

17-18 Bible Study #28

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Genesis 23-25

Genesis 23

- **Genesis 23:1-2**

- In **Genesis 6:3** we read that man shall live to 120 years
- We discussed that the number referred to the number of years left before the arrival of the flood not an age restriction
- Here we see **Sarah living 127 years**, proving the error of those who believed the max life expectancy was 120 years
- This is not a big deal, but people often develop an erroneous interpretation and declare that the bible contains errors *

Genesis 23 (Cont)

- **Genesis 23:3-11**

- *Abraham* was living near **Hebron** when *Sarah* died so
- This led him to seek a place for her burial
- He wanted to purchase a cave from the *Hittites*
 - We were first introduced to them in **Genesis 15:20** *
 - They were one of the people occupying the land promised to Abraham
- *Abraham* decided to purchase a cave from *Ephron* the *Hittite**

Genesis 23 (Cont)

- **Genesis 23:12-20**

- Abraham and Ephron came to an agreement
- Look at the language here
- It was obviously a deal and not a covenant
- We do not see the word “covenant”, any reference to seven, or the sharing in a meal

Genesis 24

Genesis 24

- **Genesis 24:1-10**

- Although not stated, most likely this man was *Eliezer* discussed in **Genesis 15:2**
- Earlier he was identified as the son who would inherit everything from *Abraham* (before the birth of *Ishmael* or *Isaac*)
- Again, it seem obvious that *Abraham* had freed his slaves, otherwise why would he complete this mission?
- *Abraham* knew that this servant would do this task because he, like *Abraham*, loved *Isaac*
- *Abraham* had him circumcised and made him a part of the covenant as a member of his household

Genesis 24 (Cont)

- So here he sends him to the city of ***Nahor*** in *Mesopotamia* (AKA *Haran*) to find a wife for *Isaac* from among his own people
- He made his camels kneel down outside the city wall next to a well
- In the next few stories whenever we hear about a “well” you must think of an approaching “wedding”
- When someone came to a well in the Pentateuch they were about to get married:
 - A well had a great deal of symbolism including water, life, fertility out in the wilderness
 - It was a meeting place where people would gather, especially when the women came to collect water in the cool of the day

Genesis 24 (Cont)

- **Genesis 24:11-14**

- The servant of Abraham asked for “a sign” from God
- We see this throughout the Old Testament as an individual seeks a sign from God directing him to do a certain thing
- “Steadfast love” is the translation of the Hebrew word “*Hesed*”
- This is a difficult word to translate as it can also be translated as “covenantal faithfulness, or “loving kindness”
- It is used throughout the Old Testament

Genesis 24 (Cont)

- **Genesis 24:15-19**

- Watering a camel was no easy task
- *Rebekah* had to go down the steps carrying a heavy jar
- She then filled it and had to carry it back up the steps to give this visitor a drink
- Then she repeated the process several time to water the 10 camels!
- *Abraham's* servant must had thought this; she was one tough woman who might be right for *Isaac*

Genesis 24 (Cont)

- **Genesis 24:20-33**

- Here we meet the relatives of *Abraham* discussed in **Genesis 22:20-24**
- We also see a repeat of “steadfast love” which related to the covenant of God with *Abraham*
- We also have our first encounter with *Rebekah’s* brother *Laban* who will play a major role in establishing the 12 tribes of Israel in **Genesis 28-30**
- The rest of this passage (and **Genesis 24:34-51**) is basically a retelling of the story we just read, including what had happened to *Abraham*, how he told this servant to make this journey, and his encounter with *Rebekah*

Genesis 24 (Cont)

- **Genesis 24:52-67**

- The family, including *Rebekah*, agreed that she would go with this servant and marry Abraham's son
- Upon arriving in the vicinity of *Beerlahairoi* and seeing *Isaac*, she took a veil and covered herself
- At that time when a married woman was in public she wore a veil as a sign that she was married
- A veil was a traditional sign of sacredness or of being set apart
- It basically functioned the way a wedding ring does today
- Both are signs that a woman is the wife of a man

Genesis 25

Genesis 25

- **Genesis 25:1-3**

- *Abraham* took another wife (also described as a **concubine**) named *Keturah*
- One of her sons was ***Midian*** who became the father of the *Midianites* and who played a major role in the rest of the Pentateuch
- This is a very important piece of information as both the ***Midianites*** and ***Ishmaelites*** had an impact on *Israel* *

Genesis 25 (Cont)

- **Genesis 25:4-8**

- Notice that concubines is plural
- We know of at least two including *Hagar* and now *Keturah*
- It appears that after the death of *Sarah*, *Hagar* and *Ishmael* returned
- Also, notice that after *Abraham* gave them gifts, he sent them away to the “east”

Genesis 25 (Cont)

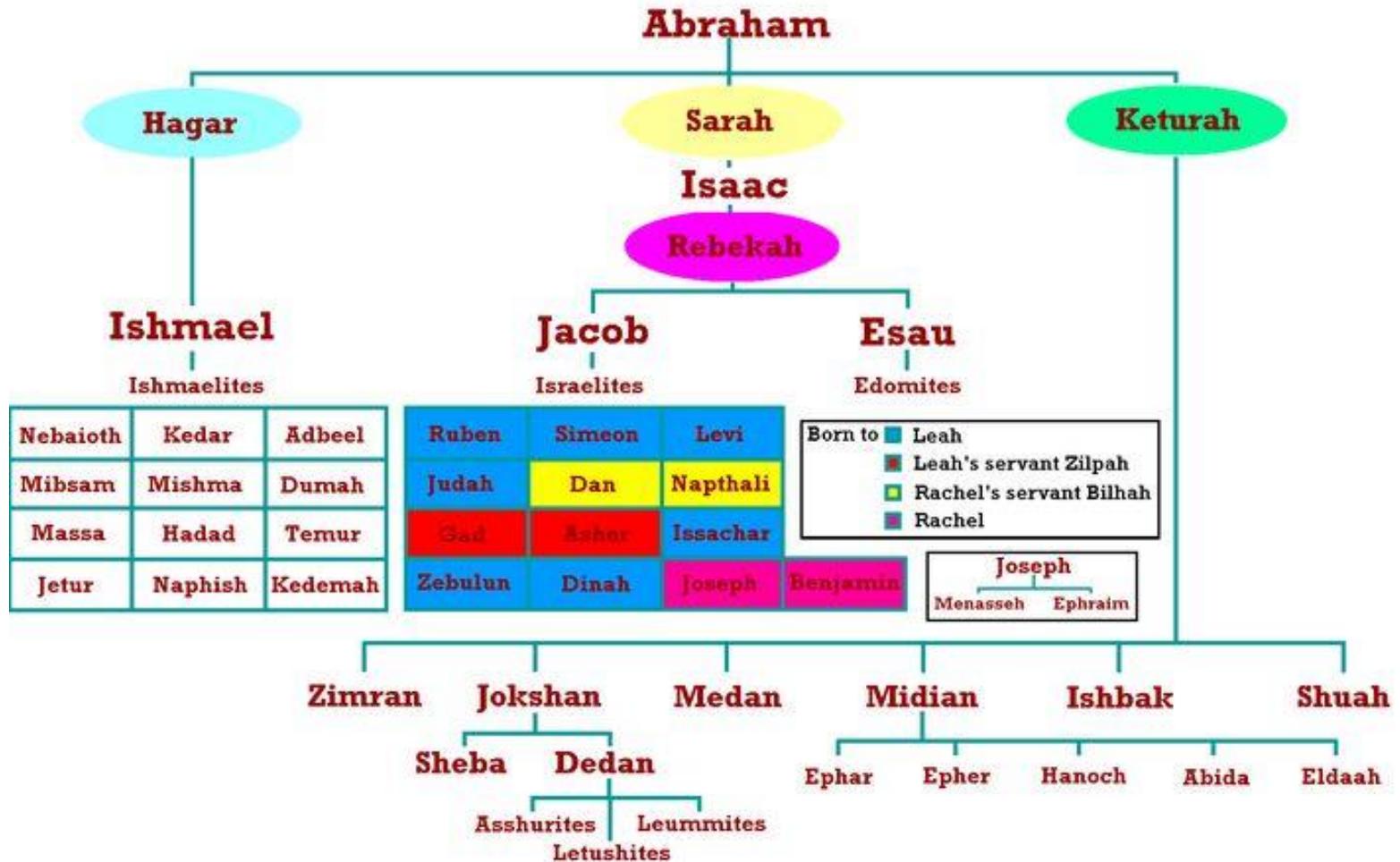
- This is significant for we will run into these descendants as *Israel* travels through the desert
- The *Ishmaelites* and *Midianites* will dwell together and become one people living in the wilderness
- Their names will be used interchangeably as we will see in the story of Joseph and later in the **Book of Judges** *

Genesis 25 (Cont)

- **Genesis 25:9-18**

- *Abraham* was buried by *Isaac* and *Ishmael* in the cave he purchased from the *Hittites* in **Genesis 23** where he buried *Sarah*
- Father Sebastian said that this cave can still be visited today
- Next, we are given the names of the **12 princes of *Ishmael*** as the angel had promised in **Genesis 17**
- Father Sebastian reminded us that we must not confuse the descendants of *Ishmael* with the people of *Islam* **

The Genealogy of Abraham



Genesis 25 (Cont)

- **Genesis 25: 19-21**

- The text then sets aside the descendants of *Ishmael* while it sets forth the descendants of *Isaac* who play a major role in the covenantal narrative
- It is interesting to note that the early *Ishmaelites* were Christians long before the arrival of Mohammed
- This means that the native religion of the Arab people was not Islam
- When identifying the *Abrahamic* religion, we find that the first new religion they accepted was Christianity

Genesis 25 (Cont)

- Saint Ephrem, the Syrian, along with the patristic tradition, divided Christianity into three patristic groupings
 - The Latin father who spoke Latin
 - The Greek father who spoke Greek
 - The Syrian fathers who spoke Syriac or Aramaic
- The early church was divided according to language *

Genesis 25 (Cont)

- **Genesis 25:19-21**

- It is also important to look at the parallels and contrast between the *Isaac* and *Abraham* stories
- We will see a great deal of *Abrahamic* information when reading the story of *Isaac*
- *Abraham's* wife was barren and she offered her maid to her husband
- *Isaac's* wife was barren and he prayed for her and she bore him twins
- The major difference was Isaac's act of prayer *

Genesis 25 (Cont)

- **Genesis 25:22-23**

- *Rebecca* thought that she might die in her pregnancy
- According to *St Ephrem* and rabbinic tradition it was *Shem* who revealed this information to *Rebecca*
- If we look at the possible age of *Shem*, he most likely was still alive *

Genesis 25 (Cont)

- **Genesis 25:24-25**

- *Isaac* and *Rebecca* called their first born son *Esau* (the “hairy one” or the “goat man”)
- They called Jacob *Ya aqov* (the heeler, tripper)
- He was the guy who grabs your heel
- If someone grabs your heel while you are walking along you stumble, trip, fall *

Genesis 25 (Cont)

- **Genesis 25:26-32**

- Father Sebastian read the text while substituting “hairy” for *Esau* and “tripper” for *Jacob*
- One day after “hairy” had been hunting for a couple of days he returned to the tent and was very hungry
- He was not about to die of hunger!
- He smelled the lentils his brother was cooking and asked for some
- Jacob told him that he could have some if he promised to give him the family “birthright”

Genesis 25 (Cont)

- In that culture the **birthright** would go to the oldest son
- This meant that he was to:
 - Receive all the wealth of the family upon the death of the father
 - Served as patriarch and take care of the family
- Or each son was allocated an equal portion of the father's wealth and the eldest was to receive a double portion

Genesis 25 (Cont)

- The key to understanding this issue was that *Esau* was to acquire the material wealth from his father upon his death
- This was a material blessing
- There is also a spiritual blessing that *Jacob* will steal from *Esau* at a later time
- We will see a similar situation with Joseph and his sons *

Genesis 25 (Cont)

- **Genesis 25:33-34**

- The author pointed out that it was obvious that *Esau* was not starving but that he despised his birthright
- There are a few things wrong here:
 - Esau did not care about his birthright and sold it for a bowl of lentils
 - He really did not want to live in a tent for the rest of his life since he was a young man who wanted to be a hunter
 - Jacob also did not treat his older brother with the respect he deserved

Genesis 25 (Cont)

- In that culture when an older brother asked the younger brother for something, he was obliged to give it to him
 - *Jacob's* actions were not right or respectful
 - Thus we can see that there were problems between both brothers and they were struggling with each other from the beginning