

Sarah

You may know me by the name "Sarah," given by the LORD, which essentially means "princess." It was because I was to be a mother of nations. My parents named me Sarai, meaning "my princess." It might be puzzling to figure out the difference between those names, but even more puzzling was the fact that I was 90 when the promise was given and had no children.

My husband, Abraham, formerly Abram, was 75 when we left Haran for Canaan, on the order of the LORD who said, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. To your offspring I give this land." After 10 years and no children, I thought that perhaps Abram should have children by my maid, Hagar. It was a common practice. Abram went along with it and neither of us consulted the LORD. This is ironic for a man later remembered for his faith!

We had already shown a lack of trust in the LORD while in Egypt. Men considered me very beautiful, even at an advanced age, and because kings often claimed women for themselves, regardless of their marital status, simply by killing the husbands, Abram spread the word that I was his sister. It was a half-truth because I was a half-sister. And there were consequences. The LORD inflicted the Egyptians with diseases. Pharaoh figured it out and confronted Abram – the pagan king was more in touch with morality than the "man of faith."

But when Hagar became pregnant, she began to despise me. It could have been anticipated. I asked Abram to get rid of Hagar and the child. Of course, that was difficult for him because this was his son, even though not mine. I believe that in your day there are what you call "blended families" that do not always blend.

About 15 years later my husband met a divine messenger who said, "No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations." Later, three men, actually angels, said to my husband, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. She will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac." Abraham literally fell over laughing, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" So why do I get all the blame for laughing?

While waiting for that fulfillment, a few consequential things happened, the nearby city of Sodom was destroyed. Abraham tried to argue with God to save it if 10 righteous people lived there. Abraham's nephew, Lot, with his two daughters were directed away by angels. Lot's wife perished for "looking back." The way Lot told it there was more than a turn of the head. She loved the benefits of the city and was not sensitive to the evil practiced there. We moved and got another blot on our reputation. Abimelech king of Gerar sent for me because Abraham had said that I was his sister. The slave girls in the kingdom all became infertile and the king had a dream that traced it to having taken me – even though the LORD did not allow him to touch me! Abraham got an earful from the king! "What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should not be done." He ended up giving us gifts of money and land and asking for prayer to restore health to his kingdom and made a treaty. Why would the LORD bless such people as us?

The messenger had predicted that I would be pregnant when he came back. I was and we named the baby "Laughter," Isaac. And everybody laughed when they heard the story! All except Hagar and her teenaged son. At Isaac's weaning party, I told Abraham again to get rid of Hagar and Ishmael.

He sent them into the desert and Hagar prepared to watch her son die. But what did the LORD do? He promised to preserve the boy's life and make of him a great nation. The LORD's promise to Abraham was even fulfilled in the results of an act of disobedience and impatience!

Later came the most traumatic event of our long marriage and I did not even find out about it until it was over. Abraham just told me that he and Isaac were going to perform a sacrifice in the region of Moriah. It was not clear to me why he had to travel to that Jebusite city and why Isaac, who was only a youth, had to go along. In retrospect, Abraham seemed subdued and uncommunicative compared to his usual demeanor when worshipping the LORD.

After returning, Abraham looked completely drained but relieved. He took a deep breath and said he had better tell the story from the beginning. "Sarah, I couldn't tell you this when it happened but the LORD spoke to me, 'Abraham, take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.'" I picked myself up off the floor and Isaac started telling the rest of the whole story with hardly a breath.

"Mother, you won't believe what happened! We got to the mountain and I said, 'Father? The fire and wood are here but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?' Father said, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' And we left the servants and went on together. When we got to the top, Father built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. Then he bound me and laid me on the altar, on top of the wood. He said that this is what the LORD told him to do."

Isaac got a sudden serious look on his young face and said, "Mother, I was not afraid! I knew everything would turn out right, even when he picked up his knife and raised it over me. Then this amazing angel called to him from heaven, 'Abraham! Abraham!' Father said 'Here I am.' 'Do not lay a hand on the boy. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.' We looked up and there in a thicket we saw a ram caught by its horns. Father went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering."

Then I looked at Abraham and he was pale and sweaty. He said, "Sarah, I just had to trust the LORD. We were promised that a nation would come from Isaac, so God would have to raise him from the dead." I hugged Isaac and hugged Abraham.

I did not live to see Isaac married nor to meet his children, but the promise was repeated to Abraham – and it was also to me! The LORD said, "I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Nothing is impossible to the LORD! It might be hard to think of that when it seems that the LORD has forgotten about you or is even doing things all wrong. And you may think the LORD will no longer bless you if you have disobeyed him. But as the angel said, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?"