

**Temple Beth-El Shabbat AM Torah Study...Genesis 21:14-21**

	<b>FOX</b>	<b>JPS</b>	<b>HEBREW</b>
<b>14</b>	Avraham started-early in the morning, he took some bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar—placing them upon her shoulder—together with the child and sent her away. She went off and roamed in the wilderness of Be'er-Sheva.	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 wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.	וַיִּשְׂכֶם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּקְחֵם לֶחֶם וְחַמַּת מַיִם וַיִּתֵּן אֶל-הָגָר שָׁם עַל- שִׁכְמָהּ וְאֶת-הַיֶּלֶד וַיִּשְׁלַחַהּ וּתְלֹךְ וַתִּמְעַ בְּמִדְבַּר בְּאֵר שָׁבַע
<b>15</b>	And when the water in the skin was at an end, she cast the child under one of the bushes,	When the water was gone from the skin, she left the child under one of the bushes,	וַיִּכְלוּ הַמַּיִם מִן-הַחַמַּת וַתִּשְׁלַךְ אֶת-הַיֶּלֶד תַּחַת אֶחָד הַשִּׁיחִים
<b>16</b>	and went and sat by herself, at-a-distance, as far away as a bowshot, for she said to herself: Let me not see the child die! So she sat at-a-distance, and lifted up her voice and wept.	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.	וּתְלֹךְ וַתֵּשֶׁב לָהּ מֵנֶגֶד הַרְחֵק כַּמִּטְחָוִי קִנְשֵׁת כִּי אָמְרָה אֶל-אֶרְאֶה בְּמוֹת הַיֶּלֶד וַתֵּשֶׁב מֵנֶגֶד וַתִּשָּׂא אֶת-קוֹלָהּ וַתִּבְכֶּה
<b>17</b>	But God heard the voice of the lad, God’s messenger called to Hagar from heaven and said to her: What is (the matter) with you, Hagar? Do not be afraid, for God has heard the voice of the lad there where he is.	God heard the cry of the boy, and an angel 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.	וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת-קוֹל הַנַּעַר וַיִּקְרָא מַלְאָךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶל-הָגָר מִן- הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מַה-לְךָ הָגָר אֶל-תִּירָאִי כִּי-שָׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶל-קוֹל הַנַּעַר בְּאֲשֶׁר הוּא-שָׁם
<b>18</b>	Arise, lift up the lad and grasp him with your hand, for a great nation will I make of him!	Come, lift up the boy and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him.”	קוּמִי שְׂאִי אֶת-הַנַּעַר וְהִחֲזִיקִי אֶת-יָדָךְ בּוֹ כִּי- לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל אֲשִׁימְנֻו
<b>19</b>	God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; she went, filled the skin with water, and gave the lad to drink.	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.	וַיִּפְקַח אֱלֹהִים אֶת-עֵינֶיהָ וַתֵּרָא בְּאֵר מַיִם וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתִּמְלֵא אֶת-הַחַמַּת מַיִם וַתִּשְׁקֵן אֶת-הַנַּעַר

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<b>20</b>	And God was with the lad as he grew up, he settled in the wilderness, and became an archer, a bowman.	God was with the boy and he grew up; he dwelt in the wilderness and became a bowman.	וַיְהִי אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַנְּעָר וַיִּגְדַּל וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּמִדְבַּר וַיְהִי רֹכֵב קִשְׁת
<b>21</b>	He settled in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took him a wife from the land of Egypt.	He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.	וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּמִדְבַּר פָּאֲרָן וַתִּקַּח־לוֹ אִמּוֹ אִשָּׁה מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם

**FOX...Yishmael Banished (21:9-21)...** Once Yitzhak has been born, separation must be made between heir and firstborn. Despite Avraham’s obvious love for him, Yishmael must leave; his mother must repeat her ordeal of Chap. 16 as well. Nonetheless the text emphasizes that God is there “with the lad” (v.20); twice the Yishmael motif of “God hearkening” resounds (v.17); and God promises that the boy will eventually attain the same exalted status as his brother (vv. 13, 18).

Structurally, this brief tale foreshadows the next chapter, the ordeal of Yitzhak. It speaks of a journey into the unknown, a child at the point of death, the intervention of God’s “messenger,” the parent’s sighting of the way out, and the promise of future blessing. Of course, the differences between the two stories are equally important.

**V. 14**

*he woke up early in the morning...*

- **RADAK**<sup>1</sup>...to carry out God’s instruction.
- **ALTER**... This is precisely echoed in the story of the binding of Isaac (22:3), as part of an intricate network of correspondences between the two stories.

*he took bread and hose full of water...*

- **RADAK**... he gave her enough food and water to last for a day or two. She was unable to carry more than that. He also gave her a plentiful supply of water as the distance to Egypt was considerable. On the other hand, she might have had relatives much closer than in Egypt. He gave her also silver and gold so that she could replenish her supplies, although the Torah did not make a specific mention of this.
- **RABBEINU BAHYA**<sup>2</sup>... He should have given Hagar silver and gold and camels to transport both her, Ishmael, and their belongings seeing he had plenty of money to spare. After all, had he not prayed for his son’s welfare in 17:18 saying to God: “if only Ishmael live (a good life) in Your presence?” However, seeing that Sarah had told him to expel Hagar and her son, and God had told him to obey everything that Sarah said to him (verse 12), Avraham complied and expelled them with the minimum of creature comforts plus a survival kit only. This is Nachmanides<sup>3</sup>’ view....

<sup>1</sup> Rabbi David Kimhi (1160-1235) was a French medieval rabbi, biblical commentator, philosopher, and grammarian.

<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Bahya ben Asher (1255-1340) was a commentator on Tanach.

<sup>3</sup> Nachmanides, or RAMBAN, (1194-1270) was a Sephardic Rabbi, philosopher, physician, Kabbalist, and biblical commentator.

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- **SFORNO**<sup>4</sup>... the hose containing the water; this was in order to show that she was a slave woman. A reminder of the angel at the time having told her that she was to submit to her mistress Sarah (16:9) A righteous person of the caliber of Avraham would certainly not send away a woman and her son without provisions adequate to ensure that she can reach the next location where new provisions can be obtained. [I wonder why Hagar was not given an animal to ride on? Clearly, Avraham was intent that she should be known to be a slave by the fact that she had to travel on foot. Ed.] Our sages in Bereshit Rabbah 53:15 understand the words ויהי אלוקים את הנער in verse 20, to mean that she had both donkeys and camels at her disposal as well as her son's servants. If we accept that line in the Midrash at face value, the crisis which overtook Hagar and Ishmael was only that they ran out of water due to having lost their way in the desert. As soon as they found a source of water they had all the means to establish themselves economically, even in the midst of the desert. It was natural for Ishmael to settle in the desert as his mother had been told already while she was pregnant that here son would be a פרא אדם, someone preferring to live in the wilderness, not in civilized society.
- **IBN EZRA**<sup>5</sup>... *Chemet* (bottle) is a vessel. It is possibly made out of skin or wood. *Chamatekha* (thy venom) in *That putteth thy venom (chamatekha) thereto* (Hab. 2:15) (*I.E. renders chamatekha (thy venom) as thy vessel.*) is analogous. Many are amazed at Abraham's behavior. They ask, how could Abraham chase his son out of his house? How could he send away mother and child empty handed? Where was his kindness? However, I am amazed at those who are amazed at Abraham, for Abraham acted according to God's dictates.(v. 12)<sup>5</sup> Had he acted contrary to Sarah's wishes and given money to Hagar, then he would have transgressed God's command. However, ultimately, after Sarah's death, he gave gifts to Ishmael's children.
- **CHIZKUNI**<sup>6</sup>...Rashi points out that he did not give Hagar silver or gold, as he himself had grown to dislike Ishmael, seeing that he had become a degenerate. Besides, at this stage Avraham did not have any "inheritance" at his disposal that he could give away, seeing that he himself was only a stranger in the land, just as was his son Ishmael. We have learned in the Talmud Kidushin 17 that when a father and a son convert to Judaism they are both "strangers," i.e. converts, but no longer legally considered as related to one another. As a result, there does not exist a "father-son" relationship to base any inheritance claim on. (Choshen Mishpot 283) Nonetheless, it had been Avraham's intention after Sarah's death to give his son Ishmael "gifts," as opposed to an inheritance, as is clear from how he treated the sons of Keturah, his concubine after Sarah's death (and Yitzchok having married and having received his full inheritance. Genesis 25:5).
- **RASHI**<sup>7</sup>... but not silver and gold, because he hated him for taking to degenerate ways (Exodus Rabbah 1:1).

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<sup>4</sup> Rabbi Ovadia ben Jacob Sforno (1475-1550) was a biblical commentator, philosopher, and physician from Italy.

<sup>5</sup> Abraham ben Meir ibn Ezra (1089-c.1167) was a biblical commentator and philosopher in the Middle Ages from Spain.

<sup>6</sup> Rabbi Hezekiah ben Manoah (1250-1310) was a French rabbi and student.

<sup>7</sup> Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105) was a medieval French rabbi and author.

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- **SIFTEI HACHAMIM**<sup>8</sup>... Why did Avraham not give him silver and gold? An answer is: Avraham assumed that shortly, after Sarah's anger subsides, he will bring him back. (*Maharshal*<sup>9</sup>)...

### *over her shoulder...*

- **JPS**...This refers only to the bread and water container. Ishmael, who is now at least sixteen years old, could hardly have been carried by his mother!
- **OR HACHAIM**<sup>10</sup>... Abraham put Ishmael also on Hagar's shoulder because the latter refused to leave his father's house. As a result Abraham tied him up as one ties up a child, put him on Hagar's shoulder and expelled her.
- **RADAK**... he placed the bread and the water on her shoulder and arranged for Ishmael to walk ahead of her. He was approximately 15 and the time, and if he would tire, Hagar would have to carry him for a while either on her shoulder or in her lap.
- **RASHI**... the child, too, he placed on her shoulder, for Sarah had cast an evil eye upon him, so that a fever seized him and he could not walk (Genesis Rabbah 53:13).
- **CHIZKUNI**... he made sure that she held him by her hand. According to Rashi, Ishmael had been taken ill, so that Hagar had to carry him also. If you were to argue that we have been taught that sickness did not exist until Yaakov was on his deathbed, (Baba Metzia 87) we must assume that the Talmud refers to terminal sickness, but that did not include dying from thirst, etc.

### *child...*

- **JPS**... Hebrew *yeled* can be used for a youth and is interchangeable with *na'ar*, which can also refer both to a baby and to a grown man.
- **ALTER**... ...in verses 14 and 15, Hagar refers to her son as *yeled*, “child” (the etymology—“the one who is born”...). This is the same term that is used for Isaac at the beginning of verse 8. From the moment the angel speaks in verse 17, Ishmael is consistently referred to as *na'ar*, “lad”—a more realistic indication of his adolescent status and also a term of tenderness, as in the story of the binding of Isaac in the next chapter.

### *sent her away...*

- **JPS**...Hebrew *shillah* is used for divorce as well as for the emancipation of slaves.
- **CHIZKUNI**... into freedom since having been intimate with her he was not allowed to sell her to another owner according to Torah law. (Compare Exodus 21:11)
  - **Exodus 21:8, 11:** (8) If she proves to be displeasing to her master, who designated her for himself, he must let her be redeemed; he shall not have the right to sell her to outsiders, since he broke faith with her.... (11)If he fails her in these three ways, she shall go free, without payment.

<sup>8</sup> Siftei Chachamim was a commentary on Rashi's commentary on Torah. It was written by Shabbethai ben Joseph Bass (1641-1718).

<sup>9</sup> Solomon Luria (1510-1573) was a teacher and Halachic authority from Poland.

<sup>10</sup> Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar (1696-1743), a Talmudist and kabbalist, wrote *Or HaChaim*, his commentary on the Torah.

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- **RAMBAN...** This is to be understood in connection with the above: *And he gave to Hagar [the bread and bottle of water]... and the child*, for he gave her the child also to go with her wherever she will go.
- **RADAK...** either from his house, or he accompanied her some distance until outside the town limits.
- **SFORNO...** he first accompanied her some distance out of his loving concern for them. (compare 18:16).
  - **Genesis 18:16:** The men set out from there and looked down toward Sodom, Abraham walking with them to see them off. **וְאַבְרָהָם הֵלְךְ עִמָּם לִשְׁלֹחֵם**

### *she wandered...*

- **JPS...** Presumably, she set out for her native Egypt but lost her way.
- **RADAK...** she did not know the route once she had entered the desert.
- **TUR HAARUCH**<sup>11</sup>... The water supply that Avraham had provided was exhausted only because instead of walking straight towards her destination, she procrastinated and made detours.
- **RASHI...** she reverted to the idol worship of her father's house (Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 30).
  - **SIFTEI HACHAMIM...** Rashi deduced this because **וּתְלַךְ** connotes going along deliberately and willingly, as **הַלִּיכָה** always means. Yet then it says **וַתִּתַּע**, connoting that she did not know where she was going, as she lost her way in the desert. One term contradicts the other. And we cannot say that at first she knew where she was going but then lost her way, because why should Scripture tell us she went deliberately? It is obvious that she went where she was going before she lost her way! Furthermore, the verse's intent is to recount how she lost her way in the desert and therefore had no water, etc. There is no reason to say she went deliberately on the way. Therefore Rashi explains that her **וַתִּתַּע** was deliberate, and that is why it says **וּתְלַךְ וַתִּתַּע** — she deliberately went astray. How? She returned to her family's idolatry. Rashi explained **וַתִּתַּע** as idolatry, based on **וַיְהִי כַאֲשֶׁר הִתְעוּ אוֹתֵי** (20:13), translated by Onkelos<sup>12</sup> as: "When the nations went astray after idolatry." (*R. Meir Stern*)

**JPS... Beer-sheba...** The name can mean either "well of oath" or "well of seven." Our narrative, as does the parallel story in connection with Isaac (Gen. 26:23-33), fuses both meanings. On the place itself, see Excursus 14.

- Excursus 14: Beer-sheba 21:32

In biblical times, Beer-sheba was the most famous of all cities in the Negeb region. The popular phrase "from Dan to Beer-sheba" indicates that the town constituted the southernmost boundary of Judah for all practical purposes.

<sup>11</sup> Tur HaAroch, a commentary on the Torah, is written by R' Jacob ben Asher (c. 1269 - c. 1343), known as Ba'al ha-Turim.

<sup>12</sup> *Targum Onkelos* is the primary Jewish Aramaic translation of the Torah and is thought to have been written in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE by Onkelos, a famous convert to Judaism (c. 25-120CE).

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In the day of Samuel it served as a kind of regional judicial center. The prophet's own sons functioned there as judges. In the period of the monarchy it housed a well-known cult center that became the object of prophetic disapproval. The sacred origins of Beer-sheba are traceable to its patriarchal associations. Abraham plants a terebinth there and invoke "The name of the LORD, the Everlasting God," following the making of a pact there with Abimelech;<sup>13</sup> Isaac receives a revelation, builds an altar, and worships at the site; and Jacob sacrifices there and also experiences a revelation.

Interestingly, patriarchal associations with Beer-sheba are restricted to the well and the cult site. Negotiations over the use of the water facilities are carried on with the king of Gerar! No king, ruler, or inhabitant of Beer-sheba is ever mentioned. There is no suggestion of the existence of any permanent settlement. Only 26:33 refers to a "city" of Beer-sheba, but this is a redactional note that explains how it got its name, and it has nothing to do with patriarchal activities.

The picture that emerges from the patriarchal narratives is fully in accord with the results of the excavations conducted from 1969 to 1976 at the site of the ancient city, the mound now known as Tell es-Saba', situated on the outskirts of the modern Beersheba. These findings have conclusively proved that no Canaanite settlement ever existed here. The earliest Israelite encampment, small and unfortified, derives from the thirteenth-eleventh centuries B.C.E. The city proper, highly fortified, really belongs to the period of the united kingdom under David and Solomon and the later kingdom of Judah.

Two outstanding discoveries made in the course of the excavations are a horned altar and a well cut in the center of the eastern slope of the mound. The subterranean water level of the well is estimated to be at least 115 feet (35 m.) down. Though it is tempting to regard this as the well upon which the patriarchal stories focus, this cannot be proved.

### V. 15

#### *When the water was gone...*

- **JPS...** Had she not lost her way, her original supplies would have been adequate.
- **CHIZKUNI...** before they reached an inn. Avraham had provided only enough water for them to reach the nearest settlement of human beings.
- **RASHI...** Hagar's problems became ever more acute. The reason why the Torah writes all this detail, is to teach that if man is confident that God will help him overcome his difficulties in the end, then his troubles do not multiply in order to teach him to appeal to God for help. The detail here has also been written in order to show how God deals with people who love His name. He appeared to Hagar on two separate occasions rescuing her from acute distress, performing miracles on behalf of her son.
- **RASHI...** because it is the nature of sick people to drink much (Genesis Rabbah 53:13).
  - **SIFTEI HACHAMIM...** Rashi deduced this because it should have said, The *bread* and the water were used up." For it said before, "He took bread and a skin pouch of water," and Avraham assumedly gave them food and drink proportionally, so both should have

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<sup>13</sup> Gen. 21:32-33

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finished together. Thus Rashi explains that Scripture is telling us that Yishmael drank disproportionately to his eating, as the sick drink a great deal, and that is why it says, “The water was used up,” but not the bread. (*R. Meir Stern*) But it seems to me that Rashi knows this because it does not say, “And they had no more water to drink.” The expression “the water was used up” implies that it happened unexpectedly, ahead of time. (*Nachalas Yaakov*<sup>14</sup>)

- **DAAT ZKENIM**<sup>15</sup>... This interpretation is somewhat puzzling, as we have been told in the Talmud, tractate Baba metzia, folio 87, that prior to the report in the Torah about Yaakov falling sick shortly before his death, sickness as we know it did not exist. We would have to conclude therefore that what the Talmud meant that until Yaakov fell sick, for no visible cause, no one fell sick without visible cause. Yishmael’s “sickness” was not a sickness in the accepted meaning of the word but was the result of Sarah having used the “evil eye” to cause this.

### *She left the child...*

- **CHIZKUNI**... (by leaving him among some bushes) she did not do so because she could no longer carry him; she did so because he was about to die from thirst; when he first took sick she had carried him for a while.
- **RADAK**... whom she had been carrying, seeing that she had become too tired to carry on. When she saw that she had been unable to locate any water, she threw him from her lap under a shrub. According to Onkelos שיחים are small trees. [it was doubly frustrating to know that there must have been a source of water nearby, how else could these trees exist? Ed.]
- **TUR HAARUCH**... According to the homiletical approach, she threw Ishmael off her shoulder. According to the plain meaning of the text, she dropped him under a tree, the expression being similar to וישליכם אל ארץ אחרת, “He exiled them to another country.” (Deuteronomy 29:27) Ibn Ezra understands the word ותשלך to mean that Hagar moved him down to her lap as a result of becoming tired and exhausted from thirst. As to why Avraham gave Hagar only bread and water and no supply of silver or gold or camels to ride on, this was due to his having been commanded by God to obey Sarah’s instructions, and she had objected to this.

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<sup>14</sup> A work by Rabbi Yaakov Lorberbaum (1760-1832) that was published posthumously. It included sermons on the Torah portion, halachic decisions, responsa, and his last will. It is most famous for his ethical will to his sons that ask them to spend time every day to learn at least one page of Gemara.

<sup>15</sup> Daat Zekenim is a Torah commentary compiled by later generations of scholars from the Franco-German (Ba’alei HaTosafot) school in the 13th century.

V. 16

*she went and sat down at a distance...*

- **HAEMEK DAVAR**<sup>16</sup>... She sat facing him. Or, “across the way from him” — she moved further away in order to weep without him hearing her, lest her crying worsen his condition.
- **RADAK... at a distance...** הרחק, the word is in the infinitive instead of in the past tense, the reason being that while she did distance herself she wanted not to be so far away that she would be totally unaware of what happened to Ishmael.
- **RASHI...** מנגד means some distance away.
  - **SIFTEI HACHAMIM...** ...in our verse, following נגד comes the word הרחק, meaning “distant,” one term contradicting the other. Therefore, Rashi explains that מנגד means the opposite of נגד. It is like saying מן נגד, the prefix מן is like מן. It conveys that she did not sit close, in front of the child....

*a bowshot away...*

- **IBN EZRA...** *Ki-metachave* (as it were a shot) is not found elsewhere in the Bible. Its definition is known. It means the distance an arrow travels after being shot.
- **RADAK...** ...The meaning is the distance a bow can be tensed for the arrow to be shot to the furthest point of its range....
- **RASHI...** — about two bowshots (since the first word is really plural) (Genesis Rabbah 53:13). The word signifies shooting an arrow — we find it so used in the Mishna (Sanhedrin 46a). If you say that it should have been written כמטחי קשת (since the root is טחה) then I say that it is quite regular for a ו to be inserted in these forms....
- **ALTER...** This particular indication of distance is carefully chosen, for it adumbrates the boy’s vocation as bowman spelled out at the end of the story.

**RASHI...And sitting thus afar...** (this is the second time that it is so said) — now that he came nearer to death she moved further away from him.

V. 17

**JPS... God heard...** That is, heeded. The phrase is equivalent to the meaning of the name Ishmael.

*the voice of the boy...*

- **ALTER...** The narrator had reported only Hagar’s weeping. Now we learn that the boy has been weeping or crying out, and it is his anguish that elicits God’s saving response. In the earlier version of the banishment of Hagar (chapter 16), the naming of her future son Ishmael stands at the center of the story. Here, as though the writer were ironically

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<sup>16</sup> Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, or Netziv, (1817-1893) was a Lithuanian rabbi and scholar. In 1854 he introduced a style of Talmud study based on broad knowledge of Tannaitic and Geonic literature as well as the Rishonim. He also emphasized the importance of the study of Chumash and Nach, giving a daily shiur on the weekly parsha.



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conspiring with Sarah's refusal to name the boy, Ishmael's name is suppressed to the very end. But the ghost of its etymology—"God will hear"—hovers at the center of the story.

- **CHIZKUNI...** Rashi uses this line to state that the prayer of a sick person on his own behalf reaches heaven faster than the prayers of others on his behalf. If you were to counter that the Talmud in B'rachot 5 teaches that a prisoner cannot liberate himself from jail, [that he needs outsiders to do that for him, Ed,] what is meant is that the state of mind of the average sick person is such that he cannot pray with the required devotion. If he could, God will respond to him first. (Rabbeinu Ovadiah mibartenura<sup>17</sup>)
  - **SIFTEI HACHAMIM...** *The prayer of the sick person is more effective than the prayers of others...* Rashi is answering the question: Hagar also cried, as it is written (v. 16), "She wept in a loud voice." Why did Hashem not hear her voice? [You might object:] The Gemara asks in Berachos 5b, "Why was R. Yochanan unable to heal himself [through prayer]?" and answers, "A prisoner cannot free himself from jail." The reason must be that R. Yochanan was not able to concentrate [in prayer]. But if he were able to do so, his own prayer would be better. (*Re'm*<sup>18</sup>)

### *called to Hagar from heaven...*

- **JPS...** Both sons of Abraham are saved at a critical moment by an angelic "voice from heaven" (cf. 22:11).
- **RADAK...** she heard his voice without seeing the source of the voice as opposed to the first encounter she had with an angel in 16:13. At the beginning of the verse the Torah uses the proposition ׀א, whereas at the end of the verse it switches to the preposition אל. The letters ׀ and ל are used interchangeably here without the meaning of the preposition undergoing any change.

### *for God has heeded the cry of the boy where he is...*

- **RABBEINU BAHYA...** This means that "I" will give him water and he will drink it before leaving this site. Our sages in Rosh Hashanah 16 learn from here that a person is not judged or convicted for sins which God foresees that he will commit in the future. He is judged merely on the basis of his present state of guilt or innocence. This is the meaning of the otherwise redundant words באשר הוא שם.
- **CHIZKUNI...** "due to the condition he found himself in;" according to Rashi the "condition" referred to is his legal/moral condition. He had not been wicked enough as yet to deserve to die on account of that. If you were to ask that the Talmud in Sanhedrin 72 when stating that a 13 year boy who has committed a far lesser offense is to be stoned to death to prevent him from becoming a far more guilty person, (the rebellious son) the difference there is that that son had already begun his career as a teenager by committing criminal deeds, whereas at that age Ishmael had voluntarily submitted to circumcision, something for

<sup>17</sup> Rabbi Ovadiah ben Abraham of Bertinoro (aka The Bartenura) (c. 1445- c.1515) was an Italian Rabbi and commentator.

<sup>18</sup> Rabbi Elijah Mizrachi (Re'em) (c. 1455-1525 or 1526) was a Turkish Talmudist, Halachic expert, and a mathematician.

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which he deserved a great deal of credit. [I have departed from the author's text somewhat by pointing to a great merit acquired by Ishmael. Ed.] He had not exhausted that merit at this stage. באשר הוא שם, seeing he was "there," as opposed to "here;" Hagar had distanced herself from her dying son to avoid having to watch his death throes. A totally different interpretation: "even though He was in a desert with no chance of obtaining water." The emphasis is on the word הוא, a reference to God Who can provide everywhere.

- **RADAK...** at the very site where Hagar had thrown the boy. The message to Hagar was that at the very site where she thought that her so was going to die, there God heard his voice, his prayer. Our sages (Rosh Hashanah 16) derive from this wording that human beings are not judged by the Heavenly Court on the basis of what they might become guilty of in the future, but their judgment is based on their status at the time judgment is in progress. If someone is wicked at the time the Heavenly Court is in session, the fact that God foresees that he will (would) become righteous at some point in the future is not taken into consideration. Equally, if someone at the time when the Court is in session is deemed innocent, the fact that God foresees that he will become a great sinner is not used to influence his judgment at that time. There is an interesting aggadah, according to which the angels remonstrated with God at this time, challenging God's mercy on the basis of the untold harm Ishmael's descendants would visit upon God's people, the Jews in the future. The angels referred specifically to the Ishmaelites denying Jews on the march into exile water to quench their thirst. (a reference to Isaiah 21,13-14) God silenced them by asking whether at this particular point in time Ishmael deserved to die. They had to admit that he did not. Hence God felt free to exercise His mercy and to let him live.
- **RAMBAN...** ....The correct interpretation, in line with the simple meaning of Scripture, appears to me to be that the verse is stating that God heard the voice of the lad in the place in which he was. He informed her that she will not need to go from there to a fountain or well for in that very place he will quench his thirst immediately ....
- **TUR HAARUCH...** ...According to the plain meaning of the text, the words mean that God listened to the prayer Ishmael offered up at the location he found himself in, in that the well which was to save his life suddenly caught his eye. He did not even need to have water brought to him from a more distant location.

## V. 18

**JPS...** Unlike Isaac, Ishmael is promised only nationhood, not national territory.

### *hold him by the hand...*

- **HAEMEK DAVAR...** Keep your hand strong on him... From this point on she no longer needed to carry him but only to support him with her arm.
- **RADAK...** do not let your hand go of him, (do not abandon him) for he will not die by thirst, for I will still make him into a great nation.

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**FRIEDMAN...***I shall make him into a big nation...* These words are spoken by the angel, but they certainly appear to be the words of God, not the angel itself. Angels do not make great nations in the *Tanak*. This is another demonstration that angels are not independent beings in the Hebrew Bible but are rather expressions of God's presence.

### V. 19

*opened her eyes...*

- **JPS...** She suddenly becomes aware of the existence of the well.
- **RADAK...** perhaps the well had been there all the time but its top had been covered with some material which made no one assume that a well hid underneath such a covering. Alternatively, it was some distance away.
- **SFORNO...** He granted her the instinct to look for water in the place where she would find it. She had not been blind previously so that her eyes had to be "opened."

**RADAK...***let the boy drink...* the sequence sounds misleading, as she had drunk herself when she saw the well, then she had filled the hose and brought it to her son to drink, after which she had filled the hose again to continue on her way. The positioning of the letters ו such as ותלך, ותמלא ותשק, ותמלא is not at all unusual.... An alternative meaning could be that she drew water from the well with the hose being used as a pail, and carried it to where Ishmael was lying, giving him to drink there.

### V. 20

**RADAK...***God was with the boy...* He ensured Ishmael's success in his undertakings.

**RADAK...***he grew up...* he amassed wealth. We encounter a similar meaning of the word ויגדל in Genesis 26:13 describing Yitzchok's economic success in the land of the Philistines.

*he settled in the desert...*

- **CHIZKUNI...** This is why he had been described as פרא אדם, (Genesis 16:12, where the angel predicted his birth) He was a loner, shunning civilized society.
- **RADAK...** first he settled in the desert nearby, moving further afield to the desert of Paran later on.

*a bowman...*

- **JPS...** The tradition that the Ishmaelites were professional marksmen is pre-sewed in Isaiah 21:17, which speaks of the bows of Kedar's warriors. Kedar is a son of Ishmael in the list of Genesis 25:13.
- **DAAT ZKENIM...** He was hunting by shooting arrows at his prospective victims. The word רובה is used here in the same sense as Genesis 49:23, where Yaakov uses it in his blessing for Joseph, i.e. ורובו, implying that his brothers, or Potiphar and his wife, had hunted

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him. Some commentators understand the word as a Hebrew alternative for the Aramaic word: רביא, translation of Isaiah 9:5: כי ילד יולד, “for a child has been born;”...

- **ALTER...a seasoned Bowman...** There is an odd doubling of the professional designation in the Hebrew (literally “archer-bowman”), which I construe as an indication of his confirmed dedication to this hunter’s calling, or his skill in performing it.

### V. 21

**JPS... the wilderness of Paran...** See Comment to 14:6. Ishmael was earlier described as “a wild ass” (Heb. *pere*’, 16:12), so there may be a word play between *paran* and *pare*.

- Comment to 14:6: *El-paran...* Paran appears to be a general name for the wilderness of the eastern Sinai Peninsula in which Kadesh is located, but the identity of El-paran is uncertain. It may be another name of Elath, on the Gulf of Akaba, or a place west of Kadesh.

*his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt...*

- **CHIZKUNI...** Presumably, this was a woman, or a daughter of a woman whom she had known before joining Avraham and Sarah originally. According to Pirkey de Rabbi Eliezer<sup>19</sup>, chapter 30, Yishmael first married a Moabite woman, and when that marriage did not work out, his mother intervened and chose a second wife for him. This is why the Torah had to report that his mother took a wife for him. His Moabite wife had lacked the Abrahamitic virtue of offering hospitality (even to his father).
- **RADAK...** she took a wife for him from her own family, seeing that he had become separated from his father’s family. It is proper for people to marry into members of their family (not too close) as a stronger bond of mutual love is liable to be forged between men and women of similar backgrounds, such as both being members of the same clan

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<sup>19</sup> Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer is an aggadic-midrashic work on the Torah which was composed in Italy shortly after 830.