

February 12, 2017 - Gen. 21:1-34 - The Birth of Isaac, Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away

Psalm 15 (again)

Haftarah - Isaiah 65:22 – 66:5 + 10-11

Hebrews 11:11-12 - “Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.”

In fact this passage in Hebrews contains the process of faith for us all:

Hebrews 11:13 - “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

“persuaded” here is *peithō* - “to trust, have confidence in, believe”

Also consider **John 8:56** - Jesus said, “Abraham saw my day and was glad.”

The Jewish Sages say that God fashioned Isaac's face to be exactly like his father's because there were some wicked people who spread tales that Isaac's father was really Abimelech, king of the Philistines, or that Isaac was a foundling whom Abraham and Sarah adopted.

Compare this to Jesus, who also had a birth that was questioned.

John 8:39-41 - “They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.”

John 14:9 - Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

2 Corinthians 3:18 - “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Genesis 21:6 - “And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me.”

Here is that word for “laugh” again - tsěchoq, which is incorporated into Isaac’s name yitzach - “laughter.” Abraham and Sarah went from laughing in mocking disbelief to laughing for joy.

“Rightly was the child of promise named Isaac, the one at whom all laugh with various feelings of incredulity, wonder, gladness, and scorn.” - Barnes’ Notes

Cast out the bondwoman and her son

The contrast between the Promised child and Ishmael now comes into focus.

Galatians 4:29 - “But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.”

On what constituted Ishmael’s mocking of Isaac, see the previous note from Genesis 16:

http://www.communityoncolumbia.org/pdf/Readings_Notes/More_On_Hagar.pdf

Ishmael was about 16-17 years old at this time.

Genesis 21:10 - “Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.”

In Galatians 4, Paul sees in this an allegory for the animosity between the gospel of grace and a religion of works:

Galatians 4:28-31 - “Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”

Genesis 21:12 - “In Isaac shall thy seed be called”

Quoted in **Romans 9:7** and **Hebrews 11:18**

Better translated “in or through Isaac shall there be posterity/descendants to thee which shall be ‘called’ or recognized as such” (Keil). Specifically, the one Promised Seed, Messiah. Isaac stands for those “born after the spirit” in Paul’s analogy in Galatians 4:28.

Abraham & Abimelech

Genesis 21:22-34 - A misunderstanding and reconciliation between Abraham and Abimelech over a water well leads to a covenant between them.

Beersheba — That is, the well of the oath, or the well of the seven, (for the word equally signifies either,)

Seven is the number of sanctity, and therefore of obligation. The name of the well is remarkable as an instance of the various meanings attached to nearly the same sound. Even in Hebrew it means the well of seven, or the well of the oath, as the roots of seven, and of the verb meaning "to swear," have the same radical letters. The Targum of Jonathan has it, "and therefore he called the well the well of seven lambs."

Who were the Philistines?

"And they returned into the land of the Philistines" -

Rabbinic sources insist that the Philistines of Judges and Samuel were different people altogether from the Philistines of Genesis. (Midrash Tehillim on Psalm 60 (Braude: vol. 1, 513); the issue here is precisely whether Israel should have been obliged, later, to keep the Genesis treaty Abraham made with Abimelech.)

The reference to the Philistines is probably an anachronism. Abimelech was the title of a ruler in an area that in later times became controlled by the Philistines.

The prophets describe these people as "the Philistines from Caphtor," (Amos 9:7) and "the remnant of the maritime district of Caphtor" (Jeremiah 47:4) It has been generally assumed that Caphtor represents Crete, and that the Philistines migrated from that island, either directly or through Egypt, into Palestine (which is named for them).

During the 12th century B.C., at a time when a number of cities in Greece and the Middle East were collapsing, large amounts of pottery and artifacts with styles similar to what people were using in the Aegean Sea region started appearing in areas that texts say were controlled by the Philistines, according to Amihai Mazar, an archaeologist and professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. As a result, many archaeologists think that the Philistines came to the Levant during the 12th century B.C., possibly as refugees searching for a new home.

One of the earliest mentions of the Philistines is recorded by the Egyptian pharaoh Ramses III (reign ca. 1184–1153 B.C.) who engaged them in battle. In a papyrus Ramses III boasts that "the Philistines were made ashes" by the Egyptian forces, a claim that modern-day scholars doubt.

See <http://www.livescience.com/55429-philistines.html>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philistines>