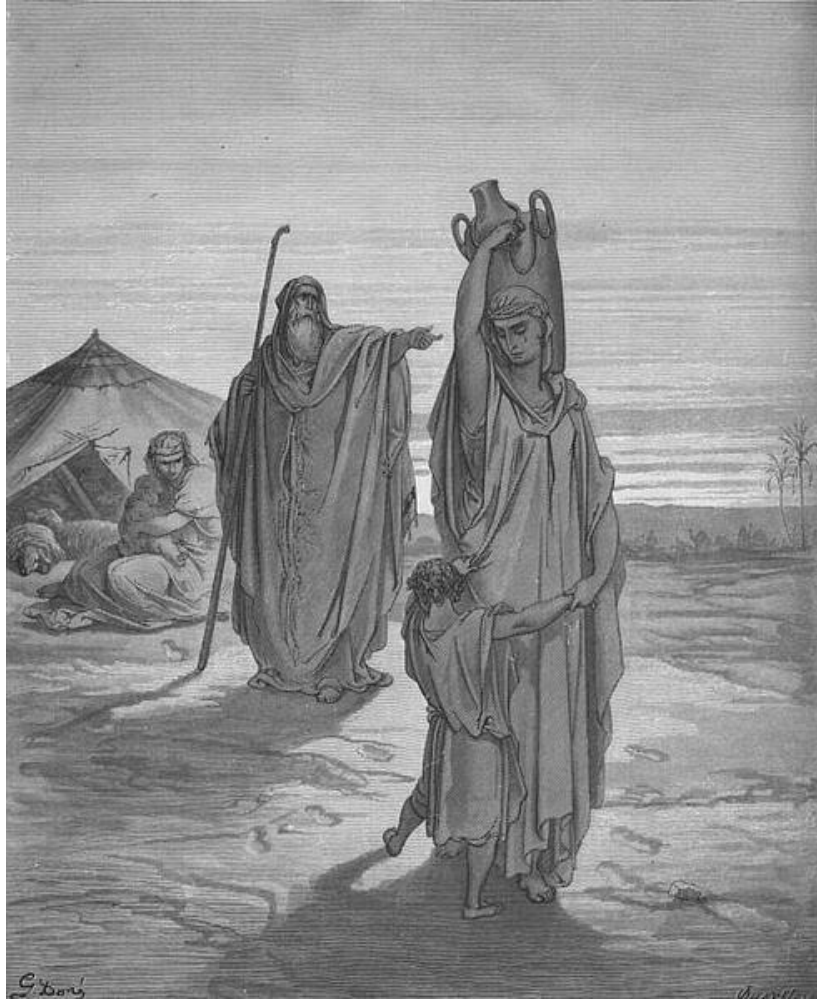


Conflict Resolution



Abraham and Sarah III

Conflicts and subsequent Resolutions are a part of life. We see them in the home, government, and even in the church. Conflicts arise, and for peace to reign, a just Resolution must be attained.

In the last two segments we have been considering a Conflict and Resolution that arose between Sarah, and Hagar, as it pertained to Ishmael, and Abraham's obligation in regard to the proposed Resolution.

In our last segment we introduced five points of interest: 1) The Conflict, and Resolution were not a part of God's plan. 2) Jehovah's attitude toward the rights of the first-born. 3) Why did the Resolution necessitate sending Hagar and Ishmael away? 4) What promises were given to Ishmael? 5) What significance is applied to this event in latter times?

Having considered the first, we will pick up our considerations with the second topic of interest:

1) God's attitude toward the rights of the first-born:

Although the Law, as a codified system, had not been given, we have seen in past segments that mankind was, none-the-less, under law. When we look into the Law of Moses we are able to glean a portion of Jehovah's attitude toward certain things, one of which is rights of the first-born.

Fast forwarding a hundred and fifty years Joseph was in Egypt, and "sat before him, the first-born according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth" (Genesis 43:33). In like manner, when Jacob (Israel) blessed the sons of Joseph, "Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the first-born" (Genesis 48:14), to which, "when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father; for this is the first-born; put thy right hand upon his head" (Genesis 48:17-18). Thus, there was already a standard in place concerning the rights of the first-born, long before the Law of Moses was given.

Concerning these rights, Jehovah revealed to Moses, saying, "If a man have two wives, the one beloved, and the other hated, and they have borne him

children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the first-born son be hers that was hated; then it shall be, in the day that he causeth his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved the first-born before the son of the hated, who is the first-born: but he shall acknowledge the first-born, the son of the hated, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath; for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the first-born is his” (Deuteronomy 21:15–17).

- 2) Why did the Resolution necessitate sending Hagar and Ishmael away?
Jehovah’s plan: “Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:1–3). This promise was to bring the Messiah into the world through the seed of Abram, but more specifically, “As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and moreover I will give thee a son of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be of her. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? And Abraham said unto God, Oh that Ishmael might live before thee! And God said, Nay, but Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year” (Genesis 17:15–21). Thus, concerning the sending away of Ishmael, “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” (Genesis 21:12).

The acts of Ishmael, i.e., mocking, at the age of thirteen, whether an indicator of a young man’s jealousy, or motivated by the nurturing of his mother Hagar, was a precursor to an ensuing struggle for the pre-eminence over the inheritance, Sarah saying, “Cast out this handmaid and her son. For the son of this handmaid shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac” (Genesis 21:10).

Jehovah’s plan that through the seed of Abraham and Sarah, all the nations of the world would be blessed was not to be thwarted by man’s intervention, nor manipulation. As we have previously noted, after the flood there were three sons of Noah, of whom the world was populated. Of these three sons it was Shem, through whom Abram descended. In this lineage, Abram had taken Sarai to wife. Sarai was the daughter of Abram’s father (Genesis 20:12), thus, both were of the lineage of Shem. Ishmael was the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, thus, the lineage of Ham. When Abraham sought a wife for Isaac, he sent his servant to his own people and Rebekah, “who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother” (Genesis 24:15), became the wife of Isaac.

In our next segment, we will consider the remainder of our questions of interest, beginning with, “What promises were given to Ishmael?”