



## The Early Life of Isaac Genesis 24-25

### Introduction

Abraham was a remarkable man of commitment, obedience and service to God. Though he had human weaknesses and failings, Abraham carried out God's purpose for his life superbly. Throughout history, most of the world has recognized his significant and unique character. He is the father of the Jews and founder of the nation Israel. He is honored as one of the greatest men of faith by Christians. The essence of his faith is captured in the following New Testament passages.

*"Not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Romans 4:19-22).*

*"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:8-10).*

*"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said 'In Isaac your seed shall be called'" (Hebrews 11:17-18).*

*"Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, and he was called the friend of God" (James 2:23).*

### Outline

- I. Marriage of Isaac - Genesis 24:1-67**
- II. Death of Abraham - Genesis 25:1-11**
- III. Ishmael's Story - Genesis 25:12-18**
- IV. Isaac and Esau - Genesis 25:19-34**

#### **I. Marriage of Isaac - Genesis 24:1-67**

##### A. Abraham's Servant - Genesis 24:1-2

Before passing the leadership baton on to Isaac, Abraham's deep concern was that Isaac find a wife who believed in the Lord God and shared a culture that was

similar to Isaac's. In those days, it was the function of the parents to select the marriage partner for their children. So Abraham directed the oldest servant in his household to go seek a wife for Isaac. Most probably, the servant was Eliezer, a tried and true servant for over sixty years (Genesis 15:2). Before Abraham had children, as chief steward, he would have been heir of all of Abraham's wealth. But now Isaac was the heir and Eliezer continued to faithfully serve him.

##### B. The Servant's Oath - Genesis 24:2-9

Abraham made Eliezer swear an oath which involved three things:

1. finding a wife for Isaac from Abraham's family and country;
2. not seeking a wife from among the Canaanites;
3. not taking Isaac back to Abraham's country of Ur. If the woman was not willing to follow Eliezer home, then he would be released from the oath.

The oath was affirmed by the customary gesture of the servant placing his hand under Abraham's thigh.

##### C. The Servant's Prayers - Genesis 24:10-14

Eliezer took ten camels, along with other gifts, and traveled some 450 miles to Mesopotamia, Abraham's former country. He was very sensitive to God's leading and relied on God's faithfulness and divine oversight to prosper his mission. His prayers were simple, unselfish, expectant, fervent and persistent. When he arrived at Nahor's well of water he prayed specifically that the young woman who he would ask for water would give him a drink and also offer to water his camels. Ancient hospitality required giving a drink to a thirsty stranger, but not to animals. Offering to water the camels would show the kindness and servant attitude of the young woman.

##### D. Rebekah - Genesis 24:15-27

Rebekah's appearance at the well was an immediate response to Eliezer's prayer. She was a courteous young woman who displayed a helpful attitude consistent with her beauty and purity. Providentially, she fulfilled the request of Eliezer's prayer by watering his camels. She then showed further kindness and hospitality by inviting him to come and lodge at their house. When Rebekah identified herself as the daughter of Bethuel and Nahor, Abraham's brother, Eliezer was overcome with thankfulness for the Lord's "mercy" and "truth"

toward Abraham. He "*bowed down his head*" and thankfully worshiped the Lord.

E. Laban, Rebekah's Brother -  
Genesis 24:28-55

It is interesting that, Nahor, Abraham's brother, was not involved in the meeting with Eliezer. Instead, Rebekah's brother, Laban, was the chief negotiator and family spokesman. He welcomed Eliezer warmly and was visibly impressed with him and his costly gifts. A hint of Laban's greedy disposition is apparent at this first meeting (verse 30), but does not become fully displayed until later chapters.

Eliezer explained his mission and the events which had transpired in an accurate, candid and forthright manner. Laban and Bethuel listened carefully and agreed to give their daughter and sister as Isaac's wife. Eliezer was overwhelmed with gratitude and immediately "*bowed himself to the earth*" and worshiped the Lord for the success of his trip.

F. The Marriage Consummated -  
Genesis 24:56-67

Rebekah decisively and courageously agreed to leave with Eliezer right away. Her family blessed her with kind words about numerous children and victories over all their foes.

Rebekah first saw Isaac as he was walking and meditating in a field which the Hebrew language indicates was a sacred spot of manifesting the providence of God. "*Beer Lahai Roi*" means "the well of Him who lives and sees." Quickly she covered herself with a veil, as Eliezer went to report to Isaac all that had transpired and the remarkable way God had directed his trip.

Isaac honored Rebekah by taking her to his mother's vacant tent and she became his wife. What a beautiful demonstration this is of God demonstrating His guidance and power in the ordinary areas of life for those who are surrendered to Him and who put their trust in Him.

### Application

Eliezer is a magnificent model of a man who responded faithfully and properly to the work of God. He was a person totally committed to God. He prayed before he acted, praised God when his prayers were answered, and fervently believed that God controls all the affairs of life. How does your life compare to Eliezer's? Do you trust in the Lord with all your heart, especially in times of uncertainty or difficulty? In what situations do you need to trust God right now? How will you follow Eliezer's faithful example?

## II. Death of Abraham - Genesis 25:1-18

### A. Keturah - Genesis 25:1-6

After Isaac was settled with a wife, Abraham married Keturah, who is referred to as a concubine (25:6). She bore him six sons, in keeping with God's covenantal promise, "*you shall be a father of many nations*" (Genesis 17:4). This does not mean that these descendants would hold fast to the promise of God, but that they were physical descendants of Abraham's natural seed. These six sons became fathers of Arab tribes who migrated to the east, southeast and southwest of Palestine. Abraham gave them adequate gifts to begin a proper life, but he left his main inheritance to Isaac.

### B. A Fulfilled Life - Genesis 25:7-11

Abraham lived a long, fulfilled life. Blessed with inner peace and a sense of satisfaction, he was physically and mentally strong until his last days. The Hebrew language for "*good old age*" denotes the ideas of dignity, experience and satisfied expectations. Isaac was 75 years old and Jacob was 15 when Abraham died. He was a significant influence on his son and grandson, inspiring Isaac to accept responsibility for carrying on with the covenantal promise.

Abraham's sons, Isaac and Ishmael, buried him in the cave at Machpelah. He had bought the property from the Hittites, in the land of Canaan, and buried Sarah there.

## III. Ishmael' Story - Genesis 25:12-18

God fulfilled His promise of making Ishmael "*a great nation*" by giving him twelve sons, and making them princes over their tribes and geographical localities (Genesis 17:20-21; 21:18). All of these men and their families occupied land further east and south of the sons of Keturah. Ishmael himself settled in the territory still further east of all his brethren. He fulfilled the pre-incarnate Christ's predictions of being a somewhat wild and independent character (Genesis 16:12-13). Although he was the object of a divine promise and had grown up under the influence of a godly father like Abraham, there is no indication that Ishmael believed in the one, true, living God when he died at age 137 years.

Ishmael was Abraham's son by the bondwoman, Hagar. He was born according to the flesh, while Isaac was the son of the free woman, born according to the Spirit through the promise of God. See Galatians 4:22-31 for the apostle Paul's explanation of this allegory.

**IV. Isaac and Esau - Genesis 25:19-34**

## A. Rebekah's Bareness - Genesis 25:19-21

Isaac's desire was for Abraham's spiritual lineage to continue, but throughout twenty years of marriage, his wife, Rebekah, had been barren. Isaac earnestly prayed for divine intervention and the Lord *"granted his plea"*. Rebekah conceived. It is important to note that the grace of God, not human actions nor human endeavors were operative here. The Hebrew language construction indicates that a proper value is put upon motherhood and the gift of children when prayer is resorted to in order to obtain offspring.

## B. God's View of Conception

Conception is the result of fertilization of a human ovum by a human sperm. This is the beginning of life. *"You have formed my inward parts; You have covered me in my mother's womb"* (Psalm 139:13). In addition to physical life, human beings uniquely have a God-given soul, the principle part of life, thought and action. *"I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well"* (Psalm 139:14). The biological component of our humanness is as sacred as our souls, as God created and sanctified both.

## C. Rebekah's Pregnancy - Genesis 25:22-24

Rebekah had a difficult pregnancy as the two children developed and struggled with each other within her womb. She was troubled and sensed that all was not well, so she went to the Lord and asked, *"Why am I this way?"* God told her that:

- (1) she would give birth to two sons who would be the progenitors of two nations;
  - (2) the elder of the two sons would serve the younger.
- This was contrary to custom in the Middle East, but God's elective purposes supersede man's traditions and practices.

The abnormal struggle within Rebekah's womb was symbolic of the bitter, adversarial relationship that would later exist between the elder and the younger son.

## D. Rebekah's Delivery - Genesis 25:25-28

The first born son was hairy and red, and was named Esau. He grew up as a strong and skillful hunter, and his father favored him as a rugged, outdoor man of the field. The second son was delivered holding on to Esau's heel and was named Jacob. (See Hosea 12:3.) He grew up as a peaceful man, disciplined and diligent about carrying on the lineage of Abraham. Rebekah loved Jacob. So, there was a distinct disparity between the

parents toward their non-identical twin sons. Isaac was attracted to Esau's active, bold skills in the field while Rebekah was drawn to Jacob's more spiritual nature (See Romans 8:6 and Galatians 4:29).

## E. The Birthright Exchange - Genesis 25:29-34

## 1. Potage for Position

When the boys were grown, Esau came in from the field one day tired and famished. Jacob had prepared a delicious smelling lamb stew and Esau could barely control his ravenous hunger. The contrast between these brothers is vividly exposed by what transpired. Esau was a profane person (Hebrews 12:16-17), and was mainly concerned with physical things, self-gratification and satisfying his sensual desires. On the other hand, Jacob appreciated spiritual values and believed the stories of his grandfather about God's promises. Esau expressed disinterest in his birthright and pressed Jacob for food. Jacob shrewdly offered potage in exchange for Esau's birthright and they completed the exchange with an oath. Jacob was now in line to be chief of the tribe and head of the family.

## 2. Independent Actions

Jacob had cunningly taken advantage of Esau's lust for food, but his craftiness was not all positive. The Lord had given him preeminence over Esau, and had promised he would be in the seed-line from which the Savior would come. However, Jacob was not fully dependent on God's promise, aggressively working out the exchange with his own ingenuity. Rebekah, was a dominant, controlling influence in his life and Jacob practiced some of her deceptive methods to get what he wanted.

**Application**

When making major decisions in your life, do you sometimes grow weary of waiting for God's direction or answer to prayers? If you have surrendered yourself to God and diligently sought His will from Scriptures, godly advice of counselors, and constant prayer, but God's will remains unclear to you, the next step is to remember that the Holy Spirit works through your personal mind and common sense to distinguish right and wrong. He may be allowing you make your own sensible judgment in this situation. In taking this last step, be sure that you have exhausted your search for Scriptural direction and wise council, and that you subject every mind-thought *"captive to the obedience of Christ"* (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).