

## MATERIAL RELEVANT TO THE SARAH AND HAGAR STORY

Nahum Sarna (*Genesis*, 1989, The Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary, New York and Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 119) sets the context of Sarah's taking the initiative in using her handmaid in the following words:

The custom of an infertile wife providing her husband with a concubine in order to bear children is well documented in the ancient Near East. The laws of Lipit-Ishtar (early 19th cent. B.C.E.) deal with the case of a harlot who produces children for the husband of a barren wife; these become his heirs. An Old Assyrian marriage contract (19th cent. B.C.E.) stipulates that if the wife does not provide him with an offspring within two years she must purchase a slave woman for the purpose. The provision of a concubine slave for bearing children is taken for granted in the laws of Hammurabi in the specific case of a wife who is a priestess and is thus barred from giving birth. In Sarai's case, it is unclear whether she had fully despaired of ever having children of her own or whether her action reflects the widespread popular belief that a woman who was unable to conceive may become fertile by adopting a child.

The text, translated by J. J. Finkelstein ("Additional Mesopotamian Legal Documents," in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament: Third Addition with Supplement*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, 542) reads as follows:

Laqipum has married Hatala, daughter of Enishru. In the country (i.e., Central Anatolia) Laqipum may not marry another (woman) — (but) in the city (i.e., Ashur) he may marry a hierodule [*qadištum*]. If within two years she (i.e., Hatala) does not provide him with an offspring, she herself will purchase a slave woman, and later on after she [i.e., either the slave woman or Hatala, the text is not clear] will have produced a child by him, he [she (?)] may then dispose of her by sale wheresoever he pleases. Should Laqipum choose to divorce her [text "him"], he may pay her five minas of silver; and should Hatala choose to

divorce him, she must pay (him) five minas of Silver.  
Witnesses: Masa, Ashurishtikal, Talia, Shupianika.

The text, translated by Samuel Noah Kramer (“Lipit-Ishtar Law Code,” in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, edited by James B. Pritchard; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 159-161, reads as follows:

If a man’s wife has not borne him children (but) a harlot (from) the public square has borne him children, he [the father] shall provide grain, oil, and clothing for that harlot; the children which the harlot has borne him shall be his heirs, and as long as the wife lives the harlot shall not live in the house with the wife.

The Code of Hammurabi (*ANET* 172, paragraphs 143-147; 73: paragraphs 170-171) reads:

When a seignior married a hierodule and she gave a female slave to her husband and she has then borne children, if later that female slave has claimed equality with her mistress because she bore children, her mistress may not sell her; she may mark her with the slave-mark and count her among the slaves. If she did not bear children, her mistress may sell her.

When a seignior's first wife bore him children and his female slave also bore him children, if the father during his lifetime has ever said “My children!” to the children whom the slave bore him, thus having counted them with the children of the first wife, after the father has gone to (his) fate, the children of the first wife and the children of the slave shall share equally in the goods of the paternal estate, with the first-born, the son of the first wife, receiving a preferential share.

However, if the father during his lifetime has never said “My children!” to the children whom the slave bore him, after the father has gone to (his) fate, the children of the slave may not share in the goods of the paternal estate along with the children of the first wife; freedom for the slave and her children shall be effected, with the children of the first wife having no claim

against the children of the slave for service.

According to Genesis 17:20 and 25:12-16, Ishmael was the father of twelve princes and through them the father of twelve tribes. Their names are (1) Nebaioth, (2) Kedar, (3) Adbeel, (4) Mibsam, (5) Mishma, (6) Dumah, (7) Massa, (8) Hadad, (9) Tema, (10) Jetur, (11) Naphish, and (12) Kedemah.

#### MATERIAL RELEVANT TO THE ABRAHAM AND ISAAC STORY

Philo of Byblos (64-141 A.D.) described a ritual in Canaanite religion as follows:

Among ancient peoples in critically dangerous situations it was customary for the rulers of a city or nation, rather than lose everyone, to give over the dearest of their children as a propitiatory sacrifice to the avenging deities. The children thus given up were slaughtered according to a secret ritual. Now Kronos, whom the Phoenicians call El, who was king of their land and who was later divinized—after his death—as the star of Kronos, had an only son by a local bride named Anobret (and therefore they called him Yedid<sup>1</sup>; even now

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<sup>1</sup> The text reads “Ieoud” (Ἰεοὺδ) but note 150 of the translators says: “The textual variants here (ἰεοῦδ; ἰεδοδ; ἰδοῦδ) seem to be reflections of a vacillation between understanding this name as the Phoenician equivalent of Hebrew *yhyd* (יְהִי) ‘only,’ or as the Phoenician equivalent of Hebrew *ydyd* (יְדִיד) ‘beloved.’” The name *Yedid* is supported by Philo of Byblos as quoted by Eusebius *PE* 1.10.44 (Gifford's English edition 1.10.40), whereas the reading *Ieoud* is supported by Eusebius *PE* 4.16.11 (Gifford's edition 4.16.156). Eusebius also noted the tradition of Philo of Byblos quoted by Porphyry (Gifford's edition 4.16.156) who stated “The Phoenicians, too, in the great calamities of war, or pestilence, or

among the Phoenicians the only son is given this name); when war's gravest danger gripped the land, he [Kronos] dressed his son in royal attire, prepared an altar, and sacrificed him.<sup>2</sup>

The blessing recited at the circumcision ceremony: “. . . who didst sanctify beloved (טִיִּי) [Israel] from birth, impressing thy statute in his flesh and marking his descendents with the sign of the holy covenant.”

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drought used to dedicated one of their dearest friends (φιλάτων) and sacrificed him . . .” The φιλάτων suggests the stem טִיִּי, as φιλία translates טִיִּי related to “love.” On the other hand, the *Ieoud*, with it cluster of vowels, suggests the stem טִיִּי “the only son,” reflected in Philo of Byblos’ μονογενῆ. The names יִיִּי (Ιεδιδα) in II Kings, יִיִּיִּי (Ιδεδει/Ιεδδιδα) in II Sam 23:25, and יִי (Ιαδδαι/Ιαδει/Ιαδαι) should be noted for comparison.

<sup>2</sup> Harold W. Attridge and Robert A. Oden, Jr., *Philo of Byblos The Phoenician History: Introduction, Critical Text, Notes*. Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 9. Washington, D. C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1981: 61–62. I appreciate Mr. Gilad Gevaryahu’s calling this quotation to my attention.