

WINTER VISION WEEK TRAINING

A Real Romantic Journey;

THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM

PART IV

December 30, 2019–January 4, 2020
Cleveland, OH

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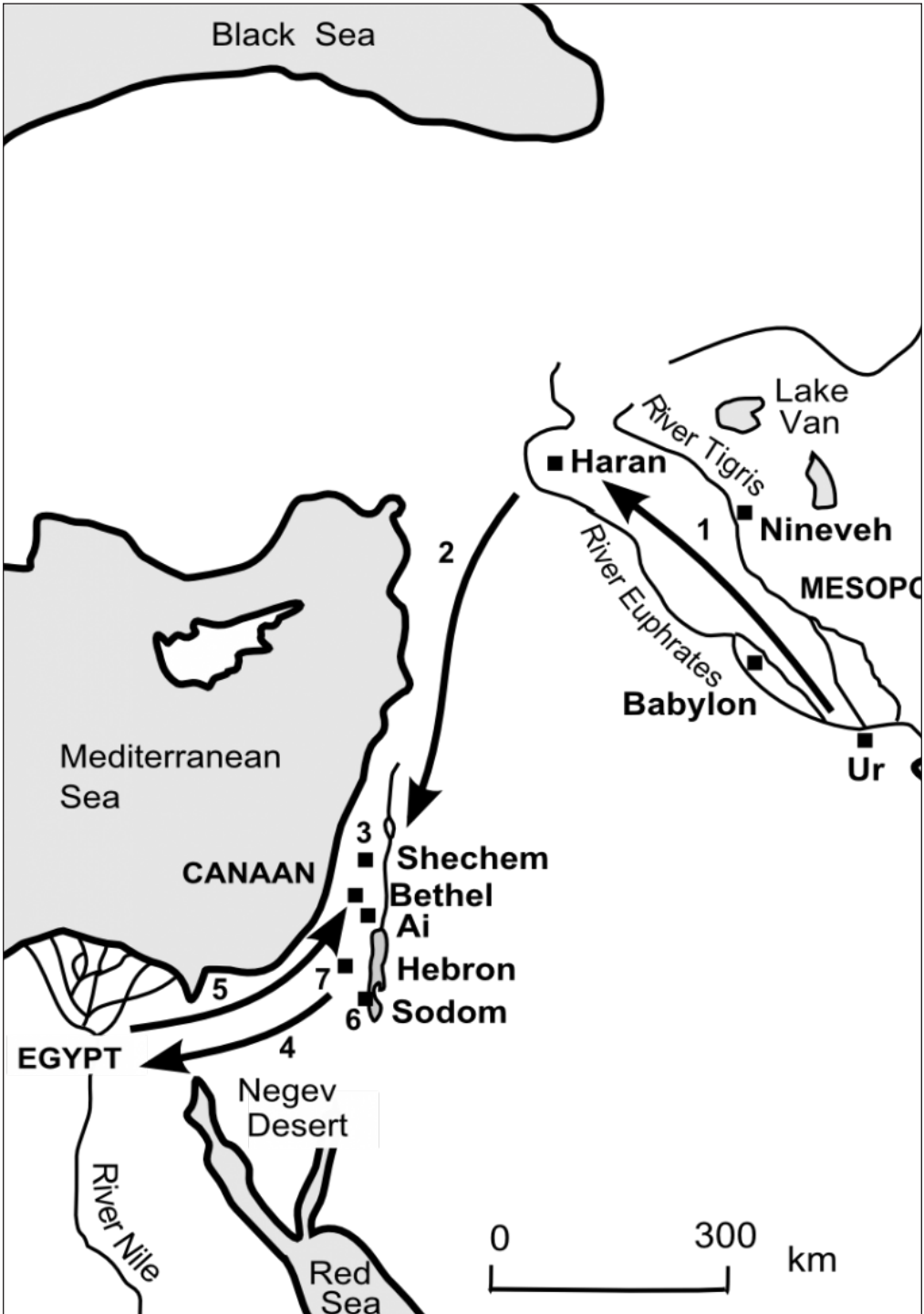
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R. Hitchcock, *Hitchcock's Bible Names*

CONTENTS

1. God's Calling and God's Promise.....	5
2. God's Persisting, Ignoring the Weakness of Begetting Ishmael.....	7
3. God's Mercy Appears Again, Producing the Covenant of Circumcision.....	11
4. God, He Himself, is Faithful to His Own Promise.....	17
5. Abraham's Failure by Ignoring God's Testimony	20
6. Enjoying God's Promise in the Continuation of Life—Begetting Isaac	23
7. Holding Only the Testimony of the Lord— Chasing Away Ishmael	27
8. Becoming Honored by Both God and Man— The Covenant with Abimelech	30



GOD'S CALLING AND GOD'S PROMISE

- 1) God appeared to Abram, calling him out of Chaldea and also out of Haran to the good land (Acts 7:2–4; Gen. 12:1–4).

- 2) Abram began his journey with a clear and healthy spiritual growth (Gen. 12:4–9, 13:18). He first came to Shechem (“strength”). Then, he built an altar between Bethel (“house of God”) and Ai (“heap of ruins”). Finally, he came to Hebron (“fellowship”). This is a cycle for every Christian’s whole life.

- 3) In the process, Abram experienced failure by going to Egypt. However, he brought back a lot of wealth with him, plus Hagar, then a little Egyptian maid servant (Gen. 12:10–13:2).

- 4) Abram overcame his flesh relationship, separating himself from Lot. God promised Abram he would gain the land with a demand that he should rise up and walk in the land through its length and its width (Gen. 13).

- 5) However, Abram still cared for his nephew’s well-being, so he fought with four kings (Gen. 14:1–16). Here, Abram’s testimony

was very spiritual: “I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich’” (Gen.14:23).

6) This brought in the appearing of God with “Do not be afraid” (Gen. 15:1).

- “Do not be afraid” is the key utterance for a faithful journeyer. We are firstly afraid of giving ourselves to the Lord. God’s word is, “Do not be afraid.” Then, we consecrate ourselves to the Lord. God likes this, and His word is still, “Do not be afraid.” Even if we serve the Lord full-time, we have a lot of considerations. God’s word is still, “Do not be afraid.” Then, as we grow, in different stages of growth and in every experience, the concluding word should still be God’s speaking: “Do not be afraid.” Then, when we mature and begin to experience spiritual combat with the “spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places,” God’s word is still, “Do not be afraid.” All these experiences should bring us into a peace at the concluding of our life. At the end of Jesus-lovers’ lives, they are going to see Christ. The Lord’s word to them is still, “Do not be afraid.”

- More than this, God promised Abram that his seed (descendant) would be as the stars in the sky (Gen. 15:5). Abram believed, and God counted him as righteous (v. 6).

7) Abram made proper offerings (15:9–10). Then, God appeared to Abram in his sleep (vv. 12–16). When it was very dark,

a smoking oven and a burning torch passed through the offerings, and God made a covenant with Abram concerning the promised land (vv. 17–21).

7

- Smoking oven—see Deut. 4:20, where Egypt is called an “iron furnace.” This shows the way of the cross while we are following Christ. We are in the world, but not of the world. We experience such a furnace.
- Burning torch—eventually we are led to a burning torch, so that we can become light for His testimony and for the going on of the saints.

MESSAGE 2:

GOD’S PERSISTING, IGNORING THE WEAKNESS OF BEGETTING ISHMAEL

- 1) The failure of Abram—taking the advice of a “flesh,” advice that matched his own inward desire. This exposes the complicatedness of every faithful Jesus-lover.

Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. ² So Sarai said to Abram, “See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain

children by her.” And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. ³ Then Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. ⁴ So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, “My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The Lord judge between you and me.”

⁶ So Abram said to Sarai, “Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please.” And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence. (Genesis 16:1–6)

- Listening to his wife’s advice: Sarai besought Abram to take Hagar, her maid brought up from Egypt, to be his wife. This triggered what was in the deepest inner-part of a comparatively spiritual Abram. He was just as anxious as Sarai and willing to do anything within reason to have a son to fulfill God’s promise. This can be one of the greatest temptations to those who desire to serve God.
- Sarai’s illogical statement:

“My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The Lord judge between you and me.”

- This is the typical sign of a big flesh. A man can know God’s promise and be desperate to see His promise fulfilled, even

through fleshly means. Yet he may have never realized how wrong he could be. To Sarai, “the Lord judge between you and me” was a very fair statement. When we read it, however, we laugh at her ignorance.

- Abram loved Sarai and allowed her to ill-treat the maid, eventually forcing Hagar to run away. Rather than a peaceful life of faith, Abram’s living became chaotic.

- 2) God’s mercy is to all, including the one who came out of Abram’s mistake.

Now the Angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸ And He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?”

She said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.”

⁹ The Angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.” ¹⁰ Then the Angel of the Lord said to her, “I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.” ¹¹ And the Angel of the Lord said to her:

“Behold, you are with child,

And you shall bear a son.

You shall call his name Ishmael,

Because the Lord has heard your affliction.

¹² He shall be a wild man;

His hand shall be against every man,

And every man’s hand against him.

And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.”

¹³ Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her,

You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?”¹⁴ Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered. (Genesis 16:7–14)

- God remembers the needy. He met Hagar, advising her to go back. He even promised her: “I will multiply your descendants exceedingly.”
- Hagar’s response: “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?” When God appeared to Abram, Abram saw God clearly. Hagar’s seeing, however, was not as clear.
 - Hagar testified that Jehovah is a God who sees. Therefore, the well was called “You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees,” which eventually became the habitation of Isaac. This indicates the grandness of God. Even through Abram’s failure, even through a small Egyptian maid, God provided a place for Abram’s son, Isaac, to abide.
- At the age of 86, Hagar bore Abram a son, who named him Ishmael (“Whom God hears”)

¹⁵ So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

- The name Ishmael was actually given by God, because God heard the sufferings of Hagar. God foresaw and

predicted that Ishmael would be “a wild man,” or, “a wild donkey of a man” (v. 12, NASB).

11

- Here, we see two different understandings.
 - God saw the suffering of Hagar and heard her voice. He gave her son a name, Ishmael, who would be a fighter, a wild donkey of a man.
 - Abram possibly thought God heard *him*, giving *him* a son “Ishmael.” The moment Ishmael was born, Abram considered that God had finally fulfilled His promise and heard his cry.

MESSAGE 3:

GOD’S MERCY APPEARS AGAIN, PRODUCING THE COVENANT OF CIRCUMCISION

1) Thirteen years later, God appeared to Abram again.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. ² And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.”

- “Almighty God”—Heb: *El Shadday*, indicates not only mighty deeds (“all-mighty”) but also a mighty being (“all-sufficient”).
- God’s demand to Abram: “*Walk before Me and be blameless.*”
- Abram fell on his face, and God continued to speak:

Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: ⁴ “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. ⁸ Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

⁹ And God said to Abraham: “As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. (Genesis 17:3–9)

- “You shall be a father of many nations.”
- “No longer shall your name be called Abram (‘exalted father’), but...Abraham (‘father of a great multitude’).”

- “I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.”
 - “I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants (“seed”) after you...for an everlasting covenant.”
 - “I give to you and your descendants (“seed”)...the land in which you are a stranger (“land of your sojourning”), all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession.”
 - “I will be their God”
 - “You shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants (“seed”) after you throughout their generations.”
- Jeremiah eventually prophesied that these promises are a life matter (Jeremiah 31:31–34).
 - When the Lord Jesus took the cup, He indicated, “This is My blood of the new covenant” (Matt. 26:28).
 - The apostle Paul eventually stressed:

“I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

¹¹ None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. ¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." (Hebrews 8:10b–12)

- The necessity of circumcision

This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; ¹¹ and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you....¹³ He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised..." (Genesis 17:10–11, 13a)

- Every male needed to be circumcised as a sign of the covenant. This indicates that no human fleshly strength can be applied or used in God's economy. God denied Ishmael, as he was born of the flesh according to Abraham's natural man.
- Circumcision means no serving one can serve in their own male strength. Today, circumcision is applied in the realm of resurrection, as the apostle Paul said:

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² buried with Him in baptism,

in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. (Colossians 2:11–12).

- Thus, circumcision implies both the death of Christ and the resurrection realm He has brought believers into for Jesus-lovers to participate in. Darby considered circumcision, “true separation to God, such as God owns.” Paul’s denotation was different—to new life.

- God then spoke to Abraham:

“As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶ And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.” (Genesis 17:15b–16)

- “You shall not call her name Sarai (“My princess”), but Sarah (“princess of a multitude”).” In the church life today, there may be many Sarais, but few Sarahs. In other words, godliness, pleasantness, and delight replace multiplication.
- She shall become mother of nations and kings.
- Abraham’s response in laughing: *Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” (Genesis 17:17)*

- His answer to God: “*Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!*” (*Genesis 17:18*)
- This happens today among the whole of Christianity. People beget something, even take advantage of present congregations, and declare, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You, God!” In turn, they lose the real blessing, the real consecration, and the high experience before God.

- God responded to Abraham’s unhealthiness:

*Then God said: “No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. ²⁰ And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. ²¹ But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.” ²² Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham. (*Genesis 17:19–22*)*

- “Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.”
- “I have blessed [Ishmael], and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly....I will make him a

great nation.” Now, we commonly understand Ishmael’s descendants as today’s Muslims.

17

- Finally, God promised that Sarah would bear a son to Abraham “at this set time,” or, “at this season” (NASB) the following year. Then, God went up.

MESSAGE 4:

GOD, HE HIMSELF, IS FAITHFUL TO HIS OWN PROMISE

- 1) Abraham may have messed things up, but the God who called him, led him, and promised him never changed.

Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. ² So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, ³ and said, “My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. ⁴ Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. ⁵ And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. (Genesis 18:1–5)

- God appeared to Abraham by the terebinths (oaks,

implying vigor and vitality) of Mamre (“strength, fertile”), which were in Hebron.

- Abraham saw three men standing near him. He bowed himself to the earth and asked to serve them with water and bread.

- Abraham’s service:

And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, Knead quickly three seahs of wheaten flour, and make cakes. ⁷And Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf tender and good, and gave [it] to the attendant; and he hasted to dress it. ⁸ And he took thick and sweet milk, and the calf that he had dressed, and set [it] before them; and he stood before them under the tree, and they ate. (Genesis 18:6–8, Darby)

- “three-seahs of wheaten flour”—could mean that in the death of Christ, the triune God is satisfied

- “the calf tender and good”—could mean Christ, without defect, slaughtered for God’s satisfaction

- “thick and sweet milk”—implies the fresh, all-inclusive riches from the mother’s source, typifying Christ’s rich supply in resurrection

- Together, these three could typify the healthy humanity of Jesus, going through death by being slaughtered, and in his resurrection producing the thick and sweet milk.

○ Abraham stood before them and served them.

○ God’s promise to Abraham:

“I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.” (Genesis 18:10)

○ Sarah laughed within herself.

Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, “After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?” (Genesis 18:12)

○ Jehovah spoke to Abraham:

*“Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?’ ¹⁴ **Is anything too hard for the Lord? (“Is [any] matter too wonderful for Jehovah?”—Darby) At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.” (Genesis 18:13b–14)***

- Abraham interceded for Lot: From 50 righteous for God to not destroy the city of Sodom to 45, to 40, to 30, to 20, eventually to 10. Thus, he saved Lot.

And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt. (Genesis 19:29)

- Lot's wife turned back and became a pillar of salt. This typifies that whosoever comes out of the cursed place—the sinful world—yet looks back will be seriously judged.

¹⁷ So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed."... ²⁶ But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. (Genesis 19:17, 26)

MESSAGE 5:

ABRAHAM'S FAILURE BY IGNORING GOD'S TESTIMONY

- 1) Abraham was so sure about God's promise, and he firmly believed that next year he would have a son. Yet, at the same

time, his heart was on the success he had through the Lord's blessing. He ended up with Abimelech.

21

- For no apparent reason, Abraham shepherded his flocks south to Gerar (Gen. 20:1), which was about 50 km from Hebron.
- Abraham called his wife his sister. So Gerar's king, Abimelech, took her.

Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. (Genesis 20:2)

- Sarah was preserved through God's intervening. He spoke to King Abimelech:

And God said to him in a dream, "Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. ⁷ Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live.... (Genesis 20:6–7a)

- God's governmental blessing to Abraham:

Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham; and he restored Sarah his wife to him. ¹⁵ And Abimelech said, "See, my land is before you;

dwell where it pleases you.”¹⁶ Then to Sarah he said, “Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; indeed this vindicates you before all who are with you and before everybody.” Thus she was rebuked. (Genesis 20:14–16)

- “My land is before you; dwell where it pleases you”
 - Abimelech gave Abraham a thousand pieces of silver for Sarah to vindicate her, or, as “a covering of the eyes” (Darby)
- This story indicates the weak side of a spiritual man. It is very different from when Abraham went down to Egypt. Abraham did not lie, but used man’s way to protect what God had given him. In turn, if God had not intervened, Abraham would have lost everything. This is a strong warning to those who have some maturity, even stature before God—it is God who protects what He has given to you or committed to you. Only God is the true protector.
 - Silver means redemption. To be given pieces of silver means that this spiritual man still needed the unique redemption of Christ, rather than changing, correcting, or improving in any way. A thousand pieces should have indicated to Abraham that in every part, he needed to be redeemed.
 - Abraham prayed for Abimelech and his family, and they bore children. This shows the faith of the spiritual man.

When he did not have a son himself, he prayed that Abimelech's household could be blessed with begetting.

23

So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Then they bore children; ¹⁸ for the Lord had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife. (Genesis 20:17–18)

- The lesson Abraham learned in being with Abimelech—that is, that only God is the true protector of whatever He gives to us—became the root of his purity in offering up Isaac.

MESSAGE 6:

ENJOYING GOD'S PROMISE IN THE CONTINUATION OF LIFE—BEGETTING ISAAC

1) The birth of Isaac

And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken. ² For Sarah conceived and bore 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 who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac. ⁴ Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old,

as God had commanded him. ⁵ *Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.* ⁶ *And Sarah said, “God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me.”* ⁷ *She also said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age.”* (Genesis 21:1–8)

- Now, we come to a spiritual stage of Abraham’s life. Abraham was “one hundred years old,” which means he should be mature in many aspects. In the Bible, “ten” is the number of completeness, so “one hundred,” which is “ten multiplied by ten,” could be a completion upon completion. This shows that, from the beginning, Isaac is a testimony of Abraham’s maturity before God. From this time on, Abraham had no more outward failures, such as going down to Egypt or the begetting of Ishmael. Suffering would still be with him, such as the death of Sarah and the delayed marriage of Isaac, but his maturity would uphold him to go through these experiences with grand dignity and wisdom.
- The Bible uses only two simple verses for this moment: “The Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him” (vv. 1–2).
- Abraham was extremely joyful, and Sarah testified: “Finally, God has made laughter for me.”

- This is an extremely interesting statement. Sarah fully realized Isaac was from God, yet there was no praise, no thanks, no honoring to God's deeds, but a "laughter."
- Even Abraham named his son, "laughter" (Isaac).
- There could be two different psychologies between Abraham and Sarah.
 - "Isaac" not only means laughter, but an inward joy and rejoicing from the deepest part. Abraham should have been very joyful. Sarah was only in extreme happiness. These two are very different.
 - Abraham must have had the greatest satisfaction in his heart. He had initially considered Eliezer to be his heir. Then, he had listened to Sarah and begot Ishmael in his flesh. Both of these God had denied. Finally, the promised seed was in his arms. This must have been a tremendous moment. Abraham began to have the realization,
 1. "I used to live in Ur and Haran, making a living and trying to be rich.
 2. I was called out by God to become a great nation, to have a great name, to become a source of blessing.

3. I possessed all the wealth of the world and was admired by many.
 4. I was promised a land, which is way beyond my imagination.
 5. Yet, in the process, I failed. I was in Egypt. I got a son by myself. I went down to Abimelech. I even almost lost my wife, Sarah, except that my precious God intervened.
 6. But now I see, with Isaac I have everything! The nation is from Isaac, the land will eventually be gained through Isaac and his descendents, and all the wealth I have must be related to Isaac alone!
- This must have been a transcendent experience for Abraham. He was elevated from the blessing to the Blesser, from having promises to the Promiser, from all the riches to the Giver. Abraham began to realize that God was everything. His eyes turned from everything the world could offer to God alone, as to him, Isaac was a sign of the Giver. He was now a real spiritual man, a man of God.

HOLDING ONLY THE TESTIMONY OF THE LORD—CHASING AWAY ISHMAEL

1) Chasing away Ishmael

- Ishmael mocked Isaac, which could be very normal on the side of man.

And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. (Genesis 21:9)

- However, the word “scoffing,” or “mocking” (Darby), is the same Hebrew word as “laughing,” which is the verb of “Isaac.”
 - With Isaac, we see three people react differently. For a spiritual man, Abraham, it could mean inward uttermost joy. For Sarah, a self-focused lady, Isaac could be used only to satisfy and glorify her. Now, for a young lad, Ishmael, the response is rather fleshly. He was in extreme jealousy, even wanting to be as Isaac. This is why he was “Isaac-ing” at Isaac.
- Sarah demanded that they be chased away.

Therefore she said to Abraham, “Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac.” (Genesis 21:10)

- Abraham was grieved in his humanity.

And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham’s sight because of his son. (Genesis 21:11)

- God reminded Abraham that the interests of God are above everything, and that God is not only the best Blessor, but that He blesses *all*. Isaac is the best of God’s blessing, but God will also bless Ishmael, as he is related to Abraham.

But God said to Abraham, “Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called. ¹³ Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed.” (Genesis 21:12–13)

- When Hagar and the boy came to Beersheba (“well of oath”), the water was gone. Hagar put the boy under a small tree and walked away, about an arrow’s shot distance. Facing the boy, she wailed, as she didn’t want to see the lad die in her presence.

So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting it on her shoulder, he gave it and

the boy to Hagar, and sent her away. Then she departed and wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba. ¹⁵ And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs. ¹⁶ Then she went and sat down across from him at a distance of about a bowshot; for she said to herself, “Let me not see the death of the boy.” So she sat opposite him, and lifted her voice and wept. (Genesis 21:14–16)

- God intervened.

And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, “What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. ¹⁸ Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.”

¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink. ²⁰ So God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. ²¹ He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt. (Genesis 21:17–21)

- He promised Ishmael would become a great nation.
- He “opened her eyes” to see a well, which means He gave her wisdom to find her way to a well. This well was not likely in Beersheba, but likely close to Egypt, the world. Ishmael even married an Egyptian wife.
- Eventually, Ishmael became the father of today’s Arabs.

BECOMING HONORED BY BOTH GOD AND MAN—
THE COVENANT WITH ABIMELECH

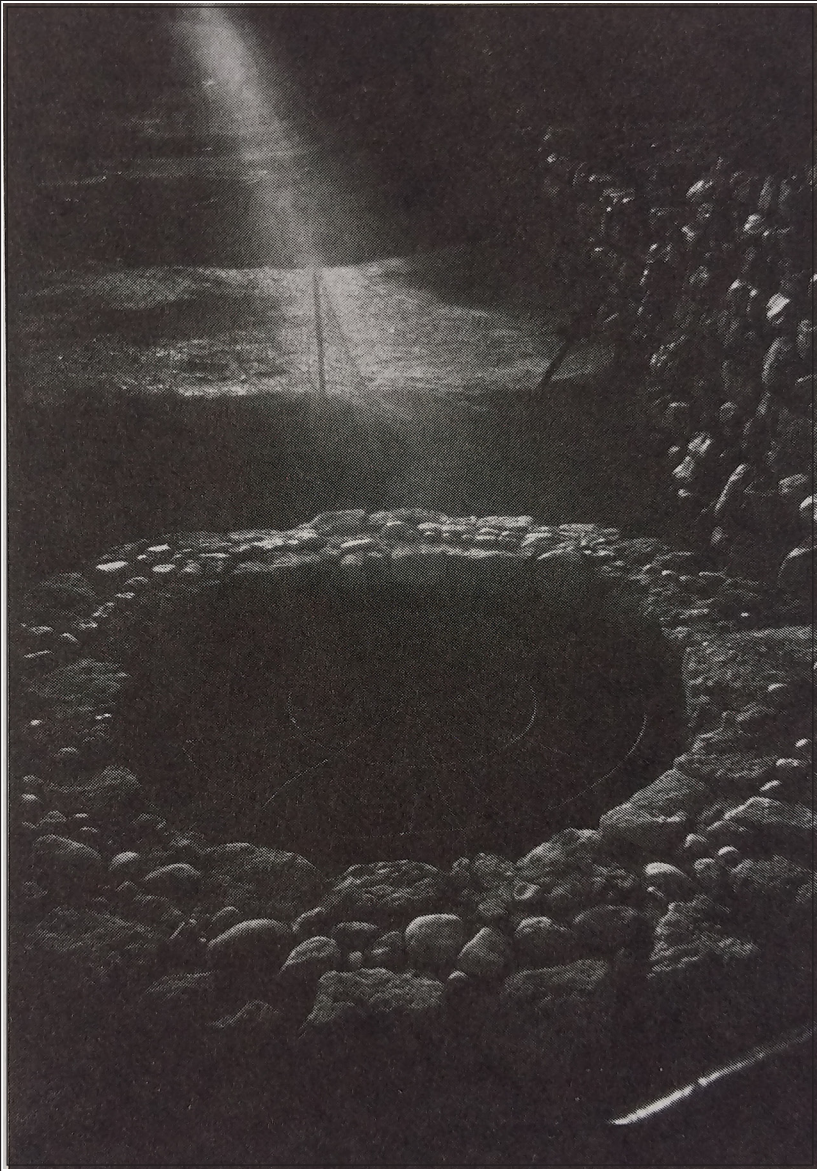
- 1) Now, as Abraham is very spiritual, the Lord is with him in every aspect. King Abimelech (a ruling title for the Philistines) came to seek a truce with him.

And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, "God is with you in all that you do."²³ Now therefore, swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me, with my offspring, or with my posterity; but that according to the kindness that I have done to you, you will do to me and to the land in which you have dwelt."

²⁴ And Abraham said, "I will swear."

²⁵ Then Abraham rebuked Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech's servants had seized. ²⁶ And Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor had I heard of it until today." (Genesis 21:22–26)

NOTE: Of the wells of Beer-sheba, one scholar says, "The well at which we camped was 12.5 feet in diameter, 34 feet till we reached the living rock, and as we were told by the Arabs, twice that depth...The wall above the rock was built with finely-squared stones, hard as marble; and the ropes of water-drawers for 4000 years have worn the edges of the hard limestone with no less than 143 flutings, the shallowest of them 4 inches deep. The ancient marble troughs were arranged at convenient distances round the mouth in an irregular circle...for the convenience of the cattle."



(above) An ancient well in the Middle East.

- “Abimelech” is a royal title of the kings of the Philistines, rather than a person, which means “Abimelech” has a long, lasting existence, rather than a short one.

- King Abimelech’s request is simple: “God is with you, but let my descendents survive.”
 - Outwardly, when Abraham became so spiritual and promising, his neighboring country’s king would seek protection for his descendants.

 - Historically, this was realized when the Israelites went into Canaan. They were commanded to terminate seven tribes (though they failed), a list which does not include the Philistines (Deut. 7:1–2). Eventually, the Philistines became a real problem to the Israelites. This may indicate that no matter how spiritual a man can be, he may unconsciously lose his sight for the overall testimony in order to gain a temporary profit.

- Spiritually, all the tribes in Canaan typify aspects of our flesh. The Philistines, however, typify a part that is very close to our fallen old man, even to the point that they have some understanding of God’s sovereignty.
 - We can say Abimelech typifies our natural man, which understands God, yet tries to take advantage of God.

- If Abraham is so much a spiritual man, he is now confronting his natural man according to his soul life.
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- Abraham took the opportunity to “reprove” (Darby) Abimelech, as he occupied a well Abraham had dug. Abraham’s first realization was that the well God provided to him, typifying the Spirit of life, was so much used by his natural man in his soul life, rather than for God and God’s interests.
 - He demands the well come back to him—an extremely spiritual experience.
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- When we first love the Lord, our natural man according to our soul life is very much mixed with our spiritual life.
 - After we love the Lord and are even consecrated, our natural man, with its zealously, can overcome what is really a spiritual life.
 - The early experience for every Jesus-lover is that his natural man overcomes his spiritual life, uses it, and gains success, such as Abraham’s twice saying that his wife was his sister.
 - By requesting the returning of the well, Abraham testified that his trust was only on God and not on any

of the effort, skill, ways, or techniques of his natural life. The same must be experienced by every Jesus-lover.

- The God he loves and trusts is the only one who can do things according to His own desire and promise.
- Abimelech confessed the fact, indicating that even our natural life will begin to realize that the best of our strength, efforts, or planning cannot match even a little move of God.

So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant. ²⁸ And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.

²⁹ Then Abimelech asked Abraham, “What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs which you have set by themselves?”

³⁰ And he said, “You will take these seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well.” ³¹ Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because the two of them swore an oath there. ³² Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba.... (Genesis 21:27–32a)

- Abraham gave sheep and oxen to Abimelech, which means a man of the Spirit would increase the blessing of his abilities in both pursuing and operation. They made a covenant.
- Abraham put aside seven ewe lambs and gave them to Abimelech as a witness of the ownership of the well.

- This is a deep and profound picture of a spiritual man. His natural man needs full salvation: “seven ewe lambs.” But this salvation is partaken of by God and man together. The number “seven” is composed either of “one plus six” (the unique God with His created man) or “three plus four” (the operating God with His creature), as a full assurance of the salvation for our natural man according to our soul life.
- The reaction of Abimelech and Abraham:

³² ...So Abimelech rose with Phichol, the commander of his army, and they returned to the land of the Philistines. ³³ Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God. ³⁴ And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines many days. (Genesis 21:32–34)

- Abimelech and his army commander left. This means that no matter how a spiritual man lives, he is not just “a spirit.” His natural man, with his fighting ability, still “left,” which means “to operate, to gain, to fight for whatever he can under the salvation Jesus provided by God.” But he, Abraham, a spiritual man, stayed by Beersheba and planted a tamarisk tree.
- A planted tree indicates longevity, testifying of the steadfastness of the covenant.
- According to the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE), this tree grows even by salty

water or in salty soil. This typifies the ability of overcoming the element of death.

- Abraham called on the name of the Lord again, and he lived in the land of the Philistines for many days. This indicates that no spiritual man will be apart from the world, as the Lord promised that He would not take us out of the world, but that He would protect us from the evil one (John 17:14–16).

2) Abraham's life continued with:

- The offering of Isaac, testifying that he is the father of faith in reality.
- Sarah dying, after which he had to pay four hundred shekels of silver for land God had already promised to him, showing his life in faith. He knew the whole land, some day, would be his.
- Finding a wife for Isaac through his faithful servant, Eliezer, who typifies the Spirit.
- Marrying another wife in his old age, Keturah (“fragrance”), indicating God's mercy to those who follow Him all their life. Even in his old age, God comforted Abraham and considered his life a life of fragrance.

