



Hagar & Ishmael

Genesis 16:7-16, 21:9-21

The door to crews' quarters creaked as it opened ever so slightly. Matey, the midshipman, stuck his head out the door; just enough to see what was happening on deck. He peeked around carefully to make sure that the deck was empty. He could hear shouts from the street below the dock where the old pirate ship was tied. The crew must all be out on the street spending their pay. They disappeared quickly when the ship was in port on payday.

He opened the door gently and stepped out into the bright sunlight. Balancing a heavy pack on his shoulders, Matey walked towards the ladder that led to the dock. He had decided to leave the Caribbean Queen. Ripply Waters, the second in command, had put Matey in charge of the crew. Matey was such a sweet and simple soul that the men had refused to obey him. Instead of listening, they teased him and got mad at him. He couldn't take it anymore and decided to leave the Caribbean Queen and find a job on another ship.

Just as he was about to reach the ladder, Matey heard his name being called.
"Matey! Matey, where are ye?" came the voice of Ripply Waters from below deck. Matey ducked behind some barrels. He couldn't let anyone see him leaving.

"Matey, where ye be?" Ripply called as he climbed the stairs to the deck. Unfortunately for Matey, Ripply was very tall and towered over the barrels. He could easily spot Matey's hiding place. "Aha, there you are!" he called, then asked, "Matey, why ya hidin'? And what are you doin' with that runnin' away bag over yer shoulder? You wasn't runnin' away, was ya?"

Matey just nodded his head and looked away; too embarrassed to look up.

"Well, why would you do that?" Ripply asked.

Matey leaned against the side of the boat and looked down at the dusty street below. "Well, sir, I just don't feel like anybody appreciates me."

Ripply Waters looked confused. "What are ye talkin' about? The men was just sayin' how much fun they have with ya."

"There weren't no fun in it for me! Face it, sir, the men hate me because I make them do their chores." Matey replied. "I don't have to stay here and be disrespected!"

"Suppose I promise to help you and look out for ya?" Ripply offered.

Matey swung his pack back onto his shoulders and pushed past Ripply towards the ladder. "I can look out for myself. I'm runnin' away! Don't try and stop me!"

"Now, you're actin' like Hagaaar," Ripply said calmly, rolling the end of her name from the back of his throat so that it sounded almost like a growl.

"Who?" Matey asked, half listening as he lowered his pack to the dock.

"Hagaaar, she be in the Bible. She were Abram and Sarah's servant."

"What did she do?" Matey asked.

"Well, it's kind of a complicated story." Ripply began. "Do you remember when God promised to make Abram the father of a great nation?"

"Aye, He promised him more offspring than all the dust of the earth," he replied.

"Aye indeed, well, Abram and Sarai grew very old and still had not had a baby. So, Sarah asked her servant Hagaaar to marry Abraham and have a baby for Sarai." Ripply continued. "And she obeyed! But when Hagaaar became pregnant, Hagaaar began to hate Sarai, and then Sarai began to treat Hagaaar very badly, so Hagaaar ran away."

This got Matey's attention. Hagar had run away, too? He flipped back onto the deck and sat down on a crate. "I know how she feels. So, what happened to her?" he asked.

Ripply pulled his Bible from his jacket pocket and turned to Genesis 16. "I'll show you. Here it is: 'The angel of the Lord found her in the desert and he asked her where she was going. "I'm running away from my mistress, Sarai," she answered."

Matey leaned forward. "Wow, an angel! What did the angel say?"

"He told her to go home to her Sarai. He said that Hagar would give birth to a boy named Ishmael. Then he promised her that God would give her more grandchildren than she could possibly count!" Ripply answered. "Hagaaar was so happy that God cared about her that she gave God a special name. She called Him 'the God who sees me.' Then, she went back to Abram and Sarai and had baby Ishmael. Everything was fine for a while, but then God changed Abram's and Sarah's name to Abraham and Sarah, and God gave them baby Isaac.

"Wait!" Matey said; stopping Ripply's story. "Sarah had a baby even though she was very old?"

"Aye, that's another miracle for she was ninety years old! We'll talk about that at another time." Ripply said. "Sarah saw Hagaaar's son making fun of Isaac, so she told Abraham to get rid of Hagaaar and her son. Well, of course Abraham was upset because Ishmael was his son, too. But God told him not to worry, that He would take care of Ishmael and Hagaaar. God promised to make Ishmael into a nation, too."

"Wow, there's that promise again!" Said Matey.

"Aye and Abraham trusted God's promise, so he gave Hagaaar and Ishmael food and water and sent them into the desert."

"What?" Matey jumped up from his seat on the crate. "He just left them out there to die?! How could they survive in the wilderness?"

"Well, Abraham did it because he trusted God," Ripply replied. "and, actually, for a moment Hagaaar didn't think they would survive! Then God heard Ishmael crying and the angel of the Lord called Hagaaar from heaven."

"Another angel? What did he say?" Matey asked.

"He said, 'What is the matter, Hagaaar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.' Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink."

Matey grinned a happy grin. "So, God saved Ishmael and Hagaaar again!"

"Aye, of course He did!" Ripply said. "God promised Abraham that he would always take care of them."

"Why do you think God kept rescuing Ishmael and Hagaaar?" Matey asked.

"Because they belonged to Abraham and God had promised to bless all of Abraham's family!" Ripply answered.

"God was watchin' out for her all along. He really is the God who sees!" Matey said, smiling at the thought.

"Aye," Ripply agreed. "God is always lookin' out fer His children."

Matey sat down on the crate and thought quietly for a minute. He really didn't want to leave. "Sir?" he said hesitantly. "Permission to stay aboard?" he asked, afraid of what the Ripply might say after his threat to leave.

Ripply's face broke into a big grin and he gave Matey a pat on the back. "Permission granted!" he bellowed. "Just remember, let this here be a lesson to you! Don't go lookin' for smoother waters. God can bless you wherever you are! He's the God who sees us!"

"I'll be doin' that, sir!" Matey agreed. Then he raced down the ladder to pick up his pack. He returned to his cabin and as he unpacked, he thanked the God who sees.