

## SCRIPTURE STUDY SHEET FOR SEPTEMBER 26, 2021 @ CAPC OAKLAND

Genesis 16:1-16 & 21:9-21

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

**16**<sup>1</sup> Now Sarai<sup>o</sup>, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian **slave-girl** whose name was Hagar,<sup>2</sup> and Sarai said to Abram, "You see that the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.<sup>3</sup> So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her **slave-girl**, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife.<sup>4</sup> He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress.<sup>5</sup> Then Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!"<sup>6</sup> But Abram said to Sarai, "Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she ran away from her.

<sup>7</sup> The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur.<sup>8</sup> And he said, "Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai."<sup>9</sup> The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her."<sup>10</sup> The angel of the Lord also said to her, "I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude."<sup>11</sup> And the angel of the Lord said to her,

"Now you have conceived and shall bear a son; you shall call him **ISHMAEL**, for the Lord has given heed to your affliction.

<sup>12</sup> He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin."

<sup>13</sup> 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?"

<sup>14</sup> Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

### LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

**Genesis** – the first book of the Hebrew Bible...pulls us into a sense of reality that is God-shaped and God-filled. It gives us a vocabulary for speaking accurately and comprehensively about our lives – where we come from and where we are going, what we think and what we do, the people we live with and how to get along with them, the troubles we find ourselves in and the blessings that keep arriving.

The book of Genesis doesn't present this to us as an abstract, bloodless truth or principle about who God is and what God is doing in and with the world. Rather, we are given a succession of stories with named people – people who loved and quarreled, believed and doubted, had children and married, experienced sin and grace. If we pay attention we find that we ourselves are living variations of the foundational stories told in Genesis from Creation to bondage in Egypt. - (adapted from the introduction to the Psalms in The Message)

We read in chapter 16 of the desperation of Abraham and Sarai to have children, and their confusion as they remain barren despite God's promises in Genesis 12. So they take matters into their own hands. By chapter 21 the miracle has happened and Sarai has given birth to her own biological son, Isaac. So no the foundational couple are in a bind: how do you undo what you tried to do to control God when God didn't seem to be doing anything?

Sarai<sup>o</sup> bore no children:: in the ancient near-Eastern world having children was a symbol of status and importance. So although rich, Sarai, being barren, is considered as a sort of non-person.

**slave-girl**:: "hand-maiden"- as such she was most likely a virgin before Sarai gave her to her husband to impregnate.

<sup>15</sup> Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. <sup>16</sup> Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

**21** <sup>8</sup> The child [Isaac] grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. <sup>9</sup> But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. <sup>10</sup> So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac." <sup>11</sup> The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. <sup>12</sup> But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. <sup>13</sup> As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring." <sup>14</sup> So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

<sup>15</sup> When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. <sup>16</sup> Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, "Do not let me look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. <sup>17</sup> And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. <sup>18</sup> Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him." <sup>19</sup> Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

<sup>20</sup> God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. <sup>21</sup> He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

#### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:**

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- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in this text?
- The story is complex. What relationships of oppression do you see? Freedom? The wilderness is the lonely desolate place of testing and trial in the Bible. Who is in the wilderness in the story? Who sees God – in terms of eye-vision; in terms of spiritual-vision?
- How has the story shaped you? Our culture? What have we maybe missed?
- How is the Spirit of God inviting you – or us – to act, speak, be, or change our relationships through this story of Hagar in the wilderness?

*I shall obtain children by her:: It's believed that the ancient Hebrews followed Nuzi Law which stipulated that the husband of a barren wife could adopt a male slave from his household who would then become heir to the family fortune. Abraham seems to have considered this option in Genesis 15:2-3. But he and Sarai instead settled on Hagar, knowing that slave holders had complete authority over the body and reproductive capacities of a slave. A handmaid was "to look after her mistress, do domestic work, and serve as wet nurse. Hagar's well-being would have been determined by Sarai. So it's not just a story of what men do to women, but also what women do to each other.*

**ISHMAEL** :: From the Hebrew name יִשְׁמָעֵאל (Yishma'el) meaning "God will hear", from the roots שָׁמַע (shama') meaning "to hear" and אֵל ('el) meaning "God". In the Old Testament this is the name of a son of Abraham. He is considered the traditional ancestor of the Arab people by Jews, Christians and Muslims.

**El-roi**:: the name means "God [El] sees." In Genesis it's only men who have been given the promise of progeny and only men who have named God. Hagar is the first – and only – woman to do so.