



The Book of Genesis

Verses 25:1-18

February 3, 2019

Genesis 25:1-4 – Abraham married another wife, whose name was Keturah. ² She gave birth to Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. ³ Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan. Dedan's descendants were the Asshurites, Letushites, and Leummites. ⁴ Midian's sons were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. These were all descendants of Abraham through Keturah.

Poor, misguided Abraham. Would that he knew the troubles he would visit on his son Isaac's descendants by his decision to have other children in addition to the one promised by God through Sarah. For example, Joseph, his great-grandson through Sarah's son, Isaac, would be sold to the Midianites (the descendants of Abraham through Keturah) who would then sell him to the Ishmaelites (the descendants of Abraham through Ishmael)!

It's no wonder there can be no peace in the Middle East... they're all family!

Genesis 25:5-6 – ⁵ Abraham gave everything he owned to his son Isaac. ⁶ But before he died, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them off to a land in the east, away from Isaac.

The only concubines of Abraham's about which we know for certain is Hagar. But it appears that these two verses may be referring to both Keturah and Hagar as concubines but there's no way for us to know for sure. In either case, while the inheritance did go to the child of the promise, Abraham's other sons were given lesser gifts and then sent off to the east along with their mothers. Now, surely that couldn't breed more resentment and loathing of Isaac by his siblings, could it?

But, seriously, Abraham had to do something like this. Otherwise, after he died the chances were high that his other children would gang up on Isaac to coerce him to share his inheritance.

There are some good lessons for us to heed here.

- The first lesson is that if we have specific desires for how our estates or possessions should be divided once we're gone then it's best to do it while we're still alive (like Abraham did) so that our children are spared from any unnecessary squabbling.
- The second lesson to be heeded is that we should be fair and careful in how we bestow our inheritance to our children. Bestowing a much larger portion of the inheritance to one child over another can create feelings of confusion, anger or bitterness in the slighted child. They can feel anguish over wondering what they could have possibly done wrong to be given less or if

the parent loved the other child more. Our children may grow older but the competition and sensitive feelings between siblings often never go away entirely if they even lesson at all.

- Finally, greed is a horrible thing that can make the best of people do bad things. Being “family” does not make the situation any better. In fact, it often makes it much worse! Giving one child a lesser portion without explaining the reasoning behind it coupled with not being able to ask the deceased parent(s) the reason why they were slighted is a recipe for conflict between your children, now and in the future.

Genesis 25:7-8 – ⁷Abraham lived for 175 years, ⁸ and he died at a ripe old age, having lived a long and satisfying life. He breathed his last and joined his ancestors in death.

It’s been said that there are only two certainties in life: death and taxes. It’s an undisputed fact that none of us are getting out of this world alive! Well, unless, your name is Enoch or Elijah. Then again, I suppose there are also those who will be caught up into the clouds at the Rapture but I digress.

In any case, for those of us who have accepted Jesus as our Savior, death has a different meaning. It’s a new beginning rather than the end. As most of us gathered here are at the point where we’re closer to the end of our lives than the beginning, it becomes even more urgent to ensure those in our lives who are lost come to know about Christ and hear the Good News! How sad would it be to share our worldly goods with those we leave behind yet we fail to impart the most important gift we could possibly share!

Genesis 25:9-11 – ⁹His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite. ¹⁰This was the field Abraham had purchased from the Hittites and where he had buried his wife Sarah. ¹¹After Abraham’s death, God blessed his son Isaac, who settled near Beer-lahai-roi in the Negev.

Abraham passes from life into eternity being one of the most important men of the Bible. He is mentioned 70 times in the New Testament alone. Only Moses is mentioned more times in the New Testament (80 references).

I find it interesting that the Bible mentions only Abraham’s two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, burying him. Where were his other sons? Well, he had sent them away to the east. However, Abraham had also sent Ishmael and his mother away with only some bread and water but here he was now honoring the father who had sent him away. We can hold onto past hurts so that they can continue to hurt us or we can let them go so that they lose their power over us and don’t continue to negatively impact our future.

An interesting fact is that Isaac is 75 and Ishmael is 89 at this point. It’s been more than half a century since their last recorded meeting. We don’t know if they had any kind of relationship after Sarah coerced Abraham to send Hagar away or not but they come together this one last time as brothers to bury their father.

Do you have any festering wounds from past conflicts within your family that need to be addressed and healed? It's been said that time heals all wounds but this can only occur once we acknowledge and come to terms with the original hurt.

I wonder if Abraham had any clue just how renowned he and the tales about him would become? If so, would he have perhaps changed any of his behaviors or the choices that he made? We never know what will be remembered and repeated about our lives. Knowing this, we should strive to live a life that will leave only "good" tales to be told of our exploits and to make our God proud. For we will stand before Him one day and every deed we have done will be revealed to all.

Our children will also tend to emulate our attitudes and actions and I'm not talking about the nice public face we put up for other to see but our true feelings that come out once we're behind closed doors. Nobody's perfect that doesn't mean we should stop trying to be better people.

Genesis 25:12-17 – ¹² *This is the account of the family of Ishmael, the son of Abraham through Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian servant.* ¹³ *Here is a list, by their names and clans, of Ishmael's descendants: The oldest was Nebaioth, followed by Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,* ¹⁴ *Mishma, Dumah, Massa,* ¹⁵ *Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.* ¹⁶ *These twelve sons of Ishmael became the founders of twelve tribes named after them, listed according to the places they settled and camped.* ¹⁷ *Ishmael lived for 137 years. Then he breathed his last and joined his ancestors in death.*

We don't hear a lot more about Ishmael going forward in the Bible but he would later become an important figure in the Islamic faith. In fact, they consider Ishmael as being more important than Isaac since he was the first born and their oral traditions present Ishmael as the son who was to be sacrificed. Of course, we have a much different account of that story. It's interesting how the details of a story vary depending on who's telling it.

Moving along, let's take a quick look back at a set of verses from Genesis 17:

Genesis 17:1-6 – *When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am El-Shaddai—'God Almighty.' Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. ² I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants."*

³ *At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him,* ⁴ *"This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations!"* ⁵ *What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations.* ⁶ *I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!*

Never let it be said that God exaggerates! When God made this promise to Abraham, there's little doubt Abraham had no idea just how fully that promise would be fulfilled! After all, he was 99 years old and childless and his wife was well past her childbearing years when he was told this news! This should be a sobering reminder to us to *never* doubt what God can accomplish in our lives no matter how bleak the situation may look to us.

Genesis 25:18 – ¹⁸ *Ishmael's descendants occupied the region from Havilah to Shur, which is east of Egypt in the direction of Asshur. There they lived in open hostility toward all their relatives.*

Why did Ishmael's descendants live in open hostility toward all their relatives? Are we really any better today in how we feel and react to those that we feel might have received better blessings or are placed in positions of higher prestige?

Ishmael was sent away with his mother by his father as a young teen and came very close to dying because of it. Undoubtedly, that would have a lasting impact on Ishmael and most likely color his perspective on life. It would be logical to assume that these past resentments and hurts in his life could then be passed onto his children affecting their relationship with their kin. How has your life experiences colored your view of life? How has it affected your children's lives?

Today, we have more broken families than ever before which greatly complicates our lives and the lives of our children. None of us are immune to divorce or its awful effects. None of us are perfect and divorce happens. When it does, how do we combat the negative effects of life when it gets "messy" like this?