



SARAH: THE MOTHER OF ALL NATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Sarah's life story starts in the Old Testament, and then crosses over into the New Testament, where God revealed His eternal purposes for her.

Sarah's life was intricately interwoven with her husband Abraham, who received a divine call from God along with great and powerful promises (Genesis 12:1-3, Acts 7:2-4). God promised Abraham early in his life that he would be the father of a great nation; however, Sarah remained barren for most of her life. In her distress, instead of waiting on the Lord to fulfill His promise, she convinced her husband to bring about the promise of a son through Hagar, her Egyptian maid (Genesis 16:1-4). Despite Sarah's strivings, God manifested His grace, power, and sovereignty to both Sarah and Hagar, who then began to know God personally and intimately.

Through Sarah's faith, trust, submission, and obedience to God, she became a model wife for women to follow (I Peter 3:1-6). She joined her husband in his call to a life-long journey, becoming a nomad¹ and a sojourner². Leaving behind the temporal comforts of an earthly city built of brick, Ur of the Chaldees,³ Sarah gained entrance into the eternal, the heavenly city, whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:8-10). As Sarah journeyed, her steps were guided and protected by an ever-watchful God whose divine presence was at her side.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

Now faith is the substance⁴ of things hoped for, the evidence⁵ of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).

¹ nomad: a person who dwells in tents; a wanderer.

² sojourner: to be in a strange place, to be a guest; one who turns aside from the road for lodging or any purpose.

³ Ur of the Chaldees: scholars believe it is located near the ancient delta in the Persian Gulf where the Tigris and the Euphrates river flow together.

⁴ substance - Greek *hupotasis* support: essence, assurance, confidence.

⁵ evidence - Greek *elegchos* proof: conviction, reproof.

Names Given to the Women in this Story

Sarai	<p>... <i>the name of Abram's wife was Sarai</i> ... (Genesis 11:29). <i>Sarai</i> in Hebrew means dominative; taken from the root name <i>Sar</i> meaning a head person, general, governor or master. <i>Sara</i> also means to have dominion, make oneself a prince and rule.</p>
Sarah	<p>... <i>Sarah shall her name be</i> (Genesis 17:15). God changed her name from Sarai to Sarah. <i>Sarah</i> in Hebrew means - a female: noble, lady, princess or queen. It is the feminine form of the Hebrew word <i>Sar</i>.</p>
Freewoman	<p><i>Abraham had two sons ... the other by a freewoman</i> [Sarah] (Galatians 4:22, 23). <i>Freewoman</i> comes from a Greek word meaning - unrestrained, to go at pleasure, as a citizen, not a slave; at liberty.</p>
Holy women	<p>... <i>in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God</i> ... even as <i>Sara</i> ... (1 Peter 3:5, 6). Sarah is an example of a <i>holy woman</i> in former times, who was set apart for God. <i>Holy</i> speaks of being pure, blameless, innocent, modest, perfect, chaste, clean and saintly.</p>
Mistress	<p>... <i>I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai</i> (Genesis 16:8). <i>Mistress</i> in Hebrew is <i>baalah</i>; lady, owner.</p>
Hagar	<p><i>Sarai ... had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar</i> (Genesis 16:1). <i>Hagar's</i> name is reflective of the circumstances of her life. An Egyptian name similar to the meaning of the Arabic word, <i>flight</i>.</p>
Sarai's maid	<p>... <i>Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou</i> ... (Genesis 16:8). The angel of Jehovah called her Hagar which means - to spread out as a family, a female slave, as a member of the household. A circle of relatives, a class of persons by extension, a tribe, people or kindred.</p>
Bondwoman	<p>... <i>cast out this bondwoman</i> [Hagar] <i>and her son</i> ... (Genesis 21:10). A female slave. Sarah called her <i>bondwoman</i> when she told Abraham to cast her out.</p>

SECTION 1 - A Barren Wife

Sarah's lineage can be traced back in history as far as Shem, one of Noah's three sons. After the flood, Shem was blessed by his father in that his lineage would have a special relation to the Lord. Genesis 9:26 states ... *Blessed be the LORD God of Shem*. Through the Seed⁶ of Abraham and Sarah all the nations of the world would be blessed.

READ Genesis 11:26-32, 12:1-3.

1. Who was Abram's father (v. 27)? _____
2. What native country was Abram and his family from (v. 28)? _____

⁶ thy Seed: all the blessings would come from the Seed who is Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16); the Seed is the Word of God who is Christ (Luke 8:11).

3. Who did Abram take for a wife (vv. 29, 30)? _____

How is she described? _____

4. In what way was Sarai related to Abram (Genesis 20:2a, 12)? _____

Terah was the father of both Abram and Sarai, who had different mothers.

5. Sarai was married to a man of wealth and shared in his high social position, what was Abraham's financial situation (Genesis 13:1, 2)?

6. What did Terah, Abram's father do? Where did he settle with his family (Genesis 11:31)?

7. Where did they stay and where did Abram's father die (Genesis 11:32)? _____

8. But what had God commanded Abram to do (Genesis 12:1, 2)? Why? _____

LOOK DEEPER

READ Acts 7:1-3. DESCRIBE God when He appeared to Abram in Mesopotamia⁷ according to Stephen prior to his martyrdom? What did He command Abram to do?

DESCRIBE the God of Glory (Psalm 24:8-10). _____

⁷ Mesopotamia - Hebrew *Aram-Hahara yim* Aram between the two rivers: the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers; Abraham's native land; region of Ur of the Chaldeans. Modern day Iraq.

SECTION 2 - A Wife of Promise

READ Genesis 12:1-5, Genesis 17:1-8, Genesis 17:15-22, and Genesis 18:1-15.

When God first called Abram, He blessed him and gave him the great promise of a son, through whose line the Messiah⁸ would come. This would be fulfilled directly through Sarai, his wife. God would use Sarai's life in a way that could only bring glory to Him because of the impossibility of what was to take place.

1. What command did God give to Abram (Genesis 12:1)? _____

2. What did God promise Abram that gave Sarai the hope of a child (vv. 2, 3)? _____

3. What did Abram do (vv. 4, 5)? _____

Who went with him? _____

4. What godly characteristics do you find concerning Abraham (Hebrews 11:8-10)? _____

5. When Abram was ninety-nine years old, what did the Almighty God⁹ command? How did He reaffirm His covenant and bless him (Genesis 17:1-12)?

How did Abraham respond (v. 3)? _____

⁸ Messiah - Hebrew *Mashiyach* anointed: consecrated person; the Messiah (Daniel 9:25, 26).

Greek *Messias* anointed: Christ, the Anointed One empowered by God to deliver His people.

⁹ the Almighty God - Hebrew *El Shaddai* first use of this name for God in Scripture.

Why did God change His name (v. 5)? _____

10 11

6. How did God bless Sarai (Genesis 17:15, 16)? _____

Who did God say she would become? _____

A change of name often meant a time when a person was no longer striving with God, but came under submission to God's will.

7. What did Abraham think in his heart (v. 17)? _____

What did he pray for (v. 18)? _____

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8. How did God clarify His covenant?¹³ What did He promise for Isaac¹⁴ and Ishmael¹⁵ (vv. 19-22)?_

9. How did Abraham respond to the three messengers of the Lord (Genesis 18:1-8)? _____

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¹⁰ Abram - Hebrew high father: lifted up.

¹¹ Abraham - Hebrew father of a multitude.

¹² Ishmael: Abram's son born to Hagar, Sarah's handmaiden, through her unbelief and persuasion (see Genesis 16:1-4).

¹³ covenant: an agreement; the promise of God to bless those who obey Him and fulfill His conditions.

¹⁴ Isaac - Hebrew *Yitshaq* laughter: son of Abraham. God makes the covenant with him.

¹⁵ Ishmael - Hebrew *Yismael* God will hear: the name of Abraham's oldest son. God does not make a covenant with him.

¹⁶ plains of Mamre: town or district near Hebron where Sarah was eventually buried (Genesis 23:17).

¹⁷ my Lord - Hebrew *Adonai* a polite request to a superior.

10. How did Sarah react to God's direct promise to her through His messengers (vv. 9-15)? Why?

11. How did the LORD address Sarah's unbelief (vv. 13-15)? _____

12. What powerful statement did God say concerning Himself (v. 14a)? _____

PERSONAL

Reflecting on your life how has God moved to do the impossible? _____

What are you longing for God to do? _____

SECTION 3 - A Striving Wife

While Sarai was waiting for God's promise of a child to be fulfilled in her, she became weary and began to strive with God and her husband.

READ Genesis Chapter 16.

1. What fact is restated concerning Sarai (v. 1)? _____

What was the name of Sarai's handmaid and where was she from? _____

2. What did Sarai suggest to her husband to "help God" bring about the long awaited son of promise (v. 2)?

What reason or argument did Sarai give for her plan? _____

Instead of trusting God, what did Abraham do? _____

3. How many years had passed in Canaan before Sarai gave Hagar to be Abram's wife (v. 3)?

Ten years and still no child! Sarai became dissatisfied with her life of barrenness. Instead of focusing on God and His promises, she began to focus on her problem. Sarai began to strive with God's will and sought to fulfill her desires in her own way.

LOOK DEEPER

Many Christians make the same mistake today. READ the following Scriptures that correct this error. WRITE what you must do.

Proverbs 3:5, 6 _____

Jeremiah 29:11-14 _____

What will God do for the sorrowful, the physically or spiritually barren?

Psalms 113:9 _____

Isaiah 54:1, 2 _____

4. Sarai's plan seemed successful and Hagar conceived a child by Abram. What was Hagar's immediate attitude towards Sarai, her mistress¹⁸ (Genesis 16:4)?

5. How did Sarai deal with her own disobedience (v. 5)? _____

¹⁸ mistress: a woman in position of authority or control; the female head of the household.

6. How did Abram handle the contention between Hagar and Sarai (v. 6)? _____

How did Sarai then deal with Hagar? _____

How did Hagar respond? _____

LOOK DEEPER

There may be striving or contention in your home between family members! Have you perhaps become harsh towards them because of their attitude towards you, even to the point of driving them away?

What does the Scripture say about a contentious woman and what effects will she have in the home?

Proverbs 21:9 _____

Proverbs 21:19 _____

Proverbs 27:15, 16 _____

What advice can you apply in a contentious situation, to neutralize it?

Psalms 34:13-15 _____

Proverbs 15:1 _____

Proverbs 28:25 _____

Proverbs 31:26 _____

Sarai's harshness caused Hagar to flee from her difficulties; however, God met her in the wilderness. He revealed Himself as the Angel of the LORD, who is the Person of Jesus Christ. Although He is invisible we do not worship or serve a God who cannot see or hear us (I Timothy 1:17). He often becomes very personal and reveals Himself, especially in times of deep trial. He makes Himself known through His Word.

7. Who found Hagar by a fountain of water in the wilderness (Genesis 16:7)? _____

8. Although knowing all things, what two questions did He ask her (v. 8)? _____

What did she answer Him? _____

9. Although Hagar was running away from her mistress, what important instruction did the Angel of the LORD give to Hagar (v. 9)?

10. What did He reveal and promise Hagar concerning her future (v. 10)? _____

11. What would she call her son (v. 11)? Why? _____¹⁹

12. What name did Hagar call the LORD (v. 13, 14)? Why? _____

_____²⁰

13. How did God bless Hagar (v. 15, 16)? _____

¹⁹ Ishmael: God will hear.

²⁰ You are the God Who Sees - Hebrew *EL Roi*.

SECTION 4 - A Fulfilled Wife

READ Genesis 21:1-7.

1. What miracle occurred in Sarah's life that the LORD had promised (Genesis 21:1, 2a)? _____

2. When did God fulfill His promise to Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 21:2b, 5, 17:17)? _____

3. What name was given to the child (Genesis 21:3)? _____²¹
4. What did God cause Sarah to do (v. 6)? _____
5. What seemed so unbelievable to Sarah (v. 7)? _____

PERSONAL

Has God done something unbelievable in your life? WRITE about that amazing event! _____

Perhaps the Lord has given you a promise that has not yet happened. What encouragement do you find from Genesis 21:1-7 that will help you to wait?

SECTION 5 – Sarah: A Submissive Wife

The Scriptures give us insight into Sarah's godly character and how she honored and respected Abraham and allowed God to move in his life despite her moment of unbelief.

READ I Peter 3:1-6.

1. What godly characteristics do we see in the women of old, as in Sarah? What is the result of godly behavior?

²¹ Isaac: laughter.

Sarah knew God's order for woman: that a woman is to submit to her husband as unto the LORD, recognizing that he is to be her head, as Christ is the head of the church and submits to the Father. Her husband was to be the godly authority in the home. By calling Abraham "lord", Sarah was acknowledging his God-given authority and her own submission. This showed her respect for his position. God never commands anyone to submit to godless, sinful authority.

LOOK DEEPER

READ Ephesians 5:21-33.

What are we all called to do (v. 21)? _____

How is the married woman to be subject to her husband (vv. 22-24)? _____

What are husbands required to do before God (vv. 25-29)? _____

SECTION 6 - A Wife of Faith

READ Genesis 23:1-4, 19, 20 and Hebrews 11:1, 8-16.

1. How old was Sarah when she died (Genesis 23:1)? _____

2. In what land did Sarah die? Name the place of her burial (vv. 2, 19, 20)? _____

3. What did Abraham restate concerning his life to the sons of Heth (vv. 3, 4)? _____

4. Sarah was included in the list of the people who died in the faith. What is faith (Hebrews 11:1)?

Romans 1:17b states *The just shall live by faith.*

5. What did Abraham do by faith (Hebrews 11:8, 9)? _____

Why (v. 10)? _____

6. What did Sarah do through faith (v. 11)? _____

Why? _____

7. How many descendants came through Sarah's son (v. 12)? _____

8. What did Abraham and Sarah see, were persuaded of and embraced (v. 13)? _____

What did they confess? _____

9. Sarah obediently left her country and city. What country did she seek and desire (Hebrews 11:14-16)?

What had God prepared for her? _____

PERSONAL

How has Sarah's faith in her sojourning given you an eternal perspective on life? _____

MEMORY VERSE

WRITE out Hebrews 11:1 and hide it in your heart.

Sarah's life leaves behind a strong final statement of a woman who had persevering faith in God and personal holiness that still challenges today's women. Sarah's pilgrimage was a long journey mapped out on the pages of the Bible for us to follow. As we learn from her life, we gain trust, patience, endurance and comfort from the Scriptures, which will give us a steadfast hope for our daily lives and our eternal future.

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