

Why It's Time for Israeli Christians to Love Ishmael Again

As a Jewish citizen of Israel, I must confess that it is sometimes hard to maintain God's heart of love for those who seek our destruction. There is no question that the radical Islamic ideology is a danger to Israel and the whole world—including the Arab nations. However, today I am not talking about the ideology but rather the people.

I had the privilege last week of spending several days with Egyptian-born prayer leader, David Demian. He demonstrates the love of God towards all nations in a way that moved me. He not only sees and honors God's role for Israel and the Jewish people, but he is also contending for God to fulfill His will in the sons of Ishmael.

Love for my Arab brothers

The more I listened to him, the more my heart was filled with love for my Arab brothers. When I say brothers—I mean, after the flesh. We are both sons of Abraham.

But wait Ron, Ishmael was mistake—and after all, not even the son of Sarah, but Hagar.

That is what I thought. My dear brother Bassam Adranly, an Israeli Arab pastor (and optometrist) who loves the Jewish nation, explained that in ancient cultures, if a woman could not bear a child, it was common to give her servant to her husband, in order for her (the servant) to bear a child with her husband—for the barren wife. We see that with both Rachel and Leah. Listen to Sara—then Sarai:

Now Sarai Avram's wife had not borne him a child. But she had

an Egyptian slave-girl named Hagar; so Sarai said to Avram, "Here now, *Adonai* has kept me from having children; so go in and sleep with my slave-girl. *Maybe I'll be able to have children through her.*" (Gen. 16:1-2, CJB)

Did you see that? Sarai doesn't say to Avram that merely *he* would have an heir, but "I'll be able to have children through her." Legally, Ishmael and Isaac were brothers, not half-brothers.

And if the Lord has disdain for the Arabs, as we sometimes act, why didn't He just let Hagar run away? When she fled from Sarai, the angel of the Lord—Yeshua in the Old Covenant—went to find her. And when He did, He blessed her greatly with a promise.

"I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count." The angel of the Lord also said to her: "You are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son. You shall name him Ishmael." (Gen. 16:10-11)

Notice he doesn't say you will have a son, but merely you will give birth to a son. Why? Because the son would belong to Sarai and Avram. Next, He speaks of the complicated life Ishmael will have.

"He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers." (Gen. 16:12)

I don't think this is a prophecy about his destiny, but more about the fruit of being born into a highly dysfunctional family and dealing with severe rejection. Why do I say this? Because Yeshua (the angel of the Lord) said to Hagar, "for the Lord has heard of your misery." He was comforting her—so it makes no sense that His very next words would be, "Oh, and I am going really curse the boy."

No, he speaks of the fruit of the wound Ishmael carries to this day. And it stemmed from Sarah's and, later, Abraham's rejection. When Isaac is finally born, she becomes suspicious of Ishmael:

The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned, Abraham held a great feast. But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac." (Gen. 21:8-10)

The Lord looks out for the abused

Notice the change in her language: *...and her son ...that woman's son...* Legally, Ishmael was Sarai's son, but she despised him and rejected him. *She disowned him.* I have a dear friend who told me of a similar story with his family. No matter how hard he tried to be accepted, they would just trample on him. He suffered severe abuse. But instead of searching for revenge, he longed for normal family relations—parents who would love him and siblings that he could enjoy.

In his darkest moments, the Lord would visit him and encourage him that everything would work out for him. Now he is a world-changer.

Like my friend, Ishmael was devastated. All he wanted was to feel like a real son and he was met with constant rejection. As he was dying after being disowned by his parents, Ishmael cried in the desert heat. And just as with my friend, the pre-New Testament Yeshua came to his mother and said:

"What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation." (Gen. 21:17-18)

Many wonder, *Why didn't God just let him die?* Look at all the bloodshed that has come through the Arab world. *We'd be better off*, many think. But we have to stop thinking of Ishmael as a bloodthirsty race of fanatics, and see him as a rejected child, dying in the wilderness, after being banished by his father.

Time to love Ishmael

Can you feel God's heart for Ishmael? Can you see how that spirit of rejection has been passed down through his bloodline? The root of Arab rejection and hatred for Israel is not radical Islam (not that I am downplaying that evil ideology), but it is rejection from Abraham and Sarah.

This past week we had a small gathering of leaders from our Tikkun Global Messianic Family and invited leaders from around the world, mostly to pray and hear the Lord. After David Demian shared about the wound of Ishmael, one brother stood up and said in repentance, "My attitude has always been toward the Arabs—save them or kill them."

Without the heart of God on the matter, it is understandable to have such a desire. *These people want to destroy us!* But once you see God's heart—how much He loves his son Ishmael and longs for him to fulfill his calling, it breaks your heart. I must confess that I have tears of love for my brother Ishmael in my eyes right now, as I am writing—but these tears have been few and far between. I have spent most of my time in the *save them or kill them* camp, not realizing that I was cursing my brother. My prayer was far from God's heart.

A Needed Rebuke

Asher Intrater, my colleague and mentor, once wrote to me:

"Ron, I think you are the best we have writing on current events, but there is one area you need a bit more

understanding—our relationship with Christian Arabs. Your references to the Arabs usually miss that there are true believing, Israel-loving, Yeshua-loving Arabs within those countries. It may be just a slight tweak for you, but it is an important tweak.”

Ouch! What an awesome, loving rebuke. I needed to hear it.

As Messianic Jews, we need to reach out to our Arab brothers who believe and express to them: *We repent for what Sarah did. We love you. We need you. You are our brothers. We do not reject you. Come back into the Abrahamic family.* Our mother Sarah rejected them, but we want to reverse that and reclaim the Arab people as full brothers.

Roots of Jewish Rejection

I suspect that many in the Arab Christian world who seek to deny God’s hand in modern Israel through replacement or fulfillment theology, suffer (whether they know it or not) from rejection not only from the Israeli nation, but also from Messianic Jews. To be honest, I have been an outspoken opponent of what I believe is false theology to erase God’s plan for Israel. I stand by every word I have written; I just lament that my eyes were dry as I wrote.

Think about it this way. God has surrounded Israel with Ishmael. As Jews, we have lamented over this. To make things worse (for us), they have been given oil. But in God’s heart, His design was to surround Isaac with his big brother Ishmael, to protect him. But, in our severely dysfunctional family, we seek to kill each other. We think in terms of nations, but remember the roots—this is a story about a family:

- Sarai couldn’t have a baby.
- Hagar birthed Sarai’s child.
- Sarai rejected the child for years.
- After Isaac’s birth, she had Abraham banish Hagar and

Ishmael, and they nearly died.

- Abraham was torn because He loved Ishmael—but in Ishmael's eyes, he was a coward for sending them away.

Paul Knew how to Pray

My prayer is for Ishmael and Isaac to be one again—to be brothers. And it must start with Jewish and Arab believers. When we pray a *save them or kill them* prayer, we are not praying the heart of God. God doesn't answer such prayers. Paul goes deeper. The Jewish leaders were seeking to kill him and his prayer wasn't a *save them or kill them* prayer, but, "For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Messiah for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel" (Rom. 9:3-4).

This week at our gathering, as Messianic Jews, we told the Arab believers at this gathering, "You are our brothers! We claim you back into the family." But these gatherings of repentance and confession between Arabs and Jews must grow larger and larger—until there is a critical mass that leads to revival in the Jewish and Arab nation.

Wait a Minute

Doesn't the Bible speak of all nations attacking Israel in the end and of there being war and famine? Good point. But at the same time, it also speaks of unparalleled revival. Before Yeshua returns there will be more Jewish and ex-Muslim believers than ever before. You can read about the coming end-time awakening in my free eBook by the same title. Just click [here](#). {eoa}

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