



“Is Any Thing Too Hard For the Lord?”

Show Notes & Transcripts

Podcast General Description:

followHIM: A *Come, Follow Me* Podcast with Hank Smith & John Bytheway

Do you ever feel that preparing for your weekly *Come, Follow Me* lesson falls short? Join hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway as they interview experts to make your study for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ *Come, Follow Me* course not only enjoyable but original and educational. If you are looking for resources to make your study fresh, faithful, and fun--no matter your age--then join us every Wednesday.

Podcast Episode Descriptions

Part 1:

What happens when we read the stories of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar through an ancient lens instead of modern assumptions? Dr. Carli Anderson joins hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway to explore the legal, and linguistic depth of these foundational narratives, revealing Sarah’s majesty, Hagar’s complexity, and the deeply personal, covenant-centered relationship God forms with each of them.

Part 2:

Dr. Carli Anderson continues to examine Genesis 18-23 through Hebrew textual analysis, reframing Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham as parallel figures of faith whose choices, trials, and covenant roles reveal deeper layers of wisdom, agency, and trust in God’s promises.

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- 05:12 *Come, Follow Me Manual*
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- 09:29 Hebrew acrostic poetry
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- 13:09 Reframing Sarah
- 17:29 Sarah in Egypt
- 20:02 Story repeats
- 21:35 Sarah seen as royalty
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- 33:51 What Hagar knows
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- 1:06:27 Archetypal story
- End of Part 1 - Dr. Carli Anderson

Part 2 -

- 00:00 Part 2 - Dr. Carli Anderson
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- 06:59 Trying to understand "mocking"
- 08:07 New understanding of a very difficult verse
- 10:54 Move the boys so they both inherit
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- 27:15 Three stories, Three sources of hope
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- 55:09 Story for three major religions
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- 1:00:47 The importance of Mount Moriah
- 1:04:24 End of Part 2 - Dr. Carli Anderson

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Biographical Information:



Carli Anderson is an Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Northern Arizona University. She holds an MA in Hebrew Bible/Ancient Near Eastern Studies from Brigham Young University and a PhD in Religious

Studies from Arizona State University. Her work examines biblical women at the intersection of text and culture, tracing their interpretations across time and traditions. She has presented nationally and internationally and spent many years living and researching in the Holy Land. She is a contributing author for *Seeing Women in the Old Testament* (Deseret Book). She lives outside Flagstaff, Arizona, where she is currently learning to play the ukulele.

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Is Any Thing Too Hard for the Lord? PART 1



GUEST: DR. CARLI ANDERSON

- Hank Smith: 00:00:00 Coming up in this episode on followHIM.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:00:04 A name change in the ancient world. This is something that happens in scriptures fairly frequently. It also is something that would happen in ancient ritual. Again, I'm gonna take us to the cultural context. In fact, a lot of times it would happen in what I would call coronation ritual, which is a ritual that makes a king a king, or a queen a queen. It marks a change of status. It marks a change of where you are, but I think here too, it marks a change in spiritual growth.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:38 Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name's Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with my co-host, John Bytheway, whom God hath made to laugh. John, that is Genesis 20, verse six. Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh. Don't you feel like that's you, John? God made you to laugh.
- John Bytheway: 00:00:59 Hey, people have laughed at me my whole life. That must be what it means.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:03 Laugh with me or at me. I'm okay either way. Yeah I wonder how many people out there have thought these two laugh too much. Well, we can quote Genesis 20. God hath made me to laugh. Now, John, I'm actually not sure it means what we think it means. We have an expert here to let us know if it actually does. Her name is Dr. Carli Anderson. Carli, Dr. Anderson, thank you for being here on followHIM.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:01:28 Thanks. I'm happy to be here. I'm really excited.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:31 This is gonna be really fun. John, Abraham, Isaac and Sarah, Lot, and his salty wife. What do you think? What comes to mind when you think of all these stories? All that's gonna happen in these [chapters](#) today.
- John Bytheway: 00:01:49 There just seem to be more women included in the stories in the Old Testament than some other places, and I really like that.

I love that Sarai's name gets changed to Sarah, along with Abram being changed to Abraham. I love stuff like that, that it's, this is the two of them and that's why I am, I'm really glad we've got Carli today 'cause I think she knows something about this.

- Hank Smith: 00:02:11 I've often thought we call it the [Abrahamic Covenant](#), but maybe someday we ought to call it the Abrahamic Sarah [Covenant](#) because it really takes both of them. Carli, we're so glad you're here. What are we gonna do today? What are you looking forward to?
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:02:26 Glad you brought up the [idea](#) of Abraham and Sarah and how they work together. That's what I wanna look at mostly in these chapters. I wanna look actually at Abraham and Sarah and Hagar first. We'll talk about how to read these stories 'cause they're not immediately easy. They're really old stories. Then I wanna take a minute to reframe Sarah and Hagar. I wanna look at them maybe with some different lenses than people have looked at them before. Couch it in what we know about what happened in the ancient world and the way the Hebrew is stylized at the end. What I hope to do is show how all three of them, Sarah Hagar and Abraham, actually have really parallel stories through these chapters and through some of the chapters that are earlier. I'll bring some of that in too. You see that they're really following a similar arc.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:13 I've noticed in these chapters life gets complicated and for our listeners, life gets complicated.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:03:20 Very complicated. These are really human figures like we're reading about them and there's a lot that's pretty relatable. You know?
- Hank Smith: 00:03:29 You're just going, wow, they have emotion. Wow. They are mortal. Now, John, we haven't had Carli on the show before, which I feel badly. We've had so much fun before even hitting record, I thought we gotta have Carli back every two weeks. What do you know about her? Have we done a background check? Where did we even find Carli?
- John Bytheway: 00:03:49 I think Hank that you have a better answer to that. Someone recommended her.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:54 Yep. A couple of people actually.
- John Bytheway: 00:03:56 Yeah. Well, let me tell you about Carli. She's an assistant professor of religious studies at Northern Arizona University.

She holds a master's in Hebrew Bible and ancient near Eastern studies from BYU and a PhD in religious studies from Arizona State. Carli's work examines biblical women at the intersection of text and culture, tracing their interpretations across time and traditions. Carli has presented nationally and internationally and spent many years living in and researching the Holy Land. She's a contributing author for the [book](#) called Seeing Women in the Old Testament. She lives outside Flagstaff and she's currently learning to play the ukulele. Maybe we can prevail upon her to do our closing hymn.

- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:04:46 I'm not that good.
- Hank Smith: 00:04:49 Well, John Bytheway plays any musical instrument you can hand him in about an hour. He'll have it down.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:04:55 I know.
- Hank Smith: 00:04:55 So you can do a duet.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:04:56 I know in about three years I'll do a duet with you John.
- John Bytheway: 00:05:01 Carli, I was excited when I saw that book, Seeing Women in the Old Testament. When did that come out?
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:05:07 It's brand new. It just came out this Fall. It's specifically for this year's Come, Follow Me study.
- Hank Smith: 00:05:12 Oh, wonderful. Women in the Old Testament. Awesome. The lesson this week is a wonderful question. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Abraham and Sarah's life filled with events both heartbreaking and heartwarming is evidence of a truth Abraham learned in a vision. That we are on earth to be proven to see if we will do all things whatsoever the Lord our God shall command. Would Abraham and Sarah prove faithful? Would they continue to have faith in God's promise of a large posterity, even when they were still childless in their old age and once Isaac was born, would their faith endure the unthinkable, a command to [sacrifice](#) the very son through whom God had promised to fulfill that covenant? Abraham and Sarah [trusted God](#) and he trusted them. In these chapters, we find stories from the lives of Abraham, Sarah, and others that can prompt us to think about our own willingness to believe God's promises, to flee wickedness and never look back and to trust God regardless of the sacrifice. In proving us, God also improves us. Wonderful. Alright, Carli, how do you wanna start? You said you wanted to go back a couple of chapters.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:06:27 Yeah, I do. I wanna look at the stories of Sarah and Hagar that are from chapters earlier. Then this week's section, I also first wanna introduce the listeners on ways to think about how to read these stories. You can read them in the English and you still get a lot. You can hear the emotion, you can hear the trouble, you can hear the stuff they're wrestling with, but it's also a really ancient text, really old stories in Hebrew. This ancient language.

00:06:58 This text is actually really, really stylized and that's just a fancy word that means every phrase, every word is important. Things will repeat, they'll be word plays, allusions to other things. It's layered in antiquity. If you keep that in mind, then you can look for the ways that the ancient editors or authors or people putting these stories together, how they put them together to give them the meat and the meaning that they wanted them to have. I actually have a really great opening for some dad jokes. If you guys have any good dad jokes.

Hank Smith: 00:07:35 Oh, okay. You have come to the right place.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:07:41 I thought that that might be true. One of the suggestions for why these stories are so stylized and why sometimes each word or certain words or phrases are gonna be repeated or have a really specific meaning might be because originally before they're written down, they come from an oral tradition. Just imagine sitting down and listening to somebody tell a really great story. If you're hearing it in the Hebrew, you're, it's easier to hear, but you can still see it in the English. It was organized around a skillful listening, if that makes any sense. When we sit down in the movie theater and we're watching say, an action flick or like a chick flick, we kind of know where it's gonna go and if it doesn't go there, it goes there a different way we're surprised, right? We're like, oh, that was a cool twist.

00:08:26 Similar things like that can happen in this text, and as a listener they might hear it, so there'll be a lot of word plays that have, I don't wanna call them like puns. Words will sound alike, and as a listener who is receiving this story, you'll hear that and then it'll cue you over to someplace else or it'll remind you of a another idea from a different story and it pulls it all in together. The best part about Dad jokes is that there's things sound the way you think there's, and then it tips you off to something else, and that's where it's funny, this story can have humor, but it also can have really elegant connections to other ideas and other themes in the biblical text.

Hank Smith: 00:09:09 Carli, we lose a lot of that when it goes to English, don't we?

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:09:12 We do.

Hank Smith: 00:09:13 That's probably hard for someone like you who can, you're like, oh, it was there and you're missing some good stuff.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:09:20 That's what I wanna show you today. I wanna show you the stuff that you might miss if you're reading it in English, when you know it's there in the Hebrew and then you go back to the English, you can see it. It's clearer.

John Bytheway: 00:09:29 For me, a classic example that was so interesting was Proverbs 31, which is, as we all know, an [acrostic poem](#). What's an a cross-stitch poem? No, an acrostic poem. It goes through the Hebrew alphabet and outlines these attributes of a virtuous woman, so it'd be like in English saying, oh, A is for her attitude, B is for her beauty, C is for her charity, D is for her delightfulness or something, but in Hebrew you would see that, but in English you don't. We get to see with the Hebrew scholar here that we lose something in the English translation and Carli's gonna fill it in for us.

Hank Smith: 00:10:12 I am really excited.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:10:14 We talked about how it's a stylized text and probably had an oral tradition, but I also wanna talk about Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, they're stylized themselves. It's not just a story. These are big figures for us, but also in the ancient context. Their stories are really culturally heavy. They have a lot of meat to it. The wild thing is that they're really succinct as they're telling us all these heavy things about these people. You can see that as we go through the verses. Let me give you a good example that you could probably relate to. For example, a mythic figure in our culture would be Santa Claus. I say Santa Claus. What's the first thing that comes to your mind?

Hank Smith: 00:10:56 North Pole. Red coat, long white beard.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:10:59 Yeah. Good.

Hank Smith: 00:11:00 Flying through the world in one night.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:11:04 A whole cloud of images that'll come up when I just say Santa Claus. You might given some more thought, you might even go to like a fourth century Saint, Saint Nicholas, who was this real person, and then also red suit. You might even go to like adjacent characters like Rudolph. If you went to Rudolph, he's part of that cloud, right? The elves, yeah, in the North Pole.

Then you might even go to a bunch of movies that tell the story or that retell the story, so that's all part of the cloud. You definitely probably think of a specific month. I don't even have to say the name of the month. You know the one, right, and you probably even think of weather. It's just intuitive. It just comes up. As soon as I say Santa Claus, when I say that these figures, Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar are culturally weighted. That's what I mean. They just, I'll say the name or the name shows up in the text and there's this whole cloud of stuff that follows them as the story gets told, that cloud is there too for the ancient readers and for us.

- Hank Smith: 00:12:03 Okay, yeah, I can see that when I think Abraham a lot comes to mind. I can think of a lot stories. General Conference talks, the temple, a lot comes to mind.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:12:15 Yeah, he's indispensable. Honestly so is Sarah and honestly, so is Hagar. We touched on this already, but I'll say it anyway. The linguistic difference. It's easy when you're reading an English text to think in an English context. What I'm gonna try to do is wiggle that loose a little bit and try to take us back as much as we can to the ancient world and put it in that context.
- Hank Smith: 00:12:39 Carli, I can tell your students in Flagstaff, they're very blessed. You're an excellent teacher.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:12:45 Oh, thank you. Thanks. I really love this stuff. It's fun.
- Hank Smith: 00:12:50 And that's part of being an excellent teacher I think. Enthusiasm. What did [Elder Maxwell](#) say? John? Part of what we might be missing in the good gospel teacher is a sense of enthusiasm about the gospel, which could prove highly contagious. Carli, you have it. Let's keep going.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:13:09 Let's start with Sarah. I wanna reframe her. To do it we have to go back a couple of chapters. Abraham and Sarah and Hagar. It's a tricky story. I talk to friends who love the scriptures, but they read the story and they don't always come away loving Sarah. She can come across in the story in the English, at least as kind of mean. Even my friends who are like, I really wanna love Sarah. They read it and they don't quite know what to do with it. I wanna reframe her first and then I'll reframe Hagar and you can see how they're really, their stories are deeply intertwined and also Abraham is part of that, but there are people who are working on their place in the plan of salvation and they're growing in all of the ways that we grow and their stories are really, really relatable.

00:13:58 Sarah, I wanna reframe her because the way we read her, we don't get to see how majestic she is. It's not easy to see that in the English. I wanna show her as an equal to Abraham and the text really sets her up like that. We've been chapter after chapter about Abraham and God coming to Abraham and setting up the covenant with Abraham and really creating that relationship with Abraham. Sarah has that too, but we miss it sometimes. The place I wanna go first actually is to chapter 12 where Abraham and Sarah go to Egypt, and it's kind of a weird story. A lot of commentators don't know what to do with it, but in some of the research that I've looked at, when Sarah and Abraham get to border, they're going to be recognized in a really specific way. You remember this story where Abraham says, please say you're my sister because that will save my life basically.

00:14:58 This is gonna be a little bit complicated to get to the point, but stick with me and I'll try to get us there together. The idea of Sarah and Abraham at the border, and Sarah being somebody that's vulnerable because she's beautiful, it reads that she's beautiful also, reads in the Hebrew, and this is really, really stylized and poetic. It reads as though she is what I'm gonna call a sacred woman. A woman who is recognized by the people that are looking, the Egyptians, the princes of Pharaoh. They're looking and she's recognized as a woman who represents divinity. One of the things that would legitimize a king's kingship would be to be basically married to the right woman. This is this idea of sacred marriage or hieros gamos, and those are fancy terms, but all I want you to hear from this is what makes a king a king in the ancient near east has a lot to do with who he's married to.

00:15:55 In these coronation ceremonies, there would be a female present in the sacred marriage part of the ritual. It's cool in a lot of ways, but what I wanna highlight is what it means for Sarah, because the woman in those ceremonies was usually a princess or a priestess or some kind of woman that was connected to divinity really closely. Scholars, when they look at this story on the border, what they're seeing is that Sarah is recognized immediately as one of those women. Now, this makes the story more interesting because yes, Sarah is beautiful. The verses definitely say she's beautiful. The people who recognize Sarah, they're given the name princes, and the Hebrew term for that is actually the term sar, but Sarah's name is related to that same root, so you can hear sar is the masculine and sarah is the feminine, so the people at the border recognizing Sarah are sars, so the sars see sarah and they see, oh, we recognize something in this person, and that's the word play. That's part

of the word play. You're gonna see this word play through Sarah and Abraham's story a lot, but it's, it's really is I think a highlight here because it points out Sarah's being noticed by these princes from Pharaoh's court putting her on equal territory with them, just by that word, Sar and Sarah. Then they praised Sarah. Let's go to Genesis 12, verses 14 and 15. Hank, will you read, let's do verse 14.

- Hank Smith: 00:17:29 I love it. Genesis 12, 14 and 15, and it came to pass that when Abram was coming to Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her and commended her before Pharaoh and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:17:48 So you can hear the princes in there. In the Hebrew, you'll hear the princes and Sarah, we hear that she's very fair and in fact Abraham says she's very fair, and then there's this word in verse 15 where they commended her before Pharaoh. The word in Hebrew is actually halal. It's a word that means to praise or commend. It fits the context, but actually it's very rarely used for anybody else but divinity. You can hear this in our hallelujah. Hallelujah. Is halal a hallelu praise and then yah is the Lord, so praise the Lord, but the princes are doing this halaling. They're praising and commending Sarah with this idea of this beauty and these princes and the praising. It really is a poetic device to set up from Sarah to be this kind of sacred woman.
- Hank Smith: 00:18:41 This is hitting home to me because I am married to a Sara. I'm going, I know what this feels like for other men to go, wow, she's beautiful. What's she doing with that guy?
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:18:52 Well, I'm gonna up the stakes even if Sarah is recognized as beautiful, but also a princess and the princes can see the princess, but then also they praise her using this word that's usually associated with divinity. It really elevates her. Now, if we put it in the context of the ancient world, the ancient or east, suddenly, if Abraham is married to Sarah, then that makes Abraham in a pretty good position regarding kingship.
- Hank Smith: 00:19:21 I'm liking this.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:19:22 I know [Sarah](#) really ups the ante for Abraham, but then also remember this, Abraham and Sarah and whoever's with him, they're going in as foreigners. He's walking in with a royal entourage. It might even be seen as a political threat to Pharaoh for Sarah to be in another person's house. Then when Abraham says, please say you're my sister, and in the Pearl of Great Price, God says, tell everybody she's your sister. He's protecting Sarah.

He's protecting Abraham because this is a really dicey political situation.

Hank Smith: 00:19:58 Okay. I've never understood that before.

John Bytheway: 00:20:01 Great insight. Yeah.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:20:02 Yeah. In that context, it fills it out a little bit, and then actually we probably won't spend much more time on this, but in chapter 20 with Abimelech, it's a very similar story and that it happens twice for Sarah when both she and Abraham are foreigners or they're not native or they're entering territory that's not theirs. It fits as a parallel both times. They're going in and Sarah is in a way legitimizing the kingship of Abraham in a territory where he's not the king. Does that make sense? It creates that tension naturally.

Hank Smith: 00:20:38 Why would the sister, would the sister then, oh, okay. That's not a threat.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:20:42 Yeah. Well, you'll notice both times what happens is Pharaoh and Abimelech give Abraham lots of riches. What I think is happening what scholars when they're looking at this, they see it's a way of merging families or like creating diplomacy between these, but Sarah going into the house is meant to legitimize probably the kingship of Pharaoh or the kingship of Abimelech, but it doesn't work because right away problems occur, the problems occur because that's the tension. Sarah is legitimizing the kingship of Abraham, not the other person.

Hank Smith: 00:21:18 So he really is a political threat.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:21:21 Yeah. That makes the [story](#) make a little bit more sense. It's, and it's less about Sarah just being beautiful, although she definitely is. What I see in that context is we can see from all of the experiences of the earlier chapters that Abraham is connected to the divine, that Abraham is talking to God, that Abraham is forming a relationship with God, but it's small and it's hidden in the Hebrew, but you can see in these verses that so has Sarah, she has established that relationship. She is actively recognized as a woman of the covenant, as a woman connected to the divine.

John Bytheway: 00:21:56 So Sarai and Abram perhaps perceived as a threat to the Pharaoh and his position.

Hank Smith: 00:22:05 She's connected to God in a big way.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:22:07 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:22:08 They don't maybe know exactly what's happened.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:22:11 But they can see it. They can. They can identify it, and the word play, the sar, sareem and the hehel, the praising, the commending, it's all to point to Sarah is special. Sarah is connected to the divine and people can see it.

Hank Smith: 00:22:25 Yeah, you would miss that if you didn't speak Hebrew.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:22:28 Yeah. It's hidden. Now we've set her up as Abraham's equal. I do also wanna just bring in the Pearl of Great Price. Abraham, in that very first chapter, talks about seeking after the blessings of the fathers. One of the things he says he wants to become or seeking after is to become a prince of peace. That word prince is, you guessed it, sar. It's lovely to me that you can see them really being put on equal footing because Abraham is seeking to become a sar and his wife's name is Sarah, the feminine equivalent.

Hank Smith: 00:23:04 I'm gonna share all these things with my wife, Sara, this is great.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:23:06 I know, you should. Yeah, all Sarahs should know this.

Hank Smith: 00:23:09 Yeah.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:23:11 Let's just jump right to 16. Now that we have established Sarah as a spiritual equal to Abraham, then when we go into her story, we can appreciate more what she's going through. We can appreciate this is a woman who knows God. This is a woman who is living in the world to serve God. Then let's jump into Genesis 16. I know this is not what we're studying this week, but I wanna go back. We have to really, to understand this week's passages, we really have to understand what happens in 16. I guess I wanna set the stage because we know the story, right? The story is that Abraham's been being promised over and over and over in the last couple of chapters by God that he's gonna have a lot of kids. He's not having any kids. Sarah is barren. That's not happening for them, and then in 16, this is where Sarah actually actively makes a decision.

00:24:06 It's clearly her decision. You can see that in verse one. It says, now, Sarai, Abram's wife, bear him no children. It just sets it all up. She had a handmaid, an Egyptian whose name was Hagar, and we'll talk about those terms more in a little bit. Verse two, and Sarah says to Abraham, behold, now the Lord has

restrained me from bearing. I pray thee go in unto my maid. It may be that I may obtain children by her and Abraham hearkened to the voice of Sarah. You can see that Sarah's leading this up. This is her idea. This is what she wants to do, and there's a couple of cool phrases in this. We're introduced to Hagar who is gonna be a major player in this whole thing. Sarah and Hagar's relationship is gonna be something that we wanna keep an eye on. I wanna put this in a context.

00:24:57 We have several extant law codes that talk about this exact situation. This is a surrogate pregnancy. They didn't have a lot of tech back then. This is how a surrogate pregnancy would be set up because surrogate pregnancies, I mean, they're tricky even today, but back then, also tricky, maybe even trickier. We have several, like I said, several law codes that establish how this operates and set up protections for all of the parties involved. When we look at those law codes, it really fits what's happening with Sarah and Hagar. The idea is when scholars are reading this, they're seeing that Sarah is taking an active role. It's something she can do legally. It's a possibility for her that she will use Hagar as a surrogate mother, but the child will belong to Sarah. Does that make sense? It's not really necessarily in there, but when you look at the law codes and how it's set up, it's clear that there's the surrogate mom and then the other mom.

00:26:01 That child belongs to the other mom. The surrogate is just providing that service. It fits within that and it gives us, I guess, a step back in the story, but it also makes it more complicated, and as you're gonna see how everything goes down, it gets pretty dicey on a lot of levels, but also really actually tricky and hard specifically for Sarah. I do wanna just point out in verse two when it says that I may obtain a child by her. You can see it setting up that surrogacy. The child will belong to Sarah, but she'll obtain it through Hagar in the Hebrew it doesn't read I'll obtain a child. It actually reads, I will be built up. You can see that it's Sarah understanding her role in this whole process and figuring a way to do it according to these law codes.

00:26:51 Legally, this is a situation that is not just gonna have emotional ramifications or relational ramifications. It's actually gonna have legal ramifications as well. There's a structure for how this is all happening. She's gonna be built up and be able to provide the heir for Abraham that God and everyone else is expecting, and I wanna put this in more of a tribal family setting, right? It's not necessarily a nuclear family setting. This is like a tribal family setting. Lot's part of this family. Abraham's part of this family and Sarah, but Abraham and Sarah seem to be the leading

couple. Sarah can mean princess. It can also mean chieftainess. They're in the position of authority. There is a hierarchy. Hagar is listed as a handmaiden and she's listed as a servant, but in the ancient east, the way they thought about servants in this context, it was a possibility for these people to be treated like family and have a lot of position and a lot of authority.

00:27:51 Abraham has a servant like this. Think of Eliezar. Eliezar is so trusted that if Abraham doesn't have an heir, Eliezar's gonna get all of the stuff. He's gonna become the heir apparent. When we think of Hagar as a maid servant, it's very likely that it's just the female counterpart to that. She's close to the family. She is a good friend to Sarah. I guess the hierarchy is there, but it's a warm connection probably and a lot of trust. Now, we'll talk more about how Hagar's status changes when I get to Hagar, I wanna reframe her too, but for Sarah, what's gonna happen is Hagar gets pregnant. Then something changes. It says, if you wanna go to verse four, Genesis 16 verse four. John, do you wanna read this?

John Bytheway: 00:28:41 Genesis 16:4, and he went in unto Hagar and she conceived and when she saw that she had conceived her mistress was despised in her eyes.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:28:52 It's this word despised. The Hebrew is a root qalal and it means to belittle. What you can see is it's moving the hierarchical structure. We even get the title for Sarah. She's a gebirah, she's a great lady. I mean, I wanna just picture scales. There's this sense that Hagar, where she stands in the family is moving the scales a little bit. The Gebirah, the great lady, is now becoming little in her eyes, it's probably an idiom. It's probably a phrase they would've recognized, and again, that same idea is right there in the law codes. If the surrogate mom breaks the structure of the hierarchy or loses respect or stops showing respect to the other mother, the receiving mother, then here's what can happen. What happens is exactly what the law codes say could happen. This is a tricky situation anytime in history and then in this cultural context, especially tricky because Sarah probably picked Hagar because she trusted her, because they were friends, because they worked together really closely like Abraham and Eliezar. Then for this power dynamic to shift or to have Sarah feel disrespected in some way, this is the really interesting part. Then you get the family dynamics, but also it's not just Hagar that's involved in this. Hank will you read verse five, Genesis 16:5.

Hank Smith: 00:30:14 Sarai said unto Abram, my wrong be upon thee. I have given my mate into thy bosom. When she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes, the Lord judge between me and thee.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:30:28 This can sound a little bit harsh, it can sound even a little bit mean. We're dealing with family dynamics, but we're also dealing with kinship dynamics and also power dynamics, but what's really interesting in this, and I want you to see this so you can appreciate Sarah, the text is really sparse about what happens. All we know is that there's a belittling happening for Sarah and it's not okay. Now, it will be very human for her not to like it, but there's this whole legal structure that protects everybody and Sarah's getting the raw end of it. This last phrase in verse five is really important and it's easy to read over, but it's actually what's called an [oath formula](#). When she says the Lord judge between me and you, what she's actually saying is, I'm calling in divinity to judge this situation. It's a really serious phrase. She is not kidding around. It's also probably got some legality to it, but she's basically saying, this has not been just to me. Sarah understands herself to be in the right. Actually, so does Abraham, because if you see his response in verse six, he immediately says, and I'll read that, Abram said to Sarai, behold, the handmaid is in thy hands do to her as it pleaseth thee. He basically backs off.

Hank Smith: 00:31:48 Carli, this isn't about Hagar getting pregnant. This is about Hagar getting pregnant then trying to shift the power dynamic, disrespecting Sarah as the chieftess looking with contempt on her or she's lost stature, so it's not about the pregnancy.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:32:09 I don't think so at all. What I see in this text is that the pregnancy was expected, but the shift in power dynamics was not.

Hank Smith: 00:32:16 Ah, okay, that helps.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:32:18 We're on the verge of some real tragedy, especially if we presume that Hagar and Sarah are good friends.

Hank Smith: 00:32:26 If you just read it in the English Cari, it almost makes Sarah look a little petty. Hey, well, we hired her to have a baby. She's having a baby now you're mad. That's not what it says.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:32:36 I don't think so. No, not in the ancient context.

Hank Smith: 00:32:40 Thank you. This is, this is so helpful.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:32:43 It helps reframe Sarah. She knows what's going on. She's trying to stand up for the rights of everybody. You'll see that through the story. When I read Sarah in this context and in the Hebrew, she's so protective of everybody, which seems exactly like what the matriarch of Israel should do, right? The matriarch of the House of Israel should do, a covenant woman should do. She's just taking care of it. She also needs things to be just, she doesn't let them slide when they're not. Most scholars, when they look at this verse and what they're seeing is it is restitution where it will bring the balance back to the family, to the kin group. What one of the law codes says and what a few scholars who read this see almost demotes Hagar, so that she's not in that high standing with Sarah, but she's a regular servant. Not necessarily like Eliezar anymore, but more of a regular servant and she doesn't like that, but also she's thinking like, what do I do? This power dynamic, what have I broken something? I mean I'm putting psychology into Hagar, but you can appreciate where she's coming from too. This isn't comfortable for anybody. It's emotional. It's relational, but it's legal too, and Sarah knows it.

Hank Smith: 00:33:51 Carli, wouldn't you say Hagar knows it too?

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:33:54 Yes.

Hank Smith: 00:33:55 I overstepped.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:33:56 Yeah, actually, Hagar's gonna have an encounter with an angel who's gonna also say, yep, go back. You did overstep. Hagar runs. You know the story she runs says she headed toward the wilderness of Shur. Most scholars are gonna see that as the border of Egypt. They assume she's going back to Egypt, back to her home country, but she gets stopped at a well for the ancient reader, when you hear the word well or the ancient listener, when you hear well, you're like, oh, something good's gonna happen because wells are kind of special places, and I'm just go through, you're in your mind. Scripture stories that happen at wells, cool things happen at wells. It says the messenger of the Lord appears, but here's where things get heartbreaking, especially for Sarah. The first thing the angel says is, this is in verse eight. He says, where are you going?

00:34:46 Identifying where she's at, and she's honest. I'm running away from my mistress, but in verse nine, the angel says, go back and he uses that elevated title, Gebirah, go back to your mistress, go back to the great lady he sets up, he reinforces the structure of how things need to be. A lot of scholars have read this as God responding to Sarah's oath formula. God is gonna judge

between you and me because I've been wronged here. An angel shows up and says, yep, go back and sets up the structure again, but this is the heartbreaking part, and this is the part nobody saw coming. The next thing the angel says is in verse 10, the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for the multitude. Verse 11, and the angel said of the Lord said unto her, behold thou art with child and shalt bear a son and shalt call his name Ishmael because the Lord hath heard thy affliction.

00:35:46 We're talking about Hagar's baby, but remember in the context, this isn't technically Hagar's baby. This was Sarah's baby. Suddenly, and we don't really even get to hear the heartbreak behind it. Sarah, who has set up a system that's gonna work for her, she's doing everything right, she's showing up in the way she needs to show up. She's following the legal codes. This was supposed to be her baby, right? This was the baby that was gonna help create the lineage, both the spiritual lineage and also the literal lineage for her and Abraham. The angel comes up and says, go back. The power dynamics are right. He justifies Sarah, but at the very next sentence, he takes away Sarah's baby. It's not Sarah's baby anymore. Now it's Hagar's. How heartbreaking Sarah now has to deal with the fact that God acknowledged, yeah, you're right. This wasn't just what happened, wasn't just for you, but also that baby's not yours anymore.

00:36:48 That baby is gonna be Hagar's, and if you notice that description of what's gonna happen for that baby is very much like the promise to Abraham. Suddenly, Hagar is getting everything that Sarah was promised, and then the worst part about it is that it has a divine signature right at the bottom, right? I'm taking the baby away. Love, God. So heartbreaking. I hope that this humanizes Sarah a little bit and also you can appreciate the depth of her struggle, the depth of her trial. Something you're gonna see as we look at all three of their stories is all three of them are gonna either lose or almost lose a son. This to me, opened up my heart for Sarah because we don't hear very much about her response to this. Hagar goes back, has the baby, some of the ancient traditions, rabbinic traditions say that Sarah loved Ishmael, treated Ishmael like he was her own son, but everybody knew it was Hagar's and that this line was going through Hagar, which means Sarah's gotta figure out another way. Again, now we know the story, we know what happens, we know that God's like I have an even better option for Sarah, but she doesn't know that, she's not gonna know that for almost 13 years. This is a weight that Sarah carries.

Hank Smith: 00:38:09 Is the Lord or the angel saying, Sarah did something to deserve this, or he's just saying, this is your baby, even though legally, lawfully, this was Sarah's plan, she got what she wanted, she got her baby. This is Sarah's baby, not anymore. Sarai's baby, I should say.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:38:26 There's not really a connection. It's, Sarah's right, you gotta go back. The way you're being treated is legal and right and sound, but also just a complete turnaround.

Hank Smith: 00:38:36 And it's probably like you said, the Lord knows she's gonna have her own child. She doesn't know that. There's so many times in the scriptures we think, oh, don't worry. In the next page, things are really great.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:38:52 She doesn't know.

John Bytheway: 00:38:53 I wanna make sure I'm getting this. It sounds like the pregnancy wasn't regretted. What was regretted was the belittling of Sarah in Hagar's eyes, and then that was what was regretted and that is bringing these other consequences, but now we're getting to a place where the angel says, actually Hagar, contrary to the surrogate laws, whatever it was actually Hagar, that's gonna be your son. Sarah doesn't know this yet, doesn't know she's going to have her own yet. Wow.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:39:27 Yeah. She doesn't.

Hank Smith: 00:39:29 When Hagar is running away, is she kind of stealing the baby?

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:39:35 You could read that. Yeah. Even ancient readers, maybe not the people in this story per se, but people maybe 2,500, 3000 years ago are gonna know that Hagars in the territory where her descendants are gonna live. The story marks the territory, setting that up. Sarah's descendants are gonna be in a different place, and it's also setting up a sense of their, the descendants relationality. You can see it's very layered the way that they're hearing it or the way that it's written.

Hank Smith: 00:40:06 If I'm the reader and I'm a descendant of Ishmael, I'm gonna read this different than if I'm a reader and I'm a descendant of Isaac.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:40:13 2,500 years in the future, you're gonna appreciate that we know that there's descendants from both mothers. These are two matriarchs of two very specific lines, but this is the moment where they've intertwined. I wanted to just spend a a second to

make this real for a minute, and we don't have to talk about maybe even surrogate pregnancies, although I know that there are many people who deal with infertility and the heartbreak that comes from that. This doesn't have to be a story just about mothers or even families. I was thinking about people that I know that have had a similar structure, right, where they did everything right. Then things turned on a dime suddenly and it wasn't what they were expecting at all, or the thing they were hoping for got taken away. The faith that that requires is a really unique kind of faith.

00:40:59 You have to go deep, surrendering to the will of God, and maybe even just surrendering that hope and trusting you also have to rebuild trust. The being, God, who you put all that trust in seems to be the one that's, by the way, not your baby, turns it around. I love hearing about people's spiritual journeys, what goes on in people's hearts and minds, and you know how they navigate things and their experiences, and it helps me appreciate how God is at work in everybody's lives in such a unique way, can show up in these ways that sometimes can break our hearts or that can make us feel like we got turned around and then suddenly what we hoped for was gone.

Hank Smith: 00:41:44 I think of Joseph of Egypt. That's my main go-to when I think this isn't fair. I've done everything you've told me to do. It seems that you are taking everything from me that you promised, and again, you and I have the benefit of knowing the next chapter. They don't.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:42:03 Yep. They're just in it. They're just living it. That's what's so gorgeous, I think about being human and having this opportunity to grow and to be tested. I don't want this every day or I don't want this at all. The idea is what it pulls out of us is so transformative, but it's really uniquely transformative and I see that in each of their three stories. Their trials are so specific and unique and the kind of faith that's required is really specific, but very universal.

Hank Smith: 00:42:32 Why send her back? I mean, she's gonna sit there holding this baby. This is my baby. I'm its mother, right in front of the woman who it's actually her baby the way it was, the whole thing was designed.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:42:44 It was supposed to be, yeah, the surrogate. There's something, their connectivity, Hagar's descendants. Traditionally, this is gonna be the Arab people. All of the Arab world identifies Hagar as a matriarchal figure for them. They see themselves as descendants of Abraham through her. It's setting up this

matriarchal line of the mother and her descendants, but there is something really important about Hagar being there in the family with Sarah and Abraham, that connectivity is really important and the way that they're interacting with each other. At least at this point in the story. I just wanna tell this story. I got permission from my sister to help you appreciate the parallels between what's going on with Sarah and also maybe just in real life. It doesn't have to be about mothers or motherhood or surrogate pregnancies, like you've just done everything right and then out of nowhere God changes the terms or moves something out of the way.

00:43:39 My sister had a similar experience when she went to serve a mission. We're different in a lot of ways. Like sisters we're very similar but also different. I was nervous to serve a mission. I was really scared, like I was shy. I didn't really like talking to people. She was quieter than me, but so excited to go, like she couldn't wait to go. She got called to St. Louis, Missouri. She went to the MTC, did her weeks in the MTC, got to St. Louis. She was there one week. One week she got sick out of nowhere, so sick, she couldn't walk, she couldn't get out of bed. They went to a couple of doctors, but nobody knew what was going on. She'd been there just a week and the mission president called her in and said, we need to send you home again. She was so excited.

00:44:24 I cried every day for like the first two months of my mission, but she was like I came here, I'm so excited to do this, and then she gets sick, and so she came home and I remember my parents were taking her to doctors and nobody could figure out what was wrong. She couldn't walk. Her legs were really unstable. She was just exhausted. Doctor after doctor couldn't figure out what was going on, and then literally at 18 months, literally on the moment of 18 months from when she went to the MTC, they went to a doctor and the doctor was like, I think I know what this is, and they started treating it and it was immediately better, very quickly started getting better. She says, I did serve a mission. It just looked really different from a lot of peoples, grew a lot spiritually.

Hank Smith: 00:45:13 Wow. I did everything right. This is a good thing that I want. I'm trying to get to the promises you have made.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:45:21 Yeah, exactly.

Hank Smith: 00:45:22 Why would you take this from me? To me yeah it makes no sense. The Lord's saying makes sense to me.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:45:29 Yeah, but the trust that takes it takes so much trust. You have to rebuild it and you have to go deep. In hindsight, we were talking about this just the other day. It changed everything for her. She's a totally different person because of it and a better person.

John Bytheway: 00:45:46 I'm just thinking as is often the case, the Lord tells us about an outcome, but he doesn't tell us how we're gonna get there. Sometimes we have an idea of how we're gonna get to that outcome, and it's wildly different than what God knows. Yeah, so like Hank said, we know what's on the next page, but they didn't.

Hank Smith: 00:46:09 Both of you know this story. [Hugh B. Brown](#), May 31st, 1968, it was at a BYU graduation and it is still talked about to this day. I won't quote the entire thing, but just some pieces. He says, could I tell you a quick story out of my own experience in life? 60 odd years ago, I was in a farm in Canada. I had purchased the farm from another who had been somewhat careless in keeping it up. I went out one morning and found a currant bush that was at least six feet high. I knew it was all going to wood. There was no sign of blossom or fruit. I had had some experience in pruning trees before we left Salt Lake to go to Canada as my father had a fruit farm, so I got my pruning shears and went to work on that currant bush. I clipped it and cut it and cut it down until there was nothing left but a little clump of stumps.

00:47:04 As I looked at them, I yielded to an impulse which I often have to talk with inanimate things and have them talk to me. It's a ridiculous habit. It's one I can't overcome. As I looked at this little clump of stumps, there seemed to be a tear on each one, and I said, what's the matter currant bush? What are you crying about? And I thought I heard that currant bush speak. It seemed to say, how could you do this to me? I was making such wonderful growth. I was almost as large as the fruit tree and the shade tree, and now you've cut me down. All in the garden will look upon me with contempt and pity. How could you do it? I thought you were the gardener here. I thought I heard that from that currant bush. I thought it so much that I answered it.

00:47:54 I said, look, you little currant bush, I am the gardener here. I know what I want you to be. If I let you go the way you wanna go, you'll never amount to anything, but someday when you're laden with fruit, you're going to think back and say, thank you, Mr. Gardener for cutting me down, for loving me enough to hurt me. Then he goes on. He talks about 10 years past, he's in the first world war. He was working his way up the ranks. He was ready to be appointed a general. He took the train to

London. The man invites him in. The man who he thinks is gonna give him this promotion. The man says to him, Brown, you are entitled to this promotion, but I cannot make it. You have qualified and passed the regulations. Like you said, you did everything right. You have had the experience.

00:48:52 You're entitled to it in every way, but I cannot make this appointment. The man leaves to go enter a phone call and Hugh B. Brown takes a look over on his desk right at the bottom of this history sheet of Hugh B. Brown in large capital letters. This man is a Mormon. Now, he said, I knew why he couldn't make the appointment. The man excuses him, and he gets back on the train and he goes all the way back to his space. He gets to his tent and he said, bitterness rose in my heart. I rather vigorously threw my cap on the cot. I clenched my fist and I shook it at heaven, and I said, how could you do this to me God? I've done everything. I know how to uphold the standards of the church, and I was making such wonderful growth. Now you've cut me down.

00:49:50 How could you do it? Then I heard a voice. Sounded like my own voice. The voice said, I am the gardener here. I know what I want you to be. If I let you go the way you want to go, you'll never amount to anything, and someday when you're ripened in life, you're going to shout back across the time and say, thank you, Mr. Gardener for cutting me down, for loving me enough to hurt me. He then goes on and gives the rest of this wonderful, wonderful message, and right at the very end, he says this, I say to you and to him in your presence, looking back over 60 years, thank you Mr. Gardener for cutting me down.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:50:42 It's a beautiful story.

John Bytheway: 00:50:44 The Book of Mormon phrase comes to mind. He doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world. We might not see it at first.

Hank Smith: 00:50:52 I wonder Carli and John, if there's angels who have our story in front of them, like we have these peoples and they're like, oh, don't worry. The next chapter, it goes really well.

John Bytheway: 00:51:03 Boy, like your sister, Carli, amazing.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:51:07 Yeah, we never know, but sometimes in hindsight, a lot of times in hindsight you think, oh, I wouldn't change that 'cause of what we gained from it, doesn't make it easy. Doesn't make it fun.

John Bytheway: 00:51:20 What's the country music [song](#)? Sometimes I thank God for unanswered prayers.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:51:27 Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:51:28 Because he has a better way of bringing you.

Hank Smith: 00:51:30 I think that was Elder Brooks in the 1990s.

John Bytheway: 00:51:33 So good, so good.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:51:37 So now that we've put Sarah in this really, really heartbreaking place, I wanna point out first she doesn't lose it. She stays true. She stays solid. The way we know that, I think ancient listeners would've known that is what happens in chapter 17. She gets renamed. I've been calling her Sarah because that's just how she is in my heart. She's been Sarai for this whole thing, and Abraham has been Abram, but it's in verse 17 that they're gonna get renamed. They're gonna have a name change. A name change in the ancient world, this is something that happens in scriptures fairly frequently. It also is something that would happen in ancient ritual. Again, I'm gonna take us to the cultural context. In fact, a lot of times it would happen in what I would call a coronation ritual, which is a ritual that makes a king a king or a queen a queen.

00:52:33 It marks a change of status. It marks a change of where you are, but I think here too, it marks a change in spiritual growth. Abram becomes Abraham and you can hear the H in that, and then Sarai becomes Sarah, and if you look at the English, you can see that she's an A-I at the end, and then the I drops off and it becomes an H. In Hebrew, that's gonna be the letter heh. There's this beautiful rabbinic tradition about this specific chapter in this story where their names change because in Hebrew, the letter, heh, or the letter H in English is an abbreviation for God's [name](#). The rabbis, when they read the story, they see that God inserted himself right into their names, which is a lovely tradition. It really is evocative of what's happening in the chapter. We know already that God is very invested in their lives, that God's very present, that they are walking examples, walking witnesses of God.

00:53:29 People recognize them as that, especially after what Sarah has just gone through. I can see this as a leveling up for her. She becomes a new person. It's God really inserting himself even more into our lives. If Sarah thought she was forgotten, she wasn't, and this was a good way. There's this moment in

chapter 17, verse 16 where God says, Sarah's gonna get a new name. She gets this beautiful promise. I'll start with 15, and God said unto Abraham, as for Sarai thy wife. Thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah, with the H, shall her name be. Here's this beautiful blessing promise. Verse 16, and I will bless her and give thee a son also of her. Yea I will bless her and she shall be a mother of [nations](#), kings of people shall be of her. In the Hebrew, it sets up this sense of belonging.

00:54:26 The kings of people are gonna belong to her, sets up yet another matriarchal line, and it's very similar to what happened for Hagar. She is gonna set up a royal line. Kings are gonna belong to her, and we know that she's becoming the founding ancestress of the house of Israel. From her is gonna come Isaac and from Isaac, Isaac and Rebekah is gonna come Jacob and then from Jacob and Rachel and Leah and Bilhah and Zilpah are gonna come the 12 tribes. She's becoming this founding ancestress, this founding mother, and it's a royal line. We've seen her in her beauty recognized by the Egyptians, and now we're seeing her, that being reinforced by God saying, this woman is queenly. This woman is a matriarch. Abraham actually responds to it. It's in verse 17. It's an interesting response, but it's gonna set up another word play in verse 17.

00:55:25 It says, then Abraham fell upon his face and laughed and said in his heart, shall a child be born of him that is a hundred years old and shall Sarah, that is 90 years old bear? I wanna just read a part of that phrase in [Hebrew](#) so you could hear it, and I want you to listen for the name Isaac, because the name Isaac is in here. (Hebrew) and there it is. Can you hear it? Abraham falls on his face and he laughs. There's a couple of ways you can have this laugh be, but one of them is a joyful laugh. He's falling on his face and he laughs. Now, this is gonna be similar to Sarah's response because everything around Isaac is joyful laughter. His name means he laughs. Itzhak.

Hank Smith: 00:56:10 Itzhak.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:56:12 Itzhak. And the second part of the syllable is like a guttural. So kind of like scratch your throat.

Hank Smith: 00:56:20 That's great. Which is what John does when he laughs.

John Bytheway: 00:56:28 I think that it's,

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:56:30 So you'll never forget it.

John Bytheway: 00:56:31 One of the things I love about these ancient cultures is how often a name indicated something like that or indicated a mission. You gotta be really careful what you do when your wife announces she's expecting 'cause back then they just named the kid that if you stub your toe and your wife says, I'm expecting, and Stubby was born on, you know.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:56:54 Stubby. Well, what's really beautiful is this idea of laughing is just gonna go all the way through the story, and then my friend and colleague, Matt Bowen, points to a way that Jesus actually uses it. Okay, so I think we're finally to chapter 18. Chapter 18 starts with a little bit of what I'll call like dramatic irony. This is a storytelling device where the listener or the audience will know something that maybe the actors in the story don't know. In verse one, it says, the Lord appeared to him. This is gonna be Abraham on the plains of Mamre and Abraham is sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. As you read this story, we see Abraham trying to figure out what's going on. Who are these visitors? We as the listeners or the readers know it's the Lord. So something special is gonna happen.

00:57:41 These messengers show up. They start talking to Abraham. In this story Abraham is outside and Sarah is in the tent. That might be stylized too. Just create almost like a sacred space for Sarah. Does that make sense? Abraham is out meeting the messengers. What's interesting is in verse nine, the messengers ask for Sarah. This is especially cool. They basically call her by name. Where is Sarah thy wife? And Abraham says, behold in the tent. This can seem like a boring verse, but what I wanna point out is if we're reading it carefully, there's a couple of ways they could know her name. The first is they know the people in the area, they know Sarah. But these seem like they're travelers coming through and Abraham is treating them with hospitality. So they may not know the area. Maybe Sarah and Abraham are really well known in the area. That's also very possible. But it could also be a little hint that these are not ordinary visitors. They know Sarah's name. Does that make sense? And they call her by that rename. Hey, is Sarah your wife? Where is she? We know that God is gonna be somehow part of this conversation. God is in this group. This is God asking for Sarah by name. So it's a little bit like a suspense like, wait, how do they know my name? Right?

John Bytheway: 00:58:59 How do you know?

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:59:01 Yeah. Wait a minute, because Sarah's listening. Then in verse 10 we get this crazy promise. Hank, do you wanna read verse 10?

Hank Smith: 00:59:10 Yeah. He said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life. And lo Sarah, thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:59:25 Sarah hears this prophecy. In 11 we get a little explanation. In case you forgot, Abraham and Sarah are pretty old, really old, stricken with age. Also, Sarah is not in the way of women. The Hebrew just is the course of women. She is in menopause. Doesn't seem,

Hank Smith: 00:59:43 Long past that phase.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:59:44 Yeah, long past childbearing. Then Sarah's reaction in verse 12, it's really fun. This is a very famous reaction. This is verse 12 and I wanna read it in Hebrew so you can hear. Listen for our special word, it's gonna sound a little different 'cause it's for Sarah. So (Hebrew) there it is. Can you hear the Itzhak in there?

John Bytheway: 01:00:05 Mm. Yeah. Yeah.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:00:07 (Hebrew) Sarah. So it's not Itzhak, it's not his name, but it's the same route. You can hear that (Hebrew) in it. Can you hear it? Abraham laughed in chapter 17 and now Sarah is gonna hear this prophecy that she's gonna have a son. Her response will be the same, just like Abraham's. Again, they're always parallel, they're always paralleling each other in action. And the really important, it's translated as within herself. You can hear that it might be self-reflective, but it also might be internal. She didn't say it out loud, she just said it within herself. This is fun just because in the same way that she lost the thing with a love, God, that she's gonna receive the new thing with a love, God. Because the first tip off is the person in that group of people. That group of visitors knows her name, maybe unusually.

01:01:05 And then she hears the prophecy and she laughs within herself. And she says, after I am waxed old, shall I have pleasure? My lord being old also? This is assumed to all just be maybe even in her mind. Then if you notice in verse 13, the Lord says to Abraham, so the conversation is happening with the Lord and Abraham and Sarah, but Sarah's not quite part of it. Eavesdropping and having her own reactions internally. Verse 13, the Lord said to Abraham, wherefore did Sarah laugh? Saying, shall I of a surety bear a child when I'm old? And then he gives this gorgeous reiteration of the prophecy and then the gorgeous beautiful promise that God gives everybody who waits, is anything too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return to thee according to the time of life and Sarah will have a son. And then in verse 15, Sarah denies, saying, I didn't

laugh for she was afraid. Then he, presuming meaning the Lord, said nay, but thou didst laugh.

Hank Smith: 01:02:09

Yeah. Yeah, you did actually.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:02:15

And it's a little, you can a little bit hear the humor in it. It's funny because if we keep that, she's saying it inside of herself. This makes it even more cool because first of all, the messenger knows her name. Wait, how does he know her name? And then in the next verse she's saying, is that really even possible? And she laughs internally to herself. Then the Lord, this figure in this group of messengers or somehow part of this conversation can hear what Sarah's even maybe thinking. Why did you laugh Sarah? And she's like, I didn't laugh. Nobody heard it. It was in my brain. But the Lord heard it. It's kind of a fun way to read it. Now there's other ways you can read that, but I like that way of reading it. This sweet interaction between the Lord and Sarah. That idea of being afraid. I wanna tell you the Hebrew on that one. It isn't necessarily like she's scared that God heard her laugh. Because I think that sometimes in Sunday school, that's the explanation that is immediate. Oh no, I didn't laugh. I didn't laugh. But that Hebrew word is yare. It can be translated as to be afraid, but it really is more of like in awe. Sarah denied and everybody knows it's not true, but she's still gonna say, no, no.

01:03:29

She's like, backpedal a little bit. I didn't laugh 'cause she's kind of in awe about what's happening right now. And then God says, no, you did laugh. lo ki tsachaqt. You can hear the tsachaqt in there. Isaac bookends the story and it's a fun story. Like there's a little bit of humor to it, which the listener, the hearer would laugh. As we're thinking about Isaac and his birth announcement, it all goes back to verse 14. Is anything too hard for the Lord? That's the story behind Isaac.

Hank Smith: 01:04:02

It's such a beautiful obvious question when we think that's impossible, that would never happen. The Lord's going, pretty good with the impossible. Have you read about me?

John Bytheway: 01:04:12

I specialize in the impossible.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:04:16

That's right.

John Bytheway: 01:04:18

I'm just so intrigued with the idea that here's the Lord with a couple of other guys and just looks like three men. Many have entertained angels unawares, that verse. That's the Lord. I mean it's the LORD in small caps. This is Jehovah. I didn't laugh. Yes you did.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:04:39 I know. Turns out he knows your name also. He can hear what you're thinking also.

John Bytheway: 01:04:45 I'm kind of in awe right now.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:04:49 Yeah. You can just see Sarah like what's happening?

John Bytheway: 01:04:54 Yeah. Knows my name. He knows what I said in my heart. I am in awe right now.

Hank Smith: 01:05:01 The woman at the well says, I perceive you are a prophet.

John Bytheway: 01:05:04 I perceive that you art a prophet.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:05:07 Yeah, I'm putting some things together. Yeah.

John Bytheway: 01:05:10 And that was a well. Where good things happen, at the well. Right?

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:05:13 That's right. Cool things are gonna happen at a well. Yep. That's true.

Hank Smith: 01:05:17 Carli, you've shown us so much. If we wouldn't have gone back to see that original story, you wouldn't feel about this part of the story, the heartbreak she had experienced earlier. Here he is showing up.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:05:32 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 01:05:33 Right in her life.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:05:36 Calling her by name.

Hank Smith: 01:05:38 I thought you'd forgotten me. I thought you'd abandoned me. I thought you'd really betrayed me. And here you are at my house, making promises and then calling me out for laughing.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:05:50 Yeah. The joke. No, you did. There's a sweetness to the story. The laughter is really hard earned, but it's, it's also funny. It's a cute story between them, but also like you said, John, incredibly powerful because sometimes God will wink at us. Have you ever had a God wink? That was me.

John Bytheway: 01:06:13 I just think of this face-to-face encounter. Wow. And what goes on later in 18 where he has this negotiation and it's face-to-face about Sodom.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:06:27 Abraham, in this next part, it's a really powerful story. It becomes kind of an archetypal story for the Jewish people when they think about themselves as descendants of Abraham and descendants of Jacob who becomes Israel. They see themselves in this story. Abraham is talking to the Lord face to face and negotiating with the Lord.

John Bytheway: 01:06:49 He's bargaining.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:06:51 Yeah. Okay. Can you find this many? No. Okay. All right. Let's, how about this many? And there's so many beautiful elements to behind what he's arguing for. He's understood to be a deeply compassionate person. He doesn't want people destroyed. When I read Abraham, I see a man who just loves his family, all of them and loves humans. He's deeply, deeply loving and compassionate, but he's also not afraid to negotiate with God. The Jewish people, when they read this passage, depending on the different tradition within Judaism, they'll wrestle with the Torah. They read the Torah and they try to, what could this be saying? What's the meaning behind this? Is this ethical? Is this not ethical? They love to do that. They see this story and also the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel is kind of their ancestral birthright. Sometimes stuff happens or there's a spiritual lesson and we can wrestle with it and try to figure it out or wrestle with God. Not be afraid to bring our questions. Maybe even our hard questions to God. Or things maybe we've been talking about impossibilities, but also please, please, maybe this way, instead of this way wrestle out difficult things.

Hank Smith: 01:08:06 I think the Lord is giving Abraham an opportunity to show how compassionate he is, because the Lord could say, no, I don't want to talk about this, it's over. He's like, what do you want? What are you thinking? Show me your heart.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:08:19 Yeah. What do you think about this?

John Bytheway: 01:08:21 I just love how at the end of verse 25, where Abraham is telling God how to be God, show me what the judge of all the earth do right? That'd be far from me to slay the righteous with the wicked. Don't you know your job?

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:08:39 Yeah. He really does.

Hank Smith: 01:08:42 How often do I do that? This heavenly Father thing, I think you're doing it wrong. This would be the right thing to do.

John Bytheway: 01:08:48 This is what you're supposed to be like.

Hank Smith: 01:08:50 Yeah, you're supposed to do this for me.

Hank Smith: Carli doesn't it seem also that the Lord doesn't wanna do this? He's going back and forth with Abraham going, give me a reason to not let these consequences play out. I don't take pleasure in suffering. What would Elder Maxwell call it John? We're getting to agency destroying mode here. How we send more spirits to this place.

John Bytheway: I can't send anybody here. He bargains him down to 10 people. If I find 10 people, then even makes a way to get those people out of there and tells them, get out, get out now, and don't even look back.

Dr. Carli Anderson: What I hear in the story too is never underestimate the power of what you bring to any given situation. That your covenants, the gift of the Holy Ghost sits with you and your prayers or your maybe even your reading of your scriptures. That can be a game changer. Even if there's just 10 of you in any given situation. The light of a single prayer in darkness is really powerful. So powerful it can stave off destruction.

Hank Smith: Coming up in part two.

Dr. Carli Anderson: You're feeling the anguish. You're feeling, this is the moment the miracle's gotta come. I'm holding that faith and I'm keeping that in my heart. I want that to be true. He builds the altar. They lay the wood, they bind Isaac, slow, slow, slow, and lays him on the altar upon the wood. It's just wild because you can hear momentum leading up to this verse 10, and Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son.



Is Any Thing Too Hard for the Lord? PART 2



GUEST: DR. CARLI ANDERSON

- John Bytheway: 00:00:01 Welcome to part two with Dr. Carli Anderson, Genesis 18 to 23.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:00:07 We're gonna skip to chapter 21 where the promise gets fulfilled. So she got the promise, it had a little bit of laughter in it. Then we move to verse one. The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had promised. That word visited it's paqad in the Hebrew and it can be to visit, it can be to appoint. It has a specialness to it. It marks it as a very important thing to be visited of the Lord, to have that interaction, but also to have a special appointment. I'm seeing that Sarah is gonna be able to step into her matriarchal power. The Lord visits Sarah, he paqads. It's a special ritual, moves her into a new space and Sarah conceived and bear Abraham a son in his old age at the set time that God had spoken. Abraham called the name of his son that was born to him whom Sarah bear to him, say it with me. Yitzhak. Right.
- 00:01:08 We get down in verse six, a little song that Sarah kind of sings to explain the naming. Sarah said, God made me to laugh so that all that here will laugh with me. Verse seven. And she said, who would've said unto Abraham that Sarah should have given children suck for I have born him a son in his old age. The laughter behind it, God has made me to laugh. So I wanna bring in a Jewish tradition that sees in her song something special. It's from Genesis Rabbah, which is a midrash text. Midrash in the Jewish tradition is commentary and adding a little bit more explanation to the story. Midrash asked the question, so God made Sarah laugh, but what does that mean for us? And then the answer in this is when Sarah was able to laugh and have her miracle and remember everything she's gone through, then actually that laughter rippled out and more and more people started having miracles.
- 00:02:04 There were women who were barren who had children. Blind people were able to see, lame people were able to walk. Midrash talks about that it wasn't just Sarah's miracle, it rippled out and created more of the miraculous in the world. I love that for so many reasons because Sarah and Abraham being so tied

to the covenant that impacting the world in a miraculous way, but also just thinking of the Savior who's gonna be one of Sarah's descendants through whom many miracles take place. He is one of the kings that belongs in her lineage as part of her [matriarchhood](#). It's just majestic in its scope.

- John Bytheway: 00:02:48 We often call Abraham a father of nations. When you [read](#) that verse, kings of people shall be of her and you said shall belong to her. Could we call Sarah a mother of nations then? That seems like we could say that too.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:03:02 Yeah, I think so.
- Hank Smith: 00:03:04 Carli, this is fantastic. I'm looking through these chapters and I have John, how many new notes do you have? I can't even find places to write. I'm running out of post-Its. Let's keep going. What's next?
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:03:16 I'd like now to reframe Hagar. We've told the story from Sarah's side. Now I wanna tell the story from Hagar's side and help you appreciate how the text really treats her with a lot of respect and power as well. To give you a little bit of background on her in some chapters before chapter 21, which is where I'm gonna focus, she starts as a maid servant. She's gonna have a child part of this kin group and then she's gonna get a new title. She's gonna be called bondwoman or handmaid. Those are different terms in Hebrew and we don't need to get too much into it except I want you to appreciate that she's elevating. She got in trouble for the disrespect, playing with the hierarchy a little bit or not handling the respect as well. But even with that, she's able to move into a really powerful place.
- 00:04:08 Actually by the end of this chapter is gonna be her own matriarch of her own line. That was the promise of the angel. I also wanna remind you that when the angel talks to her and appears to her, the promise she gets the [wording](#) is really similar to Abraham's. So it's setting her up as an equal to Abraham as well. But then also she does this really amazing thing in Genesis 16:13. She names God, she gives God a title. She says, you are El Roi, the God who sees, she's the only person in scripture that gives God a name. God gives other people names, but she gives God a name and then the well is named after that. Where we are now with Hagar is she's moved up in the kin system, the kin group. She's not a shiphchah anymore. That's the Hebrew for a maid servant.
- 00:05:05 She's now an amah. It's translated differently in the English, but it's usually handmaid or bondwoman and I wanna talk about

that just briefly because the amah is a level up for her. Just like Sarah's leveled up and Abraham's leveled up, Hagar's also leveled up and amah, this research is still pretty new, but what scholars are seeing is that the shiphchah seems to be a slightly lower position in the kin group than an amah. Usually when like a surrogate mother has the surrogate child, then they become an amah. They're in a different place in the kin group and we're still trying to figure out what that looks like 'cause we're looking back thousands of years to trying to figure out what they knew that we don't know. We can see there's a difference. She has more respect and she's treated as a mother in the family.

00:05:57 So she's definitely very much in a new position which she deserves. We also know that she had the promised son. Ishmael has been born. When Isaac is born, it looks like Ishmael's probably around 13 years old. Long time coming for Sarah, but Ishmael is part of the family and integrated well. And then we have in chapter 21 verse eight, this little small note that says the child grew and was weaned and then Abraham makes a great feast. It's a party for him. Children probably were weaned between two years and four years old, so we're gonna put that to the 13 age for Ishmael when he gets circumcised, that puts Ishmael in this next part of the story around 17 or 18. That's important for the context of what's gonna happen next because at 17 or 18 Ishmael's getting close to like marriageable age, he's gonna need a wife soon and that's gonna add a whole new dynamic.

00:06:59 What's happening in the family if we bring this in, Isaac's still little, but Ishmael's an emerging adult that helps to build the context for this. I'm just gonna go to verse nine. This is a really hard verse for people to understand like even scholars don't quite know what's going on with this. Okay, so in verse nine it says, Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian whom she had born unto Abraham mocking. This word mocking is wildly the same root as all of the laughter and the Isaac roots, Tzachaq, so it's Isaac's name, but in a slightly different conjugation. It's actually a participle. Sarah sees that he's doing this action, whatever it is, it's laughing and nobody quite knows even to this day how to handle it. One scholar sees it as taking Isaac's maybe even authority. He translates it that Ishmael is Isaacing, he's taking Isaac's position in a way, it's just ongoing at this point.

00:08:07 Seems to just be happening as a matter of course, maybe even in that participle form of Isaac. And then another [scholar](#) actually looks at this and says that this is actually a clear hint that Ishmael is ready to get married. He's marriageable age and he's, we need to find him a wife. What does that do to the

power dynamics? What's gonna happen? This is the toughest verse for Sarah and Hagar I think. Verse 10, wherefore she says to Abraham, and this is the translation, but I'll go through the [Hebrew](#) so you can hear it in a [different](#) way. Cast out this bondwoman and her son for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even Isaac. This is the tough part when everybody hears this, they're like, Sarah is so mean. There are a couple of ways you can translate this and work with the Hebrew and even some word plays or some illusions that really quite soften it and maybe even make it amazing.

00:09:04 Something happening in nine is Ishmael is getting older and there's something going on with Isaac or questions about what's gonna happen with his position. What is he actually heir to? He's given a promise by an angel through his mom. Abraham has some promises, but we also know that Sarah now has a son who is also an heir. So we've got two heirs. It's emotional and it's relational, but it's also legal. This is a dynastic question we have to ask. What's really interesting is when Sarah says in the Hebrew that cast out this bondwoman, she uses the word amah. That's why I brought up those titles. She didn't say shiphchah, she didn't make her lower than she was. She said amah. She said the handmaiden, she honored where Hagar is, the idea of casting her out. It can be to cast out.

00:10:02 This is the same route that is used to describe Adam and [Eve](#) being cast out of Eden. It also has agricultural movement to it and force to it. There's a growing to this. Now hold that thought because I'm gonna keep going. So when she says cast out, move out. You can see like the growth for Adam and Eve in Eden versus the growth once they leave, we know that story. They might even think, oh wait, okay, so they need to leave this place where it's been safe, where it's been sweet, where they have everything they need now they need to move out for some growth. That might be what the listeners or the readers are having come to their mind, is this Eden myth. That's a possibility. There's other ways to do it, but I'm gonna hold that and see if it works logically through the rest of the verse.

00:10:54 Sarah says, garash garash, move this ahma out, move this handmaiden honoring her new position out and also her son. Then the Hebrew because she will not inherit. I wanna go into grammar again and talk about this verse. It's yerosh is to inherit or he will inherit or lo yerosh. He will not inherit. This could also be what's sometimes called a subjunctive. That's just a fancy word for shoulda woulda coulda. We need to move her out and her son out because he shouldn't have to share an inheritance with my son. Not he cannot because I'm being greedy for my

son, but it could be Sarah and it reads very well this way. Both ways read fine in the Hebrew. What if this is Sarah saying move them out from this safe space. These boys both need room to grow and if he stays here, his inheritance will be less.

00:12:00 That's a possibility for reading this because you can hear that that works really well in the Hebrew. Not he shall not inherit, but he should have to inherit with Isaac, they both have really great promises. When these boys are born, they're already princes, they're already royal. You can read it. It works in the Hebrew to have Sarah being nasty and like get 'em out 'cause I'm not sharing, could be that. It could also, and several scholars see it as this, it could also be Sarah saying this needs to be different because both boys sharing isn't the promise. These boys have individual destinies they have to follow. If we keep them here, one or both of them might not follow them. When I talk about this with my students, I joke, boys are rowdy, they need space, but also like these boys have destinies. If you read it that way, then this is Sarah acknowledging the promise that the angel gave to Hagar when that angel took Sarah's baby away from her.

00:13:06 There's a lot of poignant beauty if you read it that way and it reads fine that way in the Hebrew you can read it quite easily. This is Sarah saying, I know the prophecy for my son and I know the prophecy and promise for your son. For them both to have their destinies, we have to split. Super beautiful that Sarah is the one and she would be the one because she's the gevurah. She's the great lady. So she would say this has to be different for everybody to fulfill their fullest destiny. This might be Sarah acting in wisdom. If you look in verse 11, Abraham doesn't like this idea. Like I said, I see Abraham as somebody who just, he loves his family, he wants his family around. He lost his family, he's lost a brother. He had to leave his family. He loves having his family around. This is me putting a characterization on Abraham, but I see he doesn't wanna break up this beautiful thing and this is a little bit like what happens in Eden, Eve is like I'm seeing some things and Adam's like, oh no, we don't do that. Right?

Hank Smith: 00:14:09 How about we stay here? How about we don't leave? Yeah.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:14:13 Now Sarah is becoming a type of Eve right? In this own way and that term for cast out and garash that it's the term for get out of Eden, move out.

Hank Smith: 00:14:23 It's loaded. It's supposed to bring back those memories.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:14:26 There's that poetic, that stylized intent. Abraham doesn't like it. We might not even like it without even this background. You might be like, Sarah, why are you so mean?

Hank Smith: 00:14:37 Wow. Yeah.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:14:39 Sarah is doing the right thing. Hey John, will you read verse 12?

John Bytheway: 00:14:42 And God said unto Abraham, let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad and because of thy bondwoman. In all that Sarah hath said unto thee hearken unto her voice, for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:14:57 Basically God says Sarah's right. Now if Sarah's being mean, and again the translation, it really sounds that way. The term bondwoman, it kind of sounds like she just doesn't want her around. She doesn't want to share the inheritance. If we can let Sarah be this noble, amazing woman that she's been so far and that people all over that region have noticed and even the Lord has noticed, then this fits better. This fits better as a woman who's like Eve watching what's happening and saying we can't grow here. I think there's a different way and that way involves moving out and then God says, Sarah's right.

Hank Smith: 00:15:44 I think my wife is gonna have me memorize that verse in all that Sarah hath said unto thee hearken unto her voice, she is right.

John Bytheway: 00:15:52 We'll call this the Hank's law.

Hank Smith: 00:15:56 Hank's Law.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:15:56 She can just pull that out of her pocket anytime.

Hank Smith: 00:16:00 That's interesting. That completely changes the story here.

John Bytheway: 00:16:05 Yeah.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:16:05 It does, doesn't it?

Hank Smith: 00:16:06 And our perception of Sarah, yeah, it fits her role. It fits how close she is to God and her understanding of what's supposed to happen. I love it.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:16:17 Yeah, she's doing another hard thing. She's willing to do it. She's thinking of others and she's honoring the prophecy that took away her first hope. So it's just so poignant and beautiful. She's acting with a wisdom. She's seeing things that not everyone is

seeing and asking for that to be. So Hagar really is gonna have a cool moment here with Abraham and the wording moves her into a really beautiful leading responsibility. God says to Abraham, don't be distressed. I don't want you to be upset about it. Do what Sarah says. Sarah's right. There's an interesting element, a couple of interesting words I wanna bring into because we've been talking about how there might be echoes of Eden in this part of the story. God says, Sarah's right, whatever Sarah says, do that and then the Hebrew ki bi Yitzchak, because in Isaac, (Hebrew) zara, so that would be seed is gonna be named to you.

00:17:20 It's an awkward phrase, but I wanna suggest maybe even like a possible ritual illusion to remember we talked about naming and how naming moves people into kingship. It's that the offspring is gonna be continued through him, but also the offspring is gonna be named through the descendants of Isaac. That might be a ritual illusion. I'm not sure I can say much more about it, but there's something there. You see it mirrored but in different wording in verse 13, as for the son of the amah, the handmaiden, this is Hagar, I will set him up as a nation, so it's (Hebrew), I'm gonna set him up. And you do that with kings. You put them in a place where they can be seen, a high place or it's elevated, it's ritualistic in its way and his seed will also be yours. We've got two matriarchs that are setting up independent lines, working in the covenant in their specific ways that seems to satisfy Abraham.

00:18:21 We don't get another objection. And this next verse is really, really pretty for Hagar. I wanna go through it slowly if we can. Abraham rises up early in the morning and he takes bread and he takes like a water skin is usually how they'll translate a skin of water and he puts it upon Hagar translating from the Hebrew here. So the King James might be a little bit different. He placed it upon her shoulder. Now that word shoulder is gonna be important 'cause the next thing that happens in the verse is, and also the child. In like even artistic renderings of this, sometimes you'll see Hagar and she's like looking scared and she's got like one water skin and a little thing of bread and she's got this baby on her or like a kid. Okay, hope you live. If you read it in English, it can read like that pretty easily.

00:19:11 But the Hebrew is so stylized. First of all, the word for the boy is yeled, but that's a little child. But we've already established he's not a little child. He's a grown man. That's a symbolic word. He gives her water, he gives her bread, and then he gives her the son, the yeled, and he puts it on her shoulder and the shoulder is a really unique word. There's scholars who look at this with

the idea of the shoulder that he puts it on her shoulder, the water skin and the bread and the yeled and the boy who's not a boy, he's a grown man and he sees it as Abraham giving her responsibility, governing power over this child's life. Now she now is the primary person who's gonna care for this child who makes decisions for this child or this boy, he's a grown man, for Ishmael.

00:20:03 This shoulder in other places in scripture can be used as a symbol for governance, for responsibility and even maybe kingship. You know this from the very famous Isaiah 9:6, and the government shall be upon his shoulder. There is another Isaiah verse in chapter 22 verse 22 that talks about authority being placed on somebody's shoulder. You'll see this in Nehemiah in a slightly different way. They don't wanna give their shoulders, their authority away. They wanna keep their freedom and in Zephaniah 3:9 too. So there's places where shoulder becomes symbolic of royal power leadership, if that makes sense. What's happening here probably is Abraham not casting Hagar out, but giving her the royal charge. She's now the queen. This is her lineage. She's the queen. She's making decisions for it. It's freedom. It's also setting up the promise with that idea of royalty for her son.

00:21:05 She's the queen. He's the prince, and they now go, she's under his authority. They see this as reflected in the fact that she picks a wife for Ishmael later. If he was still in Abraham's household, Abraham would pick the wife, but [Hagar](#) picks the wife, so she has legal royal authority. She's being invested with this power by Abraham in this verse. You can read it as he just gave her some stuff and hope she lived. Actually, what I think is going on here is that he says, okay, we're gonna do what we said we'd do. You're right. The boys can't inherit together. I now invest thee with this [authority](#) to be the matriarch over this line. And then she goes out into the wilderness of Beersheba. Then there's one more cool word that I think you'll like. It has to do with further down on the verse.

00:21:58 It says, she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. So you can picture her just like if we think about it in normal ways, she's got food, water, a kid who's 17 or 18, right? We hope she finds water before everything runs out. But I don't think it's that. I think it is stylized and the wandering also reinforces that there's some really cool recent scholarship that looks at this root ta'ah to wander and sees in it an allusion to not wandering like, where am I? What's going on? more wandering strategically, which echoes what the nomadic people that will be the descendants of Ishmael do in the desert. They

wander strategically. They don't settle down necessarily, right? Like think of bedouin or nomadic communities. They wander, they know where the water is, they know where the wells are, they know where the oasis are.

00:22:53 They wander strategically and it isn't a straight route. It's very strategic. This scholar sees it as a word play on what her descendants, what Ishmael and Hagar's descendants are gonna do in the wilderness down by Beersheba in that area. It changes how you read the verse because she's not just wandering and we hope she doesn't die. She's been invested with authority by Abraham to lead this line, to be this matriarch also is learning the ropes maybe or she's setting up the skillful knowledge of the desert that their, she and Ishmael's descendants are gonna have. Remember, this is mythic. Like I said, it doesn't mean not true. It's these are the ancestral myths of these people and you can hear it in the words that loosens it so much. I think it makes it quite beautiful for everybody.

Hank Smith: 00:23:45 Yeah. Doesn't seem like she got shoved away and she ran outta water later in the day.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:23:51 Yeah. We get to the part of the story where she can't find water, gives her story a little bit more nuanced. She's been wandering skillfully, which implies she knows how to find water in a desert. We know it because there's shrubs nearby, which means there's gotta be water underground somewhere. She knows what she's doing. She's looking for the thing, expects it to be there and it's not there. Here is her parallel to what happens for Sarah and what happens for Abraham. All three of these are gonna lose or almost lose a son and I wanna set it up too because like when I was saying earlier about how our individual experiences can shape our faith and it becomes really unique kinds of faith. The faith that Sarah developed is gonna be different. Hagar has to develop the faith of doing something alone. She's not with the family anymore.

00:24:44 She had to get out of that place and grow, create the inheritance, right? She had to do it alone. That's its own experience. The faith that you have to develop. If you've ever been a single parent or if you've ever had to bear a really heavy responsibility alone, you know what it is to dig deep and try to figure it out. Then you also know that sort of shock when you're like, I'm here. It should be here. What's happening and it's not there. The miracle story then is she's looking for water. It should be there and it's not there when the water is gone. I don't think this is the same water Abraham gave her. I think in the wandering, she's getting water, she knows where to find the

water, but at this place that looks like there should be water there, it's not.

00:25:32 Now she's feeling that pinch, that stress. She goes down a distance and it says a bow shot away and this bow shot away is an illusion to again, the ancestral tradition. Ishmael's descendants are gonna have archery and bowmanship, it brings in that. That's a little mythic illusion. Then she says, I don't know what to do. I don't think I can watch my child die. Again the challenge, it's really poignant. She's had to go out alone. This was the right thing. God said it, everybody knew it, and Abraham invests her with authority. She's making it work. She's doing well and setting up these patterns for her ancestry, but then it, the thing she thinks should be there isn't there. You can relate to experiences of that where like I showed up and it should be here and it's not here, so what do I do?

Hank Smith: 00:26:23 It's very similar to Sarah's story. I had a promise and it's not gonna happen.

John Bytheway: 00:26:29 Not in the way you think anyway. Yeah.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:26:33 I don't think I can watch it happen. I can't watch the promise disappear. I can't watch the boy die. Like with Sarah. Sarah's came a little bit later. Hagar comes almost immediately. It's an angel.

Hank Smith: 00:26:46 Carli, so far I have to tell you, Sarah has come to life for me and Hagar. You feel their stories more. There's a lot of heartache and pain and growth and God working individually with each woman.

John Bytheway: 00:27:05 We never want these just to be names in our scriptures.

Hank Smith: 00:27:08 You've said we were gonna do three people today, Sarah, Hagar, and I'm guessing now we move to Abraham?

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:27:15 Correct. We're gonna go to [Abraham](#) now. Their stories parallel each other. We talked about how each of them is gonna lose or almost lose a child. Spoiler alert, but you probably know what happens in Genesis 22. This is a family dealing with really complicated problems, complicated issues around like surrogacy and the legalities and friendship and relationship. It's all kinds of difficulties on the ground, but it's still beautifully symbolic, beautifully told in a way that calls in imagery from Eden and calls in imagery of royalty and special lines and princes and again, these are ancestral stories for the ancient people. They're

seeing themselves in the story. They're seeing their families, their lineages, but it's also just about a family trying to navigate how life is sometimes hard and it's hard to be in a family and sometimes it's hard to grow and sometimes you get disappointed.

- Hank Smith: 00:28:19 You added another layer by telling us, okay, not only are these stories not written in English, they're written a long time ago and the people reading them, there's things written in there for them. They're not as ancient. They're ancient compared to us.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:28:37 These descendants are gonna be neighbors, they're gonna be cousins. Yet you still don't lose the majesty, the majesty of what's happening for these royals. It's all acknowledged. These are royal lines, these are special sons, these are special women. This is a special family.
- Hank Smith: 00:28:52 Maybe just one takeaway is God can take a family with a lot of complicated issues and use them for his purposes, right? Yeah. That gives us all a little bit more hope.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:29:04 Right? Because Abraham and Sarah and Hagar, it's a spiritual lineage. We're adopted into these families. They head these families. This is their story. Complicated and messy. It's encouraging. Whatever I'm going through, what I don't seem to be getting right.
- Hank Smith: 00:29:23 Yeah.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:29:23 There's still hope for me.
- Hank Smith: 00:29:24 Yeah, and then God's gonna use our family.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:29:27 Yeah. Exactly.
- Hank Smith: 00:29:30 Okay. Tell us about Abraham.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:29:32 I love [Abraham's](#) story. I mean this is the one we know well. This is the one that we tell. It's a beautiful story and it has gorgeous parallels to Christ and the plan of salvation. Also, in thinking about the parallels with what's just happened for Sarah and Hagar, we've been looking at them. I wanna read this also with an eye for Abraham's faith and for the way that he moves through his challenge for his exquisitely difficult [trial](#), the thing that he has to overcome and experience. There's some really beautiful poetic language in this text that we can play with to help you appreciate how it was told. It is still, I think even today

understood by scholars and by people who study the Bible as literature to be one of the most beautiful chapters in the entire book. It's beautifully written, it's beautiful in the Hebrew, it's beautiful.

00:30:29 Even in translation, the narrative style pulls you in. I mean the story itself will pull you in, but the way it's told is also quite beautiful. We've gone through all of this. We've got the princes set up. They're in their separate territories in Genesis 22. We get this in verse one, the setup. This is again more dramatic irony. We the readers know what's happening maybe even before [Abraham](#) does in verse one, we get it set up and it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham. Now I wanna change that because the Hebrew has a sense of tempting, but it really is a sense of trying. This is, I need to see where you're at Abraham, so it's not a tempting. I'm gonna pull you over here and see if you'll go. It's more of I need to see where you're at. It's nasah.

00:31:23 It's this idea of a trial really. Basically I need to see how you'll respond to the situation. We're setting that up. God's gonna do that, and then there's this lovely [interaction](#) between God and Abraham that I wanna highlight. This would be stylized. Then it will have echoes later in some of the stories, the biblical stories. God says to Abraham, and he just says his name, Abraham. (Hebrew). Hineni, that's God says Abraham and Abraham says, here I am. So this word hineni is a really interesting word. It's like an acknowledging of yourself, like a I'm right here. You can use it almost as a beginning of something and look, this happened. Something like look would be the hine. It's got a sense of pause, but it's also got a sense of identifying yourself in a place and it's also used in some sacred settings.

00:32:24 So a similar exchange is gonna go on between the boy prophet Samuel and God. It's gonna have this kind of interaction. God says someone's name and then they say, here I am. It also happens in Isaiah. Isaiah six, Isaiah's going to respond to God saying, here I am. Abraham is beginning this situation with God saying, Abraham and Abraham says hineni. There's a lot of ways you could look at this, but what I see in this is it's [preparing](#) Abraham for again the next level. I'm gonna pull you up to this next level, which I feel like happens to us a lot in life. We get through things, we go through a trial, we settle in maybe, and then we're like, okay, okay, I learned a lot. I'm all right, and then they'll be the next thing, but it's about growth. We didn't come necessarily just to like sit on a beach and play a ukulele, although I would really love to do that.

Hank Smith: 00:33:22 So it's like [Abraham](#), we're moving up again. I wonder if Abraham's like, okay, I know what this means.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:33:33 Hineni that word, that Hebrew word is gonna appear multiple times in the story and it's gonna be used in interesting ways. Abraham is always saying it, I'm here. Here I am showing up, being there. John, will you read two?

John Bytheway: 00:33:49 Okay, Genesis 22 verse two, and he said, take now thy son, thy only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest and get thee into the land of [Moriah](#) and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains, which I will tell of.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:34:08 Awesome. In the English you can see that he is stating multiple times identifying who you're supposed to take. What's beautiful about this is it moves us step by step and zeroes in on a specific, we get multiple ways of thinking about [Isaac](#), our Isaac, our rejoicing, laughter, son. You can also see it's inching closer and closer to specifics and each one is so poignant. I want you to take your son, the one you really love. I want you to take Isaac, now in Jewish tradition, I just wanna share this because I think it's nice you can hear the pacing in it. It also gives it a little bit of depth. This is also in Genesis Rabbah that midrash when they see this repetition of, we haven't quite gotten to the name yet and now we're going to Isaac. They imagine this conversation. God says to Abraham, take your son, and Abraham says, I have two sons.

00:35:08 God says your only one, and he says, each is the only son of his mother. God says the one you love, and Abraham says, I love them both and then God says, Isaac, it pulls that pace out a little bit more and you can appreciate each one of those words. Another really interesting thing is that the only one, take your son, your only son. This one is a really interesting word and it's gonna be a repeated word. It's (hebrew) or it comes from this root yachad. The root can be only, it can be solitary, but it can also imply unity. There's a unity, a oneness, but also a singleness. A solitariness. It's gonna bounce back and forth between those, but I love this word in this passage because it's not hard to see types of Christ that this is a similar story about Christ and his atoning sacrifice and how there is someone that takes the place of Isaac so that sacrifices take place on the temple mount in Jerusalem, but then there is the last sacrifice that's Christ.

00:36:27 Take your son, your only one, the one you love, your beloved son. Take Isaac, the rejoicing laughter one, the joyful one, and then offer him as a burnt offering on one of the high places that

I'm gonna show you. The burnt offering, this word is olah. There were lots of different kinds of sacrifices and offerings in the Bible and the biblical text ways you could do this. What the olah is the offering that you would bring to the temple or that you would offer up when you wanted absolute communion with God, wasn't that you had like that you're worried about something that had happened or you wanted be grateful and say thank you. The olah is where you just take the whole animal and you just put it on there and you let it burn and it's symbolic of your whole self, the deepest kinds of consecration, putting yourself right on the altar, emptying your sense of self, even absolute consecration.

00:37:28 That's what he's asking. I want you to offer him up as an olah, as a deep, deep consecrated act. Go up to the mountain just like wells are places where you're like, oh, something good's gonna happen. Mountains are also good places in the biblical text. If you're going up to a mountain, something interesting, something good, probably something sacred is gonna happen. Mountains carry that connotation. We've got wells, we've got mountains. Take them up on a mountain. Then you get in verse three, a kind of a slowing down of the pace. Here's the test, here's what I'm looking for. Your son, the only one, the one you love, Isaac. Then we get what Abraham does and what scholars have noticed is that this pace, we get him slowly gathering things to get ready to go. That's one verse and then like miles get covered in a couple of verses, we go really fast.

00:38:25 Then when we get to the mountain, it's gonna slow down again and this is part of the literary style. You can hear it and you can see that in the English really well, but it's really lovely storytelling to pull us into the story and find the beauty in the story. The next morning, Abraham saddles his ass and he takes two of his servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering and he set it out for the place which God told him. He doesn't wanna leave to do it. Can you kind of hear it like we get details on how he's preparing and getting ready to go. You can hear the hesitation in the telling of the story. Then on the third day, Abraham looks up and he sees the place from afar. What I wanna focus on is verse five.

00:39:08 There's some beautiful stuff that happens in the Hebrew that you might miss in the English. Abraham says to his servants or to his young men, abide here with the ass and I and the lad will go yonder and worship and come to you again. Sounds pretty cut and dry. Each one of those descriptions of what he and Isaac are gonna do are really interesting, and this is grammar, but it's a really interesting conjugation and it's called a cohortative.

Don't freak out about the word. The cohortative just means it's a command to the first person. Usually when I think of a command, I'll be like, hey, take your shoes off or hang your hat over there. The you is implied. Sit down, eat the sandwich, whatever, the you is implied, I'm commanding a you. I'm commanding a person. In the cohortative, it's a command to yourself or to the collective, so I can say to myself, I command you to do this or I will you to do this. I wish this to be done. Let me or I shall, is often ways that it's translated. It has a sense of will, like I will this to be so. If I was gonna command myself to eat a cookie, I would be like, I shall eat a cookie. Let me eat a cookie. It's not common in English, but it does show up a lot in Hebrew.

- Hank Smith: 00:40:26 It's common in my house. I shall eat a cookie.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:40:31 I shall eat a cookie. You get in the sense of it because it's, you want it to be like, I want that cookie so bad.
- Hank Smith: 00:40:40 So when he says, I am going to yonder and worship, that's what he means? I.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:40:45 Yeah, but notice it's not I, it's we. I want you to see that because you can see Abraham's faith, you can see where Abraham would like this to go and how he remember he wrestles with God, he negotiates, he knows he can talk to God. He can tell him what he wants. He can tell him what he thinks. Verse five, he says, I and the lad will go yonder. The two of them, they're gonna do it in the Hebrew, you can see it's the we. It's two of us, two together. We will go up. It's a command, so we shall or I will, that we are gonna go up to (hebrew) to that place. You can almost see him pointing in the telling of the story. Also a cohortative, we are going to worship the two of us. We are going to worship and we're gonna do the thing. We're gonna do the ritual, we're gonna do the worship. Then come again to you. That's also a we. It's not singular and it's cohortative. I will that we return (hebrew) I willing, let us both return. Let us not just me, he knows what he is supposed to do. You can see his faith. It's so powerful to me.
- Hank Smith: 00:42:05 Is there an element of trust like this is gonna work out?
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:42:09 Yeah, that's what I see. Even maybe an element of prayer. He's saying, we're gonna go up, we're gonna worship and we are gonna come down.
- Hank Smith: 00:42:21 Both of us.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:42:22 That's a we. That's not clear in the English, but it's very much there in the Hebrew.

Hank Smith: 00:42:28 I wonder if he thinks, okay, I'm gonna go through with this, but that God's gonna bring him back. Maybe something like that. Maybe he's not gonna stop me, but something's gonna happen.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:42:40 Yeah, we get a hint of what he's thinking. When Isaac asks a little bit later in verse seven, Isaac asks, we've got the fire, we've got the wood, but where's the sheep? In verse eight, Abraham says, it's God who will see to the sheep, God's gonna provide this sheep, so we get a hint of what he's thinking. Now you can read it. It's got a lot of irony. In fact, if you're just listening to the story or you're just reading it and it's style in it's poetic form, yeah, what's gonna happen? How is this gonna be solved? And also you can see Abraham's hope. He's like, God's gonna provide. We don't really know what he's thinking except that we know he wants them both to come down and he's trusting that God's gonna provide a way. Then in verse six, I wanna go back to that. Do you remember that root yachad that is both solitary and alone or only, but also unity?

00:43:35 It comes back into the telling in verse six, Abraham takes the wood for the burnt offering and he lays it upon Isaac his son and he takes the fire in his hand and the knife, and they went both of them together, that both of them together. It's that same root. Yachad, it's yachdav, the two of them together, there's unity in that one. The last time we saw it was, take your son your only one, but now it's the two of them and it's they're united. They're going together. Now there's gonna be a little exchange and then we're gonna get it again. The two of them walk together and you can see that both of them together. Another little interesting element in this verse is that there have been exchange noticed is that Abraham gives Isaac the wood and Abraham has the fire and the knife in his hand.

00:44:29 Those are the dangerous things. That's the lethal stuff. Abraham has that in his hands. One interpretation of that is that Abraham is holding it because it's gotta be his job. Another interpretation is that he's holding it because he wants to keep it as far away from Isaac as he can before anything has to happen. Does that make sense? So he's holding the lethal stuff. Isaac is also holding the wood. You can see a beautiful parallel of holding the wood that ties to the idea of Christ and the cross and the wood and the tree.

John Bytheway: 00:45:05 I don't remember when I made this note. Might have been four years ago, but I had next to verse five, and we come to you

again inserting the word we in the NRSV and I have, maybe God will raise him again. Maybe that was the, like you said, we'll come back to you, both of us. Maybe God will raise him again. Whoa.

- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:45:27 Yeah, he's got faith. It's a willingness. I need this to be, it's like it's a command, not even willingness. That's not even the right word. It's a command I want this to be. So then they take the instruments and they walk the two of them together. That phrase is gonna come up again in verse eight. In between that, between the first expression of them walking together in unity, and the second one is a conversation that happens and it's Isaac. He asks in verse seven, Isaac spake unto Abraham, his father and said, my father, notice that. What does Abraham say? Isaac starts the conversation, my father, so he calls him by name. Then he said, Abraham responds. What does he respond? Do you see it?
- Hank Smith: 00:46:12 Hineni.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:46:13 Hineni good. There it is again. He responds to Isaac in the same way he responds to the Lord. He is like, here I am. It's so poignant. It's so powerful there. Isaac starts this conversation in that same sacred transaction that Abraham and God were having. Here I am, my son. Isaac says, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb? And Abraham in verse eight says, my son, God will provide himself a lamb for the burnt offering. Then we get the repetition of the phrase that we had right before this conversation and the two of them walked together. It sandwiches that conversation. So if you're listening skillfully, you'll hear, they walk together. Isaac says, dad, where's the lamb? Right? And Abraham says, God will provide. It's just loaded. Does Isaac know what's happening? What's the explanation for this? We do know that after that conversation, Abraham says, God will provide, and they walk together and I would translate it even in unity. They're walking together in unity. It could be subtext, right? There's an exchange that's not verbal, but the implicit between the two of them. I also really love that idea of unity that you can see mirrored in the story with Isaac and Abraham, but you can also see that mirrored in Christ in his unity with the Father, that they walked together in that unity and that oneness.
- Hank Smith: 00:47:50 It's getting very intense as you read. Yeah. Even though we all know what's gonna happen, it's still, ooh,
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:47:57 The pace is just so perfect and what's being emphasized is so poignant. The idea of questions that are being asked, they're

still moving forward in unity, and Abraham still has his faith. God's gonna provide, God's gonna provide, and then in verse nine, they arrive at the place in which God had told Abraham, Abraham builds the altar and lays the wood in order. We're slowing back down. This is the same pace as when he was packing to go. You get a play by play of what's happening every minute instead of a couple of verses where they wandered for three days. You're feeling the anguish, you're feeling, this is the moment the miracle's gotta come. I'm holding that faith and I'm keeping that in my heart. I want that to be true. He builds the altar, they lay the wood, they bind Isaac, slow, slow, slow and lays him on the altar upon the wood.

00:48:50 It's just wild because you can hear momentum leading up to this verse 10, and Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son. It's up in the air. This story is so poignant that there's actually images across the three Abrahamic traditions, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, that show Abraham with his hand up with a knife in it and Isaac and then the angel, the angels show up to keep things okay. They keep the covenant alive, they fix the situation. Here he is with his hand up and the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven. God says, Abraham. Abraham. Interesting that he says it twice, right? First time he just said it once. I am, I'm here I am. In the act ready to do this thing that I don't wanna do. And then of course verse 12 and he said, lay out thy hand upon the lad. Neither do anything unto him. For now, I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thy only son from me, and there's that only again, that yachad root.

Hank Smith: 00:50:05 You better be the most punctual angel ever like you cannot be late to this.

John Bytheway: 00:50:13 Isn't it, how God waits until the last minute sometimes before intervention? Absolutely last minute. Okay. We're gonna put to death all the believers, have a nice night at the going down of the sun in 3 Nephi.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:50:31 I had a friend who said once God loves a photo finish. It does seem that way. Faith requires pushing the edges. To build it, you have to get pushed. The strength that comes from it, it's just like spiritual strength training. There's something about it getting pushed just to the edge to just see if you can hold it

John Bytheway: 00:50:55 Forevermore we refer to Abrahamic tests as the ultimate.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:51:00 That's really true. It becomes our type of all big trials. You remember in the beginning, it's an olah. This is a consecration,

but it's also a nasah. It's also a test. This is a test to see how consecrated is Abraham. It's frightening. Even what is happening and what seems to be being required, there is that level of total consecration, just total trust.

- Hank Smith: 00:51:30 This is pulling at, I think every part of him, emotionally, physically, spiritually from the Pearl of Great Price this is like childhood trauma even he's facing. The Lord is, let me put you face to face with the ultimate nightmare. Do you trust me? Everybody walks out. Even the Lord is like, you really impressed me there. Right?
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:51:57 Don't you think that's how the Lord is with us? When we go through these tough times and these trials that feel so heavy or that push us to the brink where your back is against the wall, it's now or never Lord. I love that you said, I think even the Lord was impressed because I think he's impressed with us too.
- Hank Smith: 00:52:18 There's something that I know John loves to quote and John, I actually have the exact [story](#) here that you've quoted to me many times. This is [Truman G. Madsen](#). It's called The Power from Abrahamic Tests. Brother Madsen says, once I was in the valley known as Hebron, now beautifully fruitful, and where tradition has it, there is a tomb to Father Abraham. As I approached the place with Elder Hugh B. Brown, I asked, what are the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Elder Brown thought for a moment and answered in one word, posterity. Then I almost burst out why then was Abraham commanded to go to Mount Moriah and offer his only hope of posterity? It was clear that this man, nearly 90, had thought and prayed and wept over that question before he finally said Abraham needed to learn something about Abraham.
- John Bytheway: 00:53:22 Wouldn't you say we learn more from our hard experiences than from our easy ones, but I don't pray for hard experiences.
- Hank Smith: 00:53:31 The end of that talk, brothers and sisters, today we need Abrahams. We need those who are willing to stand and who having done all, stand. We have people now and need more who can listen to the living word and the present commitment of the Lord Jesus Christ through his prophets and stand. May God help us respond and become Abrahams.
- John Bytheway: 00:53:58 I like that word stand when you think of the word stand and standards that come from it, and the opposite of stand would be to shrink or buckle or wilt or compromise. Be a standard bearer. Do you stand with the leaders and represent their view to the people, or do you stand with the people and represent

their view to the leaders? Which way do you face? Where do you stand? Those are all tough questions.

- Hank Smith: 00:54:26 And how do you feel if you're Abraham and you went the distance? Is that why he names the mountain the name of the place?
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:54:34 Yeah. Thank you for taking us there. Yeah, he names the mountain. There's so much that's beautiful about this name. This mountain is gonna be traditionally the place of the temple. When scholars look at this, they're seeing this as the sacrifices that are gonna take place on the temple mirror this story, and then also echo ahead to Christ who is the person that makes faith possible.
- John Bytheway: 00:55:01 A lot of people are very interested in that real estate right there.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:55:06 Yeah, it's true.
- Hank Smith: 00:55:09 The descendants of Isaac worshiped there for however long, and now the descendants of Ishmael worship there. Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 00:55:15 Yeah.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:55:16 Sacred to all three Abrahamic traditions.
- John Bytheway: 00:55:19 And on one of our first days, Hank and one of the first Old Testament lessons, and Come, Follow Me, is to look for Jesus in these stories. Parallels here are pretty hard to miss.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:55:33 Yeah. The way it's told. It just brings them up.
- Hank Smith: 00:55:37 Think of Jehovah watching this play out, knowing that when it plays out for him.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:55:47 Wow. That's powerful.
- Hank Smith: 00:55:48 There is no,
- John Bytheway: 00:55:49 There's no angel to stop him.
- Hank Smith: 00:55:53 He and his father will go through with this. Right?
- John Bytheway: 00:55:58 He will like Isaac it seems, a lot have wondered about this if Isaac was submitting to this, that Jesus will.
- Hank Smith: 00:56:06 Seems like it. Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:56:08 Be a willing sacrifice.

Hank Smith: 00:56:11 Even after every time I've read this, the way you walked us through it, Carli, I am. Oh, I gotta breathe here. I'm like, oh, okay.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:56:21 It's such a powerful story. I love that it was written so beautifully. I mean all of, I think all of the Genesis stories especially are written so beautifully, but this one, there's just something in it that is relatable but also cosmically, vastly a type of the whole beauty of the plan of salvation.

Hank Smith: 00:56:42 Yeah. We've had, we have one father, two mothers, two sons, and so many separate journeys.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:56:50 Yeah, parallels but different.

Hank Smith: 00:56:53 And Jehovah working with each one, giving promises to each one. Testing each one. Carli, I laughed really hard today. You really pulled on my soul here with this last story of Abraham and also talking about Hagar and Sarah, how do you wanna wrap this up?

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:57:12 Taking us to verse 14, the very end of the story, right after they see the ram and the ram becomes the sacrifice. So Isaac lives, Abraham's faith came through and God showed up right in the nick of time. This story ends with a word play that's actually gonna be pulled in by Christ later when he's talking about Abraham. I think you'll like how he brings us full circle, but let's look at verse 14 first. There's some Hebrew in here. It's anglicized Hebrew, but does anyone wanna try it?

Hank Smith: 00:57:51 Go for it John.

John Bytheway: 00:57:54 Genesis 22:14, and Abraham called the name of that place, Jehovah-jireh, as it is said to this day, in the Mount of the Lord, it shall be seen.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:58:08 This is an ideology. This is a verse that says, here's why this place has this name and here's what this place means because of this name and this story. It's like a little bow at the end of the story, but it also marks the place that that's where this happened. We're hearing it in 2026, but the ancient people would hear it too and understand that this is the place where the sacrifices happen, and this is the story about why they happen the way they do. And it's interesting because that literally reads, the Lord will see, or the Lord sees continually like

the Lord is watching this, and then it says, and to this day it's called in the mountain of the Lord it shall be seen. It's both an active and a passive the Lord sees, and then this is where it will be seen. Let's go to John chapter eight, verse 56, and I need to shout out to a friend and colleague, [Matt Bowen](#) who wrote about this and saw this connection. It's really very beautiful.

- Hank Smith: 00:59:14 Matt's been on our show before a couple of times.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 00:59:17 The connection here is gonna tie all of our stories together. This is Christ talking about Abraham. He's referring to this mythic story. Again, when I say myth, I never mean not true. It's just a really symbolic, full, culturally weighty story. He pulls in the word play. Verse 56, your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad. What you can see in here is seeing Abraham, seeing, which is how we end this story. The Lord sees, and it will be seen on this mountain, but also there's rejoicing and that actually might be a tie to Isaac. Remember, Isaac is joyful laughter Yitzhak means to rejoice and laugh. What's beautiful to me about this verse is it's Christ. Knowing these stories, knowing these people, knowing these figures and saying in a beautifully poetic way, possibly bringing in Isaac with the rejoicing and bringing in the seeing and Abraham on the mountain and all of it together, is a way that salvation comes to the human family with sacrifice and seeing and rejoicing and these covenant people, this beautiful covenant family.
- Hank Smith: 01:00:47 Carli, isn't Jesus standing at the exact same spot?
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:00:53 Yes. Yes. Good. I'm glad you saw that.
- Hank Smith: 01:00:58 I have been here before.
- John Bytheway: 01:01:00 Feast of Tabernacles. Oh yeah.
- Hank Smith: 01:01:03 Thou art not yet 50 years old. You've seen Abraham and Jesus says, not only have I seen Abraham, I've been right here with Abraham.
- John Bytheway: 01:01:13 That's really awesome.
- Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:01:16 The story and the experience and all the faith and then the salvation, the being that's gonna bring it about all there in place and space and story. It's rejoicing. Ultimately, it's just gonna be rejoicing.

Hank Smith: 01:01:32 Carli, I can't tell you how wonderful this has been. John, I say this a lot. I know when I'm feeling the Holy Ghost is when I don't want it to end and I wanna be a better person. Carli, this is our family. We don't realize we're doing family history when we study these stories right.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:01:54 I like that. Yeah.

Hank Smith: 01:01:55 Even though John and I don't speak the Hebrew, you opened it enough to us to where I feel like we got closer to the original.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:02:02 Good. I'm glad you saw that. I've felt that there's something about it that really opens up the stories and makes them rich.

Hank Smith: 01:02:12 Thank you for your time, Carli. Thank you.

John Bytheway: 01:02:14 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 01:02:16 John, we absolutely need to thank two people. Gaylene and Russell Anderson in Sandy, Utah. They gave us this opportunity. Carli's parents.

Dr. Carli Anderson: 01:02:27 I'm really lucky. My parents are the reason that I, you're making me cry guys. My parents are the reason that I have this spiritual curiosity. They brought these stories to life for me, my mom and my dad when I was little. They encouraged me in my study and I am what I am because of them. Thanks for the shout out. They deserve it.

Hank Smith: 01:02:51 Beautiful. A perfect place to finish. We want to thank Dr. Carli Anderson for being with us today. It has been pure joy. We want to thank our executive producer Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors David and Verla Sorensen. In every episode, we remember our founder Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We've got more of Genesis to cover on followHIM. As a thank you to our wonderful listeners, we'd love to gift you the digital version of our book, Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. It offers short, meaningful insights drawn from our past Old Testament episodes. Visit Follow him.co. That's follow him.co to download your free copy today, and you'll also find the link to purchase the print edition. Thank you for being part of our followHIM family. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew. David Perry, Lisa Spice, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, Heather Barlow, Amelia Kabwika, Sydney Smith and Annabelle Sorensen.

followHIM Favorites



- Hank Smith: 00:03 Welcome to followHIM Favorites. This is where John and I share a single story to go with each week's lesson. John, the chapters for Come, Follow Me this week are Genesis 18 through 23. There's a moment in here that I think I have a story that fits Genesis 19:26. You know this story, Lot and his family, they have to run away from Sodom and Gomorrah, which is like the sinful place that's about to be destroyed. They're trying to get away. I think of it as kind of like the great and spacious building. Like we gotta get outta here, run away. And you notice Lot's wife for some reason just can't do it. She turns around, looked back, and I can think of that as like wanted to go back.
- John Bytheway: 00:43 Mm-hmm.
- Hank Smith: 00:44 She became a pillar of salt. Not exactly sure what that means. So here's the story. I don't know if you ever read Percy Jackson, the series to your kids, John, but I did. There's this moment where Percy Jackson and his friend Annabeth and his other friend Grover, they have to save the world. It's a pretty big job. They have to save the world. And on their way, they run into a place called the Lotus Casino. Their job is to get in there, get something out, and go, keep going to save the world. But they get in and they find that this place is full of games. It is wall to wall games and fun, and food. And pretty soon they forget about their mission, which was to save the world. I can see how that might slip your mind. Well, they start playing games. Annabeth is playing trivia, brainiac games.
- 01:39 Grover is playing hunting games, which is kind of odd. If you know anything about Grover. Percy Jackson is doing like these thrill, bungee cord jumping and things. He starts talking to another guy, a stranger at the casino, and every time they win a game, the guy says, whoa, groovy. Percy Jackson says, why do you say groovy? And he turns to him and says, how long have you been here?
- John Bytheway: 02:03 How long have you been here?

Hank Smith: 02:04 Yeah. And the guy says, I don't know, a couple weeks maybe. He then says to the man, what year is it? He's starting to pick up on things. He says, what year is it? And the man says, it's 1967. Wait. And he goes to another guy and says, excuse me, sir, what year is it? It's 1985.

John Bytheway: 02:22 Hmm.

Hank Smith: 02:23 He goes to someone else, excuse me, what year is it? It's 1994. He figures out all of these people have been in this Lotus Casino for decades. He says, we gotta get outta here. He runs to find his friends, and he finds Annabeth. She won't even look at him. Have you ever been talking to someone, John, who's staring at a screen? She doesn't even acknowledge that he's present. He's talking to her and she's just staring straight ahead at this screen. He grabs her and he says, he has to yell, he says, Annabeth and she turns to him and she's kind of angry, right? that he interrupted her screen watching. She said, what? And he said, Annabeth, we have to go. And Annabeth said, Percy, I don't wanna go. I'm having fun. And then Percy said this, Annabeth, this place is a trap. You check in and you stay forever. And she snaps out of it and they go find Grover and they get out and continue on their mission to save the world. I think in the movie, they drive like a sports car out the front doors. I thought of that with Sodom and Gomorrah. This place is a trap. The great and spacious building. This place is a trap. You come in, you might stay forever.

John Bytheway: 03:35 Hopefully you'll have a moment of recognition like that. Somebody will say, groovy, and then you'll know.

Hank Smith: 03:41 Groovy. I gotta get outta here. I think it was Elder Maxwell who said, Babylon does not give exit permits.

John Bytheway: 03:48 Hmm.

Hank Smith: 03:49 They don't want you to leave. And I thought of that with Lot's wife. She can't seem to get out of there, let it go. Do you remember John in the book of Revelation, Jesus says to the people in the great and spacious building come out of there, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, receive not of her plagues.

John Bytheway: 04:07 Wow. I saw a documentary once on casinos. They don't have exit signs unless they have to by law, they don't put clocks in there. They put carpets with super bright colors so that you look

down, there's no straight paths. You're going all over the place. Expertly designed to keep you in there.

- Hank Smith: 04:27 This place is a trap. You check in and stay forever. Or as the Eagles might say, you can
- John Bytheway: 04:32 Check in anytime you want, but you can never leave.
- Hank Smith: 04:35 You can never leave. We hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcast. We are with Dr. Carli Anderson this week. She is delightful. She is so much fun. Then come back next week, we'll do another followHIM Favorites.