

**Distress over Abram's Mistress (Genesis 16)**  
Grace Chapel June 10, 2009 Dr. John Niemelä

## INTRODUCTION

### REVIEW

12:1–9 After Terah's death in Haran, God told Abram to leave his father's house & household; God would make him a great nation & bless him so that he would bless others, so Abram went to Canaan where the Lord revealed Himself again and gave the land to Abram, who then built altars to the Lord and worshipped Him throughout the land that the Lord gave him (claiming that land for the Lord)

12:10–20 A severe famine caused Abram to sojourn in Egypt; he told Sarai that her beauty would cause Egyptians to kill him, but to spare her alive; she was to say that she was his sister, so that he would be blessed & live; Pharaoh took her into his house & bestowed a great dowry on Abram, but Pharaoh's whole household (other than Sarai) became quite sick; Pharaoh rebuked Abram for the evil resulting from saying that she is his sister, because it created the possibility that intimacy could have occurred; Pharaoh gave Sarai back & deported Abram, w/ Sarai, & all that belonged to Abram

13:1–18 Abram left Egypt w/ Sarai, Lot & wealth; returned to Bethel & called on the Lord; Abram & Lot's herds overtaxed the land, so strife arose between their herdsmen while Canaanites looked on; Abram ended the strife because he & Lot were relatives (letting Lot choose land); Lot chose the Jordan valley w/ much water; so they separated; Abram dwelt in (the uplands of) Canaan, but Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain (even wicked Sodom); God reaffirmed the promise of innumerable seed; God invited Abram to investigate the land; Abram settled near Hebron and built an altar (to worship the Lord)

14:1–24 Eastern kings fought the western kings who stopped paying tribute in the 13th year; the next year, the eastern kings attacked the Rephaim, the Zuzim, the Emim, the Horites, the Amalekites, the Amorites; then they attacked 5 kings near the Dead Sea; some western kings fell into tar pits around the Dead Sea; others escaped to the mountains; the eastern kings pillaged Sodom & Gomorrah, taking Lot captive before going northward; an escapee told Abram in Hebron (dwelling w/ his Amorite allies); Abram armed his 318 men & went to Dan; after dividing forces, Abram attacked, pursuing [survivors of the initial attack] to Hobah; thus, Abram rescued all of the booty, Lot, & other captives; after Abram returned from defeating Chedorlaomer, Sodom's king met Abram near Jerusalem; then Melchizedek (king of Jerusalem) brought Abram bread & wine & blessed both Abram & God Most High, the creator, who granted Abram victory; then Abram gave Melchizedek a tithe of [Abram's] whole portion; Sodom's king had offered Abram all Sodom's booty if Abram returned the people to him; Abram said that his loyalty is to God Most High, the creator, so he will not be enriched by the king of Sodom (lest he claim to have enriched Abram), but Abram does not speak for his allies nor for the food eaten by his own men

15:1–21 In a vision the Lord told Abram not to fear, because He is his guardian & benefactor; Abram feared that God had not fulfilled the promise, so his servant (Eliezer of Damascus) might be his heir, but the Lord assured him that his own son (not a servant) would be his heir & his seed would be innumerable (Abram had already believed in the Lord, so He accounted it to him for righteousness); the God who promises is the same One who led Abram to give him this land; Abram requested tangible evidence of God's guarantee, so God told him to prepare animals for a covenant ceremony, which he did; Abram saw himself going into deep sleep as the sun was setting; God said that his seed would be afflicted strangers & servants in a foreign land for 400 years, but would leave that land with many possessions; Abram would die peacefully at an old age; the fourth generation will return to Canaan, when the iniquity of the Amorites is complete [when they are ready for judgment]; the Lord unilaterally ratified the covenant, guaranteeing the fulfillment of the promises; the Lord specified the boundaries of the land and the peoples who would be displaced

**NEW EXPOSITION****(16:1–6) Human Efforts to Produce the Promised Lineage****(16:1) Sarai was barren, but had an Egyptian handmaid**

Abram was 75 when they left Haran (Gen 12:4)	2091 BC
He takes Hagar as wife ten years later (Gen 16:3), so he is 85	2081 BC
Hagar bears Ishmael when Abram is 86 (Gen 16:16)	2080 BC
Sarai was ten years younger than Abram (Gen 17:17)	

Sarai was already called barren in Gen 11:30

If she were barren in child-bearing years, she certainly is barren at age 75

**(16:2) Sarai blamed the Lord for her barrenness and broached the possibility of Abram producing a child for Sarai through Hagar; Abram obeyed her**

Giving of a handmaid was practiced in the cultures with which Abram & Sarai knew, but this is not the Lord's solution

The phrase *go in to my maid* is not as graphic as it may seem. It is *in to*, not *into*. Hebrew avoids explicit sexual language. Some parts of the body do not have Hebrew names.

**(16:3) Sarai gave Abram Hagar as wife ten years after they came to Canaan****(16:4–5) When Hagar conceived, she treated Sarai with insolence, so Sarai blamed Abram and asked for the Lord to judge between Abram and Sarai****(16:6) Abram gave Sarai a free hand, so she was harsh with Hagar, prompting Hagar to flee**

**(16:7–21) God Blesses Hagar & Her Unborn Child, when Abram Was Not a Blessing to Her**

**(16:7) The LORD found her by a water spring along the route that goes to Shur**

There were two routes available:

1. the coastal route (called *the way of the Philistines*)
2. the inland route (called *the way to Shur*)

By analogy: Take the *Garden Grove Freeway* or the *Artesia Freeway*.

The *Angel of the LORD* refers to the *LORD* Himself here. Cf. verse 13.

**(16:8) The LORD asked why she traveled; Hagar said she was fleeing her mistress Sarai**

**(16:9) The LORD instructed her to return to Sarai and to submit to her**

**(16:10) The LORD promised a sizeable (and significant) lineage through Ishmael**

**(16:11) The LORD said she was to name her son Ishmael, because the LORD heard her affliction**

*shāma'* is the vocabulary form of a verb meaning *to hear*.

*ē'l* means *God*.

*Yishmā'ē'l* means *God hears* or *God will hear*.

*The God who heard is the God who will hear*. He will not forget Ishmael.

Cf. Gen 17:20

**(16:12) The LORD announced that Ishmael (and his lineage) would be as a wildman (fighting with their brethren) as they dwell in the presence of his brethren**

NASB handles to the face of all his brethren as to the east of. . . . NKJ is right.

**(16:13–14) Hagar called on the name of the LORD who spoke to her (You are a God who sees me) so the well (between Kadesh and Bered) is called *Be'ēr lahay rō'î* and she exclaimed that she still lives after having seen the LORD.**

'attâ ē'l rō' î  
You God sees me

be'ēr la hay rō' î  
well belonging to the Living One who sees me

**(16:15–16) Hagar bore a son for Abram that Abram named Ishmael, when he was 86**

## CONCLUSION

This passage helps to flesh out Genesis 12:3. God expects Abram to be a blessing to others, even after Abram has created a mess by improvising,