

## El Roi: The God Who Sees

*So she named the Lord who spoke to her: The God Who Sees, for she said, "Have I really seen here the One who sees me?" That is why she named the spring, "A Well of the Living One Who Sees Me." It is located between Kadesh and Bered. – Genesis 16:13-14 HCSB*

Hagar, the Egyptian slave that Sarai offered to Abraham as a surrogate mother, was fleeing her mistress' mistreatment when she came to a spring<sup>1</sup>. She might have been on her way to Shur which lies east of Egypt,<sup>2</sup> her home country. The fact that her son, Ishmael, later settled in Shur<sup>3</sup> would seem to support this theory. Wherever she was going, as a good Middle Eastern desert dweller, she found this source of water and rested. It was here that she encountered the Angel of the Lord.

The Hebrew word for well, or spring, is "ayin". Oddly enough, it also means eye. Perhaps those who looked down from the top of a dune into an oasis' depression and saw the ring of green surrounding the central well thought it rather resembled the pupil within the cornea that lies within the occipital orbit.

After a brief and troubling conversation, the Angel pronounced a prophecy concerning her as yet unborn son and His blessing<sup>4</sup> strangely echoed one given to His own earthly mother<sup>5</sup> thousands of years later. But where His future incarnation would be named "Immanuel" or "God with us", Hagar's son was to be simply named "Ishmael" or "God sees."

Hagar immediately recognized that she had been talking to Elohim Himself, stating in her bemusement, "Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?"<sup>6</sup> She renamed the well Beer-lahai-roi, "the well of the Living One Who sees me" and found the strength she needed to return to her suffering in the simple fact that El Roi saw her.

Humans throughout the world have long understood the power of vision. Even from the very beginning, the fact that Adam and Eve could be naked together and unashamed<sup>7</sup> marked a very unique existence. And it was only when the Father could no longer look upon the sin-laden Messiah that the Son cried out "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani!" "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?"<sup>8</sup>

El Roi observes even when a single sparrow falls<sup>9</sup> and He is not a neutral observer<sup>10</sup>. He has demonstrated over and over for thousands of years that He loves us<sup>11</sup>. He looked upon our bloody, rejected and sin-sick selves<sup>12</sup> and found it within Himself to love us anyway.

This fact should cause an "ayin," a "well / eye" to spring up within us<sup>13</sup>. We know that when we are wrongfully treated that He will see and avenge in His own time<sup>14</sup>. We know that when we serve He will see and reward again in His own time<sup>15</sup>. The eye of God upon us should be a constant source of hope and strength.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 16:7

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 25:18; 1 Samuel 15:7

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 25:16-18

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 16:11

<sup>5</sup> Luke 2:31

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 16:13b NASB

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 2:25

<sup>8</sup> Mark 15:34

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 10:29

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 5:26

<sup>11</sup> Romans 5:8

<sup>12</sup> Ezekiel 16:4-6

<sup>13</sup> John 4:13-14

<sup>14</sup> Romans 12:19; Nehemiah 9:4-5

<sup>15</sup> Hebrews 11:6; Nehemiah 5:19; 13:14, 22, 31