

CHAPTER 21

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 21

This chapter gives an account of the conception, birth, circumcision, and weaning of Isaac, (^{<0201>}Genesis 21:1-8); of the mocking of Ishmael, and of the casting out of him and his mother from Abraham's house, at the request of Sarah, which, though grievous to Abraham, he complied with at the direction of God, (^{<0209>}Genesis 21:9-13); of the provision Abraham made for their departure, and of the supply they met with in the wilderness from God, where Ishmael was brought up, and where he married, (^{<0214>}Genesis 21:14-21); and of a covenant between Abraham and Abimelech, king of Gerar, (^{<0222>}Genesis 21:22-32); and of Abraham's planting a grove, and calling on the name of the Lord, (^{<0233>}Genesis 21:33); and the chapter is closed with this observation, that Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines many days, (^{<0234>}Genesis 21:34).

Ver. 1. *And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said*, etc.] To Abraham, (^{<0176>}Genesis 17:16,19,21 18:10,14); in a way of mercy and kindness, by fulfilling his promise, giving strength to conceive and bear a child; (see ^{<0121>}1 Samuel 2:21):

and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken; which intends the same thing in different words; and the repetition is made to cause attention to God's fulfilment of his promise, who is always faithful to his word, even in things very difficult and seemingly impossible, as in the present case: hence the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem paraphrase it, God did a wonder or wonders for Sarah in causing her to conceive when she was so old, and in such circumstances as she was.

Ver. 2. *For Sarah conceived*, etc.] This explains what is meant by the Lord's visiting her, and doing to her according to his word, (see ^{<0811>}Hebrews 11:11);

and bare Abraham a son in his old age; which circumstance is remarked, that the favour might appear the greater, and the more wonderful; or, "unto", or "for his old age"^{f1210}, for the comfort of him in his old age, who

having lived so many years under the promise of a son, and in the expectation of one, even of the promised seed, from whom the Messiah should spring, now has one, than which nothing could yield him greater consolation:

at the set time of which God had spoken to him, (^{<0172>}Genesis 17:21 18:10-14); God was not only faithful in fulfilling his promise, but in keeping the exact time of it.

Ver. 3. *And Abraham called the name of his son that was borne unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac.*] Which is the name he was directed to give him, (^{<0179>}Genesis 17:19); and he remembers the order, and is obedient to it; the reason of which name, which signifies laughter, was on account of his laughing for joy at the promise made him, as well as there might be afterwards a further reason for it, from Sarah's laughing through distrust; and it might presignify the joy and laughter that would be expressed by others at his birth; and perhaps also that he would be the object of the laughter and derision of his brother; such a number of events agreeing with his name.

Ver. 4. *And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac, being eight days old as, God had commanded him.*] (^{<0172>}Genesis 17:12), and was the first that we read of that was circumcised on that day, according to the divine precept, which Abraham strictly observed; for though this was the son of the promise, and of his old age, for whom he had the most affectionate regard, yet he administered this bloody ordinance on him; nor did he defer it beyond the time, and was himself the operator, as it seems; all which shows his strict regard, and ready and cheerful obedience to the command of God.

Ver. 5. *And Abraham was an hundred years old when son Isaac was born unto him.*] So that this was years after his departure from Haran, and coming into the land of Canaan, for then he was seventy five years of age, (^{<0124>}Genesis 12:4); and this exactly agrees with the account of Demetrius, as related by Polyhistor, an Heathen writer ^{f1211}, who makes Isaac to be born just twenty five years from Abraham's coming into the land of Canaan, and who must be now an hundred years old, being ninety nine at the time the Lord appeared unto him, and promised him a son at the set time the next year, (^{<0170>}Genesis 17:1,21). This is observed, both to show the wonderful favour to Abraham, and the faithfulness of God in the exact performance of his promise: according to Bishop Usher ^{f1212}, Isaac was

born A. M. 2108, and before Christ 1896, and probably at Beersheba, (see ^{<0213>}Genesis 21:33, 34).

Ver. 6. *And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh*, etc.] This she said on occasion of the name of her son Isaac, which name her husband had given him by divine direction, and to which she assented. This doubtless brought to her mind her former laughing, when she first heard that she should have a son, which was in a way of diffidence and distrust; but now God having given her a son, laid a foundation for laughter of another kind, for real, solid, joy and thankfulness:

[so that] all that hear will laugh with me; not laugh at her, and deride her, as Piscator interprets it; but congratulate her, and rejoice with her on this occasion, as on a like one the neighbours of Elisabeth did with her, (^{<0158>}Luke 1:58).

Ver. 7. *And she said, who would have said unto Abraham*, etc.] No one a year ago could ever have thought of such a thing, much less have come and told Abraham that he should have a child or children by Sarah; the thing was incredible, and next to impossible; none but God himself, or an angel from him, could have declared this, as none but he could bring it about, the thing is so marvellous and astonishing:

that Sarah should have given children suck? that she who was ninety years of age should bear a child, and suckle it, as she did; and in doing which she set an example to her daughters to do the like, since neither age nor grandeur, nor the business of her family, were any objection to this duty of nature; and her being able to do this was a clear proof that this was truly a child of her own. The plural number may be put for the singular, as it often is, (see ^{<0423>}Genesis 46:23); or Sarah might think, as she had strength given her to bear and suckle one child, she might bear and suckle more; though the phrase seems only to be expressive and descriptive of her as a nursing mother:

for I have borne him a son in his old age; (see Gill on "^{<0202>}Genesis 21:2").

Ver. 8. *And the child grew, and was weaned*, etc.] He throve under the nursing of its mother, and through the blessing of God upon him; and being healthy and robust, and capable of digesting stronger food, and living upon it, he was weaned from the breast: at what age Isaac was when weaned is not certain, there being no fixed time for such an affair, but it was at the discretion of parents, and as they liked it, and the case of their children

required; and in those times, when men lived to a greater age than now, they might not be weaned so early, as we find their marrying and begetting children were when they were more advanced in years. The Jewish writers are not agreed about this matter. Jarchi and Ben Melech say that Isaac was weaned twenty four months after his birth; a chronologer of theirs says ^{f1213} it was in the hundred and third year of Abraham, that is, when Isaac was three years old, which agrees with the Apocrypha:

“But she bowing herself toward him, laughing the cruel tyrant to scorn, spake in her country language on this manner; O my son, have pity upon me that bare thee nine months in my womb, and gave thee such three years, and nourished thee, and brought thee up unto this age, and endured the troubles of education.” (2 Maccabees 7:27)

According to Jerom ^{f1214}, it was the opinion of some of the Hebrews that he was five years old; and at this age Bishop Usher ^{f1215} places the weaning of him; for to make him ten or twelve years of age, as some of the Rabbins do ^{f1216}, when this was done, is very unlikely. Philo the Jew ^{f1217} makes him to be seven years of age at this time:

and Abraham made a great feast the [same] day that Isaac was weaned; because he had now escaped the dangers of infancy, and had gone through or got over those disorders infants are exposed unto, and had his health confirmed, and there was great likelihood of his living and becoming a man, since now he could eat and digest more solid and substantial food; and this was great joy to Abraham, which he expressed by making a grand and sumptuous entertainment for his family, and for his neighbours, whom he might invite upon this occasion. Jarchi says, the great men of that age were at it, even Heber and Abimelech. The Jews very impertinently produce this passage, to show the obligation they lie under to make a feast at the circumcision of their infants ^{f1218}; for this was not at Isaac’s circumcision, but at his weaning.

Ver. 9. *And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian,* etc.] That is, Ishmael, who is not expressed by name, but described by being a son of Hagar, a servant of Sarah’s, and an Egyptian woman; all which seems to be observed by way of slight, both to Hagar and her son;

which she had born unto Abraham; not unto Sarah, as she proposed to herself, when she gave her maid to Abraham, (^{<0142>}Genesis 16:2). This son of Abraham she saw

mocking; either at the entertainment made at the weaning of Isaac; or rather at Isaac himself, laughing at his name, and treating him with contempt as his younger brother, and boasting that he was the firstborn, and that the inheritance belonged to him; and threatening what he would do to him, should he hereafter offer to dispute it with him, under pretence of the promise of God that he should be Abraham's heir, and at which promise also he may be supposed to mock: and that this contention was about the inheritance seems plain from the words of Sarah in (^{<0210>}Genesis 21:10); and in it Ishmael might not only rise to high words, but come to blows, and beat his brother; for it is observed the word used sometimes so signifies, (^{<0214>}2 Samuel 2:14-17); wherefore the apostle might truly call it a persecution, (^{<0429>}Galatians 4:29); and as even cruel mockings are, (^{<0315>}Hebrews 11:35). As for the various senses the Jewish commentators put upon this, there does not seem to be any foundation for them, as that Ishmael was committing idolatry, and endeavouring to draw his brother into it; or was talking in an indecent and lascivious manner, in order to corrupt his mind; or that he was intending and attempting to take away his life, by shooting an arrow at him, and pretending it was but in jest and in play; (see Gill on "^{<0429>}Galatians 4:29").

Ver. 10. *Wherefore she said unto Abraham, cast out this bondwoman and her son*, etc.] Hagar, Sarah's handmaid and bondservant, and her son Ishmael; by this it appears that Hagar was concerned in this affair, and set her son on to mock Isaac, at least she encouraged him in it, buoying: him up with his being the firstborn, and having a right to the inheritance; wherefore Sarah saw plainly that there would be no peace nor comfort for her and her son, unless Hagar and her son were turned out of doors, for which she moves Abraham; and this not merely in a passion, but by divine direction and influence, as is evident from God's approbation of it:

for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, [even] with Isaac; which he would seem to be, if continued, and would think himself so, and there would be continual bickerings about it; wherefore, to put it out of all doubt who was heir, she desires that he and his mother both might be cast out of the house, which would be a clear determination of this matter. Sarah may seem to take upon her too much, to be so

peremptory, as to declare who should, and who should not be heir, which more properly belonged to Abraham, whom she called her lord, (^{<0182>}Genesis 18:12); but what will sufficiently free her from any charge of this kind is the revelation of the divine will, and the promise of God that so it should be; namely, that the covenant God had so often renewed with Abraham should be established with Isaac, and not with Ishmael, (^{<0179>}Genesis 17:19-21). Now what was the design of God, in guiding Sarah to make such a motion as this to Abraham, is taught us by the Apostle Paul, who makes these two women to be types and figures of the two covenants, and their sons of those that are under them, (see ^{<812>}Galatians 4:22-31).

Ver. 11. *And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight*, etc.] The motion that Sarah made to turn out of his house Hagar and Ishmael was not agreeable to him, but the reverse; it seemed an ill thing to him; it was greatly displeasing to him, and he was unwilling to come into it:

because of his son; his son Ishmael; not grieved and uneasy for what he had done; not for committing idolatry, as the Targum of Jonathan suggests, or for mocking at Isaac; but for what was proposed to be done to him, the ejection of him from his house, because of the great love he had for him, and the great concern he had for his education, and that he might enjoy the blessing promised him, he, was loath to have him cast out of his family: no concern is expressed for Hagar, though both by what God said to Abraham, and by the provision he made for her, he had a regard unto her; but his chief concern was for his son, who perhaps had a greater share in his natural affections than as yet Isaac had; nor did express so much reluctance when he was bid to him up, as he did at this time, that being at the command of God, this at the instance of his wife, and which he supposed only proceeded from passion and resentment: the Hebrew writers say ^{f1219}, that of all the evils that came upon Abraham this was the hardest and most grievous in his sight.

Ver. 12. *And God said unto Abraham*, etc.] Either by an articulate voice, or by an impulse on his mind, suggesting to him what he should do, being no doubt in great perplexity how to conduct between his wife and his son, but God determines the case for him, and makes him easy:

let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of the bondwoman: that is, let not the motion displease thee, which Sarah has made, to turn out the bondwoman and her son; let not thine affection to the

one and to the other hinder compliance with it; do not look upon it as an ill thing, or as an hard thing; it is but what is right and proper to be done, and leave the bondwoman and her son to me; I will take care of them, be under no concern for them and their welfare:

in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken to her voice; the Targum of Jonathan adds, for she is a prophetess: and indeed in this affair she spoke under a spirit of prophecy, according to the will of God; at least what she said became a divine oracle, and is called the Scripture, (^{<RB0>}Galatians 4:30); for the word “all” here must be restrained to what she had said concerning Hagar and Ishmael, and their ejection, and not to be extended to everything she had said, or should say to Abraham, to which he was always to be attentive: whereas on the other hand, it became her, as a wife, to hearken and be obedient to the voice of her husband: but in this particular Abraham is bid to listen to her, and do accordingly, for the following reason,

for in Isaac shall thy seed be called; he, and those that descended from him, should be called and reckoned the seed of Abraham more especially; and Abraham’s seed in his life should inherit the land of Canaan, given to him and his seed for an inheritance: and this is a good reason why the bondwoman and her son should be cast out, that they or their offspring might not inherit the land with Isaac, or his descendants; and particularly from Abraham in his line, and not in the line of Ishmael, should the Messiah spring, that seed in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed; and therefore a separation was necessary, that this might abundantly appear.

Ver. 13. *And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation*, etc.] A great nation, as is promised, (^{<OB70>}Genesis 17:20); and such the Ishmaelites and Saracens have been, and the Turks now are, the descendants of Ishmael. The Targum of Jonathan paraphrases it, a people of thieves, or a thieving people; as were the Saracens, and who are thought to have that name from the Arabic word “sarac”^{f1220}, to thieve; though they would have it derived from Sarah: but it is not agreeable to the promise of God to Abraham, that when for his comfort he is told that his son Ishmael and his descendants should become a great nation, that they should be described as a company of thieves and robbers; and especially when the reason of the promise is given,

because he [is] thy seed; or thy son; here the word “seed” is again used of a single individual; (see ^{<OB25>}Genesis 4:25 ^{<RB6>}Galatians 3:16).

Ver. 14. *And Abraham rose up early in the morning*, etc.] It was in the night the Lord spoke to him, and bid him hearken to the voice of Sarah; and, as soon as it was morning, he arose, and was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; for, though the thing he was directed to was disagreeable to flesh and blood, and contrary to his natural affection, yet, it being the will of God, he readily complied with it:

and took bread and a bottle of water; a loaf of bread very probably, and a leathern or wooden bottle of water, as Aben Ezra supposes it to be; for there is no need to say that these are put for all necessaries, and a liberal provision that might be made by Abraham; but it is to be taken strictly, according to the letter and history, as a matter of fact, since it could be no more than Hagar could carry, and did carry upon her shoulder: and, though Abraham could have sent cattle laden with provisions, and servants to attend them, yet he did not, which his natural affection and liberal disposition might dictate to him; but, as he was to hearken in this affair to whatsoever Sarah said, and act accordingly, perhaps this was all she would grant; or it might be so ordered by the providence of God, as a chastisement for their ill behaviour, and that they might know the difference between being in Abraham's house and out of it; and that there might be an opportunity given to show favour to them for Abraham's sake, who might probably direct them to some place where to go; and, till they came there, this might be a sufficient supply, when he gave them reason to expect more from him; but they got into the wilderness, wandered about and lost their way, and so became destitute of provisions; and this may be an emblem of the low, mean, and starving condition such are in who are under the law, and seek for happiness by the works of it:

and gave [it] unto Hagar, putting [it] on her shoulder; that is, the bread and the water, which might be put in one parcel or bundle, or in a basket, and so laid and carried on her shoulder: the Targum of Jonathan adds,

“and bound it to her loins, to show that she was an handmaid:”

and the child; not that the child was “on her shoulder”, which is quite improbable; for, since he was thirteen years of age when he was circumcised, he must be fourteen when Isaac was born; and if Isaac was two years old when weaned, Ishmael must be sixteen; and if he was three years of age, he must be seventeen; and if five years, he must be nineteen: some of the Jewish writers say^{f1221}, he was twenty seven years of age when he went out of his father's house; but they seem to come nearest the truth

that make this event to be when he was at the age of seventeen ^{f1222}, and when he must be too big to be carried on his mother's shoulder: but the sense is, that Abraham, when he put the provision on her shoulder, gave Ishmael to her, delivered him into her hand, to be taken care of by her; and very probably she led him in her hand:

and sent her away out of his house to some place assigned for her; the Targum of Jonathan adds, with a bill of divorce, dismissing her not only from his house, but as his wife; and so the Jewish writers ^{f1223} generally understand it: but there is no reason to believe there was any such custom before the law of Moses: nay, they go further, and say, that he dismissed her from himself, and from Isaac his son, and from this world, and from the world to come:

and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba; or, as the Targum of Jonathan, in the wilderness which was near to Beersheba; the place where it is probable Abraham now lived, and where Isaac was born, and the above affair was transacted, which was afterwards called by this name; for this is said by way of anticipation, (see ^{<123>}Genesis 21:31). Beersheba is said ^{f1224} to be twelve miles from Gerar, and twenty miles from Hebron, to the south ^{f1225}.

Ver. 15. *And the water was spent in the bottle*, etc.] It was all drank up by them, being thirsty, having wandered about some time in a wilderness, where they could not replenish their bottle: the Jewish writers say ^{f1226} that when Hagar came into the wilderness, she began to wander after the idols of the house of Pharaoh her father, and immediately the water ceased from the bottle, or was drank up by Ishmael, being seized with a burning fever:

and she cast the child under one of the shrubs; not from off her shoulder, but out of her hand or bosom; being faint through thirst, he was not able to walk, and she, being weary in dragging him along in her hand, perhaps sat down and held him in her lap, and laid him in her bosom; but, imagining he was near his end, she laid him under one of the shrubs in the wilderness, to screen him from the scorching sun, and there left him; the Greek version is, "under one of the fir trees", and so says Josephus ^{f1227}: some Jewish writers ^{f1228} call them juniper trees; and some make this to be Ishmael's own act, and say, that, being fatigued with thirst, he went and threw himself under the nettles of the wilderness ^{f1229}, (see ^{<811>}Job 30:7).

Ver. 16. *And she went and sat her down over against [him], a good way off*, etc.] Not being able to bear the sight of her child in his agonies, and, as she apprehended, ready to expire, she went from the place where she had laid him, and sat down under one of the shrubs or trees to shade herself, right over against that where her child was, though at some distance, which is next expressed:

as it were a bowshot; about as far off from him as an arrow can be shot, or is usually shot out of a bow; according to the Jews this was about half a mile, for they say ^{f1230} two bowshots make a mile; here she sat waiting what would be the issue, whether life or death, which last she expected:

for she said, let me not see the death of the child; she could not bear to hear his dying groans, and see him in his dying agonies:

and she sat over against [him], and lift up her voice and wept; on account of her desolate and forlorn condition, being in a wilderness, where she could get no water, and her child, as she thought, dying with thirst: the Septuagint version is, “and the child cried and wept”; and certain it is, from (⁻⁰²¹⁷Genesis 21:17), that the child did lift up its voice and cry, but that is not expressed in the text; it is quite clear in the original that it was Hagar and not her son that is said to weep, since the verb is feminine.

Ver. 17. *And God heard the voice of the lad*, etc.] By which it appears that he cried also; but whether it was in prayer to God, or through the distress and misery he was in, is not certain; and, be it which it will, his cries came up into the ears of the Lord, and he had compassion on him, and supplied his wants, and delivered him out of his miserable condition:

and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven; not a created angel, but the eternal one, the Son of God, the Angel of the covenant, who appeared in the visible heavens, and called to Hagar from thence with an articulate voice, and so loud that she could hear him:

and said unto her, what aileth thee, Hagar? or, what has befallen thee? what is the matter with thee? why criest, why weepest thou? this he said, not as being ignorant of her case, but in order to relieve and comfort her:

fear not; distrust not the power and providence of God in taking care of thee and thy son; do not be afraid of the death of the child:

for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he [is]; though in a wilderness, and under one of the shrubs in it: God is everywhere, and he can hear the cries of men be they where they will, or in ever so desolate a condition: by this Hagar would know that her son was alive, that he had been crying, and God had heard his cry; he that regards the prayer of the destitute, (^{<39A27>}Psalm 102:17), heard the cry of Ishmael under a shrub.

Ver. 18. *Arise, lift up the lad*, etc.] She had set herself down at some distance, and now she is bid to rise up and go to the place where she had left her son, and raise him up from the ground, on which he lay along:

and hold him in thine hand: or take hold on him with thine hand, and hold him up with it, he being so weak that he could not sit up without being supported:

for I will make him a great nation: which is a renewal of a promise before made both to her and to Abraham, (^{<0160>}Genesis 16:10 17:20 21:13); and by this Hagar is assured that he would recover and live, and become a man and the father of children, who in time would become a great nation; (see Gill on “^{<0160>}Genesis 16:10”), (see Gill on “^{<0170>}Genesis 17:20”), (see Gill on “^{<0213>}Genesis 21:13”), this shows that the Angel of God here speaking is God himself, or a divine Person, since none but he could make him a great nation.

Ver. 19. *And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water*, etc.] Which she saw not before; not that she was really blind and had her eyes opened, or her sight restored, but they might be holden or restrained by the providence of God, that she should not see it before; or, through inattention and distraction of mind, might not observe it; or her eyes might be swelled with weeping and crying, that she saw it not; though it is not improbable that this well was not in being before, but was immediately produced by the power of God, who when he pleases can open mountains in the midst of the valleys, and make the wilderness a pool of water, (^{<2418>}Isaiah 41:18): the Jewish writers ^{f1231} say, it was created between the two evenings, that is, on the evening of the seventh day of the creation. Happy are those whose eyes are opened, by the Spirit and grace of God, to see the well of living water, the fountain and fulness of grace that is in Christ, where thirsty souls may come and drink and take their fill.

And she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad to drink; with which he was refreshed and recovered from his fainting, and was restored to health again.

Ver. 20. *And God was with the lad,* etc.] To confirm his health, to provide for him the necessaries of life, to protect him from danger in the wilderness where he was, and to prosper and succeed him in temporal things; all which is owing to the providential goodness of God:

and he grew; increased in bodily stature, and arrived to manhood; or, “he became great”, in riches and in substance, as Ben Melech interprets it:

and dwelt in the wilderness; of Beersheba, where he now was, or of Paran after mentioned, a fit place for a wild man to dwell in, as it was said he should be; and by this means the oracle was fulfilled, (^{<0162>}Genesis 16:12):

and became an archer; skilful in the use of the bow and arrow, both for hunting and slaying of wild beasts, on whose flesh he lived, and for lighting with men, against whom his hand would be: the Jewish writers ^{f1232} say he was born with a bow, and brought up with one, and that he shot an arrow at his brother Isaac, with an intention to kill him, while he was in Abraham’s house; but it does not appear that he had any knowledge or use of the bow until he was in the wilderness and was grown up, by which he lived and defended himself; and so his posterity the Kedarenes, who sprung from his son Kedar, were famous for archery, (^{<2317>}Isaiah 21:17); and the Ituraeans, from Jetur, another of his sons, (^{<0255>}Genesis 25:15), were remarkable for their bows, of which Virgil ^{f1233} speaks; and so the Arabians that live in the deserts and round about them, called Nabathees, from Nabaioth, another son of Ishmael, are now extraordinary marksmen for bows and arrows, and to sling darts which are made of cane ^{f1234}: the Saracens got their living not by the plough, but chiefly by the bow, and were all of them warriors, and lived upon wild flesh, and as rapacious as kites ^{f1235}; and now the troops of the governor of Mecca, whereabout Ishmael, by the Arabs, is supposed to live, which are only infantry, are called Al-Harrabah, that is, archers, or dart men ^{f1236}.

Ver. 21. *And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran,* etc.] So called from Paran, a city in Arabia Petraea; it reached from the wilderness of Shur to Mount Sinai: the account Adrichomius ^{f1237} gives of it is this; Paran or

“Pharan is a wilderness, very large, desolate, impassable, and without water, containing, from Mount Sinai to Kadeshbarnea, a

journey of eleven days; its land can neither be ploughed nor sown, is wholly dry, barren, and uncultivated; uninhabitable to men, destitute of villages, houses, and cottages; where neither men are seen, nor beasts nor birds; yea, neither trees nor any grass, only rocks and high rough stony mountains; it is taken sometimes for the first part of the desert of Arabia, near Mount Sinai, and sometimes for the last part, towards the land of promise; sometimes it is called the desert of Sin, and sometimes the desert of Sinai, from the mount; but this name Pharan seems to be the most general of the names of this very long desert.”

this is the wilderness the Israelites wandered in thirty eight years; what this writer says of it must be understood only of some parts of it, otherwise Ishmael could not have lived in it:

and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt: her own country, for she was an Egyptian, (~~OR~~ Genesis 16:1); and where they dwelt was not far from it: according to the Jewish writers, he had two wives; the first he divorced, and then married the Egyptian; his first wife, they say ^{f1238}, he sent for, and took out of the plains of Moab, whose name was Aishah, and the other Phatimah; so the Targum of Jonathan here,

“and he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran, and took to wife Adisha (or Aisha), whom he divorced, and then his mother took him Phatimah to wife, out of the land of Egypt:”

the names of Ishmael’s wives seem to be taken from the Arabic writers; for Aishah, or Ayesha, was the name of a daughter of Abubeker, and one of the wives of Mahomet, and Phatimah the name of one of his daughters.

Ver. 22. *And it came to pass at that time*, etc.] Not when Ishmael was grown up and married, but when Isaac was weaned and Ishmael was expelled:

that Abimelech, and Phichol, the chief captain of his host, spake unto Abraham; Abimelech was king of Gerar, the same that is spoken of in the preceding chapter, and Phichol was the general of his army; these two great personages came together and paid Abraham a visit, and had some conversation with him, who was still in Gerar, or however in some part of that country not far from it:

saying, God [is] with thee in all that thou doest; greatly prospered him in the things of the world, for of them only could they make a judgment; they saw that he increased in worldly substance, and that his family was increased, and that he succeeded in everything in which he engaged; and, being jealous of his growing greatness and power, were desirous of securing an interest in him and in his favour.

Ver. 23. *Now therefore swear unto me here by God*, etc.] By the true and living God, by whom only an oath is to be taken, who was Abraham's God, and whom Abimelech seems to have known and to have been a worshipper of; and therefore moves for an oath to be taken by him, which he knew would be sacred and binding to Abraham, could he prevail upon him to swear:

that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son; perhaps he had heard that God had promised to give the whole land of Canaan to him and his posterity, and among the rest his kingdom, which was a part of it; and, seeing him grow great and powerful, he could not tell how soon it might be ere he was put in the possession of it, whether in his own time, or his son's, or his grandson's; and therefore desires Abraham that he would swear to do no hurt to them whenever it should be;

[but] according to the kindness I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned; that, as he had given him full liberty to sojourn in any part of his kingdom where he pleased, so, when the whole country should come into his possession, that he, or his son, or his grandson, in whatsoever time it should be, might quietly enjoy their own land, and all the inhabitants of it; at least that they might not be driven out of it, but sojourn in it as he had done.

Ver. 24. *And Abraham said, I will swear.*] Sensible of the many favours he had received from Abimelech in times past, and was still indulged with, he very readily agreed to his proposal; and the rather, as he knew by the vision between the pieces, that it would be four hundred years before his posterity should be put into the possession of the land of Canaan; and therefore could take an oath that neither he, nor his son, nor his grandson, should be injured or dispossessed.

Ver. 25. *And Abraham reproved Abimelech because of a well of water*, etc.] Before he swore and entered into covenant with him, he thought it advisable to inform him of an affair that had happened concerning a well of

water, which in those hot and dry countries, as the southern parts of the land of Canaan were, was an affair of great importance; and to make complaint of the ill usage of Abimelech's servants with respect to it, and to reason with him about it, that the thing might be adjusted to mutual satisfaction, and so a firm basis and foundation be laid for the continuance of friendship for the future; which was wisely done before their league and covenant was ratified: this it seems was a well

which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away: that is, had by force taken the use of it to themselves for their cattle, and had deprived Abraham of it, though it was of his own digging; and perhaps there might be more than one, and the singular may be put for the plural; and so the Septuagint version has it, "the wells": (see ¹²³⁵Genesis 26:15,18).

Ver. 26. *And Abimelech said, I wot not who hath done this thing*, etc.] He pleads ignorance; he knew nothing of it before, nor now which of his servants had done it; intimating, that if he could know who it was, he should severely reprimand him for it:

neither didst thou tell me: signifying that he was to blame he did not complain of it sooner; and at least he had no reason to blame him, since he had never informed him before of it, and therefore could not expect to be redressed:

neither yet heard [of it] but today: he had not heard of it from others, as the Targum of Jonathan rightly adds, by way of explanation, but that very day, and very probably not till the moment he had it from Abraham himself.

Ver. 27. *And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech*, etc.] In gratitude for former favours he had received from him, in token of the friendship that subsisted between them, and for the confirmation of it; and to show that he was fully satisfied with Abimelech's answer to his complaint, as well as willing to enter into covenant by sacrifice, when such creatures were divided, and the covenanters passed between the pieces, for so it follows:

and both of them made a covenant; or, "cut or struck a covenant"^{f1239}; cut the sacrifice in pieces and passed between them, in token of the compact and agreement they entered into with each other; signifying that whoever broke it deserved to be cut in pieces as those creatures were.

Ver. 28. *And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.*] Separate from the sheep and oxen he gave to Abimelech, and from those that were used in making the covenant.

Ver. 29. *And Abimelech said unto Abraham,* etc.] Observing what he had done, and not knowing the design of it:

what [mean] these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves? he understood what the sheep and oxen were for, that they were presents to him, at least some of them, and the rest were for the solemnizing and ratifying the covenant between them; but what these were for he could not devise.

Ver. 30. *And he said,* etc.] That is, Abraham replied to Abimelech:

for these seven ewe lambs shall thou take of my hand; as a present from him, to be retained as his own:

that they may be a witness to me that I have digged this well: these were to be a testimony that the well that had been taken away from Abraham was one that he had dug, and was his property, and which Abimelech acknowledged by his acceptance of these seven lambs; and very probably Abraham received a note from the hand of Abimelech, owning his reception of the seven lambs, and his title to the well, which these were a witness of.

Ver. 31. *Wherefore he called that place Beersheba,* etc.] Either Abraham or Abimelech, or both, called it so; or it may be read impersonally, “therefore the place was called Beersheba”^{f1240}, for two reasons, one implied, the other expressed; one was, because of the seven lambs before mentioned; so the Targum of Jonathan,

“and therefore he called the well the well of seven lambs;”

“Beer” signifying a well, and “sheba” seven; the other, and which is more certain, being expressed, is as follows;

because there they swear both of them; by the living God, to keep the covenant inviolably they had made between them.

Ver. 32. *Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba,* etc.] Which took its name from the oath annexed to the covenant there made; and which is

observed for the sake of what follows, to show that when they finished their agreement, and the ceremony of it,

then Abimelech rose up, and Phichol, the chief captain of his host; from the place where they had been conversing and covenanting with Abraham:

and they returned into the land of the Philistines; from Beersheba, which was in the extreme border of it, unto Gerar, which lay in the midst of it, and was the capital city in it; otherwise both places were in Palestine, or the land of the Philistines, a people that came out of Egypt originally, and settled here: in Jerom's ^{f1241} time Beersheba was a large village, twenty miles from Hebron to the south.

Ver. 33. *And [Abraham] planted a grove in Beersheba,* etc.] The Jewish writers ^{f1242} are divided about the use of this grove, as Jarchi relates; one says it was for a paradise or orchard, to produce fruits out of it for travellers and for entertainment; another says it was for an inn to entertain strangers in; it rather was for a shade, to shelter from the sun in those sultry and hot countries; and perhaps for a religious use, and to be an oratory, as the following words seem to suggest: in the midst of it very likely Abraham built an altar, and sacrificed to the Lord; hence might come the superstitious use of groves among the Heathens; and, when they came to be abused to idolatrous purposes, they were forbidden by the law of Moses, which before were lawful. And, though the name of Abraham is not in the text, there is no doubt but he is designed, and was the planter of the grove, and which is expressed in the Septuagint version, as it is supplied by us. What sort of trees this grove consisted of cannot with certainty be said, very probably the oak. R. Jonah ^{f1243} thinks it may be the tree which in Arabic they call "ethel", and is a tree like that which is called tamarisk in general it signifies any tree, and especially large trees ^{f1244};

and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God; who, is from everlasting to everlasting, or "the God of the world" ^{f1245}, the Creator and upholder of it, and the preserver of all creatures in it; him Abraham invoked in this place, prayed unto him, and gave him thanks for all the mercies he had received from him.

Ver. 34. *And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days.*] Even many years, days being sometimes put for years; having entered into covenant with Abimelech, the king of the country, and settled a good correspondence with him, and having his friendship and good will, which

commanded respect from his subjects, Abraham sojourned very quietly and comfortably for many years, chiefly at Beersheba; the Jewish writers say ^{f1246} he sojourned here twenty six years.