



Genesis 12

The Heroes Journey & The Sacrifice of Sarah

University of Utah Institute

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The Sacrifice of Sarah – Genesis 12

The Cosmic Myth – A Chiasmus

The hero is required to leave the safety of home

The hero is given a seemingly impossible task

The hero succeeds against huge odds

The hero is victorious, peace is restored

The hero returns home triumphant, knowing that evil is put down and order is restored

ANE Motifs regarding Gods and Kings

Leaving safety - Adam/Eve, Noah, Nephi, Moses, Jesus Christ

Tasks – dress & keep it (Adam/Eve – Gen 2.15), boat building (Noah & Nephi), law writing, gathering (Moses), Atonement – Jesus Christ

Ritual Combat – Adam/Eve v. “Serpent”, Noah, Nephi, Moses v. Combat w/ “The Sea” – Jesus v. “The Serpent” ...

Sacrifice – All heroes do this as part of their story

Victory – The Fall was a “victory” in LDS teaching, Noah is victorious against the “Sea”

Enthronement – Adam & Noah are “kings” in a sense, Nephi is enthroned, Jesus = King

Temple Building on the Mount – Noah (Gen. 8.20-9.17), Nephi (2 Nephi 5.16), Moses (Ex. 19-31)

Order is Established – Noah renews peace, Nephi separates from chaos, Jesus establishes cosmic order & renewal

The Wife/Sister Motif

The book of Genesis contains a trilogy of incidents in which the wife/sister motif was used by either Abraham or Isaac. The first account describes Abraham's journey into Egypt after a famine enveloped the land of Canaan (see Genesis 12:10–13:4). Similar situations arose later when both Abraham and Isaac dwelt in the city of Gerar (see Genesis 20:1–2; 26:7–8).

The Wife/Sister Motif

Although in each instance the patriarch identified his wife as his sister to avert a potentially dangerous situation, these accounts have puzzled many readers and scholars because of the apparent deception involved. Why did the patriarchs resort to such action? That is a difficult theological issue. In attempting to justify the patriarchs' actions, writers have proposed a number of different explanations that offer some significant insights into the three episodes...

The Wife/Sister Motif

We can gain a still greater understanding, especially of the episode of Abraham's sojourn in Egypt, if we take into account the insights provided by the book of Abraham and the Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen), one of the scrolls from the Dead Sea corpus. By doing so, we see the hand of God in Abraham's request of Sarah, for Abraham's actions initiated a confrontation between himself and Pharaoh.

The Wife/Sister Motif

Because of Abraham's obedience, God was able to introduce Himself to the Egyptian Pharaoh in power and glory. Even though it was only the first of a series of such encounters, it is clear that the God of Abraham was announcing His jurisdiction over all the families of the earth and not just over Abraham and his descendants. That concept is fundamental to our understanding of all of Jehovah's subsequent dealings with humankind throughout the Old Testament.

Strathearn, Gaye, "The Wife/Sister Experience: Pharaoh's Introduction to Jehovah" in *Sperry Symposium Classics: The Old Testament*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Provo and Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, and Deseret Book 2005), 100–116.

The Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon

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ARAMAIC TRANSCRIPTION WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATION

COLUMN 20

A New Text and Translation with Introduction and Special Treatment of Columns 13-17 by Daniel A. Machiela, Brill, 2009.

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1. []...[]
2. ...[]... []... how irresistible and beautiful is the image of her face; how
3. lovely h[er] forh[ead, and] soft the hair of her head! How graceful are her eyes, and how precious her nose; every feature
4. of her face is radiating beauty! How lovely is her breast, and how beautiful her white complexion! As for her arms, how beautiful they are! And her hands, how
5. perfect they are! Every view of her hands is stimulating! How graceful are her palms, and how long and thin all the fingers of her hands! Her legs
6. are of such beauty, and her thighs so perfectly apportioned! There is not a virgin or bride who enters the bridal chamber more beautiful than she.
7. Her beauty surpasses that of all women, since the height of her beauty soars above them all! And alongside all this beauty she possesses great wisdom. Everything about her

8. יאא וכדי שמע מלכא מלי חרקנוש ומלי תרין חברווי די פם חד תלתוהן ממליין שני רחמה ושלו
 9. לעובע דברהא וחזוהא ואחמה על כול שפיהא ונטבהא לה לאנתא ובעא למקטלני ואמרת שרי
 10. למלכא דאחוי הוא כדי הוית מתגר על דילהא ושביקת אנה אברם בדילהא ולא קטילת בכית אנה
 11. אברם בכי תקיף אנה ולוט בר אחוי עמי בליליא כדי דבירית מני שרי באונס *vacat*
 12. בליליא דן צלית ובעית ואחחננת ואמרת באחעצבא ודמעני נחון בריך אנתה אל עליון מרי לכול
 13. עלמים די אנתה מרה ושליט על כולא ובכול מלכי ארעא אנתה שליט למעבד בכולהן דין וכען
 14. קבלתך מרי על פרעו צען מלך מצרין די דברת אנתחי מני בתוקף עבד לי דין מנה ואחוי ירך רבתא
 15. בה ובכול ביתה ואל ישלט בליליא דן לטמיא אנתחי מני וידעוך מרי די אנתה מרה לכול מלכי
 16. ארעא ובכית וחשית בליליא דן שלח לה אל עליון רוח מכדש למכתשה ולכול אנש ביתה רוח
 17. באישא והואת כתשא לה ולכול אנש ביתה ולא יכל למקרב בהא ואף לא ידעהא והיא עמה
 18. תרתין שנין ולטוף תרתין שנין תקפו וגברו עלויה מכתשיא ונגריא ועל כול אנש ביתה ושלו
 19. קרא לכול ח'ל'מ'י] מצרין ולכול אשפיא עם כול אסי מצרין הן יכולון לאסיוהה מן מכתשא דן ולאנש
 20. ביתה ולא יכלו כול אסיא ואשפיא וכול חכימיא למקם לאסיוהה ארי הוא רוחא כתש לכולהן

8. is lovely! Now when the king heard the words of Herqanosh and his two companions—that the three of them spoke as one—he greatly desired her, and sent someone
 9. to be quick in acquiring her. When he saw her he was dumbfounded at all of her beauty, and took her for himself as a wife. He also sought to kill me, but Sarai said
 10. to the king, “He is my brother,” so that I would benefit on account of her. Thus I, Abram, was spared because of her, and was not killed. I,
 11. Abram, wept bitterly—I and Lot, my brother’s son, with me—on the night when Sarai was taken from me by force. *vacat*
 12. That night I prayed and entreated and asked for mercy. Through sorrow and streaming tears I said, “Blessed are you Most High God, my Lord, for all
 13. ages; for you are Lord and Ruler over everything. You are sovereign over all the kings of the earth, having power to enact judgment on all of them. So now
 14. I lodge my complaint before you, my Lord, concerning Pharaoh Zoan, king of Egypt, for my wife has been taken from me forcefully. Bring judgment against him on my behalf, and reveal your mighty hand
 15. through him and all of his house, that he might not prevail this night in rendering my wife unclean for me! Thus, they will come to know you, my Lord, that you are Lord over all the kings
 16. of the earth.” So I wept and was deeply troubled. During that night the Most High God sent a pestilential spirit to afflict him, and to every person of his household an evil
 17. spirit. It was an ongoing affliction for him and every person of his household, so that he was not able to approach her, nor did he have sexual relations with her. She was with him
 18. for two years, and at the end of two years the afflictions and hardships grew heavier and more powerful over him and every person of his household. So he sent
 19. a message to all the wise me[n] of Egypt, and to all the magicians, in addition to all the physicians of Egypt, (to see) if they could heal him and (every) person
 20. of his household of this affliction. But all of the physicians and magicians and all of the wise men were not able to succeed in curing him, for the spirit began afflicting all of them (too),

21. וערקו *vacat* באדין אתה עלי חרקנוש ובעא מני די אתה ואצלה על
 22. מלכא ואסמוך ידי עלויה ויחה ארי בחלם ח'ז]ני] [ואמר לה לוט לא יכול אברם ודי לצליא על
 23. מלכא ושרי אנתוה עמה וכען אזל אמר למלכא וישלח אנתה מנה לבעלהא ויצלה עלויה ויחה
 24. וכדי שמע חרקנוש מלי לוט אזל אמר למלכא כול מכתשיא ונגריא *vacat*
 25. אלן די מתכתש ומתנגד מרי מלכא בריל שרי אנתח אברם י'חיבו נה לשרי לאברם בעלה
 26. ויתוך מנכה למכתשא דן ורוח שחלמיא וקרא [מ]ל[כ]א לי ואמר לי מא עבדתה לי בדיל [מא] הוית אמר
 27. לי די אחתי היא והיא הואת אנתחן ונטבתהא לי לאנתה הא אנתחך דבר'ה אזל ועדי לך מן
 28. כול מדינת מצרין וכען צלי עלי ועל ביתי וחחנער מננה רוחא דא באישתא וצליית על[ה]י] די] ארפא

21. so that they fled the scene! *vacat* At this point Herqanosh came to me asking that I come pray over
 22. the king and lay my hands upon him, so that he would live. This was because he had seen [me] in a dream... But Lot said to him, “Abram, my uncle, cannot pray over
 23. the king while his wife Sarai is with him! Now go and tell the king that he should send his wife away from himself to her husband; then he (Abram) will pray over him so that he might live.”
 24. *vacat* Now when Herqanosh heard the words of Lot, he went (and) said to the king, “All these afflictions and hardships
 25. that are afflicting and troubling my lord the king are due to Sarai, the wife of Abram. Just return Sarai to Abram her husband
 26. and this affliction and the spirit of foulness will depart from you.” So the [k]i[ng] called me and said to me, “What have you done to me?! Why were you saying
 27. to me ‘she is my sister’ when she was your wife, so that I took her as a wife for myself?! Here is your wife. Take her, go and get yourself out of
 28. every district of Egypt! But now pray over me and my household, that this evil spirit may be driven away from us. So I prayed over [hi]m, that I might heal



Lessons learned from Sarai

Gen. 12.10-20 (J)

Gen. 20.1-18 (E)

Gen. 26.6-14 (J)