

# Genesis

## Chapter 20



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**Theme:** Abraham misrepresents Sarah

Abraham repeats the same sin which he committed when he went down into the land of Egypt and lied concerning Sarah, saying, “She is my sister.” It is the same sordid story, but this chapter is put here for a very important reason. Abraham and Sarah are going to have to deal with this sin before they can have Isaac, before they can have the blessing.<sup>1</sup>

**Torah Class:** After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham again becomes the focus. Here we find him on the move for generally the only reason that a pastoralist moves: to find fresh water and grazing land for his flocks and herds, because where he was had been used up. There is no reason to assume from anything the Bible has told us that he had moved beyond the hill country of Hebron, until now.

Moving south, Abraham stops in Gerar, inland in an area that would in the not too distant future become known as Philistia.....the land of the Philistines. In fact, it is entirely possible that the king of Gerar, Abimelech, was in fact an early Philistine settler.

As it helps a great deal to understand the geography to understand the event, it is pertinent to our study to know that the Kadesh spoken of here is the same as the Biblical Kadesh-Barnea. It was some kind of a cult site, and as it was a little distance into the barren Sinai, and had good water, it was undoubtedly a place where the Bedouins came from time to time to trade, worship their gods, get supplies, and so on. The place called Shur is actually in Egypt (Shur is just the Hebrew form of the Aramaic word Shur-a, which means “a wall”). Centuries before Abraham, the Egyptians had built a fortification wall roughly along the line of the modern day Suez Canal. Its purpose was to protect itself against those hordes of Asians to the North of them that constantly pestered Egypt. As we’ll see in a few chapters, eventually those Asians would overrun Egypt and actually rule Egypt for more than a century.

There is reasonable evidence that the wall existed about 400 years before Abraham, as in ancient Egyptian archives there is a document that scholars have dubbed “The Prophecy of Nepherti” dated to that time; and in that document, there is already talk of the Wall of the Ruler that was built so that the Asians could not come into Egypt.

There was a trade route that wound it’s way from Kadesh to Shur, and it ran through Gerar, later part of Philistia. You know..... sometimes we get this idea that all these Bible characters were the equivalent of Lewis and Clark, blazing new trails to new destinations, where people had never been before. That was not the case at all. ALL of our Bible heroes moved to known places, traveling long established trade routes. It is no different here in Genesis.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1McGee, J. Vernon, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 2000, c1981.

<sup>2</sup> [Torahclass.com/index.html](http://Torahclass.com/index.html), Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

## **Genesis 20:1**

**And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.**

**[And Abraham journeyed]** It is very likely that this holy man was so deeply affected with the melancholy prospect of the ruined cities, and not knowing what was become of his nephew Lot and his family that he could no longer bear to dwell within sight of the place. Having, therefore, struck his tents, and sojourned for a short time at Kadesh and Shur, he fixed his habitation in Gerar, which was a city of Arabia Petraea, under a king of the Philistines called Abimelech, my father king, who appears to have been not only the father of his people, but also a righteous man.

**[south]** The second time he journeyed from north to south (Genesis 20:1; Genesis 12:9). Twice he journeyed south to north (Genesis 13:1,3).

**[Kadesh and Shur]** Again a story begins with the itinerary of Abraham's travels, this time taking him south on a line between Kadesh (an oasis forty-six miles south of Beersheba in the northeastern Sinai) and Shur. The latter site probably refers to the "wall" (*shur*) of Egyptian fortresses in the eastern Delta region. The Egyptian story of Sinuhe (twentieth century B.C.) mentions this "Wall of the Ruler" as a barrier to the incursions of Asiatics into Egypt.

**[Gerar]** Although it is not within the range of the Kadesh-Shur line, Gerar may not have been too far of a journey for pastoral nomads such as Abraham's household. Its exact location, beyond the general area of the western Negev, is uncertain (Genesis 10:19), and it may in fact be the name for a territory rather than a city. Most archaeologists, noting strong Egyptian influence in this region between 1550 and 1200 B.C., point to Tell Haror (Tell Abu Hureireh), fifteen miles northwest of Beersheba, as its probable location.

Gerar may have been near the coast about 12 miles south of Gaza and about 50 miles south of Hebron, in the land of the Philistines (21:34). Later Isaac will do the same thing with another Abimelech ( a tribal title, not a proper name)! (26:1-11). God intervenes to preserve His promise for the line of the Redeemer... Gen 3:15 et al.

**[sojourned]** *guwr*, (H1481) *goor*; a primitive root; properly to *turn* aside from the road (for a lodging or any other purpose), i.e. *sojourn* (as a guest); also to *shrink*, *fear* (as in a *strange* place); also to *gather* for hostility (as *afraid*) :- abide, assemble, be afraid, dwell, fear, gather (together), inhabitant, remain, sojourn, stand in awe, (be) stranger, × surely. The Christian is a citizen of Heaven and a sojourner on the earth.

**EDLS** Starting with the last heh and counting every fifth letter from left to right is the phrase **hacharak oht shalav**, which means "the latticework of the equidistant letter sequence." Also from the shin in the word *shalav* and counting every fifty-fifth letter from right to left is the word *shalav* and adjacent to it is the word oht which spells letter.

## **Genesis 20:2**

**And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.**

This is quite interesting. Sarah may have been very beautiful. At this time she is almost ninety years old, and she's still beautiful. Not many senior citizens can qualify.

It may also be that her beauty may have been considerably impaired since the time she was taken in a similar manner by Pharaoh, king of Egypt; but she may have now been chosen by Abimelech more on the account of forming an alliance with Abraham, who was very rich, than on account of any personal accomplishments. A king, such as Abimelech, would naturally be glad to form an alliance with such a powerful chief as Abraham was: we cannot but recollect his late defeat of the four confederate Canaanitish kings. This circumstance was sufficient to establish his credit, and cause his friendship to be courted; and what more effectual means could Abimelech use in reference to this than the taking of Sarah, who he understood was Abraham's sister, to be his concubine or second wife, which in those times had no kind of disgrace attached to it?

**Abimelech.** The name means "My father [is] king" and was apparently a hereditary title rather than a personal name (cf. Gen. 26). This is the earliest mention of "Philistines" in Canaan's coastal area (21:32; 26:1). These "sea peoples" from Crete were probably few in number, as archeologists have traced a great influx some 800 years later. (See Insight.) Some claim the Bible is wrong to place Philistines in Canaan at this time. But pioneers from many ancient lands established early settlements there

**Torah Class:** And, we find Abraham is up to his old tricks. Now that he is in a place that he has some trepidation about, he is once again referring to his wife Sarah as his sister. And, as far as Abraham is concerned, why not? In Egypt he came out smelling like a rose, when Pharaoh took Sarah, then gave her back along with a king's ransom, just to stop the plagues that God visited on the Pharaoh.

Well, now he encounters a king the bible calls Abimelech, and essentially the Egypt affair happens all over again. Now, for the record, Abimelech is a fairly common name for that era, so it is kind of a combination title and name.....and it means, "my father is king" (Abba, father, melech, king). And, also just for the record, we'll find another Abimelech in the Bible, during the time of the Israelites in Canaan, a few hundred years into the future. So, don't let it confuse you.....it's not that much different than running into a couple of different John Joneses over a long period of time....why should THAT confuse us?

Well, it's Déjà vu all over again! Abimelech takes Sarah. Now, Sarah was 90 years old at this time. What in the world was this king thinking? The Rabbis deduced that she must have retained all that beauty that attracted the Pharaoh many years earlier, and I suppose that's possible. More likely, though, was that the king was trying to make an alliance with Abraham in the customary way of that era: marry a family member of the hoped for ally.

It's obvious from the story that there was mutual respect and peaceful intentions, not kidnapping that was going on here. There is no indication of force.<sup>3</sup>

**Nachmanides; “And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, she is my sister”** This was not like what happened in Egypt. There, when they entered the land, it is said that the Egyptians saw that the woman was beautiful, and they praised her to the lords and to Pharaoh, as they were an immoral people but this king was perfect and upright, and his people were likewise good. However Abraham suspected them, and he told everyone that she was his sister.<sup>4</sup>

**Nachmanides; “and Abimelech, King of Gerar, sent and took Sarah.”** It is wondrous that Sarah, after being worn with age, was extremely beautiful, for to be taken by kings. When she was taken to Pharaoh, though she was sixty-five years old, it is possible that she still had her beautiful appearance, but after being worn with age and the manner of women had ceased with her, that is a wonder! Perhaps her youthfulness returned to her when the angel brought her the tidings, as our Rabbis have said.<sup>5</sup>

**Origen;** “Sarah represents the virtue of the soul” I think, therefore, that Sarah, which means “princess” or “one who governs empires,” represents *arête*, which is the virtue of the soul. This virtue then is joined to and clings to a wise and faithful man, even as that wise man who said of wisdom, “I have desired to take her for my spouse.” For this reason therefore God says to Abraham, “In all that Sara has said to you, listen to her voice.” This saying, at any rate, is not appropriate to physical marriage, since that well known statement was revealed from heaven which says to the woman concerning the man, “In him shall be your refuge, and he shall have dominion over you.” If therefore the husband is said to be lord of his wife, how is it said again to the man, “In all that Sarah has said to you, pay attention to her voice”? If anyone therefore has married virtue, let him listen to her voice in all which she shall counsel him.

Abraham therefore does not now wish that virtue be called his wife. For as long as virtue is called his wife, she belongs to him and can be shared with no one. And it is proper that until we reach perfection, virtue of the soul be within us and personal. But when we reach perfection so that we are capable also of teaching others, let us then no longer enclose virtue within our bosom as a wife but as a sister; let us unite her also with others who desire her. For to those who are perfect the divine Word says, “Say that a wisdom is your sister.” In this way therefore Abraham too said Sarah was his sister<sup>6</sup> ...

Nevertheless Pharaoh too once wished to receive Sarah, but he did not wish with a pure heart; and virtue cannot unite except with purity of heart. For this reason, therefore, Scripture relates that the Lord afflicted Pharaoh with afflictions which were grievous and most severe. For virtue could not dwell with a destroyer – for this is what Pharaoh means in our language.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

<sup>4</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

<sup>5</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

<sup>6</sup> Prov. 7:4

<sup>7</sup> Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

**(Prov 7:4)** *Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman:*

### **Genesis 20:3**

**But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.**

**God speaking to non-Israelite in dream** There are few instances of messages being given in dreams by the Lord to Israelites, but dreams are one of the most common forms divine revelation was believed to take for the uninitiated. In the Mari texts it is usually those who are not among the professional temple personnel who receive messages by means of dreams. In most places in the Bible where significant dreams are given to individuals the text does not explicitly state that God spoke to the individual in the dream (Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar).

The warning of God to Abimelech concerning the deceit of Abraham further indicates the mercy of God toward all people. The two incidents in which Abraham used the same lie under similar circumstances (12:10-20) make the deed doubly reprehensible. After YAHWEH's explanation, Abimelech would deserve any punishment, for he now knew that Sarah was the wife of Abraham, "a prophet" (v. 7).

### **Fourteen Dreamers**

1. Abimelech (Genesis 20:3,6)
2. Jacob (Genesis 28:12; Genesis 31:10-11)
3. Laban (Genesis 31:24)
4. Joseph (Genesis 37:5-10)
5. The chief butler (Genesis 40:9-15)
6. The chief baker (Genesis 40:16-23)
7. Pharaoh (Genesis 41:1-32)
8. A Midianite (Judges 7:13-15)
9. Solomon (1 Kings 3:5-15)
10. Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2 and Daniel 4)
11. Daniel (Daniel 2 and Daniel 7)
12. Joseph (Matthew 1:20; Matthew 2:13-22)
13. The wise men (Matthew 2:12)
14. Pilate's wife (Matthew 27:19)

**Torah Class:** We now get this interesting little dialogue between Abimelech and God. And, God comes right to the point: Abimelech, I'm going to kill you because you have taken a married woman. Abimelech argues in his defense that he has not yet had sexual relations with her, and besides he had no idea she was a married woman. God acknowledges that Abimelech was telling the truth, but then goes on to say that it was divine power that kept Abimelech from touching Sarah.....because if he had, then no excuse would have sufficed, death would have been the penalty.<sup>8</sup>

### **Genesis 20:4**

**But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation?**

There is a fitting wordplay here. Abraham had prayed that the righteous would not be *destroyed* with the wicked (18:23-32). Now Abimelech's words echoed the same concern: **Lord, will You destroy an innocent nation?** The rebuke of this expression would have been quite forceful for Abraham.

**[Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? ... She is my sister?]** Questions 35-36. Next question is in Genesis 20:9.

Crooked policy will not prosper: it brings ourselves and others into danger. God gives Abimelech notice of his danger of sin, and his danger of death for his sin. Every wilful sinner is a dead man, but Abimelech pleads ignorance. If our consciences witness, that, however we may have been cheated into a snare, we have not knowingly sinned against God, it will be our rejoicing in the day of evil. It is matter of comfort to those who are honest, that God knows their honesty, and will acknowledge it. It is a great mercy to be hindered from committing sin; of this God must have the glory. But if we have ignorantly done wrong, that will not excuse us, if we knowingly persist in it. He that does wrong, whoever he is, prince or peasant, shall certainly receive for the wrong which he has done, unless he repent, and, if possible, make restitution.<sup>9</sup>

**God, Justice**—God's justice is not a blind, arbitrary, mechanical reaction to evil or the appearance of evil. God's justice takes into account the circumstances involved in each individual situation. Instead of pouring harsh judgment upon Abimelech for unwittingly taking Abraham's wife, God tempered His judgment with understanding and mercy. We can always count on God to understand our circumstances at any given time. He is a loving heavenly Father, just as Jesus taught. This does not mean, however, that we can manipulate God or make flimsy excuses for our disobedience. God's justice is informed by His perfect knowledge of us. We cannot deceive God, but we can depend upon Him to deal with us justly.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [Torahclass.com/index.html](http://Torahclass.com/index.html), Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

<sup>9</sup> Matthew Henry's Commentary

<sup>10</sup> Disciple's Study bible

## **Genesis 20:5**

**Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this.**

**[In the integrity of my heart]** Had Abimelech any other than honorable views in taking Sarah, he could not have justified himself thus to his Maker; and that these views were of the most honorable kind, God himself, to whom the appeal was made, asserts in the most direct manner, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart.<sup>11</sup>

Sad indeed, inexpressibly sad, was Abraham's conduct. It was not the fall of a young and inexperienced disciple, but the lapse of one who had long walked the path of faith that here shows himself ready to sacrifice the honor of his wife, and what is worse, give up the one who was the depository of all the promises. "What then is man, and what hope for him except in God None, surely. And it is to ground us well in this that we are given to see the sad and terrible failures of these honored servants of God. Not to discourage but to lead us to the Source of all comfort and strength. Only in realized weakness do we find this. Only when unable to do without God for a moment do we find what He is for us moment by moment" (F. W. Grant).<sup>12</sup>

Plainly, the evil compact which Abraham made with Sarah was due to the feebleness of: his faith in God's power to take care of them. And once more, let not writer or reader sit in pharisaic judgment upon Abraham, but see a picture of himself. Abraham did but illustrate what is all too sadly common among the Lord's people that which might be termed the *inconsistency* of faith. How often those who are not afraid to trust God with their souls, *are* afraid to trust Him with regard to their bodies! How often those who have the full assurance of faith in regard to eternal things, are full of unbelief and fear when it comes to temporal things! We have believed in the Lord and it has been counted unto us for righteousness; yet, how often, like Abraham, in the matter of the practical concerns of our daily life, we too, have more confidence in our own wisdom and scheming than we have in the sufficiency of God.<sup>13</sup>

## **Genesis 20:6**

**And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.**

**[dream]** Generally, dreams are the product of the imagination which is stimulated by a variety of things, including work or overeating (Job 20:8; Eccles. 5:3; Psalm 126:1; Deut. 13:1-5; Jude 1:8). However, God has revealed things in dreams many times. See attached appendix A 34 Dreams of Scripture.

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<sup>11</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

<sup>12</sup> Pink, A. W. (2005). *Gleanings in Genesis* (Page 192). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>13</sup> Pink, A. W. (2005). *Gleanings in Genesis* (Page 194). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

[heart] See Appendix B Fifty Kinds of hearts.

### **Genesis 20:7**

**Now therefore restore the man *his* wife; for he *is* a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore *her* not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that *are* thine.**

[prophet] First mention of “prophet” in the OT.

**Prophet’s intercession** Abraham is identified by God as a prophet who is capable of intercession on Abimelech’s behalf. The role of prophet was well understood in the ancient Near East, as evidenced by over fifty texts found in the town of Mari that report messages given by various prophets. Generally the prophet offered a message from deity, but here Abraham is praying for healing (cf. Genesis 20:17). This reflects the broader view of a prophet as one who has powerful connections to deity such that he can initiate curses or remove them. A similar prophetic role can be seen in Scripture in 1 Kings 13:6. In the ancient Near East this role would typically be played by an incantation priest.<sup>14</sup>

Stern warning: God regards adultery as a capital offense.

**Torah Class:** God order Abimelech to give Sarah back, and that Abraham would intercede for him, and if he did that, he would live. If not.....that would be the end of Abimelech’s line.

Now, did Abimelech know whom he was talking to? First, this was in a dream. A dream was a standard way of communicating with God in that era, and we’re told that in the last days, it will once again become a tool for men interfacing with God.

Perhaps we should not so easily slide by this common communication channel between man and God of a dream. It is interesting that Abimelech was a pagan, and yet God communicated with him. This will not be the last time we see this happening. Often it is implied, if not outright stated, that the Lord God Almighty only communicates with His people; well, the Bible simply doesn’t support that teaching. God is sovereign and He is all-powerful; while God does not often move a man against His own will, He will do so when it serves His purposes. Yahweh has absolute control over all things, humans included. It doesn’t matter whether that human is a Believer, an adherent of a false or non-god, or even an atheist.

What is also interesting is how readily Abimelech accepted the instruction of a God he did not know. Perhaps if there is anything more personally disastrous than a person who places his or her faith in a false-god, it is one who acknowledges no god whatsoever. Abimelech, though a pagan, had no problem dealing with the spiritual world, nor with a power higher than himself. A person who is convinced that nothing is higher than himself is almost entirely closed to God, by definition.

I would also like to point out, that the world, and history, knows NOTHING of a society or tribe, at ANY era, which did not believe in spirit beings and in a higher

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<sup>14</sup> Bible Background Commentary

authority..... a god of one kind or another. It was not until that most ridiculously named era.... “The Enlightenment”..... of the 1700’s A.D, that man had finally reached a point of depravity as to declare himself the highest of all possible beings of any kind. That is, the Enlightenment was the birth of atheism.

Second point: whereas more than 99% of the time in the OT we find the word “lord” in our Bibles where in the original it was actually God’s personal name, Yahweh, that was used, here we find the word Adonai in the original.....Adonai means “lord”. So, Abimelech was well aware he was talking to a god, but he didn’t know which one except that he was a protector of Abraham.<sup>15</sup>

### **Genesis 20:8**

**Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid.**

**[Abimelech rose early]** God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and we find as the day broke he arose, assembled his servants, (what we would call his courtiers), and communicated to them what he had received from God. They were all struck with astonishment, and discerned the hand of God in this business. Abraham is then called, and in a most respectful and pious manner the king expostulates with him for bringing him and his people under the Divine displeasure, by withholding from him the information that Sarah was his wife; when, by taking her, he sought only an honorable alliance with his family.

**Chumash:** Classic Questions: Why did his servants become “very frightened”?

**Midrash:** hey knew that Sodom had been completely obliterated, so they feared that the angels which had destroyed Sodom were now coming to visit destruction upon them.<sup>16</sup>

**Chumash;** Toras Menachem: The frightening News of Avimelech’s dream: When the Torah states that Avimelech related his dream “into the ears” of his servants it does not mean that he literally spoke into their ears, but rather that he spoke in front of them [as Onkelos writes]. The point which the Torah wishes to stress here is that Avimelech himself related the news of his dream, which was an extremely unusual occurrence since he would usually communicate with his servants via messengers. Thus, the fact that the King himself, “summoned all his servants, and he spoke about all these occurrences into their ears,” caused them to become “very frightened”.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

<sup>16</sup> Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

<sup>17</sup> Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

### **Genesis 20:9**

**Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done.**

**[What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? ... What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing?]** Questions 37-39. Next question is in Genesis 21:7.

### **Genesis 20:10**

**And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing?**

### **Genesis 20:11**

**And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God *is* not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.**

**[Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake]** What a poor excuse for a man who had been promised complete protection and blessing from God! If he had believed God he would have known that nothing could hurt him until he had received the full blessings promised in the Abrahamic covenant.

### **Genesis 20:12**

**And yet indeed *she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.***

Abraham is now talking to Abimelech who is greatly disturbed that Abraham would do a thing like lying about his wife. Again, Abraham was not trusting God. He felt that he was moving down into a godless place, but he finds out that Abimelech has a high sense of what is right and wrong. Abimelech puts a tremendous value upon character and apparently is a man who knows God. Poor Abraham doesn't look good by the side of Abimelech here.<sup>18</sup>

**Nachmanides; “and yet she is my sister, the daughter of my father”** I know not the sense of this apology. Even if it were true that she was his sister and his wife, nevertheless when they wanted to take her as a wife and he told them, this is my sister, in order to lead them astray, he already committed a sin towards them by bringing upon them a great sin, and it no longer mattered at all whether the thing was true or false!<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> McGee, J. Vernon, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 2000, c1981.

<sup>19</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, *Commentary on the Torah*, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

**[The daughter of my father, but not—of my mother]** Ebn Batrick, in his annals, among other ancient traditions has preserved the following: “Terah first married Yona, by whom he had Abraham; afterwards he married Tehevita, by whom he had Sarah.” Thus she was the sister of Abraham, being the daughter of the same father by a different mother.

**Relationship of Abraham and Sarah** In this repetition of the wife/sister motif, Abraham reveals that Sarah is actually his half sister. There was no incest taboo against such marriages in the ancestral period, and it was a way of insuring that female children from second marriages were cared for by a household. Abraham’s deception of Abimelech is reinforced by Sarah’s willingness to repeat the half-truth.<sup>20</sup>

**Torah Class:** We also find that God invokes Abraham as an intercessor.....an intermediary... here, between God and Abimelech. For the idea was that Abraham would plead on Abimelech’s behalf, and since Abraham was a righteous man, God would listen. This is not the first time Yahweh has positioned Abraham as mediator between He and mankind; Abraham pled for the hypothetical “righteous” people who lived in the city of Sodom, before God obliterated it. In actuality, Abraham was interceding for Lot. We have in these actions a type and pattern of Moses being developed for us.

As we get into verse 8, we find that Abimelech is a tad put off; Abraham’s deceit has nearly cost Abimelech his life! And, Abraham whines that well, in a certain sense Sarah really IS my sister.....of course, it is true she is also my wife. But, I was afraid of you, and I figured this was the best solution..... sorry about that.

And, we get a little tidbit of information that Sarah and Abraham had the same father, but different mothers.

It is fascinating that UNLIKE the situation down in Egypt, Abimelech did NOT kick Abraham out of his country. Rather, he simply added further wealth to Abraham’s clan, and asked him to stay.

We also find at the end of this chapter that God “restored” Abimelech and his household. In this context, it means that for some unspecified amount of time, none of Abimelech’s wives or concubines produced any children for him. So, this story we just read in a few verses probably played out over a several month period at the least; again, not an unusual characteristic for a Bible story that a couple of verses could cover a long period of time.<sup>21</sup>

### **Genesis 20:13**

**And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father’s house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother.**

**[God caused me to wander]** The verb is in the plural and the passage should read "the Gods they caused me to wander." Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity is proven again.

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<sup>20</sup> Bible Background Commentary

<sup>21</sup> Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

### **Genesis 20:14**

**And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and womenservants, and gave *them* unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife.**

[**Abimelech**] Official title of the kings of Gerar, like Pharaoh in Egypt. He appears to have been a man of virtue and a true worshiper of God (Genesis 21:22-32; Genesis 26:1-31). Also the name of a son of Gideon (Judges 8:31; 2 Samuel 11:21).

### **Genesis 20:15**

**And Abimelech said, Behold, my land *is* before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee.**

### **Genesis 20:16**

**And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand *pieces* of silver: behold, he *is* to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that *are* with thee, and with all *other*: thus she was reproved.**

It—the one thousand shekels, (not he—Abraham), is to thee for a covering—to procure thee a veil to conceal thy beauty (unto all that are with thee, and with all other) from all thy own kindred and acquaintance, and from all strangers, that none, seeing thou art another mans wife; may covet thee on account of thy comeliness.

**1000 shekels** A thousand shekels of silver is a sizable sum. In Ugaritic literature it is the amount of the bride price paid among the gods. In weight it would equal about twenty-five pounds of silver. In value it would be more than a worker could expect to make in a lifetime. The king's generosity should be understood as his guarantee that Sarah had been untouched, but also as appeasing the deity who had virtually cut off all fertility in his family.

[**covering of the eyes**] The idea is: I gave your brother a thousand pieces of silver (\$2,500) to buy you a veil to conceal your beauty so that no stranger will covet you, because you are another man's wife. In other words, Speak the whole truth, not just a part of it; say: "he is your husband, not just your brother."

### **Genesis 20:17**

**So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare *children*.**

[**healed Abimelech**] The first physical healing recorded in answer to prayer.

**Plague on Abimelech's house** The plague of barrenness or sexual dysfunction is placed on Abimelech's house until he returns Sarah to Abraham. Abraham's intercession causes God to open their wombs. The irony is that Abimelech is denied children as long as Abraham is denied his wife

**Eitz Yosef:** When a person prays for another and sweetens a Divine judgment the flow of blessing descends downwards into the soul of the one who prayed, and from there the blessing spreads to other souls. Therefore if the person who prayed is in need of the very same blessing as the one he is praying for, he will inevitably receive the blessing first, as his soul is the channel through which the blessing enters the world.<sup>22</sup>

### **Genesis 20:18**

**For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife.**

This is a beautiful testimony of God's protection of a woman whose husband has put aside his responsibility (cf. 1 Pet 3:7). God made certain that Sarah would know only her husband and would bear his child (cf. 21:1).

The moral foundation of history is not limited to God's people. God works out His universal purposes on a moral foundation, also. He honors the moral integrity of unbelieving rulers while at the same time protecting His own people and using them to bless others.

**the LORD had closed up all the wombs:** Three things are indicated by these words. First, the stay of Abraham and Sarah had been prolonged in Gerar before Sarah's identity became known. Some months would have had to pass before the people realized that they were no longer conceiving at normal rates. This means that Sarah had lived in the harem of the king for several months. Second, the Lord reached out to these people in a way they would find difficult to resist; the wish to procreate was relentless in the ancient world, as these accounts consistently emphasize. Third, God graciously protected Sarah—and Abraham. The chapter ends with irony. Because of God's desire to protect Sarah, He had closed the wombs of the women of Abimelech's house. Soon the Lord would open Sarah's womb to give her a child, long after she was too old to conceive naturally (21:1, 2).<sup>23</sup>

## **Appendix A**

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<sup>22</sup> Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

<sup>23</sup> Nelson's Commentary on the Bible

### **Thirty-four Dreams of Scripture (Dake)**

1. Abimelech, of Sarah (Genesis 20:3)
2. Jacob, of a ladder (Genesis 28:12)
3. Jacob, of ring-straked cattle (Genesis 31:10-13)
4. Jacob, of Egypt (Genesis 46:2)
5. Laban, of Jacob (Genesis 31:24)
6. Joseph, of brethren (Genesis 37:5)
7. Joseph, of brethren (Genesis 37:9)
8. Chief butler, of himself (Genesis 40:9)
9. Chief baker, of himself (Genesis 40:16)
10. Pharaoh, of famine (Genesis 41:1-4)
11. Pharaoh, of famine (Genesis 41:5-8)
12. A Midianite, of Gideon (Judges 7:13)
13. Solomon, of wisdom (1 Kings 3:3-15)
14. Eliphaz, of a spirit (Job 4:12-21)
15. Job, of terror (Job 7:14)
16. Nebuchadnezzar, of kingdoms (Daniel 2)
17. Nebuchadnezzar, of himself (Daniel 4)
18. Daniel, of kingdoms (Daniel 7)
19. Daniel, of kingdoms (Daniel 8)
20. Daniel, of God (Daniel 10:5-9)
21. False prophets, of lies (Jeremiah 23:27-32; Jeremiah 29:8)
22. Diviners, of false things (Zech. 10:2)
23. Joseph, of Mary (Matthew 1:20)
24. Joseph, of flight to Egypt (Matthew 2:13)
25. Joseph, of returning home (Matthew 2:19)
26. Joseph, of Herod (Matthew 2:22)
27. The wise men, of warning (Matthew 2:12)
28. Pilate's wife, of Jesus (Matthew 27:19)
29. Cornelius, of an angel (Acts 10:3-6)
30. Peter, of animals (Acts 10:10-16)
31. Paul, of a man (Acts 16:9)
32. Paul, of going to Rome (Acts 23:11)
33. Paul, of safety (Acts 28:23-24)
34. John, of Christ (Rev. 1:12-18)<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Dakes Bible, Dakes Study Notes

## Appendix B Fifty

### Kinds of Hearts (Dake)

1. Broken (Psalm 34:18; Psalm 51:17; Psalm 69:20)
2. Contrite (Psalm 51:17)
3. Grieved (Genesis 6:6; Psalm 73:21)
4. Willing (Exodus 25:2; Exodus 35:5,29)
5. Discouraged (Numbers 32:7-9; Deut. 1:28)
6. Obstinate (Deut. 2:30)
7. Proud (Deut. 8:14; Psalm 101:5; Ezekiel 28:5,17)
8. Wicked (Deut. 15:9; Proverbs 6:14,18; Jeremiah 4:14-18)
9. Trembling (Deut. 28:65; Isaiah 66:2)
10. Perfect (1 Kings 8:61; 1 Chron. 29:9)
11. Double (1 Chron. 12:33; James 4:8)
12. Tender (2 Kings 22:19; 2 Chron. 34:27; Ephes. 4:32)
13. Soft (1 Samuel 24:5; Job 23:16)
14. Pure (Psalm 24:4; Matthew 5:8; 1 Peter 1:22)
15. Upright (Psalm 32:11; Psalm 36:10; Psalm 64:10; Psalm 97:11)
16. Clean (Psalm 51:10; Psalm 73:1; Proverbs 20:9)
17. Fixed (Psalm 57:7; Psalm 112:7)
18. Subtle (Proverbs 7:10)
19. Froward or perverse (Proverbs 11:20; Proverbs 12:8)
20. Wise (Exodus 28:3; Exodus 35:25; Proverbs 10:8; Proverbs 11:29)
21. Merry (2 Chron. 7:10; Proverbs 15:13-15; Proverbs 17:22)
22. Sorrowful (Proverbs 14:13; Proverbs 15:13)
23. Haughty (Proverbs 18:12; Jeremiah 48:29)
24. Fretting (Proverbs 19:3; Cp. Proverbs 24:19; Psalm 37:1-8)
25. Heavy (Proverbs 25:20; Proverbs 31:6)
26. Unsearchable (Proverbs 25:3; Psalm 64:6)
27. Despiteful (Ezekiel 25:15; cp. Romans 1:30)
28. Bitter (Ezekiel 27:31; cp. Hebrews 12:15; James 3:14)
29. New (Ezekiel 18:31; Ezekiel 36:26; cp. 2 Cor. 5:17-18)
30. Stony (Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 36:26)
31. Flesh (Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 36:26)
32. Uncircumcised (Ezekiel 44:7; Jeremiah 9:26; Acts 7:51)
33. Meek and lowly (Matthew 11:29)
34. Honest and good (Luke 8:15)
35. Overcharged (Luke 21:34)
36. Troubled (John 14:1-3,27)
37. Single (Acts 2:46; Ephes. 6:5)
38. Foolish and darkened (Romans 1:21)
39. Impenitent (Romans 1:21; Romans 2:5)
40. Circumcised (Romans 2:29; Phil. 3:3)
41. Evil (Jeremiah 3:17; Jeremiah 7:24; Jeremiah 11:8; Jeremiah 16:12; Hebrews 3:12)
42. True (Hebrews 10:22; cp. Matthew 22:16)

- 43. Melted (Joshua 2:11; Joshua 5:1; Joshua 7:5; Joshua 14:8)
- 44. Deceitful (Jeremiah 14:14; Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21-23)
- 45. Hard (Deut. 15:7; Psalm 95:8; Hebrews 3:8)
- 46. Whorish (Ezekiel 6:9; cp. Hosea 4:12; Hosea 9:1)
- 47. Mischievous (Proverbs 28:14; cp. Proverbs 22:15; Romans 1:21)
- 48. Diabolical (John 13:2; Acts 5:3)
- 49. Covetous (Jeremiah 22:17; 2 Peter 2:14)
- 50. Compassionate (Psalm 55:4; Jeremiah 4:19)

Traits of the regenerated heart are different from those of a wicked one as can be clearly seen from a study of the above. God searches and knows all hearts (1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Chron. 28:9; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Ezekiel 11:5; Luke 16:15; Romans 8:27; Hebrews 4:12).<sup>25</sup>

## **Book of Jasher; Chapter 20**

1 And at that time Abraham journeyed from the plain of Mamre, and he went to the land of the Philistines, and he dwelt in Gerar; it was in the twenty-fifth year of Abraham's being in the land of Canaan, and the hundredth year of the life of Abraham, that he came to Gerar in the land of the Philistines.

2 And when they entered the land he said to Sarah his wife, Say thou art my sister, to any one that shall ask thee, in order that we may escape the evil of the inhabitants of the land.

3 And as Abraham was dwelling in the land of the Philistines, the servants of Abimelech, king of the Philistines, saw that Sarah was exceedingly beautiful, and they asked Abraham concerning her, and he said, She is my sister.

4 And the servants of Abimelech went to Abimelech, saying, A man from the land of Canaan is come to dwell in the land, and he has a sister that is exceeding fair.

5 And Abimelech heard the words of his servants who praised Sarah to him, and Abimelech sent his officers, and they brought Sarah to the king.

6 And Sarah came to the house of Abimelech, and the king saw that Sarah was beautiful, and she pleased him exceedingly.

7 And he approached her and said to her, What is that man to thee with whom thou didst come to our land? and Sarah answered and said He is my brother, and we came from the land of Canaan to dwell wherever we could find a place.

8 And Abimelech said to Sarah, Behold my land is before thee, place thy brother in any part of this land that pleases thee, and it will be our duty to exalt and elevate him above all the people of the land since he is thy brother.

9 And Abimelech sent for Abraham, and Abraham came to Abimelech.

10 And Abimelech said to Abraham, Behold I have given orders that thou shalt be honored as thou desirest on account of thy sister Sarah.

11 And Abraham went forth from the king, and the king's present followed him.

12 As at evening time, before men lie down to rest, the king was sitting upon his throne, and a deep sleep fell upon him, and he lay upon the throne and slept till morning.

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<sup>25</sup> Dakes Bible, Dakes Study Notes

13 And he dreamed that an angel of the Lord came to him with a drawn sword in his hand, and the angel stood over Abimelech, and wished to slay him with the sword, and the king was terrified in his dream, and said to the angel, In what have I sinned against thee that thou comest to slay me with thy sword?

14 And the angel answered and said to Abimelech, Behold thou diest on account of the woman which thou didst yesternight bring to thy house, for she is a married woman, the wife of Abraham who came to thy house; now therefore return that man his wife, for she is his wife; and shouldst thou not return her, know that thou wilt surely die, thou and all belonging to thee.

15 And on that night there was a great outcry in the land of the Philistines, and the inhabitants of the land saw the figure of a man standing with a drawn sword in his hand, and he smote the inhabitants of the land with the sword, yea he continued to smite them.

16 And the angel of the Lord smote the whole land of the Philistines on that night, and there was a great confusion on that night and on the following morning.

17 And every womb was closed, and all their issues, and the hand of the Lord was upon them on account of Sarah, wife of Abraham, whom Abimelech had taken.

18 And in the morning Abimelech rose with terror and confusion and with a great dread, and he sent and had his servants called in, and he related his dream to them, and the people were greatly afraid.

19 And one man standing amongst the servants of the king answered the king, saying, O sovereign king, restore this woman to her husband, for he is her husband, for the like happened to the king of Egypt when this man came to Egypt.

20 And he said concerning his wife, She is my sister, for such is his manner of doing when he cometh to dwell in the land in which he is a stranger.

21 And Pharaoh sent and took this woman for a wife and the Lord brought upon him grievous plagues until he returned the woman to her husband.

22 Now therefore, O sovereign king, know what happened yesternight to the whole land, for there was a very great consternation and great pain and lamentation, and we know that it was on account of the woman which thou didst take.

23 Now, therefore, restore this woman to her husband, lest it should befall us as it did to Pharaoh king of Egypt and his subjects, and that we may not die; and Abimelech hastened and called and had Sarah called for, and she came before him, and he had Abraham called for, and he came before him.

24 And Abimelech said to them, What is this work you have been doing in saying you are brother and sister, and I took this woman for a wife?

25 And Abraham said, Because I thought I should suffer death on account of my wife; and Abimelech took flocks and herds, and men servants and maid servants, and a thousand pieces of silver, and he gave them to Abraham, and he returned Sarah to him.

26 And Abimelech said to Abraham, Behold the whole land is before thee, dwell in it wherever thou shalt choose.

27 And Abraham and Sarah, his wife, went forth from the king's presence with honor and respect, and they dwelt in the land, even in Gerar.

28 And all the inhabitants of the land of the Philistines and the king's servants were still in pain, through the plague which the angel had inflicted upon them the whole night on account of Sarah.

29 And Abimelech sent for Abraham, saying, Pray now for thy servants to the Lord thy God, that he may put away this mortality from amongst us.

30 And Abraham prayed on account of Abimelech and his subjects, and the Lord heard the prayer of Abraham, and he healed Abimelech and all his subjects.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The Book of Jasher, Faithfully Translated 1840, Hebrew to English, J.H.Perry & Co, Salt Lake City UT