

Before We Begin

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Sermon Series

Power of Promise

1. Love is a Promise (Feb 13)
2. Promise Presents Choice (Mar 13)
3. Promises Must Be Shared (Apr 10)
4. Promise Precedes Consequence (May 22)



Sermon Series

Power of Promise

5. Promise Follows Following (June 26)
6. Promises Will Be Challenged



Promises Will Be Challenged

- Abraham, originally Abram
- Sarah, originally Sarai
- Hagar
- Ishmael
- Isaac



Abraham: Abram Part 2

- In the last lesson we learned about Abram's journeys
 - Change of physical location
 - Change of spiritual location



Abram's Physical Journey

1. Ur to Haran (with Terah)
2. Haran to Shechem (in Canaan)
3. Exploring Canaan
 - a. Between Bethel and Ai
 - b. Unnamed stops along the path to the Negeb (Canaan's southern desert)
4. The Negeb to Egypt
5. Egypt to Shechem via the Negeb





Abram's Spiritual Journey

1. He abandoned idol worship when God spoke to him
2. He built an altar in Shechem
3. He called on the name of the Lord between Bethel and Ai
4. He obeyed God to carry on with the physical journey, moving about Canaan to symbolically “possess the land”



Abram's Spiritual Journey

5. He gave tithe to the priest of God
6. He recognized God before others as sovereign in his life
7. He chose to not be angry with God in spite of his circumstance
8. He believed God's promise



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Genesis 14:11-13,16-20 (NRSV)

11 So the enemy took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way;

12 they also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who lived in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

13 Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew...



Genesis 14:11-13,16-20 (NRSV)

16 Then he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his nephew Lot with his goods, and the women and the people.

17 After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).



Genesis 14:11-13,16-20 (NRSV)

18 And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High.

19 He blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth;

20 and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!” And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything.





Abram Gave Tithe to the Priest of God

- “Tithe” means “Tenth” (Deut. 26:12)
- Abram’s gift was a celebratory thanks to God for the victory he had just won and for the possessions he had recovered (Deut. 26:10-11)
- Abram’s act became a sacred precedent and duty for God’s people (Deut. 26:1-9)



Abram's Spiritual Journey

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Genesis 14:21-23 (NRSV)

21 Then the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.”

22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have sworn to the LORD, God Most High, maker of heaven and earth,

23 that I would not take a thread or a sandal-thong or anything that is yours, so that you might not say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’”



Abram Recognized God Before Others as Sovereign in his Life

- Abram acknowledged God as GREATER
“16 Human beings, of course, swear by someone greater than themselves, and an oath given as confirmation puts an end to all dispute.” (Hebrews 6:16 NRSV)
- Abram acknowledged God as PROVIDER



Abram's Spiritual Journey

5. He gave tithe to the priest of God
6. He recognized God before others as sovereign in his life
7. He chose to not be angry with God in spite of his circumstance
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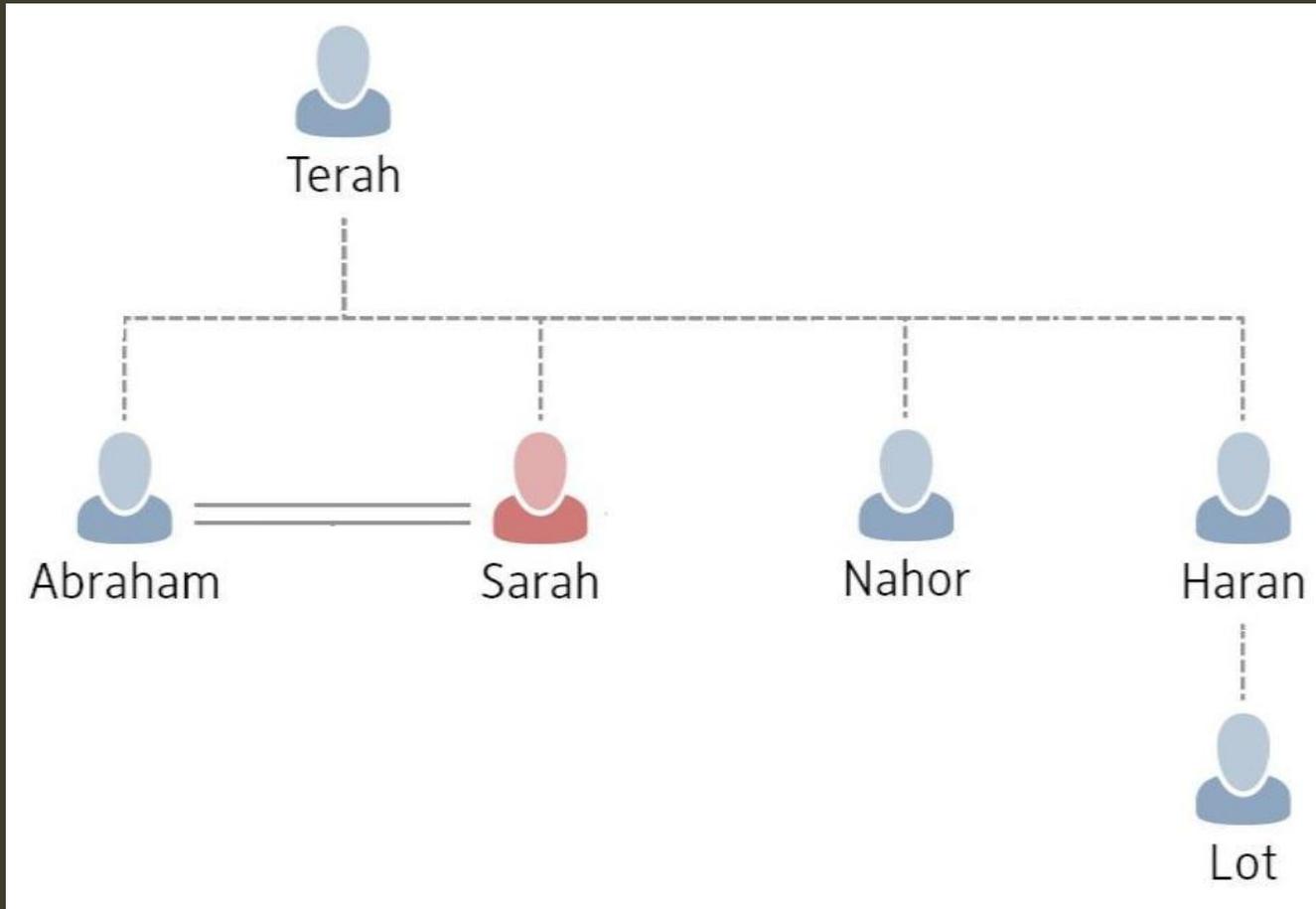
Genesis 15:1-2 (NRSV)

1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, “Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”

2 But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”



Abram's Early Family



Abram's Spiritual Journey

5. He gave tithe to the priest of God
6. He recognized God before others as sovereign in his life
7. He chose to not be angry with God in spite of his circumstance
8. He believed God's promise



Genesis 15:3-6 (NRSV)

3 And Abram said, “You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.”

4 But the word of the LORD came to him, “This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.”



Genesis 15:3-6 (NRSV)

5 He brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”

6 And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.



Sermon Series

Power of Promise

6. Promises Will Be Challenged



Challenge #1: Irrational Suggestion

- Abram was about 85 years old (Gen. 16:15)
- Sarai was about 75 years old (Gen. 17:17) and had never before conceived
- At their ages, having a child seemed so unlikely that Sarai looked for a more rational option



Genesis 16:1-4,15 (NRSV)

1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar,

2 and Sarai said to Abram, "You see that the LORD has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.



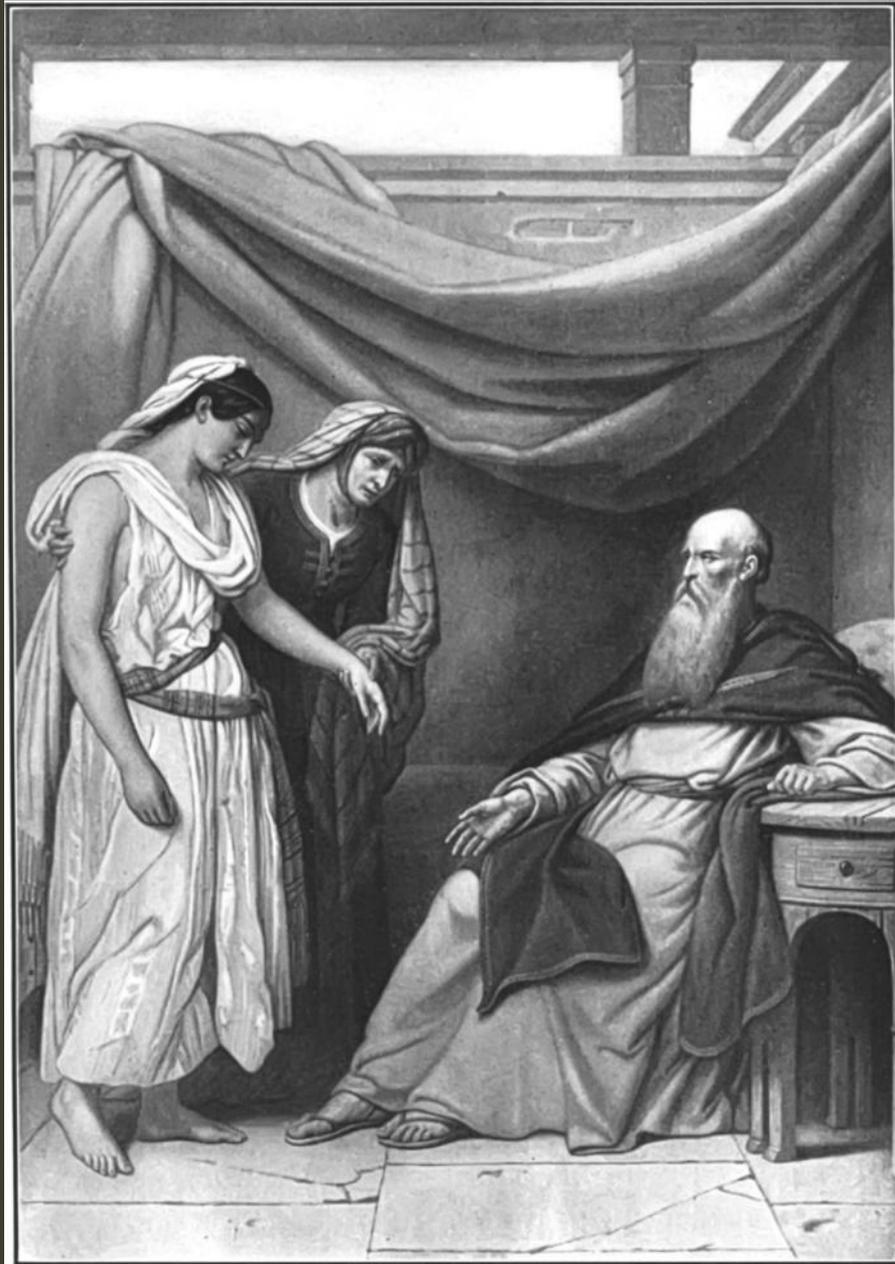
Genesis 16:1-4,15 (NRSV)

3 So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife.

4 He went in to Hagar, and she conceived...

15 Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.





Challenge #2: Events Unfold Not as Expected

- Abram expected that Ishmael would succeed him, and he placed within him all of his hopes and dreams
- God never intended to make his covenant with Ishmael
- God revealed his plan to give Abram a second son



Genesis 16:16–17:25 (NRSV)

16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, ...

5 “No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations.”



Genesis 16:16–17:25 (NRSV)

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.”



Genesis 16:16–17:25 (NRSV)

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.

25 And his son Ishmael was thirteen years old...



Challenge #3: Seemingly Impossible Situation

- Abraham was now about 100 years old
- Sarah was now about 90 years old and had gone through menopause
- At their ages, having a child was considered an impossibility



Genesis 17:15-17 (NRSV)

15 God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, ...

16 I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by 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?”



Genesis 18:10-14 (NRSV)

10 “...your wife Sarah shall have a son.”
And Sarah was listening at the tent
entrance behind him.

11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old,
advanced in age; it had ceased to be with
Sarah after the manner of women.

12 So Sarah laughed to herself, saying,
“After I have grown old, and my husband
is old, shall I have pleasure?”



Genesis 18:10-14 (NRSV)

13 The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, ‘Shall I indeed 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.”



Genesis 21:2-3,7 (NRSV)

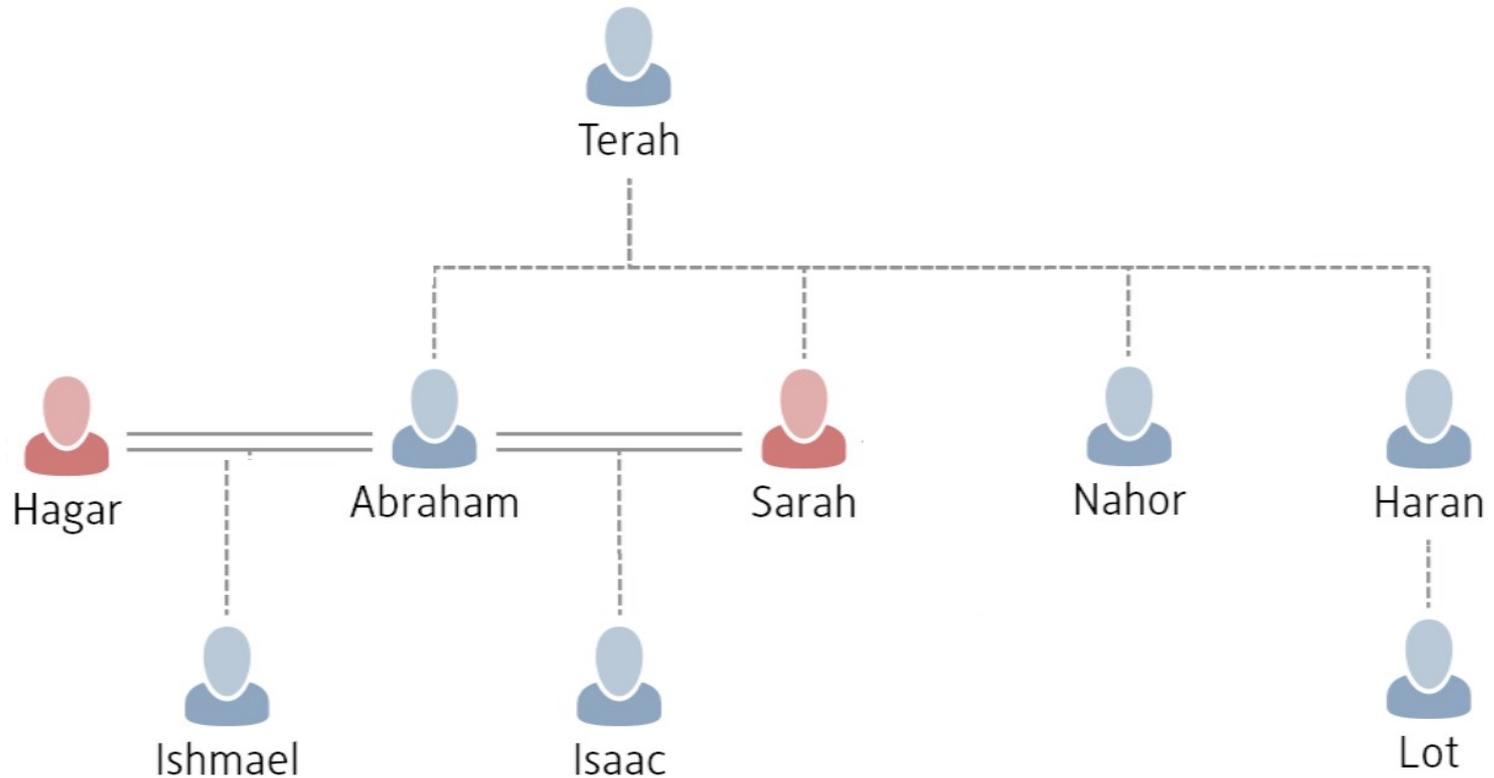
2 Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him.

3 Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him.

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.”



Abraham's Two Sons



Challenge #4: Difficult Choice

- Ishmael was about 17 years old
- Isaac was about 3 years old
- Sarah, Isaac's mother, saw Ishmael do something [bad] to Isaac or with Isaac that greatly displeased her
- Sarah demanded that Abraham expel Ishmael and his mother Hagar



Genesis 21:8-13 (NRSV)

8 The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.

9 But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac.



Genesis 21:8-13 (NRSV)

10 So she said to Abraham, “Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.”

11 The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son.



Genesis 21:8-13 (NRSV)

12 But God said to Abraham, “Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you.

13 As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring.”



Something [bad]

21:9 But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac.

צחק – Hebrew **tsâchaq**
tsaw-khak' (6711)



Something [bad]

- “playing” – NRSV
- “laughing” – ESV
- “mocking” – KJV, NIV, NASB, YLT, Darby
- “scoffing” – NKJV
- “poking fun at” – MSG



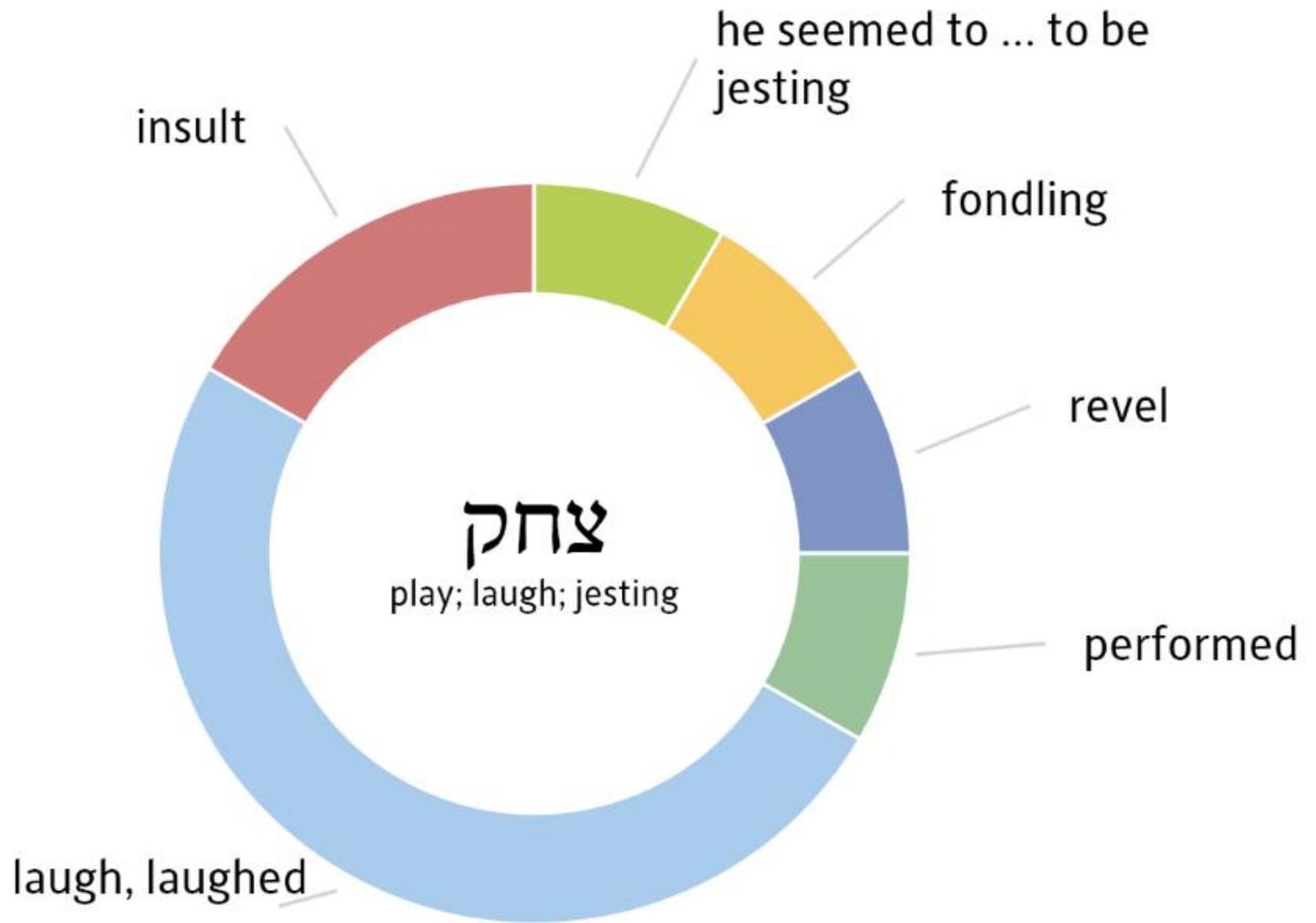
צחק – tsâchaq

- 1) To laugh outright (in merriment or scorn)
– *Genesis 17:17*
- 2) To sport—laugh, mock, play, make sport
– *Genesis 39:14*
- 3) To fondle – *Genesis 26:8*

Source (1-2): Strong, James. “A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible” (1890). Reprinted in the Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible. AMG. Chattanooga (1985).

Source (3): Holladay, William L. “A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament.” Brill. Boston (2000).





Something [bad]

- While more than one interpretation is possible, most view the incident as the foreshowing of a power struggle between
 - Ishmael, the elder son of a slave with firstborn rights of property
 - Isaac, the younger son chosen by God to carry on the Abrahamic covenant
- Sarah, Abraham's wife, favored her own son Isaac to be Abraham's heir of course



Mesopotamian Custom and Law

21:11 The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son.

- Sumerian and Nuzi law (4000-2000 B.C.) recognized sons by concubines
- Babylonian law (early 18th century B.C.) sometimes allowed disinheritance of a son but may have required a court order

Source: "NIV Archaeological Study Bible" (2005), 36



Genesis 21:14 (NRSV)

14 So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.



Challenge #5: The Dread of Sacrifice

- To Abraham, Ishmael was gone forever, and Isaac was now his only son
- Abraham now expected Isaac that would succeed him, and he placed within him all his hopes and dreams
- A day came when God commanded Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering



Genesis 22:1-12 (NRSV)

1 After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

2 He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you.”



Genesis 22:1-12 (NRSV)

3 So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him.

4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away.



Genesis 22:1-12 (NRSV)

5 Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you.”

6 Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.





Genesis 22:1-12 (NRSV)

7 Isaac said to his father Abraham, “Father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”

8 Abraham said, “God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.



Genesis 22:1-12 (NRSV)

9 When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son.



Genesis 22:1-12 (NRSV)

11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

12 He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”





Meaning for Original Readers

- Israelis and many of the Arabic tribes are descended from Abraham
- Abraham's spiritual journey is central to both the religions of Judaism and Islam
- Both the Torah (Pentateuch) and the Qur'an (Koran) contain an account of the near-sacrifice of Abraham's [unnamed] son



Meaning for Christian Readers

- Abraham was faithful to believe God's promises even in the face of the most extreme challenges
- Most importantly, Abraham's spiritual journey is central to the Christian concept of "righteousness by faith"



Hebrews 11:11-12 (NRSV)

11 By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old—and Sarah herself was barren—because he considered him faithful who had promised.

12 Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, “as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.”



Hebrews 11:17-19 (NRSV)

17 By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, 18 of whom he had been told, “It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you.” 19 He considered the fact that God is able even to raise someone from the dead—and figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.



Meaning for Christian Readers

- Abraham was faithful to believe God's promises even in the face of the most extreme challenges
- Most importantly, Abraham's spiritual journey is central to the Christian concept of "righteousness by faith"



Galatians 3:6–9 (NRSV)

6 Just as Abraham “believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,”

7 so, you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham.



Galatians 3:6–9 (NRSV)

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.”

9 For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed.



Romans 10:9-10 (NIV)

9 ...If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.



Coming to God

1. Just as Abraham believed God's seemingly impossible promises, we believe that God raised Jesus from the dead (as he promised)
2. Just as Abraham recognized God before others as sovereign in his life, we confess publicly that "Jesus is Lord"

Will you begin a relationship with God today?

