

# BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

## “Making It Happen!”

Genesis 16:1-16

2002

### Introduction

Hurley: “Make Things Happen!”

Nike: “Just Do It!”

This is the strategy of the world. And it’s a strategy that Abram and Sarai adopted in their effort to “help God” with His plan for their lives. Abram and Sarai could not have possibly anticipated the painful consequences that would result from attempting to “Make Things Happen!”

### I The Carnal Plan

A. Sarai had born Abram no children [Verse 1a]

God had promised Abram a son - Gen 12:2. But in Abram’s impatience, he adopted his servant girl’s son and named him Eliezer, which means, “God of help”. However, God rejected Eliezer and reaffirmed his promise to give Abram a son out his own body. But 10 years later, Abram was still waiting!

Abram was now 85 and Sarai was 75 years old. Undoubtedly, they must have been discouraged and disillusioned by the problem of Sarai’s barrenness.

B. Sarai had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar [Verse 1b]

Hagar was probably a gift from Pharaoh to Abram when they lived in Egypt – Gen 12:16.

Sarai decided that 10 years was ample time for God to fulfill His promise. Maybe God wanted them to be more proactive – to do something to help things along – to make something happen!

C. Sarai said to Abram: [Verse 2]

1. “The **Lord** has kept me from having children”

Jewish tradition says that before they came to live in the Promised Land, Abram and Sarai regarded their childlessness as punishment for having gone down to Egypt. God had indeed sovereignly prevented her from having children – not to frustrate Abram and Sarai, but to test them and to magnify His glory.

Ps 127:3 “Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him.”

2. “Go, sleep with my servant”

This plan had undoubtedly been forming in her mind for quite some time. But now she actually speaks what’s been in her heart.

James 1:13-15 “When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted

when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

**Application:**

We all have ungodly thoughts that drift through our minds from time to time.

That is not sin. But when we begin to cultivate those thoughts and then act on them we become participants in our own spiritual death.

2 Cor 10:5 “... we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

3. “Perhaps I can **build** a family through her”

Gen 30:1-3 “When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister. So she said to Jacob, “Give me children, or I’ll die!” Jacob became angry with her and said, “Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?” Then she said, “Here is Bilhah, my maidservant. Sleep with her so that she can bear children for me and that through her I too can build a family.”

Rationale:

1. God made the promise that **YOU**, Abram, would have a son. He didn’t specifically say that **we** would have a son.
2. We are old! My biological clock is winding down! If we don’t do something soon, God’s promises won’t be fulfilled!
3. This is a culturally acceptable practice. No one will think any the less of us. Ancient documents reveal that when a woman could not provide her husband with a child, she could give her female slave as a wife and claim the child of this union as her own. But just because something is culturally or even legally acceptable doesn’t make it right for the believer.  
For example: Abortion, ungodly entertainment, etc.
4. Hey, it will be fun!

Ishmael became the father of all the Arabic peoples who to this very day are hostile toward the natural born son, Isaac, who would become the father of the nation of Israel. In fact, the current crisis in the Middle East can be traced back to Abram’s decision to “Make Things Happen” by helping God fulfill His promise of a son.

D. Abram **agreed** to what Sari said [Verse 2b]

Abram should have been an example of faith and godliness to Sarai. Instead, with little or no protest, he passively agreed to Sarai’s suggestion. He allowed himself to be drawn and enticed into compromise. It is the story of Adam and Eve all over again.

Four mistakes that Abram made:

1. He failed by doubting the promise of God

Heb 11:5-6 “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

Hudson Taylor: "God's work, done in God's way, will never lack God's supply."

2. He failed by listening to his wife’s ungodly advice.

Having said that let me also say that many marriages are in trouble because the husband doesn’t listen to his wife. Your wife is your helpmate and you would be wise to pay attention to her counsel.

3. He failed to test his wife’s advice and counsel against the Word of God.

If your wife suggests something that is contrary to clear teachings of scripture, then you must reject that counsel and follow what the Word teaches.

Acts 5:29 “Peter ...: "We must obey God rather than men!”

4. He failed to pray for God’s wisdom or guidance.

Sometimes the prayerless decisions we make seem so insignificant and harmless.

But often these prayer-less decisions come back to haunt us.

“Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.”

1. Sari gave Hagar to her husband to be his wife

So she resolves to give up her husband's sole affection to Hagar that he might have a child by her and thus fulfill the will of God.

Prov 22:3 “A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.”

2. Abram **slept** with Hagar and she conceived [Verse 4a]

It is ironic how the tables have been turned. In chapter 12, Abram’s unbelief caused him to agonize while Sarai was in Pharaoh’s palace. Now, Sarai is left to ponder what is going on in Hagar’s bedroom.

### **Application:**

When we impatiently try to help God out by “Making Something Happen”, it rarely achieves what we hope for and often actually delays God’s purposes:

- Jacob had to live as an exile for 25 years because he thought he had to "help God out" to get his father’s blessing.
- Moses had to tend sheep for 40 years in the desert after he tried to "help God out" by murdering an Egyptian.
- Saul lost his kingship when he “helped God out” by making sacrifice to God rather than waiting for Samuel as instructed - I Samuel 13.

**Illustration:** Moving to New York

## **II The Natural Consequences**

- A. Hagar began to **despise** her mistress - 1 Sam 1:4-8 [Verse 4b]

When Hagar conceived, it ended all speculation as to who was the problem. It wasn't Abram, but Sarai. From a cultural standpoint, it confirmed that Sarai was less than a complete woman and was probably being punished by God. Hagar took it upon herself to remind Sarai of these facts at every possible opportunity.

1 Cor 4:7 "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?"

The sin of Sarai, Abram and Hagar now spirals down to a whole new level of ugliness!

B. Sarai **blamed** Abram: [Verse 5]

1. "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering!"

She had initiated the proposal to Abram, and urged it upon him. But when he gave in, she turned around and threw it back in his face.

She is not blaming him for the decision to bear a son through Hagar, but for remaining silent in the face of Hagar's growing and unrestrained contempt.

2. "May the Lord judge between you and me!"

Notice, Sarai fails to acknowledge any responsibility for the mess she's created.

Instead, she actually has the audacity to call upon God to judge her husband for the compromise she herself initiated.

**Application:**

Prov 14:12 "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."

C. Abram **abdicated** his leadership to Sarai [Verse 6]

Letting Sarai have her way was a dereliction of duty on the part of Abram. He was an accomplice to this sin by refusing to resist it or to rebuke Sarai. Sarai's stinging rebuke should have been a wake up call, but it served only to cause Abram to retreat further.

1. He turned Hagar over to Sarai

a. "Your servant is in your hands"

Rather than leading his wife out of the mess he had allowed to occur, he dodged his responsibility, preferring to pass the buck to Sarai. I think it can safely be said that, at this point, Sarai was wearing the "tunic" in the family.

James 4:16-17 "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."

b. "Do with her whatever you think best."

Here we have the total abandonment of biblical headship in the home.

Eph 5:22-24 “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”

2. Sarai **mistreated** Hagar

**Mistreated** = `anah = “To browbeat, afflict, or deal harshly with”

Eph 6:9 “And masters, ... do not threaten [your slaves], since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.”

3. Hagar **fled** from Sarai

**Application:** Running away from our problems is never the answer.

"If we seek to change our circumstances, we will jump from the frying pan into the fire. We must be triumphant exactly where we are. It is not a change of climate we need, but a change of heart. The flesh wants to run away, but God wants to demonstrate His power exactly where we have known our greatest chagrin." (Barnhouse)

### III The Divine Intervention

A. The angel of the Lord **found** Hagar [Verse 7]

**Angel** = Mal'ak = “A messenger or ambassador”

1. Near the spring beside the road to Shur

The Angel of the Lord appears frequently in the OT:

1. He appeared to Moses in the burning bush – Ex 3:2
2. He appeared to Gideon when he was threshing wheat – Judges 6:11-12
3. He appeared to Manoah and his wife when they were promised a son who would be named Sampson – Judge 13:1-25

But Gen 16 is the first appearance of the Angel of the Lord in the Bible. There is debate about who this angel is, but I believe him to be the preincarnate Christ.

The text itself supports this conclusion:

1. He speaks authoritatively in the 1<sup>st</sup> person – v. 10-12
2. Sarai identifies him as God – v. 13

B. The angel of the Lord asked: [Verse 8]

1. “Hagar, where have you come from?”

The Bible is filled with questions like this. They are probing opportunities for a man or woman to confess their disobedience and to confess it.

2. “Hagar, where are you **going**?”

The question exposes the helplessness of her situation.

Gen 3:9 “But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

C. The angel of the Lord said: [Verse 9]

1. “Go back and submit to your mistress”

**Submit** = `anah = “To abase or humble one’s self”

God tells Hagar to do something very difficult: go back to her terrible situation and to submit herself to Sarai.

1 Peter 2:18-24 “Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”

#### **Application:**

When God finds us wandering, this is always what he says, "Return and submit!" It may be a bad marriage, financial debt or broken relationships.

### **IV The Divine Promise**

A. The angel of the Lord prophesied: [Verse 10-12]

With the command to return comes the promise of blessing.

1. “I will increase your descendents greatly”

Gen 17:20 “And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation.”

2. “You will have a son and name him Ishmael”

**Ishmael** = Yishma`e'l = “God hears”

a. “For the Lord has heard of your misery”

Ps 34:17-18 “The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

3. “He will be a wild donkey of a man”

a. “His hand will be against everyone”

b. “Everyone’s hand will be against him”

c. “He will live in hostility toward all his brothers”

Gen 25:16-18 “Altogether, Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. [He] lived in hostility toward all his brothers.”

For Hagar, this was a source of great encouragement! Her son would prosper and increase greatly and at the same time, be a hostile enemy of any children of Sarai. “Sarai, you may have won the battle, but the war is not over!”

B. The response of Hagar: [Verse 13-14]

1. She named the Lord, “Beer Lai Roi” = “Well of a living (One) my Seer”

a. “You are the God who sees me”

Prov 15:3 “The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.”

2 Chron 16:9 “For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”

b. “I have now seen the One who sees me”

2 Cor 3:18 “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

2. She bore Abram a son [Verse 15a]

Apparently, Hagar obeyed the Lord’s command and returned to Abram and her mistress, Sarai, and told them everything the Lord had said to her.

C. The response of Abram: [Verse 15b-16]

1. He named the boy, Ishmael

2. He was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael

I find it interesting that God spoke to Hagar in this chapter, but not to Abram or Sarai.

In fact (as far as we know) God did not speak to Abram for 13 years (cf. 17:1).

## Conclusion

Many people take the Hurley approach toward life – they try to “Make It Happen!”

But the reality is that even our best plans and righteous works are “like filthy rags” before the Lord (Is 64:6). He will not accept them!

Just as Abram could not help God produce the promised son through human effort, so you cannot help God save your soul. Salvation is a gift of God, through faith in what Jesus Christ has done for lost sinners.

Rom 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

John 1:12 “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

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