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Abraham Said of His Wife: She is My Sister 20: 1-2

Abraham said of His wife: she is my sister DIG: Why did Abraham move from the Oaks of Mamre? Why do you think Avraham persists in this lie about not being married to Sarah? Who is he concerned about? Why? Why should he have known better? What was different now?

REFLECT: Have you ever made the same mistake over and over again? How hard is it for you to break bad habits? Do you have a bad habit that seems to have been with you forever? Do you live in fear? What solution could you choose?

When **ADONAI** tests us, it is usually to help us grow out of our weaknesses or problem areas of our flesh. We now see this principle unfolding in **Abraham's** life. **He** was, indeed, a great **man of faith** – perhaps one of the greatest (see the commentary on **Hebrews Cp – The Faith of Abraham**). But like us, **he** also had his shortcomings. The story here is similar to that of **Chapter 12** (see **Dv – Now There Was a Famine in the Land and Abram Went Down to Egypt to Live**).



Now Avraham moved on from the Oaks of Mamre, where **he** had live for twenty years, and the hill country of Judah, **into the region of the Negev** desert **and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he** temporarily **stayed in Gerar**, the capital city at that time of the land of the Philistines near the Egyptian border, and modern day Tell Abu Hureirah **(20:1).** This was a prosperous city, as revealed by archaeological excavations there, and it may be that **Abraham** has some kind of

business dealings in mind. The city controlled a lucrative caravan route and by this time **Abraham** was a wealthy and powerful chieftain.[331] Or maybe the view of the plain and the constant reminder of the ruin was too much to bear.

And while staying **in Gerar**, **Abraham said of his wife Sarah: She is my sister.** I hate to say it, but it seems that in this instance, **Abraham** was more concerned about **himself** than **his wife**. **He** was **afraid** that if **Abimelech** knew **Sarah** was **his wife**, **he** would kill **him** in order to marry **her**. This was not a question of being caught off guard. This was the recurrence of an old sin. Long ago in Egypt **he** had followed the same wicked course **(12:13)**. However, this was twenty-five years later. Since then **he** had built an altar to **the LORD**, conquered Chedorlaomer and the four kings of the east, had been blessed by Melchizedek the priest of **the Most High God**, had refused the offer of the King of Sodom to be enriched by **him**, and received great revelations and promises from **God**.[332] But this was the second time he did this! No wonder **ADONAI** was dealing with **him**!

Scripture impartially relates both the failings and the virtues of its heroes. Sometimes, it is more encouraging for us to see that such a man of faith did not always exercise it. We, too, do not always walk in **the Spirit**. It is helpful to see how **the Lord** allows other believers to grow, especially such a one as **Abraham**. Thus, the Scripture is true when it reminds us: **So then, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us, too, put aside every impediment – that is, the sin which easily hampers our forward movement – and keep running with endurance in the contest set before us (Hebrews 12:1).**

This is the last test where Abram totally failed. First, **he** stayed in **Haran** when **he** should have gone to **the** Promised **Land (11:31b)**. Secondly, **he** left **the land** of Canaan and went to **Egypt**. Thirdly, **Abram** listened to **his wife** instead of waiting on **the LORD**, which resulted in the birth of **Ishmael** and untold problems **(16:1-16)**. And fourthly, here, **his** lapse of faith continued as **he** refused to trust **ADONAI** for **his** and **his wife's** safekeeping when **he** lied *again* to **Abimelech (20:1-18).**

Hundreds of times in Scripture we are told not to be **afraid**. But how can we help it? If someone we love is in danger, if awful possibilities constantly present themselves, what are we to do? Then King **David** gives the answer: **When I am afraid, I will trust in You (Psalm 56:3). He** brings the two conflicting powers, emotion and will, into a single verse. **He's** a realist. **He** does not deny the feeling, but **he** doesn't let that govern **his** life either, or drain the energy **God** gives for **his** work. **He** feels

one thing and does another. **He** applies the antidote. I think the best way to do that is simply to offer up to **the Lord** each **fear** as it comes, and pray for grace to go on peacefully doing the work **He** has given us to do.[333]

At that time, **Abimelech King of Gerar**, ruled the land of the Philistines, who were the descendents of Ham **(10:14)**. The word **Abimelech** was not a proper name, it is merely a title of the **King of Gerar**. Just like the term pharaoh was not a proper name, but the title of the king of **Egypt**. When **Abraham** entered **the land**, **he** knew little about the people who live there, but it didn't take too long for **him** to realize they were an ungodly lot. The old fears **he** had experienced in **Egypt** suddenly returned. Once again, they agreed that **Sarah** would be passed off as **his sister**, rather than **his wife**, for the same reason as before.

Sarah was ninety years old and **it is surprising that in her old age she was still so attractive that kings desired her.** Or possibly **Abimelech** viewed **her** as of political value, since **Abraham** was a powerful and rich chieftain. **The king** already had a harem and, as was the custom in those days, kings had a right to take any woman they might choose into their harems, whether for sexual or political motives.[334] But for whatever reason, **he sent for Sarah and took her (20:2).** By repeating this sin, **Avraham**, once again, endangered the birth of Isaac. But **God** was not caught off guard. **He** never is.