

## Isaac: Laughing with God or Laughing at God (Genesis 17)

Grace Chapel June 17, 2009 Dr. John Niemelä

### INTRODUCTION

### REVIEW

12:1–9 After Terah's death in Haran, God told Abram to leave his father's house & household; God would make him a great nation & bless him so that he would bless others, so Abram went to Canaan where the Lord revealed Himself again and gave the land to Abram, who then built altars to the Lord and worshipped Him throughout the land that the Lord gave him (claiming that land for the Lord)

12:10–20 A severe famine caused Abram to sojourn in Egypt; he told Sarai that her beauty would cause Egyptians to kill him, but to spare her alive; she was to say that she was his sister, so that he would be blessed & live; Pharaoh took her into his house & bestowed a great dowry on Abram, but Pharaoh's whole household (other than Sarai) became quite sick; Pharaoh rebuked Abram for the evil resulting from saying that she is his sister, because it created the possibility that intimacy could have occurred; Pharaoh gave Sarai back & deported Abram, w/ Sarai, & all that belonged to Abram

13:1–18 Abram left Egypt w/ Sarai, Lot & wealth; returned to Bethel & called on the Lord; Abram & Lot's herds overtaxed the land, so strife arose between their herdsmen while Canaanites looked on; Abram ended the strife because he & Lot were relatives (letting Lot choose land); Lot chose the Jordan valley w/ much water; so they separated; Abram dwelt in (the uplands of) Canaan, but Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain (even wicked Sodom); God reaffirmed the promise of innumerable seed; God invited Abram to investigate the land; Abram settled near Hebron and built an altar (to worship the Lord)

14:1–24 Eastern kings fought the western kings who stopped paying tribute in the 13th year; the next year, the eastern kings attacked the Rephaim, the Zuzim, the Emim, the Horites, the Amalekites, the Amorites; then they attacked 5 kings near the Dead Sea; some western kings fell into tar pits around the Dead Sea; others escaped to the mountains; the eastern kings pillaged Sodom & Gomorrah, taking Lot captive before going northward; an escapee told Abram in Hebron (dwelling w/ his Amorite allies); Abram armed his 318 men & went to Dan; after dividing forces, Abram attacked, pursuing [survivors of the initial attack] to Hobah; thus, Abram rescued all of the booty, Lot, & other captives; after Abram returned from defeating Chedorlaomer, Sodom's king met Abram near Jerusalem; then Melchizedek (king of Jerusalem) brought Abram bread & wine & blessed both Abram & God Most High, the creator, who granted Abram victory; then Abram gave Melchizedek a tithe of [Abram's] whole portion; Sodom's king had offered Abram all Sodom's booty if Abram returned the people to him; Abram said that his loyalty is to God Most High, the creator, so he will not be enriched by the king of Sodom (lest he claim to have enriched Abram), but Abram does not speak for his allies nor for the food eaten by his own men

15:1–21 In a vision the Lord told Abram not to fear, because He is his guardian & benefactor; Abram feared that God had not fulfilled the promise, so his servant (Eliezer of Damascus) might be his heir, but the Lord assured him that his own son (not a servant) would be his heir & his seed would be innumerable (Abram had already believed in the Lord, so He accounted it to him for righteousness); the God who promises is the same One who led Abram to give him this land; Abram requested tangible evidence of God's guarantee, so God told him to prepare animals for a covenant ceremony, which he did; Abram saw himself going into deep sleep as the sun was setting; God said that his seed would be afflicted strangers & servants in a foreign land for 400 years, but would leave that land with many possessions; Abram would die peacefully at an old age; the fourth generation will return to Canaan, when the iniquity of the Amorites is complete [when they are ready for judgment]; the Lord unilaterally ratified the covenant, guaranteeing the fulfillment of the promises; the Lord specified the boundaries of the land and the peoples who would be displaced.

16:1–16 Sarai who was barren (had an Egyptian handmaid) & blamed God for her barrenness; she told Abram that Hagar could produce a child for her, giving him Hagar as wife 10 years after reaching Canaan; Hagar then treated Sarai w/ insolence, so Sarai blamed Abram & asked the Lord to judge; Abram gave Sarai a free hand, so she was harsh w/ Hagar (who fled). the LORD found her by a water spring by the road to Shur; Hagar said she was fleeing Sarai; the LORD said to return to Sarai & to submit to her, promising a significant lineage thru the son she was to name Ishmael, because He heard her affliction; Ishmael (and his lineage) would be as a wildman (fighting w/ brethren) as they dwell near his brethren; she called on the LORD who spoke (You are a God who sees me) so the well (between Kadesh and Bered) is called *Be'er lahay rō'i* & she exclaimed that she still lives after seeing the LORD; Abram named Ishmael her son when he was 86

**NEW EXPOSITION**

***(17:1–8) God appeared & changed Abram’s name to affirm the covenant***

**(17:1–2) The Lord appeared as El Shaddai when Abram was 99, commanding him to walk blamelessly before Him as He entered into covenant with Abram**

13 years have elapsed since Ishmael was born (16:16)

Meaning of El Shaddai

**(17:3a) Abram fell on his face before the Lord**

**(17:3b–5) God changed his name from exalted father to father of a multitude as a pledge that he would become the father of many nations**

His father (Terah) was an exalted father

*Ab ram*  
*Father of exaltation*

*Ab ra ham[ah]*      the *r* has no meaning  
*Father of a multitude*

**(17:6–8) God reiterated the promises of fruitfulness of seed and all of the land of Canaan under the everlasting (Abrahamic) covenant to Abraham and to his seed forever**

***(17:9–14) God gave circumcision as the sign to characterize those with whom He covenanted***  
**(17:9–11) Abraham and his seed were commanded to circumcise each male child and Abraham was to be circumcised as a sign of the covenant**

**(17:12–14) Male children at eight days, whether free or slave (even Gentiles) were to be circumcised at eight days; those not circumcised would be regarded as Gentiles (cut off from the commonwealth of Israel)**

It is important to note that the Abrahamic covenant extended blessings to Gentiles, but it is a lesser set of blessings

Cf. Genesis 12:3

Cf. the promises to Ishamael (in chapter 16 and at the end of chapter 17)

*(17:15–22) God changed Sarai’s name as a pledge of her role in the covenant*

**(17:15–16) God changed Sarai’s name to Sarah as a pledge that she would have a son and would have nations and kings as progeny**

*Sar* would mean *prince*; *Sarah* is *princess*. *Sarai* has an uncertain meaning.

**(17:17) Abram laughed**

Why did Abram laugh?

Sarah will also laugh. Why?

**(17:18–22) Abram interceded for Ishmael, but God told him that Sarah’s son, Isaac (and his seed), would be the one with whom He would establish His everlasting covenant, but God has heard the petition for Ishmael and will bless him; then the Lord departed**

*(17:23–27) Abram, Ishmael, and every male of the household (including servants) were circumcised that day*

**APPENDIX: People mistakenly try to compare circumcision with baptism**

**CONCLUSION**