

## MB Transformation

We are doing a series on Metaphysical Bible Interpretation based on the interest indicated in the June survey. Metaphysical Bible Interpretation is one of the foundational aspects of Unity's teachings. Unity is not the only tradition looking beyond the surface of the words and stories in the bible but co-founder Charles Fillmore was a prolific writer, formulating his system of interpretations for future generations to use. I find his interpretations helpful but as I found in this session, not definitive or above questioning. I'll explain more as we go along.

Last week as we reflected on Jonathan and David, we discovered there were more characters we needed to include to round out their relationship. This week our main characters are Abram and Sarai or their transformed names, Abraham and Sarah. Like last week, I discovered a couple more characters were needed to round out the picture: Abram's nephew, Lot and Sarai's handmaiden Hagar and of course, Isaac. So let's dig in to this idea of name changing. Fillmore, in the Revealing Word, says God always gave characters new names when "they achieved some signal victory". Typically this victory also represents a change in consciousness and a new insight. So in our story, we expect to find a change in consciousness in Abram and in Sarai.

The story really begins in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis. "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.'" This is kind of a big invitation. Leave everything you know, trusting Spirit to turn it into a blessing. Abram went and took his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot and their belongings and Lot's family. They journeyed to Canaan.

Let's look at what Fillmore says about the meaning of the characters at this point. Remember, in interpretation work, we are **all** of the characters; each character representing an aspect of our consciousness and how spiritual development unfolds.

Abram is viewed most favorably. Fillmore says he represents: the quality through which one has faith in the forces invisible. When this faith is concentrated upon the one God, a God consciousness is established and one intuitively knows that he is in communication with the ever living source of all

existence. Well that explains why a rational person would set off from all things familiar based on a message from God. Abram knew his guidance.

What about Lot? Fillmore says Lot represents the subjective or negative side of faith. Fillmore goes on to say that “when faith expands in consciousness and begins to go out in new county, its old subjective aspect goes with it.”

Before I tell you the metaphysics Fillmore ascribes to Sarai, I want to go on with the story. So Abram and Lot go into Canaan. They live in tents and set up altars to God as they go so they are still a little unstable. Then there is a famine. So Abram takes everyone down to Egypt. This is where it gets interesting. Apparently Sarai is quite the looker so Abram explains to Sarai that he’s expecting some attention and she should say she is his sister so Pharaoh will deal kindly with Abram. Whaaat? So they do that and Sarai is taken to Pharaoh’s house and Abram gets sheep, donkeys, camels and slaves. Works for him. Sarai, well maybe not so much. But then God is not happy with this behavior (duh!) and brings plagues upon Pharaoh. Somehow Pharaoh learns that Sarai is really Abram’s wife, even as a heathen recognizes the wrongness and sends them all packing.

Sarai is Hebrew for bitter and contentious. OK, so if your husband says, “Hey, I’m going to sell you out just a bit so things go well with me,” I’d be just a little contentious too. This affects the interpretation of Sarai much more than it does Abram. I noticed this. And I’ll tell you what **I** make of this. When you deal with male and female characters, metaphysically you are also looking at intellect and intuition. Historically, at the time of the bible and to this day, we have lived in a patriarchy with social and political dominance by males and a higher value on intellect over intuition. Fillmore’s interpretation is influenced by his own patriarchal mindset. There was a joke in seminary that the first test for ordination was administered and Charles got 100% and Myrtle got 99%. That is not a joke to me. It is evidence that even in Unity we shade the balance of intellect and intuition, male and female, in favor of maleness. For me, when things go wrong, there is an imbalance between intellect and intuition and that is not always intuition’s fault! I guess I would be a little less favorable about what Abram represents than Fillmore is. Yes, it is the dawning of the idea of God as ever-sustaining Source but that thought is **not** firmly established. First, Abram leaves the land he was given and goes to Egypt, representing materiality. This is not a big vote of trust in God’s supply but intellectual reasoning. Then his second big mistake in judgement-to trade his intuitive, emotional nature for temporary material gain.

Fillmore says Sarai represents the soul contending for its rightful place in consciousness; the initial recognizing affections and emotions are in essence divine. Honestly, I don't think the consciousness of Abram was able to recognize intuitive knowing or affections and emotions as divine. I think that is part of the limitation of Abram consciousness.

I was less pleased with this Fillmore language related to Sarai/Sarah: *It is right and proper to recognize the vital center in the organism, which is the generative center, as having **a place** in the divine economy; but **man** should never become involved in the mere animal processes of life generation, of which a coarse form of animal sensation is one phase. This is what brings the plagues of Egypt (disease) upon the human family.* OK, Chuck, I gotta go a different direction here. Try this, when initial faith (Abram) meets fear of lack and limitation (famine), it relies on intellectual reasoning to meet its needs (Egypt) and loses touch with and sacrifices the intuitive knowing (Sarai) that keeps faith on track. It is the imbalance that produces dis-ease in consciousness which manifests in the outer. I don't know how that sits with you. This is how interpretation works. We listen as we do the work. We seek our own truth. For me, our world is seeking balance and the imbalance is manifesting as violence against one another and destruction of our planet. That is a pretty big plague and still, we don't seem to be paying **enough** attention to the imbalance. This interpretation feels like a call for balance between intellect and intuition in exercising faith.

Let me skip ahead a bit so this sermon isn't a five hour class. Lot and Abram go back to where they started and both of them have a lot of stuff. Too much stuff to live together so they decide to divide up the land. Lot chose the plain of Jordan, which looked pretty lush. What happens when we judge by appearance, oh and Lot represents the limited side of faith? Lot's side of land also included Sodom and Gomora. That's a different sermon but let's just say it did not end well for Lot's wife.

Abram moves over and God comes to visit and says, "look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. Rise up, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you." Now Abram was pretty interested in the offspring because he had none. In Genesis 15, Abram brings this up in a conversation with God. *Abram said, "You have*

*given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.” But the word of the Lord came to him, “This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.”*

So we see that Abram consciousness strikes again.

Fearing that Sarai was pretty old and still barren, Abram takes up with her handmaiden Hagar and produces a son, Ishmael. Metaphysically, Fillmore says Hagar, which is Hebrew for wanderer and stranger, represents the “natural soul. It is a stranger to the awakened spiritual phase of the soul. Thoughts and emotions are sensual and likely selfish and unholy.” Back to our Abram consciousness: when initial faith (Abram) begins to doubt and questions God’s timing, it turns to personal will and intellect to achieve its ends and may seek material means that are selfish and unholy (Hagar). Abram sort of has a pattern here. The good news is there is still that *awakening faith* in unfailing Source. The less attractive news is in this phase of consciousness we continue to turn to intellect at every delay and challenge to our faith. We give it to God and then try to figure it out for ourselves. Everybody in Abram consciousness, raise your hand! Anyone question God’s timing? Anyone try to work things out for yourself?

The interesting thing about the story is that Genesis 16 puts the blame on Sarai. Sarai tells Abram to go to Hagar and then gets mad when Hagar conceives. I’m sorry, that just sounds like a man telling the story. But chapter 17 has some interesting activities. After all the doubting and folly, Abram and Sarai get their names changed. God covenants with Abraham to give him the land of Canaan for all generations and for his end of the bargain, all the males will be circumcised. Some people think this is evidence that God is female. Abraham was 99 when he was circumcised. And, God says now, 90 year old Sarah will give birth to a son, who they will name Isaac. This sounds like everyone gets punished to me. The story gets interrupted with the Sodom and Gomorra destruction and Sarah doesn’t have Isaac til chapter 21.

Metaphysically, Fillmore says Sarah represents the soul, the affectional, emotional part of human consciousness. Sarah is Hebrew for princess and so Fillmore add that as the daughter of the king (ruling consciousness) it should never be allowed to unite in any way with matter or material conditions. Fillmore says Abraham now represents the power of the mind to reproduce its ideas in unlimited expression. This ability of the mind to make substance out of ideas is called faith. The first step in spiritual development is the awakening of faith. And Isaac is Hebrew for laughter and joy.

Metaphysically, Fillmore says he represents the joy of the new birth and new life in Christ consciousness. Isaac, as compared to Ishmael, represents the power of ideas born of Spirit, “not...of the will of flesh nor the will of human but of God.” How many of us experienced a sense of newness in life when we discovered the idea of our own divinity—a life imbued with the connection to infinite Source? How many of us found a world of new possibilities?

There is an interesting ending here in Chapter 21. There is still the unfinished business of Hagar and Ishmael. Sarah tells Abraham to send them away. Maybe it is temptation or evidence of following willfulness she seeks to remove to protect this new consciousness. But Abraham hesitates. There is still a little human pride and attachment in what he has created. So God intervenes. “Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you.” Balance in male and female, intellect and intuition is restored as Abraham complies.

I thought it was interesting that the name changes precede the actual conception and birth of Isaac. So we have to assume their consciousness changed and that’s why they were able to conceive. Otherwise, it would have been seeing the outcome, the proof, before believing. Even though both Abraham and Sarah were laughing at the idea of the conception when first hearing the news from God, they moved forward. I don’t know about you but I’ve had a chuckle or two about the ideas God had of what was possible for me to accomplish. You hear the guidance, you contemplate the possibilities and you laugh. But once you enter into the Abram consciousness and faith begins to be established, no matter how many times you doubt and fall back to rely on your own devices, you are on the spiritual development path to Abraham consciousness. There you partner with Spirit and begin to really bring those spiritual ideas into manifestation. Others may laugh; you may laugh at yourself but there you are— transformed consciousness keeping intellect and intuition in balance and expressing Spirit in amazing ways.

Next week we’ll be talking about Samson and Delilah and our topic is “Liar, Liar”. So who was the liar? You might be surprised so if you have time in your Labor Day weekend, join us!