

OVERCOMING THE DYSFUNCTIONS OF ISRAEL'S PATRIARCHS

V. Following God Versus Popular Ideas

(Genesis 16:1-16)

I. Introduction

- A. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Israel's patriarchs and their respective wives and families, though blessed of God, were imperfect people who at times made huge mistakes that led to serious marital and family dysfunction.
- B. Thankfully, Romans 15:4 states that we can learn from whatsoever things were written in the Old Testament for our edification, and that includes our learning how to overcome the dysfunctions of Israel's patriarchs.
- C. We view Genesis 16:1-16 on following the Lord instead of popular ideas to avoid family dysfunction:

II. Following God Versus Popular Ideas, Genesis 16:1-16.

- A. To help God's plan that Abram sire offspring, Sarai and Abram resorted to a popular practice of their time:
 - 1. In Genesis 15:2-6, God had told Abraham that though he was childless, his wife Sarai being barren (Genesis 11:30), the Lord would produce through Abram's body a son to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant.
 - 2. Since Sarai was barren, she suggested that Abram sire a child by her handmaid, Hagar, Genesis 16:1-2a. Abram heeded his wife's advice, and Sarai gave Hagar to Abram as a concubine so that Abram cohabited with her and Hagar became pregnant with Abram's child, Genesis 16:2b-4a.
 - 3. This deed "was in accord with the practice of the day, as attested in legal codes and marriage contracts of that time," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Genesis 16:2-3.
 - 4. However, when Hagar conceived, she despised her barren mistress, so Sarai complained to Abram for causing Hagar to despise her by getting Hagar pregnant, Genesis 16:4b-5. "After Hagar conceived, Sarai apparently reduced her to her former status as a slave and she was no longer Abram's concubine. This was Sarai's legal right, though we may sympathize with Hagar's plight," *Ibid.*, fn. to Genesis 16:4-6.
 - 5. Abram told Sarai that her handmaid Hagar was under Sarai's authority, that Sarai could do with Hagar as she desired, so Sarai dealt harshly with Hagar so that she fled from her mistress, Genesis 16:6.
- B. However, this effort to help God keep His promise violated God's Biblical precedents for man's reproduction:
 - 1. In the beginning, God had made one woman Eve for one man Adam, and as a monogamous, heterosexual, permanent couple, they began to populate their family that led to populating the earth (Genesis 2:20-24).
 - 2. When Adam and Eve's ungodly descendant Lamech was the first to practice bigamy (Genesis 4:19), he asserted oppressive oversight over his wives (Genesis 4:23-24), leading to generations where bigamy and violence so filled the earth that God's judgment of the Genesis Flood ended the violence (Genesis 6:1-3).
 - 3. Thus, God's precedent of making one wife for one man at creation to procreate was to be followed: Abram was to rely on God to make his wife Sarai fertile to bear a child rather than resort to the popular practice of using his wife's handmaid that mirrored the precedent of ungodly Lamech's bigamy and that of his seed!
- C. Nevertheless, God graciously intervened to keep His covenant and calm the people involved, Genesis 16:7-16:
 - 1. Since Hagar carried Abram's child, and God had promised to bless Abram's seed, the consequence of the union of Abram and Hagar was the production of a child whom God would bless!
 - 2. Thus, the Preincarnate Christ, the "Angel of the Lord" [cf. John F. Walvoord, Jesus Christ Our Lord, 1974, p. 52-54], found Hagar by a well in the wilderness "somewhere on the road from Beersheba to Egypt, Egypt being Hagar's homeland" (Genesis 16:1, 7; Ryrie, op. cit., fn. to Genesis 16:7).
 - 3. The Lord asked Hagar where she was from and where she was going, and she said that she was fleeing from her mistress Sarai, Genesis 16:8. The Lord told her to return to Sarai and submit to her, that God would greatly multiply her seed, Genesis 16:9-10. Hagar would have a son and she would call him Ishmael, i. e., "God hears," for God had heard her affliction, Genesis 16:11; *Ibid.*, fn. to Genesis 16:11.
 - 4. The Lord predicted that Ishmael would be like an almost untameable onager (wild ass), a valuable and admired animal of that day, and that his descendants would live in defiance of Abram's other descendants, a prediction of the hostility between Arabs and Jews (Genesis 16:12; *Ibid.*, fn. to Genesis 16:12).
 - 5. Hagar named the well where this occurred "Beer-la-hai-roi," or "well of the Living One Who sees me," (Gen. 16:13-14; *Ibid.*, fn. to Gen. 16:14). She bore a son, and Abram called him Ishmael (Gen. 16:15-16).

Lesson: *When Abram and Sarai tried to help God fulfill His Abrahamic Covenant by resorting to a popular practice of their day instead of following God's Biblical precedents, they began today's great Middle East conflict.*

Application: *May we follow the Lord instead of resorting to popular human ideas in all that we do.*