

Chapter 24

A traditional means of marking an oath was for a man to touch another man's thigh, right beside his genitals, as a symbol of the solemnity and intimacy of the oath. Abraham sends his servant to find a wife for his son from among his own family (in Nahor). This was one of the most important responsibility of parents was to find appropriate spouses for their sons. The servant is concerned that possibly the bride won't just drop everything, leave her family, and travel with a stranger to a far away land. Abraham therefore gives him an out to his promise if that happens. It is essential that the bride return to settle where Isaac and Abraham are in Canaan, because they currently reside in the land which God promised to Abraham's descendants. Settling in the land of the bride could threaten the fulfillment of the promise. The servant is himself a pious man, having seen how God has blessed and accompanied Abraham, now relies on God to guide his mission in finding Isaac a wife. As Abraham is a wealthy man, the servant brings with him an extravagant bride price for the unknown soon-to-be bride of Isaac. The servant believes this is a long shot, and so prays for God to reveal "the one" for Isaac by fulfilling a set of hospitable actions. Not only does Rebekah take time to give the servant some of her water, but also offers to undertake the laborious task of providing water for his camels. This girl is a keeper! Generous! Hospitable! Hard Working! Kind! The servant gives the girl a nose ring and some bracelets, which is essentially Isaac's engagement ring to her. She accepts, thus accepting the proposal, and running to tell her family. At her home, the servant provides yet more extravagant gifts for the parents of the bride (the traditional bride price) and they agree to allow Rebekah to be married. They in turn send Rebekah's nurse and maids with her as a parting gift to their beloved daughter (again, customary). Rebekah and Isaac fall in love at first sight and are happily married.

Chapter 25

Abraham takes another concubine, Keturah, and fathers 6 additional children with her. Some believe that Keturah could have been Hagar returning after Sarah's death. Because these additional children were sons of a concubine, they did not qualify for full inheritance (which all went to Isaac), but Abraham gave them gifts of favor. Abraham died at 175 and was buried next to Sarah in the land that he owned among the Hittites.

Ishmael went on to have 12 sons, princes according to their tribes, just as God had promised Hagar.

Like Isaac's mother, his wife appears to be barren as well (God's promise is threatened once again). He prays for her and after 20 years, she conceives twins!!! It was an uncomfortable pregnancy, and the twins wrestled within her to such great extent that she wished for death! The Lord explained to her that the twins within her are two nations vying for power (Israel and Edom), and that the stronger/older twin will serve the weaker/younger one. The twins names reflect something about them: Esau because he is red, and Jacob because he is grabbing the heel of his brother (and will continue to take advantage of others for his own self-interest). The twins couldn't have been more different. Esau grew up to be a "man's man" -a skilled outdoorsman, favored by his father. While Jacob was weak and effeminate, dwelling in tents and cooking food (a woman's place, and woman's work). But, what Jacob lacked in physical strength he made up for in cunning. Esau thought he was so hungry after a long day of hunting that he gave up his birthright to his brother in exchange for a bowl of stew and bread (not exactly forward thinking).

Chapter 26

Like Abraham and Sarah before them, Isaac and Rebekah must spend time in Philistine as resident aliens during the time of famine. God did not want the family to go to Egypt yet (Egypt was the standard place you'd go during famine). God reestablishes the covenant with Abraham's son, Isaac now. Since Rebekah was so beautiful, Isaac was convinced that he'd be killed so that other men could take his wife, so he told the locals she was his sister. This worked until King Abimelech (again, more pious than Isaac gives him credit for) sees Isaac and Rebekah being intimate and figures out that they're spouses rather than siblings. He sends word out to his people not to do any harm to their family. The Lord blessed and prospered Isaac, even while they were resident aliens, increasing his crop 100 fold! He became so wealthy that the locals became jealous and King Abimilech cast him out of town to keep the peace ("you have become too powerful for us" will later be the Egyptian king's excuse for enslaving the Hebrews). Again, there are quarrels over wells and an oath of peace between Isaac and Abimilech, just as was made with Abraham.