

# Master's Journey

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## BIBLE TRUTHS

## EDITORIAL

### Good Friday?

Dennis D. Frey, Th.D.



The day of Jesus crucifixion, is known to the world as "Good Friday." As a boy, I misunderstood Good Friday thinking that it referred to the Last Supper. I suppose this was because in my child's mind there could be nothing "good" about the day they killed Jesus.

Of course, I could not fully understand the great goodness of that day or the fact that no one had actually "killed" Jesus in the normal sense of that word. Today, I appreciate the wonder of Jesus having willingly laid down His life as

opposed to it having been "taken" from Him (John 10:18). It was this willingness to give Himself that makes the day of His crucifixion "Good" Friday.

Nevertheless, I cannot to this day think too deeply about Calvary without being overtaken with a profound sense of sorrow. I have visited the church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem which is supposed to cover both the place of His crucifixion and burial, and even with hundreds in attendance at any time, there is a hushed and reverent tone. The nearly 2,000 years since that event have only served to deepen such reverence.

Something good happened at Golgotha that day, and I do not

### Hermen Who? What Biblical Interpretation?

Cheryl A. Durham, D.B.S.

Recently, I read a blog post that disturbed me. This is what it said:

*"Determining the method of Hermeneutics or method of interpretation is fundamental in the study of the Bible and Theology. Since the Bible is subject to literal and metaphorical interpretation, we are given two options either to be literal or metaphorical. There is no middle ground to determine what is right and wrong. One who studies theology should have his ground to stand on and must be ready to give an answer when in question."*

This post disturbed me because it makes big assumptions about what is fundamental and what choices we have as to how to interpret Scripture. However, it's interesting that the author assumes only one. The author is coming from a Greek orientation (epistemology) and worldview that claims the answer to the problem must be this or that.

This approach is problematic because the Bible was not written from a Greek or Western worldview, but from a Hebrew one. In the Hebrew worldview, the answer does not have to be this or that. It's startling that the author to this post doesn't recognize that his perspective is influenced by his Greek orientation. He doesn't allow for anything but his own view. He is obviously unaware of the Hebrew worldview that could allow both literal and metaphorical interpretation of the text at the same time.

pretend to fully understand even the smallest facet of it. Nevertheless, I wholly accept the “fact” of it, and unreservedly embrace it within the depth of my being. In the light of the Cross, I can do no other thing! “Here, Lord I give myself away, tis all that I can do.”

Dr. Dennis D. Frey is President of MISD



## Exegesis of Philippians 1:21-24

Roderick Logan, M.A.C.S.

**T**he Philippian letter was written by the Apostle Paul probably between 55-61 AD while in prison. Brevard Childs adds it was “originally separate literary entities combined into a single composition”. Some find it troubling when they discover this book and others in the canon have undergone such a redaction over the centuries. However, there is much to remain confident about and be resolved in regards to the integrity of Holy Scripture.

Timothy is included in the salutation as one of Yeshua’s volunteer slaves. A noteworthy play on words since Paul is currently a prisoner in Rome; chained to a guard. He recounts his prayers for the people in Philippi and their faithful endurance; making mention of their love and righteous fruit. Those trusting in Yeshua have found the courage to speak his Word, and Paul is encouraged. He touches on the mix breed of preachers advancing their cause outside having both honest and dishonest intentions. Paul comments, whatever their motivations Yeshua’s message is still being preached.

Philippi historically was a small, but prominent city both during the Greek and Roman periods. It was known for its gold mines. Geographically it is situated on Greece’s north eastern coastline on the Aegean Sea at the foot of Mt. Orbelos. The city is named after its founder Philip II (356BC) with a population believed to be around 2000. While it was more prominent during the time of Alexander’s conquests, it remained a wealthy center of commerce throughout most of the Roman empire.

Paul’s letter to the Philippians is a descriptive prose about himself, his imprisonment, his struggle with his lot in life, and how he eventually comes to terms with Yeshua’s call. This theme is summarized in the second chapter. It is about faithfully answering the call of Yeshua to serve others sacrificially. The letter commends the Philippians for doing just that, and Paul’s life serves as an illustration of such a journey. It is against this backdrop that Paul’s initial statement is examined.

*“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account”* (Philippians 1:21-24 ESV).

The author grounds his opinion in the last two sentences above. *“There is ‘NO’ (emphasis mine) middle ground to determine what is right and what is wrong.”* *“One who studies theology should have his ground to stand on and must be ready to give an answer when in question.”*

I believe that the author is projecting his own Greek worldview need onto a Hebrew worldview that does not see things the way he does. So why should we look at the Hebrew worldview? Well, for one thing we worship Jesus (not His real name) who was a Jew, raised in Jewish tradition, who ascribed to the Hebrew worldview and not the Greek one.

It was Yeshua who used both literal and metaphorical ideas in His statements and parables. He used the methods of the Second Temple Period Rabbis. Yeshua turned many phrases that used both Greek and Hebrew idioms, and if taken literally (like raining cats and dogs) could change the meaning of the text significantly.

Additionally, Paul (or Sha’ul), a rabbi who studied under Gamaliel, was not a Greek at heart; he was a Jew. While he had an excellent understanding of the Greek language and both the Greek and Roman civilizations, to be a Jew is not just a nationality; it is a life. This is evident in the idioms, practices, and categories that Paul uses to describe his theology. He is far from just literal. In fact, Paul would not use a Greek understanding of rightly dividing the word of truth as is mentioned in the blog post (2Tim 2:15). He would use Hillel’s Seven Principles of Biblical Interpretation which are far from the blog author’s view of Hermeneutics or Biblical Interpretation.

I am not saying this author knows nothing, and I certainly don’t know a whole lot. However, what I do know is that we cannot just take the Greek or Western way of understanding reality and superimpose it on a people and a God who did not endorse our western worldview. That is an anachronistic error.

The Jews are God’s people; we are grafted into them; they are not grafted into us. I am learning, however slowly, that we have done much damage to the Word of God by not understanding its roots. In our imperialism, we have ripped the New Testament from its Old Testament foundation, and by doing that, we have rendered it rootless. Something uprooted, and not connected to its life-giving source is useless. So what do we do now?

I would suggest to the author that he begin to look at the Hebrew foundations for the Bible. Jesus quoted the Old Testament saying that not a jot or a tittle will pass away until all is fulfilled. What does that mean? What kind of idioms are in that statement? Do the idioms mean something different in Hebrew than they do in English? You bet they do?

How do Jesus and Paul’s Jewish origins affect what they say? How can we know what He really means? I have a few resources for you....

<http://www.hebrew4christians.com/index.html> Hebrew for Christians

Leonard Nimoy, playing Mr. Spock, in the famed television series *Star Trek* was well known for his mantra, “live long and prosper”. This and his accompanying hand gesture was a reflection of Nimoy’s Jewish heritage. In fact, it summarizes the Hebraic viewpoint of life into two major points. (1) YHWH is the source of all life; the authority over life and death. (2) Prosperity is not measured in material gain, but in the sustaining of life (Deuteronomy 5:16, 33; 6:3, 18; Ephesians 6:3).

Paul, no doubt, recalled Solomon’s words, “*But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion*” (Ecclesiastes 9:4 ESV); as well as, “*long life is in her (wisdom) right hand...*” (Proverbs 3:16 ESV). The law and the prophets speak of life as being innately good (Job 2:4). Life is like a journey and it is the experience of the journey that validates life. It is so much more than the mere animation of the physical body or the vitality of it’s cognitive processes.

Paul, unlike the Greek culture which surrounded him, viewed life holistically. He does not speak of the tripartite man as having a body, mind, and soul; existing as three distinctives. While he uses the *zoe* (Greek; denoting the physical vitality of organic beings), he does so from a Hebraic worldview. Other Greek words like *bios*, *psyche*, and *pneuma* serve to illustrate how Hellenism classified the living; each segment has its own little box in which it is labeled and contained. Not so with Paul. He understands life to be the *nephesh haya* (Genesis 2:7); the unified whole living being which has an internal and external expression. There is a body (external expression) and there is a heart (internal expression); but one cannot be examined or understood apart from the other. The quality of life is determined by the unity - oneness - of the two (body and heart) functioning as one. Just as the giver of life is One (Deuteronomy 6:4-7); so Paul, as YHWH’s regent, is seeking to be one. He treasures this concept of life and he values his own personal life. As well, he is defined by his effort to impart life to others (Proverbs 18:21). Critical to understanding Paul is the value he puts on life.

As one of the authors of the Messianic writings, Paul clarifies his relationship to YHWH by asserting Yeshua HaMashiach and the concept of life are synonymous. The redactory work of the King James (KJV) translators in Philippians 1:21 includes the insertion of two verbs and they are shown as italicized in most printings. Neither are found in the original manuscript. As well, the Interlinear Bible transposes the nouns “life” and “death” into prepositional phrases by replacing the definite article with the preposition “to”. The text more correctly reads: “*For me the life Messiah, and the death gain*” (Interlinear, Philippians 1:21). The translator’s editing is dramatic. The English version is a softening of the text; not so much of what Paul said, but how he said it. In reality Paul is verbally showing the correspondence between life and Messiah, and between death and winning. He is expressing himself with vigor and emotion. This is what verbal “shock and awe” looks like when asterisks, capitalization, bold text, underlines, and red text are not available. Imagine Paul slamming his chained fist rhythmically on the table as he is speaking: FOR ME (bam) LIFE YESHUA (bam) AND (bam) DEATH GAIN (bam).

*Th’anatos* is the Greek word Paul uses for “death”. It’s Hebrew

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These resources will open your mind on the Bible and how God is speaking to you!

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## Rainbows, Mirages and Geometries: Allusions to a Realm ‘Beyond’?

John A. Adam, Ph.D.

*“Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them.”*

--- Psalm 111

v.2 (NIV)

### I. Patterns in Nature: the Handiwork of God.

**T**he question above is a small part of the larger, age-old one: what does the created order tell us, if anything, about the Creator and the spiritual realm. Familiar passages such as Psalm 19 (verse one in particular) and Romans 1:19-20 provide partial insights to the former, to be sure. Certainly, in the light of other key passages such as Psalm 8, Job 36:22 - 41:34, Romans 10, and many other scriptures, it is clear that, while the ultimate representation of God is Jesus himself (the Logos), God has not only given us a revelation of who He is in Scripture, but also in His creation. Indeed, they are all intimately connected (see Colossians 1:15-20). Through His Holy Spirit God caused His Word to be revealed, and through the same Holy Spirit He speaks to us today. Just as His Word will not return to Him empty or void (Isaiah 55:10,11), so, I believe, the Holy Spirit can and does use God’s created order to speak to us. Unfortunately, for many of us living in a largely urban environment, given the pace of modern life, we are not always aware of this. A desire of mine has long been to reawaken (or awaken) in myself and other people a greater appreciation for the sheer beauty and majesty of the Lord as revealed to us in His creation. God is the Author of revelation both in nature and scripture, and while they may address at times different aspects of truth, they must be intimately related (and Psalm 19 demonstrates this clearly). Indeed, it has been said “nature is but the expression of eternal thought in time”.

It may be that we can learn much about principles in the spiritual

counterpart in the Septuagint (LXX) is *mut* (pronounced *muth*); “a universally used Semitic root for dying and death”, and the Canaanite god of death and the underworld. Paul sees death as the ultimate separation from YHWH and it is due to the sin in the Garden. Death is the subsequent inescapable consequence of rebelling against YHWH’s commandments. It is the destruction of the Creator’s work, especially humanity who was created in his image. The idea “it’s a good day to die” or “he died a good death” is based on Grecian Stoic and Neo-Platonic ideologies. Rabbinic sages would argue life is not elevated to a higher level by one’s attempt to rise above the mortal body

. Not carefully considering Paul’s worldview might lead to misunderstanding his point about death being gain. Remember, Paul is a lover of life because he is a lover of Yeshua. Life is elevated, not by dying and going to some better place, but by obeying YHWH’s instructions and fulfilling his intentions. The “pie in the sky, in the sweet bye and bye” mentality distracts from living life as a fully transformed human being; from functioning as YHWH purposed from the beginning. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men (John 1:4, ESV).”

Paul is not distracted; but he is not ignoring his mortality either. He is a mere man like other men and he is destined to die. In fact, he is under the threat of death at the time he writes this letter from a Roman prison. For Paul there are no heroics in death, not even in self-sacrificial death or martyrdom. Around this time he writes to Timothy and instructs him that it is Yeshua “*who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light...*” (2 Timothy 1:10 ESV). So how is Paul reckoning his mortality with his high value on life? “The ineluctability of sin and death serves merely to bring out the fact that there is redemption only in Christ”. Paul reckons himself already dead. He is dead - dead to sin - and is only alive because of Yeshua. He has given up living for himself; knowing self-determination leads to self-defeat. He says, “*For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living*” (Romans 14:7-9 ESV). Paul chose to die in Yeshua so he could be resurrected in Yeshua. Once dead he can no longer be threatened with death; life here or life somewhere else, it does not matter. Present or absent from his body, either way he lives and life equals Yeshua.

This Apostle is not struggling with the worries of living or dying. He has come to terms with this issue once and for all. He is focused on his journey and he is engaged. He is experiencing *kerdos* (gain); he has the “advantage” and he “wins”. Instead of being preoccupied with whether he will live or die, Paul compares his former way to the dawn of his renewed life in Messiah. In chapter three he will later write, “*whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ*” (Philippians 3:7 ESV). Winning is losing what others deem to be gain. Paul has vicariously placed his life onto Yeshua; he is a volunteer slave without life, rights, or the guilt of sin. In turn, he now lives through the life of Yeshua with all its benefits.

The Hebrew word for flesh, *basar*, has a homophone which is the word for “publish, preach, or to bring news”. The Creator designed the human flesh - the actual muscular structure - for the

realm (consistent with scripture) by studying and contemplating the rich variety of patterns and relationships in the created order around us. If we can see there evidence of God’s “fingerprints” we should not be surprised to find that His Spirit can use them to reveal more about the ways God moves in our lives. But we need to train our eyes and minds and spirits to “see” this in the way that we are encouraged to do in both New and Old Testaments: “Consider how the lilies grow...” (Luke 12:27); “Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!” (Proverbs 6:6); “Do you know how the clouds hang poised...?” (Job 37:16); “Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades? Can you loose the cords of Orion?” (Job 38:31-32); “Does the eagle soar at your command...?” (Job 39:27); “...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things.” (Philippians 4:8). With such passages in mind I will nevertheless concentrate on only a few of the phenomena perceptible to the naked eye alone (or perhaps with spectacles!): obviously, given the possibility of noticing rainbows, ice-crystal halos, glories<sup>†</sup>, sunsets, cloud structures, waves on puddles, lakes and oceans, patterns in leaves, trees, animal patterns and butterfly wings, the flight patterns of Canada geese, etc., there is almost an infinite variety of topics to choose from! I will also, however, briefly address some rather surprising (to me at least) features arising in the realm of “applied mathematics” (sector III).

The created realm in which we live is, in part, a model or pattern for the spiritual realm. Hebrews 10:1 says that the law is only a shadow of the good things to come, not the realities themselves, and broadening this theme, 2 Corinthians 4:18 reminds us that what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. The Lord uses such things as light, trees, rocks, water, wind and storms, all mentioned many times in Scripture, to help us see spiritual realities, and recognize spiritual truth. Indeed, these examples and others are dual majestic themes in Scripture and nature. As part of creation, they reveal God’s glory to those with eyes to see it.

The fundamental principle I am espousing here, namely the efficacy of creation as testimony to its Creator, is of course not new; from the earliest recorded Scriptures to the present time there have been many references to it. Having cited Biblical passages above, let us now see what some writers and poets (some secular) have said about this theme.

The following lines are from a hymn written by Horatius Bonar: “*Ocean and mountain, stream, forest and flower, echo His praises and tell of his power.*” In her long poem *Aurora Leigh*, Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote: *Earth’s crammed with heaven,*

*And every common bush afire with God: But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,*

*The rest sit round it, and pluck blackberries, And daub their natural faces unaware...*

*Art’s the witness of what Is / Behind this show. If this world’s show were all,*

*Then imitation would be all in Art;.../ If genuine artists, witnessing for God’s*

purposes of publishing, preaching, and physically bringing his message to others. Paul believes if he remains in his flesh it would be *karpos*; it would be fruitful. *Karpos* in the LXX is *para*. It means “bear fruit, be fruitful, or branch off”. It is the root of the name given by Joseph to his second son, Ephraim; YHWH has made me fruitful in the country of my affliction (Genesis 41:52). Previously it was YHWH who said to Abraham, “*I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you*” (Genesis 17:6 ESV). In this context the idea of *para* is that Yeshua is the one who causes Paul to be fruitful. It is not enough that his created body is so designed to benefit and nourish others, but he must look to and depend on Yeshua to bring it about. A fruit-filled life does not happen by osmosis or sheer presence. Productivity is the consequence resulting from action taken. The ability of the tree to produce a flavorful and nutritious harvest is because YHWH provides the sun, the rain, the wind, and the soil. The tree, although designed to be fruitful, is incapable of bearing apart from the God superintended elements. Likewise, Paul understands his hardwiring and how he has been designed, yet that design must be managed within the context of Yeshua’s purpose and direction.

What is the action which precedes a fruitful season? It is work. Paul uses *ergon* to describe his labor. The LXX uses *ergon* for the word *melaka* (mlak). The Hebrew word for king is *malak* (mlk) and by adding an *alef* between the lamed and the kaf the word becomes “messenger”. When a *hey* is added at the end (mlakh) it becomes the word for work or business. The Hebrew word picture of *mlakh* is “what comes from the messenger”. The broad view shows this messenger has been dispatched from the king’s royal court. Rabbi Paul is doing exactly what Rabbi Yeshua did: “*I have given them the words that you gave me*” (John 17:8 ESV). Paul, as the King’s regent, is the designated preacher and now publisher of YHWH’s Word.

Paul is in a quandary and the English text does not quite convey it. It reads, “I am hard pressed...” (Philippians 1:23 ESV). What is the problem? The key word that sets the stage is found at the end of the previous verse, the word “tell”. It is *yada* in Hebrew. In this particular context it simply means “knowledge” or the ability “to distinguish”.

Paul’s tension is the fact he is not “in the know”. He is in prison, shackled to a guard, and not able to travel at will. Is he going to die or is he going to live? If he lives, will it be in prison or will he be set free? He does not know. Paul has accepted the idea he might die at the hands of Caesar. In that case, Yeshua will complete all he has entrusted to him (2 Timothy 1:12). Paul is not wrestling with death, but with living; or the state in which he will live. Will he live in prison confined and restricted, or will he be permitted once again to travel and disciple? Will he teach once again in a local synagogue or is he relegated to writing letters in a prison? Remember what Yeshua said: “*...Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 19:14 ESV). Children are usually not in the know yet they trust their guardians. Paul is feeling vulnerable just like a child. What will he do?

“*I am hard pressed*” is *synechomai* and the LXX uses it for ‘asar’. The Hebrew word picture is of a man who has been hooked. It

*Complete, consummate, undivided work: -That not a natural flower can grow on earth,*

*Without a flower upon the spiritual side,...*

John Ruskin wrote: *It is written on the arched sky; It looks out from every star;*

*Where the shrubless mountain-top pierces the thin atmosphere of eternal winter,*

*Or where the mighty forest fluctuates before the strong wind; With its dark waves of green foliage; It is spread out like a legible language upon the broad face of an unsleeping ocean; It is the poetry of Nature; It is that which uplifts the spirit within us...*

One of my favorite poets is Gerard Manley Hopkins, a Jesuit priest and scholar. In *God’s Grandeur* he wrote: *The world is charged with the grandeur of God. / It will flame out, like shining shook from foil...* It is interesting, and pertinent here, I think, to read what some commentators have written about this devout Victorian poet and observer of nature. In Donald McChesney’s *A Hopkins Commentary* [1] the author notes “By contemplation of simple objects - flowers, trees, streams and simple landscapes - Hopkins was at times raised to ecstasy, because he realised that the hidden energy (instress) moulding things into shapes, patterns and colours (inscapes) was the very energy of God himself. This outward and visible beauty was to him the reflection of the energy and invisible beauty of God. So in this sense all nature was sacramental to him - the visible sign of an invisible, intelligent and creative energy.” Furthermore, Margaret Ellsberg, in her book *Created To Praise* [2], and quoting from Hopkins’s *Pied Beauty*, wrote concerning the poet “If he looked very hard not at himself but at *things*, they would reveal to him something about their source and creator and would become in fact a means of prayer and praise: *Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?) / With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim; / He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change: Praise him.* What was absolutely novel in Hopkins’ writing was this startling, sustained double vision: he saw God in particulars, particulars in God.”

Nearer our present era, Erich Sauer, author of *The King of the Earth* [3] wrote “Once the universe had been created by God it had to be, since it was His work, in harmony with His nature. The existence of a universe developing in space and time is, so far as its origin and meaning are concerned, a revelation of the innermost nature of God, with its holiness and love.... The world then, being an effluence of the Divine will, must be a concrete expression of the thoughts of the Creator. The spiritual laws of Eternal being must be reflected in the natural world. Between the infinite and the finite, the ideal and the real, there must exist such a basic parallelism that the visible becomes the clothing of the invisible, a symbolizing, graspable by the senses, of the transcendental... That is “natural revelation” in its widest sense. By virtue of it, all created forms of life become concrete expressions of definite thoughts of God, and the universe

on the hook. He is discontented with being restrained. He must reconcile his discontentment with the fact Yeshua has allowed his circumstance. If it were up to him he would either be free to travel and preach, or die and be with Yeshua. This constrained lock up is not what he had in mind. Cognitively he knows full well his imprisonment is serving the cause of the kingdom, but emotionally this is a real battle for Paul. There is no denying it, the chains may be Roman, but the continued lock up is YHWH's doing. Paul's paradox: he was designed and talented (by God) for more than this, but his situation is marginalizing his expression of that design and talent (also by God). He feels squelched, but he is powerless to change the situation. His desire - *epithymia* - is a strong emotional plea to depart; to *analyo*. Paul is "pale with a yearning" to be "loosed". *Analyo* is a euphemism for "to die", and it's root, *lyo*, is used to show a "release from prison".

Paul wants out. He wants out of prison, out of the shackles, and out from under this restraint. What Paul really wants is to be out from the of limbo.

It is not the uncertainty that is eating at Paul, it is not being able to function at what he believes to be his optimum level. He is not performance based, but he is hard wired for action. He is a prophet in the sense of searching out what is latent, hidden, and obscured by a history of disobedience to YHWH's commandments. He is hard wired to proclaim, publish, and preach the message entrusted to all nations. This is his life; this is what living is all about. Confined in prison is not what he imagined, but it is the reality of what Yeshua has brought to him. Can he be content? Will he continue to trust in the One who is now restraining him?

Paul's resolve does come. It does not come easy, but it does come in verse 24; "*But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account*". Despite his psychological turmoil, he is others focused. The key word is "necessary". The Greek is *anankaaios* and it means "compelling". In Hebrew it is used for the word "constraint"; not in the sense of a natural condition, but of divinely imposed affliction.

Paul responds affirmatively to the call of Yeshua and in turn has restrictions imposed upon him, and it is those restrictions which serve as the framework of that calling.

Here is YHWH's definition of leadership: optimum functionality while under divine constraint. It is just not about responding to the call and accessing the provided resources, but it is continually seeking Yeshua's assessment and trusting him to bring about the intended results. Consider these persons and their imposed constraints: Joseph living as a slave in a foreign land; Moses arguing at the burning bush over his inabilities; Esther finding courage under the threat of death; and Nehemiah fighting enemies with one hand and building walls with the other. Much different from the leadership models of the modern church where so many aspire to be up front. Stage performers who seek to be seen, rather than to voluntarily serve others. What kind of person does it take to be a leader in Yeshua's kingdom? Is there a need for such a leader today or have we learned how to manage getting off the hooks? How do surveys, market shares, demographic profiles, and capital campaigns encourage men and

becomes a universal "reflection of the majesty of the Eternal in earthly matter" (cf. Rom. 1:19,20)...To experience God Himself in holiness and love and to radiate His power and majesty is therefore the content of our human vocation..."

Ric Ergenbright has said as much (but in fewer words!) in his book *The Art of God: The Heavens & The Earth* [4]: "...by using the visible and temporal things of the earth to describe the invisible and eternal truths of His Kingdom, God has graciously enabled us to know Him better, and to see and understand our world and ourselves through new eyes...To see and experience the beauty of nature is a wonderful thing. But to see and experience the beauty of God *through* nature is infinitely more wonderful. The former is His good and gracious gift to all people, but the latter is reserved for those who seek Him and faithfully study His Word."

In his book *Rumors of Another World* [5], Philip Yancey writes "The ordinary, natural world contains the supernatural, a necessary step since we do not have the capacity to apprehend God directly. We see God best in the same way we see a solar eclipse: not by staring at the sun, which would cause blindness, but through something on which the sun is *projected*." (Emphasis mine; see section IV.) Also, "Because rumors of another world are just that, rumors and not proofs, a thin membrane of belief separates the natural from the supernatural." He quotes Blaise Pascal, who saw the natural world as a foreshadowing of the supernatural: "He has done in the bounties of nature what He could do in those of grace, in order that we might judge that He could make the invisible, since He has made the visible excellently."

I have a book of about ninety "3-D" pictures, wherein one is advised to stare at a fuzzy picture of nothing in particular, an abstract pattern in most instances, and to let one's eyes defocus. After a while, an image, apparently three-dimensional, appears, a result of stereoscopic vision. It is really quite remarkable, and with practice I have been able to "see" the "reality" behind the pattern after just a few seconds. This is, to me at least, a powerful metaphor for the scripture truths expressed above (and of course for hints about the spiritual realm given in Ephesians 6 and related scriptures). Another such metaphor is provided by the first movie in the "Matrix" trilogy, remarked on by John Eldredge in his book *Waking the Dead* [6]. All is not what it seems.

And so with all this in mind we turn to consideration of (i) some specific optical patterns in the atmosphere, and (ii) some geometries with particular features that are relevant to this article. I wish to concentrate on things I have encountered in my professional life that have caused me to pause and wonder; things I have misperceived, taken for granted (unjustifiably) or plain misunderstood; things that forced me to admit that my worldview was too limited, that all was not as it appeared to be...things that caused a paradigm shift, however slight, in thinking about the world around me.

Although not all shadows are in the category of atmospheric optical patterns (the earth's shadow extends far beyond what we might consider the atmosphere), I include shadows in this group for simplicity. The "rays" often seen, particularly at sunset, certainly fall into this category. They are *crepuscular rays*: shadows formed by clouds partially obscuring sunlight, and when the sun is above the

women to be content with what they have been granted, and willing to sacrifice whatever the situation?

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## **Sarah – A Life of Discontent**

Arthur "Skip" Moen, Ph.D.

“God has made a joke of me” (Genesis 21:6).

**I** don't think we know the people of the Bible very well. We are the victims of years of watered-down teaching. The stories of the lives of our spiritual ancestors have been “sanctified”. We know the triumphs of their faith, but we have little appreciation for the times of humility, disobedience and failure. Of course, there are notable exceptions. We have heard of David's adultery and Samson's seduction. But most of the time, our attention is focused on the heroic acts, even if they come about as a result of sin.

This myopia damages our identification with these people. We see them as something special, living beyond our meager spiritual capabilities. But if we really look at the stories of their lives, we will discover something amazing. The Bible never glosses over the failures of people. It never avoids describing their disobedience. It never paints them as anything but completely human. There is a good reason for this. The Bible is not a book about past spiritual heroes. It is a book about God's faithfulness to His promises in spite of the human beings whom He chose as the messengers of His grace. The Bible is God's story, not ours. So, there is very little room for hero worship, saints on pedestals or spiritual supermen. The story of Sarah is a perfect example.

We know very little about Sarai, the wife of Abram. When the story opens, we are only told that she was married to Abram and accompanied him when he left home to follow God's call. As the story unfolds, we discover that she is the half sister of Abram, but other than that, we know nothing of her lineage. However, we soon find out quite a bit about her temperament.

Marriage to Abram was not exactly the epitome of bliss. Sarai dutifully obeys Abram as he determines to leave behind family and possessions, but she soon discovers that Abram is not quite as protective of her position as most wives would like. After a journey from Haran to Negeb, they settle into a life of nomadic existence. Since Abram travels with his nephew and all their possessions, we can be fairly certain that life for Sarai was probably a routine Bedouin existence. The first sign of marital discontent comes after Abram decides to do the commonsense thing in the face of a famine. We find the story in Genesis 12:10-20.

Abram is called by Yahweh to go to a place Yahweh will show

horizon this effect is sometimes referred to as “the sun drawing water”. The section following that addresses some surprising features of mathematical constructs. The point to remember in this and subsequent sections is that even in the physical and mathematical realms all is not what it seems to the casual (or untrained) observer.

## **II. Atmospheric Optical Patterns**

### **(a) Shadows.**

On the face of it, a shadow is a mysterious thing, though frequently taken for granted. It is an *absence* of light (usually only partial) in a region of space. It is in this world, and yet not of it; it is intangible yet so common that we rarely think about it. Without shadows, much of what we see around us would be “flat”; I remember the thrill I had when I first viewed the Leibnitz mountain range and several large craters on the terminator of a half-moon through my small refracting telescope. The long shadows cast by the mountains and craters brought out the fully three-dimensional nature of the surface very clearly.

As children, we may have tried to cover shadows by placing something over them, all to no avail. We also tend to think of them as merely two-dimensional shapes on the ground or wall, but in fact they are *volumes of space* out of which some light has been scattered. They may be colored, as is often seen to be the case when they fall on snow, and they may be very long – the umbral shadow of the earth is about a million miles long. It is, in fact, visible on clear evenings as a dark band in the east, rising as the sun sets in the west.

### **(b) Rainbows.**

The rainbow is at one and the same time one of the most beautiful visual displays in nature, and yet, like a shadow, an intangible phenomenon. It is illusory in that it is not of course a solid arch, but like mirages, it is nonetheless real. It can be seen and photographed, and described in mathematical terms, but it cannot be located at a specific place (unlike the raindrops causing it), only in a particular direction. It is an image located at infinity, for no matter how near or far away you are from the drops producing it, the angular size remains the same: you cannot “back up” to get more of the rainbow in your camera viewfinder! (You can of course use a wide-angle lens.)

What then is a rainbow? It is sunlight, displaced by reflection and dispersed by refraction in raindrops, an image of the sun that has been displaced in direction and in which the colors have been prismatically “unfolded” into part of a circular mosaic. It is seen by an observer with his or her back to the sun (provided the sun is low enough). The primary rainbow, which is the lowest and brightest of two that may be seen, is formed from two refractions and one reflection in myriads of raindrops. The secondary bow, frequently visible, is larger and fainter, and is produced by an additional reflection within the droplets producing it. Interestingly, each observer sees his or her ‘unique’ rainbow, because a different set of raindrops refracts and reflects the light into the eyes of every person looking at the colored bow in the sky. There are many fascinating features of rainbows to be found in the

him. Yahweh promises that He will make Abram a great nation, that Abram will be famous and that anyone abusing Abram will fall under Yahweh's curse (Genesis 12:1-3). This promise is not conditional. It is comprehensive in its scope. It does not depend on Abram's circumstances or obedience. It is God's doing. But soon after Abram responds to this call and accepts the promise, he runs into a challenging situation. The land is not able to provide food for his group. So, he determines to take matters into his own hands and do the commonsense thing – go to Egypt. After all, what good is a promise from God if Abram dies from starvation. Apparently, Abram did not consider the fact that Yahweh's promise implied provision of life in spite of circumstances. Abram does the commonsense thing. What we discover is that usually the commonsense thing leads us into problems. Abram's story is no different.

As Abram approaches Egypt, he fears a potential threat. His wife is beautiful and alluring. He reasons that if Pharaoh should decide that such a woman is worth having in the harem, Pharaoh may conclude that the only way to have Sarai is to dispose of Abram. So, Abram propagates a lie – Sarai is not his wife but his sister. This lie enables Pharaoh to enjoy sexual intimacy with Sarai without any risk to Abram. In fact, Abram is rewarded for arranging Sarai availability. Everyone benefits – except Sarai. Pharaoh gets what he wants – a new woman in bed. Abram gets what he wants – protection and financial gain. But all of this is at the expense of Sarai who is asked to provide sexual intimacy to Pharaoh under the guise that she is a free woman.

It is important to note that this deception not only abuses Sarai but also abuses God. While the commandment "Thou shall not commit adultery" has not been given, Abram had every reason to believe that God's protection certainly extended to his temporary domicile in Egypt. In fact, Abram summarily ignored God's direct promise when he decided to take the journey to Egypt. He overturned God's direction – "to a land that I will show you", in favor of his own choice based on his reasonable assessment of the situation. As it turned out, it was the beginning of a long and difficult marital disaster.

This was a disaster of Abram's making. Abram put an impossible moral dilemma on Sarai's shoulders: lie for me or I might be killed – sleep with Pharaoh and pretend that you are my sister or you might lose your husband and become Pharaoh's property anyway. So, Sarai went along with the deception. Both men seemed content with the arrangement. But God was not so pleased. The entire episode results in plagues and distress for Pharaoh. Once Pharaoh perceives that God is inflicting punishment on him, he takes steps to expose the lie and then to expel Abram and his entire following. Nothing is mentioned about Sarai's feelings regarding this event, but it takes little imagination to see that the bond between husband and wife was traumatically damaged. Sarai could no longer trust Abram as her protector. Her life of discontent began with her husband's disobedience.

Two intervening stories occur before we return to the saga of Sarai. In the first interlude, Abram takes a very different posture with his nephew Lot. He permits Lot's choice over a dispute about grazing rights, in spite of the fact that custom favored

literature<sup>2</sup> (see [7] – [9] for further references.)

### **(c) Ice Crystal Halos.**

What are halos and what produces them? The most common are circular arcs around the sun, formed when sunlight is refracted, reflected or both from ice crystals in the upper atmosphere and enters the eye of a careful observer: careful, because even the common types are easily missed. They are usually produced when a thin uniform layer of cirrus or cirrostratus cloud (occurring at high altitudes) covers large portions of the sky, especially in the vicinity of the sun. Surprisingly, perhaps, they may occur at any time of the year, even during high summer, because above an altitude of about 10 km it is always cold enough for ice crystals to form. In particularly cold climates, of course, such crystals can form at ground level (though we are not thinking here of snow crystals). Very many of these crystals are hexagonal prisms; some are thin flat plates while others are long columns, and sometimes the latter have bullet-like or pencil-like ends. A significant feature of all these crystals is that while any given type may have a range of sizes, the angles between the faces are the same. Although they do not possess perfect hexagonal symmetry, of course, they are sufficiently close to this that simple geometry based on such idealized forms suffices to describe the many different arcs and halos that are associated with them.

### **(d) Glories.**

Early one morning in 1735, a small group of people was gathered on top of a mountain in the Peruvian Andes. They were members of a French scientific expedition, sent out to measure a degree of longitude. They saw an amazing sight that morning. According to one, this was "a phenomenon which must be as old as the world, but which no one seems to have observed so far...A cloud that covered us dissolved itself and let through the rays of the rising sun...Then each of us saw his shadow projected upon the cloud...The closeness of the shadow allowed all its parts to be distinguished: arms, legs, the head. What seemed most remarkable to us was the appearance of a halo or glory around the head, consisting of three or four small concentric circles, very brightly colored, each of them with the same colors as the primary rainbow, with red outermost...". A Spanish captain named Antonio de Ulloa gave a similar description and also drew a picture of it. In his account he wrote "The most surprising thing was that, of the six or seven people that were present, each one saw the phenomenon only around the shadow of his own head, and saw nothing around other people's heads..."

During the 19th century, many such observations of the "glory" were made from the top of the Brocken mountain in central Germany, and it became known as the "Specter of the Brocken". It also became a favorite image among the Romantic writers; it was celebrated by Coleridge in his "Constancy to an Ideal Object". Other sightings were made from balloons, the glory appearing around the balloons' shadows on the clouds. Nowadays, while not noted as frequently as the rainbow, it may be seen most commonly from the

Abram's priority rights. Lot heads in the direction of Sodom, a choice that eventually leads him to destruction and humiliation. In the second interlude, Abram rescues Lot from captivity and returns a hero, only to acknowledge God's sovereignty in an encounter with Melchidezek. It appears that Abram has had a change of heart. Immediately following these two events, God visits Abram and establishes the covenant with Abram, a covenant that becomes the foundation of God's interaction with His elect race (Genesis 15). Abram's destiny is guaranteed by direct divine proclamation.

But Abram's turmoil is not finished. Sarai returns to the storyline. And now we see a different kind of woman. Sarai is no longer in the background, dutifully fulfilling the requests of her husband, even if those requests put her in the bed of another man. This time Sarai makes her will very clear. Having lost faith in Abram's commitment to her, she feels no constraint in front of him. She decides that if life is going to give her what she wants, she must take charge. Sarai knows that God has promised a long line of descendants who will be powerful, influential and very important. She is more than anxious to see this promised fulfilled. But she has no children. One day she conceives a plan to produce the required offspring even if it means using another woman.

Sarai says to Abram, "Look, Yahweh has restrained me from bearing children". Sarai's discontent is laid at the feet of God. She considers it God's fault that she is unhappy with this unfruitful marriage. He has prevented her from conceiving, so she plans another conception to circumvent this problem. Sarai is following the footsteps of her husband. He protected his self-interest by offering her as sexual exchange to Pharaoh. Now she will achieve her self-interest by offering her maidservant as sexual barter for children. She instructs Abram to have intercourse with Hagar. The text says that Abram "listened to the voice of Sarai". This phrase is reminiscent of the same wording in the Garden when Eve listened to the voice of the serpent. It is pure unadulterated temptation, coming from the mouth of one who was forced to commit adultery. Perhaps Sarai reasoned that if her husband willingly sent her into sexual union with another man, he was not the sort of man who would stand up for fidelity when she pushed him into the bed of another woman. No matter what the psychological reasoning, Abram follows in the footsteps of Adam. He concurs that this fruit (Hagar) is pleasing to the eye and good for consumption. He willingly impregnates Hagar. The woman who was abused now becomes the abuser. The man who perpetrated the abuse is now used to foster another abuse. A family pattern emerges. Sex is used to accomplish selfish ends.

We must notice that in spite of God's sacred covenant with Abram, a covenant that Sarai surely knew, Abram does not protest this arrangement. He does not insist that obedience outweighs desire and practical commonsense. Sarai wants a child. Abram wants a child. The arrangement seems logical – and desirable. The text indicates Abram did more than ploddingly acquiesce. He engages himself (literally and figuratively) in this plan. Once again, human beings reason that sex will solve their problems. But it never does.

Unfortunately, Sarai's attempt to usurp God's plan has the same

air<sup>3</sup>, with the glory surrounding the shadow of the airplane. Some beautiful color photographs have appeared in the scientific literature (see [7] for further details.)

#### (e) Mirages.

Mirages are fascinating and, almost by definition, are deceptive to the casual observer, though despite some dictionary definitions, they are not optical illusions (unlike the famous moon illusion, in which a full moon appears to be much larger on the horizon than when it is high in the sky). (For a qualitative description of the relevant physics and historical details on which this introduction is based, see the valuable article by Fraser and Mach [10]). Perhaps no better example of a mirage is afforded by the writings of Robert E. Peary, who in 1906 (en route, as he hoped, to the North Pole), stood on a summit and saw to the northwest at a distance of about 120 miles (as he believed) "snow-clad summits above the ice horizon." This mysterious yet inviting 'land' was eventually named "Crocker Land", and in 1913 an expedition, led by Donald B. MacMillan, set out to find and explore it. As they approached its apparent location, he wrote "There could be no doubt about it. Great heavens, what a land! Hills, valleys, snow-capped peaks extending through at least 120 degrees of the horizon." After moving some 30 miles toward this fantastic land, they found nothing. Some might call this a cruel hoax played on them by the 'laws' of optics; but it was not an optical illusion, for the image was real enough – it just did not coincide with an object. It was a mirage, and that is one convenient way of defining the phenomenon.<sup>4a</sup>

Why are there mirages at all and how are they created? The basic answer to each involves recognition of the fact that, to use Paul's words in Acts 17:28 in another context, we "live and move and have our being" inside a huge, locally shapeless lens – the atmosphere

itself<sup>4b</sup>. Mirages are produced, not by reflection, but by refraction, and the index of refraction varies in time and space, depending on local climatic and environmental conditions. It is the variations in the refractive index that cause refraction, and these variations are induced by corresponding changes in the density of the air, and to a much smaller extent, its moisture content.

To some extent, a mirage is a problem of perception also, and to that extent they have a loose connection to optical illusions: the mind "assumes" that the light received from an object has proceeded from it in a straight line, i.e. the object and its image are in a sense synonymous. But the slightest deviation from a straight line path over a distance of a mile, or even hundreds of feet, can displace the image significantly. Interestingly, we are more used to "displacement" in time rather than space. Spoiled as we are by the magnificent pictures from deep space that are produced by the Hubble telescope, we realize that the light we see from these objects left them thousands, millions or even billions of years ago. Even our own star, the sun, is over eight light-minutes away, but it is less well known that when the lower limb of the sun is on the horizon, it has actually just set (or, in the

consequences as Eve's enticement. Her life becomes much worse. Instead of fulfilling her desires for happiness, Hagar's pregnancy brings humiliation, envy and anger. Now she must live with a servant whose body shows everyone her husband's lack of moral integrity. We see her anger in her confrontation with Abram – "Look at the violence you have done to me! It's your fault". Sarai tells Abram that she has lost face in this arrangement. Hagar now thinks herself better than Sarai because she carried Abram's child. Her plan has backfired. Instead of a life of fulfilled promise, she has inherited as life of shame. No one can doubt Abram's potency. And now it is public knowledge that Sarai is infertile, a devastating position for a woman who is to be the mother of a great nation. The secret is out. Public and private humiliation follows.

We need to pay close attention to the text here. Notice that Sarai acknowledges that it was her plan to provide Hagar as a surrogate mother ("I myself gave my maidservant to you") but that does not relieve her discontent. Hagar's pregnancy conceived Sarai's shame. Sarai makes it very clear that the situation and its consequences are quite serious. She says to Abram, "May Yahweh decide between you and me!"

It's not obvious what this means. Peterson translates it "May God decide which of us is right", but that doesn't help much. Right about what? The context of Sarai's statement is her complaint about humiliation. She is angry with Abram. In her opinion, he has not safeguarded her status. Abram has let Hagar's pregnancy affect his emotional attachment. Sarai sees that Abram is pleased that a child will be born to him even though it is not Sarai's child. This is humiliation beyond enduring. So, she says to her husband, "God will decide if I am right (that I should have been cared for) or if you are right (that you showed favor toward Hagar)". Sarai's obvious implication is that there is no question who should come first – she should – and God will judge Abram for his misplaced devotion.

Once more sexual involvement backfires on the family of Abram. Abram's pattern, repeated by Sarai, is now the source of severe stress and deep emotional conflict. Sarai fares no better as perpetrator of the plan. She still ends up the victim. We must notice that the drama that started out about a child has suddenly turned into a soap opera about the misguided plans of the woman. The child fades completely from the scene. The real story is about Sarai's self-identity. In her mind, even though she got what she wanted, she lost what was important. She has been disgraced. The Hebrew word she uses to describe the "violence" done to her is *hamas*. This is the only time in the Old Testament that this word describes an action done by a woman. Sarai has been humiliated by her own gender, and worse, by her own slave. The humiliation is not about the child; it is about the change in two relationships. First, her husband is no longer hers alone. And secondly, her status as the mother of the promised progeny is in doubt. She loses her present and her future.

Sarai appeals to justice. Actually, she wants revenge. But Abram refuses it. After all, it was her plan and it is now his child. Feeling even more slighted, she says that God will decide, throwing the judgment of Yahweh on Abram's refusal to act on her wishes. When Sarai offered Abram sex with Hagar, he was only too happy to comply. Now that the circumstances have

morning, is just about to rise). Refraction displaces the sun's image slightly above the horizon; this effect is most pronounced near the horizon because of the increased thickness of atmosphere through which the light has to travel. This and the concomitant "flattening" of the sun on the horizon are yet more examples of a mirage: again, all is not as it appears to be.

### III. Some Geometrical Ideas: Maps, Hypercubes and Taxicabs.

In this section I consider some other contexts in which I have found it necessary to examine some of my hitherto unchallenged assumptions about the world around me. In a broad sense, they come under the category of "applied mathematics", since they involve mathematical (and in particular geometric) concepts that are used in many different subject areas (too many, alas, to discuss here). One surprising such application of mathematics is to be found in cartography, the study and production of maps.

(a) A map, whatever the scale, should accurately represent in two dimensions, directions, distances (and by implication, areas) between points of reference or interest. Armed with information about the scale of the map (and contours, if indicated), we should be able to infer some things about the fully three-dimensional region that the map represents. This applies of course, to the plans and elevations of houses and other buildings. In the medical field, CAT and MRI scans provide two-dimensional slices of three-dimensional parts of the human body. Details of the latter region, whatever it is, may be reconstructed from a successive sequence of the former images. What is being attempted – usually with great success in medicine – is to identify the "reality" from the accumulation of two-dimensional slices<sup>5</sup>. How much richer is the structure of the reality from its lower-dimensional counterparts. While the latter is "true truth" (to quote the late Francis Schaeffer) about the former, it is not *exhaustive* truth.

Every map distorts the truth to one degree or another [11], because no flat surface can be equivalent in every respect to a spherical surface. We are all familiar with the distortion of high latitude land masses in the standard Mercator projection; Greenland and North America appear to have comparable areas, when in fact the former is less than ten percent of the land area of the latter. I vividly recall the shock I felt when I first encountered the controversial Gall-Peters projection. Was the world not really the way I had assumed it to be? This map represents equal land areas on our planet as equal in area, as opposed to the areal distortion inherent in the Mercator projection, but it does tend to distort shapes. It certainly looks very strange to one who has grown up with the Mercator projection. These problems, together with political ones associated with these and some other map projections, prompted several North American geographic organizations to adopt in 1989 a resolution rejecting all rectangular world maps, stating in particular that:  
[[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gall-Peters\\_projection](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gall-Peters_projection)]

"... we strongly urge book and map publishers, the media and government agencies to cease using rectangular world maps for general purposes or artistic displays. Such maps promote serious, erroneous conceptions by severely distorting large sections of the world, by showing the round Earth as having straight edges and sharp corners, by representing most distances and direct routes

turned against her, Sarai finds that Abram is not so compliant. Nothing seems to be going her way.

Abram is a man caught in the middle. Not standing up for God's promise in the first place has now landed him on ground filled with rage on one side and affiliation on the other. But Abram knows the power of a woman's wrath. So, he takes the easy way out. "Do what you want with her", he tells Sarai. In essence, Abram concedes to another demand from his wife. If it didn't turn out right the first time, there is no sense trying to make it right now. Just let the chips fall where they may. Sarai can abuse Hagar with his blessing.

Imagine any contemporary history that wished to portray the lives of the founding family of one of the world's greatest movements. Do you suppose that the lack of moral character, the indiscretions, the sexual barter and abuse of others would be included? Do you think such actions would be the highlights of the story? Yet, here it is. The Bible glosses over nothing. Abram shows the weakest moral fiber, swayed by the ranting of an angry wife. Sarai displays a woman of fluctuating emotions, a pendulum swinging between manipulation and revenge. Sarai's abuse at the hands of her passive husband is now turned toward vengeance. She knows that the passive Abram will not resist her demands.

So Sarai inflicts her anger on Hagar. Hagar flees, determined to run as far as possible from a mistress who is as unpredictable as an evil wind. But God intervenes, sending Hagar back into the storm. In fact, Hagar is the only person who shows obedience to God in this entire debacle. The Angel of the Lord says to Hagar, "Return to your mistress and accept ill treatment from her hand". And Hagar complies. What a testimony to obedience she is. Unlike the mother and father of the faith, Hagar shows what undeserved suffering at the command of the Lord really means.

Ishmael is born. And for thirteen years, God does not visit Abram. There is a lot said in this silence. For thirteen years Abram and Sarai must face the consequences of their lack of trust in the promise of God. For thirteen years they watch a child grow who is a constant reminder of their failure. And for thirteen years, Hagar serves God by committing herself to submission under a hateful mistress.

Sarai's next encounter with God reveals another fatal flaw. God visits Abram and renews His covenant promise. To mark the occasion, God changes the names of both Abram and Sarai. Abraham and Sarah now carry God's name in their new names. They are known by a new identity – an identity that comes directly from God Himself. God leaves another permanent mark of His covenant – circumcision. This mark is private and intimate. It consecrates the male of the tribe into God's promise. It cannot be mistaken or reversed. Abraham obediently follows God's command.

Sarah re-enters the story during God's next encounter with Abraham. Accompanied by two angels who will soon rescue Lot from the destruction of Sodom, God accepts the hospitality of Abraham and eats a meal near Abraham's tent. God tell Abraham that he will return in one year and at that time Sarah will

incorrectly, and by portraying the circular coordinate system as a squared grid. The most widely displayed rectangular world map is the Mercator (in fact a navigational diagram devised for nautical charts), but other rectangular world maps proposed as replacements for the Mercator also display a greatly distorted image of the spherical Earth."

(b) Despite our inability to visualize it, the geometric properties of a four-dimensional cube (also called a hypercube or tesseract) can be readily established by analogy (see the appendix); just as a cube in three dimensions has six square faces, twelve edges and eight corners, so a hypercube has eight three-dimensional cubes, 24 square faces, 32 edges and 16 corners<sup>6</sup>. One "projection" of such a cube in three dimensions is essentially a smaller cube within a larger one, the respective corners being joined by edges. This type of classification can also be accomplished for a "cube" in  $n$  spatial dimensions. Of what interest is this to anyone but mathematicians? It transpires that this is directly related to the number of different yes/no voting combinations and the resulting number of possible outcomes for  $n$  voters when abstentions are not allowed. There are connections also with weighted voting systems. The point is that one can use any one of these systems to represent the other, and a detailed study of any one of them provides information about all. This is an example of the claim that movement to a higher level of mental abstraction is the essence of both pure and applied mathematics.

(c) For a fascinating tale of what might be termed "inter-dimensional phenomena" one can do no better than the little monograph by Edwin Abbott, entitled *Flatland – A Romance of Many Dimensions* [12]. It makes, amongst other things, an interesting case for our perceptions of how higher-dimensional entities might interact with our 3-space + time dimension. (This little book had a profound influence on my thinking about the intersection of the natural and spiritual realms in general, and about spiritual warfare in particular.)

(d) A very interesting type of geometry that does not "obey" the standard "rules" of Euclidean geometry taught at middle- or high-school, is known affectionately as *taxicab geometry*. [13]. The reason for this is best appreciated by visualizing rectangular city blocks, joined by streets aligned in the N-S and E-W directions, say Anyone traveling from the proverbial "A" to "B" can do so only by a sequence of N-S and E-W (or left-right and up-down) maneuvers (unless A and B lie on a line due N-S or E-W.) In this geometric system, the shortest distance between two points is not in general a straight line (except in the special cases noted above), but is composed of a sequence of left-right and up-down line segments.

One consequence of this type of geometry is that a circle, defined as the set of points which are a constant distance from the center, *i*, a *square* (in fact diamond-shaped, with corners located on the N-S and E-W lines)! Furthermore, the ratio of the circumference of such a circle to its diameter (the number  $\pi$  in Euclidean geometry, where  $\pi = 3.1415926\dots$ ) in taxicab geometry is equal to four! In fact this is but one of many other geometries that can provide us with seemingly weird concepts that challenge our thinking. All is not what it seems even in other "flat" two-dimensional geometries...

### And your point is...?















