



**A**ND Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. <sup>15</sup> And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. <sup>16</sup> And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept. <sup>17</sup> And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. <sup>18</sup> Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. <sup>19</sup> And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. (Genesis 21:13-19)

In global geographical measure, a bowshot is not so great a distance. One can cross such a distance in seconds or minutes. But that short distance can mean the difference in life or death, condemnation or salvation. Oftentimes, it is just such a distance that separates man from his eternal reward. It may seem quite random to measure our nearness to God by such a simple scale; however, even an inch separation of man from God is as good as twenty thousand light years of distance. The fly of an arrow is brief, but death may lie at the end of its arc of trajectory. There are many factors that dictate the fly of an arrow – the wind, the quality of the bow, the marksman that pulls the string, or perhaps the craftsmanship of the arrow itself.

The raising of a child is much like the making of an arrow. The branch from which the shaft is cut must be of sound and solid wood. The shaft must be dried and finished to a smooth and polished texture. It must be perfectly straight if it can be guided to its

intended target. Children, too, must be conceived in love and brought up under the nurture of the Bible law. They must be made straight and polished to a high gloss to accomplish much in life and spirit. *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.* (Proverbs 22:6) A child should GO straight, therefore, his training must be made straight.

Children and arrows are much alike and are compared with each other in scripture. They must undergo processes that may seem to hurt the wood, but the craftsman is making the shaft a better instrument in the hands of the marksman as he applies his skill to carving, sanding, and notching the shaft. *He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.* Proverbs 13:24 (KJV) The shaft does not take the bent and crooked shape it might otherwise attempt, but is fashioned by the hands of the craftsman to be a useful tool in his hands. Parents may not take pleasure in the discipline of their children, but it is an essential aspect of making them strong and successful.

*Ps 3 Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. 4 As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. 5 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.* (Psalm 127:3-5) Parents do not seem to truly love their children enough in our time to administer discipline. But children are a great heritage to any mother and father – a heritage which must be protected, maintained, loved, and trained. The quiver mentioned above is the home. When a home is full of children, a man walks proudly among his neighbors. He is always at the ready to produce an array of photographs each of which will be accompanied by laudatory explanation.

The Archer (Father) has full control of those arrows as long as they are in his hands or possession. One day, he will remove one of those arrows from his quiver, perhaps at the time of marriage, and carefully place it on the bow and string. He lifts the bow at an high angle, still maintaining total control of the arrow. He draws the string and arrow back with much force and waits until his aim is steady. Even now, he possesses control of the arrow; but then, as he feels comfortable with his aim, his pull, and his arrow, he releases the arrow and watches it as it leaves his bow and arches off into the sky. At that point, he has relinquished all control and influence over the arrow. If the arrow is straight and polished, the bow is strong and sure, and the archer's aim is accurate, the arrow will arrive at its intended target. If not, it will miss the hope of the archer in going where he aimed it.

The same is true of children. When they are but a branch, it is easy to fashion them into something better. As they grow older, more labor and effort is required to finish and polish them. And once they are out of the home, all control of the parent is relinquished. If they are properly prepared, made straight, and aimed properly, they will be sons and daughters of which the parents can be proud. If not, they will miss the mark.

Let us now consider that 'bowshot' of Hagar's wilderness experience. In the end, Hagar winds up by a fountain of water; but what was it that brought Hagar to the water?

1. All hope was exhausted – Hagar wandered in the wilderness until all her water was gone. She came to the realization that she may die of thirst. Worse, her beloved son, Ishmael, was already perishing for lack of water. The Christian, too, often tires of fighting the good fight and considers hope forlorn. When we have expired our own efforts and resources, we forget the God of Heaven.
2. Sorrow and heartache – Hagar could not countenance the death of her only son. She would wander a distance– a bowshot – away so as not to witness the

child's death. Sorrows mount in the lives of believers that overcome their spirits. They are bent down with sorrow and unable to see clearly. They may try to escape the circumstances that brought them to the brink instead of acting out in faith.

3. Blindness – Hagar was blind to the providential Eye of God which beheld her every move. She wept bitterly the tears that added a physical blindness to her spiritual blindness. She knew not where she wandered as she moved that bowshot away. It was not Hagar who directed her feet, but God. In our blind sorrow, God will intercede and guide our feet to places of which we have no knowledge – a place of answered prayer and glorious salvation.
4. Mourning and weeping- Like Mary Magdalene at the Garden Tomb, Hagar's tears prevented her seeing the Fountain of Water right where she was standing. How often have our tears kept us from seeing the works and purpose of God right before our eyes? God asked, What aileth thee, Hagar?
5. God opened Hagar's eyes – *And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.* The well of water was there all along, but Hagar's tears had blinded her. The same was true of Mary Magdalene. Looking for the last time into the vacant tomb where she presumed the dead body of her Lord had lain, the angels asked her, <sup>11</sup> *But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,* <sup>12</sup> *And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.* <sup>13</sup> And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? *She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.* (John 20:11-13) The angels were inside the tomb looking out at Mary, and they could see the joyous approach of Jesus toward her from behind. They must have smiled at the circumstance.

Hagar's unexpressed hopes were fulfilled without so much as a prayer, the Lord knowing her needs even if not verbalized. She discovered the Fountain of Water. Likewise, Mary, hoping to anoint a dead body, was grieved to the heart. Her tears were blinding in their profusion. Her prayers were for the dead body, but were shockingly and joyously answered by the Living Body of her Lord! <sup>14</sup> *And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.* <sup>15</sup> *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.* <sup>16</sup> *Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.* (John 20:14-16)

Like Hagar, Mary was blinded by sorrow, hopelessness and tears. But the Lord, in calling her name like no other could do, opened her eyes to His presence. Mary, too, discovered the Fountain of the Water of Life right before her eyes. It was the distance of a bowshot that brought Hagar to the fountain of waters; it was the distance of faith and love that brought Mary to her Lord.

What tugs at YOUR heart, my friend