

## **She Is My Sister, He Is My Brother**

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Christians worldwide are blessed to be Children of Abraham, howbeit many are adopted (Luke 19:9, Galatians 3:7). And we are commanded to honor Father Abraham and Mother Sarah with a promise "... thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12). Unhappily, Christ's saints remain woefully fuzzy of facts about Abraham revealed in the New Testament and Genesis, book of our beginnings. So, we slander Abraham and Sarah when we fault them for telling a "white lie" in their watchword, "She is my sister ... He is my brother" (Genesis 20:5). This reading distorts Scripture. It overlooks the fact that hundreds of our Patriarchs' circumcised servants and wives do not gossip about Abraham's state secret. They guard against genocidal attack needed to seize the *wife* of Abraham. He commands a militia 318 strong that has rescued Lot (Genesis 14:14f). Instead, soldiers of Pharaoh and King Abimelech, with faulty intel, come only to abduct Sarah not to massacre Abraham's defenders.

The Bible presents the servant-saints of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as being relatively few in Canaan and vulnerable to attack from envious neighbors. Isaac "had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him [and] all the wells which [Abraham's] servants had digged ... the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth" (Genesis 26:14-15). When the Philistines ceased striving with Isaac's herdmen over a newly dug well, Father Isaac "called the name of [the well] Rehoboth; ... For now the LORD hath made room for us" (Genesis 26:22). David notes when Abraham's house (servants) "were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in [Canaan] ... He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes; Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm" (Psalm 105:12-15).

Now hold on! Both Pharaoh and Abimelech blame Abraham for his half-truth deception. How can we hold these kings responsible for abduction of Sarah? After all, Abraham has misled them. Doesn't God acknowledge the justness of Abimelech's complaint against Abraham? "Said he not unto me, She is my sister?... in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this" (Genesis 20:5). *No way!* Sinners from Adam on try to deny guilt often by projection of guilt onto others. Adam says, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (God is responsible). "The Devil made me do it!"

God clearly does not absolve Abimelech of guilt. "Thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife" (Genesis 20:3). Like murder, kidnapping is treason against Abraham's family and merits death. Ignorance is no excuse. Households of both Pharaoh and Abimelech are plagued because of their respective abductions of Sarah (Genesis 12:17; 20:17-18). God keeps Abimelech from compounding his sin against God "therefore suffered I thee not to touch her" (Genesis 20:6). He mercifully, as with David, grants him exemption from the death penalty if he returns Sarah to Abraham without delay. "Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid" (Genesis 20:8). Abimelech does not delay. He knows he is in mortal danger of imminent attack from Abraham's "Minute Men."

Isn't Abraham putting Sarah at risk in a dubious scheme? Is Abraham, in effect hiding behind Sarah's skirts? Samuel similarly uses a partial-truth cover story to fulfill a mission fraught with danger. God sends Samuel, under scrutiny of Saul's spies, to anoint David, Jesse's son, in place of rebellious King Saul. Samuel replies "How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me" (I Samuel 16:2). The Bible does

not impugn Samuel's faith or manly courage for his assessment of the obvious risk of his mission. Rather, God provides Samuel with an impeccable, partial-truth cover story. "Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD" (I Samuel 16:2). Is it Scriptural to assume that Abimelech has more right to the "whole truth" than murderous King Saul?

So, why, oh why do we give Abimelech any benefit of doubt while discounting in our minds the risk assessment of Father Abraham? "Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake" (Genesis 20:11). (Even today Christians are subject to unprovoked murderous attack in Islamic lands.) Are we so naive as to believe that Abraham can prevent Sarah's abduction if he is merely candid about his *sister* Sarah in the first place. What assurance have we? How can we be sure that full disclosure regarding Sarah to Abimelech, a confessed kidnapper (Genesis 20:9), does not trigger a surprise attack to massacre Abraham and his servant-warriors? Anyone interested in buying the Brooklyn Bridge?

Finally, let us all remember God's Messianic promise whose blessing we share as children of Abraham. "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). Isaiah enjoins God's people "that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD ... [to] look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you" (Isaiah 51:1-2). We are not called to second guess Abraham and Sarah as Monday morning quarterbacks. We may *not* fault them for their watchword- "She is my sister ... He is my brother"- contrary to Scripture. If rising anarchy in America is to be halted, we must repent our sinful tendency to slander Abraham and Sarah.

When all is said and done, Abraham remains God's prophet who "prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants ... For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife" (Genesis 20:17-18). As Abraham's children we are called to "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (Romans 13:7).