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## Q&A#18 What is Paul's Allegory of Sarah and Hagar About?

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Today's question: "Why does Paul say that Sarah and Hagar represent two covenants in Galatians 4:21-31? Where can we see this reality in the Old Testament?"

James Jordan's articles on the subject:

<http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-horizons/no-117-call-me-ishmael-part-1/>

<http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-horizons/no-118-call-me-ishmael-part-2/>

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My new Soundcloud account is here: <https://soundcloud.com/alastairadversaria>

## Transcript

Welcome back. Today's question is, why does Paul say that Sarah and Hagar represent two covenants in Galatians 4.21-31? Where can we see this reality in the Old Testament? I'll read the verses from Galatians. Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondwoman, the other by a free woman.

But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the free woman through promise. Which things are symbolic? For these are the two covenants, the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

But the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, O barren, you who do not bear! Break forth and shout, you who do not travail! For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband. Now we, brethren, as

Israel was, are children of promise.

But as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless, what does the Scripture say? Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Now Paul's use of this story from the Old Testament is one that has caused a lot of debate, particularly the description of this as allegory. Is Paul engaging in some sort of typological reading or is he justifying the excesses of allegory that we tend to associate with that term? Is he doing violence to the original text or is he drawing upon some theme that is within the Scripture itself in the Old Testament? I believe if we look more closely there are a number of things that we'll notice that help us to understand why Paul has drawn upon this particular story. What exactly is going on and how this can illumine our reading of Galatians and understanding of the New Testament more generally? I found two pieces by James Jordan, a two-part essay by James Jordan on this, particularly helpful, and I'll give a link to that below.

This is one of the things that has particularly informed my reading here. So when we're reading through the story of Ishmael and Isaac, of Sarai and Hagar, or Sara and Hagar, what do we see? Well, the first, the start of the story in many ways is the struggle that Sarai has bearing children. She's barren and so she gives her maid to her husband Abraham so that she might bear a child on her knees, so that Hagar might bear a child for Sarai.

And this plan doesn't quite work out. The plan doesn't quite work out because as soon as Hagar conceives, her mistress is despised in her eyes. And as her mistress is despised in her eyes, she's also spoken of as being given to Abraham as a wife.

So she becomes a rival, not someone who's bearing a child for her mistress, but a rival to her mistress. And this creates all sorts of tensions within that situation. And so in Genesis 16, there are a number of allusions to other scriptural passages and other scriptural motifs.

If you read at the very beginning, Then Sarai, Abraham's wife, took Hagar, her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abraham to be his wife, after Abraham had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. So he went into Hagar and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

Then Sarai said to Abraham, My wrong be upon you. I gave you my maid into your embrace. And when she saw that I had conceived, I became despised in her eyes.

The Lord judge between you and me. So Abraham said to Sarai, Indeed, your maid is in

your hand. Do to her as you please.

And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence. Now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from and where are you going? And she said, I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.

So the angel of the Lord said to her, Return to your mistress and submit yourself under her hand. Then the angel of the Lord said to her, I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said to her, Behold, you are a child and you shall bear a son.

You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man. His hand shall be against every man and every man's hand against him, and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her. You are the God who sees. For she said, Have I also here seen him who sees me or seen the back of him who sees me? Therefore the well was called Beelahai-Roi.

Observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered. So Hagar bore Abram a son and Abram named his son whom Hagar bore Ishmael. Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

So plenty of things to notice within this passage. First of all, there's a sort of rough playing out of the themes of the fall. The wife giving something desirable to her husband to obtain a desired end.

And that thing going wrong, eyes being opened and shame as a result of it, and then a sort of exile that results. There's also Exodus themes here. The emphasis upon Hagar being the Egyptian is significant.

She is sorely treated by her mistress. Sarai acts as a sort of pharaoh type figure within this passage who mistreats her maid. And so she's sent into the wilderness.

She encounters God within the wilderness, has a theophanic appearance, and there is a promise made that she will become a great nation. That her child will grow up and his name will be, his name is given also, Ishmael. God hears.

And she names, gives a name to God after her encounter, the God who sees. And these are significant events. This going into the wilderness, encountering God in the wilderness.

This reminds us of the story of the Exodus in various ways. It reminds us of the story of Moses, for instance. Moses fleeing from Egypt and then encountering God at the

mountain.

And so these themes present Hagar as a significant character, not just someone who's intruding into a plot where she does not belong. She's a significant character. Also, Ishmael's born in the 86th year of Abram's life.

And the 86th year is a very significant year. It's the year that's bang in the center of Abram's life. Abram lives until 175, and so the events of the 86th year are in the middle of his life.

This is the center of his life. And that sort of significance in the numbers is something that people would have noticed in the past. When you pay attention to these numbers, it shows that there's something significant about this character, Ishmael, and his birth.

Something has happened here that's important. The promise that's given to Ishmael or to Hagar and through her to Ishmael is also a significant one. It's a promise that is very similar.

There's a very similar series of events here that we see in other significant birth events. In the birth of Isaac, in the birth of Samson, in the birth of John the Baptist, in the birth of Jesus, an angel appears and blesses the woman and says that she is with child. Gives the child a name, says that she will bear a son, that the child will have a name, that God has heard her, and that he will have a particular identity.

And this is something that again suggests that Ishmael is not just an intrusion within the story. He's an important character. He's a character we need to pay attention to.

And he is blessed. He is given an identity and a calling that is significant. That he'll be a wild man, he'll be like a wild donkey later on.

But God has heard her affliction. This is the same sort of thing that we see at the beginning of the book of Exodus. That God has heard the affliction of the people of Israel and he will answer them.

And so there's a return to the land at this point, much as Moses returned to the land of Egypt after encountering God. And then there's the birth of Ishmael to Abraham. Immediately after that, very shortly after this, in the text at least, but a number of years after it within the actual course of the narrative, God appears to Abraham and makes a covenant with him.

The Institute's circumcision tells him that his seed will be counted through Isaac rather than through Ishmael. But Ishmael is going to be the recipient of a promise. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you behold, I have blessed him.

I will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes

and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.

So what's going on here? It's significant that God makes promises to Ishmael that really seem to echo the promises that are made to or foreshadow the promises that are made to Isaac and the things that will be achieved through Isaac. Twelve princes make him a great nation. This is very significant language.

Ishmael is a sort of foreshadowing of Isaac. He's one who will have twelve princes arise from him and then become a great nation, be greatly multiplied and be blessed. And so he is experiencing much that will relate to Israel.

He is also circumcised. He is one of the first people to be circumcised. He bears the covenant identity with Abraham.

Now, this is a temporary thing. This is until Isaac comes on the scene, because when Isaac comes on the scene, as it were, the baton of the covenant will be passed on. Abraham will go to the sidelines.

Abraham is no longer center stage. He and Sarah dies and then he marries Keturah and has other children. But he's no longer center stage.

The story is now Isaac's. And then after Isaac, it becomes the story of Jacob and then the story of Joseph and his brethren. And so the covenant is like a baton that's been passed on, that God is achieving his purpose in this way.

Now, these nations are blessed and these people share in the blessing. But there's a movement forward and a movement from covenant bearer to covenant bearer. Now, this particular point, Ishmael is part of the covenant bearing people.

He is the son of Abraham, the only son of Abraham. And he's the one who bears that identity in a great many respects. He is circumcised.

He is the bearer of a great promise. And he's a bearer of a promise that foreshadows what will happen to Israel. And his mother is also someone who has experienced in advance a sort of Exodus event.

And so, again, we see an anticipation of something that's going to take place that just as Moses went into the wilderness. So we see a similar thing happening here. Now, after the birth of Isaac in chapter 21, something else changes.

Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old as God had commanded him. Now, Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, God has made me laugh so that all who hear me here will laugh with me.

She also said, who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children for I

have born him a son in his old age. So the child grew and was weaned and Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian whom she had born to Abraham scoffing.

Therefore, she said to Abraham, cast out this bond woman and her son for the son of this bond woman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac. And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham's sight because of his son. But God said to Abraham, do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bond woman.

Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice for an Isaac your seed shall be called. Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bond woman because he is your seed. So Abraham rose early in the morning and took a bread and a skin of water and putting it on his shoulder, he gave it and the boy to Hagar and sent her away.

Then she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba and the water in the skin was used up and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs. Then she went and sat down across from him at a distance of about a bow shot. For she said to herself, let me not see the death of the boy.

So she sat opposite him and lifted up her voice and wept and God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven and said to her, what ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.

And God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. Then she went and filled the skin with water and gave the lad a drink. So God was with the lad and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness and became an archer.

And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt. So more things to notice here that Ishmael is cast out as Sarah sees him scoffing or laughing or literally Isaicing at the weaning of Isaac. And that use of the word Isaicing, that use of the laughter that's immediately been referred to in the immediately preceding section, it's been referred to as the reason for the name given to Isaac.

And then here you see Hagar's son, Ishmael, Isaicing. And it reveals something of the tension that there are these two sons, the oldest son, Ishmael, and then the youngest son who is supposed to be the son of the promise. But here we have the oldest son, Isaicing.

And so there's a tension between these two figures. Who is the true heir? Who is the true Isaac? Who is the true one who's going to inherit the covenant? And so to clarify the status of Isaac, Ishmael has to be cast out. And so he's cast out into the wilderness and the way that that occurs is significant.

He's sent by the hand of Abraham, rises early in the morning, takes bread and a skin of

water, puts it on the shoulder and gives the boy and the food to Hagar and sends her out into the wilderness. And then she has an encounter with God in the wilderness of Paran. And there is a significant, the son is under a shrub or a bush.

And God hears the voice of the lad, not this time hearing the voice of Hagar herself, but the voice of the lad. God hears, it's his name, and God has heard Ishmael and God will bless him and save him. And so again, we have a significant deliverance and it's recorded for us in the text.

We're supposed to pay attention. Something important is happening here. God is with the lad and he grows and he dwells in the wilderness and becomes an archer.

Now, we've heard a similar description before at the beginning of early in the book of Luke, where you have the forerunner, John the Baptist, and all these things that are declared about him, his birth associated with the birth of Christ. And then at the end, so the child grew and became strong in spirit and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel. Now there's a sort of, on the surface, there seems to be some sort of symmetry or parallel between the character of John the Baptist and Ishmael.

And that may reward greater study and attention. And I'll get into that in a moment. So we've seen already a number of parallels.

There's a further parallel that must be noticed. That as you read through this story of Hagar and Ishmael going into the wilderness, Ishmael being sent into the wilderness by the hand of Hagar, we have a parallel with what immediately follows, which is the story of the sacrifice of Isaac. Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham and said to him, Abraham, and he said, here I am.

And he said, take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love and go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you. So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him and Isaac, his son, and he split the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off.

Abraham said to his young men, stay here with the donkey. The lad and I will go yonder and worship and we will come back to you. So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac, his son, and he took the fire in his hand and knife and the two of them went together.

But Isaac spoke to Abraham, his father, and said, my father. And he said, here I am, my son. And he said, look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, my son, God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering.

And the two of them went together. Then they came to the place of which God had told

him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order.

And he bound Isaac, his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took his knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham.

And he said, here I am. And he said, do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son from me.

And Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by his horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place the Lord will provide, as it is said this day, in the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.

Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven and said, by myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, in blessing I will bless you and in multiplying I will multiply you. And multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.

In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice. So Abraham returned to his young men and they rose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

So lots of parallels here between this story and the story in the chapter immediately preceding it. In both cases we have Abraham arising early in the morning, taking a child and sending the child into the wilderness. The first one, send the child by the hand of Hagar.

In the second, sending the child by his own hand and going into the wilderness and encountering this, and it's a sacrificial theme, the sacrifice of the child. There's no water in the wilderness for Hagar and she almost dies and Ishmael almost dies and Isaac almost dies. He almost dies as a sacrifice.

God hears and God acts and intervenes in that situation and saves the life of the son. And so we see the salvation of two sons' lives in these two chapters. We also see something very significant that Ishmael is left under a bush and the ram that's the substitute for Isaac is found under a bush.

And therefore we see some sort of parallel between these two events, some connection that not only is there a symmetry between these events but there is a connection in some way that this connection suggests that the events that befall Ishmael and the events that befall Isaac are connected, that this should be read as part of a single event or part, a juxtaposition that helps us to understand what's taking place in each case.



Both of them leave from the land of Beersheba and in both cases there's a lifting up of the eyes or opening of the eyes to see a well of water and to see the ram and the thicket. God's promise to be with the child as well.

So as we look through this there are all sorts of significant parallels. Later on in the story we see other things that are significant. After the death of Abraham we see Isaac and Ishmael together on the scene and they're together and then, and it came to pass after the death of Isaac that God blessed his son Isaac and Isaac dwelt at Beelahai-Roy which is the place named by Hagar.

So he's dwelling within the land of his brother, within the land of Ishmael. And we have this connection also with the land of Paran. We also see Midianites elsewhere.

Midianites like Jethro and other people like that, the Kenites as well. These are characters that are born to the other wives of Abraham and these play a significant role within history. They provide a sort of staging ground in the wilderness for the later entrance into the land.

Whether that's Jethro or whether it's the wilderness of Paran, these are places that, Midian or the land of Paran, these are places that provide for the entrance into the land for what will happen next. Ishmael in that sense is a character who's associated as a sort of forerunner. He goes through the events that are similar to those of Isaac in advance but he does not enter into the promise.

He does not enter into the fullness of it. He paves the way in different ways though and he prepares a way and provides a place for Isaac to stay. As we read through the story of Genesis, we can see a number of brothers that are compared and contrasted or juxtaposed or related in different ways.

One of the themes that is interesting that I've not yet gotten to the bottom of but I think is significant here are the sacrificial themes of two kids being sacrificed in different ways. One being sent out by hand and the other being offered as a sort of blood sacrifice. We see the two goats in the story of Esau and Jacob.

Two goats being used, one as a meal and the other as covering. And so we see Jacob going off and going to Bethel and having his head laid down on a great stone, an altar-like thing perhaps, and then the ladder leading up to heaven. And we see Esau being moved away or put out away from the fat of the land and removed from the place of fertility and growth and life.

And so there's a significant movement there, a significant juxtaposition of these two characters but one that's mediated by this image of two goats. Here we have two animals as it were, two kids that suffer different fates. Both are related to sacrificial themes in different ways.

One almost comes to death in the wilderness as he's thrown, put out into the wilderness as a scapegoat type figure. And the other is placed on the altar and then a ram is offered in replacement for him. And the ram within the bush being associated with both Ishmael and Isaac again brings forward sacrificial themes.

Elsewhere we see a similar thing within the Judah and Joseph story within the story of Joseph, there's the blood of the goat that's placed upon the coat of many colours to present that it's Joseph's blood. And in the story of chapter 38, Judah and Tamar, there is the sending of a young goat by the hand of his friend the Adolamite into the wilderness to Tamar, not knowing that it's Tamar. And so in both of these cases there are significant goats associated with the two sons and their fates.

One sent by the hand of someone into the wilderness and the other that's offered as a sort of blood sacrifice. Now I don't know what to make of that. It seems to be related in some way to the theme of the Day of Atonement.

I've speculated on this in various places. I do not know what to make of it, but there seems to be some connection and it will be interesting to unpack this and see exactly what that connection is and how it helps us to read Genesis. But for now I'll just note the probable theme that's playing at that point.

So as we look through these stories, we can see Ishmael is a blessed character. Ishmael is someone who looks like Isaac in many ways. He has 12 princes that will descend from him.

He will be made into a great nation. He takes a foreign wife. He dwells in the wilderness of Paran, which is where Israel will dwell during the wilderness experience.

And what we see when Isaac is born is that Isaac is not born of the flesh. Isaac is born as a promised child, a sort of resurrection, a life from the dead. The barren womb of Sarah is made fruitful and so she bears this child, Isaac.

And it's a different sort of child, a child that's juxtaposed with Ishmael, who finds his origin with the bondwoman, the Egyptian woman. And that's significant that she's associated with Egypt and she's also associated with the wilderness and she's associated with the law of her mistress. All these associations are there within the text already.

And then she experiences an exodus type event, but she never gets beyond the wilderness of Paran. That's where they dwell and there's no entrance into the promised land, as it were. And so Ishmael is Israel in advance, a foreshadowing of Israel.

What will happen to Israel? Now, I noticed earlier that there are parallels between the character of John the Baptist and the character of Ishmael. The parallels being that both of them have their birth foretold by an angel, various things spoken of them, the blessing that will come to them. And then both of them grow up in the wilderness.

And that reference to a child growing up, it's not often that we encounter things like that. We find that within Genesis, in this particular location, we find it within 1 Samuel, in reference to Samuel, and then we find it in Luke, in reference to Jesus, and in reference to John the Baptist. These are significant references.

And they suggest that there may be some illuminating parallel between these two characters. John the Baptist is a man of the wilderness. John the Baptist is a man who represents the prophets, and he represents the era prior to the kingdom.

He represents faithful Israel anticipating the kingdom, but not fully entering into the promise themselves. He represents this precursor. He represents this one preparing the way in the wilderness.

And I think this may be one of the best ways to understand the character of Ishmael. That Ishmael is someone who receives a great many blessings, and for a while he is, as it were, the bearer of the covenant promise. He's the child of Abraham, the only child of Abraham.

And it seems as if the destiny of the people may even lie upon his shoulders, but it's not to be. That's supposed to be passed on to someone else. Now that does not mean that he's an outcast from the people of God, from God's blessing more generally.

He is blessed. He is blessed, as it were, as a Gentile God-fearer, as one who no longer bears the weight of the covenant himself, but as someone who's drawn into the blessing. And Ishmael and Isaac living together in the same area, in Be'er Lahai Roy, I think, is maybe a significant foreshadowing of the bringing together of these two peoples.

As Isaac, the one who bears the promise and bears the destiny of the people of God, dwells with his brother, his half-brother, who no longer bears that destiny, but is made part of that one people. When we read this story, and then read Galatians 4, we can see the way that Paul is picking up some of these themes, these significant themes of Israel is like Ishmael. Israel has borne the covenant destiny, and the baton of the covenant promises, for a long period of time, and yet they are associated with the wilderness, they are associated with Sinai, they are associated with Egypt, they are associated with all these things that fall short of entering into the promise.

And then there's this new son, one, as it were, whose life from the dead, Christ, the true seed of Abraham, this new Isaac, this greater Isaac, this one who fulfills all the promises of the seed. And so as this child is born, there needs to be a clarification of his identity relative to the other bearer of the promise. And so cast out the bondwoman with her child, that to clarify the place of Christ, there has to be judgment upon the other child, as it were, the other apparent heir.

And that's one of the things that you see, that this contrast between the circumcision

and the contrast between the circumcision and Christ, who is the true promise bearer? Is it Christ? Or is it this group of the circumcision who are associated with Abraham's initial son according to the law? And what Paul argues is that Christ, for Christ's place to be clarified, is no longer about circumcision anymore. Now, the people of the circumcision can be saved, but they'll be saved as they're united to the promise seed. And so this casting out of the bondwoman is the casting out of those people who are defined purely by that old order of the flesh, of circumcision.

And there is analogy here between Ishmael and Isaac. The need for clarification, the existence of one seed that's defined primarily according to the flesh and the law, and then a second seed that's given according to promise and according to resurrection. And then there's the difference between the two mothers.

And all of these differences are rooted, ultimately, within a reading of Genesis. And when we look at the example of John the Baptist again, we can see that John the Baptist is one who prepares the way for Christ. John the Baptist is an example of what it means to be a faithful Israelite, what it means to be a true Ishmaelite in many respects, one who does not enter into the fullness of the promise, but prepares the way for another who will.

He must increase, but I must decrease. John the Baptist is the man in the wilderness, and then Jesus is the one who enters into the land. He's the one who brings rest.

We see also similar patterns in the story of Moses and the children of Israel, and in the story of Moses and Joshua and the children of Israel, and also in the story of Elijah and Elisha. Both Elijah and Moses are in different ways associated with the Ishmaelites, or with characters such as the priest of Midian, the other sons of Abraham, sons who are God-fearers and prepare the way, but they are not the ones who bear the baton of the covenant. And so this provides a very helpful framework for understanding what it means to be Israel at this juncture in history, when the true heir has come.

What happens when the true heir comes? What will the ones who prepared the way do? Will they cede their place to him? And join themselves to him? Or will they stand against him and persecute him, as the child of the bondwoman persecuted the child of the free woman? And this is the issue that Paul is dealing with within that context. And using the background of Genesis helps him to make that point well. And as you go back through Genesis, I think you'll see that this is not just an arbitrary set of connections.

There are real things that Paul is drawing upon here. He's drawing upon the promises that are made to Ishmael. Ishmael is not nothing.

Ishmael is made into a great nation, into an Israel-like nation, with 12 princes and multiplied in many respects. It goes through a sort of exodus experience as well, but does not fully enter into rest. He's also paralleled with Isaac.

We see the story at the end of the story in chapter 21, and then the story in chapter 22. One happens to Ishmael, one happens to Isaac, and these are parallel to each other. And then the ram in the thicket beneath the bush, and the lad beneath the bush.

Again, connections that help us to understand these two stories. And these two characters, their destinies are intertwined. And in the same way, the destiny of Israel and the destiny of Isaac are intertwined.

The destiny of Ishmael and the destiny of Isaac are intertwined, and they come together at the end. And in the same way, I believe Paul talks about the casting away of Israel as the salvation of the world. That as this Israel goes into the wilderness, it will lead to the salvation of all.

But then Israel will be restored too. And so we have the two, the Day of Atonement, the themes of the two goats, and I suspect there is a connection there. One goat sent into the wilderness, the other is a sin offering.

And so one is Israel, one is Ishmael. And then at the end, the two are brought together. And we have the blessing being received by Jew and Gentile as one body, by Ishmael and Isaac brought together, by Jews and by believing Christians brought together as one new body, believing Gentile Christians.

And this, I believe, is something that's foreshadowed in a great many ways in redemptive history, in the Old Testament and elsewhere. I think this might help us to understand the themes that Paul wants us to see within his use of the Sarah and Hagar story in Galatians 4. Now, I've said a lot here and rambled a bit, but I hope this is helpful. If you have any further questions, please leave them in my Curious Cat account.

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