

The Texts: The Hebrew Bible, The Qur'ān, Ancient Egyptian Literature, and The Iliad

1. Genesis 39, The Hebrew Bible
(New J. P. S. Translation)
2. Sura 12, The Qur'ān
(A. J. Arberry Translation)
3. Ancient Egyptian Literature: The Story of Two Brothers
(J. Wilson Translation in ANET)
4. Book VI of the Iliad, The Tale of Bellerophon
(R. Lattimore Translation)

The Hebrew Bible: Genesis 39:1-23

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. The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man, and he stayed in the house of his Egyptian master. And when his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord lent success to everything he undertook, 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. 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. 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.

After a time, his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and said, "Lie with me." 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. 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?" And much as she coaxed Joseph day after day, he did not yield to her request to lie beside her, to be with her.

One such day, he came into the house to do his work. None of the household being there inside, 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. When she saw that he had left it in her hand and had fled outside, 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. And when he heard me screaming at the top of my voice, he left his garment with me and got away and fled outside." She kept his garment beside her, until his master came home. Then she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew slave whom you brought into our house came to me to dally with me; but when I screamed at the top of my voice, he left his garment with me and fled outside."

When his master heard the story that his wife told him, namely, "Thus and so your slave did to me," he was furious. So Joseph's master had him put in prison, where the king's prisoners were confined. But even while he was there in prison, the Lord was with Joseph: He extended kindness to him and disposed the chief jailer favorably toward him. The chief jailer put in Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in that prison, and he was the one to carry out everything that was done there. The chief jailer did not supervise

anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him, and whatever he did the Lord made successful.

The Qur'an: Sura 12: 23-35

Now the woman in whose house he was solicited him, and closed the doors on them. "Come," she said, "take me!" "God be my refuge," he said. "Surely my lord has given me a goodly lodging. Surely the evildoers do not prosper."

For she desired him; and he would have taken her, but that he saw the proof of his Lord. So was it, that We might turn away from him evil and abomination; he was one of Our devoted servants.

They raced to the door; and she tore his shirt from behind. They encountered her master by the door. She said, "What is the recompense of him who purposes evil against thy folk, but that he should be imprisoned, or a painful chastisement?"

Said he, "It was she that solicited me"; and a witness of her folk bore witness, "If his shirt has been torn from before then she has spoken truly, and he is one of the liars;

but if it be that his shirt has been torn from behind, then she has lied, and he is one of the truthful."

When he saw his shirt was torn from behind he said, "This is of your women's guile; surely your guile is great.

Joseph, turn away from this; and thou, woman, ask forgiveness of thy crime; surely thou art one of the sinners."

Certain women that were in the city said, "The Governor's wife has been soliciting her page; he smote her heart with love; we see her in manifest error."

When she heard their sly whispers, she sent to them, and made ready for them a repast, then she gave to each one of them a knife. "Come forth, attend to them," she said. And when they saw him, they so admired him that they cut their hands, saying, "God save us! This is no mortal; he is no other but a noble angel."

"So now you see," she said. "This is he you blamed me for. Yes, I solicited him, but he abstained. Yet if he will not do what I command him, he shall be imprisoned, and be one of the humbled."

He said, "My Lord, prison is dearer to me than that they call me to; yet if Thou turnest not from me their guile, then I shall yearn towards them, and so become one of the ignorant."

So his Lord answered him, and He turned away from him their guile; surely He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing.

Then it seemed good to them, after they had seen the signs, that they should imprison him for a while.

Ancient Egyptian Literature: "The Story of Two Brothers"

Now they say that once there were two brothers of one mother and one father. Anubis was the name of the elder, and Bata was the name of the younger. Now, as for Anubis, he had a house and had a wife, and his younger brother lived with him as a sort of minor. He was the one who made clothes for him and went to the fields driving his cattle. He was the one who did the plowing and who harvested for him. He was the one who did all kinds of work for him which are in the fields. Really, his younger brother was a good grown man. There was no one like him in the entire land. Why, the strength of a god was in him.

Now after many days after this, they were in the fields and ran short of seed. Then he sent his younger

brother, saying: "Go and fetch us seed from the village." And his younger brother found the wife of his elder brother sitting and doing her hair. Then he said to her: "Get up and give me some seed, for my older brother is waiting for me. Don't delay!" Then she said to him: "Go and open the bin and take what you want! Don't make me leave my combing unfinished!" Then the lad went into his stable, and he took a big jar, for he wanted to carry off a lot of seed. So he loaded himself with barley and emmer and came out carrying them.

Then she said to him: "How much is it that is on your shoulder?" And he said to her: "three sacks of emmer, two sacks of barley, five in all, is what is on my shoulder." So he spoke to her. Then she talked with him, saying "There is great strength in you! Now I see your energies every day!" And she wanted to know him as one knows a man.

Then she stood up and took hold of him and said to him: "Come, let's spend an hour sleeping together! This will do you good, because I shall make fine clothes for you!" Then the lad became like a leopard with great rage at the wicked suggestion which she had made to him, and she was very, very much frightened. Then he argued with her, saying: "See here—you are like a mother to me, and your husband is like a father to me! Because—being older than I—he was the one who brought me up. What is this great crime which you have said to me? Don't say it to me again! And I won't tell it to a single person, now will I let it out of my mouth to any man!" And he lifted up his load, and he went to the fields. Then he reached his elder brother, and they were busy with activity at their work.

Now at the time of evening, then his elder brother left off to go to his house. And his younger brother tended his cattle, and he loaded himself with everything of the fields, and he took his cattle in front of him, to let them sleep in their stable which was in the village.

But the wife of his elder brother was afraid because of the suggestion which she had made. Then she took fat and grease, and she became like one who has been criminally beaten, wanting to tell her husband: "It was your younger brother who did the beating!" And her

husband left off in the evening, after his custom of every day, and he reached his house, and he found his wife lying down, terribly sick. She did not put water on his hands, after his custom, nor had she lit a light before him, and his house was in darkness, and she lay there vomiting. So her husband said to her: "Who has been talking with you?" Then she said to him: "Not one person has been talking with me except your younger brother. But when he came to take the seed to you he found me sitting alone, and he said to me: 'Come, let's spend an hour sleeping together! Put on your curls!' So he spoke to me. But I wouldn't listen to him: 'Aren't I your mother?—for your elder brother is like a father to you!' So I spoke to him. But he was afraid, and he beat me, so as not to let me tell you. Now, if you let him live, I'll kill myself! Look, when he comes, *don't let him speak*, for, if I accuse him of this wicked suggestion, he will be ready to do it *tomorrow again!*"

Then his elder brother became like a leopard, and he made his lance sharp, and he put it in his hand. Then his elder brother stood behind the door of his stable to kill his younger brother when he came back in the evening to put his cattle in the stable.

Now when the sun was setting, he loaded himself with all plants of the fields, according to his custom of every day, and he came back. When the first cow came into the stable, she said to her herdsman: "Here's your elder brother waiting before you, carrying his lance to kill you! Run away from him!" Then he understood what his first cow had said. And another went in, and she said the same. So he looked under the door of his stable, and he saw the feet of his elder brother, as he was waiting behind the door, with his lance in his hand. So he laid his load on the ground, and he started to run away and escape. And his elder brother went after him, carrying his lance.

Then his younger brother prayed to the Re-Har-akhti (the sun disc), saying: "O my good lord, thou art he who judges the wicked from the just!" Thereupon the Re heard all his pleas, and the Re made a great body of water appear between him and his elder brother, and it was full of crocodiles. So one of them came to be on one

side and the other on the other. And his elder brother struck his hand twice because of his not killing him. Then his younger brother called to him from the other side, saying: "Wait here until dawn. When the sun disc rises, I shall be judged with you in his presence, and he will turn the wicked over to the just, for I won't be with you ever *again*; I won't be in a place where you are—I shall go to the Valley of the Cedar!"

Now when it was dawn and a second day had come, the Re-Har-akhti arose, and one of them saw the other. Then the lad argued with his elder brother, saying: "What do you mean by coming after me to kill me falsely, when you wouldn't listen to what I had to say? Now I am still your younger brother, and you are like a father to me, and your wife is like a mother to me! Isn't it so? When I was sent to fetch us some seed, your wife said to me: 'Come, let's spend an hour sleeping together!' But, look, it is twisted for you into something else!" Then he let him know all that had happened to him and his wife. Then he swore to the Re-Har-akhti, saying "As for your killing me falsely, you carried your lance on the word of a filthy whore!" And he took a reed-knife, and he cut off his phallus, and he threw it into the water. And the shad swallowed it. And he was faint and became weak. And his elder brother's heart was very, very sad, and he stood weeping aloud for him. He could not cross over to where his younger brother was because of the crocodiles....

Then the younger brother went off to the Valley of the Cedar, and his elder brother went off to his house, with his hand laid upon his head, and he was smeared with dust. So he reached his house, and he killed his wife, and he threw her out to the dogs. And he sat in mourning for his younger brother....

(In the continuation of the story the younger brother, Bata, undergoes a series of magical transformations after death. Eventually he is elevated to the ranks of the God-Kings.)

The Iliad, Book VI, 155–205

To Bellerophon the gods granted beauty and desirable manhood; but Proitos in anger devised evil

things against him, and drove him out of his own domain, since he was far greater, from the Argive country Zeus had broken to the sway of his sceptre. Beautiful Anteia the wife of Proitos was stricken with passion to lie in love with him, and yet she could not beguile valiant Bellerophontes, whose will was virtuous. So she went to Proitos the king and uttered her falsehood: "Would you be killed, o Proitos? Then murder Bellerophontes who tried to lie with me in love, though I was unwilling." So she spoke, and anger took hold of the king at her story. He shrank from killing him, since his heart was awed by such action, but sent him away to Lykia, and handed him murderous symbols, which he inscribed in a folding tablet, enough to destroy life, and told him to show it to his wife's father, that he might perish. Bellerophontes went to Lykia in the blameless convoy of the gods; when he came to the running stream of Xanthos, and Lykia, the lord of wide Lykia tendered him full-hearted honour. Nine days he entertained them with sacrifice of nine oxen, but afterwards when the rose fingers of the tenth dawn showed, then he began to question him, and asked to be showed the symbols, whatever he might be carrying from his son-in-law, Proitos. Then after he had been given his son-in-law's wicked symbols first he sent him away with orders to kill the Chimaira none might approach; a thing of immortal make, not human, lion-fronted and snake behind, a goat in the middle, and snorting out the breath of the terrible flame of bright fire. He killed the Chimaira, obeying the portents of the immortals. Next after this he fought against the glorious Solymoi, and this he thought was the strongest battle with men that he entered; but third he slaughtered the Amazons, who fight men in battle. Now as he came back the king spun another entangling treachery; for choosing the bravest men in wide Lykia he laid a trap, but these men never came home thereafter since all of them were killed by blameless Bellerophontes. Then when the king knew him for the powerful stock of the god, he detained him there, and offered him the hand of his daughter, and gave him half of all the kingly privilege. Thereto the men of Lykia cut out a piece of land, surpassing all others, fine ploughland and orchard for him to administer. His

bride bore three children to valiant Bellerophontes, Isandros and Hippolochos and Laodameia. Laodameia lay in love beside Zeus of the counsels and bore him god-like Sarpedon of the brazen helmet. But after Bellerophontes was hated by all the immortals, he wandered alone about the plain of Aleios, eating his heart out, skulking aside from the trodden track of humanity. As for Isandros his son, Ares the insatiate of fighting killed him in close battle against the glorious Solymoi, while Artemis of the golden reins killed the daughter in anger.