

Abraham and Pharaoh



Conflict is defined as “competitive or opposing action of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons) b: mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands,” and to every conflict, there is a Resolution: “the act of finding an answer or solution to a conflict, problem...an answer or solution to something” (Webster’s). In some cases the resolution is peaceful, but in most cases, not so much, and even when the resolution is semi-peaceful, there’s still the baggage that goes with it.

The conflict of interest at this time involved Abram, the son of Terah, and Pharaoh, king of Egypt. However, before we get to the conflict proper let us direct our attention to the significance of the principals’ involved.

In our last segment we were told, concerning the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth, “of these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood” (Genesis 10:32). Of these people “Jehovah scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth”(Genesis 11:8), having confounded their language (Genesis 11:9).

Although there were three sons of Noah the scriptures draw the reader’s attention to the genealogy of Shem. When reading the scriptures the reader will readily see that Jehovah reveals a big picture, then funnels the attention down to one man, or family. In the earlier studies although Adam and Eve had “sons and daughters” (Genesis 5:4), the scriptures introduce the reader first to Cain and Abel, then to Seth (Genesis 4:25). From the introduction of Seth there is no more mention of any of Adam and Eve’s other children. Since the purpose of the

scriptures were to bring the Messiah into the world it was in that seed the scriptures focus, for it was through the seed of Seth that Noah was born. In like manner, although Abraham will have many sons, the focus will be on Isaac. Although Esau and Jacob were born to Isaac, the focus will shift to Jacob, and although Jacob begat twelve sons, the focus will shift to Judah, etc. Thus, through the seed of Shem Terah was born, and to him was born Abram, Nahor, and Haran: the focus then resting upon Abram. Two hundred and ninety years had passed from the first born of Shem, to Abram, then an additional seventy-five years before Abram was called out of his father's house. Nineteen hundred and forty-seven years after Jehovah said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel," the time has come to focus on Abram, and his seed after him, of whom Jehovah said, "I will bless thee, and make thy name great: and be thou a blessing" (Genesis 12:2), and having gone into the land of Canaan, "Jehovah appeared unto Abram and said, Unto thy seed will I Give this land" (Genesis 12:7): if the figures are correct Noah was still alive for the first fifty-five + years of Abram's life.

Now, back to the conflict in which Abram found himself: "And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was sore in the land.

"And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: and it will come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they will say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister; that it may be well with me for thy sake, and that my soul may live because of thee. And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. And the princes of Pharaoh saw her, and praised her to Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And he dealt well with Abram for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and she-asses, and camels. And Jehovah plagued Pharaoh and his house with great

plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? why saidst thou, She is my sister, so that I took her to be my wife? now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. And Pharaoh gave men charge concerning him: and they brought him on the way, and his wife, and all that he had" (Genesis 12:10–20).

The occasion of the conflict was a result of Abram's deception, as he feared for his life. The result of the deception was that "Jehovah plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife." The Resolution, "behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way."

All seems to be settled! Pharaoh had suffered greatly and it appears that Abram was able to leave Egypt with "sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and she-asses, and camels," and all is well in the land! Or was it? "The Jews have a tradition, that she (Hagar) was a daughter of Pharaoh, who, when he saw the wonders done for Sarai, said, it is better that my daughter should be a handmaid in this house, than a mistress in another, and therefore gave her to Sarai" (Targum Jon. & Jarchi in loc. Bereshit Rabba, sect. 45. fol. 40. 2.). How did that work out?

In either case we can learn a valuable piece of moral history: even Pharaoh, king of Egypt had moral convictions regarding the taking of another man's wife, as Job, a possible contemporary with Abram said, "If my heart hath been enticed unto a woman, And I have laid wait at my neighbor's door; Then let my wife grind unto another, And let others bow down upon her. For that were a heinous crime; Yea, it were an iniquity to be punished by the judges: For it is a fire that consumeth unto Destruction, And would root out all mine increase" (Job 31:9–12).