

THE BIRTH OF ISAAC

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Lessons: Genesis 21

When we look back and remember a happy time, we know the feeling of one of the Psalms, which says, "Then our mouth was filled with laughter."

Here is how part of *Psalms* 126 goes: "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then said they among the nations, the Lord has done great things for them. The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

When it is clear to us that the Lord has done great things for us, we are in a state of good appreciation and joy. One of the ways in which we show our joy is in innocent laughter.

Let us think of a good kind of laughter. Let us think of how a group of people feel when a baby is born, that is, when the Lord does that great thing for us called birth.

The Writings tell us that laughter can be many different things. No one enjoys being laughed at in a mean way. We don't enjoy being mocked or scoffed at, the way the boy Isaac was scoffed at by Ishmael in the story we just read. Knowing that we don't enjoy that kind of scoffing towards ourselves and knowing the Golden Rule, we remind ourselves not to hurt the feelings of others with the wrong kind of laughter.

There are good kinds of laughter, too. There is a place in the Word that predicts the happy time of heaven. It says, "The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof" (*Zechariah* 8:5). It is very interesting that this saying about "playing" also means "laughing." "Boys and girls laughing."

There is a laughing one hears from a distance, and one can tell that it is good-hearted laughter. The Lord gives us good times like that, times we can remember and say, "Then were our mouths filled with laughter."

Who could count the smiles that are brought to a family and the friends of family when a baby is born to them? And who knows how much happy laughter will be shared as the baby grows up?

Sarah had wanted a baby for so long. When at last the baby was born, they gave him the name that means good laughter. The name is Isaac. And Sarah said something so beautiful. "God has made me laugh, so that all who hear will laugh with me" (*Genesis* 21:6).

Family Talk

The Writings say that to feel another person's joy as joy in oneself, that is loving (*DLW* 47). In this story of a baby's being born into the world, let us be glad in Sarah's gladness, and let us be glad in the good feeling that she wished to share with others when she said, "God has made me laugh, so that all who hear will laugh with me" (*Genesis* 21:6).