



Genesis – 25:1-25:34  
Jacob and Esau  
(Lesson #34)

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**Outline For Today (Chapter 25):**

- Abraham takes a concubine and has other sons and daughters (25:1-6)
- Abraham's death and burial are recorded (25:7-11)
- The Generations of Ishmael (25:12-18)
- The Birth of Esau and Jacob (25:19-26)
- Background on Esau and Jacob (25:27-28)
- Esau sells his birthright (25:29-34)

*1 ¶ Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. 2 She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. 3 Jokshan fathered Sheba and Dedan. The sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. 4 The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. 5 Abraham gave all he had to Isaac. 6 But to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country.*

Vs 1-4 - Here, although we are not told how many years later, we see that Abraham takes **another wife**.

We read about Sarah's death in Gen 23:1, Abraham was 137 years old. Time has passed and we now learn about a third woman in Abraham's life. Her name is **Keturah**.

We will learn in a moment that she is actually a **concubine**. This is also echoed in I Chronicles:

*"The sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: she bore Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. The sons of Jokshan: Sheba and Dedan." (1Ch 1:32 ESV)*

The name of this concubine was **Keturah**. Her name means **incense** or **perfume**. We are then told that she bore an **additional six children** (they are named) to Abraham.

We are also told that **Jokshan** fathered (**Sheba and Dedan**). **Sheba and Dedan** are principal cities in **Saudia Arabia**. They both settled in southwestern Arabia, both would now represent modern day **Saudi Arabia**.

The **sons of Dedan** were **Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim**. Here we see three tribes that came out of Dedan. We believe **Asshurim and Letushim** settled in northern Saudia Arabia. **Leummim**, we believe settled in Mesopotamia. In what we call modern day Iraq.

Vs 4 - Then we read that **Midian** had sons five are listed. Their names are **Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah**. We believe that these mostly settled in northern Saudi Arabia.

All of these men listed were born **out of the union of Abraham and Keturah**.

These sons, grandsons, and great grandsons all flow from the union of Abraham and Keturah.

**Remember:**

*"4 ¶ "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you." (Ge 17:4-6 ESV)*

Here in Genesis, we have experienced many **fulfilled promises**. **The Bible is the only book that does this!**

**OBSERVATION:** When we come across things like this you need to grab a concordance, your Bible software, or a good commentary and **start puzzling it out.**

When you do this, you will normally find out something that will be surprising and make **another connection** in the **redemptive story**, I promise you!

I do not want to run all these names, but I do want to make one connection, it is the **forth son, Midian**. Historians tell us that the **Midianites settled in Northwest Arabia and South Sinai.**

The **Midianites** come up **later** in our study in **Genesis**, but let me show you a **different occurrence.**

Moses has killed the Egyptian, and it had become known to Pharaoh and Moses had to flee the land, we read in Exodus beginning in 2:15:

*"15 When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well. 16 ¶ Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. 17 The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock. 18 When they came home to their father Reuel, he said, "How is it that you have come home so soon today?" 19 They said, "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock." 20 He said to his daughters, "Then where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread." 21 And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah." (Ex 2:15-21, ESV)*

**Moses** (descended from Abraham and Sarah) married a woman named **Zipporah** (who descended from Abraham and Keturah).

We will see another connection in **Genesis 37**, but I will save that one until we get there!

**Vs 5-6** - Here once again we are told that Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac, we learned that last week in Genesis 24, if you remember Eliezer said that plainly!

Isaac is the heir. He is the promised child. He is the unique child. Isaac received the entire inheritance.

Here it is clear that Keturah's status was more that of a **concubine** than that of a wife. Her status appears much **closer to that of Hagar** than that of Sarah.

These sons **did not have an inheritance** from Abraham, that was all given to Isaac, but he did provide them (these other seven) with gifts. We can imagine that these were **large, lavish, and sizeable gifts**, but they did not have a part in the inheritance.

**The Abrahamic Covenant would be sustained and maintained through Isaac!**

**Remember:** *"God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him." (Ge 17:19 ESV)*

It appears, while he was living he gave the inheritance to Isaac, he gave massive gifts to his other sons, and he sent them away from Isaac, we are told eastward, to the east country.

He did not leave it to work out on its own, but as Isaac was the one to inherit the land, he moved to **clear them out of the promised land**, to their own lands.

Were all of these six sons of Abraham from Keturah, born following the death of Sarah? That seems to me, the best understanding. When Sarah dies Abraham is 137 years old, he is going to live another 38 years.

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**7 These are the days of the years of Abraham's life, 175 years. 8 Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. 9 Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, 10 the field that Abraham purchased from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried, with Sarah his wife. 11 ¶ After the death of Abraham, God blessed Isaac his son. And Isaac settled at Beer-lahai-roi.**

**Vs 7** - We knew this was coming, the focus has shifted away from **Abraham**, but **what a man of faith!**

Abraham was a man who made mistakes, but he was also a man of faith:

*"8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God." (Heb 11:8-10 ESV)*

*"17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, 18 of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." 19 He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back." (Heb 11:17-19 ESV)*

**Vs 8** - Here the **end of Abraham's life is recorded**, when I typed these words, it was like I was **losing an old friend**. As we look at the end of **Abraham's life** I believe we will find it to be **very instructive**.

Let's walk through what Moses writes in Vs 8:

1) Abraham **breathed his last**.

2) He physically **died**, at good old age.

*"13 Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. 14 But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age." (Ge 15:13-15 ESV)*

3) He was **gathered to his people**.

He was gathered to his people. This cannot mean physically, for physically his people, other than Sarah, were in Mesopotamia.

He was gathered to his people. **Does this mean gathered to other believers in Yahweh**, is this an illusion to the **afterlife?** I believe so.

4) **Vs 9** We see that he was **buried**.

The material part of Abraham, his now lifeless body, was buried.

**Vs 9-10** - So word gets back to Ishmael, and he makes the trip to Hebron.

There with Isaac, Ishmael buries their dad, in the cave of Machpelah, in the field that once belonged to Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, the cave and the field are located east of Mamre.

So although Ishmael has been out of the story from our perspective, he was not totally out of the story, for here he is, with Isaac, involved in burying his father.

**What about the sons of Keturah?** They are not mentioned here, and we have no idea.

**Vs 11** - **After Abraham's death**, the blessings of God and the focus of scripture history would shift to Isaac.

Up until now Isaac was being blessed because he was in Abraham's lineage, he was blessed because he was under the household of Abraham, now he is **being blessed by God, in his own right, as promised:**

*"But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year."* (Ge 17:21 ESV)

Here we are told plainly he settled in Beer-lahai-roi! The **"well of the Living One who is seeing me"** This was the place where the angel of Yahweh appeared to Hagar informing her of Ishmael's birth.

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**12 These are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's servant, bore to Abraham. 13 These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, named in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael; and Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, 14 Mishma, Dumah, Massa, 15 Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. 16 These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages and by their encampments, twelve princes according to their tribes.**

**Vs 12-15** - Here again is the Hebrew word **תולדה (towl'dah)**. It means **generations, genealogy, or descendants**. These are also likely the divisions of the written records of Genesis.

Now in passing and rather quickly, Moses provides us with the **generations of Ishmael**, the son born from the **union of Abraham and Hagar**, Sarah's Egyptian servant.

Ishmael is the son born out of the flesh, when Sarah and Abraham decided to help God fulfill his word. These are the males, and we are told specifically they are named in the **order of their birth:**

**Twelve in all** and this is in **fulfillment of prophecy** given by God. So Ishmael would have twelve sons, just like Jacob (later renamed) Israel would have twelve sons who would become the 12 tribes of Israel. But before Jacob is even born, we see the 12 sons of Ishmael. These would become 12 Arab tribes or nations. These all **settled outside Canaan**.

Remember when God came to **Abraham in chapter 17** gave him and Sarah **new names**, gave the ceremony of circumcision, the mark of the covenant, and then we read:

*"16 I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." 17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!" 19 God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. 20 As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation." (Ge 17:16-20 ESV)*

**God has fulfilled yet another one of his promises!**

**Vs 16** - It is interesting that as Jacob would have 12 sons, 12 tribes, so too Ishmael will have 12 sons, 12 tribes.

**17 (These are the years of the life of Ishmael: 137 years. He breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.) 18 They settled from Havilah to Shur, which is opposite Egypt in the direction of Assyria. He settled over against all his kinsmen.**

**Vs 17-18** - Here we come to the **end of Ishmael's life**, he would not live near as long as Abraham or Isaac, his **lifespan would be more in line with Sarah's**. He would live to be **137 years old**.

We see the similar things mentioned:

- 1) Breathed his last, died, gathered to his people.

**APPLICATION:** When we die, we will be gathered to our people!

It does not specifically say he was buried, I suppose we can assume he was.

**Vs 18** – The 12 princes of Ishmael, they settled from Havilah to Shur. Generally they were in northern Arabia along the main caravan route between Egypt and Assyria. Shur is the wilderness just east of the boarder of Egypt and Havilah probably refers to all the sandy desert area of northern Arabia.

In the Hebrew the word translated by the ESV as “**over against**” means to “fall” or to “all upon.”

According to Dr. Fruchtenbaum, it has a **double meaning** here, first to live “**side by side**” and second to “**live in a state of hostility.**”

This is in fulfillment of:

*“11 And the angel of the LORD said to her, “Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has listened to your affliction. 12 He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.”” (Ge 16:11-12 ESV)*

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**19 ¶** *These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham’s son: Abraham fathered 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. 21 And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. 22 The children struggled together within her, and she said, “If it is thus, why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. 23 And the LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.”*

**Vs 19** - Here **once again** we see the transition to the **next patriarch** under the Hebrew word, these are the “**generations of**” the Hebrew word is **תולדה (towldah)**.

The events we read about last week in chapter 24, we are told plainly that Isaac is 40, thus Abraham, at this time was 140. So as we read this verse, Abraham has not died yet.

**Vs 20** - Once again we see the lineage of Rebekah. Now the story shifts and the focal point is now Isaac and Rebekah and we learn about an **issue in this couple’s home**.

**Vs 21** - Following the timeline, Rebekah and Isaac have been **married for 20 years**, but **she is unable to conceive**. **Isaac prayed to Yahweh**, he prayed to the God of Heaven for his wife.

**APPLICATION:** Do we pray for our spouses? What do we pray for our spouses?

He prayed because **she was barren**, he prayed because no doubt this **really impacted her**.

We wonder how he saw this problem in connection with the Abrahamic covenant.

**Vs 21b** – we see the **Lord granted his request**, Rebekah, became pregnant, she conceived. It is **interesting** that the same issue that **impacted Sarah**, has **impacted Rebekah**, although not as serious or as prolonged.

**APPLICATION:** When we run into things that we do not understand, when we run into a crisis, what should be our first step?

**Vs 22** - There were **multiple children** in Rebekah’s womb (**be careful what you pray for**) and as we will learn they were brothers (two boys). I am kidding of course, but they prayed for a child and God gave them two.

Solomon prayed for wisdom to govern God’s people and God gave him much more.

**HERE IS ANOTHER FEATURE OF PRAYER.** Sometimes we must persevere in prayer, sometimes God answers prayer immediately, and another feature of prayer, we ask for one thing and God gives us that and much more. Another feature of prayer!

Back to our story: These two brothers **struggled within her**. The conflict in her womb is so intense that she went and inquired of the Lord.

We assume this **means in prayer**, but we cannot be sure. But understand, in some way she is **inquiring of Yahweh** as to what and why. It seems that the **intensity was abnormal** and she takes to prayer.

**Vs 23** - Then, it was revealed to her, **Yahweh said to her** (we do not know how) that **“two nations”** are in your womb, **“two peoples”** from within you shall be divided. This is not just a **revelation**, this is a **prophetic utterance**.

**Point #1 –**

Two different Hebrew words (nations and peoples) are used here, but the point is clear. From your womb shall come two **different nations**, two **different peoples**.

- 1) Israel
- 2) A Gentile nation that would become known as the Edomites

**Point #2 -**

- 1) The older son (Esau) shall serve the younger son (Jacob).
- 2) If we carry this prophetic word out to the nations in question, Edom will serve Israel. We should expect to see a struggle between Israel and the Edomites.

Again, this appears to be a **predictive prophecy** that we should be able to see play out in time.

Now, this is the opposite of what normally happens! The lesson, God reverses the natural order of things.

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*24 When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. 25 The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. 26 Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. 27 When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. 28 Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.*

**Vs 24** - What God said would happen, happened.

**Vs 25** - The first came out with a **red hair** on his **body**, and it **appears a lot of it**. At least for a child. This red hairy child they named Esau. Esau means “hairy.”

The firstborn, the **oldest, is Esau**. The nation (**Edom**) will get its name from the color **red**.

**Vs 26** - Next, his brother came out, and oddly enough his brother was **holding on to Esau's heel**. Now, **can you imagine what this looked like**. As they bring out Esau, there is a little hand grasped on to his heel.

Then the second child is born, they call him **Jacob**. His name means **heel holder**, it can also mean, secondarily, **supplanter or one who supplants**.

Then we are told that **Isaac was 60 years old** when these boys were born. When the children were born, Isaac and Rebekah had been **married 20 years**.

Here when Jacob and Esau were born Isaac was 60, Abraham was 160. Although we have already read about Abraham's death, it actually occurred **15 years after the birth of Isaac and Esau.**

**Vs 27** - So we are told nothing of their **childhood** or **teenage years**. But ultimately the boys **grew up** to men.

**First**, we are told that Esau was a **skillful hunter**. The last "**hunter**" we saw was **Nimrod**, he was a "**mighty hunter**" and he was **not good**. That mighty hunter whose name meant **revolt!**

**Second**, we are told he was a **man of the field**, what does this mean? He was a man of the land. It seems that he worked outside the family unit, possibly away from the family unit for long stints of time.

**Third**, we are told that **Jacob was a quiet man**, the word here is **טָם (tam)**. The traditional meaning of this word is **perfect, undefiled, or upright**.

This is the **first time** this word is used, the next three are all about Job (1:1, 1:8, 2:3).

**One More:** "*Bloodthirsty men hate one who is blameless and seek the life of the upright.*" (Pr 29:10 ESV)

John Gill's commentary: "*Jacob was a plain man; an honest plain hearted man, whose heart and tongue went together; a quiet man, that gave no disturbance to others; a godly man, sincere, upright, and perfect, that had the truth of grace and holiness in him, as well as the perfect righteousness of his Redeemer on him:*"

I would say if Hebrew words mean anything, **Jacob was a man like Job. He dwelt in tents.** For that time, **we should see this as good.** They were Nomads.

Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum wrote: This phrase dwelling in tents "*means that he chose to labor within the family clan unit; he chose to follow his family's profession, that of a shepherd, as was true of Abraham and also of Isaac.*"

It seems, a close inspection of the Hebrew leads us to see Esau as a **wondering man of the field**, while **Jacob was a nomad shepherd** who was is **טָם (tam)** **blameless** or **upright** in the eyes of God.

**Vs 28** - Here we are **alerted** of a **potential problem**, Isaac loved Esau more or for sure differently that he loved Esau, for he ate of his game, he was a man's man.

I would remind us what God said: **Vs 23b** – "*the older shall serve the younger.*"

God has chosen for the covenant to be fulfilled in Jacob and Rebekah's preference is more in line with God, than Isaac's! **The stage is set for a problem.**

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*29 Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. 30 And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.) 31 Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." 32 Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" 33 Jacob said, "Swear to me now." 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 his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright."*

**Vs 29-30** - Then one day, Jacob was in a tent **cooking stew**. Esau is in the field hunting or whatever. He loved the outdoors and he comes in from the field and it appears that he is **both famished and tired**.

Then Esau says to Jacob, let me swallow some of that red stuff. Literally, in the Hebrew what he says is, **let me gulp down some of that red, red.**

Then we are told as a parenthetical; therefore, his name was called Edom. The nation of Edom will be named not only after Esau's red hair but this event involving the "**red.**"

**Vs 31** - So at this request from Esau, Jacob responded with a counter-offer; his response, **sell me your birthright now**. We could translate this **sell me your birthright (today), sell me your birthright now**. The Hebrew word is **Yom**. So he is talking literally now, literally today.

This is interesting, for this has apparently been on Jacob's mind. Esau comes in exhausted asking to eat some of the stew he cooked, and he responds with, sell me your **birthright right now**, today.

**It is obvious, these two brothers are thinking about two very different things.**

One temporal, how he can **feed his hunger**. The second eternal, how he can secure the **birthright blessing**.

**Vs 32** - Now Esau responds... "*I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?*"

Three things should be **obvious** to us in this response:

- 1) Esau is not about to die, he may be hungry, but he is not likely starving to death.
- 2) He could likely walk one tent over and find lunch. These people are very wealthy.
- 3) At this time, he could care less about his birthright, you see his response: what use is a birthright to me?

Here is the truth, there is great value in the birthright! Esau's birthright included **four elements**:

- 1) **Physical benefits**, the firstborn gets a double portion (Deut 21:17)
- 2) **Spiritual benefits** (I Chr 5:1-2)
- 3) Connection to the **Abrahamic covenant** and the **promised land**
- 4) Being in **line of the coming seed** who would **bless the nations**

**Vs 33** - Jacob springs into action: **Swear to me now!** Swear to me that you give it to me, swear to me that you will exchange it with me for lunch.

Swear to me NOW, again the Hebrew word **Yom** is used. The swearing will make this **sale legal**.

**Esau swore to Jacob**, and the deal is agreed upon! Clearly, the birthright blessing, at least at this time in Esau's life **meant nothing**, or at best little, and **he sold it for a light lunch!**

**APPLICATION:** May we never sell important spiritual things for the almost worthless things of this world.

**Vs 34** - Jacob, having obtained the thing he desired, the birthright blessing, he gave Esau the "red" that he desired!

Esau ate, drank, rose, and went on his merry way. At this point, not even a second thought to what he had just forfeited for a **Panera's lunch!**

Then Moses tells us something we need to understand: *Thus Esau despised his birthright*. He held his **birthright blessing as worthless**, it was not something of **infinite worth**, it was **despicable**, he **despised it!**

*"14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; 16 that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal." (Heb 12:14-16 ESV)*

Meanwhile - Jacob is in the Hall of Faith: *"By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff." (Heb 11:21 ESV)*