

**God, Who Are You?**

**And**

**Who Am I?**

By

Ann Morgan Miesner

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Miesner, Ann Morgan

*God, Who Are You? AND Who Am I?*

*A Bible Study for Experiencing God by His Names*

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**BEHIND THE SCENES FOR ME AND US**

**BEHIND THE SCENES FOR YOU**

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## FOREWORD

This book is the result of a prayer I prayed in 1994:

*Lord, I know the Bible says that no man will know the day or hour when Jesus will come back to earth—except only the Father. But, I know the Holy Spirit is the very spirit of the Father, and Your Holy Spirit lives within me, so if I am part of the last generation on earth who will see Jesus face to face, I think You should be able to let me know personally.*

In the next six months, the Lord answered this prayer in ways beyond anything I could have imagined. Two events rendered me speechless and impacted my whole life so that I felt I had the weight of the whole world on my shoulders. How could I ever tell anyone so they would believe me? Every man, woman and teenager needed to know God’s answer to my prayer. I sought God constantly to know how to get these messages across, because it was not just a matter of telling, but of explaining, showing and even persuading.

Finally, God’s leading became clearer in 2001 when He brought a group of amazing women into my life. Each one had such an awesome story, not of end-times, but of how they experienced God. He had worked marvelous wonders in their life . . . *who was telling their story?* Their stories seemed to fall into a pattern of “experiencing God by His names”—the Hebrew names of God we studied together in the group we started—Women with a Passion for Jesus.

Not intending to write a discipleship Bible study for seekers and new Christians, this is the result: a precept upon precept study of who God is, and by knowing Him, we come to know who we are—and where we are going. And all this comes by facing where we came from. “My/Our Story” weaves all twelve teaching modules together—a story of our family leaving financial and emotional bondage and entering into God’s best for our lives.

This book can be used in three ways:

- a self study—no previous Bible knowledge required
- a manual for one-on-one sharing
- small group Bible studies

—Ann Morgan Miesner

## PREFACE

**H**AVE YOU EVER heard someone talking in the background, then they stopped talking as though they were waiting for someone to reply; then you realized that *someone* was *you*? You'd like to say, "Don't you know my name?" It's irritating, and it makes us feel unimportant.

Recently, a secretary was training me to take over her job. She constantly talked and never once called me by my name. I never knew if she was talking to me or someone else, because she constantly jabbered. She also treated her employer this way. One day, the boss replied to her, as he looked at me in an understanding way, "I like my name." But, the woman never acknowledged that she heard or understood a word he said.

Likewise, our heavenly Father must feel the same way about His name. Otherwise, why would He have so many of them that reveal different aspects of His character? We show respect and acknowledge He is a very important person when we understand and honor Him by His name. The ironic thing is that when we come to understand even a small portion about God's names and who He is, we find who we are; we find out about ourselves and the answers to absolutely every problem we could ever face in life. We come to experience His great love for us and that He wants to meet our every need. He shows us we can overcome any difficulty, and then teaches us how. And through that overcoming process, we learn where we have come from and where we are going.

We are going to look at twelve of the more prominent Hebrew names of God and how they relate to us. We will experience God through the lives of women, and some men, who came to know God intimately by His name as they overcame great obstacles. These people, from ages twenty-two to eighty-two, from different denominations trusting in the One and only True God, came to find that God likes His name too. He responded to each of them as they called upon His name. Their stories are interwoven with one family's adventure as they journey from bondage, trek through the desert, and cross over into God's best plan for their lives.

Be aware that our goal is to know God and to experience Him, to have an intimate relationship with Him. To *experience* is so much more than to *know* and even to understand. Many people, even Christians, know about God yet do not have *experiential knowledge* of who

He is. According to Webster's dictionary, to experience means "anything or everything lived through, training and personal participation, knowledge, skill, etc., resulting from this; to undergo."

It is my prayer you will make a quality decision right now to do what it takes to trust God's ability, His power and His goodness in your own life as you experience, and undergo, the aspects of His nature, one name at a time. The best way to do this is to keep a daily journal as you face your personal struggles in His presence. At the end of each name of God are questions or simple exercises to help you make this journey one of "personal participation." If you will answer the questions and look up the Scriptures throughout, I guarantee it will be the most exciting *experiential* journey of your lifetime—which you will travel with your heavenly Father.

Personalized Scriptures at the end of each module are designed to be laminated and/or put in a separate notebook for prayer reference. A special place is given for you to record in the back of this book how you experienced God during your study of each of the twelve names (modules). Expect it. You will. No previous Bible knowledge is required.

Be still and know that He is God. Stop, look and listen, digest the material before moving to the next module and you will hear Him calling you by your name.

*The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the [consistently] righteous man—  
upright and in right standing with God—runs into it and is safe, high [above evil]  
and strong.*

*—Proverbs 18:10 (Amplified)*

## PSALM 91

Because you have set your love upon Me, therefore  
will I deliver you; I will set you on high, because—  
*you know and understand My name*

[have a personal knowledge of My mercy, love and  
kindness; trust and rely on Me, knowing I will never  
forsake you, no, never].

You shall call upon Me, and I will answer you; I  
will be with you in trouble, I will deliver you and  
honor you.

With long life will I satisfy you, and show you my  
salvation.

—Adapted from Psalms 91: 14-16 (Amplified)

# **PART I**

## **LEAVING BONDAGE**

*Then we cried out to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression.*

*So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders.*

*—Deuteronomy 26:7-8*

# **MODULE 1**

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **El Roi [The God Who Sees Me]**

**D**ENISE WAS THE envy of her co-workers. They spent many rushed fifteen-minute breaks and half-hour lunches together in the crowded, stuffy cafeteria. Twenty-five-year-old Denise was beautiful with her long dark hair and matching brown eyes. Her lean body was such that a person knew she never had to count calories. But her business associates soon learned she was more sensitive about being thin than they were about being, well, not so thin.

Denise's outward appearance, with her ready smile, masked all the hurt and pain she held inside until she missed work for two weeks in a stressful period of her life. Her supervisor had to escort her to the emergency room when she was unable to breathe while at work. Serious stomach problems, anxiety attacks, difficulty in breathing and sleeping, and depression plagued her.

As a child, Denise had to adjust to numerous schools. After moving from Inglewood, California, to Tukwila, Washington, during second grade, she did not know how to read. Frustrated, she told her teacher, "I'm just not going to do it!"

Her instructor explained, "Denise, if you don't learn how to read, you won't be able to get a job or to even order food at a restaurant."

Convinced she could not take the easy way out, Denise started to work hard and by the end of the school year, reached the top of her class.

At the age of fifteen, Denise was uprooted to Whitefish, Montana, where relatives helped her care for her younger brother, and her ailing mother. Her mother had been diagnosed with lung cancer and given only months to live.

When recalling this time in her life, Denise managed to press her full lips together, then explained, “While every other girl was worried about what to wear to the homecoming dance, I worried about what people would think seeing me pushing my mother in a wheelchair, hooked up to oxygen, wearing a turban to cover her hair loss. While other girls were enjoying their dates at the homecoming dance, I wondered when my mother would have her next chemotherapy treatment.”

“When my mother died three months later, it was amazing the weight that lifted from me. I could finally be a teenager again and go to dances without wondering if that night would be the night my mother died, and I would miss saying goodbye. The hardest thing I had to do was to watch her go from being vibrant and full of life to being only a shell of what she once was. Ready to see her free of pain, one night I pleaded with God to please take her. That night she died.”

Her mother’s death was only one of many wounds. Before Denise was born, her mother left her father to live with another man. While still young, she remembered praying in the middle of the night for God to stop the loud quarreling between her mom and her boyfriend. She shielded her younger brother from the fights as much as she could. When he was drunk, the man beat her older brother with a chair.

The same year her mother died, Denise’s common-law stepfather died. She and her younger brother went to live with her mother’s cousin while her older brother faced life on his own. Her second cousin, Marie, of about the same age, became like a sister to her. To this day, she refers to Marie as “Sister.”

At the age of eighteen, Denise married a twenty-two-year-old marine. A year later, she took in her fourteen-year-old brother to live with them. After about three years, her husband told her, “I really don’t love you. The marital benefits increased my paycheck.” She cried in his arms.

With her marriage falling apart and feeling alone, Denise asked Marie to go shopping. They liked the South Coast Plaza, in Costa Mesa, California, especially the Barnes and Noble bookstore.

It was on this day that Denise was unexpectedly brought to the turning point in her life. The two girls found themselves in the spiritual section looking at books about angels. Suddenly—a gray-haired lady approached them and pointed out some other angel books that were good reading. Then, she started talking about Jesus, and said, “Jesus loves you.”

Denise always became defensive when strangers started preaching to her. She had built a high wall against anyone who appeared to be a *religious freak* or a *holy roller*. Her natural instinct was to tune the woman out. Her parents referred to themselves as Christians because they believed *there was* a God. Denise also considered herself a Christian and adopted the attitude from them that if a person was enthusiastic about God, that person was a *fanatic*, and that was bad. The only time Denise heard the name of “Jesus Christ” mentioned in her home was when it was used in vain.

Today though, it was impossible to turn this lady off. The girls got chills when she talked about Jesus. They never felt this way before. *Who is this Jesus she is talking about?* Denise was listening because she thought Marie was listening. Marie was listening only because she thought Denise was listening.

Suddenly, the lady had the girls’ full attention when she asked a question they had never heard, “Have you ever been saved?”

*What did that mean?*

Further explaining, the woman asked, “Would you like to pray and ask Jesus to come into your hearts?” Marie looked at Denise who said, “Yes,” so Marie answered yes. They grabbed hands, bowed their heads, and prayed together—asking Jesus who died for their sins to forgive them, and then asked Him to come into their hearts. The woman then took each girl’s face in her hands, and one-by-one, looked into her eyes, and said, “I can see a difference.”

Denise hurried home to look in the mirror to see if she looked different! She didn’t think so. Later, she told her co-workers, “Whatever I received, I didn’t know what to do with it.” The lady had encouraged the girls to get into a Bible-believing church, pointed one out to them, and walked away.

For two more years the girls drove by churches wondering if they would be good ones to visit, but they never did. They wondered if they really were different. Was that encounter for real? Did they meet God that day? Did Jesus Christ actually come into their hearts? Hungry and searching for answers, they both found they *wanted* to read their Bibles. Denise had a King James Version (KJV), given to her by her first father, but it was difficult to understand.

As Denise experienced lack of love and communication with an earthly father, she found herself reluctant to trust a relationship with someone called a Heavenly Father. Denise felt abandoned by her mother. She married to find love from a man who did not know how to love. She felt used. Could there be Someone who was real and who would never leave her? Was it

possible to ever be loved and to feel happy? All these questions were answered for Denise as time passed.

Through her searching, Denise discovered what happened to her in the bookstore also happened to a young woman in the Bible. In Genesis, the first book in the Old Testament (O.T.), Chapter 16, El Roi, our Heavenly Father Who Sees, reveals that He yearns to have an intimate relationship with us. Furthermore, this chapter also gives the principles that guide us in gaining that intimate relationship which helps us to overcome any challenge we could ever face in life. We will decipher verses 7-14, one-by-one, to see how they relate to Denise and us.

In the story prior to this special chapter, God promised Abraham if he would leave the land of his father, the land of Mesopotamia, or present day Iraq, God would bring him to a land He would show him. After arriving and settling in the land of Canaan, or present day Israel, God promised Abraham He would give him a son, one coming from his own body, and that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars. However, ten years later his wife Sarah was still not pregnant.

Sarah told Abraham, “The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; [Sarah had a maid named Hagar, who was probably given to her as they left Egypt from a previous trip] perhaps *I* can build a family through her” (Gen.16:1). The emphasis on “*I*” is added because actions stemming from self rather than God always backfire, resulting in chaos.

Abraham agreed and slept with Hagar who conceived. When Hagar knew she was pregnant, pride consumed her as she now viewed herself superior to her mistress. Sarah said to Abraham, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me” (Gen.16:5).

“‘Your servant is in your hands,’ Abraham said, ‘Do with her whatever you think best.’ Then Sarah mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her” (Gen.16:6).

This brings us to these key verses:

7 The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.

8 And he said, “Hagar, servant of Sarah, where have you come from, and where are you going?”

9 Then the angel of the Lord told her, “Go back to your mistress and submit to her.”

10 The angel added, “I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count.”

11 The angel of the Lord also said to her, “You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery.

12 He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.”

13 She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.”

14 That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

—Genesis 16:7-14

**7. God seeks and finds.** Who was this angel of the Lord, in Verse Seven, who found Hagar? Most Bible scholars agree that the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament represents Jesus Christ before he is born of the Virgin Mary because of . . . ”his promising to perform what God alone could do, and foretelling what God alone could know.”<sup>1</sup>

The angel of the Lord *found* Hagar, meaning He was searching for her. Jesus himself tells us He came to seek and to find those who are lost. After He met Zacchaeus in a tree on the road to Jericho, Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:9). God’s unseen Spirit is constantly seeking, constantly finding, constantly saving, and continually initiating a relationship with us until we make the right choice to follow Him.

\* \* \*

God, the Son—Jesus—found Denise in the bookstore. She made the right choice in answering yes to the question the lady put to her, “Do you want to be saved?” As time went on, she knew what that meant, because the Lord’s presence was with her.

Some years later a friend gave her a book, *Angels on Assignment*, by Charles and Frances Hunter as told to Roland Buck. It emphasizes our Heavenly Father’s passion for His family and the searching He does for His children, creating choices for them, over and over, until they make the right decision.

Denise realized how important it was to share her testimony, so she wrote it down. She then emptied her savings account, bought thirty books, and mailed them to her friends across the United States. She does not know if the lady in the bookstore was an angel or not. The lady said she had been to a revival at her church, held a tract from which they prayed, but never followed up with the girls, which always bothered them. Whatever the truth is, Denise became an angel on assignment to her friends as God’s messenger had so boldly shared with her.

**8. God Calls Us By Our Name.** In the Eighth Verse, the Angel of the Lord said, “Hagar, servant of Sarah.” He knew who she was and called her by her name, and then He proceeded to remind her who she was, “servant of Sarah.” He was saying to her, “Hagar, I know you, I created you. But, the question is, “do you know who you are?”

The Lord was saying to her, “I have called you by your name. I have surnamed you though you have not known Me. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God besides Me. I will gird you and arm you though you have not known Me” (Isa.:4-5 Amplified). Notice the angel of the Lord did not ask her who she was. He knew He was the only one who could reveal that to her. He is the only one who can tell us who we are. He was telling her, “Hagar, you are my child.”

\* \* \*

After meeting Jesus in the bookstore, Denise told Marie, “I began to face the reality in my life—that it was based on lies. I was filled with emotions I didn’t know how to deal with, and a realization that I didn’t even know who I was or why I felt the way I did. I had to ask myself what else in my life I was not facing.”

**8. God Asks Us Two Questions That Enable Us To Look At Who We Are.** In Verse Eight, the Lord asked, “Where have you come from, and where are you going?” Hagar is truthful because the Angel of the Lord knew everything anyway, “A man’s ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths” (Prov. 5:21).

Hagar honestly answered, “I am running away.” But, she gave no answer for where she was going. She had not even considered her destination. All she knew was that she was running away. The reality of the situation was this: she was alone in the middle of the desert, on a road leading to death. If the Lord had not intervened, called her by her name to cause her to consider these two questions, she would have died. The reality of blind decisions is death—the termination of life, whether mentally, physically, or spiritually. Honestly facing the Truth is the first step to life, whether it is eternal life or living one of vitality here on earth.

\* \* \*

When Denise began to face her life in honesty, she was able to see the physical answer to the question, “Where are you going?” Her husband tried to persuade her to go to her dad’s house (to get her to leave). When the Lord revealed to her that she should, she left and took her younger brother with her. Amazingly, Denise’s husband, who was out of the Marines and unable to hold a job, tagged along. Eventually though, he chose to leave permanently.

Will Denise's eyes be opened to be able to face her past and the question, *where have you come from?* Will she experience other aspects of God's nature to find the emotional and physical health she so desires.

\* \* \*

What is our response to these two questions? Hagar eventually found where she was going by facing the fact she was running, "I'm running from my mistress, Sarah." It is no different with us. This is a hard question, for our situation may not be so obvious. Although *happiness* is a surface and fleeting goal, if we ask ourselves what we *think* will make us happy, we can usually find something we are not facing. Hagar could have said, "I'd be *happy* if Sarah treated me well." The reality was, she was not treating Sarah well, and that is why she was in such a hot spot. Many of us can say we would be *happy* to be out of debt, but are we facing the discipline to make it happen? We would be *happy* to be thin, but is the truth that we aren't taking care of our bodies—we are running from eating correctly and exercising regularly?

At any given time, no matter where our relationship is with the Lord, we can go no further with Him until we have asked ourselves this pressing question: Am I running from something I need to be facing? Maybe we don't have trouble like Hagar did with her employers; but, are we rebelling against the holy ways of God, not loving our husbands or wives as unto the Lord, or not taking responsibility for our own words and behavior?

Many times we can only find where we are going by facing the fact that we are running, out of fear, from the direction we should be heading. Are we resisting change—leaving our comfort zone to launch out into a new career path, ministry, or leadership position? This book will not provide answers to all your problems, but it will point you to the One who sees all, knows all, and does all things well. It will help you find who you are, where you have come from, and where you are going.

**9. God Requires Accountability for Our Choices.** The angel of the Lord told Hagar in Verse Nine, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." God was requiring Hagar to be accountable for her actions. Who was she? She was Sarah's maid. In essence, the Lord, by appearing to her, was saying, "You are my child first, Sarah's maid second. Know that and be that. Face that fact and go home and trust Me to take care of you and to make good come from your life situation."

Hagar then had a choice to make. She was faced with a life and death decision. Deuteronomy 30:19 says, "I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse;

therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live.” God laid out for her, in a personal way, His words of life for her right here, “Go back; submit; grow up.” Being accountable for our behavior always brings with it—a choice. That choice may not seem like a *happy* one, and rarely is, but when it is based on the words of the One who created us, a deep satisfaction and joy grows through being obedient.

It must not have been easy for Hagar to face the fact she must be obedient ultimately to God and go back to Sarah, to humble herself before her “boss,” her “supervisor,” and the father of her child who was not her husband. If going back would cause physical harm to her, God would not have asked her to return. Everything He asks us to do eventually pushes us to grow from a child to an adult, mentally and spiritually.

Colossians 4:22-34 says:

Slaves obey your earthly masters in everything, and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.

God’s desire for Hagar was a change in attitude—which is what the Bible is, an attitude book. Being accountable to God first brings purpose in the drudgery of day-to-day existence. It is choosing life.

\* \* \*

Denise was no different than Hagar. She was faced with a life and death situation. She had fought hard for her marriage even though her husband gambled away the savings she had before they married. Many nights he left her waiting alone in the parking lot where she worked until 2:00 a.m. She had constant stomach problems during this period: worked one week, off two weeks, and never weighed more than ninety pounds. She knew that for her own life’s sake, she had to let him go; when she did, a whole new life awaited her.

Denise summarizes her feelings, “When I was told the truth of why my husband married me, I began to remove my rose-colored glasses. My whole life, I denied all the hurt and negativity I lived with day-to-day, pretending in my heart I was happy when I was miserable and depressed; I buried my true feelings.”

Denise’s choice in being accountable to choose life meant returning to her father’s house, and God took care of the rest.

**10. God Blesses Obedience.** The Angel of the Lord added in Verse Ten, “I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count.” God is saying to Hagar, if she will repent, change her mind and attitude, turn around and go back home, she will find life and become the mother of many. But we find later, she was only partially obedient. She went back physically, but did her attitude change?

\* \* \*

Some time after choosing to return to where her father lived, Denise met a man who loved and appreciated her. After moving in with him, she began to listen to Dr. James Dobson’s *Focus on the Family* radio program. It convicted her of how she was living. In obedience to God, she and her fiancé moved into separate bedrooms. Her fiancé asked a friend of his, who was the pastor of a small church in town, to marry them. Finally, Denise found a church through the man God brought into her life. They committed to this small group of believers who became their accountability support group.

God began to urge Denise to be baptized, so she asked God to convict her husband also. One Sunday morning when leaving church, she asked the pastor, “What do I need to do to be baptized?”

Her husband, who accepted the Lord through Denise’s witness, responded, “I was going to ask the same question.” (The sermon had not been on baptism.) They were both baptized on Easter Sunday, thus, beginning their spiritual relationship with God together.

**11. God Sees Our Affliction and Circumstances and Hears Our Misery.** In Verse Eleven, the Lord told Hagar that He saw her unborn child and told her she would have a son and she should call him Ishmael, meaning, “the Lord has heard of your misery.”

Psalms 139:16 says, “My eyes saw your unformed substance and in My book all the days of your life were written before ever they took shape when as yet there were none of them.”

God sees where we are, as well as our circumstances. “And not a creature exists that is concealed from His sight, but all things are open and exposed, naked and defenseless to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Jer. 23:24 Amplified).

Every detail of our lives is recorded in heaven. He has a book for each one of us. “You number and record my wanderings; put my tears into your bottle; are they not in Your book?” (Ps. 56:8 Amplified). He records our wanderings. He knows every move we make, every word we say, and every tear we shed.

\* \* \*

As a small child, Denise called out to God when she was afraid. Today, she says, “I knew God was watching over me. I could feel His presence. As I grew older and was never taught about Jesus, I didn’t know I could have a relationship with Him and that He would fill the void in my heart.”

**12. God Sees Our Future Purposes and Designs.** God told Hagar more about her unborn son in Verse Twelve, “He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.”

Job 39:5-8 gives another description of the Ishmaelites: “Who let the wild donkey go free? Who untied his ropes? I gave him the wasteland as his home, the salt flats as his habitat. He laughs at the commotion in the town; he does not hear a driver’s shout. He ranges the hills for his pasture and searches for any green thing.” In other words, He will be a *wild donkey of a man . . . living in hostility toward all his brothers.*” The country which these free descendants of Ishmael may be properly said to possess stretches from northwestern Syria to the Arabian Sea, and from Egypt to the Persian Gulf; a tract of land 1800 miles in length by 900 in breadth.”<sup>2</sup>

Surely, God was saying He had a plan. He had a purpose, and He designs all things, even though we may never see the complete picture or understand it all. But He knows, and that is what matters, “For I know the thoughts and plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer. 29:11).

\* \* \*

God has a purpose and a plan for our lives as well. God gave Denise the gift of writing songs and a full, rich voice to sing them. She went back to school to learn voice and take piano lessons in preparation for the future she could now see God had for her. She also furnished her spiritual library with all versions of the Bible she could understand and self-help books to increase her learning.

**13-14. God our Father Who Sees His Children Wants to Be Wanted.** In the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Verses, Hagar gave the name *El Roi* to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me. That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.”

How can we tie these loving actions and requirements from God together to make enough sense to have an intimate relationship with this One who sees us? Maybe some clues can be found in looking at God’s parenting skills. If we are His children, surely He is our Father “for we are His offspring” (Acts 17:28).

The parenting guidelines, taught by Jim Fay and Dr. Foster Cline, in their book *Parenting with Love and Logic* could easily come from this passage about El Roi. Their teachings are widely utilized by parents and educators. Their premise is: “Effective parenting centers around love . . . that is powerful enough to allow kids to make mistakes and permit them to live with the consequences of those mistakes. Most mistakes do have logical consequences. And those consequences, when accompanied by empathy—our compassionate understanding of the child’s disappointment, frustration, and pain—hit home with mind-changing power.”<sup>3</sup>

Fay and Cline continue to say, “The challenge of parenting is to love enough to allow them [children] to fail—to stand back, however painful it may be and let significant learning opportunities build our children.”<sup>4</sup>

Did God allow Abraham and Sarah the freedom to fail? You bet He did. He did not step in to keep Sarah from asking Hagar to sleep with her husband. He did not step in to keep Abraham from doing so. God was not like so many parents who are the rescuing kind, who rescue out of their own need to be needed. He is a parent who wants to be wanted. The children of rescuing parents never learn to think, to decide, or to learn how to solve their own problems. They don’t take responsibility for their choices or understand the consequences.

Did God step in to keep Hagar from failing? Yes, in the desert. Why? Because good parenting calls for “stepping in (1) when our children are in definite danger of losing life or limb, or of making a decision that could affect them for a lifetime; and (2) when children know that we know that they know that they cannot cope with their problem, and the consequences are very significant.”<sup>5</sup>

Did Hagar learn from her interaction with the God she named El-Roi? Did her attitude change? Genesis 21 tells about the birth of Isaac to Sarah and the great feast on the day he was weaned. Ishmael mocked Isaac, the child of promise fulfilled, just as Hagar had ridiculed Sarah when Hagar found herself pregnant. Children adopt the attitudes of their parents. Evidently, fourteen years later, Hagar’s attitude had not changed.

Hagar only partially obeyed God—physically, not spiritually. Matthew 7: 13-14 says, “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” Hagar took the wide, easy, lazy road. She was unwilling to make the effort necessary to allow God to change her heart, mind and soul, which is the narrow road to

life. And, Hagar's choice affected her son's choices and those of his descendants. How about you? Are you partially or wholly obedient to God?

Did God step in to keep Denise from failing? Certainly, He did. He sought and found her in the bookstore. "Although my father and my mother have forsaken me, yet the Lord will take me up [adopt me as His child]" (Ps. 27:10 Amplified).

What did Abraham and Sarah learn from the logical consequences of their choices? Did they learn to think, to decide, to be responsible (accountable) for their own behavior? Sarah faced a real problem after Isaac was born. She had not accepted the responsibility for her own actions and words before when she blamed Abraham for getting Hagar pregnant. She was now forced to have to deal with her mistake because of the resulting strife and hostility between Ishmael and Isaac. She told Abraham he needed to send Hagar and Ishmael away, because both could not share in the inheritance together.

Of course, this greatly distressed Abraham. What happened next is priceless! If you are a parent and old enough to appreciate the joy of having your adult child come to you for advice after the years they thought you knew nothing, then you may appreciate what happened. The adult child Abraham of 100 years of age went to his Father seeking His wisdom. Abraham certainly did not want to make another mistake he would regret. He had to *know* this time before he did anything. And, finally, the only way he could know was to go to the One who knows all and sees all.

Can you feel the Father El Roi's joy when Abraham took the time to present Sarah's suggestion to God for His advice? God responded with the fatherly *love and logic parenting empathy* saying, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant." Then, he said, "Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned [called]. I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring" (Gen. 21:11-13). God was telling Abraham, "I have a plan."

This is where the relationship between God and Abraham begins to deepen, although they had known each other for more than twenty-five years. The Lord probably reminded Abraham (through His still, small voice) of His promise to Hagar to increase her descendants. Abraham then recognized God's intent: the only way two nations could grow is if both sons were separated. Abraham wanted God's wisdom and sought it out. *Only then*, did Abraham and Sarah communicate.

In 1911 B.C.,<sup>6</sup> Abraham and Sarah had to live with the consequences of their choices. Those consequences are significant because they affect us today. Likewise, our choices affect everyone around us—for eternity. You may ask, “Why didn’t God step in with Abraham and Sarah to keep them from making a decision that would adversely affect them and the whole world for the rest of time?” Perhaps, He is still trying to get the attention of the *descendants*, and as our Parent, He is still trying to teach us through the choices we make.

“The tunnel of conflict is the passageway to intimacy in any relationship.”<sup>7</sup> Hostility, suffering, adversity, all force us to look outside ourselves for answers. What a stubborn, rebellious lot we are! Could it be God is allowing continual conflict because He wants His children to want Him, and to seek His wisdom in everything, just as He is constantly seeking an intimate relationship with us?

What better promise can we have than the one God gave the children of Abraham who became the children of Israel? In 597 B.C., after seventy years in captivity in Babylon (Iraq), God told the Israelites, “Then you will call upon me, and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ‘I will be found by you,’ declares the Lord, ‘and will bring you back from captivity’” (Jer. 29:12-14). The same is true for us today when we seek God through facing life’s difficulties in the light of our Father El Roi’s love.

## **My Story**

It looked like something out of “Country Woman” magazine—the small, white church with its bell-towered steeple reaching to the sky, and the white parsonage next to it. It was even called Pleasant Valley—in Wann, Oklahoma, a part of South Coffeyville, Kansas. You guessed it. I was the preacher’s kid (PK), along with my two brothers and one sister.

Having heard every sermon my father preached and in attendance at every summer Vacation Bible School he and my mother led, I knew I didn’t know Jesus personally. At the age of eight, I wanted Him in my heart with assurance I was going to heaven when I died, yet I didn’t know how to ask Him. Our church, or denomination, has an “invitation” at the end of every service when anyone can go forward to make a decision for Christ, or to be “saved.” I was so shy and timid; I could not put myself in front of anyone. Knowing the Bible said if I was willing to acknowledge Jesus before people, He would acknowledge me before the angels of God, and

those angels would rejoice at my coming into the kingdom of heaven, made no difference (see Luke 12:8-10). Fear had its hold on me.

One Sunday morning, during the invitation, I wanted to go forward so badly, but my fingers just gripped the wooden bench in front of me. My knuckles grew white; I found it impossible to step into that isle. Gratefully, my father saw my anguish. Later that afternoon, he called to me, “Annie, why don’t you come with me to my office.”

I followed him to his office in the church. “You know John 3:16, don’t you?” He asked me right away.

“Yes, Dad. I’ve known it all my life.”

“Then, why don’t you pray it to your heavenly Father by putting your name in the blanks where it says the whole ‘world’? Make it personal to Him.”

“You mean like this?” I bowed my head.

“For God so loved Ann that He gave His only begotten Son, that if Ann believes in Him, Ann shall not perish but shall have everlasting life?”

“Yes, that’s right. Do you feel any different now?”

I did NOT *feel* any different, but I was afraid to tell my father so. I didn’t want to disappoint him, so I meekly replied, “Yes.”

Immediately, I jolted out the door so Dad couldn’t see I was lying.

As I ran toward the house . . . the sky startled me; I stopped. It was bluer than any blue I’d seen; and then, I looked at the grass; it was greener than any green I knew. Joy filled my soul. God was so close. Jesus was in my heart without a doubt, and He had made all things new. From that time on, I *knew* heaven was my home—that Jesus saw me and loved me and died for me even if I was the only person in the whole wide world.

Fourteen years later, although I still had the assurance of going to heaven, the joy had slowly vanished. My husband and I had a son and a baby on the way. Not having known what to do with what I’d received, I felt dead. Life was dry, and I absolutely had no idea how to get the joy of Jesus back in my heart.

## MAKING IT PERSONAL

### El Roi [The God Who Sees Me]

**1. How would you answer the questions put to Hagar by the Angel of the Lord?**

*Where have you come from?*

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*Where are you going?*

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(Answer these questions now. For comparison, you will be given an opportunity to answer these questions at the end of Module 9.)

**2. Are you able to answer the question put to Denise by the gray-haired lady—**

**“Have you ever been saved?”** (Do you have an assurance in your heart that heaven is your home? You can.) If not, read out loud the following with your name in the blanks:

For God so loved \_\_\_\_\_ that He gave His only Son, that if I, \_\_\_\_\_, believe in Him, I, \_\_\_\_\_, shall not perish but shall have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn \_\_\_\_\_, but to save \_\_\_\_\_ through Him. John 3:16-17  
Did He come into your heart? \_\_\_\_\_ Today’s date \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Face from what you are running. Name them:**

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Pick one at a time, and turn it over to the Lord.** Ask His wisdom in how to face it.

Read James 1:5 to see how: “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.” (Now, give God time to show you, and He will, just as He did for Denise. It may be through the strangest sources.)



## **I AM GOD'S CHILD**

### **El Roi [The God Who Sees Me]**

You have called me by my name. You have named me though I have not known You. You are the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God besides You. You surround me and support me though I have not known You (Taken from Isaiah 45:4-5 Amplified).

Your eyes saw my unformed substance and in Your book all the days of my life were written before ever they took shape when as yet there were none of them (Taken from Psalms 139:16).

You number and record my wanderings; put my tears into your bottle; are they not in Your book? (Psalms 56:8 Amplified).

Though my father and my mother have forsaken me, yet You Lord will take me up and adopt me as your child (Taken from Psalms 27:10).

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11).

You have set before me life and death, the blessing and the curse, therefore, I will choose life, that I and my descendants may live (Taken from Deuteronomy 30:19).

## The Lord's Prayer

Our Father Who is in heaven,  
hallowed (kept holy) be Your name.  
Your kingdom come,  
Your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven (left, remitted and let go the debts,  
and given up resentment against) our debtors.  
And lead (bring) us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.  
*For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*  
—Matthew 6:9-13 Amplified

## The Ten Commandments

**I AM** the Lord your God, who brought you out of  
Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

**You shall have no other gods before me.**

You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven  
above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not  
bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a  
jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and  
fourth generations of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand  
generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

**You shall** not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold  
anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

**Remember** the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do  
all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you  
shall not do any work, neither you, not your son or daughter, not your manservant  
or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days  
the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he  
rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it  
holy.

**Honor** your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the  
Lord your God is giving you.

**You shall** not murder.

**You shall** not commit adultery.

**You shall** not steal.

**You shall** not give false testimony against your neighbor.

**You shall** not covet your neighbor's house.

**You shall** not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his  
ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

—Exodus 20:2-17

## ENDNOTES

1. Adam Clark, LL.D., F.S.A., &c., *Clark's Commentary Volume I—Genesis to Deuteronomy* (Abington Press, New York, Nashville) p. 110.
2. Clark, *Clark's Commentary, Volume I*, p. 109.
3. Foster Cline, M.D. and Jim Fay, *Parenting with Love and Logic*, (Pinion Press, Colorado Springs, CO, 1990), p. 12.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 51
6. Clark, *Clark's Commentary, Volume I*, p. 111.
7. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), p. 147.