

The Twelve Sons of Ishmael

25: 12-16

This is the account of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom Sarah's maidservant, Hagar the Egyptian, bore to Abraham (25:12). The LORD said that He would make Ishmael into a great nation (21:18), and He certainly fulfilled His promise. What became of Ishmael were his twelve sons. Ishmael probably kept this record and it was later incorporated into Isaac's genealogical record. The two brothers almost certainly exchanged information at the time of their father's funeral.

These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael. The Nebaioth (Neb-bi-OATH) are today called the Nabateans. Nebaioth was the first of twelve sons of Ishmael (Genesis 25:13a, 28:9; First Chronicles 1:29; Isaiah 60:7). They were a branch of the Edomites. It was the Nabateans who settled and built the city of Bozrah, which will play a significant role in Isaiah 63, when the Messiah returns.

Then these were also born to him: Kedar (Psalm 120:5; Isaiah 21:16-17, 42:11, 60:7; Jeremiah 49:28-33; Ezekiel 27:21), Adbeel, Mibsam, (First Chronicles 4:25), Mishma (First Chronicles 4:25), Dumah (Isaiah 21:11), Massa, Hadad, Tema (Job 6:19; Isaiah 21:14; Jeremiah 25:23), Jetur (First Chronicles 5:19), Naphish (First Chronicles 5:19) and Kedemah (25:13b-15). Even though Ishmael was not the son of promise, ADONAI was faithful to His word when He said: I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation (17:20).

These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers, according to their settlements and camps (25:16). So not only were there twelve sons and twelve tribes of the descendants of Isaac through Jacob, but there were also twelve sons and twelve tribes of the sons of Ishmael.