

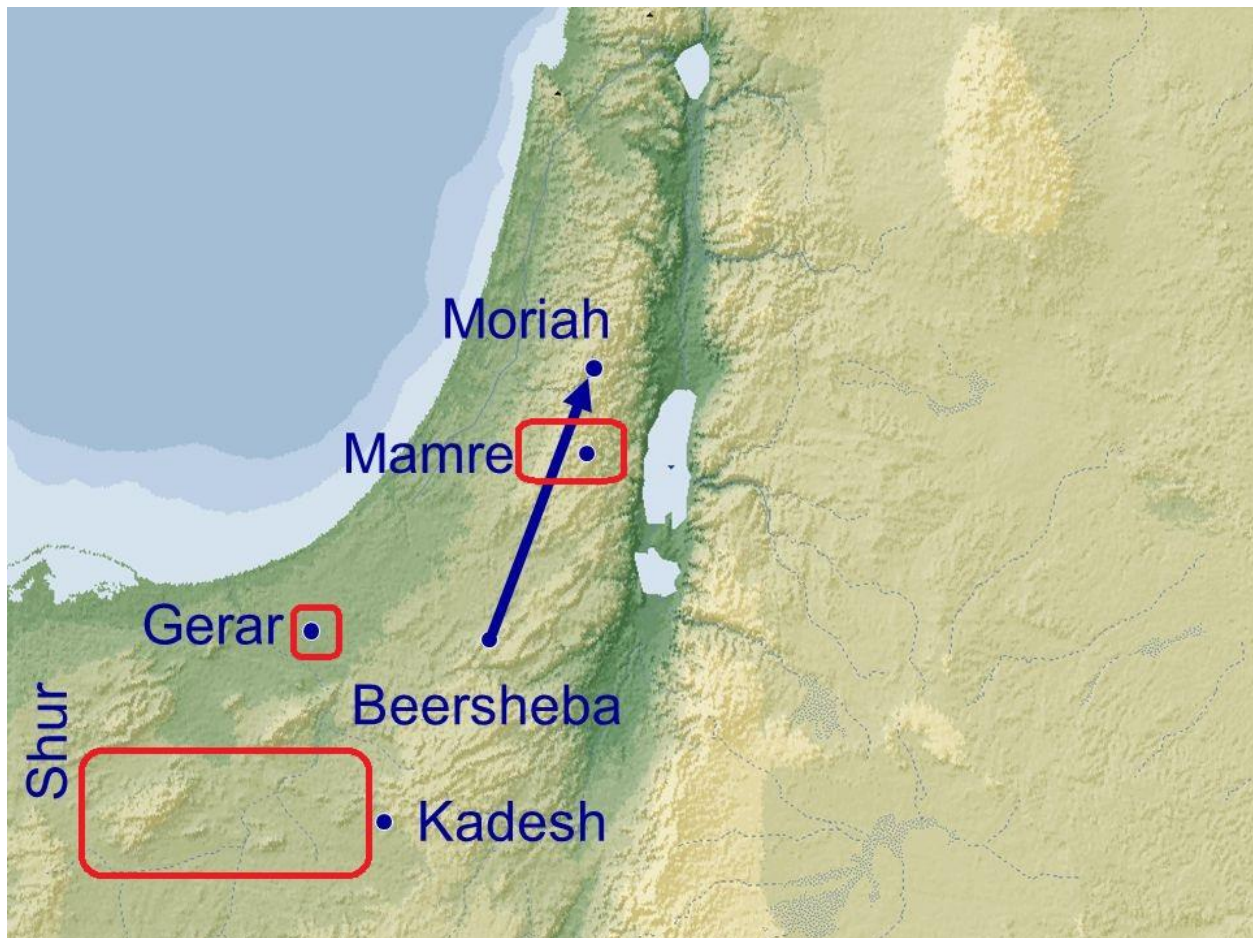
Genesis 20

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

Please ignore the blue arrow on this map



Abraham left Mamre where he had lived for many years

He traveled south to the Negev and settled between Kadesh and Shur

Then he moved to a Philistine city to the north called Gerar

Verse 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 this happened they were in Egypt

See Genesis 12:10-20

At that time Sara was about 67 years old

Now Sarah is 89 years old and past the age of childbearing

So why would Abimelech take Sarah as a wife?

Abimelech probably wanted Abraham as a military ally

See Genesis 21:22-24

But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night

God has sent messages to various kings throughout history

Probably the most famous was with Belshazzar and the handwriting on the wall

See Daniel 5:5-6

And not far behind was the message to Nebuchadnezzar about the great statue

See Daniel 2:31-35

Concerning the name Abimelech

Abimelech was not a personal name, but a title used by Philistine kings

Much like Pharaoh was a title for Egyptian kings, not a person name

Behold, you are a dead man

God sure knew how to get Abimelech's attention

But the discussion that this king has with the Lord is fascinating

Because it shows that this "pagan King" had a clear set of morals

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.

Lord, will You kill a nation, even *though* blameless?

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

Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?

See Genesis 18:22-25

In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this

The Lord agrees with the King that he acted with integrity

But then he adds, **therefore I did not let you touch her**

Even though Abimelech's motive for taking Sarah may have been to confirm the covenant with Abraham, there was still a need to confirm the covenant (touch Sarah).

Verse 7

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."

For he is a prophet

This is the first time that the word prophet appears in Scripture

This was a high honor that God conferred on Abraham

But if you do not return *her*, know that you will certainly die, you and all who are yours.

Abimelech might have been tempted to keep Sarah since God had told him that he was innocent

Maybe this is why God warned him with such a strong punishment

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?”

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

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

This was a very smart and good question to ask

Something is definitely wrong with their thinking when somebody acts this way

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.”””

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 tells the king what he was thinking

He believed a pagan, like this king, would kill him to get Sarah

But in this case the pagan acted better than the prophet of God

This also shows that Abraham didn’t trust God to protect him

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

Everywhere we go, say of me, “He is my brother

We know Abraham and Sarah got away with this two times

With the king of Egypt and now the king of the Philistines

How many times do you think they did this?

As far as we know, God never reprimanded them for it

But maybe God felt like Abimelech did an adequate job in scolding them

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 then took sheep and oxen and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and returned his wife Sarah to him.

Abimelech comes across as remarkable man in this situation

Abraham and Sarah had lied to him and treated him with disrespect

But he not only restored Sarah to Abraham, he also gave them a lot of wealth

Sheep and oxen,

Man and women-servants

Any land that he wanted

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?

Doesn't that set a bad example for others?

Yes it does!

But we also 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

Surely this was one of those times

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.

For the Lord had completely closed all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

There is no doubt that Abimelech initially got the short end of the stick with Abraham

But after it was all over, God healed Abimelech and his entire household

In addition, the king and his people were no doubt blessed by having Abraham, a prophet and very wealthy man, residing in their land.

Abraham also made the country more secure

See Genesis 21:22-24