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- Gen 21:2 And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him.
- Gen 21:3 Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac.
- Gen 21:4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.
- Gen 21:5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.
- Gen 21:6 And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me."
- Gen 21:7 And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."
- Gen 21:8 And the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.
- Gen 21:9 But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing.
- Gen 21:10 So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac."

Gen 21:11 And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son.

Gen 21:12 But God said to Abraham, “Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

Gen 21:13 And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring.”

Gen 21:14 So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

Gen 21:15 When the water in the skin was gone, she put the child under one of the bushes.

Gen 21:16 Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot, for she said, “Let me not look on the death of the child.” And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept.

Gen 21:17 And God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is.

Gen 21:18 Up! Lift up the boy, and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation.”

Gen 21:19 Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

Gen 21:20 And God was with the boy, and he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow.

Gen 21:21 He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Gen 21:22 At that time Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army said to Abraham, "God is with you in all that you do.

Gen 21:23 Now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my descendants or with my posterity, but as I have dealt kindly with you, so you will deal with me and with the land where you have sojourned."

Gen 21:24 And Abraham said, "I will swear."

Gen 21:25 When Abraham reproved Abimelech about a well of water that Abimelech's servants had seized,

Gen 21:26 Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, and I have not heard of it until today."

Gen 21:27 So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a covenant.

Gen 21:28 Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock apart.

Gen 21:29 And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?"

Gen 21:30 He said, "These seven ewe lambs you will take from my hand, that this may be a witness for me that I dug this well."

Gen 21:31 Therefore that place was called Beersheba, because there both of them swore an oath.

Gen 21:32 So they made a covenant at Beersheba. Then Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army rose up and returned to the land of the Philistines.

Gen 21:33 Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of Jehovah, the Everlasting God.

Gen 21:34 And Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines.

Gen 16:8 And he said, “Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?” She said, “I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai.”

Gen 16:9 The angel of Jehovah said to her, “Return to your mistress and submit to her.”

Gen 16:10 The angel of Jehovah also said to her, “I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.”

Gen 16:11 And the angel of Jehovah said to her, “Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because Jehovah has listened to your affliction.

Gen 16:12 He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.”

Gen 16:13 So she called the name of Jehovah who spoke to her, “You are a God of seeing,” for she said, “Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.”

Gen 16:14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

Gen 16:15 And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.

From this passage in the Bible, I really appreciate the fact that in the church life, God really watches over us (for example, He watched over Hagar, Ishmael, Sarah and Abram) who are sinners, in detail.

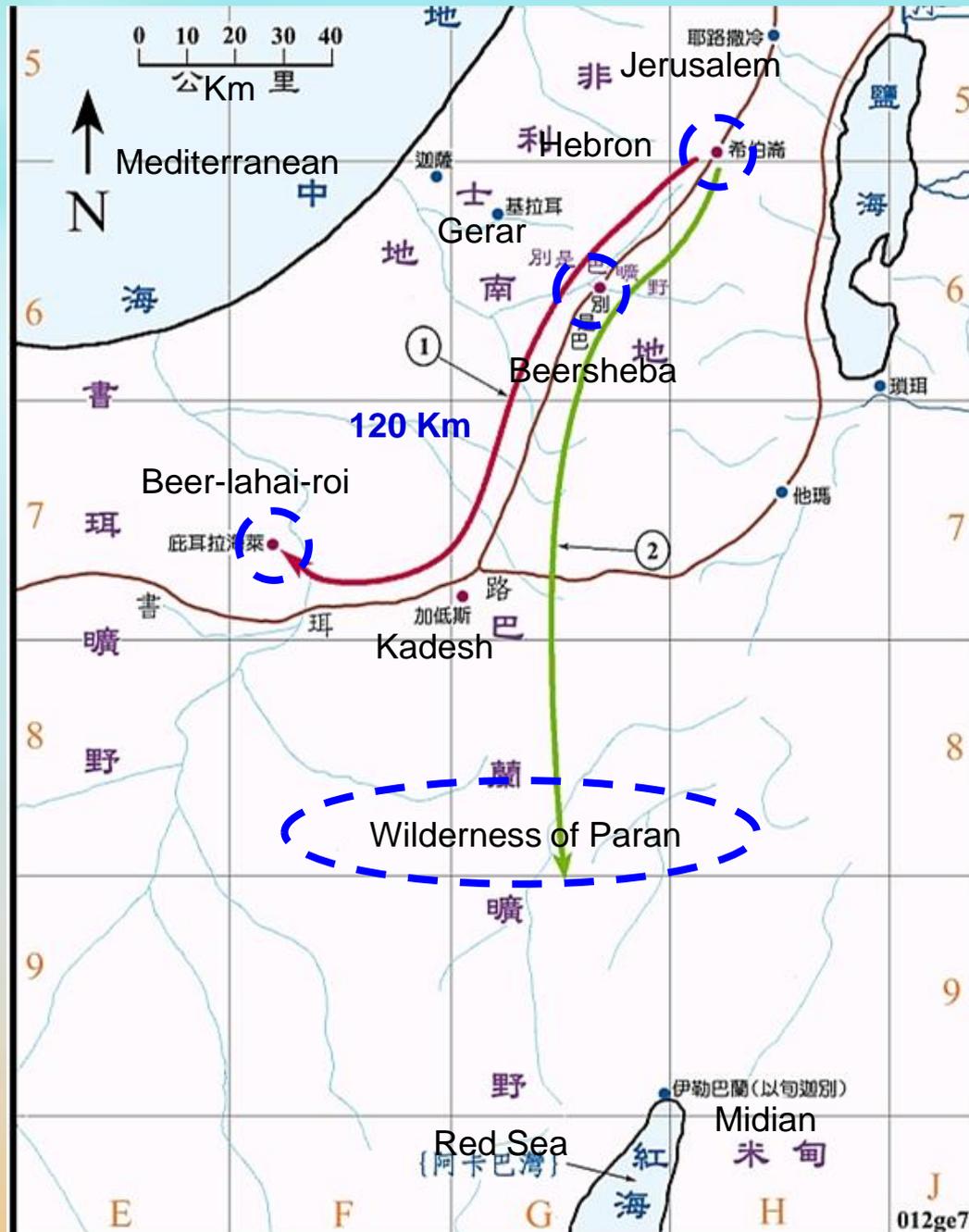
Hagar also had close dialogues with God, and she listened and submitted to God's command (God's straight and clear speaking). How about us?

God appeared to her at a well in the wilderness, then called Beer-lahai-roi, about 120 km from Hebron where Abraham and Sarah were living.

Where was Hagar headed? Was she heading for Egypt? Perhaps she wanted to return to her roots in Egypt, during this trying time of persecution from Sarai. **Where was Hagar going? We might have the same thought in similar situations to hers. Praise our Lord that God came in and spoke to Hagar (sinners like us).**

Routes

1. **Gen16** After Abram's concubine Hagar became pregnant, she was badly treated by Sarai. After having left Hebron, she met God's messenger in the wilderness. But having receiving God's blessing, she returned to Abram's house and gave birth to Ishmael.
2. **Gen 21:14-21** Hagar and Ishmael were expelled, and after being blessed by God in the Wilderness of Beersheba, they went to the Wilderness of Paran for Ishmael to grow up.



- Gen 21:1 **Jehovah visited Sarah** as he had said, and **Jehovah did to Sarah** as he had promised.
- Gen 21:2 And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him.
- Gen 21:3 **Abraham called the name of his son** who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, **Isaac**.
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- Gen 21:8 And the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.

Gen 21:1 is the first direct interaction mentioned that God had with Sarah. It means that Sarah needed to be perfected by God.

Isaac was born not by man's natural life and ability, but by the power of God's grace according to His promise to Abraham and Sarah. This happened after Abraham was circumcised, and he and his wife Sarah seemed to be completely devoid of any ability to procreate. **Christ's life will not be formed in us unless our natural life and strength are terminated.**

Gen 21:1-8 show that God would like Sarah and Abraham to realize and experience the reality that “God can give life out of nothing and that nothing is too hard for God”. Also Sarah and Abraham might not have realized at that time that Isaac was for God's purpose much more than for them.

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 21:2 And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his **old age** at the time of which God had spoken to him.

Gen 21:3 Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac.

Gen 21:4 And Abraham **circumcised** his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.

Rom 4:17 as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and **calls into existence the things that do not exist**.

Abraham had a deeper experience that God could call something into being, and kept the command of God concerning circumcision. This experience follows chapter 20, where Abraham and Sarah prayed for Abimelech's household, for God to give life to them, perhaps as a foretaste of their own experience of Isaac's birth.

Sometimes, when we look at the situation of the church, we may feel hopeless, especially with our own inadequacy. We may shepherd people, but not too many seem to grow according to our expectations. We may preach the gospel, but very few believe. We may try to raise up pillars, but very few pillars may be raised up. Our own service is weak and ineffective. The Lord may speak to us concerning our oldness (v.2). It seems like we can have no break through.

However, in chapter 20, Abraham prayed for Abimelech, and God answered. Do we experience the God who gives life in our individual prayers first, then our prayers with our service team members, and also with the church? Such prayers may strengthen our faith so God can eventually call things not being into being.

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Gen 21:10 So she said to Abraham, “Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.”

Gen 21:11 And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son.

Gen 21:12 But God said to Abraham, “Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

Spiritually speaking, Ishmael’s persecution of Isaac typifies the persecution of those born according to the spirit by the descendants of Abraham who were born according to the flesh.

Why did God say to Abraham in Gen 21:12, “Be not displeased because of the boy... Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” Was it very cruel to Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael? My fellowship is “no”. In fact, it was exactly what God desired, although the verses seemingly indicate that Sarah’s attitude might be cruel. In the church life, the Lord may give us His leading and His direction to serve the saints, but our attitude, including our speaking to serve the saints, may not be that proper.

From the later verses (Gen 21:14 – 19) we can realize that God desired Abraham and Sarah to trust Him because He could bless Hagar and Ishmael in His way. However, whether His blessing would fructify or not depended on Hagar and Ishmael’s free choice. The Bible clearly says that the name of Ishmael “God hears” was given by God.

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Gen 21:13 And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring.”

Gen 21:14 So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, **and sent her away**. And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

Abraham had a real experience of circumcision (the cross) in casting away Ishmael. In Genesis 17:18, Abraham pleaded with God that Ishmael might live before His face. This shows how attached Abraham was to Ishmael, just as he was attached to Lot. However, God spoke directly to Sarah (based on Galatians 4:30), and then God spoke to Abraham to listen to his wife and cast out Ishmael. Abraham may have thought that he could keep both Isaac and Ishmael. However, God again reiterated His promise that Abraham's offspring would be named through Isaac, and not Ishmael.

Sometimes, we like to keep both Isaac and Ishmael. Ishmael was the fruit of incomplete revelation on the part of Abraham. Are we willing to put on the cross revelation that we may have received from the Lord earlier, in order to receive fresh revelation? For example, the Lord may tell us to begin to accompany a brother to raise him up as a pillar. This may mean that we spend less time accompanying others, or we may let other saints shepherd them. This means denying ourselves and experiencing the cross.

Gen 21:13 And **I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring.**”

Gen 21:14 So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

Gen 21:15 When the water in the skin was gone, she put the child under one of the bushes.

Gen 21:16 Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot, for she said, “Let me not look on the death of the child.” And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept.

Gen 21:17 **And God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is.**

Gen 21:18 **Up! Lift up the boy, and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation.”**

Gen 21:19 Then **God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water.** And **she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.**

Gen 21:17 – 19 show that God really took good care of Hagar and Ishmael.

“Well” symbolizes the source of life and the fact that God was with Ishmael and Hagar. However, **Hagar (who represents a serving one in the church life)** did not know God’s heart desire. Sadly, she led Ishmael to grow up in the wilderness of Paran and she also took a wife for him from the land of Egypt. Hagar completely forgot the nearby well at Beer-lahai-roi where God appeared to her before:

Gen 21:20 And **God was with the boy**, and he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow.

Gen 21:21 **He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.**

Gen 16:13 So she called the name of Jehovah who spoke to her, “You are a God of seeing,” for she said, “Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.”

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Hagar may be considered a picture of a serving one who greatly affects the growth of the saints. In Genesis 16:7-14, when she flees from Sarah, God speaks to her, and she eventually recognizes Him as a God of seeing, the One who truly looked after her (Beerleharoi). This means that she knew God. She looked after her son Ishmael. In 21:16, she lifted up her voice and wept, and God heard her and again provided for her, showing her again a well. She gave her son a drink. However, as Ishmael grew up, he and his mother did not remain by the well, but moved to the wilderness of Paran, and eventually ended up in Egypt. It seems that she did not know God's heart's desire, and forgot the well where she had received her supply from God.

How we serve the saints matters a great deal. Do we stay in the church life, with the brothers and sisters, to enjoy God's provisions, and do we lead others to stay by the well? We cannot blame Hagar and Ishmael. It is very hard to trust the Lord. When the serving ones are weak, the saints will be weak. However, when we are weak, can we remain in the church life (typified by Sarah) and submit to the Lord?

Gen 15:18 On that day, Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, **from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,**
Gen 15:19 the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites,
Gen 15:20 the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim,
Gen 15:21 the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

The ten tribes + Egypt + the people living near the river Euphrates may comprise part of the complicated "I".

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

The Bible describes us as the fallen man, the "I", in at least six aspects:

- "I" is the general term for who I am;
1. I live without Christ as **an old man**;
 2. The life of my old man is **the soul life**;
 3. My old man's dwelling place is in **the sinful flesh**;
 4. My old man's self-esteem, pride, self-pity, opinions, and persistence are **self**;
 5. My "old man" has a natural life created by God, which is manifested in his abilities, talents, insights and plans. This is his "**Natural**" **aspect**.
 6. My old man who loves and serves the Lord but without the Lord is **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.

Gen 21:22 At that time Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army said to Abraham,
“God is with you in all that you do.

Gen 21:23 Now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my descendants or with my posterity, **but as I have dealt kindly with you, so you will deal with me and with the land where you have sojourned.”**

Gen 21:24 And Abraham said, **“I will swear.”**

Gen 21:25 When **Abraham reproved Abimelech about a well of water** that Abimelech's servants had seized,

Gen 21:26 Abimelech said, **“I do not know who has done this thing;** you did not tell me, and I have not heard of it until today.”

Gen 21:31 Therefore that place was called Beersheba, because there **both of them swore an oath.**

Gen 21:32 So **they made a covenant at Beersheba.**

Abraham lived in the land of the Philistines in chapters 20 and 21. He became a testimony to the Philistines, and to Abimelech. He preached the gospel to him by praying for his household in chapter 20. He was even willing to enter into a covenant with Abimelech, even though Abimelech wanted to enter into a covenant for selfish reasons. Abraham willingly said he would swear. Abraham also had a frank and open relationship with Abimelech, reproving him about a well of water. However, Abimelech did not readily acknowledge his fault, but sought to justify himself, just like he did in chapter 20. Nevertheless, Abraham was willing to redeem the well at Beersheba (which means “well of oath”), indicating that Abraham always was seeking to bring the people around him to know God.

Are we willing to preach the gospel to those around us, and to enter into a covenant with them, even when they are weak? Can we be with them, even with so many things of the self and the "I" in them (and in us also)? Can we endeavor to bring people to know God, to whatever capacity they may have, in order to be a testimony for God ?

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Gen 21:29 And Abimelech said to Abraham, “What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?”

Gen 21:30 He said, “These seven ewe lambs you will take from my hand, that this may be a witness for me that I dug this well.”

Who are the Philistines in the current church life ? (please take a look at the slide mentioning the “complicated I”, in particular concerning our religious life). During our work, school, family and finance related situations, **we often behave like Abimelech** toward God in that we do not repent and we “pretend to be unaware” of the true thoughts in our heart toward God.

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Isaac's well is a type of Christ, the life-giving Spirit, who is the source of living water and the divine supply of God's people. This is the well that Abimelech's servants had seized.

Abraham redeemed the well at the cost of seven ewe lambs. In typology, the seven ewe lambs signify the complete redemption of Christ, which indicates that the sacred living water has been redeemed and purchased through the complete redemption of Christ.