

## **Sarah and Hagar: The Matriarchal Feud (Part One)**

Last week's article was about the mother of all Matriarchs, Eve, and how one single action changed the fate of the entire human race. As we move forward in the Book of Genesis, we find two very important matriarchs having a very hard time getting along. This feud came down to one emotion: jealousy. *"Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sara. After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife."* (Genesis 16:1-4) These two women are very different from each other. Sarah is an aging woman who faithfully traveled to the land of Canaan with her husband, Abraham. Hagar is Sarah's Egyptian servant who is young and fertile. Sarah is barren and asks Abraham to father a child by Hagar. This may seem unconventional now a days but this practice of an infertile wife offering a surrogate to her husband from among her slaves was a socially legitimate practice in the ancient Middle East. Sarah is hoping to give Abraham an heir and build a family. This child would still be regarded as the lawful offspring of the wife and husband. During this early Biblical times, obtaining Hagar's permission to be a surrogate was not required. Hagar's sexuality belonged to her mistress, Sarah. Because Hagar conceives immediately, Sarah becomes increasingly jealous and treats Hagar so poorly that she is forced to flee into the wilderness while she is still pregnant with Abraham's child. An angel appears to Hagar in the desert and gives her instructions to return to Sarah so her son can be named and claimed by Abraham. She is to name him Ishmael, which means "God hears," for He has heard her plea. Hagar will become the matriarch of the Arab people, who will be the descendants of Ishmael. Because of God's divine promises, Hagar gives God a name. She is the only person in the Bible to do so. *"So she named the Lord who spoke to her, "You are El-roi"; for she said, "Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing Him?"* (Genesis 16:13) Although she was powerless as a female, God hears her, sees her and makes her the matriarch of a proud heritage. God truly sees and responds to the cry of His suffering people. He knows the emotional conflicts that we must all endure. Lord, help us to trust in your plans within our lives. **-Sherrle Clutts DRE**