

## Bereshit 16: 1-13

## בראשית טז א - יג

1. Sarai, Avram's wife, had not borne [children] to him. She had an Egyptian maid, her name was Hagar.

א וְשָׂרַי אֵשֶׁת אַבְרָם לֹא יָלְדָה לוֹ וְלֹא שָׁפָחָה מִצְרִית וְשִׁמָּה הָגָר:
- 2 And Sarai said to Avram, "Behold now, God has held me back from bearing; please come in to my maid; perhaps I will be built up [with sons] from her." And Abram hearkened to Sarai's voice.

ב וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרַי אֶל אַבְרָם הִנֵּה נָא עֲצֹרְנִי יְהוָה מִלָּדֶת בֶּא נָא אֶל שִׁפְחָתִי אוּלִי אֲבָנָה מִמֶּנָּה וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם לְקוֹל שָׂרַי:
- 3 Sarai, Avram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, at the end of ten years of Avram's living [dwelling] in the land of Canaan, and she gave her to her husband Avram for a wife.

ג וַתִּקַּח שָׂרַי אֵשֶׁת אַבְרָם אֶת הָגָר הַמִּצְרִית שִׁפְחָתָהּ מִקֶּץ עֶשְׂרִי שָׁנִים לְשִׁבְתָּהּ אַבְרָם בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וַתֵּתֶן אֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָם אִישָׁהּ לֹאשָׁה:
- 4 And he came to [sleep with] Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when she saw that she was pregnant, her mistress became less important [lowered in worth] in her eyes.

ד וַיָּבֹא אֶל הָגָר וַתְּהַר וַתֵּבֶרָ כִּי הָרְתָהּ וַתִּקַּל גְּבֻרָתָהּ בְּעֵינֶיהָ:
- 5 And Sarai said to Avram, "The wrong [injustice] done to me is upon you! I gave my maid into your bosom, but now she sees that she is pregnant, I have become unimportant [lowered in worth] in her eyes. May God judge [do justice] between me and you!"

ה וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרַי אֶל אַבְרָם חֲמָסִי עָלֶיךָ אֲנֹכִי נָתַתִּי שִׁפְחָתִי בְּחִיקְךָ וַתֵּבֶרָ כִּי הָרְתָה וַאֲקַל בְּעֵינָיָהּ יִשְׁפֹּט יְהוָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶיךָ:
- 6 And Avram said to Sarai, "Here - your maid is in your hand; do with her however it seems good in your eyes." And Sarai afflicted her, and she fled from before her.

ו וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל שָׂרַי הִנֵּה שִׁפְחָתְךָ בְּיָדְךָ עֲשִׂי לָהּ הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ וַתַּעֲנֶה שָׂרַי וַתִּבְרַח מִפָּנֶיהָ:
- 7 And an angel [messenger] of God found her by a spring of water in the desert, by the spring on the way to Shur.

ז וַיִּמְצָאָהּ מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה עַל עֵין הַמַּיִם בַּמִּדְבָּר עַל הָעֵין בְּדֶרֶךְ שׁוּר:
- 8 He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where are you coming from, and where are you going to?" And she said, "I am fleeing from Sarai my mistress."

ח וַיֹּאמֶר הָגָר שִׁפְחַת שָׂרַי אֵי מִזֶּה בָּאת וְאֵנָּה תֵּלְכִי וַתֹּאמֶר מִפְּנֵי שָׂרַי גְּבֻרָתִי אֲנֹכִי בָרַחְתִּי:
- 9 And God's angel [messenger] said to her, "Return to your mistress, and allow yourself to be afflicted under her hand."

ט וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה שׁוּבִי אֶל גְּבֻרָתְךָ וַהֲתַעֲנִי תַּחַת יָדָהּ:
- 10 And Go's angel [messenger] said to her, "I will greatly multiply your seed [children], and it will be too many to count."

י וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה הֲרֵבָה אֲרֹבָה אֶת זַרְעֲךָ וְלֹא יִסְפֹּר מֵרֹב:
- 11 And God's angel; [messenger] said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and and will bear a son, and name him Ishmael [God hears], for God has heard your affliction.

יא וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה הִנֵּה הָרָה וְיִלְדֶּת בֶּן וְקָרָאתָ שְׁמוֹ וַיִּשְׁמַעֲאֵל כִּי שָׁמַע יְהוָה אֶל עֲנִיָּךְ:

**12** And he will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be upon all, and everyone's hand upon him, and yet in the presence of all his brothers he will dwell."

יב והוא יהיה פרא אדם ידו בכל יד כל בו ועל פני כל אחיו ישכן:

**13** And she called the name of God, the one who had spoken to her, "You are the God of seeing," because she said: "Have I continued [gone on] seeing here after I have been seen?"

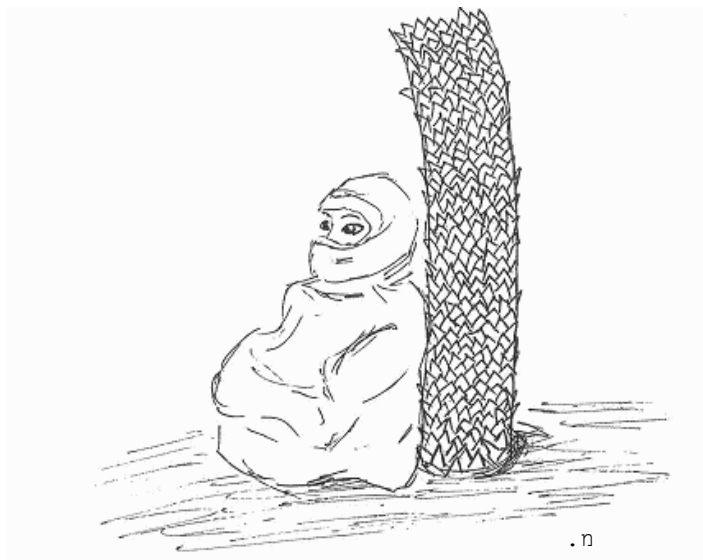
יג ותקרא שם יהוה הדבר אליה אתה אל ראי כי אמרה הגם הלא ראיתי אחרי ראי:

**14** Therefore the well was called Be'er Lachai Ro'i; [Well of the living-one who sees me], behold it is between Kadesh and Bered.

יד על כן קרא לבאר באר לחי ראי הנה בין קדש ובין ברד:

**15** Hagar bore a son to Avram, and Avram named his son, whom Hagar had borne, Ishmael.

טו ותלד הגר לאברם בן ויקרא אברם שם בנו אשר ילדה הגר ישמעאל:



ח.  
גלסר

### **Leading Idea: When is enough *enough*?**

Sarai doesn't do just one thing to Hagar; rather, it seems that she treats her badly *time after time*. Hagar finally runs away because she decides she has taken enough of Sarai's harsh treatment. How do we make the decision that *enough is enough*? There are two things to consider here (i) When to *draw the line* and say "no more!" and (ii) What constitutes *good reasons* for leaving a situation or person. Here the question is not only one of quantity, but also a matter of deciding *what factors are the relevant ones* in the first place. For instance, two people might both 'draw the line' at eating one candy bar per day – but the relevant factor to consider for one person might be health, while the relevant factor for the other might be the cost.

### **Exercise: Drawing lines**

*In each case, how do you decide that enough is enough? In each case, what factors do you take into account in making this decision?*

1. Deciding how much homework to do
2. Deciding how much candy to eat before putting the rest away
3. Deciding when you have watched enough television
4. Deciding how late to stay up
5. Deciding when your hair needs cutting
6. Deciding when to stop playing a computer game
7. Deciding whether to continue asking your parents for something after they have said 'no'
8. Deciding when teasing your brother/sister has gone far enough
9. Deciding how much tzedakah to give
10. Deciding when you need to clean your room

**Leading Idea: Consequences and Responsibility**

In verses 4-6 Sara speaks to Avram complaining of Hagar and Avram says to her “do what you want to do” – Sarai then treats her badly. Hagar then runs away.

In this passage Avram seems to take no responsibility for addressing the situation – is he then partly responsible for Hagar’s leaving? Our actions can have consequences we don’t foresee, but does that absolve us from responsibility toward the outcome?

The discussion plan “Consequences and Responsibility” explores the relationship between actions we take, their consequences and our responsibility toward the outcome.

**Discussion Plan: Consequences and Responsibility**

1. If I give you permission to play ball outside the house and a ball goes through the window, who is responsible for the broken window?
2. You loosen the wheel on the bike of someone intending to scare them, but they ended up getting hurt. Are you responsible for them being hurt?
3. You help your friend with their homework. Are you responsible for their good grade?
4. You introduce two people and they become friends. Are you responsible for their friendship?
5. Your parents don’t give you permission to go to your friend’s sleepover party and your friend is angry with you. Are your parents responsible for the anger?

### **Leading Idea: Going *from* – Going *to***

When you decide to move, does it make a difference if your reason for making the move is tied to *leaving behind the place you are currently in*, or tied to *the place you heading toward*? Sometimes the place we are heading towards is also a place we once chose to leave (coming home after camp, leaving the home town where we grew up, then coming back there later in life). Sometimes that 'return' is from a place our ancestors left generations before (Jews going to live in Israel, second or third generation immigrants returning to their parents/grandparents' country of birth). Is a return to place always motivated by the desire to be there or can there be other reasons to 'return home'?

Susan Babbitt, writing on American slavery notes that the decision to leave often also involves a bold step of imagination. In *going to* this involves the capacity to imagine one's life differently from how it is, and perhaps to imagine yourself capable of things you have not yet done. To have both to desire change and some imagined life that you are moving toward. In *going from* imagination also comes into play, as it may involve playing out the consequences of staying where we currently are. Of course both might be the matter of impulsive action (without much forethought) – but is that the case here?

Hagar has left Avram's house and she is 'on the road to Shur' - heading back toward her place of birth, Egypt. It looks like she is fleeing from one home and returning to another home. Yet she turns around and returns to the place of conflict – her home with Avram and Sarai (and that doesn't seem to turn out too well for her!). These discussion plans explore going from and going to and the reasons we might have for making these journeys.

### **Discussion Plan: Running *from*, Running *to***

1. When you run away, do your problems run with you?
2. Is it possible to run away without leaving home?
3. Is hiding from someone a kind of 'running away'?
4. If people know where you are going, are you still running away?
5. If you are running away *from* something, are you always running *to* something else?
6. Are there times when running *to* something, is always running away *from* something else? Can you give an example?
7. If you run to your mother when she comes home from work, are you running *from* anything?
8. Can you think of some circumstances when running away would be a sensible thing to do? (if so, what might they be?)
9. Can you think of some circumstances when running away would be a brave thing to do? (if so, when might that be?)
10. Can you think of some circumstances when running away would be the wrong thing to do?

## Exercise: Good Reasons for Leaving

*Do you think the following are good reasons for leaving? Explain why or why not*

1. You leave the room because your brother refuses to give you the video game.
2. You stop being someone's friend because you discover she/he stole something from you.
3. You run away because your sister hits you when you do something to annoy her.
4. You ask to change schools because your teacher tells you that you are not bright.
5. You leave your friend's sleep-over because you miss home.
6. You stop taking swimming classes because the swim instructor insists that you wear a bathing cap and you don't like wearing one.
7. You leave the softball team because the coach has clear 'favorites' in the team and you don't think that is fair.
8. You leave your friend's house early because you remember you were meant to feed the dog and you forgot to do it before you left home earlier in the day.

### Leading Idea: Rhetorical Questions

#### **"Where have you come from? Where are you going?"**

When the Angel comes to Hagar he asks: "Where have you come from? Where are you going?" Does the angel want an answer? Rhetorical questions are questions we ask when we do not expect (or even desire) an answer – rather, their intent is either: **(i) to lead us along a path of reasoning** (in which case the person asking the question then proceeds to answer it (e.g.; "Why am I saying this? Because...), or **(ii) to point our attention to something** we are already expected to know (e.g.; "Do you really want that third cookie?").

In the case of Hagar, it seems the angel is asking the second kind of rhetorical question. So what is the angel seeking to get Hagar to think about? Hagar has left Avram's house and she is 'on the road to Shur' - heading back toward her place of birth, Egypt. It looks like she is fleeing from one home and returning to another home. The question might be: *"To what home should you be returning?"* or *"Where do you belong?"*

Other cases of rhetorical questions in the Torah involve other pivotal events.

- God to Adam and Chava in the garden of Eden, (Bereshit 9-13)
- God to Cain "Where is Hevel your brother?" (Bereshit 4:9)
- God to Moshe "Why are crying out to me?" (Exodus 14:15)

## Exercise: Rhetorical Questions

*Can you think of circumstances in which the following might be asked as a genuine question? Can you think of circumstances where the question is asked rhetorically? If it is a rhetorical question, what might it be designed to get the person to think about?*

1. Do you really want that third cookie?
2. Have you been listening to what I have been saying?
3. Aren't you tired yet?
4. Did I say that you could go out tonight?
5. Aren't you cold?

Are there questions that can only be asked rhetorically?

## Leading Idea: Seeing and Naming God

Hagar's journey is unique in that she both *sees* and *names* God. Both this act of seeing (she seeing God and God seeing her; naming God) are obscurely phrased in Hebrew and open to different understandings and translations. The significance of this is captured in the reading by Rabbi Michal Shekel. Firstly, the difference between *hearing* and *seeing* is an important one – both literally and the way we use these terms metaphorically (phrases like "I see what you mean" and the notion of *insight*). Secondly, we have the significance of seeing another's *face*. You might like to explore together why the face has unique status in terms of our access to others.

*There are further resources in this booklet for exploring these: see: "Face", p.45 and on naming and naming God. Relevant exercises and discussion plans can be found in those sections.*

## Exercise: Seeing

What does the word "see" or "seeing" mean in each of these phrases?

1. "It is such a clear night, I can see a lot of stars"
2. "See that you keep these in the correct order"
3. "When you mention summer, I see the beach and sand in my mind"
4. "He always sees the best in people"
5. "I see what you mean. I hadn't thought of it like that"
6. "Please see the guests to the door"
7. "He always sees the best in people"

Below are some possible ways of understanding the use of the word 'see'. Can you match the meanings below with the phrases above?

(a) observe

(b) imagine

(c) consider the fact that

(d) understand

(e) accompany

(f) pay attention to

(g) recognize

(h) visualize

(i) -----

***Return to look at Bereshit 16:13 – the word ‘see’ is used 4 times - which senses of ‘see’ could be meant on each of these occasions? How do different meanings of ‘see’ change how we understand the passage?***

### **Activity:**

Find a place (it might be outdoors, inside a room, amongst people, alone – you decide). Sit quietly for 10 minutes and concentrate on what you can see around you. Pay attention not only to what your senses pick up, but to the multiple meanings of 'seeing' explored above. Write down your observations. Come back and share them with your class.

### **Activity: Seeing**

Sitting in the circle, one person begins by describing someone else in the circle very carefully – other's in the circle need to figure out who it is. The first person in the circle to guess who it is correctly has the next turn in describing someone else in the circle. To make it more difficult, start with describing the more general features (that several others share) before describing more unique features of the person (eg, 'brown hair' before 'red ribbons in their hair')

### **Discussion Plan: Seeing**

*In each case, make sure to explain your answers / responses.*

1. Are there times when people can hear you, but they can't see you? Describe some.
2. Are there times when people can see you, but they can't hear you? Describe some.
3. Can you look at someone but not really see them?
4. Can you see someone without looking at them?
5. Are there things about you that your friends might see that your parents don't see?
6. Are there things about you that your parents might see that your teachers don't see?
7. Do you think that your friends all see you the same way?
8. Is it possible for a stranger see you better than your friends do?



***Return to the questions above – try re-asking them about seeing and hearing God. (e.g.; Are there times when God is heard but not seen? Could you hear what God says but not listen to God? Does it make a difference if you see God as a parent or as a friend? Do you expect God to see you better than other people? In what ways?)***

