

EL ROI
WHAT'S YOUR NAME SERIES - Part 3
Ben Rudolph

Good morning Life Fellowship. It is so good to see you here this morning. My name is Ben and I am one of the teaching pastors here at Life. Please turn in your Bibles to Genesis Chapter 16 as that is where we are going to be this morning. As Jason mentioned we are in the 'Living in Community' month, and I really want to encourage you to take advantage of all these great opportunities to connect. This is a month I hope that you are planning to get to meet people and to get re-connected with some of the things that are going on here at Life. We have our ladies Bible studies that are starting up this week and I hope you will think about being a part of that as well as the men's coffee group. If you are a man or even a young man, I will be teaching that this Saturday and I would love to see you come out to our men's coffee group.

Before I get into the sermon this morning let's just take some time to pray. The heaviness of what we just sang, the reality of encountering God is something I think maybe we take lightly or casually. So I just want us to focus our hearts and our minds on the God that we are going to be talking about this morning. So let's pray.

Father, we are going to do an inadequate job this morning of using human words and expressions to declare all that you are. I pray right now that the fullness of your Spirit and the fullness of your Word would be active in our hearts and in our minds today. You are worthy of our praise and you are worthy of our time and you are worthy of this moment by which we can take a look at you and see you for who you really are. So God I pray that we would not just encounter you but that we would draw near to you in this moment today. We pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.

When I was in college I started dating my wife, Liz. She was from the West Coast, Tucson, Arizona in particular. She grew up in the desert and in a completely different environment from me as I grew up in Scranton, Pennsylvania. So when we met in college and dated for a while, my parents were like, 'Hey, you should probably go meet her family as that is important.' And if you are married you know that you don't just marry a spouse but you also marry a family. We marry into families, so during spring break of that year I flew out with Liz to her home in Arizona and I spent a week there getting to know her family. Liz has an older brother, a twin brother and a younger sister, so it was a great time for me to get to know them.

And I remember when we had like maybe a day or two left in our time in Arizona that I said the next time I came out I wanted to go see the Grand Canyon. This was like eleven thirty at night when I said that while we were all hanging out in Liz's parents' house. And Liz's brother, Billy, said, 'Dude, let's just go.' And I was like, 'Really, now?' And so some others were like, 'Yeah, let's go.' So being young and stupid we stopped at a grocery store, bought a few snacks and we took off at midnight to go to the Grand Canyon from Tucson, Arizona which was a four and a half hour drive.

So we drove through the night, and it is like driving through the back side of the moon when you are driving through some of these parts of Arizona. Everyone was like,

EL ROI
WHAT'S YOUR NAME SERIES - Part 3
Ben Rudolph

'It is so beautiful,' and I was thinking, *'I need green.'* I can take about a week of the desert beauty and then I need something that is real and green. About an hour outside of the Grand Canyon I was trying to keep my brother-in-law awake. He was driving a 1992 Pontiac Grand Am, and I asked him, *'How do we get into the Grand Canyon?'* And he was like, *'I think you have to pay at the gate.'* Now I didn't have any money and he said he didn't have any money either. *(Laughter.)* So we said a prayer and kept driving and about four-thirty we got to the gate. And guess what, no one was there.

So if you ever want to go for free to a National Park, I don't believe they man the booth between four and five a.m. because we just drove on in. Now I know they have done some remodeling since then so it may be different now. But we drove into what I think was the most popular trail which I think is called 'Angel's Trail' or something. Now it was pitch black with stars everywhere and we just kind of zonked out for an hour or so. We woke up to the sunrise over the Grand Canyon and it was just amazing. It was so beautiful, but it was also cold. I remember we got our snacks and our back packs and we started hiking down the Grand Canyon.

If you have been to the Grand Canyon you know it is just hard to express the beauty of some it with words. You can even take pictures and show them to people and they are like, *'Yeah.'* But you know it was just so amazing. And I just remember hiking down that trail with Liz and her brother and it just felt like every fifty steps or so I would just stop and look around at the beauty of everything. I just wanted to take pictures from every angle because there would be another dimension or a different light and you just felt like you were getting a new perspective every few feet. We hiked for several hours and it was just one of those amazing moments in my life.

And I feel like as we approach this series of 'The Names of God' that we are doing that as well. You know we get to the reality of God and it is hard to express in words the magnitude, the transcendence, the beauty, the truth, the magnificence, and the worthiness of God Almighty. We talked about Yahweh and Elohim and we looked at El Shaddai last week and now I feel like we are taking a few more steps down into the pathway of the Grand Canyon and we are just stopping to look at the view.

So this morning we are going to look at El Roi, the God who sees. And we are going to look at Genesis Chapter 16. This story is a very unique story, and sometimes when we read the Bible we wonder why this story is in here. And that is a good question to ask. Genesis Chapter 16 is between Genesis Chapter 15 and Chapter 17, and now you are thinking, *'Wow, rocket science. That is a brilliant biblical insight.'* But what is happening in Genesis Chapter 15 and Chapter 17 is what makes Genesis Chapter 16 so interesting, because in Genesis Chapter 15 we have Abram who God has called in Genesis Chapter 12. And we have to look at the big narrative of Scripture which is that God through all of human history, from the very beginning to even now, is looking for people to come to Him so that He can be their God and so that He can have a relationship with them.

EL ROI
WHAT'S YOUR NAME SERIES - Part 3
Ben Rudolph

So God called out a man by the name of Abram who lived in the area of Ur of the Chaldeans around nineteenth century BC. And God told Abram He wanted to bless all nations through him. He told him to leave his father's house and He was going to make him into a nation. So Abram leaves his father's home with his servants and his wife, Sarai. And Abram doesn't know how God is going to make him into a great nation when he doesn't have any children. Abram was seventy-five years old when God made him this promise. And in Genesis Chapter 15 God tells Abram for the first time that He is not going to make Abram a great nation through his servants but through his own heir, the legacy of a child born to Abram himself. And God wants Abram to believe that he is going to have offspring.

And it says that Abram believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness. So we have this covenant ceremony between God and Abram in Genesis Chapter 15. And then in Genesis Chapter 17 you have God again giving Abram the sign of the covenant which is circumcision, and he again tells him He is going to bless him through his wife Sarai. And Abram is eighty-six years old when this promise is made.

But in Genesis Chapter 16 we have what we call a 'speed bump.' It would be so great if our Christian life just looked like this general ascendancy like, *'I'm just following God. Every day I just get closer and closer to Him. We just love each other more day by day. I am more obedient day by day. It is just this wonderful experience I have with God.'* And that's not true. What happens is we follow God, we run, we stumble, we fall, we run back, we run forward, we walk, and so on. I mean the walk with God is up and down at times.

And it was that same way with Abram and Sarai. They have these great incredible moments of faith with God and then there are moments of incredible tragedy when they take matters into their own hands. And in Genesis Chapter 16 there is one of those moments. There are four characters in this story. There is Sarai, there is Abram, there is Hagar and then there is God. Sarai is Abram's wife and she cannot have children. Hagar is Sarai's handmaid or her servant. And what we are going to read here is the story of when people decide to take matters into their own hands. So let's read in Genesis Chapter 16 beginning in verse 1.

"Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her. "And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife.

And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to you embrace, and when she saw

EL ROI
WHAT'S YOUR NAME SERIES - Part 3
Ben Rudolph

she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!” But Abram said to Sarai, “Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please.” Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her.”

This is Jerry Springer stuff, people. (*Laughter.*) We have these moments with God where He tells Abram He is going to make him a great nation. And then Abram tells Sarai they are going to have children. Sarai is probably around seventy-five at this point and Abram is about eighty-five so they are beginning to think it is not going to happen.

How many times do we hear from God or we get direction from God when the Spirit of God leads us to do something and we are like, ‘*It has been two weeks, God, I am not going to be waiting around all day.*’ And here God had promised Abram these things. Now before we hammer on Abram and Sarai for what they did with Hagar, I think we have to put ourselves in their shoes. They had heard from God that Abram was going to have biological children, a legacy from Him, and that He was going to make Abram into a great nation. So okay, God, Abram had this promise and this was how He was going to do it.

But then you also have the culture, and the culture in those days was different. There were actually laws that were found etched in tablets of ancient Mesopotamia culture. And many of the laws in those days said that if you marry a wife and she does not produce for you a child within two years, it is legal for the wife to marry her handmaid to her husband so that he can have children. And that was because having children in those days, having an heir, was probably the highest priority for every family. They wanted their family lineage and legacy to continue to propagate and that was the most important thing. It wasn’t how big of a house you had or how much money you had; it was family, it was children, it was legacy. That was the most important thing in this culture. So you have Abram and Sarai and they knew that God told them what was going to happen and because the cultural laws allowed this to happen, Sarai had this idea. ‘*Let’s help God along.*’

And whenever we try to help God along, bad things happen, because God’s timing is perfect. Now listen, I am impatient. Last week I was on a trip with my dad and my brothers for my dad’s seventieth birthday. I was trying to get from point A to point B and traffic was bad. And I am the type of person if I have pulled up Google maps and there is a red line in front of me I will go around that red line. I am not submitting to that red line because I don’t like red lines, and I don’t like waiting in traffic. I think it is a waste of my time so when that red line is there I pull up my phone screen and decide if we get off this exit and we take this road and then this other road and we go up to this road we can beat the red line.

And there have been times when I have done that and it has worked out for me. And then there have been other times when I wish I had stayed on the red line. And here is what I know; when God gives us a red line we need to stay on the road because He is

EL ROI
WHAT'S YOUR NAME SERIES - Part 3
Ben Rudolph

doing something, He is working something in us. And what Sarai was doing was saying, *'Hey, I have an idea to help God along. Let's make this happen.'* So she offers her handmaid, Hagar, to Abram. Where did Sarai get Hagar? She got Hagar when she was in Egypt. And we learn this from Genesis when Abram and Sarai go down to Egypt and Abram tells Sarai not to tell anyone that he is her husband. Sarai was beautiful and Abram was afraid someone would kill him in order to marry Sarai so he had her tell everyone that he was her brother.

While they are in Egypt Pharaoh looks at Sarai and decides he wants her for part of his household. Thankfully nothing physically takes place, but then diseases and plagues start happening to Pharaoh's household and he finds out that Sarai is really married to Abram. Pharaoh gives Sarai back to Abram, and Hagar probably was given to Sarai while she was in Pharaoh's household.

Now Sarai has this great idea to have Abram marry Hagar. And this is a lack of faith and trust in God's plan. Sarai thinks she can move the hand of God along and we also see Abram being so passive in this story. Did you notice that? Sarai tells him that she has a great idea and he needs to marry her handmaid so that they can have her child. Now what should Abram have done? He should have been like, *'Honey, that is a bad idea. Or at least let me talk to God first.'* Instead he is like, *'Okay honey, whatever makes you happy.'* And it was a bad thing to do.

So not only is Abram passive in this plan, but he marries Hagar, he impregnates her, and then Hagar feels empowered by this and that she is no longer a handmaid. She thinks she has privilege now because she is going to have Abram's child. She knows they badly wanted a child, so she looks now with contempt on Sarai. There is now a battle going on because God only intended for one man and one woman to ever be in a relationship with one another. This was Sister Wives before Sister Wives was a show. And we know how that turned out.

All of a sudden there is jealousy going on. And Sarai goes to Abram and says, *'What did you do? God is going to judge you for what you did.'* And Abram could have said, *'This was your idea, honey.'* But he didn't. He knew better than to tick off his wife any more so he just said, *'Do to her whatever you want.'* And Sarai started treating Hagar horribly, oppressing her harshly.

Now let's take a look at Hagar. We had Abram and Sarai doing things wrong and now Hagar isn't any better because the moment she has a small window to have the right attitude she starts treating her mistress with contempt. Then after being treated harshly by Sarai she runs away, she flees from them. And I think we need to spend some time thinking about where Hagar was in her own journey of life. She is someone who has been used and abused. She is mentioned over and over again as a servant. Her role was to serve. She was not looked upon as someone with value, except for what she could do for them. She was someone who was neglected.

EL ROI
WHAT'S YOUR NAME SERIES - Part 3
Ben Rudolph

The Jewish Midrash is filled with lots of theories and ideas of things outside of things biblical but are tradition says that Hagar was most likely the daughter of one of Pharaoh's concubines. And when Sarai was brought into Pharaoh's household, she was given a handmaid. So Hagar was a female that had a high standing in Pharaoh's household to being given over to some kind of traveling family. She went from living in a palace to now living in a tent so it would have been a step down.

Then one day Sarai knocks on her tent door and tells her she has a plan for her life. She is to marry her husband and he is going to impregnate her. Now Hagar has no choice in this. Hagar is someone whose choices have been stripped from her. She is not someone with dreams, plans and ideas of what she wanted to do. She is someone who has always been given over. She was given over to Sarai, and now she is given over to Abram. She is used and she is abused. She has been neglected and she feels alone, like no one cares for her. And in that moment she flees. Can you imagine what it must have taken for a woman, a single pregnant woman, in the ancient Middle East to leave security and to go into the desert where she might face trade slavers or wild animals in the wilderness? Wherever Hagar was emotionally, she felt the choice to die was better than staying in that household. That was how bad the harsh treatment was for Hagar.

Sometimes I think when we look at our lives we find ourselves in places where we feel a lot like Hagar. We feel used and we feel abused. We feel like people have made choices for us, or they have made choices in their lives that have affected us in ways that we wish they had not. Whatever it is we can feel alone and we can feel like no one cares. And so we run thinking the only one that we can really trust is ourselves.

So we have this story of all these things that have gone wrong and Hagar flees from Sarai. Now look at verses 7 through 16. ***"The angel of the Lord found her."*** I want to stop here for a minute. The angel of the Lord found her, and the word 'found' is a word that means 'you are intently looking for something that was lost.' Hagar, for the first time in her life has someone looking for her. ***"The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?"***

She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." Now time out; does this sound like a great plan from God? I don't know about this; it sound fishy to me. But let's keep reading. ***"The angel of the Lord also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so they cannot be numbered for multitude." And the angel of the Lord said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has listened to your affliction. He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen."***

EL ROI
WHAT'S YOUR NAME SERIES - Part 3
Ben Rudolph

So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, “You are a God of seeing, for she said, “Truly here I have seen Him who looks after me.” Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered. And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ismael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ismael to Abram.”

We have this moment where everyone is making the wrong choices. Everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes. There is chaos, there is brokenness, there is pain, there is disruption, and many times this is the moment by which God enters into our lives, into our brokenness, into our pain, into our disappointment. As Hagar is running away it says the **“Lord found her.”** The author is saying here that this woman who feels so used and so abused and so passed over many times is now someone who is special in the sight of God. He found her. No one else was looking for her, but God was, and He found her in the middle of the desert.

We know that basically in the geography here that is expressed in this passage that Hagar was making a beeline for Egypt. She was trying to get back to her home. The text is letting us know that God is the one who is caring for her. He is the one who is looking after her. He is the one that is saying that if no one else cares about Hagar, He does. If everyone else is using her and abusing her, He won't. She can trust Him.

Not only does it say that the Lord found her, He also approaches her. He calls her by name and He asks this fascinating powerful question that I think all of us should also answer. **“Where have you come from and where are you going?” “Where have you come from and where are you going?”** Now God is not interested in Hagar's geography. He is not wondering how her GPS is working. He is not interested in her location. What He is interested in is her story. He wants Hagar to tell Him where she comes from and what her pain is. He wants her to tell Him her experiences of life, the things that have shaped her in life, the wounds she has, the disappointments she has had, He wants to know her. He wants to know her story. **“Where have you come from and where are you going?”**

God was interested in Hagar. He was interested in her story. He was interested in what she had been through. He was interested in the feelings that she was feeling and the thoughts that she had. He wanted Hagar to know that He was there for her, that He saw her and He wanted her. Whenever God asks people in the Bible questions, He is not asking questions because He doesn't know the answers. For example when Adam and Eve sinned and they ate of the fruit of the tree and then they were hiding in the Garden of Eden, when God shows up He asked them the question, **“Where are you?”** Now He knew where they were. He is trying to get them to understand what they have done and why they are no longer close to Him.

When Cain kills his brother Abel God shows up to Cain and says, **“Where is your brother?”** God knows where Cain's brother is, but He wants Cain to understand what he

EL ROI
WHAT'S YOUR NAME SERIES - Part 3
Ben Rudolph

has done and why he did what he did. When Elijah runs after the confrontation with the prophets of Baal in I Kings, he runs to Mount Horeb and he tells God that he wants to die. And the first thing that God says to him is, ***“Why are you here?”***

See when God asks us questions He is not lacking information or the answers. What He is doing is He trying to get us to open up our hearts to Him. He is trying to get us to understand the motivation of what is going on. He is trying to get us to look inwardly, and more importantly He wants to know if we can rely on Him, if we can trust Him, if we can be honest with Him.

That is what God is doing here with Hagar. He is entering into her life and letting her know that He cares about her story, He cares about where she has been, and He cares about where she is going. He is letting her know that He cares for her. Then He says this crazy statement, ***“Return to your mistress and submit to her.”*** Now if you are Hagar, what would you say? *‘You don’t know what I have been through, God. You don’t understand how horrible and wicked those people are. I have spent the last ten years with them being misused, abused, looked over, handed over, and I am done.’*

Now we are going to put pause on this because when we are first reading this we are like, *‘God, really? Why would you tell her that?’* But there was a reason why God asked her to go back and we will answer that in a little bit. Because the next thing I want you to see is what He says to her. God gives Hagar a promise. He says, ***“I will surely multiply your offspring so they cannot be numbered for multitude.”*** This is the same promise in a different way that He gave to Abram. God tells Hagar: ***“Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has listened to your affliction.”*** God has seen her, He has heard her, He knows what she was going through and He was going to bless her with a son.

Now Ismael wasn’t going to be a son that is going to be very popular, but God was saying to Hagar that He was going to take care of her. She could trust Him. The main idea I want us to take away from the idea of God being El Roi is that a God of seeing means that you can trust God to take care of you. And El Roi means that you can trust God to take care of you.

Verse 13 says: ***“So she called the name of the Lord (El Roi) who spoke to her, “You are a God of seeing, for she said, “Truly here I have seen Him who looks after me.”*** Hagar has someone who is going to look after her now. No one has looked after her before, no one has cared about her before, no one has listened to her before, no one has wanted her before, no one had pursued her before, no one had validated her before, no one had looked at her and said, *‘What do you want, Hagar? What do you like, Hagar?’* But now someone for the first time in her life, the God of the universe, found her in the middle of the desert, looked upon her and said, *‘I want you. I care for you. I have a future for you. I am giving you hope, Hagar. I am giving you a blessing. You*

EL ROI
WHAT'S YOUR NAME SERIES - Part 3
Ben Rudolph

don't have to depend on people now because you can depend on me. That is what God was saying and that is what God was doing for her.

So Hagar names God El Roi, and this is what is so fascinating, this is what is so amazing about this passage. In the Bible there are very few times when a human being names God, it is only found on rare occasions. Many times it is God who names Himself and says this is who He is when He reveals Himself to people. But what we have here in this passage is the first time a human being names God, and that is significant. Do you know why that is? It is because the first person that names God is a female Egyptian slave. I am going to say that again. The first person that names God is a female Egyptian slave.

Let me tell you something; there is a reason why I believe that man could not have written this book. This is a book that was divinely inspired by God. I know that Moses is the author of the first five books of the Bible - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. It was written to an audience that had been slaves and had come out of slavery from Egypt, so the last person they would have given space to in their narrative in a patriarchal culture was a female Egyptian slave.

Do you get that? What we have here is God saying, *'No, I am a God that is bigger than any ethnicity. I am a God that is bigger than any gender. I am a God that is bigger than any socio-economic level or status of any human level that people want to create. I am the God of every man, woman and child. And I am letting you know that a female Egyptian slave can name me.'* Wow, what a powerful picture of the grace and the goodness of God.

And what God is inviting us to do this morning is to ask ourselves if we trust Him to take care of us. God told Hagar she didn't have to worry because He was going to take care of her. He was going to give her hope for a future and He was going to bless her and her descendants. He tells her to go back to Sarai. And I think we see here there is going to be a difference in how they treat her. We never see again in Scripture that they harshly treat Hagar. And one of the things that God is most interested in happening in our lives is reconciliation and redemption. He is interested in our reconciliation and redemption to Him and He is interested in our reconciliation and redemption to our fellow man.

What God was saying to Hagar was that He knew her life had not worked out right but He was going to give Abram and Sarai another chance as well. And He wanted Hagar to trust Him even though she may not have felt like she wanted to go back. He wanted to give her the opportunity to go back so that He could redeem this moment, He would reconcile this moment.

I think there are some of us in this room that whether it is with our relationships, or with people that we know have wronged us, hurt us, used us or abused us, the first thing we want to do is cut them off. We are done with them treating us the way that they

EL ROI
WHAT'S YOUR NAME SERIES - Part 3
Ben Rudolph

have. And I want to be careful when I say this; I am not asking any of us to go into a very abusive relationship or to stay in an abusive relationship. But I am saying that if God is working in our lives many times we don't give Him the opportunity to work a work of redemption and reconciliation in our lives and in the lives of the people who have wronged us, and we just want to move on. Move on from that work place, move on from that relationship, and move on from that marriage because we have had enough of the abuse, enough of no one caring for us.

Hagar knew that when she walked back, regardless of how Abram and Sarai treated her, God was going to take care of her. And you and I have the same opportunity to trust in a God as He invites us to walk back into places that are hard for us, that are challenging for us. But we need to trust that He will take care of us.

There are three questions I want us to think about, because if God truly is El Roi these are three questions that I pondered on, and I want you to ponder on them as well. The first question is this – how does God see me today? Maybe you are thinking, '*Ben, this was a great story of Hagar. But how does God see me?*' And I want us to look at the idea of covenant here because the only reason why God gives Hagar a blessing, a promise and a hope for her descendants is because she has made a covenant with Abram. Abram married her, and I am not saying that this is what God had wanted, but there was still a covenant made between them. God had made a covenant promise to Abram, and through that Hagar also had a covenant with God.

And just like Hagar you and I receive the covenant blessings, the covenant promises, and the covenant relationship through a greater Abraham, through Jesus Christ. Through the very Son of God we receive the full blessings, the full relationship, and the full covenant benefits through Him.

When one of my sons was younger he played on a travel soccer team a lot. I was glad to support that, and we enjoyed all those weekends out on the soccer fields, and the hours upon hours, upon hours were wonderful. And I loved watching my son play soccer and I loved watching their team, but the reason why I was interested in that team was because my son was on it. If my son had not been on the team I would not have been interested, but I was interested because my son was on that team. I care about the team and I didn't want anyone to get hurt, but I was there because of my son.

And when we are on God's team it is because of the Son, when we by faith accept Him because of what He did for us by dying on the cross, and sealing us to enter into a covenant relationship with Him. He forgave us of our sins and when we entered into that relationship the fullness of how God sees us is through the lens of Jesus Christ. Just like God saw Hagar through the lens of the covenant of Abram, God the Father now sees us through the covenant commitment we have made through Jesus Christ.

EL ROI
WHAT'S YOUR NAME SERIES - Part 3
Ben Rudolph

That means when God sees us He does not see our worst days. He doesn't see the worst parts of us, the most shameful parts we want to keep hidden and away from the light. He sees it all but He sees it bought with the precious blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. He sees a new creation, He sees a holy priesthood, and He sees all these things when He sees His own Son. And many times when we approach God, the God who sees us, we worry about what He sees. But when you are under the blood of Jesus, God sees the fullness of Christ in us.

Maybe you know that you have never accepted Jesus and you know that you don't have that covenant relationship with Him. How does God see you? God still sees you but He sees you as someone who is lost, someone He has compassion on, someone like a sheep without a shepherd like He talks about in Matthew Chapter 9. If you want to know how God sees you if you are outside of a relationship with Him, read Luke Chapter 15 where Jesus gives three parables about a lost coin, a lost sheep and a lost son. If you want to know how God sees you, He sees you in that way and He is longing for you to come to Him.

God sees every one of us. He sees every single one of our stories. He sees our past, He sees our failures, He sees the things that we want to present and the things that we don't want to present. He sees all of us, but when we are in the covenant relationship with Jesus we are in the fullness of God love.

The second question is this – how do you see God? God being El Roi, what does that mean to you today? Can you trust God to take care of you? Can you trust God with your path? Can you trust God with your future? Can you trust God with your pain? Can you trust God with the using and the abusing that you have been through? Can you trust God with your story? We need to ask ourselves how we see God. Are we willing to open up our heart and life and trust Him to take care of us and to lead us to where He wants us to go?

Listen, many of us want God to care for us, we want Him to come into our lives, but when God invaded Hagar's life He wasn't just saying He was there, He was saying that He wanted her to let Him direct her, to let Him take care of her. And we may want someone to take care of us, but we don't know if we can trust God enough to let Him take care of us. Maybe you are like that this morning. You are here, you are feeling these things of pain, neglect, or disappointment in life and you just don't know if you can trust God with more of your story. But let me tell you there is no one you can trust more than God, there is no one that loves you like He does, no one who wants to give you a future and a hope like He does. The opportunity that we have this morning is to see God as someone we can trust to take care of us.

The third question is this – how do we see others? There is another layer to this story that I want us to see because I believe it is important for us to see other people. None of us like it when we are ignored. When we feel ignored, or looked over, there is

EL ROI
WHAT'S YOUR NAME SERIES - Part 3
Ben Rudolph

just something about it that just brings out a lot of emotions in us, like anger, frustration, pain or disappointment. I remember a number of years ago before the whole digital boarding passes were on our phones, that I went to the airport to go on a flight and I got a message that said I had to pick up my boarding pass at the gate. And I hated dealing with these things but I went through security and I got to the counter, and the lady there was just busily typing away while I stood there and waited. I had the *'I need help,'* look on as people carried on their conversations around us, but she just kept typing away. *'Hello, do I have to do something to get your attention. I am a Christian and I don't want to use bad words. I know you know that I am standing here but you are not helping me. Don't you see me?'*

Listen, we have all been there. We have all been to the Customer Service counter, we have all be to the school, and we have all been places wondering if anyone sees us. There is a layer to this story that I want us to look at. I thank God that He put some special teachers in my life, and I learned this from Rabbi Foreman who brings out a hyper layer of this story. Because this story of Hagar is connected to the exodus story.

Remember Hagar is from Egypt and that is where the children of Israel left from. Now I want you to see the parallels between the story of Hagar and the story of the Exodus. They all were strangers and they all were oppressed. In Genesis Chapter 15 and verse 13 we read where God made a covenant with Abram by passing through divided animals. And God tells Abram something very disturbing. He said that Abram's offspring would be strangers in a foreign land and that they would be oppressed for four hundred years. That was God's promise to Abram in Genesis Chapter 15. Then in Genesis Chapter 16 we meet a woman named Hagar, *hagar-midrash* in the Egyptian language is the word that means 'stranger.' Hagar's name is stranger, and she is treated harshly. That same word in Genesis Chapter 16 and verse 6 is the same verb in Genesis Chapter 15 and verse 13 saying that Abram's offspring would be strangers and they would be treated harshly. So we see the pattern and the parallels beginning to form.

Not only that but in Genesis Chapter 21 and verse 14 there is another story about Hagar when her son Ismael is thirteen years old and he begins to taunt little Isaac. And finally it was enough that Sarai tells Abram that he has to get rid of this woman and her son. God tells Abram to go ahead and do this because again God is going to take care of Hagar and her son Abram sends Hagar out into the wilderness so both Hagar and the children of Israel left servitude and entered into a wilderness.

And they both leave with bread on their shoulders and this is weird. I was going through the book of Exodus recently and there was this one line in there in Exodus Chapter 12 where it says the children of Israel are leaving Egypt with their bread on their shoulders. Sometimes when we see things in Scripture that are just a little odd we always need to ask ourselves why it is there. And then all of a sudden as I am reading about Hagar in Genesis Chapter 21 and verse 14 I read where Hagar left with bread on her shoulders.

EL ROI
WHAT'S YOUR NAME SERIES - Part 3
Ben Rudolph

Next both wandered in the wilderness and had a water crisis. After Hagar went in the wilderness it said she wandered around, and in Exodus Chapter 14 and verse 3 it says that Pharaoh looked at the children of Israel because God had them moving around in a very odd way, and he said they have strayed, which is the same Hebrew word that meant they were wandering around in the wilderness. Both had a water crisis and thought they were dying of thirst. What does God do? They both experience a miraculous relief from thirst. He rescues them.

Another parallel is that God commanded both to fear not. When the children of Israel are at the Red Sea with Pharaoh's army coming after them the first thing God says to them is '*Fear not.*' When Hagar puts her son Ismael underneath a bush and walks away weeping because she thinks her son is about to die, the first thing that God says to her is "*Fear not.*"

These parallels are in here for a reason because the original audience of these stories were people who had been former slaves. And I think it is wonderful that God looks at our sins, He looks at our stories, He wants to know our past and He wants to give us a future. He enters in and He wants to take care of us, but we have to be careful not to let our pain, our abuse, or the things that people have done to us define us, that we stay in the state of being a victim. We are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus.

There are two things I think He is saying. Number one – you don't have to be known by this in your life. And the second thing God tells the children of Israel that are coming out of slavery is '*Don't you dare think that you are not capable of doing the same thing, because your forefather, Abraham, did the very same thing that you experience to an Egyptian. So you have a role, you have a responsibility as my people that bear my name to see others around you. You will see the affliction of others. You will see the use and abuse of others. You will see the neglect of others. You will see people who are hurting around you, and you who have been seen will be able to see people with fresh eyes. You will be able to see people that need a word from me. You can talk to them and tell them you can help them and encourage them.*'

I had this experience a couple of weeks ago when I was doing my morning walk where I talk with God every morning. I walked by this guy whose car was broken down and he is sitting there on the side of the road. I made light conversation with as I walked by, and on the way back I asked him if he needed any help. And he told me his sister was coming to pick him up. And I have learned over the years that one of the best ways you can connect with people is to ask to pray for them. So I asked him if I could pray for him right now and he was like, '*Yeah, I would love for you to pray for me right now.*' So we just sat down and talked and I prayed for him. And he started opening up and I told him that we should get together, and he agreed.

I was leaving that morning for vacation and when I got back I was like a good Christian and I forgot to call him. But he called me. He asked me if we were going to

EL ROI
WHAT'S YOUR NAME SERIES - Part 3
Ben Rudolph

get together and I said, *'Oh yes, we are.'* And we had breakfast last week and he shared his story and I shared my story as well as the gospel with him. He is a guy going through some hard things in life and I said to him, *'I don't think God had us meet by accident. I think God wants to have a relationship with you and He wants to be close to you.'* And he had tears streaming down his face and he said, *'I think He does too.'*

We talked for over an hour and we are going to get together again this week. And these are the moments I think we can miss with God because we in our own lives are like the lady busily typing on her computer as I stood there waiting at the counter. We are on our phones, we are on our computers, we are watching our televisions, we are living our own lives doing our own things and we don't see everyone else around us. It may be our children, it may be our neighbors, it may be our spouse or our co-workers, and there are people that God has placed around us that need to be seen. They need to be seen.

Will we do that?

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.