

Genesis 21:1-4

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God kept His promise; Abraham and Sarah conceive and have a son at the appointed time. Abraham names the boy Isaac and circumcises him at eight days old in obedience to God.

This chapter begins with the fulfillment of promise, when the Lord took note of Sarah. Here the phrase “took note of” is one word in Hebrew, “paqad” which means “to visit” or “to search out.” In this instance, God is visiting Sarah by mercifully delivering her from an apparently hopeless situation of infertility, as He had promised (Genesis 17:6). A year after God made this promise, Sarah conceived and bore a son. Despite Sarah and Abraham’s old age, this was the appointed time by God for them to have a child. The birth was a miracle of God, because Abraham and Sarah were past childbearing age. Abraham was 75 years old when God first promised him a son, and he was 99 years old (and Sarah was 90) when this promise was restated years later (Genesis 17:1, Genesis 17:17).

However, Isaac was born exactly when God said he would be. A year prior, God visited Abraham’s camp and promised they would have a son. Sarah doubted the promise that she would have a child at her age, laughing. God responded to her, saying, “Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son” (Genesis 18:14).

Just as God said, Isaac was born a year later. Abraham called the name of his son...Isaac, in obedience to God (Genesis 17:17-19). The name Isaac in Hebrew is Yishaq and means “he laughs” or “laughter.” This was because Abraham laughed when God told him he would have a son with his wife, just as she laughed when she learned the same promise. It seemed preposterous that they would ever have children, especially now that they were very old. Yet their laughter, once doubtful, becomes the laughter of joy at finally having a child together.

Isaac was the promised son and heir of Abraham. Through Isaac, God would bless the nations and keep His covenant and promises to Abraham (Genesis 21:8-10, 25:1-6). This was the second time Abraham proclaims the name of his baby, the first being Ishmael, and now Isaac (Genesis 16:15). The name

Isaac was God's choice of naming the child Abraham had fathered by Sarah. Isaac's name was given by God before he was even conceived (Genesis 17:19).

Interestingly, Isaac is the only patriarch who does not have his name changed, likely because God chose his name before he was born (Genesis 17:5, 32:28; 1 Kings 18:31). The emphasis that Isaac is Abraham's son whom Sarah bore to him reinforces the significance of the birth mother. Sarah as the mother of Isaac ensures that the boy is the covenant successor. Isaac was a child of destiny.

In further obedience to God, Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, confirming the child as a covenant member (Genesis 17:23). Abraham performed the circumcision as God commanded him. Abraham is obedient to God's commands and God is faithful to fulfill His promises.

Biblical Text:

1 Then the Lord took note of Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had promised. 2 So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. 3 Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. 4 Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.