

## PART THIRTY-THREE

### THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB

(Genesis 20:1—21:34)

#### 1. *Abraham and Abimelech* (20:1-18)

1 *And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the land of the South, and dwelt between Kadesb and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. 2 And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. 3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, because of the woman whom thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife. 4 Now Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay even a righteous nation? 5 Said he not himself unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and the innocency of my hands have I done this. 6 And God said unto him in the dream, Yea, I know that in the integrity of thy heart thou hast done this, and I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. 7 Now therefore restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.*

8 *And Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid. 9 Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and wherein have I sinned against thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. 10 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? 11 And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this*

## SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. 12 And moreover she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife: 13 and it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me: at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother. 14 And Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and men-servants and women-servants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife. 15 And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee. 16 And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver: behold, it is for thee a covering of the eyes to all that are with thee; and in respect of all thou art righted. 17 And Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maid-servants; and they bare children. 18 For Jehovah had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

(1) *The Negeb*, vs. 1, "the dry," largely waterless area, which from its geographical position generally south of Judea came to be known as "the south," "the land of the south," etc. (cf. Gen. 10:19, 12:9, 26:1-6). (See Nelson Glueck's great work, *Rivers in the Desert*). The northern boundary may be indicated by a line drawn roughly from Gaza to Beersheba, thence east directly to the Dead Sea. The southern boundary can be indicated by a line drawn from the highlands of the Sinai peninsula to the head of the Gulf of Aqabah at Eilat. (This, incidentally, is the line where the political division is drawn today). Significant economically were the copper ores in the eastern part of the Negeb and the commerce which resulted in the Arabah. Control of this industry explains the wars of Saul with the Amalekites and Edomites (1 Sam. 14:47 ff.), the victories of David over the Edomites (1 Ki. 11:15

ff.), the creation of the port of Ezion-geber by Solomon, and later when these mines became too silted, the creation of a new port at Elath by Uzziah (1 Ki. 9:26, 22:48; 2 Ki. 14:22). The persistent animosity of the Edomites was motivated by the struggles to control this trade (cf. Ezek. 25:12, and the book of Obadiah). The "way of Shur" crossed this area from the central highlands (really mountains) of Sinai northeastward to Judea (Gen. 16:7, 20:1, 25:18; Exo. 15:22; Num. 33:8), the way followed by the Patriarchs (Gen. 24:62, 26:22), by Hadad the Edomite (1 Ki. 11:14, 17, 21, 22), and probably by Jeremiah in escaping to Egypt (43:6-12), and later by Joseph and Mary (Matt. 2:13-15). The route was dictated by the zone of settled land in which the presence of well water was so important; hence the frequent references to its wells (Gen. 26:18-25; Josh. 15:18-19; Judg. 1:13-15). See NBD, s.v.) This region, the Negeb, covers approximately one-half of the area of the state of modern Israel.

(2) *Abraham's Journey.* Following the destruction of the Cities of the Plain, Abraham pulled his stakes, so to speak, and journeyed "toward the land of the South." Various reasons have been suggested as to the motive for this journey, e.g., in consequence of the hostility of his neighbors (Calvin); desire to escape from the scene of such a terrible catastrophe which he had just witnessed (Calvin, Murphy); impulsion by God, to remind him that Canaan "was not intended for a permanent habitation, but a constant pilgrimage" (Kalisch); but most likely, it would seem, in search of pasture, as on a previous occasion (Keil); cf. Gen. 12:9-10, 13:1. Arriving in the land of the South, it seems that he ranged his herds from Kadesh on the north (also Kadesh-barnea), some seventy miles south of Hebron, to Shur, a wilderness lying at the northwest tip of the Sinai peninsula (beside one of its springs the Angel of Jehovah, it will be remembered, found Hagar: cf. Gen. 16:7-14). (A *wilderness* in the Palestin-

ian country of the Biblical records meant a rather wild region of scant vegetation, except at certain seasons when rainfall provided temporary pasturage for the nomads' flocks (cf. Psa. 106:9, A.R.V., marginal rendering, *pasture-land*). These wildernesses, unlike densely wooded wildernesses of our Americas, were treeless, except for palm-trees in the oases, bushes like acacia, and inferior trees like the tamarisk (Exo. 15:27, Elim; Gen. 21:33). Because of its aridity a wilderness in Scripture is sometimes called a *desert*.)

(3) *Gerar, and the Philistines*. Whatever the extent to which Abraham pastured his flocks between Kadesh and Shur, his more or less permanent tenting-ground must have been in the vicinity of Gerar, a city forty miles southeast of Gaza in the foothills of the Judean mountains (Gen. 10:19), hence interior to the coastal plain, and some distance from the route over which (by way of Gaza) invading armies invariably have moved to and fro between Egypt and Southwest Asia not only in ancient times, but even in our own century. (It should be noted that Armageddon lies on this military route, Rev. 16:16. See under "Megiddo" in any Bible Dictionary). Both Abraham and Isaac sojourned at Gerar (Gen., chs. 20, 21, 26), digging wells for their flocks. The city, we are told, was situated in the "land of the Philistines" (Gen. 21:32, 34; 26:1, 8). This designation is said to be an anachronism: "it could be ascribed to a late editor, for the Philistines probably entered the land long after the time of Abraham" (HSB, 35). Archaeological evidence, however, proves that this is not necessarily so. Cf. Schultz (OTS, 35): "The presence of the Philistines in Canaan during patriarchal times has been considered an anachronism. The Caphthorian settlement in Canaan around 1200 B.C. represented a late migration of the Sea People who had made previous settlements over a long period of time. The Philistines had thus established themselves in smaller numbers long

before 1500 B.C. In time they became amalgamated with other inhabitants of Canaan, but the name 'Palestine' (Philistia) continues to bear witness to their presence in Canaan. Caphtorian pottery throughout southern and central Palestine, as well as literary references, testify to the superiority of the Philistines in arts and crafts, In the days of Saul they monopolized metalwork in Palestine." (The Caphtorium are said to have descended from Mizraim, Gen. 10:14, 1 Chron, 1:12; Caphtor is identified as the land from which the Philistines came, Jer. 47:4, Amos 9:7. The consensus of archaeological testimony in our day almost without exception identifies these Sea Peoples as spreading out over the eastern Mediterranean world from Crete: at its height in the second millenium, Minoan Crete controlled the larger part of the Aegean Sea.) The great cities of the Philistines in "Philistia" of the Bible were (1) those on the coastal strip, from north to south in the order named, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gaza; (2) those in the interior, Ekron on the north and Gath about the center and approximately west of Hebron. Gerar, though not one of the five great urban centers, was the seat of the royal iron smelting place producing iron swords, spearheads, daggers, and arrowheads (1 Sam. 13:19-22). Pottery models of iron-shod chariots have been found here. These people seem to have settled in Palestine in great numbers about the time of the transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age (cf. Judg. 16:21); this would have been about 1500 B.C. Archaeology now confirms the fact that groups of these Sea Peoples began arriving in waves long before this time; that in fact these smaller migratory groups were in the Near East as early as the Patriarchal Age. Excavations at Gerar and other Philistine centers began as early as the nineteen-twenties, under the direction of Phythian-Adams and Flinders Petrie: these produced remains from the time of Egypt's Eighteenth Dynasty, about 1600 to 1400 B.C. Recently an Israeli archaeologist,

SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

D. Alon, surveyed the site of Gerar and "found evidence from potsherds that the city had enjoyed a period of prosperity during the Middle Bronze Age, the period of the Biblical patriarchs" (DW:DBA, 251). Cornfeld (AtD, 72) gives a consistent account of this problem of the origin of the Philistines in the Near East, as follows: "This designation ['Philistine'] is generally regarded as anachronistic because the name Philistine was applied to a Western people (Peoples of the Sea) which had migrated from Crete and the Aegean coastlands and isles around 1200 B.C.E., and settled in the coastal regions of southern Palestine. C. H. Gordon and I. Grinz consider that these 'early' Philistines of Gerar came from a previous migration of sea people from the Aegean and Minoan sphere, including Crete, which is called Caphtor in the Bible and Ugarit tablets, and Caphtorian is the Canaanite name for Minoan. Their earlier home was that other great cultural center of antiquity, the Aegean, which flourished throughout the 2nd millenium B.C.E., and is considered a major cradle of East Mediterranean, Near Eastern and European civilization. It has a close connection with the Hittite civilization, which stems also from an Indo-European migration into this sphere. This civilization spread by trade, navigation, and migration to Asia Minor, North Canaan (Ugarit, etc.), South Canaan (Gerar). The early Philistines who came into contact with the early Hebrews, and the Mycenaean of proto-historic Greece, to whom the most prominent Homeric heroes belonged, were different sections of this Minoan (Caphtorian) world. By the time of the Amarna Age, or late patriarchal age, these immigrants formed an important segment of the coastal dwellers of Canaan. Vestiges of Aegeo-Minoan art, pottery, and tools abound in archaeological finds of this period. The art is remarkable for its vivacity and it injected a notable degree of liveliness into the art of the Near East, including Egypt.

The most important role of Caphtor was its impact on both the classic Greeks of a later period and the early Canaanites, so that the earliest Greek, Canaanite (Ugarit) and Hebrew literatures have a common denominator in the Minoan or Caphtorian factor. We shall see that the early histories of the Hebrew and pre-Hellenic settlements and migrations on the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean, were originally interrelated in certain ways and that the classic traditions of Greece and the treasures of the Near East will illumine each other. C. H. Gordon maintains that 'the epic traditions of Israel starting with the patriarchal narratives are set in Palestine after the penetrations of the Indo-European Philistines from the west and the Indo-European Hittites from the north. When the Bible portrays Abraham as dealing with Hittites and Philistines, we have a correct tradition insofar as Hebrew history dawned in a partially Indo-Europeanized Palestine. This is reflected in Hebraic literature and institutions from the start.' *The early Caphtorian migration was one of a long series that had established various Caphtorian folk on the shores of Canaan long before 1500 B.C.E. They had become Canaanitized, and apparently spoke the same language as Abraham and Isaac. They generally behaved peacefully, unlike the Philistines of a later day, who fought and molested the Israelites. They were recognized in Canaan as the masters of arts and crafts, including metallurgy*" (italics mine—C. C.). These facts account also for the spread of the Cult of Fertility throughout the Near East. It is generally held by anthropologists that Crete was the center where this cult originated and from which it spread in every direction, through the Near East especially.

(4) *Abimelech*. The facts stated above give us a clearer understanding of this man who was king of the city-state of Gerar when Abraham moved into the area. The name, which means "father-king," is pure Hebrew,

and apparently was the common title—rather than personal name—of the kings of Gerar, as *Pharaoh*, for example, was of the rulers of Egypt, *Agag* of the kings of the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15), *Caesar* of the emperors of Rome (whence such later titles as *Kaiser*, *Czar*, etc.). This fact makes it entirely plausible that the Abimelech who covenanted with Isaac later (Gen. 26) was a successor to the Abimelech who had dealings with Abraham. The latter evidently sought out Abraham on the patriarch's arrival within the region of which his capital, Gerar, was the dominant city. We must realize that the nomads of Abraham's time were not wanderers all the time; rather, they alternated between periods of migration and periods of a more or less settled life. Because water was precious and the nomadic sheiks had to have it for their flocks, they had to hunt out the area where water—usually from wells—was available. Abraham was of this class. Cornfeld suggests that Abimelech visited Abraham somewhere in the locality, probably for the purpose of concluding a treaty of mutual protection that would safeguard his descendants from Israelite encroachments. It may well be also that he took Sarah into his harem, not especially because he was infatuated with her beauty (she was now ninety years old: cf. 17:17, 21:2) but for the very same purpose of cementing an alliance with this wealthy and influential patriarch. As a matter of fact, on comparing the motives and actions of these two men, it will strike most of us, I think, that Abraham's conduct, generally speaking, was below the level of integrity manifested by the Philistine king. Certainly Abimelech's role in the entire transaction supports the view stated above that these early Philistines, unlike those of later times, as a general rule behaved honorably and peacefully. Cf. Jamieson (CECG, 166): "These early Philistines were a settled population, who occupied themselves for the most part in the peaceful pursuits of agriculture and keeping cattle.



They were far superior in civilization and refinement to the Canaanitish tribes around them, and this polish they doubtless owed to their Egyptian origin." (This author holds that they had once been connected with the shepherd kings who ruled in lower Egypt (Deut. 2:23), and had on their expulsion occupied the pasture lands which lay along its northern border. It seems, however, that their original Cretan origin has by now been firmly established.)

(5) *Abimelech's Dream* (vv. 3-7). Undoubtedly it was in the course of an earlier meeting between Abimelech and Abraham that the patriarch repeated the equivocation he had perpetrated previously on the Egyptian Pharaoh (cf. Gen. 12:10-20), namely, the declaration that Sarah was his sister, a declaration which Sarah herself confirmed (v. 5), as a consequence of which Abimelech took her into his harem. Whereupon, to protect the purity of the promised seed, God "closed up all the wombs of house of Abimelech," that is, by preventing conception (cf. 16:2, Isa. 66:9, 1 Sam. 1:5-6), or by producing barrenness (cf. 29:31, 30:22). The reaction of Abimelech surely proves that his moral life was far above the level of the idolatrous Canaanites who occupied the land and makes it possible for us to understand why God deigned to reveal Himself to him.

The *dream* was the usual mode of self-revelation by which God (as Elohim) communicated with heathen. (Cf. Pharaoh's dreams (Gen. 41:1), Nebuchadnezzar's (Dan. 4:5), as distinguished from the visions and dreams in which Jehovah manifested His presence to His people. Cf. theophanies (visible appearances of deity) vouchsafed to Abraham (12:7, 15:1, 18:1), and to Jacob (28:13, 32:24), and the visions granted to Daniel (Dan. 7:1-28, 10:5-9), and to the prophets generally, "which, though sometimes occurring in dreams, were yet a higher form of Divine manifestation than the dreams" (PCG, 264). (Note that Pharaoh's butler and baker (Gen. 40:8), the Midianites

## SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

(Judg. 7:13-15), the wife of Pilate (Matt. 27:19), experienced significant dreams.) (Cf. also the vision granted Isaiah of the "Lord sitting upon a throne" (Isa. 6:1-5); Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:9-11); the visions of the Living One, of the Door opened in heaven, of the Temple of God in heaven, and of the New Heaven and New Earth, all vouchsafed John the Beloved of the isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:18, 4:1, 11:19, 21:1), all of these together, in their various details, making up the content of the Apocalypse.) The fact that God communicated with Abimelech in a dream is sufficient evidence that the latter was in some sense a believer, one who apparently feared God; however, he must have had only a limited knowledge of God, because the *dream*, as stated above, was "a mode employed for those standing on a lower level of revelation" (EG, 582). Note the conversation which occurred by means of this dream: (1) God explains that Abimelech had done a deed worthy of death, viz., he had taken another man's wife from her husband for his own purposes, whereas he should have honored the sanctity of the marriage bond (nothing was said about the other members of the king's harem, but God's silence must not be taken as approval, cf. Acts 17:30); (2) Abimelech answered by stating his fear that he, or even his subjects, however innocent in this case, might as a consequence of his sin (cf. 2 Sam. 24:17, 1 Chron. 21:17, Jer. 15:4), be destroyed as the Sodomites had been destroyed; he then protested his innocence, in view of the fact that both Abraham and Sarah had represented themselves to him as brother and sister; (3) whereupon God recognized the fact of the king's innocence and explained why he in turn—as an act of benevolence—had imposed a physical affliction on him to prevent his laying hands on the mother of the Child of Promise. (4) Finally, God ordered Abimelech to restore Sarah to her husband, "for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live," etc. Note

(1) that Abraham was divinely declared to be a *prophet*, that is, an interpreter (communicator) of the will of God (Ps. 105:15, Amos 3:7, 2 Pet. 1:21), one who speaks by divine afflatus (Deut. 13:2, 18:15-19; Judg. 6:8, 1 Sam. 9:9, 1 Ki. 22:7) either to announce the will of God to men (Exo. 4:15, 7:1) or to intercede with God for men (Gen. 20:7; Jer. 7:16, 11:14, 14:11); (2) that he, Abraham, would pray for Abimelech (1 Sam. 7:5, Job. 42:8); (3) that failing to make the required restitution, the king and all that were his would surely die. "Whatever the nature of a revelation by means of a dream may be, it surely allows for an interchange of thoughts—questions and answers, remarks and responses" (EG, 585). This teaches us, says Leupold, that "sin is sin and involves guilt, even when the perpetrator may have sinned in ignorance; such ignorance does constitute an extenuating circumstance; God acknowledges that here" (EG, 586). (God has often intimated His mind in dreams: cf. Gen. 28:12, 31:24, 37:5, 40:8, 41:1; 1 Ki. 3:51; Jer. 23, 25, 28, 32; Dan. 2:1, 4:5).

(6) *Abraham's Explanation.* Abimelech lost no time in setting things right, both in the understanding of his servants, and in the mind and heart of Abraham, protesting that the patriarch had brought on him and his kingdom near-disaster: "thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done." Abraham, apparently feeling a sense of guilt, accounted for his action on three grounds: (1) he surmised that the fear of God had been lost here as elsewhere throughout Canaan (undoubtedly a reaction from the awful scenes of the divine judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah); (2) he had not spoken a verbal untruth in declaring Sarah to be his sister; she was indeed his half-sister; (3) the action had been the result of a preconcerted arrangement between Sarah and himself, agreed upon at the time their wanderings began. (The patriarch attempts no self-justification, no exculpation: he simply states the

facts.) The view that Abraham's statement in v. 12 is directly related to his statement in v. 11, is entirely plausible; that is, as if Abraham was saying, "I spoke the truth about moral corruption in this place, because if the people had really been godfearing, they would have asked whether Sarah was also my wife, since one could marry his half-sister from the one father." The statement of the text indicates clearly that Sarah was her husband's half-sister, *i.e.*, Terah's daughter by another wife than Abraham's mother. "On the earlier levels of the development of the human race such closer relationships of those married were often necessary and so not abhorred as they came to be later. The Mosaic law would not allow such connections; see Lev. 18:9, 11; 20:17; Deut. 27:22. Whom Terah had first married or perhaps married after he had married Abraham's mother, we cannot determine" (EG, 589-590).

(7) *Abimelech's Response* (vv. 14-16). The king carried out the divine instructions. He gave Sarah back to Abraham with a liberal present of sheep, cattle and servants, and gave the patriarch permission to dwell wherever he pleased in his, Abimelech's, land. He gave Abraham also a thousand shekels of silver: this was usually of the character of a purchase-price for a wife; here, however, it seems to have been a compensation for injury unwittingly inflicted. To Sarah he said, "It is for thee a covering of the eyes," that is, not for a veil which she was to procure for this amount, but as an atoning gift. "*In respect of all thou art righted*": the general sense seems to be that Sarah's honor was now fully rehabilitated.

(8) *Abraham's Prayer* (vv. 17-18). The patriarch forthwith interceded in prayer for Abimelech and his people (cf. his intercessory prayer for Sodom and Gomorrah). As a result all the members of the king's court were now made capable of resuming their marital relations: *coitus* which had been temporarily suspended was now restored. This entire incident obviously was for the purpose

of protecting the purity of the promised seed. "In king Abimelech we meet with a totally different character from that of Pharaoh. We see in him a heathen imbued with a moral consciousness of right, and open to receive divine revelation, of which there is not the slightest trace in the king of Egypt. And Abraham, in spite of his natural weakness, and the consequent confusion which he manifested in the presence of the pious heathen, was exalted by the compassionate grace of God to the position of His own friend, so that even the heathen king, who seems to have been in the right in this instance, was compelled to bend before him and to seek the removal of the divine punishment, which had fallen upon him and his house, through the medium of his intercession. In this way God proved to the Philistine king, on the one hand, that He suffers no harm to befall His prophets (Psa. 105:15), and to Abraham on the other, that He can maintain His Covenant and secure the realization of His promise against all opposition from the sinful desires of earthly potentates. It was in this respect that the event possessed a typical significance in relation to the future attitude of Israel towards surrounding nations" (BCOTP, 242, 243).

(9) *Comparison of Gen. 12:10-20 and Gen. 20:1-18.* Alleged differences in these two narratives is taken by the "analytical" critics as evidence of a weaving together of two original sources, J and E. (As a matter of fact this theme of a sister-wife relationship occurs again in Gen. 26:6-11: in the first instance, involving Abraham-Pharaoh-Sarah; in the second, Abraham-Abimelech-Sarah, and in the third, Isaac-Abimelech-Rebekah). By the critics this chapter (20) is assumed to be an Elohist document; then how account for the "Jehovah" of v. 18? The answer is that v. 18 demonstrates the "fine propriety" one often encounters in relating these two names. V. 18 states Yahweh's method of rendering the mother of the promised seed safe: "the faithful covenant God in mercy watches

over the mother of the child of the covenant"; hence this verse is the complement essential to explaining v. 17. Other authorities explain that in v. 3, we have *Elohim* without the article, that is, Deity generally; but Abimelech recognizes the Lord, *Adonai*, i.e., God (v. 4); whereupon the historian represents Him as *Elohim with the article*, that is, the personal and true God, as speaking to him (Delitzsch, BCOTP, 240). Cf. Green (UBG, 251, 252): "The critics have mistaken the lofty style used in describing grand creative acts or the vocabulary employed in setting forth the universal catastrophe of the deluge for the fixed habit of an Elohist writer, and set it over against the graceful style of the ordinary narrative in the early Jehovist sections. But in this chapter and in the rest of Genesis, whenever Elohim occurs in narrative sections, the stately periods of the account of the creation and the vocabulary of the creation and the flood are dropped, and terms appropriate to the common affairs of life and the ordinary course of human events are employed by the Elohist precisely as they are by the Jehovist. Elohim occurs throughout this chapter (vs. 3, 6, 11, 12, 17), except in the last verse (v. 18) where Jehovah is used. But the words and phrases are those which are held to be characteristic of the Jehovist." Thus do the critics nullify their own "assured results."

Again, the question is raised by the critics, Why the specific inclusion of the elaboration by Abraham as regards his motivation in dealing with Abimelech, as distinguished from the narrative of his dealing with Pharaoh? That is to say, is there a reason for the explanation to Abimelech that his wife was in reality a half-sister in view of the fact that no such explanation was vouchsafed the king of Egypt? Obviously, there is a reason for this difference. Again, note Green (UBG, 257, n.): "Abraham says of his wife at the outset, 'She is my sister' (v. 2). In and of itself this is quite intelligible; and a Hebrew narrator

would certainly have told this more plainly, if he had not on a like occasion stated in more detail what moved Abraham to it (12:11-13). Was it necessary now to repeat it here? The rapidity with which he hastens on to the fact itself shows what he presupposes in the reader. But while in the first event of the kind (cf. 12), in Egypt, the narrator briefly mentions Pharaoh's gifts and plagues, he sets forth in more detail the cause of Abraham's conduct. The reader might certainly be surprised that the same thing could happen twice to Abraham. The narrator is conscious of this; and in order to remove every doubt of this sort which might so easily arise, he lets Abraham clear up the puzzle in what he says to Abimelech (vs. 11-13). Thus the narrator himself meets every objection that could be made, and by the words, 'when God caused me to wander from my father's house' (v. 13), he looks back so plainly over all thus far related, and at the same time indicates so exactly the time when he first thought of passing his wife off as his sister, everywhere in foreign lands, that this can only be explained from the previous narrative in ch. 12."

Certainly there are similarities between this episode and those recorded in Genesis 12 and Genesis 26. However, as Leupold writes (EG, 579): "It is foolish to claim the identity of the incidents on the ground that they merely represent three different forms of the original event, forms assumed while being transmitted by tradition. Critics seem to forget that life just happens to be so strange a thing that certain incidents may repeat themselves in the course of one life, or that the lives of children often constitute a strange parallel to those of their parents." Smith-Field (OTH, 79) "Here the deceit which Abraham had put upon Pharaoh, by calling Sarah his sister, was acted again with the like result. The repeated occurrence of such an event, which will meet us again in the history of Isaac, can surprise no one acquainted with Oriental manners; but it would have been indeed surprising if the author

SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

of any but a genuine narrative had exposed himself to a charge so obvious as that which has been founded on its repetition. The independent truth of each story is confirmed by the natural touches of variety; such as, in the case before us, Abimelech's keen but gentle satire in recommending Sarah to buy a veil with the thousand pieces of silver which he gave to her husband. We may also observe the traces of the knowledge of the true God among Abimelech and his servants (Gen. 20:9-11)." Green (UBG, 258, n.): "The circumstances are different in the two narratives. Here Abimelech makes Abraham a variety of presents after he understood the affair; there, Pharaoh before he understood it. Here God Himself appears; there He simply punishes. Here Abraham is called a prophet (v. 7), as he could not have been at once denominated when God had but just called him. The circumstances, the issue, and the description differ in many respects, and thus attest that this story is quite distinct from the former one." (Green quotes the foregoing from a work by the distinguished scholar, Ewald, *Die Komposition der Genesis kritisch untersucht*, 1823).

The following summarization by Leupold (EG, 579-580) of the striking differences is conclusive, it seems to the writer: "Note the following six points of difference: two different places are involved, Egypt and Philistia; two different monarchs of quite different characters, one idolatrous, the other, who fears the true God; different circumstances prevail, a famine on the one hand, nomadic migration on the other; different modes of revelation are employed—the one kind surmises the truth, the other receives revelation in a dream; the patriarch's reaction to the accusation is quite different in the two instances involved—in the first, silence; then in the second instance, a free explanation before a king of sufficient spiritual discernment; lastly, the conclusions of the two episodes are radically different from one another—in the first instance,



dismissal from the land; in the second, an invitation to stay in the land. We are compelled, therefore, to reverse the critical verdict: 'it is impossible to doubt that the two are variants of the same tradition.' We have here two distinct, though similar, events."

Haley (ADB, 26): "A favorite exegetical principle adopted by some of these critics appears to be, that *similar events are necessarily identical*. Hence, when they read that Abraham twice equivocated concerning his wife; that Isaac imitated his example; that David was twice in peril in a certain wilderness, and twice spared Saul's life in a cave, they instantly assume that in each case these double narratives are irreconcilable accounts of one and the same event. The absurdity of such a canon of criticism is obvious from the fact that *history is full of events which more or less closely resemble one another*. Take, as a well-known example the case of the two Presidents Edwards, father and son. Both were named Jonathan Edwards, and were the grandsons of clergymen. 'Both were pious in their youth, were distinguished scholars, and were tutors for equal periods in the colleges where they were respectively educated. Both were settled in the ministry as successors to their maternal grandfathers, were dismissed on account of their religious opinions, and again settled in retired country towns, over congregations singularly attached to them, where they had leisure to pursue their favorite studies, and to prepare and publish their valuable works. Both were removed from these stations to become presidents of colleges, and both died shortly after their respective inaugurations; the one in the fifty-sixth, and the other in the fifty-seventh year of his age; each having preached, on the first Sabbath of the year of his death, on the text: 'This year thou shalt die.'" (From Memoir prefixed to the Words of Edwards the younger, p. 34. Cf. also 1 Sam. 23:19, 26:1; 1 Sam. 24:6, 26:9, with Gen. 12:19, 20:2, 26:7.) Haley (*ibid*, 27, n.): "Observe that no one of the

above cases [in Genesis] bears, in respect to *points of coincidence*, worthy of comparison with this unquestioned instance in modern times." Again (*ibid.*, 317): "We have elsewhere seen that distant events may bear a very close resemblance. A late rationalist concedes that 'in those rude times, such a circumstance might have been repeated,' and that the 'dissimilarities of the two cases render their identity doubtful.' In king Abimelech, says Keil, we meet with a totally different character from that of Pharaoh. We see in the former a heathen imbued with a moral consciousness of right, and open to receive divine revelation, of which there is not the slightest trace in the king of Egypt. The two cases were evidently quite distinct." Again: "Whereas Abraham makes no reply to Pharaoh's stinging indictment (12:20), he has here a great deal to say to Abimelech in self-defense (20:11-13)." In passing, it should be noted that Sarah was some sixty-five years old, in the encounter with Pharaoh. As a "noble nomadic princess," undoubtedly she had led a healthful life with a great measure of freedom. (Haley, *ibid.*, 318): "In contrast to the swarthy, ugly, early-faded Egyptian women, she possessed no doubt great personal attraction. In the second instance, when she was some ninety years of age, nothing is said as to her *beauty*. Abimelech was influenced, not by Sarah's personal charms, but simply by a desire to 'ally himself with Abraham, the rich nomad prince'" (as Delitzsch puts it).

## 2. "New Light" on Abraham's "Deceptions"

(Explanatory: I have purposely withheld, for presentation at this point, certain evidence from recent archaeological findings which throws an entirely new light on Abraham's conduct toward Pharaoh and Abimelech, and have "gone along," so to speak, with the traditional concept of Abraham's "deceptions." It must be admitted that these do not portray the patriarch in a favorable light. On the basis of this viewpoint of his motives, perhaps the

best that could be said by way of extenuation is the following comment by Leupold (EG, 593): "If the case in hand is to be approached from the moral angle, then it is seen to offer an illustration how even with God's best saints susceptibility to certain sins is not overcome by a single effort. These men of God, too, had their besetting sins and prevailing weaknesses. The repetition of the fall of Abraham under very similar circumstances, instead of constituting grounds for criticism should rather be regarded as a touch entirely true to life" (EG, 593).

Dr. E. A. Speiser, in his excellent work on Genesis (Anchor Bible Series) presents an entirely different picture, as derived from Hurrian (Horite) customary law. The Horites evidently were a mixture of Semitic and Indo-European peoples who occupied East Central Mesopotamia. The chief center of Hurrian culture was Nuzi, which was east of the Tigris not too far southeast of Nineveh. (Another important center of archaeological findings was Mari, the center of the Amorite civilization; Mari was on the bend of the Euphrates, some distance northwest of Babylon, a region in which the city of Haran was located, which according to Genesis was the home of Abraham's kinsmen.) The Hurrian culture was not known until 1928-1929 when the Nuzi cuneiform documents (some 20,000 in number) were discovered. As a result we know that these people had some strange customs having to do with the sister-wife relationship.

Dr. Speiser writes (ABG, Intro., 39 ff.): "Among the various patriarchal themes in Genesis, there are three in particular that exhibit the same blend of uncommon features: each theme appears to involve some form of deception; each has proved to be an obstinate puzzle to countless generations of students, ancient and modern; and at the same time, each was seemingly just as much of an enigma to the Biblical writers themselves." These three are specifically: the problem of the sister-wife relationship

## SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

(Abraham and Sarah), that of the transfer of the birth-right and the paternal blessing (as from Esau to Jacob), and that of a father's disposition of his household gods (images, Gen. 31:19-30). (It is the first of these problems which we deal with here; the other two will be taken up in connection with their appearance in the Scripture text.) Involved in most of these instances are the laws of inheritance, especially those involved in adoption, and certain legal phraseology in some cases. Discoveries at Nuzi have shed a flood of light on these problems. The difficulty involved, however, is that of ascertaining *the extent to which Abraham was familiar with this Hurrian customary law*. Traditionally, Abraham has been regarded as resorting to deception to "save his skin," in the three instances in Genesis in which he is represented as introducing his wife as his sister, primarily because the two—husband and wife—felt that this half-truth and half-lie was necessary to protect them from the erotic habits of their pagan neighbors. As we have already seen, the three occurrences of this episode have been used by the critics as an argument for the composite (documentary) authorship of the Pentateuch. Now, according to the light shed on the problem in the Nuzi documents, it was the custom among those of the higher social caste there (the nobility) for a husband to adopt his wife as his sister. This was designedly for social standing. Speiser (ABG, intro., 40): "In Hurrian society a wife enjoyed special standing and protection when the law recognized her simultaneously as her husband's sister, regardless of blood ties. Such cases are attested by two separate legal documents, one dealing with the marriage and the other with the woman's adoption as sister. This dual role conferred on the wife a superior position in society." The idea seems to have been that, under an old fratriarchal system, a sister had privileges that wives generally did not have. Hence, when Abraham

said of Sarah, "She is my sister," and Sarah said in turn of Abraham, "He is my brother," this meant that they were, in a sense, untouchable. But, as this interpretation indicates, when they made these representations to Pharaoh, they found them of no avail. On the other hand, as this was their best defense under Hurrian law, it would seem that Abimelech was acquainted with that particular law and hence respected the position of Sarah. The same must also be true of the Abimelech who figured in the case of Isaac and Rebekah. Speiser concludes (*ibid.*) that in the context of the customary law involved, Abraham and Sarah were perfectly honorable in their representations.

Obviously, there are some serious objections to this general interpretation. In the first place, why were the representations made by Abraham and Sarah to the Egyptian king accepted at face value with the result that he took Sarah into his harem? It must be true, of course, that he had no such knowledge of the Hurrian law governing the case. It is said, however, that Pharaoh's conduct must have been due to the fact that *in Egypt the role of sister was not highly regarded*. The difficulty with this explanation is the fact that it is not in harmony with what is known about Egyptian history and culture. (The reader is advised to read Dr. Will Durant's great work, *Our Oriental Heritage*, pp. 164-170, for reliable information about these matters.) Writes Dr. Durant: "Very often the king married his own sister—occasionally his daughter—to preserve the purity of the royal blood . . . the institution of sister-marriage spread among the people, and as late as the second century after Christ two thirds of the citizens of Arsinoe were found to be practising the custom. The words *brother* and *sister*, in Egyptian poetry, have the same significance as *lover* and *beloved* among ourselves. . . . 'No people, ancient or modern,' said Max Muller, 'has given women so high a legal status as did the inhabitants of the

## SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

Nile Valley.' . . . It is likely that this high status of woman arose from the mildly matriarchal character of Egyptian society. Not only was woman full mistress in the house, but all estates descended in the female line. . . . Men married their sisters not because familiarity bred romance, but because they wished to enjoy the family inheritance," etc. (pp 164-166). Obviously, then, Abraham's device could have worked in Egypt only if the Pharaoh was familiar with Hurrian law and was willing to acknowledge it binding in his realm. But both of these conditions seem most unlikely.

Then, what about Abimelech? Was he aware of this Hurrian law, as far as "Philistia" was from far eastern Mesopotamia? It is possible that he could have been familiar with it. But, again, the opposite would seem to have been the truth. And again we have the difficulty of explaining why Abimelech would have been influenced by such a custom had he even known of it.

As for the Genesis story, the causes and effects involved are plainly presented. The truthfulness of the Genesis accounts of these sister-wife representations is in strict harmony with the realism of the whole Bible. And finally, the application of the Hurrian law to these cases necessitates certain pre-suppositions, namely, (1) that the redactors (apparently the possibility of Mosaic authorship is ignored) were completely ignorant of the Hurrian custom; (2) that in trying to weave together alleged varied traditions of one and the same original event, they allowed unexplainable inconsistencies to creep into the Genesis text; (3) that they must have experienced considerable embarrassment in portraying the revered patriarch and his wife as practising equivocation "to save their own skins"; that they were prompted to introduce in each case what was known in ancient times as the *deus ex machina*, i.e., the obtrusion of divine judgment to produce under-

standing, repentance and restitution on the part of the monarchs involved. Finally, and most serious of all, not only is the possibility of Mosaic authorship ignored, but *even the possibility of Divine inspiration—verbal, dynamic, or even supervisory—is completely disregarded.*

The facts of the matter are, from the present author's point of view, that the narratives under consideration in Genesis are three different accounts of three different originals; and that the accounts, as they stand, *are completely in line with Biblical realism.* The Bible is the most realistic book in the world. It pictures life just as men have lived it in the past and as they live it now. It is pre-eminently the Book of Life. It portrays both their vices and virtues, their fears and their triumphs, their temptations and frailties as well as their victories of faith. The very first principle of Biblical interpretation is that the Bible should be allowed to mean what it says and to say what it means, without benefit of over-reaching analytical criticism or the gobbledygook of speculative theology. This is simply the application of the practical norm of "calling Bible things by Bible names."

### 3. *The Birth of the Promised Heir (21:1-7)*

*1 And Jehovah visited Sarah as he had said, and Jehovah did unto Sarah as he had spoken. 2 And Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3 And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. 4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 And Abraham was a hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. 6 And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh; every one that heareth will laugh with me. 7 And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should give children suck? for I have borne him a son in his old age.*

## SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

Vv. 1, 2—Yahweh “visited” Sarah, that is, fulfilled His promise at the set time He had promised to do so: our God keeps His promises to the very letter. (Cf. Gen. 17:21; 18:10, 14). Sarah “*bare Abraham a son in his old age: all sources emphasize the fact that Isaac was a late-born child*” (Skinner, ICCG, 321). And Abraham called the son’s name *Isaac*, i.e., Laughter (cf. 17:17, 18:12). The son was “so called because of his father’s believing and his mother’s unbelieving laughter at the promise of his birth, and because of their great joy now at the fulfillment of it” (21:6; cf. Isa. 54:1). The birth, naming and circumcision of Isaac were in accord with Gen. 17:19, 12. Ishmael had been circumcised previously at the age of thirteen (17:25). Abraham was now 100 years old: thus he had waited twenty-five years for the fulfillment of the promise (cf. 12:5)—a remarkable instance of faith and patience (Rom. 4:20); and thus Isaac’s birth was a remarkable demonstration of divine power (Rom. 4:20, Heb. 11:11-12). *The several instances of miraculous conception mentioned in Scripture are the following: Sarah (Heb. 11:11); Rebekah (Gen. 25:21); Rachel (Gen. 30:22); Manoah’s wife (Judg. 13:3-24); Hannah (1 Sam. 1:19, 20); Elisabeth (Luke 1:24, 25, 36, 37, 58); and Mary, by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:31-35).*

### 4. *The Expulsion of the Bondwoman and Her Son* (vv. 8-21)

8 *And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. 9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne unto Abraham, mocking. 10 Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this handmaid and her son: for the son of this handmaid shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. 11 And the thing was very grievous in Abraham’s sight on account of his son. 12 And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because*



of the lad, and because of thy handmaid; in all that Sarah saith unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. 13 And also of the son of the handmaid will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. 14 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and gave her the child, and sent her away; and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. 15 And the water in the bottle was spent, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. 16 And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot; for she said, Let me not look upon the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept. 17 And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. 18 Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thy hand; for I will make him a great nation. 19 And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. 20 And God was with the lad, and he grew; and he dwelt in the wilderness, and became, as he grew up, an archer. 21 And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

(1) *Sarah's Anger* (vv. 8-10). V. 8—Isaac weaned—at about the age of three. The feast was the customary celebration of the occasion of the weaning of a child. The age of weaning in modern Palestine is from two to three years; in ancient Israel it must have been later, at least in some instances (Cf. 1 Sam. 1:22, 2 Mac. 7:27ff.). “The weaning was always regarded as a joyous occasion, as we find with Samuel, who on being weaned was taken by his mother to the Tabernacle at Shiloh” (SC, 103): (cf. 1 Sam. 1:22ff.). V. 9—Sarah saw Hagar’s son *mocking*.

## SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

Other versions (LXX, Vulgate, JB) gave it "playing with her son Isaac." Leupold translates: "Sarah observed that the son of the Egyptian woman Hagar, whom she had borne to Abraham, was (always) mocking": the frequentative participle is used here, says this writer. "Another allusion to Isaac's name, cf. 17:17f.; the one verb means 'to laugh' and 'to play'" (JB, 37, n.). The recently published Hebrew commentary (SC, 103-104) reads: "*making sport*: the verb denotes idolatry (cf. Exod. 32:6), immorality (cf. 39:17), or murder (cf. 2 Sam. 2:14f.); in all these passages the same or a similar verb occurs, and in the last-mentioned the meaning is to fight to the death. Also, he quarreled with Isaac about the inheritance, claiming he would be the heir as the eldest son; this follows from Sarah's insistence in the next verse that he should not be co-heir with Isaac. . . . Ishmael derided Isaac and jeered at the great feast, and Sarah resented that the son of a bondmaid should presume to do this, which explains her allusion to his lowly parentage." Skinner (ICCG, 322) certainly disagrees: "*playing with Isaac her son* . . . It is the spectacle of two young children playing together, innocent of social distinctions, that excites Sarah's maternal jealousy and prompts her cruel demand." Leupold takes the opposite view (EG, 599): "The writer did not want to say that he mocked *Isaac*, because, apparently, Ishmael mocked the prospects of Isaac and his spiritual destiny; in fact, just adopted a mocking attitude over against *everything* involved in Isaac's future. . . . To translate, as many would do, "he was *playing*," certainly imputes to Sarah the cheapest kind of jealousy, quite unworthy of this woman of faith." But, why should we not here, as elsewhere, resolve this problem in the light of New Testament teaching, on the principle that any Scripture must be in harmony with the teaching of the whole Bible? Therefore, we shall allow Gal. 4:29 to settle the question: "he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after

the Spirit," etc. This is a capsule description of the never-ending warfare of the carnally minded against the spiritually minded (Rom. 8:5-9). *The Bible will never speak clearly to those who will not accept it and treat it as a whole.* Just how old was Ishmael by this time? Correlating 16:16 with 21:5, we conclude that he was about fifteen years old. It is rather difficult to think that on this occasion a fifteen-year-old would have been doing much "playing" with a two- or three-year-old.

V. 10—Sarah demands that both the bondwoman and her son should be *cast out*; this would seem to indicate that Sarah held Hagar responsible for Ishmael's mocking attitude toward Isaac. V. 11—Abraham was grieved, not so much apparently about the prospect of losing the bondwoman as about the lack of proper care and protection for the son if they were to be "cast out," for, after all, Ishmael was *his* son. Abraham's language in 17:18 seems to indicate that he had hoped that Ishmael might be recognized as the promised heir; however, this plea and God's answer in v. 19 indicate clearly that this was not the Divine will. This should teach us that *man's responses and ways of doing things (righteousness) cannot be substituted for God's way of doing things.* In the present instance (v. 11) "Abraham's displeasure may well have been a reflection of the fact that customary law of his day forbade the expulsion of a slave wife and her children" (HSB, 35). Vv. 12-13: God intervenes to reassure the patriarch, telling him to hearken to his wife's demand because she is justified in making it. God's reason for sanctioning the demand is that according to His Eternal Purpose (Eph. 1:3-14, 2:11-21; 3:1-12) the true descendants (seed) of Abraham should be found in the line of Isaac. "Since, then, Ishmael potentially is a foreign element among the offspring of Abraham, he must be removed. That being God's reason for Ishmael's and Hagar's dismissal, why should it not also have been Sarah's?" (EG, 603). "V. 12. Isaac, as thine heir, shall

bear and propagate thy name; and the promised seed and land, and the spiritual prerogatives, shall be entailed upon him, Rom. 9:7-8, Heb. 11:8" (SIBG, 246). Reassurance is now given to Abraham with respect also to the future of Ishmael and his progeny: for Abraham's sake, God tells him, He will make him expand into a great people; hence Abraham should have no misgivings as to Ishmael's survival of any or all vicissitudes that might lie ahead.

(2) *Hagar and Ishmael in the Wilderness* (vv. 14-17). V. 14—*Bread and water*. This is a phrase which includes "all necessary provision, of which it is probable that Hagar and her son had sufficient to have served them till they had gotten to Hagar's friends in Egypt, had they not lost their way" (SITB, 246). The patriarch put the bottle (a skin of water, or water-bag) on Hagar's shoulder, "and gave her the child, and sent her away." The critics have had a field day here, so to speak, in the indulgence of speculative sophistry, in assuming that the text indicates that Hagar put the bread, the water-skin, and *the boy*, on her shoulder. This is ridiculous, of course, because by no possible means can the notion that Ishmael was just a small boy be harmonized with previous passages, such as 17:24, 25; 21:5, etc. "Distorted tradition could hardly have grown blurred on so important a fact as the priority of the birth of Ishmael" (EG, 605). Why not accept the simplest and most obvious meaning, namely, that *he gave the bread and the water and the child* (SC, 106), that is, put the lad's hand in his mother's so that she could lead him by her side. The statement certainly does not mean that Abraham gave her Ishmael also to carry. Vv. 14-16: Hagar departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. (It seems evident that Abraham was now dwelling somewhere in the area not too far from Beersheba.) Hagar kept on wandering until her water supply was exhausted, as inevitably would occur under such circumstances; such exhaustion as that which resulted from

lack of water supply naturally affected the boy much more quickly than the mother. Haley (ADB, 418): "The English version of verses 14-18 is peculiarly infelicitous, and makes a wrong impression. The 'child' was *not* placed upon Hagar's shoulder, nor cast under the shrub, nor held in the hand, as an infant might have been. The Hebrew word here rendered 'child,' denotes not only an infant, but also a *boy* or *young man*. Ishmael was at the time some sixteen years of age. The growing boy would be much more easily overcome by the heat, thirst, and fatigue of wandering than his mother, the hardy Egyptian handmaid. When he yielded to exhaustion she hastily laid him, fainting and half-dead, under the shelter of a shrub. Even after he was refreshed with water, he needed to be 'held,' that is, supported and led, for a time." (It should be noted that the same word *yeled*, 'child,' in vv. 14, 15, is applied to Joseph when *seventeen* years old (Gen. 37:2, 30). "For a time the mother supports the son, but her fast-failing strength cannot bear to be doubly taxed. She finds one of the bushes of the desert. Scant shade such as may be offered is often sought out by those wandering in the desert when they need protection against the sun's rays (cf. 1 Ki. 19:4). The mother desires to ease what appear to be the dying hours of the lad's life. She drops him hastily in exhaustion . . . with fine skill the author delineates how painfully the mother's love is torn by her son's distress. She must stay within sight. Yet she cannot witness his slow death. At the distance of a bow-shot . . . she hovers near. Her agonized cry rings out, 'I cannot look upon the death of the lad.'" (EG, 606). "She sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept." *Divine succor came*, vv. 17-19, in two forms, namely, the voice of the Angel of God from heaven, and the opening of Hagar's eyes. While God Himself heard the voice of the lad (perhaps his crying out for water), the medium of His revelation was *the Angel of God*. "What aileth thee?"

## SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

—thus the Angel recalled to Hagar that she had no cause for alarm, that in fact she was forgetting what God had promised in 16:10ff.; and then He repeated the promise here that He would make of the boy a great people. (Note the tremendously dramatic portrayal of physical and emotional suffering that is given us here, and given in just a few poignant statements). God evidently opened her eyes; that is, He gave her the insight to perceive that water was to be found close at hand. She filled the bottle with water and gave the lad drink. Vv. 20-21: *Ishmael's Future*. The boy grew up, evidently amidst the hardships of the desert—the proof that God was with him. He became a skilful bowman (archer); indeed his descendants were all noted for their archery. (Cf. Isa. 21:17). Ishmael grew up in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from among her own people. Mohammedan Arabs all claim descent from Ishmael; they hold that the well which God revealed to Hagar was the sacred well of Zemzem at Mecca, their holy city. It should be noted that Ishmael's line soon lost all spiritual kinship with Abraham and his posterity.

*Geography*. V. 14—"the wilderness of *Beersheba*." The name was introduced here proleptically, unless the incident related in vv. 22-33 had already taken place. The town itself was midway between the Mediterranean Sea and the southern end of the Dead Sea some distance east of Gerar. It became known as the southern limit of Israelite occupancy, so that the entire land (Palestine) could be designated as the territory "from Dan to Beersheba" (Judg. 20:1). "The wilderness of Beersheba" was the name given to the generally uncultivated waste between Palestine and Egypt. It seems evident that Abraham spent much of his later life in this area (Gen. 21:34, 22:19). Isaac was dwelling there when Jacob set out for Haran (Gen. 28:10). On this way into Egypt Jacob stopped there to offer sacrifices (Gen. 46:1). In the division of

the land this area went to the tribe of Simeon (Josh. 19:2). Beersheba was some fifty miles southwest of Jerusalem; hence, down through the centuries the southern gate of Jerusalem, leading toward Hebron and Beersheba, has been known as "the gate of friendship" *in memoriam* of the close relationship that existed between God and Abraham throughout the latter's sojourn in the Negeb. It was from Beersheba that Abraham set out on his journey to offer up Isaac, the child of promise, somewhere in "the land of Moriah" (Gen. 22:2). *The wilderness of Paran* (cf. Gen. 14:6)—the region in the central part of the Sinai peninsula, east of the wilderness of Shur (cf. Num. 10:12, 12:16; 13:3, 26; 1 Ki. 11:18, 1 Sam. 25:1). Kadesh (or Kadesh-barnea) was on the eastern border of the wilderness of Paran, and hence at the western limit of the wilderness of Zin (Num. 14:32-35, cf. Deut. 2:14; Num. 33:36-37; Num. 20:1; Num. 20:10-13, 27:14; Deut. 32:51; 20:14-21; Judg. 11:16-17; Num. 34:4, John. 15:3; Ezek. 47:19, 58:28; Josh. 10:41). (The oasis of *Beer-labai-roi* was in the northern part of the wilderness of Paran: cf. Gen. 16:7-14, also Gen. 24:62).

##### 5. *The Covenant with Abimelech* (vv. 22-34)

22 *And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phicol the captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest: 23 now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned. 24 And Abraham said, I will swear. 25 And Abraham reproveth Abimelech because of the well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away. 26 And Abimelech said, I know not who hath done this thing: neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I of it, but today. 27 And Abraham took sheep and oxen,*

## SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

*and gave them unto Abimelech; and they two made a covenant. 28 And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. 29 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves? 30 And he said, These seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that it may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well. 31 Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba; because there they sware both of them. 32 So they made a covenant at Beer-sheba: and Abimelech rose up, and Phicol the captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines. 33 And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of Jehovah, the Everlasting God. 34 And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines many days.*

“At that time,” that is, about the time Isaac was born. Jewish scholarship explains this incident—the dialogue between Abimelech and Abraham—substantially as follows (SC, 106-107). Abimelech recognized that God was with Abraham, as evident by the latter’s escape from Sodom (and his abandonment of that area as his place of residence), and the birth of Isaac in Sarah’s declining years. On these grounds Abimelech sought peace between them by means of a covenant (in this sense, a pact, a treaty), not on the ground of Abraham’s wealth and power. The king reminded the patriarch of his kindness in permitting the latter to live in the land surrounding Gerar, seat of the royal residence, and sought from him a formal declaration of reciprocal courtesy. To give support to this approach and to the proposed pact, the king brought with him, Phicol, the leader of his army (cf. 26:26). We now learn that the reason for Abimelech’s proposal was the fact that a strained relationship had arisen; this, said he, should not be allowed to persist. Whereupon Abraham replied that his only cause of complaint was the theft by



violence of one of his wells, by Abimelech's servants. (Skinner (ICCG, 326) thinks that the right to several wells was being contested—on the basis of the frequentative used here; also on the basis of the plural 'wells' in the LXX, Brooke-McLean addition, 1906; and especially by comparison with the fuller parallel in Gen. 26:18. Skinner translates, *And as often as Abraham took Abimelech to task about the wells . . . Abimelech would answer . . .* etc.) To this the king replied that he had not been cognizant of the incident until 'today' (*i.e.*, the day on which he was meeting with Abraham to propose this mutual agreement), even chiding the patriarch for not telling him about it. (This would seem to refute Skinner: indeed Abraham might well have dug several wells, but the violence may have occurred at only one of them.) When the air had been cleared by this preliminary exchange, the covenant was actualized. (Some authorities think that the word "covenant" in Scripture should be used exclusively to signify pacts in which God is one of the parties involved). It must be kept in mind that *in these hot countries a well was of great value* (cf. 26:18-21).

Vv. 28-30: *The seven ewe-lambs.* Abraham's explanation of his purpose in presenting the seven-ewe lambs to the king "by themselves"—an allusion to the special end which they were intended to serve—and the king's acceptance of them, signified Abimelech's renunciation of all claim to the well in question. The gift or exchange of presents frequently accompanied the making of a covenant (cf. 1 Ki. 15:19, Isa. 30:6, Hos. 12:1-2), the exchange in this case, however, was not an integral part of the covenant. The covenant itself (*berith*) was then confirmed by the mutual oath-taking; hence the name *Beer-sheba*, meaning the "Well of the Oath," after the essential element of the covenant. "The first part of the compound means 'well'; but the second part could be either 'seven' or 'oath.' Hence an original and entirely appropriate 'Well

## SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

of Seven,' that is, Seven-Wells, lent itself to elaboration as 'Well of the Oath,' which popular etymology would be loath to ignore. As a matter of fact, all three connotations—well, seven, and oath—figure in the present episode through the medium of popular interpretation: a dispute over a well is resolved by a treaty that is solemnized by seven ewes, which in turn symbolize a mutual oath" (ABG, 159-160). But Skinner seems to insist that the seven lambs, a present or gift, was not "an understood part of the ceremony," at least on the part of Abimelech. Why can we not let the Bible say what it means and mean what it says? that is, why is it necessary to assume that Abraham himself had nothing to do with the naming of the place, in view of the plain statement in v. 31 that he did, and that he so named it with regard to the mutual oath taken by the king and himself, the "Well of the Oath"? (*Why does the ultra-academic mentality insist on reading discrepancies into Scripture passages when there is no necessity for such nit-picking? Can it be true that the ultra-educated mind has become so intellectually bogged down with minutiae that it has lost the power to think, or at least to "think straight"?*) It seems that the whole question involved here is presented with complete clarity: that the first group of animals, v. 27, symbolized the basic pact (cf. 15:9 ff.), that the second group, on the other hand, the seven ewe-lambs, was clearly labeled a gift, the acceptance of which by Abimelech was to constitute the validation of Abraham's claim to the well. (Obviously Abraham may have caused other wells to be dug *after* this occurrence, cf. 26:18). The king and his captain then returned "into the land of the Philistines," that is, "they simply returned from Beersheba where this took place, to Gerar which was the capital" (SC, 107). As Beersheba lay in the same general area it could also be described as being in the land of the Philistines. "Beersheba did not belong to Gerar, in the stricter sense; but the Philistines extended their wander-

ings so far, and claimed the district as their own, as is evident from the fact that Abimelech's people had taken the well from Abraham. On the other hand, Abraham with his numerous flocks would not confine himself to the Wady *es Seba*, but must have sought for pasturage in the whole surrounding country; and as Abimelech had given him full permission to dwell in the land (20:15), he would still, as heretofore, frequently come as far as Gerar, so that his dwelling at Beersheba (22:19) might be correctly described as sojourning (nomadizing) in the land of the Philistines" (BCOTP, 247). There are several wells in this vicinity, in our day, we are told, the largest of which is a little over 12 feet in diameter; "the digging of this well involved cutting through 16 feet of solid rock. . . . Conder found a date indicating that repairs had been carried out as late as the 12th century A.D. At the time of his visit in 1874, it was 38 feet to the surface of the water" (NBD, 138).

V. 33—*The tamarisk tree*, planted by Abraham in Beersheba, common in Egypt and in Petraea, has been found growing in recent years near the ancient Beersheba. This is a species of stunted bush or gnarled tree of desert areas. "The planting of this long-lived tree, with its hard wood, and its long, narrow, thickly clustered, evergreen leaves, was to be a type of the ever-enduring grace of the faithful covenant God." But there is no mention whatever of a cult associated with this place, or of sacrifice *in memoriam* of the treaty made there. "The tamarisk with its firm and durable wood was a fitting emblem of the Everlasting God. Why some make a fetish of this tree, or others say that the tree was only 'believed to have been planted by Abraham,' is beyond our power to explain" (EG, 614). Sacred trees, sacred wells, sacred stones, etc., each sacred by virtue of the event which it memorialized, are common throughout the Scriptures (cf. Josh. 4:7; Gen. 35:8, 13:18; Exo. 3:1-5; cf. Exo. 34:13; Deut.

## SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

16:21-22; cf. Deut. 33:16; cf. also Gen. 2:16-17, 3:6; Rev. 22:2). "*Jehovah, the Everlasting God.*" The peculiar term here, *El Olam*, apparently is to justify the translation, *the Eternal*. (The critics assume that there was a Cult of Beersheba, among the *sacra* of which "there must have been a sacred tamarisk believed to have been placed there by Abraham." Hence the name of Deity here is explained "presumably" as being "the pre-Israelite name of the local *numen* ["presiding spirit"] here identified with Yahwe." But this whole hypothesis is based on the *apriori* determination to "explain" everything recorded in the Old Testament solely in the light of pagan mythologies and cults: hence the many such instances in Genesis. The fact seems to be that no concrete evidence exists to justify the notion that in this particular account in Genesis a *grove* was involved rather than a single tamarisk tree. Similarly, there is no real warrant, outside human speculation, for trying to tie in the name of Jehovah here with any localized *numen*. I find Lange's explanation the simplest and most convincing (CDHCG, 460): "Abraham had earlier (Gen. 14:22) designated Jehovah as El Elyon, then recognized him (17:1) as El Shaddai. It follows from this that Jehovah had revealed himself to him under various aspects, whose definitions form a parallel to the universal name Elohim. The God of the highest majesty who gave him victory over the kings of the East, the God of miraculous power who bestowed upon him his son Isaac, now revealed himself in his divine covenant-truth, over against the temporary covenant with Abimelech, as the eternal God. And the tamarisk might well signify this also, that the hope of his seed for Canaan should remain green until the most distant future, uninjured by his temporary covenant with Abimelech, which he will hold sacred." (For the tamarisk, cf. also 1 Sam. 22:6, 31:13; for *The Everlasting God*, cf. Exo. 15:18, Psa. 90:2, Jer. 10:10, Deut. 32.40, Dan. 6:26, Rom. 1:20, Eph. 3:9, 2 Pet. 3:8; Rev.

1:8, 4:9, 22:13, etc.) Speiser (ABG, 159): "This need not, however, refer to the local deity of Beer-sheba, but may be a local epithet of a deity called upon to support a formal treaty that is expected to be valid for all time."

V. 34—More and more Abraham, and later his son Isaac, saw that this southern extremity of the land (Palestine) was best suited to his *sojourning*. (This word *sojourning* is indeed the key to Abraham's life throughout: cf. Heb. 11:8-10). *Many days*—according to Rashi's calculations: "More than in Hebron: in Hebron he dwelt twenty-five years but here twenty-six years" (SC, 108). (Cf. Gen. 22:19, 26:23-33, 28:10, 46:1).

## FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

### The Allegory of Sarah and Hagar

Gal. 4:21-31, cf. 2 Cor. 3:1-18, Rev. 21:2. An allegory is defined as a *sustained* comparison, as a "prolonged metaphor, in which typically a series of actions are symbolic of other actions" (Webster). In the allegory of Sarah and Hagar the Apostle certainly points up the principle of interpretation on which we have insisted, in this work on Genesis, from the very beginning, namely, that *no Scripture passage or incident can be clearly understood, or interpreted, except in the light of the teaching of the Bible as a whole*. Failure to recognize this norm is responsible for ninety per cent, I should say, of the doctrinal confusion that abounds in the nominal Christian world.

In our text the Apostle teaches us that in Hagar and Sarah we have an allegory of the Old and the New Covenants respectively (in stereotyped form, the two Testaments which make up the entire Bible). On the basis of this allegorical interpretation, we find the following comparisons (in this case, points of difference):

HAGAR	SARAH
("fugitive," "flight")	("princess")
— the bondswoman, slave, Gen. 21:10, 12; Gal. 4:30.	— the freewoman, the wife, Gen. 17:15-19, Gal. 4:31.
— Ishmael, "God hears," the child of bondage, Gen. 16:15, Gal. 4:21-31.	— Isaac, "laughter," the child of Divine promise, Gen. 17:19, 18:14, 21:2; Gal. 4:23.
— the Old Covenant, which engendered unto bondage, Gal. 4:24.	— the New Covenant, which engenders unto freedom, Gal. 4:26, John 8:31-32, Rom. 8:1-11, Jas. 1:25.

## SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1--21:34

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| <p>—made with the fleshly seed of Abraham, Gen. 12:1-3, 17:7; Deut. 5:1-5, Jer. 31:31-34.</p>  | <p>—made with the spiritual seed of Abraham, those redeemed by Christ Jesus, Gal. 3:23-29, 1 Cor. 12:13, 1 Pet. 2:1-5.</p>   |
| <p>—mediated by Moses, Deut. 5:4-5; John 1:17, 7:19; Gal. 3:18-20.</p>   | <p>—mediated by Christ, 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:1-6, 9:15, 12:24.</p>   |
| <p>—included Jews (and proselytes) only, Gen. 17:9-14.</p>   | <p>—includes all obedient believers in Christ, both Gentiles and Jews, Eph. 2:11-22, 3:6-7; Rom. 11:28-32; Gal. 3:23-29.</p>   |
| <p>—that of natural or fleshly birth (generation), Gen. 17:13.</p>   | <p>—that of spiritual birth (regeneration), John 3:1-7; Rom. 5:5, 8:1-11; 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; Gal. 5:22-25, 2 Cor. 3:1-3, Tit. 3:5.</p>   |
| <p>—that of fleshly circumcision, as the sign and seal thereof, hence infants and heathen servants, who had to be taught to know the Lord after their induction into the Covenant by circumcision, Gen. 17:9-14; John 3:6, 7:22; Acts 7:8; Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:7-12.</p> | <p>—that of spiritual circumcision as the sign and seal thereof, Rom. 2:29, Eph. 2:11, Phil. 3:3, Col. 2:9-12. Cf. Acts. 2:38, John 3:5; Rom. 5:5, 6:1-9; Gal. 3:27, 2 Cor. 1:22, 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19. (See under Part 30, "Circumcision of the Heart.")</p> |
| <p>—that of an earthly (the Levitical) priesthood, Exo. 28:1, Heb. 5:4, 7:1-9.</p>   | <p>—that of the priesthood of all obedient believers, 2 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6, Rom. 12:1.</p>  |
| <p>—that of an earthly (the Aaronic) high priesthood, Lev. 8:1-9.</p>  | <p>—that of the royal High Priesthood of Christ, after the order of Melchizedek, <i>i.e.</i>, the King-Priest "without beginning of days or end of life," Psa. 110:4; Heb., chs. 7, 8, 9, 10.</p>  |
| <p>—that of Law, John 1:17, "the bond written in ordinances," Col. 2:14, Rom. 2:12-16, Luke 24:44, etc.</p>  | <p>—that of Grace (unmerited favor), John 1:27, Rom. 3:24, 7:4, 8:3, 10:4; Eph. 2:8, Tit. 3:7, Acts 20:24, etc.</p>  |
| <p>—that of Law written on tables of stone, Exo. 32:15, Deut. 10:4, Heb. 9:4, 2 Cor. 3:3.</p>  | <p>—that of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, Rom. 8:2, 1 Cor. 15:45, John 6:63, 68; written on "tablets of human hearts," 2 Cor. 3:3 (R.S.V.); hence, by "the hearing of faith," Gal 3:2. (Cf. also Jer. 31:33, Ezek. 11:19).</p>                       |

- that of the "letter," *i.e.*, of the Mosaic Law regarded as "a yoke of externalism, a system that possessed no life of its own, and inspired no life in others." Rom. 3:19-20.
- that of the "spirit," 2 Cor. 3:3, Rom. 3:21-27; John 6:63; Rom. 8:1-11; that which makes for freedom in Christ Jesus, John 8:31-32, Jas. 1:25; freedom both from the *guilt* of sin (Ezek. 18:19-20; and from the *consequences* of sin, Exo. 20:5-6; and from passion, pride, superstition, prejudice, etc., as well, John 6:63.
- that of the ministration of death, 2 Cor. 3:7; that is, the Law passes the death sentence on all who disobey it, 1 Cor. 15:56, Rom. 5:12.
- that of the ministration of the spirit, Rom. 7:6, 8:6; John 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6.
- that of the ministration of condemnation, 2 Cor. 3:9; the system of "thou-shalt nots," disobedience to which was sin, and usually incurred the death penalty, *e.g.*, Num. 15:32-36; John 8:5.
- that of the ministration of righteousness, *i.e.*, justification, Rom. 5:1-11. Cf. also Rom. 2:27-29, 7:6, 8:11; Gal. 5:8, 1 Cor. 15:45. John 8:5—the Law would stone the adulteress; the Gospel said to her, "Go, and sin no more."
- that of a system of *shadows* or *types*, Heb., chs. 9, 10; cf. Rom. 5:14, 1 Pet. 3:19-21.
- that of the antitypes, the *realities* of "heavenly things," Heb. 8:5, also ch. 10.
- that system under which the gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit were bestowed only on individuals to qualify them for tasks which God commissioned them to perform, Gen. 20:7, Neh. 9:9-30, Isa. 63:10-15; Num. 11:17, 25, 26-30; Num. 27:18-23; Exo. 35:30-35; Judg. 4:4, 3:10, 11:29; Judg. 14:6, 14, 19; 1 Sam. 11:6, 16:13; 2 Sam. 23:1-2; 1 Chron. 28:11-12; cf. Neh. 9:20, 2 Pet. 1:21, 1 Pet. 1:10-12; hence, *imperfect* in the sense that it lacked the promises connected with the Gospel, Jer. 31:31-34, Heb. 8:7-12, 9:11-15, 10:1-18.
- that system under which all obedient believers—the church—share the indwelling of the Spirit, John 7:37-39, Acts 2:38, Rom. 5:5, 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; Rom. 8:11, 1 Cor. 12:13, Rom. 14:17, 1 Pet. 1:2; hence, said to be "enacted upon better promises," *viz.*, remission of sins, the indwelling of the Spirit, and eternal life, Acts 2:38; Rom. 5:5, 8:9-11, 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 4:30, 5:18; Matt. 25:46, Rom. 6:23, John 3:16.

Farrar (PC, Second Corinthians, 58): "In other words, 'not of the Law, but of the Gospel'; not of that which is dead, but of that which is living; not of that which is deathful, but of that which is

## SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

lifegiving; not of bondage, but of freedom; not of mutilation, but of self-control; not of the outward, but of the inward; not of works, but of grace; not of menace, but of promise; not of curse, but of blessing; not of wrath, but of love; not of Moses, but of Christ. This is the theme which St. Paul develops especially in the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians (see Rom. 2:29, 3:20, 7:6-11, 8:2; Gal. 3:10, 5:4, etc.)."

On Gal. 4:22-25, Mackintosh (NG, 181) writes: "'The flesh' is, in this important passage, contrasted with 'promise'; and thus we not only get the divine idea as to what the term 'flesh' implies, but also as to Abraham's effort to obtain the seed by means of Hagar, instead of resting in God's 'promise.' The two covenants are allegorized by Hagar and Sarah, and are diametrically opposite, the one to the other. The one gendering to bondage, inasmuch as it raised the question as to man's competency 'to do' and 'not to do,' and made life entirely dependant upon that competency. 'The man that doeth these things shall live in them.' This was the Hagar-covenant. But the Sarah-covenant reveals God as the God of promise, which promise is entirely independent of man, and founded upon God's willingness and ability to fulfill it. When God makes a promise, there is no 'if' attached thereto. He makes it unconditionally, and is resolved to fulfill it; and faith rests in Him, in perfect liberty of heart. It needs no effort of nature to reach the accomplishment of a divine promise. Here was precisely where Abraham and Sarah failed. They made an effort of nature to reach a certain end, which end was absolutely secured by a promise of God. *This is the grand mistake of unbelief.* By its restless activity, it raises hazy mist around the soul, which hinders the beams of the divine glory from reaching it. 'He could do there no mighty works, because of their unbelief.' One great characteristic virtue of faith is, that it ever leaves the platform clear for God to show Himself; and truly, when He shows Himself, man must take the place of a happy worshiper." Again: "Hence, therefore, a man who tells me, You must be so and so, in order to be saved, robs the cross of all its glory, and robs me of all my peace. If salvation depends upon *our* being or doing aught, we shall inevitably be lost. Thank God, it does not; for the great fundamental principles of the gospel is that God is ALL: man is NOTHING. It is not a mixture of God and man—it is all of God. The peace of the Gospel does not repose in part on Christ's work and in part on man's work; it reposes *wholly* on Christ's work, because that work is perfect—perfect forever; and it renders all who put their trust in it as perfect as itself" (p. 183). (Cf. John 1:29).

"The law addresses man, tests him, proves him a wreck, puts him under a curse. It not only puts him there, but keeps him there as long as he is occupied with it. The Gospel, on the other hand, recognizes that man is lost, in need of a Savior. So the Gospel reveals God as He is—the Savior of the lost, the Pardoner of the guilty, the Quickener of the dead. It exhibits Him as extending His ineffable grace in offers of redemption. There is nothing in man—for who could expect anything out of a bankrupt?—that might enable him to achieve redemption no matter how strenuously he might tug at his



own bootstraps. There is no provision in any law for self-redemption: redemption can occur only when the true owner buys back his own property. God is the owner of all things—the earth and the fulness thereof, all things non-living and living, including man. Therefore, since man has chosen to mortgage himself in sin, he simply cannot be redeemed unless and until his original owner pays the ransom price and so buys him back: that ransom price was paid on Calvary. God must independently exhibit His own grace to the fallen creatures (Rom. 3:23, Col. 1:21-22; Rom. 6:6, 7:14; Eph. 2:1, Gal. 4:3, Heb. 2:17, Matt. 20:28, 1 Tim. 2:5-6, etc.). And the Galatians, like Abraham of old, were going away from God, and depending upon the flesh. They were returning to bondage, and to go back unto the Law was to put themselves back under the curse of sin, cf. Gal. 3:1-14.

“While the birth of Isaac filled Sarah’s heart with laughter, it also brought out the true character of the bondwoman’s son. So the inauguration of the New Covenant brought out by way of contrast the true character of the Old. The Old was the tutor leading us unto Christ: it served the ideals of its day. But the New is of Christ, and therefore we who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1) are no longer under the Old. The birth of Isaac proved to be to Abraham’s household what the implantation of a new heart is to the soul of the sinner. The son of the bondwoman could never be anything but that. He might become a great archer; he might dwell in the wilderness; he might become the ancestor of twelve princes—but he was still the son of a bondwoman. On the other hand, no matter how despised, how weak, how powerless Isaac might be, he was still the son of the freewoman. Their very natures were different (cf. John 3:6, Rom. 8:1-11).

The bondwoman represents the Covenant of Law, and her son represents the works of the Law. This is very plain. The former genders only to bondage; she can never bring forth a free man, because *she herself* is a bondwoman. The Law of Moses never gave liberty, as long as the individual was alive and it ruled him. I can never be truly free if I am under the dominion of the Law. I can be free only under *grace*, appropriated by *faith* (Acts 15:11, Eph. 2:8, Tit. 2:11, Rom. 3:26). Wherefore, when the New Covenant was ratified, it was necessary that the Old be cast out (abrogated). (Cf. Col. 2:13-15, Heb. 8:13, Gal. 3:23-25). Thus, in the casting out of the bondwoman, Hagar, the allegory of Sarah and Hagar is complete.” (See again art., “The Two Covenants,” Part Thirty, *supra*. Read also Augustine’s great work, *The City of God*; cf. Gal. 4:26, Rev. 21:1-4.)

### “Infant Baptism”

(Review “Circumcision of the Heart,” Part Thirty, *supra*. The following is added verbatim from the dialectic of the little book, *On the Rock* (pp. 43, 44), by D. R. Dungan, pioneer preacher of the Restoration Movement. It should be considered as complementary, and conclusive (I should say) to any study of the Covenants.)

## SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

I will give you a few, as I think, valid reasons for not baptizing infants:

1. It is without Scriptural authority. Neither Christ nor any one of the apostles ever commanded it.

2. It supplants believers' baptism, which the Lord did command.

3. It has a tendency to subvert true conversion, by bringing persons into the church in infancy, causing them to trust to that for salvation.

4. It deprives one of the pleasure of obedience.

5. It involves uncertainty as to having been baptized.

6. It teaches baptismal regeneration. Indeed, baptismal regeneration gave rise to infant baptism.

7. It changes the order of Christ's commission to His apostles; their first duty according to that, was to teach, or preach the gospel; but, according to this doctrine, their first duty was to baptize.

8. To be baptized is an act of obedience, but an infant can not obey an authority it knows nothing about.

9. Peter says that baptism is the answer of a good conscience, but the infant can have no conscience in the matter.

10. Baptism is coupled with repentance and faith, but infants are incapable of either.

11. Baptism was coupled with calling on the name of the Lord by those who were baptized, but infants cannot do that.

12. Those baptized by divine authority gave satisfactory evidence of faith, by a confession, before they were baptized, but infants can not.

13. Infant baptism is generally employed to bring them into the church, a place in which they are in no way qualified to be. Church members in the days of the apostles, first, gave heed to the apostles' teaching; attended to the fellowship; third, partook of the Lord's Supper; fourth, engaged in prayer; fifth, did not dare to wilfully

neglect the assembly of the saints; sixth, exhorted one another; seventh, engaged in the public charities that were imposed upon them at the time; eighth, exhibited the fruits of the Spirit. Now infants can do none of these things, and hence can not be members of the church.

14. It set at naught all change of heart as necessarily preceding baptism.

(To this we add: infant "christening," commonly called "infant baptism," is really infant *aspersion* (sprinkling), or infant *affusion* (pouring). Real infant baptism is infant *immersion*, the practice of Greek Orthodoxy from the first.)

### REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART THIRTY-THREE

1. Locate the Negeb, Gerar, "the way of Shur." What mining operations were carried on in this area in patriarchal times?
2. To what area did Abraham migrate after the destruction of the Cities of the Plain? What probably prompted this move?
3. What evidence do we have that the Philistines were in this area even before patriarchal times?
4. From what Mediterranean areas did the Philistines come?
5. Explain "Caphtor" and "Caphtorian."
6. What did the word "Abimelech" signify?
7. What probably was Abimelech's motive for taking Sarah into his harem?
8. What affliction did God put on the house of Abimelech because of this action?
9. What does this account indicate about Abimelech's general moral standards?
10. Name the outstanding dream experiences related in the Bible.

SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

11. List some of the more important Biblically-related vision-experiences.
12. How did these differ from theophanies?
13. What were the functions of a prophet? In what sense was Abraham a prophet?
14. What did God order Abimelech to do by way of restitution for the wrong he had committed?
15. How did Abraham account for his own action with respect to Abimelech and Sarah?
16. What were the details of Abimelech's response (restitution)?
17. What was the result of Abraham's intercession for Abimelech?
18. How does Abimelech compare with Pharaoh in the similar incident recorded in ch. 12?
19. What seems to have been God's over-all design in His dealing with the persons involved?
20. In what three chapters of Genesis do we find this theme of a sister-wife relationship recorded, and who were the persons involved in each case?
21. What added explanation did Abraham make to Abimelech that he had not made to Pharaoh? How account for this added disclosure?
22. On what grounds do we reach the conclusion that these three accounts involving sister-wife relationships were accounts of three different episodes?
23. List the circumstantial differences in the two narratives.
24. Is it reasonable to assume *a priori* that similar events are necessarily identical?
25. How does Dr. Speiser relate Hurrian customary law to these sister-wife episodes?
26. What are some of the objections to this view?
27. In what sense was Isaac's conception and birth a special demonstration of Divine power?

28. How old was Abraham when Isaac was born? How long had he waited for the fulfillment of the Divine promise?
29. What did the name "Isaac" mean? What was the basis for giving the boy this name?
30. What aroused Sarah's resentment against Hagar and her son? What did she demand of Abraham?
31. How does Skinner's explanation of Sarah's attitude differ from that of Leupold *et al*?
32. How does Gal. 4:29 give us the determination of this problem?
33. What was Abraham's personal reaction to Sarah's demand that Hagar and her son be cast out?
34. What reassurance did God give Abraham about the future of Ishmael and his progeny?
35. What is the simplest and obvious meaning of v. 14?
36. How does Haley explain verses 14-18?
37. How does Genesis describe Hagar's and Ishmael's condition in the "wilderness of Beersheba"?
38. How did Divine succor come to Hagar and her son? What did God promise with regard to Ishmael's future? What circumstances of his future are disclosed here?
39. Locate geographically the Wilderness of Beersheba, the Wilderness of Paran, and the Wilderness of Zin.
40. What role does Beersheba play in the story of the patriarchal age?
41. How long did Abraham continue to sojourn in the region of Beersheba?
42. What kind of covenant did Abimelech now seek with Abraham? What apparently prompted him to propose this covenant?
43. What seems to have been the cause of the strained relationship between the patriarch and the king?
44. What was the importance of wells in these countries?

SOJOURN IN THE NEGEB 20:1—21:34

45. In what way was the covenant confirmed in this instance?
46. What was the purpose of Abraham's gift of the seven ewe-lambs?
47. Give Dr. Speiser's explanation of the etymology of the name "Beersheba."
48. What claim apparently was validated by Abimelech's acceptance of the seven ewe-lambs?
49. In what sense is Beersheba said to have been "in the land of the Philistines"?
50. Explain the significance of Abraham's planting of the tamarisk tree in Beersheba. Is there any significant evidence that this was in a grove or that the place was the locus of a pagan cult?
51. What general forms do *memorials* take in Scripture? That is, what are the different kinds?
52. Explain the significance of the name *El Olam*.
53. Restate Lange's exposition of the significance of this name.
54. How many years did Abraham spend in this region, in comparison with the length of his sojourn near Hebron?
55. Why is the word "sojourn" so significant in explaining Abraham's movements?
56. Explain what is meant by the Allegory of Sarah and Hagar. List the essential features of this allegory.
57. Review the section of Part Thirty which has to do with "circumcision of the heart," showing precisely what Scripture teaches spiritual circumcision to be.
58. What reasons are given by Dungan for not practising what is called "infant baptism"? How is "infant baptism" related to "spiritual circumcsision"?