

1. Bereishis 12: 10 – 20

י וַיְהִי רָעָב, בְּאֶרֶץ; וַיֵּרֶד אַבְרָם
מִצְרָיִמָּה לְגִּיּוֹר שָׁם, כִּי-כָבֵד הָרָעָב
בְּאֶרֶץ.

10 And there was a famine in the land; and
Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there;
for the famine was sore in the land.

יא וַיְהִי, כַּאֲשֶׁר הִקְרִיב לְבֹא
מִצְרָיִמָּה; וַיֹּאמֶר, אֶל-שָׂרִי אִשְׁתּוֹ,
הִנֵּה-נָא יֹדַעְתִּי, כִּי אִשָּׁה יִפְתֹּ-
מִרְאָה אָתָּה.

11 And it came to pass, when he was come near
to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his
wife: 'Behold now, I know that thou art a fair
woman to look upon.

יב וְהָיָה, כִּי-יִרְאוּ אֹתָךְ הַמִּצְרִיִּים,
וַאֲמָרוּ, אִשְׁתּוֹ זֹאת; וְהָרְגוּ אֹתִי,
וְאֹתָךְ יַחְיֶי.

12 And it will come to pass, when the Egyptians
shall see thee, that they will say: This is his wife;
and they will kill me, but thee they will keep
alive.

יג אָמַרְי-נָא, אַחֲתִי אָתָּה--לְמַעַן
יִיטֵב-לִי בְּעַבְדֶּיךָ, וְחַיְתָּה נַפְשִׁי
בְּגִלְלָהּ.

13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister; that it
may be well with me for thy sake, and that my
soul may live because of thee.'

יד וַיְהִי, כְּבֹא אַבְרָם מִצְרָיִמָּה;
וַיִּרְאוּ הַמִּצְרִיִּים אֶת-הָאִשָּׁה, כִּי-יָפָה
הִוא מְאֹד.

14 And it came to pass, that, when Abram was
come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the
woman that she was very fair.

טו וַיִּרְאוּ אֹתָהּ שָׂרֵי פְרָעָה, וַיְהַלְלוּ
אֹתָהּ אֶל-פְּרָעָה; וַתִּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה,
בֵּית פְּרָעָה.

15 And the princes of Pharaoh saw her, and
praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was
taken into Pharaoh's house.

טז וַיֵּלֶאבְרָם הִיטִיב, בְּעַבְדֶּיךָ; וַיְהִי-
לֹא צֹאן-וּבָקָר, וְחֹמְרִים, וְעַבְדִּים
וְשִׁפְחוֹת, וְאִתְּנֹת וּגְמָלִים.

16 And he dealt well with Abram for her sake;
and he had sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and
men-servants, and maid-servants, and she-asses,
and camels.

- יז** וַיִּנָּגַע יְהוָה אֶת-פַּרְעֹה וְנָגָעִים גְּדֹלִים, וְאֶת-בֵּיתוֹ, עַל-דִּבְרֵי שָׂרַי, אִשְׁתֵּי אֲבִרָם. **17** And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.
- יח** וַיִּקְרָא פַרְעֹה, לְאַבְרָם, וַיֹּאמֶר, מַה-זֹּאת עָשִׂיתָ לִּי; לָמָּה לֹא-הִגַּדְתָּ לִּי, כִּי אִשְׁתְּךָ הִוא. **18** And Pharaoh called Abram, and said: 'What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?
- יט** לָמָּה אָמַרְתָּ אֲחֹתִי הִוא, וְאָקַח אֹתָהּ לִי לְאִשָּׁה; וְעַתָּה, הִנֵּה אִשְׁתְּךָ קָח וְלֵךְ. **19** Why saidst thou: She is my sister? so that I took her to be my wife; now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.'
- כ** וַיִּצַּו עָלָיו פַּרְעֹה, אֲנָשִׁים; וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ אוֹתוֹ וְאֶת-אִשְׁתּוֹ, וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ. **20** And Pharaoh gave men charge concerning him; and they brought him on the way, and his wife, and all that he had.

2. Radak Bereishis 12:10

מצרימה, generally speaking, there was always plenty of food in Egypt even if famine was prevalent in neighbouring countries because Egypt did not depend on rain from above, but relied on the waters of the river Nile which were most dependable both in quality and in quantity. Even the Torah mentions this as an advantage of Egypt in Deut. 11,10 when comparing the land of Israel to that of Egypt. Avram could not cope with the famine in the land of Canaan, due to all his herds and flocks requiring water and grazing land. Besides, by then he had a household comprising many people for whose welfare he was responsible.

לגור שם, he did not intend to settle in Egypt, only to wait out the famine there.

3. Bava Kama 60b

ת"ר רעב בעיר פזר רגליך שנא' (בראשית יב, י) ויהי רעב בארץ וירד אברם מצרימה [לגור] (ויגר) שם ואומר (מלכים ב ז, ד) אם אמרנו נבא העיר והרעב בעיר ומתנו שם מאי ואומר וכי תימא ה"מ היכא דליכא ספק נפשות אבל היכא דאיכא ספק נפשות לא ת"ש (מלכים ב ז, ד) לכו ונפלה אל מחנה ארם אם יחיונו נחיה

The Sages taught: If there is famine in the city, spread your feet, i.e., leave the city, as it is stated in the verse: “And there was a famine in the land; and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there” (Genesis 12:10). And it says: “If we say: We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there; and if we sit here, we die also, now come, and let us fall unto the host of the Arameans; if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die” (II Kings 7:4).

4. Sanhedrin 39b

מלכים א א, ד) והנערה יפה עד מאד א"ר חנינא בר פפא עדיין לא הגיעה לחצי יופי של (שרה דכתיב עד מאד ולא מאד בכלל

a verse stated with regard to Abishag, who attended King David before his death: “And the damsel was very fair [yafa ad me’od]” (I Kings 1:4). Rabbi Ḥanina bar Pappa says: She still did not reach half the beauty of Sarah, as it is written: “Ad me’od,” which can be translated as “up to very fair,” but not including the praise of “very fair.” By contrast, it is written concerning Sarah: “She was very fair”

5. Rashi Bereishis 12:11

הנה נא ידעתי. מדרש אגדה עד עכשו לא הכיר בה מתוך צניעות שבשניהם, ועכשו הכיר בה על ידי מעשה. דבר אחר, מנהג העולם שעל ידי טרח הדרך אדם מתבזה, וזאת עמדה בפייה. ופשוטו של מקרא הנה נא הגיע השעה שיש לדאג על יפיה, ידעתי זה ימים רבים כי יפת מראה את, ועכשו אנו באים בין אנשים שחרים ומכערים, אחיהם של כושנים, ולא הרגלו באשה יפה

BEHOLD NOW I KNOW — The Midrashic explanation is: Until now he had not perceived her beauty owing to the extreme modesty of both of them; now, however, through this event, he became cognizant of it (Midrash Tanchuma, Lech Lecha 5). Another explanation: Usually, because of the exertion of travelling a person becomes uncomely, but she had retained her beauty (Genesis Rabbah 40:4). Still, the real sense of the text is this: Behold, now the time has come when I am anxious because of thy beauty. I have long known that thou art fair of appearance: but now we are travelling among black and ugly people, brethren of

the Ethiopians (Kushim), who have never been accustomed to see a beautiful woman.

6. Ibn Ezra Bereishis 12:11

וטעם הנה נא ידעתי. שהיה כיופי שרה בארצה רק במצרים וארץ הנגב לא היה כמוה כי הצורות משתנות בעבור האויר וטעם ואותך יחיו שיתנו לך כל צרכיך כי ימי רעבון היו

Behold I now realize. In Canaan there were other women as beautiful as Sarah but not in Egypt, because physical appearance is affected by climate

7. Radak Bereishis 12:13

למען ייטב לי, so that on account of your describing yourself as my sister they will treat me well. The “good treatment” Avram referred to was not financial reward but simply that they would let him live. It is quite inconceivable that Avram wanted to use his wife as a pimp uses a prostitute. Even though we read in verse 15 that Avram, in the event, experienced many financial favours as the man whose consent was sought to have his sister as someone’s wife, this is something he had not counted on at all. In fact, we know how unwilling Avram was to accept people’s favours when he turned down the spoils of war which were not a gift to him but his due as he had fought that war. (Genesis 14,23.) Had he not been in Pharaoh’s country and been afraid to reject these gifts, he would most certainly not have accepted them. Avram was not interested in acquiring more wealth than God had seen fit to grant him.

8. Seforno Bereishi 12:13

למען ייטב לי, so that when you will say that you are my sister, each one will entertain the hope that I will agree to your marrying them. Therefore, none of them will have any reason to kill me. Rather, he will seek my approval by offering me a dowry for you. It was the custom in those days that the father of the bride would be bribed with money or its equivalent to agree to let his daughter marry someone.

9. Bereishis Rabba 41:2

רִישׁ לָקִישׁ בְּשֵׁם בַּר קַפְּרָא אָמַר, פֶּרְעָה בְּרָאֲתָן לָקָה. אָמַר רַבֵּן שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל מִצָּאֵנִי זָקֵן
אֶחָד מִכָּה שְׁחִין בְּצִפּוֹרִי, וְאָמַר לִי עֲשָׂרִים וָאַרְבָּעָה מִיָּנִי שְׁחִין הֵם, וְאֵין לָךְ קֶשֶׁה מִכָּלֶם
שֶׁהָאִשָּׁה רָעָה לוֹ אֲלֹא רָאֲתָן בְּלֶבֶד, וְבוֹ לָקָה פֶּרְעָה

Reish Lakish cited Bar Kappara: Pharaoh was struck with ra'atan. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: An elderly man, who was struck with boils, encountered me in Tzippori. He told me that there are 24 types of boils, and none of them are as bad for conjugal relations as ra'atan. This is what Pharaoh had.

10. Ralbag Bereishis 12:3

ואם היה אברם בוחר סבל הרעב — אשר היה אפשר שימות בו — על סבל מה שאפשר
שיקרה לשרה מהגנות, היה חסידות של שטות,

11. Ramban Bereishis 12:10

And there was famine in the land (Gen. 12:10) – behold, Avraham went down to Egypt due to hunger, to live there temporarily in order to save his life in the days of drought, and the Egyptians exploited him without cause to get his wife, and the Holy One of Blessing avenged them with great afflictions, and brought him out from there with cattle, silver and gold, and Pharaoh had commanded men to send him. And it is a hint from (Avraham), since his children went down to Egypt because of hunger to live temporarily in the land, and the Egyptians did evil to them and took their wives, as it says (Exodus 1:22) And every (baby) girl you shall let live, and the Holy One of Blessing avenged them with great afflictions until they were taken out (laden) with silver and gold and sheep and cattle, with many possessions, and they (Egyptians) pressed them to be gone from the land. Not a single incident that befell the father didn't befall the children. And this matter is explained in Bereshit Rabbah 8:6: "Rabi Pinchas said in the name of Rabbi Oshaya - The Holy One said to Avraham: 'Go and conquer the way for your children.' And you find that everything that was written regarding Avraham was also written regarding his descendants: regarding Avraham it is written and there was famine in the land, regarding Israel it is written (Genesis 45:6) this is already two years of famine in all the land." And you should know that our father Avraham committed a great sin unintentionally, in which he brought his righteous wife to stumble into

transgression because of his fear of getting killed, and he should have trusted the Name to have saved him, his wife and all that was his, because Elohim has power to help and to save. Also his going out from the land - of which he had been commanded at the beginning - due to famine was a transgression that he committed, because Elohim would have saved him from dying (even) in a famine. And because of this deed it was decreed that his seed would be in exile in Egypt under the hand of Pharaoh.

12. Radak Bereishis 12:12

The promises by G'd are based on man having taken every reasonable precaution not to require a miracle to save him from danger. When one is aware that one finds oneself in a situation where danger to one's life is likely, one must first take every precaution at one's disposal to counter such danger. Our sages (Pessachim 64) have told us that it is inadmissible to sit with one's hands in one's hands, waiting for G'd to perform a miracle to save one's life. They base this advice on the verse in Deut. 6,16 **אלוקיכם לא תנסו את ה'**, "do not put the Lord your G'd in a position of having to perform a miracle for you." When the prophet Samuel went to anoint a son of Yishai (David as it turned out) as replacement for King Sha-ul (Samuel I 16,2) he told G'd that he was afraid to do this as King Sha-ul would kill him if he heard about this, G'd did not criticise him for being afraid, but instructed him to use subterfuge so as to avoid suspicion of traitorous conduct. We learn from these examples how a righteous person must behave when he faces danger in carrying out what he knows to be G'd's will. One must not leave matters to miracles.

13. Bereishis Rabba 41:2

אמר רבי ברכיה על דטולמוסין למקרב למסאנא דמטרונא. וכל אותו הלילה הייתה שרה . שטוחה על פניה ואומרת, רבון העולמים אברהם יצא בהבטחה, ואני יצאתי באמונה. אברהם יצא חוץ לסירה, ואני בתוך הסירה. אמר לה הקדוש ברוך הוא כל מה שאני עושה בשבילך אני עושה, והכל אומרים על דבר שרי אשת אברם, אמר רבי לוי כל אותו הלילה

הָיָה מֶלֶאךָ עֹמֵד וּמִגְלִיב בְּיָדוֹ, הָיָה אָמַר לָהּ אֵין אֶמְרַתְּ מְחִי מַחִינָא, אֵין אֶמְרַתְּ נִשְׁבּוּק
שְׂבִיקָנָא, וְכָל כֵּךְ לָמָּה שְׁהִיְתָה אוֹמְרַת לוֹ אִשְׁתְּ אִישׁ אֲנִי וְלֹא הָיָה פּוֹרֵשׁ.

Rabbi Berechiah said: Pharaoh's officers went to remove the matron's shoe, and that entire night Sarah was stretched out on her face, saying, "Master of the universe! Abraham left [Babylon] with a promise, while I left on faith! Abraham left outside the prison, and I am imprisoned!" G-d said to her: Everything I do is because of you, and all will say, "It is because of Sarai, wife of Abram." Rabbi Levi said: For that entire night, an angel stood with a rod in hand. He said to her, "If you say to strike, I will strike. If you say to let up, I will let up." Why do so much? Because she said, "I am a married woman," and he did not stop.