

Eliezer

My name is Eliezer. I was with Abram before he became Abraham. I was actually a slave he picked up in Damascus on his way from Haran. Because I earned his trust, I was put in charge. Other slaves, including Hagar, were given him by the king of Egypt as compensation for taking Sarai into his palace. Abram had spread the word that she was his sister – she was indeed a half-sister but also his wife. When the king's household began to experience diseases, he suspected the reason and gave her back. It was obvious that there was something special about this man – something to do with his God. It was also clear that he had trouble telling the truth and was protected by his God anyway.

I was with Abram when he gave Lot the first choice of the land although he was older and more powerful and could have taken the best part by force. The gossip among the other servants was that he trusted a promise of his God that eventually the land would all be his.

I was also part of Abram's "army" when he rescued Lot from the 4 kings. On the way back, an ancient priest named Melchizedek blessed him and Abram gave him a tithe of the spoils from his brilliant military victory. When returning the captives to their homes he refused to keep anything for himself, stating that he did not want the king of Sodom say that he had made Abram rich.

Not long after that, something happened that we servants all watched with great interest. Abram called for a cow, goat, ram, dove and pigeon. He cut the larger animals in half, drove away the vultures then went to sleep. After sunset, what we saw was astounding. A flaming torch and firepot appeared and passed between the pieces of the animals.

I later overheard him telling his wife about complaining to his God that he had no son. Then my ears pricked up when he went on to say that at present, I, Eliezer of Damascus, was his heir. (Quite a conflict of interest for me!) But we who saw all these miraculous things happen knew that his powerful God could give him a son!

He told Sarai about hearing God speaking to him in a dream, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions." It would wait four generations in order for the Amorites to become so wicked that they must be punished. My boss was promised an amazing future by his powerful God.

Sarai had carried the shame of being childless all those years and suggested to Abram, with reluctance I'm sure, that he might have a son by her slave, Hagar. Perhaps, she reasoned, this was the plan of God. I am informed that you have what is called surrogacy in your day and it is still fraught with unanticipated consequences.

Hagar had a son and then despised her infertile mistress. Abram surely regretted the decision.

Then Abram informed us servants that he, his son Ishmael and all the males in the company would be circumcised. It was a sign of a covenant with his God and not an option or matter for discussion. At the same time, Abram was told that his name was changed to Abraham -- "ancestor of many nations" and Sarai would be Sarah. There was much discussion of this among the slaves. The procedure had something to do with reproduction, but the childlessness was not Abram's fault since he had a child with Hagar. What was this powerful God up to?

Three men made their appearance near Abraham's tent and were entertained in the traditional manner before they brought a message. In nine months, Sarah would have a son! As they began to leave, they made another surprising statement. Sodom was to be destroyed because of its wickedness. Abraham, knowing that Lot and his family had moved into the city began to bargain with the visitors about the minimum number of righteous people it would take to cancel the destruction. He started with 50 and got down to 10 where he stopped – he probably had heard enough to know. And, indeed, only 4 came out when the warning was given to Lot -- he, his wife and their two daughters. Not even the men pledged to marry them came along.

I was one of the slaves who brought supplies to Lot in the place where he took refuge after the catastrophe and got the horrible details from those eye-witnesses. We had seen from the hills the burning sulfur that obliterated both Sodom and Gomorrah. But the moral evil was revealed by the testimony of Lot and his daughters. I could not believe the horror of it.

Lot said that he intercepted two of the three men who had visited Abraham as they entered the city of Sodom. They must have been angels although they appeared as men. They told him of their plan to spend the night in the city square. Lot knew there would be problems and convinced them to come into his home. Then, as he had suspected, trouble began. The men of the town, not just the young and reckless but the middle aged and even the elders, came and blatantly asked Lot to send the visitors out for an orgy. Whether they considered this an invitation that would be enthusiastically accepted, or they considered it their right to abuse anybody who entered their gates, Lot told them he was protecting his guests.

Next, however, Lot showed that he had been corrupted by his association with the city because he offered his two virgin daughters to the assailants. What father would do that? Perhaps he knew that those men were not attracted to women, and it was just a gesture. The crowd insisted on breaking in and were struck blind by the angels who led Lot, his wife and the girls out of the city. The wife could not really tear herself away from the luxury of the city and disobeyed the angels, ending her life as a pillar of salt along the road.

Abraham spent some time in the nearby kingdom of Gerar and again did his little deception as an attempt to save his own life by telling everyone that Sarah (still beautiful at 90) was his sister. The pagan king, Abimelech, feared God more than my master and repented of taking Sarah into his house, ending the affair by giving this man – who got the king in trouble because of a lie and yet was a favorite of his God -- livestock and slaves. This was apparently to buy favor and avoid punishment – by Abraham’s God.

When Isaac was born, exactly when predicted, Sarah wanted to get rid of Hagar and Ishmael. Abraham was caught between his wife and his two sons. They were both to be blessed because of God’s promise to Abraham. As the chief slave of this complicated man, I could not wrap my mind around why he was given special favor. Eventually I realized that this was exactly the point! Abraham did not deserve the favor of God. No one does. But after the next event, I too began to worship the God of Abraham.

The details of the following episode were not clear until after it was over. Abraham rose early after a restless night – I don’t think he had slept at all -- and took Isaac with the equipment necessary for worship, the fire, the fuel and the knife. I noticed before Isaac did that there was no animal for the sacrifice. Isaac was 13 at the time and related what we servants did not see after being left behind. When he asked about the lamb, his father had said, “God Himself will provide a lamb.” The binding of Isaac, his co-operation with being bound and seeing his father raise the knife without fighting back must have been a sight to see. Isaac told us that he just trusted his father and trusted his God. An angel intervened and Isaac was NOT killed.

Abraham, in his mind was prepared to die when he returned home, for surely Sarah would have killed him. The whole thing was a test of his faith in God, and he passed the test. I am sure that you know by your day about the fulfillment of the promise. Did Abraham’s descendants become as numerous as the stars in the sky or the sand of the seashore? Did Ishmael, not the son of promise, also become a great nation? Sarah died and was buried in a purchased plot of land. Isaac still had no wife.

Before he died, Abraham made me promise to find a wife for Isaac among his relatives in Haran but not to take Isaac back to that land. I had seen enough of the power of the God of Abraham to not be surprised at the way it happened. When I arrived in that country, I prayed “Let the young woman to whom I shall say, ‘Please let down your jar that I may drink,’ and who shall say, ‘Drink, and I will water your camels’ -- let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac.” And it happened just as I prayed.

I determined to follow the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and I did so to the end of my days. Abraham was still vigorous when my life came to an end. I never got any of

his herds and flocks as would have happened if he had no child. But I share in the greater blessing because I came to worship his God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac.

Genesis 14 – 25, 2 Peter 2:7