ προσεκύνησεν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν <sup>3</sup> καὶ εἶπεν κύριε εἰ ἄρα εὔρον χάριν ἐναντίον σου μὴ παρέλθῃς τὸν παῖδά σου <sup>4</sup> λημφθήτω δὴ ὕδωρ καὶ νιψάτωσαν τοὺς πόδας ὑμῶν καὶ καταψύξατε ὑπὸ τὸ δένδρον <sup>5</sup> καὶ λήψομαι ἄρτον καὶ φάγεσθε καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο παρελεύσεσθε εἰς τὴν ὁδὸν ὑμῶν οὐ εἶνεκεν ἐξεκλίνατε πρὸς τὸν παῖδα ὑμῶν καὶ εἶπαν οὕτως ποίησον καθὼς εἶρηκας <sup>6</sup> καὶ ἔσπευσεν Ἀβραὰμ ἐπὶ τὴν σκηνὴν πρὸς Σαρραν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ σπεῦσον καὶ φύρασον τρία μέτρα σεμιδάλεως καὶ ποίησον ἐγκρυφίας <sup>7</sup> καὶ εἰς τὰς βόας ἔδραμεν Ἀβραὰμ καὶ ἔλαβεν μοσχάριον ἀπαλὸν καὶ καλὸν καὶ ἔδωκεν τῷ παιδί καὶ ἐτάχυνεν τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτό <sup>8</sup> ἔλαβεν δὲ βούτυρον καὶ γάλα καὶ τὸ μοσχάριον ὃ ἐποίησεν καὶ παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐφάγοσαν αὐτοῖς δὲ παρειστήκει αὐτοῖς ὑπὸ τὸ δένδρον <sup>9</sup> εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτόν

**NASB**

18.1 Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. 2 When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth, 3 and said, "My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant by. 4 "Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree; 5 and I will bring a piece of bread, that you may refresh yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant." And they said, "So do, as you have said." 6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead *it* and make bread cakes." 7 Abraham also ran to the herd, and took a tender and choice calf and gave *it* to the servant, and he hurried to prepare it. 8 He took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed *it* before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate.

9 Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "There, in the tent." 10 He said, "I will surely re-

**NRSV**

18.1 The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. 2 He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. 3 He said, "My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. 4 Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. 5 Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on, since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." 6 And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." 7 Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. 8 Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

9 They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent." 10 Then one said, "I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent

**NLT**

18.1 The LORD appeared again to Abraham while he was camped near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day about noon, as Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent, 2 he suddenly noticed three men standing nearby. He got up and ran to meet them, welcoming them by bowing low to the ground. 3 "My lord," he said, "if it pleases you, stop here for a while. 4 Rest in the shade of this tree while my servants get some water to wash your feet. 5 Let me prepare some food to refresh you. Please stay awhile before continuing on your journey." "All right," they said. "Do as you have said." 6 So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, "Quick! Get three measures of your best flour, and bake some bread." 7 Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a fat calf and told a servant to hurry and butcher it. 8 When the food was ready, he took some cheese curds and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them there beneath the trees.

9 "Where is Sarah, your wife?" they asked him. "In the tent," Abraham replied. 10 Then one of them said, "About this time next year I will return, and your wife Sarah will have a son." Now

ποῦ Σαρρα ἡ γυνὴ σου ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν ἰδοὺ ἐν τῇ σκηνῇ <sup>10</sup> εἶπεν δὲ ἐπαναστρέφων ἤξω πρὸς σὲ κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον εἰς ὥρας καὶ ἔξει υἷὸν Σαρρα ἡ γυνὴ σου Σαρρα δὲ ἤκουσεν πρὸς τῇ θύρᾳ τῆς σκηνῆς οὕσα ὀπισθεν αὐτοῦ <sup>11</sup> Αβρααμ δὲ καὶ Σαρρα πρεσβύτεροι προβεβηκότες ἡμερῶν ἐξέλιπεν δὲ Σαρρα γίνεσθαι τὰ γυναικεία <sup>12</sup> ἐγέλασεν δὲ Σαρρα ἐν ἑαυτῇ λέγουσα οὐπω μὲν μοι γέγονεν ἔως τοῦ νῦν ὁ δὲ κύριός μου πρεσβύτερος <sup>13</sup> καὶ εἶπεν κύριος πρὸς Αβρααμ τί ὅτι ἐγέλασεν Σαρρα ἐν ἑαυτῇ λέγουσα ἀρά γε ἀληθῶς τέξομαι ἐγὼ δὲ γεγήρακα <sup>14</sup> μὴ ἀδυνά τεῖ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ ῥῆμα εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον ἀναστρέψω πρὸς σὲ εἰς ὥρας καὶ ἔσται τῇ Σαρρα υἱός <sup>15</sup> ἠρνήσατο δὲ Σαρρα λέγουσα οὐκ ἐγέλασα ἐφοβήθη γάρ καὶ εἶπεν οὐχὶ ἀλλὰ ἐγέλασας

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21:1 καὶ κύριος ἐπεσκέψατο τὴν Σαρραν καθὰ εἶπεν καὶ ἐποίησεν κύριος τῇ Σαρρα καθὰ ἐλάλησεν <sup>2</sup> καὶ συλλαβοῦσα ἔτεκεν Σαρρα τῷ Αβρααμ υἷὸν εἰς τὸ γῆρας εἰς τὸν καιρὸν καθὰ ἐλάλησεν αὐτῷ κύριος <sup>3</sup> καὶ ἐκάλεσεν Αβρααμ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου αὐτῷ ὃν ἔτεκεν αὐτῷ Σαρρα

turn 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. <sup>11</sup> Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. <sup>12</sup> Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?” <sup>13</sup> And the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?’ <sup>14</sup> “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.” <sup>15</sup> Sarah denied it however, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. And He said, “No, but you did laugh.”

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21.1 Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised. <sup>2</sup> So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. <sup>3</sup> Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. <sup>4</sup> Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. <sup>5</sup> Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac

entrance behind him. <sup>11</sup> Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. <sup>12</sup> So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?” <sup>13</sup> The Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, “Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?” <sup>14</sup> Is anything too wonderful for the Lord? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.” <sup>15</sup> But Sarah denied, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. He said, “Oh yes, you did laugh.”

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21.1 The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised. <sup>2</sup> Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. <sup>3</sup> Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. <sup>4</sup> And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. <sup>5</sup> Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. <sup>6</sup> Now Sarah said, “God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.” <sup>7</sup> And she said, “Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah

Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent nearby. <sup>11</sup> And since Abraham and Sarah were both very old, and Sarah was long past the age of having children, <sup>12</sup> she laughed silently to herself. “How could a worn-out woman like me have a baby?” she thought. “And when my master, my husband, is also so old?” <sup>13</sup> Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’ <sup>14</sup> Is anything too hard for the LORD? About a year from now, just as I told you, I will return, and Sarah will have a son.” <sup>15</sup> Sarah was afraid, so she denied that she had laughed. But he said, “That is not true. You did laugh.”

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21.1 Then the LORD did exactly what he had promised. <sup>2</sup> Sarah became pregnant, and she gave a son to Abraham in his old age. It all happened at the time God had said it would. <sup>3</sup> And Abraham named his son Isaac. <sup>4</sup> Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded. <sup>5</sup> Abraham was one hundred years old at the time. <sup>6</sup> And Sarah declared, “God has brought me laughter! All who hear about this will laugh with me. <sup>7</sup> For who would have dreamed that I would

Ἰσαακ <sup>4</sup> περιέτεμεν  
δὲ Ἀβρααμ τὸν Ἰσαακ  
τῇ ὀγδόῃ ἡμέρᾳ καθὰ  
ἐνετείλατο αὐτῷ ὁ θεός  
<sup>5</sup> Ἀβρααμ δὲ ἦν ἑκατὸ  
ν ἔτων ἡνίκα ἐγένετο αὐ  
τῷ Ἰσαακ ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ <sup>6</sup>  
εἶπεν δὲ Σαρρα γέλωτά  
μοι ἐποίησεν κύριος ὃς  
γὰρ ἂν ἀκούσῃ συγχαρεῖ  
ταί μοι <sup>7</sup> καὶ εἶπεν τίς  
ἀναγγελεῖ τῷ Ἀβρααμ  
ὅτι θηλάζει παιδίον  
Σαρρα ὅτι ἔτεκον υἱὸν  
ἐν τῷ γήρει μου

was born to him. 6 Sar-  
ah said, "God has made  
laughter for me; every-  
one who hears will laugh  
with me." 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."

would nurse children?  
Yet I have borne him a  
son in his old age."

ever have a baby? Yet  
I have given Abraham a  
son in his old age!"



Genesis 18:1-15

וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה בְּאַלְנֵי מִמְרָא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב

פֶּתַח-הָאֵהָל כַּחַם הַיּוֹם: וַיֵּשֶׁא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה  
אֲנָשִׁים נֹצְבִים עִלָּיו וַיֵּרָא וַיֵּרֶץ לְקִרְאָתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֵהָל  
וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֶרְצָה:

<sup>3</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי אִם-נָא מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֶל-נָא תַעֲבֹר  
מֵעַל עַבְדְּךָ:

<sup>4</sup> וַיִּקְחֵנָּא מַעֲטָמִים וּרְחֹצוֹ רְגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעֵנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ:

<sup>5</sup> וַאֲקַחְהָ פַתַּח-לֶחֶם וְסַעֲדוֹ לְבַכֶּם אַחֵר תַּעֲבְרוּ כִּי-עַל-כֵּן  
עֲבַרְתֶּם עַל-עַבְדְּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כֵּן תַעֲשֶׂה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ:

<sup>6</sup> וַיִּמָּהַר אַבְרָהָם הָאֵהָלָה אֶל-שְׂרָה וַיֹּאמֶר מַה־רִי שְׁלֹשׁ  
סָאִים קָמַח סֹלֶת לְדוֹשֵׁי וַעֲשֵׂי עֲגוֹת:

<sup>7</sup> וְאֶל-הַבָּקָר רֵץ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח בֶּן-בָּקָר הַדָּ וְטוֹב וַיִּתֵּן  
אֶל-הַנְּעָר וַיִּמָּהַר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתוֹ:

<sup>8</sup> וַיִּקַּח חֲמֹאֶה וְחֹלֵב וּבֶן-הַבָּקָר אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּתֵּן לַפְּנִיָּהִם  
וְהוּא-עֹמֵד עֲלֵיהֶם תַּחַת הָעֵץ וַיֹּאכְלוּ:

<sup>9</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אֵיךְ שְׂרָה אֲשַׁתְּךָ וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בְּאֵהָל:

<sup>10</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר טוֹב אֲשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כַּעֲת חַיָּה וְהִנֵּה-בֵן לְשְׂרָה אֲשַׁתְּךָ  
וְשְׂרָה שָׁמַעַת פֶּתַח הָאֵהָל וְהוּא אַחֲרָיו:

<sup>11</sup> וַאֲבָרָהָם וְשְׂרָה זָקְנִים בָּאִים בַּיָּמִים חֲדָל לְהַיּוֹת לְשְׂרָה  
אֶרֶץ פְּנִשִׁים:

<sup>12</sup> וַתִּצְחַק שְׂרָה בְּקַרְבָּהּ לֵאמֹר אַחֲרַי בְּלֹתִי הִיתָה-לִּי עַדְנָה  
וְאֲדֹנָי זָקֵן:

<sup>13</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָהָם לְמָה זֶה צִחְקָה שְׂרָה לֵאמֹר  
הֲאֵף אֲמַנָּם אֵלֶּךָ וְאֲנִי זָקְנָתִי:

<sup>14</sup> הִיפְלֵא מִיְהוָה הַבָּר לְמוֹעֵד אֲשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כַּעֲת חַיָּה  
וּלְשְׂרָה בֵּן:

<sup>15</sup> וַתִּכְחַשׁ שְׂרָה לֵאמֹר לֹא צִחְקָתִי כִּי יֵרָאָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא  
כִּי צִחְקָתִי:

Genesis 21:1-8

וַיְהִי וַיְהוָה פָּקַד אֶת-שְׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר וַיֵּעַשׂ

יְהוָה לְשֵׁרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר: <sup>2</sup>וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד שֵׁרָה לְאַבְרָהָם בֶּן  
לְזִקְנָיו לְמוֹעֵד אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהִים:  
<sup>3</sup>וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם אֶת-שֵׁם-בְּנוֹ הַנּוֹלֵד-לוֹ אֲשֶׁר-יָלְדָה-לוֹ שֵׁרָה  
יִצְחָק:

<sup>4</sup>וַיִּמַּל אַבְרָהָם אֶת-יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ בֶּן-שְׁמֹנֶת יָמִים כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה  
אֱתוֹ אֱלֹהִים:

<sup>5</sup>וַאֲבְרָהָם בֶּן-מֵאָת שָׁנָה בְּהוֹלֵד לוֹ אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ:

<sup>6</sup>וַתֹּאמֶר שֵׁרָה צָחֵק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹהִים כֹּל-הַשְּׁמֵעַ יִצְחָק-לִי:

<sup>7</sup>וַתֹּאמֶר מִי מִלֵּל לְאַבְרָהָם הִינִיקָה בָנִים שֵׁרָה כִּי-יֵלְדָתִי  
בֶּן לְזִקְנָיו: