



Chayei Sarah

Genesis 23:1-25:18

Sarah First Lady of Israel

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Gen 23:1 Sarah lived 127 years; these were the years of the life of Sarah.

Gen 23:2 And Sarah died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

Gen 23:1 ויהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים שנה ושבע שנים שני חיי שרה:

Gen 23:2 ותמת שרה בקרית ארבע הוא חברון בארץ כנען ויבא אברהם לספד לשרה ולבכתה:

Sarah's Profile in A Nutshell

Strengths and accomplishments

- Was intensely loyal to her own child
- Became the mother of a nation and an ancestor of Yeshua
- Was a woman of faith, the first woman listed in Hebrews 11 Hall of Faith

Weakness and mistakes

- Has trouble believing God's promise to her
- Attempted to work problems out on her own, without consulting God
- Tried to cover her faults by blaming others

Lessons from her life

- God responds to faith even in the midst of failure
- God is not bound by what usually happens; he can stretch the limits and cause unheard-of events to occur

Vital Statistics

- Married Abram in Ur of the Chaldeans, then moved with him to Canaan
- Occupation: Wife, mother, household manager
- Relatives: Father; Terah, Husband; Abraham, Half brothers; Nahor and Haran.
Nephew: Lot son; Isaac

Key Verses;

Sarah's story is told in Genesis/B'rysheet 11 to 25. She is also mentioned in Isaiah 51:2, Romans 4:19; Romans 9:9, Hebrews 11:11; 1 Peter 3:6

Even at 90 Sarah was considered a beautiful woman and loved and respected by her husband Abraham. The only thing that was missing was a child that they were beyond hope of having. However, God had other plans and Sarah became the mother of a nation, the nation of Israel.

Sarah was a woman of Divine Inspiration, Vision and Dominion. When God called Abram He also called Sarah. She had a long wait for her dream of a child to manifest from the time she was married to Abraham until Isaac's birth, however she persevered. She made a mistake in underestimating that God's promise would come from her womb, not that of Hagar, but the promise was fulfilled in spite of her trying to help God. Sarah is a Aischet Chayel, an example for all woman to follow. Full of grace and beauty and submitted to God's will. She was a woman of faith and strength. Both her and Abraham had to believe the impossible, walk in obedience to God's instructions, leave what was known for what was not known. Sarah had to see with spiritual eyes what could not be seen in the natural. Strength and dignity were her clothing. Her physical beauty was only surpassed by her spiritual beauty.

Genesis 11:29 And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife *was* Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.

Gen 11:30 But Sarai was barren; she *had* no child.

Iscah: This is Sarah [called Iscah] because she would see (סוֹכָה) through Divine inspiration, and because all gazed (סוֹכִינִין) at her beauty. Alternatively, יִסְכָּה is an expression denoting princedom, (נְסִיכּוּת), just as Sarah is an expression of dominion (שְׁרָרָה) . - [from Meg. 14a]

Gen 12:1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

Gen 12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

Sarah was a teacher of Torah, just as Abram. She would teach the woman the ways of the God of Abram based on the Torah/Teachings and Instructions that were revealed to them at that time.

Gen 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Gen 12:4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram *was* seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

Gen 12:5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

and the souls they had acquired in Haran: whom he had brought under the wings of the Shechinah. Abraham would convert the men, **and Sarah would convert the women**, and Scripture ascribes to them [a merit] as if they had made them (Gen. Rabbah 39:14). (Hence, the expression אָשְׁרָ עָשׂוּ, lit. that they made.) The simple meaning of the verse is: the slaves and maidservants that they had acquired for themselves, as in [the verse] (below 31:1): “He acquired (עָשָׂה) all this wealth” [an expression of acquisition]; ([Num. 24:18](#)): “and Israel acquires,” an expression of acquiring and gathering.

Hagar was the daughter of Pharaoh and when he saw the blessings that were upon Sarah, he allowed his daughter to become Sarah’s handmaiden in hopes she would be blessed as well.

Gen 16:1 Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name *was* Hagar.

Gen 16:2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

Gen 16:3 And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

Gen 16:4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

Gen 16:5 And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong *be* upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.

an Egyptian handmaid: She was Pharaoh’s daughter. When he (Pharaoh) saw the miracles that were wrought for Sarah, he said, “It is better that my daughter be a handmaid in this household, then a mistress in another household.” - [from Gen. Rabbah 45:1]

Sarah change of status from “My Princess’ to “Princess over all”. God not only exalts her status but also renews her body to that of her youth.

Genesis 17:15-19 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall* her name *be*.

you shall not call her name Sarai: which means “my princess,” for me, but not for others. But Sarah, in an unqualified sense, shall be her name, that she will be a princess over all. — [from Ber. 13a] Rashi

And I will bless her: And what is the blessing? That she returned to her youth, as it is said (below 18:12): “My skin has become smooth.” - [from B.M. 87a] Rashi

Even at age 90, God would bless her with the ability of a young woman in order to nurse her son.

And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a *mother* of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

and I will bless her: with breast feeding, when she required it, on the day of Isaac’s feast, for people were murmuring against them, that they had brought a foundling from the street and were saying, “He is our son.” So each one brought her child with her, but not her wet nurse, and she (Sarah) nursed them all. That is what is said (below 21:7): “Sarah has nursed children.” Gen. Rabbah (53:9) alludes slightly to this. — [from B.M. 87a] Rashi

Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a *child* be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his seed after him.

Gen 18:10 And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard *it* in the tent door, which *was* behind him.

Gen 18:11 Now Abraham and Sarah *were* old *and* well stricken in age; *and* it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

Gen 18:12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

I will surely return: The angel did not announce that he [himself] would return to him, but he was speaking to him as an emissary of the Omnipresent. Similarly, (above 16:10): “And the angel said to her: I will greatly multiply [your seed],” but he [the angel] did not have the power to multiply [her children], but he spoke as an emissary of the Omnipresent. Here too, it was as an emissary of the Omnipresent that he said this to him. (Elisha said to the Shunamite woman ([II Kings 4:16](#)): “At this season, at this time next year, you will be embracing a son.” And she said, “No my lord, O man of God, do not fail your maidservant. Those angels who announced to Sarah said (below verse 14): ‘At the appointed time, I will return,’” [but Elisha did not promise to return]. Elisha replied, “Those angels, who live and endure forever, said, ‘At the appointed time, I will return.’ But I am flesh and blood, alive today and dead tomorrow. Whether I shall be alive or dead, ‘At this time, etc. [you will embrace a son.]” (Gen. Rabbah 53:2)

When Ishmael became a threat to Isaac and Sarah was concerned about her son's welfare, God came to Sarah's defense and cast Hagar and Ishmael away from the son of promise in order to protect him and Sarah. Sarah was a woman of much wisdom and saw that Ishmael was abusing her son and that in order to protect him, Ishmael had to be sent away. Sarah was protecting the promised seed and heir.

21:9 The Hebrew verb translated **laughing** is ambiguous and may be interpreted as denoting either “mocking” or “playing.” The verbal form used here possibly favors “mocking.” Galatians 4:29 follows this interpretation. Ishmael was probably making fun of Isaac's role as Abraham's promised son.¹ However some Jewish resources have said that in the Hebrew the word ‘playing’ indicates sexual abuse² see end note) קַחֵץ

Gen 21:10 Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, *even* with Isaac.

Gen 21:11 And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.

Gen 21:12 And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Sarah was a great role model and mother of Israel. When she died all mourned her death. She was an example of strength, godliness, purity and humility. The Midrash states that all of Sarah's life was equally good.

Gen 23:1 And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: *these were* the years of the life of Sarah.

Gen 23:2 And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same *is* Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.

And the life of Sarah was one hundred years and twenty years and seven years: The reason that the word “years” was written after every digit is to tell you that every digit is to be expounded upon individually: when she was one hundred years old, she was like a twenty-year-old regarding sin. Just as a twenty-year-old has not sinned, because she is not liable to punishment, so too when she was one hundred years old, she was without sin. And when she was twenty, she was like a seven-year-old as regards to beauty. — from Gen. Rabbah 58:1] **the years of the life of Sarah:** All of them equally good.

¹ Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (86). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

² †[קַחֵץ S⁶⁷¹¹ TWOT¹⁹⁰⁵ GK⁷⁴⁶⁴] **vb. laugh** (Arabic حَجَك (dahika), laugh, Syriac ܡܚܝܟܐ (ghēk), cf. Ba^{ES 34}; v. also (שחק)—**Qal Pf.** 3 fs. קַחֵץ Gn 18:13, etc.; **Impf.** 3 ms. יִצְחַק Gn 21:6, וַיִּצְחַק 17:17; 3 fs. וַתִּצְחַק 18:12;—**laugh**, Gn 18:12, 13, 15^(x2) (J), 17:17 (P); c. ל at, concerning, 21:6. **Pi. Impf.** וַיִּצְחַק Ju 16:25; **Inf. cstr.** לִצְחַק Ex 32:6, (בִּי), לִצְחַק בְּנוּ (בִּי), Gn 39:14, 17; **Pt.** מִצְחַק Gn 19:14; 26:8, מִצְחַק 21:9;— **1. jest** Gn 19:14 (J). **2. sport, play** Gn 21:9 (E); Ex 32:6 (J); *make sport* for Ju 16:25 (לְפִנֵּי); || (וַיִּשְׂחַק־לָנוּ); *toy with* (אָת), of conjugal caresses Gn 26:8 (cf. Doughty^{Arab. Des. i. 231}), *make a toy of*, c. ב, 39:14, 17 (all J).²

SARAI (Sēr' ī) Personal name meaning “princess.”ⁱ

In the Apostolic Scriptures Rom. 4:19 refers to Sarah’s barrenness as evidence of Abraham’s faith;

Romans 4:19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:

Rom. 9:9 cites her conception of Isaac as an example of God’s power in fulfilling a promise.

Rom 9:9 For this *is* the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son

Galatians 4:21–31 contrasts her with Hagar without naming her,

Gal 4:21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

Gal 4:22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

Gal 4:23 But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman *was* by promise.

Gal 4:24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

Gal 4:25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

Gal 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Gal 4:27 For it is written, Rejoice, *thou* barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

Gal 4:28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

Gal 4:29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the Spirit, even so *it is* now.

Gal 4:30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

Gal 4:31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Heb. 11:11 lauds her faith, and

Heb 11:11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

1 Pet. 3:6 describes her relationship with Abraham.

1Pe 3:6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

Sarah's obedience and faith had an impact on not only a nation called Israel but the world as well. She set the tone for all who would follow after her as an example of a woman, wife and mother. Even our Shabbat prayers make mention of her every Erev Shabbat with the following blessing over our daughters:

Y'sim-meikh elohim k'sara, rivka, raheIl v'leah. May God make you as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, & Leah.

ⁱ **SARAI** (Sēr' ī) Personal name meaning "princess." Wife and half sister of Abraham (Gen. 11:29–25:10). Sarah, first called Sarai, had the same father as Abraham. Marriages with half brothers were not uncommon in her time. Sarah traveled with Abraham from Ur to Haran. Then at the age of 65 she accompanied him to Canaan as Abraham followed God's leadership in moving to the land God had promised. During a famine in Canaan, Abraham and Sarah fled to Egypt. This was Abraham's first attempt to pass off Sarah as his sister rather than wife because he feared that he would be killed when the Egyptians saw Sarah's beauty. Consequently, the Pharaoh thought Sarah was Abraham's sister, took Sarah into court, and treated Abraham well. When the Lord sent serious disease on Pharaoh's household, he saw the deception and sent them away. The second trick about Abraham's relationship with Sarah was in the court of Abimelech, king of Gerar, who also took in Sarah. God intervened in Abimelech's dream and protected Sarah. He sent them away with the right to live there and with a gift for Sarah.ⁱ

In her grief over her barrenness, Sarah gave her maid Hagar to Abraham in the hope of an heir, but she expressed resentment when Hagar conceived. When Sarah was almost 90 years old, God changed her name and promised her a son. A year later she bore Isaac.

At the age of 127, Sarah died at Hebron, where she was buried in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre.