

Fables from the Jewish Tradition
By Rabbi Manes Kogan

(25)

The Dove and Its Chicks

Aggadat Bereshit 37.5 (Buber Ed., p. 75)



Background to the Fable "The Dove and Its Chicks"

Genesis 12:10-15

10. *And there was a famine in the land; and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was severe in the land.*
11. *And it came to pass, when he came near to enter to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that you are a pretty woman to look upon;*
12. *Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see you, that they shall say, This is his wife; and they will kill me, but you they will keep alive.*
13. *Say, I beg you, that you are my sister; that it may be well with me for your sake; and my soul shall live because of you.*
14. *And it came to pass, that, when Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw the woman that she was very pretty.*
15. *The princes of Pharaoh also saw her, and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken to Pharaoh's palace.*

Genesis 20:1-3

1. *And Abraham journeyed from there toward the Negev, and lived between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.*
2. *And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister; and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.*
3. *But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, you are but a dead man, because of the woman whom you have taken; for she is a man's wife.*

"And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begot Isaac" (Genesis 25: 19).

? What is the redundancy in the verse above that needs to be explained?

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אגדת בראשית פרק לז.ה

[ה] [ד"א ואלה תולדות יצחק בן אברהם] אברהם הוליד את יצחק. וכי איני יודע שאברהם הוליד את יצחק, א"ר חנניה רבה משל ליונה שהיו הנצים והעורבים רודפים אחריה, ברחזה מהן ונכנסה וישבה על קינה, והי' בני אדם אומרים ביצים הללו מן הנץ הן, וזה אומר מן העורב הן, א"ל אחד כל זמן שהן ביצים אינן ידועות אם של עורב הן, אם של נץ הן, אלא הניחו עד שתלד ויעשו אפרוחין, ואתם יודעין ממי הן, כך נטלטה שרה פעמים הרבה. אצל פרעה, אצל אבימלך כך התחילו אומרים לא עיברה אלא מפרעה, ואלו אומר' לא עיברה אלא מאבימלך, אמר להן הקב"ה (יסכרו) [יסכרו] פי דוברי שקר (תהלים סג יב), המתינו עד שתלד, ואתם רואין למי הוא דומה, מיד צוה הקב"ה למלאך הממונה על צורת הולד, אמר לו אל תצור אותו דומה לאמו אלא לאביו, שידעו הכל שאינו אלא מן אביו, מיד יצא דומה לאביו, לכך נאמר אלה תולדות יצחק בן אברהם [אברהם הוליד את יצחק].

A dove that was being chased by hawks and crows finally managed to escape and returned to its nest to sit on its eggs.

Some men said, "Those are hawks' eggs."

Others said, "They are crows'."

One man said, "As long as they are eggs, we will not know if they are hawks' or crows'. Wait until they hatch, and then we will know whose they are."

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Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? Why is it impossible to know if the eggs are hawks' eggs or crows' eggs until they hatch?

? Why didn't the third man try to convince the two other that the eggs were dove's eggs?

Marcelo Ferder's Drawing

? How do the two men look in Marcelo Ferder's Drawing?

Note on "The Dove and Its Chicks"

This beautiful fable serves to expand the interpretation of Aggadat Bereshit concerning the following verse: "And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begot Isaac" (Genesis 25:19).

The midrash points out the redundancy of the verse: If it has already been said that Isaac was Abraham's son, why is it necessary to reiterate that Abraham begot Isaac? The midrash (and also Rashi in his commentary on the Torah) tells us that Abraham's neighbors, on seeing his wife pregnant, doubted that he was the father, saying that Sarah's son was the son of Abimelech, since Abraham had fathered Isaac at the age of one hundred.

Therefore, God—according to the Midrash—made Isaac in the image of his father, to put an end to the people's gossip. This is why the verse stresses that Abraham was Isaac's father, since after Isaac's birth there could be no doubt. Likewise, it is impossible to know if the eggs of a dove pursued by crows and hawks are of one or the other until the young hatch and everyone can see who the father is. The problem of Abraham's paternity and of the jeers of his contemporaries is also dealt with in Midrash Tanchuma (Warsaw Edition), Toldot 1 and 3.

? Why didn't Abraham try to convince his scoffing neighbors that the baby Sarah was carrying was his?

? Using our fable as a metaphor, can you think on situations that "we need to wait until they hatch," or people, or projects that "we need to wait until they hatch,"?

? What is our fable teaching us about parenting?

Wrapping Up

! "It ain't over 'til the fat lady sings" (or until the eggs hatch)

Discussion Ideas from Rabbi Dorit Edut

This may be one to skip with the K-3rd grades in that it assumes knowledge about genetics and sex that the children may not understand or be ready for.

4th-6th GRADES:

1)

Why were the men unsure of whether the eggs were hawk eggs or crow eggs? Could they have been something else?

2)

Why do you think it is important to know who your birth parents are? Today, many kids live with step-parents or adopted parents or even with other relatives. Do you think every person naturally finds a "mother" or a "father" figure, even if it is not their birth parent—or is that really not needed?

3)

What might it mean to "Honor your mother and your father," if you don't live with them?

7th-12th GRADES:

1)

The story brings up the issue of patience in resolving problems or finding answers. Give an example of something in your life or in our world today which required much waiting and patience to solve.

2)

With genetic testing today, we can determine not only who our birth parents are but also know many genetic features that they have passed on to us. What do you think about knowing in advance whether you carry genes that could result in certain diseases or medically difficult conditions later in your life?

3)

What do you think of open adoptions, where children at a certain age can find out who their birth parents are and locate them?

4)

This fable relates to a midrash about the miraculous birth of Isaac, son of two very elderly people, which raised all kinds of questions of actual parentage. Why do you think the Rabbis found this so important to resolve with both the midrash and the fable? What larger societal issue were they relating to? Why could this be important for the future of the Jewish people, especially during the Roman rule during the Second Temple period?

Language Arts Strategies from Dr. M. Patricia Cavanaugh **Pre-Reading Strategy: Provide Background Information**

Provide background information on birds—specifically doves and hawks. Discuss interesting facts about enemies, nest raiding, and longevity.

www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds

www.callipyia600.com/allpictures/birds/other_birds/others

Read the text and discuss the facts about birds in relation to the fable.