

The Periphery of Redemption: The Torah Readings of Rosh haShannah

1. Genesis 17:1-27; 18:1-15

1 And when Avram was ninety-nine years old God appeared to Avram, and said to him: 'I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be whole. 2 And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will make of you, many.' 3 And Avram fell on his face; and God talked with him, saying: 4 ' My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 And your name shall no longer be Avram, but rather your name shall be Avraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations 6 And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall descend from you. 7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendents after for generations, an eternal covenant to be a God for you and for your descendents after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your descendents after you. the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.' 9 And God said to Avraham: 'You shall keep My covenant, you and your descendents after for generations 10 This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendents after you - every male among you shall be circumcised.

15 And God said unto Avraham: ' Sarai your wife, shall not be called Sarai, but rather Sarah is to be her name. 16 And I will bless her, and I will give you a son from her; I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall descend from her.' 17 Avraham fell on his face, and laughed, and said in his heart: 'Shall one who is a hundred years old beget a child? and shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, give birth?' 18 And Avraham said to God: 'Would that Yishmael might live before You!' 19 And God said: But your wife Sarah shall give birth to a son for you; and you

א ויהי אברהם, בן-תשעים שנה ותשע שנים; ויִרְא
קִוּוּק אֶל-אֲבְרָם, וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֱנִי-אֱלֹהִים
שְׂדֵי--הַתְּהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי, וְהָיָה תָמִים. ב וְאַתְּנָה בְרִיתִי,
בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ; וְאַרְבֵּה אוֹתָךְ, בְּמֵאֵד מְאֹד. ג וַיִּפֹּל
אֲבְרָם, עַל-פָּנָיו; וַיְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ אֱלֹקִים, לֵאמֹר. ד אֲנִי,
הִנֵּה בְרִיתִי אִתְּךָ; וְהָיִיתָ, לְאֵב הַמּוֹן גוֹיִם. ה
וְלֹא-יִקְרָא עוֹד אֶת-שְׁמֹךָ, אֲבְרָם; וְהָיָה שְׁמֹךָ
אֲבְרָהָם, כִּי אֵב-הַמּוֹן גוֹיִם נִתְּתִיךָ. ו וְהִפְרַתִּי אִתְּךָ
בְּמֵאֵד מְאֹד, וְנִתְּתִיךָ לְגוֹיִם; וּמְלָכִים, מִמֶּךָ יֵצְאוּ. ז
וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינְךָ, וּבֵין זַרְעֶךָ אֶתְרִיד
לְדוֹרָתָם--לְבְרִית עוֹלָם: לְהִיּוֹת לְךָ לְאֱלֹהִים, וּלְזַרְעֶךָ
אֶתְרִיד. ח וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ וּלְזַרְעֶךָ אֶתְרִיד אֶת אֶרֶץ
מִגְרִיד, אֶת כָּל-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן, לְאַחֲזֹתָ, עוֹלָם; וְהָיִיתִי
לְהֵם, לְאֱלֹקִים. ט וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים אֶל-אֲבְרָהָם, וְאַתָּה
אֶת-בְּרִיתִי תִשְׁמֹר--אֶתָּה וְזַרְעֶךָ אֶתְרִיד, לְדוֹרָתָם. י
זֹאת בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרוּ, בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם, וּבֵין זַרְעֶךָ,
אֶתְרִיד: הַמּוֹל לְכֶם, כָּל-זָכָר.

... {ס} טו וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים, אֶל-אֲבְרָהָם, שְׂרִי
אֲשָׁתְךָ, לֹא-תִקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמֵהּ שְׂרִי: כִּי שָׂרָה, שְׁמָהּ.
טז וּבִרְכַתִּי אֹתָהּ, וְגַם נָתַתִּי מִמֶּנָּה לְךָ בֵּן; וּבִרְכַתִּיהָ
וְהָיְתָה לְגוֹיִם, מְלָכֵי עַמִּים מִמֶּנָּה יֵהְיוּ. יז וַיִּפֹּל
אֲבְרָהָם עַל-פָּנָיו, וַיִּצְחַק; וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלִבּוֹ, הֲלִבָּן
מֵאָה-שָׁנָה יוֹלֵד, וְאִם-שָׂרָה, הִבְת-תִּשְׁעִים שָׁנָה תֵּלֵד.
יח וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבְרָהָם, אֶל-הָאֱלֹקִים: לוֹ יִשְׁמְעָאֵל, יִתְּנָה
לְפָנָי. יט וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים, אֲבָל שָׂרָה אֲשָׁתְךָ יִלְדֶת

shall call his name Yitzchak; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendents after him. 20 And as for Yishmael, I have heard you; I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But My covenant will I establish with Yitzchak, whom Sarah shall give birth to at this set time in the next year. . . .

Chapter 18

1 And God appeared to [Avraham] by the terebinths of Mamre, as he sat in the tent entrance in the heat of the day; 2 and he lifted up his eyes and saw three men standing near him; and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent entrance, and bowed down to the earth, 3 and said: 'My lord, if I have found favor in your eyes, do not pass by your servant. 4 Let now a little water be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest under the tree. 5 And I will fetch a loaf of bread, and eat to your heart's content; after that you can go, having stopped in at my home.' And they said: 'Yes, do as you said.' 6 And Avraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said: 'Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes.' 7 And Avraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it to the boy; and he hurried to prepare it. 8 And he took butter, and milk, and the meat which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they ate. 9 And they said to him: 'Where is your wife Sarah?' And he said: 'She is in the tent.' 10 And he said: 'I will return to you at this time next year and there will be a son for your wife Sarah.' And Sarah heard in the tent entrance, which was behind him.-- 11 Now Avraham and Sarah were old, and advanced in years; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.-- 12 And Sarah laughed to herself, saying: 'Now that I am old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?' 13 And God said to Avraham: 'Why did Sarah laugh, saying: Shall I have a child, as I am old? 14 Is any thing too hard for God? I will return to you at this time next year and there will be a son for Sarah' 15 Sarah denied it, saying: 'I did not laugh; because she was afraid. And God

לָהּ בֵּן, וְקָרָאתָ אֶת-שְׁמוֹ, יִצְחָק; וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתּוֹ לְבְרִית עוֹלָם, לְזָרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו. כ וּלְיִשְׁמָעֵאל, שְׁמַעְתִּיד--הִנֵּה בִּרְכִיתִי אִתּוֹ וְהִפְרִיתִי אִתּוֹ וְהִרְבִּיתִי אִתּוֹ, בְּמֵאד מְאֹד: שְׁנַיִם-עָשָׂר נְשִׂאִים יוֹלִיד, וְנִתְּתִיו לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל. כֹּא וְאֶת-בְּרִיתִי, אֶקִּים אֶת-יִצְחָק, אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵד לָהּ שָׂרָה לְמוֹעֵד הַזֶּה, בְּשָׁנָה הַאֲחֵרָת. . . .

פרק יח

א וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהֵי יִקְוָה, בְּאַלְנֵי מְמָרָא; וְהוּא יָשָׁב פְּתַח-הָאֵהָל, כְּחֹם הַיּוֹם. ב וַיֵּשֶׂא עֵינָיו, וַיֵּרָא, וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אַנְשִׁים, נֹצְבִים עָלָיו; וַיֵּרָא, וַיִּרְץ לְקָרְאֵתָם מִפְּתַח הָאֵהָל, וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ, אַרְצָה. ג וַיֹּאמֶר: אֲדֹנָי, אִם-נָא מְצֹאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ--אֵל-נָא תַעֲבֹר, מֵעַל עַבְדְּךָ. ד יִקַּח-נָא מְעֻט-מִמֶּנִּי, וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם; וְהִשְׁעֲנוּ, תַּחַת הָעֵץ. ה וְאָקַחְתָּ פַת-לֶחֶם וְסֻעָדוֹ לְבַבְכֶם, אַחֵר תַּעֲבֹרוּ--כִּי-עַל-כֵּן עֹבְרֵתֶם, עַל-עַבְדְּכֶם; וַיֹּאמְרוּ, כֵּן תַעֲשֶׂה כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ. ו וַיִּמְהַר אַבְרָהָם הָאֵהָלָה, אֵל-שָׂרָה; וַיֹּאמֶר, מִהֲרִי שְׁלֵשׁ סְאִים קָמַח סֹלֶת--לוֹשִׁי, וַעֲשִׂי עֲגוֹת. ז וְאֵל-הַבָּקָר, רֵץ אַבְרָהָם; וַיִּקַּח בֶּן-בָּקָר רֶדֶ וְטוֹב, וַיִּתֵּן אֵל-הַנֶּעֱר, וַיִּמְהַר, לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתוֹ. ח וַיִּקַּח חֲמָאָה וְחֶלֶב, וּבֶן-הַבָּקָר אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה, וַיִּתֵּן, לַפְּנִיָּהֶם; וְהוּא-עֹמֵד עֲלֵיהֶם תַּחַת הָעֵץ, וַיֹּאבְלוּ. ט וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו, אֵיךְ שָׂרָה אֲשַׁמָּה; וַיֹּאמֶר, הִנֵּה כְּאֵהָל. י וַיֹּאמֶר, שׁוּב אֲשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כְּעַת חַיָּה, וְהִנֵּה-בֵן, לְשָׂרָה אֲשַׁמָּה; וְשָׂרָה שְׂמַעַת פְּתַח הָאֵהָל, וְהוּא אַחֲרָיו. יא וְאַבְרָהָם וְשָׂרָה זָקְנִים, בָּאִים בַּיָּמִים; חֲדָל לִהְיוֹת לְשָׂרָה, אֶרְחַ בְּנָשִׁים. יב וַתִּצְחַק שָׂרָה, בְּקִרְבָּהּ לֵאמֹר: אַחֲרֵי בְלִתִּי הֵיטָה-לִּי עֲדָנָה, וְאֲדֹנָי זָקֵן. יג וַיֹּאמֶר יִקְוָה, אֵל-אַבְרָהָם: לָמָּה זֶה צִחַקְךָ שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר, הֲאֵף אֶמְנֵם אֵל--וְאֲנִי זָקְנָתִי. יד הֲיִפְלֵא מִיָּהוָה, דְּבָר; לְמוֹעֵד אֲשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ, כְּעַת

said: 'No, you did laugh.'	תָּהָה--וּלְשָׂרָה בֶּן. טו וּתְכַחֵשׁ שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר לֹא צָחַקְתִּי, כִּי יִרְאֶה; וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא, כִּי צָחַקְתָּ.
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2. Commentary of Yitzchak ben Yehudah Abarbanel on Genesis 17 (b. 1437- d. 1508, Portugal and Italy)

<p>God responded to the question, <i>Would Yishmael live before you</i> by saying, <i>But Sarah your wife</i>, as if to say, 'Avraham, you thought that all of the good that I promised to do for you was for your sake and therefore once you had your son Yishmael, you thought that the birth of Yitzchak was unnecessary, so much so that you asked <i>Would that Yishmael live and be before Me in My covenant</i>. Know that the matter is not so, because Sarah is worthy of bearing you a child and just as you are a necessary parent, so is she, and Yishmael is not her son and therefore from the perspective of Sarah, the birth of Yitzchak is necessary, even though Yishmael will not die.</p>	<p>השיב הקב"ה לשאלת לו ישמעאל יהיה לפניך באמרו אבל שרה אשתך כאומר אברהם אתה חשבת שכל הטובה אשר יעדתי לך לעשות לך יהיה בעבורך ולכן בהיות לך ישמעאל בנך חשבת שתהיה הולדת יצחק ללא צורך עד שמפני זה שאלת אם יהיה ישמעאל ואם יהיה לפני בבריתי. דע כי אין הדבר כן כי שרה ראוי שתלד לך בן וכמו שאתה בהולדה כן תזכה היא והנה ישמעאל אינו בנה ולכן מפאת שרה היתה הולדת יצחק הכרחי אע"פ שלא ימות ישמעאל</p>
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3. Genesis Chapter 21

<p>1 And God remembered Sarah as God had said, and God did to Sarah as God had spoken. 2 And Sarah became pregnant, and gave birth to a son for Avraham in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3 And Avraham called the name of his son that was born to him, whom Sarah birthed for him, Yitzchak. 4 And Avraham circumcised his son Yitzchak when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 And Avraham was a hundred years old, when his son Yitzchak was born to him. 6 And Sarah said: 'God has made laughter for me; every one that hears will laugh for me.' 7 And she said: 'Who would have said about Avraham, that Sarah should nurse children? for I have borne him a son in his old age.'</p>	<p>א ויקנן פקד את-שָׂרָה, כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר; וַיַּעַשׂ יְקֹוֹק לְשָׂרָה, כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר. ב וַתֵּהָר וַתֵּלֵד שָׂרָה לְאַבְרָהָם בֶּן, לְזִקְנָיו, לְמוֹעֵד, אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר אֱלֹקִים. ג וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם אֶת-שֵׁם-בְּנוֹ הַנּוֹלָד-לוֹ, אֲשֶׁר-יָלְדָה-לוֹ שָׂרָה--יִצְחָק. ד וַיִּמָּל אַבְרָהָם אֶת-יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ, בֶּן-שְׁמוֹנֶת יָמִים, כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֱלֹקִים. ה וַאֲבְרָהָם, בֶּן-מֵאָת שָׁנָה, בְּהוֹלֵד לוֹ, אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ. ו וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה--צָחַק, עָשׂ: כָּל-הַשְּׂמֵעַ, יִצְחָק-לִי. ז וַתֹּאמֶר, מִי מָלַל לְאַבְרָהָם, הַיְנִיקָה בָנִים, שָׂרָה: כִּי-יִלְדֵתִי בֶן, לְזִקְנָיו.</p>
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8 And the child grew, and was weaned. And Avraham made a great feast on the day that Yitzchak was weaned. 9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Avraham, laughing (*metzachek*). 10 [Sarah] said to Avraham: 'Cast out this maid and her son; for the son of this maid shall not inherit with my son, with Yitzchak' 11 And the matter was very bad in Avraham's sight on account of his son. 12 And God said to Avraham: 'Let the matter not be bad in your eyes because of the lad, and because of your maid; listen to everything that Sarah says; for Yitzchak will be your official heir. 13 And also of the son of the maid will I make a nation, because he is your child. 14 And Avraham arose up early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away; and she departed, and strayed in the wilderness of Beer-sheva. 15 And the water in the bottle was finished, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. 16 And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bow-shot; for she said: 'Let me not see the death of the child.' And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept. 17 And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her: 'What is with you Hagar? Do not be afraid for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. 18 Get up and lift up the lad, and hold him fast by the hand; for I will make him a great nation.' 19 And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. 20 And God was with the lad, and he grew; and he lived in the wilderness, and became an archer. 21 And he lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

ח ויגדל הילד, ויגמל; ויעש אברהם משתה גדול, ביום הגמל את-יצחק. ט ותרא שרה את-בן-הגֵר המצרית, אשר-ילדה לאברהם--מצחק. י ותאמר, לאברהם, גֵרש האמה הזאת, ואת-בנה: כי לא יירש בן-האמה הזאת, עם-בני עם-יצחק. יא וירע הדבר מאד, בעיני אברהם, על, אודת בנו. יב ויאמר אלקים אל-אברהם, אל-ירע בעיניך על-הנער ועל-אמתה--כל אשר תאמר אליך שרה, שמע בקלה: כי ביצחק, יקרא לה ורע. יג וגם את-בן-האמה, לגוי אשימנו: כי ורעה, הוא. יד וישכם אברהם בבקר ויקח-להם וחתמת מים ויתן אל-הגֵר שם על-שכמה, ואת-הילד--וישלתה; ותלה ותתע, במדבר באר שבע. טו ויכלו המים, מן-החתמת; ותשלף את-הילד, תחת אחד השיתים. טז ותלה ותשב לה מנגד, הרחק כמטחוי קשת, כי אמרה, אל-אראה במות הילד; ותשב מנגד, ותשא את-קלה ותבך. יז וישמע אלקים, את-קול הנער, ויקרא מלאך אלקים אל-הגֵר מן-השמים, ויאמר לה מה-לך הגֵר; אל-תיראי, כי-שמע אלקים אל-קול הנער באשר הוא-שם. יח קומי שאי את-הנער, והחזיקי את-גדף בו: כי-לגוי גדול, אשימנו. יט ויפקח אלקים את-עיניה, ותרא באר מים; ותלה ותמלא את-החתמת, מים, ותשק, את-הנער. כ ויהי אלקים את-הנער, ויגדל; וישב, במדבר, ויהי, רבה קשת. כא וישב, במדבר פארן; ותקח-לו אמו אשה, מארץ מצרים.

4. Bereishit Rabbah 53:11

<p>ותרא שרה את בן הגר המצרי (בראשית כא, ט), אמר רבי שמעון בן יוחאי רבי עקיבא הנה אומר בו דבר לגנאי, ואני אומר בו דבר לשבח, דרש רבי עקיבא ותרא שרה וגו', אין מצחק אלא גלוי עריות, היה מה דאת אמר (בראשית לט, יז): בא אלי העבד העברי אשר הבאת לנו לצחק בי, מלמד שהיתה אמנו שרה רואה אותו לישמעאל מכבש גנות וצד נשי אנשים ומענה אותן. תני רבי ישמעאל אומר, אין הלשון הנה של צחוק אלא עבודת כוכבים, שנאמר (שמות לב, ו): וישב העם לאכל ושתו ויקמו לצחק, מלמד שהיתה אמנו שרה רואה את ישמעאל בונה בימוסיות וצד חגבים ומקריב עליהם. רבי אלעזר בנו של רבי יוסי הגלילי אומר אין הלשון הנה צחוק אלא לשון שפיכות דמים, היה מה דאת אמר (שמואל ב ב, יד): יקומו נא הנערים וישחקו לפנינו. רבי עזריה משום רבי לוי אומר, אמר ליה ישמעאל ליצחק גלגל ונראה חלקנו בשדה, והיה ישמעאל נוטל קשת וחצים ומורה כלפי יצחק, ועושה עצמו כאלו מצחק, הדא הוא דכתיב (משלי כו, יח יט): כמתלהלה היתה זקים וגו' פן איש רמה את רעהו ואומר הלא מצחק אני, ואומר אני בו דבר לשבח אין לשון הנה של צחוק אלא לשון רשעה, שבשעה שנולד אבינו יצחק היו הכל שמחים, אמר להם ישמעאל שוטים אתם, אני בכור ואני נוטל פי שננים, שמתשובת אמנו שרה לאברהם (בראשית כא, י): כי לא יירש בן האמה הזאת עם בני,</p>	<p>And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian (Genesis 21:9) - Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said: Rabbi Akiva used to interpret this to his [Ishmael's] shame, and I read it positively. Rabbi Akiva taught <i>And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Avraham, laughing (metzachek)</i> Now <i>laughing (metzachek)</i> refers to nothing else but sexual immorality, as in the verse, <i>The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought to us, came in to laugh at me.</i> (Gen. 39:17). This teaches that Sarah saw Yishmael . . . entrap married women and rape them. R. Yishmael taught: This term <i>laughing (metzachek)</i>' refers to idolatry, as in the verse, <i>And the people sat to eat and drink and got up to laugh</i> (Exodus 32:6). This teaches that Sarah saw Yishmael build altars, catch locusts, and sacrifice them. R. Eleazar said: The term <i>laughing (metzachek)</i> refers to bloodshed, as in the verse, <i>Let the young men, please, arise and laugh before us</i> (II Sam. 2:14) Rabbi Azariah said in Rabbi Levi's name: Yishmael said to Yitzchak: 'Let us go and see our portions in the field' and he would pick up the bow and shoot arrows, aiming in Yitzchak's direction, while pretending to be playing (<i>laughing</i>), as it is written: <i>as a madman who casts fire-brands, arrows, and death; so is the man that deceives his neighbor, and said: 'I am just laughing (metzachek)</i>(Proverbs 26:18-19) And I [Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai] say that this is to be interpreted to the praise [of Yishmael]. This expression of <i>laughing (metzachek)</i> is only used as 'inheritance'. In the moment that Yitzchak our father was born all were happy. Yishmael said to them: Fools! I am the first-born, I am going to receive double portion [of the inheritance], that from the answer of Sarah our mother to Avraham <i>because the son of this maidservant will not inherit with my son, with Yitzchak . . .</i></p>
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5. Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer Chapter 29

Yishmael went and took a wife from the daughters of Moav. After three years, Avraham went to visit his son Yishmael and he swore to Sarah that he would not get off his camel in the place where Yishmael was living. [Avraham] arrived there in the middle of the day, and he found Yishmael's wife there. He said to her, "Where is Yishmael?" She said, "He and his mother went to bring fruit and dates from the wilderness." [Avraham] said to her, "Give me a little bread and water as I am weary from my travels through the wilderness." She said, "I don't have any bread or any water." [Avraham] said, "When Yishmael comes tell him the following message, . . . and say to him, *An old man from Canaan came to see you and said to change your door post as it is not good for you.*" And when Yishmael came back from the wilderness, she told him these things. And Yishmael understood and divorced her.

And his mother sent and took a wife for him from her father's household and Fatima was her name. And again after three years, Avraham went to visit his son Yishmael and he swore to Sarah, as he did the first time, that he would not get off his camel in the place where Yishmael was living. [Avraham] arrived there in the middle of the day, and he found Yishmael's wife there. He said to her, "Where is Yishmael?" She said, "He and his mother went to herd camels in the desert." [Avraham] said to her, "Give me a little bread and water as I am weary from my travels through the wilderness." She took out bread and water and gave him. Avraham stood and prayed before before God for his son, and Yishmael's home became filled will all good manner of blessing. And when Yishmael came home, [his wife] told him what had occurred and Yishmael knew that all along his father's mercies were with him, *as a father has mercy on his children.*

שלח ישמעאל ולקח לו אשה מבנות מואב, לאחר שלש שנים הלך אברהם לראות את ישמעאל בנו, ונשבע לשרה שלא ירד מעל הגמל במקום שישמעאל שרוי תמן, והגיע לשם בחצי היום, ומצא שם את אשתו של ישמעאל, אמ' לה היכן הוא ישמעאל, אמרה לו הלך הוא ואמו להביא פירות ותמרים מן המדבר, אמ' לה תני לי מעט לחם ומים כי עייפה נפשי מדרך המדבר, אמרה לו אין לי לחם ולא מים, אמ' לה כשיבא ישמעאל הגידי לו את הדברים הללו . . . ואמרי לו זקן אחד מארץ כנען בא לראותך ואמ' חלף מפתן ביתך שאינה טובה לך, וכשבא ישמעאל מן המדבר הגידה לו את הדברים הללו . . . והבין ישמעאל ושלחה.

ושלחה אמו ולקחה לו אשה מבית אביה ופטימה שמה, ועוד אחר שלש שנים הלך אברהם לראות את ישמעאל בנו, ונשבע לשרה כפעם ראשונה שאינו יורד מן הגמל במקום שישמעאל שרוי שם, והגיע לשם בחצי היום ומצא שם אשתו של ישמעאל ואמ' לה היכן הוא ישמעאל, אמרה לו הוא ואמו הלכו לרעות את הגמלים במדבר, אמ' לה תני לי מעט לחם ומים כי עייפה נפשי מדרך המדבר, והוציאה לחם ומים ונתנה לו, עמד אברהם והיה מתפלל לפני ה' על בנו ונתמלא ביתו של ישמעאל מכל טוב ממין הברכות, וכשבא ישמעאל הגידה לו את הדבר וידע ישמעאל שעד עכשו רחמי אביו עליו כרחם אב על בנים

**6. Al-Bukhari: THE STORY OF HAJRA [Hagar] AND ISHMAEL (*Sahih Bukhari*.
Book #55, Hadith #583) (with thanks to Dr. Shari Lowin)**

Narrated Ibn Abbas: . . . Abraham brought[Hagar] and her son Ishmael while she was suckling him, to a place near the Ka'ba under a tree on the spot of Zamzam, at the highest place in the mosque. During those days there was nobody in Mecca, nor was there any water. So he made them sit over there and placed near them a leather bag containing some dates, and a small water-skin containing some water, and set out homeward. Ishmael's mother followed him saying, "O Abraham! Where are you going, leaving us in this valley where there is no person whose company we may enjoy, nor is there anything?" She repeated that to him many times, but he did not look back at her. Then she asked him, "Has Allah ordered you to do so?" He said, "Yes." She said, "Then He will not neglect us," and returned while Abraham proceeded onwards. On reaching the Thaniya, where they could not see him, he faced the Ka'ba, and raising both hands, invoked Allah saying the following prayers: 'O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring dwell in a valley without cultivation, by Your Sacred House (Ka'ba at Mecca) in order, O our Lord, that they may offer prayer perfectly. So fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and provide them with fruits, so that they may give thanks.' (14.37)

Ishmael's mother went on suckling Ishmael and drinking from the water (she had). When the water in the water-skin had all been used up, she became thirsty, and her child also became thirsty. She looked at him tossing in agony; She left him, for she could not endure looking at him, and found that the mountain of Safa was the nearest mountain to her. She stood on it and started looking at the valley keenly so that she might see somebody, but she could not see anybody. Then she descended from Safa and when she reached the valley, she tucked up her robe and ran through the valley like a person in distress and trouble, till she crossed the valley and reached the Marwa mountain where she stood and started looking, expecting to see somebody, but she could not see anybody. She repeated that (running between Safa and Marwa) seven times."

The Prophet said, "This is the source of the tradition of the walking of people between them (i.e. Safa and Marwa)." When she reached the Marwa (for the last time) she heard a voice and she asked herself to be quiet and listened attentively. She heard the voice again and said, 'O, (whoever you may be)! You have made me hear your voice; have you got something to help me?' And behold! She saw an angel at the place of Zamzam, digging the earth with his heel (or his wing), till water flowed from that place. She started to make something like a basin around it, using her hand in this way, and started filling her water-skin with water with her hands, and the water was still flowing out after she had scooped some of it."

The Prophet added, "May Allah bestow Mercy on Ishmael's mother! Had she let the Zamzam (flow without trying to control it)/ (or had she not scooped from that water to fill her water-skin),¹ Zamzam would have been a stream flowing on the surface of the earth." The Prophet further added, "Then she drank (water) and suckled her child. . . .

¹ The phrase in Arabic is missing words. The Arabic says, "Had she let the Zamzam, Zamzam would have been a stream flowing on the surface on the earth." Meaning, had she let it alone. The editor/translator is trying to figure out what leaving the Zamzam alone might entail. The suggestions are: a) had she left the water to continue to flow vigorously, without trying to control it b) had she left it alone by not trying to fill her waterskin up with water. Either way, had she left it alone it would have continued to flow as a stream, flowing over the earth.

The Prophet added, "Ishmael's mother was sitting near the water. They [the Jurhum] asked her, 'Do you allow us to stay with you?' She replied, 'Yes, but you will have no right to possess the water.'² They agreed to that." The Prophet further said, "Ishmael's mother was pleased with the whole situation as she used to love to enjoy the company of the people. So, they settled there, and later on they sent for their families who came and settled with them so that some families became permanent residents there. The child (i.e. Ishmael) grew up and learned Arabic from them and (his virtues) caused them to love and admire him as he grew up, and when he reached the age of puberty they made him marry a woman from amongst them.

After Ishmael's mother died, after Ishmael's marriage Abraham came to see his family that he had left before, but he did not find Ishmael there. When he asked Ishmael's wife about Ishmael, she replied, 'He has gone in search of our livelihood.' Then he asked her about their way of living and their condition, and she replied, 'We are living in misery; we are living in hardship and destitution,' complaining to him. He said, 'When your husband returns, convey my salutation to him and tell him to change the threshold of the gate of his house.' When Ishmael came, he seemed to have felt something unusual had taken place, so he asked his wife, 'Has anyone visited you?' She replied, 'Yes, an old man of such-and-such description came and asked me about you and I informed him, and he asked about our state of living, and I told him that we were living in a hardship and poverty.' On that Ishmael said, 'Did he advise you anything?' She replied, 'Yes, he told me to convey his salutation to you and to tell you to change the threshold of your gate.' Ishmael said, 'It was my father, and he has ordered me to divorce you. Go back to your family.'

So, Ishmael divorced her and married another woman from amongst them (i.e. Jurhum). Abraham stayed away from them for a period as long as Allah wished. He then called on them again but again did not find Ishmael. He came to Ishmael's wife and asked her about Ishmael. She said, 'He has gone in search of our livelihood.' Abraham asked her, 'How are you getting on?' asking her about their sustenance and living. She replied, 'We are prosperous and well-off (i.e. we have everything in abundance).' Then she thanked Allah. Abraham said, 'What kind of food do you eat?' She said, 'Meat.' He said, 'What do you drink?' She said, 'Water.'" He said, "O Allah! Bless their meat and water." The Prophet added, "At that time they did not have grain, and if they had had grain, he would have also invoked Allah to bless it."

The Prophet added, "If somebody has only these two things as his sustenance, his health and disposition will be badly affected, unless he lives in Mecca."

The Prophet added, "Then Abraham said to Ishmael's wife, "When your husband comes, give my regards to him and tell him that he should keep firm the threshold of his gate.' When Ishmael came back, he asked his wife, 'Did anyone call on you?' She replied, 'Yes, a good-looking old man came to me,' so she praised him and added, 'He asked about you, and I informed him, and he asked about our livelihood and I told him that we were in a good condition.' Ishmael asked her, 'Did he give you any piece of advice?' She said, 'Yes, he told me to give his regards to you and ordered that you should keep firm the threshold of your gate.' On that Ishmael said, 'It was my father, and you are the threshold (of the gate). He has ordered me to keep you with me.'

² Possess – meaning, own the water rights and either prevent others from accessing it or charge them to do so.