

# GENESIS

## Chapter 16

### *Sarai and Hagar*

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. 2 And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. 3 So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. 4 And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. 5 And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the LORD judge between you and me!" 6 But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her. 7 The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. 8 And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." 9 The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." 10 The angel of the LORD also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." 11 And the angel of the LORD said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has listened to your affliction. 12 He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen." 13 So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing," for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me." 14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered. 15 And 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 Abram.

**16:1** *Egyptian.* Perhaps Hagar was acquired while Abram and Sarai were in Egypt (see 12:10–20). (CSB)

Sari may have acquired Hagar while she and Abram sojourned in Egypt. Ironically, the Isarelites later became slaves to Egyptians. (TLSB)

**16:2** *The LORD has prevented me from bearing children.* Some time had passed since the revelation of 15:4 (see 16:3), and Sarai impatiently implied that God was not keeping his promise. (CSB)

*Go in to my servant.* An ancient custom, illustrated in Old Assyrian marriage contracts, the Code of Hammurapi and the Nuzi tablets, to ensure the birth of a male heir. Sarai would herself solve the problem of her barrenness. (CSB)

*obtain children by her* – Literally, "be built up by her." The OT saints sometimes obtained children through means that Holy Scriptures describes but does not advocate. However, they were recognized

legal practices of the day and shared many of the same benefits and complications realized in today's fertility options (e.g., surrogacy). (TLSB)

**16:3** *ten years.* Abram was now 85 years old (see 12:4; 16:16). (CSB)

*as a wife* – For conjugal relations, as would be normal between husband and wife. (TLSB)

**16:4** *looked with contempt on her mistress.* Peninnah acted similarly toward Hannah (see 1Sa 1:6). (CSB)

Sari became slighted or demeaned in Hagar's eyes. Hagar was guilty of judging by appearances, assuming that because Abram's seed took root in her, while Sarai remained barren, it meant she, not Sarai, had God's and Abram's favor. Later, St. Paul would use Hagar and Sarai as types of the two religions known to man – those teaching justification by the Law and those teaching justification by the Gospel. (Gal. 4:22-23). (TLSB)

**16:5** *may the wrong done to me be on you* – Although Sarai gave occasion for the contempt that Hagar showed her, Abram may have contributed to the problems, thus giving rise to Sarai's complaint. (TLSB)

*May the LORD judge between you and me.* An expression of hostility or suspicion (see 31:53; see also 31:49). (CSB)

This is an assertion of innocence. (TLSB)

**16:6** *do to her as you please* – In prudence, Abram sided with his barren wife, over the pregnant maidservant. (TLSB)

*she fled* – Hagar would not receive the discipline of her mistress. By fleeing she also took away the couple's hope of an heir. (TLSB)

**16:7** *The angel of the LORD.* Since the angel of the Lord speaks for God in the first person (v. 10) and Hagar is said to name "the LORD who spoke to her: 'You are the God who sees me'" (v. 13), the angel of the Lord is a manifestation of God himself (see Ex 3:2, 4; Jdg 2:1–5; 6:11–24; 13:22; Zec 3:1–7; 12:8). Traditional Christian interpretation has held that this "angel" was a preincarnate manifestation of Christ as God's Messenger-Servant. But whether this "angel" was the second person of the Trinity remains uncertain. (CSB)

*Shur.* Located east of Egypt (see 25:18; 1Sa 15:7). (CSB)

**16:8** *I'm fleeing from my mistress.* Not yet knowing exactly where she was going, Hagar answered only the first of the angel's questions. (CSB)

**16:9** *return...submit* – Literally, "put yourself under her hands." Sarai, in her harsh treatment of Hagar, was disciplining her servant, who had become arrogant on account of God's gift. To this, Hagar should have submitted in the first place (cf Heb. 12:11). (TLSB)

**16:10** A promise reaffirmed in 17:20 and fulfilled in 25:13–16. (CSB)

God's promise to Hagar was different from His promise to Abram. The children of the slave woman are separate from the children of the free woman (cf Gal. 4:21-31). On an earthly level, God promised to

multiply a people from Hagar (Arabs), who even now contend with those born from Sarai (Israelites). (TLSB)

**16:12** *wild donkey*. Away from human settlements, Ishmael would roam the desert like a wild donkey (see Job 24:5; Hos 8:9). (CSB)

Unbridled, wild in temperament and spirit, and given to war and bloodshed. This prophetically describes Ishmael (Cf 25:12-18). (TLSB)

*dwelt over against all his kinsmen*. The hostility between Sarai and Hagar (see vv. 4–6) was passed on to their descendants (see 25:18). (CSB)

Live in opposition to all. (TLSB)

**16:13** *I have seen him who looks after me*. Hagar recognized in the Angel of the Lord a manifestation of the Lord Himself. Hagar confessed that God sees and takes care of her, or that she saw God and He had not destroyed her. Hebrew is difficult, comparable to Ex. 33:23, where God graciously promised to allow Moses to see His “back.” (TLSB)

**16:14** *Beer Lahai Roi*. Another possible translation that fits the context equally well is: “well of the one who sees me and who lives.” (CSB)

**Ch 16** Sarai seeks alternative means for fulfilling God’s promise. When God provides a son to Hagar, discord and strife arise because of jealousy and pride. How often our own households and marriages are torn asunder when we devise ways and means that God has not commanded! Consider how willing our Lord was to submit Himself to everything the Father willed, even when that meant suffering at the hands of evil men and dying in their place. He has seen your suffering, and has taken it upon Himself. By His dying and His rising, He makes sure the God who sees all is now graciously disposed toward you. • Dear Lord, though You see all, You promise now to see us only in Jesus. Tenderly work among us by Your means of grace, exercising Your fatherly care. In Jesus’ name. Amen. (TLSB)