

GENESIS 16

¹Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar; ²so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my servant; perhaps I can build a family through her."

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. ³So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian servant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. ⁴He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.

⁵Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me."

⁶"Your servant is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

HEBREWS 10

³⁵ do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. ³⁶You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. ³⁷For,

"In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay."

³⁸And,

"But my righteous one will live by faith. And I will not be pleased with the one who shrinks back."

³⁹But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

GALATIANS 3

³Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by human effort?

⁴Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain? ⁵Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by your observing the law, or by your believing what you heard?

⁶So also Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

⁷Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. ...

⁹So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

¹⁰All who rely on observing the law are under a curse ... ¹¹Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because "the righteous will live by faith." ¹²The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, "Whoever does these things will live by them."

Run Away [Part 1]

Trouble in the family of faith

It had been 10 years [16:3] since Abram and Sarai (*sāray*) embarked on the adventure of faith. Sarai too shared in the covenant of faith and blessing. With Abram she experienced the tragedy and pain of presumption - and received the favour of God's faithfulness and rescue [12:9-13:18].

Sarai was physically a very beautiful woman [12:11,14]. Peter comments that she also had the unfading beauty of a gentile and quiet spirit [1Pe 3:4]. Furthermore she was a godly woman, a woman of faith [Heb 11:11; 1Pe 3:6] and hope [1Pe 3:5].

Sarai (age 75) had been waiting in hope for a long time.

Surrender to Fear & Doubt » Pride

Even in the household of faith there are times of surrender to fear & doubt.

- Sarai's first words are surprising – words of hostility, despair, misery, and rejection. Some years later, Naomi would echo similar emotions.

Ruth 1:20 "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. ... The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."

Sarai blames the LORD for her barren condition. Sarai lost confidence [Heb 10:35-39] that the promise of a child is for her. She has forgotten that - by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit [Gal 3:14].

What follows was not faith, and was not pleasing to the LORD [Ro 8:8; Heb 10:38; 11:6].

Sarai reckons that there is another way - a human way to fulfil the divine promise. She schemes to "make things work". She allows her mind to be controlled by the sinful nature [Ro 8:7,8]. It is 'a moment of untruth'.

- Hagar (*hāgār*) is a young Egyptian woman probably acquired as a servant when Abram was in Egypt [Ge 12:16]. She must have proven herself to be of good character for Sarai and Abram to choose her to conceive a child. The proposal [16:2] was not an act of love, but of insemination. No doubt she had heard about and observed Abram's faith journey. She was told of God's promise [15:4], and was chosen ("called") to be the channel of God's blessing. The choice of obedience meant she would give up (sacrifice) the hope of marriage and making her own family. She placed her future (hope) well-being in the hands of Abram and God!

All three characters misbehave (pride » failure) and "run away"

- 16:4 Hagar wrongly reckoned that the baby within her [conceived naturally Ga 4:23] was the son of the promise. She became proud (thinking: I have fulfilled the promise) and showed contempt, perhaps expecting to displace Sarai [cf Pr 30:23]. This invited abuse from Sarai. Hagar is proud of her 'work'. She runs away from the unfair treatment.
- 16:5,6 Sarai is jealous and angry. She blames God [16:2] and Abram [16:5], and Hagar [16:5]. She feels unloved and rejected. Sarai is proud of her righteousness. She "runs away" from her failure.
- 16:6 Abram shirks responsibility under threat [cf Ge 12:11-13]. He does not courageously lead with faith, retreats in presumption. Abram is proud of his innocence. He "runs away" from responsibility.

It's a mess

A news story of that day would probably use words such as:

fear, blame, jealousy, pride, anger, shame, suffering,
injustice, doubt, loneliness, impatience, rejection,
selfishness, abuse, distress, manipulation

The photograph is not one of faith and blessing. It is a picture of pride, independence and the curse [Ga 3:10].

We probably would not be surprised if God were indeed to abandon Abram. But He doesn't. He rescues them - redemption. » part 2.

GENESIS 16

³So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian servant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. ⁴He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

⁶... Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

⁷The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.

⁸And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

"I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered.

⁹Then the angel of the LORD told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her."

¹⁰The angel added, "I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count."

¹¹The angel of the LORD also said to her:

"You are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son.

You shall name him Ishmael^a, for the LORD has heard of your misery.

¹²He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."

¹³She 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." ¹⁴That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi^b; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. ...

^a 11 Ishmael means God hears

^b 14 Beer Lahai Roi means well of the Living One who sees me.

חֶסֶד, *khesed*, God's covenant loyalty - the commitment that God has made with his people - a commitment to be our God, to be there in our future, to be for us, to be loving and merciful, even when we fail or are unfaithful.

2 CHRONICLES 7

¹⁴if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

2 CORINTHIANS 1

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

Run Away [Part 2]

Reconciliation

Background to the story

10 years earlier Abram and Sarai (*saray*) embarked on the adventure of faith. Sarai shared in the covenant of faith and blessing. Now aged 75, she had been waiting in hope for a long time and lost confidence that the promise would be fulfilled through her [Heb 10:35-39; Ga 3:3]. In a moment of untruth, she, and Abram schemed to "make things work".

The outcome is a mess (curse):

- Hagar is proud of her 'work'. She runs away from the unfair treatment.
- Sarai is proud of her righteousness. She runs away from her shame.
- Abram is proud of his innocence. He runs away from responsibility.

The LORD found Hagar

God sees their misery [cf Ex 3:7] and steps into this painful and messy situation to heal and to rescue. Likewise, the LORD knows us - knows our circumstance - and meets us at the place where we want to escape.

God (identified as the angel of the LORD) meets Hagar at her point of need. (This is the longest conversation that God has with a woman in the OT.)

16:8 Hagar ... The LORD calls her by name. God's first word is one of **love**, acceptance and **identity**. We have been created for intimacy. (Note: Abram and Sarai don't call Hagar by name. She is simply the *servant*.)

servant of Sarai ... Perhaps she had no idea that **the LORD knew her**.

16:8 What are you doing here? [cf 2Ki 19:27; Ps 139] The LORD asks these questions to help Hagar acknowledge and take responsibility / ownership for her failure. He challenges her to get things in right perspective - the first step towards rescue (reconciliation / redemption).

16:8 I'm running away - Hagar **admits to her failure and unfaithfulness**. She does not give any excuse; there is no self-justification and no complaint. She 'owns' her disgrace. Her shameful reply is from a heart that is sorrowful, broken, humble and longing to be healed [cf the lost son Lk 15].

16:9 Go back ... and submit [cf 1Pe 2:18-21] Reconciliation with God and with one another begins with acknowledging reality and then acting in humility. **Repentance** is an act of "going back and submitting". The LORD is giving "**purpose**" to Hagar's life.

16:10 The LORD's promise to Abram [Ge 12:2; 13:16; 15:4,5] will be fulfilled, even with Hagar. The LORD gives **hope** to Hagar.

In the Presence of God, Hagar found **identity, purpose and hope**.

God is faithful. Even though Abram, Sarai and Hagar had all failed and were unfaithful, God will be merciful and gracious to them. **This is God's khesed**.

The One who sees me!

16:11 Ishmael means God hears. He hears the cry of our heart. He sympathizes with our condition [cf Heb 2:18], and wants to rescue us.

16:13 the God who sees me. He sees our desperate condition. Hagar believed in the Living God. She believed His promise [cf Ge 15:6]. This is **faith**. [God hears, sees and rewards ... this is prayer Mt 6:6]

It must have been a humiliating and anxious-filled experience to come back from the desert and enter the tents of Abram again. But, she went back in obedience and faith, confident of God's favor to her.

- **God cares. He hears. He sees. He fulfills His promise. He redeems.** This was the experience of Hagar.

P.S. Comfort and Reconciliation [16:15]

When Hagar returned to Abram and Sarai, she came with a **message of hope** to them! [2Co 1:3,4]. It was the message they needed to hear.

16:15 Abram names his son and takes responsibility. How wonderful are God's ways!