

## EXERCISE BASED ON THE LAWS OF HAMMURABI

How might ancient Near Eastern legal customs as transmitted in the Code of Hammurabi shed light on the behaviour of Sarah and Abraham in Genesis 16 & 21?

Genesis 16:1-6

§146

If a man marries a *nadītu* (a type of priestess who cannot bear children), and she gives a slave woman to her husband, and she (the slave) then bears children, after which that slave woman aspires to equal status with her mistress—because she bore children, her mistress will not sell her; she place upon her the slave-hairlock, and she shall reckon her with the slave women.

Genesis 21:8-14

§170

If a man's first-ranking wife bears him children and his slave woman bears him children, and the father during his lifetime then declares concerning the children whom the slave woman bore to him, "My children," and he reckons them with the children of the first-ranking wife—after the father goes to his fate (i.e., dies), the children of the first-ranking wife and the children of the slave woman shall equally divide the property of the paternal estate: the preferred heir is a son of the first-ranking wife, he shall select and take a share first.

§171

But if the father during his lifetime should not declare concerning the children whom the slave woman bore to him, "My children," after the father goes to his fate (i.e., dies) the children of the slave woman will not divide the property of the paternal estate with the children of the first-ranking wife. The release of the slave woman and her children shall be secured...