

## Genesis Chapters 20-21 Summary - John Karmelich

I must admit one of the things that's endlessly fascinating to me is how loyal God is to us in spite all of the ways we mess up! The last chapter ended with the great Sodom and Gomorrah story and where He put Lot and his daughters after that. Short version is that family ended up being the founders of what's the country of Jordan today. In these chapters, we're back dealing with Abraham who I am sure knows all of that destruction aftermath and where his nephew ended up. These chapters describe decisions we see Abraham making, most of which were mistakes! God guided and helped him, despite the mistakes he made! The great lesson to us is despite the sins and mistakes we make daily if we've given our lives to Jesus, God still work through us in spite of our mistakes!

In these two chapters, the focus is on what Abraham had to deal with in his life after the Sodom thing! It involved traveling to Philistine territory within Israel. (Most likely, the Philistines came from where the nation of Greece is today and they formed five significant cities on the Israelite coastline!) Abraham didn't say God gave me this land so leave me alone! Instead, he lied about Sarah being his wife as he's in fear of the Philistines hurting him. (It says a lot about Sarah's beauty, even given the fact she was in her 90's at this point!). In Chapter 20 the Philistine leader took Sarah as his wife! God spoke to this guy and said, "Hey dude, that beautiful older women is Abraham's wife, so "no touchy" and let her go from your harem!" Anyway, Abraham and Sarah went on their way in spite of the fact God told Abraham of the baby he and Sarah would have long before this incident!

Speaking of the baby, their son Isaac was born in the next story in these two chapters. We then read at the time Sarah stopped nursing her son, that she wanted Abraham's other son "out of the picture"! Then we see Abraham out of love for Sarah, did what she asked, and sent his other son Ishmael and her mom with no financial support despite Abraham's great wealth! We then read of a miracle: The boy Ishmael almost died in the wilderness! Ishmael's mom learned a few chapters back her son would be the leader of a nation. Despite that she abandoned her son for fear he was going to die there! The point is despite her fear God stepped in to help them to help and encourage her. God keep His word how Hagar would the founder of a great nation! (More on that coming up!)

The final story involves Abraham making a treaty with the Philistine leader in effect to establish what's the boundary between each of their territories. Remember both were wealthy men! It is the same king who Abraham lied to about Sarah being his sister and not his wife! Therefore, this Philistine king could still think of Abraham as a liar, but also one blessed by God! The despise was over a well that a servant of Abraham dug, and the king thought the well was one of his. Bottom line they made a treaty, and that location became the separation of Israel's boundary not only with the Philistines, but it also became the southern boundary of Israel to this day. That issue was about trust! In fact, most of these two chapters deal with trusting God in spite of the mistakes that we make in life. Yes, there's more to these chapters but what I want us to gather, is the necessity of trusting God in spite our mistakes the face He's faithful to us despite all the times we mess up! With that said, time for some more details:

Remember Chapter 19 ended focusing on what happened to Lot's family, so the scene switches back to Abraham in Chapter 20. I get the impression he liked to travel around the area. Maybe Abraham wants to see all the land that his descendants will inherit or maybe he just needed fresh grazing land for all of his animals. Bottom line, he is near the southwest corner of Israel in Philistine country. Remember the Philistines were there all through the Kings period and weren't eliminated till the Babylonian Captivity.

Anyway, Abraham "conveniently forget" to mention to that king that Sarah was his wife as he was full of fear that this king would kill Abraham! Sarah went along with the deception and went in the harem!

The problem is God made the unconditional promise to Abraham that he and Sarah would have a baby in a year, so God decided to step in the picture. As I said, God appeared to the Philistine king through a dream and said in effect, don't touch Sarah as she's Abraham's wife. The Philistine king who's probably aware of the Sodom and Gomorrah destruction, decided not to mess with God! That king agreed to let Sarah go. It's interesting God referred to Abraham as a prophet! (It is the first time that word is used!) That's despite the sin of telling the half truth to this foreign king! The interesting thing was in order to make things right God told this foreign king to let Abraham pray for him. God gave a stern warning to "do this or else!"

Bottom line, the prayer was done, the foreign king gave Abraham some nice parting gifts plus money. I would say that God covered Abraham's rear here! The epilogue for that foreign king was he could now get his harem pregnant which failed up to this point. Now it's time for Abraham and Sarah to have this baby despite the fact she was 90 and he was 99!

I have to admit I'm fascinated by the miracle of "reverse menopause" so that Sarah was able to have the baby she always wanted after many decades of no pregnancy! I realize God can do anything, but it still fascinates me how God changed her body again! Bottom line, they had the baby named Isaac, which is the Hebrew word for laughter! They were both amazed of the miracle of a baby so late in life!

The next issue is Abraham's other son Hagar. This is the one who Sarah said 19 years ago (if my count is right), "Hey honey since I can't get pregnant, let's help God out and we'll have a baby using a servant girl of mine!" Now it's 19 years later the young boy made fun of the 2-3 year old son of Sarah. (If you have male children, it is normal for the older boy to make fun of his younger half-brother! Still Sarah's wish was to not have the older boy around as it was symbolic of her mistake! Of all people Paul picked up on this analogy in the New Testament as he referred to Hagar's exile of being like Christians turning from the desires of the flesh (i.e., Sarah trying to please God via Hagar). (See Galatians 4:21-31.) That simply means we can't please God by our own efforts just as Sarah realized her mistake. Still Abraham wasn't crazy about just sending out his son "empty handed"! That is when God stepped in again, to tell Abraham "Don't worry. I'm going to make a great nation from Hagar (in effect he's the father of Arabs so it's not an issue) and Abraham's true seed will come through Isaac!" The point for you and me is He will guide our lives despite our mistakes!

Then we have a desert scene of a lack of trust. Hagar's mom runs out of water in the desert, so she will leave her son alone to die. God steps in to say in effect, "Didn't I announce chapters ago Hagar will be a leader of a nation?" Then a well appeared and they were on their way!

That would be a nice ending right there, but God throws one more story in here. Remember the leader of the Philistines didn't trust Abraham since he lied to him in Chapter 20? Therefore we get the story of a treaty between the two nations over a well. They didn't have lawyers in those days (I'll refrain from a bunch of lawyer jokes!) The way a treaty was made was animals were cut in half as if to say, "If either of us violate this treaty the violator will end up like the dead animals!" Bottom line they made the deal, and each party went on their way. The place where it happened is called Beersheba, which means well of the oath. As I stated that city to this day is considered Israel's southern border! The point of all this is for the foreign king and Abraham to trust each other since they'll be neighbors and the treaty did that and solved that issue.

Bottom line for you and me, do we mess up? Does God still keep His promises to us despite us letting Him down? Yes. Obviously, it's not a license to sin, but it is a reminder that He's faithful when we are not and that's a great thing to keep in mind as we study His word!

On the same page as this study is a more detailed study I wrote many years back. You are welcome to email me if you want or join my list to the get the latest lesson. Thanks for reading. John