

# I Connect Sunday School Class Notes

August 15, 2021

## Meet in Building B, Room 1

Up the stairs to the right just before you enter the main doors to the sanctuary. Then, first room on the right.

### *Praises and Concerns*

## Genesis 16

16:1-16

### Commentary

Hagar, the Egyptian slave girl, is presented as the solution to Sarai's barrenness, according to cultural practice in the ancestral age. Hagar runs away and is met by the "Lord's messenger," who ministers to her and extends promises to her that rival the covenant promises given to Abraham.

1 Sarai, Abram's wife, had not been able to have children. Since she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar, 2 Sarai said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from giving birth, so go to my servant. Maybe she will provide me with children." Abram did just as Sarai said.

### Commentary:

Abraham was now eighty-five years old, Sarah was seventy-five, and the promise of an heir seemed no nearer fulfilment. Despairing of offspring herself, Sarah persuades Abraham to take her Egyptian maid Hagar as a secondary wife, intending, according to ancient custom, to regard the issue as her own. But her lack of faith in God's promises was productive of very unhappy consequences.

**3** After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took her Egyptian servant Hagar and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife. **4** He slept with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when she realized that she was pregnant, she no longer respected her mistress.

### **Commentary**

The Arabs claim descent from Hagar through Ishmael, Hagar's son. Her name, which means 'flight,' is akin to the word Hegira, used of the flight of Mohammed from Medina to Mecca (622 a.d.), an event from which the Mohammedans date their era. It was accounted a great disgrace and a sign of God's displeasure to be without offspring.

**5** 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." **6** Abram

said to Sarai, "Since she's your servant, do whatever you wish to her."  
So Sarai treated her harshly, and she ran away from Sarai.

### **Commentary**

All are at fault for the problems: Hagar fails to respect her mistress,  
Abram fails to maintain peace in the family, and sarai fails to treat  
Hagar graciously.

7 The LORD's messenger found Hagar at a spring in the desert, the  
spring on the road to Shur,

### **Commentary**

Shur: The word means 'wall' and was probably applied to the chain of  
fortresses on the NE. frontier of Egypt. The Desert of Shur was the  
wilderness bordering on these fortresses which were built to keep out  
Asiatic invaders.

The phras, "the Lord's messenger" occurs here for the first time. This  
messenger is an unspecified supernatural envoy sent from the Lord,  
but sometimes also identified with the Lord.

8 and said, "Hagar! Sarai's servant! Where did you come from and  
where are you going?" She said, "From Sarai my mistress. I'm running  
away." 9 The LORD's messenger said to her, "Go back to your

mistress. Put up with her harsh treatment of you." **10** The LORD's messenger also said to her, "I will give you many children, so many they can't be counted!" **11** The LORD's messenger said to her, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You will name him Ishmael because the LORD has heard about your harsh treatment.

### **Commentary**

*Ishmael means "God hears"*

**15** Hagar gave birth to a son for Abram, and Abram named him Ishmael. **16** Abram was 86 years old when Hagar gave birth to Ishmael for Abram.

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## **Genesis 17**

### **Commentary**

17:1-27 This is another appearance of God to Abram in which God expands the understanding of their covenant relationship established in Chapter 15. This chapter contains 5 divine speeches. This is the first one.

**1** When Abram was 99 years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am El Shaddai. Walk with me and be trustworthy.

### **Commentary**

Ishmael was now thirteen years old, and Abraham probably expected no other heir. But his faith was to be put to a further test. The Almighty God in Heb. is el Shaddai: Walk before me, and be thou perfect. i.e. always conscious of My presence, and living a pious, whole-hearted, upright life. These are the conditions required by God in connection with the covenant about to be made.

**2** I will make a covenant between us and I will give you many, many descendants." **3** Abram fell on his face, and God said to him, **4** "But me, my covenant is with you; you will be the ancestor of many nations.

### **Commentary**



This is the second divine speech. The 'many nations' of Genesis 17:4 and Genesis 17:6 included not only Israelites but also Ishmaelites, Edomites (through Esau), Midianites (by Keturah), Arabs (by Hagar).

**5** And because I have made you the ancestor of many nations, your name will no longer be Abram but Abraham.

### **Commentary**

This is probably a variation on 'Abram,' but its meaning is unknown. In commemoration of this event, Jewish children receive their name when admitted to the covenant by circumcision (Luke 1:59), as do Christian children when baptised into the Church of Christ.

**6** I will make you very fertile. I will produce nations from you, and kings will come from you. **7** I will set up my covenant with you and your descendants after you in every generation as an enduring covenant. I will be your God and your descendants' God after you.

### **Commentary**

The third divine speech details Abraham's covenant obligations. Wesley says, "As a covenant of grace, it is "everlasting in the evangelical meaning," because God's covenant with Abraham is a means of grace for all readers everywhere and always who read it with an eye to receiving grace.

**8** I will give you and your descendants the land in which you are immigrants, the whole land of Canaan, as an enduring possession. And I will be their God." **9** God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants in every generation. **10** This is my covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Circumcise every male. **11** You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it will be a symbol of the covenant between us. **12** On the eighth day after birth, every male in every generation must be circumcised, including those who are not your own children: those born in your household and those purchased with silver from foreigners. **14** Any uncircumcised male whose flesh of his foreskin remains uncircumcised will be cut off from his people. He has broken my covenant."

### **Commentary**

*This third divine speech details Abraham's covenant obligations, emphasizing especially Abraham's seed rather than the land promise.*

*The rite of circumcision has always been practised by the Jews from Abraham's time to the present day. Other ancient nations also observed the ceremony, such as the Egyptians and Phœnicians, but not the Philistines, Babylonians, Greeks or Romans. It is still*

observed, not only by Mohammedan nations who claim to be descended from Abraham, but by the Abyssinian, Egyptian, Polynesian and other peoples. Among these latter, the rite is generally performed about the age of ten or twelve years, as a preliminary to marriage, and as admitting to full civil and religious tribal privileges, often associate with magical, almost mythical, significance to the practice. With the Hebrews, circumcision had a special significance. They regarded it as a sign of the covenant between God and His people, and they alone of all nations circumcised their infants, thereby devoting them from their birth to Jehovah. With them, too, the shedding of the blood of that part upon which depends the perpetuation of life was the symbol of the continuous consecration of the nation from one generation to another. The outward sign must be accompanied by the putting away of fleshly and sinful desires: cp. Deuteronomy 10:16; Romans 2:28, Romans 2:29.

The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Colossians witness to the desire of the Jewish Christians to impose the obligation of circumcision on their Gentile brethren, and to the struggle in which St. Paul was successful in freeing his converts from the yoke of Judaism.

### **Commentary**

The fourth divine speech focuses on Sarah's role in the covenant, making it a family affair and constituting a blessing.

**15** God said to Abraham, "As for your wife Sarai, you will no longer call her Sarai. Her name will now be Sarah. **16** I will bless her and even give you a son from her. I will bless her so that she will become nations, and kings of peoples will come from her." **17** Abraham fell on his face and laughed. He said to himself, Can a 100-year-old man become a father, or Sarah, a 90-year-old woman, have a child?

### **Commentary**

Abraham's laughter becomes the basis for his son's name. Abraham was unwilling that Ishmael should be deposed from his position as heir: but God would prosper him also ([Genesis 17:20](#)).

**18** To God, Abraham said, "If only you would accept Ishmael!"

### **Commentary**

The fifth divine speech:

**19** But God said, "No, your wife Sarah will give birth to a son for you, and you will name him Isaac. I will set up my covenant with him and with his descendants after him as an enduring covenant. **20** As for Ishmael, I've heard your request. I will bless him and make him fertile

and give him many, many descendants. He will be the ancestor of twelve tribal leaders, and I will make a great nation of him. **21** But I will set up my covenant with Isaac, who will be born to Sarah at this time next year. **22** When God finished speaking to him, God ascended, leaving Abraham alone. **23** Abraham took his son Ishmael, all those born in his household, and all those purchased with his silver—that is, every male in Abraham's household—and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that same day, just as God had told him to do. **27** All the men of his household, those born in his household and those purchased with silver from foreigners, were circumcised with him.

### **Commentary**

We often find ourselves intimidated by the god/human dynamic. Prayer can be stifled by fear or a sense of our unworthiness, or perhaps an inability to claim for ourselves the relationship God has established between us. We have been created in God's own image, and God honors that. We are free, even expected, to relate intimately to God. God can be counted on to meet us at every occasion. God knows our propensity for argument, and our relationship is no worse for wear by going a few rounds.

## **Genesis 18**

### **Commentary**

The Lord appears to Abraham at his home near Hebron and in conversation along the road to Sodom; the Lord's emissaries visit Lot, leading to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

In this beautiful narrative, the writer dwells on the unique revelations of God's purposes with which Abraham was favoured. In after times, the patriarch received the title of 'the friend of God' (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23).

**1** The LORD appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre while he sat at the entrance of his tent in the day's heat. **2** He looked up and suddenly saw three men standing near him.

### **Commentary**

Abraham was entertaining angels unawares.

As soon as he saw them, he ran from his tent entrance to greet them and bowed deeply. **3** He said, "Sirs, if you would be so kind, don't just pass by your servant. **4** Let a little water be brought so you may wash your feet and refresh yourselves under the tree.

### **Commentary**

The difficulty of procuring the necessities of life when travelling in the East causes the duty of hospitality to be observed to an extent unknown to ourselves. The ready hospitality of Abraham is in striking contrast with the conduct of the Sodomites to the same visitors.

**5** Let me offer you a little bread so you will feel stronger, and after that you may leave your servant and go on your way—since you have visited your servant." They responded, "Fine. Do just as you have said." **9** They said to him, "Where's your wife Sarah? And he said, "Right here in the tent." **10** Then one of the men said, "I will definitely return to you about this time next year. Then your wife Sarah will have a son!" Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him.

### **Commentary**

The unexpected prediction confirms the promise of Gen 17:19: Sarah herself will bear a son.

**11** Now Abraham and Sarah were both very old. Sarah was no longer menstruating. **12** So Sarah laughed to herself, thinking, I'm no longer able to have children and my husband's old. **13** The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Me give birth? At my age?' **14** Is anything too difficult for the LORD?

### **Commentary**

Compare the Angel Gabriel's words to Mary, 'With God nothing shall be impossible' (Luke 1:37).

When I return to you about this time next year, Sarah will have a son." **15** Sarah lied and said, "I didn't laugh," because she was frightened. But he said, "No, you laughed."

### **Commentary**

The name Isaac means "he laughs."

**16** The men got up from there and went over to look down on Sodom. Abraham was walking along with them to send them off (ancient custom to accompany guests along part of their journey). **17** when the LORD said, "Will I keep from Abraham what I'm about to do?"

### **Commentary**

God reveals to Abraham the purpose of the visit to Sodom. It was essential that His servant as founder of a great nation should understand God's dealings with nations generally; that He is concerned in their affairs, and that whilst 'slow to anger and of great kindness 'He is a righteous God who will by no means clear the guilty.

**18** Abraham will certainly become a great populous nation, and all the earth's nations will be blessed because of him. **19** I have formed a



relationship with him so that he will instruct his children and his household after him. And they will keep to the LORD's path, being moral and just so that the LORD can do for Abraham everything he said he would."

### **Commentary**

*The mission of Israel was to preserve a pure faith and pure morals amid the corruptions of mankind till the Messiah should come*

**20** Then the LORD said, "The cries of injustice from Sodom and Gomorrah are countless, and their sin is very serious! **21** I will go down now to examine the cries of injustice that have reached me. Have they really done all this? If not, I want to know." **22** The men turned away and walked toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing in front of the LORD (one of the three men). **23** Abraham approached and said, "Will you really sweep away the innocent with the guilty?"

### **Commentary**

*Abraham is also thinking about Lot and his family/s safety.*

*We have here 'the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man,' humble, yet earnest, and even bold. In his anxious sympathy for others Abraham forgot, perhaps, that 'the love of God is broader than*

the measures of man's mind,' but he was right in believing that God allows His purposes to be influenced by prayer and repentance.

What happens now is not typical of ancient bartering. Abraham would have expected his initial offer of 50 to be countered with a much higher number, such as 100. Back-and-forth negotiation would arrive somewhere between his 50 and the counteroffer of 100. Instead, the Lord refuses to play this game, and agrees to forgive the city of Sodom for the sake of Abraham's 50. Abraham continues lowering his initial bid from 50 to 45, to 40, and then by increments to 10, only to learn that he is unable to outdistance the mercy of God, which he has underestimated.

**24** What if there are fifty innocent people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not save the place for the sake of the fifty innocent people in it? **25** It's not like you to do this, killing the innocent with the guilty as if there were no difference. It's not like you! Will the judge of all the earth not act justly?" **26** The LORD said, "If I find fifty innocent people in the city of Sodom, I will save it because of them." **27** Abraham responded, "Since I've already decided to speak with my Lord, even though I'm just soil and ash, **28** what if there are five fewer innocent people than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city over just five?" The LORD said, "If I find forty-five there, I won't

destroy it." **29** Once again Abraham spoke, "What if forty are there?" The LORD said, "For the sake of forty, I will do nothing." **30** He said, "Don't be angry with me, my Lord, but let me speak. What if thirty are there?" The LORD said, "I won't do it if I find thirty there." **31** Abraham said, "Since I've already decided to speak with my Lord, what if twenty are there?" The LORD said, "I won't do it, for the sake of twenty." **32** Abraham said, "Don't be angry with me, my Lord, but let me speak just once more. What if there are ten?" And the LORD said, "I will not destroy it because of those ten." **33** When the LORD finished speaking with Abraham, he left; but Abraham stayed there in that place.

## **Genesis 19**

**1** The two messengers entered Sodom in the evening. Lot, who was sitting at the gate of Sodom, saw them, got up to greet them, and bowed low. **2** He said, "Come to your servant's house, spend the night, and wash your feet. Then you can get up early and go on your way."

### **Commentary**

Guests travelling through an ancient city had the option of spending the night in an open square, although citizens were expected to provide overnight lodging.

But they said, "No, we will spend the night in the town square." **3** He pleaded earnestly with them, so they went with him and entered his house. He made a big meal for them, even baking unleavened bread, and they ate. **4** Before they went to bed, the men of the city of Sodom—everyone from the youngest to the oldest—surrounded the house **5** and called to Lot, "Where are the men who arrived tonight? Bring them out to us so that we may have sex with them." **6** Lot went out toward the entrance, closed the door behind him, **7** and said, "My brothers, don't do such an evil thing. **8** I've got two daughters who are virgins. Let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them whatever you wish. But don't do anything to these men because they are now under the protection of my roof." **9** They said, "Get out of the way!" And they continued, "Does this immigrant want to judge us? Now we will hurt you more than we will hurt them." They pushed Lot back and came close to breaking down the door. **10** The men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house with them and slammed the door. **11** Then the messengers blinded the men near the entrance of the house, from the youngest to the oldest, so that they

groped around trying to find the entrance. **12** The men said to Lot, "Who's still with you here? Take away from this place your sons-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and everyone else you have in the city **13** because we are about to destroy this place. The LORD has found the cries of injustice so serious that the LORD sent us to destroy it." **14** Lot went to speak to his sons-in-law, married to his daughters, and said, "Get up and get out of this place because the LORD is about to destroy the city." But his sons-in-law thought he was joking. **15** When dawn broke, the messengers urged Lot, "Get up and take your wife and your two daughters who are here so that you are not swept away because of the evil in this city." **16** He hesitated, but because the LORD intended to save him, the men grabbed him, his wife, and two daughters by the hand, took him out, and left him outside the city. **17** After getting them out, the men said, "Save your lives! Don't look back! And don't stay in the valley. Escape to the mountains so that you are not swept away." **18** But Lot said to them, "No, my lords, please. **19** You've done me a favor and have been so kind to save my life. But I can't escape to the mountains since the catastrophe might overtake me there and I'd die. **20** This city here is close enough to flee to, and it's small. It's small, right? Let me escape there, and my life will be saved." **21** He said to Lot, "I'll do this for you

as well; I won't overthrow the city that you have described. **22** Hurry! Escape to it! I can't do anything until you get there." That is why the name of the city is Zoar.

### **Commentary**

*While Abraham thought all along that the righteous would perish with the wicked unless the whole city was saved, God distinguished between the innocent and the guilty, and saved four persons.*

**23** As the sun rose over the earth, Lot arrived in Zoar; **24** and the LORD rained down burning asphalt from the skies onto Sodom and Gomorrah.

### **Commentary**

*The whole neighbourhood of the Dead Sea abounds in sulphur and bitumen, furnishing the materials for the terrible conflagration which ensued. Probably a convulsion of the earth released some springs of naphtha which flowed through the cities and ignited.*

**25** The LORD destroyed these cities, the entire valley, everyone who lived in the cities, and all of the fertile land's vegetation. **26** When Lot's wife looked back, she turned into a pillar of salt. **27** Abraham set out early for the place where he had stood with the LORD, **28** and looked out over Sodom and Gomorrah and over all the land of the valley. He

saw the smoke from the land rise like the smoke from a kiln. **29** When God destroyed the cities in the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot away from the disaster that overtook the cities in which Lot had lived. **30** Since Lot had become fearful of living in Zoar, he and his two daughters headed up from Zoar and settled in the mountains where he and his two daughters lived in a cave. **31** The older daughter said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there are no men in the land to sleep with us as is the custom everywhere. **32** Come on, let's give our father wine to drink, lie down with him, and we'll have children from our father." **33** That night they served their father wine, and the older daughter went in and lay down with her father, without him noticing when she lay down or got up. **34** The next day the older daughter said to the younger, "Since I lay down with our father last night, let's serve him wine tonight too, and you go in and lie down with him so that we will both have children from our father." **35** They served their father wine that night also, and the younger daughter lay down with him, without him knowing when she lay down or got up. **36** Both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father. **37** The older daughter gave birth to a son and named him Moab. He is the ancestor of today's Moabites. **38** The younger

daughter also gave birth to a son and named him Ben-ammi. He is the ancestor of today's Ammonites.

**The Lord bless us and keep us;**

**the Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us;**

**the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace.**