

GENESIS CHAPTERS 20-21

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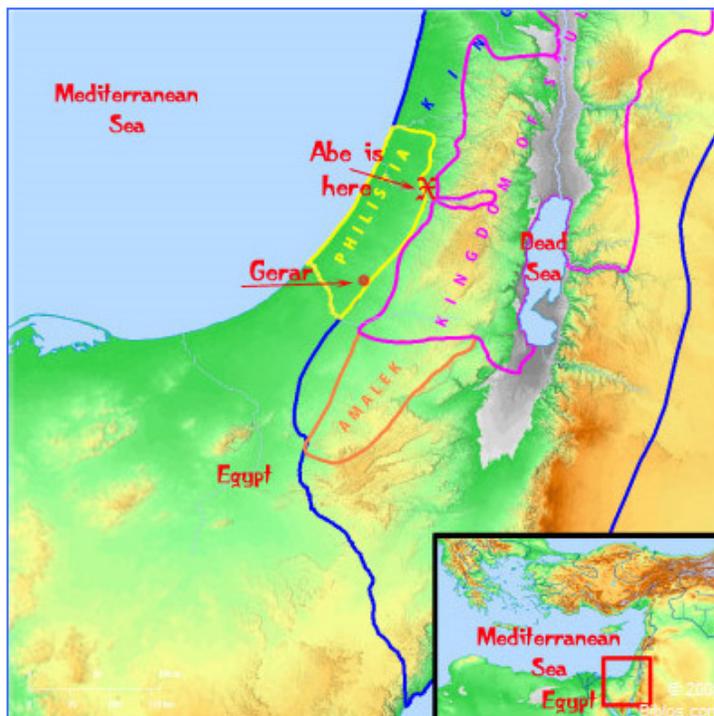
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Genesis Previously		
Mankind Created	Nations Formed	Abram Covenanted
Abram at War, is Honored, Land Boundaries Specified		
Sarai substituted, then Rejected Hagar; the Lord supported Her Expanded Names given to Sarai and Abram.		
Abraham was Visited and Warned about Sodom Sodom Was Destroyed, but Lot and Daughters Were Saved.		

Following the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham again becomes the focus of the Genesis story. We find him on the move for the main reason a man raising animals moves: to find fresh water and grazing land for his flocks and herds.

(Genesis 20:1 NLT) Abraham moved south to the Negev and lived for a while between Kadesh and Shur, and then he moved on to Gerar. While living there as a foreigner, (2) Abraham introduced his wife, Sarah, by saying, "She is my sister." So King Abimelech of Gerar sent for Sarah and had her brought to him at his palace.

- This was 25 years after **Abraham** heard the call of God in Haran the second time. **King Abimelech** may have been seeking a marriage alliance with **Abraham's** people by marrying **Sarah**. This "sister" lie is an old sin repeated. While there is some truth in calling her his sister, the intent was to conceal the truth that she was his **wife**. Repeating a sin becomes easier. God's choice of **Abraham** was not related to his merits!
- **Abimelech's** name is actually a title (father-king) and was used by other kings later. **Abimelech** was a God-fearing man with high principles. God communicated directly with him.



Note Genesis 21:22:

“God is obviously with you, helping you in everything you do,” Abimelech said.

If Abimelech had been an idolater, he would have attributed **Abraham's** success to some idol.

C.C. Crawford writes:

“The fact that God communicated with Abimelech in a dream is sufficient evidence that the latter was in some sense a believer, one who apparently feared God; however, he must have had only a limited knowledge of God, because the dream . . . was “a mode employed for those standing on a lower level of revelation.””

him, went back home to Gerar. Then we’re told that Abraham stayed in that area for a long time.”

- The **tamarisk tree** was planted as a memorial to the event. They grew so slowly they were thought of as being planted for the next generation.
- **Abraham** engaged in public worship here.



Tamarisk Tree

Abraham then gave some of his sheep, goats, and cattle to Abimelech, and they made a treaty.

- The first test of the contract was over water wells. **Abimelech** hadn't known about this event, but they made a treaty about water.

(28) But Abraham also took seven additional female lambs and set them off by themselves. (29) Abimelech asked, "Why have you set these seven apart from the others?" (30) Abraham replied, "Please accept these seven lambs to show your agreement that I dug this well." (31) Then he named the place Beersheba (which means "well of the oath"), because that was where they had sworn the oath.

- They settled the matter, **Abimelech** agreeing that the wells belonged to **Abraham**. The **lambs** were like a permit fee.

(32) After making their covenant at Beersheba, Abimelech left with Phicol, the commander of his army, and they returned home to the land of the Philistines. (33) Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he worshiped the LORD, the Eternal God. (34) And Abraham lived as a foreigner in Philistine country for a long time.

- Because there was water, **Abraham** and his large company of servants and animals stayed in Philistine country a long time.
- "Beersheba" means well of the oath. **Bradford** summarizes this event:
"There was a dispute going on between Abraham's clan, and Abimelech's people, over some water wells. And, the wise Abimelech, aware that Abraham had a friend in the highest place, simply wanted to settle the issue before God again threatened him. The negotiations end successfully with the traditional B'rit (covenant) making ceremony, and Abimelech and his military commander who came with

(3) But that night God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him, "You are a dead man, for that woman you have taken is already married!" (4) But Abimelech had not slept with her yet, so he said, "Lord, will You destroy an innocent nation? (5) Didn't Abraham tell me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'Yes, he is my brother.' I acted in complete innocence! My hands are clean." (6) In the dream God responded, "Yes, I know you are innocent. That's why I kept you from sinning against Me, and why I did not let you touch her. (7) Now return the woman to her husband, and he will pray for you, for he is a prophet. Then you will live. But if you don't return her to him, you can be sure that you and all your people will die."

- **Abimelech** knew what happened at Sodom and understood that he was in trouble. He defended his actions.
- **Abraham** is called a **prophet** by the **Lord**. This is the first use of the word in Scripture. As a **prophet**, **Abraham** is the Lord's spokesman but here functions as a priest as well, speaking to **God** on behalf of **Abimelech**.

LESSONS:

- God's grace gave **Abimelech** a chance to correct the matter.
- God's grace restrained **Abimelech** from touching Sarah.
- God's grace enabled Isaac to be born without a parentage question.
- God's grace was seen in allowing Abraham to pray for the king so he would live. This is at least the second time Abraham was interceding for another person, Lot being the first.
- Sins done in ignorance are still sins and there is a penalty.

(8) Abimelech got up early the next morning and quickly called all his servants together. When he told them what had happened, his men were terrified. (9) Then Abimelech called for Abraham. "What have you done to us?" he demanded. "What crime have I committed that deserves

treatment like this, making me and my kingdom guilty of this great sin? No one should ever do what you have done!

- **Abimelech** was eager to comply. The king's **servants** also feared God. **Abimelech's** choice of words was mild.

(10) Whatever possessed you to do such a thing?" (11) Abraham replied, "I thought, 'This is a godless place. They will want my wife and will kill me to get her.' (12) And she really is my sister, for we both have the same father, but different mothers. And I married her. (13) When God called me to leave my father's home and to travel from place to place, I told her, 'Do me a favor. Wherever we go, tell the people that I am your brother.'"

- **Abraham** has assessed the king incorrectly. It was not a **godless place**. He had not learned to trust God on this matter even though he had a severe lesson in Egypt.
- **Abraham** and Sarah had the same father, but different mothers. Abraham HAD told a half-truth. But it caused much trouble.

(14) Then Abimelech took some of his sheep and goats, cattle, and male and female servants, and he presented them to Abraham. He also returned his wife, Sarah, to him. (15) Then Abimelech said, "Look over my land and choose any place where you would like to live." (16) And he said to Sarah, "Look, I am giving your 'brother' 1,000 pieces of silver in the presence of all these witnesses. This is to compensate you for any wrong I may have done to you. This will settle any claim against me, and your reputation is cleared."

- Sarah was returned to her husband. Abraham was given animals and servants and grazing rights. Unlike the event in Egypt, Abraham was expected to stay in the land. Abraham received silver like a legal fine the king imposed on himself. **C.C. Crawford** writes:
 "The king carried out the divine instructions. He gave Sarah back to Abraham with a liberal present of sheep,

- **Hagar's eyes** were **opened to water** nearby.
- The Lord gave Ishmael special help in maturing. **C.C. Crawford** makes this comment:
 "God evidently opened her eyes; that is, He gave her the insight to perceive that water was to be found close at hand. She filled the bottle with water and gave the lad drink. Vv. 20-21: Ishmael's Future. The boy grew up, evidently amidst the hardships of the desert—the proof that God was with him. He became a skillful Bowman (archer); indeed his descendants were all noted for their archery. (Cf. Isa. 21: 17). Ishmael grew up in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from among her own people."
- **Hagar** got a wife for Ishmael from among her own people even though she was a worshiper of the one true God. That must have made an interesting story!!

(22) About this time, Abimelech came with Phicol, his army commander, to visit Abraham. "God is obviously with you, helping you in everything you do," Abimelech said. (23) "Swear to me in God's name that you will never deceive me, my children, or any of my descendants. I have been loyal to you, so now swear that you will be loyal to me and to this country where you are living as a foreigner." (24) Abraham replied, "Yes, I swear to it!"

- **Abimelech** and **Phicol** could see the blessing that **Abraham** received from the Lord. They wanted a lasting contract of peace. **Abraham** had dealt deceptively over Sarah, so the king wanted, and received, a stronger statement from the prophet.

(25) Then Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well that Abimelech's servants had taken by force from Abraham's servants. (26) "This is the first I've heard of it," Abimelech answered. "I have no idea who is responsible. You have never complained about this before." (27)

The Peace Agreement was the normalization of diplomatic relations between *The United Arab Emirates* and the *State of Israel*. See state.gov/the-Abraham-accords/ for an official explanation from the U.S. Department of State.

(14) So Abraham got up early the next morning, prepared food and a container of water, and strapped them on Hagar's shoulders. Then he sent her away with their son, and she wandered aimlessly in the wilderness of Beersheba. (15) When the water was gone, she put the boy in the shade of a bush. (16) Then she went and sat down by herself about a hundred yards away. "I don't want to watch the boy die," she said, as she burst into tears.

- **Abraham** got personally involved in providing **food** and **water** in a backpack. He sent them on their way knowing the Lord had plans for them. This hardy woman despaired of a solution. She cried, believing Ishmael was dying. Ishmael had just gone from being potentially wealthy to being penniless and homeless.

(17) But God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, "Hagar, what's wrong? Do not be afraid! God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. (18) Go to him and comfort him, for I will make a great nation from his descendants."

- **God** addressed **Hagar's** fears and reminded her of an earlier promise. Genesis 16:10. Unlike the promise that came through Isaac, the promise to Ishmael was that he would become a **great nation**, not hold extensive property.

(19) Then God opened Hagar's eyes, and she saw a well full of water. She quickly filled her water container and gave the boy a drink. (20) And God was with the boy as he grew up in the wilderness. He became a skillful archer, (21) and he settled in the wilderness of Paran. His mother arranged for him to marry a woman from the land of Egypt.

cattle and servants, and gave the patriarch permission to dwell wherever he pleased in his, Abimelech's, land. He gave Abraham also a thousand shekels of silver: this was usually of the character of a purchase-price for a wife; here, however, it seems to have been a compensation for injury inflicted unwittingly. To Sarah he said, "It is for thee a covering of the eyes," that is, not for a veil which she was to procure for this amount, but as an atoning gift. "In respect of all thou art righted": the general sense seems to be that Sarah's honor was now fully rehabilitated."

(17) Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants, so they could have children. (18) For the LORD had caused all the women to be infertile because of what happened with Abraham's wife, Sarah.

- Despite his sin, **Abraham** still had standing with **God**. He was a prophet, vs. 7.
- The women in **Abimelech's** household had not been able to conceive. This was a very serious matter for a king's household. Notice that one prayer from **Abraham** opened the wombs of the Philistine women, but 25 years of praying had not opened Sarah's. God has his own timing. He is Sovereign.

This chapter records the birth of Isaac. This begins the fulfillment of the second part of the covenant with Abraham--the part about his children. They don't own the promised land yet, but the family needs to expand before they receive it.

(Genesis 21:1) The LORD kept His word and did for Sarah exactly what He had promised. (2) She became

pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God had said it would.

- The writer notes the exact timing for this birth. These several sentences appear to be a summary of what has been covered in the story to this point.

- There are seven cases of miraculous conception in

Scripture:

- **Sarah** (Verse 1 and Hebrews 11:11)
- Rebekah (Gen. 25:21)
- Rachel (Genesis 30:22),
- Manoah's wife (Judges 13:3-24)
- Hannah (1 Samuel 1:19, 20)
- Elizabeth (Luke 1:24, 25)
- Mary, by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18, 20; Luke 1:31-35).

The first six women wanted children. The case of Mary was different.

(3) And Abraham named their son Isaac. (4) Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded. (5) Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. (6) And Sarah declared, "God has brought me laughter. All who hear about this will laugh with me. (7) Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!"

- The name **Isaac** had been foretold. The **circumcision** covenant was kept. The **laughter** issue came up again, with a different slant. **Sarah** was pleased. It is amazing that she lived through childbirth at such an age. **Tom Bradford** summarizes this way:

“The elderly couple was overjoyed; Abraham had just turned 100 years old, and Sarah 90, when Isaac was produced it was miracle enough that Abraham could sire a son at that age, or that Sarah who had NEVER, even as a young girl, had a womb that could

produce life, could do so several decades after it was humanly possible but it was also a miracle that such an aged woman could even survive the birthing process. And, as verses 6 and 7 show, they were as astonished and dumbfounded as the hundreds and hundreds of people that now formed their clan would have been as well.”

(8) When Isaac grew up and was about to be weaned, Abraham prepared a huge feast to celebrate the occasion. (9) But Sarah saw Ishmael--the son of Abraham and her Egyptian servant Hagar--making fun of her son, Isaac. (10) So she turned to Abraham and demanded, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won't have it!" (11) This upset Abraham very much because Ishmael was his son.

- **Weaning** was usually around three years of age. It was a cause of **celebration** in camp.
- There was family trouble: 17-year-old **Ishmael** mocked. **Sarah** wanted **Hagar** and the **son** to be gone. She was concerned about the family **inheritance**, too. Two-thirds of **Abraham's** vast holding would go to **Ishmael**. One-third to **Isaac. Abraham** was profoundly distressed. He loved both sons.

(12) But God told Abraham, "Do not be upset over the boy and your servant. Do whatever Sarah tells you, for Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted. (13) But I will also make a nation of the descendants of Hagar's son because he is your son, too."

- **God** contacted **Abraham** with a solution. Let her go.
- Ishmael will become **a nation** as well because he belongs to you. Let **Hagar** and Ishmael go. **God** will care for them.
- At this point, Ishmael split from the family. Both men became the fathers of millions of people. They haven't agreed on much until the Abraham Accords signed in 2020.