

2024 BIBLE STUDY SERIES
THEME: “GET YOUR HOPES UP!”

JULY 10, 2024

KINGDOM-LED RELATIONSHIPS: SIBLING RIVALRY
COMPROMISED FAITH CREATES GENERATIONAL RIVALRIES
BETWEEN HUSBANDS, FIRST AND SECONDARY WIVES,
AND THE SEEDS OF THEIR RELATIONSHIPS

SARAI AND ABRAM/SARAI AND HAGAR/ISHMAEL AND ISAAC

PART I - Genesis 16:1-16

Topics

- ☐ Reflection Questions
- ☐ Important Emphasis
- ☐ Key Terms
- ☐ Introduction
- ☐ Outlines
- ☐ Exploring the Text
- ☐ Checking for Understanding
- ☐ Life Application

Reflection Question

- A. Do you recall a time when you pressed ahead with a project or program that ultimately failed because you did not first pray and submit your plans to God? If yes, briefly explain how you recovered.

- B. Have you experienced challenges with establishing inheritance rights within a blended family? Briefly explain.

Important Emphasis

Forsaken Firstborns

[A recurrent motif (or theme) in the Patriarchal Narratives]

The first-born often seem to be losers in Genesis by the very condition of their birth.¹

The 'forsaken firstborn' theme in the book of Genesis portrays a recurring pattern where the dignity and rights of firstborn sons like Ishmael, Esau, Reuben, and Manasseh are disregarded in favor of younger siblings. The younger brother's triumph in Genesis is often not due to his actions, but rather the consequence of another's intervention.

Abraham's Many Sons (Genesis 4:22-25)

Children of the Flesh: Ishmael (Hagar)

Children of the Promise through Faith: Isaac (Sarai)

Faltering Faith Leads to Hope Deferred (Genesis 16:1-4)

A Misguided, Meddling, Mother

Stressed Surrogacy leads to Struggles and Strife

A Hostile Home Environment Creates Rivalries (Trouble in the Tent!)

Mixed Blessings

From Barren to Baring (Genesis 16:15; Genesis 21:1-2)

Child of the Promise and Children of the Flesh (Genesis 17:20; 25:6, 11)

Making Peace to Lay a Father to Rest

¹ R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 6.

Key terms

Abram/Abraham
 Afflicting/Affliction
 Angel of the Lord
 Authority
 Barren
 Beer Lahai Roi
 Beersheba
 Bered
 Bitter Fruits
 Blessing(s)
 Bondwoman
 Canaan
 Circumcision
 Conceived
 Concubine
 Descendant

Despised
 Faith
 Faithful
 Faithlessness
 God
 Hagar
 Haughtiness
 Heir
 Humbling
 Inheritance
 Isaac
 Ishmael
 Kadesh
 Laughed/Laughing
 Mistress
 Mocking

Nation(s)
 Patience
 Polygamy
 Power
 Promise(s)
 Pride
 Sarai/Sarah
 Secondary Wife
 Seed
 Shur
 Slave Woman
 Surrogate Mother
 Trusting God
 Waiting on the Lord
 Weaned
 Wilderness

Introduction

The furtherance of sin from the first families of Adam and Eve has continued to subsequent generations. Despite this, God intervenes to offer ongoing grace and mercy. We will now shift our focus to the family of Abraham, highlighting the recurring theme of marital and parental conflicts that influenced God's chosen people throughout antiquity.

We are introduced to Abram and his wife Sarai in **Genesis 11:27-30** as part of the genealogy of Terah. In about 2090 B.C., God called Abram to leave the comforts of his homeland and take his family to “the land that I will show you.” Abram’s speedy response to God’s command was the first of several actions that earned him the title of “spiritual father of those who have faith” (**Rom. 4:11, 16**).

God made several promises to Abram in **Genesis Chapter 12:1-3**—promises of seed, soil, and a Savior:

- Abram was to father a great nation (*seed*);
- God would prepare a land for that nation (*soil*);
- the entire world would be blessed by a *Savior* who would come through Abram’s seed (**Matt. 1:1; Gal. 3:8**).

While all of Abraham’s descendants—the nation of Israel—were commissioned to be a _____ to the world, because of their repeated failure to do so the promise would be fulfilled through Christ.

It took quite some time for God's _____ to come to be realized. However, God repeated the promises to Abram again in **Genesis 13:14-18**, when Abram and Lot parted ways, God repeated part of His promise. Parts or the whole of the promise were repeated to Abraham in Genesis Chapters 15, 17, 18, and 22. God continued to repeat His promise to Abraham's _____ (Isaac in Gen. 26 and Jacob in Gen. 28). However, as human nature would have it, Abram had assured God that He believed the promises and continued to obey God; but after so long, the faith of Abram and his wife Sarai began to get a little shaky. After all, Abram was 75 years old, and Sarai was 65 years old when they trusted God and left Haran headed to Canaan. It would be 25 years before Sarai became pregnant with Isaac manifesting the promise that God intended for them. In the meantime, waiting patiently for the Lord became a difficult thing to do. So, they took matters into their own hands.

Outline I – The Consequences of Taking Matters into Your Own Hands

Genesis 16:1-16 (NASB 1995) – Ishmael's Birth

- A. Listening to the wrong voice: Abraham listens to Sarai (Gen. 16:1-3)
- B. Things didn't turn out like we thought (Gen. 16:4)
- C. Making Matters Worse: compounding a bad decision (Gen. 16:5-6)
- D. The faith of an Egyptian maid (Gen. 16:7-14)
- E. The fruit of a lack of faith (Gen. 16:15-16)

EXPLORING THE TEXT

A. Listening to the wrong voice: Abraham listens to Sarai (Gen. 16:1-3)

¹Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. ²So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. ³After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife.

Abraham's firstborn son, Ishmael, is a token of Abraham's early weakness of faith in God's promise. God had promised Abraham that his wife, Sarah, would bear him a son whose descendants would outnumber the stars in the sky. He and Sarah were already old when the promise was given, and no child had yet been conceived.

Ten years after the promise of a son to be Abram's heir, Sarai suggested that Abram take her maid, Hagar, as a _____ (v. 2 AMPC). This was by

custom a moral action and may have seemed to Abram the way God would keep His promise. But it was not God's plan.

"Wife" is here used to describe an inferior, though not degrading, relation, in countries where _____ prevails. In the case of these female slaves, who are the personal property of his lady, being purchased before her marriage or given as a special present to her, no one can become the husband's secondary wife without the consent or permission of her _____. This usage seems to have prevailed in patriarchal times; and Hagar, Sarai's slave, of whom she had the entire right of disposing, was given by her mistress' spontaneous offer, to be the secondary wife of Abram, in the hope of obtaining the long-looked-for **heir**. It was a wrong step—indicating a lack of simple reliance on God—and Sarai was the first to reap the _____ of her device.

B. Things didn't turn out like we thought (Gen. 16:4)

⁴He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight.

Hagar viewed her ability to become pregnant as giving her an advantage over her barren mistress, and she *began to despise* Sarai. Then Sarai, who was the one who had given Hagar to Abram, turns on him and holds him responsible for Hagar's attitude!

C. Making Matters Worse: compounding a bad decision (Gen. 16:5-6)

⁵And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done me be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms, but when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her sight. May the LORD judge between you and me." ⁶But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight." So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence.

May the wrong done me be upon you. Sarai appears to accuse Abram of favoring Hagar because Sarai is not able to have children. To alleviate Sarai's suspicions and jealousy, Abram gives Hagar back to Sarai, even though Hagar was originally under his care as his secondary wife or _____.

Sarai afflicted Hagar; the term implying stripes and hard usage, to bring down the body and humble the mind. If the slave were to blame in this business the mistress is not less liable to criticism. She alone had brought her into those circumstances, in which it was natural for her to value herself beyond her _____.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. What did Sarai tell Abram to do in light of their childlessness? (16:1-2)
2. How did Abram respond to Sarai's request that he "go in to" her maid? (16:2)
3. How did Sarai present her maid to Abram? (16:3)
4. After Hagar became pregnant, how did she behave toward her mistress Sarai? (16:4)
6. Who did Sarai blame for Hagar's disrespect of her, and how did she express her anger? (16:5)
7. How did Abram respond to his wife? (16:6)
8. Now that her husband gave her permission to deal with Hagar, what did Sarai do? (16:6)
9. What was Hagar's response to her mistress's harsh treatment? (16:6)

EXPLORING THE TEXT

D. The faith of an Egyptian maid (Gen. 16:7-9)

⁷ Now the angel of the LORD found her [Hagar] by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸ He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from and where are you going?” And she said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.” ⁹ Then the angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority.”

This well, pointed out by tradition, lay on the side of the caravan road, in _____, a sandy desert on the west of Arabia-Petra, to the extent of a hundred fifty miles, between Palestine and Egypt. By taking that direction, she seems to have intended to return to her relatives in that country. Nothing but pride, passion, and sullen obstinacy, could have driven any solitary person to brave the dangers of such an inhospitable wild; and she would have died, had not the timely appearance and words of the angel recalled her to reflection and duty.

The angel (thought by many to be Christ in his pre-incarnate state) addressed her as *Hagar, servant of Sarai*: an immediate reminder of who she was. She had a name of her own, but she needed Sarai for her _____ to be complete. She had conceived to carry a baby for Sarai, but now she was acting as if she was carrying the baby for herself. She needed to remember who she was.

The angel asks her, “*Where have you come from, and where are you going?*” It is not that he does not know the answer, but he wants Hagar to think about it herself. Hagar’s reply, “*I am running away from my mistress Sarai,*” is correct but the angel’s response focused on why she ran away. The root of her problems was her failure to _____ to Sarai after she found she was pregnant. The angel of the Lord did not condemn Hagar. But he did tell her to return to Sarai and submit to her.

E. The Fruit of a Lack of Faith (Genesis 16:10-16)

¹⁰ Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count." ¹¹ The angel of the LORD said to her further, "Behold, you are with child, And you will bear a son; And you shall call his name Ishmael because the LORD has given heed to your affliction. ¹² "He will be a wild donkey of a man, His hand will be against everyone, And everyone's hand will be against him, and he will live to the east of all his brothers." ¹³ Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "You are a God who sees"; for she said, "Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?" ¹⁴ Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered. ¹⁵ So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.

Ishmael—Like other Hebrew names, this had significance, and it is made up of two words—"_____." The reason is explained: "...because the LORD has given heed to your affliction.

He will be a wild man—literally, "a wild ass man," expressing how the wildness of Ishmael and his **descendants** resembles that of the wild ass.

His hand will be against every man—descriptive of the rude, turbulent, and plundering character of some Arabs.

Dwell in the presence of all his brethren—dwell, that is, pitch tents; and the meaning is that they maintain their independence despite all attempts to eradicate, root out, or subdue them.

Called the name—common in ancient times to name places from circumstances, and the name given to this well was a grateful recognition of God's gracious appearance in the hour of Hagar's distress.

Wherefore the well was called Beer-Lahai-roi—It appears, from Genesis 16:7, that Hagar had sat down by a fountain or well of water in the wilderness of Shur, at which the _____ **of the Lord** found her; and, to commemorate the wonderful discovery which God had made of himself, she called the name of the well *Beer-Lahai-roi*, "A well to the Living One who seeth me."

Hagar gave birth to a son as predicted; and following the instructions of the angel of the Lord, Abram called him Ishmael.

The events recorded in Genesis Chapter 16 clearly show that wrong choices produce long-lasting problems (even generational). Because of Abram's failure, problems arose between himself and Sarai (16:5; **also see** 21:8-21; 25:6), between Sarai and Hagar (16:5-6), and between the children, Isaac and Ishmael, and their descendants (21:8-10). In the next lesson, we will explore just how extensive those problems became after the true promise was fulfilled with the birth of Isaac in Genesis Chapter 21.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

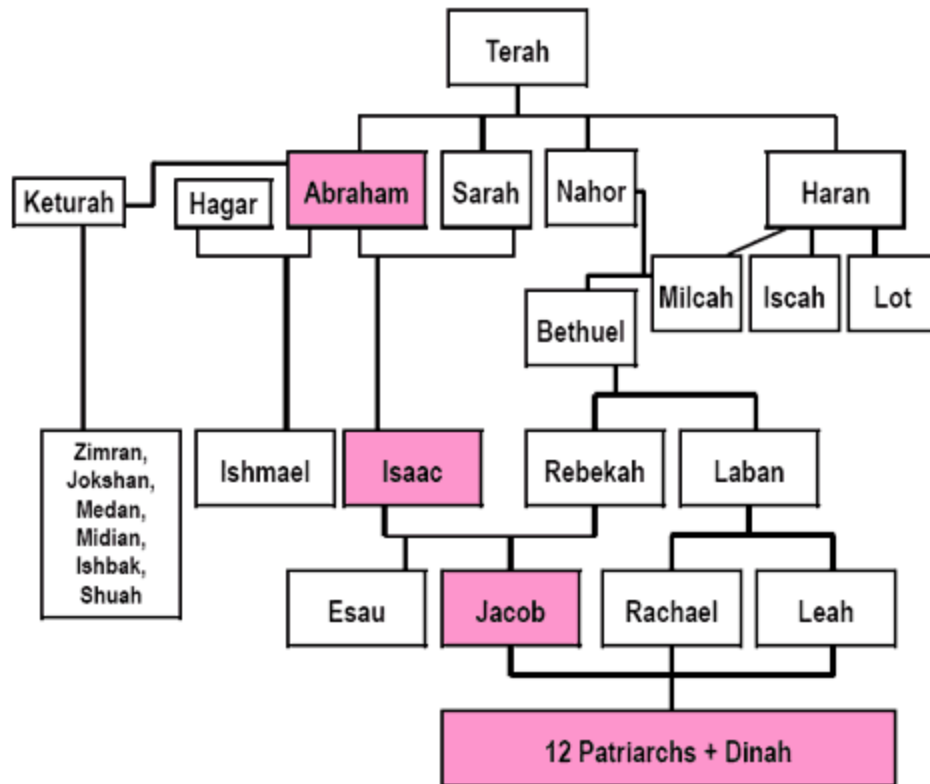
10. Where did the Angel of the Lord find Hagar in the wilderness? (16:7)
11. How did the Angel of the Lord address Hagar, and what two questions did he ask her? (16:8)
12. Where did Hagar tell the Angel of the Lord she was going? (16:8)
13. What two actions did the Angel of the Lord direct Hagar to do? (16:9)
14. What blessings did the Angel of the Lord give to Hagar? (16:10-11)
15. How did the Angel of the Lord describe Ishmael's physical characteristics and demeanor? (16:12)
16. How did Hagar refer to the person who spoke to her, and what did she name the well that she was near? (16:13-14)
17. How old was Abram when Hagar bore Ishmael? (16:16)

LIFE APPLICATION

- Make a list of areas in your life that you find challenging to trust God and His timing.
- Identify someone whom you may not have spoken to in a long while because of past hurts (or just neglect), and make a point to send them a card or call them to see how they are doing.

**NEXT LESSON: SARAI AND ABRAM/SARAI AND HAGAR/ISHMAEL AND ISAAC
PART II - Genesis 21:1-21; 25:11**

Abraham's Family Tree



Hagar Flees from Sarai into the Wilderness

