

“You are the God who sees me” (Gen 16,13)

Hagar, there is so much dust in your hair. Where have you been?

I was in the desert.
In solitude.
Closer to death than to life.
When Sarah humiliated me again, I just started running.
I walked and walked
until the paved ground turned to loose sand,
I left the tents behind and the people.
I ran as far as my feet would take me.

Hagar, what were you thinking?

Nothing. I was thinking nothing.
I didn't know where to go, just - away.
At some point I was tired. Thirsty. And so deeply hurt.

Hagar, what happened?

I'm just looking for my place in life.
Like everyone else. I am Sarah's handmaid.
She couldn't have children of her own,
so she sent me to her husband Abraham.

When I got pregnant, I was so proud. And excited and full of anticipation.
Sure, maybe I triumphed a little over Sarah and made her jealous.
But then she was cruel to me. Mean. Vicious.
That's when fear suddenly gripped me. What will happen to my child?
What can my future look like in this house?
And Abram didn't protect me, not at all.
No one at home cared about how I felt.
That's when I understood: It's all about their life. It's about their happiness. Not mine.
I'm looking for my place in life and I can't find it.

What happened to you in the desert, Hagar?

I walked till my feet were wounded and no tears to cry were left.
Then I found a spring.
I stopped and leaned over the edge of the spring.
I don't remember if I wanted to throw myself in or drink.
I think I just wanted to see how deep it went down.
See into the dark for a little bit.
Because there was so much darkness and despair inside of me.
So I leaned in, expecting,
that deep black and heaviness would reach out to me.

But do you know what I saw?
The sky above me.
The clouds. The vastness.
And I saw my reflection on the water.
My tired eyes. The chapped lips. The disheveled hair.

And suddenly I felt
as if someone was strengthening my back.
I didn't dare to turn around,
but in the water I saw an outline,
like a shadow behind me.
I had lost myself. And God found me.

And then there was this question.
I am not sure
if I asked it to myself or if someone really spoke.
Hagar, where did you come from and where are you going?
I am a maid and I have escaped.
But in the moment I said this, I thought to myself: Is this who I am?
A refugee? A humiliated slave? A hopeless, subjugated woman?
Is this my future?

As I looked at my reflection
And this shadow behind me
Suddenly this confidence grew in my heart:
God is with me, too. And with my son.
He heard my lament.
My questions. My silence. My suffering.
I straightened up at the well.
I loosened my gaze from the reflection
And started looking
And there was this great world around me.
Full of promise and future - also for me.
I turned around and a breeze
Had just stirred up some of the sand.
Carried it up and away
Toward the sun.
I had now seen the One who sees me.
And I could return home with confidence and new hope.

Hagar, what has changed?

Nothing has changed. And yet everything.
I realised: Even if I feel lost and am stumbling -
God changes the path under my feet for the good.
Even if I do not know much about myself,
I waffle and struggle a lot
What I know for sure: I am - seen by God
and so precious in his eyes that he sets out to meet me.
He has plans for me. He sees me. Completely and totally.
What I carry in my heart and hope. What I fear
and am and want to be.
My Creator and Redeemer, You are a God who sees me.

Amen.