

The Book of Genesis

Lesson 21

Chapter 22

At the beginning of chapter 21, Isaac was being weaned, a celebration that occurred at the age of four. At the time of that celebration, Hagar and Ishmael were sent away from Abraham's family. Abraham then moved his clan to settle in Beersheba. The number of years that transpired was not recorded. At the beginning of chapter 22, Abraham will take Isaac to Mount Moriah in an act of obedience to the LORD.

Abraham, Isaac and Moriah

Genesis 22:1 Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ² And He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." ³ So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

We do not know how old Isaac was at this time when the LORD "tested Abraham." The LORD instructed Abraham to **"Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."** Frankly, this command seems out of character for the LORD. Why would the LORD ask Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering? For the last 21 chapters that covered more than 2078 years, the LORD had never condoned human sacrifice; therefore, why would He instruct Abraham to do so now? Furthermore, why did Abraham not question the LORD about His request? Did Abraham tell Sarah what the LORD had instructed him to do with Isaac? Why did the LORD call Isaac Abraham's "only son"? Abraham was also the father of Ishmael; however, he was no longer living with Abraham. He had an Egyptian wife and he was living east of Abraham in the area called Paran.

Where was the "land of Moriah"? We have already encountered the village of Salem where Melchizedek was the priest of the LORD. Salem sat on a small hill nestled among the numerous hills in the area. The next hill northeast of Salem was called Moriah. Many years later, under the leadership of David, Salem will become Jerusalem and he will choose Mt. Moriah as the location for the future temple mount. David's son, Solomon will construct the temple according to David's plans. Just to the west and on the hill called Moriah is Golgotha, the "place called the skull" where the LORD will be offered as the final sacrifice about 2000 years later. So, on this day, Abraham packed the donkey with wood, took Isaac and two young men and began the journey from Beersheba to Moriah.

The Third Day

Genesis 22:4 On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. ⁵ And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and return to you." ⁶ And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.

Following today's modern Route 60 from Beersheba to Jerusalem, the journey is just under 60 miles. Because of the terrain, Abraham probably would have followed this same route on foot. We have often mentioned in the study of the Bible that a day's journey was about 20 miles. It was a hard day's journey from early in the morning until late in the afternoon with a rest period in the middle of the day. This passage confirms that teaching with Abraham's seeing Moriah in the distance on the third day. Because of the terrain of the area around Jerusalem, he was no more than five miles away.

Even though we do not know how old Isaac was, he was old enough to carry the wood while Abraham carried the fire torch and the knife.

Isaac's Question

Genesis 22:7 And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

On the way to Moriah, Isaac began to wonder about the offering they were going to make on the mount. They had everything for the burnt offering except the lamb. Isaac questioned his father about the absence of the lamb.

In a burnt offering, the lamb was slain with the knife and the entire carcass was totally consumed by the fire; nothing was saved from the fire.

Abraham's Answer

Genesis 22:8 And Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

Abraham's answer was short and to the point, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." "God will provide" is a common phrase regularly used by religious people in times of need. Will God provide? What happens when God does not provide according to a person's desires? Did Abraham think there was another way? Why did he not confess at this time that Isaac was the intended lamb to be sacrificed? Did Isaac understand? Did

Isaac show blind trust in his father? Did Abraham show blind trust in the LORD? We can only speculate about what Abraham and Isaac were thinking at this time.

The Offering

Genesis 22:9 **Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there, and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰ And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.**

What was Abraham thinking? What was Isaac thinking? What did they say to each other? Did Isaac resist? Was this a test just for Abraham's trust in the LORD or was this also a test for Isaac's trust in his father? In any case, Isaac was bound, placed on the wood and Abraham took the knife in his hand to kill his son, the only son living in his household at the time, the son that the LORD promised would be the father of kings and kingdoms, LORD and lords.

The LORD's Intervention

Genesis 22:11 **But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ¹² And he said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."**

Abraham was obedient even to the point of death. Was it the LORD who needed to know that Abraham was a faithful obedient man or was this test for Abraham's understanding? The Scripture says, **"for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son."** Isaac was obedient even to the point of death. Did the LORD need to know that Isaac was faithful and obedient? Here the LORD has planted the seed of the theological teaching leading to salvation by faith. Abraham heard the Word of the LORD and trusted it to be true without need for further action; he comprehended the Word of the LORD as an instruction for him. **Trust is always attached to a person or persons.** Even in his trust of the LORD's words, Abraham could have ignored His command. You can trust a person without believing everything that he says. **Belief is always attached to a statement or statements.** Abraham internalized the Word of the LORD, trusted in the LORD and believed His Words. Trust and belief lead to faith. The word "faith" is not found in the Old Testament but the concept appears in various places, including this passage where ultimate trust and belief in the LORD result in faith. Faith obtains salvation. **Faith is always attached to obedience.** In this passage, Abraham was obedient to the LORD. These three make up the process of salvation for Christians today; we hear the Word and trust the deliverer; we hear the Word and believe the message; we hear the Word and place our faith in it through our obedience.

The LORD's Provision

Genesis 22:13 Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind *him* a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.

At the apex of Abraham's faith in the LORD, with the knife ready to kill, the LORD stopped him and provided a substitute for Isaac. On that same mount, about 2000 years later, the LORD would be the substitute for the lamb as the sacrifice for our sins. He would be the lamb, He would be slain, He would die in our stead, He would be the object of our trust, belief and faith.

Name of Place

Genesis 22:14 And Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided."

In Hebrew, "The LORD Will Provide" is the name Jehovah-jireh; Jehovah means LORD and jireh means "to see." Why does it not mean provide? The LORD sees the need and makes sure that things will be done for those who trust, believe and have faith in Him and His Word. We see Paul impose the essence of this name in Romans 8:28, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose." On that same mount, the LORD provided the way of salvation for all who would trust, believe and have faith in Him through His substitutionary death about 2000 years later. For now, it is Isaac who will be saved through the substitutionary death of the ram. The lesson learned in this story will become paramount in the Mosaic Law and will be deeply ingrained in Jewish life by the time of the LORD's earthly death!

LORD's Second Blessing

Genesis 22:15 Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶ and said, " By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸ "And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." ¹⁹ So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.

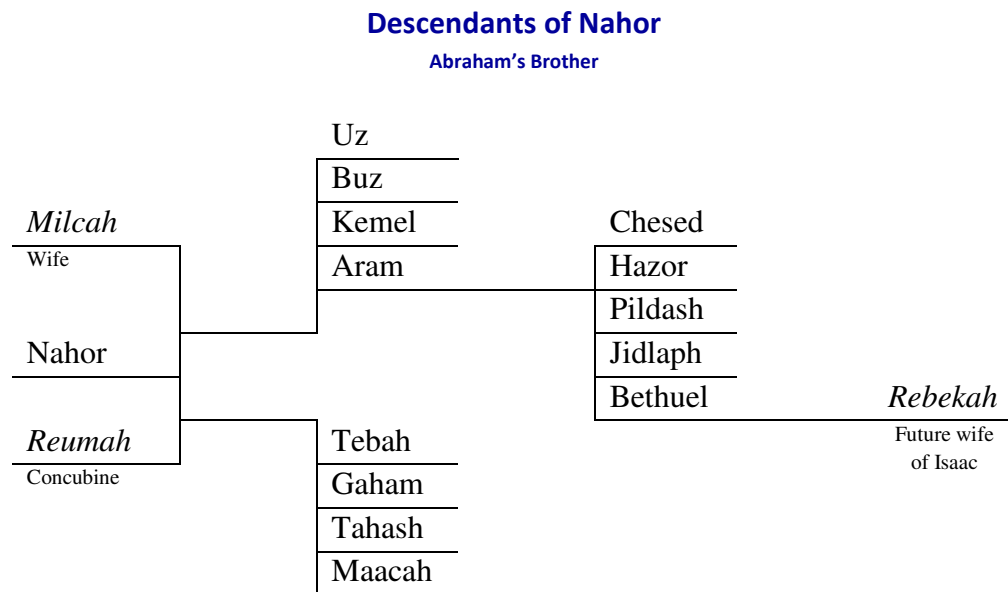
As if Abraham had any doubt, the LORD reiterated His covenant with Abraham one more time. Through Isaac, a multitude would be born, enemies defeated and all the people of the earth would be blessed. It is interesting where verse 19 takes the story; Abraham returned home with the three young men. We must not forget that at the end of every encounter with the LORD, we must go home, we must return to life among the family, we must explain to those we love and

who love us what has transpired in our life. Dare we tell our family about our encounter with the LORD? For some family members, it may be a wonderful revelation: for others, it may be a dreaded announcement, the difference being whether or not the hearer has trust, belief and faith in the LORD.

News from Nahor's House

Genesis 22:20 **Now it came about after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, "Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: ²¹ Uz his first-born and Buz his brother and Kemuel the father of Aram ²² and Chesed and Hazo and Pildash and Jidlaph and Bethuel." ²³ And Bethuel became the father of Rebekah: these eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. ²⁴ And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah and Gaham and Tahash and Maacah.**

Chapter 22 ends with the introduction of Nahor's family. Nahor was the brother of Abraham and Sarah who stayed behind in Haran when Abraham left for the Promised Land many years before. We do not know who informed Abraham of his brother's good fortune: however, in the list of Nahor's heirs is the name of Isaac's future wife. This list includes all the male heirs of Nahor but only one female heir of Bethuel. Surely other females were born to the lot, yet, the acknowledgement of Rebekah name must have been the purpose of this disclosure in the lineage because she will become the wife of Isaac.



At the beginning of the next chapter, Sarah will be 127 years old when she dies; Isaac will be 37 years old at her death. It is quite possible that the news of Nahor's family came to Abraham just shortly before the death of Sarah. If so, up to 20 years or more may have transpired since

Abraham presented Isaac for the burnt offering on Mount Moriah. Isaac will marry at the age of 40, about three years after the death of Sarah.

Chapter 23

Thirty-seven years have passed since the birth of Isaac. Many years have passed since Abraham showed his trust, belief and faith in the LORD in his willingness to offer Isaac on Mount Moriah. At the end of chapter 22, Abraham was living in Beersheba; however, chapter 23 opens with Abraham and Sarah back in Kiriath-arba which is the name of the location of Hebron during the life of Moses. Abraham previously lived in this village at the time of the formation of the Dead Sea.

Death of Sarah

Genesis 23:1 Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; *these were* the years of the life of Sarah.² And Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

Sarah was 127 years old when she died in the Hebron area. We do not know when Abraham moved from the Beersheba/Gerar location but it must have been many years before Sarah's death, which deeply affected Abraham, as it should. Abimelech and Phicol will not recognize Isaac at the age of 40.

Offer to Purchase Cave

Genesis 23:3 Then Abraham rose from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying,⁴ "I am a stranger and a sojourner among you; give me a burial site among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."⁵ And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him,⁶ "Hear us, my lord, you are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our graves; none of us will refuse you his grave for burying your dead."⁷ So Abraham rose and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of Heth.⁸ And he spoke with them, saying, "If it is your wish *for me* to bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and approach Ephron the son of Zohar for me,⁹ that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he owns, which is at the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me in your presence for a burial site."

Abraham had lived in the Hebron area long enough to find favor in the eyes of the local Canaanites. The sons of Heth were deeply devoted to Abraham and offered him the best of their graves for Sarah. Abraham had a place in mind, a cave that would hold Sarah which was out of sight. The cave was owned by Ephron, the son of Zohar. The area was called Machpelah; which

means “the field with the double cave.” Abraham expected to purchase the cave from Ephron for a full price with no discount.

Ephron's Offer

Genesis 23:10 Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the sons of Heth; *even* of all who went in at the gate of his city, saying, ¹¹ "No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead."

It is clear that Ephron wanted to bless Abraham with a gift at this time; he wanted to give the cave to Abraham free and clear. The people were present at the gate to verify the transaction.

Abraham's Response

Genesis 23:12 And Abraham bowed before the people of the land. ¹³ And he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, "If you will only please listen to me; I will give the price of the field, accept *it* from me, that I may bury my dead there." ¹⁴ Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, ¹⁵ "My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between me and you? So bury your dead." ¹⁶ And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, commercial standard.

Ephron pressed Abraham to accept the cave for Sarah; Ephron threw out a ridiculous price to Abraham in an attempt to signify before all that even 400 shekels of silver meant nothing because of the relationship between the two. But the statement did not have the intended effect on Abraham; he did not flinch, but counted out 400 shekels of silver according to the standard commercial weight and gave it to Ephron for the cave and the field.

Deed of Field, Cave and Trees

Genesis 23:17 So Ephron's field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre, the field and cave which was in it, and all the trees which were in the field, that were within all the confines of its border, were deeded over ¹⁸ to Abraham for a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.

The transaction was completed and Abraham became the owner of the field and the cave. Abraham now owned two pieces of property in the Promised Land - the well at Beersheba and the field and cave of Machpelah.

Sarah's Funeral

Genesis 23:19 And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan.²⁰ So the field, and the cave that is in it, were deeded over to Abraham for a burial site by the sons of Heth.

We have been calling the town Hebron since chapter 13, but Moses included the name in the text in order to identify the location. The field and the cave were facing Mamre, the oak forest owned by Mamre where Abraham camped for several years leading up to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah before relocating to Beersheba. It was extremely likely that Abraham was living in the same oak forest of Mamre when Sarah died. In this passage, Moses adds the name Kiriath-arba in order to identify the area with the ancient name. Kiriath-arba means “city of four.”