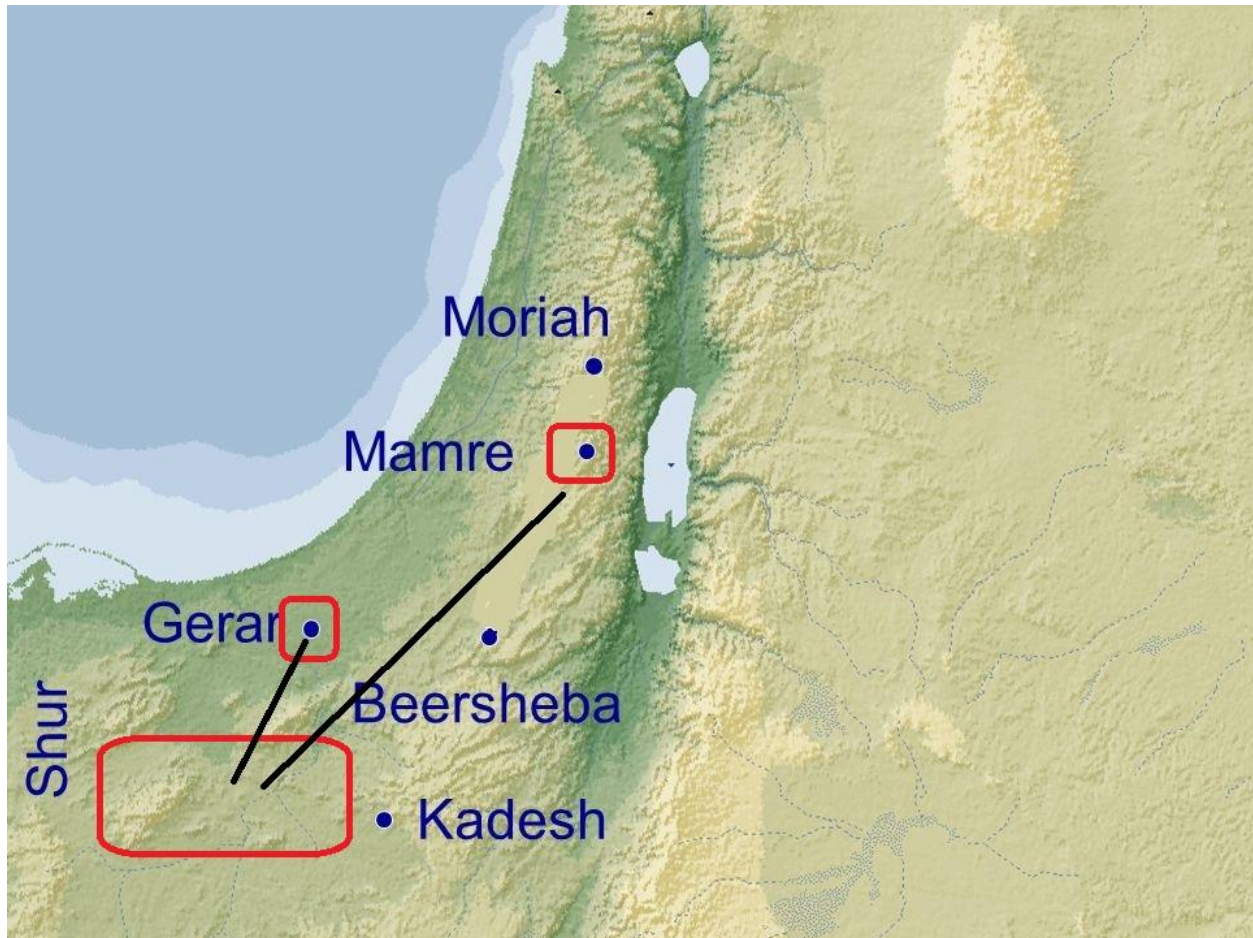


Genesis 20

Verse 1

Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he lived for a time in Gerar.

See Map 2005



Gerar was in the land of the Philistines.

Verses 2 - 3

² And Abraham said of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.” So Abimelech king of Gerar sent *men* and took Sarah. ³ But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married.”

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

The first time that Abraham did this was in the land of Egypt.

See Genesis 12:11- 13

¹¹ It came about, when he was approaching Egypt, that he said to his wife Sarai, “See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; ¹² and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. ¹³ Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well for me because of you, and that I may live on account of you.”

When they were in Egypt Sara was about 65 years old but now she is 89 and there is no mention of her beauty in the text.

Some commentators have suggested that Abimelech took Sarah to confirm a covenant that he had made with Abraham. Thus Abimelech wasn't interested in her for her physical beauty but to solidify a covenant they had made. However, there is no mention of a covenant here and verse 11 points to a different motivation.

³ But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married.”

Abimelech was not a personal name, but a title used by the Philistine kings, much like Pharaoh was a title for Egyptian kings, not a person name.

Being told by God that he was a dead man definitely got his attention.

Verses 4- 6

⁴ Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, “Lord, will You kill a nation, even *though* blameless? ⁵ Did he himself not 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.” ⁶ Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. ⁷ Now then, return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return *her*, know that you will certainly die, you and all who are yours.”

⁴ Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, “Lord, will You kill a nation, even *though* blameless?

This was very similar to the question that Abraham asked God in chapter 18.

See Genesis 18:25

²⁵ Far be it from You to do such a thing, to kill the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are *treated* alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?”

⁶ Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.”

The Lord agreed with the King that he had acted with integrity and he lets the king know that nothing happened because He kept it from happening. Here again we have a situation where a pagan king is acting with integrity (morality) and Abraham (a man of faith) has once again shown no integrity (lied and deceived).

⁷ Now then, return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, know that you will certainly die, you and all who are yours.”

This is the first time that the word prophet appears in Scripture. This was a high honor that God conferred on Abraham.

God also warns the king that he should not waver in his decision to return Sarah.

Verses 8-10

⁸ So Abimelech got up early in the morning and called all his servants, and told all these things in their presence; and the people were greatly frightened. 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 on my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done.” ¹⁰ And Abimelech said to Abraham, “What have you encountered, that you have done this thing?”

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 on my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done.”

Abraham received a just rebuke.

¹⁰ And Abimelech said to Abraham, “What have you encountered, that you have done this thing?”

The king asked Abraham a very insightful question. Hopefully Abraham gave this some thought in the days that followed.

Verses 11-13

¹¹ Abraham said, “Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. ¹² Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife; ¹³ and it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father’s house, that I said to her, ‘This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, “He is my brother.””

¹¹ Abraham said, “Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.

Abraham puts his foot in his mouth by telling the king what he really thinks. He believes this king and his people are pagans and that they would kill him in order to take his wife.

The actual problem is that Abraham doesn’t trust God to protect him despite the fact that God has blessed him immensely. Just a short time ago God had told him he would have a son through Sarah, and yet he still worries that he will die at the hands of this king before the child is born? His faith is still very weak.

¹² Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife;

This is how mankind tries to justify themselves, but a half-truth is the same as a lie.

¹³ and it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, "He is my brother."'"

We know Abraham and Sarah used this lie two times now, with the king of Egypt and the king of the Philistines, but it makes one wonder how many other times they may have done this that are not recorded in scripture.

As far as we know, God never reprimanded them for doing this but maybe the shame of what they did was punishment enough. This is no way for a man to treat his wife and no wife would respect a man that acted this way.

Verses 14-16

¹⁴ Abimelech then took sheep and oxen and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and returned his wife Sarah to him. ¹⁵ Abimelech said, "Behold, my land is before you; settle wherever you please." ¹⁶ To Sarah he said, "Look, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. It is your vindication before all who are with you, and before everyone you are cleared."

Abimelech went well beyond what God had told him to do. He not only restored Sarah to Abraham, he also gave them a great deal of wealth.

1. Sheep and oxen.
2. Male and female servants.
3. Whatever land Abraham desired.
4. And to Sarah a thousand pieces of silver.

Abraham and Sarah gained a lot of wealth from both kings. But why did God allowed them to gain riches through lies and deception? We know that God overlooks our sin and ignorance, for a period of time, to give us time to grow in our faith and repent.

See 2 Peter 3:9

⁹ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.

If it were not for God's grace, none of us could be saved.

Verse 17-18

¹⁷ Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his female slaves, so that they gave birth *to children*. ¹⁸ For the Lord had completely closed all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

It seems a bit odd that Abraham had to pray for Abimelech since he was the one that had done wrong and the king had acted with integrity but it seems that God wanted the king to know that Abraham was His special emissary.

The women of the king's household also suffered because of Abraham's lack of faith but it couldn't have been for too long.

See chart 2010

Ch.	Person	Event	Age	Year
16	Abram	Ismael born	86	1910
17	Abraham	Circumcision	99	1897
18-19	Lot	Sodom and Gomorrah	99	1897
20	Abraham	She is my sister (2nd time)	99	1897
21	Abraham	Isaac born	100	1896
22	Abraham	Abraham Tested	120	1876
23	Sarah	Sarah dies	127	1859

This event took place when Abraham was 99 years old but there were also a number of other things that also took place while he was 99 and before he lied to the King. In verse 1 it says that he had moved from Mamre to the Negev area and then moved again to Gerar which all took place before the King took Sarah.

In any case the King may have noticed that the women of his house were not getting pregnant but he probably didn't understand what was happening until God warned him in a dream that he was a dead man for taking Sarah.