

# GENESIS

## Genesis 16

*"<sup>1</sup> Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; <sup>2</sup> so she said to Abram, 'The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.'*

*Abram agreed to what Sarai said. <sup>3</sup> So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. <sup>4</sup> He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.*

*When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. <sup>5</sup> Then Sarai said to Abram, 'You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.'*

*<sup>6</sup> 'Your slave is in your hands,' Abram said. 'Do with her whatever you think best.' Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.*

*<sup>7</sup> The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.*

*<sup>8</sup> And he said, 'Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?'*

*'I'm running away from my mistress Sarai,' she answered.*

*<sup>9</sup> Then the angel of the Lord told her, 'Go back to your mistress and submit to her.' <sup>10</sup> The angel added, 'I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.'*

*<sup>11</sup> The angel of the Lord also said to her:*

*'You are now pregnant*

*and you will give birth to a son.*

*You shall name him Ishmael,*

*for the Lord has heard of your misery.*

*<sup>11</sup> He will be a wild donkey of a man;*

*his hand will be against everyone*

*and everyone's hand against him,*

*and he will live in hostility*

*toward all his brothers.'*

*<sup>13</sup> She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: 'You are the God who sees me,' for she said, 'I have now seen the One who sees me.' <sup>14</sup> That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.*

*<sup>15</sup> So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. <sup>16</sup> Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael." Genesis 16:1-16 [NIV]*

Following God's promises and covenant with Abram, we find him and Sarai continuing to live their lives near Mamre, modern day Hebron, but Sarai has still not had a child for Abram. Her decisions in the days ahead, and those of Abram and Hagar, are all key factors in this lesson's study. No less than thirty-eight verses, in chapters sixteen, seventeen, and twenty-one, tell us that the story of Hagar and Ishmael is an important one, or God would not have devoted so many verses to these events (Genesis 16, 17:18-26 and Genesis 21:8-20). Beginning in this chapter, Abraham will become the father of the three largest world religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These three religions will stem from the two sons that he will father—Ishmael and Isaac. However, only one of these sons will receive the promises of God, as we will discover in our study.

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**Note what we can learn from the following verses and questions, including regarding the two women in our story, Sarai & Hagar.**

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1. Who was Sarai?
  - a. Genesis 11:30
    - i. ANSWER: Sarai was "childless" and "not able to conceive."
  - b. Genesis 16:1
    - i. ANSWER: Sarai had "borne [Abram] no children."
  - c. Genesis 17:17
    - i. ANSWER: Sarai was old. In the time period described in this verse (13 years after Ishmael's birth), she was ninety years old.
  - d. Genesis 18:11
    - i. ANSWER: This verse in chapter 18 tells us that "...Sarah was past the age of childbearing."
2. Who was Hagar?
  - a. Genesis 16:1
    - i. ANSWER: Hagar was an Egyptian slave. She would have been purchased in Egypt, likely during the days that Abram and his family were there during the famine.
  - b. Genesis 16:4
    - i. ANSWER: She becomes a wife who is given to Abram by Sarai (Gen. 16:3). Through custom, and in order to bear Sarai a child for her and Abram, Hagar is now a wife of Abram. The custom was that barren women would give their servant to their husband as a way of having children through them, similar to what we saw in Egypt, where the Pharaoh would have many wives—all of whom bore him children in order to carry on his bloodline. Abram would now have two wives and would soon have a son through Hagar to continue his family line. However, once Hagar knew that she was pregnant, her meek and mild demeanor as a slave turned against Sarai, whom she looked down on as barren. Hagar became haughty about being the woman who would finally give Abram a child.
3. How old were the following people at the time of this story?
  - a. Abraham; see Genesis 16:16
    - i. ANSWER: Abram was 86 years old when Ishmael was born.
  - b. Sarai; see Genesis 17:1 and 17:17
    - i. ANSWER: In the time period of these scriptures, Abram is now 99 years old, and it has been 13 years since the birth of Ishmael. Verse seventeen indicates that Sarai is now 90 years old. So, at the time that Ishmael was born 13 years earlier, Sarai would have been 77 years old and well-past the age of child bearing, even during those days.
  - c. Hagar
    - i. ANSWER: We are not given an age for Hagar. However, given her role as a slave and maid to Sarai, and her ability to get pregnant--even to an 86-year-old man—we can assume that Hagar was young and fertile. In summary, we see that seventy-seven-year-old Sarai, concerned about providing Abram a child, gives Hagar her slave to her 86-year-old husband Abram. Together, they have a son, Ishmael.
4. What happened between Hagar and Sarai? See Genesis 16:4-5
  - a. ANSWER: Again, when Hagar became pregnant, her meek and mild behavior turned to arrogance. Understandably, this rubbed Sarai the wrong way, and as a result, she treated Hagar so harshly that Hagar ran into the wilderness. An angel of the Lord convinces her to return and deliver the baby. Approximately 14 years later, Sarai, at the age of ninety, would actually bear Abraham a son, Isaac, just as God had promised (Genesis 21:1-7).
5. Who did Sarai blame for the turmoil? How nasty did things turn out, once Hagar was pregnant? What happened as a result of all of this? See Genesis 16:5.
  - a. ANSWER 1: Sarai immediately blames Abram for causing all this trouble. She forgets that all of this began as her idea. But notice that Abram does not say that to her; rather, he simply lets her deal with the matter between her and Hagar.
  - b. ANSWER 2: Sarai's treatment of Hagar drives the pregnant slave out of the camp and into the desert.
6. Who rescues pregnant Hagar? See Genesis 16:7.
  - a. ANSWER: "the Angel of the Lord" rescues her.
7. Who is "the Angel of the Lord"?
  - a. ANSWER 1: This is the first of what will become many references to the Angel of the Lord. All are found within the Old Testament. It is believed by many, including myself, that these are references to the pre-incarnate Christ—also referred to as a theophany. Jesus is rescuing Hagar.
  - b. ANSWER 2: For further study and references citing the Angel of the Lord read the following verses:
    - i. Genesis 22:11-12; 31:11 and 13; 48:16
    - ii. Judges 6:11, 16 and 22; 13:22-23
    - iii. Zechariah 3:1-2

8. What does the Angel of the Lord tell Hagar in each of the following verses?
- a. Genesis 16:10
    - i. ANSWER: Her descendants will be "too numerous to count."
  - b. Genesis 16:11
    - i. ANSWER: She would have a son, and she was to name him Ishmael. Note that the Angel of the Lord gave Ishmael his name.
  - c. Genesis 16:12
    - i. ANSWER: Her son would be "a wild donkey of man" and "live in hostility toward all his brothers."

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I should point out that many critics dispute the ages of Abram and Sarai that are cited in the Bible. Much debate continues, as mentioned in previous lessons. I recommend reading Dr. Craig Olson's paper, "How Old was Father Abraham?" for a different perspective on this subject. As I have mentioned previously, for our study, we are going to take the Bible literally for these ages and study them from that perspective.

From our study of Abram, Sarai, and Hagar, one important lesson jumps out at me, and I hope it does to you as well. Specifically, I am referring to the importance of waiting on the Lord and not taking matters into our own hands. I think the KJV says it best in Isaiah 40:31, "but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." In Jeremiah 29:11 God says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." When we decide what our future should be, or when we worry about tomorrow rather than trusting in the Lord each day, we fall into trouble and lose our way; we wander off the narrow path, just as Sarai did in this lesson's scripture.

However, if we trust in the Lord and pray as the Psalmist prayed, "Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me." [NIV]; then Jesus will become our full-time guide, leading us in paths of righteousness and keeping us from harm so that we may prosper in his kingdom.

Commit this week to trusting in Jesus. In Matthew 22:37, Jesus teaches us to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." Let's commit to do that this week, so that we too can avoid the mistakes of Sarai and be a blessing to someone each day.

Have a blessing-filled week!

In Christ,

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