

Genesis 16

I. THE COMPROMISE BY ABRAM (16:1–16)

- a. **The rationale for his compromise** (16:1–3)
- b. *The problem* (16:1): Sarai is still unable to bear a son.
- c. *The plan* (16:1–3): Sarai convinces Abram to marry Hagar, her servant, in order to have a son through her.

II. The results of his compromise (16:4–16)

- a. *Hagar's marriage to Abram* (16:4): After Hagar conceives, she begins to look down upon Sarai.
- b. *Hagar's mistreatment by Sarai* (16:5–6): After suffering harsh treatment from the frustrated Sarai, Hagar flees into the desert.
- c. *Hagar's meeting with the Lord* (16:7–14)
- d. The Lord advises her (16:7–9): The angel of the Lord comes to her by a well and tells her, "Return to [Sarai] and submit to her authority."
- e. The Lord assures her (16:10–14): The angel of the Lord tells Hagar that she will have innumerable descendants through her unborn son, who will be called Ishmael ("God hears").
- f. *Hagar's mothering of Ishmael* (16:15–16): She gives birth to Ishmael when Abram is eighty-six years old.¹

Detail:

I. THE COMPROMISE BY ABRAM (16:1–16)

- a. **The rationale for his compromise** (16:1–3)

Genesis 16:1-3: *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.*

- b. In Genesis 15 we had seen God go through a covenant ceremony with Abram. God had promised to give Abram the land. Abram was declared righteous in Genesis 15:6. Yet, God still has not provided him with a child. It has been ten year (verse 3).
- c. *The plan* (16:1–3): Sarai convinces Abram to marry Hagar, her servant, in order to have a son through her.
 - i. Recently, in thinking about this I was convicted to think of this from Hagar's perspective.

¹ H. L. Willmington, [*The Outline Bible*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Ge 15:18–16:16.

- ii. How did she feel about this?
- iii. Was she consulted?
- iv. Here Abram is very wealthy. We see that in the last few chapters. In Genesis 14 we see that he is wealthy enough to have his own military to rescue Lot.
- v. Now, Sarai has a servant.
- vi. Servants back then were not like our transatlantic slave trade. They were a little more like indentured servants, but still a little worse off than that. This is an example how bad it could be to be a servant.
- vii. She needs to pretty much prostitute herself to Abram.
- viii. This may be a little too far, but Abram pretty much rapes her, or to put it another way, Sarai and Abram rape her. That may be going a little bit far, but she really did not have any choice in the matter.
- ix. One writes: *"It was a serious matter for a man to be childless in the ancient world, for it left him without an heir. But it was even more calamitous for a woman: to have a great brood of children was the mark of success as a wife; to have none was ignominious failure. So throughout the ancient East polygamy was resorted to as a means of obviating childlessness. But wealthier wives preferred the practice of surrogate motherhood, whereby they allowed their husbands to 'go in to' . . . their maids, a euphemism for sexual intercourse (cf. 6:4; 30:3; 38:8, 9; 39:14). The mistress could then feel that her maid's child was her own and exert some control over it in a way that she could not if her husband simply took a second wife."*⁴⁹⁸
- x. *". . . one Nuzi tablet reads: 'Kelim-ninu has been given in marriage to Shennima. . . . If Kelim-ninu does not bear children, Kelim-ninu shall acquire a woman of the land of Lulu (i.e., a slave girl) as wife for Shennima.'"*³
- xi. Sarai says "The Lord" has prevented me from having children. We see the principle that the Lord controls the womb.
- xii. Sarai gives Abram the plan.
- xiii. Verse 2: Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.
- xiv. If you look at the words that Sarai used to offer Hagar it is the same type of wording that Eve used in Genesis 3:6. This is making the point that this is not good.
- xv. We will see this idea of giving servants for reproduction again in Gen 30:3, 4, 9, 10.
- xvi. Moody: *In this section Abram's doubt in God's promise of an heir resurfaced, prompting the sin with Hagar. The specific pattern surrounding the temptation, sin, consequences, and divine response to Abram parallels Adam's sin in Gn 3. This reinforces that God's ideal purpose for humanity is*

⁴⁹⁸ 498. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, p. 7.

² Tom Constable, [Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ge 16:1.

³ Tom Constable, [Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ge 16:1.

refocused in Abram, and God will sovereignly ensure the success of this purpose despite Abram being tainted by depravity.⁴

- xvii. Verse 3: Abram had lived in the land for ten years.
- xviii. It has been ten years! That is a long time to wait on the promise. It seems that it has been ten years since Genesis 12:4.
- xix. Sarai took Hagar, the Egyptian servant, and gave her to Abram as a wife. In Genesis 12:16 they were given servants among other things in Egypt.
- xx. MacArthur: *After 10 childless years (cf. 12:4), Sarai resorted to the custom of the day by which a barren wife could get a child through one of her own maidservants (v. 2, "I will obtain children through her"). Abram, ignoring divine reaction and assurance in response to his earlier attempt to appoint an heir (cf. 15:2–5), sinfully yielded to Sarai's insistence, and Ishmael was born (v. 15).⁵*
- xxi. *Hagar became a slave wife, not on equal standing with Sarai. However, if Hagar produced the heir, she would be the primary wife in the eyes of society. When this eventually happened, Hagar become insolent, prompting Sarai's anger.⁶*

II. The results of his compromise (16:4–16)

Genesis 16:4-16: *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,*

⁴ Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham, eds., "[Genesis](#)," in *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 73.

⁵ John F. MacArthur Jr., [The MacArthur Study Bible: New American Standard Bible](#). (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), Ge 16:3.

⁶ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Ge 16:3.

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.*

- a. *Hagar's marriage to Abram (16:4): After Hagar conceives, she begins to look down upon Sarai.*
- b. *She despises Sarai.*
- c. *I like what the CSB says: The young slave girl found herself carrying the child of the most important man in the clan—something Sarai had never done. As a result, Sarai **became contemptible to Hagar.***⁷
- d. *In verse 5 Sarai is torn about this.*
- e. *It looks like she almost blames Abram. Sarai is saying may the wrong done her be upon Abram.*
- f. *As in the Garden of Eden the immediate consequence of sin was personal enmity. The Moody Bible Commentary shares: This enmity between Adam and Eve was expressed in their covering/hiding from each other those parts of themselves that physically reflect their deepest intimacy. In the present instance the marital enmity is expressed in v. 5, where Sarai accosted Abram for impregnating Hagar. This resulted in Sarai being **despised in her [Hagar's] sight.** As in the case of Adam and Eve, the enmity resulting from sin was carried over into the relationship of the couple's children. This also reinforces that sexual sin invariably results in personal enmity at some level.*⁸
- g. *Sarai is pouring out emotions. Sarai is voicing how she is despised.*
- h. *Hagar's mistreatment by Sarai (16:5–6): After suffering harsh treatment from the frustrated Sarai, Hagar flees into the desert.*
- i. *NET: Sarai blamed Abram for Hagar's attitude, not the pregnancy. Here she expects to be vindicated by the LORD who will prove Abram responsible. A colloquial*

⁷ Robert D. Bergen, "[Genesis](#)," in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 34.

v. verse

⁸ Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham, eds., "[Genesis](#)," in *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 73–74.

- rendering might be, “God will get you for this.” It may mean that she thought Abram had encouraged the servant girl in her elevated status.⁹
- j. In verse 6 Abram says that her maid is in her power. Abram says that she can do what she wants.
 - k. CSB: *Though Hagar was now his wife (v. 3), Abram relinquished his rights to her. Hagar was once again no more than Sarai’s slave.*¹⁰
 - l. It was forced sex and then it was treated her poorly.
 - m. Hagar runs away.
 - n. MacArthur: **Shur**. *South of Palestine and east of Egypt, which meant that Hagar attempted to return home to Egypt.*¹¹
 - o. *Hagar’s meeting with the Lord (16:7–14)*
 - p. The Lord advises her (16:7–9): The angel of the Lord comes to her by a well and tells her, “Return to [Sarai] and submit to her authority.”
 - q. This is the first time the “Angel of the Lord” appears in Scripture.
 - r. We will see “the angel of the Lord” again: Gen 21:17, 18; 22:11, 15; 31:11¹²
 - s. It is quite likely that this “Angel of the Lord” is YHWH or Jesus, the visible image of the invisible God.
 - t. In verse 8 God asks her questions. In Genesis 3:9 God asks Adam questions.
 - u. In verse 9 she is to return and submit.
 - v. In verse 10 we see an amazing statement regarding her descendants.
 - w. Yes, she has to go back and serve but her descendants will multiply.
 - x. The Lord assures her (16:10–14): The angel of the Lord tells Hagar that she will have innumerable descendants through her unborn son, who will be called Ishmael (“God hears”).
 - y. Verse 11: Ishmael means “God hears.”
 - z. Verse 12: more statements about who Ishmael will be. They will be to the east of Abram’s descendants.
 - aa. Moody: **The angel of the LORD said that her son Ishmael ... will be a wild donkey of a man (v. 12; i.e., uncontrollable and fractious), with especial animosity (such being the sense of to the east—i.e., in rebellion/enmity) toward his brothers in the line of promise, namely, Israel (v. 12). Throughout the Bible, the Ishmaelites are represented**

⁹ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Ge 16:5.

v. verse

¹⁰ Robert D. Bergen, [“Genesis,”](#) in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 34.

¹¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [The MacArthur Study Bible: New American Standard Bible](#). (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), Ge 16:7.

¹² [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

v. verse

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- as being in continual opposition to Israel and their assertion of ownership and dominion of the land of Israel (cf. Ps 83:2–6; Jdg 8:24).¹³
- bb. NET: *The prophecy is not an insult. The wild donkey lived a solitary existence in the desert away from society. Ishmael would be free-roaming, strong, and like a bedouin; he would enjoy the freedom his mother sought.*¹⁴
- cc. Keil and Delitzsch: *“He will be a wild ass of a man.” The figure of a אֲרָרָה, onager, that wild and untameable animal, roaming at its will in the desert, of which so highly poetic a description is given in Job 39:5–8, depicts most aptly “the Bedouin’s boundless love of freedom as he rides about in the desert, spear in hand, upon his camel or his horse, hardy, frugal, revelling in the varied beauty of nature, and despising town life in every form;” and the words, “his hand will be against every man, and every man’s hand against him,” describe most truly the incessant state of feud, in which the Ishmaelites live with one another or with their neighbours. “He will dwell before the face of all his brethren.” עַל פְּנֵי denotes, it is true, to the east of (cf. Gen. 25:18), and this meaning is to be retained here; but the geographical notice of the dwelling-place of the Ishmaelites hardly exhausts the force of the expression, which also indicated that Ishmael would maintain an independent standing before (in the presence of) all the descendants of Abraham. History has confirmed this promise. The Ishmaelites have continued to this day in free and undiminished possession of the extensive peninsula between the Euphrates, the Straits of Suez, and the Red Sea, from which they have overspread both Northern Africa and Southern Asia.¹⁵*
- dd. In verse 13 she calls the place “El Roi” meaning the God Who sees.
- ee. Hagar has remained alive after seeing Him.
- ff. In verse 14 the well is called Therefore the well was called “Beer-lahai-roi...” This means “the well of the living One Who sees me.
- gg. *Hagar’s mothering of Ishmael* (16:15–16): She gives birth to Ishmael when Abram is eighty-six years old.¹⁶
- i. Hagar gives birth and Abram names the son Ishmael which is what verse 11 said.
 - ii. I do not know if God told Abram also to name him that or if Hagar revealed this to Abram.

cf. compare or consult

¹³ Michael A. Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham, eds., [“Genesis.”](#) in *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 74.

¹⁴ Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Ge 16:12.

¹⁵ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, [Commentary on the Old Testament](#), vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 141.

¹⁶ H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Ge 15:18–16:16.

- iii. ESV Study Bible: *By naming Ishmael, Abram publicly acknowledges him as his son and heir.*¹⁷
- iv. Keil and Delitzsch: *Having returned to Abram's house, Hagar bare him a son in his 86th year. He gave it the name Ishmael, and regarded it probably as the promised seed, until, thirteen years afterwards, the counsel of God was more clearly unfolded to him.*¹⁸

¹⁷ Crossway Bibles, [*The ESV Study Bible*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 79.

¹⁸ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, [*Commentary on the Old Testament*](#), vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 142.