

Hagar and the Angel of the LORD

16: 7-14

DIG: How does the LORD comfort the oppressed Hagar? Why does He insist that she submit to Sarai's authority? What do His dealings with Hagar teach us about Him? Why do you think ADONAI's treatment of Hagar gave her the courage to return to Sarai? Did God's love stop for Ishmael after his descendants had become a great people, or would He continue to love them?

REFLECT: From what are you tempted to run? Where have you seen the LORD lately? As a result of that encounter, what name would you give to God or to the place where you met Him?

Eventually the mistreatment at the hands of Sarai became so unbearable that Hagar ran away. She was so desperate that she ran out into the desert. This would have most likely meant death to her and certainly to the child she was carrying.²⁷³

The Angel of the LORD, or Malach ADONAI, found Hagar near a spring in the desert (16:7a). This is the first appearance of the Angel of the LORD in the TANAKH. This is a unique Person. He is called the Angel of the LORD 58 times and He is called the Angel of God 11 times. This is never a common angel, but the second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ. This is always a reference to the pre-incarnate Messiah. Significantly, the rabbis teach that the phrase the Angel of the LORD is sometimes used to denote God Himself. Indeed, when this phrase appears He may be referred to as an angel, but somewhere else in that context, He is referred to as ADONAI Himself. We see the same thing here.

He found her near a spring in the Negev desert. It was the spring that is beside the road to Shur (16:7b). The road to Shur was a major highway between Egypt and the land of Canaan (20:1, 25:18; Exodus 15:22; First Samuel 15:7, 27:8), so this shows that Hagar had fled and she was now in the border area between the Sinai and the Negev desert. There was Hagar, who had fled from her master and mistress. She was sitting there, without anything left. As she had fled, she had not received a donkey, sheep or goat. Probably not even any food or drink. She had nothing. Rejected, mistreated (16:6), a slave, a nobody. Several months pregnant and without hope, in a lonely, forgotten place.

But **ADONAI** saw **her** and had compassion on this nobody, who represents millions of nobodies, dressed in black today, slaves to their husbands, and told that they will be like wood for the fire of hell. **And God** called out to **her**, "**Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?**" **Hagar** most likely had no personal relationship with **the LORD**. **She** may have heard about **Him** from **Abram**, but **she** didn't cry out to **Him**. So **God**, in **His** mercy, made the first move and reached out to **her**.

He didn't merely send an ordinary angel to comfort **her**. **He** sent **His Son, Yeshua Messiah**. **The Angel of the LORD** would appear later in the Bible, often in unique times. **He** can be seen when **Abraham** offered **Isaac** on Mount Moriah (**22:13**), in the burning bush on Mount Sinai (**Exodus 3:2**), sitting down with **Gideon** under the oak in Ophrah (**Judges 6:11-22**), appearing to **Samson's** parents (**Judges 13:1-24**), and when **He** put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrian soldiers getting ready to invade Jerusalem in the days of **Hezekiah** (**Isaiah 37:36**). **Hagar** was privileged to be the first person to be honored with **His** visit. **He** must have loved **her** dearly. **Jesus Christ** continues to reveal **Himself** to many of **Ishmael's** descendants today. **He** also loves **them** very much and wants to call **them** by name so they can know **Him** personally.

She answers the first question: **I am running away from my mistress Sarai, she answered (16:8)**. But **she** doesn't answer the second question because **she** seems to be wandering aimlessly far from home, not sure of **her** future at all. One of the great characteristics of **God** is that **He** is always out looking for the lost.

Then the **Angel of the LORD** told **her**, "**Go back to your mistress and submit to her**" (**16:9**). The divine presence called for obedience to **His** divine will. **She** returned to **her** mistress and accepted **her** position. It had not been **ADONAI's** will for this union between **Abram** and **Hagar** to take place; but now that it had, **He** would make a gracious promise to their descendants.²⁷⁴

The Angel makes a specific prophecy and speaks as **God** Himself when **He** says: **I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count (16:10)**. **ADONAI** had promised **Abram** to make **his** descendants as numerous as **the stars** in the sky (**15:5**). The Patriarchs received such a promise, but **Hagar** is the only woman to receive such a promise. And even though **Ishmael** was not the child of promise, **the LORD** graciously promised **Hagar** to also bless the fruit of **her** womb. The Bible tells us that **Ishmael** would be the father of **twelve tribes (25:12-18)**. Later, **Abram** would pray a blessing for **Ishmael (17:18)**. **God** told **him** that **He** would indeed bless **Ishmael**, just as **He** had promised **his** mother **Hagar** at the well. As a result, **ADONAI** honored **the child** that was born from unbelief and chose to bless **him** greatly also.

In fact, one person can only become a great people when **God blesses** the womb of the mothers, protects them from sickness, their enemies and **bless them** with food and drink. The descendants of **Ishmael** lived in some of the harshest places on earth, the edges of deserts where there was little food and water. No wonder **Ishmael** became an archer, hardly anything would grow there. But evidently **the LORD** blessed **Ishmael's descendants** as **He** did when the Israelites traveled through the desert. **And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him. I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation (17:20).** Such is **God's** love for **Ishmael** and his descendants.

The pre-incarnate **Messiah** also said to her, "You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him **Ishmael**, which in Hebrew means *God hears*, for the **LORD** has heard of your misery" (16:11). **God** has named very few people. **Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz** (Isaiah 8:3) was given his name *after* his birth. **Sha'ul** had his name changed to **Paul** (Acts 13:9) and **Jesus** changed the name of **Simon** to **Kefa** (Matthew 16:17-18). **Isaac** (17:19), **Jesus** (Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:31), and **John the Baptist** (Luke 1:13) were named *before* their births. **Ishmael**, however, was *the first* unborn child named by **ADONAI** Himself.

But the name itself had to be a great encouragement to **Hagar**. In the midst of her distress and weeping **ADONAI** was saying to her, "I hear you." By naming the child **Ishmael**, which means *God hears*, every time **Hagar** thought of her son or looked at her son, she would be reminded that **God** had heard her at the lowest point of her life. **The LORD** had heard her misery. What a comfort to know that **God** hears of and sees our misery today. **He** is concerned and will act on our behalf if we believe in **Him** (see my commentary on [The Life of Christ Bw - What God Does For Us at the Moment of Faith](#))

Today, the descendants of **Ishmael** cry out five times a day, "Merciful **God**, show us the straight way." *God hears*. So many live in misery, under the yoke of government corruption and harsh religious regulations. But *God hears*. **ADONAI** has placed **His Son, Jesus** (or **Esa**) within the pages of the Koran. The citations below are all listed from *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, translated by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall: A mentor Religious Classic, The New American Library, New York, New York, fifth printing, 1956.

- (1) **Esa** was sent by Allah, who supported **Him** with the Holy Spirit to tell the world of Allah's will (2:87; 5:110-117);
- (2) Allah gave **Esa** to the world, exalted **Him** above all others, and supported **Him** with the Holy Spirit as proof of **His** sovereignty (2:253);

- (3) Allah caused the miracle birth of John the Baptist to the aged Zechariah and his barren wife so John could be the messenger to announce **Jesus** as the Messiah (3:33-41);
- (4) Allah appointed Mary to be the virgin mother of **Esa**, the Messiah (3:42-45, 19:12-22, 21:90);
- (5) **Yeshua** would be righteous [sinless] all **His** life (3:46, 6:86, 19:19);
- (6) **Esa** would be raised from the dead (19:33-34);
- (7) **Esa**, the Messiah and son of Mary, crucified, appeared dead, **He** did not appear to be alive because **He** was dead (4:157-158, 3:55);
- (8) **Yeshua** was a messenger of Allah, who is to be believed (4:171);
- (9) Allah taught **Jesus** **His** religion and commanded **Him** to establish it (42:13, 43:63);
- (10) Allah caused **Esa**, son of Mary, to follow [the prophets], gave **Him** the Gospel, and placed compassion and mercy in the hearts of those who follow **Him** (57:27);
- (11) Allah strengthened the group of Jews who believed **Esa** and **His** message, so they overcame those who disbelieved (61:14);
- (12) the true message of **Jesus** and the prophets was perverted by religious leaders who were condemned by Allah (9:31);
- (13) long before the Prophet Muhammad, Allah revealed the Torah and the Gospel for the guidance of mankind (3:3-4, 48, 65);
- (14) Allah taught **Jesus** the Scriptures and wisdom, and the Torah and the Gospel. Allah would do miracles through **Esa** and make **Him** a messenger to Israel (3:48-49);
- (15) Allah gathered **Yeshua** and caused **Him** to be resurrected and ascended to Allah himself (3:55, 4:158);
- (16) Allah bestowed the Gospel on **Esa** to be the light of the world (5:46);
- (17) observing the Torah and the Gospel brings nourishment from above (5:66);

(18) those who went astray from Allah's commands were cursed by both David and **Yeshua** (5:78);

(19) Allah inspired **Esa's** disciples to believe in **Him** and **His** message (5:78);

(20) **Esa** and **His** disciples were Allah's helpers (61:6 and 14);

(21) followers of Muhammad are commanded to believe in all that was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and that which Moses and **Jesus** received (2:136)

(22) the surrender, al-Islam - means that Islam and Muslims are to be surrendered to Allah's will and guidance as had been revealed to **Abraham** by **God** and explained by **Esa** (3:19).

It is impossible for Muhammad to replace **Jesus**. There can be only one **Messiah**. **Jesus** did **Messiah's** work (opening heaven) 550 years before Islam's prophet was born. Only belief in the resurrected Christ can make it possible for a person to enter the Kingdom.

With regards to Jacob, the **NIV** and most translations are based on a bias against **Ishmael**. Some words have a wide semantic range and can be taken either positively or negatively. Because many translators have this bias, they translate these verses negatively. Let's take a closer look at **Genesis 16:12** - this most controversial verse.

He will be a wild donkey of a man (16:12a). Bible interpreters have taken this to point out the wildness and aggressiveness of the Arabs. However, **donkeys** are social animals who are herbivores and do not have the capacity to kill other animals. What does **ADONAI Himself** say about the **wild donkey**? When speaking to **Job** about **His** ability to control the universe, **ADONAI** said to him: **Who let the wild donkey go free? Who untied his ropes (Job 39:5)?** Even the mere act of releasing **wild donkeys** out in the desert where **they** roamed **free** was beyond **Job's** ability. Thus, when the Bible points us to **wild donkey's**, it is a picture of them being **free** animals, unlike domesticated ones who are bound. The footnote in the **NIV** merely says that **a wild donkey** means *away from human settlements*. Therefore, we must conclude that **God** told **Hagar**, a slave **herself**, that **her son** would be a **free man**.

Today we see most of **Ishmael's** descendants living as slaves, bound by the regulations of Islam. Yet **Isaiah** prophesied that the people of the Arabian Peninsula would worship **the Messiah** one day (see my commentary on **Isaiah Jv - The Attraction of the Gentiles**). This means that multitudes of **Ishmael's descendants** are yet to enter into the freedom that

comes from following **the Way (Acts 9:2)**, and being freed by **Jesus** from the slavery of religious systems that started in Babylon and are perpetuated by Satan today.

His hand will be (on) upon everyone (16:12b). The NIV translates this in a negative sense: **His hand will be against everyone**. Other valid translations of the Hebrew preposition are **on**, or **upon**. This means **his influence will be (on) upon everyone (First Samuel 5:6; Second Samuel 24:17; Second Kings 3:15; Nehemiah 2:8; Job 9:33; Psalm 139:5; Isaiah 8:11; Ezekiel 21:3)**, and indeed it has been. It is important to note that the preposition used by the Jewish scholars when translating the Hebrew into Greek used the verb *to lay on*. The B'rit Chadashah expression is **to lay hands on**. Such as: **Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you (First Timothy 4:14; also see Acts 13:3; First Timothy 5:22 and Hebrews 6:1-3)**.

And live to the east of (16:12c). Once again the NIV negatively translates **and everyone's hand against him (16:12c)**. However, the NIV footnote says that the Hebrew could also be translated **live to the east of**. Again, in a literal sense this is quite true of the sons and daughters of **Ishmael**.

And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren (16:12d NKJV). The NIV translates this verse: **And he will live in hostility toward all his brothers** because of the negative interpretation of the **wild donkey**.²⁷⁵ When we look at this verse in a new light, we can see that it is **God's** plan to save millions of Arabs (see my commentary on **Revelation Fk - Gentiles in the Messianic Kingdom**). Although the Bible speaks very little about the rest of **Ishmael's** life there are two short scriptures that speak volumes.

First, **Abraham's sons, Isaac and Ishmael, buried their father together in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, the field Abraham had bought from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah (25:9-10)**. This leads us to believe that **the two brothers** had a good relationship with each other. It is true that after **Isaac** was born, **Hagar** was furious over **her** treatment by **Sarah**. **She** influenced **Ishmael**, who ended up **mocking** his younger brother resulting in both **Hagar** and **Ishmael** being sent away by **Abraham (21:8-10)**. However, it was very unlikely that the toddler **Isaac** had any memory of the **mocking** that infuriated **Sarah** so much.

Secondly, years later, **Isaac's** son Esau married a daughter of **Ishmael (28:9)**. Marriages only took place with the consent of both fathers. If the father was incapable or dead, the oldest son would take his place. **Ishmael** had died at least fifteen years before Esau approached his family. Had **Ishmael's** son Nebaioth been resentful that **Isaac** was the son of

promise and full heir to **Abraham's** wealth, even though **his father** was the firstborn, **he** would not have given **his** sister to Esau. Instead, **he** did not object and the marriage took place. It seems that **Ishmael** had experienced healing through the blessing of **his** twelve sons as **God** had promised (17:20).

Therefore, we can see that the Israelites and the Ishmaelites had very few problems (aside from the Midianites), with each other before **the Messiah** came. After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD, many Jews went to live in Arabia. To date there are Jewish communities in the Arabian Peninsula. In the sixth century, a Jewish king even reigned over South Arabia. Only with the coming of Islam did the hostility of the Jews surface. But the Jews, secular or messianic did not, and still do not, accept Muhammad as a prophet of **God**. Gentile believers didn't either. The biggest sin that a Muslim can commit is to confess that **God** has a partner. Every day during the call to prayer, the muezzin proclaims that **God** has no son. The Muslims have learned to hate those who worship **the Meshiach** because, according to them, all Jewish and Gentile believers commit the greatest sin. But Muhammad will not have the final word, says: **The desert tribes will bow down before Him and His enemies will be like the dust (Psalm 72:9).**

She gave this name to ADONAI who spoke to her: *El Ro'i* "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me" (16:13). She was overwhelmed by the fact that **the LORD** personally took an interest in **her** while **she** was in **misery**. **God** sees everything that happens in our lives. In the midst of suffering, **God** sees us. **He** does not merely watch us struggle from far away; **He** comes to us, touches our spirits, and gives us strength to endure the trials of life (His Names Are Wonderful, by Elizabeth Vandr Meulen and Barbara Malda, Messianic Jewish Publishers, 2005, page 35).

That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi, which means *the well of the Living One who sees me*, it is still there, between Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 20:1) and Bered (16:14). May the LORD Himself find *us* at the well as **He** did Hagar of old, and may it be ours, as it was hers, to hear **Him** and see **Him**.²⁷⁶ As **He Himself** said: **If anyone is thirsty, let them come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within them (John 7:37).**