

The Book of Genesis

Lesson 23

Chapter 25

Chapter 24 was the first chapter in the book of Genesis to display the process of seeking the Divine providence of the LORD through prayer. Elsewhere, the LORD spoke directly with a person to communicate His will and desires. In Chapter 24, the servant addressed the LORD with a specific request for a specific time frame for a specific outcome. It is an example of how we should petition the LORD in our personal journey to find the will of God.

With the beginning of Chapter 25, the story quickly tells the important events from Abraham's marriage after Sarah's death to the selling of Esau's birthright to Jacob, covering at least 35 years. The genealogy of Ishmael actually expands the length of time hundreds of years into the future. In general, Chapter 25 presents a summary of events to introduce Jacob and Esau; however, Chapter 26 provides a small portion of important information about the lives of Isaac and Rebekah after the births of the twins.

Abraham's New Wife, Concubines and Sons

Genesis 25:1 Now Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. ² And she bore to him Zimran and Jokshan and Medan and Midian and Ishbak and Shuah. ³ And Jokshan became the father of Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim and Letushim and Leummim. ⁴ And the sons of Midian were Ephah and Epher and Hanoch and Abida and Eldaah. All these were the sons of Keturah. ⁵ Now Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac; ⁶ but to the sons of his concubines, Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the east.

We do not know how quickly Abraham took Keturah to be his wife; nor do we know her background. Some have supposed that Keturah was the same as Hagar but that seems improbable because the Scripture has shown how emphatic the LORD was in making sure Moses identified all the parties and all the places in the past chapters. Abraham surely married Keturah after the death of Sarah. This wife gave Abraham six sons; we do not know if she gave him any daughters. Those six sons gave seven grandsons to Abraham.

Abraham	Keturah	Zimram	Sheba
		Jokshan	Dedan
		Medan	
		Midian	Ephah
		Ishbak	Epher
		Shuah	Hanoch
			Abida
			Eldaah

The passage also mentions sons of Abraham by concubines. What was a concubine? She was a woman taken by a man for the purpose of bearing children. The concubine and the child of a concubine had a few privileges in the family but nothing in comparison to the status of a wife and her children. The concubine was considered the property of the man; she could be sold or given away at the discretion of the man. In many circumstances, a collection of concubines was held in harems to be used by the man. When a woman gave one of her maids to her husband for a sexual purpose, with that sexual act performed, the maid became the concubine of the man.

An interpretation difficulty arises at this point in the story. Was Keturah a concubine or was she a wife? The Scripture states that she was an *ishshah* or wife. Had she been a concubine, it seems that the Scripture would have called her such. Some commentators state that both Hagar and Keturah were concubines. Hagar fits the pattern and was definitely a *pilegesh* or concubine; Keturah does not.

It seems from this passage that Keturah was a second wife of Abraham; it also seems that Abraham had other concubines besides Hagar who bore him children. How many concubines did Abraham take? We do not know and to make matters worse, we do not know the names of all the sons of those concubines. Because of the structure of this information, we can safely say that Keturah was taken as a wife after the marriage of Rebekah to Isaac after Abraham was 140 years old. In addition, after taking Keturah, Abraham also took several concubines who bore him children. Moreover, Abraham willed everything that he had to Isaac; yet, while he was still alive, he gave each of his sons a gift and sent them to the east to live. Several of the sons listed became the founders of great and mighty nations. Moses will take a descendant of Midian as a wife. Dedan and Sheba will figure greatly in the Bible story during the time of Solomon. Together with all the other names listed, his sons will populate the land with people as numerous as the stars and the sands on the sea shore as promised in the covenant to Abraham and his descendants.

Abraham's Death

Genesis 25:7 **And these are all the years of Abraham's life that he lived, one hundred and seventy-five years. ⁸ And Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied *with life*; and he was gathered to his people.**

Abraham lived to be 175 years of age, 75 years past the birth of Isaac, 35 years past the death of Sarah, 32 years past the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah and 12 years past the births of Jacob and Esau. The Scripture does not tell the location of Abraham's death. He died in the 2166th year after the creation of Adam.

Burial of Abraham

Genesis 25:9 **Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, facing Mamre,¹⁰ the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth; there Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife.¹¹ And it came about after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac lived by Beer-lahai-roi.**

For the first time in 71 years, Ishmael returned to the Bible story. He joined Isaac in the burial of Abraham, placing him in the same grave purchased for Sarah. Do we know where that grave is today? Absolutely!

GRAVE OF ABRAHAM

The grave site of Abraham is the second most holy place for the Jews in the world. It is located in Hebron. During his reign, Herod the Great built a high wall around the cave; however, it was not covered with a roof. Later, a Christian Church was built within Herod's walls. In the seventh century, Muslims overtook the complex and turned the church into a mosque. In the twelfth century, Christians regained the complex, rebuilt a church only for it to fall again to Islam which returned it to a mosque in the same century. Today, a roof connects most of Herod's walls.

Inside the structure are six cenotaphs. A cenotaph is a sepulchral monument erected in the memory of a person who is buried somewhere else. The six cenotaphs are for Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Leah. The cenotaphs do not contain the remains of these six; their remains are buried beneath the structure in a secure restricted area.



Figure 28 Cave of the Patriarchs - Hebron



Figure 29 Centopah of Abraham



Figure 30 Centophs of Isaac and Rebekah

Generations of Ishmael

Genesis 25:12 **Now these are *the records of* the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maid, bore to Abraham;¹³ and these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the first-born of Ishmael, and Kedar and Adbeel and Mibsam¹⁴ and Mishma and Dumah and Massa,¹⁵ Hadad and Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah.¹⁶ These are**

the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages, and by their camps; twelve princes according to their tribes.

Because the LORD has Moses name Hagar again in this genealogy of her descendants from Abraham through Ishmael, we can positively state that Hagar and Keturah were not the same person as some commentators recommend. Had they been the same person, then the six sons of Keturah would have been listed with Ishmael in this passage.

Ishmael	Nebaioth
	Kedar
	Adbeel
	Mibsam
	Mishma
	Dumah
	Massah
	Hadad
	Tema
	Jetur
	Naphish
	Kedemah

The twelve sons of Ishmael became the twelve princes or dukes of Arabia. On ancient Arabian maps, the location of the village of each son can be identified. Tema's village will figure greatly in prophecy still to be fulfilled as one of the stops of the LORD on His way to Armageddon at His Second Coming.

Death of Ishmael

Genesis 25:17 **And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.**

¹⁸ **And they settled from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria; he settled in defiance of all his relatives.**

The LORD guided Moses to complete the story of the life of Ishmael in this passage. Ishmael died at the age of 137 in the 2214th year after the creation of Adam, 48 years after the death of Abraham. According to ancient maps, Shur began west of Egypt in the Arabian Peninsula and Havilah was the desert of today's Saudi Arabian area south of Babylon or today's Iraq and Kuwait.



Map 24: Ishmael's Descendants populated the land of Shur and Havilah

Generations of Isaac

Genesis 25:19 **Now these are the records of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son:**

Abraham became the father of Isaac; ²⁰ and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife.

Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebekah, Ishmael was 54 and Abraham was 140. Sarah had died three years earlier and never knew Rebekah.

Prayer of Rebekah

Genesis 25:21 And Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived.

For twenty years, Isaac and Rebekah could not have children. Finally, Isaac petitioned the LORD for Rebekah that she might have a child and the LORD answered his prayer.

Struggle of Twins

Genesis 25:22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I *this way*?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. ²³ And the LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples shall be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger." ²⁴ When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.

The LORD blessed Rebekah with twins. But the twins “struggled” against each other in her womb. Notice that Rebekah asked the LORD why the twins were struggling. “Struggle” is not a strong enough word to describe the meaning in this passage. The Hebrew is *yithrotsatsu* which mean to dash against or bruise. A true war was occurring between the twins in Rebekah’s womb. To that petition the LORD spoke directly to Rebekah. Each twin will have heirs who will form nations but **“one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger.”** The Jews will be the offspring of Jacob and the Edomites will be the offspring of Esau; Jacob was the younger, Esau was the older. Esau will begin having children many years before Jacob; however, both will eventually have twelve sons. For many years Esau’s Edomite descendants will be stronger and overpower the Jewish descendants of Jacob. Herod the Great, an Edomite, ruled as king of the Jews at the time of the birth of Jesus. However, as in this prophecy from the LORD, Esau will serve Jacob in life and in death through his descendants.

Birth of Esau and Jacob

Genesis 25:25 Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. ²⁶ And afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them.

Esau’s name came from his color; he was red and hairy as a newborn. Jacob’s name came from his holding the heel of Esau as he was born. The name Jacob means to trip a person by the heel,

to deceive, defraud or supplant. His name will be fulfilled when he trips up his brother and tricks him into selling his birthright to Jacob.

Isaac was 60 years old when the twins were born 2151 years after the creation of Adam. Abraham was 160. Abraham will die when the twins are 15 years old.

Esau and Jacob

Genesis 25:27 When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents. ²⁸ Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Esau became the “man of the field.” This meant that he provided for the family by taking to the fields and forests to provide wild meat and produce. The passage says that Jacob was a “peaceful man.” Actually, the original Hebrew says he was an *ish tam* or plain man. This means that he was employed in the common practices of breeding and tending the herds and working the garden already owned by Isaac.

The home of Isaac and Rebekah was at odds with itself because of the difference between the love of Isaac and Rebekah for Esau and Jacob. In spite of all the good accomplished by Isaac and Rebekah, this one facet plants the seed of the undesirable attachment of one parent to one child over another. This parental preference will grow and fester during the lives of the twins. At that time, Jacob will run to Mesopotamia and remain there for 21 years; however, the fear of Esau’s rage will raise its ugly head again when Jacob returns to Canaan.

Sell of Birthright

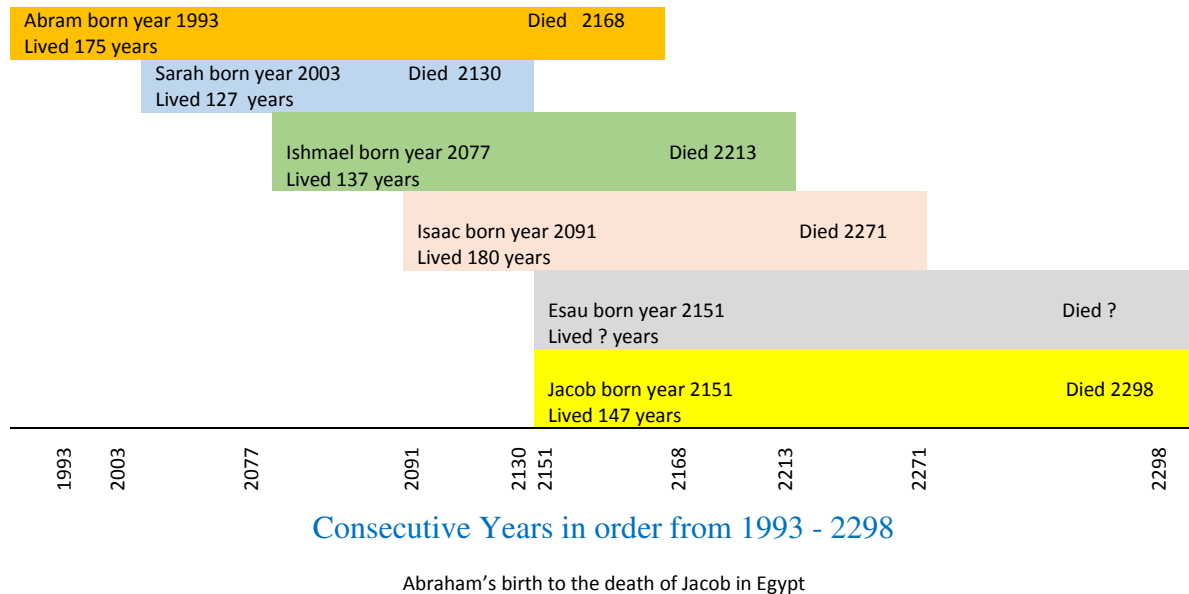
Genesis 25:29 And when Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished; ³⁰ and Esau said to Jacob, "Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished." Therefore his name was called Edom. ³¹ But Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." ³² And Esau said, "Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?" ³³ And Jacob said, "First swear to me"; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

We do not know how old the twins were when this event occurred. Older English versions call the “cooked stew” *sod pottage*. This old term actually describes what Jacob was preparing that Esau desired. The main ingredients in *sod pottage* are beans or lentils boiled until they are done, seasoned with oil and garlic and then mashed into a paste-like substance. It was no special food because it was the mainstay of many nations for many people for many centuries. Exhausted and starving, Esau was willing to do anything for a meal. The birthright was extremely important and valuable to a child. It promised a place of leadership one day over the rest of the family; it

promised upon the death of his father the inheritance of all he owned. Abraham had given all that he had to Isaac; Isaac would give all that he had to his eldest son Esau. In addition, Isaac would bless his eldest son with a special benediction. The blessing of the first born male will be expanded after the exodus from Egypt during the wilderness travels of the Israelites.

Did Esau sell his birthright before or after the death of Abraham? We do not know. Chapter 25 covers many years and most of the sense of timing has been lost for these events save the age of Abraham and Ishmael at their deaths and the age of Isaac at the birth of his twin sons. However, Ishmael will live at least until the twins are 62 years old.

Abraham through Jacob



Chapter 26

Famine, Isaac and Abimelech

Genesis 26:1 Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines.² And the LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you."³ "Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham."⁴ "And I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;⁵ because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws."

The famine of Abraham's day was in the first year of his coming out of Haran into Canaan Land when Abraham was 75 years old. In that famine, Abraham traveled with his large clan to Egypt where he lied to Pharaoh about Sarah's being his sister.

In this passage, the LORD spoke directly to Isaac and warned him not to go to Egypt but to go to the land of Abimelech, the king of the Philistines. This was the same Abimelech Abraham interacted with and lied to about Sarah's being his sister instead of his wife. As we remember, Abimelech was instructed by the LORD not to touch Sarah or he would be a dead man. In Abraham's day, Abimelech was the king of Gerar but now he has become the king of the Philistines, a whole group or tribe of the Canaanite descendants, yet he still lived in Gerar.

Notice that the LORD makes the same promise to Isaac that he made to Abraham. We do not normally call this the Isaac Covenant, but it is. It is a promise to Isaac that began with Abraham and will continue through his children. In Chapter 25 Isaac's twin boys were born and grew into manhood. That chapter seems to be a summary of the lives of Abraham's descendants and Chapter 26 revisits the days of Isaac's marriage just after the death of Abraham. Isaac's twins were 15 years old when Abraham died; therefore, this story occurred when the twins were between the ages of 15 and 40.

Isaac's Lie

Genesis 26:6 So Isaac lived in Gerar. ⁷ When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," for he was afraid to say, "my wife," *thinking*, "the men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is beautiful."

Whether or not Isaac knew about Abraham's mistake with Abimelech is unknown; the fact is that Isaac makes the same mistake with Abimelech that his father did. However, Abimelech had not taken Rebekah to be a wife as he had done with Sarah.

Abimelech's Discovery

Genesis 26:8 And it came about, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out through a window, and saw, and behold, Isaac was caressing his wife Rebekah. ⁹ Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, "Behold, certainly she is your wife! How then did you say, 'She is my sister'?" And Isaac said to him, "Because I said, 'Lest I die on account of her.'" ¹⁰ And Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us." ¹¹ So Abimelech charged all the people, saying, "He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."

Evidently, Abraham had moved away from Gerar and the well that he dug at Beersheba many years before and Abimelech did not know the history of Isaac's family; he did not know whether or not Abraham had a daughter named Rebekah. However, when Abimelech saw Isaac caressing Rebekah, he immediately knew that Isaac had lied to him. Rebekah was not the sister of Isaac, she was his cousin. Isaac had outright lied to Abimelech whereas Abraham's tale was a half lie. Nevertheless, a partial lie is still a lie!

Abimelech remembered the warning of the LORD and held to that standard with his people. Here a seed of God's approval and disapproval is planted in the story – God does not approve of a man taking the wife of another man for any reason. The penalty for such action was death which will be confirmed when the LORD gives the Law to Moses.⁴¹

Isaac's Blessing

Genesis 26:12 Now Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. And the LORD blessed him,¹³ and the man became rich, and continued to grow richer until he became very wealthy;¹⁴ for he had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household, so that the Philistines envied him.

Despite Isaac's mistake, the LORD still blessed him. A flawed man can still be used of God. As the heir of Abraham's fortune, Isaac was rich beyond imagination. To that wealth, the LORD added more, making him the envy of the Philistines.

Abraham's Wells

Genesis 26:15 Now all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines stopped up by filling them with earth.¹⁶ Then Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are too powerful for us."¹⁷ And Isaac departed from there and camped in the valley of Gerar, and settled there.¹⁸ Then Isaac dug again the wells of water which had been dug in the days of his father Abraham, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the same names which his father had given them.¹⁹ But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of flowing water,²⁰ the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with the herdsmen of Isaac, saying, "The water is ours!" So he named the well Esek, because they contended with him.²¹ Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over it too, so he named it Sitnah.²² And he moved away from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he named it Rehoboth, for he said, "At last the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

⁴¹ Deuteronomy 22:24

Abraham's men had dug many wells in Abimelech's land. Now, years later, Isaac's men, many of whom were servants of Abraham, uncovered those same wells and found water again. But the Philistine herdsmen of Gerar were jealous of Isaac's findings and claimed the wells. Isaac renamed two of the wells with the names Esek and Sitnah. Esek means strife; Sitnah means hatred. Moving further from the area, Isaac named a well Rehoboth which means broad place. That name means that Isaac had finally found a large enough place to water his livestock and family as well as the locals without dispute.

Isaac at Beersheba

Genesis 26:23 Then he went up from there to Beersheba. ²⁴ And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, " I am the God of your father Abraham; Do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and multiply your descendants, For the sake of My servant Abraham." ²⁵ So he built an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well.

One day, Isaac made his way to Beersheba, the well that Abraham had paid Abimelech with seven ewe lambs. That property belonged to Isaac because he had inherited it from his father. There, on the night that he arrived, the LORD confirmed His covenant with Isaac again. Isaac worshiped the LORD there and his servants dug the well.

Abimelech, Ahuzzath, Phicol and Isaac

Genesis 26:26 Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with his adviser Ahuzzath, and Phicol the commander of his army. ²⁷ And Isaac said to them, " Why have you come to me, since you hate me, and have sent me away from you?" ²⁸ And they said, "We see plainly that the LORD has been with you; so we said, 'Let there now be an oath between us, *even* between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, ²⁹ that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good, and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD.'" ³⁰ Then he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. ³¹ And in the morning they arose early and exchanged oaths; then Isaac sent them away and they departed from him in peace.

Abimelech had not changed his ways. When he approached Isaac at Beersheba, he offered the same agreement that he had made with Abraham. Abimelech brought his lawyer and general along to witness the oath in order to assure that Abimelech's people would keep the law made between him and Isaac.

Abimelech, Ahuzzath, Phicol and Isaac

Genesis 26:32 Now it came about on the same day, that Isaac's servants came in and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him, "We have found water."

33 So he called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.

"Shibah" is a variant spelling of Sheba. The well that Isaac's men uncovered was the well that Abraham's men dug originally and Abraham purchased with seven ewe lambs and called Beersheba many years before.

Esau's Marriage

Genesis 26:34 And when Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; ³⁵ and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

Finally, Chapter 26 addresses the marriage of Esau when he and Jacob were 40 years old. It had been 2191 years since the creation of Adam. Esau took two wives who were from the Canaanite tribes. These marriages disturbed Isaac and Rebekah greatly. Like Abraham, Isaac and Rebekah did not want their sons to intermarry with the Canaanite people.

Isaac will not die for another 80 years in the 2271th year after the creation of Adam. In 30 years, when the twins are 70 years old, Isaac will be blind and he will give his blessing to Jacob instead of Esau; he will then send Jacob away to Mesopotamia to find a wife. Twenty-one years after that, Jacob will return to Canaan with 11 sons and one daughter. Joseph will be a newborn at that time. Later Benjamin will be born and Jacob's wife will die giving birth to him. Isaac will not die until Joseph is 30 years old and having been a slave in Egypt for 13 years. Joseph was 17 years old when his brothers sold him into Egyptian slavery; therefore, Joseph knew Isaac well!