

Genesis 20

1 And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, in some versions it says “Negev.” **and dwelt between Kadesh** The place where Numbers 11-14 will show us a potentially 11-day journey taking 38 years (says Deuteronomy) **and Shur,** These places of Hagar’s meeting with the angel in chapter 16. **and stayed in Gerar.**

20:2

Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” Here we go again, only this time she is not 66 as in chapter 12; she is 91. Whoa! She must have been amazingly pretty!

Another thing to consider is that we have roughly 1800-1900 years between Genesis 1 and Genesis 11. Now, since Genesis 12, we’ve passed only 24-25 years.¹

And Abimelech Means “my father is king,” and is merely a title such as “Pharaoh” or “Candice” (Acts 8). **king** remember, we have ten different “kings” mentioned in chapter 14 so there’s no need to see every **king** as a larger “king” in today’s sense. **of Gerar sent and took Sarah.** Just as Pharaoh did. Perhaps this was a diplomatic move to have peace with a fellow king? To marry his sister?² Marrying into other royal families appears to be a pretty common practice even in Solomon’s day.

20:3

But ^fGod came to Abimelech ^gin a dream by night, and said to him, “Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man’s wife.” Notice that the charge is understandable to this **Abimelech**, and he even defends himself regarding the charge. Please do take note, then, that there is a universal appreciation and understanding of certain ethical/legal expectations across cultural and geographical lines. Obviously, though, Abraham didn’t have a whole lot of faith that that sense of right and wrong would have curtailed their lustful theft of his wife—twice now.

20:4-5

But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, “Lord, will You slay a righteous Here again, we are amazed that this ruler thinks his folks are **righteous** just as Abraham supposed Lot and his clan were **righteous** (18:23).

nation also? How long ago did Sodom get destroyed? Perhaps months since the last few chapters took a year. Somebody has been a testimony to Abimelech. He knows somebody has spared a nation by appealing to supposed righteousness. **5 Did he not say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she, even she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart** We see two very surprising things: Abimelech thinks his folks are “righteous” (verse 4), and he says that his heart has **integrity!** Now, of course, we could work around this and say “He is only saying he has **integrity** regarding this situation,” but even so...he is using some pretty spiritual language, is he not?³ **and innocence of my hands I have done this.”**

20:6

And God said to him in a dream, “Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; Yes, God was the one who taught Joseph that to sin against a man was to really sin against God (Genesis 39:9). In both cases, it was the sin of taking another man’s wife. **therefore I did not let you touch her.** It’s been less than a year since the birth announcement of Isaac. This is a real problem! If God doesn’t intervene, Abimelech could be given credit for the conception of Isaac!

20:7-9

¹Genesis 17-Genesis 20 is a mere year.

²Proposed to me by SRBC deacon Walter Creighton.

^fPs. 105:14

^gJob 33:15

³This is a very good similarity to the words of Job’s wife in Job’s 2nd chapter. Perhaps this is a good proof showing the Mosaic authorship (at least, in part) of Job.

Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray This is the first time this term is used in the Bible and it is a man asking for something on behalf of somebody else. Furthermore, the first function of a prophet was praying for somebody else (intercession) **for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die,** So we see that impending death is the same as being "a dead man" (verse 3). Furthermore, since this is the next instance of somebody being called "dead" or seen as "dying" after Genesis 2, there is no point in seeing the Edenic account as a sort of "spiritual death" as touted by so many preachers and teachers, and rather see Adam and Eve as "good as dead" (as Abimelech is here) if they eat of the forbidden fruit. **you and all who are yours."** Numbers 16 (Korah's household) and Joshua 6 (Achan's household) show this principle being carried out in the rest of this saga.

8 So Abimelech rose early in the morning, called all his servants, and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were very much afraid. 9 And Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? Again, when the leader of a kingdom is in deep sin, it appears that the kingdom itself is being counted sinful. You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done." For somebody who does not appear to know *Elohim* or *El Elyon*, this is a pretty refined sense of right and wrong.

20:11-15

And Abraham said, "Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place; Abraham, on the other hand, has a very low view of this nation's sense of morality. "I was pretty sure you folks steal wives and murder people." **and they will kill me on account of my wife. 12 But indeed she is truly my sister. She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.** An explanation that would have been helpful in chapter 12. **13 And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, flashback to 12:1-3 that I said to her, 'This is your kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, "He is my brother." ' "**

14 Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham; and he restored Sarah his wife to him. Abraham gets richer again because of God just as he did in the Genesis 12 episode. **15 And Abimelech said, "See, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you."** It is all his anyway (Genesis 15). This is, furthermore, like Satan offering Jesus the "nations of the world" (Matthew 4) only to realize they are all His anyway (Matthew 28:18).

On the other hand, this is God's way of allowing Abraham to reap what he sowed in Genesis 13 where he gave Lot this very same offer.

20:16

Then to Sarah he said, "Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; indeed this vindicates you before all who are with you and before everybody." Thus she was rebuked. This word has some other intricacies which may provide a positive rather than negative translation. In other words, her record was purged. She was not known as she who was intimate with this man and she was allowed to leave.

20:17-18

So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Here's a wonderful token of God's sovereignty: **Abimelech** is experiencing God and learning more about Jehovah-God, but it was done as a result of Abraham's strange and perhaps sinful dealings. **Then they bore children; 18 for the LORD had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.**