

Coastal Sermon Notes: Genesis 22:1-18
The Reality of Wilderness Wonderings: October 19, 2025

1. The Rejoicing of a Son: Genesis 21:11-21

¹ **The LORD visited Sarah** as he had said, and **the LORD** did to **Sarah** as he had promised.

² And **Sarah** conceived and bore **Abraham** a son in his **old age** at the time of which God had spoken to him.

³ **Abraham** called the name of his son who was born to him, whom **Sarah** bore him, **Isaac**

⁴ And **Abraham** circumcised his son **Isaac** when he was **eight days old**, as **God** had commanded him.

⁵ **Abraham** was a **hundred years old** when his son **Isaac** was born to him.

And **Sarah** said,
“**God** has made **laughter** for me; everyone who hears will **laugh** over me.”

⁷ And **she** said,
“**Who would have said to Abraham** that **Sarah** would **nurse children**? **Yet I have borne him a son** in his **old age**.”

a. **The Lord Visited Sarah.** I love that phrase. There is nothing quite like a visitation from those you love. The term here is personal, intimate, and allows the one visited to be reminded they have not been forgotten. **The Hebrew: נָקַד (paqad):**

- **It implies divine attention and care. It is more than God just remembered.**

- God **came to** Sarah
- God **attended to** her personally
- God **intervened** in her specific situation
- God gave her His **focused attention**

- **Sarah's Story makes it even more intimate**

- Barren for decades (Genesis 11:30)
- Promised a son multiple times (Genesis 17:16, 19; 18:10, 14)
- Waited until she was **90 years old**
- Laughed in disbelief (Genesis 18:12)
- Had given up hope physically ("it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women" - 18:11)

b. **The intimacy of conception**

- Genesis 21:1 is followed by verse 2: "And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son..."
- The "visiting" includes the **intimate act of opening her womb**.
- God didn't just decree it from heaven - He personally intervened in her body to make conception possible.
- This is deeply personal, physical, intimate divine action.

c. **Abraham Circumcised Isaac at eight days old. Why the eighth day?**

- **Most likely a correlation with the creation account.** The creation took six days, and God rested on the seventh day. The eight day may be a reference to a new creation. Isaac was circumcised on the eighth day. The Jewish calendar begins on Sunday, the first day of the week.
- Interestingly, the early Christians would say the resurrection of Jesus happened on the eighth day, viewing Jesus as a new creation.
- Again, the idea is that the number 7 represents completion, day eight begins a new cycle.
 - Sunday – Day 1 (Palm Sunday)
 - Monday – Day 2
 - Tuesday – Day 3
 - Wednesday – Day 4 (Ash Wednesday)
 - Thursday – Day 5
 - Friday – Day 6 (Good Friday)
 - Saturday – Day 7 (Sabbath)
 - **Jesus rose on day 8.**
- **Isaac, the child has lived a full week:**
 - Experienced a complete creation cycle (7 days)
 - Now enters covenant on day of "new beginning"
 - Symbolically: natural life (7 days) → covenant life (8th day)
- **Here is a “Nerdy” Medical/Scientific Discovery: Vitamin K levels:**
 - **Vitamin K** is essential for blood clotting
 - **Newborns are born with low Vitamin K** (doesn't cross placenta well)
 - **Vitamin K levels** are lowest on days 1-3
 - **Then rise significantly** as gut bacteria develop
 - **Peak around** day 8
 - **Then decline again**
 - **Day 8 is literally the safest day in the child's life** for a surgical procedure involving bleeding. It is amazing that God commanded day 8 circumcision ~4,000 years ago. Modern medicine only discovered why day 8 is medically optimal in the 20th century:

d. **The Laughter Theme:** If you recall, the Lord told Abraham and Sarah they would have a kid next year. How did both respond? On separate occasions they both laughed, signifying a degree of disbelief. How did God respond? He told them to name the child, Isaac, which means he will laugh. It was God's way to always remind the parents that they laughed at God's promise.

- **Sarah's Response to her newborn:** "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over (with) me." When you read that you are genuinely happy for her. Infertility is a hard thing for couples who have experienced this. However, just as you want to celebrate, she then proceeds to say something shocking.
- **"Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children?** Yet I have borne him a son in his old age." Wait, what!? Who would have said that they both would bear children? Well, of course, that's what God said. It is almost like she has not let that really sink in. She was proud of herself for bearing a son for Abraham. Oh Sarah, why did you say it like that? Why didn't you just praise him in front of everyone? Sadly, sometimes this can be true about us. We can forget God over the course of a week when He has blessed us. Sometimes God's people can have a short-term memory after a God blessing.

2. The Heartbreak of a Son: Genesis 21:8-14

⁸ And the **child** grew and **was weaned**.

And **Abraham** made a **great feast** on the day that **Isaac was weaned**.

⁹ But **Sarah** saw the **son** of Hagar the Egyptian, whom **she** had borne to **Abraham**, **laughing**.

¹⁰ So **she said** to **Abraham**,

“Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.”

¹¹ And the thing was **very displeasing** to **Abraham** on account of **his son**.

¹² But **God** said to **Abraham**, **“Be not displeased** because of **the boy** and your **slave woman**.

Whatever **Sarah** says to you, **do as she tells you**,

for through **Isaac** shall **your offspring** be named.

¹³ And **I will make a nation of the son** of the **slave woman** also, because **he is your offspring**.”

¹⁴ So **Abraham** rose early in the morning and **took bread** and a **skin of water** and **gave** it to **Hagar**, putting it on **her shoulder**, along with **the child** and **sent her away**.

a. **The Weaning of Isaac.** The average time a mother weens in America is one year or less. It is essentially the same in Great Britain and other European countries. However, in the Ancient Near East (ANE), we have documentation that it was on average two to three years. So, if you look at a medieval painting, you are likely to see a painting of Isaac being weaned as an infant. However, this is looking at this event, or shall I say “painting this event” from a western perspective. It is pretty safe to say that Isaac was a toddler.

- **This also best explains why Abraham had a GREAT feast.** This was meant to celebrate Isaac moving from an infant to a toddler. In a culture where the infant mortality rate was high, this was an important reason to celebrate. Isaac had survived infancy.
- **Everyone was happy until Sarah noticed that Ishmael was laughing at Isaac, the toddler.** In fact, Ishmael’s laughter would ultimately have his mom and him go packing.

b. **The Laughter Theme goes Full Circle.**

- **Abraham and Sarah laughed** at the thought of having a son at an advanced age
- **God told them to name their son, Isaac**, which connected to laughter, means he will laugh.”
- **Sarah laughs in joy** when she gives birth to Isaac.
- **At the feast Ishmael laughs at “he will laugh” (Isaac).**
- **Ishmael’s laughter makes Sarah angry**, and she orders her husband to “Cast out the slave woman and her son.”
- **The sad part of this reality** was that the reason Hagar and Ishmael are there is the first place was because of the sins of Abraham and Sarah, when they were in Egypt. They both lied about them being spouses. What happens next. Sarah comes up with a plan to have children through her maid servant. Sarah arranges for Hagar to become his wife and together they produce a child (Ishmael.). This just illustrates the point is that sometimes our sins come back to haunt us.

c. **Abraham is very displeased about Sarah’s demand.** There are two words in Hebrew that mean good and bad /evil. It is the Hebrew words, **“ra” and “tov.”** These are the same words used on the Garden when it came to the tree of good (tov) and Evil (ra). When Abraham hears Sarah’s demand, he uses the term, **“ra,”** which in his context is evil.

However, the Lord tells Abraham not to think it is evil / bad, but to do what Sarah tells him because she was right, Isaac will be the promised child. What God is communicating in a sense is that sending them away is not evil; it is actually part of my plan. He will make a nation out of his firstborn.

- d. **Abraham rises in the morning and sends Hagar and Ishmael away with a loaf of bread and a skin of water.** There is a nuance here that is easy to miss. Abraham in a sense is sacrificing Ishmael. He seemingly is sending them away to die in the desert. Yes, he was told the child would become a nation, but he still had to be willing to lose Ishmael.
- No doubt, the author is preparing us for the second time Abraham will have to “sacrifice” a son.** This is heartbreaking. He will have to be willing to give up the two things most important to him; his two sons. Here, he says goodbye to Ishmael, who would be around seventeen years old at the time. Isaac was around two or three.

3. God Hears! Genesis 21:14b-18

And **she** departed and wandered in **the wilderness of Beersheba**.

¹⁵ When the water in the skin was gone, **she** put **the child** under one of the bushes.

¹⁶ Then she went and **sat down** opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot, for **she said**,
 “Let me not look on the death of the child.”
 And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept.

¹⁷ And God heard the voice of the **boy**, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What troubles you, **Hagar**?

Fear not, for God has heard the voice of **the boy** where he is.

¹⁸ Up! Lift up the boy, and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make **him** into a great nation.”

- a. **The Water is Gone.** This is the last thing you want to see in the dessert. Hagar distances herself from Ishmael because she cannot look at her child dying. The pain is too much. She moves a bowshot away for one simple purpose, to lift up her voice and cry.
- As a reader, you should be connecting the dots. I have heard this story before with Hagar. The last time was when an angel told her to name her child, God hears (Ishmael).

Category	Genesis 16	Genesis 21
Hagar's Status	Pregnant / Fleeing	Mother / Exiled
How she Arrived	Fled from Sarah	Sent by Abraham (God's Plan)
Water Source	Spring (v.7)	Well: Verse (v, 19)
God's Action	Angel finds her	God hears the Boy
Key Words: HEARS	God heard Affliction (v. 11)	God Hears Boy (2 x in Vs 17)
Key Word's: SEES	Hagar sees God -El Roi (v. 13)	God Opens Eyes: Sees Well (v. 17)
Promise Given	Great Nation (v. 11)	Great Nation (v18)
Outcome	Returns to Household	Stays in Wilderness
Purpose	Submit and Return	Separate and Establish

- b. **The Important Lesson:** Even if you are an outcast, God Hears and Sees you. In this beautiful story, God takes the mother and son who were not chosen and provides much needed divine assurance. In other words, this is not the end of your story. When you leave the wilderness, and you will, you will not only survive, but your son will become a great nation.

The name Hagar means immigrant in the Hebrew, and no that she felt that way when she was forced to leave Egypt because of Abraham's deception, and now, when she is kicked out Sarah's household. There is so much pain for Hagar. Life was beyond her control, but now she gets the divine assurance that they will return home, and Ishmael will be blessed. Hagar would be a fascinating conversation when we get to heaven. Thank goodness God hears and sees us, even as outcasts.

4. God is Present: Genesis 21:19-21

¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes,
and **she** saw a well of water.

And **she** went
and filled the skin with water
and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰ And God was with **the boy**,
and he grew up.

He lived in **the wilderness**
and became an expert with the bow.

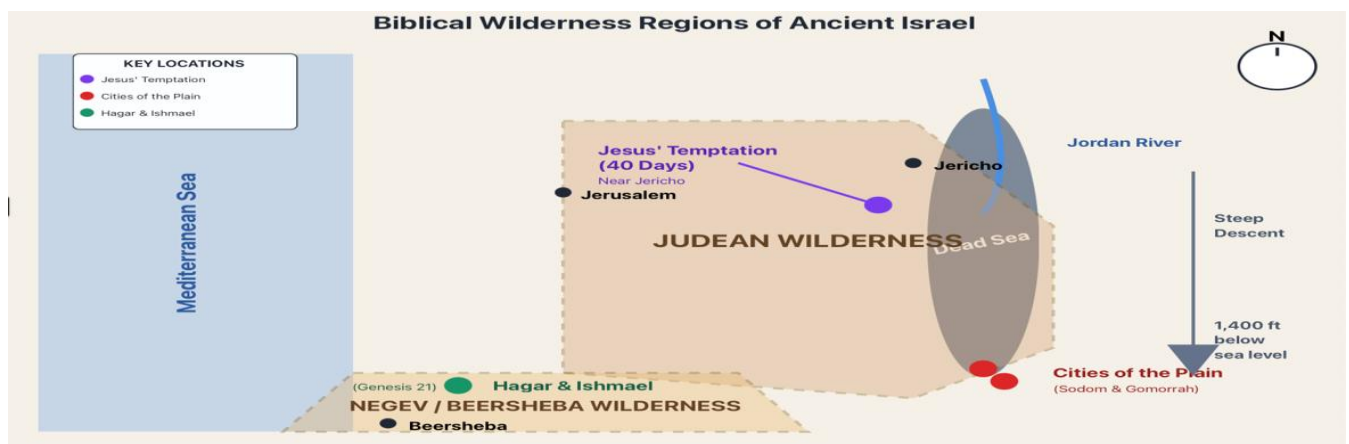
²¹ He lived in the **wilderness of Paran**,
and **his mother** took a wife for him
from **the land of Egypt**.

- a. **The Wilderness Themes: Hagar sees water “again.”** We have also been here before. On the previous wilderness trip when Hagar fled Sarah because of mistreatment, she also saw a well spring. Here response to God was naming him El Roi, Good sees.

- **Let's compare both trips to the wilderness.**
- **This chart serves two main purposes.** First, this is Hagar's Second trip to the Wilderness. Second, even in the wilderness, God hears and sees you.

- b. **The Wilderness Geographically: Map**

- The **Negev** (south of Canaan) - arid, sparsely populated
- The **Sinai peninsula** - where Israel wandered 40 years
- The **Judean wilderness** - east of Jerusalem, descending to the Dead Sea
- The **Arabian desert** - where Hagar and Ishmael fled



c. **The Wilderness as Theological Space:** Place of Testing and Formation. The wilderness is where God shapes His people:

- **Israel's 40 years** (Exodus-Deuteronomy): Testing obedience, revealing hearts, teaching dependence
- **Moses' 40 years** in Midian: Preparation before calling
- **Elijah's 40 days** to Horeb: Spiritual renewal after burnout
- **Jesus' 40 days** of temptation: Recapitulating and succeeding where Israel failed
- **Paul's time in Arabia** (Galatians 1:17): Formation after conversion

d. **Place of Divine Encounter:** Stripped of distractions, the wilderness becomes a meeting place with God:

- **Moses at the burning bush** (Exodus 3)
- **Israel receiving the Law at Sinai** (Exodus 19-20)
- **Elijah hearing the "still small voice"** (1 Kings 19)
- **John the Baptist's prophetic calling** (Luke 1:80, 3:2-4)
- **Paul receiving revelation** (Galatians 1:11-17)

e. **Place of Provision and Dependence:** The wilderness reveals both human helplessness and divine faithfulness:

- **Hagar and Ishmael:** God opens her eyes to water (Genesis 21:19)
- **Israel:** Manna, quail, water from rock (Exodus 16-17)
- **Elijah:** Fed by ravens, then an angel (1 Kings 17:4-6; 19:5-8)
- **Jesus:** Ministered to by angels (Matthew 4:11)

f. **The wilderness becomes a place of:**

- New beginnings
- Renewed covenant relationship
- The Pathway to the Promised Land
- Where God is doing deep work.

g. **Why God Leads Us Into Wilderness**

▪ **To Expose What's Really in Our Hearts**

"Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart" (Deuteronomy 8:2)

▪ **To Teach Dependence on God Alone**

"He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna... to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD" (Deuteronomy 8:3). We live in a world of:

- **Self-sufficiency** as the highest virtue
- **Control** as the illusion we chase

h. **How We Relate:** Likewise, we ourselves have our own wilderness wonderings.

▪ **Personal/Relational Wildernesses:**

- **Chronic illness** - years of pain, no cure in sight, feeling forgotten by God
- **Infertility** - wanting a child, month after month of disappointment, "water running out"
- **Prodigal child** - watching your son/daughter walk away from faith, feeling helpless
- **Divorce/betrayal** - marriage ending, feeling cast out, starting over with nothing
- **Grief/loss** - death of spouse, parent, child - the wilderness of "life without them"
- **Addiction** (yours or loved one's) - trapped, can't escape, feel like you're dying

- **Loneliness** - single when you long to be married, isolated, unseen
- **Caregiving exhaustion** - caring for aging parent or disabled child, no end in sight
- **Financial Wildernesses:**
 - **Job loss** - unemployment dragging on, savings depleted, "water running out"
 - **Business failure** - dream collapsed, debt mounting, future uncertain
 - **Medical debt** - crushing bills, bankruptcy, feel like you can't survive
 - **Poverty** - working multiple jobs, still can't make ends meet, invisible to society
- **Spiritual Wildernesses:**
 - **Unanswered prayer** - praying for years, silence from heaven, wondering if God hears
 - **Crisis of faith** - doubting everything you believed, feeling abandoned by God
 - **Ministry burnout** - serving faithfully, feeling empty, "water skin is empty"
 - **Church hurt** - wounded by Christians, feel cast out, don't know where to go
- **Circumstantial Wildernesses:**
 - **Chronic pain/disability** - body betraying you, limited, dependent
 - **Mental illness** - depression, anxiety, feeling like you're dying inside
 - **Legal troubles** - false accusations, prison, system against you
 - **Immigration/refugee** - literally cast out from homeland, strangers in strange land

Conclusion: As Impossible as it may seem; God uses the wilderness wanderings of our lives to keep us dependent on Him. In the process, He is creating your story, your testimony to share with others that no matter what happens, God "sees" you and "hears you," even in your darkest distress.