

“The Lord will provide.” Faith is hard. Trust is difficult. The Creator had told me he would ***“bless those who bless”*** me and ***“curse those who curse”*** me. But trusting that promise in the midst of the stresses and pressures of life was hard. The Creator said he would be there for me. He would protect me. He would provide for me. But I struggled to live by faith in that promise. Trusting in his promises when the fear of my flesh was constantly pushing me in another direction was difficult.

Fire had just rained down from heaven and I had witnessed Sodom and Gomorrah wiped off the face of the earth. It was devastating and terrifying. The loss of life had been catastrophic. My nephew Lot had been living in Sodom and he had narrowly escaped the destruction—but his wife ***“looked back”*** and was lost. I was rattled and shaken. So I headed south to distance myself from the memory of the destruction. I moved into the land where Abimelech was king. Fear once again gripped my heart and I fell back into old patterns. I lied and said my wife Sarah was my sister. And just like it had happened in Egypt with Pharaoh, Abimelech took her to be his wife. Thankfully the Creator intervened in the midst of my unfaithfulness and stopped Abimelech from consummating the marriage. But when Abimelech offered me great wealth, I took it. The temptation was too great. Even though the wealth I had taken from Pharaoh had ruined my relationship with Lot and led me into great trouble, I told myself it would be different this time. I lied and convinced myself that this time the wealth wouldn’t be a curse.

Frankly, I was frustrated with the Creator. He had brought me out of the safety of my father’s house and land. Wandering in these foreign lands I was exposed to all sorts of dangers I wouldn’t have been if the Creator had just left me alone, back with the rest of my family in the comforts of Civilization. But despite my unfaithfulness, the Creator remained faithful. Just as he had promised, Sarah became pregnant and gave birth to a son named Isaac. It was incredible, an absolute miracle. Sarah was 90 years old and had long before stopped her womanly cycles. We hadn’t felt this kind of joy in a long time. But the joy didn’t last. When we had a great feast for Isaac’s weaning, Sarah saw Ischmael, my teenage son through her servant Hagar, playing with Isaac. She became jealous and told me to throw Hagar and Ischmael out of our house because she did not want Ischmael sharing the inheritance with Isaac. The Creator told me to stand down and not resist Sarah in her anger. He said he would take care of Hagar and Ischmael and would always walk with them through life. ***“The Lord would provide.”***

Overwhelmed by the family drama, I decided to make more of a home for myself in this southern land. So I met with king Abimelech and made a covenant with him. I bonded myself with him further while my relationship with the Creator continued to fade and disappear into the background. Then many years later, I finally heard the voice of the Creator again. The Creator came to me and told me to take my son Isaac onto a mountain and offer him there as a ***“whole fruit”*** offering. I was confused. The Creator had waited 25 years to give us this son he had promised. He had said this son was to be the start of a great nation. And now he wanted me to give him up? To sacrifice him? To kill him? I had failed to live by faith so many times on this journey over these decades. I was determined to get this right. I was determined to trust in the Creator and stop overthinking everything. The Creator had brought this child forth from a dead womb. He had brought life from death. Who was I to say he couldn’t do that again. If Isaac was dead, he could raise him again. I had seen it with my own eyes over and over—nothing was impossible for the Creator.

So I packed up and headed out to the mountain with Isaac. On the journey, Isaac knew that we were going to make an offering, but saw we had no sheep with us. So Isaac asked me where the sheep for our offering was going to come from. I told him, ***“The Creator will provide.”*** When we got to the top of the mountain, I proceeded to do what I knew. I built an altar and placed the wood upon it. I took Isaac and tied him up and placed him on the altar. Then I raised my knife to kill him. Then suddenly the Creator spoke, ***“Abraham! Abraham! Do not touch the child!”*** Then I looked up and saw a sheep stuck in one of the nearby bushes. The Creator had provided. And that is exactly what we named that mountain, ***“The Lord will provide.”***

I had finally and truly lived by faith. It felt wonderful to let go and fall in trust into the Lord’s hands. ***“The Lord had provided”*** just as he promised. But it didn’t suddenly make my life easier. Isaac was traumatized by my actions and Sarah was horrified with what I had done. Our relationship had been tenuous for decades and I had failed Sarah so many times as a husband. This was the final straw. She separated from me. She moved further north while I stayed in the south. I had not only sacrificed my son, I had sacrificed my wife, I had sacrificed the very last parts of my life that I had been holding back from the Lord. I was now completely and totally in the Creator’s hands—my whole life was his—everything I cared about was his. It was beautiful and it was terrifying.

I was now an old man and I was all alone. Yet through the Creator’s will and power, I was becoming the father of a great nation, a great people who would learn to live by faith. I knew it was true, ***“The Lord will provide.”*** It would be a difficult struggle to live by faith and trust in this promise. The temptations would continue to come. My flesh would continue to be weak. But I needed to stay the course. I needed to endure and persevere. I needed to be patient. The moment I thought I had faith figured out, I would fall and fail. The moment I thought I was strong enough to let down my guard, I would stumble. My life was a constant tug-of-war between faith on one side and fear on the other. And sure enough, after Sarah died, I relapsed into fear in my grief. Instead of trusting in the Creator to provide a wife for Isaac I sent my servant back to my father’s house, the very house the Creator had called me to leave. There my servant found Rebekah to marry Isaac. My son, the child of promise from the Creator, was now marrying back into my father’s house. All the dysfunction the Lord had called me to leave behind was now flooding back into my family. And the consequences of this would haunt us and follow us for hundreds of years to come.

“The Lord will provide.” The Creator makes this promise to us. The Creator says to you, ***“I will provide.”*** He is the all-powerful Creator who created everything out of nothing. He is the Creator who brought Isaac forth from Sarah’s dead womb. He is the Creator who raised Jesus from the dead. He once brought you forth out of nothing—he can and will recreate and resurrect you once again, even after you die. Trust in him. Have faith in him. ***“The Lord will provide.”*** He is going to take care of you and those you love in suffering. He is going to take care of you and those you love in sickness. He is going to take care of you and those you love in old age. He is going to take care of you and those you love in death. ***“The Lord will provide.”*** Every moment of everyday, turn your mind, heart, body, and soul to the Lord. Do not listen to your flesh. Do not give in to fear. It takes only a moment of hesitation and distraction to fall into the traps of worry and anxiety. Keep your eyes focused on the Lord in every single moment of your life. And when you fail, look back to him immediately. Struggle with every fiber of your being to trust in the Lord. Run the race of faith. Finish the race of faith. Your very life depends on clinging to this promise: ***“The Lord will provide.” Amen.***