

GOD'S PROMISE WILL NOT BE REPLACED

Genesis 17:15–22



BEFORE WE BEGIN

Don't Just Learn the Text — Know God Through It

As we study Scripture tonight, ask:

- What is God revealing about Himself?
- What is God saying to me?
- Where am I out of alignment with His truth?
- What needs to change in my heart, thinking, or walk?
- How do I realign with what God is saying?
- How does this lead me to know Christ more deeply?

*The goal is not just information. **The goal is transformation through knowing Him.***

God's Promise Will Not Be Replaced

Genesis 17:15–22

- 17:15–16 — Sarah receives a new name
- 17:17–18 — Abraham laughs, pleads for Ishmael
- 17:19 — God names Isaac the covenant heir
- 17:20 — Ishmael is genuinely blessed
- 17:21–22 — The appointed time, and obedience

MAIN THOUGHT

God may extend mercy and blessing beyond the covenant line, but He will not allow human substitutes, emotional attachments, or natural impossibilities to replace the purpose He has established.

GENESIS 17:15–16

God Turns To Sarah

- Sarai becomes Sarah
- Not “my princess” — princess to nations
- Kings of peoples from her
- Named before her circumstances change

Sarai → Sarah

שַׂרַי — Sarai *sah-RYE*

“My princess” — personal, restricted to Abraham's household

שָׂרָה — Sarah *SAH-rah*

“Princess, noblewoman” — her calling now reaches nations and kings

God does not merely add a heh — ה to Sarai. He removes the final yod — י and replaces it with heh — ה.

Abram's change is different: Abram — אַבְרָם becomes Abraham — אַבְרָהָם by receiving the heh within his name. The paired name changes therefore place a heh in both Abraham's and Sarah's new names.

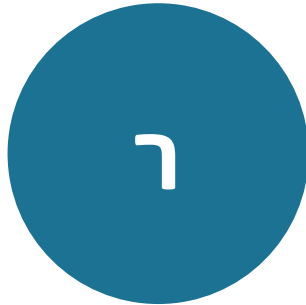
The heh is one of the letters appearing in God's covenant name, YHWH — יהוה. Jewish interpretive tradition has connected the two new hehs in Abraham and Sarah's names with God's name, divine presence, creation, fertility, and a new spiritual identity.

Ancient Hebrew Letter Picture — Sarah



Shin

*Teeth, pressing, strength,
consuming*



Resh

The head, chief, leader, person



Hey

*Revelation, beholding, made
visible*

GENESIS 17:15–16

God Turns To Sarah

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- Not “my princess” — princess to nations
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God's Word Before Her Circumstances

- Her present condition did not define her future
- God's word did
- The Shepherd corrects without discarding
- Application: what false identity am I believing?

GENESIS 17:17–18

Abraham Falls Down, Laughing

- Facedown in reverence
- Laughing at the impossibility
- “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!”
- Loves the son he can see

Vayitzchak → Yitzchak

וַיִּצְחָק — **vayitzchak** *vai-yits-KHAAHK*

“He laughed” — astonishment, joy, or disbelief

וַיִּצְחָק — **Yitzchak (Isaac)** *yits-KHAAHK*

“He laughs / laughter” — the son's name will echo this moment forever

לוֹ / יִחְיֶה לְפָנֶיךָ *lu / yikh-YEH leh-fah-NEH-khah*

“Oh, that” / “might live before Your face” — an emotionally charged wish

Falling Down While Laughing Within

- Man sees the posture
- God sees the heart — 1 Samuel 16:7
- Worship and struggle in the same moment
- True surrender brings the heart, not just the body

We Prefer The Ishmael We Manage

- “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!”
- Ishmael has value — but not Isaac's purpose
- A substitute cannot fulfill an assigned purpose
- Faith trusts God to provide what we lack

GENESIS 17:19

No — Sarah Shall Bear A Son

- God answers with certainty
- “You shall call his name Isaac”
- An everlasting covenant
- Not Ishmael's replacement — Isaac's assignment

Isaac — The Covenant Established

אָבַל — **aval** *ah-VAHL*

“No — indeed” — corrective and certain, removing ambiguity

אָקִים — **aqim (from qum)** *ah-KEEM*

“I will establish” — cause to stand; God Himself upholds it

בְּרִית עוֹלָם — **berit olam** *beh-REET oh-LAHM*

“Everlasting covenant” — enduring through the appointed generations

God Speaks With Certainty

- The sheep look at what exists
- The Shepherd sees the entire purpose
- “I will establish” — not Isaac, not Abraham, not Sarah
- The scar remains — but now it testifies

GENESIS 17:20

“I Have Heard You”

- Ishmael — “God hears”
- Blessed, fruitful, multiplied exceedingly
- Twelve princes, a great nation
- Blessing is not covenant election

Ishmael — “God Hears”

יִשְׁמָעֵאל — **Yishmael** *yish-mah-EL*

“God hears / God will hear”

שְׁמַעְתִּיךָ — **shematikha** *sheh-mah-TEE-khah*

“I have heard you” — a deliberate wordplay on Ishmael's own name

שְׁנַיִם-עָשָׂר נְשִׂאִים — **shneim-asar nesi'im** *shnay-eem ah-SAHR neh-see-EEM*

“Twelve princes” — chiefs, leaders, tribal rulers

Covenant Distinction

Category	Ishmael — the natural line	Isaac — the covenant line
Origin	Human effort and strategy (Genesis 16)	Divine initiative and promise (Genesis 17)
Scope of blessing	Temporal, national, physical — twelve princes	Redemptive, spiritual, everlasting — the Messianic line
Primary relation to God	Object of God's broad mercy	Instrument of God's specific covenant purpose
Paul's later description	“According to the flesh” (Galatians 4:23)	“Through promise” (Galatians 4:23)

Both lines are real, and both are the object of God's faithfulness. The grid distinguishes assignment, not worth.

GENESIS 17:20

“I Have Heard You”

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Blessing Is Not Approval

- Not two categories: heir or worthless
- A blessing can be misused
- The problem is misalignment, not the gift
- Application: am I using this blessing for the Giver's purpose?

GENESIS 17:21–22

My Covenant With Isaac

- “At this set time next year”
- The promise has an appointed time
- God finished speaking
- Abraham moves from hearing to obeying

The Appointed Time

מוֹעֵד — moed *moh-ADE*

“Appointed time” — fixed season, designated occasion; the same word behind Israel's feasts

וַיֵּכַל — vayekhal *vai-yeh-KHAHL*

“Finished” — to complete, to bring to an end

וַיַּעַל — vaya'al *vai-YAH-ahl*

“Went up” — ascended, withdrew upward

Delay Is Not Disorder

- The promise has a calendar
- God is not discovering the timing
- There is nothing left to negotiate
- Waiting is not passive — it is alignment

CLOSING SUMMARY

Three Truths That Must Never Be Confused

- Sarah is the promised mother
 - Ishmael is genuinely blessed
 - Isaac is the covenant heir
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FINAL RESPONSE

- Stop asking God for our Ishmael
- Trust His purpose over our preference
- Receive His “no” without accusation
- Wait for the appointed time
- Move from hearing to obedience

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What substitute are you still asking God to establish because trusting His appointed promise requires more surrender than you want to give?