

Broken Heart Arising

By Walter Arthur McCray

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Hagar the Egyptian sat and wept in the hot dry heat of the desert.

“My pain is just too much,” sobbed Hagar. “I refuse to watch my son die. Not in my presence, before my anguishing eyes. My heart hurts. I quit.”

Life had turned bitter for the single mother.

At the outset Hagar felt the new family from Canaan was her breakthrough. Her ‘father’ Abram the Hebrew was from the city of Ur in Mesopotamia. The sensitive old man took good care of his extended household. Though childless, his wife Sarai was loyal and determined.

Hagar jumped at the chance to become Sarai’s personal helper, and return with the couple from Egypt to Canaan—the northern tip of Africa. Excitement gripped her tender heart. A new chance in life had come to visit new places, meet new people. Opportunity, maturity, and security awaited her. Yet, never once did she anticipate the devastating trouble she would face.

“If only I knew then what I know now,” Hagar bitterly sobbed, “I would never have left my family and Egyptian homeland. Trust Abram? Never! Work for that no-good old Sarai? I should have told her where to go!”

Hagar worked hard and well as Sarai’s new personal helper. All was beautiful, until she slept with Abram and got pregnant.

“It wasn’t my fault. I only did what Sarai told me,” Hagar groaned. “Abram, my boss, and I—we all agreed to the plan. My newborn would become their legal heir. But the surrogate pregnancy backfired when Sarai got jealous, and angry. She treated me so badly I ran away to the desert. She knew I couldn’t give birth and survive by myself. Where could I turn for help?”

In the wilderness, God spoke to mistreated and heartbroken Hagar.

“It’s better at this time for you to return. Deal with Sarai as best you can. I’ll bless you, and your son will succeed. Name him Ishmael.”

So Hagar swallowed her pride and prepared for the worse. She went back home, and eventually gave birth to Abram’s son.

Thirteen terrible years passed. Abram and barren Sarai grew older, and stretched their hopes by changing their names to Abraham and Sarah. Yet, Sarah’s mistrust toward Hagar and Ishmael burned on.

Then, unbelievably, when Abraham was 99, Sarah became pregnant—at age 89!

A woman’s troubling intuition—Sarah’s baby Isaac means Hagar’s headache! In a few years, the dam broke. The conflict boiled over at Isaac’s party when Ishmael mocked the young boy. Sarah’s rage fumed and Hagar felt *déjà vu*.

This time, cruel Sarah forced Abraham to (ex)terminate Hagar—to abandon his baby’s mama and son to the barren desert. When their bread and water ran out, so did Hagar’s hope. Placing weak and worn Ishmael under some shrubs, she turned her back on the child and walked away to avoid witnessing his agonizing death.

Hagar’s heart now cries out with unbearable pain. Life’s afflictions batter her soul. She is forsaken, alone, destitute, frightened, beat down, hopeless and broken.

Hagar's heart is breaking. Her life is dying—so she thought.

Once again, God appeared to assure Hagar at her lowest. Heaven heard the cries of Ishmael, and grief of a distraught mother.

God spoke: "Arise from your brokenness, Hagar. Retrieve Ishmael from beneath the shrubs. He will not die, but prosper into a great nation. Embrace the child of divine destiny; hold him in your hands."

Drawing courage from God's word, Hagar arose from brokenness and walked toward her wailing son.

As she walked, God made her see.

There in the distance was a watering well. Hagar filled her skin-bottle with the life-sustaining water. Quickly she returned to nurture the parched thirst of her lingering child. He revived.

God stayed with the child. He became a great hunter and mature man. In time, his mother found him a wife from Egypt, her native land. Ishmael thrived.

Hagar survived. The abandoned single mother overcame life's injustice, beat down, and crises. By trusting the Lord, she arose from a broken heart and shattered life.

In Jesus, we too can arise.