

## GENESIS 20

### Abraham's Deception

<sup>1</sup> Then Abraham journeyed from there toward the south country. He dwelled between Kadesh and Shur. When he was visiting<sup>i</sup> the city of Gerar, <sup>2</sup> He said about Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." So Abimelech, king of Gerar, sent and took Sarah. <sup>3</sup> But Elohim came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, "Look out! You are but a dead man. For the woman which you have taken is a man's wife."

<sup>4</sup> But Abimelech had not come near her. So he said, "Adonai.<sup>ii</sup> Will You kill innocent<sup>iii</sup> people? <sup>5</sup> Didn't he tell me,

'She is my sister?'

"And she, even she herself, said,

'He is my brother.'

"I have done this covenant act<sup>iv</sup> with an honest heart. I am completely innocent."

<sup>6</sup> And Elohim said to him in a dream, "Yes! I know that you did this covenant act<sup>v</sup> with an honest heart. I also kept you from sinning<sup>vi</sup> against Me. Therefore. I didn't let you touch her. <sup>7</sup> Now therefore, give the man his wife,<sup>vii</sup> for he is a prophet. He will pray for you and you will live. But if you don't give her back, then know that you will surely die — you and all who are yours."

<sup>8</sup> Therefore, Abimelech rose early in the morning and called all his servants. Then he told them all these things. The servants were very<sup>viii</sup> afraid.

<sup>9</sup> Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done things to me that you ought not have done." <sup>10</sup> And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you see that made you do this thing?"

<sup>11</sup> So Abraham said, "I thought,

'Surely there is no moral reverence<sup>ix</sup> for Elohim in this place. They will kill me in order to take my wife.'

<sup>12</sup> "But she is really my sister. She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother. She is now my wife. <sup>13</sup> And it came to pass, when Elohim caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her,

'This is the kindness<sup>x</sup> which you will show me. Everywhere we come, say,

"He is my brother." ' "

<sup>14</sup> Then Abimelech took sheep, and<sup>xi</sup> oxen, and menservants, and women servants, and gave them to Abraham. He also gave Sarah, his wife, back to him. <sup>15</sup> And Abimelech said, "Look! My land is before you. Live wherever it pleases you."

<sup>16</sup> And he said to Sarah, "Look! I have given your brother<sup>xii</sup> 1,000 pieces of silver. He is a covering for you.<sup>xiii</sup> Now everyone with you, and everyone else will know you are innocent."<sup>xiv</sup>

<sup>17</sup> So Abraham prayed to Elohim. Then Elohim healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants. Then they were able to give birth to children. <sup>18</sup> For Yahweh had kept all the women in Abimelech's house from having children because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.<sup>xv</sup>

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- i The verb גָּוַר (*gūr*) means “to sojourn” or “to dwell temporarily” as a non-native. It reflects the condition of living as a dependent or vulnerable outsider, often without legal rights or permanent settlement. This root is closely related to the noun גֵּר (*gēr*), meaning “sojourner” or “resident alien.”
- ii The Hebrew is (“Adonai”). It means Lord or master.
- iii The Hebrew root צַדִּיק (*tsad-deek*) means righteous. Synonyms include upright, just, lawful, right, moral, and decent. Biblical righteousness is a person who is wearing the righteousness of Jesus. First, this righteousness is relational; it depends on being in Christ. Second, this righteousness is forensic; it fulfills the demands of God’s covenant. Third, this righteousness is ethical; it reflects faithfulness to a relationship.
- iv The Hebrew root is צַדִּיק (Zayin-**Aleph-Tav**). Its basic meaning is to cut, either as a blessing or a judgment. This translation routinely translates this 3-letter word in terms of covenant. See the article “The **Aleph-Tav**.” Here it refers to his violation of God’s covenant protection of Abraham.
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- vi The Hebrew is אָפַּח. The root means to miss. Synonyms include sin, miss the mark, repent, lead astray, purge, incur guilt, and forfeit.
- vii The Hebrew is אִשָּׁה. This is an **Aleph-Shin-Tav**. The **Aleph-Shin-Tav** is the first (**Aleph**) love (*Shin*=flames) of the marriage (**Tav** = covenant). This is why Strong’s defines the word as woman or wife. The deeper meaning is that Sarai was the mother of God’s covenant nation of Israel. God uses and blesses these women.
- viii The Hebrew is אָדָּם. The root means vehemently. Synonyms include very, greatly, exceedingly, fervently, passionately, violently, intensely, much, mightily, and vigorously.
- ix The Hebrew is אָדָּם. The root often means fear. But its meaning depends heavily on context. When referring to Yahweh, it conveys a profound reverence and awe toward God — one that shapes behavior and moral courage. It highlights a continuous, conscious lifestyle of honoring God’s holiness and justice.
- x The Hebrew root אָדָּם (*chesed*) means steadfast love or covenant mercy. It is all the aspects of Elohim’s love based on Elohim’s covenant faithfulness. Synonyms include beauty, favor, loving kindness, mercy, pity, goodness, faithfulness, and love.
- xi The literary technique of Polysyndeton uses multiple “and”s (or other conjunctions) in a series. It slows the reader and gives emphasis to each item.
- xii Note the sarcasm here. Abimelech called him “your brother,” not “your husband.”
- xiii This is an idiom of the Hebrew culture. Idiom are difficult to translate. Abraham, as the head of the family, was responsible for her protection. In this case, when Abraham failed in his responsibilities, the LORD Jesus stepped in and kept things right.
- xiv The Hebrew is אָדָּם לְכָל וְנִכְחַתָּהּ (‘‘and she was all reproved’’). means to appoint, correct, decide, or judge rightly. It often appears in legal or judicial contexts. We can see the devil’s fingerprints here. Abraham was wrong to let Abimelech take her. This jeopardized the developing line of King Jesus. Sarah was guiltless.
- xv The Hebrew is אִשָּׁה. This is an **Aleph-Shin-Tav**. The **Aleph-Shin-Tav** is the first (**Aleph**) love (*Shin*=flames) of the marriage (**Tav** = covenant). This is why Strong’s defines the word as woman or wife. The deeper meaning is that Sarai was the mother of God’s covenant nation of Israel. God uses and blesses these women.