

Patriarchs in Egypt: Abraham

Abraham in Egypt

Biblical Events

Abraham in Egypt

Biblical Events

- Egypt first appears in the biblical narrative in the story of Abraham.
- A severe famine strikes Canaan, causing the patriarch and his family to travel in Egypt.

Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. (Genesis 12:10 ESV)

Abraham in Egypt

Biblical Events

- Anticipating actions of the Egyptians, he devises a plan to protect his wife Sarah by saying she is his sister. She was actually a half sister, so he conveyed half truth.
- In enemy territory a husband could be killed for his wife. But as her brother, someone wanting her would have to make marriage arrangements with him.
- Abram's scheme put God's promise in jeopardy. God would rescue his wife so that the promise might be fulfilled.

When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, "I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake." (Genesis 12:11-13 ESV)

Abraham in Egypt

Biblical Events

- While there, the Pharaoh took Sarah into his palace to be part of his royal harem and treated Abraham well.
- The story's ironic twist is that someone who need not bargain for her, namely Pharaoh, wanted Sarai. The very words of Abram— "so that I will be treated well"— came back on him, for Pharaoh treated Abram well because of beautiful Sarai, and Abram got very wealthy.

When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. (Genesis 12:14-15 ESV)

And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels. (Genesis 12:16 ESV)

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Egypt-in-the-Bible.html>

Abraham in Egypt

Biblical Events

- Because of his actions, God afflicted the house of Pharaoh.
- In spite of the trouble Abram brought on himself, God was faithful to his word and did not let the foolishness of this man throw his plan into jeopardy.

But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. (Genesis 12:17 ESV)

Abraham in Egypt

Biblical Events

- Pharaoh calls Abraham to account for his actions and the consequences to his house and sends him from Egypt.

So 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." And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had. (Genesis 12:18-20 ESV)

So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb. (Genesis 13:1 ESV)

Abraham in and Israel in Egypt

Parallel Motifs

Abraham and Israel in Egypt

Parallel Motifs

- 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 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.
- God was doing more than promise deliverance for the future nation; it was as if in anticipation he acted out their deliverance in Abram.
- In relation to the message of the book, Genesis 12:10-20 is significantly placed right after Abram's call and obedience. In this story Abram was not walking by faith as he had been in the beginning, but God had made promises to him and would keep them. Abram was not the only patriarch who had to be rescued rather ingloriously from such difficulties.

Abraham and Israel in Egypt

Parallel Motifs

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| Famine in the land | Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. (Genesis 12:10 ESV) | Now there was no food in all the land, for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished by reason of the famine. (Genesis 47:13 ESV) |
| Descent to Egypt to sojourn | Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. (Genesis 12:10 ESV) | Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied greatly. (Genesis 47:27 ESV) |
| Killing males but saving the females | ... and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. (Genesis 12:12 ESV) | Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live." (Exodus 1:22 ESV) |

Abraham and Israel in Egypt

Parallel Motifs

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| Plagues on Egypt | But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. (Genesis 12:17 ESV) | Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. (Exodus 7:3-4 ESV) |
| Spoiling of Egypt | And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels. (Genesis 12:16 ESV) | The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. (Exodus 12:35-36 ESV) |

Abraham and Israel in Egypt

Parallel Motifs

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| The deliverance | When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. (Genesis 12:14 ESV) | The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. (Exodus 14:28-29 ESV) |
| Ascent to the Negev | So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negev. (Genesis 13:1 ESV) | Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan and said to them, "Go up into the Negev and go up into the hill country," ... They went up into the Negev and came to Hebron. Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) (Numbers 13:17, 22 ESV) |

Abraham in Egypt

Notable Egyptians

Hagar

Abraham's Concubine

- Later we are introduced to Hagar, Abraham's servant, who is an Egyptian.
- In "giving away" his Sarai in Egypt, Abram may have acquired Hagar.

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female **Egyptian servant** whose name was Hagar. (Genesis 16:1 ESV)

Hagar

Abraham's Concubine

- When Sarai is unable to produce offspring, Hagar is given to Abram as his concubine, and she bears Ishmael.

So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar **the Egyptian**, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. (Genesis 16:3 ESV)

And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived... And the angel of the LORD said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has listened to your affliction." (Genesis 16:4, 11 ESV)

Abraham in Egypt

Timeline

Abraham in Egypt

Timeline

- Calculating the time that Abraham entered Egypt is difficult..
- Most of the calculations are based on determining the time of the Exodus and working backward.
- Two different timeframes, known as the “early date” and the “late date” have emerged as scholars try to reconcile the biblical text to historical and archaeological evidence.
- The traditional “early” date for the Exodus is 1446 BCE.

Abraham in Egypt

Timeline

- This traditional “early” date of 1446 BCE is based on the passage in 1 Kings 6:1 which says that there were 480 years before work commenced on the Temple in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign. Solomons fourth year is around 967/6 BCE making the Exodus 1446 BCE.
- In the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the LORD. (1 Kings 6:1 ESV)

Abraham in Egypt

Timeline

- Using the 1446 BCE date for the Exodus, we can work back to the time of Abraham.
- According to Exodus 12:40, Israel was in captivity in Egypt for 430 years, making beginning of captivity 1876 BCE.
- We know from Genesis 47:9 that Jacob was 130 years old when he and his family entered Egypt.
- This would mean that Jacob was born in 2006 BCE.
- We know from Genesis 25:26 that Isaac was 60 when Jacob was born. From this we can calculate that Isaac was born in 2066 BCE.
- And from Genesis 21:5 we know that Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born so Abraham was born in 2166 BCE.
- We also know from Genesis 12:4 that the traveled to Canaan when he was 75 which would have been in 2091 BCE.

Abraham in Egypt

Timeline

- And from Genesis 16:3 we know that Hagar (the Egyptian) was given to him 10 years after he moved to Canaan, which would be 2101 BCE.
- Assuming that he brought Hagar back from Egypt, he would have visited Egypt between 2091 and 2101 BCE.
- This would place hm in Egypt during the period of the Middle Kingdom Period, probably during the 11th dynasty.

Middle Kingdom

Dynasty	Seat	Start	End	Length	First Ruler	Last Ruler
XI	Thebes	2130 BC	1991 BC	139 years	Intef	Mentuhotep
XII	Itjtawy	1991 BC	1802 BC	189 years	Amenemhat I	Sobekneferu
XIII	Itjtawy	1803 BC	1649 BC	154 years	Sekhemre Khutaway	??

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dynasties_of_ancient_Egypt

Abraham in Egypt

Timeline

- The end of the First Intermediate Period is characterized by the emergence of a dynasty based in Thebes that was just gaining power in the south and would ultimately control all of Egypt.
- Wikipedia actually divides the 11th dynasty, placing the first part in the First Intermediate Period and the second part in the Middle Kingdom.
- The Eleventh Dynasty originated from a group of Theban monarchs serving kings of the 8th, 9th or 10th dynasty with roots in Upper Egypt that ruled from 2134 to 1991 BC.
- The successors of Intef the Elder, starting with Mentuhotep I, became independent from their northern overlords and eventually conquered Egypt under Mentuhotep II.
- So the Pharaoh that Abraham met may have been a northern leader who took the title, or an early king from the Theban dynasty.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_pharaohs

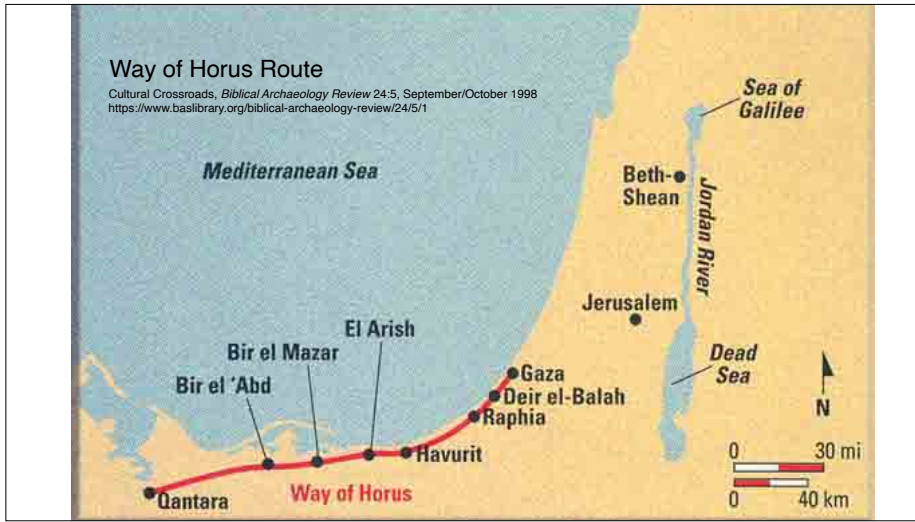
Abraham in Egypt

Locations

Abraham in Egypt

Location

- Abraham probably traveled the "Way of Horus" from Canaan to Egypt. This route ended in the eastern delta region of Goshen.
- This is the part of Egypt where most biblical characters lived and most of the biblical events took place.



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Abraham in Egypt

Location

- Goshen place where the Israelites settled when Jacob's family migrated there.
- Goshen is the place where Israel was located during the plagues of Egypt

You shall dwell in the land of **Goshen**, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. (Genesis 45:10 ESV)

But on that day I will set apart the land of **Goshen**, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. (Exodus 8:22 ESV)



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The Pyramids

- While in this region, Abraham probably saw the pyramids on the Nile's west bank.
- Remember, the "early date" places Abraham in Egypt during the 11th dynasty, so at that point the pyramids were already several hundred years old.
- The first pyramid was a four-sided stepped stone construction built at Saqqara by Pharaoh Djoser in the 3rd Dynasty.
- The earliest smooth-sided pyramid in the form we know today was constructed by Pharaoh Sneferu at Dahshur in the 4th Dynasty.
- The northern-most, the largest and most famous of the pyramids at Giza are from the 4th Dynasty.

<https://biblicalarchaeology.org/research/patriarchal-era/3039-israel-in-egypt?highlight=WylhY3RZiwxNywiYWN0cyAxNyJd>