

“From Faith to Fear” (Genesis 12:10-13:4)

What are the highpoints of your life? A family memory? A special award? Graduating from high school or college? Securing your first job? Getting married? Having your first child? Landing a sought-after promotion? Buying your dream home? Becoming a Christian? After experiencing such a great moment, what do you expect? If you're like most people, you expect celebration, satisfaction, joy, rest, and peace. Unfortunately, in life things don't always work out that way. After a high point you must assume that Satan will attack you or the Lord will test you, or both. This is the only way you can grow in your faith. God uses the tough circumstances of life to build the muscles of your faith and keep you from trusting something other than His Word. In Genesis 12:10-13:4, we find that Abram, the man of faith (12:1-9), was also, at times, a man of failure (12:10-20). In these verses, we will learn that any man or woman, regardless of his or her spirituality, is capable of faltering in the faith. Nevertheless, we will also find hope that God loves to restore people to Himself (13:1-4). When our faith fails, God doesn't. Look with me at three principles that will help you live a life of extraordinary faith.

1. Expect your faith to be tested (12:10). The Bible teaches that the life of faith is full of obstacles. This is confirmed in the life of Abram. Already, in his spiritual pilgrimage, Abram has experienced several tests: He was called to leave his hometown (11:31-32); his wife was barren (11:30); and the land that God promised to him is occupied (12:6). Now there comes another challenge. Verse 10 reads, “**Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt¹ to sojourn² there, for the famine was severe³ in the land.**” As soon as Abram arrives in Canaan he experiences his most severe test to date—famine. Imagine what must have gone through Abram's mind: “I came all the way out here for this! I thought Canaan was to be a land of blessings!” Imagine the complaining of those closest to him: “Abram, I told you that you were crazy to come here! So you obeyed your God! For what reason? So He could bring us all out here in the wilderness to destroy us!”⁴ Does this sound familiar? How many times have you said, “God, I deserve better than this. I've tried to serve you and live for you and this is the thanks I get for my efforts? Thanks a lot!”

Abram was overwhelmed with the circumstances that God dealt him. Now he was not wrong for being concerned about the famine or feeding his family, but he was wrong for failing to trust God to provide for his needs (Isa 31:1).⁵ Abram acted prematurely. In alarm, he felt like he must do something and it seems he will have to go to Egypt where there is likely to be more food.⁶ Abram's going down to Egypt⁷ was not so much an intentional sin as it was a reflexive turn to his own devices.⁸ He did not deny God; he simply forgot Him. He forgot how great God is. We are so much like Abram! Trials come and we automatically go into survival mode. We scheme, we prognosticate, we run through the “what ifs,” we shore up our position, and we pile sandbags. And God? Oh yes...we ask Him to bless our ways.⁹

Let's stop and think about this for a moment. Almost as quickly as Abram enters into Canaan, he leaves.¹⁰ Isn't this strange? Abram trusted God for over 1,000 miles from Ur to Canaan. He followed. He left behind his culture, his friends, and his possessions. He traveled to a country where he had never been. Why? Because he believed that God was going to make him into a great nation. But when Abram arrived in Canaan and a famine hit the land he does not think he will be alive for more than a few weeks. What does he do? He goes to Egypt and tries to solve his problems. The man who trusted God for the ultimate—his future—was unwilling to trust God for the immediate—food. It doesn't make sense! Abram trusted God for the big things of life, but messed up when it came to smaller things. Yet faith means trusting God for the big things as well as for the little things. This is where we often fail. We trust God with our eternal salvation, and then we worry about the struggles we're going through and the decisions we have to make.¹¹ Can you relate to this? Do you trust the Lord for your eternity and panic over the trivial issues of your today? Abram lost faith in God's protection and took matters into his own hands. Abram is motivated by fear for his life. But there are options open to God that Abram does not see.¹²

When circumstances become difficult and you are in the furnace of testing, remain where God has put you until He tells you to move. Faith moves in the direction of peace and hope, but unbelief moves in the direction of restlessness and fear (Isa 28:16). In times of testing, the important question is not, “*How* can I get out of this?” but “*What* can I get out of this?” (Jas 1:1-12). God is at work to build your faith and He alone is in control of circumstances. You are safer in a famine, in His will, than in a palace, out of His will.¹³ It has well been said, “The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you.”¹⁴

But if we are to live this type of life we must become little children in the kingdom of God (Matt 18:1-4). If Abram had been a little child, he never would have left Canaan. The famine would not have deterred a little child from listening to his father. But Abram did not play the part of a child, and the result was all the complex actions that followed his decision to leave the land and make for Egypt. When you and I encounter trials and tests, God wants us to immediately exercise child-like faith and cry out to Him. “Father, I’m scared. What would you have me do? Help me hear from you.”

If you’re like me, you find this very difficult. It’s natural to want to take matters into our own hands. Many of us solve problems for a living. We rarely sense a need to rely upon God. We do quite well by ourselves...thank you! Yet, God will often bring tests into our lives that only He can solve. He does this so that we are forced to look to Him as our Father. When your child has a life-threatening disease, you have no choice but to turn to God. When you have a financial crisis that you can’t charge on your credit card, you have to turn to God. When you lose your job or your marriage, you have to turn to God. When you have an addiction that you can’t overcome, you have to turn to God. This is when God teaches us the most about faith. This is when He breaks us of our selfish pride. Abram lost faith in God’s protection and took matters into his own hands. Abram is motivated by fear for his life. But there are options open to God that Abram does not see.¹⁵

Do not be surprised if a famine meets you. Tests are a part of the Christian life. They are necessary to build you up in the Lord. Paul tells us that “tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope” (Rom 5:3-4). James echoes these sentiments and says, “the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (Jas 1:3-4). You can’t grow in Christ apart from tests.

[Expect your faith to be attacked. Then learn to...]

2. Face your fears with faith (12:11-20). When you and I fail to pass faith tests, God takes us to school once again and gives us additional pop quizzes. In 12:11-13, Abram was faced with another test. Moses records: “**It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he [Abram] said to Sarai his wife, ‘See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you.’**”¹⁶ Amazing! Even at age 65, Sarai is such a beautiful woman that just being seen with her was a life-threatening experience.¹⁷ WOW! You’ve got to love that! Abram knew that the Egyptians would not honor his civil rights, for they were noted for cruelty and immorality. Among these descendants of Ham polygamy and sexual promiscuity were common. Beautiful women who found themselves in a foreign land were sought out by the natives. Further, the marriage bond was respected enough so that if a woman was desired as a wife, it was thought necessary to dispose of her husband before taking her. Thus, to save his own skin, Abram devised this little ploy, which he offers as they approach Egypt. Interestingly, Abram’s request is really a half-truth, for Sarai was Abram’s half-sister (20:12). However, Abram’s intent here was clearly to deceive, and he was trusting in his deception to protect him instead of trusting in the Lord.¹⁸ Abram failed to fear God. He was more afraid of the Egyptians than he was of God. Fear of man is incompatible with faith in God (Prov 29:25).¹⁹

Can you relate to this struggle? Are you afraid to talk to your friends about Christ because they may laugh at you or even worse, reject you? Are you constantly seeking to please people and win their approval? Do you live in fear of your boss firing you? All of these thoughts are natural, in our flesh, but God is not calling us to a natural life but to a supernatural life. He has given us the power to live above our circumstances (2 Pet 1:4).

Why does Abram succumb to such sinful behavior? Verse 13 reveals Abram's two motivations: Abram is seeking to protect himself ("**that I may live on account of you**") and to benefit himself ("**that it may go well with me**"). There are a few choice titles that come to mind to describe a man like this: self-serving jerk, insensitive brute, chauvinistic pig. In addition to being a jerk, he was also an opportunistic bum. He profited from his wife's moral and spiritual endangerment. He put others around him at risk. He put his wife at risk.²⁰ He put Pharaoh and his household at risk.

But before we jump down Abram's throat, let's put ourselves in his sandals. Abram is married to a hottie! What's Abe to do? It's not his fault that he's been blessed by God and married up. So now it becomes a matter of self-preservation. Abram's motives may not be as selfish as they appear.²¹ It is likely that Abram asked Sarai to pose as his (eligible) sister so that when the men of the land asked for her hand, he could stall for sufficient time for them to leave the land.²² It really was an ingenious plan. One of the local men would come to Abram to ask for his sister's hand in marriage.²³ Abram would consent but insist upon a long engagement (long enough for the famine to end). During this time Sarai would remain at Abram's home where their marriage could secretly continue and the safety of Abram was assured. It seemed that the benefits were great and the liabilities of such a scheme were minimal.

However, such a plan was evil for several reasons. First of all, it tended to ignore the presence and power of God in Abram's life. God had promised the ends, but seemingly He was unable to provide the means. He promised a land, a seed, and a blessing. Now it seemed as though Abram was left to his own devices to procure them. Second, Abram's plan was wrong because it jeopardized the purity of his wife and the promise of God. God had promised to make of Abram a great nation. From Abram a great blessing to all nations, the Messiah, would come. Now Abram was willing to run the risk of another man taking Sarai as his wife. How, then, could she be the mother of Abram's seed?²⁴

There are additional problems with Abram's lying, and lessons we can learn:

- 1) After lying once it becomes easier to do the next time. Abram later tried to pull the same stunt with Abimelech in 20:12.
- 2) Lying influences others around us. In 26:7, we discover Abraham's son, Isaac, pulling this exact same stunt with his wife Rebekah and Abimelech.
- 3) Lying brings a reproach to the name of God. Sadly, a pagan king must rebuke Abram for his deception and lack of faith in God (12:18-19).

George Burns was joking when he said that the key to his success was first learning honesty; once he could fake that, he could achieve anything.²⁵ We laugh at this but we all can acknowledge the truth that seems to be resident in this remark. Yet, God says lying is not an appropriate response for the believer.²⁶ Are you careful to tell the truth to the best of your ability?

Now back to our story. In 12:14, Moses writes, "**It came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful.**" Sure enough, the Egyptians fell for Sarai. The impersonal identification of "**woman**" signifies Sarai's treatment as an object.²⁷ The men found her "**very beautiful.**" One of the questions posed in the commentaries is: "How could this 65-year-old woman have been such a head-turner?" There are several points worth making: First, there are beautiful ladies that have aged well, into their 60's, 70's, and 80's. A famous modern day example is Sophia Loren.

Second, we must also remember the distortions our culture brings to our perspective. Our culture has persuaded us that beauty is closely connected with sensuality, youth, and certain facial and bodily features. Yet, not every culture is as superficial in their assessments of beauty as is ours. Biblically speaking, the phrase used here is also used to describe a fine specimen of a cow, in Genesis 41:2. Therefore, we need not assume that Sarai has miraculously retrained her stunning beauty of youth. Her dignity, her bearing, her countenance, her outfitting may well contribute to the impression that she is a striking woman.²⁸ Finally, some scholars suggest that, since Sarai lived to be 127 years old (23:1), her 60's would be equivalent to our 30-40's. I think this is the least likely view.

In 12:15, Abram's worst nightmare occurred: **“Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh** [The word **“Pharaoh”** is not a personal name; it is a title meaning “Great House.” It is the equivalent of “Crown” for the British monarch.²⁹]; **and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.”**³⁰ Great! Abrams's plan backfires because Pharaoh does not take the time to negotiate. Sarai became a part of Pharaoh's harem. What was going on in those chambers? Was she now in Pharaoh's arms? Abram began to write his own rendition of *Pharaoh, Pharaoh*: “Pharaoh, Pharaoh...oh baby, let my Sarai go! Yeah, yeah!” On account of her beauty, Sarai would surely become one of Pharaoh's favorite wives. And from then on, life would have taken its natural course. She well could have lived and died in Egypt, and had her place in a royal tomb.³¹

In 12:16, we read these tragic words: **“Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels.”** All of these gifts were provisions of wealth in Abram's day. The last two gifts, the female donkeys and the camels, tell all. Female donkeys were far more controllable and dependable for riding and, therefore, the ride of choice for the rich (the Lexus's and BMW's of the Nile). To have a domesticated camel in Abrams's day and age was the equivalent to owning a Ferrari Testarosa.³²

So you would think Abram would be happy, right? Wrong! He would have been better off to suffer hunger in the Promised Land than to be rich in Egypt.³³ Everything that Abram received in Egypt later caused him trouble. Because of the great wealth he acquired from Pharaoh, Abram and Lot could not live together and had to separate (13:5-6). Hagar, the Egyptian maidservant that Pharaoh gave to Abram brought division and sorrow into the home (16:1-16). Abram attempts to build a family through Hagar. This was not God's plan. Hagar becomes the mother of the Arab nations. Sarai becomes the mother of the Jewish nation. Today, we live with the international tensions between these two countries, and the origin of the struggle goes back to Egypt. Abram failed to trust God. Abram failed to obey God. Abram failed to fear God. Today we feel the consequences of that terrible decision.

When we fail to trust, obey, or fear God, there are serious consequences. The wealth that Abram accumulated would be a perpetual reminder that Sarai was no longer in his household but in Pharaoh's.³⁴ God blessed Abram even when he wasn't doing what he should; and God continued to protect Abram, even when Abram was being a liar. God did not call back His promise to Abram, because the promise depended on God, not on Abram. Some contemporary Christians have the mistaken idea that God always blesses obedience with abundance and judges sin with hardships. This is not always the case. Abram could have used that kind of erroneous logic to justify his spirituality during this lapse of faith. In reality, he experienced famine—in the will of God, and an abundance of material wealth—out of the will of God.³⁵ The problems we run from in one place are usually greater at the next place.

How do you respond when the pressure is on? When the finances are low? When you're having conflict with your spouse or a co-worker? When you have no idea what to do next? When you are discouraged or angry? Whether you realize it or not, your life, character, and choices are influencing people around you: your spouse, your children, your family, and friends. You may be the only “Bible” they'll ever read!

In 12:17-20, our story heats up with intensity: **“But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife.”**³⁶ Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, **“What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go.’ Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him.”** In 12:17, we find one of the greatest words in the Bible—the word **“but.”**

Significantly, God had not yet been mentioned in this passage until here. Despite Abram’s lack of faith and unethical behavior, God intervenes on behalf of Sarai and the promises He has made to Abram. No matter what circumstance we may be in, God is greater than any famine or any Pharaoh. The Lord intervenes by sending **“great plagues”** on Pharaoh and his house.³⁷ Any misfortune in the ancient world was looked upon as an indication of divine displeasure. So when God sent great plagues, Pharaoh and his advisers may have tried to pinpoint when the troubles started. When they traced the troubles back to the time of Sarai’s arrival, they may have figured out what probably happened. Though the nature of the plagues is unexplained, it is possible that Pharaoh was inflicted with sexual ailments that prevented the consummation of physical union with Sarai.³⁸ God was protecting the ancestress of Israel from the desecration of the body, from which the sacred nation was to come (cf. Ps 105:13-15).

How sad! Instead of bringing blessing and life (12:3), Abram brings cursing upon Egypt.³⁹ What a turn of events! To make matters worse, a bizarre scene then unfolds before us: a man of God telling a “white” lie to a pagan ruler. Evidently, either from some innate sense of the fear of God, or from knowledge gained from Sarai herself, Pharaoh became convinced that the plagues came from God because of the intentions that he had concerning Sarai. When the Pharaoh later confronted Abram with that lie and its implications, Abram must have felt very small indeed.⁴⁰ (Unfortunately, Abram did not learn the lesson from it that he should have, as we will see in Genesis 20.)

It is interesting to note that the Pharaoh’s inquisition of Abram is similar to the Lord’s words to Adam and Eve: **“What is this you have done?”** (3:13). He then follows this up with another question, **“Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?”**⁴¹ Ouch! Pharaoh assumed the moral high ground. Abram appeared the sinner, Pharaoh the saint.⁴² Abram remained silent under Pharaoh’s reproach, uttering not a word. What could he say? Abram was exposed and disgraced. He was thrown out! After being commanded by Pharaoh to leave, Abram does that, in company with an escort provided by the Egyptian ruler, perhaps to protect Abram and Sarai from the possibility of the defilement of Sarai, just as Abram had originally feared (12:20). Abram and his entourage must have humbly crept out of Egypt with their tails tucked between their legs.

Three very important principles can be found in these verses:

- 1) The Christian’s conduct does greatly affect his credibility. How many non-Christians have been appalled by the behavior of a Christian? Jesus said, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be required” (Luke 12:48). What kind of person are you at work or at school? Do other people know what you believe and where you stand? Or, are you a Christian chameleon that just blends into your environment? If I were to show up at your work or school and go through the day with you, would you behave differently than you normally do?
- 2) God would prefer for us to repent on our own, but if we are unwilling He will intervene. He does so for our own good and for His own glory.⁴³ He is a loving Father who disciplines His children (Heb 12:5-11).
- 3) If God is able to make out of this deceitful man one whom He shall call “my friend” (cf. Isa 41:8), He can do the same for you and me. Though Abram fails the tests of faith and ethics, God proves faithful. Though we are unfaithful, He is faithful (2 Tim 2:13). God takes pity on His children (Ps 103:13). He supernaturally intervenes to protect His own, though this is not always so (1 Kgs 18:13; Heb 11:35-38).

[When you have succumbed to fear, there is only one solution...]

3. Return to a life of faith (13:1-4). The great news of the Bible is that there is life after failure. Now that God has delivered Abram from this mess, how does he respond? In 13:1-4, Moses tells us: **“So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot with him. Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold. He went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.”** We have no clue as to how long Abram remained in Egypt. No altars were built in Egypt, to our knowledge, nor are we told that Abram ever called on the name of the Lord there. But finally he does right before God. Abram goes back to Canaan. He goes back to Bethel, “the house of God” (cf. 12:8). He goes back to the altar! Hallelujah—there is life after the mess. Like Abram, when we lapse in faith we must return to the point of our departure from God if we desire once again to restore the joy of communion we once knew. Abram is today remembered as the man of faith—in part because he returned **“to the place where his tent had been at the beginning”** (13:3). If you have disobeyed and God is disciplining you, go back to the place you left Him and make things right. The victorious Christian life is a series of new beginnings. This is not an excuse for sin, but it is an encouragement for repentance.⁴⁴

If Abram had stayed in Canaan when the famine came, his faith would have grown. He would have seen the Lord provide for him. Since he did not stay in Canaan, the same famine that could have been a means of spiritual growth actually took him away from God, led to sin, and eventually brought great humiliation. What an important step it would be if we would learn that lesson about life. Instead of complaining, we would trust God. Instead of saying, “Why has God let this happen to me? Doesn’t He care? Why has God abandoned me?” we would say, “Here is another opportunity for me to trust God. I wonder what wonderful things He is going to do for me this time.” It is not always easy to do that. It sometimes takes more grace to stay in Canaan than to get there. But that is what God wants. He does not want our way to be easy, because if it is easy we will not grow. He arranges the steps of faith in an upward direction so that our spiritual muscles will grow strong and we can eventually scale the heights of great blessing.⁴⁵

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Notes

¹ Ross writes, “One cannot miss the deliberate parallelism between this sojourn of Abram in Egypt and the later event in the life of the nation in bondage in Egypt. The motifs are remarkably similar: the famine in the land (12:10; 47:13), the descent to Egypt to sojourn (12:10; 47:27), the attempt to kill the males but save the females (12:12; Ex. 1:22), the plagues on Egypt (Gen. 12:17; Ex. 7:14-11:10), the spoiling of Egypt (Gen. 12:16; Ex. 12:35-36), the deliverance (Gen. 12:19; Ex. 15), and the ascent to the Negev (Gen. 13:1; Num. 13:17, 22). The great deliverance out of bondage that Israel experienced was thus already accomplished in her ancestor, and probably was a source of comfort and encouragement to them.” Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002 [1988]), 49. Cf. Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 217.

² The Hebrew verb *gur* traditionally rendered “to sojourn,” means “to stay for a while.” The “stranger” (traditionally “sojourner”) is one who is a temporary resident, a visitor, one who is passing through. Abram had no intention of settling down in Egypt or owning property. He was only there to wait out the famine. See NET Study Notes. If Abram had intended to leave permanently, he would have likely returned to his hometown of Ur.

³ Heb. *kaved* (“severe”) has the idea of heavy, or that of being multiplied, lengthened, or extended.

⁴ Gene A. Getz, *Abraham: Trials and Triumphs* (Glendale, CA: Regal, 1976), 28.

⁵ Another severe famine (Gen 12:10) later encouraged Jacob and his family to sojourn in Egypt (47:4), but God gave Jacob permission to go (46:2-4).

⁶ Waltke writes, “I believe Abram rushed ahead of God by going to Egypt without a divine revelation that he should do so.” Waltke, *Genesis*, 213.

⁷ Some expositors treat the words, “went down” and “went up,” as moral terms (cf. Gen 12:10; 13:1), but it is not easy to prove that they have moral force here. They seem to be merely topographical. When Abram traveled from the Negev to Egypt, he had to go down. Now, while it is impossible to prove that the terms “went down” and “went up” have moral significance, it is still quite clear that Abram made his move to leave the land without consulting the Lord.

⁸ Nowhere is Abram directly condemned for his decision to go down to Egypt, but later developments make it clear that his actions did not stem from faith. Abram did not consult God, but acted independently.

⁹ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 190-191.

¹⁰ Waltke observes, “The rapidity of the narration between Abram’s journeying in 12:9 and his leaving in 12:10 gives the impression that he walked right through and out of the Promised Land (i.e., Canaan).” Waltke, *Genesis*, 213.

¹¹ See Ed Dobson, *Abraham: The Lord Will Provide* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1993), 26. See also Eaton, *Genesis 12-23*, 36.

¹² Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 74.

¹³ Another way of putting it is: Abram would have been better off to suffer hunger in the Promised Land than to be rich in Egypt.

¹⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Obedient* (Wheaton, IL: Chariot Victor, 1991), 23.

¹⁵ Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 74.

¹⁶ This is one of the many indications that the Bible is unimpeachably honest in its presentations of its men and women. This impeccable honesty is consonant with the high degree of divine inspiration that it claims for itself. And as for Abram, his yielding to expediency and compromise make us almost blush for him, until we remember that we are made of the same stuff.

¹⁷ Only rarely does the Bible refer to a person’s appearance (e.g., Rebekah, 24:16; Rachel, 29:17; Joseph, 39:6; and David, 1 Sam 16:12).

¹⁸ Abram never sank lower than upon this occasion, unless it is the time when he repeated his sin (cf. Gen 20:1-18).

¹⁹ Waltke writes, “Abram’s fear demonstrates a lack of trust in God’s recent promises. Although God has promised to make Abram’s seed abundant and to curse those who curse Abram, Abram fears for his life.” Waltke, *Genesis*, 213.

²⁰ Incidentally, in Sarai’s submission to Abram’s counsel one sees, perhaps, an illustration of 1 Peter 3:3-6, but it was a submission that she should not have given him, it seems to me.

²¹ Oriental attitudes toward adultery were much more sensitive than ours (Gen 20:2-9). It is doubtful that Abraham would have allowed his wife to bear that sin on her conscience, much less allow himself to be an accomplice in it.

²² U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis II* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1964), 348-352.

²³ The medieval commentators suggested that what Abraham hoped to get out of his “brother” status was the right to receive and deny all suitors’ requests to be Sarai’s husband. There is a biblical precedence for this. See Laban and Rebekah in Gen 24:55 and Dinah and her brothers in 34:13-17.

²⁴ Bob Deffinbaugh, *Genesis: From Paradise to Patriarchs*. Lesson 13: When Faith Fails Genesis 12:10-13:4 (www.bible.org, 1997), 2.

²⁵ Quoted in Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing*, 192.

²⁶ Kaiser writes, "It must be stated clearly that Abraham and Isaac both practiced deception. The Bible merely reports that they did so, without approving of it. God preserved the purity of Sarai and Rebekah in spite of all the maneuverings of their husbands...No one can make a case for lying based on these passages. It will always be wrong to lie, since God is truth. Abraham and Isaac are to be condemned for their complicity in lying, no matter how noble a motive they may have had, or how much truth the lie contained. Still, God was not to be deterred in His plan to bring life and blessing to the nations through the offspring of Sarai and Rebekah." Walter C. Kaiser, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997 [1996]), Electronic ed

²⁷ Waltke, *Genesis*, 214.

²⁸ John H. Walton, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 397.

²⁹ Waltke, *Genesis*, 214.

³⁰ Egyptians, politicians, and kings liked to have plenty of women in a "harem"—a household of wives.

³¹ Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing*, 192-193.

³² Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing*, 193.

³³ Towns, *History Makers of the Old Testament*, 72.

³⁴ Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, 276.

³⁵ Elmer Towns, *History Makers of the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1989), 71.

³⁶ Deffinbaugh writes, "There is no evidence of a physical relationship between Pharaoh and Sarai. While the preparation period would normally have been at the home of Abram, in this case it would be at the palace. Sarai would likely undergo a relatively long period of preparation for her presentation to Pharaoh. Such was the custom in those days (see Esther 2:12-14)." Bob Deffinbaugh, *Genesis: From Paradise to Patriarchs*. Lesson 13: When Faith Fails: Genesis 12:10-13:4 (www.bible.org, 1997), 4.

³⁷ This is the first example of the cursing and blessing element of God's promise to Abram in Gen 12:2-3.

³⁸ The word "plagues" (*naga*) in the form found here is used only of smiting with disease (2 Kgs 15:5; 2 Chron 26:20).

³⁹ Waltke, *Genesis*, 214.

⁴⁰ Ronald F. Youngblood, *The Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 152.

⁴¹ Of course, Pharaoh, while more righteous than Abram in the matter, was not completely in the right. It would appear to be quite probable that, if Abram had admitted that Sarai was his wife in the beginning, he would have had Abram slain.

⁴² Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing*, 193.

⁴³ Abram's experience in Egypt illustrates the truth that backsliders usually don't take the initiative in getting out of their "Egypt." God had to plague Pharaoh who then expelled Abram from the land.

⁴⁴ Wiersbe, *Be Obedient*, 26.

⁴⁵ James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis 12-36 Vol. 2* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985 [1998]), 477.