

genesis

God's Book of Beginnings

The Death of Abraham (Genesis 25)

25:1-6 Hagar ^{Genesis 16:3} and Keturah ^{v.1} were each called Abraham's "wife" (*'iššâ*: woman, wife), but Keturah was also referred to as his concubine ^{1 Chronicles 1:32} (*pilegeš*: wife of lower status). So Moses' reference to "[Abraham's] concubines" ^{v.6} could have denoted Hagar and Keturah, or perhaps was a reference to Keturah and other concubines not mentioned in Scripture. Abraham loved Keturah and her six sons, so he gave his concubines sons "gifts"; however, he sent them to the "east", so Abraham's entire inheritance could go to Isaac ^{Genesis 24:36}.

The descendants of Abraham and Keturah/Hagar produced most of the Arab tribes east of the PL

The firstborn rights (birthright or law of primogeniture) included double inheritance ^{Deuteronomy 21:17}, but as the "only" son ^{Genesis 22:2,12} of Abraham & Sarah, the entire inheritance was Isaac's ^{Genesis 24:36}. The firstborn male not only received more inheritance, but they were consecrated to God ^{Exodus 13:1-2}. Ultimately, the primary blessing for Isaac's son involved the passing on of the Abrahamic covenant.

25:7-11 Abraham lived 175 years ("a good old age") and died ("was gathered to his people"). Isaac and Ishmael buried Abraham with his wife Sarah in the cave of Machpelah ^{Genesis 23:17-20}. After Abraham left Haran ^{Genesis 12:4}, he traveled around for exactly 100 years before dying in the PL. The phrase "breathed his last" was from a Hebrew word also translated "gave up the ghost" ^{KJV, ASV}. This was the first of two times less-than-friendly brothers came together to bury their father ^{Genesis 35:29}.

25:12-18 Ishmael had twelve sons who became tribal rulers from the Tigris River to southeastern Egypt. He died at the age of 137 years and "was gathered to *his* people". The phrase "gathered to his people" indicated a death and a reunion with previously departed friends ^{Matthew 8:11, Luke 16:22-23}, and was applied to the deaths of Abraham ^{v.8}, Isaac ^{Genesis 35:28-29}, Jacob ^{Genesis 49:33}, Moses & Aaron ^{Deuteronomy 32:50} and Ishmael ^{v.17}. However, the Israelite patriarchs and Ishmael did not go to the same area within the place of the dead (OT: Sheol [*Sh'ôwl*] and NT: Hades [*Hadēs*]) (i.e., not gathered to the same "people") (e.g. Lazarus and rich man ^{Luke 16:19-31}).

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God had promised Ishmael he would be the father of “twelve rulers” ^{Genesis 17:20}, similar to the 12 sons of Nahor ^{Genesis 22:20-24} and the 12 tribes of Israel from the line of Abraham/Isaac/Jacob ^{Genesis 49}.

Ishmael’s offspring “lived in hostility toward all their brothers” just as God told Hagar ^{Genesis 16:12}.

25:19-23 Isaac married his cousin, Rebekah ^{Genesis 24:15} at the age of 40. She was barren for the first twenty years ^{v.20,26} of their marriage. In response to Isaac’s prayers, God blessed Rebekah with a pregnancy of twin boys, but throughout the prenatal period, the baby boys were so active in her womb that she prayed for understanding, and God faithfully responded.

The struggles of Jacob and Esau started in their mother’s womb, continued over their lives ^{Genesis 27} and persisted even between Israel (Jacob) ^{Genesis 32:28} and Edom (Esau) ^{36:4} (e.g. David ^{2 Samuel 8:13-14}).

Prior to birth, God told Rebekah the twins represented different “nations” ^{v.23} and the “older [would] serve the younger” ^{v.23, Romans 9:10-12}. This was an indication that His sovereign elective purposes do not have to follow customs, traditions or laws (e.g., the rights of the firstborn ^{Deuteronomy 21:17}).

25:24-26 The first twin to be born to Rebekah was red and hairy, and they named him Esau.

The second baby came out clutching Esau’s heel ^{Hosea 12:3}, and so they named him Jacob.

The name Jacob means ‘he grasps the heel’ (figuratively meaning ‘he deceives’ ^{Genesis 27:36}).

The name Esau probably means ‘hairy’. He had red hair all over ^{v.25} and he loved red stew ^{v.30}, resulting in Esau and his descendants being referred to as Edom ^{v.30}, which means ‘red’.

There is a second Biblical example of odd circumstances relative to the birth of twins ^{Genesis 38:27-30}.

25:27-34 Esau was an outdoorsman and Isaac’s favorite ^{Genesis 37:3}, while Jacob was a homebody and was loved by Rebekah. Jacob was cooking stew when Esau came in from the country. Esau told Jacob he was famished and Jacob offered the stew for Esau’s birthright. Esau’s response showed he had no respect for (that he “despised” ^{v.34}) his birthright, and gave an oath giving up his birthright to Jacob, in exchange for stew to satisfy his hunger.

Esau had the birthright and Jacob the stew, but afterward Esau had stew and Jacob the birthright.

In Esau’s mind, he was probably thinking: ‘What good is a birthright if I starve to death?’ ^{v.32}.

When a life is rooted in earthly appetites, the importance of spiritual matters is easily minimized.

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In Hebrews, Esau is referred to as “godless” for selling his birthright for “a single meal” ^{Hebrews 12:16}. In this specific instance, Jacob did not deceive Esau, he was open and obvious, but unscrupulous. A couple of Biblical passages ^{Malachi 1:2-3, Romans 9:13} clearly pronounce God’s “love” for Jacob and “hatred” for Esau. The contrast illustrates God’s sovereignty in all His relationships with mankind.

Isaac and Abimelech (Genesis 26)

- 26:1-6** Another famine hit the area ^{Genesis 12:10}, but God told Isaac to not go to Egypt, because He would take care of him. The LORD then reconfirmed His Abrahamic covenant with Isaac. The Abrahamic Covenant was announced ^{Genesis 12:2-3}, affirmed ^{Genesis 15:18-21}, confirmed ^{Genesis 17:1-21}, and here renewed by God with Isaac ^{v.2-5} (and renewed one more time later with Jacob ^{Genesis 28:10-17}). Isaac blessed his descendants by being obedient to God’s command for him to not go to Egypt. Obedience and blessings, disobedience and cursings are intimately linked ^{Deuteronomy 11:26-28}.
- 26:7-11** While living in Gerar, Isaac told everyone Rebekah was his sister, instead of his wife, for fear of his life ^{Genesis 12:10-13, 20:1-2,11}. After a time, Abimelech observed Isaac “caressing” Rebekah and instantly recognized they were not brother and sister, but husband and wife. Abimelech rebuked Isaac for his lie and what it could have meant to him and his people, and he then issued an order for no man to bother Rebekah or Isaac, under a penalty of death.
- 26:12-25** Isaac’s crops and livestock flourished, because “the LORD blessed him”. The Philistine men and leader recognized God’s hand on Isaac, so the men filled in Isaac’s wells “with earth” and Abimelech requested that Isaac move away. After disputes over the water wells, Isaac went to Beersheba, where God confirmed His commitment to Isaac and his descendants. Responding to the LORD’s appearance, Isaac built an altar in honor of the LORD ^{Genesis 12:7-8}. Desert wells were a sign of prosperity (resulting in disputes) for Abraham ^{Genesis 21:25-26} and Isaac. The names of the water wells told the story between Isaac and the Philistines, from arguments in the desert to finding the right spacing: *Esek* (contention), *Sitnah* (opposition) and *Rehoboth* (room).
- 26:26-33** Abimelech asked Isaac for a treaty; they feasted and “swore an oath to each other”. That day, Isaac’s men dug a well and they named it *Shibah* ⇒ Beersheba (well of the oath).

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In this situation, Abimelech was either a tribal title, a relative of the Abimelech cited earlier ^{Genesis 20:2} or the same man. The latter seems very unlikely, because the two events occurred ~ 90 years apart. However oddly, the military commanders for the Abimelechs were both named Phicol ^{Genesis 21:22}.

In another aspect of this incident relative to the one between Abraham and Abimelech ^{Genesis 21:22-32}, the Philistine leader accompanied by his military commander requested he and Isaac sign a treaty. Again it was obvious, even though he brought 'his' strength (Phicol), Abimelech feared Isaac's God.

26:34-35 Ignoring the standard set by Abraham ^{Genesis 24:3-4}, Esau married two Hittite women.

Esau knew he had hurt his parents ^{Deuteronomy 7:3}, so he later married Ishmael's daughter ^{Genesis 28:8-9}.

Isaac Blesses Jacob (Genesis 27)

27:1-4 Isaac was old and blind. Thinking he was close to death, he told his oldest son, Esau, to hunt some wild game and fix him a meal, because Isaac planned to give Esau his blessing.

Isaac considered himself "old" and determined it was time to bless his eldest son, because he was 137 years old and his sons were 77 years old ^{ages determined from Genesis 35:28, 30:24-25, 31:41, 41:46-47, 45:6, 47:9}.

Isaac could not imagine he would live for another 43 years (dying at the age of 180 ^{Genesis 35:28}).

Isaac was physically blind, but he also allowed his physical desires for food to blind his judgement.

Isaac was intending to grant Esau his blessing while ignoring God's words to Rebekah ^{Genesis 25:23}, Esau's bartered birthright ^{Genesis 25:33}, and Esau's grievous marriages to Hittite women ^{Genesis 26:35}.

27:5-16 Listening to Isaac and Esau's conversation, Rebekah saw a chance to ensure Jacob, instead of Esau, would receive the blessing. She told Jacob to get two goats so she could fix the meal for him to take to his father. Jacob feared receiving a curse for lying to Isaac, since his body was not hairy like Esau's, but Rebekah said the curse would fall on her ^{Matthew 27:25}.

So she cooked, put Esau's clothes on Jacob and covered his hands and neck with goatskins.

Jacob was afraid of getting caught, but he seemed to carry no guilt about his mother's plan.

27:17-25 Jacob took the food from his mother and went to his father, pretending to be Esau.

Isaac was wary of who he was, because he had come so quickly and had the voice of Jacob; however, Jacob's insistence that he was Esau, his hairy "hands" and the smell of the food convinced Isaac, so that Rebekah's deception worked and Isaac ate stew and drank wine.

Please forward questions/concerns about these notes to ron price, 505-294-4743, pricegang@integrity.com.

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Isaac asked 3 skeptical questions, but allowed himself to be deceived by his senses of touch, smell.

In misusing the LORD's name and his lying, Jacob broke the 3rd and 9th Commandments Exodus 20:7,16.

He did, however, suffer consequences for his actions: he was exiled from his family for many years, he never saw his mother again, Esau wanted to kill him, Laban would deceive him, and his entire family was often involved in conflict. And the deception wasn't even necessary. Why? Genesis 25:23

27:26-29 After his meal, Isaac had Jacob kiss him, and sensing the smell of Esau's clothes, Isaac pronounced his blessing (and the blessing from God to Abraham Genesis 12:1-3) to Jacob.

The blessing of Isaac upon Jacob included prosperity in crops, domination over other nations and his brothers, curses on those who cursed him, and blessings on those who blessed him Genesis 12:2-3.

27:30-40 Soon after Jacob withdrew from Isaac, Esau brought food for their father, asking him to eat and to bless him. Realizing what had happened, Isaac became very upset, exclaiming the blessing had already been claimed! Esau cried out in response, repeatedly begging for his father to bless him. Isaac and Esau agreed the blessing had been gained through deception; however, Isaac sternly confirmed that the blessing on Jacob was complete and irrevocable. Isaac finally gave in and pronounced a secondary, and a rather negative, blessing upon Esau. Isaac "trembled violently", despite knowing in his heart/mind the outcome was God's will Genesis 25:23. He had tampered with God's plan, and so he gave the only blessing he could to Esau Hebrews 11:20.

Esau's blessing from Isaac was in contrast to Jacob's blessing: Esau (and his descendants) would live in a less prosperous area, be subservient to his brother and be in constant battle with other nations, although there would be some times of temporary success over Jacob's line 2 Chronicles 21:8.

27:41-46 Esau was very bitter about Jacob receiving the birthright blessing, so he made plans to kill him following the death of their father, but that did not happen for another 43 years. Rebekah heard Esau's plans and told Jacob to flee to her brother, Laban, in Haran (and suggested to Isaac that Jacob go find a wife). She was afraid of losing both sons "in [a] day", because if Esau murdered Jacob, then the "avenger of blood" Numbers 35:19 would kill Esau.

While Jacob was forced to leave home in order to escape Esau's anger, Jacob would use the opportunity to continue the tradition of finding a wife from their relatives in their homeland Genesis 24.

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