

## The Book of Genesis

### Chapter 25

**25:1 Abraham again took** [NIV,TAN,NRS: "took another"] **a wife, and her name was Keturah.**

#### Keturah

Some mistakenly have thought that "Keturah" was another name given to Hagar. Although Keturah was called a concubine in 1CO 1:32, she is referred to here as a wife. The only difference between a wife and concubine was there was no official ceremony nor marriage settlement made with a concubine. Therefore, Keturah could have been a concubine until the death of Sarah, after which Abraham officially married her, making her a legal wife.

**25:2-4 She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah** [He is considered the forefather of Bildad the Shuhite]. **Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan; the descendants of Dedan were the Asshurites, the Letushites and the Leummites. The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah. All these were descendants of Keturah.** (NIV)

Through Keturah, Abraham became the fourth listed patriarch with at least 12 peoples descended from him.

**25:5 And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac.**

#### Isaac as Heir

Isaac was the heir to the position of patriarch.

**25:6 But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines** [reference to Hagar and Keturah] **and sent them away from his son Isaac to the land of the east.** (NIV)

#### "Sent Them Away"

He had to send these sons away for two reasons:

1. They were not to inherit the land of Canaan, so their inheritance had to be established in another area.
2. Upon the death of Abraham, Isaac would inherit everything, including authority over all his half-brothers, making him legal owner of all that they possessed.

**25:7-8 Abraham had lived for a hundred and seventy-five years when he breathed his last. He died at a great age, a full span of years, and was gathered to his forefathers** [1801 B.C.]. (REB)

**25:9-11 His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, the field Abraham had bought from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah. After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi.** (NIV)

Time Frame

Isaac was 75 years old at this time and had been living in this area for 35 years (24:62).

**25:12 Now this is the genealogy of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maidservant, bore to Abraham.**

Descendants

Before giving the story of Isaac, we are given the summary of the descendants of Ishmael.

**25:13-17 These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth [forefather of the Nabateans] the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish [Jetur and Naphish seem to be the forebearers of the people who resisted the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh (1CO 5:18-22)] and Kedemah. These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers according to their settlements and camps. Altogether, Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. He breathed his last and died, and he was gathered to his people [1753 B.C.]. (NIV)**

Esau is the fifth listed patriarch with at least 12 peoples descending from him.

**25:18 They settled from Havilah to Shur, which is opposite Egypt in the direction of Assyria; he settled down alongside of all his people [NKJ: "he died in the presence of all his brethren"]. (NRS)**

Havilah

Havilah extended from the Euphrates near its junction with the Tigris to the desert of Shur east of the Nile.

**25:19-20 This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he married [1836 B.C.] Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean [NKJ: "Syrian"]. (NIV)**

Focus of Account

This account has more to do with Isaac's sons than with Isaac himself. Except for GEN 26, Isaac plays a secondary role.

**25:21 Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. (NIV)**

Rebekah's Circumstances

Rebekah was barren, just like Sarah (11:30), Rachel (29:31), and even Leah for awhile after the birth of Judah (29:35). God was emphasizing through these wives that the blessing promised to Abraham and his descendants could not be accomplished by human effort. It was only possible by God's direct intervention.

**25:22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I this way?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.**

## Genesis Theme

Now a major theme which runs throughout the remainder of Genesis is introduced—the struggle between brothers. This condition affected the sons of Isaac and the sons of Jacob. The point being made is that the will of God was accomplished in spite of the conflicts between families.

## Rebekah's Inquiry

The manner in which Rebekah went to inquire of God is not explained. She may have gone to an altar where Abraham had spoken with God, or this may have simply been a prayer she prayed inside her tent.

**25:23 And the LORD said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body [REB: "going their own ways from birth"]; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger."**

## God's Blessing

In most cases throughout Genesis, God chose the younger to accomplish His plan. Abel was chosen over Cain, Seth over Japheth and Ham, Isaac over Ishmael, Judah over his three older brothers, and Joseph over all his brothers. In the use of the younger, God's grace [His undeserved favor] is emphasized. The blessing given to Abraham was not a right that was deserved, as a birthright was viewed. God's blessing is given to those who have no right to it—the definition of grace!

**25:24-25 When the time came for her to give birth [1816 B.C., when Abraham was 160 years old], there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. (NIV)**

## Esau

"Esau," in Hebrew, is composed of the same three letters as the word "hairy," but with the first two letters reversed.

**25:26 After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them. (NIV)**

## Jacob

In Hebrew, "Jacob" is composed of the same three letters in the same order as the word "heel." However, the word in Hebrew can be extended to "*one who trips another by the heel*" and can be rendered "supplanter".

**25:27 The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. (NIV)**

## Esau & Jacob

The personality and interests of the two were at opposite extremes. It seems that Jacob was more interested in being a merchant than working with animals, and Esau just the opposite.

**25:28 Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob. (NIV)**

### Favoritism

God reveals that parental favoritism was the cause of the conflict between the siblings. A problem that Jacob perpetuated in his family.

***25:29-34 Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew" [Hebrew: "adom", contains three of the same letters that compose "Edom"]! "I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.) Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright. (NIV)***

### God's Choice

This event is recorded to show that God's choice of the younger over the older was not unfair. Esau despised the right of birth (HEB 12:16), but Jacob understood its importance and wanted it desperately.