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 . . . the name of Abram's wife was Sarai . . . (Genesis 11:29).
Sarai in Hebrew means dominative; taken from the root name Sar meaning a head person, general, governor or master. Sara also means to have dominion, make oneself a prince and rule.

Sarah . . . Sarah shall her name be (Genesis 17:15).
God changed her name from Sarai to Sarah. Sarah in Hebrew means - a female: noble, lady, princess or queen. It is the feminine form of the Hebrew word Sar.

Freewoman Abraham had two sons . . . the other by a freewoman [Sarah] (Galatians 4:22, 23).
Freewoman comes from a Greek word meaning - unrestrained, to go at pleasure, as a citizen, not a slave; at liberty.

Holy women . . . in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God . . . even as Sara . . . (I Peter 3:5, 6).
Sarah is an example of a holy woman in former times, who was set apart for God. Holy speaks of being pure, blameless, innocent, modest, perfect, chaste, clean and saintly.

Mistress . . . I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai (Genesis 16:8).
Mistress in Hebrew is baalah; lady, owner.

Hagar Sarah . . . had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar (Genesis 16:1).
Hagar's name is reflective of the circumstances of her life. An Egyptian name similar to the meaning of the Arabic word, flight.

Sarai's maid . . . Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou . . . (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.

Bondwoman . . . cast out this bondwoman [Hagar] and her son . . . (Genesis 21:10). A female slave. Sarah called her bondwoman when she told Abraham to cast her out.

SECTION I - 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 Seed of Abraham and Sarah all the nations of the world would be blessed.


1. Who was Abram's father (v. 27)?

2. What native country was Abram and his family from (v. 28)?

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-Halara yin 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


When God first called Abram, He blessed him and gave him the great promise of a son, through whose line the Messiah\(^8\) 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 God\(^9\) command? How did He reaffirm His covenant and bless him (Genesis 17:1-12)? How did Abraham respond (v. 3)?

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

\(^9\) the Almighty God - Hebrew El Shaddai first use of this name for God in Scripture.
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Why did God change His name (v. 5)?

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)?

8. How did God clarify His covenant? What did He promise for Isaac and Ishmael (vv. 19-22)?

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

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.


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?

Psalm 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 mistress (Genesis 16:4)?

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

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?

Psalm 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?

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

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


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)?

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.