

# Where have you come from?

She was Egyptian; she was young, and alone. She had been given as a slave to the mistress of her present household. Her mistress and master had visited Egypt some time before and after some sort of scandal involving the Pharaoh and the wife, the couple left the country laden with gifts, the little girl included.

In the Middle East to this day, people believe that she was a princess, a daughter of one of Pharaoh's household. The young Egyptian princess isn't mentioned again until she is given by her mistress to the old master as a concubine with the idea of her becoming a surrogate mother.

The reason for this is that the marriage was childless and this was a way devised by the mistress to have a child through her maidservant. It was a common enough custom in those days. The plan worked, the slave girl became pregnant and proud, and the wife couldn't handle it. Can't blame her, we'd say.

When we mess around with God's plans, they usually backfire.

The mistress was already aware of *The Promise* her husband had received from God about them becoming parents. But unable to believe she started picking on the girl so much the young, frightened slave girl took off into the desert in despair.

**That's when she had her *Encounter*.**

Not many people in all the pages of history have had such an encounter. This young, pregnant, unmarried, run-a-way Egyptian slave girl, of no account in worldly affairs, was important enough in the plan of God for him to rescue her by 'The Angel of the Lord'! And he said to her, 'Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?'

She answered, 'I am running away from my mistress,' and it was obvious to her and the angel that she didn't know where she was going. The young confused woman, lost and windblown, her dark eyes showing her fear through the folds of her torn and stained headscarf bowed her head to the sand.

The angel spoke, 'Return to Sarai your mistress and submit to her,' adding, 'I will increase your descendents so much that they will be too numerous to count. You are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery.' So Hagar returned to her mistress.

I love the story of Hagar. She who was of little account, was regarded so worthy by God as to be rescued by the Angel of the LORD Himself. What does the Holy Scriptures say about Hagar's response to that first rescue? As well as obedience to return to her mistress, she said words that are there for us to read today in the ancient writings. 'She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her, 'You are the God who sees me,' for she said, 'I have now seen the One who sees me.'

**How amazing is that! She saw God!**

## Frustrated Fleas

*Ever heard about the fleas in the jar?*

*The story is that at first the fleas were put in a matchbox. They were only able to bounce up a certain height. When they were accustomed to the height, they were then put into a jar, and the lid taken off. But they failed to use the freedom given to them.*

*Isn't that like people, they train in a certain way by education or circumstances, and when given greater scope to extend or expand themselves, they are unable to do so.*



# And where are you going?

After Hagar returned to her mistress she gave birth to Ishmael. As Hagar went into labour, she would have been placed between the legs of Sarah and supported by Sarah the child would be born. As the child emerged from Hagar, the midwives would deliver him through the legs of the mistress thus enabling Sarah to claim the child as her own. This was common practice. Hagar was a slave, owned by Sarah. She would be regarded as the wet nurse and no more. She was part of the goods and chattels of the household of Abraham. Although Sarah did not love Ishmael, the first born of her husband, Abraham greatly loved Ishmael.

In the midst of all her distress, she remembered the angel of the Lord's promise.

When Ishmael was fourteen, another crisis occurred. Sarah finally gave birth to the child of promise – Isaac. Hagar was again cast out and again God rescued her and Ishmael. Completing Hagar's story it is written, 'While he was living in the desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.' That one sentence contains another chapter of her story. She was an amazing woman, in the midst of all her distress she remembered the angel of the LORD's promise to her, to make a great nation from her son. So she finds a wife for her son, from her own people, the Egyptians.

Egypt is known as the place of safe haven: firstly for Abraham and his household, then for Jacob and his family. Two generations later in another famine situation, Joseph, the great-grandson of Abraham was thrown into a cistern, (a dry well). His brothers sat down to eat lunch. And while they ate, they looked up and saw a caravan of – wait for it – Ishmaelites –

the descendants of Hagar! For twenty shekels of silver his brothers sold him to the Ishmaelites, who were the means by which God brought Joseph to Egypt!

The descendants of Ishmael, the son of Hagar and Abraham take the Saviour of Egypt to the place of God's appointment. Not only to save Egypt but later the whole of the Twelve Tribes of Israel as well.

But there's more:

We can follow the story in the Bible: an Angel appears to another Joseph and tells him 'Take the mother and child and flee to Egypt.' So Egypt becomes the place of safe haven for the Saviour of the World – Jesus, the Christ, this very fact undergirds the Egyptian church, to this very day.

History tells us the first Joseph who was sold to the Ishmaelites, said to his brothers, after he had saved them, 'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.'

I love this picture of the weaving of God's purpose for the saving of all his people. Even when they fail, he can turn a faithless wife, a discarded concubine, a boastful young dreamer with murderous brothers, and much, much later, the hatred of the tyrant Herod to cause these people and the Saviour of the World to find safe haven in Egypt. God can use anyone for his divine purpose, even an outcast Egyptian slave-girl called Hagar, and even you. None of us are exempt from His grace.

Where have you come from and where are you going?

**Eternal questions that we all need to face.**

## Who is our God?

All beliefs and faiths have a God. God is a generic term. Some people say all gods are the same. Hindus have several gods, Buddhists have a god, and Muslims have Allah as their god. Who is our God? How do we tell people who our god is and what He wants us to call Him? God himself tells us who He is and what He wants us to call Him. When god spoke to Moses He said "I AM" has sent you. Then god continues that He wants to be known as "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob". In our day and age when there are many gods being worshipped in our community we need to know and be able to tell people who our God is and that He has a special name. Our God is the One and Only GOD. The Great "I AM". Read Exodus 3:13 – 15

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