

Genesis 20-21

Bible Study

Review

Chapter 17

God establishes his covenant with Abraham...to be a father of many nations

- Circumcision the physical sign—of the special relationship with God
 - Ishmael promised to be a great nation—Arabs
- Promise to Sarah to have a son—Isaac—his descendents would receive the promises

Chapter 18

Abraham intercedes for Sodom—pleads for mercy if any righteous to be found there

Chapter 19

Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed

- Lot escapes the destruction of Sodom

(Ch. 20) The story shifts back to Abraham:

(I Corinthians 10: 11) “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were **written for our admonition...**”

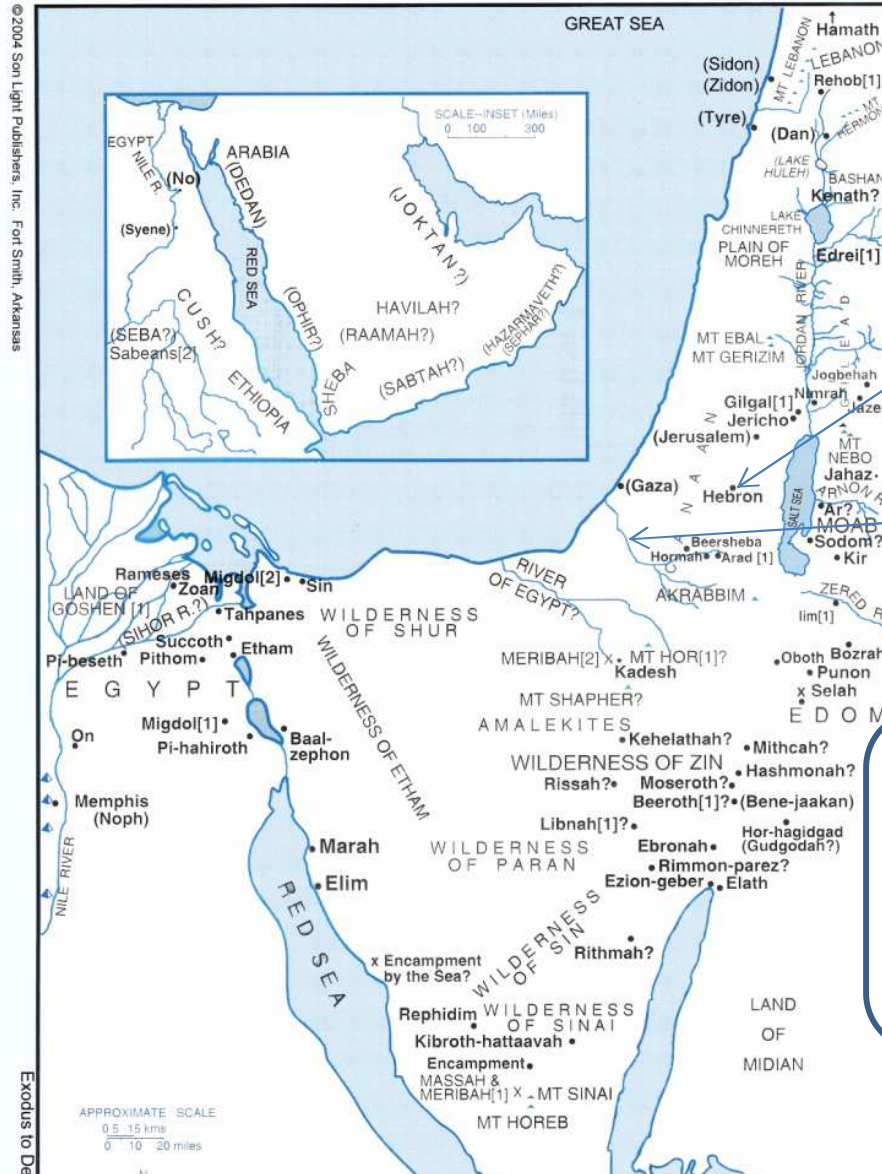


Chapter 20

(Parallels chapter 12-- journey to Egypt)

Genesis 20:1-2

¹And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar.



“journeyed from there”
(Mamre Ch. 18:1)

Gerar— ‘stayed’ as a
resident alien

v. 2 Abimelech—Philistine King

(Abimelech seems to have been
a title like: Pharaoh or Caesar

Genesis 20:2

²Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She *is* my sister.” And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

Verse **2** “She is my sister”

Sarah was the half sister of Abraham (explained in verse 12)

Verse 2 (last part) “Abimelech took Sarah”

(NSB) “This action put Sarah in the king’s harem, but not in his bed. Because of her advanced age, it is probable that Sarah was more desirable for her wealth than for her physical appearance”

Verse 3-7 (takes the form of a **trial**)

³But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, “Indeed you *are* a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she *is* a man’s wife.”

Verse **3** (last part) “she is a man’s wife”

Literally (Heb.) “a noble wife of a noble man”—spoken of a level of dignity by God

(NSB) “Presumably, Abimelech was a pagan king. Yet God warned him of the wrong he was about to commit. This is another instance of the protective care that the Lord gives his people.”

⁴But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, “Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also?”

⁵Did he not say to me, ‘She *is* my sister’? And she, even she herself said, ‘He *is* my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this.”

Verse 4 “will you slay a righteous nation also?”

- Adultery merited the death penalty in the ancient world...
- The king apparently assumed the whole nation would be punished also

Genesis 20:6

⁶And 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.

God did not allow Abimelech to touch Sarah...

It is not stated how, but apparently it was a plague similar to Pharaoh in chapter 12

(v.7) “he (Abraham) shall pray for you and you shall live”

Genesis 20:7

⁷Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he *is* a **prophet**, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore *her*, know that you shall surely die, you and all who *are* yours."

"restore the man's wife"—the test of Abimelech's sincerity

"a prophet"—first occurrence of the word in the OT

"pray"—an intercessory prayer...only Abraham's prayer could save the life of the king

➤(v. 17) "God healed Abimelech"

Genesis 20:8

⁸So Abimelech rose early in the morning, called all his servants, and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were very much afraid.

Verses 9-13

The conversation between Abimelech and Abraham are similar to the account with Pharaoh in chapter 12...but also different in outcome



GENESIS 20:9-10

⁹And 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 **on my kingdom** a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done.”

¹⁰Then Abimelech said to Abraham, “What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?”

Verse 9

Whereas Pharaoh was only concerned about himself (‘what have you done **to me**?’ Chapter 12: 18).....Abimelech was concerned about his subjects

Verse 10

Abimelech gave Abraham a chance to reply (Pharaoh did not)

Genesis 20:11-13

¹¹And Abraham said, “Because I thought, surely the fear of God *is* not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife.

¹²But indeed *she is* truly my sister. She *is* the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.

Sarah was his half sister—later law would ban these unions (Lev. 18: Deut. 27: 22) (NSB) “The marriages of the family of Terah were very close. In this patrician society, the marriages of close relatives was regarded as a sign of rank”

¹³And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This *is* your kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, "He *is* my brother.'""

Abraham justifies his behavior as his general policy wherever he went

Genesis 20:14-16

¹⁴Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and male and female servants, and gave *them* to Abraham; and he restored Sarah his wife to him.

¹⁵And Abimelech said, "See, my land *is* before you; dwell where it pleases you."

¹⁶Then 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.

Abraham was given spoils like he received in Egypt
In Egypt he was expelled immediately...here he is invited to stay and choose where to live

Verse 16

"a **thousand** pieces of silver" —fifty pieces was the usual amount for a bride

Genesis 20:17-18

¹⁷So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants.
Then they bore *children*;

¹⁸for the Lord had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah,
Abraham's wife.

Verses 17-18

Shows that Abimelech had become sick upon taking Sarah into his harem and that is why
he did not approach her

And the wives of his household had their wombs closed as well

(Word) "That Abraham's prayer for Abimelech restored the health of the royal household shows his effectiveness as a prophetic intercessor (v.7) and reiterates that through him all the families of the Earth find blessing (12:3)"

Chapter 20 Lessons

Abraham repeated the same mistake—sometimes it takes multiple times before we learn our lesson



God will protect his people despite their weaknesses

God delivered Abraham and Sarah and the promises were intact....no one can thwart the plan of God

Chapter 21
“Isaac displaces Ishmael”

Genesis 21:1-2

¹And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah **as He had spoken.**

²For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son **in his old age**, at the set time of **which God had spoken to him.**

Verse 1-2

“visited”: indicates God’s special interest—God entered directly into the affairs of his people

The promise was fulfilled as “he had said”..... “as he had spoken”at the time he had promised (18:14)

Genesis 21:3

³And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac.

“Isaac”= he laughs

Genesis 21:4-5

⁴Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.

⁵Now Abraham was **one hundred years old** when his son Isaac was born to him.

Verses 4-5

Abraham obeyed—had Isaac circumcised the 8th day as told in 17: 12
“one hundred years old”—emphasizes the miracle

Genesis 21:6-7

⁶And Sarah said, “God has made me laugh, *and* all who hear will laugh with me.”

⁷She also said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne *him* a son in his old age.”

Sarah expresses joy—her laughter of unbelief has changed to joy of rejoicing over her son

But the rejoicing does not last long—the **animosity** between Sarah and Hagar returns



Genesis 21:8

⁸So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a **great feast** on the same day that Isaac was weaned.

A child in these times might not be weaned until three years of age

Infant mortality being high—so reaching two or three years of age would be reason to celebrate

Genesis 21:9

⁹And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, **scoffing**.

“Scoffing”= mocking—usually used with nasty overtones (mock, jest, make fun of)

➤ Ishmael mocks Isaac

Previously Sarah had mistreated Hagar (16:6)...now Hagar’s son Ishmael was mistreating Sarah’s son

Genesis 21:10

¹⁰Therefore 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.”

“Cast out”=Drive out this **slave-wife** and her **son**—their names not even mentioned
(Word) “the language suggests a mean belittling of Hagar and Ishmael

Genesis 21:11-13

¹¹And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham’s sight because of his son.

¹²But **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.

¹³Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he *is* your seed.”

Abraham loved Ishmael but God assures him that Ishmael would have a future
God tells Abraham to listen to Sarah because her demands coincide with his plans

Genesis 21:14-16

¹⁴So 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.

¹⁵And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs.

¹⁶Then 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.

Verse 14

“sent her away”—not as rough as “cast out”

“wilderness of Beersheba”—moving towards northern Arabia where many Ishmaelites would later inhabit

v. 14 (last part) “Then she departed and wandered in **the Wilderness** of Beersheba.

v. 15 And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy **under one of the shrubs.**”



Genesis 21:17-18

¹⁷And 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*.

¹⁸Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.”

“God heard” = Ishmael
(Chapter 16: 11)

A message of divine authority to encourage
Hagar

Genesis 21:19-21

¹⁹Then 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.

²⁰So God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

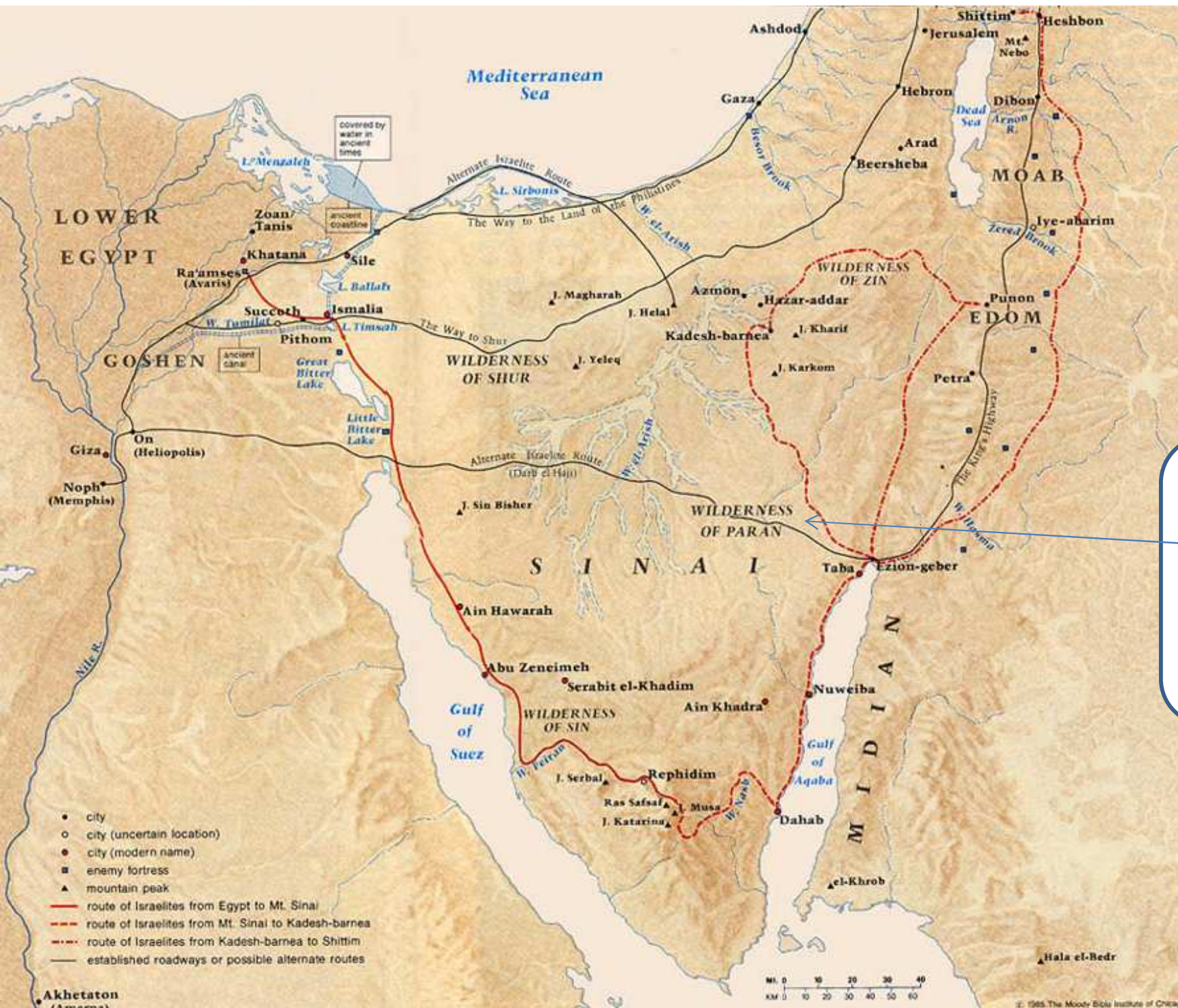
²¹He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Verse 21

“his mother took him a wife for him from the land of Egypt”

His mother—Egyptian; His wife—Egyptian

(Aid) “The Ishmaelites, therefore were at the start one-fourth Semitic and three fourths Hamitic, racially speaking”



v. 21 "he (Ishmael) dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran"

Genesis 21:22-23

²²And 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.

²³Now 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.”

²⁴And Abraham said, “I will swear.”

Verse 22

Abraham and Sarah appear to be living still in Gerar (land of the Philistines)
“God is with you”—thus he wants to make a treaty with Abraham (v. 23)...a covenant sealed by an oath
“swear”—play on the name Beersheba

Genesis 21:25-26

²⁵Then Abraham rebuked Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech’s servants had seized.

²⁶And Abimelech said, “I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor had I heard *of it* until today.”

A dispute over a water well—which was critical for sheep and goats
Abimelech wanted to settle the issue quickly

Scarcity of water and the tremendous labor involved in digging wells-- made them valuable property in the ancient middle east



Genesis 21:27

²⁷So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant.

A treaty was made between the two—an exchange of gifts was customary

Abraham was perhaps the beneficiary thus he only gave gifts

Genesis 21:28-29

²⁸And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.

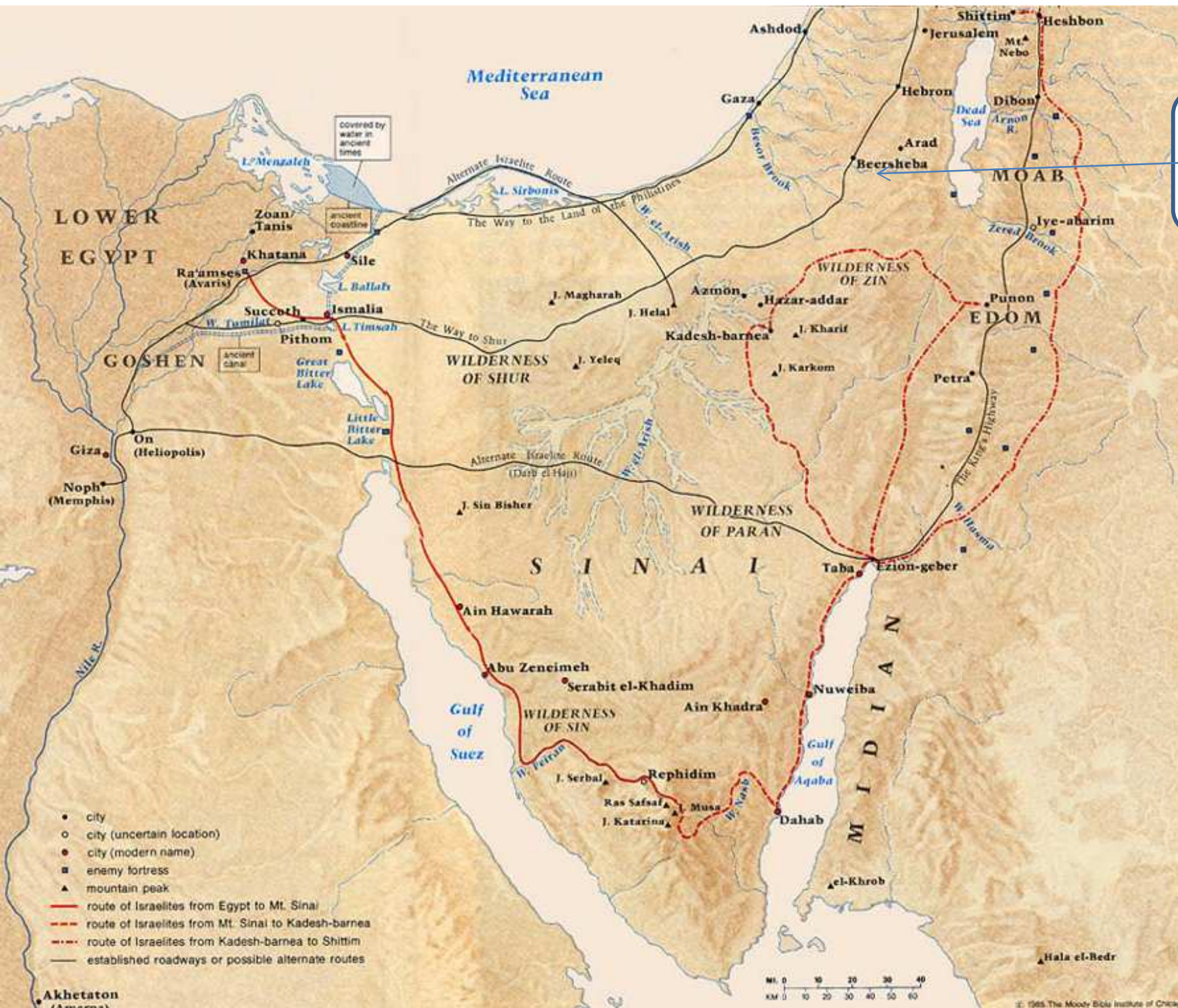
²⁹Then Abimelech asked Abraham, “What *is the meaning of* these seven ewe lambs which you have set by themselves?”

³⁰And he said, “You will take *these* seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well.”

³¹Therefore he called that place [£]**Beersheba**, because the two of them swore an oath there.

(Companion) Beersheba= Heb. *Well of the oath*

(NSB) “The Hebrew number seven is similar in sound to the verb ‘to swear’
Thus Beersheba would be the well where they swore and the well of the seven ewe lambs”



Beersheba

- city
- city (uncertain location)
- city (modern name)
- enemy fortress
- ▲ mountain peak
- route of Israelites from Egypt to Mt. Sinai
- - - route of Israelites from Mt. Sinai to Kadesh-barnea
- · · route of Israelites from Kadesh-barnea to Shittim
- established roadways or possible alternate routes



Genesis 21:32-34

³²Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba. So Abimelech rose with Phichol, the commander of his army, and they returned to the land of the Philistines.

³³Then *Abraham* planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God.

³⁴And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines many days.

v. 32

This covenant secured Abraham's legal right to dwell in the land in peace, and made Abimelech recognize that the well was property of Abraham

v. 33

The tamarisk tree marked the spot of the treaty

➤ To dwell under one's tree was a sign of peace and security (Zech. 3:10)

“the Lord, the Everlasting God” “El-Olam” or El of eternity

(NSB) “the master of eternity. Not only does he live forever, but He meets the needs of his people for all eternity”

Lessons
Chapter 21

God is true to His word—He fulfilled his promise to Abraham and Sarah: a son and heir of the promises was born to them

We can suffer the **consequences** when we ignore God's instructions and laws



Family bitterness results from Abraham and Sarah's impatience