

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaac is Born & Ishmael is Expelled
Genesis Message Forty-Eight
Genesis 21: 1-21



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Dentwater Bible Church

Genesis Message Forty-Eight The Promised Child is Born-Ishmael is Expelled

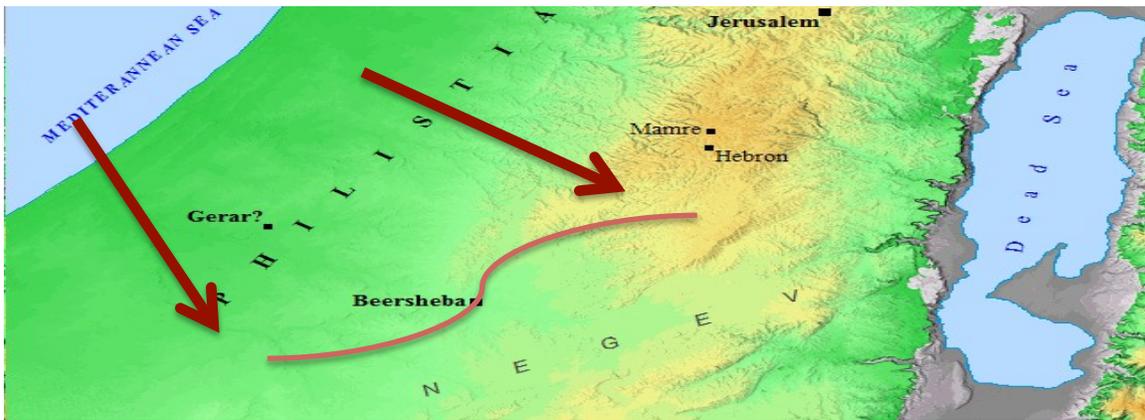
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Review:

ABRAHAM SINS AGAIN

Genesis 20: 1-18



Gerar is thought to be in the Gaza Strip of the Philistines

Abraham left the area of the Oaks of Mamre after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. He was probably also distancing himself from the incestuous activities of Lot and his two daughters. Considering the total destruction of the cities of the plain he might have wanted to be closer to the trade routes moving from Canaan to Egypt. Gerar has been found through archaeological discoveries to have been a very prosperous city. Gerar was near the coast about 12 miles south of Gaza and about 50 miles south of Hebron, in the land of the Philistines (Genesis 21:34). So Gerar is located in the Gaza Strip, which has historically been the domain of the Philistines. They were from the line of Ham (Noah's second son) while Abraham was from the line of Shem (Noah's first and most righteous son). In fact the Hebrew word for Egypt is **מִצְרַיִם** *Mizraieem*, which is the name of one of Ham's sons, a grandson of Noah (Genesis 10: 6).

Abraham tells the king of Gerar that Sarah is his sister, a half-truth at best and really just another lie. The last time he did that (Genesis 12) he sought to protect himself from unrighteous Pharaoh as he left the Canaan famine instead of waiting on God's provision. He was fearful then and he was fearful now too. We must remember that Sarah was either pregnant with Isaac or about to become pregnant with him and God would not allow Abraham's stupidity to stop the promise line of the Jewish nation and ultimately its Messiah. The Abrahamic Covenant will be fulfilled regardless of what Abraham or Sarah

did to appear to stop its fulfillment. God's plan is always best and He always gets His will accomplished.

God came to the king of Gerar whose title was Abimelech in a dream at night to warn him of the actual relationship between Abraham and Sarah. We see God giving revelation to the pagans through dreams at night and not direct intervention as He does with His prophets. The Proverb says that the Lord is far from the wicked (Proverb 15: 29). But He speaks directly to His prophets and now His children (us) through Scripture. Scripture is direct revelation of God to those who will accept it as such. We are His chosen. Abimelech had taken Sarah into his harem, which was his right as a pagan king to populate his harem with any woman of his choosing. This is a remarkable tribute to the attractiveness of Sarah at her advanced age of ninety. She was probably not showing the pregnancy yet. We also see the outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant here too in the cursing effect given when Jehovah appeared to Abraham for the second time (Genesis 12: 3). The Lord closed the wombs of the women in Abimelech's harem so that they would not produce any children (Genesis 20: 18).

The Lord would not allow Abraham and or Sarah to do anything to negatively affect the coming of the promised son Isaac. So He tells Abimelech that he would be a dead man if he touches her for she is another man's wife. Now so far he had not attempted to have sexual relations with her but that was due to God preventing it (*I also withheld thee from sinning against me. Therefore suffered I thee not to touch her*). Abimelech said to God *Said he not himself unto me, She is my sister? And she, even she herself said, He is my brother. In the integrity of my heart and the innocency of my hands have I done this.* It is quite clear that God's law against adultery was clear even to a pagan king. God then gave him some instructions:

1. Restore the man's wife because he is a prophet (*navi* first time in the Bible) and he shall pray for you and you shall live.
2. If you don't you will die as well as your family.

Psalm 105: 15

15 Saying, Touch not mine anointed ones, And do my prophets no harm.

There is a fitting wordplay here. Abraham had prayed that the righteous would not be *destroyed* with the wicked at Sodom (Genesis 18:23-32). Now Abimelech's words mirror the same concern: Lord, will You destroy an innocent nation?

Abimelech approaches first his servants to relate these events, which cause them to be very scared of what might happen them. He inquires of Abraham as to what he did, what did Abimelech do to deserve this treatment and these things should not have been done. Again affirming that he knew adultery was wrong. Even though God did not severely rebuke Abimelech; Abimelech rebuked Abraham.

Abraham responds with a retort that because the fear of God is surely not in this pagan place he feared for his life. So he lied again as he did before Pharaoh before. Abraham's marriage to Sarah as his half-sister was not prohibited yet in the divine progressive revelation of God's plan. It would be under the Mosaic Covenant (Law) later (Cir. 1446 B.C. Leviticus 18: 9; 18: 8, 20: 17; Deuteronomy 27: 22 etc.) Abraham now tells Abimelech that this has been his and Sarah's policy since Haran for about twenty-

five years to describe themselves as brother and sister. They probably did this successfully more often than the two times recorded in Scripture where it backfired on them. Abraham is then asked to stay in Gerar and Abimelech gave him five things, sheep, oxen, menservants, maidservants, and thousand pieces of silver. Abraham accepted the gifts making him even richer by the world's standards so he considered the matter closed. Abimelech told Abraham that *now it is to you a covering of the eyes to all that are with you*. This means that it will render those blind that would criticize you for these actions. So another way of saying this is: "This vindicates you and you are approved." Abimelech still needed Abraham's prayer intercession, which he gave. Then God opened the wombs of the women of whom He had closed.

Even though Abraham was the one who lied he prayed and the curse was lifted all because of the Covenant God made with him. It is an unconditional Covenant. Thereby God will do as He has promised in spite of disobedience. This in no way justifies lying which God hates just as God is against the sin of adultery. We also see an outworking of the principle of forgiveness. God forgave Abimelech and he then scolded Abraham. He ended up giving Abraham many gifts as God had moved him to do so. We forgive others because we have been forgiven (Matthew 18: 35)

Today's Message:

THE PROMISE CHILD IS BORN

Genesis 21: 1-7

1 And Jehovah visited Sarah as he had said, and Jehovah did unto Sarah as he had spoken. 2 And Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3 And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. 4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 And Abraham was a hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. 6 And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh. Every one that heareth will laugh with me. 7 And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should give children suck? For I have borne him a son in his old age (ASV 1901).

God visited Sarah with a child at the set time (Genesis 17: 21). He had said before He would give her a child and now the promise was to be fulfilled. The child would come at the exact time the Lord had prophesied. Just as the Lord Jesus came at His first advent at the appointed time. He will return again too at the appointed time to remove His children from this earth and sometime later commence the Tribulation. This will be followed by a thousand year Millennial Kingdom with Christ ruling the government on His shoulders (Isaiah 9: 7). Finally Sarah was able to believe God's promises as she saw them fulfilled. Her faith had matured to the point that she believed and had confidence in the Word of God. As New Testament saints we are saved by grace through faith. We genuinely believe God's Word because we know it is true and He is faithful. God whom had opened the wombs of the women of Abimelech now opened the womb of Sarah. He

promised and He is capable. Interestingly God said or God had spoken is stated three times in these verses which emphasizes His fulfillment of His Word.

Other occasions in Scripture have been given where humans did not believe a prophecy regarding the coming of a child. Remember what did Elisha said to the Shunammite woman ‘At this season, when the time cometh round, thou shalt embrace a son.’ And she said to him: ‘Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thy handmaid (II Kings 4: 16). She too did not believe Elisha God’s prophet when he made this prophecy. But at the appointed time the child did arrive (II Kings 4: 17).

The promised son was born when Abraham was a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety. Her womb and ovaries had been restored to give birth as well as her breasts to nurse. Sarah’s name means a princess, which signifies that many nobles would come from her. The Orthodox Jews see the word “children” as apposed to child as significant (Genesis 21: 7). They reason that she would nurse many children to prove the birth to the other princesses that came to see the boy believing rather that Sarah had brought home an abandoned child from the marketplace. The Bereshit Rabbah honoring Sarah expands on this concept.

Our mother Sarah was extremely modest. Said Abraham to her: ‘This is not a time for modesty, but uncover your breasts so that all may know that the Holy One, blessed be He, has begun to perform miracles.’ She uncovered her breasts and the milk gushed forth as from two fountains, and noble ladies came and had their children suckled by her, saying, ‘We do not merit that our children should be suckled with the milk of that righteous woman.’ The Rabbis said: Whoever came for the sake of heaven became God-fearing (Bereshit Rabbah 50: 9).

Abraham called his son Isaac which is Yitzhak יִצְחָק in Hebrew. It is the short form for יִצְחָק אֱלֹהִים. It means He (God) laughs. Do not be surprised at God finding enjoyment in giving this couple a child out of season. The laughter spoken of through the child’s name is laughter of joy and not of humor. It represents a deep joy that is realized by laughing out loud at a pleasant experience. God has given this to us to share and that is exactly what Sarah did. (Genesis 21: 6). She knew the joy of which only one who has received God’s special blessings can relate. This is similar to our salvation experience when the Holy Spirit enters us and takes up residence. We become “born again” as the Lord Jesus described to Nicodemus (John 3: 3). We receive the joy of knowing that we can see the Kingdom of God. We can’t help telling others what has happened to us!

Abraham following God’s previous command (Genesis 17: 10) circumcised Isaac on the eighth day of his life. This is the first mention of an infant being circumcised on the eighth day. The others were adults as mentioned in Genesis chapter seventeen

ISHMAEL AND HAGAR ARE DRIVEN OUT

Genesis 21: 8-21

8 And the child grew, and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. 9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne unto Abraham, mocking. 10 Wherefore she

said unto Abraham, Cast out this handmaid and her son. For the son of this handmaid shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. 11 And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight on account of his son. 12 And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy handmaid. In all that Sarah saith unto thee, hearken unto her voice. For in Isaac shall thy seed be called. 13 And also of the son of the handmaid will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. 14 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and gave her the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. 15 And the water in the bottle was spent, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. 16 And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot. For she said, Let me not look upon the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept. 17 And God heard the voice of the lad. And the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not. For God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. 18 Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thy hand. For I will make him a great nation. 19 And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. 20 And God was with the lad, and he grew. And he dwelt in the wilderness, and became, as he grew up, an archer. 21 And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran. And his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt (ASV 1901).

The events of verse eight represent the circumstances that caused the expulsion of Ishmael. Isaac grew to the point of being off his mother's breast milk, which was in that culture was between the ages of two and five. So this makes Ishmael between the ages of seventeen to twenty. He was an adult. In the ancient Hebrew culture weaning was an event in ones life to be celebrated and Abraham organized a great feast on that day. This provoked Ishmael to jealousy. Scripture does not relate any such festivities for Ishmael's weaning.

Ishmael began to mock Isaac and Sarah being a protective mother took notice. She saw what Ishmael was doing and was going to take measures to make a permanent end to it. The Hebrew word for mocking is *metzachek* מִצְחָק. It is sometimes translated as making sport. It frequently appears in the Old Testament (Genesis 19: 14; 39: 14, 17; 26: 8; Exodus 32: 6; Judges 16: 25; II Samuel 2: 14). In some instances it refers to a negative action of ridicule. In a very limited occurrence (Genesis 26: 8) it refers in a positive sense of simply playing. In some passages it refers to making sport, which expresses a strong sense of ridicule coupled with idolatry and sexual immorality. Whatever the exact nature of Ishmael's attitude toward Isaac, it was clearly a highly improper attitude. This portended future even worse actions on the part of Ishmael toward Isaac. Sarah then told Abraham that he had to cast out both Hagar and Ishmael. Her references to them are indicative of her attitude toward them. She calls Hagar the *handmaid* and Ishmael *her son*. It is clearly meant to demean them both by making reference to Hagar's lowly societal status as a slave. She did not want to give any credence to the fact that she offered Hagar originally to bring a son to Abraham. The

deeper reason for these events is that God caused Sarah to respond in this manner. He was not going to allow any harm to come to the covenant heir of the covenant He made with Abraham. Clearly Ishmael was not the heir and Sarah reiterated this to Abraham. The Jewish nation was going to flourish and become as the stars of heaven and the sand of the seashore (Genesis 22: 17). God's Covenant with Abraham was going to be carried out.

Abraham loved Ishmael and was grieved at the edict Sarah gave him. Even though it was warranted it hurt him deeply to have to cast both Ishmael and Hagar out of the family compound. However, God came to him for the *seventh* time to explain that He had a plan for Ishmael and to comfort Abraham. God reaffirmed His control over the entire situation and that it was He who spoke through Sarah by affirming what she said to Abraham (*In all that Sarah saith unto thee, hearken unto her voice*) he must do. This is the only time in the Bible that a husband is told by God to harken or to obey his wife. *The reason is because in Isaac shall they seed be called.* Meaning Isaac was the seed of the inheritance of the Covenant that God made with Abraham. God said that He would bless Ishmael (*make a nation of him*), which became the Arab nation. Ishmael was still from Abraham's seed so God made a provision for him through the Abrahamic Covenant by blessing him (Genesis 12: 2-3).

Now we turn to the actual expelling of Ishmael and his mother. Remember that Ishmael is in his late teens or twenty years old. Abraham did five things toward this end as God had commanded.

1. He rose up early in the morning. (He made his decision to obey God)
2. He took bread and a bottle of water. (Indicative of the meager inheritance)
3. He gave it to Hagar by putting it on her shoulder
4. He gave her the child (Ishmael was now under Hagar's authority)
5. He sent her away (this makes the expelling official)

Sarah's attitude was a hostile one toward Hagar and Ishmael. She used the Hebrew word *garash* גָּרַשׁ, which has a harsh and hostile connotation toward the expelling. The word used for God's expelling is *shalach* שָׁלַח, which is neutral as its worst and usually has the connotation of a friendly release. The subtleties of the Hebrew language allow us to see God's motive and actions as opposed to those of mankind. God uses the same word in expelling Adam and Eve from Eden. This gives us some degree of insight to amount of love God has for us and even in the most heinous infractions of His commands He treats us in an undeserved loving manner.

Hagar wandered in the desert (wilderness) in that she was lost. They ran out of water. She being the dutiful mother placed Ishmael under a tree. She was afraid for him and did not want to be near to see him perish. She was so distraught that she wept out loud at the imminent death of Ishmael. Next we see the "Angel of Jehovah" appearing to her. We know from this context that is the second person of the Holy Trinity our Lord Jesus Christ.

He calls to her from Heaven and asks a rhetorical question "*What ails you Hagar?*" He then tells her that God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Christ begins to comfort her by telling her that he will survive. He tells her to lift him up and hold him in your hand. He tells them that he will make a great nation of him, which is the

Arab nation. In order to do that Ishmael must survive and so *God opens her eyes* to see a well. She then is able to get some water for Ishmael and herself.

God continued to walk with Ishmael. The text tells us that *he grew and he dwelled in the wilderness*, which sets the stage for his future desert wanderings. God then reaffirms Ismael's occupation as an archer and opens the door for his aggression. He became a hunter before the Lord. This status is the same negative activity as Nimrod. He too was a hunter before (against) the Lord. He dwelled in the area between the Negev and the Sinai in Paran.

This section of scripture closes with Hagar choosing a wife for Ishmael from the country of her origin Egypt. The ancient Egyptians were of the tribe of Ham while the Jews came from Shem. This added to the antagonism that was there between Isaac and Ishmael.

Paul uses this story to teach the spiritual lesson of Law and Grace in Galatians 4: 21-31. He tells us that Grace cannot coexist with the Law as methods of salvation.

Our last song for today "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" uses the word Ebenezer that seems foreign to us except in Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" where the miser Ebenezer Scrooge is a main character. The biblical name is anything but that character.

I Samuel 7: 12-14

12 Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath Jehovah helped us. 13 So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more within the border of Israel: and the hand of Jehovah was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. 14 And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the border thereof did Israel deliver out of the hand of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites (ASV 1901).

The word "Ebenezer" comes from Hebrew and is actually two words pronounced together:

Even Haazer. אָבֶן הָעֵזֶר

Even is the Hebrew word for *stone* and Haazer is Hebrew for *the help* so it means the "helping stone." The "V" sound and the "B" sound look like the same letter and are interchangeable depending upon the grammatical morphology. So it gets translated accurately as Ebenezer. God is our rock and our help.

NEXT WEEK: THE BEERSHEBA COVENANT & THE AKEDAH

Please Call or e-mail with any questions or comments.

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