



Four Loathsome Heroes

Noah

Stories of a great flood can be found in the folk tales of almost every culture, so it could be possible that there was a time when much of Earth's current landmass was temporarily underwater. Exactly what historical time that was, however, is questionable as there is no "official" record of any such phenomena, and "the Egyptian civilization was in a particularly flourishing state at this very time and was building its pyramids."¹

There are many reasons why we also must assume that much of the story of Noah's ark is fabrication. One such reason is the clear impossibility of Noah collecting a pair of every species when many species only live above the Arctic Circle, deep in the jungles of South America, or in the Australian outback. Another reason is the preposterous size of an ark capable of holding — and storing a year's provisions for — every known species ... there are over 250,000 species of beetles alone! But let us chalk all that up to the natural tendency for storytellers to exaggerate, and consider instead what sort of man Yahweh supposedly picked to save the human race.

For being the first leader mentioned in the Bible, there is precious little written about Noah. According to Genesis, Noah was the son of Lamech and the grandson of Methuselah. At the age of 500, he had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. When Yahweh decided to start the world over again, he chose Noah (now 600 years old) to carry on the human race because "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generations." [GEN 6:9]

One of the strangest stories in the Bible occurs after the flood business is over. Noah became a farmer. "He planted a vineyard; and he drank of the wine, and became drunk, and lay uncovered in

his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it upon both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness." [GEN 9:20-23] Now be sure to get this picture clearly in your mind. A man walks unknowingly into a tent and can't help but spy his 602-year-old father passed out on the bed in just his birthday suit. (A rather ill-fitting suit, to be sure.) He immediately tells his brothers, who cover up the old man after walking backwards into the tent. And does Noah awake and thank his sons for covering up an old man in need?

Not exactly.

"When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, 'Cursed be Canaan; a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers.'" [GEN 9:24]

This wins the award for being the most ungrateful and outrageous statement in the entire Bible. A man gets drunk of his own accord, removes his own clothes, passes out, and then complains about what his son has *done to him!* What harm had been done ... other than to Ham's poor eyes? And, to top it off with even greater lunacy, Noah curses not his son Ham, but Ham's son Canaan (Noah's grandson), who had absolutely nothing to do with the whole affair.

What possible reason could the author of Genesis have for writing such a preposterous story? Could the fact that "Canaan" is the name for the land long coveted by the Israelites have anything to do with this?

¹ Asimov, Isaac, *Asimov's Guide to the Bible*, Avenel Books, 1981, p. 38.

Abraham

Ten generations after Noah, one of Shem's descendants was named Abram (no, this isn't a typo, later his name was lengthened to Abraham) who was destined to become the founder of the Hebrew nation. Prior to Abram, the terms "Hebrew" and "Jew" had no meaning. The Bible tells us nothing about the 75 years of his life before he was chosen by Yahweh to father a great nation, nor does Yahweh offer any reason for his selection. Perhaps if we observe how he acts as he wanders about the land, Abram's special qualities will be revealed to us.

At Yahweh's urging, Abram takes his wife, Sarai, and his nephew, Lot, and all of their possessions, households, and servants, and begins a long trip. First to Canaan, and then, because there was a famine, down into Egypt. Abram is afraid that the Egyptians will kill him and take his wife because she is so beautiful, so he lies and gets his wife to lie and say she is his sister. [GEN 12:12-13] The Pharaoh does indeed lust after Sarai and takes her as a wife. Abram then lives very comfortably in Egypt off the largess of the royal family. Yahweh, however, doesn't much like an Egyptian copulating with Abram's wife. Does he punish Abram for his cowardice, his lies, his pimping for his wife? Of course not. Yahweh sends great plagues upon the house of Pharaoh.

When Pharaoh discovers that he has been duped, he kicks Abram out of Egypt, but lets him take his wife and all his possessions. Thus, Abram, who was well off when he entered Egypt, is a very rich man when he exits.

Sarai seems unable to conceive, so she suggests that Abram (age 86) take another wife, namely Sarai's Egyptian maid, Hagar. This Abram does, and Hagar bears him a son, Ishmael. [GEN 16] Thirteen years later, Yahweh again visits Abram, changes his name to Abraham (and Sarai to Sarah), and reiterates his prediction that Abraham will be the father of multitudes who will get to live in the land of Canaan. In exchange, all Yahweh asks is that Abraham and all the males in his family and

among his servants and slaves become circumcised. Even though no reason is given for what must have seemed an extremely odd request, Abraham immediately complies and spends the rest of the day mutilating the penises of every man within his household. [GEN 17]

Once again, Abraham goes on the road, this time ending up in the kingdom of Gerar. Once again, he sought favor from the king by passing off Sarah as his sister. And once again, the king takes Sarah to be his wife. Only this time, Yahweh is kind enough to inform the king about Abraham's deception before the marriage is consummated. The king, in apparent appreciation for not being killed as well as deceived, gives Abraham his wife back, along with sheep, oxen, male and female slaves, and a thousand pieces of silver. And thus, Abraham becomes an exceedingly wealthy man, mostly by pimping for his wife and deceiving heads of state.

Abraham went on to father Isaac, then marry again and father six other sons. (Isaac was so like his father that he, too, tried to pass his wife off as his sister.) [GEN 26:6-11] Isaac was the father of Jacob (who became known as Israel) and Jacob was the father of Joseph (of the pretty coat) and eleven other sons who all became the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel; thus fulfilling the prediction that Abraham's children would become a nation. (The prediction was not written down until many centuries after the occurrence of the event predicted — a circumstance that always improves accuracy.)

Lot

Few non-Jews would be able to describe Abraham as the father of the Hebrews, yet almost every Westerner knows the story of Abraham's nephew, Lot. Probably this is because the graphically intense image of Lot's wife turning into a pillar of salt is so unforgettable.

There is actually very little said about Lot in the Bible, but little things sometimes come in lurid packages.

Lot was living in Sodom when two angels—who apparently were indistinguishable from normal men—entered the city to see if its citizens were as evil as had been reported. When Lot sees the strangers enter town, he offers them food and shelter, which they accept. They eat and prepare for bed, but then a most fantastic event occurs: every single male in the city, "both young and old, to the last man," [GEN 19:4] surround the house and demand that Lot "bring [the strangers] out to us, so that we may know them." The implication here is that the Sodomites desired to have homosexual relations with the strangers. But there were only two strangers, and there must have been thousands of men outside Lot's door. This scenario boggles the mind even more than all those millions of critters crammed into Noah's boat.

Lot's reaction is no less outrageous. He says to the mob, "Behold, I have two daughters who have not known man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men." [GEN 19:8] Yes, you read it right; Lot offers his virgin daughters to the crowd in place of the strangers!

The epilogue to this story is almost as depraved. In it Lot and his two daughters are living in a cave. Since the daughters have no man around to satisfy their reproductive desires, they conspire to get their father drunk and have sex with him. Apparently, the alcohol of the time did not have the inhibiting influence on male sexual performance that it does today, for they are successful in this escapade ... two nights in a row.

We never are told the type and extent of the sins of Sodom that prompted Yahweh to destroy that city, but if, by comparison, Lot was considered a good guy, then the rest of the townfolks must have been true scum.

As for all the little children that got barbecued in Yahweh's cleansing fire, we can only speculate about their moral character.

David

David was the most revered king of the Jews, as is shown by the Gospel writers attempts to

prove that Jesus was of David's lineage. David was a young soldier from Bethlehem when he performed his best-remembered feat, slaying Goliath with only a sling and a stone. The Bible relates little else extraordinary about him that would explain his future fame. Here are a few items you probably didn't know.

Once, when David was encamped with his exiled band of outlaws and misfits, a filthy man in torn clothing staggers in to camp, falls to his knees in deference to David, and tell this story. He (the messenger is never named) had been fighting alongside the Israelites when he came upon their king, Saul, seriously wounded and in peril of being captured by the Philistines. Saul calls out to the man in his pain and says "slay me, for anguish has seized me, and yet my life still lingers." [2Sam 1:9] Seeing that Saul will not live much longer anyway, the man complies with his king's orders, thus saving Saul from a more painful and shameful death at the hands of his enemies. The man then escapes through enemy lines to bring the news of Israel's defeat. He also brings the king's crown, which he believes should now belong to David.

And can you guess how David shows his appreciation for this heroism and homage? David has the man killed. ... He does, however, keep the crown.

(For those Bible readers whose sense of justice is offended by this story, an entirely different version of Saul's death has been thoughtfully included in 1 Samuel, chapter 31.

* * *

A few years later, David, now king of all Israel, peers out from the roof of his house and spies his neighbor, the beautiful Bathsheba, taking a bath. Overcome with lust, David has his troops seize Bathsheba and bring her to his bedchamber where he "lay with her" (as the RSV so quaintly puts it), and gets her pregnant. Now Bathsheba's husband, whose name was Uriah, was away soldiering. David sends for him and gives him a sealed message to take back to his commanding officer. The message read, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest

fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die." [2Sam 11:15] And that's just what happened.

Thus did King David commit adultery, and thus did King David betray the trust of his army and commit the foul and gutless murder of his loyal soldier.

Now, to be fair about this, we should note that Yahweh was not pleased with these events and meted out justice as only Yahweh could—when the baby was born, He killed it.

As for David, he added Bathsheba to his harem and fathered another child by her, a fellow named Solomon.

"The Bible reinforces the message that there are two kinds of sexual morality: one for rulers, who get off scot free for their sexual crimes, and one for the ruled, who wind up slaughtered if they transgress." — Terry Gould, *The Lifestyle*, p.94.

As bloodthirsty and treacherous as the Israelites were, we still think of them as far more

civilized than those cultures, such as the Inca, whose gods demanded human sacrifices. Consider, however, the following story. During David's reign there was a famine for three years. Yahweh tells David that the cause of the famine is the "blood guilt on Saul and on his house" [2Sam 21:1] (*i.e.* the kings of Israel) for the murder of certain Gibeonites. David asks the Gibeonites what would remove this debt, and they say the death of seven of the sons of the murderer. So, David gives these seven men up, and the Gibeonites hang them "on the mountain of the Lord."

If these killings only appeased the Gibeonites, the story would be but one more drop of mayhem in the ocean of atrocities that make up the Old Testament. Note, however, that in His pleasure at the deaths of the seven sons, Yahweh immediately ends the famine. This is not exactly the same as splitting people open on an altar to appease the gods, but the victims are not likely to appreciate the distinction. And so, the skeleton of human sacrifice lurks behind the gilded robes in good King David's royal closet.

Does It Really Matter?

It is likely that there truly was a king David, around whom many a tall tale grew. It is less likely that there was a Noah, Abraham, or Lot. But, fictional or not, the question of Moses' pertinence may still be asked for each of these lives. The answer is that those who wrote the first five books of the Old Testament, and all the Hebrews/Israelites/Jews and Christians who since have revered and promoted these books, thought that these depraved characters were heroes, and their dastardly exploits worth celebrating, if not emulating. Millions still think that way today.

It is in such horrific tales that we find the roots of many of The Most Insidious Lies.

