

Gen 20:1 From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar.

Gen 20:2 And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

Gen 20:3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife."

Gen 20:4 Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, "Lord, will you kill an innocent people?"

Gen 20:5 Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this."

Gen 20:6 Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her.

Gen 20:7 Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."

Gen 20:8 So Abimelech rose early in the morning and called all his servants and told them all these things. And the men were very much afraid.

Gen 20:9 Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done."

Gen 20:10 And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you see, that you did this thing?"

Gen 20:11 Abraham said, "I did it because I thought, 'There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.'

Gen 20:12 Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife.

Gen 20:13 And when God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, 'This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, "He is my brother.'"

Gen 20:14 Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male servants and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and returned Sarah his wife to him.

Gen 20:15 And Abimelech said, "Behold, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you."

Gen 20:16 To Sarah he said, "Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. It is a sign of your innocence in the eyes of all who are with you, and before everyone you are vindicated."

Gen 20:17 Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children.

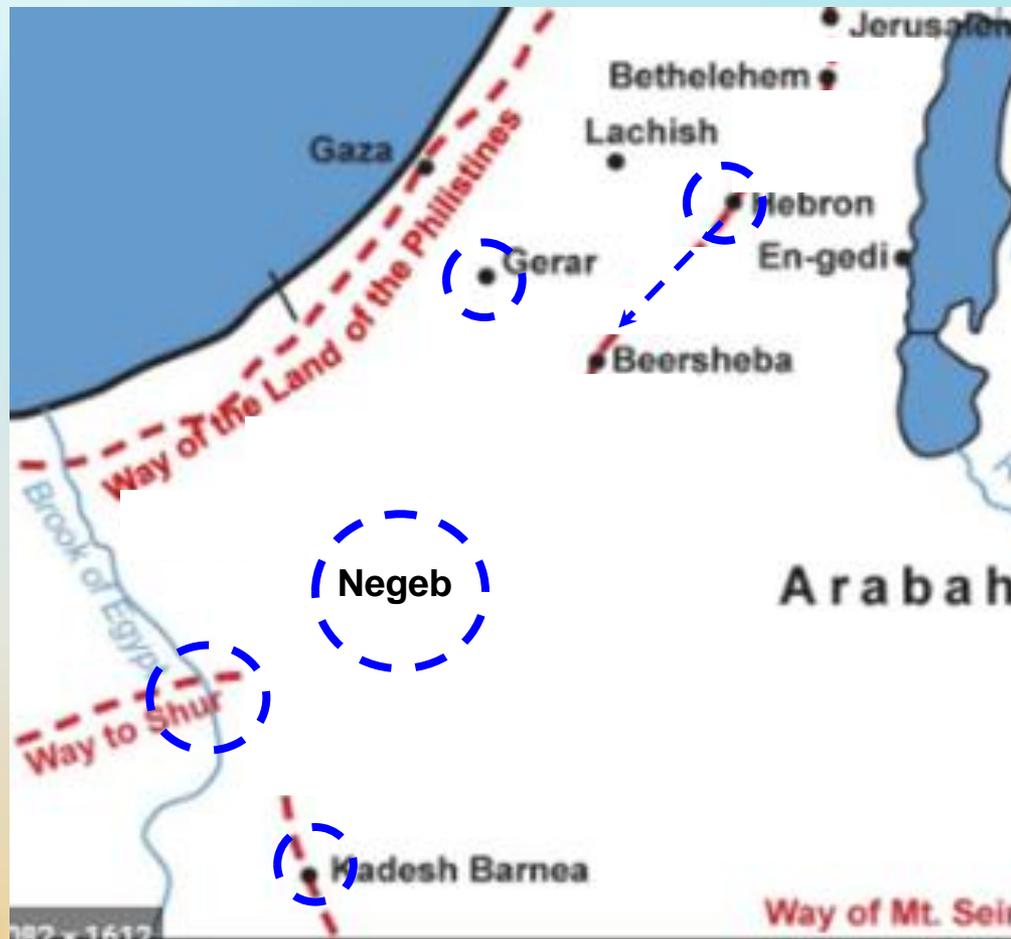
Gen 20:18 For Jehovah had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

Gen 18:1 And Jehovah appeared to him **by the oaks of Mamre**, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day.

Gen 20:1 From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar.

Gen 26:1 Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And **Isaac went to Gerar** to Abimelech king of the Philistines.

Why did Abraham journey toward the territory of the Negeb and live between Kadesh and Shur, and then sojourn in Gerar?



Gen 20:1 From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar.

Why did Abraham journey toward the territory of the Negeb, then live between Kadesh and Shur, and then move to Gerar?

Abraham made a similar journey to the Negeb in Genesis 12, and ended up in Egypt. This journey was different. Both Abraham and Sarah had grown much in life between the two journeys. Moreover, Abraham and all those in his household had been circumcised (chapter 17). In addition, both their names had been changed by God from Abram and Sarai to "Abraham" and "Sarah."

As in chapter 12, Abraham journeys towards the Negeb ("parched" or "drought"). However, in chapter 12, he journeys south towards the Negeb from in between Bethel ("house of God") and Ai ("heap of ruins"). In chapter 12, he still has an eye on the world as his security, and eventually experiences famine, ending up in Egypt. In chapter 20, Abraham still journeys south towards the Negeb, but this time from the oaks of Mamre in Hebron ("fellowship with God"). His position of departure is different, indicating that he has grown. Now, he dwells between Kadesh ("sanctuary" deriving from the root word "holy") and Shur ("enclosure" or "wall"). This may indicate that now, even in a parched region, he has a sanctuary (God's house, the church) to the west and an enclosure or a wall (God as the protection of the house). Eventually, he moved to Gerar ("lodging place"), but with the connotation of "pilgrimage" in Philistine territory. This may mean that this time, Abraham could live in Gentile territory, as a testimony of the father of many nations, not trusting in an escape route, as before, but with the house of God as his enclosure and holy sanctuary, and always a pilgrim. Now, the Bible does not say he lived in a tent in Gerar because he now had the life and living of a tent-dweller.

Gen 20:2 And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And **Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.**

Gen 20:3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife."

Gen 20:4 Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, "**Lord, will you kill an innocent people?**"

Gen 20:5 Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' **In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.**"

Gen 20:6 Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and **it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not**

Who is Abimelech? Who are the Philistines? The Philistines lived very close to the Israelites. They had frequent interactions with each other. The Philistines knew the God of the Israelites in an outward way, and could even imitate the practice of sacrifice (1 Samuel 6:2-21). They may typify our religious self, the uncircumcised "I," the old man who even loves and serves the Lord but without the Lord, thereby living out a religious life.

Who is Abimelech?

- 1. He took Sarah for himself (v.2). The "I" acts according to self, not according to God.**
- 2. He justified himself (v.4-5). Actually, he was right and even God acknowledged it (v.5). The "I" will act according to the tree of knowledge of "good" and "evil" and confess the evil to God, but not the "good" (that is, living a life independently of God).**
- 3. He called God "Lord." Therefore, he seemed to know God (v.4)..**
- 4. Actually, he was self-righteous. He did not know that it was God who had kept him from sinning, and not his good heart or good intentions (v.6).**

Why did Abraham journey toward the territory of the Negeb and live between Kadesh and Shur, and then sojourn in Gerar?

1. To me, the Lord would like to teach us from this journey that He desires to "**perfect or build up** both Abraham **and Sarah** as a household" because now his name is "Abraham" and her name is "Sarah" and also Abraham's wife. The first time, both Abram and Sarai misunderstood: Gen 15:4 And behold, the word of Jehovah came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; **your very own son shall be your heir.**" ; Gen 16:2 And **Sarai said to Abram**, "Behold now, Jehovah has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.

Gen 16:3 So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, **Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife.** "

Gen 17:15 And God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.

Gen 17:16 I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

Gen 17:17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, "**Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?**"

Gen 18:12 **So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?"**

We need to pay attention to

Gen 20:16 **To Sarah he (Abimelech) said**, "Behold, I have given your brother **a thousand pieces of silver**. It is a sign of your innocence in the eyes of all who are with you, and before everyone you are vindicated."

In Abraham and Sarah's first journey to Egypt, the Bible does not mention anything which God said to Sarah directly.

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Gen 20:11 Abraham said, “I did it because I thought, ‘There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’”

Gen 20:12 Besides, **she is indeed my sister**, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife.

Gen 20:13 And **when God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, ‘This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, “He is my brother.”’**

Gen 20:13 shows that there is a rather rooted weakness of faith in Abraham just at the time God called him out of Ur of Chaldea. God would try to lead Abraham and Sarah out of that weakness by working in them.

Gen 20:12 indicates that even though Abraham did not tell a lie, it was still not the truth, and such a speaking may tend to lead other people to sin (Gen 20:6). We need to be completely open to God and men.

Gen 20:13 reveals that God desires to build up both Abraham and Sarah, **and prevent Sarah from blindly submitting herself to Abraham.**

Gen 20:6 Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and **it was I who kept you from sinning against me.** Therefore I did not let you touch her.

Why did Abraham journey toward the territory of the Negeb and live between Kadesh and Shur, and then sojourn in Gerar?

2. God desires both Abraham and Sarah to know subjectively Gen 18:14: **Is anything too hard for Jehovah?** At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.”

Gen 20:17 Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children.

Gen 20:18 For Jehovah had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

The two above verses show that Abraham (and I believe, Sarah also) are trying to test and/or "experience" God giving "life" to Abimelech's family as a preview of their (Abraham and Sarah) eventually having a son. God answers and they thus experience it subjectively by faith in God. This could be a crucial basis of their faith that will enable both of them to offer Isaac to God as a burnt offering later.

Why did Abraham journey toward the territory of the Negeb and live between Kadesh and Shur, and then sojourn in Gerar?

3. We need to pay attention to the meanings of four Hebrew words in Gen 20:1 “Negeb”, “Kadesh”, “Shur” and “Gerar” just like brother Titus pays attention to “Bethel” and “Ai” ;

“Hebron” means “fellowship”;

“Negeb” means “burning” or simply the south of the land of Judea;

“Kadesh” means “holy”;

“Shur” means “wall”;

“Gerar” means “sojourn”.

Please see brother Antipas' slide.

Gen 20:1 From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the **Negeb** and lived between **Kadesh** and **Shur**; and he sojourned in **Gerar**.

Gen 12:8 From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to Jehovah and called upon the name of Jehovah.

Why did Abraham journey toward the territory of the Negeb and live between Kadesh and Shur, and then sojourn in Gerar?

4. In Gen 12 and 13, Abram built an altar many times, but none here in Gen 20. Because he experienced the offerings and the dividing of the offerings and the smoking fire pot and the flaming torch in Gen 15, **Abraham may have somewhat become a person living and constituted with such an offering life.**

Gen 15:7 And he said to him, "I am Jehovah who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."

Gen 15:8 But he said, "O Lord GOD, **how am I to know that I shall possess it?**"

Gen 15:9 He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."

Gen 15:10 And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half.

Gen 15:17 When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.

Why did Abraham journey toward the territory of the Negeb and live between Kadesh and Shur, and then sojourn in Gerar?

5. The “Philistines” may represent some of the fallen "I" which can only be terminated during Lord's 2nd coming.

"I" is so complicated (based on the outline of brother Titus' conferences).

The Bible describes the "I" of the fallen man in at least five aspects:

I, is the general term for who I am;

- A. I live without Christ as an old man: the Old Man
- B. The life of my old man is the soul life: the Soul
- C. My old man's dwelling place is in the sinful flesh: the Flesh
- D. My old man's self-esteem, pride, self-pity, opinions and persistence are self: the Self
- E. My "old man" has a natural life created by God, which is manifested in my abilities, talents, insight and plans. Natural...My living without the fresh revelations and visions from the Lord is also a part of the old man.

Maybe we could add the 6th aspect:

- F. **My old man who loves and serves the Lord, but without the Lord, represents a religious life.**

We never dreamed that we would possess these five aspects which are diametrically opposed to the face of God, making us sinners through and through. When the Lord Jesus came, He did not deal with the “I” in the same way. He nailed the whole "I" to the cross.

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Gen 20:15 And Abimelech said, “Behold, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you.”

Gen 20:16 To Sarah he said, “Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. It is a sign of your innocence in the eyes of all who are with you, and before everyone you are vindicated.”

Gen 20:17 Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children.

What is the difference between Abimelech and Pharaoh? In Genesis 12, Pharaoh gave Abraham sheep and oxen and male and female servants. So did Abimelech. However, Pharaoh did not give any silver or gold to Abraham. Abimelech gave Abraham 1000 pieces of silver as a sign of her innocence in the eyes of all who were with her, and as a token of her vindication. Also, Pharaoh did not speak to Sarah, but Abimelech spoke directly to Sarah. Silver, in the Bible, signifies God's redemption. This may mean that God's redemption, in our experience, may be vindicated or confirmed by the Gentiles around us who see our testimony. Abimelech saw a testimony in both Abraham and Sarah, which indicates that this couple had grown to become a household. They had been redeemed from their vain manner of life, and this was seen by those around them.

Abraham preached the gospel to Abimelech by praying for his household. This means that Abimelech knew God. We need to treasure every brother who grows to whatever extent. Can we even raise up Abimelechs?

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Gen 20:17 Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children.

Gen 20:18 For the LORD had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

Pharaoh never gave Abraham gold or silver. God gave Abraham those experiences of His divine nature and His redemption. In chapter 20, Abimelech gave Abraham 1000 pieces of silver, but no gold. This may indicate that saints who are weaker (relatively) or newer in the divine life can lead us to experience the redemption of Christ as a testimony to others. They can never redeem us (only Christ redeems us) and never give us the divine nature, but our experience of redemption can be confirmed or vindicated by others.

Abraham prayed to God to heal Abimelech and also his wife and servants so they could bear children again. The Bible does not say that God asked him to do so, but the fact that he did so may indicate that both he and Sarah were testing or trying to experience whether God could give life as a prelude to God giving them a son, as He had promised. This experience of "testing" was different from chapter 16 when they tried to "help" God fulfill His promise without praying to God (individually and together and with their service team). Abraham's and Sarah's prayer in chapter 20 may be evidence of the redemption (signified by the 1000 pieces of silver) that they experienced from their failure in chapter 16.

Gen 20:4 Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, “Lord, will you kill an innocent people?”

Gen 20:5 Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.”

Gen 20:6 Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her.

Many times we may have the same thought as Abimelech: “You have done this in the integrity of your heart,” but do not understand “it was I who kept you from sinning against me”.

What mistake did Abimelech make? He did not fellowship with God concerning taking Sarah as his wife. This is a very significant event in Abimelech’s life.

Therefore we need to pray for the advancement of the church (Sarah may represent the church) sincerely, frequently and intimately, and avoid being indifferent.