

Ask Away – January 19

1) Why did Abimelech want to marry Sarah?

Although we can't be certain, it seems likely that Abimelech wanted to marry Sarah out of a desire to ally himself with Abraham, who was rich and powerful (cf. Gen 13:2). It may be that Sarah, who was around 90 years old, was still a beautiful woman, but the basis for the marriage was probably economics and politics rather than love and physical attraction.

It should be noted that this event is very important, for it has direct bearing on the promise of God. God told Abraham, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son" (Gen 18:10). Since the promise was to be fulfilled within that year, Abimelech's marriage to Sarah threatened the promise. If Abimelech had sexual relations with her, the identity of the father of Isaac would be in doubt. That is why God personally intervened (Gen 20:6, 18). It also adds significance to Abimelech's thousand pieces of silver as Sarah's vindication (Gen 20:16)—it was a statement that he had not violated another man's wife.