

# The God Who Cared for Hagar

## El Roi: The God Who Sees and Looks After Me



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**Text:** Gen. 16:1-16<sup>1</sup>

**Date:** March 30, 7pm

**Series:** Drawing Near to God through His Name

**Introduction:** The Name “El Roi” is found only once in the Scriptures. It means “The God Who sees and looks after me”. He sees us at our darkest, most lonely and wandering hour, and He looks after us.

Genesis 16 introduces us to an Egyptian slave girl named Hagar. She has no status in life. Abraham likely obtained her as a gift from Pharaoh when he left Egypt after he told a half truth about Sarah being his sister. Many commentators believe that we first discover Hagar in **Gen 12:16**, “And for her [*Sarai*’s] sake he [*Pharaoh*] dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels.”

One of the female slave girls was very likely Hagar. Remember that Hagar didn’t choose her place of birth. She didn’t choose her status in life. She was not less important to God than Abraham or Sarah. We are going to see tonight that Hagar refers to God by His Name: **El Roi**—*He is the God who sees me, He knows me, and He looks out after me and cares for me.*

Of course we know that God is kind to Abraham even though he makes a mess of everything. He has plans for Abraham.

But what about this slave girl? Is Hagar important to God? The answer is YES! It is at her breaking point that she realizes God cares for her. Maybe you’ve been at that breaking point in your life and you’ve wondered WHY God would allow the pain and confusion in your life.

Sometimes we find ourselves in a place in life where we are at the breaking point.

- You may have made poor decisions, and God has allowed you to reap the consequences.
- Perhaps you’ve been trying to serve God faithfully, and a trial has hit you out of nowhere.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is from the *English Standard Version* of the Bible.

It is often during those times that we feel very alone, like God does not care.

Hagar had to get to this desolate place in her life to understand that God is **El Roi**—*He is the God who sees me, He knows me, and He looks out after me and cares for me.*

Let's jump into the story in Genesis 16. Sarah is barren, and stops trusting the Lord. She begins "leaning on her own understanding".

## I. **The Story of Hagar (Gen. 16).**

A. The **Context** (vs. 1-3): Sarah is barren and does not trust God. She takes matters into her own hands.

Verses 1-3, "Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. 2 And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. 3 So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife."

Consider who Hagar was. She's a young girl torn from her family, her culture, her country, and all that was familiar to her in order to become a possession, owned completely by another. Now as the years have gone by she is looked upon as one who will produce an heir for her master.

### **The Law of the Land**

Ancient Near Eastern Laws authorized a barren wife to use a slave in this capacity and stipulated that afterwards the child no longer belonged to the slave but to the master and his wife. According to the law of the land, Ishmael would have been considered Sarah's legal offspring. Imagine the pain of having to give your child up!

But it get's worse!

B. The **Conflict** (vs. 4-6): Hagar is Banished!

We see now that Hagar looks with contempt on Sarah. Before we condemn Hagar, let's remember that she's being asked to give up her baby. Regardless of what exactly it was that Hagar did, it deeply upset Sarah.

Verses 4-6, "And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. 5 And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with

contempt. May the LORD judge between you and me!” 6 But Abram said to Sarai, “Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please.” Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her”.

### **Abraham’s Sad Leadership**

What a sad commentary on Abram’s leadership. He should have protected Hagar, but he just stays out of the way!

Abram is as weak as dish water. He just wants to keep the peace. He says, “Do with her whatever you think is best. There is a warning here for us men. We must not avoid making the hard decisions and doing the hard thing. We’ve got to stand with conviction and compassion. Abraham was like a dead fish. He let his wife lead him when she was in an emotional crisis.

*Application:* God forbid that any of us men should not take the leadership in our homes. We are to be the one at the wheel, steering the ship to godliness and a whole hearted submission to God for our family. Abraham just let his wife, in a very unstable emotional state, take over.

Sarah banishes Hagar. So now Hagar is a distraught, frightened, homeless, pregnant, non-Israelite slave girl. Do you think God cares? She’s about to be introduced to “*El Roi, the God who sees me and is looking after me*”. He cares when we are desperate, confused, and lost. He sees our life and is very much concerned.

### C. God’s **Compassion** (vs. 7-9).

Hagar is a runaway pregnant slave. She heads into the desert towards Egypt—her homeland. She reaches a spring of water, beside the road to Shur which is a few days away! She’s pregnant, dehydrated, confused, and lost. She’s goes to a desert and that’s where she encounters God!

She wasn’t looking for God. But God found her! **Verses 7-9**, “The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur [WALL]. 8 And he said, “Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?”

I find it so gentle and kind that God calls her by name. It may be that she was never called by her name. She’s likely called “the servant” or Sarah’s servant. But God calls her Hagar. He knows her and He sees her and looks after her.

*Illustration:* Benson and I spoke with a homeless man on Tuesday named Chris. He said, “You know, I’ve got to get a house and a car and get on my feet and get my life together before I seek God.” Our response was, “No, you need to thank God that you are homeless, because it’s taken this wilderness and this trial and this valley for God to get your attention to see how much you need Christ”!

Let's thank God for the deserts. Let's make sure we drink from the springs that God puts in our path.

**Verse 8**, God asks, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." 9 The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her."

Even though God asked Hagar where she had come from and where she was going, the omniscient, omnipresent God already knew the answers and yet He still cared to show her personal comfort in her affliction.

- D. God's **Course** (vs. 10-12). In verses 10-12, God promises to bless Hagar's son. God promises to bless her family and God even gave a name for her son, Ishmael, which means, "**God listens**"!

God heard this forgotten slave girl's heart. He saw her **affliction**. He cares. And she is introduced to the person of Jesus Christ: the Angel of the LORD.

The exciting thing is that when we see the Angel of the Lord, this is what we call a "Christophany": an appearance of Jesus Christ before His incarnation.

Hagar comes to the understanding that this Angel of the LORD who speaks to her is in fact God Himself.

**Verses 10-12**, "The angel of the LORD also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." 11 And the angel of the LORD said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has listened to your affliction. 12 He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen. 13 So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing," [EL ROI]"

Despite the awful circumstances Hagar was going through, God had a plan to bless Hagar and remembered her affliction.

Let us never forget **Romans 8:28**, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

**Jeremiah 29:11**, "For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for peace, and not for disaster, to give you an expected end".

- E. Hagar's **Confession** (vs. 13-16).

**Verses 13-16**, “So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, **“You are a God of seeing,”** [EL ROI] for she said, “Truly here I have seen **Him who looks after me.**” 14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered. 15 ¶ And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.”

Hagar realized God’s watchful eye was over her! What a joy! What a realization! What a relief!

## II. The **Significance** of God’s Name: El Roi.

### A. God is El Roi *knows everything about you* (Ps. 139:1-6).

**Psalm 139:1-6**, “O LORD, you have searched me and known me! 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. 3 You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. 4 Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether. 5 You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.”

### B. God is El Roi *because He cares about our affliction* (Rom. 8:28; Pro. 3:5-6). Hagar encountered God in the desert and addressed him as El Roi “the God who sees me”—the One who looks after me. Sometimes it takes a serious affliction for you to even notice God’s care.

**Rom. 8:28** tells us that God works all things – good and bad—for our good and for God’s glory. **Proverbs 3:5-6** says that we should trust God and not lean to our own understanding.

But understand God is caring for you 24 and 7.

Hagar’s God is the One who numbers the hairs on our heads and who knows our circumstances, past, present, and future. When you pray to El Roi, you are praying to the one who knows everything about you and loves you and guides you.

### C. God is El Roi *because His watchful eye is over us* (Mat. 10:28).

Jesus says in Matthew 10:28, “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.”

**Conclusion:** Just as Hagar discovered in her time of great need, there are no circumstances in our lives that escape God’s fatherly awareness and care. God knows us and our troubles. He has called us to give hope for hurting people and to point them toward Him.