

Genesis 12:11-13

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In Egypt, Abram asks his wife to only say she is his sister for fear that the people will kill him and kidnap Sarai because she is a beautiful woman.

While in Egypt, Abram stopped building altars and chose to mislead the Egyptians. He told Sarai *I know that you are a beautiful woman* and powerful rulers would sometimes take beautiful women for themselves and kill their husbands.

Escaping the danger of famine in Canaan, Abram fears that in Egypt he will run into another sort of risk. Abram knew that he would not be able to enter Egypt unnoticed. The Egyptians would see them and *kill me, but they will let you (Sarai) live*. Abram was afraid Sarai's beauty would draw the attention of powerful men and they would murder him and take her for their wife. So, he comes up with a premeditated plan of deception.

Abram asked Sarai to *say that you are my sister*. Calling Sarai his "sister" was not untrue, she was his half-sister ([Genesis 20:12](#)). In Hebrew, the word "sister" means more than a sibling, it is also an expression of love. In Egyptian, the word "sister" was used for both sweetheart and wife. There was a social custom that when there was not a father, the brother assumed legal guardianship of his sister, particularly in arranging marriage on her behalf. Therefore, whoever wished to take Sarai as a wife would have to negotiate with her "brother." However, this did not disclose a vital point, that Sarai was also Abram's wife. Abram's purpose in the deception was to preserve his life, but in doing so it seems he put Sarai at risk. He probably reasoned that she was at risk anyway.

God is patient and forgiving, and in this case seems to accommodate Abram. Abram put his wife at risk, in order that he *may live*. This does not seem to be a faith-filled moment in Abram's life. None of us are perfect human beings though. We are all subject to the same temptations and possess the same frailties as all other human beings. Abram, the man of great faith, is fearful of the evil of which people are capable. This event implies that Abram at this point is not looking to God to protect him in this scenario. He is using his own wiles. He reasons that if Pharaoh were to decide to add Sarai to his harem while knowing that she was Abram's wife, he would have to kill Abram first.

Biblical Text:

¹¹ It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, “See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; ¹² and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. ¹³ “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.”