

HUMAN SOLUTIONS | GENESIS 16:1-3

The previous chapter contained a delay in the promise of God. No longer would Abram himself inherit the land, but his descendants would inherit the land after a long and arduous delay which included slavery (Gen. 15:15). And while this was about as bad as it gets, at least *someday* Abraham's family would have the Promised Land at last.

But **after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan** (v. 3), they still had no children. It is at this time that Sarai looks to her **handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar** (v. 1). Note that a **handmaid** is not necessarily a slave but is certainly under the authority of the woman of the home.

Sarai suggested that Hagar would be given to Abram to **be his wife** (v. 3). It is noteworthy that this was legal in the only known legal code of the day, the Hammurabi Code, paragraph 146:

If a man takes a wife and she gives this man a maid-servant as a childbearer and the maid-servant does bear him children, then this maid assumes equality with the wife; because she has borne him children, her master shall not sell her for money, but he may keep her as a slave, reckoning her among the maid-servants.¹

This code is noteworthy not only because it was in existence in Abram's day, but also because the religious liberals who employed so-called *Higher Criticism* to develop an errant view of the origin of the Bible insisted that the Torah could not have been written in the time of Moses because no such coded legal system existed until hundreds of years after Moses. After the discovery of the Hammurabi Code (A.D. 1901), it was known that *Higher Criticism* was flawed in its basic premises.

The *human solution* took place **after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan** (v. 3). This is a verse that helps us build a chronological baseline to the Abrahamic story, but also helps us to recognize that God is counting years **in the land** and not outside of the land. This helps us solve many chronological difficulties in the Bible.

HUMAN PROBLEMS | GENESIS 16:4-6

The seemingly quick conception with Hagar caused the Sarai to be **despised** (v. 4) in the eyes of Hagar. Perhaps Hagar began to see herself as more favored of the Lord than was Sarai, or perhaps she just began to see emotional power over the entire situation.

When this happens, Sarai is livid and declares, **My wrong be upon thee** (v. 5). That is, "may the injustice done to *me* be placed upon *thee*." Further, she declares, **the LORD judge between me and thee** (v. 5). Sarai certainly sees herself in good standing with God while her husband is on the wrong side. As we saw in sermon 7, this likely stems

from the entire Egyptian experience in which Abram creates the whole "mess" by going to Egypt, suggesting Sarai as his sister, and likely coming home with Hagar.

Abram decides to stay out of it, leaving the solution to Sarai. Sarai then **dealt hardly with her** (v. 6) and this drove Hagar to flee. Note that the Hammurabi Code (paragraph 119) forbade Sarai from selling Hagar, but the harsh treatment seemed, at first, to rid Sarai of the problem.

A SUPERNATURAL VISIT | GENESIS 16:7-11

Amazingly, Hagar is found by **the angel of the LORD** (v. 11). While the details must be saved for another day, this is almost surely a reference to the preincarnate Messiah. The Lord asked Hagar, **whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go?** (v. 8). This is, no doubt, a rhetorical question, for the Lord certainly knows the answer. In fact, every time the Lord asks a rhetorical question it seems to be as a matter of rebuke (consider Gen. 3:9 and 4:6, for example).

In verses 9, 10, and 11 we have three consecutive and identical phrases, **And the angel of the LORD said unto her...** As we learned in a previous sermon, this unusual arrangement always implies a "pregnant pause" for the hearer to stop and contemplate before answering. Other than the first bit of "bad news" in verse 9, verses 10 and 11 are exceedingly positive. Her offspring was to be multiplied **that it shall not be numbered for multitude** (v. 10). And verse 11 sounds so much like announcement of the birth of the Messiah Himself that it is hard to miss (compare Matt. 1:21. Gen. 17:19 has similar verbiage for Isaac). Hagar's son was to be called Ishmael **because the LORD hath heard thy affliction** (v. 11). Ishmael means "God hears."

ISHMAEL IS BORN | GENESIS 16:12-16

The Lord tells Hagar that her son will be **a wild man** (literally, "a wild-donkey man." The "freedom" that Hagar desires from Sarai will be given to her son. He will run free and "undomesticated," but this has its consequences. The one who lives wherever he wants ends up having no place to call home. Like Cain in the "land of Nod," Ishmael will be a wanderer, always home and never home. And being such a wanderer, **his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren** (v. 14). Like an animal that roams freely, he will also be continually pushed back when he gets on someone else's property. Being a nomad, "his life is intertwined with everyone else's as he journeys from place to place."²

Hagar spoke to God and called Him *The God Who Sees*. She then exclaimed, **Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?** (v. 13). This is testimony that she knew of whom she spoke and was amazed to have **looked** (and thus lived) after visiting with God.

¹ <http://faculty.collin.edu/mbailey/hammurabi%27s%20laws.htm> – accessed November 20, 2022.

² Grumet, Zvi. *Genesis: From Creation to Covenant*. Maggid Books, New Milford, CT. 2017. Pg. 181.