

Genesis 16

Verses 1- 3

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had not borne him a child, but she had an Egyptian slave woman whose name was Hagar. ² So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing *children*. Please have relations with my slave woman; perhaps I will obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. ³ And so after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave woman, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife.

² So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing *children*. Please have relations with my slave woman; perhaps I will obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.

In chapter 15 God had just told Abraham the following:

See Genesis 15:2-4

² But Abram said, "Lord ^[b]God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ Abram also said, "Since You have given me no son, one who has been born in my house is my heir." ⁴ Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."

Abram knew that he would have a son but the text does not specifically say that Sarai would be the mother. Did Abram and Sarai do this thinking it was part of God's will? If they did, they were not thinking clearly for several reasons.

1. The idea that Sarai could obtain children thru another woman was ludicrous.
2. This arrangement violated the marriage relationship. They knew the teachings about creation and how God designed marriage to be between a man and a woman.

See Genesis 2:24

²⁴ **For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.**

3. It also set a bad example for future generations. His grandson will have 4 wives.

³ And so after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave woman, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife.

Abram was 75 when he left Haran and this event took place when he was 85. One year later he will have a son, Ishmael, at the age of 86.

Sarai was correct in understanding that her slave woman would be a wife to Abram in the eyes of the Lord. However, in actual practice, Hagar had fewer rights than a wife and they treated her accordingly.

Verses 4 - 6

⁴ Then he had relations with Hagar, and she conceived; and when *Hagar* became aware that she had conceived, her mistress was insignificant in her sight. ⁵ So Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be upon you! I put my slave woman into your arms, but when she saw that she had conceived, I was insignificant in her sight. May the Lord judge between you and me." ⁶ But Abram said to Sarai, "Look, your slave woman is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight." So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence.

⁴ Then he had relations with Hagar, and she conceived; and when *Hagar* became aware that she had conceived, her mistress was insignificant in her sight.

Even if people have no knowledge of God or even worse they openly hate and mock Him, they should still understand that human nature tells us that polygamy is bound to be full of envy, jealousy, and strife. Godly people have to ignore both their creator and human nature not to understand this.

⁵ So Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be upon you! I put my slave woman into your arms, but when she saw that she had conceived, I was insignificant in her sight. May the Lord judge between you and me."

Sarai seems to think that Abram is to blame for her mistreatment and that God would judge in her favor if He were to make a judgment on this matter. However, any fair minded person can see that both of them had an equal blame in this misguided plan. Sarah was wrong for suggesting this arrangement and Abraham was equally wrong for agreeing to it.

⁶ But Abram said to Sarai, “Look, your slave woman is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight.” So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence.

Abram told Sarai that she was responsible for Hagar and that she should handle the situation as she saw fit. Sarai punished Hagar for her contempt by treating her harshly and she decided to run away since she had no one (not even her husband) to intercede for her.

Verses 7- 8

⁷ Now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸ He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s slave woman, from where have you come, and where are you going?” And she said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.”

⁷ Now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.

“The Angel of the Lord” is a reference to the Son of God. There are numerous verses in the Old Testament that confirm this but just one will be listed here.

See Genesis 22:15–17

¹⁵ Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶ and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand, which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

This is an amazing thing that happened here. In this male dominated society, a handmaid (female slave) is being addressed by the God of Heaven and she will be given a great promise.

The Lord met with her by a spring of water in the wilderness on the way to Shur.

See map 1605 below



Hagar left Hebron and was on her way to Egypt. She was an Egyptian by birth and it is possible that she was hoping to receive help from a relative.

Verses 9 -11

⁹ So the angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority." ¹⁰ The angel of the Lord also 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 pregnant,
And you will give birth to a son;
And you shall name him Ishmael,
Because the Lord has heard your affliction.

⁹ So the angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority.”

God may have wanted her to return so she would be blessed along with the rest of Abram’s family. However, God makes decisions based on His full knowledge of each person and all of their descendants which no man can do.

¹⁰ The angel of the Lord also said to her, “I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.”

See Map 1610



The Arab world had a combined population of around 464 million in 2022. Pretty good promise for a slave woman from Egypt wouldn’t you say. However, this was also part of the blessing that was promised to Abram when God told him that he would become the father of many nations.

¹¹ The angel of the Lord said to her further,
“Behold, you are pregnant,
And you will give birth to a son;
And you shall name him Ishmael,
Because the Lord has heard your affliction.

The name Ishmael means “God will hear”. The Lord heard Hagar and answered with a great blessing.

Verse 12

**¹² But 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 in defiance of all his brothers.”**

This description should be applied to Ishmael as a person, not to all of his descendants. Arabs are not a race. Some have blue eyes and red hair; others are dark skinned; many are somewhere in between. Most Arabs are Muslims but there are also millions of Christian Arabs and thousands of Jewish Arabs, just as there are Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Americans.

Verse 13

¹³ She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.”

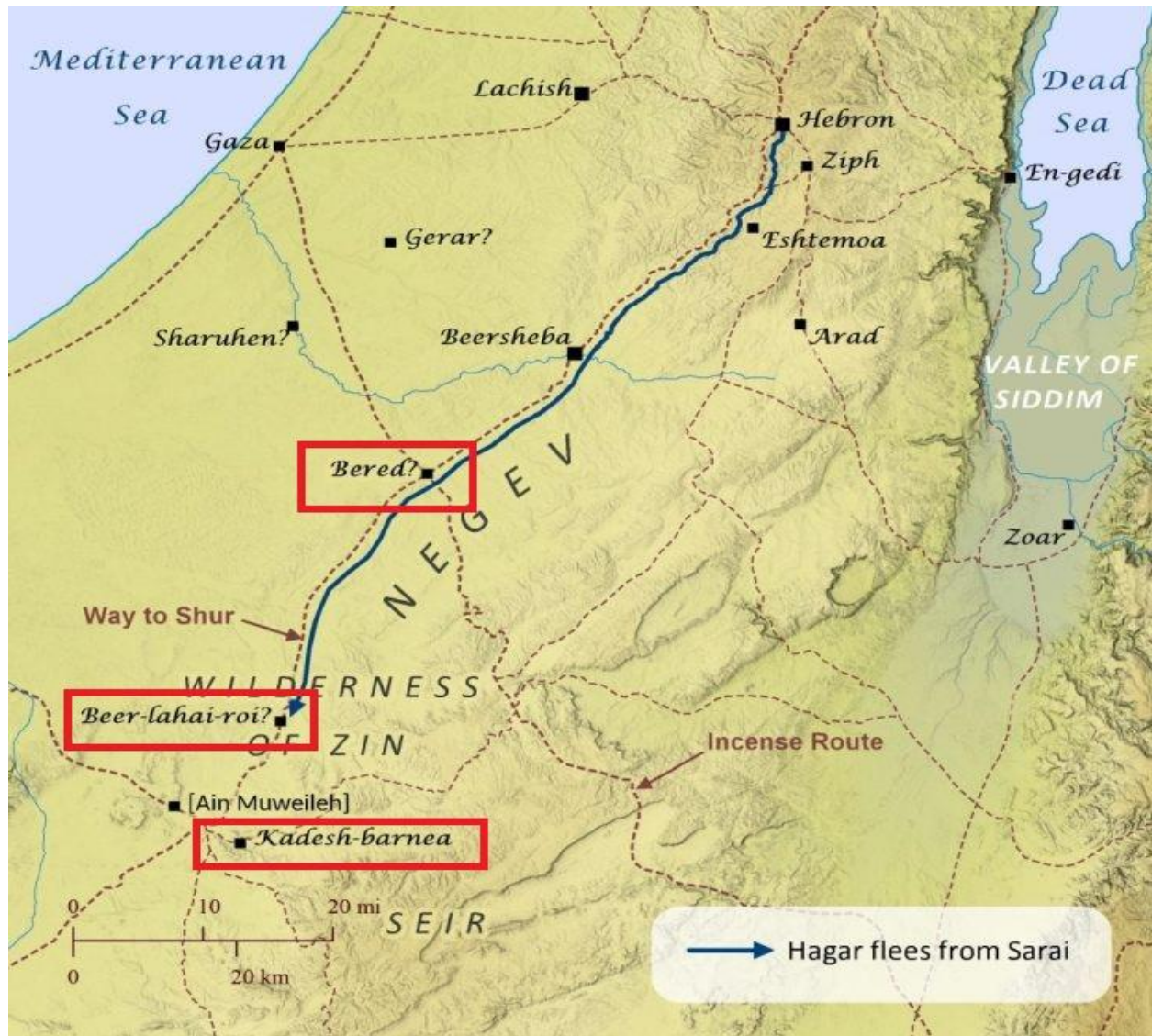
This should be an encouragement to every person that has been treated unfairly in life and particularly those who have been forced into a life of slavery.

While Hagar was told to return to her mistress and submit to her authority she could go back home knowing that she had met with God and received a great promise.

Verse 14

¹⁴ That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

See map 1615



Verses 15 -16

¹⁵ So Hagar bore a son to Abram; and Abram named his son, to whom Hagar gave birth, Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.

Isaac would not be born for another 14 years.