

HAGAR

Egyptian Servant Girl

SCRIPTURES: Genesis 16; 21:9-21 (Genesis 25:12, Galatians 4:24-25)

NAME MEANING: "flight" (Egyptian)

FAMILY ORIGIN: Egyptian, possibly one of the slaves that Pharaoh gave Abraham during his sojourn in Egypt in time of Palestinian famine (Gen. 12:10-20)..

WELL: "Beer-Lahai-Roi" (The Well of the Living One Who Sees Me") between Kadesh and Bered (on the way to Shur)

GOD: "You are the God who sees" (Genesis 16:3)

BACKGROUND: Abraham, patriarch and father of the Hebrew nation, was called of God to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees. God promised him a land and descendants. He and his brother settled in Haran for some time. Eventually Abram, Sarah and his nephew Lot continued their migration to the Promised Land, a journey that included a 10-year period of wandering. During a period of famine they sojourned into Egypt. Abram eventually settled in Beer-sheba (150 miles from Egypt) on a main trade route. Beer-sheba was a place of seven wells (still there today). When God's promise of an heir was not fulfilled, Sarah (then 80 years old) took it in her hands to offer her handmaid Hagar to Abraham as a surrogate mother (a custom fairly common in the east). A child born of such a liaison would be legally hers.

HAGAR'S STORY: Hagar became pregnant and consequently became despised in her mistress' eyes. Hagar fled, doubtless intending to return to Egypt (150 miles) by a common road (from Hebron past Beer-sheba "by way of Shur"). There an angel of the Lord found her by a well and directed her to return to her mistress and submit to her, promising her the birth of a son and numerous descendants. She named the place "Beer-lahai-roi" ("The well of the Living One who sees me").

Hagar returned to Abraham and Sarah and Ishmael was born. About 14 years later, Isaac was born to Sarah as God promised. Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah 90. Ishmael mocked the young Isaac and Sarah insisted that Hagar and her son had to be expelled. Abraham, although displeased, agreed and sent them away. Hagar probably again headed to Egypt but ran out of water in the desert. Anticipating Ishmael's death, she left him under a shrub and moves away from him so as not to see him die. Again an Angel of the Lord appeared to her with a comforting promise of her son's increasing greatness, and directed her to a fountain (well) from which she filled the bottle and gave to Ishmael.