

Community Bible Church

The Book of Genesis

Chapters 20-21

In **Genesis chapters 20** and **21**, two vivid contrasts and two conflicts are highlighted. The first is between **Abraham** and **Abimelech** in **chapter 20** and the second is between **Sarah** and **Hagar** in **chapter 21**. The **apostle Paul** even picks up on these contrasts and uses one as an illustration of **law** verses **grace** in his letter to the **Galatians**.

In **Genesis chapter 20**, Abraham and Sarah decide to relocate from **Mamre** in central Canaan to **Gerar** in the south. There they encounters a man named Abimelech, a petty chieftan of Gerar referred to as a “king.” **Chapter 21** records the birth of **Isaac** to Sarah and Abraham and the conflict with **Hagar and Ishmael**.

These two chapters can be outlined as follows:

Abraham and Abimelech in Gerar 20:1-18, 21:22-34

The Deception 20:1-8
The Defense 20:9-13
The Delivery 20:14-18
The Deal 21:22-34

Isaac and Ishmael in Conflict 21:1-21

The Arrival 21:1-8
The Antagonism 21:9-13
The Affirmation 21:14-21

1. The narrative in **Genesis 20** records the migration of Abraham and his family into the southern part of Canaan known as the Negev area, where they settled in Gerar. What took place in **20:2**? Does this pattern sound familiar (see **12:12-13**)? Does this passage bring to mind any recurrent patterns of sin and deception that you have dealt with in your life? How did God respond to this serious breach of integrity in Abraham’s life in **20:3-8**? What did you think of Abraham’s response in **20:10-12**?

2. Read **20:14-18**. Recall that the promise to Abraham and the line of the Messiah through Sarah was at stake in this situation. How did this entire episode come to a conclusion, based upon the gracious response of the pagan king and the prayer of Abraham?

3. **Chapter 21** records the miraculous and long-promised birth of Isaac. Note that Isaac's name (*Yitzhak* in Hebrew) means "*he laughs.*" Read this very personal narrative of Abraham and Sarah in **21:1-8** and give some of the details of this event. What most interested you in this story?

4. The clouds of dissent move in over the story in **21:9-11**. What happens? How does God intervene in **21:12-13**? What did Abraham do in **21:14**?

5. The conclusion of the Isaac-Ishmael narrative is given in **21:15-21**. This passage demonstrates God's compassion for Hagar and Ishmael. In what ways does God, and His Son, intervene in a gracious and merciful way? Note that Ishmael settles in Paran in the Sinai Peninsula and becomes the father of the Arab people. The conflict and animosity between the offspring of Isaac and Ishmael continues to the present day.

6. **Chapter 21** concludes by again describing the tension between Abraham and Abimelech, the political leader of Gerar. Read **21:22-33** and write a brief summary of this conflict and the outcome.

7. In the New Testament the Apostle Paul refers to the narrative of these two women (Sarah and Hagar) and their sons, and uses it as an analogy to illustrate to the Galatians the clear distinction between works-righteousness/self-effort and faith/grace. Read **Galatians 4:21-31** (below in NLT) and describe what most interests you in this passage regarding the use of the Old-Testament-in-the-New.