

Doctrine of Ishmael

1. Ishmael was the firstborn son of Abraham by Hagar, an Egyptian maid of his wife Sarah. Abraham was 86 at the time and had lived in Canaan for 11 years.
2. Sarah, the barren wife, in keeping with customs of her times as seen in the Babylonian law code of Hammurabi, gave her slave Hagar to Abraham to produce an heir for the family.
3. When Abraham was 99 God renewed His covenant with him and enjoined circumcision of Ishmael as a sign of his membership in the covenant community.
4. God also announced that He would fulfill the divine promise through his wife Sarah, although Abraham looked on Ishmael with deep affection and prayed that he might be the promised heir (Gen 17:18).

Gen 17:18 And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

Gen 17:19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

5. When Ishmael was circumcised, Abraham and his household (those born to the men and women who had grown up in his employ and newcomers to the household through purchase from foreigners) were also circumcised.

5.1 Ishmael was 13 years old at the time of his circumcision. Many Arab tribes still circumcise their youths at the age of 13.

6. Fourteen years after the birth of Ishmael, Isaac was born to Sarah and Abraham. The jealousy that had long separated Sarah from Hagar came to a breaking point at the time of the weaning of Isaac.

7. Sarah insisted, contrary to the customs of the times as evidenced by Abraham's displeasure (Gen 21:11), that Hagar and Ishmael leave to live in the wilderness of Beersheba, and later in the wilderness of Paran.

Gen 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.

Gen 21:11 And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.

Gen 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.

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

7.1 There is no record in the Scripture or elsewhere of animosity developing between Ishmael and Isaac. For example both sons tended to the burial of Abraham in the cave of Machpelah (Gen 25:9).

Gen 25:9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; *(a city two miles north of Hebron.)*

8. While Isaac was his sole heir, Abraham endowed the sons of his concubines (Hagar and Keturah) while he was still living (Gen 25:6).

Gen 25:6 But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.

9. Therefore Ishmael received some of Abraham's material goods. Keturah's sons were sent away eastward, whereas Ishmael went to the southwest.

10. Hagar took for him an Egyptian wife and he became the father of 12 sons and a daughter called Mahalath (Gen 28:9) or Bashemath (Gen 36:3). She became one of the wives of Esau.

Gen 28:9 Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife.

Gen 36:2 Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan; Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite;
Gen 36:3 And Bashemath Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth.



11. The names of Ishmael's sons were Nebajoth, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah (Gen 25:13-15).

Gen 25:12 Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham:

Gen 25:13 And these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam,

Gen 25:14 And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa,

Gen 25:15 Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah:

11.1 Since most of these names occur as tribal entities of considerable influence, some scholars look upon this genealogy list as ethnic rather than personal.

11.2 The Nebaioth Arabs seem to have been the Nabaiati, mentioned in Assyrian records by Tiglathpileser III along with the Qidri (Kedar) mentioned by Ashurbanipal.

11.3 The Keder tribe is mentioned in the Assyrian records of Esarhaddon and Kedar was found inscribed on a silver vessel dating back to the 5th century B.C.

11.3.1 The Kedarites were known for their wealth in flocks and their men were famed archers.

Jer 49:28 Concerning Kedar, and concerning the kingdoms of Habor, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon shall smite, thus saith the LORD; Arise ye, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east.

Jer 49:29 Their tents and their flocks shall they take away: they shall take to themselves their curtains, and all their vessels, and their camels; and they shall cry unto them, Fear is on every side.

Eze 27:21 Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee (i.e., Tyre) in lambs, and rams, and goats: in these were they thy merchants.

Isa 21:16 For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Within a year, according to the years of an hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail:

Isa 21:17 And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished: for the LORD God of Israel hath spoken it.

11.3.2 They lived in black tents in unwalled encampments. (Son 1:5; Isa 42:11)

Son 1:5 I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.

Isa 42:11 Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the encampments that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains.

11.3.3 In Isa 60:7 and also in Ashurbanipal's inscription they are referred to in connection with the Arabic tribe of Nebaioth. They seem to have roamed the Syrian desert east of Palestine, but in the Persian period were also found in the desert south of Palestine.

Isa 60:7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.

Isa 60:8 Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?

Isa 60:9 Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.

Isa 60:10 And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.

Isa 60:11 Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought.

Isa 60:12 For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.

11.3.4 At the time of Israel's return from Persia the Kedarites were ruled by "Geshem the Arabian" (Neh 2:19), who is called "King of Kedar" on a silver vessel discovered at Tell el-Maskhutah in the east part of the delta of Egypt.

Neh 2:19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?

Neh 2:20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

11.3.5 Kedar and her confederate peoples exerted great influence from the delta region of Egypt to the Syrian desert and from Sennacherib's time to the Nabataean period.

11.4 Adbeel, the third son of Ishmael is also the name of an Arabian tribe mentioned in Gen 25:13 and 1Ch 1:29.

1Ch 1:29 These are their generations: The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth; then Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam,

1Ch 1:30 Mishma, and Dumah, Massa, Hadad, and Tema,
1Ch 1:31 Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These are the sons of Ishmael.

11.4.1 His tribe resided in northwestern Arabia closer to Kedar and Nebaioth. Little else is known.

11.5 We know little of Mibsam except that he was a son of Ishmael. Certain Arab histories connect Mishma with an Arab tribe called Benee Mesma living in Saudi Arabia today.

11.6 Dumah is a son of Ishmael and the presumed ancestor of a tribe in Arabia (Gen 25:14; 1Ch 1:30), which gave its name to an oasis now called Dumat ej-Jendel, capital of the district known as the Jauf.

11.6.1 Dumah lies about halfway between the Gulf of Aqabah and Kuwait on the Persian Gulf.

11.7 Massa was one of the sons of Ishmael and a descendant of Abraham (Gen 25:14; 1Ch 1:30). According to the RSV, Agur (Pro 30:1) and King Lemuel (Pro 31:1) may have belonged to this Arabic tribe.

Sayings of Agur

Pro 30:1 The sayings of Agur son of Jakeh-- an oracle: This man declared to Ithiel, to Ithiel and to Ucal:

Pro 30:2 "I am the most ignorant of men; I do not have a man's understanding.

Pro 30:3 I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One.

Pro 30:4 Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Who has gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hands? Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and the name of his son? Tell me if you know!

Pro 30:5 "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

Pro 30:6 Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.

Sayings of King Lemuel

Pro 31:1 The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.

Pro 31:2 What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?

Pro 31:3 Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.

Pro 31:4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink:

11.7.1 There are references to Massa, Tema, and Nebajoth in Gen 25:13-15 and in the Assyrian inscriptions of Tiglathpileser III.

11.8 Hadar is an alternate form of Hadad, son of Ishmael (Gen 25:15). The letters Resh (r) and Daleth (d) are similar in Hebrew and were frequently confused. He founded a tribe of the same name, attested in cuneiform records as the Hudadu.

11.9 Tema was the ninth son of Ishmael who was subsequently regarded as one of the 12 princes of Ishmael and whose name identified the village and encampment of his descendants. (Gen 25:15; 1Ch 1:30)

11.9.1 The residence of the clan is to be identified with the modern Teima, an oasis and caravan stop in northwest Arabia c. 260 miles southeast of Ezion-geber (Job 6:19), It lay on the caravan route between the land of spices and incense in south Arabia and the countries to the north such as the delta region of Egypt, Israel, and Syria.

Job 6:15 But my brothers are as undependable as intermittent streams, as the streams that overflow

Job 6:16 when darkened by thawing ice and swollen with melting snow,

Job 6:17 but that cease to flow in the dry season, and in the heat vanish from their channels.

Job 6:18 Caravans turn aside from their routes; they go up into the wasteland and perish.

Job 6:19 The caravans of Tema look for water, the traveling merchants of Sheba look in hope.

Job 6:20 They are distressed, because they had been confident; they arrive there, only to be disappointed.

Job 6:21 Now you too have proved to be of no help; you see something dreadful and are afraid.

Job 6:22 Have I ever said, 'Give something on my behalf, pay a ransom for me from your wealth,

Job 6:23 deliver me from the hand of the enemy, ransom me from the clutches of the ruthless'?

Job 6:24 "Teach me, and I will be quiet; show me where I have been wrong.

11.9.2 In an oracle concerning Arabia the inhabitants of the land of Tema were urged to succor the Dedanites and Kedarites who were soon to flee from a crushing rout (Isa 21:14), perhaps a reference to the campaign of Tiglathpileser III who claimed to have received tribute from the inhabitants of Tema or the troops of Babylon who would in one year conquer the middle east.

A Prophecy Against Arabia

Isa 21:13 An oracle concerning Arabia: You caravans of Dedanites, who camp in the thickets of Arabia,

Isa 21:14 bring water for the thirsty; you who live in Tema, bring food for the fugitives.

Isa 21:15 They flee from the sword, from the drawn sword, from the bent bow and from the heat of battle.

Isa 21:16 This is what the Lord says to me: "Within one year, as a servant bound by contract would count it, all the pomp of Kedar will come to an end.

Isa 21:17 The survivors of the bowmen, the warriors of Kedar, will be few." The LORD, the God of Israel, has spoken.

11.9.3 In Jer 25:23 Tema is numbered among those peoples who were to drink of the cup of the wine of the wrath at the hand of the Lord, which apparently has reference to the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar.

Seventy Years of Captivity

Jer 25:1 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon ...

Jer 25:18 To wit, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, an hissing, and a curse; as it is this day;

Jer 25:19 Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people;

Jer 25:20 And all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod,

Jer 25:21 Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon,

Jer 25:22 And all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Zidon, and the kings of the isles which are beyond the sea,

Jer 25:23 Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all that are in the utmost corners,

Jer 25:24 And all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the desert,

12. Ishmael's descendants settled all over Arabia, (today's Saudi Arabia), the delta region of Egypt and lands east of the Promised Land.

13. Now let's see where Tema (the ninth son of Ishmael) and his descendants settled.

14. Nabonidus, son of Nebuchadnezzar, the last king of Babylon, lived at Tema in Saudi Arabia (modern Tayma) for a decade, building his palace there and beautifying and fortifying the city to rival Babylon; leaving the rule of Babylon to his son Belshazzar.

15. Jetur was one of the sons of Ishmael and a founder of a tribe living northeast of Israel. (Gen 25:15; 1Ch 1:31; 5:19)

15.1 He is thought to have lived in Ituraea. Ituraea appears only once in the Scriptures (Luk 3:1), where it designates a portion of the territory ruled over by Philip, the son of Herod the Great and brother of Herod Antipas.

Luk 3:1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,

15.2 The area later known as Ituraea was adjacent to Trachonitis in northeast Palestine, beyond the Jordan River.

15.3 After conquest by the Israelites in c. 1400 B. C. the land was occupied by the tribe of Manasseh (1Ch 5:18-22).

1Ch 5:18 The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skillful in war, were four and forty thousand seven hundred and threescore, that went out to the war.

1Ch 5:19 And they made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, and Nephish, and Nodab.

1Ch 5:20 And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them: for they cried to God in the battle, and he was entreated of them; because they put their trust in him.

1Ch 5:21 And they took away their cattle; of their camels fifty thousand, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of asses two thousand, and of men an hundred thousand.

1Ch 5:22 For there fell down many slain, because the war was of God. And they dwelt in their steads until the captivity.

16. Naphish was the eleventh son of Ishmael (Gen 25:15; 1Ch 1:31) and founder of a clan with which the Israelite tribes east of the Jordan made war and subdued.

16.1 Naphish is also spelled Nephish in 1Ch 5:19 (KJV). This clan is not mentioned in later records, nor is positive identification possible.

17. Kedemah was the twelfth son of Ishmael (Gen 25:15; 1Ch 1:31).

17.1 The Hebrew name (Qdma) means "toward the east." It is possible that the Bene Qedem, "the children of the east" (Gen 29:1; Jdg 6:3-6,33, etc.), mentioned frequently in Biblical and extra-Biblical records, may be descendants of Ishmael.

Gen 29:1 Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east.

Jdg 6:3 And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them;

Jdg 6:4 And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.

Jdg 6:5 For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.

Jdg 6:6 And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.

Jdg 6:33 Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.

Jdg 6:34 But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him.

Jdg 6:35 And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

Jdg 6:36 And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,

Jdg 6:37 Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.

18. The epithet "a wild ass of a man" ascribed to Ishmael in Gen 16:12 is not to be considered an opprobrium but one of praise.

Gen 16:12 And he will be a wild man (Onager); his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

18.1 The wild Onager (a wild ass found in the desert of the middle east) was the choicest animal on the Assyrian king's hunting list and a delicacy on the menus at royal banquets. Here it depicts the Bedouin freedom of the Ishmaelites in the southern wilderness.

19. Ishmael died at the age of 137. His burial place is unknown. The Muslims claim that he and his mother Hagar were buried in the Ka'aba at Mecca.



Gen 25:17 And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people.

20. In Gal 4:21-5:1 Paul interprets the narratives of Ishmael and Isaac allegorically. Remember Ishmael represents the law and Isaac represents grace.

Gal 4:21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the Mosaic Law, did you learn nothing from the law?

Gal 4:22 For it is written, Abraham had two sons, the one by a slave, the other by his right woman.

Gal 4:23 Ishmael was the son of Hagar a slave, Ishmael was born after the flesh; but Isaac was a product of the freewoman, Sarah, the product of a divine promise.

Gal 4:24 The events are an allegory: for the account teaches of two covenants; the one from Mount Sinai, which brings bondage, Hagar and her child are analogous with the law and bondage.

Gal 4:25 Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds today to the present city of Jerusalem, Jerusalem at the time of Paul's writing was in slavery to the law and legalism.

Gal 4:26 But the Jerusalem which is from above is free, and she is our mother.

Gal 4:27 For it is written by Isaiah: "Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because the children of the barren woman now surpass the children of the slave."

Gal 4:28 Isn't it clear that you, like Isaac, are children of the promise.

Gal 4:29 In the days of Hagar and Sarah, Ishmael, who was born in the ordinary way, persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit and it is the same today.

Gal 4:30 But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son."

Gal 4:31 Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman. We are children of the promise as was Isaac.

Gal 5:1 Christ has set us free to live a free life. So stand firm and do not let anyone put the harness of the slavery of the law upon you.

20.1 In the above verses Paul uses Ishmael to teach Judaeo Christian legalists who were clinging to the ordinances of the Mosaic law that the Law must pass away (as Ishmael was sent away).

20.2 As Ishmael was a problem to the child of promise so also in the case of those legalists who came from James and John, they were a like problem. Legalism and grace cannot coexist.

