

Abimelech's and Abraham's exchange in Gen 20.9-13

ABIMELECH'S CHARGES

[NOTE SHIFTING DIRECTION OF ACCUSATION AND VICTIMIZATION]

"What have you done to us?

[Abraham as perpetrator; the people of Gerar as victims]

How have I sinned against you

[Abimelech as perpetrator; Abraham as victim]

Abimelech as already claimed to be innocent, but only against Sarah?

that you have brought such great guilt [= adultery] on me and my kingdom?

[Abraham as perpetrator; Abimelech and his kingdom as victims]

Abimelech knows that he did not commit adultery with Sarah and that God protected him

You have done things to me that ought not to be done."

[Abraham as perpetrator; Abimelech as victim]

"What were you seeing, that you did this thing?"

[shifting from plural ("things") to singular ("this thing")]

What exactly are/is the charge(s)?

ABRAHAM'S DEFENSE

[NOTE THE MULTIPLE LEVELS OF QUOTATION AND IMPLICIT DECEPTION]

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.

[When did he think that? What assumptions underlie it? Note v. 13 below]

Besides, she is indeed my sister

the daughter of my father but not the daughter of my mother

[new information, but should Abimelech/we trust it?

Wouldn't the narrator of Gen 11.26-31 have told us?]

and she became my woman.

[thus, confessing to incest; Leviticus 18.9]

And when the gods caused me to stray from my father's house

[reinterpreting 12.1-4 negatively]

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.'"

[quoting himself telling Sarah what to say; again, should we trust him?]

What exactly is his defense?