

A. Request in the Summit (22-24)

Inspiration

-Promises of God

God was clearly fulfilling His promise to "bless [Abraham] and make [his] name great" (Gen 12:2)

-Performance of Abraham

"God is with you..." - Great compliment regarding the godliness of Abraham.

Gen 39:1-3 (Joseph)

B. Reproving in the Summit (25-31)

Reason for the Reproving

This was a matter that needed to be dealt with before the "peace treaty" could be ratified.

Response to the Reproving

"I do not know..."

Repeating of the Reproving

"you will take from my hand, that this may be a witness for me that I dug this well."

Note: In both encounters, the one who was wronged is the one who gave gifts. (Gen 20:14-16)

The same is true in salvation (John 3:16)

C. Results of the Summit (32-34)

Establishment of Peace

"So they made a covenant..."

Began to fail after Abraham died:

*Isaac deceived Abimelech (Gen 26:1-16)

*Philistines stopped Abraham's wells (Gen 26:18)

At that time - Most likely 4+ years after their first encounter in Chapter 20.

22 At that time **Abimelech** and **Phicol** the commander of his army said to **Abraham**, "God is with you in all that you do."

23 Now therefore *swear to me here by God* that you *will not deal falsely* with me or with my descendants or *with my posterity*, but *as I have dealt kindly with you, so you will deal with me and with the land where you have sojourned.*"

24 And **Abraham** said, "I will swear."

25 When Abraham reproved **Abimelech** about a *well of water* that **Abimelech**'s servants had seized,

26 **Abimelech** said, "I do not know who has done this thing; *you did not tell me*, and I have not heard of it until today." <- Why did Abraham not address this earlier?

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

28 **Abraham** set *seven ewe lambs* of the flock apart.

29 And **Abimelech** said to **Abraham**, "What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?" <- May have been sacrifices in a covenant ceremony (compare 15:9-17)

30 He said, "These *seven ewe lambs* you will take from my hand, that *this may be a witness for me that I dug this well.*" Beersheba = "Well of Seven" or "Well of Oath"

31 Therefore that place was called **Beersheba**, because there *both of them swore an oath*.

32 So they made a covenant at **Beersheba**. Then **Abimelech** and **Phicol** the commander of his army rose up and returned to the *land of the Philistines*.

33 **Abraham** planted a *tamarisk tree* in **Beersheba** and *called there on the name of the LORD*, the Everlasting God. Tamarisk - Evergreen tree suitable for the climate

34 And **Abraham** *sojourned many days* in the land of the Philistines.

Specifications

-Integrity of the Covenant

"Will not deal falsely..."

-Duration of the Covenant

"With my posterity..." (Lifetime commitment)

-Kindness of the Covenant

"Deal [kindly] with me..."

Luke 6:31 (Golden rule)

-Coverage of the Covenant

"and with the land where you have sojourned."

Accommodation

"I will swear."

Abimelech

-King of Gerar

-Second recorded encounter with Abraham (Gen 20:1-18)

-Deceived by both Abraham and Isaac (Gen 20:1-18; 26:1-16)

-Covenants with Abraham and Isaac at Beersheba (Gen 26:26-33)

-Possible that "Abimelech" could have been a title of Philistine kings (e.g. 'Pharaoh')

Enjoyment of Peace

-Planting of a Tree

-Practicing of Worship

"Called...on the name of the Lord..."

-Place of Residence

"Abraham sojourned many days in the land..."

See Gen 20:15

Abimelech

Genesis 20 (ESV)

¹ From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. ² And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. ³ But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man’s wife.” ⁴ Now Abimelech had not approached her. So he said, “Lord, will you kill an innocent people? ⁵ Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.” ⁶ Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her. ⁷ Now then, return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.”

⁸ So Abimelech rose early in the morning and called all his servants and told them all these things. And the men were very much afraid. ⁹ Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, “What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done.” ¹⁰ And Abimelech said to Abraham, “What did you see, that you did this thing?” ¹¹ Abraham said, “I did it because I thought, ‘There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’ ¹² Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife. ¹³ And when God caused me to wander from my father’s house, I said to her, ‘This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, “He is my brother.” ’ ”

¹⁴ Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male servants and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and returned Sarah his wife to him. ¹⁵ And Abimelech said, “Behold, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you.” ¹⁶ To Sarah he said, “Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. It is a sign of your innocence in the eyes of all who are with you, and before everyone you are vindicated.” ¹⁷ Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children. ¹⁸ For the LORD had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife.

Genesis 26:1–33 (ESV)

¹ Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar to Abimelech king of the Philistines. ² And the LORD appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. ³ Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. ⁴ I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, ⁵ because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.”

⁶ So Isaac settled in Gerar. ⁷ When the men of the place asked him about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,” for he feared to say, “My wife,” thinking, “lest the men of the place should kill me because of Rebekah,” because she was attractive in appearance. ⁸ When he had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out of a window and saw Isaac laughing with Rebekah his wife. ⁹ So Abimelech called Isaac and said, “Behold, she is your wife. How then

could you say, 'She is my sister'?" Isaac said to him, "Because I thought, 'Lest I die because of her.'" ¹⁰ Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us." ¹¹ So Abimelech warned all the people, saying, "Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."

¹² And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The LORD blessed him, ¹³ and the man became rich, and gained more and more until he became very wealthy. ¹⁴ He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants, so that the Philistines envied him. ¹⁵ (Now the Philistines had stopped and filled with earth all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father.) ¹⁶ And Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we."

¹⁷ So Isaac departed from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there. ¹⁸ And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, which the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham. And he gave them the names that his father had given them. ¹⁹ But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water, ²⁰ the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." So he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him. ²¹ Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that also, so he called its name Sitnah. ²² And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, saying, "For now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

²³ From there he went up to Beersheba. ²⁴ And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake." ²⁵ So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well.

²⁶ When Abimelech went to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phicol the commander of his army, ²⁷ Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me and have sent me away from you?" ²⁸ They said, "We see plainly that the LORD has been with you. So we said, let there be a sworn pact between us, between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, ²⁹ that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD." ³⁰ So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. ³¹ In the morning they rose early and exchanged oaths. And Isaac sent them on their way, and they departed from him in peace. ³² That same day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well that they had dug and said to him, "We have found water." ³³ He called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.

ABIMELECH, KING OF GERAR (אַבִּימֶלֶךְ, *avimelekh*). Misled to believe that Sarah (Gen 20) and Rebekah (Gen 26) were the sisters of Abraham and Isaac, respectively. Makes a covenant with Abraham (Gen 21) and Isaac (Gen 26) at Beer-sheba. If Abimelech is a throne name, there could be two people named Abimelech represented in these stories.

Etymology and Occurrences outside the Hebrew Bible

“Abimelech” is made up of two West Semitic elements: אב (*'b*) meaning “father” and מלך (*mlk*) meaning “king,” together meaning “my father is king”. The name *a-bi-mil-ki* occurs eleven times in the El Amarna texts and appears to be the name or title of the official of Tyre. The name also occurs several times in Ugaritic, Akkadian, and Punic texts (Hess, *Amarna Personal Names*, 18–19). Abimelech is likely a throne name for the ruler of Gerar (Matthews, *Genesis*, 403).

Abimelech, King of Gerar (Early Second Millennium BC)

A character named Abimelech appears four different times in Genesis: in the accounts of the deception of Abraham and Isaac (Gen 20:1–18; 26:1–16) and the covenant at Beer-sheba (Gen 21:22–34; 26:26–33). In Genesis 20:1–18, Abimelech takes Sarah into his house because he believes she is Abraham’s sister. The text states that he does not approach her sexually; whether Abimelech is an upright person or has been rendered sexually impotent by God (Gen 20:17–18) is open to debate (Novick, “Almost, at Times, the Fool”, 277–290). Abimelech reappears in Gen 21:22, accompanied by Phicol (his general) to make a covenant with Abraham, establishing Abraham’s (and his descendants’) claim to the well, and the site of Beer-sheba. In Genesis 21:34, Abraham dwells in the land of the Philistines—most likely an anachronistic name for the people of the region (see Hamilton, *Genesis*, 94)—implying that Abimelech is their king.

These two stories closely parallel stories about Isaac, Abraham’s son. In Genesis 26:1–16, which recapitulates both Gen 12:10–20 and 20:1–18, Isaac goes to Abimelech, called “king of the Philistines,” in Gerar during a famine. However, Abimelech does not take Rebekah into his house, even though Isaac has declared that she is his sister. Abimelech spies on Isaac and sees him caressing Rebekah; thus he discerns the truth. He rebukes Isaac and warns his people to stay away from Rebekah. Unlike the friendly resolution of Abraham’s story, Abimelech sends Isaac away in Gen 26:16 because his wealth poses a threat to Abimelech’s people. Later in Genesis 26:26–33, Abimelech initiates proceedings for a second peace-covenant between his people and Isaac’s, which takes place at Beer-sheba.

Other Occurrences

In Psalm 34, the name Abimelech appears as the king before whom David pretended to be insane. In First Samuel 21:10–15, the king’s name is Achish, indicating either historical inaccuracy or a second, possibly semitic, name for Achish (Dahood, *Psalms 1–50*, 205). Finally, the Masoretic text of 1 Chronicles 18:16 names Zadok and Abimelech as priests during David’s reign. Second Samuel 8:17 and most other textual witnesses of 1 Chronicles 18:16 use the name Ahimelech instead.

Bibliography

- Block, Daniel Isaac. Judges, Ruth. New American Commentary 6. Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999.
- Dahood, Mitchell. *Psalms 1–50*. The Anchor Bible 16. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966.
- Hamilton, Victor. *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.
- Hess, Richard S. *Amarna Personal Names*. American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series 9. Eisenbrauns, 1993.
- Klein, Lillian R. *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 68. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1988.
- Matthews, Kenneth A. *Genesis 11:27–50:26*. New American Commentary 1B. Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005.
- Novick, Tzvi. “‘Almost, at Times, the Fool’: Abimelech and Genesis 20.” *Prooftexts* 24, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 277–290.
- Schneider, Tammi J. *Judges*. Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000.

KERRY LEE¹

ABIMELECH (Heb. ^a*bîmelek*, ‘the (divine) king is my father’). **1.** Philistine kings of Gerar bearing this name figure in episodes involving Abraham (Gn. 20:1–18) and Isaac (Gn. 26:1–33). The similarities between the accounts have led many to suppose that they are doublets, but Abimelech may have been a cognomen of Philistine kings (*cf.* Egyptian ‘Pharaoh’); there are also significant differences in the stories (and note the relevance of Gn. 20:13 for both Abraham and Isaac). Nor need the reference to the presence of Philistines in Canaan in patriarchal days be anachronistic, for ‘Philistine’ may mean that the Gerarites were an advance party of the Sea Peoples who later settled in Palestine; of these the Philistines were to become the dominant element. In the superscription to Ps. 34 the name Abimelech is given to Achish king of Gath.

2. A son of Gideon by a Shechemite concubine (Jdg. 8:31). With the aid of his mother’s family he murdered all seventy of his brothers, with the exception of Jotham. Although he proclaimed himself ‘king’—a title which his father had repudiated (Jdg. 8:23) his territory cannot have extended beyond W Manasseh. After 3 years the Shechemites turned against their king and sided with Gaal. Abimelech responded vigorously and cruelly; he later died somewhat ingloriously while besieging Thebez. For the archaeological background to Jdg. 9, see G. E. Wright, *Shechem*, 1965, pp. 123–128.

3. A priest, the son of Abiathar (1 Ch. 18:16) according to *MT*, but perhaps a scribal error for Ahimelech (so *RSV*; *cf.* 2 Sa. 8:17).

R. P. GORDON.²

¹ Lee, K. (2012). Abimelech, King of Gerar. In (J. D. Barry & L. Wentz, Eds.) *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

² Gordon, R. P. (1996). Abimelech. In (D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman, Eds.) *New Bible dictionary*. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Promises of God

Genesis 12:1–3 (ESV)

¹ Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Performance of Abraham

Genesis 39:1–3 (ESV)

¹ Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. ² The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. ³ His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.

Kindness of the Covenant

Luke 6:31 (ESV)

³¹ And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

Covenant – Sheep and Oxen

Genesis 15:9–17 (ESV)

⁹ He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰ And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. ¹¹ And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

¹² As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. ¹³ Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶ And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

¹⁷ When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.

Beersheba

BEERSHEBA. The name given to an important well, and also to the local town and district (Gn. 21:14; Jos. 19:2). The present town lies 77 km SW of Jerusalem and approximately midway between the Mediterranean and the S part of the Dead Sea. There are several wells in the vicinity, the largest 3.75 m in diameter. The digging of this well involved cutting through 5 m of solid rock. On one stone of the masonry lining the shaft Conder found a date indicating that repairs had been carried out in the 12th century AD. At the time of his visit in 1874, it was 11 m

to the surface of the water.

Excavations at *Tel es-Saba*, 5 km W of the town, have revealed a planned and fortified town of the Judaeon monarchy. A well outside the gateway is dated to the 12th century BC by the excavator, and associated with Abraham, setting the stories of the Patriarchs after the Israelite conquest. There is no evidence to support this speculation. No pottery of Bronze Age date has been found at the site, nor anything to prove the place's ancient name. Iron Age pottery has been found in the modern town (*Bir es-Seba*), which was called Berosaba in Roman times, and may yet prove to be the patriarchal site.

The meaning of the name is given in Gn. 21:31, 'The well of seven' (*i.e.* lambs). The alternative interpretation, 'The well of the oath', arises through a misunderstanding of the use of the Heb. word for 'therefore', which can refer only to an antecedent statement (Gn. 11:9 is not really an exception), and a mistranslation of the Heb. particle *ki* by 'because', whereas it here introduces an independent temporal clause and should be rendered 'when', or even 'then'. The antecedent statement tells *why* it was done; this clause, *when* it was done. (for a similar use of *ki*, cf. Gn. 24:41; cf. König, *Heb. Syntax*, 387 h.) The explanation of the alleged second account of the naming of the well by Isaac (Gn. 26:33) is given in v. 18: 'And Isaac dug again the wells of water which had been dug in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the names which his father had given them.' Since the digging of a well was often a major achievement, filial respect alone would insist that the work of a great father would be thus remembered. In v. 33 the actual wording is: 'He called it Shibah.' The use here of the feminine of the numeral may merely express the numerical group, roughly equivalent to 'It, of the seven'.

Beersheba has many patriarchal associations. Abraham spent much time there (Gn. 22:19). It was probably a part of Palestine without an urban population, since the seasonal nature of the pasturage would not have been conducive to settled conditions. From here he set out to offer up Isaac. Isaac was dwelling here when Jacob set out for Harran (Gn. 28:10). On his way through to Joseph in Egypt, Jacob stopped here to offer sacrifices (Gn. 46:1). In the division of the land it went to the tribe of Simeon (Jos. 19:2).

In the familiar phrase 'from Dan to Beersheba' (Jdg. 20:1, *etc.*) it denoted the southernmost place of the land. The town owed its importance to its position on the trade-route to Egypt.

The reference to it in Amos (5:5 and 8:14) indicates that it had become a centre for undesirable religious activities.

Beersheba and its villages (Heb. 'daughters') were resettled after the captivity (Ne. 11:27).

The place referred to by Josephus (*BJ* 2.573 and 3. 39), which Winckler wanted to identify with the Beersheba of the OT, was a village in lower Galilee (Jos., *Life* 5:188).

BIBLIOGRAPHY. W. Zimmerli, 4, 1932. Y. Aharoni, 4 1, 1973; 4, 1, 1974, pp. 34–42; 2, 1975, pp. 146–168.

W. J. MARTIN.
A. R. MILLARD.³

³ Martin, W. J., & Millard, A. R. (1996). Beersheba. In (D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman, Eds.) *New Bible dictionary*. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Tamarisk Tree



Tamarisk—Heb. ‘eshel (Gen. 21:33; 1 Sam. 22:6; 31:13, in the R.V.; but in A.V., “grove,” “tree”); Arab. asal. Seven species of this tree are found in Palestine. It is a “very graceful tree, with long feathery branches and tufts closely clad with the minutest of leaves, and surmounted in spring with spikes of beautiful pink blossoms, which seem to envelop the whole tree in one gauzy sheet of colour” (Tristram’s Nat. Hist.).⁴

⁴ Easton, M. G. (1893). In *Easton’s Bible dictionary*. New York: Harper & Brothers.