Coming Home

Source Sheet by Rabbi Elana Nemitoff-Bresler

בראשית כ"א:ט'-י"ט

Genesis 21:9-19

(9) Sarah saw the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham playing. (10) 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." (11-13) Abraham was distressed but God assuaged his worries. (14) Early next morning Abraham took some bread and a skin of water, and gave them to Hagar. He placed them over her shoulder, together with the child, and sent her away. And she left. (15) When the water was gone, she left the child under one of the bushes, (16) and went and sat down at a distance; for she thought, "Let me not look on as the child dies." And sitting thus afar, she burst into tears. (17) God heard the cry of the boy, and a messenger of God called to Hagar and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heeded the cry of the boy where he is. (18) Come, lift up the boy and hold him by the hand," (19) 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.

Hagar was literally exiled from her home, but God saw her and essentially helped create a new home with God. How do we create a sense of home with those in our lives?

שמואל א אי:חי-י״ז

(ח) וַיּאמֶר לָה אֶלְקנֶה אִישָּׁה חַנָּה לֵמֶה תִּבְכִּי וְלָמֶה לָא תְאֹכְלִי וְלֶמֶה יֵרַע לְבָבֶךְ הַלְּוֹא אֲנֹכִי טְוֹב לְּךְ מֵּשְשָׁרֶה בְּנִים: (ט) וַתְּקָם חַנָּה אַחֲרֵי אָכְלֶה בְשִׁלְה וְאַחֲרֵי שְׁתָה וְעֵלִי הַכֹּהֵן ישׁבֹ עַל־מְזוּזָת הֵיכַל יְהֹוֶה: (י) וְהָיא מֶרַת נָפֶשׁ וַתִּתְפַּלֵּל עַל־יְהֹוֶה וּבָלָה תִבְבֶּה: (יא) וַתִּדֹּר נְּדֶר וַתּאֹמֵר יְהֹוֶה צְּבְאׁוֹת אִם־רָאָה תִרְאָה וּ בְּעֲנֵי אֲמְהֶךּ וּזְכַרְתַּנִי וְלְא־תִשְׁכֵּח אֶת־אֲמְהֶּךּ וְנְתַתְּה לַאֲמְתְדָּ זֶרֵע אֲנְשִׁים וּנְתַתְּיוֹ לֵיהֹוָה כָּל־יְמֵי חַיִּיוֹ וּמוֹרֶה לֹא־יַעֲלֶה עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ: (יב) וְהָיָה נְּעוֹת וְקוֹלֶה לְא יִשְּׁמֵע וַיַּחְשְׁבֶּה עֵלִי לְשִׁכֹּרְה: (יד) וַיִּאֹמֶר אֵלֵיהָ עַלִּי עַד־מְתֵי מְשָׁתַּבְּרָת עַל־לִבְּבָּה הָפִינְה בְּעִיה נְעִוֹת וְקוֹלֶבְּה לְא יִשְּׁמֵע וַיַּחְשְׁבֶּרְ עְשִׁרְ לְשׁכֹּרֵה: (יד) וַיְּאֹמֶר אֵלֶיהָ עֵלִי עִד־מְתַיּ מִּשְׁתָּבְּרִין הָסִירִי אֵת־יֵינֵךְ מֵעְלֵידִּ: (טו) וַתַּעַן חַנָּה וַתִּאֹמֵר לְא אֲדֹנִי אִשֵּׁה קְשַׁת־רוּהַ אָבֹּכִי וַיִין לְא שָׁתִיתִי I Samuel 1:8-17

(8) Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Hannah, why are you crying and not eating? Why are you so sad? Am I not more devoted to you than ten sons?" [i.e. you don't need kids, you have me!] (9) After they had eaten and drunk, Hannah rose.—The priest Eli was sitting near the temple of Adonai.— (10) In her wretchedness, she prayed to Adonai, weeping all the while. (11) And she made this vow: "O God, if You will look upon the suffering of Your maidservant and will remember me, and grant me a male child, I will dedicate him to Adonai for his whole life; and no razor shall ever touch his head." (12) As she kept on praying before God, Eli watched her mouth. (13) Now Hannah was praying in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard. So Eli thought she was drunk. (14) Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Sober up!" (15) And Hannah replied, "Oh no, my lord! I am a very unhappy. I have drunk no wine, but I have been pouring out my heart to Adonai. (16) Do not take me for a worthless woman; I have been speaking out of my anguish and distress." (17) "Then go in peace," said Eli, "and may God grant you what you have asked."

How does the lack of trust both Elkanah and Eli show Hannah represent her home becoming unsafe? We often don't know another person's experience, yet we judge. How do we honor those whom we meet in their need to make their own home?

Ezekiel 12:3

(3) Therefore, human...Go into exile from your home to another place before their very eyes; perhaps they will take note.

יחזקאל י״ב:ג׳

ג) וְאַתְּה בֶן־אָדָׁם... וְגָלִיתָ מִמְּקוֹמְדֹּ אֶל־מְקוֹםאַחר לְעֵינֵיהֶם אוּלֵי יֵרְאוֹּ:

What obligation do we have to honor everyone's sense of being at home? How?

Niddah 16b

A person one doesn't love is one who enters the house of another suddenly, without warning. Rabbi Yoḥanan says: And this includes even one who comes into his own house without prior warning, as the members of his household might be engaged in private activities.

נדה ט"ז ב

והמושיב שבת במרומי קרת והאוחז באמה ומשתין מים והנכנס לבית חבירו פתאום אמר רבי יוחנן ואפילו לביתו

Why do the rabbis teach us that we shouldn't enter one's house without warning (even our own)?

Love of Jerusalem, Yehuda Amichai

Here they build a house and there they destroy Here they dig into the earth And there they dig into the sky, Here they sit and there they walk Here they hate and there they love.