



From Canaan to Egypt (Gn 12:10–20): Abraham's sojourn and its ethical dilemma for migrants in socio-economic circumstances

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Migration of people, whether legal or not, is no doubt one of the universe's enigmas. As a subject that seeks the engagement of interdisciplinary approaches, the biblical text is not in shortage of references to the movement and resettlement of individuals across different narratives and literary forms. Numerous references to 'sojourners', 'migrants', and the intricacies and reactions that migration generates are found in several portions of the Pentateuch. By employing a narrative methodology and a hermeneutic of ethical deduction as interpretive approach, this article holds that, the patriarchal narrative of Genesis 12:10–20, is fittingly, a narrative of migration that raises several ethical challenges that are profoundly relevant to migrants in socio-economic situations. Abraham's vulnerable position as a migrant under socio-economic circumstances to Egypt created fear in him and presented him moral dilemmas in which inequalities created by wealth and poverty posed dangers of losing faith. Many individuals and families are faced with similar circumstances today, being caught up in webs of difficult considerations and forced to make unpleasant decisions.

Contribution: This article employs a narrative reading of Abraham's sojourn in Genesis 12:10–20 in an attempt to bring together biblical, literary and theological discourses into dialogue with ethics and migration. The article serves as a viable starting point for discussions about the ethical considerations faced by migrants in socio-economic situations, and how principles of honesty, empathy and responsible decision-making can guide their actions.

Keywords: migration; Pentateuch; Genesis 12; Abraham and Sarah; ethical dilemma; socio-economic duress; wealth and poverty.

Introduction

Migration is such, 'a highly complex phenomenon, with significant economic, sociopolitical, cultural, and religious repercussions for the migrants, their native countries, and the host societies' (Padilla & Phan 2013:1). The migration of populations, whether in ancient history or the context of modern and/or postmodern times, has significant effects on local and global economies and places strains on law enforcement and the sovereignty of national boundaries. Migration extends beyond mere governmental, economic and legal considerations. It also serves as a focal point for theological and Christian ethical engagement, as highlighted by Kotzé and Rheeder (2020:4) and complements the discourse across various fields of study (cf. Grau 2013:12). Granted that migration presents an ethical dilemma for migrants' survival because of difficult socio-economic circumstances, this article employs a narrative approach to reading Abraham's sojourn in Egypt (Gn 12:10–20) and attempts to bring together biblical, literary and theological discourses into dialogue with ethics and migration.¹ The patriarchal narrative of Genesis 12:10–20, this article holds, is fittingly a narrative of migration that raises several ethical challenges that are relevant to migrants in socio-economic situations.

As a narrative methodology involves studying and interpreting stories or narratives to understand social phenomena, the following sections explore a brief review on the phenomenon of sojourners and migration intricacies in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (HB/OT) within the context of the Pentateuch, conduct a thorough analysis of the narrative structure, characters, themes and

1.The initial names of the patriarch and matriarch were 'Abram' and 'Sarai' until they were changed by Yahweh in Genesis 17:5. For the sake of consistency, this article throughout, uses 'Abraham' and 'Sarah'. Exception however occurs in quoted text where 'Abram' or 'Sarai' are used.

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Note: Historical Thought and Source Interpretation.

consequences within the migration narrative in Genesis 12:10–20, and by subjective engagement with the text, identify ethical principles embedded in the text and deduce their relevance to migrants in socio-economic circumstances. By employing these tools and approaches, this article creates a robust analysis of the patriarchal narrative in Genesis 12:10–20, focusing on its ethical dimensions and relevance to contemporary socio-economic challenges faced by migrants.

Sojourners and migration intricacies in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

Across history, migration has remained an inherent aspect of human existence. Individuals relocate for diverse motives and the assorted interpretations and terms applied to them mirror the motives. Originating from the Latin concept *migrare*, migration according to Padilla and Phan (2013:2) means movement, 'whether temporary or permanent, voluntary or forced, of individuals and groups of people crossing territorial boundaries'. While several concepts are used to describe the migration phenomenon, this section of the article concerns itself with the HB/OT primary term גֵּר : translated in this article as 'sojourner' (cf. Gn 12:10; 23:4).

In the HB/OT, the term גֵּר is typically used to describe an individual who, either alone or with their family, departs to migrate from his or her community, often for economic or political reasons. The reasons could include war (2 Sm 4:3), famine (Rt 1:1) and blood guilt (Ex 2:22). In this new location, the sojourner's rights to land ownership, marriage and participation in judicial systems, religious rituals and warfare are restricted, which leads to their reliance on the host population for assistance (Achenbach 2011:30). It's noteworthy that the HB/OT perceives and treats the גֵּר as more than a mere foreigner. Scholars refer to the גֵּר in various terms such as 'resident alien' (Achenbach 2011:29; cf. Albertz 2011:53; Nihan 2011:111; Wöhrle 2011:82), 'protected citizen' (Kellermann 1975:444), 'transitory resident' (Strine 2018:54), 'immigrant', or 'refugee' (Carroll 2011:53), a 'dependent stranger' (Glanville 2018a:5), or a 'vulnerable person from outside the core family' (Glanville 2018b:603).

The movement of individuals and groups can be traced back to the very beginning of Genesis. For instance, Cain is sentenced to perpetual wandering after killing Abel (Gn 4:10–14). In the biblical narrative, humanity becomes dispersed at Babel, leading to the proliferation of nations (Gn 10–11). The chronicle of the chosen people commences with Terah's migration from Ur to Haran, followed by Abraham's subsequent journey from there to Canaan (Gn 11:31–12:5). In essence, the history of the Patriarch and his descendants is tied to migration (Gn 23:4; Dt 26:5) (Carroll 2011:54–55). Survival is a common motivation for many who migrate. In the Pentateuch, for instance, individuals such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (along with their families) temporarily sojourn in various places to find sustenance such as in Egypt (Gn 12; 42–46); the Negev (Gn 20); Philistia (Gn 26). Jacob journeys to Aram to escape the anger of his brother Esau,

residing with Laban and his family for a period (Gn 27–31). Moses flees Egypt for several years after committing a crime; he marries a Midianite and names their son 'Gershom', which alludes to the term *ger* (Ex 2) (Carroll 2011:55).

Life in foreign lands often posed challenges as seen in the Israelites' ordeal as slaves in Egypt after Joseph's departure (Ex 1:5). Psalm 137 expresses the anger, disgrace and longing of those forcibly uprooted from Judah by Babylon. These various emotional responses were accompanied by diverse political choices and social structures. The biblical approach to migration and the predicament of migrants draws from Scripture's depiction of God's love, righteousness and justice, along with his aversion to any form of oppression and exploitation (Coetsee 2020:43–44). The narratives in the HB/OT can provide guidance for discussions about immigrants and refugees from several angles.

Genesis 12:10–20 and its narrative structural developments

Narratives are the main aspect of storytelling. They are used by writers in literature to present and show their story to readers rather than telling them what to do (Long 1993:165–181). In the context of biblical exegesis, narratives are believed to be the predominant mode of expression in the HB/OT (cf. Berlin 1983:13). Within Biblical literature, narratives serve a dual purpose; they not only recount events (providing the backdrop for God's revelation) but also convey the significance of these events (illuminating the purpose of history). Although the hermeneutical task of deriving ethical principles or perspectives from narratives looks difficult, narratives no doubt offer insightful ethical virtues in many and significant directions (Wenham 2000:109–119).

As a unique literary composition that emerged 'sometime during the early Persian Period (539–330 BCE)' (O'Connor 2018:3), the book of Genesis with its two major blocks of material, namely Primeval History (Gn 1–11) and the ancestral narratives (Gn 12–50) (Arnold 2009:1; Schuele 2014:333), addresses most profound questions and issues of life. In the primeval story block, on the one hand, one encounters the basic elements of the world and of humanity, and on the other hand, in the patriarchal story, one reads about the basic elements of human community (Westermann 1985:23). Basically, two types of literature are found in Genesis, 'narrative and numerative' (Westermann 1984:6), although poetic pieces are incorporated into the narratives as well (Fretheim 1994:324). Sailhamer (1990:10) remarks that, 'the overall literary form of the book is historical narrative, which is the representation of past events for the purpose of instruction'. In the narrative context, readers discover that human agency is not the only, or even the most powerful, influence on morality in the world.

Like many narrative materials in the HB/OT, Genesis presents an anthropological lifelike artistic representation. In fact, it showcases a distinct inclination to portray the full range of human behaviour, particularly when it comes to the

human characters (Schuele 2014:338; Towner 2001:140–142; Wenham 1987:290–291; cf. the story of Abraham in Gn 12:10–20; the repeated wife-sister story, Gn 20:1–18; 26:1–14). Thus, it seems reasonable to say that the biblical authors and/or editors depict the heroes of the Genesis stories in ways that attract the readers' sympathy. As human characters, they are perhaps not absolute ethical role models, but certainly figures with whom the readers can identify (Schuele 2014:338).

Generally, Genesis 12 through 50 is a narrative about the life and work of Abraham, Sarah, and their descendants. Specifically, Genesis 12 is at the end of primordial history, and thus the narrative serves as the 'beginnings of everything in the human realm: the cosmos, humanity, the family, sin, murder, sexual perversion, industry and power tussle' (Tushima 2018:1). Genesis 12:10–20 chronicles Abraham's lack of faith, immediately after his faithful response to God's promise. It contains as well as demonstrates Abraham's immature faith, his selfish and shocking disregard for his wife and the resulting implications of the conversations between Abraham and Pharaoh.

In form-critical analysis, scholars reflecting on the history of the interpretation of the narrative hold that Genesis 12:10–13:2 has close correspondence with Genesis 20:1–18 and Genesis 26:1–13 because of the matriarch/sister motif in the passages (cf. Alexander 1992:145–153; Peleg 2006:197–208; Von Rad 1973:270). Genesis 12:10–20 is the first of the three 'matriarch/sister motif' episodes in Genesis. The first two focus on Abraham and the last on his son Isaac. The narrative about Abraham and Sarah's sojourn in Egypt (Gn 12:10–20) is believed to be post-Priestly (Levin 2004, cited in Granerød 2010:133). Levin makes an analysis indicating that the account involving the forefather and foremother in Egypt is a secondary detour. In this narrative, Abraham and Sarah's journeying into and out of Egypt serves as a foreshadowing of the Israelites' similar experiences in and out of Egypt, as recounted in the Joseph story and the Exodus narrative (Levin 2004:240–241; cited in Granerød 2010:70; cf. Arnold 2009:13; Pratt 1983:165–166). The following sub-sections analyse the structural developments of the narrative of Abraham and Sarah's sojourn in Egypt (Gn 12:10–20) in order to articulate its ethical dilemma for migrants in socio-economic circumstances.

Faith tested by famine (Gn 12:10)

Abraham's and Sarah's migration from the north to the south is confronted with challenging developments that undoubtedly tested their faith:

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 (Gn 12:10).²

That Abraham's sojourn 'from Canaan to Egypt' was based on the circumstantial economic situation in Canaan is made explicit in the opening verse of the unit: '... there was a

² Except otherwise stated, all translations in this article are adapted from the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

famine in the land; . . .' (Gn 12:10). Abraham's world no doubt was rooted in an agricultural economy. Anthropological investigations into the era and geographic area indicate that families depicted in these narratives followed a combination of semi-nomadic pastoralism and herdsman husbandry practices (Gn 13:5–12; 21:25–34; 26:17–33; 29:1–10; 37:12–17) (Matthews 2000:972).

A famine was a serious problem; it meant mass starvation. During a severe regional famine, it is observed that Jacob sent his children to Egypt to purchase grain (Gn 42–45) and finally settled there in Goshen (Gn 46–50). Isaac settled in Gerar during a famine (Gn 26) and planted crops for the first time (Gn 26:12–13). One could imagine that this famine was catastrophic, for it 'was severe in the land' (Gn 12:10). It would be understandable for Abraham to be apprehensive about the famine and fretful about feeding his family. Consequently, Abraham migrated to Egypt to escape starvation.

From threat of famine to facing fear (Gn 12:11–13)

Abraham is believed to have entered Egypt during the First Intermediate Period of Egypt's history, at the end of the Old Kingdom. It was the 'dark period' where there was manifest disunity as Egypt had become fragmented, resulting into several small feudal kingdoms, each attempting to gain power over its neighbour (Bard 2008:41; Gardiner 1961:110; Redford 2001:526). It was therefore not uncommon during this period for foreigners to be permitted entrance into the country. Strine (2018:56) remarks that on coming in contact with an imperial power that he does not trust, Abraham's fear made him to convince his wife Sarah to identify and introduce herself as his sister. The text says:

And it came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarah his wife, 'See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; and it will come about when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. 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 (Gn 12:11–13).

On arriving in Egypt, Abraham senses potential danger, entertains misguided and delusional fears and persuades Sarah to lie on his behalf. From the narrator's perspective, readers are led to believe that Abraham held the belief that the Egyptians were more willing to resort to murder in order to attain a beautiful married woman. However, if their aim was to pursue a beautiful single woman, they would feel obligated to adhere to legal boundaries. Thus, the giving and receiving of pride price for Sarah, would perfectly settle this dimension of Abraham's fear.

From the text, it is clear that Abraham feared that the Egyptians would seize Sarah regardless of her marital status and kill him as the husband. Abraham's proposal would spare the Egyptians the moral dilemma associated with a living husband as opposed to a living brother. Thus, the strategy 'say you are my sister so that it may go well with me

because of you, and that I may live on account of you' (Gn 12:13) could have served to offer greater theoretical protection for both the wife and her husband. Abraham opts for the safer of two unfavourable choices, which were: (1) preserving his life while allowing Sarah to be with Pharaoh, or (2) facing death while still having Sarah become involved with Pharaoh. Given these dire circumstances, his decision holds a certain degree of logic.

Pharaoh's fondness of Sarah (Gn 12:14–16)

The narrative brings readers to the point where Abraham and Sarah proactively exploit a potential support system. Pharaoh's affection for Sarah brought provisions to the externally displaced family (Strine 2018:58). The narrative reads:

And it came about when Abram came into Egypt; the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. And Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. Therefore, he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels (Gn 12:14–16).

Here in Egypt, Abraham's fears turn to reality as one of the Egyptians – Pharaoh, in fact – does desire Sarah, and Sarah is 'taken into Pharaoh's house' (Gn 12:15). On incorporating Sarah into Pharaoh's harem, Abraham received a significant dowry comprising cattle and human servants. Hence, the strategy of claiming 'you are my sister', achieved its intended purpose when viewed from a human perspective. Abraham's concerns about sustenance and survival led to the development of his deceptive scheme: a stark departure from his time in Canaan before the famine.³ As a result, he became enriched by Pharaoh, acquiring a wide array of material possessions (12:16).

God's intervention and Abraham's departure from Egypt (Gn 12:17–20)

The high point of the narrative is, however, God's intervention and the consequent expulsion of Abraham from Egypt by Pharaoh:

But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarah, Abram's wife. Then 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 commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him (Gn 12:17–20).

It is unclear whether Sarah had engaged in sexual relations with Pharaoh or not, as is evident in the parallel case of Abimelech in Genesis 20:6. The text most likely suggests that

³While in Canaan, he was faithful in God's will, and in the midst of the wicked Canaanites, he built altars to God and called upon Him. But here in Egypt, and outside God's will, one finds him persuading his wife to lie because he was hungry and afraid.

the act of 'taking to wife' did indeed occur. Abraham's strategy of claiming Sarah as his sister and his approval of her integration into Pharaoh's harem strongly implies that he expected sexual relations to take place. This expectation is reasonable given that Sarah's beauty would not have positioned her as a likely candidate for the role of a palace kitchen maid.

As a result of Abraham's belief that refusing Pharaoh could result in his own death, the strategy of deceit involving the 'brother' facade significantly enhances his fortunes and wealth. Pharaoh rewards him generously with sheep, cattle, donkeys, slaves and camels. However, God intervenes by afflicting Pharaoh and his household with severe plagues (Gn 12:17). When Pharaoh realises that he has been involved with another man's wife, he promptly confronts Abraham. Pharaoh expresses his frustration at the deception and dishonesty, leading to his decision to expel them from Egypt.

Ethical deductions for migrants in socio-economic circumstances

The migration that was a significant reality for many people in biblical times, parallels contemporary migration dynamics driven by fundamental human needs, such as the real-life struggles endured by migrants from specific war zones, armed conflict, climate-induced disasters or famine. It also parallels potential mistreatment of migrants (Carroll 2011:56). Sojourners are susceptible to the uncertainties of life. The ethical viewpoints and ethical obligations presented in the Bible can contribute to shaping individual's conduct, church's endeavours, and governmental laws that foster the well-being of humanity and inclusive welfare. The extent to which Christian ethical influence and engagement have an impact plays a pivotal role in this (Carroll 2011:56).

The Bible is a literary treasure that holds an abundance of anthropological and psychological insights that are nearly boundless. Exploring and delving into these insights can offer people a deeper understanding of models that define the collective human experience shared across all cultures. This understanding would have the potential to grant individuals valuable perspectives and cultivate attitudes that undoubtedly hold the power to free them from constraints (Eben 2004:669–670; cf. Jung 1965:117–118). The dilemmas associated with migration are epitomised by the economic disadvantage of migrants (Tushima 2018:1). Implicit in these dilemmas is the false and/or often hidden identity of the migrants, consequently leading to dehumanisation and injustice against migrants, which include lowering and subsidising their time of service or labour. The moral imbalances, deficiencies and distortions in turn often lead to poor management of migrants and migrants' exploitation (Palmer 1995:592). Thus, in our pursuit of an appropriate and pertinent 'Pentateuchal ethic of migration', engaging in thoughtful dialogue with the themes presented in the account of Abraham's sojourn in Genesis 12:10–20 is of great value. The narrative encompasses issues of universal human need, suffering, poverty, fear, economics, exploitation and more.

The narrative gives rise to numerous ethical dilemmas that hold relevance for migrants in socio-economic circumstances.

Manipulation of power, deception and responsibility to vulnerable groups

The migration of Abraham with Sarah to Egypt, as recounted in Genesis 12:10–20, provides a narrative backdrop that can be analysed with ethical deductions in terms of manipulation of power, deception and responsibility, particularly in relation to vulnerable groups. In the narrative, one can observe, on the one hand a significant power imbalance between Abraham and Sarah, who are foreigners in Egypt. Abraham, as the patriarch, holds more influence and control over the situation compared to Sarah. On the other hand, the Egyptian Pharaoh, as a ruler, wields considerable power over both Abraham and Sarah because of his position and resources.

Abraham plays a very smart role. On recognising the potential threat to his life because of Sarah's beauty, he strategically withholds information about their marital relationship. By presenting Sarah as his sister, he manipulates the information available to the Egyptians, intentionally obscuring the truth to serve his interests. Abraham's actions could be seen as way of exploiting the power dynamics of the time. By presenting his wife as his sister, he gains favour and material wealth from Pharaoh. This manipulation is a means of exploiting the lack of complete information on the part of the Egyptians, leading to a situation where they unwittingly participate in the deception. He is not providing the complete truth about their relationship, leading to potential misunderstandings and ethical concerns. The deception becomes apparent when Pharaoh takes Sarah into his palace, thinking she is single. Pharaoh's actions are based on incomplete information, leading to a situation where he unwittingly becomes entangled in a deceptive scenario.

While Abraham's strategy of dishonesty instantaneously enriches him with material gains, this strategy leads to potential harm for both Sarah and Pharaoh. The ethical question here is whether it is justified to lie or deceive in order to protect oneself, especially at the potential expense of others' well-being. Strine (2018), commenting on the deceptive ruse, observes:

Necessity, not deficient morality, drives dishonesty; deceptive actions like the matriarch-sister ruse furnish an opportunity to evaluate the character of the unknown host population. Indeed, misdirection constitutes one of the few survival mechanisms available to involuntary migrants when they arrive in a new place. (p. 57)

The narrative goes to explain the dilemma of human consciousness and knowledge and consequently, being able to make judgement of what humans regard as good or evil actually constitutes the elemental start of the question of morality and ethics (Eben 2004:667). The awakening into consciousness is not an ecstatic enlightenment, but part and parcel of the human predicament – of the suffering of people,

their choices and the supports they receive in their struggle (Eben 2004:667). One of the stimulating ethical considerations of the narrative is responsibility to truth and integrity. Abraham needed to learn to tell the truth and to trust God for protection (Assohoto & Ngewa 2006:30). The narrative thus prompts consideration of the importance of truthfulness, integrity and ethical behaviour, even in challenging situations. Migrants, like all individuals, have a responsibility to uphold these values while navigating complex circumstances.

On the other hand, Abraham's decisions disadvantage other vulnerable individuals – Sarah and the leader of Egypt – and puts them at risk. Sarah, as a woman in a foreign land, relies on Abraham for protection and support. Abraham, as the head of the household, has a responsibility to ensure the welfare and safety of Sarah. However, by manipulating the truth and putting her in a compromising situation, he jeopardizes her safety and well-being. In addition, Abraham's actions affect Pharaoh and his household, as they unwittingly become part of the deceptive scenario. This highlights the broader responsibility individuals have to avoid causing harm or exploiting vulnerable groups.

This strategy of immorality did not please God; Abraham's deception leads to divine intervention that brings harm to the ruler's household and his people (Gn 12:17). Assohoto and Ngewa (2006) commenting on the exploitation and victimhood in the narrative observe that:

But Pharaoh was not merely an innocent victim of Abraham's deception. He was also someone who abused his position of authority. Abram's fear that his wife would be seized was well founded, and shows that Pharaoh was prepared to exploit foreigners, who are often among the weaker members of society. (p. 30)

The narrative thus underscores the interconnectedness of actions and their potential impact on others, highlighting the ethical imperative of considering the broader consequences of individual decisions. It is a cautionary tale about the potential harm that can arise when individuals compromise truth and neglect the well-being of those in vulnerable positions, exploit power imbalances and engage in deceptive practices. It thus prompts reflection on the ethical responsibility of migrants to consider the potential consequences of their actions on both themselves and the communities they interact with.

Cultural sensitivity, welcome and trustworthy relationship

In Genesis, Kotzé and Rheeder (2020:5; quoting Gallagher 2014) observe that:

Abraham is acknowledged as an immigrant and a stranger in the land. His position as a nomadic outsider is an important aspect of the primary narrative, and he experiences the challenges that many foreigners and migrants face today, namely culture shock, social displacement, cultural confusion, and language barriers. (p. 4)

Culture shock refers to the disorientation and discomfort experienced when individuals encounter a new and

unfamiliar cultural environment. Certainly, the inability or failure of an individual to understand social norms, customs and communication styles of the host culture can lead to feelings of isolation, anxiety and frustration. The loss of social connections can result in feelings of loneliness, a sense of not belonging, and difficulties in building new relationships in the host country. Abraham's migration to Egypt might not have occurred without some concerns about his moral and social well-being. As he approached Egypt, he found himself entering a land characterised by a cohesive society, established institutions, and a robust governmental structure. It's plausible that he began to worry about his ability to cope with the challenges that he foresaw would arise from living in a vastly different social environment.

The apprehension he voiced was rooted in more than just an understanding of the generally negative tendencies of human nature, particularly in a morally compromised society, remains certain. Abraham's apprehensions could have been influenced by specific factors tied to the well-known behaviour and customs of the Egyptian people. His statement suggests that he viewed the Egyptians as being more permissive about murder compared to adultery. Clearly, the narrative highlights cultural differences and misunderstandings between Abraham and the ruler of Egypt. Such cultural differences and misunderstandings raise ethical questions about the importance of understanding and respecting the cultural norms and values of the host community when migrating. Understanding and addressing these challenges is crucial for creating supportive and inclusive environments that facilitate the successful integration of foreigners and migrants into their new communities.

Abraham's action obviously eroded trust between him and the ruler of Egypt. Thus, when migrants engage in dishonest practices, it could erode the trust between migrants and the host community, reinforcing negative stereotypes and undermining the potential for positive relationships between different groups. Clearly, Abraham's sojourn presents readers with a practical awareness of the ethics of welcome, respect and trustworthy relationships (Cronshaw et al. 2023:166). Ethics of welcoming requires people to recognise the cultural location of migrants and refugees, including making space for their experience of liminality – whether welcoming them into shared space (by people in host community or host communities themselves) or hospitably blessing them as they navigate their own space. Such ethics of embrace is not monochromatic, but it always starts with an accepting recognition of difference. However, fear, distrust and ignorance can all make positive moves towards embracing migrants difficult (Cronshaw et al. 2023:167–168).

Conclusion

Genesis 12:10–20 is clearly a story of migration that is interweaved with ethical complexities of navigating power imbalances and the responsibilities that come with wielding influence over vulnerable individuals. The narrative highlights the situation faced by Abraham and Sarah in Egypt; it involves the exploitation of power dynamics

through the manipulation of information, the vulnerability of Sarah, and the consequences for all parties involved. In this exploration, one can imagine the ethical implications of manipulating power, engaging in deception and the responsibility individuals bear towards vulnerable groups.

The narrative helps one with insight into how needy people, in their insecurity, and desperate conditions to survive, are susceptible to looking for ways and means of addressing their felt needs. No doubt, socio-economic situations of hardship, deprivation, adversity, war, hunger, poverty, disease, need, misery, etc., are endemic and traumatic initiators of strategies and actions of astonishing proportions. However, the narrative can serve as a starting point for discussions about the ethical considerations faced by migrants in socio-economic situations, and how principles of honesty, empathy, and responsible decision-making can guide their actions. It is thus, a narrative that serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of actions that compromise truth and neglect the well-being of those in vulnerable positions.

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Author's contributions

B.O.B. declares that they are the sole author of this research article.

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This research does not involve human participants that require ethical approval. It is simply a biblical-theological exploration and thus literary studies from which informed implications are drawn for readers' reflection.

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