

Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar

Genesis 15-16



And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

Genesis 13:6

The Lord's Promise

Earlier in Abram's life, the Lord had promised him that his posterity would be as numerous as the "dust of the earth" (Genesis 13:16)



Abram had waited for many years and still did not have any children.

What was Abram's concern?

That he was childless and therefore had no heir. Also, Abram wondered if Eliezer would become his heir

What was the Lord's response?

Abram and Sarai would have their own child, and their posterity would be innumerable



Eliezer

He was the man whom Abram identified as “steward of my house”

His name means “God of Help”

He apparently is the same steward who later acted as emissary in the quest to obtain a wife for Isaac (Genesis 24:2)

He was the eldest steward that ruled over all that Abraham had

He was commissioned to go to the city of Nabor where Abraham’s kin were and arrange for Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel, to be betrothed to Isaac (Gen. 24: 11-15)



JST Genesis 15:



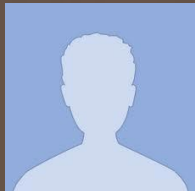
9 And Abram said, Lord God, how wilt thou give me this land for an everlasting inheritance?



10 And the Lord said, Though thou wast dead, yet am I not able to give it thee?

11 And if thou shalt die, yet thou shalt possess it, for the day cometh, that the Son of Man shall live; but how can he live if he be not dead? he must first be quickened.

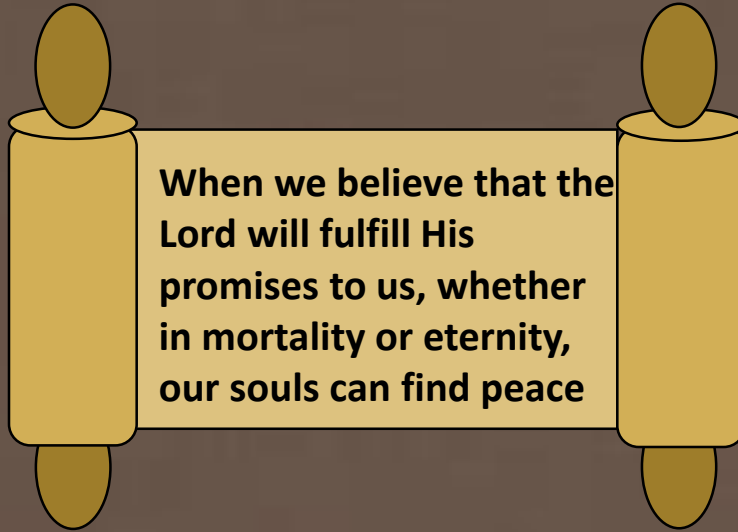
Son of Man—Jesus Christ



12 And it came to pass, that Abram looked forth and saw the days of the Son of Man, and was glad, and his soul found rest, and he believed in the Lord; and the Lord counted it unto him for righteousness.

Abram was reminded that he would live again after his mortal life was completed because of the Savior's Atonement and Resurrection.

Concerns For the Future



When we believe that the Lord will fulfill His promises to us, whether in mortality or eternity, our souls can find peace

What should I choose as a career?

Will I find the right person to marry?

Will I be able to serve a mission?

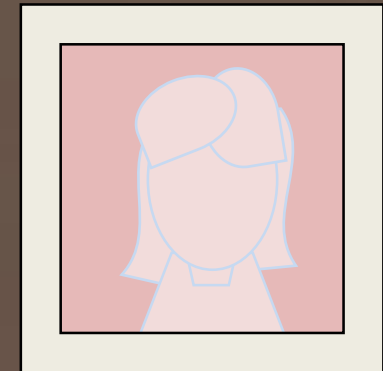
Will I have children?

Will I have children?

Will I find the right person to marry?

Should I choose a career or stay home?

Will I be able to serve a mission?

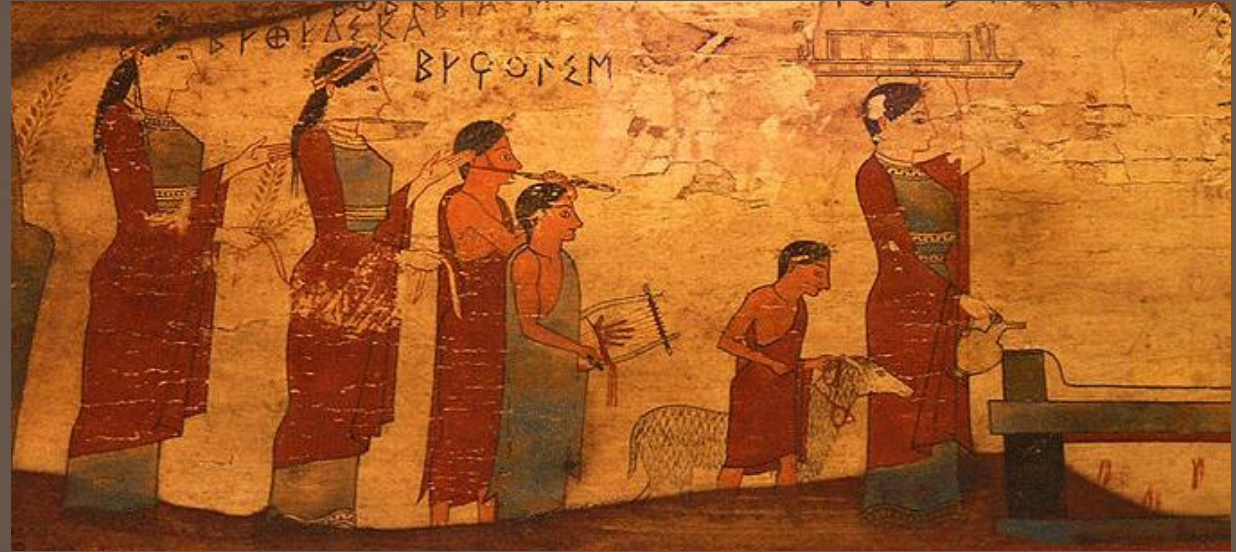


The Agreement

God commanded Abram to take various animals, cut their carcasses into two pieces, and set them apart from each other.

A “smoking furnace, and a burning lamp” representing the Lord’s presence then “passed between those pieces” (see verse 17).

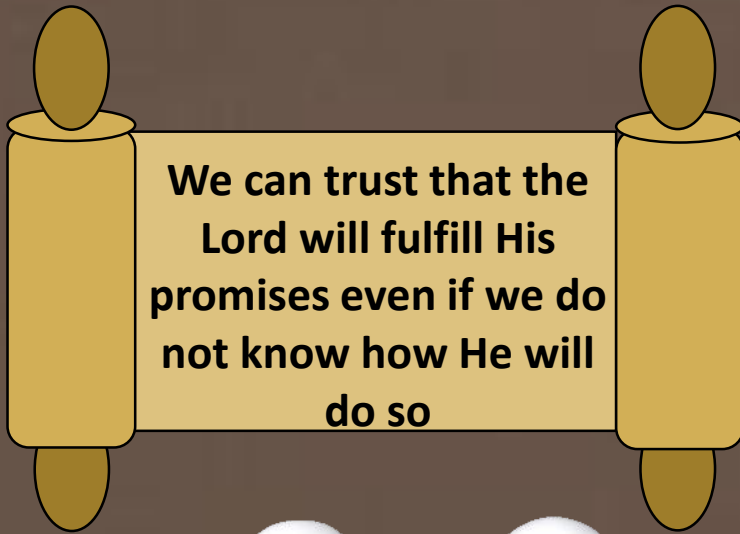
In ancient times, when such a covenant was made, the individual passing between the carcasses was essentially saying, “May I also be cut in two if I do not keep my part of this covenant.”



Abram was assured that the Lord would fulfill His promises to him.

He did not know *how* the promises of the Lord would be fulfilled.

The Trust



“This life is an experience in profound trust. ... To trust means to obey willingly without knowing the end from the beginning (see Prov. 3:5–7). ...

“To exercise faith is to trust that the Lord knows what He is doing with you and that He can accomplish it for your eternal good even though you cannot understand how He can possibly do it.”

The Handmaid

Sarai could not have any children, so she gave her handmaid Hagar to Abram as a plural wife.

According to the custom of the time, Sarah's giving her handmaid, Hagar, to be a wife to Abraham was an expected and logical act



God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because this was the law; and from Hagar sprang many people. This, therefore, was fulfilling, among other things, the promises. D7C 132:34



Sarai could obtain children by her servant Hagar, thus fulfilling the Lord's promise that Abram would have children.

Hagar

She was an Egyptian handmaiden to Sarah also spelled “Agar”

She was the mother of Abraham's son, Ishmael

She is mentioned in the D&C each time in connection with the principle of plural marriage



Jealousy

Sarai responded by dealing “hardly” with Hagar, who fled into the wilderness.

Hagar conceived a child but began to feel jealousy and bitterness toward Sarai.



Galatians 4:21–31

The Allegory of Sarah and Hagar



Hagar	Sarah
Bondwoman	Free Born
Son Ismael—after the flesh	Son Isaac—Child of Promise
Old Covenant—Law of Moses—subject to bondage of the flesh	New Covenant—Gospel—men are made free
	Heirs of Promise



“Those born after the flesh war against those born of the Spirit.”

An Angel is Sent

And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness



Return to Sarah and do as she wishes

I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude

You will have a son and his name will be Ismael

The Lord hears and sees us in our trials and can help us through them

Ishmael

He was the oldest son of Abram, being born of Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid of Sarai

Ishmael means “God hears” and the name *Beer-lahai-roi* means “the well of Him who liveth and seeth me.”

He and his mother were separated from the household of Abraham because of “mocking”

When Abraham died he and Isaac, son of Sarai and Abraham, came together to bury their father

He passed away at age 137

His descendants seem to become a ‘wandering people’ who intermingled with the nations of Canaan

Joseph was sold by his brethren into the hands of the ‘Ishmeelites’ who took him to Egypt
(Gen. 37:25-28, 39:1)

(*Note:* Hagar and her son Ishmael are revered in the Islamic faith as ancestors of Muhammad, the founder of Islam. Muslims [followers of Islam] also honor Abraham as a prophet.)

Old Testament Seminary Manual Lesson 24





“You are not alone on this journey. Your Heavenly Father knows you. Even when no one else hears you, He hears you. When you rejoice in righteousness, He rejoices with you. When you are beset with trial, He grieves with you.”



*...and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world
Matthew 28:20*

Sources:

Suggested Hymn: #90 From All That Dwell below the Skies

1. *Old Testament Who's Who* by Ed J. Pinegar and Richard J. Allen pg. 46-47, 66, 80
2. Richard G. Scott ("Trust in the Lord," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 17).
3. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf ("Your Wonderful Journey Home," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 127–28).

Plural Marriage:

At certain times in the history of the world, the Lord has commanded His people to practice plural marriage. Plural marriage was practiced by Abram and Sarai and by their grandson Jacob, and it was practiced for a time during the early days of the restored Church, beginning with Joseph Smith.

How plural marriage in the Old Testament connects to plural marriage in the last dispensation

“While working on the translation of the Bible in the early 1830s, the Prophet Joseph Smith became troubled by the fact that Abraham, Jacob, David, and other Old Testament leaders had more than one wife. The Prophet prayed for understanding and learned that at certain times, for specific purposes, following divinely given laws, plural marriage was approved and directed by God. Joseph Smith also learned that with divine approval, some Latter-day Saints would soon be chosen by priesthood authority to marry more than one wife. A number of Latter-day Saints practiced plural marriage in Nauvoo, but a public announcement of this doctrine and practice was not made until the August 1852 general conference in Salt Lake City. At that conference, Elder Orson Pratt, as directed by President Brigham Young, announced that the practice of a man having more than one wife was part of the Lord’s restitution of all things (see Acts 3:19–21)” (*Our Heritage: A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* [1996], 97; see also Jacob 2:27–30).

See More about -- Ishmael, Our Brother
By James B. Mayfield June 1979 Ensign

Galatians 4:21–31. The Allegory of Sarah and Hagar

“Paul here uses the life of Abraham as an allegory to dramatize the superiority of the gospel over the law of Moses—a mode of teaching designed to drive his doctrine home anew each time his hearers think of Abraham and his life.

“Hagar, the bondwoman, bore Ishmael; and Sarah, the free-woman, brought forth Isaac. Ishmael was born after the flesh, while Isaac, as a child of promise, came forth after the Spirit. Hagar is thus made to represent the old covenant, the law of Moses, the covenant under which men were subject to the bondage of sin; while Sarah symbolizes the new covenant, the gospel, the covenant under which men are made free, free from bondage and sin through Christ.

“Mt. Sinai, from whence the law came, and Jerusalem, from whence it is now administered, symbolize the law, and their children are in bondage. But the spiritual Jerusalem, the heavenly city of which the saints shall be citizens, is symbolized by Sarah, and she is the mother of freemen. Sarah, who was so long barren, as our spiritual mother, has now made us all, like Isaac, heirs of promise.

“But it is now, as it was then, those born after the flesh war against those born of the Spirit. And as God rejected Ishmael and accepted Isaac, so does he now reject those who cleave to the law of Moses and accept those who turn to Christ.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:477–78.)

Hagar:

And God opened her eyes Genesis 21:19

Hagar's status is unequivocally displayed: she is a slave, and she belongs to Sarai. Sarai gives her to Abram, as she is Sarai's property. Hagar does not belong to Abram.

If the union proves to be childless, the wife is required to provide a concubine, but would then have all the legal rights to the offspring. This may also act as evidence against a common reading of these verses that Sarai was, through her own intellect, attempting to force the fulfillment of promises Abram had already received. Significantly, this will also play into the next section with Hagar as a freed slave (by virtue of her marriage to Abraham).

Hagar does important things and receives important promises and visits. She is the first freed slave in the Bible. She becomes one of the elect few to directly receive the promise of innumerable posterity as well as an annunciation of the birth of a son by an angel. She is the first and only woman in scripture to name God. "And she called the name of the Lord God who spoke to her, Thou art God who seest me; for she said, For I have openly seen him that appeared to me. Therefore she called the well, The well of him whom I have openly seen."

Abram/Abraham and Sarai/Sarah never use Hagar's name nor speak to her directly. Indeed, God and His messenger are the only ones in these stories who speak to her directly and use her name when doing so (Genesis 16:8, 21:17).

What is also clear is that Sarah witnesses something between Ishmael and Isaac that pushes her, on the basis of inheritance issues, to demand Abraham to send Hagar and her child elsewhere. The text does make clear that God commands Abraham to follow the will of his wife Sarah in dismissing Hagar, changing Abraham's view. Hagar is dismissed into the wilderness, becomes the first character [Page 100] in the Bible to weep, and yet subsequently experiences another visit of a divine being and is saved by the actions of the deity.

Genesis 25:12 In this the final reference to Hagar in the Hebrew Bible, we see again the identification of her as Egyptian. This has been a constant theme and her constant identifier throughout her time on screen. With this theme comes a dramatic look forward in time to the Exodus of Israel out of Egypt yet set as a distinct reversal: an Egyptian slave leaving the oppression or affliction suffered in the home of Abraham and Sarah, rather than Israelite slaves leaving the oppression suffered in Egypt.

The figure of Hagar in the Abrahamic scriptural traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) is one human character who stands as a common thread between those religious approaches. However, the views of Hagar and how she is read and used by those respective religious communities is vastly different. While her story is largely similar, interpretation of her position varies exceedingly. Her position as the second wife of Abraham assures her a preeminent position in religious historiography.

In Judaism and Christianity, she is largely eclipsed by the preeminence given to Sarah and the inheritance due to Isaac, as the firstborn of the first wife. Within Judaism, she is generally set aside in exegetical works and largely disappears within the shadow of Sarah, becoming, as one academic put it, superficially seen as a "throw-away character." Yet in some later Jewish traditions, Hagar is said to have later fully converted to the covenant religion of Abraham, and taken a new name, Keturah (which most consider to be Abraham's third wife), and is reunited with Abraham after Sarah's death.

Excerpts from: <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/hagar-in-lds-scripture-and-thought/>