

August 21, 2016

Who is Your God?

"The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert...and he said, 'Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?...She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her, 'You are the God who sees me...'" Genesis 16:1-16

Quite often Scripture records events where one person would meet God in such a way as to be completely changed by their experience. In those situations the one who meets God describes our Father in terms that become one of God's names. One of those events is recorded in Genesis 32 and 33.

In this passage Jacob is heading back toward Canaan after spending more than twenty years with his uncle. As the Patriarch nears Canaan he is attacked at night and wrestles with his adversary for a good part of the night. Finally discovering that he is wrestling with God's angel he demands a blessing. The angel blesses him, ***"Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."*** (Genesis 32:28) In this passage God is called El Elohe Israel of the "God of Israel".

In a similar way in an earlier event God is given the name El Elyon or God Most High. After defeating five kings who had abducted his nephew Abram meets Melchizedek who is called in the passage, ***"...priest of the God most high."*** Melchizedek blesses Abram in the name of ***"God most high"*** for his great victory.

One of the qualities of God and of his Son is that they never change. Unlike you and I, God is consistent across time so that the God who was worshiped by Noah and Abram is the same as the God we serve in every way. El Olam is the God who never changes; who is the same yesterday, today and forever and in the Hebrew letter Jesus is described in the same terms. ***"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever."*** (Hebrews 13:8) So, Jesus would be our El Olam.

Among the most beautiful names for God is, I think, El Roi or the God who sees. In Genesis 16 we come across a custom that in our times would be very peculiar indeed. Sarai, the Patriarch Abram's beloved wife, has been unable to bear him any children. So, according to the accepted custom of the day, Sarai gives her handmaiden Hagar to Abram so that he can father a heir through her.

Hagar becomes pregnant and then begins to treat her mistress badly so Sarai, blaming Abram for the whole mess, makes him send her away. Hagar wanders out into the desert and before long is near death. An Angel finds her there and saves her. Because of her rescue she calls God, El Roi or the God who sees me.

In each of these cases the names that are used for God show us how he takes care of us and provides for us. He sees and understands our struggles and through all of those tough times he is our El Elohe, the God of our family.

God is also the source of all of the blessings that come our way. Just as Abram acknowledged that his great victory over his enemies was God's doing so we need to understand and acknowledge that the God most high, El Elyon, is supplying our needs.

Unlike us God is never fickle. He does not change his mind and is constant and consistent in every way. He is El Olam, the God who never changes and Jesus, his Son, is the same. It is their consistency that makes it possible for us to understand and follow them over time. God demanded that the first believers love others and he is still demanding the same thing today.

And our God, as Hagar learned, is the God who sees. There is never a time when our God and Father is not aware of what is going on in our lives, for good or evil. When we are struggling he knows, when we are weak he knows and when we are needing his help and guidance he knows. Jesus tells us that the God of heaven even knows the number of hairs on our heads. So, God sees us, and understands. He is at work to address our needs even when we are lost and wandering.

