

# SIBLING RIVALRY Sunday, October 20, 2013

## Unifying Topic: A BLESSING FOR ISHMAEL AND ISAAC

### Lesson Text

**I. An Advocate For The Oppressed (Genesis 21:13-14, 17-21)**

**II. God's Covenant Established With Isaac (Genesis 26:2-5, 12-13)**

**The Main Thought:** And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. (Genesis 21:12-13, KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** The circumstances surrounding one's birth can affect a child's identity and self-worth. Where does a child find his or her identity and self-worth? Despite the circumstances surrounding Ishmael's and Isaac's births, God promised to create great nations through both them.

**Lesson Aim:** To show God would honor His promise so Abraham through Isaac as well as demonstrate God' grace to Ishmael.

**Life aim:** To show how God really is Lord over all people and how He still blesses us in spite of our mistakes and disobedience.

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**21:12** And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

**21:13** And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.

**21:14** 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 the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

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**21:17** 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.

**21:18** Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation.

**21:19** 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.

**21:20** And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

**21:21** And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

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**26:2** And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of:

**26:3** Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father;

**26:4** And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;

**26:5** Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

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**26:12** Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him.

**26:13** And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great:

### **HISTORY:**

God kept His promise and visited Sarah exactly at the appointed time He had spoken of, and Sarah became pregnant and bore Abraham a son in his old age. Abraham named his son Isaac. When his son was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded. At the time of Isaac's birth, Abraham was 100yrs old. Sarah said, "*God has made me laugh and now everyone will laugh with me.*" Sarah would not have dreamed that she would have a baby and give Abraham a son (21:1-7).

**21:8** And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned. This was apparently a Near East custom of that day, when a child reached 2-3 years old and weaned from his mother's breast. Therefore, Abraham threw a great feast for Isaac on the very day he was weaned from his mother's breast.

**21:9** And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. The celebration of Isaac's passage from infancy to childhood was witnessed by the laughter of ridicule. At some point during the feast, Sarah saw Ishmael (the firstborn son of Abraham by Hagar the Egyptian handmaid of Sarah) mocking Isaac: ridiculing, poking fun, being mean-spirited, and bitter toward him. This is known as sibling rivalry. Remember Isaac was 2 or 3 years old and Ishmael was 16 or 17 years old. No matter how old or how young, there will be some friction between

siblings. This discord seemed trivial at first glance, but not to Sarah who bore the promised child for Abraham. <sup>1</sup>Ishmael was surely jealous, because Abraham was giving too much attention to Isaac. He had all of Abraham's attention for so long. This new child had taken his place with his father. Galatians 4:29 says, *"But then he (Ishmael) that was born after the flesh persecuted him (Isaac) that was born after the spirit..."* Sarah had become jealous, as well.

**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.** Sarah does not want Ishmael to inherit any part of Isaac's inheritance. She tells Abraham to cast out the bondwoman and her son (Hagar and Ishmael). Now, Abraham's attention was now split two ways, and he was more focused upon Isaac at the time, than Ishmael, even though he loved Ishmael. Ishmael's mocking had gotten to Sarah and she could not stand it any longer; they had to go. This is the second time Sarah did not seek or trust God's help, but began to tell Abraham what to do.

**21:11 And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.** This situation grieved Abraham very much. Sending a child away you love is hard for any parent to bear and this was very hurtful and dreadful for Abraham.

**21:12 God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.** No doubt Abraham prayed to God about this matter, because God answers by telling him not to be upset; not to be grievous over the bondswoman, Hagar—just do what Sarah said. God does three things for Abraham;

- God relieved Abraham's distress and perplexity by telling him what to do.
- God reminded Abraham of His great purpose.
- God reassures Abraham that the conflict would be resolved. Isaac will take priority over Ishmael even though Ishmael is older. Isaac would be known as the son of promise. Through him shall all the nations be blessed. God told Abraham to do what your wife asked.

No matter what the conflict for us is:

- The answer is found in God's Word. His Word will relieve whatever distress we have and give us the answer to our questions. Our task is to search His Word for the peace we need.
- The answer is found in God's purpose. We must remind ourselves of His purpose in our lives; and
- The answer is found in God's assurance of blessings, if we will trust and believe God just as Abraham did.

## LESSON:

### **Genesis 21:13-14, 17-21 An Advocate For The Oppressed**

**21:13 And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.** God would bless Ishmael, just because he belonged to Abraham, but the real blessing was to come through Isaac and his ancestors. He would take care of Ishmael, wherever he was.

**21:14 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 the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.** Abraham got up early in the morning to send Ishmael and Hagar off into the wilderness. In the wilderness of Beersheba, water was difficult to find in this region. Abraham gave her bread, and a bottle of water, and put it on Hagar's shoulder. I know Abraham dreaded this day. However, hurtful this was, Abraham obeyed God.

### NOT APART OF THE LESSON 21:14-15

**21:15 And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs.** Here is a single mother and child out in the desert and soon the little water that Abraham had given to them had been used up. Ishmael had apparently fainted from thirst and food. Hagar pulled him over under a bush; one of the shrubs to sit him down.

**21:16 And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bow shot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept.** There was exhaustion, hopelessness, and the threat of death. They could not go on any farther. Hagar had reached the end of her strength and sat down a hundred yards off from Ishmael. She began to lift up her voice and weep because she didn't want to see her child die; she was sure that he would soon die. She thought the situation was hopeless. We assumed that her voice was lifted up in prayer unto God, for in the next verse God heard her cry; her voice. Her cry could simply be 'save us' and that could have been her prayer. Sometimes we have to be at the end of our rope before we cry out for help or even cry out to God!

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/Genesis/31.html>  
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

## BACK TO LESSON

**21:17 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.** Apparently Ishmael was crying out also and God heard his voice. Ishmael means "*God hears*." God heard Hagar's cry and the angel of God spoke to her out of heaven. We never wander so far away from God that He will not hear our cry for help. This was due solely to God's mercy and God's love for Abraham! God stirred her to think about her problem when He asked the question: "*what aileth you?*" What was her problem? Well at this time she feared death; the death of her son. God assured her that He had heard the voice of the lad, Ishmael and He knew exactly where he was.

**21:18 Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation.** Hagar was not to quit and give up, but she was told to arise and lift up Ishmael and comfort him with her hand, for he is to be a great nation.

**21:19 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.** God makes the physical provision for Hagar and Ishmael in the desert as He caused her eyes to open and see a well of water. She couldn't have seen it without God's help. She and her son were now able to quench their thirst and fill their bottle with water.

**21:20 And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.** God continued unbroken care and provisions for Hagar and Ishmael. He was with Ishmael as he grew into manhood. Ishmael continued to live in the desert and in that terrain he became an archer. He was able to hunt and feed himself and for his mother.

**21:21 And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.** Hagar and Ishmael accepted their God-given call in life. They remained in the desert of Paran. She sought a wife out of the land of Egypt for Ishmael.<sup>2</sup> Ishmael married and he had 12 sons. Like Ishmael himself, Ishmael's descendants also lived in the desert. And they became a great nation, as God had promised (Genesis 25:13-18).

## NOT APART OF THE LESSON 26:1

**26:1 And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went into Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar.** There had been a famine in the land in the days of Abraham when he was alive. Abraham died at 175yrs (25:7, 8). Once again the land of promise is faced with a famine, but it was a different famine than the one Abraham had faced. Isaac faced the loss of his father; he faced the loss of the herds, flocks and crops. He stood on the brink of losing his wealth, for he was a very wealthy man. He had inherited most of the wealth of his father, Abraham. Obviously the famine was very severe. Isaac was facing a terrible trial and temptation; the trial of losing all he had and the temptation to distrust God and forsake the Promised Land. He weakened under the pressure. He turned from the Promised Land, moving his herds and flocks southward toward of Egypt. He went down to Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. "*Abimelech*" may have been a title for the king, like "*Pharaoh*." On his way to Egypt he stopped in Gerar, the capital of the Philistines, to ask help from Abimelech. Gerar is half-way between Beersheba and Gaza.

## BACK TO LESSON

### Genesis 26:2-5, 12-13 God's Covenant Established With Isaac

**26:2 And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of:—** But note God's intervention— The Lord appeared unto Isaac and instructed him not to go down into Egypt, but live in the land where He told him to live. Remember, in Scripture, the Egypt in that day was a symbol and type of the world.

**26:3 Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father;—** God permitted Isaac to sojourn in the land of Gerar, remaining in Philistia and promised to be with him and bless him. Apparently, the prospect of Isaac setting up and trading in Gerar appealed to Abimelech, so he gave Isaac permission to stay in Philistine territory. The Philistines were a tribe of people who were to become one of Israel's fiercest enemies. Philistines mean "Sea People." The oath sworn to Abraham will still be performed by God for Isaac.

**26:4 And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;—** God was confirming the Abrahamic covenant to Isaac; that his descendants would be greatly multiplied as the stars of heaven and that they would possess all those lands. God had given the promises to Abraham eight different times. He gave the promises to Isaac on two different occasions. And

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/genesis-mwks2-lbw.htm>  
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

lastly there will be the promised seed of the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

**26:5 Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.** God declares why He gave these great promises to Isaac: because of Abraham; because Abraham, the father of Isaac obeyed God's voice:

- He kept *"the charge"* of God. A charge had to do with God's official call or appointment to service. Abraham kept the charge to be the head of God's people, the father of faith.
- Abraham kept *"the commandments"* of God. The word *"commandment"* stresses the fact that the command is from God Himself; it is divinely given. Abraham kept the commandment of God to believe God, to separate from Ur (a symbol of the world) and to follow after the promises of God.
- Abraham kept *"the statutes"* of God. The word *"statute"* refers to the permanence, the unending force of what God says. An example of this would be Abraham's keeping the statute of circumcision.
- **and** Abraham kept *"the laws"* of God. Laws would involve rules of instruction that need to be taught and passed on. They would be rules of righteousness that govern behavior. Abraham followed the rules of God from the depths of his heart and conscience.

Now that was a lot. Abraham proved himself to be faithful to God.

**26:12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him.** God blessed Isaac so richly in that land he sowed in, that it came by mightily. Isaac received in the same year a hundredfold. God was blessing Isaac in order to secure him and his offspring more and more in the Promised Land. Isaac was only half-heartedly following the Lord by remaining among the worldly Philistines. However,...

- His crops produced a hundredfold (v12).

**26:13 And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great:—** God blessed Isaac abundantly, and not once, but God continued blessing him, until he was extremely wealthy.

- His personal wealth became very great (v13).
- His flocks and herds and servants increased greatly (v14).

#### **SUMMARY:**

God spoke to Abraham, telling him not to feel grievous about sending Ishmael and the bondswoman, Hagar away. He is to do whatever his wife Sarah tells him, for the promise will come through Isaac, the promised son. Regarding the son of the bondswoman, be assured that God will also develop a great nation from him— for he's Abraham's son also. Abraham sent them away early in the morning into the wilderness of Beersheba with bread and a bottle of water for their hunger and thirst. (21:12-14).

While in the desert, God heard the boy crying and an angel of God called from Heaven to Hagar, telling her not to be afraid because God heard the boy crying and knows where he is. He told her to rise up and go to the boy and comfort him for God will also make him a great nation. Just then God opened her eyes to see a well of water. Then she was able to fill the bottle they had with water for her and her son. <sup>3</sup>God was on the boy's side as he grew up. He lived out in the desert and became a skilled archer. He lived in the Paran wilderness. And his mother got him a wife from Egypt (21:17-21).

God appeared to Isaac who is now in the city of Gerar where Abimelech, king of the Philistines lived because there is a famine in the Promised Land. As Isaac leaves the famine, God tells him, not go to Egypt but do as He tells him. Isaac was to stay where He tells him, in the land of Gerar. He would be with him, bless him, and give the land to him and his descendants as was promised to his father Abraham. <sup>4</sup>The descendants were to be as many as the stars in the sky and they will receive all these countries. All the nations of the Earth will get a blessing for themselves through Isaac's descendants because Abraham obeyed everything God said (26:2-5).

God kept His promise to bless Isaac. When Isaac planted in that land, he reaped in the same year a hundredfold what he had sown, because the Lord blessed him. He was soon a man of great wealth (26:12-13).

#### **APPLICATION:**

God still had a blessing for both sons in the midst of sibling rivalry. No one can have what God has for you!

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2021&version=MSG>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2026&version=MSG>