

# Genesis 16 Commentary

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Summary Chart of The Book of Genesis								
Focus	Foundation Events (Four Events) (Events Predominant)				Foundation People (Four People) (People Predominant)			
Divisions	Creation (Ge 1-2)	Fall (Ge 3-5)	Flood (Ge 6-9)	Nations (Ge 10-12)	Abraham's Faith (Ge 12-24)	Isaac's Family (Ge 25-26)	Jacob's Conflicts (Ge 27-36)	Joseph's Calamity (Ge 37-50)
Topics	Beginning of the Human Race (Race As A Whole)				Beginning of the Hebrew Race (Family of Abraham)			
	Faithfulness of Mankind (Noah)				Faithfulness of One Man's Family (Abraham)			
	Historical				Biographical			
Place	Eastward From Eden to Ur				Westward From Canaan to Egypt			
Time	~2000+ Years (20% of Genesis) (~4004-2090BC)				About 300 Years 193 Yr in Canaan, 93 Yr in Egypt (80% of Genesis) (2090-1804BC)			
	Primeval History of Humanity				Patriarchal History of Israel			
Author	Moses							

## BEGINNINGS

- Ge 1:1-25 - The Universe (Everything)
- Ge 1:26-2:25 - The Human Race
- Ge 3:1-7 - Sin Enters the World
- Ge 3:8-24- God Promises Redemption from Bondage to Sin
- Ge 4:1-15 - Family Life
- Ge 4:16ff - Civilization
- Ge 10:1-11:32 - The Nations of the World
- Ge 12:1ff - The Story of Israel and the Jews



**Abraham believed God** (Gal 3:6±, Ge 15:5,6±)

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### John Phillips' Outline of Genesis 16

The Pawning of Faith (Ge 16:1–16)

1. The Test of the Silence of God (16:1–6)
  1. Abram's Double Mind (16:1–4)
    1. The Problem (16:1)
    2. The Proposal (16:2–3)
    3. The Price (16:4)
  2. Sarai's Deceitful Heart (16:5–6)
    1. Her Untamed Tongue (16:5)
    2. Her Untamed Temper (16:6)
  3. Hagar's Defiant Will (16:6)
2. The Truth of the Sovereignty of God (16:7–16)
  1. The Revelation to Hagar (16:7–12)
    1. The Coming of the Omnipresent One: A Revelation of Grace (16:7–8)
    2. The Command of the Omnipotent One: A Revelation of Government (16:9)
    3. The Comfort of the Omniscient One: A Revelation of Greatness (16:10–12)
      1. Promise (16:10–11)
      2. Prophecy (16:12)
  2. The Response by Hagar (16:13–16)
    1. Her Verbal Expression of Faith (16:13–14)
    2. Her Vital Expression of Faith (16:15–16)

**Genesis 16:1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar.**

- bare: Ge 15:2,3 21:10,12 25:21 Judges 13:2 Lu 1:7,36
- Egyptian: Ge 12:16 21:9,21
- name: Ga 4:24, Agar
- [Genesis 16 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## BARREN SARAI'S SITUATION

[Paul Apple](#) sums up Genesis 16 asking "So what is God communicating in this text?"

(1) Don't give in to the temptations of:

Presumption (look at the scheming of Sarah = playing God) and

Passivity (look at how Abram fails to take the leadership in his home)

Abraham is not as mature in the faith as we might expect him to be at this point

(2) Don't turn and run when the pressure is on or imagine that you are outside the scope of God's deliverance and mercy – story of Hagar

Whenever we try to play God, we make a mess of things, but God can show mercy.

**Steven Cole** introduces this chapter - There are few joys in this life that compare to a harmonious family life. The late Dr. M. R. De Haan said, "The nearest thing to heaven on earth is a happy Christian home." At the same time, few things in this world are as stressful as a home filled with strife. Solomon, with his 1,000 wives and concubines, must have known what he was talking about when he wrote, "It is better to live in a corner of the roof than in a house shared with a contentious woman" (Prov. 25:24). ([Why We Have Family Problems - Genesis 16:1-6](#))

**Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar** - This is another parenthetical statement by Moses. Abram ("exalted father") was not living up to his name, his wife had been unable to become pregnant after some 10 years of trying and he had been promised a descendant, in fact as many as the dust of the earth (Ge 13:16+)! There was not much "dust" in the Abram and Sarai household -- "[clean as a whistle.](#)" as they say! It is notable that not once in Genesis 16:1-6 do we see Sarai or Abram consult God. That generally bodes ill for what follows! Notice also that God does not intervene to stop Abram. Why not? A simple answer is that Abram did not ask His advice.

*God won't step in and prevent His children*

*from making some serious mistakes if they don't seek Him.*

-- Steven Cole

**NET NOTE** - The Hebrew term שִׁפְחָה (shifkha, translated "servant" here (MAID in the NAS) and in Ge 16:2, 3, 5, 6, 8) refers to a menial female servant. The story illustrates the limits of Abram's faith as he tries to obtain a son through social custom. The barrenness of Sarai poses a challenge to Abram's faith, just as the famine did in chap. 12. As in chap. 12, an Egyptian figures prominently. (Perhaps Hagar was obtained as a slave during Abram's stay in Egypt.)

**R Kent Hughes** entitles Genesis 16 "**Shortcutting Faith**" noting that this is the "first marital triangle in biblical history. Here we have the multiplication of rejection, anger, hurt, jealousy, and vicious cruelty. Life complicated itself exponentially, and there was no resolution." (BORROW [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing page 236](#))

**Bob Utley** - The name Hagar means "to flee" (BDB 212). This is characteristic of her (cf. Gen. 16:6, 8). She was an Egyptian who was probably purchased for Sarai while they were in Egypt (cf. Gen. 12:10-20).

**Matthew Henry (concise)** - Verses 1-3. Sarai, no longer expecting to have children herself, proposed to Abram to take another wife, whose children she might; her slave, whose children would be her property. This was done without asking counsel of the Lord. **Unbelief worked, God's almighty power was forgotten.** It was a bad example, and a source of manifold uneasiness. **In every relation and situation in life there is some cross for us to bear: much of the exercise of faith consists in patiently submitting, in waiting the Lord's time, and using only those means which he appoints for the removal of the cross. Foul temptations may have very fair pretenses, and be colored with that which is very plausible (WOE!). Fleshly wisdom puts us out of God's way.** This would not be the case, if we would ask counsel of God by his word and by prayer, before we attempt that which is doubtful.

**Bob Utley** - "**the Lord has prevented me from bearing children**" It is obvious that the couple had discussed YHWH's revelations and also the delay in their fulfillment. Apparently they began planning how to "help" Him fulfill His promise! The form of the VERB "prevented" (*Qal*/ PERFECT) denotes completed action. Sarai must have thought she was permanently barren. In a sense Sarai is blaming YHWH for her continued barrenness (cf. Gen. 20:18). The delay was part of the plan of God to mature their trust in Him and to clearly reveal Himself to later generations. All believers struggle with the timing of divinely promised events. [SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD TESTS HIS PEOPLE](#)

**THOUGHT** - Sometimes I hear someone say, "I'm going to go ahead with this action and if God wants to stop me, He can." Or I've heard, "I'm going to marry this non-Christian because I've prayed about it and feel a

peace about it." You don't need to pray about it! God has clearly forbidden it in His Word. If you pray about it, you're sinning, because you're asking God to change His holy standards. God isn't impressed with your prayers unless your heart is ready to obey, and then He will reveal what we should do. But He won't necessarily stop us if we don't seek Him with an obedient heart. (Steven Cole [Why We Have Family Problems - Genesis 16:1-6](#))

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## **Matthew Henry Notes - Matthew Henry Notes: Chapter: 16**

Hagar is the person mostly concerned in the story of this chapter, an obscure Egyptian woman, whose name and story we never should have heard of if Providence had not brought her into the family of Abram. Probably she was one of those maid-servants whom the king of Egypt, among other gifts, bestowed upon Abram (ch. 14:16). Concerning her, we have four things in this chapter:-

- I. Her marriage to Abram her master (Ge 16:1-3).
- II. Her misbehaviour towards Sarai her mistress (Ge 16:4-6).
- III. Her discourse with an angel that met her in her flight (Ge 16:7-14).
- IV. Her delivery of a son (Ge 16:15, 16).

Ge 16:1-3 We have here the marriage of Abram to Hagar, who was his secondary wife. Herein, though some excuse may be made for him, he cannot be justified, for from the beginning it was not so; and, when it was so, it seems to have proceeded from an irregular desire to build up families for the speedier peopling of the world and the church. Certainly it must not be so now. Christ has reduced this matter to the first institution, and makes the marriage union to be between one man and one woman only. Now,

**I. The maker of this match (would one think it?) was Sarai herself:** she said to Abram, I pray thee, go in unto my maid, Ge 16:2. Note,

**1. It is the policy of Satan to tempt us by our nearest and dearest relations** or those friends that we have an opinion of and an affection for. The temptation is most dangerous when it is sent by a hand that is least suspected: it is our wisdom therefore to consider, not so much who speaks as what is spoken.

**2. God's commands consult our comfort and honour much better than our own contrivances do.** It would have been much more for Sarai's interest if Abram had kept to the rule of God's law instead of being guided by her foolish projects; but we often do ill for ourselves.

**II. The inducement to it was Sarai's barrenness.**

**1. Sarai bare Abram no children.** She was very fair (Ge 12:14), was a very agreeable, dutiful wife, and a sharer with him in his large possessions; and yet written childless. Note,

(1.) God dispenses his gifts variously, loading us with benefits, but not overloading us: some cross or other is appointed to be an alloy to great enjoyments.

(2.) The mercy of children is often given to the poor and denied to the rich, given to the wicked and denied to good people, though the rich have most to leave them and good people would take most care of their education. God does herein as it has pleased him.

**2. She owned God's providence in this affliction:** The Lord hath restrained me from bearing. Note,

(1.) As, where children are, it is God that gives them (Ge 33:5), so where they are wanted it is he that withholds them, Ge 30:2. This evil is of the Lord.

(2.) It becomes us to acknowledge this, that we may bear it, and improve it, as an affliction of his ordering for wise and holy ends.

**3. She used this as an argument with Abram to marry his maid; and he was prevailed upon by this argument to do it.** Note,

(1.) When our hearts are too much set upon any creature-comfort, we are easily put upon the use of indirect methods for the obtaining of it. Inordinate desires commonly produce irregular endeavours. If our wishes be not kept in a submission to God's providence, our pursuits will scarcely be kept under the restraints of his precepts.

(2.) It is for want of a firm dependence upon God's promise, and a patient waiting for God's time, that we go out of the way of our duty to catch at expected mercy. He that believes does not make haste.

**4. Abram's compliance with Sarai's proposal**, we have reason to think, was from an earnest desire of the promised seed, on whom the covenant should be entailed. God had told him that his heir should be a son of his body, but had not yet told him that it should be a son by Sarai; therefore he thought, "Why not by Hagar, since Sarai herself proposed it?" Note,

(1.) Foul temptations may have very fair pretenses, and be coloured with that which is very plausible.

(2.) Fleshly wisdom, as it anticipates God's time of mercy, so it puts us out of God's way.

(3.) This would be happily prevented if we would ask counsel of God by the word and by prayer, before we attempt that which is important and suspicious. Herein Abram was wanting; he married without God's consent. This persuasion came not of him that called him.

**Genesis 16:2 So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.**

- the Lord: Ge 17:16 18:10 20:18 25:21 30:2,3,9,22 Ps 127:3
- obtain children: Heb be builded, Ge 30:3,6 Ex 21:4 Ru 4:11
- listened: Ge 3:1-6,12,17

### SARAI'S SAD SOLUTION

**So** - Term of conclusion. Childless Sarah looks around and considers her options and arrived at a bad solution to use her servant. In Genesis 15 Abram considered a solution that also involved his servant Eliezer, but the difference in Abram's case was that he consulted the Lord. See the principle? It's simple! Got a problem? Consult God!

**Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children** - So far her theology is very accurate. She understood that ultimately Jehovah had the "final say" on whether (and when) she and Abram would have children. Abram was 85 by now so his biological clock was ticking and her days of fecundity under the best of circumstances were likewise fading fast. And yet undoubtedly she knew the promises Yahweh had made to Abram concerning his descendants. However, waiting was (is) difficult when you have a promise but no tangible results or evidence. That's why it's called faith for as the NET renders it "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for (CLEARLY THEY HOPE FOR AN HEIR), being convinced of what we do not see." (Heb 11:1) Her faith wavered and the ripples that would result from her wavering faith would have negative impact throughout the ages! Today we call it the Middle East conflict, Jews (Isaac) versus Arabs (Ishmael)!

*Be very careful of the hazards in the road ahead  
when you willfully choose to take a detour from the clear will of God!*

**Please go** in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her." - **Go in to my maid** is a euphemism for sexual relations. Sarai has a faith failure and illustrates what it looks like to walk by sight and not by faith, seeking a human solution to accomplish a heavenly purpose. Sarai acts as if she believes the saying of Ben Franklin that "God helps those who help themselves." That is absolutely NOT Biblical and Genesis 16 strongly refutes that false "humanistic philosophy"! Promises of God do not need our help to be fulfilled. They just call for our obedience to His revealed will. He will take care of the details!

*Hope deferred makes the heart sick.*  
-- Proverbs 13:12

In Proverbs 13:12 the Hebrew word for **hope** (tokhelet) has the implication of a tense if not anxious wait. **Deferred** (mashak) means dragged or drawn out or extended and Sarai had been waiting at least almost 11 years. Her heart was **Sick** (chalah) which means weak, faint, figuratively feeling anxious or grieved. Failure in realizing one's hopes can be depressing or discouraging to all of us. People can bear frustration only so long.

**THOUGHT** - Recall that hope is connected with faith for **faith** is the assurance of things **hoped** for, the conviction of things not seen." (Heb 11:1+) Sarai's faith was faltering! What had begun in the Spirit Sarai (and Abram) now tried to complete in the flesh, which is a problem in many lives and which Paul addressed in Gal 3:3+ writing "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

**THOUGHT** - How are you walking beloved? By the Spirit or by the flesh?

**Ryrie** says that Sarai's humanistic solution was not so bad in the eyes of the world for it "was in accord with the practice of the day,

as attested in legal codes and marriage contracts of that time." [NET NOTE](#) agrees writing "Sarai simply sees this as the social custom of having a child through a surrogate." The problem is always when we seek worldly ways to fulfill heavenly promises.

**Ligon Duncan:** God is sovereign and we have a hard time accepting that. . . The problem is when God's sovereignty conflicts with our desires....the idea of God 'seeing' in the Old Testament is identical with the idea of God 'caring.' If He sees, then He cares.

**Parunak:** From the perspective of the book, it stands as a roadblock to the promises that God has made. In 15:2, Abram raises this issue with the Lord. Here, the narrator observes it. This shift has the effect of making the problem much more prominent. First Abram raises it: "Lord, how am I going to have a seed?" Now the narrator picks it up, as though in a background voice: "That's right, folks. How is he going to have a seed?" It is now not just Abram's problem, but a major problem with the plot, which centers around the divine promises. ([Notes on Gen 16](#))

**Alan Carr** rightly observes that Abram "is still reaping the harvest he sowed in Egypt! Note: You never go into sin and come out clean! There is always some reminder, some evidence that you were there! That is the Law of Sowing and Reaping (Woe! Gal. 6:7-8+) (ED: WHAT'S THE TAKE-AWAY? IT IS BETTER NOT TO SOW!)

**Calvin:** The faith of both of them was defective; not indeed with regard to the substance of the promise, but with regard to the method in which they proceeded; since they hastened to acquire the offspring which was to be expected from God, without observing the legitimate ordinance of God.

It is interesting to compare 2 "faith failures" in Abram's life. In Genesis 12 Famine was a threat to the **promised land**. Here in Genesis 16, Sarah's barrenness was a threat to the **promised seed**, the line of Messiah.

**Bob Utley - Please go in to my maid**" The VERB is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE used in the sense of a request (cf. Gen. 30:3). The verb is often used as a euphemism of sexual intimacy (cf. Gen. 6:4; 16:2; 19:34; 30:3; 38:8,9; 39:14; Deut. 22:13; 25:5; 2 Sam. 11:4; 12:24; 16:21-22; 20:3; Pro. 6:29).

**Perhaps I will obtain children through her** - The Hebrew expression is somewhat strange as literally it read "perhaps I will be built from her." In context the idea is that a child through Hagar would form the foundation for their family.

**Bob Utley** adds ""**I shall obtain children through her**" This is very much in line with the Nuzi Tablets which describe the Hurrian culture of the second millennium B.C. Hagar's child would legally become Sarai's child and Abram's heir. The VERB (BDB 124, KB 139, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) is literally "build up," but is used metaphorically for building a family (cf. Gen. 30:2; Deut. 25:9; 1 Sam. 2:35; 2 Sam. 7:27; 1 Kgs. 11:38; 1 Chr. 17:10,25).

**Believer's Study Bible** - The word "**obtain**" is more literally rendered "I shall be built," showing the selfishness of Sarai's yearning. Abram clearly shared the blame by abandoning his responsibility of leadership and adopting her plan (cf. Ge 16:6; 3:17). Abram in his relationship with Hagar violated God's basic ordinance for marriage, which dates back to creation itself (cf. Ge 2:24, see note below). Sarai's plan amounted to **polygamy**, and the presence of two wives under the same roof **inevitably brings trouble** (cf. Ge 3:4). Hagar despised her mistress. Though she felt inferior in essence, she claimed to be superior in function.

**Believer's Study Bible** note on Ge 2:24 - This verse is the commentary of the narration and not the speech of Adam (cf. v. 23; Matt. 19:4, 5). God's principle of marriage includes three aspects: **(1)** the "leaving," i.e., the legal act in which husband and wife make a public commitment of ultimate loyalty and lifelong devotion one to the other, above all others, even parents; **(2) (CLEAVING)** the "joining," i.e., the personal aspect of tender love and faithful responsibility which is permanent and binding (cf. Eph. 5:21-33); and **(3)** the becoming "one flesh," i.e., the physical or sexual union which symbolizes the beginning of a union of souls, a spiritual and psychological intertwining of persons (cf. Song 3:4, - "*Sex as God designed in proper place and time is good, powerful, living, unifying. Outside of God's design it becomes evil, cruel, perverted, divisive.*"). "**Leave**" (azav, Heb.) and "**join**" (davaq, Heb.) are terms associated with covenant treaties (ED: SEE [Covenant: As It Relates to Marriage](#)). Here, marriage is interpreted as a new relationship bound by mutual oath. Sexual intimacy is an expression of the union of the two people; however, sexual union by itself is not sufficient to define the biblical concept of marriage.

**And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai - Listened** is a word which conveys more than just Abram hearing her voice, but often indicates obedience to what is heard, which is what happened in this case. As substantiation of that point, note that the Septuagint translates **listened** ([shama](#)) with the Greek verb [hupakouo](#) which means to follow instruction, obey, submit to, in this case submitting to Sarai's wishes. Oh my, Abram what are you doing? Our wives are one flesh with us (Ge 2:24+) and are generally excellent counselors. I know my wife has saved me from many a catastrophic decision (at least when I would listen). But God had already spoken and promised Abram a son, so surely it would have been advisable to find a little "altar time" with Him to see if Sarai's advice was sound and in His will.

**THOUGHT** - Oh, to learn this difficult lesson. Before we make a major move (and even a minor move!) we should seek His face and connect with God, to hear His voice (especially through His Word and prayer), so that we might know His will, which is good and acceptable and perfect (Ro 12:2b+). We often pray the following prayer but do we really practice it? -- "*Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven*" (Mt 6:10+). It is a great prayer, especially if we put it into practice!

This is not the first time in Genesis that a man got into trouble by listening to the voice of his wife. In the Garden of Eden when Eve was tempted and fell into sin because of Satan's seductive lies, God addressed her husband Adam with these words "**Because you have listened to the voice of your wife**, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life." (Ge 3:17+) Both cases highlight the faltering faith of two men which would lead to catastrophic consequences. Comparison of Adam and Abram is interesting as the first brought sin and death into the world and the second jeopardized God's plan to address that sin and death!

**Paul Apple**- What was Sarah's view of God? Do we view God as some type of Scrooge that plots to prevent our dreams from becoming reality? Do we view God as someone who forgets about His promises or is unable to overcome obstacles? What is our view of God? James 1 – loving heavenly Father who longs to give good gifts to His children. The God who is faithful to keep all His promises and all powerful to control all things. The God who sees my situation and cares deeply about me

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### **Bob Utley - SPECIAL TOPIC: SATANIC ATTEMPTS TO THWART THE MESSIANIC LINE**

- A. Cain's rebellion, Genesis 4
- B. Mixing of human and angelic lines, Genesis 6
- C. Tower of Babel rebellion, Genesis 11
- D. Abram giving Sarai to Pharaoh, Genesis 12
- E. Birth of Ishmael to Hagar (Sarah's servant), Genesis 16
- F. Abram giving Sarah to Abimelech, Genesis 20
- G. Sacrifice of Isaac, Genesis 22
- H. Rivalry between Esau and Jacob, Genesis 25, 32
- I. Isaac giving his wife to Abimelech, Genesis 26
- J. Trickery and rivalry of Laban, Genesis 29-31
- K. Jacob merging with Shechem, Genesis 34
- L. Rivalry between Jacob's children, Genesis 37
- M. Judah's faithlessness and promiscuity related to Tamar, Genesis 38

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### **Helping God**

Is anything too hard for the Lord? — Genesis 18:14

Today's Scripture : Genesis 16:1-16

People have always had a tendency to want to "help" God when He seems slow to fulfill His promises.

The Lord had promised Abraham that his descendants would be as countless as the stars and that an heir would come from his own aging body (Gen. 15:1-5). Abraham believed the Lord, but Sarah ran out of patience. She talked Abraham into fathering children through her maidservant Hagar. Ishmael was born, but he wasn't the son of promise (17:18-21). Fourteen years later, when Abraham and Sarah were very old, God did the impossible—Sarah conceived and the son of promise, Isaac, was born.

A godly woman shared this story: "Once during my husband's absence, a crisis arose. I needed to act quickly, but I was utterly helpless. Finally I prayed, 'Lord, this is impossible for me. You'll have to take over completely. I can't even help You!'" She testified that God then accomplished the impossible when she admitted her helplessness.

When we depend on ourselves, people see what we can do and our testimony is, "Didn't I do well!" When we depend on God, people see what He can do and our testimony is, "Didn't God do well!" Which testimony will you have today? By: Joanie Yoder (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

When sorrows assail us or terrors draw nigh,  
His love will not fail us, He'll guide with His eye;  
And when we are fainting and ready to fail,  
He'll give what is lacking and make us prevail.

—Anon.

Facing an impossibility gives us the opportunity to trust God.

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## **P G Matthew - Devotional**

She said to Abram, "The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said.—Genesis 16:2

Genesis 15 records one of the high points in the life of Abraham. There we read one of the most important verses in all of Scripture: "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness." But Genesis 16 speaks of one of Abraham's lowest points. This warns us that right after a mountaintop experience, we can make the most terrible mistakes. A tremendous spiritual victory does not guarantee our avoiding a grievous error the next day. How careful we must be as we make decisions, and how important it is to learn from this chapter in Abram's life.

The Christian life entails a series of tests that help us to grow in our faith in God. Abram passed several such tests of faith in Genesis 12 through 15. He earned an "A." But now he faced a trial of patience: Could he be patient and wait on God's perfect timing for a son, or would he try to solve the problem in his own way by leaning on his own understanding? Here Abram failed terribly. At his wife's leading, he who had risen to the zenith of faith now descended to the Dead Sea of self-reliance. Abram meekly obeyed Sarai's carnal instructions, and Hagar, her Egyptian maidservant, conceived a son, Ishmael.

God allowed Abram and Sarai to carry out their plan in opposition to his will, but he would never add his blessing. The consequences proved to be devastating, both at that time and for generations to come. As soon as Hagar knew she was pregnant, there was bitter strife in the household. Fourteen years later, when God appeared to Abraham to renew his promise of a son to be conceived through Sarai, Abraham pleaded with God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!" (Gen. 17:18). But it would never be. We can never manipulate God's will to make it conform to our own. God will never bless our Ishmaels. Eventually, Abraham and Sarah would have to send him away, which "distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son" (Gen. 21:11). Not only so, but the descendants of Ishmael also became archenemies of the future nation of Israel. How bitter is the fruit of self-will!

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**ILLUSTRATION - BEWARE OF DETOURS!** Back in the '60s, my wife and I enjoyed a brief vacation in the beautiful foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. As we began to drive home, she said, "Let's take this side road. It looks interesting." Interesting! It turned out to be one of the worst rural roads we have ever encountered, including some we've seen on mission fields overseas. There were no potholes; they were all craters. And while my car was raising dust, my impatience was raising my temper. As we carefully rounded a curve, we concluded that few people ever took this route; for there in front of us were two turtles, leisurely taking a walk in one of the two ruts that kept you on the road. When we finally reached civilization and a paved road, I thought of the statement Vance Havner often made: "The detour is always worse than the main road." Genesis 16 records a painful detour that Abraham and Sarah made in their pilgrim walk, a detour that brought conflict not only into their home but also into the world. What today's journalists call "the ArabIsraeli conflict" began right here. ([Warren Wiersbe](#))

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### **Parunak ([Notes on Gen 16](#)): 3 Principles:**

#### **1. The wife is more likely to be deceived than the husband.**

1 Tim 2:14, drawing on the woman's own confession in Gen 3:13.

Recall that the NT associates the fall always with Adam, never with Eve.

#### **2. She inherits from Eve a tendency to rebel against her husband and seek to control him:**

Cf. Ge 3:16b+, interpreted in the light of Ge 4:7+.

Here we see Sarai exhibiting the tendency of Ge 3:16b+.

#### **3. The man must obey the injunction of Ge 3:16b+ and lead the wife, obeying the Lord above all.**

Luke 14:26, we are to hate our wife in comparison with the Lord.

This is not just a NT principle; Deut 13:6-11+ requires the Israelite to give up a wife who has fallen into idolatry.

**Genesis 16:3 After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife.**



- had: Ge 12:4,5
- gave: Ge 16:5 30:4,9
- his: Ge 25:6 28:9 32:22 35:22 Judges 19:1-4 2Sa 5:13 1Ki 11:3 Ga 4:25
- [Genesis 16 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## ABRAM WAS PATIENT FOR TEN YEARS

**After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan-** In Ge 12:4 we learn that "Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran." So he would be about 85 years old now.

*God's delays are not God's denials.*

As alluded to earlier, **ten years** explains Sarai's concern to do something about their childlessness. **Ten years** is a long time to wait for a promise from God and most of us don't like to wait. But it is through "**faith and patience** [that we] inherit the promises" (Heb 6:12+). God has a perfect timetable for all that He wants to accomplish in our lives. After all, this event was not the birth of just any baby but he was to play a pivotal part in God's great plan of redemption which would impact the entire world. Sarah's waiting soon led to impatience. Isn't that the effect that waiting can have on all of us? (That's a rhetorical question!) Why did God wait so long? The writer of Hebrews gives us some insight explaining that He wanted Abraham and Sarah to be physically "as good as dead" (Hebrews 11:12+) so that God Alone would receive the glory. At age 85, although his biological clock was ticking, Abraham was still virile enough to father a child (as Ishmael would soon prove), so the time for the miracle baby had not yet arrived according to God's perfect timetable.

A willingness to wait on the Lord is evidence that you are walking by faith. "He that believes shall not make haste (Heb - chush = to hurry or do something quickly)" (Isa. 28:16). Paul quoted Isaiah in Romans 10:11 and amplified its meaning writing that "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED (or ashamed)." Whenever we stop trusting God, we start to get in a hurry and usually run in the wrong direction with the result that we end up being ashamed and/or disappointed (BEEN THERE, DONE THAT!)! While Abraham and Sarah were waiting, God was growing their faith and patience (Heb 6:12) and building their character during those 10 years. Unfortunately, Sarai could not persevere in this trial. James writes

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (Jas 1:2-4+).

**Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife**"took" implies to grasp or take hold of (like Noah taking hold of the dove Ge 8:9). The Lxx uses "lambano" which can mean to grasp one, eg with the hand (Acts 27:35). Normally the girl's father gives her to be married, but in the case of a "maid" her mistress gives her away (compare Ge 29:28 with Ge 30:4). Abraham's taking Hagar as a second wife was legal according to the marriage code of that day. In later years, Jacob would marry his wives' maids, Bilhah and Zilpah; and each would give him two sons. Moreover, the plan seemed to be successful, for Hagar conceived a child. What is legal in man's eyes is not necessarily best in God's eyes and this was certainly an illustration of that timeless principle. The golden plumb line should always be "what is the will of the LORD?" ("What saith the LORD?") Clearly Sarai's relationship with Abram was not in His will, for God never accepted Hagar as Abraham's legitimate wife. As discussed in Ge 16:8, the Angel of the Lord (A CHRISTOPHANY) referred to Hagar as "Sarah's maid" not as Abram's wife (or even as his concubine). Later Sarai referred to Hagar as "this maid and her son" (Ge 21:10), not as "Abraham's wife and son." However, note that Ge 16:3 says Hagar gave her to her husband Abram **as his wife**. In any case, Hagar was a manifestation of sin (of Sarai as well as Abram) because as Paul explains "whatever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23).

**Deffinbaugh:** It is ironic how the tables have been turned. In chapter 12, Abram's unbelief caused him to agonize while Sarai was in Pharaoh's palace. Now, Sarai, due to her proposal, is left to ponder what is going on in Hagar's bedroom.

**Bob Utley** - "After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan" It is significant that at least ten years have elapsed since God spoke to Abraham in chapter 15. Abraham was continuing to trust, but was trying to think of ways that he could help God. This again is God showing Abraham specifically that it was His resources, not Abraham's, that would ultimately bring forth the promise. This section is used as an allegory by Paul in Gal. 4:21-31.

**Warren Wiersbe** has an interesting thought regarding Sarai's giving Hagar to Abram - Sarah knew that she was incapable of bearing a child but that her husband was still capable of begetting a child. God had specifically named Abraham as the father of the promised heir, but He had not yet identified the mother. Logically, it would be Abraham's wife, but perhaps God had other plans. Sarah was "secondguessing" God, and this is a dangerous thing to do. Remember, true faith is based on the Word of God (Rom. 10:17) and not on the wisdom of man (Prov. 3:5-6), because "faith is living without scheming." Sarah said, "It may be"; she did not

say, "Thus saith the Lord!" God had told Abraham, "Know of a surety" (Gen. 15:13), but Sarah had no such assurance on which to base her actions.

**Genesis 16:4 He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight.**

- her mistress: 1Sa 1:6-8 2Sa 6:16 Pr 30:20,21,23 1Co 4:6 13:4,5
- [Genesis 16 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Proverbs 20:21-23 Under three things the earth quakes, And under four, it cannot bear up: 22 Under a slave when he becomes king, And a fool when he is satisfied with food, 23 **Under an unloved woman when she gets a husband, And a maidservant when she supplants her mistress.**

### HAGAR CONCEIVES! SARAI DESPISES!

**He went in to Hagar** - This is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

*"In whatever man does without God,  
he must fail miserably, or succeed more miserably."*  
--George MacDonald

**And she conceived** - Who allowed this conception? Clearly the LORD, because children are a gift of the LORD (Ps 127:3) Often (as in this case) God allows our sin to come to full bloom and bring forth the consequences of our willful rebellion! Woe! When the way of faith (which involves patient waiting) was abandoned and the way of human wisdom was taken, Abram was caught in a chain of inevitable consequences which would bring grief for years not only to him but to the entire world for millennia (Ishmael became the ancestor of the Arabs, who are still hostile to the Jews and as I write in Fall, 2023 Israel has suffered a major defeat at the hands of Hamas, descendants of Ishmael!)

**THOUGHT**- Oh how we need to consider the possible long term consequences of short term pleasure of sin (Heb 11:25+)!

**And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised** ([qalal](#); Lxx = [atimazo](#) - treated with disrespect or shamefully, dishonored) **in her sight** - We could subtitle this section "Tension in the Tent!" Sarai didn't see this coming but when we play God, we lack God's vision. In short, we are not "The God who Sees" as Hagar later names God! "**She**" refers to Sarai who began to see Hagar's abdomen enlarging, clear evidence that she had conceived a child with Abram. The very goal Sarai had willfully sought becomes a reality and stirs deep emotions in Sarai. We gain a sense of the meaning of the word **despise** ([qalal](#)) in its uses in Ge 8:21 and Ge 12:3 where in both passages it is translated **curse**. Sarai began to treat Hagar with contempt, with open disrespect.

[Warren Wiersbe](#) - When you follow the wisdom of the world, you will end up warring like the world (Jas 3:13-18). Of all fights, family fights are the most painful and the most difficult to settle. Had Hagar maintained the attitude of a servant, things might have been different; but she became proud, and this irritated her mistress (Pr 30:21-23). The first thing they should have done was build an altar, worship the Lord, and tell Him their problems. They should have confessed their sins and received His gracious forgiveness. Once you stop fighting with God and with yourself, you will have an easier time not fighting with others. The first step toward reconciliation with others is getting right with God.

Hagar's harsh treatment by barren Sarai reminds me of barren Hannah's harsh treatment by [afecund](#) Peninnah in 1 Samuel 1:6+, the writer recording that "Her (HANNAH'S) rival (PENINNAH), however, would **provoke her bitterly to irritate her**, because the LORD had closed her womb." Read 1 Samuel 1:1-28+ and note how Hannah did not run from her problem but took her problem to the LORD and he answered, giving her a son, Samuel!

**Matthew Henry (concise) - Verses 4-6.** Abram's unhappy marriage to Hagar very soon made a great deal of mischief. We may thank ourselves for the guilt and grief that follow us, when we go out of the way of our duty. See it in this case, Passionate people often quarrel with others, for things of which they themselves must bear the blame. Sarai had given her maid to Abram, yet she cries out, My wrong be upon thee. That is never said wisely, which pride and anger put into our mouths. Those are not always in the right,

who are most loud and forward in appealing to God: such rash and bold imprecations commonly speak guilt and a bad cause. Hagar forgot that she herself had first given the provocation, by despising her mistress. Those that suffer for their faults, ought to bear it patiently, 1 Peter 2:20.

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**Despised** [07043](#)) **qalal** means first of all to be slight, to be trivial, to be trifling, to be swift. There are a number of nuances of this verb but most reflect somehow upon the main idea of slightness or lightness and thus the first use of **galal** in Ge 8:8, 11 refer to the flood waters being **abated** (receding, becoming "slight" if you will). In Ge 8:21 in the third use of **galal** God promises to "never again **curse** the ground on account of man." Over 1/2 of the uses of **galal** are rendered as some variation of to curse. One of the more famous uses is in Ge 12:3 where Jehovah promises "I will bless those who bless you, and the one who **curse** (**qalal**) you I will curse (**arar** - [0779](#))." Sarah "**despised** (considered slight so to speak or "to be of no account in the eyes of)" Hagar when the latter became pregnant with Abram's child Ishmael (Ge 16:4, 5).

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### **Matthew Henry Notes: Ge 16:4-6**

We have here the immediate bad consequences of Abram's unhappy marriage to Hagar. A great deal of mischief it made quickly. When we do not well both sin and trouble lie at the door; and we may thank ourselves for the guilt and grief that follow us when we go out of the way of our duty. See it in this story.

**I. Sarai is despised, and thereby provoked and put into a passion**, Ge 16:4. Hagar no sooner perceives herself with child by her master than she looks scornfully upon her mistress, upbraids her perhaps with her barrenness, insults over her, to make her to fret (as 1 Sa. 1:6), and boasts of the prospect she had of bringing an heir to Abram, to that good land, and to the promise. Now she thinks herself a better woman than Sarai, more favoured by Heaven, and likely to be better beloved by Abram; and therefore she will not submit as she has done. Note,

1. Mean and servile spirits, when favoured and advanced either by God or man, are apt to grow haughty and insolent, and to forget their place and origin. See Prov. 29:21; 30:21-23. It is a hard thing to bear honour aright.
2. We justly suffer by those whom we have sinfully indulged, and it is a righteous thing with God to make those instruments of our trouble whom we have made instruments of our sin, and to ensnare us in our own evil counsels: this stone will return upon him that rolleth it.

**II. Abram is clamoured upon, and cannot be easy while Sarai is out of humour**; she upbraids him vehemently, and very unjustly charges him with the injury (Ge 16:5): My wrong be upon thee, with a most unreasonable jealousy suspecting that he countenanced Hagar's insolence; and, as one not willing to hear what Abram had to say for the rectifying of the mistake and the clearing of himself, she rashly appeals to God in the case: The Lord judge between me and thee; as if Abram had refused to right her. Thus does Sarai, in her passion, speak as one of the foolish women speaketh. Note,

1. It is an absurdity which passionate people are often guilty of to quarrel with others for that of which they themselves must bear the blame. Sarai could not but own that she had given her maid to Abram, and yet she cries out, My wrong be upon thee, when she should have said, What a fool was I to do so! That is never said wisely which pride and anger have the inditing of; when passion is upon the throne, reason is out of doors, and is neither heard nor spoken.
2. Those are not always in the right who are most loud and forward in appealing to God. Rash and bold imprecations are commonly evidences of guilt and a bad cause.

**III. Hagar is afflicted, and driven from the house**, Ge 16:6. Observe,

1. Abram's meekness resigns the matter of the maid-servant to Sarai, whose proper province it was to rule that part of the family: Thy maid is in thy hand. Though she was his wife, he would not countenance nor protect her in any thing that was disrespectful to Sarai, for whom he still retained the same affection that ever he had. Note, Those who would keep up peace and love must return soft answers to hard accusations. Husbands and wives particularly should agree, and endeavour not to be both angry together. Yielding pacifies great offenses. See Prov. 15:1.
2. Sarai's passion will be revenged upon Hagar: She dealt hardly with her, not only confining her to her usual place and work as a servant, but probably making her to serve with rigour. Note, God takes notice of, and is displeased with, the hardships which harsh masters unreasonably put upon their servants. They ought to forbear threatening, with Job's thought, Did not he that made me make him? Job 31:15.
3. Hagar's pride cannot bear it, her high spirit having become impatient of rebuke: She fled from her face. She not only avoided her wrath for the present, as David did Saul's, but she totally deserted her service, and ran away from the house, forgetting,

(1.) What wrong she hereby did to her mistress, whose servant she was, and to her master, whose wife she was. Note, Pride will hardly be restrained by any bonds of duty, no, not by many.

(2.) That she herself had first given the provocation, by despising her mistress. Note, Those that suffer for their faults ought to bear their sufferings patiently, 1 Pet. 2:20.

**Genesis 16:5 And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done me be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms, but when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her sight. May the LORD judge between you and me."**

[AMP](#) Then Sarai said to Abram, "May [the responsibility for] the wrong done to me [by the arrogant behavior of Hagar] be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms, and when she realized that she had conceived, I was despised *and* looked on with disrespect. May the Lord judge [who has done right] between you and me."

[AMPC](#) Then Sarai said to Abram, May [the responsibility for] my wrong *and* deprivation of rights be upon you! I gave my maid into your bosom, and when she saw that she was with child, I was contemptible *and* despised in her eyes. May the Lord be the judge between you and me.

[CSB](#) Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for my suffering! I put my slave in your arms, and when she saw that she was pregnant, I became contemptible to her. May the Lord judge between me and you."

[CEB](#) Sarai said to Abram, "This harassment is your fault. I allowed you to embrace my servant, but when she realized she was pregnant, I lost her respect. Let the Lord decide who is right, you or me."

[CEV](#) Then Sarai said to Abram, "It's all your fault! I gave you my slave woman, but she has been hateful to me ever since she found out she was pregnant. You have done me wrong, and you will have to answer to the Lord for this."

[ERV](#) Then Sarai said to Abram, "My slave girl now hates me, and I blame you for this. I gave her to you, and she became pregnant. Then she began to feel that she is better than I am. I want the Lord to judge which of us is right."

[EXB](#) Then Sarai said to Abram, "This is your fault [May the wrong/violence done to me be on you]. I gave my slave girl to you [into your embrace; into your lap], and when she became pregnant [conceived], she began to treat [look on] me badly [with contempt]. Let the Lord decide who is right—[judge between] you or me."

[GW](#) So Sarai complained to Abram, "I'm being treated unfairly! And it's your fault! I know that I gave my slave to you, but now that she's pregnant, she's being disrespectful to me. May the Lord decide who is right—you or me."

[TLB](#) Then Sarai said to Abram, "It's all your fault. For now this servant girl of mine despises me, though I myself gave her the privilege of being your wife. May the Lord judge you for doing this to me!"

[MSG](#) Sarai told Abram, "It's all your fault that I'm suffering this abuse. I put my maid in bed with you and the minute she knows she's pregnant, she treats me like I'm nothing. May God decide which of us is right."

- **wrong:** Lu 10:40,41
- **the Lord:** Ge 31:53 Ex 5:21 1Sa 24:12-15 2Ch 24:22 Ps 7:8 35:23 43:1
- [Genesis 16 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## **MISTREAT THE MAID BLAME THE MAN!**

**And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong ([chamas/hamas](#)) done me be upon you** - Sarai attempts to deflect the blame! There is nothing like the wrath of an angry woman! She is wishing the **wrong** she has experienced would be on Abram (see some of the translation above)! **Wrong** refers to violence or malicious conduct intended to injure another. **Wrong** ([chamas/hamas](#)) is a strong Hebrew word used elsewhere in Genesis to describe the sins that prompted the flood (Ge 6:11, 13) and the vicious retaliation wreaked by Simeon and Levi (Ge 49:5; cf. 34:25). In effect, what Sarai is saying is "It's all your fault!" She is not all wrong. Abram said "yes" when he could have said "no" to Sarai's plan! He played the passivity card and jettisoned his leadership role! So in a sense he was an accomplice to the sin! Now back to Sarai's accusations. Does this "blame shifting" sound familiar? There was a similar attempt by Adam to shift the blame to Eve in the Garden (Ge 3:12-13+).

"Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned."

--Victor Hugo

**I gave my maid into your arms** - Hebrew literally reads "I placed my female servant in your bosom."

**but when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised**([qalal](#); Lxx = [atimazo](#) - treated with disrespect or shamefully, dishonored) **in her sight** - Here Sarai claims to feel exactly the way she feels about Hagar (the verb is identical). It is not clear that Hagar looked with disdain on Sarai, but regardless, that is Sarai's perception which stokes the fires of her passion! Sarai is now walking by sight, walking by the flesh, for the rotten fruit of the flesh includes "enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions." (Sarai seems to have manifests them all!) (Gal 5:20+). One is reminded of the words of James "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You desire (A CHILD) and do not have; so you commit murder (OR HATE). You are envious and cannot obtain (NO CHILD); so you fight and quarrel." (James 4:1-2+).

**May the LORD judge between you and me** - [CEV](#) paraphrases it "you will have to answer to the Lord for this." Note who Sarai is blaming! Not Hagar, but Abram. It's all your fault! Note how Sarai doubles down on Abram. First, **May the wrong done me be upon you**. Then with the phrase **May the LORD judge** calling for God to judge who is right (implying she is right). **Gordon Wenham** adds that "Her outburst closes with what is virtually a curse: "May the LORD judge between you and me" (cf. 1Sa 24:13, 16)." (Borrow [Genesis 16-50. page 222](#))

**NET NOTE** is interesting - **May the LORD judge between you and me**. Then 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 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.

**Bob Utley** - "**may the Lord judge between you and me**" The VERB is a *Qa*/IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE (like a command) sense. Exactly what she wants YHWH to do is ambiguous. Apparently she is seeking divine sanction for her feelings of rejection or approval for her planned actions against Hagar. However, the phrase does show the growing tensions between Abram and Sarai.

**William MacDonald** has an interesting comment writing that "Sarai responded by blaming Abram, then driving Hagar out of the house. This illustrates the conflict between **law** and **grace**. **They cannot cohabit** (Gal. 4:21–31+). (BORROW [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

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**Wrong** (violence) ([02555](#))([chamas/hamas](#)) from the verb **chamas** = to treat violently or wrong) means wrong, violence (to God's law = Ezek 22:26, Zeph 3:4, "violent hatred" = Ps 25:19), malicious (witness - Ex 23:1, Dt 19:16), , and is used almost always in connection with sinful violence, not with the violence of natural catastrophes. Basically **chamas** connotes the disruption of the divinely established order of things. It has a wide range of nuances within this legal sphere. The noun usually denotes physical violence (Ezek 7:23). It suggests crimes (Jdg 9:24) or violent wrong (1Ch 12:17). **Chamas** provoked the Flood - **Chamas** signifies extreme wickedness and the first two uses are very instructive (especially God's reaction)...

(Ge 6:11) Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with **violence**. (Lxx translates with [adikia](#) = an act that violates the standards of right conduct)

(Ge 6:13) Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with **violence** (Lxx translates with [adikia](#)) because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

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## **The Blame Game**

My wrong be upon you! . . . The Lord judge between you and me. — Genesis 16:5

Today's Scripture : Genesis 16:1-6; 21:8-13

When Jenny's husband left her for another woman, she vowed that she would never meet his new wife. But when she realized that her bitterness was damaging her children's relationship with their father, she asked for God's help to take the first steps toward overcoming bitterness in a situation she couldn't change.

In Genesis 16, we read the story of a couple to whom God later promised a baby. When Sarai suggested that her husband Abram have a child with their servant Hagar, she wasn't fully trusting God for the child He had promised. When the baby was born, Hagar despised Sarai (Gen. 16:3-4), and Sarai became bitter (vv.5-6).

Hagar had been the slave with no rights and suddenly she was special. How did Sarai react? By blaming others, including Abram (v.5). God's promise was realized in the birth of Isaac 14 years later. Even his weaning celebration was spoiled by Sarai's attitude

(21:8-10).

It may never have been easy for Sarai to have lived with the consequences of their decision to go ahead of God. It may have taken a miracle of grace to change her attitude but that could have transformed everything. Sarai couldn't reverse the decision, but through God's strength, she could have lived with it differently, and given God the glory. By: Marion Stroud

Thank You, Lord, that though our situations may not change, Your grace is strong enough to change us in our situations. Help us as we struggle sometimes to live in this sinful world.

By God's grace, we can reflect His light in the dark times.

**Genesis 16:6 But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your maid 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: Ge 13:8,9 Pr 14:29 15:1,17,18 1Pe 3:7
- in: Ge 24:10 Job 2:6 Ps 106:41,42 Jer 38:5
- as it pleaseth thee: Heb. that which is good in thine eyes, dealt hardly with her. Heb. afflicted her. Pr 29:19
- fled: Ex 2:15 Pr 27:38 Ec 10:4
- [Genesis 16 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## **ABRAM ABDICATES SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP**

**But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your maid is in your power** (literally "your hand"); **do to her what is good in your sight."**  
**NLT** - "Abram replied, "Since she is your servant, you may deal with her as you see fit." Abram could have "man upped" and confessed he was partially to blame for this mess, but again he plays the passivity card and fails to lead and instead caves in to Sarai's emotional raving. He should have confronted Sarai with her part in the sin, but he did not. In any event Sarai took control and treated Hagar harshly. What is sad, is that Abram refused to "man up," for Hagar was carrying his offspring and this would seem to warrant his protection from the ire of Sarai. Clearly Abram failed in two ways - he failed to lead Sarai and failed to protect Hagar! Did you catch that phrase "**what is good in your sight**"? He should have phrased it "what is good in God's sight!" Abram's words are eerily similar to what got Israel in deep trouble in the book of Judges, Judges 21:25+ recording "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did **what was right in his own eyes.**" At this moment in Sarai and Abram's life, it seems there was no "King" in their household!

**THOUGHT** - **Bill Gothard** speaking to 2600 pastors made a statement that was condemning to all the pastors. He said that, by far the greatest complaint of pastors' wives was that their husbands, the spiritual leaders in their church, had failed to take spiritual leadership in their home! Men, are any of us also convicted?

**R Kent Hughes** observes that Abram "hid behind the conventions of the Code of Hammurabi (Law 146), which stipulates that if a concubine claims equality with her mistress because she bore children, her mistress may demote her to her former status. Abram impotently abdicated any responsibility for the situation, or for that matter for poor Hagar who had recently become his wife." (BORROW [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing page 240](#))

**Bob Utley** - This seems to be somewhat cruel to us, but we must judge it in light of its own day and not ours. This fits exactly the Nuzi Tablets and the Code of Hammurabi in how to deal with concubines. Again, in some ways this parallels the Gen. 3:11-13 account. Abram passes the responsibility from himself as family leader to Sarai. Humans tend to deflect responsibility and make excuses!

**So** - Term of conclusion. Sarai in essence obeys Abram's words (do what is **good** in your sight), but instead of doing **good**, she does bad!

**Sarai treated her harshly** ('**anah**; Lxx = **tapeinoo** = make low, humiliate, degrade, abase), **and she fled from her presence** - Sarai humiliated Hagar, who felt the humiliation and hatred and fled the house. One can hardly blame her! Hagar could flee from the presence of Sarai, but as we soon see, she could not flee from the presence of the Lord.

As we have all learned all too often and too painfully, running away from a problem does not cause the problem to "run away"! Recall Abram's running to Egypt when the problem of famine surfaced (Ge 12:10ff+) and look where that led! In fact Hagar (assuming she joined his family in Egypt) is part of the present problem. Problems not confronted head-on and solved or resolved can take on a life of their own and spawn off "baby" problems which usually "grow up" into big problems!

**THOUGHT** - How are you handling your problems (we all have them!)? Are you in effect doing the "Hagar two-step" and trying to run from them? Or are you running toward God Who is the ultimate "Problem Solver?" Pr 18:10+ says "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous runs into it and is safe [sagab](#) = lifted up above the fray is the idea."

**NET NOTE** on **treated her harshly** - In the [Piel stem](#) the verb עָנָה ('[anah](#)) means "to afflict, to oppress, to treat harshly, to mistreat."

As alluded to earlier the seed of Ishmael and Isaac are still at war with each other 4,000 years later.

*Whatever man does without God,  
he'll fail miserably or succeed more miserably.*  
-- George MacDonald

**Bob Utley** - "**she fled from her presence**" A slave running away was a serious legal matter which had serious consequences. This is very similar to the event recorded in Gen. 21:8-21. The following verses show YHWH's care and love, even for the concubine Hagar and her child. YHWH's love is not limited to Abram's family (i.e., Melchizedek, Job).

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**Treated...harshly** (afflicted) (06031) '[anah](#) means to be afflicted, be bowed down, be humbled, be meek. '**Anah** frequently expresses the idea God sends affliction to discipline (Dt 8:2-3+, see context Dt 8:5, 1Ki 11:39; Ps 90:15 Luke 3:5). '**Anah** often speaks of harsh and painful treatment (Isa 53:4, Ge 16:6). '**Anah** is most frequently translated in LXX by [tapeinoo](#) (as Ge 16:6 and Lev 16:29). God commanded them to "afflict themselves" ("deny yourselves" Lev 16:31NIV), which is the same word used to describe the pain that the Egyptians inflicted on the Hebrews (Ex 1:11,12) and the suffering Joseph felt in prison (Ps 105:18)!

The verb '[anah](#) is the one used to describe what Egypt does to Israel (Ge 15:13; Ex 1:11-12), and it is a prohibited action toward defenseless people (Ex 22:21-24). This is what a man does to a woman in taking her (Dt 21:14; Dt 22:24).

**'Anah - 75 verses** - afflict(16), afflict him at all(1), afflicted(22), affliction(1), disturbed(1), do violence(1), force(1), humble(12), humbled(6), humbling(1), mistreat(1), oppressed(1), oppressors(1), ravish(1), ravished(2), silenced(1), submit(1), treated her harshly(1), violate(1), violated(5), weakened(1). Gen. 15:13; Gen. 16:6; Gen. 16:9; Gen. 31:50; Gen. 34:2; Exod. 1:11; Exod. 1:12; Exod. 10:3; Exod. 22:22; Exod. 22:23; Lev. 16:29; Lev. 16:31; Lev. 23:27; Lev. 23:29; Lev. 23:32; Num. 24:24; Num. 29:7; Num. 30:13; Deut. 8:2; Deut. 8:3; Deut. 8:16; Deut. 21:14; Deut. 22:24; Deut. 22:29; Deut. 26:6; Jdg. 16:5; Jdg. 16:6; Jdg. 16:19; Jdg. 19:24; Jdg. 20:5; 2 Sam. 7:10; 2 Sam. 13:12; 2 Sam. 13:14; 2 Sam. 13:22; 2 Sam. 13:32; 1 Ki. 2:26; 1 Ki. 8:35; 1 Ki. 11:39; 2 Ki. 17:20; 2 Chr. 6:26; Ezr. 8:21; Job 30:11; Job 37:23; Ps. 35:13; Ps. 88:7; Ps. 89:22; Ps. 90:15; Ps. 94:5; Ps. 102:23; Ps. 105:18; Ps. 107:17; Ps. 116:10; Ps. 119:67; Ps. 119:71; Ps. 119:75; Ps. 119:107; Ps. 132:1; Ps. 140:12; Isa. 25:5; Isa. 31:4; Isa. 53:4; Isa. 53:7; Isa. 58:3; Isa. 58:5; Isa. 58:10; Isa. 60:14; Isa. 64:12; Lam. 3:33; Lam. 5:11; Ezek. 22:10; Ezek. 22:11; Dan. 10:12; Nah. 1:12; Zeph. 3:19; Zech. 10:2

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## Steven Cole's Conclusions/Applications from Genesis 16:1-6

**1. Shift your focus from seeking personal fulfillment and happiness to seeking to please and glorify God.** Christians have gotten caught up in our cultural pursuit of personal fulfillment and happiness. We've fallen into the trap of using God and the Bible to make us happy. But if it doesn't seem to be delivering the goods, then we bail out of our marriages or seek fulfillment in worldly pleasures, rather than submitting ourselves to God's purpose for our personal and family lives. If you are unhappy in your marriage, the reason you should seek counsel is not so that you can become happy. You need to get help because a marriage marked by conflict does not please and glorify God. That should be your focus.

**2. You cannot please and glorify God apart from saturating yourself with His Word.** If you do not know God's Word, you will simply be swept downstream with the powerful currents of our culture. As much as you need to eat to stay healthy, so you need to feed daily on God's Word. Read it, memorize key verses, meditate on it, and seek to obey it. Psalm 1 promises blessing to the one who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, but who delights in God's Word.

**3. Strive to become a biblical thinker who challenges our culture with God's Word, especially in family matters.** Why should career success be your main goal in life? Why does your family need all the latest junk, instead of giving generously to God's work? Why should your TV set be on for several hours every evening? Why should you run your schedule at a frenzied level like everybody else? How can your family develop a ministry mind-set? Become a biblical thinker!

**4. Husbands need to assume loving leadership in the home and wives need to let them to take it.** I'm not talking about

becoming an [Archie Bunker](#), who barks commands at his cowering wife and kids. That's not biblical leadership! I am talking about leading by example from the strength of a growing, personal walk with God. The main job description for a husband is to love his wife sacrificially as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her (Eph. 5:25). That means never acting selfishly, but always for the ultimate good of your family. If a husband focuses on his God-ordained responsibility out of a desire to glorify God and the wife on hers, there will not be competition, but complementarity. Husbands should learn to practice the servant leadership exemplified by the Lord Jesus. Husbands should always remember that an exhaustive study of police records has shown that no woman has ever shot her husband while he was doing the dishes (Reader's Digest [11/79])!

If we follow wrong cultural customs rather than God's plan, we'll have family problems. But, if we'll focus on pleasing and glorifying God by obedience to His Word, if we learn to think biblically and lead lovingly by example in our homes, we'll avoid many family problems and begin to experience a little bit of heaven on earth. ([Why We Have Family Problems - Genesis 16:1-6](#))

**Genesis 16:7 Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.**

- **found:** Pr 15:3
- **a spring of water:** Ge 25:18 Ex 15:22 1Sa 15:7
- **Shur:** The desert of Shur being between the south of Canaan, where Hebron was situated, and Egypt, it is likely that Hagar was returning to her own country.
- [Genesis 16 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries



Source: [Abraham: Following God's Promise](#)  
(See Shur in Bottom Left Corner)

## THE ANGEL OF THE LORD SHOW UP FOR FIRST TIME

**Now** - Time phrase. **Now** means at that moment, the moment of Hagar's great distress (and surely also great fear and uncertainty). But God "sure" arrives just in time at Shur!

*God's timing is always precise, certain, and punctual,  
but the Lord doth not compute and reckon his seasons of working by our arithmetic.*

– [John Flavel](#)

**The Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur**- One could subtitle this section "The God Who Shows Amazing Mercy in the Midst of a Miserable Mess!" Notice who finds who! God takes the initiative to find the lost (then and now)! God is a seeking God! We may think that we found Him, but the reality is, He found us. We were lost and confused, wandering away from Him. He came looking and found us! Luke 19:10+ says it best - "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Play Michael Card's great song (he wrote it and sang it) [El Shaddai](#). While we do not encounter that Name in this section, Michael Card does have a line in the beautiful song that speaks of God seeing Hagar in her distress (see lines in bold)....

Through Your love and through the ram  
You saved the son of Abraham  
Through the power of Your hand  
Turned the sea into dry land



## To the outcast on her knees

### You were the God who really sees

And by Your might

You set Your children free

Who is this mysterious **angel**? Clearly this one is far more than a created angel, because of His prophetic promise in Ge 16:10. No created angel would or could ever make such a pronouncement. This is divine and I think is an Old Testament manifestation of Jesus Christ, what is known as a Christophany. See my detailed analysis of [Angel of the LORD](#). As an aside Hagar's meeting at spring recalls the meeting of the Samaritan woman with Jesus by the well in John 4+.

The "hero" of Genesis 16 arrives on the scene - the Angel of the LORD, mentioned 4 times - Gen. 16:7; Gen. 16:9; Gen. 16:10; Gen. 16:11

**OTHER MENTIONS OF "THE ANGEL OF THE LORD" IN THE OT** - Gen. 22:11; Gen. 22:15; Exod. 3:2; Num. 22:22; Num. 22:23; Num. 22:24; Num. 22:25; Num. 22:26; Num. 22:27; Num. 22:31; Num. 22:32; Num. 22:34; Num. 22:35; Jdg. 2:1; Jdg. 2:4; Jdg. 5:23; Jdg. 6:11; Jdg. 6:12; Jdg. 6:21; Jdg. 6:22; Jdg. 13:3; Jdg. 13:13; Jdg. 13:15; Jdg. 13:16; Jdg. 13:17; Jdg. 13:18; Jdg. 13:20; Jdg. 13:21; 2 Sam. 24:16; 1 Ki. 19:7; 2 Ki. 1:3; 2 Ki. 1:15; 2 Ki. 19:35; 1 Chr. 21:12; 1 Chr. 21:15; 1 Chr. 21:16; 1 Chr. 21:18; 1 Chr. 21:30; Ps. 34:7; Ps. 35:5; Ps. 35:6; Isa. 37:36; Zech. 1:11; Zech. 1:12; Zech. 3:1; Zech. 3:5; Zech. 3:6; Zech. 12:8

**Parunak:** Ex 15:22+ ("The wilderness of Shur") -- the region just beyond the border of Egypt into which Moses brought Israel after the Red Sea. The point of this detail is that Hagar is heading back home, toward Egypt. ([Notes on Gen 16](#))

**John MacArthur on the angel of the Lord** - This special individual spoke as though He were distinct from Yahweh, yet also spoke in the first person as though He were indeed to be identified as Yahweh Himself, with Hagar recognizing that in seeing this Angel, she had seen God (v. 13). Others had the same experience and came to the same conclusion (cf. 22:11-18; 31:11-13; Ex 3:2-5; Nu 22:22-35; Jdg 6:11-23; 13:2-5; 1Ki 19:5-7). The Angel of the Lord, who does not appear after the birth of Christ, is often identified as the pre-incarnate Christ. (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Steven Cole** - Who is this **Angel of the Lord**? There is debate among scholars, but I believe that it is the Lord Jesus Christ in a preincarnate appearance. ([The God Who Sees - Genesis 16:7-16](#))

**Warren Wiersbe on the Angel of the LORD** - This is the first appearance in Scripture of the **Angel of the Lord**, Who is generally identified as our Lord Jesus Christ. In Genesis 16:10, the angel promised to do what only God can do, and in Ge 16:13, Hagar called the angel "**God**." These pre-incarnation visits of Jesus Christ to the earth were to meet special needs and to accomplish special tasks. The fact that the Son of God took on a temporary body, left heaven, and came down to help a rejected servant-girl surely reveals His grace and love. His servants Abraham and Sarah had sinned against the Lord and against Hagar, but the Lord did not desert them.

**Matthew Henry (concise)** - Verses 7-16. Hagar was out of her place, and out of the way of her duty, and going further astray, when the Angel found her. It is a great mercy to be stopped in a sinful way, either by conscience or by providence. Whence comest thou? Consider that thou art running from duty, and the privileges thou wast blest with in Abram's tent. It is good to live in a religious family, which those ought to consider who have this advantage. Whither wilt thou go? Thou art running into sin; if Hagar return to Egypt, she will return to idol gods, and into danger in the wilderness through which she must travel. Recollecting who we are, would often teach us our duty. Inquiring whence we came, would show us our sin and folly. Considering whither we shall go, discovers our danger and misery. And those who leave their space and duty, must hasten their return, how mortifying soever it be. The declaration of the Angel, "I will," shows this Angel was the eternal Word and Son of God. Hagar could not but admire the Lord's mercy, and feel, Have I, who am so unworthy, been favoured with a gracious visit from the Lord? She was brought to a better temper, returned, and by her behaviour softened Sarai, and received more gentle treatment. Would that we were always suitably impressed with this thought, Thou God seest me!

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**W H Griffith-Thomas - The Special Interposition** (Ge 16:7-12).—What a picture of real life is found in this chapter! Man is seen blundering, sinning, and suffering, and then God intervenes with His overruling providence, wisdom, and grace.

We see the blessed truth of Divine interest in human troubles (Ge 16:7). 'The angel found her.' God had not overlooked what had taken place, and now He interposes in order to bring about the best possible results after the error and sin of His children. How often God has had to do this for His children since that day!

We observe, too, the Divine call for perfect submission (Ge 16:8, 9). The questions 'whence' and 'whither' recall Hagar to her position, and the slave woman tells the simple truth about her flight. The Divine command is that she should return and submit

herself. It will be noticed that the quasi-marriage is not for an instant acknowledged. Sarah is still Hagar's mistress. This call for submission was the first step towards blessing in Hagar's life. The same is true to-day. If we have made mistakes which have led us into sin, the primary condition of restoration is complete submission to the will of God, whatever that may involve.

We have also the Divine assurance of definite blessing (Ge 16:10). God accompanies His call for submission by the promise of blessing to her child. He never makes a demand without giving us a promise. Thus He encouraged and incited her to the very submission from which she doubtless shrank.

And above all there is the Divine revelation of overruling providence (Ge 16:11, 12). God told her that she should have a son and also of his name and its meaning (Ishmael; 'God shall hear'). Thus every time she mentioned his name she might be reminded of God's promises. Her son's character and relation to others were also revealed (Ge 16:12), an additional encouragement to the poor creature in her misery and trouble.

This interposition had its immediate and blessed effect on Hagar. It led to a realization of the Divine presence (Ge 16:13.) 'She called the name.... Thou God seest me,' or 'The God of my vision.' The Divine Presence thus came into her life with its blessing and cheer.

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#### QUESTION - [Who is the angel of the Lord? WATCH VIDEO](#)

**ANSWER** - The precise identity of the "**Angel of the LORD**" is not given in the Bible. However, there are many important "clues" to his identity. There are Old and New Testament references to "angels of the Lord," "an angel of the Lord," and "the angel of the Lord." It seems when the definite article "the" is used, it is specifying a unique being, separate from the other angels. **The angel of the Lord speaks as God, identifies Himself with God, and exercises the responsibilities of God** (Genesis 16:7-12; 21:17-18; 22:11-18; Exodus 3:2; Judges 2:1-4; 5:23; 6:11-24; 13:3-22; 2 Samuel 24:16; Zechariah 1:12; 3:1; 12:8). In several of these appearances, those who saw the angel of the Lord feared for their lives because they had "seen the Lord." Therefore, it is clear that in at least some instances, the angel of the Lord is a theophany, an appearance of God in physical form.

The appearances of the angel of the Lord cease after the incarnation of Christ. Angels are mentioned numerous times in the New Testament, but "*the* angel of the Lord" is never mentioned in the New Testament after the birth of Christ. One possible difficulty is that the angel who appears to Joseph in a dream in Matthew 1:24 is called "the" angel of the Lord. However, this angel is clearly the same one appearing in verse 20, which calls him "*an* angel." Matthew is simply referencing the same angel he had just mentioned. There is also some confusion regarding Matthew 28:2, where the KJV says "the angel of the Lord" descended from heaven and rolled the stone away from Jesus' tomb. It is important to note that the original Greek has no article in front of *angel*; it could be "the angel" or "an angel," but the article must be supplied by the translators. Other translations besides the KJV say it was "an angel," which is the better wording.

**It is possible that appearances of the angel of the Lord were manifestations of Jesus before His incarnation** Jesus declared Himself to be existent "before Abraham" (John 8:58), so it is logical that He would be active and manifest in the world. **Whatever the case, whether the angel of the Lord was a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ (Christophany) or an appearance of God the Father (theophany), it is highly likely that the phrase "the angel of the Lord" usually identifies a physical appearance of God.** [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### Matthew Henry Notes: Ge 16:7-9

Here is the first mention we have in scripture of an angel's appearance. Hagar was a type of the law, which was given by the disposition of angels; but the world to come is not put in subjection to them, Heb. 2:5. Observe,

**I. How the angel arrested her in her flight,** Ge 16:7. It should seem, she was making towards her own country; for she was in the way to Shur, which lay towards Egypt. It were well if our afflictions would make us think of our home, the better country. But Hagar was now out of her place, and out of the way of her duty, and going further astray, when the angel found her. Note,

1. It is a great mercy to be stopped in a sinful way either by conscience or by Providence.
2. God suffers those that are out of the way to wander awhile, that when they see their folly, and what a loss they have brought themselves to, they may be the better disposed to return. Hagar was not stopped till she was in the wilderness, and had set down, weary enough, and glad of clear water to refresh herself with. God brings us into a wilderness, and there meets us, Hos. 2:14.

**II. How he examined her, Ge 16:8. Observe,**

1. He called her Hagar, Sarai's maid,

(1.) As a check to her pride. Though she was Abram's wife, and, as such, was obliged to return, yet he calls her Sarai's maid, to humble her. Note, Though civility teaches us to call others by their highest titles, yet humility and wisdom teach us to call ourselves by the lowest.

(2.) As a rebuke to her flight. Sarai's maid ought to be in Sarai's tent, and not wandering in the wilderness and sauntering by a fountain of water. Note, It is good for us often to call to mind what our place and relation are. See Eccl. 10:4.

## **2. The questions the angel put to her were proper and very pertinent.**

(1.) "Whence comest thou? Consider that thou art running away both from the duty thou wast bound to and the privileges thou wast blessed with in Abram's tent." Note, It is a great advantage to live in a religious family, which those ought to consider who have that advantage, yet upon every slight inducement are forward to quit it.

(2.) "Whither wilt thou go? Thou art running thyself into sin, in Egypt" (if she return to that people, she will return to their gods), "and into danger, in the wilderness," through which she must travel, Deu. 8:15. Note, Those who are forsaking God and their duty would do well to remember not only whence they have fallen, but whither they are falling. See Jer. 2:18, What hast thou to do (with Hagar) in the way of Egypt? Jn. 6:68.

## **3. Her answer was honest, and a fair confession: I flee from the face of my mistress. In this,**

(1.) She acknowledges her fault in fleeing from her mistress, and yet,

(2.) Excuses it, that it was from the face, of displeasure, of her mistress. Note, Children and servants must be treated with mildness and gentleness, lest we provoke them to take any irregular courses and so become accessory to their sins, which will condemn us, though it will not justify them.

4. How he sent her back, with suitable and compassionate counsel: "Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hand, Ge 16:9. Go home, and humble thyself for what thou hast done amiss, and beg pardon, and resolve for the future to behave thyself better." He makes no question but she would be welcome, though it does not appear that Abram sent after her. Note, Those that have gone away from their place and duty, when they are convinced of their error, must hasten their return and reformation, how mortifying soever it may be.

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### **God Sees Her Part 1**

Today's Reading: Genesis 16:7–14

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." —Genesis 16:13

My first eyeglasses opened my eyes to a bold world. Without glasses, items in the distance were a blur. At age twelve, with my first pair of eyeglasses, I was shocked to see clearer words on blackboards, tiny leaves on trees, and perhaps most important, big smiles on faces.

As friends smiled back when I greeted them, I learned that to be seen was as great a gift as the blessing of seeing.

The slave Hagar realized this as she fled from her mistress Sarai's unkindness. Hagar was a "nobody" in her culture, pregnant and alone, fleeing to a desert without help or hope. Seen by God, however, she was empowered to see Him. God became real to her—so real that she gave God a name, El Roi, which means, "You are the God who sees me." She said, "I have now seen the One who sees me" (Genesis 16:13).

Our God sees each of us too. Feeling unseen, alone, or like a nobody? God sees you and your future. In return, may we see in Him our ever-present hope, encouragement, salvation, and joy. Patricia Raybon (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

**Genesis 16:8 He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from and where are you going?" And she said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai."**

- Sarai's maid: Ge 16:1,4 Eph 6:5-8 1Ti 6:1,2
- whence: Ge 3:9 4:10 Ec 10:4 Jer 2:17,18

- I flee: 1Sa 26:19
- [Genesis 16 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## THE ANGEL OF GOD REACHES OUT TO HAGAR

**He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from and where are you going?”**- The Angel (Christophany ~ omniscience) knew but asks a rhetorical question, not an "[open theism](#)" question!

**And she said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.”** Hagar answered the first part of the question but not the last. However, given her Egyptian background and her location in Shur (south toward Egypt), she was likely headed back home to Egypt.

**THOUGHT**- Hagar’s theme song might have been Keith Green’s old song "[So You Wanna Go Back to Egypt!](#)" ([Play](#)). Sadly this song is the theme song for many believers who have been rescued by Christ from the world but want to go back into the world! Is this your theme song dear follower of Christ? If so, may the Spirit grant you to "[Turn Your Eyes on Jesus](#)" and the things of the earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace!

**Steven Cole** adds "Those are good questions to ask yourself when you’re in a difficult situation: Where have you come from? Did God allow that trial for some reason? Where are you going? Did you seek His permission to run? Our real need in a bad situation is not to escape, but to seek and to submit to the Lord (TO GO BACK AND SUBMIT TO SARAI WAS TO SUBMIT TO THE LORD’S COMMAND)."

**Deffinbaugh**: Running away does not change relationships, nor does it remove responsibility. Jonah, even in the belly of that fish, was still God’s prophet with a message for the Ninevites. Hagar continued to be Sarai’s maid, and it remained her duty to serve her mistress.

**Bob Utley** - Verses like this (i.e., Gen. 3:9,11; 4:9,10), which record God or His representative asking questions, have become part of a theological movement called "Open Theism," which takes these questions literally and make the theological assumption that God does not know the future or historical actions of persons. I do not support Greek philosophy (i.e., the philosophically developed attributes of God), nor do I deny the historicity of the Genesis accounts, but I do assert that they are literary documents which use metaphorical language (as all human communication does; see G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*). The issue is the purpose of the questions in the Bible. Do they reflect a lack of knowledge on God’s part or God working to develop understanding in human beings? There are too many other texts that assert God’s knowledge of persons and future events for me to feel comfortable with Open Theism as anything but a reworked A. N. North’s theology (i.e., Process Thought).

### QUESTION - [What is open theism?](#)

**ANSWER** - “Open theism,” also known as “openness theology,” the “openness of God,” and “free will theism,” is an attempt to explain the foreknowledge of God in relationship to the free will of man. The argument of open theism is essentially this: human beings are truly free; if God absolutely knew the future, human beings could not truly be free. Therefore, God does not know absolutely everything about the future. Open theism holds that the future is not knowable. Therefore, God knows everything that can be known, but He does not know the future.

Open theism bases these beliefs on Scripture passages which describe God “changing His mind” or “being surprised” or “seeming to gain knowledge” (Genesis 6:6; 22:12; Exodus 32:14; Jonah 3:10). In light of the many other Scriptures that declare God’s knowledge of the future, these Scriptures should be understood as God describing Himself in ways that we can understand. God knows what our actions and decisions will be, but He “changes His mind” in regard to His actions based on our actions. God’s disappointment at the wickedness of humanity does not mean He was not aware it would occur.

In contradiction to open theism, Psalm 139:4, 16 state, “Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD...All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” How could God predict intricate details in the Old Testament about Jesus Christ if He does not know the future? How could God in any manner guarantee our eternal salvation if He does not know what the future holds?

Ultimately, open theism fails in that it attempts to explain the unexplainable—the relationship between God’s foreknowledge and mankind’s free will. Just as extreme forms of Calvinism fail in that they make human beings nothing more than pre-programmed robots, so open theism fails in that it rejects God’s true omniscience and sovereignty. God must be understood through faith, for “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6a). Open theism is, therefore, not scriptural. It is simply another way for

finite man to try to understand an infinite God. Open theism should be rejected by followers of Christ. While open theism is an explanation for the relationship between God's foreknowledge and human free will, it is not the biblical explanation. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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## God Calls Your Name

He said, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" Genesis 16:8

Today's Scripture & Insight : Genesis 16:1–9, 16

Natalia went to a different nation with the promise of receiving an education. But soon the father in her new home began physically and sexually abusing her. He forced her to care for his home and children without pay. He refused to let her go outside or use the phone. She had become his slave.

Hagar was Abram and Sarai's Egyptian slave. Neither one used her name. They called her "my slave" or "your slave" (Genesis 16:2, 5–6). They merely wanted to use her so they could have an heir.

How different is God! The angel of the Lord makes His first appearance in Scripture when He speaks to a pregnant Hagar in the desert. The angel is either God's messenger or God Himself. Hagar believes He's God, for she says, "I have now seen the One who sees me" (v. 13). If the angel is God, He could possibly be the Son—the One who reveals God to us—making an early, preincarnate appearance. He says her name, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" (v. 8).

God saw Natalia and brought caring people into her life who rescued her. She's now studying to become a nurse. God saw Hagar and called her by name. And God sees you. You may be overlooked or worse, abused. Jesus calls you by name. Run to Him. By: Mike Wittmer (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](http://OurDailyBreadMinistries.com). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

What does it mean to you that Jesus knows your name? How might you similarly encourage others?

Thank You, Jesus, for knowing my name. I rest in Your love for me.

For further study, read [Reclaiming Hope: Why We All Need Mercy, Justice, and Hope](http://ReclaimingHope.com).

**Genesis 16:9 Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority."**

[AMP](#) The Angel of the Lord said to her, "Go back to your mistress, and submit humbly to her authority."

[AMPC](#) The Angel of the Lord said to her, Go back to your mistress and [humbly] submit to her control.

- **submit**: Ec 10:4 Eph 5:21 6:5,6 Tit 2:9 1Pe 2:18-25 5:5,6
- [Genesis 16 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## RETURN AND SUBMIT

**Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit ('[anah](#)'; Lxx = [tapeinoo](#) = make low, humiliate, degrade, abase) yourself to her authority."** - The two commands are interesting, the call to **return** being easy to understand but the call to **submit** ('[anah](#)'; Lxx = [tapeinoo](#) = make low, humiliate, degrade, abase) is the same word used in Ge 16:6 of Sarai's harsh treatment of Hagar. [CEB](#) says "Put up with her harsh treatment of you." [YLT](#) has "humble thyself under her hands." The Angel is telling Hagar to submit to the authority of Sarai and to whatever mistreatment would be inflicted. He does not promise to change the situation with Sarai, but does promise to bless the male child (i.e., Ishmael) as who would become the founder of the Arab peoples.

Genesis 21:18 (SPEAKING TO HAGAR CONCERNING ISHMAEL) "**Arise, lift up** the lad, and **hold** him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him."

[Bob Utley](#) points out that "This message implies that it is YHWH's will that Hagar's child grow up under Abram's influence (i.e., knowledge of YHWH)."

**THOUGHT** - Harsh treatment (not speaking of life threatening treatment) is not necessarily a justification to remove oneself from the realm of legitimate authority. Enabled by God's Spirit, we need to learn to submit in difficult circumstances and trust in the God Who sees all and can deliver and vindicate us.

*Your number one need in a time of trial is to submit to God--  
humble yourself under His mighty hand*

**Steven Cole** has some thoughts on a word many of us bristle at -- **'SUBMIT'** - The book of First Peter is about submission to authority in a time of trial. The Christians to whom Peter wrote were suffering, some as slaves under harsh masters, some as wives under disobedient husbands, all as citizens under an unjust government. Peter's word to each group of victims was, "Submit" (1Pe 2:13, 18+; 1Pe 3:1+). He sums it up, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you" (1Pe 5:6-7+). Your number one need in a time of trial is to submit to God--humble yourself under His mighty hand. He is in control of the circumstances. He cares for you; don't doubt His love. There are lessons which our rebellious nature cannot learn except by submitting to God in trials, even when we're being treated wrongly or unfairly. Some people never grow in the Lord because they have a habit of running from difficult situations where He has put them for their training.....Some of you may be in trying situations right now, but you haven't submitted to God. Maybe your pattern has been to run from one difficult situation to the next, always blaming others or complaining about bad luck, but never humbling yourself under God's mighty hand. You won't know His blessing until submit to Him in whatever circumstances He has placed you. It's hard news, but it's not really bad. The good news: When we submit to God in our affliction, He will bless us and our descendants. ([The God Who Sees - Genesis 16:7-16](#))

**Genesis 16:10** Moreover, the **Angel of the LORD** said to her, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count."

- the Angel: Ge 22:15-18 31:11-13 32:24-30 48:15,16 Ex 3:2-6 Judges 2:1-3 6:11 Judges 6:16,21-24 13:16-22 Isa 63:9 Ho 12:3-5 Zec 2:8,9 Mal 3:1 Joh 1:18 Ac 7:30-38 1Ti 6:16
- I will: Ge 17:20 21:13,16 25:12-18 Ps 83:6,7
- [Genesis 16 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

#### **Related Passage:**

Genesis 17:20 As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.

Genesis 25:12-18 (GOD'S PROMISE FULFILLED) **Now these are the records of the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maid, bore to Abraham;** 13 and these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael, and Kedar and Adbeel and Mibsam 14 and Mishma and Dumah and Massa, 15 Hadad and Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. 16 These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages, and by their camps; twelve princes according to their tribes. 17 These are the years of the life of Ishmael, one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people. 18 They settled from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria; he settled in defiance of all his relatives.

## **NOW THE ENCOURAGEMENT**

**Moreover, the Angel of the LORD** said to her, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count" - Note that this promise "I will greatly multiply..." is the same wording God used in His promise to Abram in Ge 22:17. Only God can multiply descendants. This Angel is the omnipotent God (Christ) speaking! Knowing that Hagar would need some encouraging motivation, the Angel gives us an incredible prophetic promise of countless descendants. This promise is repeated to Abram about Ishmael in Gen. 17:20. The upshot is that Abram would become the father of two groups of innumerable offspring fulfilling Ge 13:16 and Ge 15:5.

**Steven Cole** - There's an application here for us: God allows U-turns in the desert! Even though we've run from God, if we will turn around and submit to Him in our trials, His blessing will be on us and our descendants. We can be assured that He will work out His sovereign plan for us and for our children if we will make a U-turn and submit to Him. ([The God Who Sees - Genesis 16:7-16](#))

We may suppose that the angel having given Hagar that good counsel (Ge 16:9) to return to her mistress she immediately promised to do so, and was setting her face homeward; and then the angel went on to encourage her with an assurance of the mercy God had in store for her and her seed: for God will meet those with mercy that are returning to their duty. I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest, Ps. 32:5. Here is,

**I. A prediction concerning her posterity given her for her comfort in her present distress** Notice is taken of her condition: Behold, thou art with child; and therefore this is not a fit place for thee to be in. Note, It is a great comfort to women with child to think that they are under the particular cognizance and care of the divine Providence. God graciously considers their case and suits supports to it. Now,

**1. The angel assures her of a safe delivery, and that of a son, which Abram desired.** This fright and ramble of hers might have destroyed her hope of an offspring; but God dealt not with her according to her folly: Thou shalt bear a son. She was saved in child-bearing, not only by providence, but by promise.

**2. He names her child, which was an honour both to her and it:** Call him Ishmael, God will hear; and the reason is, because the Lord has heard; he has, and therefore he will. Note, The experience we have had of God's seasonable kindness to us in distress would encourage us to hope for similar help in similar exigencies, Ps. 10:17. He has heard thy affliction, Ge 16:11. Note, Even where there is little cry of devotion, the God of pity sometimes graciously hears the cry of affliction. Tears speak as well as prayers. This speaks comfort to the afflicted, that God not only sees what their afflictions are, but hears what they say. Note, further, Seasonable succours, in a day of affliction, ought always to be remembered with thankfulness to God. Such a time, in such a strait, the Lord heard the voice of my affliction, and helped me. See Deu. 26:7; Ps. 31:22.

**3. He promises her a numerous offspring,** (Ge 16:10): I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, Heb. multiplying, I will multiply it, that is, multiply it in every age, so as to perpetuate it. It is supposed that the Turks at this day descend from Ishmael; and they are a great people. This was in pursuance of the promise made to Abram: I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, Ge 13:16. Note, Many that are children of godly parents have, for their sakes, a very large share of outward common blessings, though, like Ishmael, they are not taken into covenant: many are multiplied that are not sanctified.

**4. He gives a character of the child she should bear, which, however it may seem to us, perhaps was not very disagreeable to her** (Ge 16:12): He will be a wild man; a wild ass of a man (so the word is), rude, and bold, and fearing no man-untamed, untractable living at large, and impatient of service and restraint. Note, The children of the bondwoman, who are out of covenant with God, are, as they were born, like the wild ass's colt; it is grace that reclaims men, civilizes them, and makes them wise, and good for something. It is foretold,

(1.) That he should live in strife, and in a state of war: His hand against every man-this is his sin; and every man's hand against him-this is his punishment. Note, Those that have turbulent spirits have commonly troublesome lives; those that are provoking, vexatious, and injurious to others, must expect to be repaid in their own coin. He that has his hand and tongue against every man shall have every man's hand and tongue against him, and he has no reason to complain of it. And yet,

(2.) That he should live in safety, and hold his own against all the world: He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren; though threatened and insulted by all his neighbours, yet he shall keep his ground, and for Abram's sake, more than his own, shall be able to make his part good with them. Accordingly we read (Ge 25:18), that he died, as he lived, in the presence of all his brethren. Note, Many that are much exposed by their own imprudence are yet strangely preserved by the divine Providence, so much better is God to them than they deserve, when they not only forfeit their lives by sin, but hazard them.

**II. Hagar's pious reflection upon this gracious appearance of God to her,** Ge 16:13, 14. Observe in what she said,

**1. Her awful adoration of God's omniscience and providence, with application of it to herself:** She called the name of the Lord that spoke unto her, that is, thus she made confession of his name, this she said to his praise, Thou God seest me: this should be, with her, his name for ever, and this his memorial, by which she will know him and remember him while she lives, Thou God seest me. Note,

(1.) The God with whom we have to do is a seeing God, and all-seeing God. God is (as the ancients express it) all eye.

(2.) We ought to acknowledge this with application to ourselves. He that sees all sees me, as David (Ps. 139:1), O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.

(3.) A believing regard to God, as a God that sees us, will be of great use to us in our returns to him. It is

a proper word for a penitent:-

{1.} "Thou seest my sin and folly." I have sinned before thee, says the prodigal; in thy sight, says David.

{2.} "Thou seest my sorrow and affliction;" this Hagar especially refers to. When we have brought ourselves into distress by our own folly, yet God has not forsaken us.

{3.} "Thou seest the sincerity and seriousness of my return and repentance. Thou seest my secret mournings for sin, and secret motions towards thee."

{4.} "Thou seest me, if in any instance I depart from thee," Ps. 44:20, 21. This thought should always restrain us from sin and excite us to duty: Thou God seest me.

2. Her humble admiration of God's favour to her: "Have I here also looked after him that seeth me? Have I here seen the back parts of him that seeth me?" so it might be read, for the word is much the same with that, Ex. 33:23. She saw not face to face, but as through a glass darkly, 1 Co. 13:12. Probably she knew not who it was that talked with her, till he was departing (as Jdg. 6:21, 22; 13:21), and then she looked after him, with a reflection like that of the two disciples, Lu. 24:31, 32. Or, Have I here seen him that sees me? Note,

(1.) The communion which holy souls have with God consists in their having an eye of faith towards him, as a God that has an eye of favour towards them. The intercourse is kept up by the eye.

(2.) The privilege of our communion with God is to be looked upon with wonder and admiration,

{1.} Considering what we are who are admitted to this favour. "Have I? I that am so mean, I that am so vile?" 2 Sa. 7:18.

{2.} Considering the place where we are thus favoured-"here also? Not only in Abram's tent and at his altar, but here also, in this wilderness? Here, where I never expected it, where I was out of the way of my duty? Lord, how is it?" Jn. 14:22. Some make the answer to this question to be negative, and so look upon it as a penitent reflection; "Have I here also, in my distress and affliction, looked after God? No, I was a careless and unmindful of him as ever I used to be; and yet he has thus visited and regarded me:" for God often anticipates us with his favours, and is found of those that seek him not, Isa. 65:1.

### III. The name which this gave to the place: Beer-lahai-roi, The well of him that liveth and seeth me, Ge 16:14.

It is probable that Hagar put this name upon it; and it was retained long after, in perpetuum rei memoriam-a lasting memorial of this event. This was a place where the God of glory manifested the special cognizance and care he took of a poor woman in distress. Note,

1. He that is all-seeing is ever-living; he lives and sees us.

2. Those that are graciously admitted into communion with God, and receive seasonable comforts from him, should tell others what he has done for their souls, that they also may be encouraged to seek him and trust in him.

3. God's gracious manifestations of himself to us are to be had in everlasting remembrance by us, and should never be forgotten.

**Genesis 16:11 The angel of the LORD said to her further, "Behold, you are with child, And you will bear a son; And you shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has given heed to your affliction.**

- shall: Ge 17:19 29:32-35 Isa 7:14 Mt 1:21-23 Lu 1:13,31,63
- Ishmael: i.e. God shall hear
- because: Ge 41:51,52 1Sa 1:20
- has: Ge 29:32,33 Ex 2:23,24 3:7 Job 38:41 Ps 22:24
- [Genesis 16 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## PROPHECY OF A SON TO BE NAMED ISHMAEL

The **angel of the LORD** said to her further, "**Behold**, you are with child, And you will bear a son; And you shall call his name



**Ishmael** - Hagar knew she was pregnant but did not know it was a male. The name Ishmael means "God hears" or "may God hear." Imagine how every time Hagar spoke the name "Ishmael," she would be reminded of God's mercy in her time of distress!

**Because** - He is explaining the significance of the name Ishmael.

**The LORD has given heed** ([shama](#); Lxx = epakouo) **to your affliction** - He has heard her painful cries, and her son's name would remind her continually that God heard her cries! **Has given heed** ([shama](#)) is translated in the Lxx with the rare verb epakouo which means to pay close attention to what one is told with the implication of being responsive (used in 2Co 6:2, used again in Ge 17:20 "I have heard you.") The point is that the LORD has clearly heard and responded to her painful cries.

**Ligon Duncan:** Galatians 4:21+: "Tell me, you who want to be under the law, do you not listen to the law for it is written that Abraham had two sons. One by the bondwoman and one by the free woman." And the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh and the son by the free woman through the promise. Now Paul goes on to expand that and continue that thought through the very end of that chapter, down to verse 31. But I want you to concentrate on that last phrase in verse 23. The son by the bondwoman was born how? According to the flesh. And the son by the free woman through the promise. Now Paul is pointing there to the fact that Hagar's giving birth to Ishmael was the result of the design of the flesh. The will of man, indeed, the sinful will of man produced Ishmael, whereas Isaac was the product of Abraham and Sarai's trust in the covenant promises of God. So Ishmael is the product of Abram and Sarai's failure of trust in the Lord.

**Genesis 16:12 "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 to the east of all his brothers."**

[AMP](#) "He (Ishmael) will be a wild donkey of a man; His hand *will be* against every man [continually fighting] And every man's hand against him; And he will dwell in defiance of all his brothers."

[AMPC](#) And he [Ishmael] will be as a wild ass among men; his hand will be against every man and every man's hand against him, and he will live to the east *and* on the borders of all his kinsmen.

[CEB](#) He will be a wild mule of a man; he will fight everyone, and they will fight him. He will live at odds with all his relatives."

[ERV](#) Ishmael will be wild and free like a wild donkey. He will be against everyone, and everyone will be against him. He will move from place to place and camp near his brothers."

[ESV](#) 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."

[HCSB](#) This man will be like a wild donkey. His hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand will be against him; he will live at odds with all his brothers.

[NASB](#) (NOTICE HOW THE OLDER 1977 NAS TRANSLATES IT DIFFERENT THAN THE NASB95) 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."

[NIV](#) He 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."

[NLT](#) This son of yours will be a wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives."

- be a: Ge 21:20 Job 11:12 39:5-8
- wild: The word rendered "wild" also denotes the "wild ass;" the description of which animal in Job 39:5-8, affords the very best representation of the wandering, lawless, freebooting life of the Bedouin and other Arabs, the descendants of Ishmael.
- his hand: Ge 27:40
- he shall: Ge 25:18
- [Genesis 16 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## ISHMAEL A WILD DONKEY

**He will be a wild donkey of a man, His hand will be against everyone, And everyone's hand will be against him** Wild donkey

sounds derogatory to modern ears but is not to ancient ears. Wild donkeys roamed the dry steppes of the Near East. A **wild donkey** is a figure of independence, fierce aggression and self-will throughout the OT (cf. Job 39:5-8; Jer 2:24; Hosea 8:9). Ishmael would pass along this trait to his Arabic descendants!

**WILD DONKEY** - 11x - Gen. 16:12; Job 6:5; Job 11:12; Job 24:5; Job 39:5; Ps. 104:11; Isa. 32:14; Jer. 2:24; Jer. 14:6; Dan. 5:21; Hos. 8:9

**NET NOTE** - **A wild donkey of a man.** 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. "His hand will be against everyone." The "hand" by metonymy represents strength. His free-roaming life style would put him in conflict with those who follow social conventions. There would not be open warfare, only friction because of his antagonism to their way of life.

**Bob Utley** on **wild donkey of a man** - this was not a derogatory comment in the Ancient Near East. These animals were used for sacrifices in Mesopotamia. They were highly valued and admired. It denotes his isolationistic tendencies (i.e., nomadic herdsman). Ishmael is going to love his freedom and will live a nomadic life. The next two poetic lines describe this nomadic existence (self reliant, trust no one, make no alliances).

**And he will live to the east of all his brothers - To the east** is literally opposite or across from. The exact sense is not clear. **NET NOTE** says "Ishmael would live on the edge of society (cf. NASB "to the east of"). Some take this as an idiom meaning "be at odds with" (cf. NRSV, NLT) or "live in hostility toward" (cf. NIV)."

**Bob Utley** on **to the east** - This phrase, "to the east," seems to have two possible etymologies: (1) to the east of (lit. "before the face of," BDB 815) and (2) "in defiance of." Both etymologies seem to be related in this context and describe exactly the Bedouin tribes of the Middle East.

**Warren Wiersbe** - While we must not apply these traits (HERE ASCRIBED TO ISHMAEL) to every descendant of Ishmael, the centuries-long hostility between the Jews and the Arabs is too well known to be ignored. The Arab nations are independent peoples, dwelling in the desert lands and resisting the encroachments of other nations, especially Israel and her allies.

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#### QUESTION - [Has anyone ever seen God?](#)

**ANSWER** - "No one has ever seen God" (John 1:18a). This statement refers to the spiritual nature of God. God is spirit (John 4:24a), and so we are naturally limited in perceiving Him. Physical eyes cannot behold spiritual beings.

**The Lord Jesus Christ is a unique case** "No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man" (John 3:13). Since He is both the [Son of Man](#) and the [Son of God](#), Jesus knows both the earthly and heavenly realms. He descended from heaven, where "he was with God in the beginning" (John 1:2). Jesus has seen God; in fact, Jesus is the embodiment of all God is: "No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known" (John 1:18; cf. Colossians 2:9).

Because of our physical, moral, and spiritual limitations, God the Father sent His one-and-only Son into the world. Through Jesus Christ, we know God and are redeemed from our sin. If we want to see God, we must look to Jesus. Those who beheld Jesus as He walked this earth were, in a sense, seeing God—not God as a [spirit](#) but God clothed in humanity (John 14:9).

When Moses talked with God at the [burning bush](#), "Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God" (Exodus 3:6). Later, God tells Moses, "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" (Exodus 33:20). In other words, truly seeing God as He is, in the fullness of His glory, is more than any mortal can tolerate (cf. Isaiah 6:5). Moses was allowed a glimpse of God's glory, but, for his own protection, most of God's glory was kept hidden from him (Exodus 33:21–23).

What, then, should we do with other passages that describe various people "seeing" God? For example, in Exodus 33, the same chapter in which Moses *cannot* see God, Moses speaks to God "face to face" (verse 11). In this instance, we must understand the phrase *face to face* as a figure of speech indicating Moses and God were in close communion. They were speaking to each other *as if* they were two human beings holding a conversation.

There are other times when people *seem* to have seen God:

- In Genesis 32:22–32, Jacob wrestles with someone who is later revealed to be God. When the incident was over and Jacob felt the full import of what had just happened, he was overawed: "So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared'" (verse 30). However, Jacob did not see God in all His glory, and he did not see God in spirit form. On a purely physical level, Jacob wrestled a [theophany](#), a manifestation of God in human form.

- In Judges 13:1–23, Samson’s parents have an interaction with the angel of the Lord. They don’t realize they are speaking to the angel of the Lord until the angel performs a sign and ascends to heaven before their eyes. At that point, Samson’s father is terrified: “‘We are doomed to die!’ he said to his wife. ‘We have seen God!’” (verse 22). But, as in Jacob’s case, they had only seen God appearing as an angel. This is another example of a theophany (or Christophany).
- In Isaiah 6:1–13, Isaiah has a vision of “the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne” (verse 1). There are seraphim present, and even they cover their faces in God’s presence (verse 2). Isaiah’s immediate reaction is fear due to his sin: “Woe to me!” he cries. “I am ruined! . . . My eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty” (verse 5). God then atones for Isaiah’s sin and commissions him as a prophet. Of note here is that Isaiah is experiencing a prophetic vision; thus, he is not seeing Yahweh, per se, but a symbol of His presence and majesty. Or this could be another Christophany (see John 12:41).

No one has ever seen God, who is “the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, *whom no one has seen or can see* To him be honor and might forever. Amen” (1 Timothy 6:15–16, emphasis added). It is only through God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, that we can approach God, know God, and see God. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

#### QUESTION - [What does it mean that no one has seen God \(1 John 4:12\)?](#)

**ANSWER** -1 John 4:12 says, “No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.” The same assertion that no one has ever seen God can be found in other parts of Scripture, such as John 1:18. But what does this statement signify, especially in light of Moses, Gideon, and others who seem to have seen God?

Scripture proclaims that no one has seen God because God is a spiritual being, and our eyes are limited to perceiving only physical, material objects—and even that has limits. God is invisible. Just as we cannot see the wind, we cannot see God.

Furthermore, it’s important to distinguish between what is possible and what is reasonable. While anything can happen within the realm of possibilities, is it reasonable to expect created beings to be able to see the Creator of the universe? When we factor in the existence of the spiritual realm, it becomes clearer why the idea of seeing God with our limited human eyes is impossible.

So, the skeptic asks, how can we ever come to know God if we can’t see Him? In response, we assert that God took the first step to meet us in the person of Jesus. Therefore, if we seek to know God, we should look at Jesus. John 1:18 states, “No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father’s heart. He has revealed God to us” (NLT). The writer of Hebrews also affirms this by stating, “In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe” (Hebrews 1:1–2). Not only did Jesus redeem us from our sins, but He also made God visible (and approachable) to us.

What about passages in the Old Testament that seem to suggest people met God and even wrestled with Him? For example, Exodus 33 says on one hand that Moses couldn’t see God (verse 20) yet also records that “the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.” (verse 11). The expression “face to face” seems to be more of a figure of speech, emphasizing the intimacy between God and Moses. Or it could be that Moses saw a [theophany](#)—a visible manifestation of God. Other possible theophanies in the Old Testament include Jacob’s wrestling match (Genesis 32:22–30), Abraham’s conversation with God near Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:1–33), the appearance of an angel to Samson’s parents (Judges 13:1–23), and the angel who spoke to Gideon (Judges 6).

Therefore, while no one has ever beheld God in His essence, He has manifested Himself numerous times in human form and engaged in conversation with His people. These theophanies in the Old Testament foreshadow the [Incarnation](#), where God the Son assumes human flesh.

After John states that no one has ever seen God, he writes, “But if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is made complete in us.” The love Christians demonstrate reflects God’s love. We cannot see God, yet when we exercise love, we know that God is dwelling in us. Christian love serves as tangible evidence of God and the gospel. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

#### QUESTION - [What is a theophany? What is a Christophany?](#)

**ANSWER** - A theophany is a manifestation of God in the Bible that is tangible to the human senses. In its most restrictive sense, it is a visible appearance of God in the Old Testament period, often, but not always, in human form. Some of the theophanies are found in these passages:

1. Genesis 12:7-9 – The Lord appeared to Abraham on his arrival in the land God had promised to him and his descendants.
2. Genesis 18:1-33 – One day, Abraham had some visitors: two angels and God Himself. He invited them to come to his home, and he and Sarah entertained them. Many commentators believe this could also be a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ.
3. Genesis 32:22-30 – Jacob wrestled with what appeared to be a man, but was actually God (vv. 28-30). This may also have been a Christophany.
4. Exodus 3:2 - 4:17 – God appeared to Moses in the form of a burning bush, telling him exactly what He wanted him to do.
5. Exodus 24:9-11 – God appeared to Moses with Aaron and his sons and the seventy elders.
6. Deuteronomy 31:14-15 – God appeared to Moses and Joshua in the transfer of leadership to Joshua.
7. Job 38–42 – God answered Job out of the tempest and spoke at great length in answer to Job’s questions.

Frequently, the term “glory of the Lord” reflects a theophany, as in Exodus 24:16-18; the “pillar of cloud” has a similar function in Exodus 33:9. A frequent introduction for theophanies may be seen in the words “the Lord came down,” as in Genesis 11:5; Exodus 34:5; Numbers 11:25; and Nu 12:5.

Some Bible commentators believe that whenever someone received a visit from “the angel of the Lord,” this was in fact the pre-incarnate Christ. These appearances can be seen in Genesis 16:7-14; Genesis 22:11-18; Judges 5:23; 2 Kings 19:35; and other passages. Other commentators believe these were in fact angelophanies, or appearances of angels. While there are no indisputable Christophanies in the Old Testament, every theophany wherein God takes on human form foreshadows the incarnation, where God took the form of a man to live among us as Emmanuel, “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

#### Related Resource:

- [Has anyone ever seen God? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)
- [If Moses met face to face with God, why, later, was he not allowed to see God’s face? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**Genesis 16:13 Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, “You are a God who sees”; for she said, “Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?”**

[AMP](#) Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, “You are God Who Sees”; for she said, “Have I not even here [in the wilderness] remained alive after seeing Him [who sees me with understanding and compassion]?”

[AMPC](#) So she called the name of the Lord Who spoke to her, You are a God of seeing, for she said, Have I [not] even here [in the wilderness] looked upon Him Who sees me [and lived]? Or have I here also seen [the future purposes or designs of] Him Who sees me?

[CSB](#) So she named the Lord who spoke to her: “**You are El-roi,**” for she said, “In this place, have I actually seen the one who sees me?”

[CEB](#) Hagar named the Lord who spoke to her, “**You are El Roi**” because she said, “Can I still see after he saw me?”

[CJB](#) So she named *Adonai* who had spoken with her **El Ro’i [God of seeing]**, because she said, “Have I really seen the One who sees me [and stayed alive]?”

[ERV](#) The Lord talked to Hagar. She began to use a new name for God. She said to him, “You are ‘God Who Sees Me.’” She said this because she thought, “I see that even in this place God sees me and cares for me!”

[ESV](#) 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.”

[EXB](#) The slave girl gave a name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are ‘God who sees me [or God of seeing; Hebrew *El-Roi*]’ ” because she said to herself, “Have I really seen God who sees me?”

[GW](#) Hagar named the Lord, who had been speaking to her, “You Are the God Who Watches Over Me.” She

said, "This is the place where I watched [the one] who watches over me."

**HCSB** So she called the Lord who spoke to her: The God Who Sees, for she said, "In this place, have I actually seen the One who sees me?"

**LEB** So she called the name of Yahweh who spoke to her, "You are El-Roi," for she said, "Here I have seen after he who sees me."

**TLB** Thereafter Hagar spoke of Jehovah—for it was he who appeared to her—as "the God who looked upon me," for she thought, "I saw God and lived to tell it."

**MSG** She answered God by name, praying to the God who spoke to her, "You're the God who sees me! "Yes! He saw me; and then I saw him!"

**NOG** Hagar named **Yahweh**, who had been speaking to her, "You Are **El Roi**." She said, "This is the place where I watched the one who watches over me."

**NET** So Hagar named the Lord who spoke to her, "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "Here I have seen one who sees me!"

**NLT** Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the Lord, who had spoken to her. She said, "You are the God who sees me." She also said, "Have I truly seen the One who sees me?"

**NRSVACE** So she named the Lord who spoke to her, 'You are El-roi'; for she said, 'Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?'

**OJB** And she called the Shem of Hashem Who spoke unto her, El Roi (G-d Who Sees); for she said, Have I also here seen after Him that seeth me?

**VOICE** As a result of *this encounter*, Hagar decided to give the Eternal One who had spoken to her a *special name because He had seen her in her misery*. **Hagar:** I'm going to call You the God of Seeing because in this place I have seen the One who watches over me.

- called: Ge 16:7,9,10 22:14 28:17:19 32:30 Judges 6:24
- Thou: Ge 32:30 Ex 33:18-23 34:5-7 Ps 139:1-12 Pr 5:21 15:3
- him that: Ge 31:42
- [Genesis 16 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## EL ROI GOD WHO SEES

Play the song '[The God Who Sees](#)' a song that speaks of the God Who sees Hagar in her distress.

**THOUGHT** - Dear believer, you are beloved by the Great and Mighty God. That is truth that will forever be your firm foundation no matter how great the "earthquake" is that you are experiencing (or will experience). Take a moment and listen to this song and may the Holy Spirit, our Comforter, minister deeply to your innermost being with the words, for El Roi is [The God Who Sees](#). In Yeshua's Name. Amen.

**Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "You are a God who sees"**- Hagar names Jehovah by a new name El Roi: God Who Sees This is the only place in the OT where someone gives Deity a name.

**Steven Cole** points out that "Hagar wouldn't have seen the Lord if it hadn't been for her trial. God often uses trials to open us up to some fresh vision of Him which we would have missed if we hadn't been in the difficult situation." "Hagar called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, 'You are a God who sees'" (16:13). God sees! Not only does God see, but even better, God sees me, and in spite of my confusion and rebellion, He lets me get a glimpse of Him! ([The God Who Sees - Genesis 16:7-16](#))

**Parunak:** an abstract noun meaning "seeing." It leaves open the question as to who is doing the seeing and who is seen -- Probably, as her following explanation shows, the ambiguity (God who sees; or Hagar who sees God) is intentional. God has seen her, and she now realizes that she has also seen him. Hagar's insight is to recognize that this high God, who is also the creator of all things, is in addition in personal contact with his people. He is not distant and hidden, but accessible. ([Notes on Gen 16](#))

**NIV Study Bible** (BORROW) - Another possible translation that fits the context equally well is: "well of the one who sees me and who lives," i.e., Hagar.

**Warren Wiersbe** - Hagar's wilderness experience brought her face-to-face with God and taught her some important truths about

Him. She learned that He is the living God who sees us and hears our cries when we hurt. The name of the well means "The well of One who lives and sees me." He is a personal God, concerned about abused people and unborn babies. He knows the future and cares for those who will trust Him.

**John MacArthur** sees the Angel as God - You are a God who sees. Recognizing the Angel as God and ascribing this new name to Him arose from Hagar's astonishment at having been the object of God's gracious attention. The theophany and revelation led her to call Him also "the living one who sees me" (Ge 16:14). (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**For** (term of explanation) **she said**, "**Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him**- She clearly is saying she has seen God and since it was the Angel of the LORD Who was speaking with her there can be little doubt that this Angel is divine, the Creator, not the created!

**THOUGHT** - When *El-Roi* sees His people, it's out of a sense of caring. "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Ro 8:31±) Our enemy, Satan, is out to destroy us, but God is for us. And "if God is for us, who can be against us?" Knowing that God sees all things may leave you in moment-to-moment fear that He will going to strike you down for your sinful ways! How can any of us stand under the careful scrutiny of a holy God? But the revelation of God as *El-Roi*, the Mighty One who Sees, is intended to be a great comfort to those who love Him, not to strike terror in our hearts.

**Herbert Lockyer** - In the wilderness Hagar discovered her [Jehovah Shammah - The LORD is There](#) and proved Him to be her [Jehovah Jireh: The LORD Will Provide](#) and when her child was born he was called, [Ishmael](#), meaning "God who hears." (BORROW [All the Divine Names and Titles of the Bible](#))

**Bob Utley** - "I even remained alive here after seeing Him" It was understood in the Ancient Near East that to see God was to die (cf. Gen. 32:30 and Exod. 33:20). Hagar is shocked that God (i.e., Angel of the Lord) would come to her and that she would see Him and still live. It is difficult in the context to know if (1) she was amazed to see a physical manifestation of Deity (i.e., I saw Deity) (2) she was amazed God saw her and came to her with such encouragement and care (Deity saw me) I think #2 fits the context best and the later name of the well in Gen. 16:14. Anchor Bible Commentary on Genesis says the name is pointed in the MT in an unusual manner to allow both possibilities (p. 110). This is the only place in the OT where someone gives Deity a name. Usually Deity reveals Himself by giving a combination name (i.e., El plus, YHWH plus, Elohim plus). Also note that this unique naming was done by a persecuted Egyptian slave girl. YHWH seeks her out and confronts her. His love is amazing! See [CAN HUMANS SEE GOD AND LIVE?](#)

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## God Sees You

She called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees. —Genesis 16:13

Today's Scripture : Genesis 16:1-13

Hagar, Sarah's handmaid, was being treated unkindly by Sarah, so she fled into the wilderness. As Hagar stood beside a spring in that desolate and lonely place, the Angel of the Lord visited her. He assured her that God Himself was aware of her situation. Hagar responded, "You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees" (Genesis 16:13). She found great comfort in knowing that the Lord God saw her and knew about her distress.

You and I can have that same confidence in God's watchcare. We can be sure that the Lord God is with us wherever we go, and He knows everything that happens to us. As the all-powerful One, He is able to solve every problem, no matter how overwhelming or perplexing it may be. We are never alone, never forgotten, and never beyond hope.

Whatever your troubling circumstances are, whether you're afflicted by illness or injury, brokenhearted over the loss of a loved one, or disillusioned because your dearest friend has betrayed or rejected you, God knows and cares. You may be deeply depressed, or perhaps you're plagued by loneliness and discouragement. But you can be confident that you are under God's watchful eye. Yes, like Hagar, you can know that God sees you. By: Richard DeHaan (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Beneath His watchful eye  
His saints securely dwell;  
That hand which bears all nature up  
Shall guard His children well.  
—Doddridge

We need not fear the perils around us because the eye of the Lord is always upon us.

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**Spurgeon - Thou God seest me.** When no eye seeth you except the eye of God, when darkness covers you, when you are shut up from the observation of mortals, even then be ye like Jesus Christ. Remember His ardent piety, His secret devotion—how, after laboriously preaching the whole day, He stole away in the midnight shades to cry for help from His God. Recollect how His entire life was constantly sustained by fresh inspirations of the Holy Spirit, derived by prayer. Take care of your secret life; let it be such that you will not be ashamed to read it at the last great day.

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**Adrian Rogers - Our God is:**

The God of strength - Elohim.

The God of sovereignty - Jehovah.

The God of superiority - Adonai.

The God of sufficiency - El Shaddai.

The God of supremacy - El Elyon.

The God of stability - El Olam.

The God of sympathy - El Roi.

And all of these names are made known unto us in that one beautiful name - JESUS.

**El Roi** - He is the God of sympathy. He sees. He knows. God sees you. You don't have any heartache, you don't have any pain, you don't have any trouble that He doesn't know of. In Psalm 33:18, 19, "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, and upon them that hope in His mercy." Did you know that God sees you right now? God knows your very thoughts. God knows your heartache. God knows your imaginations right now. God is there and Jesus is our El Roi, because what does the Bible teach us in the Book of Hebrews? We do not have a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows. He cares. His eye is on the sparrow and I know He watches me.

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## **El Roi**

[Hagar] called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" —Genesis 16:13

Today's Scripture : Genesis 16:7-13

Many locator devices are on the market today that promise to help us keep track of elderly parents, children, wallets, pets, parolees, even potential kidnapping victims.

As useful as these gadgets are, they would have done Hagar no good. No one seemed to care enough about Hagar and her unborn child to monitor their well-being in the desert. No one but El Roi—Hebrew for "You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees" (Gen. 16:13).

Hagar served Sarai, Abram's wife. Sarai felt like a weak link in the chain of God's promise to bless Abram with many descendants. She was barren, so she told Abram to sleep with her maidservant and build a family through her. This ill-advised suggestion—born amid intense cultural pressures to provide an heir—led to nothing but trouble. When Hagar became pregnant, she despised Sarai for her inability to have children. Then Sarai treated Hagar so badly that she ran away. There in the desert, feeling the misery of her past and the uncertainty of her future, Hagar met God, who saw her and took care of her.

El Roi sees your past misery, your present pain, your uncertain future. He is so watchful that He knows when the smallest sparrow perishes (Matt. 10:29-31). And He is the God who sees and cares for you today. By: Marvin Williams (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

If God sees the sparrow's fall,  
Paints the lilies short and tall,  
Gives the skies their azure hue,  
Will He not then care for you?  
—Anon.

Keep your eyes on the Lord; He never takes His eyes off you.

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## **Naming God**

I have now seen the One who sees me. Genesis 16:13

Today's Scripture : Genesis 16:1–13

In his book *The God I Don't Understand*, Christopher Wright observes that an unlikely person is one of the first to give God a name. It's Hagar!

Hagar's story provides a disturbingly honest look at human history. It's been years since God told Abram and Sarai they would have a son, and Sarai has only grown older and more impatient. In order to "help" God, she resorts to a custom of the day. She gives her slave, Hagar, to her husband, and Hagar becomes pregnant.

Predictably, dissension arises. Sarai mistreats Hagar, who runs away. Alone in the desert, she meets the angel of the Lord, who makes a promise strikingly similar to one God had made earlier—to Abram (see Gen. 15:5). "I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count" (16:10). The angel names Hagar's son Ishmael, which means "God hears" (v. 11). In response, this slave from a culture with multiple gods that could neither see nor hear gives God the name "You are the God who sees me" (v. 13).

"The God who sees us" is the God of impatient heroes and powerless runaways. He's the God of the wealthy and well-connected as well as the destitute and lonely. He hears and sees and cares, achingly and deeply, for each of us. By: Tim Gustafson (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Lord, You didn't sugarcoat the story of Your people in the Bible and yet You loved them—as You love us—in spite of all the dirt and drama. You are the God who sees us, and yet we can still run to You.

Read about some of the names that Jesus is given. See *The Amazing Names of the Messiah*.

God sees us with eyes of compassion.

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## [I See You](#)

I have now seen the One who sees me. Genesis 16:13

Today's Scripture : Genesis 16:1–13

"I see you," a friend said in an online writers' group where we support and encourage each other. Having felt stressed and anxious, I experienced a sense of peace and well-being with her words. She "saw" me—my hopes, fears, struggles, and dreams—and loved me.

When I heard my friend's simple but powerful encouragement, I thought of Hagar, a slave in Abram's household. After many years of Sarai and Abram still longing for an heir, Sarai followed the custom of the culture and told her husband to conceive through Hagar. But when Hagar became pregnant, she treated Sarai with contempt. When Sarai mistreated her in return, Hagar fled far away to the desert.

The Lord saw Hagar in her pain and confusion, and He blessed her with the promise that she would be the mother of many descendants. After the encounter, Hagar called the Lord "El Roi," which means "the God who sees me" (Gen. 16:13), for she knew she wasn't alone or abandoned.

As Hagar was seen—and loved—so are we. We might feel ignored or rejected by friends or family, yet we know that our Father sees not only the face we present to the world, but all of our secret feelings and fears. He speaks the words that bring us life. By: Amy Boucher Pye (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

Father God, just as You saw Hagar in her distress, so You see those who are hurting, fleeing oppression, and afraid. Please send them help and encouragement.

To know that God sees us gives us comfort and confidence.

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## **James Smith - My Father sees me!**

"The One who sees me!" Genesis 16:13

The eye of the Lord is upon the righteous, and His ear is open unto their cry.



God sees everything—but He observes His people with special attention.

His eye has been upon me this day! He has seen every movement of my mind, and every action of my body. His eye is upon me now, and will be through the dark watches of the night.

But it is a comfortable thought, that He who sees me always—loves me most! He loves me, notwithstanding all that He sees amiss in me.

Let us ever cherish the thought: "My Father sees me! I am under His eye! He sees all I do, all I suffer, all my desires. Nothing can conceal the least circumstance from His eye. He sees me—when I see not Him. He sees me in the furnace—and is with me. He sees me in the battle—and gives me the shield of His salvation. He sees me when my foot is slipping—and often has the hand of His mercy caught me and held me up! He see me when tempted to sin—when giving way to fear—or when yielding to the world!"

Let me call to mind this solemn fact: My God sees me!

If I sin—it must be immediately under His eye!

If I yield to temptation—it must be in His presence!

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**David Guzik** - (Ge 16:13-16) God's blessing and protection of Hagar and Ishmael.

Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered. So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees: Hagar knew this was no mere angel who appeared to her. The Angel of the Lord was also the-God-Who-Sees, the same One watching over Hagar and Ishmael. Ishmael is the first man in the Bible to receive his name before he was born.

So Hagar bore Abram a son: Apparently, Hagar did return with a submitted heart. She told the whole story to Abram and Sarai, and Abram named the child Ishmael, just as instructed in the meeting with the Angel of the Lord Hagar described. Hagar might have returned and said, "I fled from you all because I was so miserable and thought I could not continue here. But the Lord met me and told me He would see me through. He told me to come back and submit to you, so that is why I'm here." After meeting with El Roi, (You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees), Hagar knew that if God could be with her in the wilderness, He would be with her in having to submit to Sarai also.. "If we seek to change our circumstances, we will jump from the frying pan into the fire. We must be triumphant exactly where we are. It is not a change of climate we need, but a change of heart. The flesh wants to run away, but God wants to demonstrate His power exactly where we have known our greatest chagrin." (Barnhouse)

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**C H Spurgeon's illustration of Omniscience** - God Sees - A plate of sweet cakes was brought in and placed upon the table. Two children played upon the hearth rug before the fire. 'Oh, I want one of these cakes!' cried the little boy, jumping up as soon as his mother went out, and going on tiptoe towards the table. 'No, no,' said his sister, pulling him back; 'no, no; you must not touch.' 'Mother won't know it; she did not count them,' he cried, shaking her off, and stretching out his hand. 'If she didn't, perhaps God counted,' answered the other. The little boy's hand was stayed. Yes, children, be sure that God counts I: children's Missionary Recorder 1852.

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**J J Knap - June 14 God, Thou Seest Me** Gen. 16:13

There was a tone of holy surprise in the exclamation of Hagar when she sat down at a well in the desert, and was sought and found by the Angel of the Lord: "Thou God seest!" The Egyptian servant, who had lived long in Abram's tent and who was even closely involved with him, had at least learned something concerning the true God. However, when she had fled from Sarai, and roamed all by herself through the wilderness with the great sorrow that she had brought this upon herself by her own fault, she could not have thought that the eye of the Lord followed her from step to step. When she experienced that the Lord was also there, and made her confess her guilt that she was fleeing from the face of Sarai, and showed her the right but painful way to return and to humble herself before her mistress,—no, then she did not turn away her ears, but, surprised by a goodness that even followed and overtook a runaway servant, she called the Lord a new name: "Thou God seest," that is to say, "Thou art a God who seest and who is seen by a sinful human being."

**A God who seeth**,—that is His name! He sees us where we may be and what we may be doing, not the least in loneliness, when our feet, like those of Hagar, walk on paths that are not His. The Egyptian servant thought that she was all alone and left by all. However, now it proved from the words that the Angel of the Lord addressed to her, that He knew her whole life's history and that He

was completely familiar with what had taken place in Abram's tent. He did not see her now for the first time, but the divine eye had watched over her upon all her ways. It had taken notice of the sorrow of her heart with a carefulness from which nothing escaped. Exactly because everything was known to the Lord, He could now look upon her with a glance that was severe and admonishing indeed, but at the same time merciful and compassionate.

**A God who seeth**,—that is His name! He regards our sorrow, our cross, our humiliation at the hand of high-minded people. He also beholds our shortcomings and sins, and He does not justify them, but He punishes us concerning them in our conscience. He prefers to meet with us in loneliness, and He does not even wait till we go with our soul to Him, but He is the first One in everything. In this way He met us in our misery in the Son of His love, of whom the Angel of the Lord was a type. Whoever has met once in grace with that Messenger of God, will understand the scope of the words of blessed surprise: "Thou God seest me," because in Jesus Christ He is not only a God who beholds, but He is also seen by us in Him in the riches of His compassion. (The Loins Girded)

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### J R Miller's Yearbook July 18

"As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand." 1 Kings 17:1

"You are the God who sees me!" Genesis 16:13.

We all stand in the presence of God. His eye is ever upon us. His face ever beams its light upon us. We all believe this, and say it often with our lips; yet **many of us do not really get the truth into our heart! If we did—it would make holier people of us** We would not slight our work as now we do so often, if we were truly conscious that God is looking on us as we work! This consciousness of the presence of God, would also give us hope and courage in darkness or danger; like Hagar, who said, "You are the God who sees me!" Some people think of the omniscience of God—as a reason for fear and terror. But to Hagar, it meant divine love and care. God had not forgotten her, nor forsaken her. She was cast out of her earthly home—but the Lord saw her and took her up. If we are God's children, the thought of our Father's presence should always bring us comfort, assurance, and a wonderful sense of security. It is a great thing to stand before God, to be conscious of His eye upon us, and to know Him so well as not to be afraid of Him.

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### J. R. Miller - His unsleeping watchfulness - "You are the God who sees me!" Genesis 16:13

Go where we may, we cannot get away from the calm, clear gaze of the Divine Eye! Neither in the blue depths of the heavens, nor in the dark abysses of the grave — can we hide away from God. If we could take the morning sunbeams for wings, and fly away on them with all the swiftness of light to the remotest bounds of space — we could not get beyond the reach of the Divine Eye. If we creep into the darkness, darkness so deep and dense that no human eye can behold us — still God sees us as clearly as if we stood in the bright noon-day sunshine! Darkness hides not from Him. Night shines to His eye, as brightly as day.

When we know that God loves us, there is infinite comfort in this thought of His unsleeping watchfulness. It is our Father who watches us! There ought also to be wondrous encouragement and inspiration in this consciousness.

While the Eye of divine love is looking upon us, we should always strive to be pleasing to Him in all things!

"If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea — even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast! If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me, and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to You; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to You!" Psalm 139:9-12

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In writing about *El-Roi* in "*The Character of God*," **R. C. Sproul** said: "There are many things in my life that I do not want to put under the gaze of Christ. Yet I know there is nothing hidden from Him. He knows me better than my wife knows me. And yet He loves me. This is the most amazing thing of all about God's grace. It would be one thing for Him to love us if we could fool Him into thinking that we were better than we actually are. But He knows better. He knows all there is to know about us, including those things that could destroy our reputation. He is minutely and acutely aware of every skeleton in every closet. And He loves us."

That God sees everything, even our darkest secrets, and **still loves us** gives Christians our great hope. The growing realization of God's foresight and care should also help you to be completely honest before him. Identify one or two areas where do not feel comfortable with honesty. Prayerfully commit yourself to full disclosure before his face. Ask that your truth may lead to victory in his providence ([See this attribute of God](#)).

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**J C Ryle discusses the power of the doctrine of God's Omniscience** ([Where is Your God, My Boy?](#)) - However hard it is to comprehend this doctrine (omnipresence)—it is one which is most useful and wholesome for our souls. To keep continually in mind—that God is always present with us; to live always as in God's sight; to act and speak and think as always under His eye—all this is

eminently calculated to have a good effect upon our souls. Wide, and deep, and searching, and piercing—is the influence of that one thought, "You are the God who sees me!" (**Genesis 16:13**) (Click for additional discussion - [Where is Your God, My Boy?](#))

**Genesis 16:14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.**

- Beer-lahri-roi, That is, The well of him that liveth and seeth me. Ge 21:31 Ge 24:62 Ge 25:11
- Kadesh: Nu 13:26
- [Genesis 16 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

## BEER-LAHAI-ROI

**Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered-** Places were often named for the events that happened at the place and such is the case regarding the name of this well (compare Beersheba - "Well of the oath" Ge 21:31). Here the well is called "The well of the Living God Who sees."

**Steven Cole** When God meets you in a time of trial, as He did with Hagar, and you see Him, your first thought is, "Oh, God, how can You be so merciful to me, a sinner? I'm in this mess because of my own rebellion and sin, and yet You didn't strike me down or let me go. You directed me in the way I need to go and promised me Your blessing if I will do it. Thank You, Lord!" You gain a fresh glimpse of the mercy of God. When that happens, it becomes a source of testimony to others. They named the well with this unusual name, **Beer-la-hai-roi**: "The well of the Living One who sees me," or, "the well of the seeing alive." When travelers asked, "How did this place ever get this name?" the story would be told again, how God met Hagar there in her time of need, told her what to do and promised His blessing. In the same way, when God has met you in your trial and you've seen Him in a fresh way, use it to tell others of His great mercy. ([The God Who Sees - Genesis 16:7-16](#))

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**BEER-LAHAI-ROI [ISBE]** - be-er-la-hi'-roi, be-er-la-hi-ro'-i (be'er lachai ro'i, "well of the Living One that seeth me"): "A fountain of water in the wilderness," "the fountain in the way to Shur" (Gen 16:7-14). It was the scene of Hagar's theophany, and here Isaac dwelt for some time (Gen 16:7 f; 24:62; 25:11). The site is in The Negeb between Kadesh and Bered (Gen 16:14). Rowland identifies the well with the modern `Ain Moilaihhi, circa 50 miles South of Beersheba and 12 miles West of `Ain Kadis. Cheyne thinks that Hagar's native country, to which she was fleeing and from which she took a wife for Ishmael, was not Egypt (mitsrayim), but a north Arabian district called by the Assyrians Mucri (Encyclopedia Biblica). S. F. Hunter

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**W H Griffith-Thomas** - It prompted a memorial of the Divine promise (Ge 16:14). 'The well was called [Beer Lahai Roi](#).' See margin, 'The well of Him that liveth and seeth me'; that is, the well where life is preserved after seeing God.

It elicited obedience to the Divine will. She returned to her mistress, accepted the position, and all things were fulfilled according to the Divine revelation.

**1. The continuance of the old nature.**—How truly this fact of the spiritual life is proved by this chapter! Is it not also manifest in daily experience? The most deeply-taught believer is not exempt from the temptations, weaknesses, and tendencies of the old sinful nature.

**2. The occurrence of special dangers.**—Here again we are face to face with a well-known fact of the spiritual life. Our life may be lived for days, and weeks, and months without anything exceptional occurring, and then suddenly a special temptation may arise which leads us into sin.

**3. The unexpected sources of temptation.**—Abraham's temptation came from the nearest and dearest in his life, the very source whence trouble might have been least expected. So it often is to-day. Satan uses even the holiest of relationships and the closest of ties to bring about sin, and we ought not to be 'ignorant of his devices.'

**4. The combination of high motives and wrong actions.**—Sarah's motives were undoubtedly good, and we may fully believe that Abraham was actuated in the same way, and yet their actions were manifestly wrong. How frequently this remarkable combination of good motive and bad conduct occurs in history and daily life! The end does not justify the means, whatever people may say.

**5. The far-reaching effects of a believer's sin.**—Evil-doing on the part of a child of God is perhaps the very worst thing that can happen, and often has very widespread effects. It has been well pointed out by a modern writer that the existence of

Mohammedanism to-day is really to be traced to Abraham's false step; Mohammedanism which is in some respects the deadliest opponent of Christianity. Isaac and Ishmael still struggle in fierce opposition.

**6. The necessity of prolonged waiting on God.**—God's will must be realised in God's way, and God's way often involves waiting God's time. The union of faith and patience (Heb. 6:12+) is one of the prime necessities of true spiritual life.

**7. The supreme secret of all true living.**—Abraham could hardly have been living in close touch with God, or his spiritual perception would have been keen enough to detect the danger lurking in Sarah's temptation. The only protection against error in thought and action is found in abiding with God, living in fellowship with Him, listening to His voice in His word, and keeping the pathway to His presence clear by prayer and alertness of attitude before Him. **'The people who know their God will display strength and take action.'** (Da 11:32+). ([Genesis - a devotional commentary](#))

### Genesis 16:15 So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.

- Hagar: Ge 16:11 25:12 1Ch 1:28 Ga 4:22,23
- Ishmael: Ge 17:18,20,25,26 21:9-21 25:9,12 28:9 37:27

## ABRAM CALLS HIM ISHMAEL

**So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael-** This is actually Abram's "firstborn" son, which normally would mean he receives the most significant blessing in the ancient near east, but in this case as the son of the flesh (so to speak) he would take second seat to Isaac, the son of promise. The time is about 2079 BC. Hagar had given Abram God's chosen name and agrees and names him **Ishmael**.

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**Ray Pritchard** - Hagar Gives Birth to Ishmael Ge 16:15-16 The final two verses tell us that Hagar went home to give birth to Ishmael. This speaks volumes about her faith in God. Why would she dare to go home after Sarah had mistreated her?

1. She believed she could trust God in spite of her circumstances.
2. She concluded that God's goodness outweighed Sarah's hostility.
3. She knew that if God had called her, he could take care of her.

You have heard it said before, but I will say it again. The safest place for any Christian is in the center of his will. Strange as it may seem, it was safe for Hagar to be under Sarah's cruel mistreatment in the will of God than to be out on her own and out of God's will. I remind you that she had no guarantees as to how Sarah would treat her. Perhaps the mistreatment and snide comments continued for years. I tend to think they did. Human nature being what it is, it's easy to believe that Sarah's deep jealousy would continually provoke conflict. Here is a simple application to ponder: We never solve life's problems by running away. Most of us have tried that route at one time or the other. It never works. Most of the time growth comes only as we face our problems head-on. Finally, I find it instructive that Sarah and Abraham took her back. I'm sure Abraham wanted her back. After all, she was carrying his child. And I'm just as sure Sarah didn't want her back. Nevertheless, they took her in. Did God have time for a poor servant? Did he care about a slave-girl's baby? Would the God of Israel care for an Egyptian slave-girl? Yes, Yes, Yes!!! Hagar's presence was a stinging rebuke to both of them for their sins! They couldn't look at her without being reminded of their folly. "The whole Christian life is a life of repentance." Even the name Ishmael served as a constant voice from the past, reminding them that God had heard the cries of the despised servant girl. ([Doing the Right Thing in the Wrong Way](#))

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### Steven Cole's Conclusion

Dr. James Dobson tells of a time when he watched his daughter's pet hamster trying to gnaw its way out of its cage to what, no doubt, looked to the hamster like freedom. But Dobson saw what the hamster did not: the family's pet dog, watching expectantly from a few feet away. If the hamster had worked its way free, it would have met sudden death. The cage was really its protection and blessing.

We're often like that pet hamster. We try to break free from some confinement or trial that God has put us in, thinking that then we could really live. But God sees that our real need is to submit to Him in the trial. We need to realize that even as God saw Hagar, He sees us. He especially sees our affliction. If in our trials we will look, like Hagar, we will see God in His mercy toward us. Our response will be to submit ourselves to His loving purpose. The French writer, Paul Claudel, wrote, "Christ did not come to do away

with suffering; He did not come to explain it; He came to fill it with His presence." I pray that if you're suffering, you'll see the God who sees you ([The God Who Sees - Genesis 16:7-16](#))

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#### **Matthew Henry Notes: Ge 16:15-16**

It is here taken for granted, though not expressly recorded, that Hagar did as the angel commanded her, returning to her mistress and submitting herself; and then, in the fulness of time, she brought forth her son. Note, Those who obey divine precepts shall have the comfort of divine promises. This was the son of the bond-woman that was born after the flesh (Gal. 4:23), representing the unbelieving Jews, Gal 4:25. Note,

1. Many who can call Abraham father are yet born after the flesh, Mt. 3:9.
2. The carnal seed in the church are sooner brought forth than the spiritual. It is an easier thing to persuade men to assume the form of godliness than to submit to the power of godliness.

#### **Genesis 16:16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.**

- [Genesis 16 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons and commentaries

### **ABRAM'S FIRST SON AT AGE 86**

**Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.**- Heb "the son of eighty-six years." While this was his first son, it was the son born of the flesh and not the Spirit and thus was not to be in the line of the Messiah. Ishmael is born 11 years after Abram settled in the land of Canaan. Note that there will now be a time interval of 13 years until the next entry in Genesis 17:1. Ishmael will be growing up as the firstborn and as the only son, so he was probably "spoiled."

#### **Abraham's Chronology:**

- Age 75 (Ge 12:4-5) (Sarai = 65). God told him He would make Abe a father of many nations.
- Age 86 (Ge 16:16) Abe went into Hagar producing Ishmael,
- Age 99yo (Ge 17:1, 17:17) In Ge12:3 God preached the gospel to Abraham (Gal 3:8), and not only would the Jews find salvation but so would the Gentiles. The seed that God promised was in fact Jesus Christ, [Ga3:16]
- Age 100 (Ge 21:5) Abraham fathers Isaac with Sarah
- Age 137 (Ge 23:1) Abraham's wife Sarah dies
- Age 140 (Ge 25:20) Abraham's son Isaac marries Rebekah
- Age 175 (Ge 25:7) Abraham dies

At age 86 Abe went into Hagar producing Ishmael, the product of the flesh not of the promise--and the flesh can never please God!!!

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