

Abraham's Death, and the Genealogy of Ishmael

Genesis 25:1-18

Genesis 25:1-18 - Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah. ² And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. ³ Jokshan begot Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. ⁴ And the sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.

⁵ And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. ⁶ But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.

⁷ This is the sum of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years. ⁸ Then 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 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, ¹⁰ the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife. ¹¹ And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac dwelt at Beer Lahai Roi.

¹² Now this is the genealogy of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maidservant, bore to Abraham. ¹³ And these were the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ¹⁴ Mishma, Dumah, Massa, ¹⁵ Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. ¹⁶ These were the sons of Ishmael and these were their names, by their towns and their settlements, twelve princes according to their nations. ¹⁷ These were the years of the life of Ishmael: one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people. ¹⁸ (They dwelt from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt as you go toward Assyria.) He died in the presence of all his brethren."

Background Notes

How many sons did Abraham have? Can you name them? Now if you have never read Genesis 25, your answer was probably "Two: Isaac and Ishmael." Well, I'm so sorry – that's wrong! Genesis 25 reveals that after Sarah died, Abraham married again and had six more sons - a total of eight. The name of his second wife was Keturah, and that's all we know about her. 2 Chronicles 1:32 calls Keturah Abraham's "concubine." This is to distinguish her status from, Sarah, Abraham's primary wife, but Genesis says that Abraham married Keturah. As you know, both the Jews and the Arabs trace their roots back to Abraham - the Jews through his son Isaac, and the Arabs through his son Ishmael **and** his six other sons.

Abraham lived for 175 years. Thus he was alive when Jacob and Esau were born, even though the account of their births comes at the end of this chapter. Abraham would not have died until the boys were teenagers. Isaac and Ishmael buried Abraham in the cave of Machpelah, where Sarah was buried. You can visit that tomb today in Hebron.

Ishmael died at the age of 137, and his descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, east of the border of Egypt (v17-18). That area would include northern Arabia today. A number of the names in this chapter, by the way, are attested to in extra-biblical sources, not in the Bible alone.

The last part of verse 18 is difficult to translate. It could mean that Ishmael's descendants settled in the presence of his brethren or relatives, or settled in defiance or hostility of their brethren, or possibly even that they lived to the east of their brethren or relatives. Your Bible translation has at least one of those, but we don't know the exact meaning.

Doctrinal Points

1. A full life before death is the biblical norm for the believer.

Verse 8: *"Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people."* The idea here is that Abraham had a life that was full and satisfying - a fulfillment of the promise that God made to him in Genesis 15:15: *"Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age."*

Believers are not promised long life. Our lives may be cut short for any number of God's sovereign reasons. However, the biblical norm is for the believer is to have a life that is fulfilled, full and satisfied in Christ, no matter how long that life lasts. The Lord Jesus said in John 10:10: *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."*

Abraham, the father of the faithful, had a full and satisfying life. That can be our portion as well. It's the biblical norm. A full and abundant life is the biblical norm for the believer.

2. A full life after death is the biblical hope for the believer.

"Abraham... was gathered to his people" (v8). The phrase, *"he was gathered to his people,"* is a Hebrew idiom or expression meaning he joined his ancestors in death. However, it may be more than just this Hebrew idiom or expression. I believe that it contains the truth that there is not only life after death, but also a *full* life after death for the believer.

Abraham was gathered to his people - to the faithful believers who had gone before – Abel, Enoch, Noah, and all the other faithful followers of God from Adam on down. The phrase was used for Abraham's death, Isaac's death, and Jacob's death. In verse 17 it was used of Ishmael, who was a believer, but not used of Esau, who was not a believer. The phrase "*slept with his fathers*" found in the record of the Kings of Israel and Judah is used for the deaths of both good kings and bad kings. However, the phrase "*gathered to his people*" seems to be used only of those who are believers, including Moses and Aaron.

In both Old and New Testaments, the Bible teaches that there is not only life after death, but also a *full* life after death for the believer. That is the "hope" of the believer. "Hope" - not in the sense of "I hope it's true," but "hope" in the sense that it **is** true, but it is yet in the future.

At the end of Psalm 23:6, "*I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*," - David was not only looking forward to life after death, but a full life after death in the house of the Lord. The Lord Jesus told us, "*in My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also*" (John 13:2-3). That is not only a promise of life after death - it is a promise of a full life after death for the believer!

3. God is faithful to His promises.

Back in Genesis 17:4-5, God made a promise to Abraham: "*As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations.*" Notice that the word "nations" is plural. That is fulfilled here in Genesis 25. Besides Isaac and Ishmael, Abraham had six more sons who become the fathers of nations.

God also gave a promise for Ishmael in Genesis 17:20: "*And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.*" We see that promise fulfilled here in Genesis 25 as well. "*These were the sons of Ishmael and these were their names, by their towns and their settlements, twelve princes according to their nations*" (v16). This is a direct fulfillment of the promise that God made to Abraham in Genesis 17.

God was faithful to His promises then, and God is faithful to His promises today. We could use many promises out of Scripture as examples. Let's take 1 Peter 5:7: "*casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*" God has promised to take care of us, so we don't have to worry. Do you believe that? God is faithful to His promises.

4. God is faithful to His program.

Verse 11 says, “*after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac.*” Even though Abraham was dead, God’s program would move forward. Regardless of how many other sons Abraham had, Isaac was the *promised* son. He would be blessed, and the covenant promises would come through him. This was God’s program, and nothing could change it. Nothing can change God’s program today! All events are leading up to the return of Christ, and nothing can change that! Human power can’t change it! Human politics can’t change it! Satan cannot thwart God’s program - even though he tries. God is faithful to His program.

Practical Application

Are you living in Beer Lahai Roi?

I’m sure you’re thinking, “What kind of crazy question is that?” Of course I mean, “Where are you living, spiritually speaking?” You see, Beer Lahai Roi means “Well of the Living One who sees me”!

What a great name, with great spiritual significance! Hagar was there when the Lord met her in desperate need (Genesis 16). Isaac was living there while he waited for God’s choice of a wife (Genesis 24). And this is where we should be living, waiting on God, conscious of His living presence, conscious that He sees us and cares for us.

You see, this is not just a mental concept to grasp - it’s the **truth!** The Lord is alive and He is with us. He sees us and knows everything about us. He cares for us - even when circumstances are very difficult to handle. Do you believe this? Knowing God as “the Living One who sees me” can change your whole outlook on life!

Are you living in Beer Lahai Roi?