

March 29, 2020

The People of Judah Are Exiled

2 Kings 25:8-21

During several weeks of terrifying news, we have also had moments of beauty and solidarity. “Neighbors on lockdown in Spain placed a birthday cake outside the home of a woman turning 80 before erupting into a chorus of 'Happy Birthday'.” “Charo's birthday had fallen days after the Spanish government announced the entire country would go into lockdown as a result of drastic measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus.”

Prompted by a neighbor calling her name, “the emotional 80-year-old [opened] the door to discover a cake placed on a small table outside her front door. As Charo then [stepped] out of her apartment, residents from the neighborhood burst into a rendition of 'Happy Birthday' from their apartment windows.” Her neighbor Nacho said, “She is going through a tough time and the least we could do as neighbors is support each other, especially where vulnerable people are concerned.”¹

In today’s lesson about the exile of Judah in Babylon, the student book author writes, “The need for the familiar in a sea of foreign is critical for all of us.”² Exile is all about stripping away what is known and surrounding someone with the unfamiliar. In such an exile, all one can hope for is something—anything—that feels familiar. For the Israelites, that need for the familiar led to a reawakening of the Jewish faith.

We are in the midst of a global crisis caused by the pandemic of the coronavirus. As many of us change our way of life through social distancing and isolation in order to protect the most vulnerable, we find ourselves in need of the familiar. What could be more simple and yet more familiar than the tune of “Happy Birthday”? A woman’s neighbors found a way to make her day special. They found a way to bring something familiar and loving into a sea of foreign. May we all find ways to love our neighbors in the midst of this sea of foreign.

1. What creative suggestions have you seen, heard of, or read of for connecting to one another, especially the vulnerable?
2. How did the Exile lead to a reawakening of the Jewish faith?
3. How might you reach out to bring something familiar to someone else this week?

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¹From “Neighbors on Lockdown in Spain Reduce Woman to Tears When They Sing 'Happy Birthday' Through the Window to Celebrate Her Turning 80,” by Faith Ridler, *The Daily Mail* ([dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8122303/Neighbours-lockdown-spain-sing-happy-birthday-celebrate-woman-turning-80.html](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8122303/Neighbours-lockdown-spain-sing-happy-birthday-celebrate-woman-turning-80.html)).

²From *Adult Bible Studies*, Spring 2020, by Randy Cross (Cokesbury, 2019); pages 40-41.

