

H. Michael Marquardt 445 Pioneer Ave.    Sandy, UT 84070-1174    (801) 255-7377
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September 12, 1996

Susan Staker  
 5313 Roper Avenue  
 Fair Oaks, CA 95628

Dear Susan,

I received your note postmarked August 23rd together with your Sunstone paper on "The Lord Said, Thy Wife Is A Very Fair Woman to Look Upon": The Book of Abraham, Secrets, and Lying for the Lord." Thank you for sending a copy. I have made some markings on a copy your paper.

- p. 1 you may want to add that women assisted in washing and anointing of women before their endowment
- p. 2 persons working in Times and Seasons office: John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and a new employee Lyman O. Littlefield

The Times and Seasons establishment was sold for \$6,600. (see Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 2:153). The printed History of the Church 4:513-14 has "between 7,000 and 8,000 dollars." This is clearly not the correct amount. It would be good to know the source of the entry of 20 November 1841 of the History of the Church 4:454 relating to a meeting of the Twelve where there is a mention of Ebenezer Robinson.

Concerning Lyman O. Littlefield who wrote the wedding remarks that was published in the Times and Seasons - he is mentioned in Wilford Woodruff's journal 2:177 (27 May 1842), as being "cut of[f] for Adultery." The Nauvoo High Council Minutes for the same date records, "Charge against Lyman O Littlefield by Geo Miller For improper and unvirtuous conduct and for teaching false doctrine ... The charge was fully sustained. On motion Resolved. That he be disfello[w]shipped untill he made satisfaction to this Council" (typed copy, original in LDS archives). It appears that in this instance cut off means disfellowshipped. In 1845 Littlefield wrote a booklet on the assassination of the Joseph and Hyrum Smith with the name of William M. Daniels on the title page (see Flake, A Mormon Bibliography 1830-1900, 193).

I would suggest that the long endnotes be shortened and you may want to add some of the information in the endnotes to the body of the paper.

Enclosed are two items relating to the Genesis Apocryphon. In the work by Joseph A. Fitzmyer there is commentary for this text. I hope this help a little. I enjoyed reading your paper. Hope to hear from you again.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael".

H. Michael Marquardt

Comments on Susan Staker's Sunstone Paper  
Delivered in Salt Lake City, 17 August 1996

Marshall Hamilton

I'm struck by the irony of us, as descendants of polygamous pioneers, discussing Abraham's deception at the court of the pharaoh. It seems to me that we're going to have to get used to yet another definition for the term "sister-wife."

Susan Staker presents a curiously one-dimensional picture of the two settings she describes in her paper. I would urge her to round out the pictures of the time of Abraham as presented in Genesis and in the Book of Abraham as well as the picture of 1842 Nauvoo. Such fleshing out, taking advantage of the research and conclusions of many other scholars, will not only make the settings she describes more interesting and believable, but it will also make her conclusions more accessible.

Let me illustrate my point on adding dimension by first discussing the wife/sister deception as described in Genesis and in the Book of Abraham.

The book of Genesis contains not just one, but three accounts of a patriarch's wife being disguised as his sister, to preserve the life of the patriarch. Susan Staker's paper concerns the first of those three stories--that of Abram disguising his wife Sarai as his sister when they traveled to Egypt to escape a famine.

Susan Staker has discussed the Genesis chapter 12 account, of Abram deceiving the Egyptian pharaoh, and has drawn several conclusions from the text of the ten or so verses we find in Genesis chapter 12. She has wistfully called for an account from the point of view of Sarai, an account where the wife is shown to be a free agent, in contrast to the chattel-like description in

those verses.

She also positively states that Abram conceives the idea for deception “to protect himself from the consequences of anticipated male rivalry.” Then she contrasts her reading of the Genesis account with the Book of Abraham retelling, and finds that in creating the book of Abraham, Joseph Smith changed the principal actor from Abram to God, thus making God himself responsible for the deception, rather than Abram the prophet.

Susan’s paper would be enriched dramatically by making at least a brief reference to the Genesis 20 and Genesis 26 accounts of similar wife/sister deceptions. In Genesis 20, unbelievably enough, Abraham and Sarah, their names having been changed to reflect the new covenant they have made with God, play the same ruse, this time deceiving King Abimelech of Gerar. In chapter 26, Abraham and Sarah’s son Isaac plays the same deception, also against King Abimelech, pretending that Rebekah, his wife, is really his sister. In each case, the king suffers for taking another man’s wife; in Genesis 26, King Abimelech himself harangues Isaac for putting him at risk.

To say that it strains credulity that such a ruse would take place three times within two generations is to put it mildly. One scholar has succinctly stated, “The unknown scribe or scribes who put together Genesis from earlier narratives made no effort to produce a consistent story...he or they simply included everything that was thought to have the authority of antiquity.” That’s one explanation.

Another explanation that resonates with students of Mormonism is that there was a selection or an abridgement process at work in creating the text of Genesis, and that the compiler wanted future generations to know certain details, so he included them in his text. Such an