
CHAPTER 5

ABRAHAM'S SON IN HIS OLD AGE—ISAAC The Grievous Life of Isaac and Rebekah

Truly, The Father of the Faithful had a most trying life. But by now God considered him a prophet (Gen 20:7, see the previous chapter of this *History*). But his most severe test was yet to come! How? Through the birth of the long awaited son Isaac. Yes, an incredible miracle was about to occur in Abraham and Sarah's life! A child was to be born to Sarah when she was at the incredible old age of 90! The promised line of God's servants was to continue. God's Government was to be returned to this Earth! Our God has the awesome power to accomplish anything!

Abraham's family was to have a pronounced affect on the entire globe. Throughout this world we can see these promises everywhere. Not just in Israel and the middle East where his grandson Jacob grew up and had a very large family, but also through the children of Ishmael, Abraham's firstborn son through Hagar, his wife's handmaiden, who grew up in the Middle East. To Ishmael descendants, Abraham's promise of land was fulfilled through the large Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf region. The majority of oil and petroleum products come from this area. Oil is considered by many as "black gold."

We read of this promise in Gen. 21:13: "And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed."

The previous chapter of this *History* ended with Abraham's encounter with Abimelech and another "half-truth." We see a sinful deception (Abraham's fearfulness and deception, a weakness of character B not really a legitimate explanation—strongly contrasted with Abimelech's generosity). The Father of the Faithful had yet to gain a really genuine strong faith!

Isaac

2108 A.M., Isaac

God always keeps His promises! Isaac is finally born when Abraham is 100 years old. See Gen.21 :1-5:

"1. And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. 2. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. 4. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5. And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him."

Because Abraham and Sarah had attempted to "help" God (whom we should know doesn't need any assistance), problems in the family arose.

In Genesis 21:9-12 we read of some of the difficulties: "9. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. 10. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir

with my son, even with Isaac. 11. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. 12. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah has said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called."

Abraham rose up early in the morning, took bread and a bottle of water, gave them to Hagar and sent her and her son away. By the time they reached the wilderness of Beersheba her meager supply of water was gone and most despondently she cast her young son under one of the shrubs, expecting him to die! She wept bitterly.

God heard the cries of the lad and sent an angel to comfort Hagar, promising her that her son would grow into a great nation. Then God opened her eyes to see a well of water! They were saved! Hagar and her son Ishmael, who grew into a skilled archer, lived in the wilderness of Paran until he was old enough to have a wife, an Egyptian woman. Indeed, Ishmael was to grow up and his entire prodigy as wild men, their hands against every man, even their own brothers (Gen. 16:12). In the history of this world only in short periods of very strong leadership have the Arabs had any real peace! This may be some of the great trouble among modern-day Ishmaelites today! God allowed it because He was going to work through Isaac to complete His Plan.

Many years passed in the young life of Isaac. In Bullinger's *Companion Bible*, Appendix 50, he estimates that Isaac was 33 when his father was going to have to offer him as a sacrifice. Other commentators speculate a different, but still at a fairly young age.

Abraham's great trial

Genesis Chapter 22 records one of the greatest tests in all of man's history, the most moving story of Abraham's sacrifice of his only (true) son Isaac.

God's next step in His overall plan of redemption was to put Abraham through his greatest trial to test his obedience to Him (Gen 22:1-2):

"1. And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt [try] Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. 2. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Again, Abraham did not argue with God, but I'm sure he prayed long and hard the three days he trudged to Mt. Moriah to try to understand why God had commanded him to make this sacrifice! The parallelism between what Abraham was asked to do with Isaac and Almighty God the Father allowed to happen to His Son Jesus cannot be overlooked! Remember, Jesus Christ lay in the grave after His crucifixion at age 33 for three days and three nights, the same amount of time Abraham journeyed to Moriah! Bullinger, in his *Companion Bible*, Appendix 50, speculates that Isaac was 33, the same age when our Savior Jesus Christ was offered in sacrifice for all of mankind's sins! Nobody knows for sure.

This great trial on Abraham reaches its climax in Gen. 22:9-12:

"9. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. 10. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. 11. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

12. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son thine only son from me.”

Imagine! Isaac carried the wood on his shoulders to the altar, then allowed himself to be bound and placed upon the wood. Isaac was a very special young man who trusted his father implicitly, even to the point of death! When Abraham heard the voice of the angel calling him, he was so relieved! Did he pass the great test?

Abraham did not fail! God made His covenant with Abraham unconditional. Read Gen. 22:15-18):

“15. And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, 16. And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: 17. That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; 18. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”

God promised this man Abraham that he would be the father of literally millions of human descendants, and that One of them would be Jesus Christ Himself! Truly, Abraham can rightly be called the Father of the Faithful.

Sarah's death

When Isaac reached 37 years of age, his mother Sarah died at the age of 127 in Hebron in the land of Canaan. Abraham, now 137 years old, and his son mourned for her. Abraham buried his wife in a cave in the field of Machpelah before Mamre in Hebron in the land of Canaan, which he purchased for 400 shekels of silver from the sons of Heth (Gen. 23).

Sarah's death deeply grieved Isaac, and after three years Abraham made his eldest servant swear to find a suitable wife for his son away from the land of Canaan and to go to Abraham's own country and kindred. Again, we see God in great action planning the life of Isaac. The finding of Rebekah by Abraham's servant can only be considered miraculous!

The servant returned to the land of Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor (Gen. 24:10). There, Abraham's servant met Rebekah the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor Abraham's brother. Rebekah, in modern terminology would be considered Isaac's second cousin, as would be Laban Rebekah's brother who would figure very greatly in the life of Rebekah and Isaac's son Jacob.

In many ways it was love at first sight (Gen. 24:63-67)! The heavy burden of grief on Isaac had been lifted! They married when Isaac was 40 (Gen. 25:20) but waited twenty years before having any children.

Ten years after their marriage, Isaac at age of 50, Abraham at age 150 is remarried to Keturah with whom he had a number of additional children, many of whom are considered the fathers of modern royalty in Europe (Gen. 25:1-4).

Abraham lived to the ripe old age of 175 and his sons Isaac, now 75, and Ishmael, now 89, buried him in the same cave his wife Sarah had been buried 48 years earlier (Gen. 25:7-10).

After bearing twelve sons who became great princes, Ishmael himself died at age 137 (Gen. 25:17).

The Grievous Life of Isaac and Rebekah

2169 A.M., Esau, Jacob

After twenty years of being barren, Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife so she might have children. She became pregnant, with twins! They struggled together within her (Gen. 25:22-23) until they were born into two manner of people, quite different, to become quite contentious and a lot of grief to their mother and father.

The two boys grew up, Esau to become a cunning hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau, especially enjoying the venison he killed and prepared, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Was this the beginning of their grief? It is so important to treat all your children equally, especially in love and patience. One of the keys to good child rearing is to treat all your children equally.

Although the Bible does not record the time of Esau's selling his birthright for a bowl of soup, some commentaries speculate that the boys were older teenagers or even twenty-some years old. Again Bullinger speculates in his *Companion Bible* that the boys were 24 at this time. At whatever age they were, Esau despised his birthright. And Jacob, called the "supplanter," bought it from his brother for a mere bowl of lentil soup and some bread! Some people wonder why God "hated" Esau but "loved" Jacob? In His wisdom and understanding, God could see how these boys were going to turn out! In some ways both boys were in the wrong. I'm sure we can see some of the brewing problems between these two boys and how this grieved their parents.

There was another famine in the land, so God directed Isaac and Rebekah to sojourn in the land of Egypt. They moved to Gerar in the Negeb where Isaac himself, not yet having enough faith in God nor learning the sad lessons of his father, told the men in the place that Rebekah was not his wife, but his sister! In actuality, she was his wife and his niece, the daughter of Bethuel his first cousin.

He became very prosperous, and then moved back to Beersheba, still in the Negeb region.

At 40 years of age, Esau married Judith and Bashemath, two wives of the Hittites. This added to the grief of Isaac and Rebekah, to marry outside their family (Gen. 26:34-35). Later he took more gentile wives (Gen. 28:8-9). Some wonder if this wasn't to spite his parents further.

Isaac old and nearly blind, around 136 years of age, Jacob now about 76 and his mother schemed to steal the first born's blessings by deceiving Isaac into thinking that he was blessing his first born Esau. The ruse succeeded, and the younger Jacob received the majority of his father's blessings. Poor Esau received practically nothing. He cried bitterly but God had already discerned his spirit, and though through deception, the blessings were passed onto Jacob and his progeny (Gen 27:38-40). Only in time will Esau break the yoke from his neck. Obviously, he hated Jacob for this and vowed to slay his brother after the days of mourning for his father Isaac were over. But Isaac lived another 44 years!

Word got to Jacob through his mother Rebekah, and after seeing his father once more, he fled to Haran and to his uncle Laban's clan. Neither Isaac nor Rebekah wanted their son Jacob to marry any of the daughters of Canaan. Through Esau they had already become a great grief to Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 27:46).

Laban's clan

It was on his way from Beersheba to Haran when Jacob had his mysterious dream of a ladder whose top reached into heaven and he saw angels ascending and descending on it (Gen. 28:12). God appeared to him and promised him incredible blessings of offspring and land. The next morning Jacob took his "pillow stone" on which he had slept, built an altar and poured oil upon it, and vowed that the Lord would be his God and that he would tithe to Him.

Upon reaching Haran, Jacob met Rachel, Laban's second born daughter, fell in love with her and wept for joy! When Rachel reported to her father, he ran out to meet Jacob. He abode with them about one month when Laban bargained with Jacob to work for him for agreed upon wages. He loved Rachel very much so he proposed that he work for seven years for her hand in marriage. "tricky" Laban agreed (Gen. 29:20). His time of employment began when Jacob was about 77 years of age. It's hard to believe that Jacob was an "old" 84 when he married!

Some might think this is unusual. One scholar says he was 76, Bullinger has him as 77 or 78, and Ivan Panin records Jacob as 79. In the next Chapter of this *History*, we will explore his age in much greater detail from numerous Biblical references. I think you will find this most interesting! It's one of the great mysteries of the Bible. The A.M. dates given in Jacob's life will be further substantiated in the next chapter of this *History*.

2252 A.M., Jacob's marriage

When the seven years of labor were complete, anxious Jacob was ready for marriage. But after a somewhat intoxicating marriage feast, tricky Laban passed off his firstborn daughter Leah instead of Rachel. It was late and Jacob had too much food and drink so he did not perceive Leah when she was given to him as his wife. He consummated the marriage, but the next morning to his sorrow he discovered Laban's deception. Needless to say, he was angry with his uncle who presented him a rather lame excuse about marrying off the elder first before the younger. That may have been the custom of the land, but Laban's deceptive lifestyle showed through many times later in Jacob's life. They agreed that if Jacob were to complete the marriage week with Leah and to promise another seven years of labor, he would give Rachel to him in marriage. What could Jacob do? He agreed, so at age 84 he had two wives! To each of his two daughters, Laban gave handmaidens to help them in his daughters' duties. They eventually would become Jacob's concubines and bear some of his thirteen children.

For the next seven years a lot of children were born through Leah, Rachel's handmaiden Bilhah and Leah's handmaiden Zilpah. Rachel herself was barren for her first six years of marriage. Genesis chapters 29 and 30 give the details of the children's births. Bullinger's *Companion Bible* has the first eleven children through Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah all born in the first seven years of Jacob's marriage. Finally, Rachel became pregnant and had her first child in the seventh year of her marriage (Gen.30:22-24).

2259 A.M., Joseph

At age 91 Jacob had completed his fourteen years of service for his two wives and wanted to return to his homeland (Gen. 30:25-26). Again, Laban seeing the prosperity Jacob had brought to him, bargains with him for another six years of labor in return for some of Laban's livestock

(Gen. 31:38, 41). Through selective breeding (Gen. 30:41-43), Jacob arranged to get the best of Laban's stock, even though Laban changed Jacob's wages ten times! Laban's sons became quite jealous of Jacob, to such an extent that Jacob feared for his life. He decided it was time to leave (Gen. 31:17-18)!

Three days later Laban learned of his son-in-law's departure, and because Rachel had stolen Laban's household gods, he and his sons chased after Jacob. In a dream one night (Gen. 31:24) God warned Laban not to speak good or bad to Jacob.

God's hand was very much in the life of Jacob and would be to an even greater extent in his future!