

Lizzie Strauss

Interpreting Sacred Texts

Jason Ripley

29 April, 2021

Explorations in Midrash: An Experiential Examination of Exegesis

The original goal of this paper was to examine the ways in which varying levels of acceptance or non-acceptance of Midrashic tradition influence various faith communities' interpretations of the same religious text. Upon beginning my research, however, I quickly realized that I was approaching the project with far too little background knowledge of Midrash itself to begin looking into its application. I had thought that Midrash was simply a collection of stories with Biblical characters as their protagonists— canonized Biblical fanfiction, if you will. But as I explore in this paper, not only are not all Midrash narratives, Midrash is an explicitly didactic genre. Because of this initial lack of knowledge, this paper has become more exploratory than argumentative. Instead of putting forth an argument of how the Bible should be interpreted, I will use interpretations of the covenant found in Genesis 12:1-3¹ to discover what Midrash is, how it has informed the work of contemporary scholars, and the possibilities it has for informing my own understanding of Biblical texts.

First, however, a few notes a stylistic choices I have made:

1. I will be referring to Abram/Abraham as Abraham, following James L. Kugel, author of *The Bible As It Was*,² which I will be citing in this paper. I make this

¹ *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*. Jewish Publication Society, 1985. Accessed via Sefaria.org. 1 "The LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make of you a great nation, And I will bless you; I will make your name great, And you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you And curse him that curses you; And all the families of the earth Shall bless themselves by you.""

² James L. Kugel, *The Bible As It Was* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 133

choice for two reasons— firstly, Abram/Abraham is known to most people as Abraham, and this name will feel more familiar to most readers. Secondly, although God makes their first covenant, which I will discuss, with Abram, the covenant canonically begins to be fulfilled with the conception of Isaac,³ which happens to Abraham. In other words, the person to whom God fulfills divine promises and thereby legitimizes their relationship is Abraham.

2. When referring to God, I will be using gender-neutral pronouns. I feel that gender is a human phenomenon, so to use gendered words to refer to God would be to minimize their divinity.

Defining Midrash

Midrash is a genre of rabbinic literature. *The New Encyclopedia of Judaism* defines Midrash as "Rabbinic commentary on the Bible, clarifying legal points or deriving lessons by literary devices: stories, parables, legends" and translates the word itself as "exposition."⁴ It is related to Talmud in that both are rabbinic commentaries on Torah, but their forms are different. Also, Talmud traditionally grew out of oral teachings given to Moses at Sinai, while Midrash is generally understood to have been rabbinically generated in the Middle Ages.

Midrash is organized as a verse-by-verse, or often word-by-word, compilation of commentaries on the Biblical text. These commentaries are often narrative or add elements to the Biblical narrative, but they are not the Biblical fanfiction that I imagined. Instead, exegetes are able to imagine new contexts in which to interpret words and phrases, allowing for huge amounts

³ One could argue that because Abram's son Ishmael is born before Isaac and before Abram's name changes to Abraham, the person to whom God begins fulfilling their promise to is Abram. Ishmael, however, does not have nearly the same amount of narrative importance as Isaac. Isaac's line of descendants is greater than Ishmael's, so I see Isaac as the true fulfillment of the promise to make of Abraham a great nation.

⁴ Geoffrey Wigoder, Editor-in-Chief. *The New Encyclopedia of Judaism* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 528

of flexibility in interpretation. By doing so, Midrash creates and uses the opportunity to ask creative questions about stories and scripture. For instance, Midrash could ask, "Why does X event follow Y event in the narrative instead of the other way around?" or "How did X character feel when God said Y?" These questions allow Rabbinic commentary and contemporary readers to use scripture more effectively in their own lives.

However, the format is difficult to read. One Midrash on Genesis 12:1 reads "*Wisdom maketh a wise man stronger than ten rulers* (Eccl 7:19): this refers to Abraham, [whom wisdom made stronger] than the ten generations from Noah to Abraham; out of all of them I spoke to thee alone, as it was written, NOW THE LORD SAID UNTO ABRAHAM."⁵ In this passage, as well as others quoted later in this paper, the rabbinic commentary is rendered without any special formatting and the verse which is being commented on is written in capital letters. Other biblical quotes are italicized and cited by book, chapter, and verse. When specific Rabbis are quoted, their words are not put in quotation marks.

There are two types of Midrash: halachah, which deals with the legal content of the Torah, and aggadah, which deals with the non-legal and narrative content. In the glossary of his book *What is Midrash?*, Jacob Neusner says that "aggadah" means "lore" in Hebrew and "bears the secondary meaning of 'fable.'"⁶ Halachah and aggadah are separate, but since halachah deals with legal matters and aggadah sets out moral guidelines, they interact with and influence each other according to *The New Encyclopedia of Judaism*.⁷ The goal of Midrash Aggadah is always didactic. But unlike Midrash Halachah, which sets forth binding laws, Aggadah is regarded as

⁵ H Freedman, trans; H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds. "Lech Lecha" in Genesis I from *Midrash Rabbah*, (New York: The Soncino Press), 1983.

⁶ Jacob Neusner, *What is Midrash?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 108.

⁷ Wigoder, *The New Encyclopedia of Judaism*, 40

the opinion of the author and is not binding. In this essay, I will be focusing exclusively on aggadah.

In *What is Midrash?*, Jacob Neusner proposes another categorization system for Midrash. He suggests that Midrash be sorted into three entirely new categories—paraphrase, prophecy, and parable.⁸ In paraphrase, Midrash takes over the narration of the Biblical text by filling in gaps and altering word choices. These Midrash do not have a clear boundary between themselves and the actual text. Exegetes who use Midrash as prophecy read older passages as foretelling newer passages or current events. Midrash that falls under parable sees scripture as having surface level as well as deeper hidden meanings and seeks to explain these meanings to the reader. None of these three categories is restricted only to Halacha or to Aggadah.

According to *The New Encyclopedia of Judaism*, Midrash Aggadah developed over a period of about 1000 years. This extended period of development allowed Greek and Babylonian language and philosophy to significantly affect Midrash, meaning that much of contemporary Jewish theology and culture is influenced by other Mediterranean cultures through the stories we tell about our scripture.⁹ This also means that there was a lot of time for stories from the folklore traditions of these cultures and Midrash to interact and affect each other. While most Midrash is relatively obscure, some stories have thoroughly entered the Jewish collective consciousness. For instance, in my own experience, many Jews are surprised to learn that the story of Abraham smashing his father's idols as a child is contained in Midrash, not scripture. This and other stories contribute to the uniquely Jewish understandings of the character of Abraham, who he was, his influence on Jewish tradition, and what it means to be his descendant.

⁸ Neusner, *What is Midrash?*, 7

⁹ Wigoder, *The New Encyclopedia of Judaism*, 39

Scholarly Interpretations of Scripture

Rabbinic Interpretations

One of the most notable characteristics of Midrash is its intertextuality and status as early canonical criticism. Most Midrash includes quotes from other rabbinic sources and from other parts of the Bible. For example, one Midrash on Genesis 12:2 interprets the Covenant in light of a passage from Deuteronomy: "Said he to Him: 'Yet hast Thou not caused the seventy¹⁰ nations to spring from Noah? He replied: 'That nation of which it is written, *For what great nation is there, that hath God so nigh unto them* (Deut. 4:7), them will I raise up from thee.'"¹¹ The Rabbi is imagining a conversation between Abraham and God following God's promise to make of Abraham a great nation wherein Abraham protests that God has already made all the nations possible from Noah's descendants, so how could Abraham be the father of a great nation?

Setting aside Abraham's lack of attention to the fact that, as a descendant of Noah, his descendants would also be descendants of Noah, this passage is striking because it imagines a personal, intimate relationship between Abraham and God wherein Abraham feels comfortable enough to question God. Because Abraham is regarded as the spiritual and/ or literal father of all Jews, this interpretation sheds light on how Jews after Abraham have understood their relationships with God to be personal inheritances from Abraham. In fact, the quoted Deuteronomy verse hints at this hereditary relationship structure. In the Jewish Publication Society's translation, published in 1985, the verse reads "For what great nation is there that has a god so close at hand as is the LORD our God whenever we call upon Him?"¹² This translation, which is more accessible to the modern reader, highlights the close relationship between the nation of the Israelites and God.

¹⁰ The number seventy here connotes all possible, like Noah's forty days and nights

¹¹ Freedman, "Lech Lecha"

¹² *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*

Another Midrash on Genesis 12:2 holds that each of the three main clauses of the covenant ("I will make of you a great nation, And I will bless you; I will make your name great")¹³ corresponds to one of three risks of travelling– "diminishing procreation, and reducing one's wealth and one's fame."¹⁴ We see later on in the text that each of these promises indeed comes true. Both here and in the first Midrash concerning Abraham and God's conversation, Abraham takes a risk and is rewarded for doing so.

Another comment on the same verse reads "R. Isaac said: [God promised Abraham]: 'I will set thee as a blessing in the Eighteen [Benedictions]. Yet thou dost not know whether Mine is first or thine is first.' Said R. Acha in R. Ze'ira's name: Thine is before Mine; after having recited 'the shield of Abraham', we then recite 'who resurrectest the dead.'"¹⁵ This refers to the Amidah, a series of prayers which make up a large portion of most Jewish prayer services and argues that part of the fulfillment of the covenant is the inclusion of Abraham's name in the Amidah. However, this interpretation leads to more questions than it answers for me. Perhaps I simply lack knowledge of the historical context, but why would these rabbinic scholars not know the order of the Amidah? Who canonized the Amidah, and when? And what importance does the order have since "shield of Abraham" and "who resurrects the dead" both refer to God?

A comment on Genesis 13:14 interprets the covenant as only applying to Abraham and his literal descendants. It reads:

R. Judah said: There was anger [in heaven] against our father Abraham when his nephew Lot parted from him. 'He makes everyone cleave [to Me],' said the Holy One, blessed be He, 'yet he does not cause his brother's son to cleave [to Me]!... 'I promised him, *Unto thy seed I have given this land*' (Gen. 15:18), said God 'yet he attaches Lot to himself; if so,

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Freedman, "Lech Lecha," 319-320

¹⁵ Ibid., 321

let him go and procure two common soldiers! ... Hence, AND THE LORD SAID TO
ABRAM: ... FOR ALL THE LAND WHICH THOU SEEST, TO THEE WILL I GIVE
IT.¹⁶

This interpretation is based on the traditional belief that as the father of monotheism, Abraham was a successful evangelist. Because Abraham was not able to convert Lot, his own nephew, God was angry at Lot and cast him out of Abraham's household before fulfilling his covenant that Abraham would become a great nation.

The final Midrash that we will explore, another commentary on Genesis 12:2, claims that "No man ever priced a cow belonging to Abraham [in order to buy it] without becoming blessed, ... Abraham used to pray for barren women, and they were remembered ... and they were healed ... when the sick person merely saw him he was relieved."¹⁷ This interpretation of Abraham is strikingly Messianic— in the Gospel of John, Jesus is noted for performing healing miracles.¹⁸ Another Midrash on Genesis 12:10¹⁹ is more explicitly Messianic.

R. Joshua b. Levi commenced thus: *In this world He hath given [food] unto them that fear him; He will be ever mindful of His covenant* (Ps. 111:5). Said R. Joshua b. Levi: in this world he hath given wanderings²⁰ unto them that fear him; but in the Messianic future, *'He will be ever mindful of His covenant.'* For what is written of Abraham? *'And I will bless thee, and make thy name great'* (Gen 12:2). As soon as he set out, famine assailed him, yet he did not protest nor murmur against Him, but, AND THERE WAS FAMINE IN THE LAND, etc.²¹

¹⁶ Ibid., 338

¹⁷ Ibid., 321

¹⁸ John 5:15 (NRSV)

¹⁹ *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*. "There was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land."

²⁰ The marginal notes in the Freedman edition of the Midrash notes that the word translated here as "wanderings" is related to the word translated above as "food"

²¹ Freedman, "Lech Lecha," 326

This Midrash asserts that God will finally fully fulfill their covenant with Abraham in the Messianic Age. Put together, these two comments trouble me as an adherent to the Reform branch of Judaism, which holds that it is the responsibility of humans living in the world right now to perform *tikkun olam*, healing the world, not the promised Messiah, who is not worth waiting for. I will work with these Midrash in the final section of this paper.

Academic Interpretations

In his book *The Bible As It Was*, author James L. Kugel presents an interpretation of Abraham as theological innovator.²² Drawing on an assortment of apocryphal, rabbinic, Biblical, and extra-Biblical sources, Kugel presents a number of scenarios of Abraham's discovery of the monotheistic God, as well as a number of scenarios of persecution that God saved him from by directing him to leave his homeland of Chaldea. In each of these scenarios, he draws on Joshua 24:2-3, which establishes that Abraham's kinsmen were idolatrous, and which was used heavily by Rabbinic authors.²³

Kugel first cites a well known Midrash in which Abraham, whose father sold idols, smashed the idols in his father's shop, to propose that he saw first hand as a child "the folly of worshipping idols"²⁴ and thus was, ironically, converted through his father's idolatry. He then references a number of stories told by ancient historians about the Chaldeans' skill in astronomy to propose that Abraham was an astronomer who discovered the oneness of God in the stars.²⁵ Either way, Abraham was the sole believer in the one true God in Chaldea. Kugel goes on to argue that "Abraham's new ideas about God would not have been acceptable to the Chaldeans"²⁶ and cites stories from Josephus and Jubilees, as well as Isaiah and other texts to propose that

²² Kugel, *The Bible As It Was*, 131-148

²³ *Ibid.*, 134

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 137

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 141

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 141-142

Abraham was persecuted for his belief. He concludes that God must have told Abraham to leave Chaldea to escape this persecution.

The idea that Abraham was the only person in his homeland to not worship idols or to believe in a monotheistic God is not especially exciting to me. It also explains how Abraham came to be known as the father of monotheism. However, the most intriguing aspect of Kugel's argument is its striking use of a variety of sources. In fact, the use of Rabbinic and apocryphal sources, coupled with the reliance on a Biblical passage not being directly explored justifies the label of "modern Midrash."

Earlier, I quoted *The New Encyclopedia of Judaism* as defining Midrash as "Rabbinic commentary on the Bible, clarifying legal points or deriving lessons by literary devices: stories, parables, legends." This definition is quite broad, and except for the qualification that the commentary must be Rabbinic, Kugel's piece fits. Much of his evidence comes in the form of narrative derived from ancient sources. I also commented earlier on Midrash's intertextuality, and Kugel's piece is nothing if not intertextual, drawing as it does upon a wide variety of works across genres and eras.

This reframing of modern scholarly work as Midrash opens up a new way of thinking about Midrash itself. Adding texts to the canon of Midrash forces the scholar to consider the essence of Midrash. The answer to the question "what is Midrash?" shifts from "These specific texts" to "Texts such as these." Because Kugel joins the Rabbis in not only commenting on the Bible through narrative, but working in conversation with the text and each other. They are asking imaginative questions about situations and characters and attempting to fill in blanks in the text. A definition of Midrash that includes Kugel needs to include these characteristics. The definition then becomes "commentary on the Bible, clarifying legal points or deriving lessons by

literary devices: stories, parables, legends; actively working with other texts and scholars; being curious about characters and situations within the text; and creatively answering those curiosities." This definition is not only more useful in helping people understand what Midrash is, it allows for new and exciting ideas to be put forth under the Midrashic umbrella.

In her book *The Beginning of Desire: Reflections on Genesis*, Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg takes a similar approach to Kugel in her analysis of Lekh Lekha, the parashah that consists of Abraham's exile from Chaldea through the covenant of the circumcision. Through a synthesis of Midrashic and other rabbinic sources, Zornberg argues that "index to Abraham's maturity is the exquisite tension he maintains between the hiddenness, the incommensurate Otherness of God, and the daring activity of his own integrative mind."²⁷ She analyzes commentaries by Rashi, Rambam, and Ramban in which Abraham "roam[s] around in his mind,"²⁸ eventually discovering the Oneness of God as the only logical answer to the question of what being has the power to move the planets. Through this internal process, Abraham becomes intimate with God and thereby begins the transformation from childless Abram to Abraham, "*av hamon goyim*, father of many nations"²⁹ whom God befriends.

This interpretation is entirely consistent with Kugel's proposals of Abraham-as-intellectual, and strikingly, both interpretations cast Abraham as a self-taught monotheist— in neither does God reveal himself to Abraham as YHWH, although the Biblical text does not indicate that this is the case. In fact, Abraham and God have frequent direct, personal conversations, including in Genesis 12:1, which begins "The LORD said to Abram..., "³⁰ indicating that at least by the beginning of their relationship, God is capable of

²⁷ Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Beginning of Desire: Reflections on Genesis* (Three Leaves Press, 1995), 96

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 80

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 80

³⁰ *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*

talking directly to Abraham. But the idea of Abraham discovering God himself is appealing, especially in the context of a Jewish audience of scholars and thinkers. If Abraham, the son of an idol merchant can discover God, so can you or I. If Abraham can be blessed thrice, so can you or I— all we need is to study.

But the anthropological approach fails to answer the question lurking behind Abraham's revelation: why didn't God reveal himself to Abraham earlier? And why didn't God reveal himself to the idolatrous Chaldeans? Neither Gottlieb Zornberg nor Kugel proposes a theodicy to answer this question. By failing to do so, both pieces cast God as, at best, thoughtless towards the Chaldeans, and at worst, a cruel bully, powerful enough to play favorites and heartless enough to do so.

Personal Interpretations of Scripture

In this section, I will make two attempts to compose my own Midrash on the intratextual fulfillment of Genesis 12:2 ("I will make of you a great nation, And I will bless you; I will make your name great, And you shall be a blessing.")³¹ and conduct analysis on their successes and failures. Both attempts fulfill the definition of Midrash put forth above: "commentary on the Bible, clarifying legal points or deriving lessons by literary devices: stories, parables, legends; actively working with other texts and scholars; being curious about characters and situations within the text; and creatively answering those curiosities."

The first attempt is a feminist reading of Abraham's sale of Sarah to Pharaoh:

The Rabbis said: each of the three main clauses of the covenant I WILL MAKE OF YOU A GREAT NATION, AND I WILL BLESS YOU; I WILL MAKE YOUR NAME GREAT (Genesis 12:2) corresponds to one of three risks of travelling— diminishing

³¹ Ibid.

procreation, and reducing one's wealth and one's fame. I WILL BLESS YOU, therefore, indicates that God will bestow wealth upon Abraham. R. Levi said: No man ever priced a cow belonging to Abraham [in order to buy it] without becoming blessed, nor did a man ever price a cow [to sell] to him without his becoming blessed. It is because of this that when cunning Abram went to Egypt, he sold Sarah his wife to Pharaoh, knowing that God would bless those who had economic dealings with him. He said to Sarah: tell Pharaoh that you are my sister, this way he will purchase you and be blessed. But God was angry with Abraham for attempting to implicate Pharaoh in the covenant, for R. Judah said: 'I promised him, *Unto thy seed I have given this land*' (Gen. 15:18), said God 'yet he attaches Lot to himself; if so, let him go and procure two common soldiers! Hence THE LORD AFFLICTED PHARAOH AND HIS HOUSEHOLD WITH MIGHTY PLAGUES (Genesis 12:17). But God held their word, hence ABRAM WAS VERY RICH IN CATTLE, SILVER, AND GOLD (Genesis 13:2).

This Midrash draws on multiple Rabbinic commentaries in its attempt to justify Abraham's duplicity and sale of Sarah as an almost Odyssean effort to force God's hand into blessing Pharaoh, an idol-worshipper like the Abraham's family in Chaldea. God sees through the trick and punishes Abraham through Pharaoh, but allows Abraham to keep the wealth he gained from Sarah's sale.

This attempt at a feminist reading of God's fulfillment of the covenant almost saves Abraham by giving him a good reason to sell his wife, but it damns God and fails to adequately address the plights of Pharaoh and Sarah. Although Abraham thinks he's being noble by sacrificing his wife, he is still selling her into sexual servitude, raping her by proxy. And because of his intimate relationship with God, he should know that his human sleights of hand could

never be subtle enough to escape God's notice. Despite his shortcomings, Abraham attempts to save more than his own skin here, which is not what is indicated in the text of the Tanakh.³²

But if Abraham's actions here are foolish to the point of inexcusable, God's are simply unforgivable. They fail both here and in the original text to prevent Sarah, an innocent woman under the control of her husband, from being sold into sex slavery. One wonders if the trauma she surely endured in Pharaoh's household was a catalyst for the trauma she imposes on her own slave, Hagar, in Genesis 16.

God also punishes Pharaoh thrice: first by refusing to allow the blessings he gave Abraham to extend to Pharaoh, second through the plague that surely foreshadows its more famous cousins from *Exodus*, and third by allowing the man who tricked him to keep the wealth he gave him in good faith. Pharaoh, however, is not innocent. Although one could argue that he was just a dupe of a weirdly incestuous sex trafficking scam, he did knowingly buy a sex slave and presumably raped her. But even if we adjust the story to clarify that God was punishing Pharaoh for raping Sarah, as is implied in the original, the punishment is hardly fair or restorative.

So how can we read the fulfillment of the covenant in a way that redeems God and Abraham? A second attempt look like this:

In this world He hath given [food] unto them that fear him; He will be ever mindful of His covenant (Ps. 111:5). Said R. Joshua b. Levi: in this world he hath given wanderings³³ unto them that fear him; For what is written of Abraham? 'And I will bless thee, and make thy name great' (Gen 12:2). As soon as he set out, famine assailed him, yet he did not

³² Genesis 12:12 in *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures* reads "If the Egyptians see you, and think, 'She is his wife,' they will kill me and let you live," indicating that Abraham's only reason for selling Sarah was to avoid his own murder.

³³ The marginal notes in the Freedman edition of the Midrash notes that the word translated here as "wanderings" is related to the word translated above as "food"

protest nor murmur against Him, but, AND THERE WAS FAMINE IN THE LAND, etc.³⁴ But Torah says *'There was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land'* (Genesis 12:10). Abraham, knowing that God would grant him food, set out to wander in the wilderness, arriving after many days in Egypt. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg writes *'The transformation of Abraham's being ... can be achieved only through a readiness to submit himself to ... placelessness.'*³⁵

Hence, ABRAM WAS VERY RICH IN CATTLE, SILVER, AND GOLD.

Here, R. Joshua b. Levi attempts to explain the reason for Abraham's mysterious wandering, but in doing so, he seemingly misquotes Torah, which places the famine chronologically ahead of Abraham's wandering to Egypt, not after it as Levi assumes. In this rewriting of Levi's Midrash, Abraham is struck by famine, and knowing of the connection that the Hebrew hints at between food and wandering, sets out. His wandering is rewarded and the covenant begins to be fulfilled with spiritual gratification, food, and economic wealth.

This Midrash utterly fails to engage with the issues of Sarah and Pharaoh, but it succeeds in redeeming Abraham. The issue of the Messianic age that R. Joshua b. Levi brings up in the original quoted Midrash is irrelevant, so it is deleted, which solves the issue of the Messiah quite neatly, but it frustratingly fails to engage with it.³⁶ Only by failing to engage with these issues is Midrash so far able to justify Pharaoh's rape of Sarah or to explain the Rabbis' Messianic hopes. But perhaps this is a failure, not of Midrash as an exegetical form, but of the inexperienced writer.

³⁴ Freedman, "Lech Lecha," 326

³⁵ Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Beginning of Desire: Reflections on Genesis*, 86

³⁶ Perhaps, though, one of the beauties of Midrash is the element of reader choice— if the reader disagrees with the conclusion, they are free to ignore it.

In this second Midrash, God comes out better than in the first, but they are not unscathed. The Torah states quite clearly "There was a famine *in the land*"³⁷ (emphasis added), not that there was a famine in Abraham's household. By afflicting the whole country, God punishes an untold number of innocent people for the sake of Abraham's learning experience.

In contrast to God, Abraham is wholly pure in this narrative— he once again takes on the risks of travel for the sake of nourishment of his household and apparently possesses a prescient wisdom in knowing that the right choice is to wander.

Of the two interpretations I have proposed, the second is clearly more morally acceptable, but it only achieves this relative acceptability through the dismissal of a key passage in the Torah wherein Abraham, patriarch of the Patriarchs, simply sells his wife into slavery. Further philosophical and exegetical explorations are needed to justify the inclusion of this passage in the scripture.

³⁷ *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*, Genesis 12:10

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