

A range of interpretations of Abram's choice in Genesis 12.10-20

"The ruse is the only weapon left for the powerless given over to the mighty." (Klaus Westermann)

"A hip-hop womanist reading of this text would say that he pimped her out." (Wil Gaffney)

"In a patriarchal society, Abraham takes action that constitutes the ultimate humiliation for a man precisely because of his desperation at the situation in which G-d placed him." (Marvin Sweeney)

"Since discourse often reflects hidden desires, perhaps Abraham's real motive is to receive gifts from the Egyptians...[he] sees Sarah as expendable because she has no child" (Ilona Rashkow)

a case might be made that having been commanded to enter the land and then promised it would be given to his descendants, he should not have abandoned it on his own initiative—or have feared that he would be put to death before his childlessness had come to an end. (Jon Levenson)

"The scenario which Abram constructs for Sarai arises from his awareness of a fundamental cleavage between appearance and reality in Egyptian life. He instantly sees through the outer surface to the underlying dynamics of sexual desire which motivates it." (Hugh White)

"Does Abram truly fear for his life? Or does he see in Sarai the opportunity to increase his economic worth? He certainly uses his life as a means of persuading Sarai to go along with the ruse. How much is genuine anxiety? How much is rhetoric?" (Danna Nolan Fewell and David Gunn)

Abram "committed a great sin inadvertently" by leaving the land promised him and "[bringing] his righteous wife to a stumbling-block of sin" in Egypt—so great a sin that, by the karmic process that Ramban saw operating in the Torah, Abram's unintended sin caused the exile in Egypt that his descendants would later suffer. Medieval commentator, Ramban, quoted in J. Levenson)

"it appears that Abram is motivated by a desire to overcome the obstacle that Sarai's barrenness presents to his chance to father a biological heir. He will remove her from the family. Abram is maneuvering to be rid of Sarai so that he can get another wife for himself." (Nahum Sarna)

"...as her brother, Abram would be recognized as the protector and legal guardian whom one would approach to negotiate Sarai's marriage. Thus, based on evidence external to the narrative, the reader can now appreciate the twofold purpose of Abram's ploy: the preservation of his life and the protection of his wife." (Barry L. Eichler)