

## Genesis 15 revisited and 16

More about the smoking oven and burning torch

There's several images here:

1) purity – the oven isn't for baking bread, it's for refining metal. You melted down the metal and the impurities came to the top and were skimmed off. You repeated this until you have a clear shiny top. Fire is also used for purification in many places.

2) the image of smoke and fire is also used symbolically of God, such as when he filled the temple for Solomon, Isaiah and in Revelation; you're also supposed to see the image of clouds in the smoke (Isaiah 4:5) and think about the children of Israel being led and defended by a pillar of cloud (smoke) by day and fire by night. Fire and smoke are also used several times to describe the judgment of the Lord "the day is coming, burning like an oven"

That reference also speaks of the wicked and evil burning up like stubble.

Since the word used for oven can also mean furnace or the refiner's fire, we're to get a "positive" image of God's judgment in that it isn't there out of a human wrath, but for purification, and the same oven that burns the chaff bakes the bread, as our friend Charnouk would say.

Perhaps the Genesis reference means that God was promising to Abram by the certainty of His glory and His coming judgment, two things that you can count on. No wonder the great fear and dread and sleep fell upon him.

Genesis 15:13-16; 18-21

Promises:

- 1) descendants will be slaves and afflicted for 400 years
- 2) nation enslaving them will be judged
- 3) they will leave the nation rich
- 4) Abram will live a long time and die in peace
- 5) descendants will come back to possess the land, but not until the sins of the people there are full (ready to be judged in the conquest)
- 6) people whose land his descendants will be given are named and the boundaries given (probably another parenthetical)

Genesis 16:1-4

We don't know how much time had elapsed between chapters 15 and 16, but by the time of Chapter 16, they have been traveling for 10 years, so Abram is 85 and Sarai is 75.

If you've waited for 10 years on a promise from God that evidently he only sees fit to mention every several years, might you be getting impatient?

And, if you think about it, God never has said exactly how this heir will come about, and at Abram's age you've got to wonder about how many more years the fellow will be up to the challenge, and what Sarai suggested was a perfectly legal and ac-

ceptable option in their day,

BUT.....

is there really an 85-year-old or younger man in the room who thinks that this is a good idea?

It may sound like a good idea at first, "Honey, I'm too old to have any more children, so why don't you go have a fling with the cute little young Egyptian maid and make a son that way?"

"Oh, now darlin', you know you're the only woman for me, but if you insist, I'll do it just to make you happy."

Genesis 16:5

"My wrong be upon you....the Lord judge between you an me."

In other words, it may have been my idea but it's all your fault!

Once again, let's be honest, is there a man in the room who didn't see that coming?

Genesis 16:6 – one word here may show us that the writer was on Abram's side or it may show us about the character of Abram, or maybe both.

**"But** Abram said to her..."

look at all the different ways that "but" can be read:

Instead of arguing,

Instead of saying what was really on his mind,

Instead of defending himself,

Instead of flying mad,

Instead of reacting the way we would've, etc.

he just tells her that Hagar is her slave, take care of it. After all, in those days they lived in separate tents, so what happened in the tent was like what happens to day in Vegas.

Genesis 16:6

so Sarai comes down on Hagar with the full fury of an angry and jealous person, and Hagar runs away

Genesis 16:7

Hagar is making good time; she's on her way back to Egypt, and perhaps she thinks that she's out of reach of Sarai, but she's not beyond the reach of God. As you can see on the map, she's following the major trade route, and as soon as she gets through at the well in the land of the Amalekites, she's got a straight shot across the dessert back to Egypt.

Genesis 16:8

Notice how gently the angel deals with her. That's the same type of approach that God used with Adam after the Fall and even the same greeting he has for Satan in the book of Job. The same gentleness, that we're told to treat the lowly and down-trodden with through the Old and New Testaments.

Genesis 16:8-9

But even though she's dealt with gently, it's still firmly, and she's told to go back and

to submit to Sarai, just as Peter will tell the Christian slaves of his day to submit to their masters, even the jerks.

Once again, the important thing for us to see is the overall consistency of the nature and character of God as portrayed in both Testaments. The O.T. God is no more angry and judgmental than the N.T. God and neither is He less loving and kind in either.

Genesis 16:9-12

Hagar is given a promise not unlike that of Abram, that she'll have a son and that he'll be the father of an uncountable multitude.

But notice that unlike Abram's true seed, this one will not be a blessing to the nations, but will basically be a wild trouble-maker, always in a fight with somebody else. Unlike her, he won't be a slave to anybody.

Genesis 16:13-14

God is suddenly very real to Hagar, since she proclaims "El Roi" or The God who Sees and says that she has met this God of Abram who's also been watching her. The name of the well means "The well of the Living One" – suddenly, Hagar is able to go back and endure Sarai's abuse, and you don't think that Sarai is going to let something like her running away go unpunished, do you? There's no more talk of Hagar running away or of being haughty. Evidently, she's been changed by her encounter with the Living One.

How about us? Have we encountered the Living One?

How has that encounter changed us?

How does it help you to handle the abuse and mistreatment by others or life in general to know that El Roi, the God Who Sees, is looking after you?

Genesis 16:15-16

Time is still ticking away on God's promise. Now Abram is 86 years old, and evidently nothing of consequence happens for the next 13 years because he'll be 99 years old in chapter 17.