

Genesis 16

Scriptures:

1 Corinthians 10:12-13 -
Therefore let him who
thinks he stands take heed
lest he fall. 13 No
temptation has overtaken
you except such as is
common to man; but God is
faithful, who will not allow
you to be tempted beyond
what you are able, but with
the temptation will also
make the way of escape,
that you may be able to bear
it.

Notes:

The context for chapter sixteen:
God had promised the land of
Canaan to Abram and also to make
him a great people, too numerous to
count. Abram believed in God and it
was accounted to him as
righteousness. Those were the
promises – given to Abram and his
barren wife Sarai.

After the theophany of seeing the
symbol of God passing between the
parts of the sacrifice Abram's faith
must have soared. And then he
waited for God to act.

We can imagine he is doing his part
with Sarai to get her pregnant, but
nothing is happening.

Chapter 16 is a story of wavering
faith and human expedencies.

"No perfect feet walk the path of
faith." Barnhouse (Hughes, 2004)
page 237

Paul said something similar (1 Cor.
10:12).

Notes:

One of the greatest tests a believer
can face is silence from God. It is a
test of faith over the flesh. It is a test
to see if we will do the natural thing
or if we will do the spiritual thing.

Scriptures:
Genesis 12:11-16 -
And it came to pass, when
he was close to entering
Egypt, that he said to Sarai
his wife, "Indeed I know
that you are a woman of
beautiful countenance.
12 Therefore it will happen,
when the Egyptians see
you, that they will say,
"This is his wife"; and they
will kill me, but they will
let you live. 13 Please say
you are my sister, that it
may be well with me for
your sake, and that I may
live because of you."
14 So it was, when Abram
came into Egypt, that the
Egyptians saw the woman,
that she was very beautiful.
15 The princes of Pharaoh
also saw her and
commended her to Pharaoh.
And the woman was taken
to Pharaoh's house. 16 He
treated Abram well for her
sake. He had sheep, oxen,
male donkeys, male and
female servants, female
donkeys, and camels.

^S^A^A
1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no

children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant

whose name was Hagar.

Notes:
Sarai, though a woman of
incomparable beauty, had a major
flaw, she was barren. There was a
cultural stigma attached to
barrenness. She was seventy-five
years old at this point – time was
running out.

"Her barrenness was deemed a
tragedy in ancient culture, where it
was a mark of success to have many
children and a sad failure to have
none." (Hughes, 2004) page 238

'Hagar' was the fruit of Abram's
lack of faith in Egypt ([Gen. 12:16](#)).

Sarai knew that God had promised to
give Abram a son that was the fruit
of his body, but she did not know
that it would come from her body.

'Egyptian...Hagar' – descendant of
Ham – the cursed descendant of
Noah.

According to the laws and culture,
Hagar was Sarai's property.

Scriptures:
Genesis 3:17 -
Then to Adam He said,
“Because you have heeded
the voice of your wife, and
have eaten from the tree of
which I commanded you,
saying, ‘You shall not eat of
it’:

“Cursed is the ground for
your sake;
In toil you shall eat of it
All the days of your life.

Genesis 2:24 - Therefore a
man shall leave his father
and mother and be joined to
his wife, and they shall
become one flesh.

² So Sarai said to Abram, “See now, the Lord has

3068 - yhwh

Notes:
‘go in to’ = idiom for ‘have sexual
relations with’

‘Abram heeded the voice’ – compare
with [Gen. 3:17](#) Adam heeded the
voice of his wife.

This had been a custom for over a
thousand years. If a woman was
barren, she could provide her
husband with one of slaves as a
concubine, and then claim the
offspring as her own.

restrained ^S me from bearing *children*. Please, go in

6113 – to hold
back

4994 -

935 -

Sarai was suggesting that Abram
engage in polygamy. God had
already told His people what His will
was in relation to marriage ([Gen.
2:24](#)). Polygamy was not God’s
perfect will.

to my ^S maid; perhaps ^H I shall obtain children by

413 -

1129 -

‘...the Lord has restrained me...’ –
this is true, but she is saying it as an
accusation. She is calling into
question God’s goodness and
faithfulness. This whole account
should remind us of Eve in the
Garden.

‘Please, go in to my maid...’ – she is
going to take care of what is lacking
from God.

^H her.” And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai.

8085 -

There is an element of self-sacrifice
in this act. She was the love of
Abram’s life. She was giving up the
specialness of the intimacy they had
shared since their youth.

Scriptures:
Genesis 3:6 - So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

³ Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar ^S her maid,

3947 -

Notes:
'ten years' – that would make Abram 85 years old.

'took...gave' – compare with [Gen. 3:6](#) Eve took and gave the forbidden fruit to Adam.

There is no indication about Hagar's willingness to be used in this way. She was not given a choice, and culturally she had to submit.

Hagar is used!

the Egyptian, and gave ^H her to her husband Abram ^S

5414 -

to be his ^A wife, after Abram had dwelt ten ² years in

802 - wife

the land of Canaan.

Scriptures:
Genesis 15:2-4 - But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"
4 And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."

Galatians 6:7-8 - Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Proverbs 30:21-23 -
For three things the earth is perturbed,
Yes, for four it cannot bear up:
22 For a servant when he reigns,
A fool when he is filled with food,
23 A hateful woman when she is married,
And a maidservant who succeeds her mistress.

4 So he^A went in to Hagar, and she^H conceived. And

when she^H saw that she^H had conceived, her^H mistress^S

1404 – A woman master who has a degree of authority over something.

became despised in her^H eyes.

7043 – 'To despise, conceived of as treating someone lightly or not with deserved respect.'

Notes:
Abram knew God had promised to give him a son from his own body (Gen. 15:4). He may not have understood that it would come through his barren wife Sarai.

Even though Hagar was Abram's wife, Sarai was still her mistress (female version of master)

This is moral failure on Abram's part. He had recently witnessed the fiery theophany, and then here he is passively complying with Sarai's lack of faith in God's promise.

There is irony in this account: Abram's lack of faith resulted in Sarai getting Hagar as a maid. And now Sarai's lack of faith will result in Abram taking Hagar as a wife. Abram is getting what he has sown (Gal. 6:7-8) and there is more terrible fruit coming.

'her mistress became despised...' – the natural fruit of this poor choice (Prov. 30:21-23).

The peace of Abram's home was shattered by his poor choice.

Sarai probably believed she was being unselfish, self-sacrificing, generous, and magnanimous by giving Hagar to Abram. But it was an act of worldly flesh and could only produce worldly fruit.

Scriptures:

Jeremiah 17:9-10 -

The heart is deceitful
above all things,
And desperately wicked;
Who can know it?
10 I, the LORD,
search the heart,
I test the mind,
Even to give every man
according to his ways,
According to the fruit of
his doings.

⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, “My ^Swrong ^{be} upon

2555 – damage,
injustice

Notes:

Sarai was blaming Abram for Hagar’s wicked behavior and Sarai’s humiliation. She was wrong to blame him because it was her idea, but she was also right because Abram was the patriarch of the family and he should have prevented it.

Someone had to be blamed and Sarai chose to blame Abram.

When we are upset, it is what is within us that comes out. If there is honey in a bottle that is upset, honey comes out. If there is vinegar in the bottle, vinegar comes out. If there is poison in the bottle, poison comes out.

“Upsetting the bottle does not determine what is inside the bottle; it only reveals it. When we get upset and say bitter, unkind things, it is because that is what is inside us.” (Phillips, 1980) page 139

^Ayou! ^SI gave my ^Smaid ^Hinto your ^Aembrace; and when

2436 -

^Hshe saw that ^Hshe had conceived, ^SI became

despised in her ^Heyes. The Lord ^{oo}judge between ^Ayou

8199 – ‘arbitrate’

and ^Sme.”

Scriptures:

⁶ So Abram said to Sarai, “Indeed your ^Smaid ^His in

^Syour hand; do to her as ^Hyou ^Splease.” And

when Sarai dealt harshly with her, ^Hshe ^Hfled from

6031 - afflict

^Sher presence.

Notes:

Neither Sarai nor Abram refer to Hagar by name – a sign of their attitude toward her. She was simply a tool to get what they wanted. Shameful!

Here is where Abram should have been the man. He should have reassured Sarai of his love and devotion, and he should have dealt with Hagar’s disrespectful behavior. Instead, he told Sarai to handle it. This was also according to the customs of the land.

‘dealt harshly’ – this same Hebrew word would be used to describe how the Egyptians treated the Hebrews in Exodus.

This whole sordid affair began when the people of God started to mistrust the Word of God.

Believers who resort to expediences in order to hurry what they believed to be God’s will have resulted in humanly unsolvable problems. (taken from Hughes)

Hagar is used, then abused!

‘she fled’ – living as Sarai’s maid she would have heard about Abram’s God. As she leaves, she takes with her a false idea of who God is.

“It is a blessing that God’s witness to Himself is not confined to the poor and shoddy testimony we ourselves so often bear.” (Phillips, 1980) page 140

Scriptures:
Luke 19:9-10 - And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; 10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

7 Now the Angel of the Lord found her by a spring

4397 -

3068 - yhwh

Notes:
'Angel of the Lord' – first occurrence in the Bible. Probably none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

He appears the first time in the Bible, not to Abraham, the patriarch of God's chosen people and the possessor of the promises of God, but to a woman, a slave, an Egyptian. Not to someone seeking Him but to someone running away to the world.

Hagar is a victim in this account. She started out as an unwilling participant in Sarai and Abram's act of expediency. She did exasperate the situation with her wicked treatment of Sarai, but Hagar is still a victim.

'on the way to Shur' – Hagar is headed home to Egypt.

of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the

way to Shur.

Scriptures:

⁸ And He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have

Notes:
‘Sarai’s maid’ – not Abram’s wife –
the Lord did not approve of their
union.

He calls her by name. God knows
your name!

His question was a call to
confession!

^Hyou come from, and where are ^Hyou going?”

^HShe said, “^HI am fleeing from the presence of ^Hmy

mistress Sarai.”

Scriptures:

⁹ The Angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to

Notes:

your mistress, and submit yourself under her

6031 –
Same as verse 6 –
‘dealt harshly
with’

hand.”

Scriptures:

¹⁰ Then the Angel of the Lord said to her, “I will

Notes:
Only time in the Bible a promise like
this is made to a woman.

multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that

they shall not be counted for multitude.”

Scriptures:

11 And the Angel of the Lord said to her:

Notes:

“Behold, you ^Hare with child,

And you ^Hshall bear a son.

You shall call his name Ishmael,

3458 – ‘God will
hear’

Because the Lord [△]has heard your affliction.

6040 -

12 ^IHe shall be a wild man;

6501 – running
wild

Notes:

‘wild man’ = ‘wild donkey of a man’
“used in the OT as a figure of an individualistic lifestyle untrammelled by social convention.”

Ishmael would be a man who would do whatever he wanted with being constrained by social norms or conventions.

^IHis hand *shall be* against every man,

Ishmael was not the child of promise – he was the child of faithless expediency. He was not the child of grace – he was a child of the flesh.

And every man’s hand against ^Ihim.

Little did Abram and Sarai know that their act of expediency would result in conflict for the people of God that has lasted for millennia and has spilled an ocean of blood. The Muslims claim Ishmael as their spiritual ancestor and are against the children of the promises, the Jews.

And ^Ihe shall dwell in the presence of all ^Ihis

brethren.”

Scriptures:

13 Then she called the name of the Lord who

Notes:

'seen Him' – translators interpreted this as deity – preincarnate Christ

Something radical happens in Hagar. She has an encounter with the living God and believes. Her faith resulted in obedience – she returned as she was instructed.

spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for

Hagar, the Egyptian slave is saved! No longer is God, Abram's God, but He is her God.

she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees

me?"

Scriptures:

14 Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi;

Notes:

observe, *it is* between Kadesh and Bered.

Scriptures:

15 So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named

Notes:
Expediencies, shortcuts, and compromises sometimes come with tragic consequences. With God Grace and mercy are always available. But some sins cannot be undone in this world. We bear the scars of those sins for the rest of our lives.

his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.

Scriptures:

16 Abram *was* eighty-six years old when Hagar

Notes:
How do we help God keep His promises?
1. Wait! (trust!)
2. Seek!
3. Obey!

bore Ishmael to Abram.

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