

[The Wilderness E3 Transcript]

[Recap and Setup for Today's Stories (0:00—11:37)]

Jon: Welcome to BibleProject podcast. We are studying the theme of the wilderness in the story of the Bible.

Tim: It's a place where humans can't really live in and of themselves and their own resources. And that makes it a place that is dangerous, and hostile, and the opposite of God's good purposes for human flourishing.

Jon: The wilderness, as a setting, teaches us about the fragility of all of life.

Tim: The wilderness provides a really important insight that: To be a creature is to be on the precipice of life and death all the time. My moment-by-moment existence is being sustained by someone who has resources greater than I do.

Jon: God planted a garden in the wilderness, and it's sustained by his life. And he puts Adam and Eve there to enjoy it and learn to live by God's life.

Tim: When humans are exiled from the garden, it's because they were deceived, and then they foolishly went against God's wisdom and command. In that sense, their exile from the garden is self-caused. God's the one enforcing it, but they're the ones who brought it on themselves by not trusting God's provision.

Jon: Today, we go outside of the garden of Eden, and we consider three more stories of how people end up in the wilderness. We'll look at the story of Cain, who murders his brother and is banished deeper into the wilderness. We'll look at how Abraham and Sarah, God's chosen couple, tragically becomes the snake that drives a single mother out into the wilderness. And we'll look at how Moses, the man God chose to rescue Israel from slavery—how he also murders a man and has to flee into the wilderness.

Tim: These stories are closely tied together because they want us to meditate on how people end up in wilderness environments and then what God does when he discovers that people are dying in the wilderness. He sees and he hears, and what

seems like game-over from our point of view is never game-over from God's point of view.

Jon: Today on the podcast: the complicated ways we end up in the wilderness and the surprising mercy we always find there. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

[Musical Break (2:14—2:19)]

Jon: Hey, Tim.

Tim: Hey, Jon. Hello.

Jon: Hello.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Let us continue—

Tim: Mmm, into the wilderness.

Jon: Yeah, through the wilderness.

Tim: Mmm, yeah, and in.

Jon: Well, we'll go in first.

Tim: Into so that we can go through—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And then out of.

Jon: All right.

Tim: Yeah. But right now we're, we're in it. We're in a—

[Laughter]

Tim: A series of podcast conversations about the theme of the wilderness in the story of the Bible. It's more about the setting, but the setting of the wilderness is on repeat from the first sentences and pages of the Bible, and consistent throughout, with a very meaningful turning point in the story of Jesus, and then some interesting images of the resolution of the tension in the last pages of the Bible. Which for me, that's just what biblical themes are.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: The wilderness.

Jon: The wilderness.

Tim: Mhm. It's a place where humans can't really live in and of themselves and their own resources. And that makes it a place that is dangerous, and hostile, and the opposite of God's good purposes for human flourishing.

Jon: Mhm. Kind of seems simple when you say it like that.

[Laughter]

Jon: Is that all we've, kind of, said so far?

Tim: No, we said a lot more—

[Laughter]

Tim: In the last conversation, because what I was trying to do is work towards what I think the biblical authors are doing with the wilderness imagery, which isn't just to try and tell us about where important biblical events took place—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And then tell us what's obvious about the wilderness, that it's a place where there's no water, and it's hard to live—or you can't live, they are also doing higher-level, like, philosophical heavy lifting—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: About the nature of creation and its relationship to the creator. And that's kind of what we focused on in the last conversation.

Jon: Right. In storytelling, the setting or the environment of a scene can become really important. So if it's raining in a scene in a movie, it's often a foreboding sign sometimes.

Tim: Hmm. Yeah.

Jon: Sometimes not.

Tim: I—it's just a heavy mood.

Jon: Mmm, it's a heavy—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Mood.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And so you place something in the desert—

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: Right—in a movie—*Star Wars* opens up in kind of this deserty place. You know, *Mad Max*—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Is like in a desert.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. Mhm.

Jon: It's a mood.

Tim: It's—totally. Yeah. It's an environment that communicates so much.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Life is—

Tim: Mmm, precarious.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Very fragile.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: It's a fragile existence, and we're on the border of death and life.

Tim: Yeah, all the time. Yeah. The knife edge.

Jon: The knife edge.

Tim: And the wilderness literally was the opposite of the hill country—more fertile lands in terms of the biblical authors, their own geography.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: We talked about that in the first couple episodes. But then also the word for wilderness, *midbar*, and the word field, a *sadeh* in Hebrew, can also refer to the transition zone inbetween—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: The fertile land and just the stark wilderness.

Jon: Right.

Tim: But you're moving up towards the precipice—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: In that middle zone, and then you're off the cliff—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: When you're full on in the desert.

Jon: The deeper you go into the wilderness, the closer you are to—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: De-creation.

Tim: And that precariousness, that fragility of life in that physical environment—I was—started using this binary: physical and metaphysical.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So the biblical authors are also trying to think meta, higher-level, than thinking about the nature of reality. And the wilderness provides a really important insight into the nature of existence—

[Laughter]

Tim: That also is at work in, in these stories that: To be a creature in the garden or in the desert is to be on the precipice of life and death all the time.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Even when you don't think you are, you are.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And to have a conditional existence as a creature means that whether I'm in the garden or in the desert, my moment-by-moment existence is being sustained—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: By someone who has resources greater than I do.

Jon: Yeah. In the fertile hill country, it's easy to forget that.

Tim: Yes. Yeah. Totally.

Jon: Even though it's still true.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: But it's painfully obvious—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: When you go out into the wilderness. And the deeper you go, the more stark that gets. You know, as we were talking about this, it did make me think about the parallel to fasting.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah, totally.

Jon: And it's interesting that Jesus went into the wilderness to fast because there's this sense of: When my body has what it needs, when I'm in an environment of plenty, it's easy to forget.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Like, I'm actually sustained by something much—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Greater than myself, and this is way more precarious than I ever imagined. And allowing yourself to be in that situation and to experience it, and then to kind of be tested, like: "Do I trust God is enough?"

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "Can I make it through this moment?"

Tim: Yeah. And that is a major theme of the wilderness stories, especially of the Israelites in the wilderness later. It's so important and there's so much in the Torah connected to it, we're going to take two conversations after this one—

[Laughter]

Tim: To talk about exactly what you're putting your thumb on.

Jon: The testing in the wilderness?

Tim: Yeah. Totally.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah. So let's definitely put a, a big, bright, pink pin, uh, in that part of this theme.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: What I'd like to do before we get there, however, is look at two stories that come before the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, the first main stories where people get exiled into the wilderness. You know what? A well-known trope of movie

tropes is of, like, the person in the wilderness wandering. Somehow they get dropped there or something—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Terrible happens and—

Jon: Right.

Tim: Now they're there and they have little to no resources and they're like, you know, crawling—"Ah—"

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: You know, through the wilderness. There are two moments like that, one in Genesis, one in Exodus, that happened before the Israelites leave Egypt and go out into the wilderness. And those two stories are exploring not just: What is the wilderness? But also: How did we get here? How do humans end up in these situations where they find themselves in wilderness-like moments? And these two stories are deeply connected. The biblical authors have hyperlinked them together through all these shared words and phrases to get us to meditate on: How did we end up in the wilderness and not in the garden in the first place?

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: How do people end up in the wilderness?

Jon: How do you get to the wilderness?

Tim: Yeah. That's right. Because the Israelites, as they leave Egypt—they are led into the wilderness by God. So it might lead you to think that the wilderness is always a place where—it's sort of like God making you eat your veggies.

[Laughter]

Tim: So like: "This is good for you."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "You don't like it, but I'm—"

Jon: It's your coming of age—



Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Kind of thing.

Tim: But before that ever happens, there are actually a number of other stories where we get a repeated pattern of how people end up in the wilderness in the first place. And I think, for me, that's become really important to emphasize that before you get to the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, and God testing their faith, and so on.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So what I'd like to meditate on is: real quick recap the exile of Adam and Eve into the wilderness out of the garden.

Jon: Okay. Is that story number one?

Tim: Well, I guess there are—so there's three stories.

Jon: Three stories.

Tim: Okay.

[Laughter]

Tim: And then I want to look at the story of *Hagar* or Hagar—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: The Egyptian slave of Abraham and Sarah—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And how she ends up exiled in the wilderness two times. And then how the story of Moses' exile into the wilderness of Midian—how that happens. And all three of these stories are closely tied together in terms of verbal connections that the authors have put there because they want us to meditate on how people end up in wilderness environments—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And then what God does when he discovers that people are dying in the wilderness or about to die. So back to the garden of Eden. Let's start there.

Jon: Okay.

[Musical Break (11:03—11:37)]

[Adam and Eve Exiled Into the Wilderness (11:37—20:32)]

Tim: So the garden of Eden story comes after the seven-day creation narrative. And it begins with the wilderness with no water. We looked at that in the last conversation. And what we learned is, in the wilderness, there were no plants cultivated or wild because there was no human to do any farming because there was no water. And then God solves each one of those—one, two, three. And on the other side of the Eden story at the end of chapter three, when humans are exiled from the garden, they're exiled out there to work the ground. It's the same phrase that was used right in the opening, of: "There was no human to work the ground."

Jon: Oh.

Tim: And then humans go out of the garden "to work the ground."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Bu—

Jon: What's the significance of that?

Tim: Oh, it's just like a little literary frame—

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: Because they were also called to work, the same word *avod*, in the garden, but it was a very different kind of work.

Jon: Yeah. There's a difference between working in the garden and working the ground.

Tim: Yeah. That's right. In the garden, just, God provides, and stuff is growing off of trees. And so the work you're doing is truly like a partnership, and it's attending and stewarding, cultivating.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Whereas, God says, outside the garden, it's going to be by the sweat of your brow, there's going to be thorns and thistles, and it's going to be so difficult it's actually going to run down your body and turn it back into dust. And then the human goes out of the garden to work that kind of ground.

Jon: Hmm. So it's a different ground in that it's ground in the garden versus ground outside the garden. But I kind of imagine it being the same kind of work. You know?

Tim: Yes. Actually, thank you. That's a wonderful observation. Yeah. It's more about: Where are the resources coming from? In the wilderness, you're going to have to figure out a way to irrigate dry land.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Whereas—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: In the garden, God just popped a spring up—

[Laughter]

Tim: Out of the center—

Jon: Sure.

Tim: And it's just—that's doing all the work for you—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: A, a lot of the work for you.

Jon: Right. But there would still be weeds, I would imagine, in a—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Garden.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: But you still have access to the tree of life, so as you—

Tim: Yeah—

Jon: Work—

Tim: That's good. That's good.

Jon: You're not grinding yourself into the ground—

Tim: That's right.

Jon: You're working with the energy of—

Tim: That's right.

Jon: Eternal life.

Tim: Yeah. And that surely is a part of the, the pun intended with: "God formed the human out of the dust of the ground." So out of the dry wilderness. That's where the human's made. And then: "God rested the human in the garden." It's the word "rest —"

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: But as a verb.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: It's trying to show that the kind of work that humans are put in the garden to do is a both simultaneously work and rest because it's done in this environment where you're covered. Any lack you have in terms of resources, or power, or energy —

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: "I got you covered," God says.

Jon: Yeah. Okay.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: So there's work and then there's work.

Tim: Work and then there's work, yeah. So when humans are exiled from the garden, it's because they were deceived. And then they foolishly went against God's wisdom and command, and so God exiles them. So in that sense, their exile from the garden, you could say, is self-caused. Like, God's the one enforcing it—

Jon: Right.

Tim: But, like, they're the ones who brought it on themselves by not trusting God's provision.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And what's the provision? The provision is just the abundant fruit and seeds of the garden, and the water, and all of that. So the Adam and Eve story is a portrait of people finding themselves in the wilderness because God is giving them over to what they desired. They didn't fully know or perhaps comprehend what would follow, but they did know that they were breaking God's wise command. And so that's how people end up in the wilderness. So that sets a pattern that, when biblical characters find themselves in the wilderness, there's usually a lot of creative working or shaping in the story to help ponder: How did people end up here in the first place? Why would anybody—

[Laughter]

Tim: Leave the garden?

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Like it seems so paradoxical.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So one way that people end up in the garden is not trusting God's wisdom and not doing what God said, and so they bring upon themselves, actually, the disaster of depriving themselves of resources. So both God is the one sending them out—but the reason God's sending them out is because they are not to be trusted.

Jon: The humans aren't to be trusted?

Tim: The humans aren't to be trusted. Mhm.

Jon: The humans also don't trust God.

Tim: Yeah. God can't trust the humans to do what he says, and the humans didn't trust what God said. Yeah, which is how they ended up out there. Uhm, but there's a promise of a seed of the woman who's going to deal with that deceiver and presumably undo the tragic consequences of everything that happened. So just this combination of causes of, like, human folly but also God's, like, oversight, God's justice, or wisdom—that's how Adam and Eve end up in the wilderness.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So there's usually complexity. So what I'd like to do then is go to the next story, which is really the first time, if you look for the word wilderness, *midbar*—

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: In the book of Genesis—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: The first time it appears is when Abraham goes and fights a bunch of kings, a coalition of kings—

Jon: Oh. F—

Tim: To r—to rescue Lot.

Jon: Oh, to rescue Lot. Yeah.

Tim: And you're just told that when those kings came, they tromped on a bunch of people, and one of those groups was Edomites, who live in the wilderness.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: It's just a little, like, side comment.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So the second appearance of the word is the first time a character goes into the *midbar*, and that person is an Egyptian female slave named Hagar.

Jon: Yeah. Before we turn to that, it has struck me, though, because you—the other word is field and isn't in—

Tim: Oh, yeah.

Jon: The next story—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Cain takes Abel into a—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Field and—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Kills him.

Tim: Yes. He takes him out in—

Jon: Is that the word f—that's—

Tim: Same word, *sadeh*.

Jon: *Sadeh*.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yes. It's where the snake crawled in from—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Is where Cain takes Abel to.

Jon: Am I supposed to be thinking of kind of the wilderness—

Tim: That's great.

Jon: In a way with—

Tim: Thank—

Jon: That?

Tim: Thank you. That's great. Excellent. I overlooked that.

[Laughter]

Tim: Yes, for sure.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Cain takes Abel to the place where the snake crawled into the garden from.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: I sometimes picture him taking him out to his own field because he's a farmer.

Tim: Oh, right.

Jon: But I guess I'm now thinking it more of like into the wild fields.

Tim: Yeah, sure.

Jon: You know, that boundary area.

Tim: Right. Yes.

Jon: And that's where then the de-creation happens.

Tim: Yeah, he de-creates his brother.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. Thank you.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: That's actually super relevant—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: To what we're talking about. But the reason he leads his brother out, further out from Eden, into the *sadeh*—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: The uncultivated land, is because of his own anger.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And jealousy.

Jon: His jealousy—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And that he gives into it.



Tim: Mhm. And God talks with him right before that happens and is like: "Listen, there's exaltation for you too, my friend. And there's a wild animal crouching. It wants you."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "But you can rule over it."

Jon: This is sin?

Tim: Yeah, sin is the croucher.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So: "You can rule over this animal," but instead he takes—

Jon: Instead—

Tim: His brother.

Jon: Sin leads him out into the f—wilderness—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Has him—

Tim: This is great.

Jon: Kill his brother.

Tim: Yeah. So there, it's a distorted desire and a mistrust of God's word.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Because God said, like: "There's exaltation for you, too." And that lack of trust and distorted desire.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Thank you. That's great. I guess now we've done f—

[Laughter]

Tim: We'll do—

Jon: We'll do four—

Tim: Four—

Jon: Stories.

Tim: Four stories.

[Laughter]

Tim: Thank you very much. That's excellent. Okay. So both of those stories—the parents and the son inform what's happening here in the story of Hagar later, who's the first person after Cain and Abel and Adam and Eve—

[Laughter]

Tim: To find themselves in a wilderness. And really, I guess maybe the operative question is: How and why does this person find themselves in the wilderness?

[Musical Break (19:58—20:32)]

[Hagar Flees From Abraham and Sarah Into the Wilderness (20:32—45:14)]

Tim: So the story of Hagar in the wilderness happens in Genesis 16, but let's, quick, kind of set it up.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So when Abram and Sarah went to the land of Canaan because of God's instruction and promise—like: "I'm going to bless you there." So they go there. And then there was a food shortage when they were—

Jon: "Go to the lush hillside."

Tim: "Go to the lush garden land where I'm going to bless you," and they arrive, and there's a famine.

[Laughter]

Jon: Oh.

Tim: And they're like: "Oh, okay." So he goes south to Egypt, lies about his wife, and it's this interesting replay of Adam-and-Eve failure to trust God, and Abram doesn't trust God. And so God bails him out. And then we find out that when Pharaoh tries to, like, shoo Abram out of his territory—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Uh, get him to leave, he gives him a bunch of gifts. And one of them is a bunch of slaves, Egyptian slaves. Uh, and one of them is a female slave named The Immigrant, or *Hagar* in Hebrew.

Jon: "*Hagar*" means "the immigrant."

Tim: That's right. So that's where she's introduced to the story.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So she was acquired by Abraham as like a payoff from a king, uhm—

Jon: Who was getting punished by God—

[Laughter]

Tim: Who was getting punished by God.

Jon: Because God was protecting Abraham—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Even though Abraham was the one—

Tim: E—was in the wrong.

Jon: Doing—

[Laughter]

Tim: So it's already like—

[Laughter]

Tim: So complicated.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It's like—

Jon: Abraham now has an Egyptian slave because of a payoff for something that he did that was wrong, that God still rescued, because God has attached himself to Abraham.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And now we're going to read a story about how he deals with this Egyptian slave.

Tim: Yes. Yeah.

Jon: The Bible—

Tim: So—

Jon: is complicated.

Tim: S—Bible—

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah, or maybe, you say is—humans are complicated.

Jon: Yeah, that's true.

[Laughter]

Tim: And the Bi—

[Laughter]

Tim: And the Bible's just being honest.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: It's just being truthful—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: About how complicated humans are. So a couple chapters later in Genesis 15, Abraham and Sarah still don't have a child that they've produced of themselves. And God reaffirms Abraham, like: "You're going to have a bunch of kids." In Genesis 15, famously, God leads Abram out at night to look up at the night sky and says: "Count the stars if you can. So your seed will be." A seed as a metaphor for the children that you'll have. Right after that, God also tells Abram: "When you have a bunch of kids, something actually terrible is going to happen to them." And that is, in verse 13 of Genesis 15: "You should know that your seed will become immigrants in a land that is not their own." And that word immigrant is Hagar's name, but in the plural.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: "They're going to be immigrants in a land not their own. And they're going to become enslaved. That land will enslave your seed. And that land will oppress your seed for 400 years. But then, I will judge the nation that they're enslaved to. And afterward, they will go out with many possessions."

Jon: Mmm. Yeah.

Tim: So this is as clear a forecast—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Forward as you could look for in the Bible.

Jon: For the story of Exodus.

Tim: Story of Exodus is on the brain. Mhm. Yeah. So you have an Egyptian slave named Hagar, but your descendants are going to become oppressed, enslaved—

Jon: *Hagars*.

Tim: *Hagars* in the land of Egypt. So there's some important interplay there. And so you know that's coming. And it raises the question of: "Well, gosh—"

Jon: Why?

Tim: Why? How? When?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Like, because right now he's in the land of Canaan and he's not enslaved. So like, how—

Jon: Famine's over. He's back in the land.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: He's got a bunch of stuff. He just needs some kids.

Tim: He just needs—yeah.

[Laughter]

Tim: Totally.

Jon: He'll needs on—at least one.

Tim: That's right. So we visited a moment in the story earlier on in a previous Exodus-inspired series, I think on the New Exodus, which was about: How and why did Abraham's descendants end up in Egypt?

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So that was in our New Exodus series.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So I'd, if listeners want a deeper dive into this, like, go back there. What I want to focus on in looking at the Hagar story is how Hagar ends up in the wilderness—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Because there's something significant there. So here, I'm summarizing a conversation we had in that new Exodus series. So the story of Genesis 16 begins with Sarah not yet having a child. And we learn, however, she did have this slave girl, an Egyptian one, and her name was The Immigrant. "So Sarai said to Avram: 'Look, Yahweh has restrained me from being able to give birth to a son. Yahweh has not given me the gift yet. So please go into my slave girl. Perhaps I can be built up by means of her.' So Sarai, the wife of Avram, took Hagar, her Egyptian slave girl, this was at the end of 10 years of Avram dwelling in the land of Canaan, and she gave to her husband, Avram, as a wife, and he went into Hagar, and Hagar became pregnant." So here you have a promise of God. "You're going to have a kid." Y—

Jon: But it's been 10 years.

Tim: Yeah, it's been 10 years. You have the wife of the one who was given that instruction, and she has a moment where she doesn't trust God, that God will provide a son through herself. So she comes up with another plan. And that other plan involves her taking and then giving to her husband. So this is all the language patterned after the, the s—

Jon: Genesis three—

Tim: Genesis three and the story of Adam and Eve.

Jon: Where it's the woman in that story who is confronted by the snake—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And doesn't trust the voice of God, takes the fruit, and gives it—hands it over to Adam—

Tim: Right.

Jon: In that story.

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

Jon: Takes the fruit, hands it to the man.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. And then he takes and eats, so to speak—

Jon: And the man takes and eats, okay.

Tim: By taking the slave and having sex with her. So they're both kind of implicated.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: They're both responsible. But then what happens next is interesting. "When Hagar saw that she became pregnant, she looked at her female master, Sarai, and Sarai became cursed in Hagar's eyes." So this is a little illusion, just kind of like a cultural background here, that, in traditional, patriarchal, multi-generational, extended family environments, a wife's social value is very much bound up with the ability to produce children.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So it's as if Hagar sees now that she's in an elevated—

Jon: She's important now.

Tim: Yeah. She's important. And Sarai can see that too. And so she goes to Avram in verse five, and she says: "May the violence done to me be upon you." She uses the word *khamas* for, like, physical violence.

Jon: So hold on. She saw that she was pregnant. So that's—

Tim: Hagar saw.

Jon: Hagar saw that—

Tim: Sh—she became pregnant.

Jon: The immigrant was pregnant.

Tim: Mhm.



Jon: And her mistress, that's Hagar—

Tim: Mmm. Her mistress, so, Hagar's female master, became cursed in her eyes. Who is that female master? Sarah.

Jon: Okay. Sarah became cursed—

Tim: In Hagar's eyes.

Jon: In Hagar's eyes. So Hagar's—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Like: "Okay, I'm kind of the more important woman here."

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah. Now, we're not told, like, how she felt about this or if she expressed this, if she started, like, treating her poorly.

Jon: Right.

Tim: But to become cursed means of—"You're not in the position of the blessed one anymore, I am."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: "You're the cursed one."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That's Hagar's—

Jon: Right.

Tim: Relationship now.

Jon: "I have the blessing."

Tim: "I have the blessing. You don't."

Jon: "So you—and you don't."

Tim: Yep. That's right.

Jon: "That means you have the curse."

Tim: And Sarah can very much feel—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: The turning—

Jon: Yeah—

Tim: Of the tables.

Jon: She feels it as violence.

Tim: Yeah, she calls it violence. “I’m being done violence. And you know what? This is your fault, Abram.”

[Laughter]

Tim: “This is your fault. I gave my slave girl into your lap,” and she saw that she became pregnant, “and I became cursed in your eyes. May Yahweh bring justice between me and between you.”

Jon: Hmm. Yeah.

Tim: So now she—like, she’s really angry at him. But you’re kind of like: “But this was your idea.”

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So Abram said to Sarai—what Abram should have done is like come in as a peacemaker, right? Like he has these two rival wives now. And the right thing to do would be to, like, come in, right, with empathy, with a sense of fairness, and try and help mediate a reconciliation here. Instead, he just totally abdicates all responsibility. He just says: “Look, your slave girl is in your hand. Do what is good in your eyes.” And that further cements the analogy the author wants us to make with Adam and Eve at the tree. Because now Hagar—

Jon: Because they saw the fruit was good.

Tim: Yeah, Hagar is like the fruit that she took. And she did what was good in her eyes, which is what the fruit looked like on the tree. So then what we learn is: “Sarah oppressed her. Sarah oppressed Hagar,” which is the exact word that was used to

describe what the Egyptians are going to do to Abraham's future descendants in the previous story.

Jon: I see. So the very next story—and this, you did bring this up.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: So we're told Abraham's descendants—"You're going to have a bunch of kids—big family—they're going to be oppressed."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And then you get the story of the family starting, and it ends—

Tim: Hmm, sorry. "They're going to be immigrants, *hagars*—"

Jon: Oh: "They're going to be *ha*—"yeah.

Tim: "*Hagars* in a land not their own, and that land will enslave them and then oppress them."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And every single one of those words—

[Laughter]

Tim: Is being activated—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Here—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But the roles are swapped.

Jon: Mmm. Yeah. "This is how your family began: oppressing this female servant, household servant, slave, and then oppressing her."

Tim: Yeah, oppressing the Egyptian, enslaved immigrant.

Jon: Whatever that looked like.

Tim: Yeah, it doesn't say. It just says—"He—she oppressed her."

Jon: "She oppressed her."

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. Mi—

Jon: So much so that Hagar then—

Tim: Hagar takes off.

Jon: Takes off.

Tim: And where does she go? Into the wilderness, the *midbar*, in the next sentence. So let's just pause. We'll see how God responds here, but let's just think through: How does this person end up in the *midbar*, in the wilderness? And: What is its relationship to how Adam and Eve and how Cain ended up in the *midbar* or the, the *sadeh*?

Jon: Well, yeah.

Tim: I mean, we've already kind of made many of the comparisons between the stories.

Jon: Can you speak really quickly—sorry, this is off topic.

Tim: Oh, okay.

[Laughter]

Jon: But can you speak really quickly to this dynamic of the female and the male, like, the woman and the man? It's been taught sometimes where it's like, because of Eve—that Adam was given the fruit. It's like Eve's fault.

Tim: Oh—

Jon: And then in this—

Tim: I see.

Jon: Story, it really does—I mean, Abraham is pretty delinquent—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: In his responsibilities—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: But the focus really isn't on—

Tim: On her, on Sarah.

Jon: On her.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: So is there some misogyny in here? Like—

Tim: Oh, I see. Well, I mean, I think this story is trying to echo the dynamics that were also at work with Adam and Eve at the tree.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And what you learned there was—remember, the sequence was God made *adam* outside from the dust outside the garden—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: But it was wet dust because that river—

[Laughter]

Tim: Flowed out, and then rested the human in the garden, then gives *adam* the instruction about not eating from the tree.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Then, God splits *adam* in two—

Jon: Make male and female. And the female is the *ezer*.

Tim: The female is the delivering ally.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah, without whom the singular *adam* cannot do what God commanded him to do.

Jon: So the story starts with this very elevated view—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Of women.

Tim: Yes. “The essential other.” Yes. And then the snake targets the woman.

Jon: Right.

Tim: And the whole conversation—

Jon: And what some people will say is like, because women are weaker, and—

Tim: Ah—

Jon: And that’s why the snake targeted, and that—

Tim: Yeah. A—people say that.

Jon: People say that.

Tim: There’s no anchor for that in the story.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And you’d be hard pressed to say that that’s a view of women in the Hebrew Bible.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: There’s no sign of intellectual or moral weakness in a figure like, uh, Moses’ mom—

[Laughter]

Tim: *Yokheved*, or Miriam, Ruth, or Deborah, or Huldah.

[Laughter]

Tim: Right? All of these remarkable—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Uh—and also people end up in that position by taking Paul the Apostle to mean that in his retelling of this moment of the story in—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: One of his letters to Timothy. One of the problems with that is that Paul also used the story of the snake's deception of Eve not to describe women in general, but to describe humans in general.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: In Second Corinthians, I think it's 11, he says: "I am afraid that y'all Corinthians are being deceived as Eve was deceived." So for him, Eve's deception was a paradigm for human deception, not women in particular.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And also, there's another detail in the Eden story that—the snake is just talking to the woman the whole time.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And then when it says: "The woman saw, she took, she ate, and she gave to her husband who was with her—"

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: "And he ate." And this is good Jewish-wisdom-literature style. It saves one of the most important details—

[Laughter]

Tim: For the last line.

Jon: He was with her.

Tim: He was standing there the whole time.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And so you kind of get that feeling, I think that dynamic—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: Is reflected here—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Where Abram's like—he's not absent. He was a part of all of this.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And he just tries to offload his responsibility when, in fact, he could have stepped in at any moment and helped these two women figure out this tension. But he doesn't. He just takes advantage of the situation. At least that's how—my understanding.

Jon: Okay. Yeah.

Tim: Does that address what you're—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Noticing and feeling?

Jon: No, it helps. Thank you.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: So—

Tim: Good.

Jon: The real question on the table is: How did Hagar get in the wilderness here?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And so Hagar—I mean, we don't know a lot about her—

Tim: No.

Jon: At all.

Tim: No.

Jon: But she is an immigrant—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: That has been handed over to Abraham and Sarah.



Tim: Yeah. So she got transferred from one powerful, abusive man—

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: To another—

Jon: A Pharaoh—

Tim: Guy—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: Who also ends up being an abuser—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Along with his wife in this—

Jon: She's living with his family for o—10 years.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And then, suddenly, Sarah, the matriarch, comes and says: "Here's the deal. You're going to go get pregnant by—"

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "Abraham."

Tim: "You're going to have sex with my husband."

Jon: "And you're going to give us a son."

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: So I mean, she doesn't have any choice in the matter.

Tim: No, nope.

Jon: And so she does it. And then all of a sudden, there's this power dynamic that's all screwed up. And she's now going to get the brunt of that—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Deal.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And so how did she end up in there? By Abraham's mistrust in God's promise, because it's not coming at the timing they thought it would come.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: I mean, for good re—they're getting old, I'm sure.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah, that's right. Yeah, it's not like they're pure evil.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: This is an honest portrait—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Of like real—

Jon: "It's been 10 years."

Tim: It's been 10 years.

Jon: "I can't have a kid."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: If you haven't had a kid in 10 years, i—it's probably not going to happen.

Tim: Yeah. Yep.

Jon: I mean, if you look around—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: That's the reality.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: But then there's also this, this sense of: "Well, then we can treat other people like property, and to the end that will serve us. And when we do that, if it creates weird power relational dynamics, then we'll let other people suffer the consequences of that."

Tim: Yeah. That's a good summary.

Jon: And those people suffering the consequences of bad decisions that the people of power—can just say: “You’re going to have to deal with it, not us.” And that’s forcing someone into the wilderness.

Tim: Yeah. Yes. That’s such a good summary. Thank you. Yeah. So it’s really both like Adam and Eve’s exile into the wilderness, except it’s a new twist because the innocent person is thrust into the wilderness—

Jon: Right.

Tim: Because of the Adam-and-Eve-like behavior—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Of Abraham and Sarah. Yep. So it’s even more tragic in that sense.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So what’s going to happen? Well: “The messenger of Yahweh,” or—usually translated “the Angel of the Lord.” “The messenger of Yahweh found Hagar at a spring of waters in the wilderness. Oh, that spring is on the way to Shur.”

Jon: Okay.

[Laughter]

Jon: Sure.

Tim: Sure. Sure.

[Laughter]

Jon: Sure it is.

Tim: Uh, Shur, if you do a concordance search, doesn’t appear very often. It’s a way station between the land of Canaan and Egypt.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So she's going home.

Jon: But it's an outpost in the wilderness.

Tim: But it's an outpost in the wilderness, and she found a little oasis, a spring—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: A spring in the wilderness.

Jon: This is how all humanity was created—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Is a spring in the wilderness.

Tim: A spring in a wilderness. Yeah. "And the messenger of Yahweh said: 'Hagar, slave girl of Sarai, where is it you're coming from? Where are you going?'" This is what—very much like what God said to Adam and Eve after they blew it with the tree.

Jon: Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: "Where are you?"

[Laughter]

Tim: "Where are you—"

Jon: "Why are you hiding?"

Tim: Yeah. "Why are you hiding?" Ah, it's like what God says to Cain. "Where's your brother?"

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: Mhm. "Where are you going?"

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: "Well, from before the face of Sarai, my mistress, I'm fleeing." And the messenger of Yahweh said to her: "Return. Go back and oppress yourself under her hand."

Jon: Hmm. "Allow yourself to be oppressed."

Tim: Yes. Then, the messenger of Yahweh said: "Multiplying—I will multiply your seed. I will double multiply your seed so that your seed cannot be counted because of the multiplying." You're like: "Whoa."

Jon: That's what God promised Abraham.

Tim: Yeah. This is the seed of Abraham. So this child's going to get the Abraham blessing.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Then, the messenger said: "Look, you're pregnant. You're going to give birth to a son. You shall call him *Yishmael*," which is how you would say in Hebrew, "God will hear," "because Yahweh has heard your oppression." So what is God's response this time? He makes a promise of future seed. Remember, when Adam and Eve were exiled into the wilderness, he made a promise of the future seed of the woman. Now here, God is, as if, providing a little Eden-oasis at this spring in the wilderness of that there's a future for her seed. And Yahweh has heard the oppression. But: "You need to return. There is still a time of oppression under her hand, but it will result in this future seed." As we are going to see—verse 12: "That future seed will be a donkey of a human. His hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand will be against him. And against the face of all of his brothers, he will reside." So: "Liberation is going to come for you and your seed out from under Abraham, but not yet. There's still a time, and Yahweh has very much heard what's going on with you." And she takes this as good news. She called the name of Yahweh, who spoke with her: "You are *El roi*. You are the God who sees." So God has seen, God has heard, he hears the cry of the immigrant who's oppressed, and God responds and makes a promise of a future seed. And then she names the well. She names the well: "*Ber Lakhai Roi*, the Well of the Living One Who Sees Me."

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: And then Hagar goes back, and she gives birth to Yishmael.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So this is the origin story of Yishmael, who's not going to be the chosen son in terms of the covenant—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But he's definitely recipient of the blessing, and God cares and hears very much about the oppression of this woman and her son.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So let's just pause there. God both—he tells her to go back for a time, even though it will result in eventual liberation, and what you need to know is God sees, and hears, and he's given you this gift of a well, and he's going to give you a gift of future seed.

Jon: It's such a side-quest story, like—because Ishmael is not that important moving forward.

Tim: Hmm. Well, it depends.

[Laughter]

Jon: It depends?

Tim: Yeah, Yishmael and his seed stays very much on the brain—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Through the rest of the Torah and Prophets.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: All right.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: I guess I just don't, maybe—

[Laughter]

Jon: Know that—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: How that works.

Tim: Yeah. This is going back, but in our Firstborn series—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: In the podcast a couple of years ago, we were tracing how pretty much all the main players that you meet in the biblical world, going on in the biblical story, all go back to characters whose ancestors are born in these stories in Genesis. So the Yishmaelites get connected to the Midianites.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: And—in terms of, they're all desert dwellers—

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: Dwellers in the wilderness in the south and the east of Israel.

Jon: Really? So wait, the Midianites, who Moses is going to marry into—

Tim: The Yishmaelites. Yeah. Because Abraham, his third wife, Keturah, at the end of the Abraham stories—and he has a bunch of kids through her, and Midian is one of them. And—

Jon: Oh, so that's not connected to Yishmael, it's connected to—

Tim: Yeah, but the descendants of the Midianites—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: And the Ishmaelites end up, like, banding together—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: Into one tribe.

Jon: Oh, they do?

Tim: Yeah. And, uhm, lo and behold, this is Jethro.

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: Jethro comes from this family.

Jon: Oh, okay. Yeah.

Tim: And Jethro's, like—he's very much connected to the next repetition of this story we're going to look at—

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Which is the story of Moses.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So let's just notice this portrait of how Hagar found herself in the wilderness and how did God respond: with mercy, with empathy, and with blessing. He saw and he heard her oppression, and he promises future seed, and he meets her at a well. So that has developed how people end up in the wilderness. So the wilderness is kind of self-caused again by—

Jon: Caused—

Tim: Abraham and Sarah—

Jon: Yeah. Mhm.

Tim: But for someone else.

Jon: Right.

Tim: And that's the twist here.

Jon: Yeah. Abraham and Sarah has become the snake in this story.

Tim: That's right, yeah. Well, they've become like Adam and Eve, but then they also kind of are the snake—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: In the same way. Yeah. Okay. So let's keep all of, now, Adam-and-Eve story, Cain-and-Abel story, Hagar, Abraham-and-Sarah story—

[Laughter]

Tim: On the brain as we go to the story of Moses—

Jon: Okay.



Tim: In the book of Exodus.

[Musical Break (44:43—45:14)]

[Moses Flees From Pharaoh Into the Wilderness (45:14—1:08:16)]

Tim: So when we turn to the story of the Israelites in Exodus chapter one—this is three generations down the line from Abraham and Sarah. Those descendants of Abraham went down to Egypt because of a famine—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Just like Abram did. And what we find in the opening paragraph of Exodus is that they are fruitful and multiplying, becoming very strong. The land was filled with them. And Egypt's a good land. It's actually described like the garden of Eden—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: In Genesis.

Jon: When we looked at that map, that whole N—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Like, Nile Delta is just lush green.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. So now we're in that situation that God told Abram about a long time ago, that: "Your seed will become enslaved in a land not their own."

Jon: Here we are.

Tim: Here we are. And now they're just fruitful and multiplying like the stars of the sky.

[Laughter]

Tim: And you're—

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: And they're like: "Whoa, God's—"

Jon: So they're, like—

Tim: "Promise came true."

Jon: They're kind of in their wilderness, but they're still blessed.

Tim: Ah, they left Canaan because of a famine.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But they went to Egypt, w—

Jon: Oh, that's true.

Tim: Which is like the garden of Eden.

Jon: Which is not a wilderness. It is like a garden.

Tim: It's like a garden.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And they're multiplying in the garden.

Jon: Oh.

Tim: Now, it's not their own garden.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: The point is, God's promise about the seed like stars has become true.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: "But a new king—here we go: "Rose up over Egypt, and he didn't know about Joseph," and everything that happened at the end of Genesis. "And he looks at the multiplying of the sons of Israel and says: 'Oh, let us act skillfully—"

[Laughter]

Tim: ““With them or else they’ll continue to multiply. And man, if there’s ever a war —”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: ““They’re going to join our enemies. They’re going to make war on us, and—”

Jon: “We can’t trust these guys.”

Tim: ““Can’t trust them.”” So we’ve talked about this scene—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Many times, especially in the New Exodus series and the Redemption podcast series. So what I just want to focus here is, in those conversations, we talked here about how Pharaoh is being set on analogy to the snake.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: You have a fruitful and abundant new humanity, Israel in the garden, and you have a snake who’s fearful and deals with wisdom and shrewdness—more shrewd—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Than any of the other beasts of the field.

[Laughter]

Tim: And so: “He places over them captains of forced labor in order to—”

Jon: “Oppress them.”

Tim: “Oppress them.”

Jon: *Hagar*.

Tim: Yup. Yeah. And even as much as they oppress them, the Israelites just kept multiplying.

Jon: Hmm. Okay. The blessing is still breaking—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Through.

Tim: That's right. So in the midst of that oppression and enslavement because of a trickster, what's going to happen now? So this is all, one, the language of Genesis 15 and 16. There are immigrants in the land, enslaved, oppressed, but now it's the Egyptians doing to the Israelites what the Israelites' ancestors, Abraham and Sarah, did to their Egyptian slave.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So it's that inversion, and we've looked at that before. So what is so powerful then is the next scene, which is a story, uh, that goes on to involve seven women. Actually, this connects back to your question about—

Jon: How women are treated.

Tim: Portrait of women. Yeah. So Hagar and Sarah are kind of these honest, empathetic, but critical portraits of these rival wives—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And how they relate to Abram is all mapped onto what became the unfortunate, like, distortion of the relationship with Adam and Eve. What's so amazing about Exodus one and two is that all of the women—

[Laughter]

Tim: And there's seven women—

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Are depicted as brave, God-fearing, trusting God's word even over the violence of Pharaoh, like, heroines, like, heroic women. And it—the first one is Moses' mom. So in this interesting scene, she disregards Pharaoh's command to throw the baby boys into the Nile. We didn't talk about that just now, but that's what Pharaoh does. That's his third and final solution to deal with the problem of these Israelite slaves. And so—

Jon: Start killing them off.

Tim: Start killing them off. So she is crafty in her own way. She puts her baby boy in the river, like Pharaoh said to do, but she creates an ark. The same word as Noah's ark. And she put the child in the ark and then put the ark in the Nile. And then his sister was there. So this becomes a, a mother-daughter—but, you know, there's also this dynamic of: It's a mother—an oppressed, enslaved mom who is—now has to surrender her seed over to who knows what. She has to give him up. But it's an effort to save him. And so it's precisely that seed, through that mother's trust, that is going to float into Pharaoh's house and become the downfall of the snake.

Jon: Hmm. Hmm.

Tim: So we're kind of playing with the themes of Genesis 3:15 there. It's really—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Really interesting—

Jon: Yep.

Tim: Way. And that son Moses, you know—he's found by the daughter of Pharaoh and her slave girl. And then he ends up being adopted into the house of Pharaoh. So I'm really fast forwarding here because I want to—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Get us to a scene. So he's named *Moshe* because that rhymes with the Hebrew word for “draw up.” “I *moshe'd* him up out of the waters.” That's what Pharaoh's daughter says. Okay. This is really cool. “So *Moshe* grew up,” this is Exodus two verse 11, “And he went out to his brothers.” And you're like: “Whoa, there's a whole backstory—”

[Laughter]

Tim: “Clearly implied there.”

Jon: That he knows that he's—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Not Egyptian?

Tim: Yeah, somehow he knows that the Israelites are his brothers.

Jon: Yeah. Probably looks it.

Tim: Yeah, we don't—yeah, I mean—

Jon: We just don't—

Tim: So much we don't know.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And it's hard for us not to think of it in terms of *The Prince of Egypt*.

[Laughter]

Tim: You know, we've seen—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But what he notices is that he sees an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man, which is interesting because the Egyptians are also his brothers.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: He—I mean, he just spent like a couple of decades—

Jon: Grew up with them, yeah.

Tim: So it's also—there's this ambiguity of who are his brothers. He sees his adopted-brothers-people striking his biological-brothers-people. And so he looks this way and that way, and he just straight up murders that Egyptian. And you're like: "Whoa—"

[Laughter]

Tim: "That's intense."

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: "That's, uh, one way to solve a dispute—"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “Is just kill one of the people.”

Jon: That’s a violent way to solve it.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. And then he goes out the next day, and he sees two Hebrews fighting. And he says to the one who was in the wrong, like: “What are you doing? Why are you striking each other?” And the guy’s like: “What, who are you, Egyptian? Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Are you going to murder me just like you murdered the Egyptian?” So it’s this interesting story, and all this language here is actually modeled after the Cain and Abel story.

Jon: Hmm. With the brother language?

Tim: Mhm. It’s brother striking brother to murder. And he wonders about if this other brother is going to “murder,” which is the same word, “*harag*,” used in the Cain and Abel story. Then, Moses became afraid and said: “Oh my gosh, the matter’s become known that I killed that Egyptian.” And he was right because Pharaoh heard about this. And so Pharaoh sought to murder *Moshe*, Moses.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “So Moses fled from before the face of Pharaoh. And he went and dwelt in the land of Midian,” which is a desert. He’s—

Jon: That’s the desert people.

Tim: He—yeah. He flees into the wilderness.

Jon: Hmm. And—

Tim: Hmm. Mhm.

Jon: if I’ve been tracking correctly, I know that the Midianites are connected to the Ishmaelites?

Tim: Yes. By the end of Genesis, the Ishmaelites and the Midianites are—

Jon: Huh.

Tim: Like two different names—

Jon: For the same clan.

Tim: For the same group of desert dwellers.

Jon: Wow.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah. So let—put the whole portrait together. We have enslaved Israelites who are being oppressed. We have a snakey trickster, Pharaoh, who's doing this. You have oppressed slave women who fear and trust God, so they surrender over the future of their seed. And that seed ends up floating into the house of Pharaoh. And he is in tension with his brothers. We're mapping Adam-and-Eve story, but also we're drawing elements from the Cain and Abel story. And he is like Cain. He murders his brother.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It doesn't say he went out to the wilderness—

Jon: Right.

Tim: Or even out to a field, but it did say that he went out.

Jon: He went out.

Tim: He went out.

Jon: Then, he buried him in the sand.

Tim: And then he buried him in the sand. Oh, that's good.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That's good. So we're not in the garden.

Jon: We're not in the garden.

[Laughter]

Tim: The murder took place out—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Out in the desert.



Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Whoa.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah, in the sand.

Jon: In the sand.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yeah, you don't garden the sand.

Tim: Yeah. And now we have a guy fleeing into the wilderness. He "flees from before the face of Pharaoh." That's exactly the same phrase from when Hagar, the immigrant, the Egyptian immigrant, fled from before the face of Sarah.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Okay. So Sarah has it out for Hagar—

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Uh, is going to oppress her. Don't know what that means. She flees from the—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Face of her—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Into the wilderness.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Moses knows that: "Pharaoh has it out for me now. I'm going to flee."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Hagar didn't do anything wrong in the—

Tim: Right.

Jon: Story.

Tim: Yeah, right.

Jon: But Moses has killed a man.

Tim: Yeah. So now we're—it's this—another layer of complexity yet again—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Because he's not fully innocent. He belongs to the people who are oppressed.

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Though he himself was not oppressed.

Jon: No.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: He grew up in the house of Pharaoh, but he's got this dual identity. He takes it upon himself to seek justice in a way that takes the life of this Egyptian.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And then he realizes: "I'm going to be in trouble, and I need to go." And so he flees to Midian, which is the desert people, the wilderness people.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. And what does he find there? A well.

[Laughter]

Tim: Just like Hagar. He finds a well.

Jon: And then he finds a well.

Tim: Yeah. And then what does he find at that well? Well, he meets a whole bunch of daughters, seven daughters by the well. And a bunch of bad shepherds roll up and start oppressing or bullying these seven daughters. And so Moses rises to the occasion, and he—it just says he rescued them.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Then, he waters their flock. And then, uhm, the daughters go back to their dad. And who's that dad? Well, his name is here, *Reuel*, which is one of the names of this character.

[Laughter]

Tim: Uh, his other name is Jethro—

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Who is the Midianite high priest—

[Laughter]

Tim: Of the land. And he just brings Moses right into the family. Moses ends up marrying—

Jon: One of his daughters.

Tim: One of his daughters. And he lives out there in the wilderness.

Jon: And it's this daughter, the wife of Moses, who becomes the seventh of the seven women that you were referring to later?

Tim: She's the—yeah, one of the seven daughters, and she becomes the seventh woman who rescues Moses' life.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: In another weird story that we don't have time to talk about.

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But my point is, is that all of a sudden—think of Hagar.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Hagar fled into the wilderness—

Jon: Yeah. Finds a well.

Tim: Met God at a well.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: God listened and heard and gives her a promise of future seed.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: But that future seed is going to live in tension with his brothers. And Yishmael is his name. And then here, Moses meets descendants of Yishmael—

Jon: Out in the wilderness.

Tim: In the land of Midian at a well—

[Laughter]

Tim: Right—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: And marries into that family. And here's Moses now at tension with his brothers because his Israelite brothers aren't down for him.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: His Egyptian brothers are definitely not down for him.

Jon: Yeah. He's ou—on the outs—

Tim: Yeah, he's on the outs.

Jon: With both.

Tim: Yeah. And then the next paragraph, and we'll have to end here, is: The narrator tells us that the sons of Israel's groaned because of their slavery, and God heard—

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Their cry. He remembered his covenant with Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, and he saw the sons of Israel.

Jon: Those are the words to Hagar.

Tim: Yeah. So what's so remarkable is Exodus one and two is drawing on these wilderness stories from—with the garden of Eden, from Cain and Abel, and from the Hagar debacle—

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: And providing yet another series—

[Laughter]

Tim: Of, of twists on them. So let's, let's come back. How do people end up in the wilderness—

Jon: Oh my goodness.

Tim: According to the Bible?

[Laughter]

Jon: Okay. Yeah. Well, first is not trusting the voice of God and listening to the voice of the snake. And that just means you're choosing the domain of the wilderness. In some way, you're—that's your choice. That's Adam and Eve. God enforces it. So God is also the one exiling them into the wilderness.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: So there's this dynamic there. It's their choice, but God is—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Honoring that choice, enforcing that choice, but then giving this hope of: This is not the end of the story.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: A seed of the woman—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Will crush the snake. A seed of the woman will come take care of this. But they're in the wilderness. That's the first way into the wilderness. The next story into the wilderness is luring your own brother into the wilderness to kill him—

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: Going further into the wilderness, taking his life by your own twisted desires, which is also called sin—

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: Which is crouching—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: At the door.

Tim: Yeah. And there, it's: You're taking him out there because the wilderness or the field is a place where no one lives. So you can have privacy—

Jon: Do it in secret.

Tim: Do it in secret.

Jon: Yeah, Moses thought he was killing the man in secret.

Tim: Mhm. That's right.

Jon: He looked around, and no one was—

Tim: He looked around, and no one was there.

Jon: Buried him in the sand.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: So all humanity is in the wilderness because of these reasons.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Uhm, we get to the story of Abraham and Sarah, who God says: “That seed is going to come through you. I’m going to bless you. And that’s going to bless all the nations.” They don’t have a child, so they oppress the immigrant slave, named “Immigrant,” and—to get a child. And when that creates a bad relational dynamic, they oppress her more, and then she flees into the wilderness. So she ends up in the wilderness because of the oppression of others.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: God meets her at a well, gives her a promise of blessing, tells her: “Endure the oppression.”

Tim: Hmm, and the promise is about a future seed, but that future seed will be in a struggle with his brothers.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: But God heard and saw her oppression and her, her cry.

Jon: Hmm. Because the Midianites will be like a people that—

Tim: Mhm. Yeah, live—

Jon: They’re in tension with?

Tim: Yeah, live in tension with, yeah, they’re brothers. Mhm.

Jon: Yeah. They’re brothers. It’s so interesting.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: They are.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: And then we read the story of Moses, who—wh—who is his brother? Is it the Egyptians?

Tim: Yeah, mhm.

Jon: Is it the Israelites, the Hebrews? And what does it mean to, to protect your brother and fight for justice? And what he does is he goes: “Well, I can—I’ll decide, and I’ll kill who I want to kill.” And that puts him in trouble with both brothers.

Tim: Yeah. That’s right.

Jon: But really—

[Laughter]

Jon: For the Pharaoh want—will kill him.

Tim: That's right. Yeah.

Jon: And so he flees into—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: The wilderness. So he's in the wilderness from his own—

Tim: Mmm, yeah, his own violence.

Jon: His own violence.

Tim: Yeah. But he comes ultimately from a people who are oppressed, enslaved immigrants—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Oppressed by Egypt. So what is—right—Abraham and Sarah did is now being done to their later descendants.

Jon: Yeah, it's all complicated in that.

Tim: And what the mom has to do is hand her son over, not to the wilderness, but to the waters, which are, remember, the—

Jon: Moses' mom—

Tim: The symbolic—

Jon: Oh, opposites. Yeah.

Tim: Pair of the wilderness is the—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: C—the chaos waters.

Jon: Right.



Tim: And then God delivers the seed through the chaos waters into the house of Pharaoh.

Jon: Into the house of Pharaoh.

Tim: And that's everything you just said. And then Moses finds—

[Laughter]

Tim: Himself fleeing into the wilderness.

Jon: Moses is so complicated.

[Laughter]

Jon: He is the oppressed immigrant, but he grows up in the house of Pharaoh, and he's—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Not oppressed. He is the Cain figure that kills his brother, but he doesn't do it because of jealousy. He does it—

Tim: Oh, yeah. Right.

Jon: Out of a sense of moral, like—

Tim: Yeah, obligation.

Jon: Obligation.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And then when he flees into the wilderness, he then rescues more people. Like that same impulse of like: "I want to do what's right," is there.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: So, yeah, he's a—

Tim: He's a, he's a com—

Jon: Really complex character.

Tim: He's a realistic character, actually.

Jon: Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: Right?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: He wants to do the right thing. Sometimes he loses his temper.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And other times he does it well. And who's he rescuing and where?

[Laughter]

Tim: He's rescuing the descendants connected to Yishmael at a well and ends up getting a blessing of a wife and a family there in the wilderness with the descendants of Yishmael. And then God hears and sees the cries of his people. So the way God responded to Hagar is now how God is responding to Moses and to the Israelites.

Jon: So the wilderness is a place—it's not an ideal place.

Tim: No.

Jon: But out there, there is still, just like a spring came out of the wilderness, and that's how this all began—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: When you find yourself in the wilderness, God can meet you.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: There can be springs. And he will hear the voice of those who cry out—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: In the wilderness.

Tim: So what we just did was we just meditated on the hyperlinks between four stories—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Of where people end up in the wilderness. But again, the reason why I wanted us to do this before we do the next thing is because the next series of stories are about God leading people into the wilderness. And it's become significant to me that all of the stories before that are of people exiling each other into the wilderness through their—through all kinds of reasons. And all of the reasons in these stories are an honest depiction of how complicated humans are. And to me, that is so profound. Humans don't create the wilderness. The wilderness is the opposite of creation. But we do find ourselves and exile ourselves and others into these desperate places of being on the knife-edge of life and death for a whole host of reasons that feel very complicated to try and address. But the biblical authors want us to pay attention to them and to meditate on how these stories reflect our own patterns of behavior and the effects that our choices have on ourselves and other people. We can send others into the wilderness without even fully knowing that that's what we're doing. Or we can send ourselves into the wilderness—

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: By our stupid choices.

Jon: And God wants to meet—

Tim: Ah—

Jon: People in the wilderness.

Tim: Yeah. He wants to and he does.

Jon: And he does.

Tim: He sees, and he hears. And what seems like game-over from our point of view is never game-over from God's point of view. And maybe that's probably the most—

[Laughter]

Tim: Important thing to take away here. There's always—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: The promise of future seed. There's the provision of the wells and the promise that this isn't the end of the story. God wants to lead his people back to the garden.

Jon: Hmm.

[Musical Break (1:05:36—1:05:40)]

Jon: Thank you for listening to this episode of BibleProject podcast. Next week, we're going to look at stories in Exodus and Numbers where God intentionally leads the Israelites through the wilderness for 40 years.

Tim: What we're going to focus on are the moments where God has led his people into the wilderness directly and personally. And there is a crisis of trust. People start grumbling and getting angry, and it becomes a big conflict between God and his people in the wilderness.

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Norma: Hi, my name is Norma, and I'm from Maryland.

Felipe: Hi, my name is Felipe. I'm from Brazil.

[Felipe speaking in another language]

Norma: I first heard about BibleProject from a friend in our small group at church. I use BibleProject for getting an overview of each book of the Bible. I also love to hear

the classroom teachings and get more in-depth study with Tim and Jon, as well as the podcast.

[Felipe speaking in another language]

Norma: We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. BibleProject is a nonprofit funded by people like me. Find free videos, articles, podcasts, classes, and more on the BibleProject app and at [BibleProject.com](https://BibleProject.com).

Felipe: Thank you, BibleProject.

Mike: Hello, my name is Mike Fleming, and I'm on the marketing team where I help the story of the Bible reach as many eyes, ears, and hearts as I can. I've been working at BibleProject for four years, and one of my favorite parts of working here is that I get to experience the Bible for a living, which is so cool. There's a whole team of us that make the podcast come to life every week. For a full list of everyone who's involved, check out the show credits at the end of the episode wherever you stream the podcast and on our website.