

# Hagar

*The Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature. James Strong and John McClintock; Haper and Brothers; NY; 1880.*

Ha'gar (Heb. *Hagar* <sup>הַגָּר</sup>, *flight*, apparently from her abandonment of her mistress; but according to others, a *stranger*, from her foreign birth, *SEE HAGARENE* Sept. and N.T.  $\varsigma$ Αγαρ), a native of Egypt, and servant of Abraham (*Ge 21:9-10*), perhaps one of the female slaves presented to Abraham by Pharaoh during his visit to Egypt (*Ge 12:16*), although she properly belonged to Sarah (*Ge 16:1*). The long continued sterility of Sarah suggested to her the idea (not uncommon in the East) of becoming a mother by proxy through her handmaid, whom, with that view, she gave to Abraham as a secondary wife (Genesis 15). B.C. 2078. *SEE ABRAHAM; SEE ADOPTION; SEE CONCUBINE*. This honor was too great and unexpected for the weak and ill-regulated mind of Hagar; and no sooner did she find herself likely to become the mother of her master's heir than she openly indulged in triumph over her less favored mistress. The feelings of Sarah were severely wounded, and she broke out to her husband in loud complaints of the servant's petulance. Abraham, whose meek and prudent behavior is strikingly contrasted with the violence of his wife, left her with unfettered power, as mistress of his household, to take what steps she pleased to obtain the required redress. (See Kitto's *Daily Bible Illust.* ad loc.) In all Oriental states where concubinage is legalized, the principal wife has authority over the rest; the secondary one, if a slave, retains her former condition unchanged, and society thus presents the strange anomaly of a woman being at once the menial of her master

and the partner of his bed. This permission, however, was necessary in an Eastern household, but it is worthy of remark that it is now very rarely given; nor can we think, from the unchangeableness of Eastern customs, and the strongly-marked national character of those peoples, that it was usual anciently to allow a wife to deal hardly with a slave in Hagar's position. Left with this authority over her dotal maid-servant, Sarah was neither reluctant nor sparing in making the minion reap the fruits of her insolence; but whether she actually inflicted blows (Augustine, *Epist.* 48), or merely threw out menaces to that effect, cannot be determined from the verb  $\text{הָאַע}$  (to "*afflict*") there employed. Sensible, at length, of the hopelessness of getting the better of her mistress, Hagar determined on flight; and having seemingly formed the purpose of returning to her relations in Egypt, she took the direction of that country, which led her to what was afterwards called Shur, through a long tract of sandy uninhabited country, lying on the west of Arabia Petrsea, to the extent of 150 miles between Palestine and Egypt. Here she was sitting by a fountain to replenish her skin-bottle or recruit her wearied limbs, when the angel of the Lord appeared, and in the kindest manner remonstrated with her on the course she was pursuing, and encouraged her to return by the promise that she would ere long have a son, whom Providence destined to become a great man, and whose wild and irregular features of character would be indelibly impressed on the mighty nation that should spring from him. — Obedient to the heavenly visitor, and having distinguished the place by the name of Beer-lahai-roi (q.v.), "the well of the visible God," Hagar retraced her steps to the tent of Abraham, where in due time she had a son; and, having probably narrated this remarkable interview to Abraham, that patriarch, as directed by the angel, called the name of the child Ishmael "God hath

heard" (Genesis 16). B.C. 2078. Fourteen years after the birth of Ishmael the appearance of the long-promised heir entirely changed the relations of the family, though nothing materially affecting Ishmael took place till the weaning of Isaac, which, as is generally thought, was at the end of his third year. B.C. 2061. Ishmael was then fully capable of understanding his altered relations to the inheritance; and when the newly-weaned child, clad, according to custom, with the sacred symbolic robe, which was the badge of the birthright, was formally installed heir of the tribe (see *Biblioth. Bibl.* vol. 1; Vicasì, *Annot.* p. 32; Bush on [Ge 27:15](#)), he inconsiderately gave vent to his disappointed feelings by an act of mockery ([Ge 21:9](#) the Hebrew word קִנְיָ, though properly signifying "to laugh," is frequently used to express strong derision, as in [Ge 19:14](#); [Ne 2:19](#); [Ne 4:1](#); [Eze 23:32](#); accompanied, as is probable on some of the occasions referred to in these passages, with violent gestures, which might very justly be interpreted as persecution, [Ga 4:29](#)). The procedure of Abraham in awarding the inheritance to Isaac was guided by the special command of God, and, moreover, was in harmony with the immemorial practice of the East, where the son of a slave or secondary wife is always supplanted by that of a free woman, even if born long after. This insulting conduct of Ishmael gave offence to Sarah, such that she insisted upon his expulsion from the family, together with his mother as conniving at it. So harsh a measure was extremely painful to Abraham; but his scruples were removed by the divine direction to follow Sarah's advice (see Kitto's *Daily Bible Illust.* ad loc.), "for," adds the Targum of Jonathan, "she is a prophetess" (compare [Ga 4:30](#)). Accordingly, "Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water (and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder), and the child, and sent her away" ([Ge 21:14](#)). B.C. 2061. In spite of instructions, the two exiles missed their

way. Overcome by fatigue and thirst, the strength of the young Ishmael first gave way, and his mother laid him down in complete exhaustion under one of the stunted shrubs of this arid region, in the hope of his obtaining some momentary relief from smelling the damp in the shade, while she withdrew to a little distance, unable to witness his lingering sufferings, and there "she lifted up her voice and wept." In this distress, the angel of the Lord appeared with a comforting promise of her son's future greatness, and directed her to a fountain, which, concealed by the brushwood, had escaped her notice, and from which she now revived the almost lifeless Ishmael. This well, according to the tradition of the Arabs (who pay great honor to the memory of Hagar, and maintain that she was Abraham's lawful wife), is Zemzem, near Mecca. (See Weil's *Bibl. Legends*, p. 82.) Of the subsequent history of Hagar we have no account beyond what is involved in that of Ishmael, who established himself in the wilderness of Paran, in the neighborhood of Sinai, was married by his mother to a countrywoman of her own, and maintained both himself and his family by the produce of his bow ([Ge 21:20-21](#)). *SEE ISHMAEL*. In [Ga 4:24](#), the apostle Paul, in an. allegory, makes Hagar (τὸ σαυραρ) represent the Jewish Church, which was in bondage to the ceremonial law, as Sarah represents the true Church of Christ which is free from this bondage. (See Bloomfield's *Note*, ad loc.) Some commentators, however, have discovered an alliteration in. the name here with the Arab word for *stone* (*hajar*). According to Mohammedan tradition, Hagar (*Hfajir*) was buried at Mecca! (D'Herbelot, *Bib. Or.* s.v. Hagiār). Mr. Rowlands, in traveling through the desert of Beersheba, discovered some wells and a stone mansion, which he declares the Arabs still designate as those of Hagar! (Williams, *Holy City*, 1, 465 sq.). *SEE ABRAHAM*.