

Did Abram lied to Pharaoh in Genesis 12:13?

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 in appearance, 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 for your sake.” 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, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, 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 go.” And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had. (Gen 12:10–20 ESV)

Let us observe this story.

- (1) There are three main actors in the story: Pharaoh, Abram, and the LORD.
- (2) Sarai was very beautiful and when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. She was taken to be Pharaoh’s wife.

(3) For her sake Pharaoh dealt well with Abram giving him gifts being Sarai's brother.

(4) The LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues.

(5) Pharaoh gave men orders concerning Abram, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had.

Let us talk about migration. From Quirino province I moved my wife and young kids with me down to Manila to find a living. That is 400 kilometres away from home. After some years of stay I moved north-westward to Pangasinan province (150 km.) only to move once again eastward to Nueva Ecija province (150 km.) where I finally settled. Moving one's family in these modern times is not as hard as it was in the times of Abram. To compare, firstly, I was moving some distance but I was not leaving my country. And as a citizen I have rights and there was the law of the land that gave me protection. This was not true to Abram. Secondly, moving from place to place is relatively easier today compared to the time of Abram when travel was by foot or by the utility of animals — either way that was slow. There is also the danger of bandits on the road. Migrating is not something that one would consider lightly, it is something that was only done out of necessity and not without a lot of reservation. Only when the benefit of moving far outweighs the danger of staying that it is finally decided upon. The law of inertia also says that it takes outside energy to move an object that is not in motion. One thing is sure, Abram's decision to move to foreign territory is a dreaded decision but it was the best option available for him. To watch your family die slowly because of famine is worst than moving to a foreign and potentially unfriendly territory.

Now let us put on Abram's shoes.

For sure we would want to know what kind of people the Egyptians were. They were pagans and what good thing one would expect? It is good to have a good wife but in this case, Sarai can be a potential danger to his husband. Abram thought that Pharaoh, the Egyptian king, would kill him so that he could take Sarai as his wife. Some may argue that this fear is unfounded, but how could we judge the situation better when Abram was the one who lived in that time period having heard the stories of how Pharaoh treated the aliens who entered his territory?

We can see how accurately Abram predicted the turn of events. After the princes of Pharaoh saw Sarai, they praised her to Pharaoh and she was taken to be Pharaoh's wife. As he expected he was treated well and given possessions as gifts from Pharaoh.

Now let us see how the LORD acted on this story. The LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues. So great was the plague that Pharaoh gave men orders concerning Abram, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had. Why was the possession not taken back? I believe that Pharaoh feared the LORD so much because of the plagues and that he would not dare do another thing that would upset him more.

Was the LORD just in his dealing with Pharaoh? That is a good question.

The LORD is just in all his ways but what justified the great plagues when apparently Pharaoh was not aware that Sarai was the wife of another?

Was there a sign that Sarai was possibly the wife of another? Yes, she was no longer a virgin when Pharaoh slept with her. But some may object that

there is no proof that Pharaoh slept with her. Pharaoh said, “Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her for my wife?” Sarai is also a very beautiful woman. Later we come to know that Sarai (later Sarah) was barren. The statement “took her for my wife” is not conclusive but is very suggestive that he slept with her. How could one resist the beauty of one that was lauded very beautiful for one night? And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, why? I suggest that the princes of Pharaoh knew or that they were given orders to report to the Pharaoh when they see beautiful woman. If this thinking is correct, it highly suggests that Pharaoh was a sexually active man like most of men are. Sexual attraction was a constant in the human history so it is very likely that Pharaoh slept with Sarai on the first opportunity. Thus, Pharaoh knows that Sarai was not a virgin.

Let me go further and suggest a thing — that the LORD closed the womb of Sarai when Pharaoh slept with her. This one I cannot prove but I suggest it as a possibility. God chose Abram as the father of a great nation from which the Messiah shall come and that through Sarai the patriarch Isaac was born. I could think that God closed her womb so that she will not have a child by other man.

The question is not fully satisfied though, even if we allow that Pharaoh have come to know that Sarai was not virgin after sleeping with her, how could this justify the great plagues?

Drought was not a one time event in the Bible and Egypt enjoyed food security because of the rivers that flows through it. Being a pagan nation where sex and fleshly pleasures was the norm and not the exception, we can safely generalise that Pharaoh was no different. The account above

suggest so, and that for me justified the great plagues on which the LORD afflicted Pharaoh.

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Did Abraham lied to Abimelech in Genesis 20:2?

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Did Isaac lied to Abimelech in Genesis 26:7?