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Genesis 16

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Genesis 16.

Topics.

- Sarai gives Hagar the Egyptian, her servant to Abram her husband as a wife.
- Hagar looks on Sari with contempt, Sarai treats her harshly and Hagar flees.
- The angel of the LORD tells Hagar, to return to Sari and submit to her.
- The angel of the LORD tells Hagar Ishmael's offspring will be multiplied.
- Hagar calls the name of the LORD, "You are a God of seeing."

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

The previous chapter: the focus of chapter fifteen was upon God telling Abram that His own son would be his heir and his offspring as the stars of heaven and they would inherit the land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates. Abram believed God and He counted it to him as righteousness. Abram divided a heifer, a flaming torch passed between the pieces and the LORD told Abram; his offspring will be afflicted four hundred years.

GENESIS 16:1-3

1

Sarai Gives Hagar the Egyptian, Her Servant to Abram as Wife.

- **Genesis 16:1-3:** Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. ²And 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. ³So, 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.

Sarai said, "The LORD has prevented me from bearing children," (v2) Sarai saw all situations of her life (good or bad) as being in God's control. It was natural to the mind of the faithful to recognize the power and will of God in all things. The faithful of the Old Testament saw God as the King of their life and every circumstance, good or bad as being in the hand of God, both Job and Habakkuk (as did all the faithful of the Old Testament) had this same great faith. Even though Job suffered great affliction his attitude was:

- Though he slays me, yet will I trust in him (Job 13:15).

Habakkuk begins his prayer saying, "Even though his body trembles at the power of the LORD and he feels weak and feeble because of the enemies who are coming to invade his land, he will quietly wait for the day of trouble." He then ends his prayer with the following great words of faith.

- Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, ¹⁸yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. (Hab. 3:17-19).

Job and Habakkuk made the LORD their fortress and refuge by making him their greatest love, their best thought and the passion of their heart and mind and rested in the knowledge that if everything fails in this life they would be raised to be with the Lord in eternal glory where happiness everlasting dwells and while living in this life rested in the confidence and faith that the LORD was with them by his Spirit, his love and his grace.

A personal note: I have seen a man born with no legs and no arms (Nick Vujicic) who to the natural mind would appear a mistake made by God, but this man lived his life before God worshipped him and kept a right attitude as did Job and Habakkuk. He is an amazing testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and went on to become one of the world's greatest motivational speakers. He is an encouragement to hundreds of thousands of people who are suffering their own difficult circumstances. I have heard testimonies of teenage girls who have suffered absolute horror, terror and abuse find the love of God and go on to become the source of comfort to many hurting girls in similar circumstances and help them live a life of mental and emotional freedom and joy. We may not all reach hundreds of people, but if we take the right attitude to difficult circumstance, we can all be an amazing testimony to God and to those who know us. While on this side of eternity no-one is exempt from trouble and difficulty, it is the attitude and who we go through it with that makes the difference. God does not promise freedom from trouble but He does promise comfort, love and strength to cope and grow from it.

That I may obtain children by her: Sarah had been in Canaan for ten years and was now barren and seventy-five and had given up upon being a mother and having her own child came to the conclusion that if she and Abram were to have an heir and share in the promise the child would have to be born through a substitute, being her handmaid (female slave) Hagar. In this way Sarai would obtain children by Hagar for a child born by her handmaid in her house would be counted as her own especially since the child would be her husband's. Sari tells Abram to go in unto her Egyptian maid Hagar, (meaning take her to wife with the intention of having a child by her). Abram desiring a son agrees to Sari suggestion. It should be kept in mind that as yet God had not told Abram that He would accomplish His promise of a seed to come out of his loins through Sarai his wife and that having children this way to enlarge one's own house was a common practise at this time. Therefore, is very likely that Sarai's proposal, and Abram's agreement with it may well have stemmed from their eager desire to give birth to the promised seed especially since God had not yet told Sarai she would be the mother of nations and Kings would come from her. This would also explain why Sarai conclude that the child would come by Abram and her handmaid and why Abram might have agreed to go along with Saris suggestion especially since this was the culture during that time for women who were barren. Only a harsh spirit would condemn Sari for making such a suggestion and limiting God's power to the common order of nature, especially since the Scriptures tell us Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years and the way of women had ceased to be with Sarah and Sarah herself said, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" (Gen. 18:11-12). Added to this it is certain her and Abram had laid together many times in the hope of conceiving, yet she was still barren; now she is past the age of having children; neither she or Abram had been told that she would be the woman the promised seed would come from and therefore in her eyes she was simply following the custom and culture of that time.

As regards the morality of the act: in Genesis it is written, "Man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh," (Gen. 2:24) showing that marriage with one wife was the original law and monogamy was the rule as we see in the households of Noah, Terah, Isaac, and others. However many, like Esau, Jacob, David and Solomon allowed themselves a far greater liberty and in so doing their conduct drops far below the original standard of God's design for a married couple. Some of the reason Abram followed Sari suggestion maybe credited to the reality that everyone's actions are strongly influenced by the general views and culture of the people among whom

they live. It should be noted that even though Abram had such a great passion to have a child of his own and so much depended upon him having offspring, he took no steps to seek out another wife, but remained content with Sarai even though she was barren. When he did take Hagar it was at his wife's request and for a reason which seemed to him and her acceptable and perhaps even right at that time.

GENESIS 16:10-12

Hagar looks on Sari with Contempt, and Hagar Flees from Sari.

- **Genesis 16:4-6:** And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt (despised in KJV) on her mistress. ⁵And 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!" ⁶But 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.

Hagar looked on her mistress with contempt: (v4) (mistress was despised in her eyes in KJV) contempt and despised carry the idea of looking upon Sari with disdain disrespect and scorn. It is perhaps possible that Hagar now that she had conceived a child by Sari's husband considered herself superior to Sari and perhaps favoured by Abram above her. Sari responds by treating Hagar harshly meaning severely, bitterly, callously and ruthlessly, some suppose that Sari beat Hagar with unmerciful cruel whippings, but considering Sari was a woman God greatly honoured and the angel of the LORD told Hagar to return to her mistress and submit to her," this is very unlikely (v9). It is far more likely that Hagar being pregnant with Abram's child (believed by Abram at this time to be the child of promise) had been elevated above the position of slave, relieved from her daily duties as a servant and received favour from Abram.

Now that Hagar is in an elevated position and has given birth to Abram's child she looks upon Sari with distain, Sari looks to Abram to do something, he in turn tells Sari even though he has taken Hagar to wife and she has given birth to his child, she is still inferior to Sari and has no right to exalt herself above her station, therefore she has the power to exercise authority over her and do as she pleases. Naturally this would not give Sarai liberty to take Hagar's life or even to treat her cruelly, but to deal with her as a mistress may lawfully do with a servant. Abram still retained the same love and affection for Sarai, his first and lawful wife. He showed her the same respect he always had and supported her in her honour and dignity as his wife and rightly considered Hagar as his secondary wife and as Sarai's maid and therefore allows Sari to exercise authority over her. Sari in response to Hagar's contempt probably cast her out of the house, reduced her back to her common position as a slave and made her life very difficult.

Hagar flees from Sari: Hagar, unable to bear Sari's treatment and humiliation and very likely fearing Sari was going to take Ishmael from her flees from Sari. (The following verses of this chapter show that she was intending to return with Ishmael to Egypt her home country). Despite the tension and animosity between Sari and Hagar the following verse shows that God accepted both Ishmael and Isaac as sons of Abram:

- It is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. (Gal. 4:22).

GENESIS 16:7-9

The Angel RD tells Hagar, to Return to Sari and Submit to Her.

- **Genesis 16:7-9:** The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸And 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." ⁹The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her."

In the way to Shur: (v7) in Genesis we are told that the generations (i.e., the twelve princes and their tribes) of Ishmael Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's servant, bore to Abraham settled from Havilah to Shur, which is opposite Egypt in the direction of Assyria (Gen. 25:12-18). In Samuel it is written, "Saul defeated the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt (1 Sam. 15:7) clearly showing that Hagar was intending to return to her native country Egypt. It is interesting to notice that this very place where Hagar stopped to rest and the angel appeared to her in the wilderness, and areas adjacent to it were the very place where the offspring of Hagar's sons Ishmael settled.

The spring of water: (v7) that Hagar stopped at was a place of refreshing water in the wilderness that lay between Egypt and Canaan on a path that the Israelites stop at as they journey backwards and forwards from Canaan to Egypt. This shows that she was making her way to Egypt, her native country as fast as she could where in all probability she intended to remain.

The angel of the LORD: (v7-9) this is the first mention in Scripture of the angel of the LORD, and he appears not to a Hebrew, but an Egyptian woman fleeing from her mistress. This fact shines a spotlight upon how important Hagar was to God's eternal plan for mankind's salvation that He purposed and planed in His eternal mind according to His eternal foreknowledge. It is interesting to notice that even though the angel of the LORD would clearly know all that has taken place between Hagar and Sari he still asks her to explain why she is fleeing; she tells him the story and he tells her to return to Sari and submit to her.

The angel of the LORD in Scripture: in Exodus chapter three (in the King James Bible), the angel of the LORD is given the following titles:

- The angel of the LORD and God (v2).
- The God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob and God (v6).
- The LORD and God (v7, 11, 12).
- God and the God of your fathers (v13) and I AM THAT I AM (v14).
- God and the LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob (v15).
- The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob (v16).
- The LORD God of the Hebrews and the LORD our God (v18).

This angel acts:

- As God's agent on earth and amongst mankind.
- Speaks in a human language that people understand.
- Appears very awesome when appearing as a man.
- When he appeared before men, they often did not know it was the angel of the LORD.

The character of this angel: the name of the angel of the LORD is wonderful; fire does not harm him; he speaks and acts for the LORD God; often speaks as though he is the LORD and is not bound by our laws of physics and laws of science in any way.

The angel of the LORD can be seen as: God's presence, God's voice and God's power. The Angel of the LORD is God appearing to man in a form that will not destroy him. Should God appear to any descendant of Adam (which we all are) in His fullness and Holiness His presence would destroy them. This is why God always appears surrounded in dark clouds, fire or as some form of spiritual angelic being such as the Angel of the LORD. It is certain that the invisible, Immortal Eternal Almighty Holy God of creation, the source of all life and Omnipotent God the Eternal Spirit is able to take on various spiritual angelic manifestations as he did to Moses in the burning bush (Exod. 3:2), to Hagar as she fled to Egypt (Gen. 16:7-9) and to others to reveal to them His eternal plans that He purposed in His eternal mind before the foundations of the world for mankind's salvation on earth and His plans and purposes for their lives. For further information see the title:

- Angel of the LORD in, Angels (ON WEBSITE MENU).

GENESIS 16:10-12

The Angel tells Hagar Ishmael's Offspring will Be Multiplied.

- **Genesis 16:10-12:** The angel of the LORD also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." ¹¹And 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. ¹²He 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 (dwell in the presence of all his brethren KJV).

I will surely multiply your offspring: (v10) God promises Hagar an Egyptian slave woman fleeing from her Hebrew mistress that her offspring through Ishmael will be so numerous they will not be able to be numbered because of the multitude of them. This promise highlights the truth that God is not limited to using His own people to bring about His eternal plan that He purposed in His eternal mind according to His eternal foreknowledge, before time began for this earth and mankind's salvation.

Ishmael: comes from the Hebrew word (*Yishma`e'l*) it literally means God will hear and carries the idea of hearing intelligently (often with implication of attention and obedience.) It is the name of Abraham's oldest son and of five Israelites.

He shall be a wild donkey of a man: (v12) wild donkeys of the Arabian Deserts adapt very well to desert lands, mountains and wilderness areas they love solitude and freedom and are fiercely stubborn. They are difficult to force or frighten into doing something they perceive to be dangerous for whatever reason and are therefore hard to restrain and tame. Today their determined stubbornness is attributed to their strong sense of self-preservation. Once a person has earned their confidence and trust they can be willing and companionable partners and very dependable in work, often these working donkeys are associated with those living at or below subsistence levels.

- Who has let the wild donkey go free? Who has loosed the bonds of the swift donkey, ⁶to whom I have given the arid plain for his home and the salt land for his dwelling place? ⁷He scorns the tumult of the city; he hears not the shouts of the driver. ⁸He ranges the mountains as his pasture, and he searches after every green thing. (Job 39:5-8).

God has not only given the wild donkey its love for freedom but also given it its hate to be dominated and enslaved. The wild donkey is a creature that loves to roam the desert plains and is adapt at making them its home. It has no love for the noise, the rush and the business of city life, but would rather be free to roam the deserts and mountains independently seeking out its own food. Though the wild donkey can be tamed its natural inclination and nature is averse to submission and desirous of freedom.

Ishmael shall be a wild donkey of a man: (v12), this expression means that he and his offspring though living among all their brethren will dwell independently of them and in contention with them. They will be like a wild donkey in the sense that they will be unsettled in their land, a violent warlike people that provoke and injure their neighbours and those of their own offspring and by doing so continually multiply their enemies around them. The fierce stubbornness of the wild donkey and its distain to be dominated by others is a very fitting symbol even today for the character of the Bedouin Arabs of the deserts

His hand will be against every man and everyone's hand against him: (v12) this is another amazing biblical prophecy that is continuing to be fulfilled before our very eyes proving to the whole world that the Scriptures of the Bible are written by the inspiration of God. This prediction refers to the offspring of Ishmael who it is here foretold that he would be extremely numerous, wild and against all those dwelling around them and their neighbours who in response to Ishmael's provocations would be against them. History shows that this is exactly how the offspring of Ishmael have been for almost four thousand years. Ishmael had twelve sons, who gave rise to twelve tribes (or nations), called by their names. Even though almost every powerful conqueror who has risen up in history has taken their armies to their borders and at times even beyond them into Egypt, not one has ever been able to subdue the Ishmaelite's or deprive them of their freedom. Even though threatened and insulted by all their neighbours the Ishmaelite's continue to keep their ground

The history of Ishmael: the Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans or any other people have been able to subdue the offspring of Ishmael. Even today (2016) the Arabs not only live independent of the Turks, but also compel them to pay a yearly levy (or tax) for the passage of their pilgrims to Mecca, and also require them to pay for their caravans as they travel through their country. The descendants of Ishmael have continued to exist as a free race in the presence of the other Abrahamic nations and maintain their independence in spite of all attempts to uproot, destroy and totally exterminate them.

The offspring of Ishmael today: believe that God gave the plains and deserts to Ishmael as his inheritance and therefore suppose it is not only their right before the LORD to suppress the surrounding nations by violence or by whatever means they can, but also their duty to plunder and destroy those amongst their own offspring who do not bow down to their authority and submit to their rule, their laws and their belief system literally fulfilling to this very day the following prophecy of the LORD'S angel to Hagar:

- 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. (Gen. 16:12).

From the very days of Ishmael their father these tribes whether large or small have continually been in conflict with one another and their surrounding neighbours as if they were naturally prone to discord and contention.

GENESIS 16:13-16

Hagar calls the Name of the LORD, "You are a God of Seeing."

- **Genesis 16:13-16:** So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing," (Thou God seest me in KJV) for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me." ¹⁴Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered. ¹⁵And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. ¹⁶Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

Beer-lahai-roi: (v14) comes from the Hebrew word (*B^e'er la-Chay Ro'iy*) it literally means, "The well of a living one," and refers to a well in a place in the desert between Kadesh and Bered

You are a God of seeing: (v13) (Thou God seest me in KJV) clearly God sees all things, but Hagar makes God very personal to her, with the words, "God sees me." She is not simply saying that God visibly sees her as a person, but that the God of Abram and Sarah, reveals Himself to her, a lowly Egyptian woman it means:

- God sees her with His eye of omniscience love, grace and mercy
- God sees her desolate and miserable condition in the wilderness.
- God sees her distress, sorrow, affliction and difficult circumstances.
- God eye is graciously upon her for her good.

It is in this sense that Hagar is saying God sees her. The following verse shows that if any of us literally saw God with our physical eyes it would result in death:

- God said, "You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." (Exod. 33:20).

It is possible Hagar saw God in a dream, a vision in the mind, or as a hologram before her eyes, but it is more likely it carries the idea of awareness. God spoke to her, she had no doubt about this, it was clear, distinct and was the voice of God, so with this clarity of mind it would be right and proper for Oriental people of this era to say, "I have seen God." Hagar not only perceived by experience that God's eye was upon her but also was aware that He saw the contempt she had toward Sarah her mistress and her fleeing from her, her wondering in the wilderness and all the motives and intents of her heart and despite seeing all this God favoured her with a son and a promise that his offspring will so greatly multiply that they cannot be counted.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.