

Does God Lie? If So, Should We?

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God lied! Yes, He did! He lied, and we have the written evidence directly in the Bible (Torah) itself.

In Genesis 18, we have recorded God's conversation with Abraham about the promised birth of Isaac. Sarah overheard the prophetic conversation between Abraham and God. God revealed to Abraham that in one year's time Sarah will bear him a son.

“And he said, I will surely return to you at this time next year, and behold, your wife Sarah will have a son. And Sarah heard from the entrance of the tent, and it was behind him.” (verse 10)

At this time in their lives, Abraham and Sarah were both old by any standards. Abraham was close to 100, with Sarah being close to 90. Needless to say, for years, Sarah was no longer menopausal.

“Now Abraham and Sarah were old, coming on in years, Sarah had ceased to have the way of the women.” (verse 11)

Upon hearing God's Word, Sarah laughed and noted that not only was she old and “worn out,” but also insinuated that Abraham, her husband, was no longer a “young stud.” By saying that he was old, she implies that maybe he would have been a prime candidate for Viagra, if it had been around in those days. Needless to say, however true it may be, Abraham would not have interpreted such a comment from his wife in any positive manner.

“And Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I have become worn out, will I have smooth flesh? And also, my master is old.” (verse 12)

Knowing now that Sarah's comments might upset the domestic tranquility between her and her husband, God intervenes, and explained that Sarah laughed, questioning if she could give birth when she is so old. But that is not what Sarah said! Sarah was noticing how old Abraham was, yet God twisted around her words, and made them about herself, instead of about Abraham.

“And the Lord said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh, saying, Is it really true that I will give birth, although I am old?” (verse 13)

However one may want to twist and turn this story, the truth is crystal clear. God lied to Abraham about what Sarah said! Now, granted it is written in Numbers 23:9, “*God is not a man that He should lie.*” However, in the original Hebrew for this verse in Numbers, the

Name of God used is “El” and not YHWH (who was speaking to Abraham here in Genesis). While there is only One God, there are still many levels of Divine revelation, and it was Bilaam saying these words, not Moses. Apparently, Bilaam, like so many after him, was not aware of the subtle, higher ways in which God (YHWH) works. So, there is no contradiction between texts, but only different levels of perception of the ways in which the Divine works.

This example proves to us a point about practical wisdom. Even God recognizes how important it is for spouses (and others) to get along with one another. And, if for the sake of peace and domestic tranquility, one spouse lies to the other, not to inflict harm, but to avoid inflicting harm, this may be considered a good thing. It is the only time that one may indeed tell an untruth without Heaven taking notice to judge and condemn.

Discretion and wisdom are byproducts of learning and living the Word of God. Peace and domestic tranquility are always the desired end. These, above all, are what are blessed by God.

We are taught that God has two special Names, these are Shalom (peace) and Emet (truth). Sometimes, in the darkness of our world, one comes into conflict with the other. One needs the wisdom of the Living Word of Torah to ascertain and discern which must take precedence at the moment.

There is no rule to this, no law to govern how we discern wisdom, and how we make peace. But, make peace, we must. Building bridges is the way of God. Burning bridges is the path of perdition, the way of the proverbial devil.

How one acts reveals just where one's heart truly lies, either with God, or with the proverbial devil.

Actions! Actions! These alone talk the language that God hears, and to which He pays special attention.

There is one other important point about this story. Sarah never lied directly to Abraham. She made an insensitive statement, true. It was God who recognized that even such a little thing as this could interfere with His great Divine plan. So, He intervened, and made peace.

How many times do you think that God intervenes in our lives, and makes peace behind the scenes, beyond our awareness, protecting us from what could otherwise become a major problem?

God intervened to protect Sarah from hurting Abraham. *God intervenes daily, in our lives, to protect us from being hurt, and from hurting others! For this alone, we have a great deal for which to be thankful.*

*“In the yeshiva of Rebbe Yishmael they taught, You see how precious peace is, for even the Holy One, blessed be He, altered Sarah's words **for the sake of peace.**”*

(T.B. Baba Metzia 87a, also Rashi on Gen. 18:13)