

## Chapter 15: The Callings of Abraham

*Genesis 21:22–34*

Abraham has seen God work in powerful ways over the course of his life. God has spoken to him, made special promises to him, appeared to him, empowered him to overthrow great warriors, established a covenant with him, given him the covenant sign of circumcision, revealed to him his secret decrees, permitted him to intercede on behalf of Sodom, and given him a son in his old age. Through these events, we have seen the ups and the downs in Abraham's life, as he sometimes walks by faith and other times does not. With every remarkable step, God has led him into a deeper relationship with himself.

What, though, has God accomplished during the ordinary times? We have previously noted that the extraordinary events do not all take place one after another. Sometimes many years pass before God reveals anything new to Abraham. As in the life of Jesus, the Scriptures simply do not tell us what happened during certain long periods of time. The text certainly suggests that Abraham (and Jesus) faithfully discharged their vocations (that is, their *callings*) during that time, whether as a husband, a father, and a rancher (Abraham), or as a son, a brother, and a carpenter (Jesus). Nevertheless, we typically do not get to see their ordinary faithfulness recorded for us in the text of Scripture until we arrive at Genesis 21:22–34. In this passage, we see one of the most mundane, ordinary interactions that we have encountered from the life of Abraham so far. Nevertheless, from this event we see that God is at work in a routine treaty negotiation just as much as he is at work in establishing covenants or overthrowing wicked cities. Even in the most ordinary circumstances of our lives, *God sanctifies us through our vocations.*

### **Our Vocations Toward Others (Gen. 21:22–24)**

We met Abimelech, the Philistine king of Gerar, in Genesis 20. When Abraham sojourned in Gerar, he lied about Sarah's relationship to him as his wife, so that Abimelech took Sarah in marriage (Gen. 20:2). When God condemned Abimelech for having taken another man's wife (Gen. 20:3–7), Abimelech in turn confronted Abraham for lying (Gen. 20:8–10). Ultimately, Abimelech restored Sarah to Abraham and gave a thousand pieces of silver as a sign of her innocence (Gen. 20:16). Then, Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and Abimelech's household, since God had closed all the wombs because of Sarah (Gen. 20:17–18). From that initial interaction, Abimelech learned two things about Abraham: (1) God personally protects Abraham and Abraham's wife Sarah from harm, and (2) Abraham is not necessarily someone whom Abimelech can trust. With these two lessons in mind, we now read that Abimelech approaches Abraham about entering into a covenant together:

[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.” (Gen. 21:22–24)

The transitional phrase “At that time” leaves the exact timing of this encounter undefined. The events of this narrative could take place shortly after Abraham’s deception in Genesis 20 or after the birth of Isaac and the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael (Gen. 21:1–21).<sup>1</sup> Isaac does not appear in this story, but it seems best to understand that this story happens chronologically after Isaac’s birth. In this way, we see that the two incidents with Abimelech “form bookends (20:1–18; 21:22–34) for the narratives describing the birth of the heir (21:1–13) and the expulsion of his chief rival (21:14–21).”<sup>2</sup>

From another perspective, Abraham finds himself in the midst of conflict in both the earlier story about casting out Hagar and Ishmael as well as this story about Abraham’s well.<sup>3</sup> In the first story, Abraham’s conflict surrounds the rival claims of his child according to the flesh against the inheritance of his child of promise. In this story, Abraham’s conflict surrounds his use of the Promised Land—specifically, of a well that he dug in the Promised Land. Abimelech granted Abraham permission to dwell in his land wherever it pleased Abraham to do so (Gen. 20:15). By this permission, we observed that Abraham moved one step closer toward possessing the land, even though he remains only a sojourner.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, just as the long-awaited birth of Isaac did not remove pain and conflict from Abraham’s life, so Abraham’s freedom to dwell in the Promised Land does not come without its own conflict. Abimelech is right to declare that “God is with” Abraham (Gen. 21:22); however, this does not mean that Abraham lives without trouble.

### Peace for Abimelech’s Posterity

Abimelech’s primary concern in this narrative is to secure from Abraham peace for himself and for his posterity. God has promised to bless anyone who blesses Abraham, and to curse anyone who dishonors Abraham (Gen. 12:3). Abimelech learned firsthand of God’s vow to curse anyone who harms Abraham, and now Abimelech seeks to enter into God’s promises to bless anyone who blesses Abraham. To begin, Abimelech observes, “God is with you in all that you do” (Gen. 21:22). Other people will similarly recognize God’s presence to bless Isaac (Gen. 26:28), Jacob (Gen. 30:27), and Joseph (Gen. 39:3).<sup>5</sup> Although Abimelech will never forget his previous terrifying dream encounter with God on Abraham’s behalf (Gen. 20:3–7), Abimelech’s words “in all that you do” seem to refer to God’s *ongoing* blessing to give success to Abraham rather than that initial incident alone.<sup>6</sup> Only two verses earlier in Genesis 21:20, we also read that “God was with the boy” Ishmael, showing us the similar vulnerability and strength of Abraham and Ishmael: “both are away from home—one in a wilderness, one in a Philistine country—but God is with both.”<sup>7</sup>

After his opening observation of God’s faithfulness toward Abraham, Abimelech makes his request: “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” (Gen. 21:23). This is the first appearance in this passage of the word “swear” (*shaba*), which becomes important in this passage to explain the name of the well Beersheba.<sup>8</sup> In Hebrew, the word for “well” is *be’er*, so that Beersheba means the “Well of *Sheba*’.” In part, the name Beersheba has to do with the oath that Abraham swears with Abimelech here,

although there is more to this wordplay, as we will see.

Without question, one of the driving forces behind Abimelech's concern that Abraham *not* deal falsely with him has to do with Abraham's false dealings in Genesis 20.<sup>9</sup> The specific oath Abimelech asks Abraham to swear, however, does not prohibit telling a lie in general, but the more serious false dealings of covenant breaking (cf. Ps. 44:17).<sup>10</sup> That is, Abimelech is seeking to prohibit Abraham from the treachery of harming Abimelech, Abimelech's descendants, or Abimelech's posterity. Now, we do not know what Abimelech knows about God's promises to Abraham. Nevertheless, the nature of the oath that Abimelech asks Abraham to swear seems to recognize that Abraham and Abraham's offspring will grow to become a great and mighty nation, even if Abraham only has one heir at this time.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, from the precedent of the kindness (*hesed*) Abimelech showed to Abraham earlier, Abimelech asks Abraham to swear that he will show the same kindness to Abimelech and Abimelech's family.<sup>12</sup>

### Abraham's Oath

Abraham does not hesitate to enter into this covenant with Abimelech: "I will swear" (Gen. 21:24). Clearly, Abraham recognizes that he has the prerogative to enter into agreements with other people, provided that those agreements do not compromise his loyalty to God.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, God commissioned Abraham to bless all the families of the earth for all those who bless Abraham (Gen. 12:3). The New Testament warns believers not to become "unequally yoked" with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14–7:1) by entering into close partnerships of marriage or business that will inevitably force one party to cave in to the demands of the other. King Solomon is the classic example of the destructive consequences of being unequally yoked, since his marriages to foreign women led him to build temples and offer worship to foreign gods (1 Kgs. 11:1–8).

Even more, we can slip into idolatry apart from our relationships with unbelievers. Whenever we love someone or something in our lives more than we love God, that person or thing becomes an idol for us. Sometimes, we can even begin to make idols out of the good gifts and vocations that God has entrusted to us. So, God calls us to love and serve our families, but we can make our families idols by allowing them to draw us away from the other ways God has called us to serve him. Or, God calls us to work in such a way that honors him in all we do, but we can begin to serve our work as an idolatry when we seek the glory that comes from work more than the glory that comes from God. Even our ministries can become idols when we care more about what we are achieving for the Lord than we do for the Lord himself. How, then, should we approach *any* vocation God gives to us? In other words, how do we walk the tightrope between failing to fulfill our vocations faithfully and between over-pursuing our vocations so that they become idolatries?

The church father Augustine helpfully clarifies the different ways that we love God and that we love everything else in the world. That is, we are called to love God for his own sake, since only he is "eternal and unchanging," and we are called to love everything else for *God's* sake:

But none of us ought either to find enjoyment in ourselves, if you consider the matter straightforwardly, because we ought not either to love ourselves for our own sakes, but for the sake of the one whom we are to enjoy....But if they love themselves for their own sakes, they are not relating themselves to God; rather, in turning to themselves, they are not turning to anything unchangeable. And that is why their enjoyment of themselves is to some

extent defective, because they are better when they cleave to the unchangeable good and are tightly bound to it, than when they release themselves from it to cling even to themselves....So all who love their neighbors in the right way ought so to deal with them that they too love God with all their heart, all their soul, all their mind. By loving them, you see, in this way as themselves, they are relating all their love of themselves and of the others to that love of God, which allows no channel to be led off from itself that will diminish its flow.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, believers cannot love people or things for their own sake, since that would be idolatry. Instead, we are called to love other people and the good gifts of God's creation for *God's* sake. Only God should receive the full love of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, for only God is infinite, glorious, eternal, and unchanging. When we invest our full affections into finite, perishing, fickle people, we will not only offend God as we set up a rival for the affections that belong to him, but we will also end up disappointed. Only God is worthy of our worship, and only God can satisfy us.

In this light, we see that Abraham's oath here does not compromise his integrity in the least. Abraham is not pursuing a treaty with Abimelech for its own sake. Rather, Abraham is simply swearing to live according to the calling that God has given him. God has called Abraham to live in such a way that he will bless those who bless him (Gen. 12:3), and those are the precise terms that Abimelech asks from Abraham. While believers should be refuse to enter into relationships that will corrupt our good character, we should also be eager to find opportunities to engage in honorable conduct in the sight of the world, since our good deeds may lead may lead some to glorify God (1 Pet. 2:12).

What Abraham's oath illustrates, then, is that we learn to love God *through* fulfilling the vocations that he has given us. Abraham can love his neighbor as himself for the sake God. In other words, serving his neighbor is, for Abraham, an act of loving God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. In the same way, we learn to love God *by* practicing service and love toward our families, our work, our ministry, and our neighbors. The Apostle John even says that it is impossible to love God apart from learning to love our brothers in Christ: "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20). God calls us to serve and love in our vocations in order to train us to serve and love *him*.

### **Our Vocations Toward Ourselves (Gen. 21:25–32)**

There is, however, something curious about Abraham's reply to Abimelech's proposal. While Abimelech initiates this covenant with twenty-seven Hebrew words, Abraham responds with only two words.<sup>15</sup> Abraham's terse reply likely reflects his frustration over the disposition of a well that he dug.<sup>16</sup> This covenant offers him an opening to make his complaint:

[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." [27] So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a covenant. (Gen. 21:25–27)

Earlier, Abimelech “took” Abraham’s wife, Sarah (Gen. 20:3), and now Abimelech’s servants have “seized” Abraham’s well of water (Gen. 21:25).<sup>17</sup> Abimelech committed the first transgression in ignorance and innocence (Gen. 20:6), but Abimelech’s innocence in this passage is not quite so clear. On the one hand, Abimelech protests his innocence, saying, “I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, and I have not heard of it until today” (Gen. 21:26). Abimelech previously protested his innocence to God, but now Abimelech protests his innocence to Abraham.<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, the verb “reproved” suggests that Abraham makes his complaint several times, leading one commentator to translate the verb as “berated” to convey the repetitive sense of this reproof.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, this dispute about wells of water will emerge again for Isaac (Gen. 26:12–33).<sup>20</sup> For Isaac, the wells dug during the days of Abraham will again become a point of contention with another King of Gerar named Abimelech, and Isaac will enter into another covenant regarding well water usage in Beersheba. Clearly, water usage is, and will continue to be, a divisive topic in this country, with Abraham and Isaac at the center of controversies.

Still, we should probably take Abimelech’s word that *he* did not know what had happened. The repetitiveness conveyed by this word “reproved” likely means that Abraham has made his complaints to the servants of Abraham, and that this is indeed the first time that Abimelech has heard of this matter.<sup>21</sup> As another alternative, John Calvin plausibly suggests that Abimelech may not have known about the incident, but that Abraham is frustrated by Abimelech’s “excessive forbearance” that has allowed his servants to act outside of his oversight.<sup>22</sup> We should note, however, that Abimelech only defends his innocence; he does not offer to restore the well.<sup>23</sup> Abraham will still need to deal with the issue of the well. Nevertheless, Abraham moves forward with the covenant arrangement, giving sheep and oxen to Abimelech so that the two men are able to make (lit., “cut”) a covenant. Most likely, the two men cut these animals in pieces to signify the covenant curses they will bring upon themselves if they break the terms of their covenant (cf. Gen. 15:10; Jer. 34:18).<sup>24</sup>

### The Complaint of Abraham

After the cutting of the covenant, Abraham moves to secure his well:

[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?” [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.” [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. (Gen. 21:28–32)

Abraham sets aside seven ewe (female) lambs from the flock. The language is unclear about whether these seven come from the original group of “sheep and oxen” (Gen. 21:27), or whether Abraham now provides an additional set of ewe lambs.<sup>25</sup> Ewe lambs were uniquely valuable, both for breeding the flock and in sacrificial worship (e.g., Lev. 14:10; Num. 6:14).<sup>26</sup> Even so, Abimelech does not understand why Abraham sets aside these ewe lambs from the other sacrificial animals in the cutting of the covenant. If they were a part of the other sheep and oxen, then it may appear to Abimelech that Abraham is taking back a part of his original gift.<sup>27</sup> This may raise serious questions for

Abimelech, since Abraham has already demonstrated a willingness to play fast and loose with the truth (cf. Gen. 20), and since the terms of the covenant specifically forbade dealing falsely (Gen. 21:23).<sup>28</sup> Is Abraham already turning back on the terms of the covenant?

In fact, Abraham has a specific purpose behind his actions. The word “seven” introduces the final aspect of the wordplay for the name of the well, Beersheba. Earlier, we noted that the word for the “swear” in Hebrew is *shaba’*. The word for “seven” is nearly identical: *sheba’*. Abraham explains that Abimelech must take these sheep because Abraham “wants more than a general treaty; he wants a specific concession, namely, the guaranteed use of the well that he had dug.”<sup>29</sup> By these animals, Abimelech will renounce the well as belonging to Abraham.<sup>30</sup> The *seven (sheba’)* sheep will stand as a witness that Abraham dug the well (Gen. 21:30), and that Abimelech has acknowledged this fact by “swearing” (*shaba’*) an oath (Gen. 21:31). This “well” (*be’er*), therefore, will be called Beersheba (*be’er sheba’*), literally the “Well of *Sheba’*,” which has two possible meanings: the “Well of Seven” and/or the “Well of the Oath.” This is a confusing scene for English-speaking moderns to read, so Allen Ross’s comments are welcome as we attempt to understand what is happening here:

The relationship between the number “seven” and the idea of swearing must be examined closely. Here the motif of the seven animals seems to be part of the process of swearing. Elsewhere it may be simply that the person taking the oath would do something seven times, or merely make an oath using the word for “seven.” Whether the two words “seven” and “swear” should actually be related is uncertain; in this passage the narrative relates them so strongly that each offers significance for the other.<sup>31</sup>

Abraham lays perpetual claim to this well by Abimelech’s *oath* and with these *seven* sheep.<sup>32</sup> In the days before photocopiers, scanners, file cabinets, and the option of storing digital document backups in the cloud, the naming of this well powerfully attests to its rightful ownership. From this point onward, everyone will know the significance of the well of Beersheba: “The point of the commemorative naming is that it would preserve for future generations the record of how that property was secured.”<sup>33</sup> At the conclusion of the covenant negotiations, both parties are satisfied.<sup>34</sup> Abraham has retained his well, and Abimelech and Phicol peacefully return back to their home (Gen. 21:32).

### The Trials of Living in the Land

If it is difficult for us to understand the subtle nuances of Abraham’s negotiation tactics, it is perhaps even more difficult to understand why these negotiations make their way into the canon of Scripture. Even if we grant the practical importance of the well for sustaining life among Abraham and his household, why do *we* still need to know about this well? In short, Abraham here takes possession of a part of the Promised Land by securing rights to this well.<sup>35</sup> Beyond his legal claim to the well itself, this also means that Abraham gains “*de facto* possession of the region near it.”<sup>36</sup> To be sure, the right to *use* the well does not mean that Abraham *owns* the well. It is probably more accurate to say that Abraham has secured a perpetual *lease* of Abimelech’s property in consideration for the seven ewe lambs, rather than seeing this covenant as a transfer of ownership. Abraham will only take ownership of a very small piece of land before his death (Gen. 23). Nevertheless, this narrative of how Abraham gains ongoing rights to the well of Beersheba moves us a little closer

toward the fulfillment of God's promises to give Abraham and Abraham's offspring the entire land of Canaan. God is using this treaty not only to bless Abimelech, but to bring about his blessings for *Abraham*.

Remember, God intends the Promised Land of Canaan to function as a renewed garden of Eden, where the holy God will dwell with his holy people. This does not mean, however, that living in the Promised Land will be free from sin and suffering. Just as the birth of the promised offspring, Isaac, in some ways only complicated Abraham's life further, so living in the land of Canaan alongside Abimelech is only bringing further complications into Abraham's life. God is providing for Abraham, but he is also testing and training Abraham in faith and obedience. In the broader context, these trials are preparing Abraham for his ultimate trial coming in the next chapter, when he must sacrifice his beloved son Isaac. Although the trial of the stolen well is not as obviously related to the sacrifice of Isaac as the casting-out of Abraham's son Ishmael, both are trials that Abraham must undergo as he learns to live walk before the Lord blamelessly (Gen. 17:1).

God gives us vocations, then, not only to provide us opportunities for ministering to others. God uses our vocations to create opportunities for the ministry that he intends to do in *us*. In his book *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, Paul Tripp reminds us of the significance of how God is preparing us for "the great wedding to come," where we will dwell as the holy bride of Christ with our holy God in the holy new heavens and earth forever and ever:

The difficulties now, the suffering now, the disappointments now, and the blessings now are all preparation for the wedding *then*. Our experiences today do not reflect God's inattention or unfaithfulness, but his jealous love. He is exposing our wandering hearts and foolish minds and the ways we trust our passions more than the principles of his Word. He is calling us to forsake our own glory for his, and teaching us that the idols we pursue will never satisfy us. He is making us wise to temptation and aware of a lurking enemy. He is teaching us to live for treasures that moth and rust can't destroy and that thieves can't steal. He is teaching us what it means to live in a way that recognizes our identity as his children. He is teaching us to live open, approachable, and humble lives....Everything you face today is premarital preparation—living *now* with *then* in view.<sup>37</sup>

God does not waste a single trial in any area of our lives. Whether we are dealing with thorns and thistles in our work, or whether we are dealing with conflict in our families, God works all things together for our good as he calls us into his purposes (Rom. 8:28). God fulfills his promises of completing his good work in us (Phil. 1:6) through the pain we must endure along the way. Through our vocations, God is leading us into taking possession of the Promised Land.

### **Our Vocations Toward our God (Gen. 21:33–34)**

After Abimelech returns to his land, Abraham returns to his previous practices of worship:

[33] Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God. [34] And Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines. (Gen. 21:33–34)

Abraham has consistently dwelt and worshiped near trees since entering the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:6–8; 13:18; 18:1).<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, we still do not really know why Abraham here plants a tamarisk tree, although the text suggests that planting this tree has something to do with his worship: “and called there on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.”<sup>39</sup> In part, this note reminds us that Abraham never ceases to worship the Lord wherever he went throughout his life.<sup>40</sup> In this specific context, this word about Abraham’s worship may also prepare us for his ultimate act of worship in the next chapter, when God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac.<sup>41</sup> God does not shape us only by our horizontal, human interactions, but also through our vertical interactions with him through worship. It is through our regular, ongoing worship that God reorients us to all that he is doing in and through our vocations.

For the moment, the text suggests a long period of calm before that coming storm:<sup>42</sup> “And Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines” (Gen. 21:34). These many days of Abraham’s sojourn remind us of the common, uneventful periods of Abraham’s life. As we mentioned earlier, we sometimes forget that Abraham does not move from one climactic encounter with the Lord to the next. This verse teaches clearly that Abraham spends the vast majority of his life waiting faithfully in trust and obedience to the Lord. John Walton observes that this passage reveals the way that Abraham is establishing “covenant roots. Gradually Abraham is establishing roots in the land—digging wells and planting trees. Additionally, as relationships are established with the peoples in the land, the blessing is taking root.”<sup>43</sup> Much of our lives are characterized by the same, faithful waiting for the Lord. We move from day to day, year to year, decade to decade, in simple obedience to the Lord’s vocations for our lives. We live out life in our families. We work hard to serve others. We exhort one another to know the Lord. We return, week by week, to worship the Lord together with the people of God, knowing that he is working all things together for our holiness. For the most part, the events that seem notable to us will pass unremembered into history, just like the vast majority the events in Abraham’s life—and even the events in Jesus’ life (cf. John 21:25)! God accomplishes far more than we realize in both the uneventful times of peace and the troubled times of conflict.

## Discussion Questions

1. What vocations has God given you toward others? Brainstorm your relationships in family, friends, workplace, neighbors, and community. What does God intend to accomplish in these through your relationships? What does God intend to accomplish in *you* through your relationships with them? How should your vocation shape your prayers, attitudes and actions?
2. Is it possible to make idols of our relationships with other people: of our families, friends, or our career associates? How can we recognize when our relationships turn our first allegiance away from God? How do we love other people for God’s sake? Or, how can love and service toward our neighbors qualify as an act of loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength?
3. What has God promised us as his long-term plan for our lives? God promised to give Abraham the land of Canaan; what does he promise to give to us? What does God use in our lives to accomplish



that work progressively over the course of time? How do trials prepare us for what God is doing? What might we do to keep our eyes focused on eternity in the present?

4. Why does God assign us vocations? Does God need something from us, or does he call us to our vocations for some other purpose? How do our vocations wean us off of our love for the world? How do our vocations increase our love for God? How does God use our ordinary vocations to accomplish deep work of sanctification over lifetimes in ways that we hardly notice?

## Notes

1. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 90.
2. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 275.
3. “The placement of this incident after 21:8–21 presents an interesting thematic parallel. Both 21:8–21 and 21:22–34 describe a scene of conflict—conflict over a boy and over a well. Abraham is the loser in both instances. Ishmael is banished and Abraham’s well is seized by another. In 21:8–21 Sarah is the one who expresses a grievance and Abraham is an innocent bystander and Ishmael’s provider. But in 21:22–34 Abraham’s role is switched and he becomes the one who expresses a grievance. Abimelech replaces Abraham in his role as the innocent bystander and provider. Both times Abraham gives provisions or gifts to another: bread and water to Hagar and Ishmael; sheep, cattle, and ewe lambs to Abimelech.” (Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50*, 87–88.)
4. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 75.
5. Kidner, *Genesis*, 152.
6. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 92.
7. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50*, 88.
8. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 92.
9. Kidner, *Genesis*, 152.
10. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50*, 88.
11. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 92.
12. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50*, 89.
13. Calvin, *Genesis*, 553–54. Available online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom01.xxvii.i.html>>
14. Augustine, *Teaching Christianity (De Doctrina Christiana)*, translated by Edmund Hill, edited by John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1996), 114–15.
15. “Apart from the introduction (v. 22a), Abimelech’s covenant request took twenty-one words in Hebrew (v. 23). Abraham’s response takes two words....” (Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50*, 89–90.)
16. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 92, 95.
17. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50*, 90.
18. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 387.
19. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 92.
20. Kidner, *Genesis*, 152.
21. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 92–93.
22. Calvin, *Genesis*, 554. Available online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom01.xxvii.i.html>>
23. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 92–93.
24. “Abraham initiates the covenant ritual by submitting voluntarily sheep and cattle, which probably are

slain by both men (e.g., 15:10). This is a classic example of a bilateral covenant involving mutual obligations by the two parties. Exactly what is expected of the two parties is not stated; from v. 23 we may infer that the treaty at least provided for principled and peaceful relations.” (Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 280.)

25. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 93.

26. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 280–81.

27. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 93.

28. “Abraham’s actions are not self-explanatory, and hence Abimelech presses Abraham for clarification. As a matter of fact, as far as Abimelech is concerned, hardly anything Abraham does or says is self-explanatory!” (Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50*, 91.)

29. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 93.

30. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50*, 92.

31. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 388.

32. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 94.

33. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 388–89.

34. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 95.

35. “Also the formal recognition of Abraham’s well (v. 30) by the indigenous Philistine suggests to the reader proleptically the possession of the land by his descendants.” (Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 276.)

36. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 94.

37. Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 241.

38. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 282.

39. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 94.

40. Calvin, *Genesis*, 556–57. Available online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom01.xxvii.i.html>>

41. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 282.

42. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50, Volume 2*, 95.

43. Walton, *Genesis*, 502.