

## Genesis 25

This is the third of three transitional chapters. These chapters contain the death of Sarah (23), the finding of a wife for Isaac (24) and the death of Abraham (25). These chapters move the story of the Promise forward from the first to the second generation.

This chapter opens with Abraham, after the death of Sarah, taking a new wife, named Keturah. With Keturah he has six more sons (not too bad for a guy over a hundred). One of the sons was named Midian, from which the Midianite people were supposedly descended. We also learn that Abraham had concubines by whom he had other sons. While some people might be put off by such behavior, not only was it typical of the age, but it is also a theological reflection on the Promise. In this case it demonstrates that Abraham did become the father of many nations, just as he was promised. This kept promise is also emphasized later in the chapter when Ishmael's twelve sons (yes, just like the twelve tribes of Israel) are listed and spoken of as princes of villages, encampments and tribes. Of note, is that while even the sons of the concubines are given gifts, they are all sent back to the east, so that only Isaac will be the Promise bearer and Promised Land owner.

The chapter then turns to the death of Abraham at the age of one-hundred and seventy-five. He is buried by his two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, in the tomb which Abraham had purchased as a burial site for Sarah. Once again, we are reminded that the tomb and the land around it had been purchased from the Hittites. Thus, Abraham is buried on holy, promised ground and the Promise moves to the second generation.

Though the Promise is to continue through Isaac, once again it seems to be at risk when we learn that Isaac's wife Rebecca, just like Sarah, is barren. This issue is quickly resolved when Isaac prays to God and Rebecca conceives twins. What happens next is some of the great foreshadowing in the scripture. It begins with Rebecca complaining about the constant activity of the twins in her womb and her seeking the Lord's advice about it. What she hears is rather odd. She is told that in her womb are two nations and that there would be division and the older twin would serve the younger. We catch a glimpse of this upcoming competition when Jacob, who is born second, comes out grabbing the heel of his older brother Esau.

What happens next shows the inscrutable nature of God. By all accounts and tradition, the Promise ought to go to the elder son; especially in this case because the elder son Esau, is dad's favorite (a hunter) and the younger son Jacob, is momma's boy (loves to cook). Yet this is not what happens. Esau comes home hungry from hunting and willingly sells his birthright (the Promise) to Jacob for a meal. Somehow God has turned culture and tradition on its head.

**Reflection:** This chapter is a powerful reminder that God works with ordinary people, in extraordinary ways, to accomplish extraordinary things. Esau and Jacob are both flawed people. Jacob is a schemer and Esau is focused on immediate gratification. Yet, as we will discover, God uses them both to do great things. This chapter allows us to reflect on what God can and does do with us as people of the Promise; that we can be less than perfect people and still do amazing things.

### **Questions:**

1. What do you think of Abraham's having concubines? Does this change your view of him?
2. What similarities do you see between this story and those that have come before?
3. Where do you see God turning culture and tradition on their heads?