



A Call to the Infinite

Genesis, Chapter 18

9. And they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "Behold in the tent."

10. And he said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year, and behold, your wife Sarah will have a son." And Sarah heard from the entrance of the tent, and it was behind him.

11. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, coming on in years; Sarah had ceased to have the way of the women.

12. And Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have become worn out, will I have smooth flesh? And also, my master is old."

13. And the L-rd said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Is it really true that I will give birth, although I am old?'"

14. Is anything hidden from the L-rd? At the appointed time, I will return to you, at this time next year and Sarah will have a son."

Genesis, Chapter 21

1. And the L-rd remembered Sarah as He had said, and the L-rd did to Sarah as He had spoken.

2. And Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the time of which G-d had spoken to him.

3. And Abraham named his son who had been born to him, whom Sarah had borne to him, Isaac.

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

6. And Sarah said, "G-d has made joy for me; whoever hears will rejoice over me."

Yevamot 64a

Why were the foremothers barren? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, longs to hear the prayer of the righteous.

Why is the prayer of the righteous compared to a pitchfork? As a pitchfork turns the sheaves of grain from one position to another, so does the prayer of the righteous turn the attributes of the Holy One, blessed be He, from the attribute of anger to the attribute of mercy.

R' Hirsch

Yitzchak is derived from the word laughter, for by all the laws of nature the very idea of his birth was "laughable."

פרק יח

ט. ויאמרו אליו אייה
שָׂרָה אֲשֶׁתְּךָ וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה
בְּאֵהָל:

י. וַיֹּאמֶר שׁוּב אֲשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כְּעֵת חֲזִיה וְהִנֵּה בֶן
לְשָׂרָה אֲשֶׁתְּךָ וְשָׂרָה שִׂמְעַת פֶּתַח הָאֵהָל וְהוּא
אֲחֵרִיו:

יא. וַאֲבָרְהָם וְשָׂרָה זָקְנִים כָּאִים בְּיָמִים חֲדָל
לְהִיּוֹת לְשָׂרָה אֲרַח פְּנָשִׁים:

יב. וַתִּצְחַק שָׂרָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ לֵאמֹר אַחֲרַי בְּלִתי
הִיטָה לִי עֲדָנָה וַאֲדַנִּי זָקֵן:

יג. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל אֲבָרְהָם לְמָה זֶה צִחְקָה שָׂרָה
לֵאמֹר הֲאֵף אֲמַנָּם אֵלֶד וְאֲנִי זָקְנָתִי:

יד. הֲיִפְלֵא מֵה' דְּבַר לְמוֹעֵד אֲשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כְּעֵת
חֲזִיה וּלְשָׂרָה בֶן:

פרק כא

א. וְה' פָּקַד אֶת שָׂרָה כְּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר וַיַּעַשׂ ה'
לְשָׂרָה כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר:

ב. וַתֵּהָר וַתֵּלֵד שָׂרָה לְאֲבָרְהָם בֶּן לְזָקְנִיו לְמוֹעֵד
אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹקִים:

ג. וַיִּקְרָא אֲבָרְהָם אֶת שֵׁם בְּנוֹ הַנּוֹלָד לוֹ אֲשֶׁר
יִלְדָה לוֹ שָׂרָה יִצְחָק:

Genesis, Chapter 21

14. And Abraham arose early in the morning, and he took bread and a leather pouch of water, and he gave [them] to Hagar, he placed [them] on her shoulder, and the child, and he sent her away; and she went and wandered in the desert of Beer Sheba.

15. And the water was depleted from the leather pouch, and she cast the child under one of the bushes.

16. And she went and sat down from afar, at about the distance of two bowshots, for she said, "Let me not see the child's death." And she sat from afar, and she raised her voice and wept.

17. And G-d heard the lad's voice, and an angel of G-d called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What is troubling you, Hagar? Fear not, for G-d has heard the lad's voice in the place where he is."

In the place where he is (21:17)

Rashi

He is judged according to his present state. The angels pleaded with G-d not to perform a miracle for Ishmael because in the future his offspring would persecute and murder Jews. G-d responded He would judge Ishmael only according to his present deeds and not according to what would happen in the future.

פרק כא

יד. וישכם אברהם בבקר ויקח לחם ויחמת מים ויתן אל הגר שם על שכמה ואת הילד וישלחה ותלך ותתע במדבר באר שבע:

טו. ויכלו המים מן החמת ותשלך את הילד תחת אחד השיחים:

טז. ותלך ותשב לה מנגד הרחק כמטחי קשת כי אמרה אל אראה במות הילד ותשב מנגד ותשא את קלה ותבך:

יז. וישמע אלקים את קול הנער ויקרא מלאך אלקים אל הגר מן השמים ויאמר לה מה לך הגר אל תיראי כי שמע אלקים אל קול הנער באשר הוא שם:

SUMMARY

- Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Chana were all barren.
- On the first day of Rosh Hashana the portion about Sara giving birth to Yitzchak is read in the synagogue. (In the haftarah, Chana's birth of Shmuel is read.) Both women's prayers were answered on Rosh Hashana. Their prayers turned the judgement into mercy.
- Prayer in hebrew is tefillah, which means to bind, since it connects us to G-d.
- Though Yishmael and his descendants would be evil, G-d judged him, "where he is now."
- Isaiah 51:2: "Look to Abraham and Sarah who bore you." Yitzchak's birth was laughable, a real miracle, as is our existence as a people.
- No matter how adverse our situation is, we can always turn to our Creator for comfort and salvation.

