

PART THIRTY-FIVE

THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: HIS PROVISIONS FOR POSTERITY

Genesis 23:1—25:18

1. *Provision of a Burial Place (23:1-20)*

1 *And the life of Sarah was a hundred and seven and twenty years: these were the years of the life of Sarah. 2 And Sarah died in Kiriathbarba (the same is Hebron), in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her. 3 And Abraham rose up from before his dead, and spake unto the children of Heth, saying, 4 I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. 5 And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him, 6 Hear us, my lord; thou art a prince of God among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead. 7 And Abraham rose up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth. 8 And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar, 9 that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me in the midst of you for a possession of a burying-place. 10 Now Ephron was sitting in the midst of the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, 11 Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the children of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead. 12 And Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land. 13 And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the*

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land, saying, *But if thou wilt, I pray thee, hear me: I will give the price of the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there.* 14 *And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him,* 15 *My lord, hearken unto me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead.* 16 *And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver which he had named in the audience of the children of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant.*

17 *So the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the border thereof round about, were made sure* 18 *unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city.* 19 *And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre (the same is Hebron), in the land of Canaan.* 20 *And the field, and the cave that is therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying-place by the children of Heth.*

(1) *The Death of Sarah* is the next recorded event in the life of Abraham. At the age of 127 years Sarah died at Hebron (the earlier name of which was Kiriath-arba). The fact that Sarah died at Hebron indicates that Abraham had returned from Beersheba to his old home there; or he could have sojourned back and forth repeatedly between Beersheba and Hebron throughout the intervening years. (It could have been, too, that Sarah was away from Beersheba, possibly on a visit to her former home, when she died, vv. 1, 2). "It so happens that Sarah is the only woman whose age and death are reported in the Scriptures, as commentators have observed from days of old. This cannot be without design. She is the mother of all be-

lievers, according to 1 Pet. 3:6, and so deserving of some such distinction" (EG, 640). (For Kiriath-arba, cf. Num. 13:28; Josh. 15:13-14, 21:11; Judg. 1:20). Abraham *mourned and wept for her*: "a reference to formal rites, which has no bearing, one way or another, on the survivor's personal feelings; just so, a Nuzi adoption document provides that 'when A dies, B shall weep for him and bury him'" (ABG, 69). But "such demonstrations of grief are as natural and as proper to the Oriental as is our greater measure of restraint to us" (EG, 642); and we must therefore believe that this mourning and weeping was the expression of deep and sincere sorrow on Abraham's part.

(2) *Negotiations for a Burying-place* (vv. 3-16). As burial within one day's time after death was the rule in this land, Sarah's death made necessary the purchase of a burial ground. Hence we now have the story of how Abraham becomes the owner of the field and cave of Machpelah, by formal purchase from the Hittites, and there proceeds to bury his dead. Although the land had been promised to Abraham and his seed, up to this time God had "given him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on" (Acts 7:5). Now, however, the sanctity of the desired burying-place demanded that it be his own. "Abraham acquires proprietary rights in Canaan: the promise of the Land, 12:7, 13:15, 15:7, is beginning to be fulfilled" (JB, 39). Abraham enters into negotiations with "the sons of Heth," that is, the Hittites. The transaction was conducted "with punctilious regard to all the necessary formalities, and these are recited in detail" (UBG, 292). "Abraham wanted to purchase a burying-place in Canaan, and to have the claims thereunto ascertained, that he and his nearest relatives might have their dust laid there apart from the heathen natives; and might have it as a pledge and earnest to confirm their faith in God's promise of their possession of the whole country in His due time, cf. 25:9, 47:29-30, 49:31, 50:13, 24-26"

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(SIBG, 249). *The Sons of Heth* were the Hittites. (The Hittite Empire was founded about 1800 B.C. by an Indo-European people who had settled in Canaan and throughout the Near East in city-states at a much earlier time. Hence the name is given to an ethnic group living in Canaan from patriarchal times and until after the Israelite occupation (cf. Josh. 1:4; Gen. 15:20, Deut. 7:1, Judg. 3:5). These were called the "children of Heth" (23:5) after their eponymous ancestor Heth, a son of Canaan (Gen. 10:15). The center of the great Hittite empire was in what is now Turkey; their capital city was Hattusas (or Boghazkoi) located in the bend of the Halys River. The discovery of iron is reported to have occurred in this area, in the region of the Black Sea, during this period of Hittite hegemony.)

Abraham instituted the negotiations with the frank statement that he was a sojourner and a stranger in the land, that is, a kind of resident-alien (a settled sojourner, so to speak, a long-term resident, but one who lacked the usual privileges of a citizen, notably, the right to own land). (Cf. Gen. 12:10, 19:9, 20:1, etc.). The concession that the patriarch seeks is simply the acquiring of enough land to serve as a burial site. In the course of the entire transaction, he behaves, and is treated by the inhabitants, as a generous and powerful prince. Finally he strikes a bargain with Ephron the Hittite, in the presence of the entire populace. (It seems obvious that behind their generosity "there lurked an aversion to the idea of a purchase" Skinner, ICCG, 337). Courteously refusing the use of their sepulchres, and the offer of a burial-place for his own use as a gift, Abraham finally succeeds in buying for its full value of 400 shekels' weight of silver ("current money with the merchant") the Cave of Machpelah, close to the oak of Mamre, with the field and "all the trees that were in the field," in which the Cave was located. Here Abraham buried Sarah (v. 19); here Abraham himself

was buried later by Isaac and Ishmael (25:9); here also were buried Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah (35:27-29, 47:29-30, 49:31, 50:13).

(3) *The Cave of Machpelah*, vv. 17-20. Literally, "the cave of double." Some hold that it consisted of two stories; others that the name indicated that several couples were to be buried there; still others, that it was a double cave, one within the other, etc. Many interesting facts have been brought to light by recent archaeological findings which authenticate the details of the purchase of this burial-place. Wiseman writes (NBD, 765): "Recent comparisons of the details of Abraham's purchase of Machpelah with Middle Assyrian and Hittite laws support the antiquity of Gen. 23. Thus M. R. Lehmann draws attention to the inclusion of the number of the trees, the weighing of silver at the current merchant valuation, and the use of witnesses at the city-gate where the transaction was proclaimed (verses 16-18). These accord with Hittite laws which fell into oblivion by c. 1200 B.C. The desire of Ephron to sell all the property rather than 'the cave at the edge of the field' (verse 9) may be linked with legal and feudal requirements of the time." "At the present day in many of the outlying villages of Palestine, where primitive customs are still kept up, I have seen the elders sitting in the gates conducting public business. In ancient times the gate of a town or village was the place where the elders or judges sat, where cases were heard and adjudicated, and where all matters affecting the public welfare were discussed, Gen. 34:20, Deut. 16:18, Ruth 4:1" (SIBG, 249). "Hittite real estate transactions made specific reference to the trees on the property" (HSB, 37). "Verses 17, 18 are in the form of a legal contract. Specifications of the dimensions and boundaries of a piece of land, and of the buildings, trees, etc., upon it, are common in ancient contracts of sale at all periods" (Skinner, ICCG, 338).

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The modern site of this burial cave is in the famous sanctuary of Haram (Gunkel, *Genesis*, 273) at Hebron, under the great Mosque. It is one of the holiest shrines of Mohammedanism, and is venerated also by both Jews and Christians. Machpelah is mentioned in the Talmud. Entrance is forbidden Jews and Christians unless they can secure permission from the Moslem Supreme Council. "Visitors who have been admitted to the mosque describe the cenotaphs of Abraham, Isaac, and their wives, as being covered with elaborately ornamented palls. The cenotaphs of Jacob and Leah are in a small adjacent structure. The tombs are said to be in the cave below the cenotaphs. Moslems claim that the tomb of Joseph is just outside the Cave of Machpelah, represented by a cenotaph West of the Mosque of the Women. But see Josh. 24:32" (HBD, 409). The whole enclosure, we are told, "is jealously guarded by massive stone walls, probably of Herodian work, though the antiquity of the cave itself and its furnishings has not been verified by archaeological research" (NBD, 765). "The cave below has never been examined in modern times, but it is stated by its guardians to be double. There is no reason to doubt that the tradition as to the site has descended from biblical times; and it is quite probable that the name Makepelah is derived from the feature just referred to" (Skinner, ICCG, 339).

2. *Provision of a Wife for Isaac (24:1-67)*

1 *And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age; and Jehovah had blessed Abraham in all things.* 2 *And Abraham said unto his servant, the elder of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: 3 and I will make thee swear by Jehovah, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that thou wilt not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: 4 but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife for my*

son Isaac. 5 And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? 6 And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. 7 Jehovah, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house, and from the land of my nativity, and who spake unto me, and who sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he will send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife for my son from thence. 8 And if the woman be not willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath; only thou shalt not bring my son thither again. 9 And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning this matter.

10 And the servant took ten camels, of the camels of his master, and departed, having all goodly things of his master's in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nabor. 11 And he made the camels to kneel down without the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time that women go out to draw water. 12 And he said, O Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, send me, I pray thee, good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. 13 Behold, I am standing by the fountain of water; and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water: 14 and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast showed kindness unto my master. 15 And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nabor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. 16 And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin,

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neither had any man known her: and she went down to the fountain, and filled her pitcher, and came up. 17 And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Give me to drink, I pray thee, a little water from thy pitcher. 18 And she said, Drink, my lord: and she basted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. 19 And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. 20 And she basted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw, and drew for all his camels. 21 And the man looked steadfastly on her, holding his peace, to know whether Jehovah had made his journey prosperous or not. 22 And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold, 23 and said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee. Is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in? 24 And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcab, whom she bare unto Nabor. 25 She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in. 26 And the man bowed his head, and worshipped Jehovah. 27 And he said, Blessed be Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, who hath not forsaken his loving-kindness and his truth toward my master: as for me, Jehovah hath led me in the way to the house of my master's brethren.

28 And the damsel ran, and told her mother's house according to these words. 29 And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the fountain. 30 And it came to pass, when he saw the ring, and the bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he was standing by the camels at the fountain. 31 And he said, Come in, thou blessed of Jehovah; wherefore

standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels. 32 And the man came into the house, and he ungirded the camels; and he gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men that were with him. 33 And there was set food before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on. 34 And he said, I am Abraham's servant. 35 And Jehovah hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and men-servants and maid-servants, and camels and asses. 36 And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath. 37 And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell: 38 but thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son. 39 And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me. 40 And he said unto me, Jehovah, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house: 41 then shalt thou be clear from my oath, when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give her not to thee, thou shalt be clear from my oath. 42 And I came this day unto the fountain, and said, O Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go: 43 behold, I am standing by the fountain of water; and let it come to pass, that the maiden that cometh forth to draw, to whom I shall say, Give me, I pray thee, a little water from thy pitcher to drink; 44 and she shall say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman whom Jehovah hath appointed for my master's son. 45 And before I had done speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the fountain, and

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drew: and I said unto her. Let me drink, I pray thee. 46 And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also. 47 And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nabor's son, whom Milcch bare unto him: and I put the ring upon her nose, and the bracelets upon her hands. 48 And I bowed my head and worshipped Jehovah, and blessed Jehovah, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter for his son. 49 And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.

50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from Jehovah: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. 51 Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as Jehovah hath spoken. 52 And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself down to the earth unto Jehovah. 53 And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things. 54 And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master. 55 And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go. 56 And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing Jehovah hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master. 57 And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth. 58 And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go. 59 And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. 60 And they blessed

Rebekah, and said unto her, Our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and let thy seed possess the gate of those that hate them.

61 And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. 62 And Isaac came from the way of Beer-labai-roi: for he dwelt in the land of the South. 63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, there were camels coming. 64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she alighted from the camel. 65 And she said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant said, It is my master: and she took her veil, and covered herself. 66 And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. 67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

(1) *Abraham's steward commissioned* (vv. 24:1-9). After the death of Sarah, Abraham returned to the region around Beersheba. He was now in his declining years: "well-stricken in age" must, by way of contrast to 18:11, emphasize that the infirmities of age were becoming more and more evident. Hence, there was a most important matter for the patriarch to attend to without delay, namely, to arrange a marriage for his son Isaac. There is nothing here to indicate that Abraham's death was imminent. Evidently the need for taking steps along this line had been suggested by Sarah's death and by the fact that the patriarch felt the need of attending to this duty while he was still well enough physically and mentally to do so. He felt, too, that the step was necessary lest, in case he should die, Isaac might take a wife from among the idolatrous Canaanites (vv. 3, 4). (The Canaanites—a term

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used collectively here as in many other places for any number of different ethnic groups—were heathen given over to destruction and so very improper to be matched with Isaac (cf. 26:34-35, 27:46. Exo. 34:16, 2 Cor. 6:14-15), but Abraham's friends in Mesopotamia worshipped the true God, although they also served their idols: (vv. 31, 50; 31:19, 30). "The father's sole initiative in this direction and the entire passivity of Isaac on the occasion are to be accounted for by the fact that, first, it was primarily the function of parents to provide for the marriage of their children in those days; and, in the second place, Isaac was by character and disposition much inclined to be passive and unaggressive" EG, 656). "Abraham was induced to provide for this [Isaac's marriage] in a mode in harmony with the promise of God, quite as much by his increasing age as by the blessing of God in everything, which necessarily instilled the wish to transmit that blessing to a distant posterity" (BCOTP, 257).

What follows here is one of the most idyllic stories in all human literature. "The chapter is one of the most perfect specimens of descriptive writing that the Book of Genesis contains. It is marked by idyllic grace and simplicity, picturesque elaboration of scenes and incidents, and a certain 'epic' amplitude of treatment, seen in the repetition of the story in the form of a speech. These artistic elements so predominate that the primary ethnographic motive is completely submerged. It may be conjectured that the basis of the narrative was a reinforcement of the Aramean element in the Hebrew stock, as in the kindred story of Jacob and his wives. But if such a historical kernel existed, it is quite lost sight of in the graphic delineation of human character, and of ancient Eastern life, which is to us the main interest of the passage. We must also note the profoundly religious conception of Yahwe's providence as an unseen power, overruling events in answer to prayer" (Skinner, ICCG, 339-340).

Abraham's steward, "his servant, the elder of his house, that ruled over all that he had," is usually taken to have been the Eliezer of Damascus (15:2), who some sixty years previously was regarded as the *heir presumptive* to Abraham's house. However, "it seems a rather rare case that one servant should be in another man's employ for such a length of time. In fact, it would seem that Eliezer must have been in Abraham's employ more than twenty years to arrive at a position of such influence as he held according to 15:12. That would necessitate by the time of this chapter eighty consecutive years of service!" Still and all, this man of ch. 24 had the complete management of Abraham's household; he was "the one ruling" all that Abraham had. Surely this indicates ripe experience and great trustworthiness!

(2) *The Oath.* Abraham put the steward under oath in order that his wishes might be inviolably fulfilled, even if he (Abraham) should die in the interim. He made the steward swear that he would not take a wife for his son from among the daughters of the Canaanites, but would bring back a wife from his (Abraham's) native country and his kinsfolk. "*Put thy hand under my thigh,*" etc. "This custom, which is only mentioned here and in chap. 47:29, the so-called bodily oath, was no doubt connected with the significance of the hip as the part from which the posterity issued (46:26), and the seat of vital power; but the early Jewish commentators supposed it to be especially connected with the rite of circumcision" (BCO TP, 257). (Cf. 35:11, Exo. 1:5). For the Jewish view, note the following: "When one swears, he takes a sacred object in his hand, such as the Scroll of the Law or the phylacteries. The circumcision was the first precept of God to him [Abraham], and had also come to him only through great pain; hence it was particularly precious to him, and so he ordered his servant to put his hand upon it when taking the oath (Rashi). This is done when a

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superior adjures an inferior, such as a master his servant or a father his son who also owes him obedience: cf. 47:20 (Rashbam). It was the custom in those days for a servant to take an oath in this manner, placing his hand under his master's thigh, the latter sitting upon his hand. This signified that the servant was under his master's authority. It is still the practice in India (Abraham Ibn Ezra)" (SC, 122). "The same gesture as in 47:29; contact with the genital organs is intended to make the oath inviolable" (JB, 41). "A reference to an oath by the genital organs, emblems of the life-giving power of deity" (IBG, 652). "The symbolism of this act is not clear. At any rate, the pledge thus elicited was evidently a most solemn one, for it carried with it a curse or ban in the event of non-compliance. Since sons are said to issue from their father's thigh (46:26, Exo. 1:5), an oath that involved touching this vital part might entail the threat of sterility for the offender or the extinction of his offspring. The only other instance of the same usage in the Bible, 47:29, is linked, like the present, to a man's last request—always a solemn occasion" (ABG, 178). "Note passages such as 46:26, Exo. 1:5, Judg. 8:30. Consequently, this form of oath has particular regard to the descendants and is taken in reference to them. But we cannot stop short with this correct statement. For when we consider how eagerly from the time of Adam believers looked forward to a Savior that was to be born, and also how Abraham (12:3) knew and believed that from his own line such a Savior was to follow, we cannot but accept the orthodox view held by the churchfathers from days of old, that this oath was administered in view of the Savior to come from Abraham's line. The whole course of procedure builds upon this prominent fact. This same form of oath is found besides only in 47:29. Consequently, we do not find here a remnant of some old custom now no longer understood, nor is this a remnant of some phallic cult, nor was this an oath by the *membrum virile*, for the

hand was placed under the *thigh*, nor are the present-day analogies referred to by commentators as still obtaining among Arabs and Egyptians a good illustration or parallel. Here was a godly oath by a godly man taken and administered in the light of his greatest hope, the coming Savior. 'Yahweh,' as the covenant God, is most appropriately referred to as the one by whom the servant is to swear" (EG, 659).

(3) *The God of heaven and the God of the earth*, v. 3. This phrase is an affirmation of the Divine omnipotence. It is especially in keeping with the spiritual theme of God's providence which pervades the narrative throughout. We must understand that it was not because the people in Canaan did not wish to give their daughters in marriage to Issac that Abraham sent his servant to Mesopotamia; Abraham was a wealthy man and could have made any marital arrangement for his son that he desired. He simply did not want the covenant-heir to become entangled with a Canaanite woman and her idolatrous background. He was looking toward the protection of the purity of the Seed (Gal. 3:16). Scripture tells us that he had all things, wealth, honor, long life and children, and now he lacked only grandchildren. "Being old and wealthy, he feared that in the event of his death someone might bribe Eliezer to select an unfit wife for Isaac; hence he had to adjure him" (SC, 122). "The motive is a natural concern for the purity of the stock." We surely have here evidence "of the exalted conception of God prevailing among the patriarchs."

Vv. 5-8. It was necessary that the steward should know the full meaning of the oath before he took it (Jer. 5:2, Prov. 13:16). The servant's fear seems to be, not that he would fail to find a bride for Isaac, but that the maiden selected might not be willing to be separated such a distance from her relatives; in the event of such a development, he asked, would the patriarch want Isaac to be returned to

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the land of his fathers? Would the oath bind him to take Isaac back to Haran? The suggestion elicited from the patriarch "a last utterance of his unclouded faith in God." Yahwe, said Abraham, had taken him from his father's house and had promised him and his seed under oath that they should have the land (Canaan) for a possession. He also discharged the servant, in case of failure to procure a bride and bring her back willingly to his place of sojourning, from the oath he had taken, being fully assured himself that Yahwe, the God of heaven, *would send His angel* to providentially guide events in such a way that the Divine promise would be fully actualized. There was no doubt in Abraham's mind that the servant would bring back the bride-to-be, because all this was God's doing in fulfilment of His eternal purpose. "God had ordered Abraham's departure from Mesopotamia; it was therefore improper that either he or his son should return thither, where they would be tempted to a partial idolatry" (SIBG, 251). To sum up Abraham's faith: on no account, said he, must Isaac leave the land of promise, because such a move would be a final act of unbelief and disobedience, v. 8. Whereupon the servant, understanding clearly the nature of his mission, and feeling satisfied in all matters that impinged on his conscience, "put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning the matter," v. 9.

(4) *The Servant at the Well*, vv. 10-15. Taking ten camels to bring home the bride-to-be and her attendants and "all goodly things" sent by his master to be presents to the bride and her relatives, the steward of Abraham's house traveled to Mesopotamia, "to the city of Nahor," evidently Haran (11:31, 12:4). where Nahor dwelt. (Note the Hebrew for Mesopotamia, *Aram-nabaraim*, i.e., "Aram of the two rivers." This was Central Mesopotamia, originally the region within the great bend of the Euphrates. The area was also known as Paddan-Aram, "field of

Aram" (25:20, 28:2). Some authorities think that "the city of Nahor" was a town near Haran, with slightly different spelling in Hebrew from Nahor, Abraham's brother, v. 15). On arriving at his destination, the servant "made his camels to kneel down without the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time that women go out to draw water" (v. 11). *Note his prayer for a sign, again evidence of dependence on the leading of Yahwe* (cf. Judg. 6:36-40, 1 Sam. 14:8ff.) All authorities are agreed on the fidelity of this picture to Eastern life.

(5) *The Servant and Rebekah*, vv. 15-27. V. 14—"This token the servant asked not from presumption or distrust, but as directed by the Spirit of God": Judg. 6:17, 37, 39; 1 Sam. 6:7-9, 14:8-10; 20:7; 12:17; Isa. 7:11-14, 38:7, 8; Exo. 4:2-9). "The personal humility and fidelity displayed by this aged servant are only less remarkable than the fervent piety and childlike faith which discover themselves in the method he adopts for finding the bride. Having cast the matter upon God by prayer, as a concern which specially belonged to him, he fixes upon a sign by which God should enable him to detect the bride designed for Isaac" (PCG, 301). "The matter in hand is of extraordinary importance. A wife is to be found for the heir of promise. This was a special concern of God, and so the single-hearted follower of Abraham makes it. He takes upon himself the choice of a maiden among those that come to draw, to whom he will make the request of a particular act of kindness to a stranger, and he prays God that the intended bride may be known by a ready compliance with his request. The three qualifications, then, in the mind of the venerable domestic for a bride for his master's son, are a pleasing exterior, a kindly disposition, and the approval of God" (MG, 354). "*And it came to pass, before he had done speaking,*" that the answer came, in the form of a "damsel, very fair to look upon, a virgin," then as if to emphasize this last-stated fact, the added

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statement, "neither had any man known her," v. 16. (This was of great importance, of course, in guaranteeing the ethnic purity of the promised seed, and hence of the Messianic Line.) Thus did the maiden satisfy the first criterion demanded by the servant. The damsel, we are told, and she herself confirmed the fact (vv. 24, 47), was the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor by Milcah, and the sister of Laban (v. 20, also 11:27-29, 22:20-24). Cf. 29:5, "Laban, the son of Nahor": "Laban is called by Jacob the son of Nahor, that is, his grandson, with the usual latitude of relative names in Scripture, cf. 28:13," MG, 391). Rebekah "*went down to the fountain, and filled her pitcher, and came up.*" In Eastern wells there were steps down to the surface of the water. The servant was watching her in silence, no doubt delighted by her modest and gracious demeanor; then he ran to meet her and presented his request with which she complied at once, giving him water to drink from her pitcher. But she did even more: she graciously drew water for the camels until their thirst was fully slaked. The servant must have been waiting in wonder and silence as he took note of the ample fulfilment of the sign. This maiden presented a pleasing exterior, and a kindly disposition, and in everything she did was manifesting the approval of Yahwe. He then presented the maiden with the nose-ring of gold (Ezek. 16:11-12) and the bracelets, not as the bridal gifts but as a reward for the service she had rendered. He wants to know who her kindred were and whether they had the means and the inclination to entertain a stranger (as inns were not yet in existence). Whereupon she introduced herself as the daughter of his master's nephew and assured him of the hospitable accommodations which were at his disposal. And the old man, overwhelmed, *bowed his head and praised God for all the manifestations of His providence.* Rebekah, in wonderment herself, reported the startling news to her mother's house, *i.e.*, tent: "the

daughter's course naturally tends to the mother when such startling news is to be communicated; besides, the women had their separate compartments, as we gather also from 31:33f.—a separate tent" (EG, 672). (Such notions as that this was a relic of a matriarchy, or that the father was dead, are entirely gratuitous.)

(6) *The Servant's Narrative*, vv. 28-49. Laban now apparently takes over the formalities of hospitality, "inspired by the selfish greed for which that worthy was noted in tradition." "Laban was better known through his grandfather (Nahor) than through his father Bethuel. It may also be that Bethuel was of little account, as we find Laban answering before him, cf. 24:50" (SC, 168). When Laban saw the presents which the steward had given his sister, he recognized that the envoy was from some man of wealth and position and became almost obsequious in his attentions. He invited the servant (whom we believe to have been Eliezer) into his house, unmuzzled the camels, gave "straw and provender" for them, and then washed the feet of the servant and the feet of the men who were with him. The crowning act of hospitality in an Eastern household was the presentation of food to the visitors. In this case, however, the faithful servant insists that he must deliver his message before partaking of the friendly meal with his host. It should be noted that Laban addressed Eliezer with the words, "Come in, thou blessed of Jehovah," etc. Evidently the name of Jehovah was not entirely unfamiliar to Laban's ears: "the knowledge and worship of the living God, the God of truth and mercy, was still retained in the family of Nahor" (MG, 355), or at least it would seem so. Or, it is possible that Laban addressed Eliezer as the blessed of Jehovah, as a result of hearing the words of the latter, who had called Abraham's God Jehovah.

The servant now discharges his commission before partaking of the food set before him. Beginning with the account of his master's possessions and family affairs, he

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describes with considerable minuteness his search for a wife for Isaac and the success which he had met with thus far. Then, v. 49, he pressed his suit, emphasizing the providential guidance which Yahwe had seen fit to give him, even to the granting of the "sign" which was to him proof that Rebekah was the desired bride, both desired and divinely identified. Laban and Bethuel also recognized in all this the guidance of God, saying, "we cannot speak unto thee bad or good," that is, we cannot add a word, cannot alter anything (Num. 24:13, 2 Sam. 13:22). "That Rebekah's brother Laban should have taken part with her father in deciding, was in accordance with the usual custom (cf. 34:5, 11, 25; Judg. 21:22, 2 Sam. 13:22), which may have arisen from the prevalence of polygamy, and the readiness of the father to neglect the children (daughters) of the wife he cared for least" (KD, BCOTP, 260). V. 52—After receiving the assent of Laban and Bethuel to the union, the servant "bowed himself down to the earth unto Jehovah" (vv. 50-52). He then gave all the presents to Rebekah and her kinsmen which Abraham had sent; then, when this ceremony was all finished, they partook of the feast provided by the host.

(7) *Rebekah's departure*, vv. 50-67. Obviously the matter is settled in accordance with custom. In the gifts for Rebekah's relatives, it has been said that we could have a survival of the practice of purchase-price of a wife (34:12, Exo. 22:16, 1 Sam. 18:25); in this narrative, however, what is done takes place from a more refined idea of marriage, "from which the notion of actual purchase has all but disappeared" (ICCG, 346). In Islam, we are told, these customs have come to be synonymous with the dowry.

The next morning Eliezer expressed his desire to set off at once on the journey home. The relatives, however, wished to keep Rebekah with them for "a few days, at least ten." But when the maiden herself was consulted,

she decided to go without delay. So "they blessed Rebekah," and said to her, "Be thou the mother of thousands of ten thousands," etc., that is, of an innumerable offspring, and "let thy seed possess the gate of those that hate them" (cf. Gen. 22:17). Thus did Rebekah and her "damsels" start the long journey back to the Land of Promise, escorted by Eliezer and his accompanying retinue of male servants. The long trip from "the city of Nahor" back to Hebron and evidently on to the region of Béersheba must have taken a month at least. When the caravan arrived in the vicinity of "the land of the South" (the Negeb), Isaac was just returning from a visit to the well Be-er-la-hai-roi (15:14); and "at the eventide" (the coming on of the evening), we are told, he went out in the field "to meditate," v. 63. Had he been to the well of Hagar "which called to mind the omnipresence of God, and there, in accordance with his contemplative character, had laid the question of his marriage before the Lord"? Or had he merely traveled to that region to look after his flocks and herds? Certainly the purpose of his going into the field *to meditate* must have had something to do with his marriage and subsequent future life. Just at a certain moment of time, the caravan from Mesopotamia arrived at the very spot where Isaac was meditating; and Rebekah, as soon as she saw the man in the field coming to meet them, hastily descended from her camel to receive him, "according to Oriental custom, in the most respectful manner." Certainly her premonition had been that this must be her future husband, and verifying her insight by actual inquiry and identification, she immediately "enveloped herself in her veil, as became a bride when meeting the bridegroom" (BCOTP, 261). "The servant then related to Isaac the result of his journey; and Isaac conducted the maiden into the tent of Sarah his mother, and she became his wife, and he loved her, and was consoled after his mother, *i.e.*, for his mother's death" (*ibid.*, p. 261).

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It seems obvious (from v. 67) that Sarah's death had affected Isaac deeply. Rebekah's arrival proved to be a source of solace and strength. (As a matter of fact, subsequent events show that the wife was the stronger willed of the two: to say that Isaac was not characterized by aggressiveness is putting it mildly: it would be more nearly right, we think, to speak of him as "henpecked.") It seems that "out of respect for Sarah, her tent remained dismantled after her death until Rebekah came" (SC, 132).

Dr. Speiser again calls our attention to the fact that the details recorded about Isaac's marriage can no longer be regarded as doubtful; any notion that the story was invented, he says, should be dispelled by what we know today about Hurrian marriage practices—which were normative in the region of Haran—when the brother acted in place of the father. "The pertinent marriage contract would then come under the heading of 'sistership document.' A composite agreement of this kind would embody the following specifications: (a) the principals in the case, (b) nature of the transaction, (c) details of payments, (d) the girl's declaration of concurrence, (e) penalty clause. A close study of vss. 50 ff. should show that what we have there is virtually a restatement, in suitable literary form, of such a 'sistership document.' For principals we have this time, on the one hand, Abraham's servant as the spokesman for the father of the groom, and, on the other hand, Laban as the responsible representative of the prospective bride. The transaction is thus necessarily of the 'sistership' type, since it is the girl's brother who acts on the request. The emissary gives presents to the girl, but does not neglect the 'gifts' for her brother and mother, which must cover the customary bride payment. Most significant of all, in view of the detailed evidence from Nuzi, is the statement that Rebekah herself should be consulted (57); her reply is in the affirmative, 'I will go' (58). The Nuzi text says in similar cases . . . 'myself

and my brother (agree to this marriage)' . . . or '(I do this) of my own free will.' The only thing, then, that is missing is the penalty clause, which, would surely be out of place in a literary transcript" (ABG, 184-185). This author takes the position, of course, that "there can be little doubt that Bethuel was no longer alive at the time, which is why Laban was free to exercise his prerogatives as brother." The evidence cited to support this view, by way of contrast with those suggested above, is (1) that in v. 50, the listing of the father after the son is irregular; (2) that what is worse, no gifts for the father are mentioned in v. 53, although Rebekah's "brother and mother" are mentioned as recipients; (3) similarly, in v. 55, it is again "her brother and her mother" who ask that the prospective bride postpone her journey, whereas nothing is said about the father. Various genealogical references to Bethuel (vv. 15, 24; also 22:22, 23, and 15:20) present no difficulty, however. Speiser concludes: "The inclusion of Bethuel in vs. 50 is due either to a marginal gloss inspired by the genealogical references, or to some textual misadventure" (*ibid.*, 184). We have tried to present all aspects of this problem: the student may draw his own conclusions. It should be kept in mind that in any and all such trivia no question of the fundamental integrity of the Bible is involved.

3. *Abraham's Provisions for His Various Lines* (25:1-18)

(1) *The Line by Keturah* (25:1-4)

1 And Abraham took another wife, and her name was Keturah. 2 And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. 3 And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim. 4 And the sons of Midian: Ephah, and Ephher, and Hanoah, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.

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A chronological problem arises here. The following excerpts will suffice to make it clear. "Abraham's marriage to Keturah is generally supposed to have taken place after Sarah's death, and his power to beget six sons at so advanced an age is attributed to the fact, that the Almighty had endowed him with new vital and reproductive energy for begetting the son of the promise. But there is no firm ground for this assumption; as it is not stated anywhere, that Abraham did not take Keturah as his wife till after Sarah's death. It is merely an inference drawn from the fact, that it is not mentioned till afterwards; and it is taken for granted that the history is written in strictly chronological order. But this supposition is precarious, and is not in harmony with the statement, that Abraham sent away the sons of the concubines with gifts during his own lifetime; for in the case supposed, the youngest of Keturah's sons would not have been more than twenty-five or thirty years old at Abraham's death; and in those days, when marriages were not generally contracted before the fortieth year, this seems too young for them to have been sent away from their father's house. This difficulty, however, is not decisive. Nor does the fact that Keturah is called a concubine in ver. 6, and in 1 Chron. 1:32, necessarily show that she was contemporary with Sarah, but may be explained on the ground that Abraham did not place her on the same footing as Sarah, his sole wife, the mother of the promised seed" (KD—BCOTP, 261-262).

Murphy (MG, 358-359): "According to the laws of Hebrew composition, this event may have taken place before that recorded in the close of the previous chapter. Of this law we have several examples in this very chapter. And there is nothing contrary to the customs of that period in adding wife to wife. We cannot say that Abraham was hindered from taking Keturah in the lifetime of Sarah

by any moral feeling which would not also have hindered him from taking Hagar. It has also been noticed that Keturah is called a concubine, which is thought to imply that the proper wife was still living; and that Abraham was a very old man at the death of Sarah. But, on the other hand, it is to be remembered that these sons were in any case born after the birth of Isaac, and therefore after Abraham was renewed in vital powers. If the renewal of vigor remained after the birth of Isaac, it may have continued some time after the death of Sarah, whom he survived thirty-eight years. His abstinence from any concubine until Sarah gave him Hagar is against his taking any other during Sarah's lifetime. His loneliness on the death of Sarah may have prompted him to seek a companion of his old age. And if this step was delayed until Isaac was married, and therefore separated from him, an additional motive would impel him in the same direction. He was not bound to raise this wife to the full rights of a proper wife, even though Sarah were dead. And six sons might be born to him twenty-five years before his death. And if Hagar and Ishmael were dismissed when he was about fifteen years old, so might Keturah when her youngest was twenty or twenty-five. We are not warranted, then, still less compelled, to place Abraham's second marriage before the death of Sarah, or even the marriage of Isaac. It seems to appear in the narrative in the order of time." "The promise (17:4-6) that Abraham should be exceedingly fruitful and the father of many nations, looks beyond the birth of Isaac, and finds its fulfilment in other descendants as well. This, like most other alleged discrepancies, is found not in the text itself, but in arbitrary critical assumptions." (UBG, 308). There is no way of determining with any degree of certainty whether Abraham was still living when Isaac and Rebekah were married, or, if so, how long he lived after that event.

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As for the tribes that descended from these six sons of Keturah, efforts to identify them have not been very successful. (Cf. 1 Chron. 1:32-33.) (Incidentally, who was Keturah? Rashi identifies her with Hagar "who received the name because her deeds were as comely as 'incense' (*ketoreth*); also, because she kept herself 'chaste' (*kasher*, cognate root to *katar*, of which Keturah is the passive participle), from the time that she separated from Abraham" (SC, 32). Such an identification, however, cannot be harmonized with the plural, "concubines," 25:6.) It seems obvious that these tribes, descendants of Keturah and her sons by Abraham, peopled a considerable part of Arabia to the south and the east of the Promised Land, under the name of Midianites (Exo. 2:15) among whom Moses took refuge, the Sabaeans (Sheba, Job 1:15, 6; 19; 1 Ki. 10:1), the Shuhites (Job 2:11), the Dedanites, etc. "The Arabian tribes with whom the Israelites acknowledged a looser kinship than with the Ishmaelites or Edomites are represented as the offspring of Abraham by a second marriage, cf. 1 Chron. 1:32 ff." (ICCG, 349). There are named here six sons of Abraham, seven grandsons, and three great-grandsons, making sixteen descendants by Keturah.

(2) *Abraham's Final Disposition of His Property* (vv. 5-6).

5 And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. 6 But unto the sons of the concubines, that Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts; and he sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.

Isaac, the child of promise, the only son of his wife, Sarah, received all his possessions. The son of the concubines (Hagar and Keturah) were sent away with gifts, into the east country, that is, Arabia in the widest sense of the term, to the east and southeast of Palestine, to what

is known as the Syro-Arabian desert. The Keturean stock divided into six branches, of which only one, Midian, ever attained importance. In allocating his possessions, it is to be assumed that Abraham provided the sons of the concubines with an abundance of flocks and herds sufficient to provide for their future growth and sustenance.

(3) *The Death and Burial of Abraham* (vv. 7-11).

7 And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, a hundred threescore and fifteen years. 8 And Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years, and was gathered to his people. 9 And Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; 10 the field which Abraham purchased of the children of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife. 11 And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son: and Isaac dwelt by Beer-lahai-roi.

Abraham died at the good old age of 175, and *was gathered to his people* (cf. 15:15, Judg. 2:10). "This expression which . . . is constantly distinguished from departing this life and being buried, denotes the reunion in Sheol with friends who have gone before, and therefore presupposes faith in the personal continuance of a man after death, as a presentiment which the promises of God had exalted in the case of the patriarchs into a firm assurance of faith (Heb. 11:13)" (BCOTP, 263). "An old man, and full of years," literally, "satisfied." "He saw all the desires of his heart fulfilled, and was satisfied with all that he wished to see and do. He was granted the privilege of seeing in his lifetime the reward stored up for him in the world to come" (SC, 133). Note that the burial of the patriarch in the cave of Machpelah was attended to by Isaac and Ishmael, "since the latter, although excluded from

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the blessings of the covenant, was acknowledged by God as the son of Abraham by a distinct blessing (17:20), and was thus elevated above the sons of Keturah" (*ibid.*, 263). It is significant that both sons shared in the service of interment. "Funerals of parents are reconciliations of children (35:29), and differences of contending religionists are often softened at the side of a grave" (PCG, 314). What a glorious setting of the sun on an ineffably glorious pilgrimage of faith! After Abraham's death, the divine blessing was transferred to Isaac who returned to his abode by Hagar's well (cf. 17:20).

(4) *The Line of Ishmael* (vv. 12-18).

12 Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham: 13 and these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the first-born of Ishmael, Nebaioth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam, 15 and Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa, 15 Hadad, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah: 16 these are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their villages, and by their encampments; twelve princes according to their nations. 17 And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, a hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died, and was gathered unto his people. 18 And they dwelt from Havilah unto Skur that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: he abode over against all his brethren.

The usual procedure of the inspired historian is repeated here: the future of Abraham's eldest son is traced briefly before proceeding with the primary theme—the Messianic Line—as continued in the line of the Child of Promise. The one name in this line which may be of significance is Nebaioth, v. 13. "Nabajoth was the progenitor of the Nabathaeans, who, about four centuries

before the Christian era, drove the Edomites out of Petra, and constructed most of those rock tombs and temples whose splendor astonish the modern traveler" (SIBG, 253). "The Nabataeans held possession of *Arabia Petraea*, with *Petra* as their capital, and subsequently extended toward the south and northeast, probably as far as Babylon; so that the name was afterward transferred to all the tribes to the east of the Jordan, and in the Nabataean writings became a common name for Chaldeans (ancient Babylonians), Syrians, Canaanites, and others" (BCOTP, 265). (Cf. Gen. 28:9, 36:3; Isa. 60:7).

V. 16. Note "encampments": that is, premises hedged around, "then a village without a wall in contrast with a walled town," Lev. 25:31. "Twelve princes, according to their nations." (Note in connection also the twelve tribes of Israel). The Ishmaelites (various Arabian tribes, the Bedouins in particular) trace their beginnings to these twelve princes. It is interesting to note that these peoples are the foremost protagonists of Mohammedanism (even as the twelve princes of Israel and their posterity are the protagonists of Judaism).

Ishmael died at the age of 137, and his descendants dwelt in Havilah, the area on the borders of Arabia Petraea and Felix, as far as Shur, to the east of Egypt, "in the direction of Assyria" (x. 29, 16:7), from which they extended their nomadic excursions into the northeast to the land of the Euphrates: *i.e.*, dwelling from the Euphrates to the Red Sea (Josephus, *Ant.* I. 12, 4). Thus Ishmael abode (settled) "over against all his brethren" (cf. 16:12, also Judg. 7:12).

(For archaeological studies, look up material under *Mari*, *Nuzi*, *Ugarit*, *Amarna*, *Larsa*, *Alalakh*, *Boghazkoi*, *Ur*, *Babylon*, *the Moabite Stone*, *the Code of Hammurabi*, etc. See *The Biblical World: A Dictionary of Archaeology*, edited by Pfeiffer, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan.)

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON
PART THIRTY-FIVE

1. Summarize the various provisions which Abraham, in his last years, made for his numerous progenies.
2. How explain the fact that Sarah is the only woman whose death and burial are related in Scripture.
3. Where was Sarah buried? What other Bible personages are buried there?
4. Summarize Abraham's negotiation proceedings for the acquirement of a burial place. Why did he seek this in Canaan?
5. Who were the Hittites?
6. How much did Abraham pay for the field and cave of Machpelah?
7. What does the name (*Machpelah*) mean? What does the meaning suggest?
8. In what details did Abraham's negotiations for Machpelah follow Middle Assyrian and Hittite law?
9. Where is this cave supposed to be today?
10. Why did Abraham in his last years make provisions for a wife for Isaac?
11. Whom did he commission to procure this prospective bride?
12. Where did he send this person, and why did he send him to that area?
13. What oath did Abraham exact from this person whom he commissioned?
14. What was the bodily form of oath which the patriarch required?
15. With what do Jewish commentators correlate this oath?
16. What is the critical (anthropological) explanation of the import of this oath?
17. What evidence do we have that both Abraham and his steward relied on Divine Providence to direct them?

18. What seems to have been the status of religious faith and practice among Abraham's relatives in Mesopotamia?
19. Is it possible to verify the notion that the kind of oath taken by the steward had reference to generative powers?
20. How does Leupold explain the far-reaching significance of this oath?
21. What was the steward's fear especially about the possible failure of his mission?
22. What did Abraham promise in case those fears should prove to have a real foundation?
23. For what divine token of identification of the prospective bride did the steward pray?
24. Whom did the steward meet at the well? What was her ancestry?
25. What three characteristics does Murphy hold to have been those which this prospective bride should manifest?
26. In what ways did the maiden at the well manifest these characteristics?
27. For what did the steward praise God?
28. Who was Laban? What light did this incident throw on Laban's character?
29. How account for the fact that Laban conducted these negotiations?
30. Do we have intimations that Rebekah's father might have been deceased? What are these intimations?
31. What were the details by which the negotiations were concluded?
32. What decision did Rebekah herself make? Does not her action in this respect prove that she "had a mind of her own"?
33. Explain what a "sistership document" was under Hurrian law.

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34. In what ways did these negotiations for Rebekah as the prospective bride parallel the chief characteristics of the "sistership document"?
35. What is the significance of Rebekah's apparently unexpected meeting with Isaac on the return to Beer-sheba?
36. Where did the meeting take place? What was Isaac doing at the time?
37. What is the chronological problem involved in chapter 25, vv. 1-4?
38. On what ground do we give Keturah the status of a concubine?
39. What disposition with respect to his property did Abraham make for the sons of his concubines?
40. What disposition of his property did Abraham make for Isaac and why?
41. Where was Abraham buried? What significance is there in the fact that both Ishmael and Isaac participated in their father's burial?
42. Which of the sons of Keturah figured later in Old Testament history?
43. What territory did the Ishmaelites occupy? How did their subsequent history fulfil the oracle of Gen. 16:12?
44. Who were the Nabataeans? What and where was Petra?
45. Who are the Bedouins in relation to the descendants of Ishmael?
46. What was an Ishmaelite "encampment"? How old was Ishmael when he died?
47. What present-day religion glorifies, so to speak, the twelve princes of Ishmael as the ancestors of the people by whom it is espoused?
48. What religion looks back to the twelve princes of Israel as its original source?

49. List the analogies that occur between the life of Isaac and the life of Christ.
50. List the various steps in Abraham's pilgrimage of faith.
51. What Scriptural evidence have we that Abraham believed in the future life?
52. What does the Bible tell us about Abraham's last days?
53. Does Abraham's pilgrimage justify the notion that he had succumbed to idolatry while living in Ur of the Chaldees? Explain your answer.

* * * * *

FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

Analogies: Isaac and Christ

Gen. 22:1-14, Heb. 11:8-19

Trace briefly the early life of Abraham and Sarah; their journey into Canaan, brief sojourn in Egypt, the separation from Lot. Abraham's communion with God relative to the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, the blessing of Melchizedek, and the material prosperity of the patriarch. In honor of his fidelity to the will of God, the name of Abraham has gone down in all ages as "father of the faithful" (Rom. 4:16-22, Gal. 3:6-7, Heb. 11:8-10, James 2:20-24).

In the midst of Abraham's prosperity, however, there was one heartache. Both Abraham and Sarah were growing old, and no child had blessed their household. There was no outward indication of the fulfilment of God's promise, and Sarah had passed the age of child-bearing (Gen. 17:1-4; 18:11-14). But

"God moves in mysterious ways
His wonders to perform"

and a child is promised to the faithful twain. In time, Isaac is born, Heb. 11:11. In many respects Isaac was a type of Christ.

PROVISIONS FOR POSTERITY 23:1—25:18

1. Isaac was "a child of promise", Gen. 17:1-8, 17:19, Heb. 11:8-10, 17-19.

2. Isaac was the "only begotten son" of Abraham and Sarah. Gen. 17:19, 22:16, Heb. 11:17.

3. The offering of Isaac upon Moriah, Gen. 22:1-14. A case where the positive law of God superseded moral law. Picture the sentiments and emotions of the patriarch in this trial of faith. God "proved" Abraham. He named the place Jehovah-jireh, "the Lord will provide."

4. Isaac carried wood for the offering of himself. Gen. 22:6.

5. Isaac asked, "Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" Gen. 22:7.

6. Isaac was three days in coming to his figurative resurrection. Gen. 22:4. Heb. 11:17-19.

7. Abraham sent his servant, Eliezer, Gen. 15:2, 24:1-9, into a far country to find a bride for Isaac, from among his kindred.

8. The servant said: "Hinder me not," that he might hasten to present Rebekah to Isaac. Gen. 24:55-56.

9. Rebekah said, "I will go", Gen. 24:58.

1. Jesus was The Child of promise. Gen. 3:16, 22:18, Isa. 7:14, 11:1-2, 9:6-7, Micah 5:2, Matt. 1:18-23. Luke 1:26-38. John 1:15-18, 1:29.

2. Jesus is the "only begotten Son of God". John 3:16, Psalm 2:7, Acts 13:33, John 1:14.

3. The offering of Jesus upon Calvary, John 3:16. Heb. 9:27-28. This was in obedience to the eternal purpose of God. 1 Peter 1:18-20. Thus the Lord has provided sufficient atonement for sin, and a way of reconciliation between man and his heavenly Father. Rom. 3:22-26, Col. 1:18-23.

4. Jesus bore His own Cross. John 19:16-18.

5. This suggests the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane. Matt. 26:39. We would not consider this an antitype however.

6. Jesus was three days in coming to His literal resurrection. Mark 16:1-8. I Cor. 15:1-4.

7. After the resurrection and glorification of the Son, the Father sent the Holy Spirit into the world to find a Bride for Jesus. John 7:39, 14:16-17, 16:7, Luke 24:46-49, Acts 1:8, 2:1-4. Through the Holy Spirit, God is today visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people "unto His name," Acts 11:18, 15:14.

8. The Holy Spirit is today striving with the world, and pleading with cold-hearted professors of religion that He may hasten the presentation of the Bride to the Bridegroom. Matt. 22:2-10, Acts 7:51-53, Rom. 8:1.

9. So the Bride of the Redeemer should be yearning to meet the Bridegroom, Matt. 25:6. God has prepared the feast. Blessed are they that will be ready for the coming of our Lord, and will meet Him in the air, and partake of the marriage feast of the Lamb.

1 Thess. 4:16-17, Rev. 19:7-9.
 There is not a single exhortation
 in the New Testament to prepare
 for death, but ever to meet the
 Bridegroom at His second com-
 ing. John 14:1-3, 2 Peter 3:8-12.

We return to the scene on Mount Moriah, in conclusion, to recall that self-sacrifice is the supreme test of faith, and that implicit obedience is the only testimony of it. In either respect, Abraham was not found wanting. But when we come to the climax of the story on Mount Moriah, where a voice from Heaven says, "Abraham, lay not thine hand upon the lad," the type is lost. There was no voice like that on Calvary, no heavenly edict to cry, "Spare thy Son." He gave Him freely for us all, "the innocent for the guilty, the Just for the unjust." All of this was done that you might head and accept the precious invitation,

"Come to Calvary's holy mountain,
 Sinners, ruined by the fall;
 Here a pure and healing fountain,
 Flows to you, to me, to all,
 In a full, perpetual tide,
 Opened when our Saviour died".