

Genesis 16 –Lack of faith and patience results in the birth of Islam

THEME: Sarai's suggestion; Hagar flees; the tests of Abraham.

As we come to this chapter, I must confess that I almost wish it were not in the Bible. After Abram rose to the heights in chapter 15, you would say that he certainly is treading on high places—but he is not perfect. In chapter 16 we see the lapse of this man's faith relative to Sarai and Hagar, the Egyptian maid. We have here the unbelief of both Sarai and Abram, and the birth of Ishmael. This is certainly a letdown after the wonder of the previous chapter. – McGee

Sarai and Hagar

Gen 16:1 *Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar.*

Abram got two things down in the land of Egypt which really caused him trouble: one was wealth, and the other was this little Egyptian maid.

Gen 16:2 *So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai.*

The thing that Sarai suggested was the common practice of that day. When a wife could not bear a child, there was the concubine. Now don't say that God approved it. God did not approve of this at all. This was Sarai's idea, and Abram listened to her. It looks like he is surrendering his position as head of the home here, and he followed her suggestion.- McGee

Gen 16:3 *Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan.*

This little Egyptian maid becomes a concubine, and this is not according to God's will. God is not going to accept the offspring at all—He didn't; He wouldn't. Why? Because it was wrong. Don't say that God approved this. All you can say is that this is in the record because it is an historical fact. - McGee

Gen 16:4 *So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.*

Hagar said, "I've mothered a child of Abram, and Sarai couldn't do it." She looked down on Sarai, you see. – McGee

Notice: How conflict always seems to arise when you stray off course from God's will. Have you seen that in your life?

Gen 16:5 *Then Sarai said to Abram, "My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me."*

Don't pass this verse by. Don't assume that God approved of this. God says that it is wrong, and now Sarai sees that she has done wrong. "My wrong be upon thee"—she is wrong, my friend. God will not accept this, and it is going to be a real heartbreak to old Abram. But, you see, Abram and Sarai are not really trusting God as they should. After all, Abram at this time is nearly ninety years old and Sarai eighty. I think they have come to the conclusion that they are not going to have a child. Sarai could

Genesis 16 –Lack of faith and patience results in the birth of Islam

probably rationalize and say, "I think maybe this is the way God wants us to do it, for this is the custom of the day." It was the custom of that day, but it was contrary to God's way of doing things. We get the wrong impression if we think that just because something is recorded in the Bible God approves of it. The Bible is inspired in that it is an accurate record, but there are many things God does not approve of that are recorded in His Word.

The moral implications that you and I read into this are not quite here in the historical record. Abram and Sarai were brought up in Ur of the Chaldees where this was a common practice, and the moral angle is not the thing that for them was so wrong. The terrible thing was that they just did not believe God. The wrong that they committed by Abram taking Sarai's maid Hagar was a sin, and God treated it as such. But today we reverse the emphasis and say that taking a concubine is a sin, but we do not pay too much attention to the unbelief. Yet the unbelief was the major sin here; that is, it was lots blacker than the other. - McGee

What is worse? Our sin or our lack of faith, and how are they connected?

HAGAR FLEES

Gen 16:6-7 So Abram said to Sarai, "Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please." And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence. Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.

Hagar took off—she ran away—and this would probably have meant death to her and certainly to the child she was carrying. I am inclined to believe that the Angel of the Lord is none other than the preincarnate Christ. This is characteristic of Him: He is always out looking for the lost. Hagar had traveled quite a distance from home. - McGee

Gen 16:8-10 And He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai." The Angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand." Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, "I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude."

In the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul uses this as an allegory. He speaks there of Hagar and her offspring as being Mount Sinai where the Mosaic law was given, and he speaks of the legality and the bondage of that law. Then he speaks of Sarai as being the one who is free. The point is that the one who belonged to Abram was Sarai—she was his wife. Many people today want to take on something different; they want to get under the law. But, my friend, as believers we have been joined to Christ. The church has been espoused to Christ, Paul says, as a chaste virgin and will someday be the bride of Christ. Therefore may I say to you, you do not want to take on the law. The law is another one that you and I just don't need; it is like Hagar, and that is the point that Paul is making in Galatians. - McGee

This is going to be a great sorrow, not only to Sarai (it already has been to her), but it is going to be an even greater sorrow to Abram later on. Hagar now comes back to give birth to a boy, that boy who happens to be Abram's son.

Gen 16:11-12 And the Angel of the LORD said to her: "Behold, you are with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild

Genesis 16 –Lack of faith and patience results in the birth of Islam

man; His hand shall be against every man, And every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."

Have you looked at this verse in light of about four thousand years of history in the Middle East? What is going on out there today? The descendants of Ishmael are wild men—that has been the story of those Bedouin tribes of the desert down through the centuries, and it is a fulfillment of the prophecy that God gave. They will tell you that they are sons of Abraham, but they are also sons of Ishmael. They are related to Abraham through Ishmael. - McGee

Gen 16:13-14 Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are- the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

Hagar's exclamation in verse 13 might be paraphrased, "You are a God who may be seen," for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" She named the well "Beer Lahai Roi" (literally, well of the One who lives and sees me). – BBC

How gracious God is to Hagar! It is not her sin, so God very graciously deals with her. Let me repeat that I believe the Angel of the Lord here is none other than the preincarnate Christ gone out to seek the lost again. He's that kind of Shepherd, and He brings to her this good word.

"And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me." This is something new to her that she did not realize before. The Egyptians did have a very primitive idea and conception of God. "For she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?" She is overwhelmed by the fact that she is seen of God. That doesn't seem to be very impressive to us today because we have a higher view of God than that. But wait just a minute! We probably come just as far short of really knowing about God as Hagar did. It is difficult for a little, finite man to conceive of the infinite God, and all of us come short of understanding and of knowing Him. I think that a theme which will engage us throughout the endless ages of eternity is just coming to know God. That is worthy of any man's study. To come to know God is something that will dignify a man's position throughout eternity. – McGee

Do you know that you have a God that even see you, no matter your level, status, or circumstances?

Gen 16:15-16 So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

Remember that Ishmael was Abram's son. Abram was now eighty-six years old.

THE TESTS OF ABRAHAM

Before we go farther, I would like to make a recapitulation of the seven appearances of God to Abram, five of which we have already seen. There were certain failures in the life of Abram, but also there were successes. Actually, there were seven tests which God gave to him:

(1) God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees, his home, and Abram responded partially. His faith was weak and imperfect, but at least he moved out. Abram finally arrived safely in the land of Canaan, and God blessed him.

(2) Then there was a famine in the land of Canaan, and Abram fled from the land of Canaan to Egypt. There he acquired riches and Hagar—and both were stumbling blocks.

Genesis 16 –Lack of faith and patience results in the birth of Islam

(3) Abram was given riches which are a real test. They have been a stumbling block to many a man, by the way. Frankly, I have always wished that the Lord would have let me have that kind of test rather than some of the others I've had! But nevertheless, I'm of the opinion that He could not have trusted me with riches. Abram did not forget God, and he was certainly generous and magnanimous toward his nephew Lot. Riches resulted in his separation from Lot, and God appeared to him again.

(4) Abram was given power through his defeat of the kings of the east. That was a real test, for he happened to be the conqueror. This man Melchizedek met him, which I think strengthened Abram for the test, and so he refused the spoils of war. Afterwards, God appeared to Abram and encouraged him.

(5) God delayed giving Abram a son by his wife Sarai. Abram became impatient, and through the prompting of Sarai, he took matters into his own hands and moved outside the will of God. As a result, there was the birth of Ishmael. The Arabs of the desert today still plague the nation Israel, and they will keep right on doing that, I think, until the Millennium.

Abraham's two final tests occur (6) at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in chapter 18 and (7) at the offering of his son Isaac in chapter 22.

Read back through the lists of tests above. Put yourself in Abram shoes. How would you have done?