

Genesis 21:14-17

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Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael away. They wander in the wilderness and run out of water. Hagar thinks they will die, but God hears Ishmael's cries and rescues them.

When faced with a challenging task, Abraham did not hesitate to do what God told him; he *rose early in the morning* to send Hagar and Ishmael away. They were not driven out, but *sent away* peacefully. Abraham fitted them with supplies, *bread and a skin of water*. Abraham gives Hagar *the boy*, meaning he committed guardianship of Ishmael to Hagar, thereby relinquishing responsibility of his son. [Genesis 16:16](#) tells us Abraham was 86 years old when Ishmael was born. So Ishmael was 14 when Isaac was born. Assuming that Isaac was weaned 2-3 years later, Ishmael was somewhere between 16-17 when Abraham sent him into the wilderness with Hagar.

Hagar departs with her son and the few provisions given to them. She wanders *about in the wilderness of Beersheba*, possibly trying to reach Egypt. Beersheba was at the southernmost border of Canaan, 20 miles southwest of Hebron, and 150 miles north of Egypt. The origin of the name *Beersheba* is given later (cf. [Genesis 21:31](#), [26:33](#)).

After an unspecified length of time, *the water in the skin was used up*. It's likely their bread was gone, too. Hagar gives up hope on survival, so she leaves Ishmael *under one of the bushes* of the wilderness. She leaves him there and sits *opposite him, about a bowshot away*, perhaps around 100 yards so that he cannot see her. She begins to pray, *Do not let me see the boy die*. She is afraid that they may die of starvation and thirst, and cannot bear the thought of watching her son perish.

In despair, Hagar *lifted up her voice and wept*. Fittingly, Ishmael's name means "God hears" (cf. [Genesis 16:11](#)). *God heard the lad crying*. Not only was Hagar weeping in fear for her son's life, Ishmael too was weeping alone under the bush where he had been left. Hearing Ishmael's cries, God responds right away.

The angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, a voice came down from on high. It said, What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has

heard the voice of the lad where he is. God hears their troubles, and responds. His help comes in the following passage.

Hagar is doubtless reassured to hear a voice from heaven. This is not the first time the Angel of the Lord has come to Hagar's rescue ([Genesis 16:7](#)). God's grace extends to Hagar and Ishmael. They did not receive what they desired, but they still received a great gift.

Biblical Text:

¹⁴ So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave *them* to Hagar, putting *them* on her shoulder, and gave *her* the boy, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba. ¹⁵ When the water in the skin was used up, she left the boy under one of the bushes. ¹⁶ Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, "Do not let me see the boy die." And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and wept. ¹⁷ God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.