

Introduction

We return once again to the account of Abraham at the end of his life. He has successfully secured a wife for his son Isaac. This begins the family history of Isaac. Abraham then finds another wife for himself after the death of Sarah.

1. Death of Abraham, 25:1-11

Sarah died at the age of 127 (23:1); she was 10 years younger than Abraham (17:17), so he was 137 when she died. This passage tells us he lived an additional 38 years. In the meantime, he married again, this time to Keturah. They had 6 children together.

As he neared death, he ensured that Isaac would inherit all of his possessions, except those that he gave to his other sons, including those of his concubines. Apparently his family was a little larger than just Sarah, Hagar (Gen. 16, 21), and Keturah. However, he sent those other sons to the east so they would not interfere with Isaac.

Abraham died, having received part of the promise that God gave to him, namely that he would be personally blessed. He did not see the fulfillment of the entire covenant (Heb. 11:13). He was 175 years old. His two primary sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which Abraham had purchased in Gen. 23.

After his father's death, Isaac lived at Beer Lahai Roi (see Gen. 16:14) and God blessed him.

On another chronological note, remember that Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born. But Isaac was 60 years old when the twins Esau and Jacob were born. This means that Abraham was alive for 15 years after his grandsons were born. The order of the text does not indicate that, as Abraham dies early in chapter 25 and the children are not born until late in the chapter. You can see that Genesis is not always arranged chronologically.

2. Genealogy of Ishmael, 25:12-18

Ishmael is listed here as having 12 sons. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? He lived to the age of 137. He was born when Abraham was 86 years old (16:16), so he lived beyond his father's death 48 years.

For the geography of this area, see 1 Sam. 15:7 for a similar phrase as we find in 25:18. Shur is east of Egypt in the midst of the Sinai peninsula. Havilah is mentioned in Gen. 2:11. There is apparently no certainty as to where this place was located; some suggest the coast of Ethiopia; others place it in the Arabian peninsula.

3. Birth and Early Life of Esau and Jacob, 25:19-34

Isaac was married to Rebekah at the age of 40. But they could not have children for 20 years! What a trial. Isaac prayed that God would allow his wife to become pregnant, and she did. They got more than they bargained for—twins!

A timely story comes from Ed Frampton, missionary with the Int'l Board of Jewish Missions. He wrote on April 7 about the first church that they planted as missionaries in South Africa. The "pastor we installed in this church is a wonderful pastor named Bafana. He speaks Zulu and English. He and his wife of six years (Sibongile) have so wanted to have a child. Today we got word that she is with child. Matter of fact, with CHILDREN! Twins, that is! We are praising the Lord, but they will need prayer and help."

The twins caused a bit of consternation for Rebekah because they fought each other inside her womb! God told her that this indicated how they would be the source of two competing nations, and that the younger child would have the upper hand. Note that this is mentioned in Rom. 9:11-13 regarding the doctrine of election. God set his love upon Jacob before he had done anything to merit it – before he was born or had done anything good or bad. See also Mal. 1:2-3.

Esau was born, shall we say, with a full head of hair. He had red hair actually all over his body. They named him, appropriately, "hairy" (not Harry!). He later was nicknamed

Edom (25:30) because he craved some red stew. The nation of Edom descends from him. Jacob is the supplanter because he took Esau's place.

An important note in this chapter is that Esau sold his birthright, that is, the place of prominence as the firstborn in the family, for a single meal. The Bible tells us that he despised his birthright (25:34). It may at first seem unfair that he lost his birthright to his younger brother in this way, but he really did not care for it in the first place. This indicates a lack of respect for the Abrahamic promises and all that the birthright entitled him to. Of course, God had not planned that he should be in the Abrahamic line of the promise before. None of this surprised God! Note Heb. 12:16-17.

4. God Promises Blessings to Isaac, 26:1-35

There was another famine in the land (see Gen. 12:10) and so Isaac had to move around to find food. God told him specifically to stay in the land and not go down to Egypt. This would lead to blessing—and not just any blessing, but that of the Abrahamic covenant!

Isaac did, however, repeat the mistake of his father in lying about his wife. He was afraid that the Philistines would take his wife from him so he lied. I wonder if the bad example of his father affected Isaac? After getting this straightened out, he was indeed blessed—in crops, animals, and servants. The Philistines asked him to leave their country because of his prosperity and strength.

There is a little account of how Isaac had to dig several wells before getting one at which he had uncontested water rights. The king of the Philistines, also named Abimelech like the earlier king of Abraham's day, made a treaty with Isaac to maintain the peace.

In the midst of all these happenings, God repeats the Abrahamic promises to Isaac a couple of times: 26:2-5 and 26:24-25.

One very important note: Notice how Esau married two Hittite women. They evidently did not believe in the God of Abraham—see 2 Cor. 6:14. This was a cause of grief to Esau's parents.

5. Jacob Again Supplants Esau with Regard to the Blessing of Isaac, 27:1-48

The account here is probably familiar to you. In Isaac's culture, it was important to pass on a blessing to the eldest son when death was near. In this case, it was especially important because that blessing carried Abrahamic covenant implications.

Rebekah intercepted the information that a blessing from Isaac was imminent, and informed Jacob to quickly get ready, disguise himself, and steal the blessing from his brother. This he did in a very sneaky way, which only worked because his father was basically blind.

Notice Isaac's use of Abrahamic covenant language in 27:29 where the cursings and blessings are mentioned. Remember that these are personal but also extend to his descendants as well.

Esau came too late and received the leftovers on the blessings. He cried but it was already done. His distaste for his birthright has come around to haunt him. He planned to kill his brother to sooth his anger, but Rebekah got wind of it and sent Jacob away to her brother Laban. It is here that Jacob finds his wife, as we will see in later chapters.

Conclusion

Note that Jacob could have received God's blessing in another way—we are confident that God never requires us to sin to be in His will (James 1:13). But sometimes God allows these sorts of things in His plan.

It would be an interesting study to look at the uses of the word "blessed" in the book of Genesis—it occurs in 68 verses a total of 89 times.