

Hagar and the Birth of Ishmael

16: 1-16

It is difficult to imagine a greater contrast between the last chapter and this one. In **Genesis 15 Abram** was seen as a man of faith. **Abram** had **believed ADONAI**, and it was **credited to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4:3)**. But in **Genesis 16** he is seen as a man of unbelief.

As we read about **Abram's** life we will find that **God** appeared to **him** seven times, each time to develop faith in **his** life. But this does not mean **he** was faultless. The fact of the matter is that **he** failed many times. **The LORD** gave **him** seven tests and **he** fell flat on **his** face on four of them. First, **he** stayed in **Hebron** when **he** should have gone to the Promised Land (**11:31b**). Secondly, **he** left Palestine, went to Egypt, lied to Pharaoh, and picked up **an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar (12:10-20)**. **Abram** turned down riches from the King of Sodom and passed that test; if **he** was going to be rich, it would be from **God** and not from man. Thirdly, **he** listened to **his** wife instead of waiting on **ADONAI**, which resulted in the birth of **Ishmael** and untold problems (**16:1-16**). And fourthly, **his** lapse of faith continued as **he** refused to trust **Elohim** for **his** and **Sarah's** safekeeping when **he** lied to **Abimelech (20:1-18)**. **Abraham's** last two successful tests occur at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the offering of **his** son Isaac. But **he** still failed four times. However, like **Simon Peter**, **he** got up, brushed **himself** off, learned from **his** mistakes, and started to follow **the LORD** again in faith.

Was **Ishmael** a mistake? Will the next thirteen years be a waste? No. With **ADONAI** there are no dead ends, only training grounds. May I say to you, if **God** has touched your heart and life, you also may fall. But, like **Abraham**, you are surely going to get up and start all over again.²⁶⁹