

**Peace** be with you, listening friends. We greet you in the name of God, the Lord of peace, who wants everyone to understand and submit to the way of righteousness that He has established, and have true peace with Him forever. We are happy to be able to return today to present your program *The Way of Righteousness*.

In our studies in the Torah, we have seen how God promised to make Abraham the father of a new nation from which the prophets of God and the Savior of the world would come. However, up to this point in the story, Sarah, Abraham's wife had not yet borne a son and both she and Abraham were extremely old.

Today we have another amazing story. At the start of the story we will see three men who came to visit Abraham. However, these three men were more than mere humans. Two of them were **angels** and the other was **the Lord God Himself!** Some might say that God could not have appeared to Abraham in the form of man, but they have forgotten that God is great and that nothing is too hard for Him. God can do anything, except that which is unrighteous.

Today we will be reading from four chapters of the Torah. In the book of Genesis, chapter eighteen, the Scripture says:

*The Lord **appeared to Abraham** near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day.*

*Abraham looked up and saw **three men** standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.*

*He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way-now that you have come to your servant."*

*"Very well," they answered, "do as you say."*

*So Abraham hurried and...brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them.*

*While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.*

*"Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him.*

*"There, in the tent," he said.*

*Then **the Lord** said, "**I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.**"*

*Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"*

*Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son."*

*Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh."*

*But he said, "Yes, you did laugh."*

*Then the Lord said, "**The outcry against the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.**"*

*The men turned away and went toward Sodom, **but Abraham remained standing before the Lord.***

*Then Abraham approached Him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing-to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! **Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?**"*

*The Lord said, "If I find **fifty** righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake."*

*Then Abraham spoke up again: "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty?"*

*Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?"*

*"If I find **forty-five** there," he said, "I will not destroy it."*

*Once again he spoke to Him, "What if only forty are found there?"*

*He said, "For the sake of **forty**, I will not do it."*

*Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?"*

*He answered, "I will not do it if I find **thirty** there."*

*Abraham said, "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?"*

*He said, "For the sake of **twenty**, I will not destroy it."*

*Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?"*

*He answered, "For the sake of **ten**, I will not destroy it." When the Lord had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.*

*The two angels arrived at **Sodom** in the evening, and **Lot** was sitting in the gateway of the city.*

*When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. "My lords," he said, "please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning."*

*"No," they answered, "we will spend the night in the square."*

*But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. <sup>4</sup>Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom-both young and old-surrounded the house. They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them."*

Many of the men of Sodom were homosexuals and reveled in a sin God calls perversion.

*Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him <sup>7</sup>and said, "No, my friends. Don't do **this wicked thing**...*

*don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof."*

*"Get out of our way," they replied.*

*And they said, "This fellow came here as an alien, and now he wants to play the judge! We'll treat you worse than them."*

*They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door. But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door.*

*Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness so that they could not find the door.*

*The two men said to Lot, "Do you have anyone else here - sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you?"*

*Get them out of here, because we are going to destroy this place. **The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.**"*

*So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry his daughters. He said, "Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!"*

*But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.*

*With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished."*

*When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them.*

*As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, "**Flee for your lives! Don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!**"*

***Then the Lord rained down burning sulphur on Sodom and Gomorrah-from the Lord out of the heavens.***

*Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities-and also the vegetation in the land. **But Lot's wife looked back and she became a pillar of salt.***

***Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the Lord.***

*He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace.*

*So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived.*

This is the solemn story of how God judged the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with burning sulphur from the sky. Today the ruins of Sodom lie under the Dead Sea in Palestine.

To pursue sin is never a wise choice. **God is serious about judging sin!**

Now, in the time left today, we want to continue in the Torah and see how **God gave Abraham and Sarah a son**, thus **fulfilling the promise** He had made to them so long ago.

In chapter twenty one, the Scriptures say: *Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised.*

*Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.*

*Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him.*

*When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God*

*commanded him.*

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

*Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."*

Thus did God fulfill the promise He had made to Abraham and Sarah a long time before.

Sarah, who was known as one "who can't have children," bore a son **just as God had said**. They called him **Isaac**, which means *he laughs*. But not everyone was rejoicing over Isaac's birth.

The Scriptures say:

*Isaac grew and was weaned, and on the day he was weaned, Abraham held a great feast. <sup>9</sup>But Sarah saw that **the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking**, and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."*

*The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son.*

*But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant.*

*Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring."*

*Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then **sent her off with the boy**.*

Ishmael's departure was painful for Abraham, but it had to be, since God had revealed to him that the new nation, and the Savior of the world, would come through **Isaac**--not though Ishmael.

Ishmael, who was about fifteen years old, made fun of Isaac and had **no appreciation for God's plan** to make of Isaac a great nation which would offer salvation to the world.

So what happened to Ishmael? The verses which follow show us how he went with his mother and lived in the desert near Egypt, and married an Egyptian woman.

Ishmael became the father of the Arab race, which became enemies of the nation which came from Isaac, just as God had predicted to Abraham.

To this day there is a rivalry between Arabs and Jews, as you well know! God loves the Arabs and the Jews and all people in every nation and wants them all to turn to Him.

Friends, our time is gone. We trust that each of you have again seen that the true and living God is **a faithful God** who cannot go back on His word. That is why He judged Sodom and Gomorrah - **just as He said**.

That is why He gave Abraham and Sarah a son in their old age - **just as He had promised He would do**.

And that is why He had Abraham send Ishmael away - **that His unchanging purposes might be established**.

Thank you for your attention.

We urge you to join us next time, because, God willing, we will be looking into the most significant event in Abraham's life: the story of Abraham's sacrifice of his son....

Until next time, we leave you with this verse from the Word of God:

***"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out!"***