

## Sarah, My sister, My Wife

1

Genesis 12:10-20

Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, "I know that you are a woman beautiful to behold; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account. When Abram entered Egypt the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, he-asses, menservants, maidservants, she-asses, and camels.

But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. So Pharaoh called Abram, and said, "What is this you have done to me?" Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her, and be gone." And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him; and they set him on the way, with his wife and all that he had.

2

Genesis 20:1-18

From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister," and Abimelech, king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man, because of the woman whom you have taken; for she is a man's wife. Now Abimelech had not approached her; so he said, "Lord, wilt thou slay an innocent people? Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother,' in the integrity of heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me; therefore I did not let you touch her. Now then restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet and he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you, and all that are yours."

So Abimelech rose early in the morning and called all his servants, and told them all these things; and the men were very

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1. Attributed to the J source.

2. Attributed to the E source.

much afraid. Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said to him, "What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done." And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What were you thinking of, that you did this thing?" Abraham said, "I did it because I thought, There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. Besides she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. And when God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, 'This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, He is my brother.'" Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves, and gave them to Abraham and restored Sarah his wife to him. And Abimelech said, "Behold, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you." To Sarah he said, "Behold I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; it is your vindication in the eyes of all who are with you; and before every one you are righted." Then Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children. For the LORD had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

3

Genesis 26:1-11

Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines. And the LORD appeared to him, and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you, and will bless you; for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will fulfill the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give to your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give to your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves: because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws."

So Isaac dwelt in Gerar. When the men of the place asked him about his wife; he said, "She is my sister"; for he feared to say, "My wife," thinking, "lest the men of the place should kill me for the sake of Rebekah"; because she was fair to look upon. When he had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out of window and saw Isaac fondling Rebekah his wife. So Abimelech called Isaac, and said, "Behold she is your wife; how then could you say, 'She is my sister'?" Isaac said to him, "Because I thought, 'Lest I die because of her.'" Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have

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3. Attributed to the J source. Note how the potential problem with Genesis 20 is handled: "besides the former famine."

brought guilt upon us." So Abimelech warned all the people, saying, "Whoever touches this man or his wife shall be put to death."

#### Summary of Themes

Genesis 12:10-20	Genesis 20:1-18	Genesis 26:1-11
Hero: Abram	Hero: Abraham	Hero: Isaac
Heroine: Sarai	Heroine: Sarah	Heroine: Rebekah
King: Pharaoh	King: Abimelech	King: Abimelech
Pharaoh desires	Abimelech desires	Citizens desire
YHWH sends plagues	God warns in dream	
Pharaoh understands	God explains	Abimelech finds out
Pharaoh berates A.	Abimelech berates A.	Abimelech berates
A. silent	A. explains reasons	I. Explains reasons
Pharaoh sends away	Abimelech gives gifts	Abimelech warns people