

DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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Ninth Week -- Sunday

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL DEPART

"And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. Therefore she said to Abraham, 'Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.' And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham's sight because of his son" (Genesis 21:9-11).

When Sarah at length gave birth to a son, the event doubtless diffused a general gladness through the camp of Abraham. Yet the joy was not universal, for Hagar, the bondwoman, beheld with sorrow of heart the frustration of the hopes she had cherished respecting her son as the future heir of Abraham. This feeling strengthened into jealousy and dislike, which she seems to have also imparted to Ishmael, who was about twelve years old at the birth of Isaac. Sarah, having now a son of her own, was freed from any thoughtful regard for them, which had probably restrained her in her conduct before Isaac's birth. But now she might reasonably fear some danger to her own personal heritage as well as to the safety of her own son if Abraham should depart from life during Isaac's immaturity, with Ishmael being so much older and of an intractable character.

These feelings on both sides came to an explosion on the occasion of a public festival held three years after the birth of Isaac to celebrate his weaning. The hostility and rancor of Hagar and her son were so plainly manifested on that occasion that Sarah cast off all restraint and insisted that both Hagar and Ishmael should be forthwith sent away. But "the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight, because of his son." It is not said *because of Hagar*; for it will be remembered that he had given up all right of control over her to Sarah; but it might be questioned whether she had the right to demand that Abraham's son should be expelled from the camp. There seems a probability that he would have resisted his wife's behest had he been left wholly to himself. But he was not left to himself. The word of God came to him assuring him that this demand of Sarah, harsh as it seemed, was in conformity with the Divine purposes concerning his sons, and would be eventually best for both of them.

Once assured of the will of God, the patriarch no longer hesitated. He "rose up early in the morning," and after providing them with such refreshments as they were likely to need on the journey, he sent them away.

So Hagar and Ishmael went forth and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. In the blindness of her sorrow, Hagar seems to have lost her way and the water which she had in a skin bottle was gone long before she came to any well or tents where hospitality would have been extended. The young Ishmael, unused to hardship and weariness, was the first to break down. He could go no further and seemed likely to die of thirst in that hot wilderness. At length Hagar, who had sustained his fainting steps, laid him down under the shelter of a shrub and withdrew a little way that her irrepressible grief might not disturb his last moments. She sat down and lifted up her voice and wept.

Did she cry to God? He had met her before in that very wilderness and had spoken comfortably to her, and she might think that he would not forsake her now. But if she had forgotten God, He had not forgotten her. In that moment of her deepest despair, a voice called to her with paternal tenderness. "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." At that moment God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. All care, all trouble was over now. She hastened to fill her bottle and brought water to her son, to whom that refreshment soon imparted new life and strength.