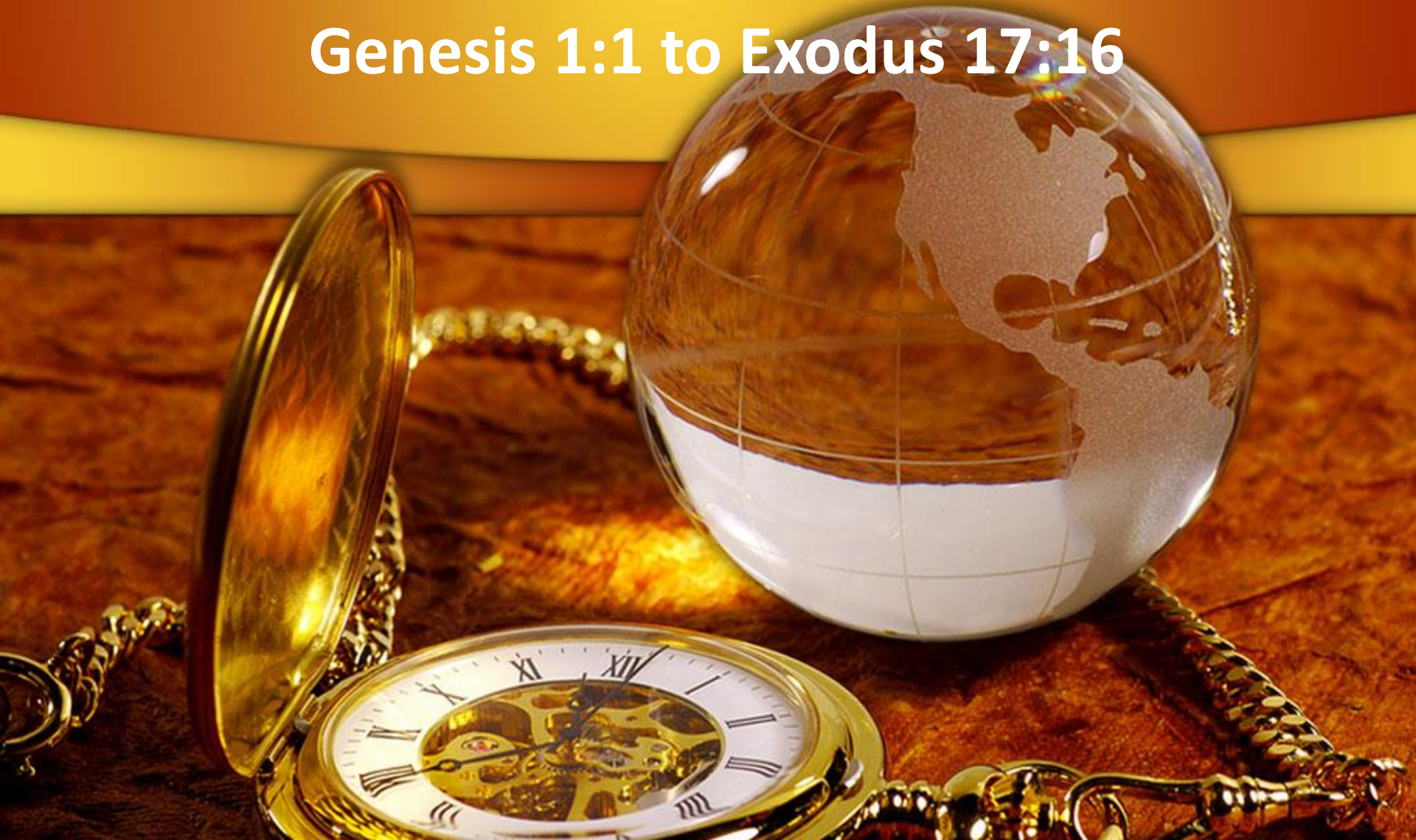
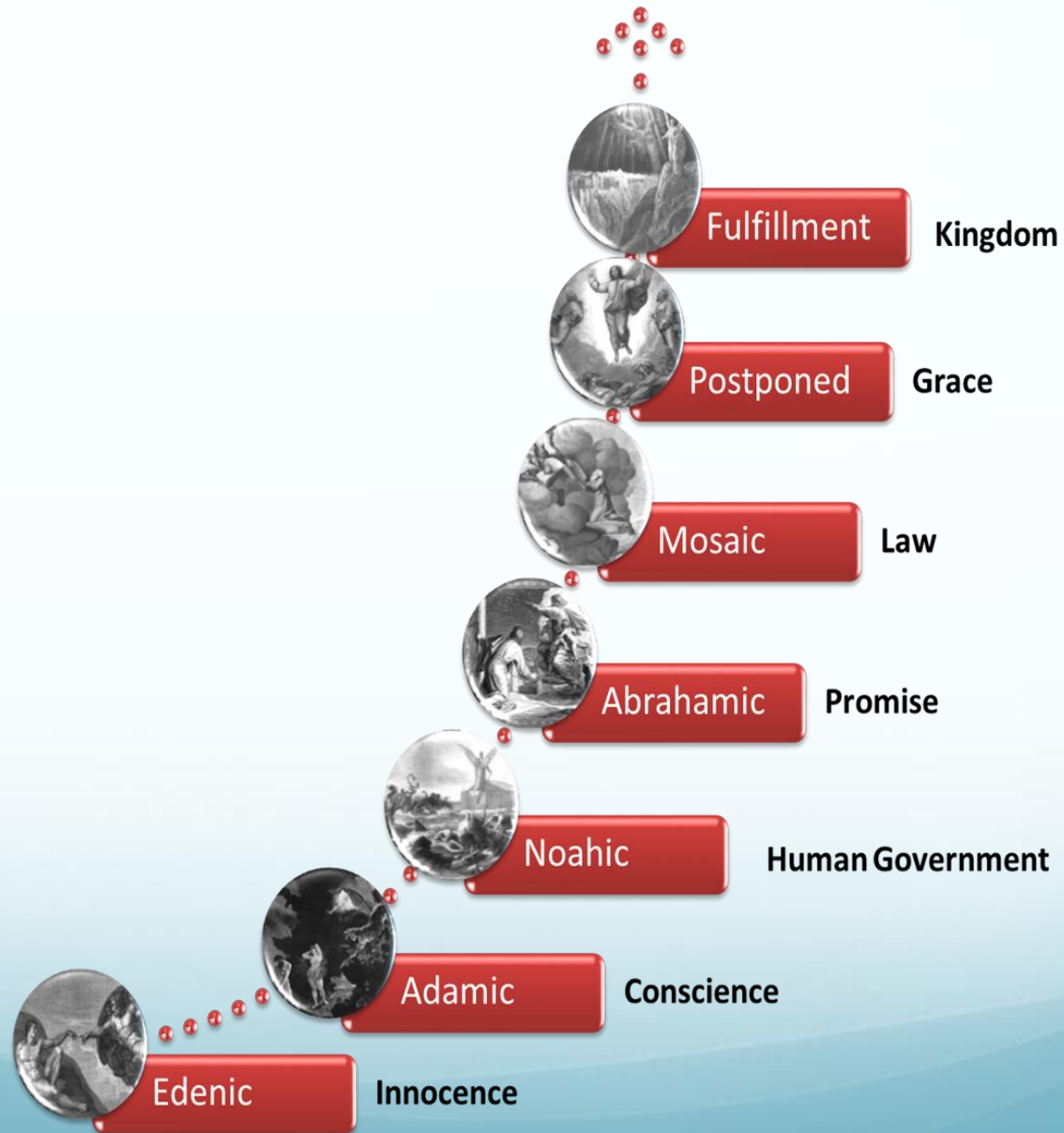


# From God's Creation to God's Nation

Genesis 1:1 to Exodus 17:16



# Review of Covenants in the Bible & Dispensations



# Abrahamic Covenant

**ABRAHAMIC**  
**Genesis**  
**15**

**LAND**

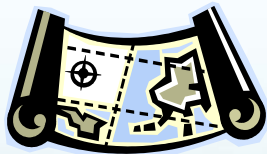
**SEED**

**BLESSING**

**LAND**  
**Deuteronomy**  
**29-30**

**DAVIDIC**  
**2 Samuel**  
**7:12-16**

**NEW**  
**Jeremiah**  
**31:31-34**



*Unconditional* covenant with a conditional blessing (Deut. 28; Lev. 26)

# Quick Review of Ch. 20

- I. Abraham reverts back to his “old schemes” 20:1-2.....the standard “half truth”
- II. YHWH intervenes & Abimelech makes his case 20:3-7.....the Pagan king acts more righteous than YHWH’s Patriarch
- III. Abimelech confronts Abraham & the response & the “familiar” send-off 20: 8-17.....Since the Ab. Cov. is unconditional, Abraham gets blessings & those also who bless him

# Chapter 21 Audio



# Genesis 21 Outline

- I. The Fulfillment & the Feast 21:1-8
  - A. YHWH' s promises of offspring from his loins fulfilled (v.1-5)
  - B. The celebration by Sarah & Abraham (v.6-8)
- II. The Flouting, the Fury, & the Farewell 21:9-14
  - A. Sarah's disdain of "slave woman & son (v. 9-10)
  - B. Abraham's distress & YHWH's reassurances (v. 11-13)
  - C. The farewell & "send off of Hagar & Ishmael (v. 14)
- III. The Fear & the Faithfulness of YHWH 21: 15-21
  - A. Hagar thinks it is "over" in the desert (v. 15-16)
  - B. YHWH hears & sends the "angel of God" to reassure (v.17-18)
  - C. YHWH provides & Ishmael grows up well (v. 19-21)
- IV. Contract with a "Familiar face" 21:22-34
  - A. The Persons & the plan (contract) (v. 22-24)
  - B. The Problem (v. 25-26)
  - C. The Pact & the Place (v. 27-34)

# Introductory Comments on *Chapter 21*

- YHWH demonstrates He cannot lie (Num. 23:19) and cannot break His promises (Josh. 21:45)
- What seems impossible to man, is shown “no problem” to YHWH
- Abraham, although imperfect, follows the commands of the Lord
- YHWH displays His promise keeping, grace, and protection even to His people (Israel) future enemy
- Abimelech back in scene to make “deal” with Abraham, realizing God was with him

## I. The Fulfillment & the Feast 21:1-8

### A. YHWH' s promises of offspring from his loins fulfilled (v.1-5)

- **1** Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised.
- The birth of Isaac, the birth of the promised seed-son, begins in verses 1–2
- with the fulfillment of the promise with verse 1, focusing on the promise of God/the faithfulness to His word
- The promise of 18:10, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, & Sarah your wife will have a son”
- Although one might anticipate the birth story as the act’s climax, this narrative of Abraham’s walk with God and faith in a seed will not crest until Abraham has faced the ultimate challenge to his faith, the sacrifice of his son (Waltke)



## A. YHWH' s promises of offspring from his loins fulfilled (v.1-5)

- **2** So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him.
- The birth of Isaac came about “as [the Lord] had said,” a fact stressed three times within vv. 1–2. The plan not only comes about, but, more important, it happens as announced
- Thus the narrative calls attention to God’s faithfulness to his word and careful attention to the details of his plan
- Since Abraham and Sarah’s entrance into Canaan some twenty-five years earlier (12:4), the couple has looked to this day

## A. YHWH' s promises of offspring from his loins fulfilled (v.1-5)

- **3** 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.
- In the naming of Isaac (see 17:19) and in circumcision (21:4; see 17:9–12), Abraham keeps covenant
- The name means “he laughs,” a pun with the laughter of disbelief and joy Abraham and Sarah have expressed
- And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac. The timing was: when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him

## A. YHWH' s promises of offspring from his loins fulfilled (v.1-5)

- Now the token of the covenant was being applied on the day that it was commanded, and Isaac is the first one recorded to be circumcised on the eighth day, since all those circumcised in chapter 17 were beyond the age of eight days
- **5** Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.
- It was a twenty-five year wait before the promise of God was fulfilled; the promises of God are not always immediate, but they are always sure (Fruchtenbaum)
- The bodies of Abraham and Sarah had been miraculously rejuvenated, their ages being one hundred and ninety years old, respectively (Genesis 17:17; 21:5) (Morris)

## B. The celebration by Sarah & Abraham (v.6-8)

- **6** Sarah said, “God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.”
- **7** And she said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”
- On verse 6, Compare this statement with her earlier accusation of God (16:2); “Now behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children, please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her”
- The Hebrew literally reads “laughter to me,” again a play upon words with Isaac’s name, but it was a positive play on words with Isaac’s name (this time, my addition here to Fruchtenbaum’s comments here)

## B. The celebration by Sarah & Abraham (v.6-8)

- She then added: every one that hears will laugh with me, or “will laugh for me,” in contrast with the past when people like Hagar laughed at her (Fruchtenbaum)
- or how she herself laughed at the word of the Lord proclaiming this supernatural bringing of the seed through her and Abraham (my comments)
- In addition, it is another positive word play on Isaac’s name. She was saying that others will share her joy, but as the chapter continues, it shows that Sarah’s statement was not totally true (since she won’t be content until Hagar & Ishmael gone!, my comments)

## B. The celebration by Sarah & Abraham (v.6-8)

- **7** And she said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”
- “Children” the unexpected plural here implies that she is looking beyond Isaac to his offspring who are destined to bless the earth (Waltke)
- Furthermore, Sarah uses the plural form, showing her faith in the Abrahamic Covenant that from Isaac will come many more descendants (Fruchtenbaum)
- Sarah was “young” enough again, not only to have a child, but to nurse him (verse 7); Abraham was “young” enough again not only to father Isaac, but also six other sons of his wife Keturah, after Sarah died (Genesis 25:2)! (Morris)

## B. The celebration by Sarah & Abraham (v.6-8)

- Excellent summary of verse 1-7 from Allen Ross:
- God provided the child of promise to Abraham and to Sarah ... at the very time God had promised (cf. 18:10). They responded in faith by (a) naming him Isaac (21:3), (b) circumcising him according to the covenant (v. 4; cf. 17:9–14, and (c) praising God for this amazing fulfillment (21:6–7) (Ross, the BKC)
- “.....Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”
- The use of the singular shows she was now focused on Isaac
- She clearly recognized that what happened was supernatural. She no longer laughed in unbelief, but in joy.

## B. The celebration by Sarah & Abraham (v.6-8)

- **8** The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.
- **weaned.** This rite of passage from the dangerous stage of infancy to childhood usually occurred at about three years of age (1 Sam. 1:22–25; 2 Macc. 7:27)
- so this would make Ishmael somewhere between the ages of seventeen and twenty years old
- In keeping with the customs of those days: *Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned*
- In place of yearly birthdays, the tradition in those days was to have a special feast on the official day of the weaning of the child



## B. The celebration by Sarah & Abraham (v.6-8)

- Important setting note: Abraham was still dwelling in the land of the Philistines (Genesis 21:34), who had already been made painfully aware of the power of God
- Now, however, they (The Philistines) could share with Abraham the knowledge of the fulfilled promises of God.
- For the New Testament writers, the coming of the promised seed, Jesus Christ, paralleled the birth of Isaac as no other fulfilled promise could. With the long-awaited and supernatural birth of this **greater Seed** (the fulfillment of the seed promise, my comments inserted here) came a far greater visitation from on high (Gal. 3:19; Luke 1:68). (Ross, Creation & Blessing)

## II. The Flouting, the Fury, & the Farewell 21:9-14

### A. Sarah's disdain of "slave woman & son (v. 9-10)

- **9** Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking.
- In verse 9, while everybody else was rejoicing, there was one negative element that led to the expulsion of Ishmael
- And Sarah saw, and what she saw, she took quite personally: the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne unto Abraham, mocking
- Instead of saying "Ishmael," the author states: the son of Hagar the Egyptian, focusing on Hagar's Egyptian nationality to emphasize that the animosity of Hagar towards Sarah has now been instilled in Ishmael toward Isaac

## A. Sarah's disdain of "slave woman & son (v. 9-10)

- The Hebrew word for *Isaac* and the Hebrew word for *mocking* is the same root
- Here again there is a play upon words with Isaac's name but this time in a negative sense
- Ishmael took Isaac's name and its meaning and reduced it to mockery; he was "isaacing" Isaac
- Ross on this: The commentaries follow either the traditional view that Ishmael was mocking the young child or the view that Ishmael was simply playing with Isaac on equal footing and that Sarah perceived a threat in that relationship. The meaning may lie somewhere in between these two interpretations
  - Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 379.

## A. Sarah's disdain of "slave woman & son (v. 9-10)

- The usage of the word *meṣaḥēq* (*mocking*) in *Genesis* proves helpful
- In 19:14 Lot seemed to be a ' mocker" or "jesting"
- In 26:8 describes Isaac's conjugal playing with Rebekah
- In 39:14, 17 Potiphar's wife's accusation of Joseph of one who "trifled" or "mocked" him
- In each case the verb describes an activity that had been misinterpreted: the words of Lot seemed to differ from his previous words, the actions of Isaac showed a different relationship with his "sister," and in the false accusation Joseph's alleged rape differs from his good behavior (Ross, *Creation & Blessing*)

## A. Sarah's disdain of "slave woman & son (v. 9-10)

- Also in the "playing" of Ishmael with Isaac, another attitude may have been very visible to Sarah
- Also this verb is used in Exodus 32:6 for the "playing" of the people in the camp when Moses was on the mountain
- In Judges 16:5 when the Philistines brought out the blinded Samson to entertain or "play" for them
- In all the uses there is the idea of a less-than-serious toying with someone, a trifling with someone or something, and possibly **a deceptive play** that could prove harmful
- The use of the word in Genesis 21:9, then, is more complicated than children's play

## A. Sarah's disdain of "slave woman & son (v. 9-10)

- On the surface the activity may have seemed harmless but Ishmael probably did not take the child or the promise seriously
- The English word "mock" thus suits the context here, if the mocking is subtle. "Mock" has a wide range of meanings, including deride, scorn, ridicule, and imitate
- The Septuagint (The Greek translation of the OT) translated this verb with "give way to hilarity" (*paizonta*), *apparently an attempt to intensify the meaning for the piel m<sup>eṣahēq</sup>*
- Paul used a stronger word in relating the event: "persecuted" (*ediōk*), *as it has been generally interpreted (Gal. 4:29). The Greek verb (diōkō) basically means "to pursue, put to flight, chase away," usually in a hostile sense, and thus the translation "persecute" has been used*

## A. Sarah's disdain of "slave woman & son (v. 9-10)

- In the midrash on Genesis, *Genesis Rabba*, Ishmael was accused of unchastity, idolatry, and shooting, among other things
- Whether Paul was influenced by prevailing Jewish interpretations of Ishmael would be hard to prove
- I believe Paul was Holy Spirit "influenced" ....thus doctrine of inspiration applied here to his writing (my comments)
- Paul used the biblical record analogically to make his point about the Judaizers who were trying to undermine the truth of the gospel
- His choice of words to describe what Ishmael was doing is interpretive—it attempts to express what Sarah perceived to be the real threat to Isaac

## A. Sarah's disdain of "slave woman & son (v. 9-10)

- Ishmael may have been playing with Isaac, but if he was permitted to continue, his real effort would have been to supplant this new heir
- In Genesis 21, then, the "laughter" was the response of faith to the promise of God, but the "mockery" signified the response of unbelief in God's plan that Isaac should be heir
- The story illustrates the truth that faith and unbelief are incompatible. That which trifles with God's work must be removed so that the faith can prosper under God's blessing
  - Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 380.



## A. Sarah's disdain of "slave woman & son (v. 9-10)

- **10** Therefore she said to Abraham, "Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac."
- The "therefore" above is referring to Ishmael's "mocking" Isaac
- The demand was: Cast out this handmaid and her son, meaning they are to be expelled from the household of Abraham
- *Isaac was to be the heir, and Ishmael was to be disinherited*
- Ishmael was to be disinherited, but he was not to be dishonored. Hence, God's intervention would have to come into play for the expulsion to occur. (Fruchtenbaum)

## B. Abraham's distress & YHWH's reassurances (v. 11-13)

- 11 The matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son.
- This shows again how much Abraham loved Ishmael
- The discord, trivial as it seemed at first glance (11), came from a fundamental rift which time would disclose and the New Testament expound as **the incompatibility of the natural and the spiritual** (Ps. 83:5, 6; **Gal. 4:29** and context)
- Paternal love alone, not moral or legal concerns, explains Abraham's distress (see 16:6; 17:18)
- Legal code during this time (the Lipit-Ishtar law code (ca. 1875 B.C.) stipulates this: if a slave bears children and the father then grants freedom to her and her children, "the children of the slave shall not divide the estate with the children of their (former) master.

## B. Abraham's distress & YHWH's reassurances (v. 11-13)

- Sarah's demand to expel Hagar and Ishmael from any share in the inheritance appears to be based on moral and legal grounds
- I say this was done within YHWH's sovereign plan
- Abraham was a kind and generous man, as well as a loving father. He had even interceded on one very important occasion with God on behalf of Ishmael (Genesis 17:18) (Morris)
- Concerning Abraham's distress: How much greater will be his distress when YHWH commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac??

## B. Abraham's distress & YHWH's reassurances (v. 11-13)

- **12 But God** said to Abraham, “Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named.
- Again, however, God spoke to Abraham. Though Sarah's attitude was wrong in one way, **she really was acting in consistency with God's own promises and plans** (even if it wasn't her only motive here, my comments)
- God comforted Abraham by showing His plan as it concerned Isaac and as it concerned Ishmael
- *And God said unto Abraham. This was the seventh divine appearance for Abraham, and it began with a word of comfort “do not be distressed because of the lad & your maid...”*

## B. Abraham's distress & YHWH's reassurances (v. 11-13)

- Then came the divine instruction: In all that Sarah said unto you, hearken unto her voice. This is the only time a husband is told by God to hearken to or to obey his wife (Fruchtenbaum says this is this only time a husband is told by God to hearken or obey his wife)
- So more reinforcing words from YHWH: The reason was: for in Isaac shall your seed be called, meaning Isaac was to be the son of the inheritance; Isaac was the covenant-son to whom the Abrahamic Covenant was going to be sustained
- Whatever may have been Sarah's motivation for her demand, it was the will of God as well

## B. Abraham's distress & YHWH's reassurances (v. 11-13)

- **13** “And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant.”
- Verse 13 reveals God's plan concerning Ishmael: this is the Arab nation. The reason was: because he is your seed; **Ishmael will not receive the Abrahamic Covenant, but he will benefit** from the blessing aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant.
- This conflict between Sarah and Hagar, between Isaac and Ishmael, has been appropriated in the New Testament as an illustration (Paul calls it an allegory) of the continuing conflict between law and grace, between the flesh and the spirit

## B. Abraham's distress & YHWH's reassurances (v. 11-13)

- In Galatians 4:22–31, the apostle Paul develops this contrast at considerable length. Those who are born after the flesh, he says, are the spiritual descendants of Hagar, great in number but nevertheless under the Law, and they seek salvation through the impossible task of making sinful flesh keep the Law of God
- Those who are to share in God's heavenly promises, however, centered in the heavenly Jerusalem (now being prepared by Christ and destined some day to come down out of heaven to the new earth), are the children of faith, like Isaac
- The Law can never give life; but God's promise, received by faith, does give eternal life (Morris)
- These children of faith are not in bondage to the Mosaic covenant, whose terms are impossible to obey, but are under the Abrahamic covenant, given unconditionally and appropriated solely by faith in the promises

## B. Abraham's distress & YHWH's reassurances (v. 11-13)

- Morris concludes:
- Though those after the flesh ridicule and persecute those after the spirit, it is the latter who will ultimately receive the blessing. They are *free, not in bondage, as Sarah was a freewoman and Hagar a bondwoman. There must be a separation between those who are in bondage and those who are free in Christ*
  - Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1976), 369.



## C. The farewell & “send off of Hagar & Ishmael (v. 14)

- **14** So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave *them* to Hagar, putting *them* on her shoulder, and *gave her* the boy, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba.
- **Early the next morning.** Once again, God’s promise (21:12) is matched by Abraham’s quick obedience (cf. 22:3)
- **skin of water.** This would hold approximately 3 gallons or 24 pounds

## C. The farewell & “send off of Hagar & Ishmael (v. 14)

- “and sent her away”
- here the Hebrew text does not use the word *garash*, which was used by Sarah in verse 10 and carried the meaning of being expelled in a hostile way
- The word used is *shalach*, which is a neutral term, at times used in the sense of a friendly release
- It is also the same word used of sending Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden in 3:24
- The provisions Abraham gave Hagar would normally have been sufficient to get them to the next oasis or desert well, but the problem was that she got lost on the way

## C. The farewell & “send off of Hagar & Ishmael (v. 14)

- *and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba; in other words, she became lost*
- God had not abandoned Ishmael; he had provided for the resolution of a tension that could have no other resolution
- Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away, with bread and a bottle of water. In view of Abraham’s wealth, this might seem a niggardly arrangement, and we can only surmise that Abraham knew with certainty that God, as He had promised, would take care of them
- He realized that, apart from God, no matter how much he gave them, it would not be enough; but *with God, they could not lack*

### III. The Fear & the Faithfulness of YHWH 21: 15-21

#### A. Hagar thinks it is “over” in the desert (v. 15-16)

- **15** When the water in the skin was used up, she left the boy under one of the bushes.
- **16** Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, “Do not let me see the boy die.” And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and wept.
- Their lives were endangered, they were out of water
- In spite of his young manhood (he was between seventeen and twenty), Ishmael was affected first; and he apparently was fainting
- She went and sat away from him, not being able to bear to watch him die up close

## B. YHWH hears & sends the “angel of God” to reassure (v.17-18)

- **17** God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.
- Ishmael apparently also was praying. God had allowed them to come to the point where they could no longer endure in their own strength and would have to depend on Him
- In 21:17–19, Hagar had a second encounter with the Angel of Jehovah
- for the second time, God *heard in conjunction with Ishmael. The first time was in 16:11, which became the basis of Ishmael’s name.*

## B. YHWH hears & sends the “angel of God” to reassure (v.17-18)

- Fruchtenbaum says this about the “angel of God”
- In verses 17b–18 is the voice of the Angel of Jehovah. Here He is called *the angel of God (this is the God of the previous phrase), and He called to Hagar out of heaven. The source is Heaven, again showing that God and the angel of God are the same person....*(so this “angel” is a theophany, possibly an pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ, my comments)
- At a minimum, this “angel” spoke with divine authority
- Waltke says the use here “angel of God” is used to reflect His role with the non-elect.....this would have to mean the other times “angel of God” used would have to be to non-believers

## B. YHWH hears & sends the “angel of God” to reassure (v.17-18)

- Here’s what Morris says on change from “The angel of the Lord” to “the angel of God”
- It is more than coincidental that, in Genesis 16:7, this divine being is called “the angel of Jehovah.” Here he is called “the angel of Elohim.” The reason for the change is that Jehovah is God’s covenant name, and Hagar was in the first instance still under the roof and protection of Abraham. Now, however, she has become a “stranger to the covenant of promise,” and therefore the name of God which is used is the name associated with creation and power, rather than redemption.
  - Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1976), 370.

## B. YHWH hears & sends the “angel of God” to reassure (v.17-18)

- **18** “Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him.”
- Then Hagar received some instructions:
  - First, Arise
  - second, lift up the lad
  - and third, hold him in your hand
- All this will convey to her that both she and he will survive
- The promise was: I will make him a great nation.
- Again, there is a promise of the Arab nation; but for him to be able to have this, he must survive



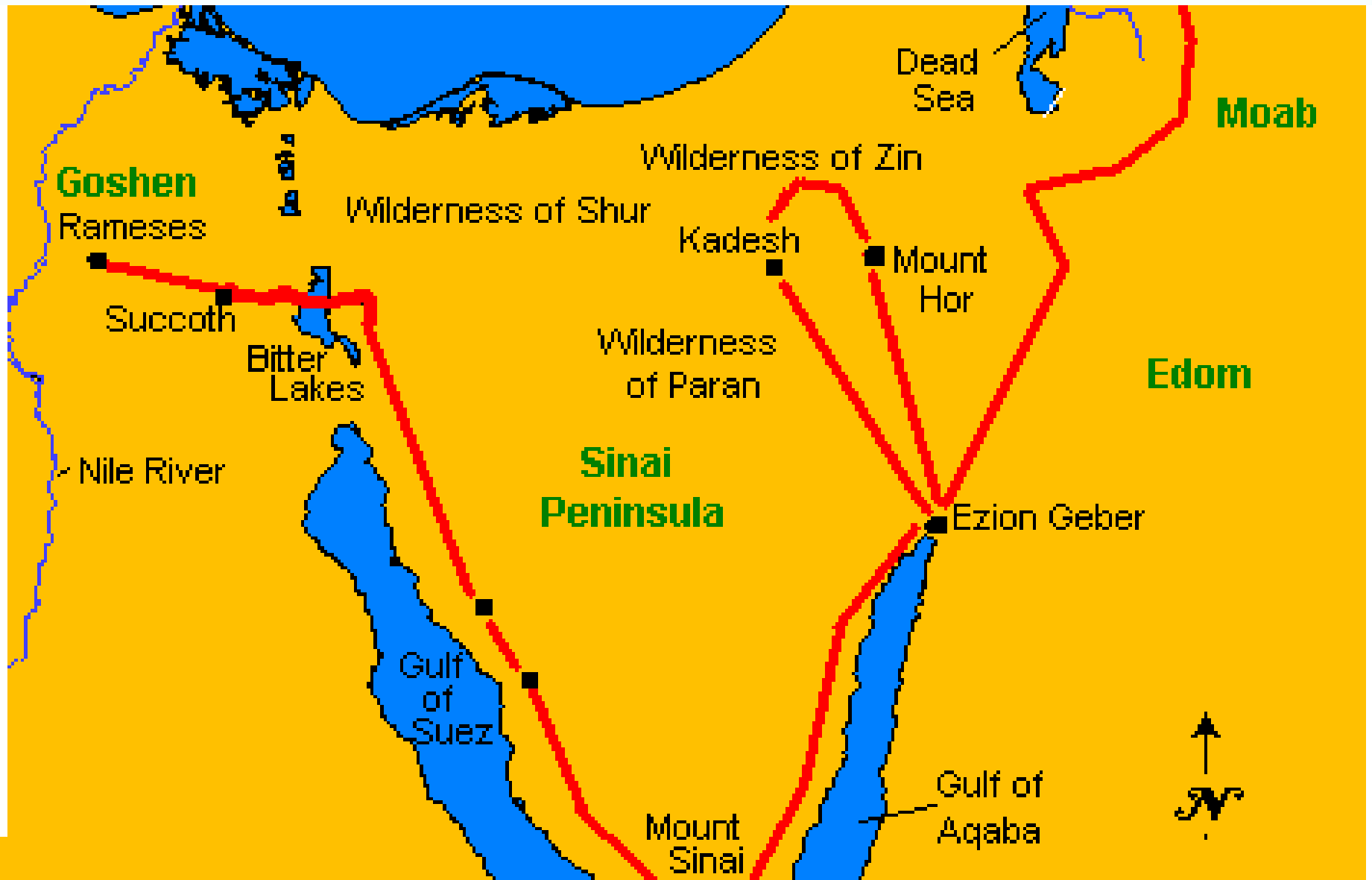
## C. YHWH provides & Ishmael grows up well (v. 19-21)

- **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.
- The water may have been miraculously provided, but the context implies that it was a well or a spring that was already there, and she simply did not see it (Fruchtenbaum)
- He was graciously concerned with Ishmael and his mother. He provided water for them immediately, from a well which He had either just created or which, if it already was there, they had been unable before to see. (Morris)

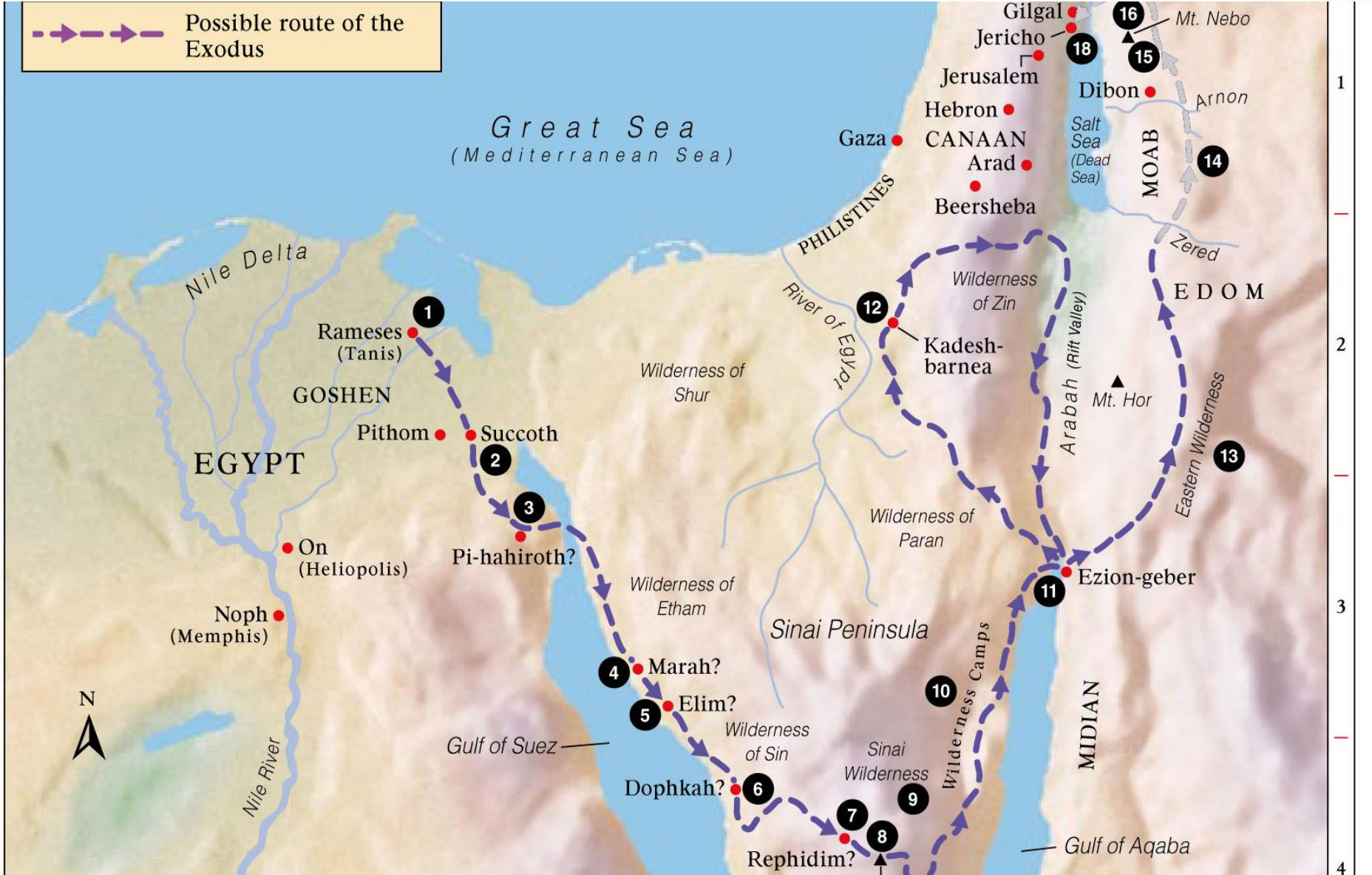
## C. YHWH provides & Ishmael grows up well (v. 19-21)

- **20** God was with the lad, and he grew; **and he lived in the wilderness and became an archer.**
- **21** He lived in **the wilderness of Paran**, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.
- And God was with the lad, fulfilling His promise to Abraham made earlier
- Ishmael developed in the desert setting: and he grew; and he dwelled in the wilderness, setting the stage for the beginnings of Ishmael's desert wanderings
- Ishmael's occupation is mentioned: [He] became, as he grew up, an archer, and that set the stage for his aggression

# C. YHWH provides & Ishmael grows up well (v. 19-21)



# Map of wilderness of Paran



## C. YHWH provides & Ishmael grows up well (v. 19-21)

- He now became a hunter. In the context of Genesis, this is not a positive but a negative, as already indicated with Nimrod; for he, too, was a mighty hunter before the Lord
- And he dwelled in the wilderness of Paran, along the border or between the Negev and the Sinai
- the wife was chosen by Hagar. The origin was: out of the land of Egypt. The wife for Ishmael was the same nationality as the mother
- According to Genesis 25:13–15, he finally had twelve sons, and thus the “great nation” God promised him had begun.
- The ancient Egyptians were Hamitic. As is known from Egyptian archeology, the Hamitic Egyptians were quite anti-Semitic, which would add to the antagonism that was already there (Fruchtenbaum)

## C. YHWH provides & Ishmael grows up well (v. 19-21)

- There are two New Testament quotations and applications
  - 1. In Romans 9:7–8, there is the reference to the statement: In Isaac shall your seed be called, in a context that makes a contrast between the Remnant (the Jews who believe) and the non-Remnant (the Jews who do not believe)
  - 2. In Galatians 4:21–31, Paul makes a reference to the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael to teach the spiritual lesson that law and grace as ways of salvation simply cannot coexist

## C. YHWH provides & Ishmael grows up well (v. 19-21)

- Great comments from Ross on NT exposition by Paul
- Isaac was born by the promise and was the heir. One represented bondage at Sinai, the other freedom when the promise finally came.
- When Christ, the seed, came, the old was done away. Now that the promise has come, believers are co-heirs with the promised Seed by adoption through God's grace. To go back under the Law would be to undo the fulfillment of God's promise
- Those adopted by the Seed become seeds and are set free from the bondage of the Law (Gal. 5:1). Just as Ishmael and Isaac were in conflict (Gal. 4:29), so the flesh and the Spirit do not harmonize

## Ross (Cont.)

- The flesh struggles against the Spirit, often mocking it (Gal. 5:16–18). Therefore believers are to “get rid of the slave woman and her son” (Gal. 4:30), that is, to remove the threat of the flesh and “live by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16)
- Allen P. Ross, Genesis, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 63.



## IV. Contract with a “Familiar face” 21:22-34

### A. The Persons & the plan (contract) (v. 22-24)

- **22** Now it came about at that time that Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, “**God is with you in all that you do;**
- Abimelech, well aware of God’s blessing on Abraham, wished to enter into a nonaggression pact with him
- Then the text lists two men: Abimelech, who was the king of Gerar as already known from Genesis 20, and Phicol the captain of his host. Phicol, like Abimelech, is not a proper name but the title of the commander-in-chief
- they have come to recognize the presence of God with Abraham. Their recognition now motivates them to enter into a covenantal relationship with him DUH!!..my comments!!

## A. The Persons & the plan (contract) (v. 22-24)

- The “duhs” .... The king’s admission that God favored the patriarch follows from his dream experience (20:6–7)
- And the following closing of the Philistine women’s wombs and subsequent opening of them upon Abraham’s prayer to YHWH
- The idea of divine presence (“God is with you”) echoes the recent description of God’s supervision of the boy Ishmael (v. 20), guaranteeing success (also, Isaac [26:28] and Joseph [39:2, 3, 21, 23]) (Mathews)
- Abimelech’s request indicates his fear of Abraham’s potential to supplant his future dynasty and kingdom (v. 23). Mention of honesty (“[not] deal falsely,” *šāqar*), “kindness” (*ḥesed*), and Abraham’s “alien” (*gûr*) status recall their earlier dealings in chap. 20

## A. The Persons & the plan (contract) (v. 22-24)

- **23** now therefore, swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my offspring or with my posterity, but according to the kindness that I have shown to you, you shall show to me and to the land in which you have sojourned.”
- **24** Abraham said, “I swear it.”
- The basis of the request was: but according to the kindness I have done unto you, you shall do unto me, and to the land wherein you have sojourned.
- What this shows is that Abraham had become a strong chieftain, a nomadic one, but a chieftain nonetheless, to be feared by the local city-kings of the city-states
- They recognized that *God was with Abraham, but Abraham had been deceptive once before*

## A. The Persons & the plan (contract) (v. 22-24)

- That was the paradox Abimelech faced: God was with Abraham, but Abraham was deceptive; it was this contradictory element that called for a binding treaty.
- Whereas the first conflict, **Scene 5 (20:1–18)**, concerned jeopardy of the seed, the second conflict, **Scene 7 (21:22–34)**, concerns jeopardy of the land (i.e., well rights). In each scene **God ensures Abraham** and his **offspring protection and provision**. In this scene **Abraham negotiates as more than an equal** with Abimelech the Philistine king (Waltke, with my added bolding of text)

## A. The Persons & the plan (contract) (v. 22-24)

- Waltke gives a good explanation of a key word used here 9 times “to swear”
- The two covenants are unified by the Hebrew root *šb*´. *This root, from which is derived both the verb “to swear” and the numeral “seven,” occurs nine times in these thirteen verses*
- The verb “to swear” occurs three times, twice in the nonaggression pact incident (21:23, 24), and once in the well incident (21:31). The other derivative of the same root, “seven” (*šeḇa*´) *occurs three times in the second incident (21:28, 29, 30)*
- The pun comes together in the place name “Beersheba” (21:31, 32, 33). Each of the names of the principal characters, Abraham and Abimelech, occurs exactly seven times
  - Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 298.

## B. The Problem (v. 25-26)

- **25** But Abraham complained to Abimelech because of the well of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized.
- After Abraham “swears it” in verse 24, he can add the “but” in v. 25 since he is quite confident of YHWH’s backing of him
- in verse 25, Abraham had his own complaint: And Abraham reproved Abimelech because of the well of water, which Abimelech’s servants had violently taken away. What this shows is that the House of Abimelech had not acted fairly either. (Fruchtenbaum)
- **well of water.** Water, so essential for survival and livestock, is a precious commodity.

## B. The Problem (v. 25-26)

- **26** And Abimelech said, “I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor did I hear of it until today.”
- He really may not know, or this comment may also be a negotiating tactic. It seems just as probable that a keen ruler would know about the activities of his servants. In fact, the tensions between his servants and Abraham might have prompted his request for a nonaggression pact. (Waltke)
- Abimelech’s response seemed to satisfy Abraham, as Abraham’s following action clearly shows.
  - Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariels Bible Commentary: The Book of Genesis*, 1st ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2008), 349.

## C. The Pact & the Place (v. 27-34)

- **27** Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant.
- It was a *covenant of peace*. Normally, this was as far as they needed to go with the making of the covenant, but Abraham went a step further in verses 28–31 with the seven ewe lambs
- **28** Then Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.
- **29** Abimelech said to Abraham, “What do these seven ewe lambs mean, which you have set by themselves?”
- **30** He said, “You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand so that it may be a witness to me, that I dug this well.”



## C. The Pact & the Place (v. 27-34)

- **So Abraham brought sheep and cattle.** According to Wenham, the fact “that only Abraham gave gifts suggests he is the lesser party and principal beneficiary of the treaty. (Incorrect, my comments!)
- In fact, however, Abraham, the greater in this partnership, is giving gifts to the lesser to guarantee no further infractions of Abraham’s rights (see 21:23). YES!
- In verse 28 is the setting aside: *And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves, something that Abimelech noticed in verse 29: What mean these seven ewe lambs which you have set by themselves? “What is the significance of the seven ewe lambs?*

## C. The Pact & the Place (v. 27-34)

- Abraham's explanation is given in verse 30: And he said, These seven ewe lambs shall you take of my hand; they were a gift to Abimelech
- The reason was: that it may be a witness unto me, that I have dug this well.
- The gift of sheep was a visible sign to Abimelech that this well, located in Beer-Sheba where they were making the covenant at the present time, was the well that Abraham dug and no one else; therefore, it was Abraham's by right of labor
- Abimelech's acceptance of the lambs shows that he recognized Abraham's claim. Not only is there a covenant of peace, but with the seven ewe lambs, there is a covenant of justice (Fruchtenbaum)

## C. The Pact & the Place (v. 27-34)

- **31** Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because there the two of them took an oath.
- **32** So they made a covenant at Beersheba; and Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, arose and returned to the land of the Philistines.
- **Beersheba.** The name means either “Well of oath” or “Well of seven,” a pun on the key word. The name bears witness to the treaty between the two men and Abraham’s right to the well. Beersheba marked the southern boundary of Israel during the monarchy.

## C. The Pact & the Place (v. 27-34)

- Not only does the word sheva mean “seven,” but it also comes from the root shava, which means “to swear,” because they swore an oath. Therefore, it carries a double meaning: “the well of the seven,” because of the seven ewe lambs and “the well of the swearing” because there they swore an oath
- the covenant is concluded: So they made a covenant at Beer-sheba. Then came the departure: Abimelech and Phicol the captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines. Actually, there were no Philistines living in the area yet. Nevertheless, the title is given to these proleptically. It means that this is the area where later the Philistines indeed settled, and Gerar was part of the Philistine Plain

## C. The Pact & the Place (v. 27-34)

- The Philistines arrived later, in the twelfth century b.c. These were their forerunners who now controlled the same territory the Philistines would control later on
- **33** *Abraham* planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.
- **34** And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days.
- **tamarisk tree.** The planting of this small tree of the Negev probably serves as a landmark of God's grace, a pledge that Abraham will stay in the land, and perhaps as a symbol of God's shading presence

## C. The Pact & the Place (v. 27-34)

- The fact that he planted the tree shows that he intended to stay there for some time, and so for now there would be no more roaming.
- In fact, this covenant allowed him to stay where he was by the Well of Beersheba, because Abimelech had recognized Abraham's claim to that well
- Second, in his action, Abraham instituted public worship: and called there on the name of Jehovah, the Everlasting God; in Hebrew, El Olam. The root meaning of the word olam is that which is "secret," "hidden," "concealed," or "unknown."
- Only because God's nature is everlasting can the term have the meaning "eternal" here; He is indeed the Everlasting God (Fruchtenbaum's comments with what I believe the word Olam to mean here in context.....everlasting/eternal)

# Map of Beersheba



# Picture of the well at Beersheba





## C. The Pact & the Place (v. 27-34)

- The point is that *olam* indicates an unknown period of time, so that the context alone determines the time element applied, and in this context everlasting would be equivalent to the English sense of eternal (Fruchtenbaum).....excellent!!
- **33** *Abraham* planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.
- **Eternal God. See 14:19.** As on other occasions, Abraham refers to God by a name appropriate to his particular deeds. The well of Beersheba symbolizes life for Abraham's posterity

## C. The Pact & the Place (v. 27-34)

- **34** And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days
- **Stayed/Sojourned.** The Hebrew here is translated elsewhere, “he stayed for a while.” It denotes an alien, in this case a pilgrim. Though an alien, he is granted a settled place (see 20:15)
- Though he had made a covenant with an earthly king, in order to avoid attack, he recognized that God Himself had made an eternal covenant with him, to give him and his seed all this land for ever
- He would eventually come back to Beersheba to dwell (Genesis 22:19); but for the present he went back to the place where he had been living in the land of the Philistines, where he continued to live for many years, until, in fact, Isaac was a grown man (Morris)

# Some Takeaways from Wiersbe

- So often in the trials of life we fail to see the divine provisions God has made for us, and we forget the promises He has made to us
- We open our hands to receive what we think we need instead of asking Him to open our eyes to see what we already have
- The answer to most problems is close at hand, if we only have eyes to see (Jn 6:1-13;21:1-6)
- Hagar is certainly a picture of the needy multitudes in the world today: wandering, weary, thirsty, blind, and giving up in despair
- We need to tell them the good news that the water of life is available & the well is not far away! (Jn. 4:10-14; 7:37-39)
- God is kind and gracious to all who call on Him, because of His beloved Son Jesus Christ

# Some Takeaways from Ross

- When the Lord fulfilled his Word by providing Isaac, the child of promise, Abraham and Sarah responded with obedience and praise, but Ishmael became a threat to the promised heir, prompting his expulsion into the wilderness, where God provided for him and his mother
- On the human level we may make theological observations concerning how people respond to the fulfillment of the promise. On one side, we find great joy, renewed obedience, and concern for the future developments; on the other side, we realize that some may at the least detract from it, and at the most may oppose it. There is also the emphasis in the narrative on the Lord's protection and provision for the outcasts in the wilderness, another theme that began in the Genesis 16 story.
  - Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 376.

# My “Takeaways” from Ch. 21

- YHWH never, **NEVER** breaks His promises....as shown in the birth of Isaac at the exact time He said would happen
- Abraham shows his sanctification progressing **by obeying immediately** with the token of the covenant, circumcision
- **Age is never a hindrance to be used by God** in supernatural ways as shown by the 100 year old Abraham and 90 year old Sarah
- YHWH showers **His grace even on His (future) enemies (common grace)**, and reveals Himself to them, since He loves the whole kosmos (world)
- The **Lord blesses those who bless Abraham** (ultimately nation Israel) (12:3)..this is an eternal truth.....one that even is rebelled against at the end of the millennium toward Christ ruling in Jerusalem

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