

A Voice Crying in Wilderness: The Tale of Hagar

Genesis 16

Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar.

And Sarai said to Abram, "Look, יהוה has kept me from bearing. Consort with my maid; perhaps I shall have a child through her." And Abram heeded Sarai's request.

So Sarai, Abram's wife, took her maid, Hagar the Egyptian—after Abram had dwelt in the land of Canaan ten years—and gave her to her husband Abram as concubine.

He cohabited with Hagar and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was lowered in her esteem.

And Sarai said to Abram, "The wrong done me is your fault! I myself put my maid in your bosom; now that she sees that she is pregnant, I am lowered in her esteem. יהוה decide between you and me!"

Abram said to Sarai, "Your maid is in your hands. Deal with her as you think right." Then Sarai treated her harshly, and she ran away from her.

A messenger of יהוה found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the road to Shur, and said, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

And she said, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai."

And the messenger of יהוה said to her, "Go back to your mistress, and submit to her harsh treatment."

And the messenger of יהוה said to her, "I will greatly increase your offspring, And they shall be too many to count."

The messenger of יהוה said to her further, "Behold, you are pregnant And shall bear a son; You shall call him Ishmael, For יהוה has paid heed to your suffering. He shall be a wild ass of a person; His hand against everyone, And everyone's hand against him; He shall dwell alongside of all his kin."

And she called יהוה who spoke to her, "You Are

וְשָׂרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ אַבְרָם לֹא יָלְדָה לוֹ וְלֹהָ שְׁפָחָהּ
מִצְרִית וּשְׁמָהּ הָגָר:
וּתְאֹמַר שָׂרַי אֶל-אַבְרָם הִנֵּה-נָא עֲצָרְנִי יְהוָה
מִלְדֹת בֶּאֱנָא אֶל-שְׁפָחָתִי אוֹלִי אֲבָנָה מִמֶּנָּה
וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם לְקוֹל שָׂרַי:
וַתִּלָּח שָׂרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ-אַבְרָם אֶת-הָגָר הַמִּצְרִית
שְׁפָחָתָהּ מִקֵּץ עֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים לְשִׁבְתּוֹ אַבְרָם בְּאֶרֶץ
כְּנָעַן וַתִּתֵּן אֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָם אִשָּׁה לֹא-אִשָּׁה:
וַיָּבֹא אֶל-הָגָר וַתְּהַר וַתֵּלֶד כִּי הָרְתָהּ וַתִּקַּל
גְּבֻרָתָהּ בְּעֵינֶיהָ:
וּתְאֹמַר שָׂרַי אֶל-אַבְרָם חֲמָסִי עָלֶיךָ אֲנֹכִי נָתַתִּי
שְׁפָחָתִי בְּחִיקְךָ וַתֵּלֶד כִּי הָרְתָהּ וְאֶקַּל בְּעֵינֶיהָ
יִשְׁפֹּט יְהוָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶיךָ:
וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל-שָׂרַי הִנֵּה שְׁפָחָתְךָ בְּיָדִי
עֲשִׂי-לָהּ הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינֶיהָ וַתַּעֲנֶה שָׂרַי וַתִּבְרַח
מִפָּנֶיהָ:
וַיִּמְצְאֶהָ מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה עַל-עֵינֵי הַמַּיִם בַּמִּדְבָּר
עַל-הָעֵין בְּדֶרֶךְ שׁוּר:
וַיֹּאמֶר הָגָר שְׁפָחָת שָׂרַי אֵי-מִנָּה בָאת וְאָנֹכִי
תֹלְכִי וּתְאֹמַר מִפָּנֶי שָׂרַי גְּבֻרָתִי אֲנֹכִי בְּרָחַת:
וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה שׁוּבִי אֶל-גְּבֻרָתְךָ וְהִתְעַנִּי
תַּחַת יָדֶיהָ:
וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה הֲרָגָה אֶרְבֶּה אֶת-זֶרְעִי
וְלֹא יִסְפָּר מִרְבִּי:
וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה הִנֵּה הָרָה וּלְדוֹת בִּן
וְקִרְאָת שְׁמוֹ יִשְׁמָעֵאל כִּי-שָׁמַע יְהוָה אֶל-עֲנָנָהּ:
וְהוּא יְהוָה פָּרָא אָדָם יָדוּ בְּכָל יוֹם כָּל כּוֹ
וְעַל-פָּנֶי כָל-אֲחָיו יִשְׁכָּן:
וַתִּקְרָא שֵׁם-יְהוָה הַדֹּבֵר אֵלֶיהָ אֵתָה אֵל רֹאֵי כִי
אֲמָרָה הַגֵּם הַלֵּם רְאִיתִי אֶתְרִי רֹאֵי:
עַל-כֵּן קָרָא לְבָאָר בָּאָר לְחֵי רֹאֵי הִנֵּה בֵּין-קִדְשׁ
וּבֵין בְּרָד:
וַתֵּלֶד הָגָר לְאַבְרָם בֶּן וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָם שֵׁם-בְּנֵו
אֲשֶׁר-יָלְדָהּ הָגָר יִשְׁמָעֵאל:
וְאַבְרָם בֶּן-שְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים בְּלֶדֶת-הָגָר
אֶת-יִשְׁמָעֵאל לְאַבְרָם: }ס

El-roi," by which she meant, "Have I not gone on seeing after my being seen!"
Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it is between Kadesh and Bered.—
Hagar bore a son to Abram, and Abram gave the son that Hagar bore him the name Ishmael.
Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

Genesis 21:1-21

יהוה took note of Sarah as promised, and יהוה did for Sarah what had been announced. Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken.
Abraham gave his newborn son, whom Sarah had borne him, the name of Isaac.
And when his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God had commanded him.
Now Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.
Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter; everyone who hears will laugh with me."
And she added,
"Who would have said to Abraham That Sarah would suckle children! Yet I have borne a son in his old age."
The child grew up and was weaned, and Abraham held a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.
Sarah saw the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham playing.
She said to Abraham, "Cast out that slave-woman and her son, for the son of that slave shall not share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."
The matter distressed Abraham greatly, for it concerned a son of his.
But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed over the boy or your slave; whatever Sarah tells you, do as she says, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be continued for you. As for the son of the slave-woman, I will make a nation of him, too, for he is your seed."
Early next morning Abraham took some bread and a skin of water, and gave them to Hagar. He placed them over her shoulder, together

ויהוה פקד את־שרה כאשר אמר ויעש יהוה לשרה כאשר דבר:
ותהר ותלד שרה לאברהם בן לזמניו למועד אשר־דבר אתו אלהים:
ויקרא אברהם את־שם־בנו הנולד־לו אשר־ילדה־לו שרה יצחק:
וימל אברהם את־יצחק בנו בן־שמונת ימים כאשר צוה אתו אלהים:
ואברהם בן־מאת שנה בהנלד לו את יצחק בנו: ותאמר שרה צחק עשה לי אלהים כל־השמע יצחק־לי:
ותאמר מי מלל לאברהם היניקה בנים שרה כִּי־ילדתי בן לזמניו:
ויגדל הילד ויגמל ויעש אברהם משתה גדול ביום הגמל את־יצחק:
ותרא שרה את־בן־הגר המצרית אשר־ילדה לאברהם מצחק:
ותאמר לאברהם גרש האמה הזאת ואת־בנה כי לא יירש בן־האמה הזאת עם־בני עמי־יצחק: וירע הדבר מאד בעיני אברהם על אודת בנו: ויאמר אלהים אל־אברהם אל־ירע בעיניך על־הנער ועל־אמתך כל־אשר תאמר אליך שרה שמע בקלה כי ביצחק יקרא לה ורע: וגם את־בן־האמה לגוי אשימנו כי ורעה הוא: וישכם אברהם ויפקד ויחזק־לחם ויחמת מים ויתן אל־הגר שם על־שכמה ואת־הילד וישלחה ותלך ותתע במדבר באר שבע: ויכלו המים מן־החמת ותשלך את־הילד תחת אתד השחים:
ותלך ותשב לה מנגד הרחק כמטותי קשת כי אמרה אל־אראך במות הילד ותשוב מנגד ותשא את־קלה ותבך:
וישמע אלהים את־קול הַנֶּעֱר ויקרא מלאך אלהים אל־הגר מן־השמים ויאמר לה מה־לך הגר אל־תיראי כִּי־שמע אלהים אל־קול הנער כאשר הוא־שם:
קומי שאי את־הנער והחזיקי את־גדך בך כִּי־לגוי גדול אשימנו:

with the child, and sent her away. And she wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

When the water was gone from the skin, she left the child under one of the bushes, and went and sat down at a distance, a bowshot away; for she thought, "Let me not look on as the child dies." And sitting thus afar, she burst into tears.

God heard the cry of the boy, and a messenger of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heeded the cry of the boy where he is.

Come, lift up the boy and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him." Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went and filled the skin with water, and let the boy drink.

God was with the boy and he grew up; he dwelt in the wilderness and became skilled with a bow.

He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

וַיִּפְקֹחַ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־עֵינֶיהָ וַתֵּרָא בְּאֵר מַיִם וַתֵּלֶךְ
וַתִּמְלֵא אֶת־הַחֲמַת מַיִם וַתִּשְׁק אֶת־הַנָּעַר:
וַיְהִי אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַנָּעַר וַיַּגְדֵּל וַיֵּשֶׁב בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיְהִי
רֹכֵב קֹשֶׁת:
וַיֵּשֶׁב בַּמִּדְבָּר פָּאֲרָן וַתִּקְחֶהּ לוֹ אִמּוֹ אִשָּׁה מֵאֶרֶץ
לְמִצְרַיִם: {פ

Genesis Rabbah 45:1

Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai said: Hagar was Pharaoh's daughter. When Pharaoh saw the [miraculous] acts that were done on Sarah's behalf in his palace, he took his daughter and gave her to him [Abraham]. He said: 'It is preferable that my daughter be a maidservant in that household than be the mistress in another household.' That is what is written: "And she had an Egyptian maidservant, and her name was Hagar" – here is your reward [ha agrikh]. Avimelekh, too, when he saw the miracles that were performed on Sarah's behalf in his palace, he took his daughter and gave her to him. He said: 'It is preferable that my daughter be a maidservant in that household than be the mistress in another household.' That is what is written: "The daughters of kings are among those who honor you; at your right hand stands the consort, attired in gold from Ofir" (Psalms 45:10).

אָמַר רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאי הָגָר בַּתוֹ שֶׁל פַּרְעֹה
הָיְתָה, וְכִיוֹן שָׂרָא פַּרְעֹה מַעֲשִׂים שְׁנֵעִשׂוּ
לְשָׂרָה בְּבֵיתוֹ, נָטַל בַּתוֹ וּנְתָנָהּ לוֹ, אָמַר מוּטָב
שֶׁתְּהֵא בְּתִי שִׁפְחָה בְּבֵית זֶה וְלֹא גְבִירָה בְּבֵית
אַחֵר, הִנָּהּ הוּא דְּקִתִּיב: וְלֵה שִׁפְחָה מִצֻּרִית
וּשְׂמָהּ הָגָר, הֵא אֲגִרִיף. אִף אֲבִימֶלֶךְ כִּיוֹן
שָׂרָא נָסִים שְׁנֵעִשׂוּ לְשָׂרָה בְּבֵיתוֹ נָטַל בַּתוֹ
וּנְתָנָהּ לוֹ, אָמַר מוּטָב שֶׁתְּהֵא בְּתִי שִׁפְחָה בְּבֵית
הַזֶּה וְלֹא גְבִירָה בְּבֵית אַחֵר, הִנָּהּ הוּא דְּקִתִּיב
(תְּהִלִּים מֵה, י): בְּנוֹת מְלָכִים בִּיקְרוּתִיף נֶאֱכָה
שֶׁגַל לִימִינָהּ בְּכֶתֶם אוֹפִיר

Genesis Rabbah 45:4

Noblewomen would come and inquire after Sarah's wellbeing, and Sarah would say: 'Go and inquire after the wellbeing of that meek woman' [Hagar]. Hagar would say to them: 'My mistress Sarah, her inner reality is not like her outward impression. She gives the impression of being a righteous woman, but she is not a righteous woman. Were she a righteous woman, look at how many years that she did not conceive, whereas I conceived in one night.' Sarah would then say: 'Should I have a discussion with this woman? Better that I should have a discussion with her master.'

והיו מטרונות באות לשאל בשלומה של שרה
והיתה שרה אומרת להם צאו ושאלו בשלומה
של עלובה, והיתה הגר אומרת להם שרי גברתי
אין סתרה פגלוייה, נראית צדקת ואינה צדקת,
אלו היתה צדקת ראו כמה שנים שלא נתעברה
ואני בלילה אחד נתעברתי, והיתה אומרת עם דא
אנא מסב ומתן, הלואי מסב ומתן עם מרה

Genesis Rabbah 45:5

It is written: "He consorted with Hagar, and she conceived." Why, then, does the verse [later] state [to Hagar]: "Behold, you will conceive and bear a son"? (Genesis 16:11). The explanation is that it teaches that Sarah directed an evil eye against her and caused her to miscarry her fetus.

הנה הרה וילדת בן, אלא מלמד שהכניסה בה
שרה עין רעה והפילה עברה

Genesis Rabbah 53:13

"On her shoulder and the child" – he was twenty-seven years old and yet you say: "On her shoulder"? It teaches that Sarah introduced an evil eye into him and he was afflicted with fever and pain [and could not walk on his own]. Know that it is so, as it is written: "The water in the skin was finished" (Genesis 21:15), as a sick person typically drinks a lot and frequently.

על שכמה ואת הילד, בן עשרים ושבע שנים,
ואת אמרת: שם על שכמה, אלא מלמד
שהכניסה בו שרה עין רעה ונכנסה בו חמה
ואכאבית, תדע לה שכן, דכתיב (בראשית כא,
טו): ויכלו המים מן החמת, שכן דרך החולה
להיות שותה הרבה ובכל שעה

Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer 30:6

The well which was created at twilight was opened for them there, and they went and drank and filled the bottle with water, as it is said, "And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water" (Gen. 21:19). And there they left the well, and thence they started on their way, and went through all the wilderness until they came to the wilderness of Paran, and they found there streams of water, and

ושם נפתחו להם הבאר שנבראת בין השמשות
והלכו ושתו ומלאו את החמת מים, שנאמר:
"ויפקח אלהים את עיניה". ושם הניחו הבאר
ומשם נשאו את רגליהם והלכו אל המדבר כלו
עד שהגיעו למדבר פארן ומצאו שם מוצאי מים
וישבו שם, שנאמר: "וישב במדבר פארן"

they dwelt there, as it is said, "And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran" (Gen. 21:21).	
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