

# THE BIBLICAL WILD

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*WEEK II: Genesis 16-33, Psalms 6-11*

Let us pray.

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart and I will tell of all your wonderful deeds. I will be glad in it. I will sing praise to your name oh most high.

AMEN.

We continue our journey through Genesis this week by coming to the story of Abraham and Sarah and the birth of children and the continuation of the covenant that has been made with them.

You may recall that God has promised Abraham and Sarah that a great nation will come from them that they will be blessed with many descendants. And they will be given a land, a land of promise, in which to inhabit.

Abraham and Sarah have been waiting patiently - or perhaps I should say increasingly less patient - for God's promises to come true. And so as it is with many of us who become impatient with the unfolding of God's plan, Abraham and Sarah work together to find a way to help God along with this.

So Sarah calls her slave Hagar to come to her and has Abraham lie with Hagar. As a result of that union is born Ishmael. But this is not to be the promise that God has given. They are to wait even longer for a son to be born to them. Eventually they have Isaac; a child born in their advanced years. A definite miraculous promise delivered by God.

Now you may wonder - what happens with Isaac and what happens with Ishmael? Well, as God promised it is through Isaac that the many generations and the land will come. It is the God of Isaac and Abraham who will learn later of Jacob. But what of Ishmael? Is he to be cast out and not receive any of the promises? God whom we can assume did not initially intend for the promise to go through Ishmael is never the less and gracious and merciful God. One who is full of steadfast love. So God also makes a covenant with Ishmael and promising that there will be a great nation that comes from him as well. Today's Muslims trace their promise their inheritance back to Abraham through Ishmael.

So we have Abraham and we now have Isaac and the covenant is continuing to unfold.

As Isaac ages he prepares himself to offer his blessing upon his oldest son Esau,

but Jacob who desires his father's blessing tricks his brother Esau by offering his brother a bowl of soup to satisfy his hunger in exchange for the blessing. Thus even though Jacob is a trickster, a con man, one who steals from his brother, he receives the blessing. Jacob lives his life and continues on a path of being deceitful but yet never the less God continues to stay with him.

I'm standing here in the midst of a cemetery, a place where it is easy to recall the many gifts and the many blessings that come from people who have preceded me. I know that God is present, and God is present with all of us, regardless of how successful we are or of how we might fail or fall short of what God intends for us. The promise is always there, always able to be renewed and always passed on from one generation to the next.

As you approach your study and devotion this next week I put to you a couple questions: How has your understanding of God and God's blessing changed as you have encountered this holy scripture? Secondly I wonder what blessings you have received from your ancestors that you can pass on to the next generation?

God bless you and see you next week.