Torah Series - Book of Genesis

A. Chapters 20:1-23:20 – Abram Continued

Genesis 20:1-2 – Abraham and Sarah in Gerar with Abimelech

- **Gerar is a city**. Surrounding area is agricultural to support the city.
- Abraham journeys to the Negeb and sojourns in Gerar.
- He again says of Sarah his wife, "**She is my sister**" (Gen 20:2; cf. Gen 12), fearing he might be killed for her beauty. Repeating a pattern from Genesis 12 with Pharaoh.
- '**Beauty**' - Abraham is rich. These guys think they can kill him, take his wealth and women.
- Abimelech king of Gerar takes Sarah.

Genesis 20:3-7 – "I have a dream!"

- God comes to Abimelech **in a dream** by night: "You are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife" (Gen 20:3).
- God is protecting Sarah (and the **Messianic line**)
- Abimelech protests his innocence (he had not approached her) and notes that both Abraham and Sarah presented the half-truth (she *is* his half-sister, daughter of his father but not mother—Gen 20:12).
- God acknowledges Abimelech's integrity of heart but says He withheld him from sinning and touching her (Gen 20:4-6).
- God instructs Abimelech to return Sarah and that Abraham is a **prophet** who will pray for him.

Genesis 20:8-13 – Abimelech confronts Abraham and rebukes him

- Abimelech calls Abraham and asks what he has done and why he brought such guilt on his kingdom.
- Abraham explains his fear: "I thought, 'Surely the fear of God is not in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife'" (Gen 20:11), and reiterates the half-sister relationship (Gen 20:12-13).
- Abraham's **lack of trust in God & fear of death** has driven him to sin against Abimelech/Sarah/God. (//Death→Sin in Garden of Eden)
- 11-13 Note Abraham's **excuses** //Adam in Garden

Genesis 20:14-18 – Resolution and Restoration

- Abimelech gives Abraham sheep, oxen, male and female servants, and **returns Sarah**.
- He also **offers land** ("My land is before you; dwell where it pleases you") and gives Sarah 1,000 pieces of silver as a 'covering of the eyes' (vindication/honor) before others (Gen 20:14-16).
- Abraham prays to God, and God **heals** Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants so they could bear children again (the Lord had closed all the wombs because of Sarah—Gen 20:17-18).
- Note: **Time has elapsed here**. Genesis isn't laying out tight chronology so much as the meaning of important events.

Genesis 21:1-7 – It's a boy! *Mazel Tov!*

- The **Lord visited Sarah** as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken (Gen 21:1).
- Sarah conceives and bears Abraham a son in **his old age** (Abraham 100, Sarah 90), at the set time God had spoken.
- Abraham names him **Isaac** ("he laughs") and circumcises him on the eighth day as commanded (Gen 21:2-4).
- Sarah rejoices: "God has made **laughter** for me; everyone who hears will **laugh** with me" (Gen 21:6-7). Abraham makes a great feast on the day Isaac is weaned.

Genesis 21:8-14 – Son Spat

- Sarah sees the son of Hagar the Egyptian (Ishmael) "playing"/laughing/mocking Isaac and demands Abraham cast out "this slave woman and her son," insisting the inheritance not go to Ishmael (Gen 21:9-10; cf. Gal 4:21-31 in later Christian interpretation).
- This displeases Abraham greatly, but God tells him to listen to Sarah: "for **in Isaac** shall your offspring be named" (Gen 21:11-12).
- God promises to make **a nation** of Ishmael as well, since he is Abraham's offspring (Gen 21:13).
- Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael away with bread and a skin of water. They wander in the wilderness of Beersheba; water runs out.

Genesis 21:15-21 – God's Faithfulness to Hagar & Ishmael

- Hagar sets the boy under a bush and weeps. God hears the boy's voice; the angel of God calls to Hagar: "Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy" (Gen 21:14-17).
- God opens her eyes to a well of water and reaffirms the promise of a great nation from Ishmael (Gen 21:18-21).
- Ishmael grows up in the wilderness of Paran and becomes an archer; Hagar gets him a wife from Egypt.

Genesis 21:22-34 – Covenant with Abimelech

- Abimelech (with Phicol, commander of his army) approaches Abraham, recognizing "God is with you in all that you do" (echoing earlier events in ch. 20).
- They seek a covenant/oath of kindness and honesty between them and their descendants (Gen 21:22-24).
- Abraham reproves Abimelech over a well seized by his servants. They make a covenant; Abraham sets apart seven ewe lambs as witness that he dug the well. The place is called **Beersheba** ("well of the oath/seven").
- Abimelech and Phicol return to the land of the Philistines (Gen 21:25-32).
- Abraham plants a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and calls on the name of **the Lord, the Everlasting God** (*El Olam*). He sojourns many days in the land of the Philistines (Philistines haven't been invented yet - anachronistic reference)

Genesis 22:1-8 – God tests Abraham

- **God tested Abraham** (not to discover something unknown to Him, but in the sense of purifying/strengthening like metallurgy; same word can be rendered "tempted" elsewhere but here means **proven through trial**).

- God calls “Abraham!” and he replies “Here I am” (Gen 22:1).
- God commands: “Take your son, your **only son Isaac**, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and **offer him** there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Gen 22:2). Abraham rises early, prepares, and journeys with Isaac, two servants, wood, etc.
- On the **third day**, Abraham sees the place. He tells the servants to wait: “I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you” (Gen 22:5 – faith that God would provide/restore). This is the exact same place Christ will be sacrificed on the cross!
- Isaac carries the wood; Abraham carries fire and knife. Isaac asks about the lamb; Abraham replies, “**God will provide for himself the lamb** for a burnt offering, my son” (Gen 22:7-8).
- Isaac is one of the only people in the OT without negative/bad things/failures illustrated about him.

Genesis 22:9-14 – Sacrificial Swap

- They reach the place. Abraham builds the altar, lays the wood, binds Isaac, and lays him on the altar.
- **Obvious allusion to Christ.**
- As Abraham stretches out his hand with the knife, the **Angel of the Lord** calls from heaven: “Abraham, Abraham! … Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, **seeing** you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me” (Gen 22:9-12).
- Abraham illustrates/**displays** his faithfulness in God’s promises.
- Abraham sees a ram caught in a thicket and offers it as a burnt offering instead (substitution). He names the place **The Lord Will Provide** (YHWH Yireh/Jehovah Jireh) (Gen 22:13-14).
- Sacrifices were primarily about thanksgiving/meals. God provides the ram for this.

Genesis 22:15-19 – God’s Promise of Blessing

- The Angel of the Lord reaffirms the promises with an oath: **numerous** offspring like stars/sand, they shall possess the gate of their enemies, and **in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed**, because Abraham believed & obeyed God’s voice (Gen 22:15-18). Abraham returns to Beersheba (well of the oath).

Genesis 22:20-24 – Milcah’s Genealogy

- Seemingly ‘**Random**’ genealogy
- Introduces **Rebekah** & prepares for Isaac’s marriage in Genesis 24
- **BONUS: Uz & Buz!** Great baby names!

Genesis 23 – Death and burial of Sarah

- Sarah dies at 127 years old in Kiriath-arba (Hebron) in the land of Canaan. Abraham mourns and weeps (Gen 23:1-2).
- As a sojourner, Abraham negotiates to buy a **burial place** from the sons of Heth (Hittites). A place to return to and visit (cf: Osama bin Laden’s burial at sea. No place to return to!)
- He requests the cave of **Machpelah** at the end of Ephron’s field.

- Ephron offers it freely, but Abraham **insists on paying** full price (400 shekels of silver) in the presence of witnesses for legal ownership (Gen 23:3-18).
- The field, cave, and trees are deeded to Abraham as possession. He buries Sarah in the cave of Machpelah opposite Mamre (Hebron) in Canaan (Gen 23:19-20).
- Sarah's burial marks the first piece of the Promised Land legally owned by Abraham's family (foreshadowing full possession). Abraham remains a sojourner but secures a foothold through honorable dealings.
- Her burial place is known and **still visitable today** (Cave of the Patriarchs in the West Bank city of Hebron).
