

## MATERNAL ADVOCACY

### A Devotional Meditation on Chayei Sarah (Life of Sarah)

Genesis 16:7-14, 23:1-25:18; 1 Kings 1:1-31, 3:16-28; 2 Samuel 11:1-27;  
Proverbs 31:1-31; Isaiah 49:14-15; Matthew 24:9-14

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My Mother was a strong, wise woman. She grew up in hard times. The Great Depression and World War II put tremendous demands on a young girl, the second of seven children, who had to take a hand in raising her younger siblings while completing high school and working to help the family make ends meet. Through such trials, she learned that strangers might be kind and helpful, but they might also threaten those she loved. That made her fiercely protective of her kin and others in her circle. That's a good description of a lioness, and Mother was most certainly a lioness. She raised her children well, with a tough love that wasn't always pleasant. She defended us, but she made sure we knew where we had erred. That's how we learned how to take our places in the world with wisdom, discernment, resolve, and the strength of family.



*Serkalem Ayele, 30, holds her 7 days old daughter Kidist Belete inside Assosa General Hospital. Assosa, Benishangul-Gumuz Region, Western Ethiopia. Photo: UNICEF Ethiopia, Meklit Mersha, March 2, 2017, [via Flickr](#).*

Ideally, mothers and fathers should be their children's strongest advocates, and the first to speak correction into their lives. That's how children grow up with the greatest chance to become well-adjusted, contributing members of society. We will always fall short of the ideal, but we are never relieved of the responsibility to be the best advocates and role models we can be for our children.

This is a task best accomplished through the active partnership of both parents, but let's consider the role of mothers as advocates. There are several biblical examples, such as Solomon's mother, Bathsheba. We cannot ignore the fact that she entered an adulterous relationship with King David – perhaps against her will. It's good that she and David "did the right thing" by getting married, but it's still disturbing that Bathsheba was free to marry only because David conspired to have her husband, Uriah, killed. It might have been easier to send Bathsheba away, but instead David chose to stop the cycle of sin by doing what he could to redeem the relationship and the situation. The fact that she became one of many wives in David's household is yet another problem, but Bathsheba became the mother of David's heir, and an ancestor of Messiah Yeshua.

What was the redeeming feature about Bathsheba that caused her to be so honored? Perhaps it was her advocacy for her son, Solomon, when his half-brother Adonijah tried to steal the kingdom. On hearing the news, she went to David and said,

“My lord, you swore by *ADONAI* your God to your handmaid: ‘Surely, Solomon your son will be king after me, and he will sit on my throne.’ Yet now, behold, Adonijah reigns, though you do not know it—my lord the king. He has sacrificed oxen, fattened cattle and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king’s sons, Abiathar the *kohen* [priest] and Joab the commander of the army, but he has not invited Solomon your servant. As for you, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. Otherwise it will come to pass, when my lord the king sleeps with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be considered traitors.”

1 Kings 1:17-21 TLV

This mother’s plea moved David to action, and he affirmed Solomon as his heir. It’s easy to say that Bathsheba approached the king simply because she knew her own life would be in danger if Adonijah succeeded, but that discounts something fundamental to our humanity: the love of a mother for her child. It’s the kind of maternal love that helped Solomon gain wisdom and discernment so he could rightly judge between two women who claimed to be the mother of the same infant. It’s interesting that both of those women were prostitutes, and yet the evidence of maternal love revealed the child’s true parent.

Maternal love moved as well in the heart of Hagar as she advocated for her son, Ishmael, with God Himself. That’s why she became the first person recorded in the Bible to give God a name based on her encounter with Him. Hagar found herself in dire straits because her mistress Sarah advocated for her son, Isaac. Ishmael was a threat to Isaac’s position as Abraham’s heir, just as Adonijah was a threat to Solomon.

Sarah, like Bathsheba, appealed to her husband on behalf of her son, and Abraham listened to her even though it grieved him. He knew she was right, though. When it came time to find a wife for Isaac, Abraham must have missed Sarah’s wise counsel. It’s easy to imagine that he was praying and hoping to find a woman like Sarah – a woman who loved both her husband and her child without reservation, and who could navigate the difficult position of being an advocate for them both.

That’s precisely the kind of woman Rebekah turned out to be. She was first an advocate for herself, and from that place of strength she served others selflessly. She was also a woman of vision and deep devotion to her family. Those are the qualities she took into her marriage with Isaac, and those qualities brought comfort to him after the death of his mother Sarah.

The love of these mothers is evident regardless of circumstances. Only Rebekah fits the profile of a “proper wife,” meaning a woman in an irreproachable relationship with her husband. Something tainted the reputations of all the others, and yet they were true mothers who knew how to love their children. Maybe the lesson here is that motherly love transcends marital status and social standing. Perhaps that is evidence of God’s grace: as long as mothers love their children, there is hope they might turn out well, and that our civilization will not crumble. God Himself speaks of this in His words of comfort to Israel:

But Zion said: “*ADONAI* has forsaken me, *ADONAI* has forgotten me.”

“Can a woman forget her nursing baby or lack compassion for a child of her womb? Even if these forget, I will not forget you.”

Isaiah 49:14-15 TLV

This is part of God's promises to preserve, redeem, and restore Israel, along with those from the nations who come into the covenant through faith in Israel's Messiah. Those promises provide context for Messiah Yeshua's words about the end of this age:

Then they will hand you over to persecution and will kill you. You will be hated by all the nations because of My name. And then many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one other. Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. Because lawlessness will multiply, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. This Good News of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Matthew 24:9-14 TLV

It's that part about the love of many growing cold that should get our attention. Until now, we might have questioned if we had arrived at that place in time. These days, though, we have to wonder. When mothers and fathers are willing to sacrifice their unborn children on the altars of convenience, then perhaps lawlessness has multiplied to the place where even maternal love has grown cold. There is more reason to think about this when we see mothers raising their children to be terrorists, or drug dealers. Do they do this deliberately, or does it happen because their lack of love leads to neglect? Does it really matter when the result is a generation that embraces violence? Maybe we are at the end of days, or maybe we are at a crossroads, when mothers can decide the fate of the world simply by learning to love their children a little more.