

# How is This Story Different From All Others?

## A Reexamination of the Narratives in Genesis Through the Lens of the Haggadah

**Narrative psychology** is a viewpoint or a stance within psychology...concerned with the "storied nature of human conduct" In other words how human beings deal with experience by constructing stories and listening to the stories of others...[H]uman activity and experience are filled with "meaning", and stories, rather than logical arguments or lawful formulations, are "the vehicle by which that meaning is communicated".

### Genesis 12:10-20

(10) 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) As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. (12) If the Egyptians see you, and think, 'She is his wife,' they will kill me and let you live. (13) Please say that you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may remain alive thanks to you." (14) When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw how very beautiful the woman was. (15) Pharaoh's courtiers saw her and praised her to Pharaoh, and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's palace. (16) And because of her, it went well with Abram; he acquired sheep, oxen, asses, male and female slaves, she-asses, and camels. (17) But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his household with mighty plagues on account of Sarai, the wife of Abram. (18) Pharaoh sent for Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me! Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? (19) Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her as my wife? Now, here is your wife; take her and begone!" (20) And Pharaoh put men in charge of him, and they sent him off with his wife and all that he possessed.

### בראשית י"ב:כ'

(י) ויהי רעב בארץ ויבא אברם מצרימה לגור שם כי כבד הרעב בארץ: (יא) ויהי כאשר הקריב לכווא מצרימה ויאמר אלשרי אשתו הנהנא ילדתי כי אשה יפתמראה את: (יב) והיה כייראו אתה המצרים ואמרו אשתו זאת והרגו אתי ואתך יחי: (יג) אמרינא אחתי את למען יטיבלי בעבורך וחייתך נפשי בגללך: (יד) ויהי כבוא אברם מצרימה ויראו המצרים אתהאשה הוא מאד: (טו) ויראו אתהשרי פרעה ויהללו אתה אלפרעה ותקח האשה בית פרעה: (טז) וילאברם היטיב בעבורה ויהילו צאנויבקר וחמרים ועבדים ושפחה ואתנת וגמלים: (יז) וינגע יקוק אתפרעה ונגעים גדלים ואתביתו עלדבר שרי אשת אברם: (יח) ויקרא פרעה לאברם ויאמר מהזאת עשית לי למה לאהדת לי כי אשתך הוא: (יט) למה אמרת אחתי הוא ואקח אתה לי לאשה ועתה הנה אשתך קח ולך: (כ) ויצו עליו פרעה אנשים וישלחו אתו ואתאשתו ואתכלאשרלו:

### Genesis 19:1-11

(1) The two angels arrived in Sodom in the evening, as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to greet them and, bowing low with his face to the ground, (2) he said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house to spend the night, and bathe your feet; then you may be on your way early." But they said, "No, we will spend the night in the square." (3) But he urged them strongly, so they turned his way and entered his house. He prepared a feast for them and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. (4) **They had not yet lain down, when the townspeople, the men of Sodom, young and old—all the people to the last man—gathered about the house. (5) And they shouted to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may be intimate with them."** (6) So Lot went out to them to the entrance, shut the door behind him, (7) and said, "I beg you, my friends, do not commit such a wrong. (8) Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you please; but do not do anything to these men, since they have come under the shelter of my roof." (9) But they said, "Stand back! The fellow," they said, "came here as an alien, and already he acts the ruler! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." And they pressed hard against the person of Lot, and moved forward to break the door. (10) But the men stretched out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. (11) And the people who were at the entrance of the house, young and old, they struck with blinding light, so that they were helpless to find the entrance.

### בראשית י"ט:א-י"א

(א) ויבאו שני המלאכים סדמה בערב ולוט ישב בשערסדום ויראולוט ויקם לקראתם וישתחו אפים ארצה: (ב) ויאמר הנהנא אדושם סורונא אלבית עבדכם ולינו ורחצו רגליכם והשפמתם והלכתם לדרככם ויאמרו לא כי רחוב גליו: (ג) ויפצרום מאד וסרו אליו ויבאו אלביתו ויעש להם משטה ומצות אפה ויאכלו: (ד) טרם ישכבו ואנשי העיר אנשי סדם נסבו עליהבית מנער ועדזקן כליהעם מקצה: (ה) ויקראו אללוט ויאמרו לו איך האנשים אשרבאו אליך הלילה הוציאם אלינו ונדעה אתם: (ו) ויצא אלם לוט הפתחה והדלת סגר אתריו: (ז) ויאמר אלנא אחי תרעו: (ח) הנהנא לי שתי בנות אשר לאידעו איש אוציהנא אתהן אליכם ועשו להן פטוב בעיניכם רק לאנשים האל אלתיעשו דבר כיעלעלן באו בצל קרתי: (ט) ויאמרו ו גשהלהא ויאמרו האחד באלגור וישפט שפוט עמה נרע לה מהם ויפצרו באיש בלוט מאד ויגשו לשבר הדלת: (י) וישלחו האנשים אתינדם ויבאו אתלוט אליהם הניתה ואתהדלת סגרו: (יא) ואתהאנשים אשרפתח הבית הפו בסנורים מקטן ועדגדול וילאו למצא הפתח:

Genesis 20

1) Abraham journeyed from there to the region of the Negeb and settled between Kadesh and Shur. **While he was sojourning in Gerar, (2) Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister."** So King Abimelech of Gerar had Sarah brought to him. **(3) But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, "You are to die because of the woman that you have taken, for she is a married woman."** (4) Now Abimelech had not approached her. He said, **"O Lord, will You slay people even though innocent?"** (5) He himself said to me, **'She is my sister!'** And she also said, **'He is my brother.'** When I did this, my heart was blameless and my hands were clean." (6) And God said to him in the dream, "I knew that you did this with a blameless heart, and so I kept you from sinning against Me. That was why I did not let you touch her. (7) Therefore, restore the man's wife—since he is a prophet, he will intercede for you—to save your life. If you fail to restore her, know that you shall die, you and all that are yours."

Genesis 21:9-20

(9) Sarah saw the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham playing. **(10) She said to Abraham, "Cast out that slave-woman and her son, for the son of that slave shall not share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."** (11) The matter distressed Abraham greatly, for it concerned a son of his. (12) But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed over the boy or your slave; whatever Sarah tells you, do as she says, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be continued for you. (13) As for the son of the slave-woman, I will make a nation of him, too, for he is your seed." (14) **Early next morning Abraham took some bread and a skin of water, and gave them to Hagar. He placed them over her shoulder, together with the child, and sent her away. And she wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. (15) When the water was gone from the skin, she left the child under one of the bushes, (16) and went and sat down at a distance, a bowshot away; for she thought, "Let me not look on as the child dies."** And sitting thus afar, she burst into tears. (17) God heard the cry of the boy, and an angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heeded the cry of the boy where he is. (18) Come, lift up the boy and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him." (19) **Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went and filled the skin with water, and let the boy drink.** (20) God was with the boy and he grew up; he dwelt in the wilderness and became a bowman.

(א) ויסע משם אברהם ארצה הנגב וישב בין קדש ויגד שור ויגר בגרר: (ב) ויאמר אברהם אל-שרה אשתו אחתי היא וישלח אבימלך מלך גרר ויטח את-שרה: (ג) ויבא אלקים אל-אבימלך בחלום הלילה ויאמר לו הנה מת על-האשה אשר-לקחת והוא בעלת בעל: (ד) ואבימלך לא קרב אליה ויאמר אדושם ה' ויהי-גם צדיק תהרג: (ה) הלא הוא אמר-לי אחתי הוא והיא-גם-הוא אמרה אחי הוא בתם-לכבי ויבנקנו פפי עשיתי זאת: (ו) ויאמר אליו האללים בחלום גם אנכי ידעתי כי בתם-לכבי עשית זאת ואחשך גם-אנכי אותך מחטוילי על-כן לא נתתיך לנגע אליה: (ז) ועתה השב אשת-האיש כי-נביא הוא ויתפלל בעדך ותחיה ואם-אינך משיב דע כיימות תמות אתה וכל-אשר-לך:

בראשית כ"א:ט-כ'

(ט) ותרא שרה את-בן-הגר המצרית אשר-ילדה לאברהם מצחק: (י) ותאמר לאברהם גרש הנאמה הזאת ואת-בנה כי לא יירש בן-הנאמה הזאת עם-בני עם-מצחק: (יא) וירע הדבר מאד בעיני אברהם על אודת בנו: (יב) ויאמר אלקים אל-אברהם אל-ירע בעיניך על-הנער ועל-אמתך כל-אשר תאמר אליך שרה שמע בקלה כי כיצחק יקרא לך נרע: (יג) וגם את-בן-הנאמה לגוי אשימנו כי ורעה הוא: (יד) וישכם אברהם ו בבקר ויחלוקם וחמת מים ויתן אל-הגר שם על-שכמה ואת-הילד וישלחה ותלך ותתע במדבר באר שבע: (טו) ויכלו המים מן-החמת ותשלך את-הילד תחת אחד השיחים: (טז) ותלך ותשב לה מנגד הרחק במטחני קשת כי אמרה אל-ארה במות הילד ותשב מנגד ותשא את-קלה ותברך: (יז) וישמע אלקים את-קול הנער ויקרא מלאך אלקים ו אליהגר מן-השמים ויאמר לה מה-לך הגר אל-תיראי כי-שמע אלקים אל-קול הנער באשר הוא-שם: (יח) קומי שאני את-הנער והחזיקי את-גדך בו כי-לגוי גדול אשימנו: (יט) ויפקח אלקים את-עיניה ותרא באר מים ותלך ותמלא את-החמת מים ותשק את-הנער: (כ) ויהי אלקים את-הנער ויגדל וישב במדבר ויהי רבה קשת:

Genesis 26:1-11

(1) There was a famine in the land—aside from the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham—and Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines, in Gerar. (2) The LORD had appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land which I point out to you. (3) Reside in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; I will assign all these lands to you and to your heirs, fulfilling the oath that I swore to your father Abraham. (4) I will make your heirs as numerous as the stars of heaven, and assign to your heirs all these lands, so that all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your heirs— (5) inasmuch as Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge: My commandments, My laws, and My teachings.” (6) **So Isaac stayed in Gerar. (7) When the men of the place asked him about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,” for he was afraid to say “my wife,” thinking, “The men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is beautiful.** (8) **When some time had passed, Abimelech king of the Philistines, looking out of the window, saw Isaac fondling his wife Rebekah. (9) Abimelech sent for Isaac and said, “So she is your wife! Why then did you say: ‘She is my sister?’” Isaac said to him, “Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her.” (10) Abimelech said, “What have you done to us! One of the people might have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.” (11) Abimelech then charged all the people, saying, “Anyone who molests this man or his wife shall be put to death.”**

(א) ויהי רעב בארץ מלכר הרעב הראשון אשר היה בימי אברהם ויגדו יצחק אל-אבימלך מלך-פלשתים גררה: (ב) ויגד אליו יקום ויאמר אל-תכד מצרומה שכן בארץ אשר אמר אליך: (ג) גור בארץ הזאת ואתנה עמך ואברכה כפי-לך ויזרעה אתו את-כל-הארצות האל והקמתי את-השבעה אשר נשבעתי לאברהם אביך: (ד) והרבתי את-זרעה ככוכבי השמים ונתתי לזרעה את כל-הארצות האל והתברכו בזרעה כל גווי הארץ: (ה) עקב אשר-שמע אברהם בקלי וישמר משמתי מצותי וקויתי ותורת: (ו) וישב יצחק בגר: (ז) וישאלו אנשי המקום לאשתו ויאמר אחתי הוא פי ירא לאמר אשתי פד-הרגני אנשי המקום על-רבקה כייטבת מראה היא: (ח) ויהי פי ארכילו שם הנמים וישלף אבימלך מלך פלשתים בעד החלון ויגד והנה יצחק מצחק את רבקה אשתו: (ט) ויגד אבימלך ליצחק ויאמר אף הגה אשתך הוא ואיך אמרת אחתי הוא ויאמר אליו יצחק פי אמרתי פד-אמות עליה: (י) ויאמר אבימלך מה-זאת עשית לנו כמעט שכב אחד העם את-אשתך והבאת עלינו אשם: (יא) ויצו אבימלך את-כל-העם לאמר הנגע באיש הנגה ויבאשתו מות יומת:

Genesis 29:16-26

(16) Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older one was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. (17) Leah had weak eyes; Rachel was shapely and beautiful. (18) Jacob loved Rachel; so he answered, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.” (19) Laban said, “Better that I give her to you than that I should give her to an outsider. Stay with me.” (20) So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her. (21) Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife, for my time is fulfilled, that I may cohabit with her.” (22) And Laban gathered all the people of the place and made a feast. (23) When evening came, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to him; and he cohabited with her.— (24) Laban had given his maidservant Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her maid.— (25) **When morning came, there was Leah! So he said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? I was in your service for Rachel! Why did you deceive me?” (26) Laban said, “It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the older.**

## בראשית כ"ט:ט"ז-כ"ו

(טז) וילבן שתי בנות שם הגדלה לאה ושם הקטנה רחל: (יז) ועיני לאה רכות ורחל היתה יפת-תאר ויפת מראה: (יח) ויאהב יעקב את-רחל ויאמר אעבדך שבע שנים ברחל בתך הקטנה: (יט) ויאמר לבן טוב תתי אתה לך מתתי אתה לאיש אחר שבה עמך: (כ) ויעבד יעקב ברחל שבע שנים ויהיו בעיניו פנמים אחדים באהבתו אתה: (כא) ויאמר יעקב אל-לבן הבה את-אשתי פי מלאו ימי ואבואה אליה: (כב) ויאסף לבן את-כל-אנשי המקום ויעש משתה: (כג) ויהי בערב ויקח את-לאה בתו ויבא אתה אליו ויבא אליה: (כד) ויתן לבן לה את-זלפה שפחתו ללאה בתו שפחה: (כה) ויהי בבקר והנה-הוא לאה ויאמר אל-לבן מה-זאת עשית לי הלא ברחל עבדתי עמך וגמה רמייתי: (כו) ויאמר לבן לא-יעשה כן במקומנו לתת הצעירה לפני הבכירה:

(1) When Joseph was taken down to Egypt, a certain Egyptian, Potiphar, a courtier of Pharaoh and his chief steward, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him there. (2) The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he stayed in the house of his Egyptian master. (3) And when his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD lent success to everything he undertook, (4) he took a liking to Joseph. He made him his personal attendant and put him in charge of his household, placing in his hands all that he owned. (5) And from the time that the Egyptian put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed his house for Joseph's sake, so that the blessing of the LORD was upon everything that he owned, in the house and outside. (6) He left all that he had in Joseph's hands and, with him there, he paid attention to nothing save the food that he ate. Now Joseph was well built and handsome. (7) **After a time, his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and said, "Lie with me."** (8) **But he refused.** He said to his master's wife, "Look, with me here, my master gives no thought to anything in this house, and all that he owns he has placed in my hands. (9) He wields no more authority in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except yourself, since you are his wife. How then could I do this most wicked thing, and sin before God?" (10) And much as she coaxed Joseph day after day, he did not yield to her request to lie beside her, to be with her. (11) **One such day, he came into the house to do his work. None of the household being there inside, (12) she caught hold of him by his garment and said, "Lie with me!" But he left his garment in her hand and got away and fled outside. (13) When she saw that he had left it in her hand and had fled outside, (14) she called out to her servants and said to them, "Look, he had to bring us a Hebrew to dally with us! This one came to lie with me; but I screamed loud. (15) And when he heard me screaming at the top of my voice, he left his garment with me and got away and fled outside."** (16) She kept his garment beside her, until his master came home. (17) Then she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew slave whom you brought into our house came to me to dally with me; (18) but when I screamed at the top of my voice, he left his garment with me and fled outside." (19) When his master heard the story that his wife told him, namely, "Thus and so your slave did to me," he was furious. (20) So Joseph's master had him put in prison, where the king's prisoners were confined. And he remained there in prison.

(א) ויוסף הורד ממצרים ויקנהו פוטיפר סרס פרתה שר הטבחים איש מצרי מיד הישמעאלים אשר הורדהו שמה: (ב) ויהי יקוק את-יוסף ויהי איש מצליח ויהי בבית אדניו המצרי: (ג) וירא אדניו כי יקוק אתו וכל אשר-הוא עשה יקוק מצליח בידו: (ד) וימצא יוסף תו בעיניו וישרת אתו ויפקדהו על-ביתו וכל-יש-לו נתן בידו: (ה) ויהי מאז הפקידו אלו בביתו ועל כל-אשר יש-לו ויברך יקוק את-בית המצרי בגלל יוסף ויהי ברבת יקוק בכל-אשר יש-לו בבית ובשדה: (ו) ויעזב כל-אשר-לו בידיוסף ולא-תדע אתו מאומה כי אם-הלחם אשר-הוא אוכל ויהי יוסף יפה-תאר ויפה מראה: (ז) ויהי אחר הדברים האלה ותשא אשת-אדניו את-עיניה אל-יוסף ותאמר שכבה עמי: (ח) וימאן ויאמר אל-אשת אדניו הן אדושם לא-תדע אתי מה-בבית וכל אשר-יש-לו נתן בידו: (ט) איננו גדול בבית הזה ממני ולא-חשד ממני מאומה כי אם-אותך באשר את-אשתו ואיך אעשה הרעה הגדלה הזאת ותטאתי לאלהים: (י) ויהי בדרך אל-יוסף יום ויום ולא-שמע אליה לשקב אצלה להנות עמה: (יא) ויהי כהיום הזה ויבא הביתה לעשות מלאכתו ואין איש מאנשי הבית שם בבית: (יב) ותתפשטה בנגדו לאמר שכבה עמי ויעזב בגדו בידה ויגס ויצא החוצה: (יג) ויהי כראותה כיעזב בגדו בידה ויגס החוצה: (יד) ותקרא לאנשי ביתה ותאמר להם לאמר ראו תביאו לנו איש עברי לצחק בנו בא אלי לשקב עמי ואקרא בקול גדול: (טו) ויהי כשמעו כיעזבתי קולי ואקרא ויעזב בגדו אצלי ויגס ויצא החוצה: (טז) ותגתו בגדו אצלה עד-בוא אדניו אל-ביתה: (יז) ותברך אלו בדרךים האלה לאמר בא-אלי העבד העברי אשר-הבאת לנו לצחק בי: (יח) ויהי כהרמי קולי ואקרא ויעזב בגדו אצלי ויגס החוצה: (יט) ויהי כשמע אדניו את-דברי אשתו אשר דברה אלו לאמר בדרךים האלה עשה לי עבדך ויחר אפו: (כ) ויקח אדושם יוסף אלו ויתנהו אל-בית הסהר מקום אשר-אסורי [אסירי] המלך אסורים ויהי-שם בבית הסהר:

**Marshall Ganz. 2009. What Is Public Narrative: Self, Us & Now (Public Narrative Worksheet).**

We are all part of multiple “us’s” – families, faiths, cultures, communities, organizations, and nations in which we participate with others. What community, organization, movement, culture, nation, or other constituency do you consider yourself to be part of, connected with? With whom do you share a common past? With whom do you share a common future? Do you participate in this community as a result of “fate”, “choice” or both? How like or unlike the experience of others do you believe your own experience to be? One way we establish an “us” – a shared identity – is through telling of shared stories, stories through which we can articulate the values we share, as well as the particularities that make us an “us.” ...

A story of us works if people identify with each other on behalf of values that inspire them to act.

## Leviticus 19: 33-34

ויקרא יט: לג-לד

And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, you shall not taunt him. The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto you as the home-born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

וְכִי־יִגְוֹר אִתְּךָ גֵר בְּאַרְצְכֶם לֹא תוֹנֶנּוּ אֹתוֹ: כְּאֶזְרָח מִכֶּם יִהְיֶה לְכֶם הַגֵּר וְהַגֵּר אִתְּכֶם וְאַהֲבַת לֹךְ כְּמֹוד קִי־גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

## "A Stranger and a Resident"

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l Adapted by R. Eliyahu Blumenzweig Translated by Kaeren Fish

On the other hand, a person has to know that he is a "stranger" in the world. It can be difficult to live with this knowledge, especially if one is successfully integrated in the world and one's material pursuits are flourishing. A person who experiences setbacks and defeats in all his endeavors will not find it difficult to feel himself a "stranger." But if everything goes smoothly for a person, and his path in life takes him from one success to the next, it is difficult for him to sever his bond with the reality of this world, which gets stronger by the day. This bond arises not only from the person's subjective consciousness, but also from reality itself: the works of Creation, bursting with life, invite man to eat of their fruit and to satisfy himself with their goodness.

Despite this – and specifically for this reason – a person must consciously adopt a sense of foreignness. He must know that even his integration into the most practical aspects of life is necessary in order to be able to achieve a higher spiritual level. The reality is nothing but a means. The end, the aim, is to attain "that day" when "God will be One, and His Name will be One" (Zekharia 14:9). When a person feels, with his entire being, that this is his goal and purpose in life, then he is able to sense his "foreignness" in this world – not out of scorn for the world, nor in an attempt to remove himself from it, but rather out of his integration into it as a means to attain a higher goal – "that day."