

**GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Lesson 16. (Gen 20:1-21:34). For lesson copies, go to <http://www.montgomerychurch.org/resources8.html>**

**Overview:** Chapter 19 presented God’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the subsequent escape of Lot and his daughters. Chapters 20 and 21 return us to the world of Genesis 12 (Abram and Pharaoh) and 16 (Sarai and Hagar). In Gen 20, Abraham again deals with a foreign king. This time the king is named Abimelech of Gerar (Philistia). Genesis 21 returns us to the earlier struggle between Sarah and Hagar. We recall that Abram (before God changed his name to Abraham) and Sarai (before her name was changed to Sarah) were in the “promised land” 10 years (16:3) when they “helped” God accomplish His purpose of providing descendants. The result was a decidedly mixed blessing. God declared that Hagar would not carry the promise of Abram, but she would experience the blessing of multiple descendants (16:10). However, God also declared that the child (*Ishmael*; “God hears”) would live a tumultuous life – conflict will be the nature of his existence (16:12). God “heard” (paid heed) to Hagar’s affliction, and told her to return to Sarai in submission (16:9). In that interchange, Hagar recognized a powerful aspect of who God is, declared He is “El-Roi” (“God of my seeing”), and obeyed (16:13). Chapter 21 gives us the promised birth we have been waiting for. Abram will have now waited 25 years from the declaration of God’s promise, but in God’s timing and by God’s Power, the promise comes true. The scene between Sarah and Hagar is basically replayed. Again God “appears” to Hagar (for Hagar He is *El-Roi*, “God of my seeing”).

**Read 20:1-18 completely through:** Recall that just after entering the promised land in chapter 12, Abram traveled to Egypt because of the famine in Canaan. Out of concern for his and Sarah’s lives, he deceived Pharaoh in very much the same manner (with a couple of notable differences) as he will Abimelech – king of Gerar, part of the land of the Philistines (outside the promised land again). Recall also that God enjoined Abram to be a blessing to others when He initially promised Abram “descendants” and “land” (12:1-3).

- **Re-read 20:1-7.** Now re-read 12:10-20. What similarities or differences do you find in these two accounts? What lesson(s) do you draw from this? Note: in 20:7 God declares Abraham to be a prophet. What role does a prophet have and what role will Abraham play in this instance? Discuss.
- **Re-read 20:8-13.** Compare with 12:10-20 again. What differences or similarities do you see? What question does Abimelech pose to Abraham and what is his response? What do you conclude about Abraham’s understanding of God at his point? What lesson, if any, do you draw for yourself?
- **Re-read 20:14-18.** Compare again with 12:10-20. In 20:14-18, who blesses who and in what way? What lesson(s) do you learn from this? Discuss.

**Read 21:1-34 completely through.** This chapter draws us back to chapters 16, 17 & 18 and gives us the scene that we have been waiting for – God’s fulfillment (in His time and by His Power) of the promised heir. Chapter 21 then concludes where we began in chapter 20 – with Abraham and Abimelech. Both parts underscore recognition of the Presence of God and the presence of God’s blessings. The chapters also point ahead to prepare us to better understand God’s testing of Abraham in chapter 22 – an apparent challenge to everything God has promised to Abraham from chapter 12 to this point!

- **Re-read 21:1-14.** Compare with 16:1-6. In 21:1-14, what actions are taken by Abraham? (Recall God’s command in 17:9-14 as you reflect on chapter 21). What actions are taken by Sarah? What lesson(s) do you draw regarding God’s Power and Promises from these verses? Discuss.
- **Re-read 21:14-21.** Compare with 16:7-14. In 21:14-21, what does Hagar do in her travail? What does God do? What lesson(s) do you draw for yourselves regarding “faith”? Discuss.
  - *Reminder:* As we noted in an earlier lesson, someone has written that Godliness-in-action, i.e., putting full trust in God to guide our steps through life, is a process of removing the blinders in order to “see” the reality God offers, and then receive those blessings in order to actualize the potential God plans for us. What blinders? Paul would suggest that they are blinders to “*the eyes of your heart*” (Eph 1:18). For when they are released, Paul states that the “believer” will “see” three blessings: “*The hope of His calling*” (Eph 1:18); “*The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints*” (Eph 1:18); “*The surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe*” (Eph 1:19). Do you think this applies to the situation with Hagar? What implication does this have for you personally? Discuss.
- **Re-read 21:22-34.**
  - What does Abimelech, the king of Gerar, acknowledge about Abraham and what does he desire as a consequence of what he “sees”?
  - What does Abraham do in response to Abimelech’s request?
  - What does Abraham do with regard to his relationship with God after the covenant is completed? What lesson(s), if any, do you draw from these interactions?