

Lesson: The Lord will Provide (Gen 20:1-21:34)

After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, we get two immediate portraits of God. In chapter 20, God is portrayed as a protector. For God’s purposes to work, he must be a protector for Abraham and his family. In chapter 21, he fulfills his promise for Abraham and his family with the birth of Isaac. God proves himself as both protector and promise keeper.

Biblical Takeaways

1. ***God will Protect (20:1-18)***: Abraham journeyed closer to the region of the Negev, which is south in the Levant. While there, he told his wife to tell everyone she was his sister. Being concerned that her beauty might cause some power-broker to take her and kill him made Abraham a bit nervous. Similar to the interaction with Pharaoh, Abraham asked Sarah to tell a half-truth. And similar to what God had done with Pharaoh, God showed up in a dream and threatened the egomaniacal man who would just take a woman to use her for his basest desires. God warned Abimelech that he was a dead man and his entire house was under judgment for messing with Abraham and Sarah. Abraham prayed for Abimelech and God’s wrath was turned away. Though Abraham lied, God protected him.
2. ***God will keep his Promise (21:1-34)***
 - a. Verse 1 says, God did “as he promised.” This is an essential statement for understanding the remainder of the chapter, and indeed, the entire Bible. There is nothing God said he would do that will ever fall to the ground. The question for us is do we believe it.
 - b. Sarah conceived and had the boy whom they named Isaac as God instructed them. Abraham was 100 when the child was born, which meant he waited for about 25 years. And Isaac was aptly named. Sarah and Abraham were not supposed to have a child. Abraham and Sarah were way too old to have a child. The very thought made them both laugh. But others would laugh at them for even thinking they could have a child. But God took what was laughter of derision and made it laughter of joy. That is, God changed it from people laughing at Abraham and Sarah to laughing with them.
 - c. The laughter bespeaks the power of God to bring life out of death. Joy is the inevitable response of those who have seen the hand of God move in an impossible situation. Both Abraham and Sarah were essentially dead as parents. That part of who they were was done. Yet, God chose them to use them even though their power to reproduce was dead. This was to show that God can transform whatever we consider dead in us to bring new life.
 - d. (vv. 8-21): The promise of Isaac was too big to share space with Ishmael. Sarah’s instinct to send Hagar and Ishmael was part of God’s divine plan. Abraham did not want to send Hagar and Ishmael away. But God told him to listen to the instructions of Sarah. It could be that the messiness of the firstborn, born out of disobedience, would interfere with God’s purposes for the entire world. God’s plans would be fulfilled in and through Isaac and not Ishmael. God provided for Hagar and Ishmael and Ishmael became a great leader (vv. 12-21).
 - e. Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech, the same king who had threatened him earlier. Despite some of Abimelech’s servants’ actions, Abraham was able to maintain that covenant with Abimelech and received protection while living in his lands as an immigrant.