

Ernest Gonzalez

Professor David Emanuel

BIB 102 NA Old Testament Literature

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Promise Keeper

It is known to man that fear is one of the persistent enemies in our lifetime, not an enemy to hate or to despise but one to discuss clarity with. The Bible is filled with imperfect people serving a perfect God, and although I was not raised in Church, fragments of stories in the Bible have stuck with me as I grew up. I had heard about Abraham, the father of faith, and the beautiful promises God left for him and his descendants. Little did I know the story of Abraham goes more in depth. As I read the Old Testament, two particular events that took me by surprise included Abraham and his mistrust in God being revealed through the way he handled coming into a foreign country with his wife, this occurred in Genesis 12 and Genesis 20. When I read through these passages, it was as though I was reading the same story...but in reality both stories were individual events.

Genesis 12 shows Abram and Sarai living through a famine, the severity of the famine caused Abram and Sarai to head to Egypt in search for stability, but before Abram and Sarai arrived in Egypt, The Old Testament states Abram's concern of being killed due to Sarai's beauty. In fear, Abram pleaded with Sarai, and they both agreed to enter Egypt on the same terms. Soon, Sarai was taken to live with Pharaoh, and while Abram lived in Egypt he was blessed by Pharaoh because Abram had claimed to be related to Sarai. Reality soon struck the kingdom when plagues came upon them. It was not specified what made the Pharaoh conclude the plagues were Abram and Sarai's fault, but the chapter ends with Pharaoh questioning Abram's actions. Genesis 12:20 states, "So Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had." This ending seemed to be too good to be true, but God really worked it all out for good.

Genesis 20 presents another event similar to Genesis 12, the story takes place in a land called Gerar, in which Abraham once again asks Sarah to claim to be his sister. In Genesis 17,

God changes Abram and Sarai's name to Abraham and Sarah to remind them of God's promise to them. Just like Genesis 12, Sarah's beauty is noticed again, this time, in the land of Gerar. King Abimelek took for himself Sarah, and consequently encountered God in his dream. God reveals to king Abimelek the sinful act he committed in taking someone's else's wife. Abimelek, unaware of this fact, pleads with God for mercy in his dream, God reveals to Abimelek that He prevented him from touching Sarah, and God's grace is seen upon Abimelek, God tells Abimelek to restore Sarah to Abraham then Abraham will pray on behalf of Abimelek's family. Throughout Abimelek and God's conversation I noticed God seemed to favor Abraham. Although Abraham may have failed God, God was still faithful to protect and to finish what God himself had begun in Abraham. Chapter 20 ends with God healing Abimelek's wife and female servants after Abraham had prayed for them.

Both of these stories demonstrate the same issue of trust, Abraham lacked trust in God. In a way, readers can claim Abraham did not believe God would protect him or his wife. Abraham's perception of God's power might have been limited. Abraham stated in Genesis 20:11, "surely the fear of God is not in this place" due to the places he was going to visit were Godless, Abraham taking God by taking matters into his own hands, and through both stories we can see how God ended up having to flip the script and take charge of the situations. Thankfully everything turned out positive in both instances. In addition, both stories directly affect the ruler's household. Both the Pharaoh and King Abimelek took Sarah, and they were both affected by consequences, consequences that instilled the fear of God in their lives.

A difference these two passages have is the location, Genesis 12, took place in Egypt and the moving of Abraham and Sarah into Egypt was due to a famine. On the other hand, Genesis 20 took place in Gerar and the motive in which Abraham and Sarah left was not clearly mentioned. At the end of Genesis 20, Abraham does state that God caused him to wander from his "fathers house." So, two different causes and two different locations are presented. In addition, Genesis 12 does not specify how God revealed himself to the Pharaoh, but Genesis 20 does reveal to the readers how God communicated with King Abimelech. In Genesis 20 readers can paint a picture of God conversing with King Abimelech through a dream. Also, what Abraham received from both rulers were not exactly the same, in Genesis 12 Abraham received his wife and all his possessions, he also received sheep, oxen, male donkeys, servants, female

donkeys, and camels. On the other hand, in Genesis 20, Abraham ends up leaving Gerar with sheep, oxen male, female servants, land and silver.

I believe Abraham was wrong in his actions because he did not fully trust in God. Although it may have seemed skillful for Abraham to think strategically to protect himself, God had already given a promise to Abraham. The outcome of both mistakes were determined by God at the end, it was only by God's mercy and grace that both situations were able to end in peaceful terms. It was God who revealed himself to King Abimelek and Pharaoh. To enable Abraham to gain gifts from these rulers, God instilled respect for Himself, and as a result Abraham gained many gifts from both of them. God had already given Abraham many promises, so God was true to His word.

Genesis 12 and 20 resonate with other incidents in Genesis, such as, Lot being raped by his two daughters. Both of his daughters had intercourse with him because they decided to take family bloodline matters into their own hands. This story brought me back to Abraham taking the situation into his own hands and thinking he was wise. Genesis 12 and 20, also reminded me of when Sarah took matters of having a child into her own hands. In Genesis 16, Sarah allowed Hagar to bear a baby with Abraham, but the situation did not result in the way Sarah had desired because of Hagar's disrespectful remarks towards Sarah. God ended up restoring Hagar's identity and provided a blessing, just as God had provided for Abraham in Genesis 12 and 20, God had done it before. In addition the story of Moses was very similar to the events in Genesis 12 and 20, things like being in Egypt, being let go by the pharaoh, and gaining material blessings coming from a foreign country are seen in both stories.

These two accounts reveal to me, God's faithfulness. They showed me how God's care is not to be taken lightly. Although Abraham might have made a mistake, God remained merciful towards both him and Sarah. What surprised me about the ending of both Genesis 12 and 20 was Abraham being blessed with property, such as oxen, servants, and land. These two events bore God finishing what He starts, and showed me how imperfect humans are, but also how merciful God is. God's intellect and power is far beyond what we may ever grasp.

The lesson I received from the stories that I can apply to my life is to trust God, God worked it all out for good at the end of both stories, and it was not for Abrahams's glory but for God's own glory. God used those moments to reveal himself to the kings and rulers and reveal

himself as the triune God. Throughout both events, God had mercy and Grace upon Abraham and Sarah. This shows that God never goes back on His word even when we mess up.