GENESIS 16

The Child of the Flesh

1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife,[i] did not bear him any children. But she had a female servant, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

2 Then Sarai said to Abram, "Now look. Since Yahveh has kept me from having children, go to my maid. It may be that I may obtain children by her."[ii]

So Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. **3** And Sarai, Abram's wife,[iii] took Hagar,[iv] her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. This happened after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan.

4 When he went into Hagar, she conceived. When she saw that she had conceived, she treated her mistress with contempt.

5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "Let my wrong be upon you! I have given my maid into your bosom. But when she saw that she had conceived, she despised me. May Yahveh judge between me and you."

6 But Abram said to Sarai, "Look! You have authority over your maid. Do to her as it pleases you."

So, when Sarai dealt harshly with her, Hagar ran away from her. **7** And the Angel[v] of Yahveh came to her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain on the way to Shur.[vi]

8 Then he said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid.[vii] Where did you come from?[viii] Where will you go?"

And she said, "I am running away from the face of my mistress, Sarai."

9 Then the Angel of Yahveh[ix] said to her, "Go back to your mistress. Place yourself under her authority."

10 The Angel of Yahveh said to her, "I will give you so many children that they cannot be numbered."

11 Again, the Angel of Yahveh said to her, "Look! You are pregnant and will give birth to a son. You will call his name Ishmael,[x] because Yahveh has heard your affliction. **12** He will be a wild man. His hand will be against everyone, and everyone will be against him. He will dwell in the presence of all his family."

13 Then she called the name of Yahveh who spoke to her, "You, El, see me."[xi] She said, "I have also seen the One who sees me!"

14 They named the well Be'er Lahai Roi[xii] after this. See! It is between Kadesh and Bered. **15** Then Hagar gave birth to Abram's son. Abram called his son's name, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. **16** Abram was 86 years old when Hagar gave birth to his son Ishmael.

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[i] The Hebrew אִשָּׁה is an **Aleph**-Shin-**Tav**. The **Aleph**-Shin-**Tav** is the first (**Aleph**) love (*Shin*=flames) of the marriage (**Tav** = covenant). This is why Strong's defines the word as woman or wife. The deeper meaning is that Sarai was the mother of God's covenant nation of Israel. God uses and blesses these women.

[ii] Surrogacy was a common practice in the ancient Near East. The wife would arrange to have one of the servants give birth to children in order to produce an heir for her husband. The female servant remained a slave, but the child was the legal heir of the husband and wife.

[iii] The Hebrew אִשָּׁת is an **Aleph**-Shin-**Tav**. The **Aleph**-Shin-**Tav** is the first (**Aleph**) love (*Shin*=flames) of the marriage (**Tav** = covenant). This is why Strong's defines the word as woman or wife. The deeper meaning is that Sarai was the mother of God's covenant nation of Israel. God uses and blesses these women.

[iv] Note that the **Aleph**-**Tav**" does not show up connected to Hagar's name until she becomes Abraham's concubine. At this point, Hagar came into the intimate marital covenant with Abraham, a type of the **Aleph**-**Tav**. See the article "The **Aleph**-**Tav**."

[v] The word "Angel" must be capitalized because of the subject "I" in verse 10. Only God can cause a person to multiply into a great nation.

[vi] Hagar is an Egyptian. Shur is on the way back to Egypt.

[vii] Remember! Hagar is in a covenant relationship with Yahveh.

[viii] The Hebrew בָּאת is a Bet-**Aleph**-**Tav**. This word brings us into a deeper covenant relationship with the **Aleph**-**Tav**. Scripture points us to her covenant relationship with Abraham. See the article "The **Aleph**-**Tav**."

[ix] The phrase "Angel of Yahveh" is frequently identified with Yahveh Himself: Gen 16:13; 22:11-2; 31:11, 13; 48:16; Judges 6:11, 16, 22; 13:22-23; Zechariah 3:1-2.

[x] "God will hear."

[xi] The Hebrew אֵל רֳאִי means "El Roi." The form רֳאִי (*r^{o}-ee*) with this vowel pointing and suffix only appears here in Gen 16:13. Normally, when Hebrew attaches the first common singular suffix *-î*, it has a possessive idea (אֲדֹנִי "my lord," אָבִי "my father"). But here it attaches to a rare nominal form of רָאָה ("to see"). The sense is not "my God of seeing," but rather "God who sees me," with the suffix understood objectively.

[xii] "Well of the Living One who sees me."