

Sent: Wednesday, February 13, 2019 4:53 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Genesis 25:1-28

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones!" (Psalm 116:15)
Our lesson last nite on Genesis 25:1-28 might well have been titled "Family Matters"--or maybe "All in the Family," or "Everybody Loves Raymond"! We were somewhat surprised with the opening words: "Now Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah"! Even more surprised when we learned that he and Keturah had six sons! We thought we had heard all the important aspects of Abraham's life with the close of Genesis 24--and that the narrative would now turn to Isaac and Rebekah, the "marriage made in heaven"!

We learned very little of the "other life" of Abraham with Keturah. Was she a "wife" or a "concubine"? I Chronicles 1:32 says "concubine," and this is also indicated in Genesis 25:6, where it speaks of "the sons of his concubines" (plural, suggesting Hagar and Keturah). Unger's Bible Dictionary defines concubine as "a secondary or inferior wife"--so she could have been both! So, did she become Abraham's wife or concubine during the forty or so years after the death of Sarah--in which case he did an amazing amount of propagating when he was between the ages of 132 and 175? Doesn't sound likely! But neither does it sound very likely that Sarah would have put up with another wife of Abraham's in the household during her lifetime! We know what happened to Hagar and Ishmael when Ishmael berated Sarah's young son Isaac! They were "driven out" and left to live alone in the wilderness of Paran, much to the chagrin of Abraham. But God actually told Abraham to "listen to Sarah"--because it was "through Isaac that your descendants would be blessed"! But God also promised that he would make a great nation through Ishmael, "because he is your descendant"! (This according to Genesis 21!)

We see all this coming together with the "toledot" or "records of the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son," in Genesis 25:12-18. "Shepherd's Notes" notes that, "The Ishmaelites were set apart as a new and distinct people, parallel to (what would be) the 12 tribes of Israel--but alienated from the covenant relationship with God!" So we see how God was faithful to His promise to Abraham in making Ishmael a great nation and giving him many descendants (and becoming the "father of many nations")!

The Genesis narrative focuses almost exclusively on the covenant line of Isaac! Genesis 25:5-6 says "Now Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac (presumably when Abraham died), but to the sons of his concubines (plural, which would include Ishmael), Abraham gave gifts while he was living, and sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward, to the land of the east" (presumably in what is now Arabia). Why did Abraham send them all away? So that the "center stage" of the story (God's story of redemption) would be set up and reserved for His chosen one!

There's an interesting "side story" in Scripture, however, about one of the sons of Abraham and Keturah, and that would be Midian--who would become the father of the Midianites! The Midianites would become one of the primary enemies of the Israelites! In Numbers 22, they joined with the Moabites to try to prevent the Israelites from entering the Promised Land! And in Judges 6, God used the Midianites to bring the Israelites "very low" because of their "evil in the sight of the Lord"--until they repented and God used Gideon to deliver them!

But, ironically, God also used one particular Midian in a very special way--400 or so years after the days of Abraham and Keturah! It has to do with the life of Moses! Remember how, in Exodus 2, Moses was rescued by Pharaoh's daughter, while the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and grew up in the courts of Pharaoh. But then, after he killed an Egyptian guard who was mistreating an Israelite slave, he had to flee from the presence of Pharaoh! And he ended up "sitting down by a well" in the land of Midian, where he came to the aid of seven daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian, who were driven away by some shepherds. He not only rescued them from danger but even "watered their flocks" and would be taken into the Jethro's household and given his daughter, Zipporah, as his wife! (Sound familiar?) Ending up settling there for 40 years! And then one day (see Exodus 3), while "pasturing the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law...he (just happened to) come to Horeb, the mountain of God...where the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a burning bush..."! Well, you know the rest of the story! Moses was called to return to Egypt to stand before a new Pharaoh and to be used by God to free the Israelites from their Egyptian captivity! (Jethro, the Midianite, it turned out to be just happened to be a follower of the true God, the God of his forefather, Abraham, and later actually became an adviser to Moses over how to manage the children of Israel through their wilderness wanderings! See this amazing story in Exodus 18!)

Wow! All this tied to the story of a son of Abraham and Keturah's named Midian! Isn't it amazing how God works our His eternal plan and purpose! Even in unexpected, and under-reported, ways! Oswald Chambers writes in "My Utmost for His Highest," "Never believe that so-called random events of life are anything less than God's appointed order! Be ready to discover His divine designs anywhere and everywhere"!

Well, back to our lesson in Genesis 25! Verse 8 says: "Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people!" And so the connection with our memory verse--"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones!" (Psalm 116:15) His passing not only signals the blessed hope of life after death, but his burial in the Cave of Machpelah also anticipates the fulfillment of God's promise of the promised land (both down here and up there)!

Among God's promises, given way back in Genesis 15:13-16, was that Abraham's descendants would one day--400 hundred years later--return to the land of Canaan, the promised land, and that Abraham would "go to his fathers in peace and be buried in a good old age!" Must have been a beautiful funeral service! And, amazingly, Isaac and Ishmael buried their father--together! Wow! (Interesting how funerals--and weddings--often have a way of bringing together divided families!)

Our lesson in Genesis 25 next turns to the "chosen heir," Isaac, and his wife, Rebekah! But the mood of the chapter seems to suddenly turn from one of satisfaction and blessing to one of struggle and strife! Rebekah, like her mother-in-law Sarah is unable to bear a child, the next "heir" in the line of the covenant promise! And when, after 20 years, in answer to Isaac's prayers, it put Rebekah through a lot of hard labor! "The children (twins) struggled together within her," verse 22 says! And she cries out to God--"why?" (Ever done that?)

And God gives her a shocking revelation: "Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples will be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger!"

Sounds like a lot of struggle and conflict ahead! And that, as we'll see, will be the case! And the focus will be on the younger one--the "chosen one"--who will be named Jacob! Hosea 12:3 captures it well! "In the womb he grasped the heel of Esau; as a man he struggled with God!"

Well the next 12 chapters of Genesis will be all about Jacob and Esau--and mainly about Jacob--while Isaac and Rebekah get little coverage! Shepherd's Notes states: "The story of Isaac is told in the context of the lives of Abraham and Jacob!" Isaac is viewed "under the shadow of his illustrious father, Abraham, and his strong-willed son, Jacob! Willmington's Guide describes Isaac as the "mediocre son of a great father and a mediocre father of a great son"!

Well, we're in store for lots of drama! But the question arises about God's ways and workings through all this! Why, for example, did God choose Jacob over Esau? Would it be correct to say that God foresaw that Jacob would value the birthright and the promises of God, whereas Esau would not--and that this was the reason for God choosing Isaac? No way! Says Dr. Constable! And this is supported by Scripture!

Romans 9:10-13 says--"And not only this, but Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac, for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger..."

And so we see in this lesson again that it's all about God and His wondrous ways of working throughout history! About His foreknowledge and sovereignty! About His faithfulness to His promises! And about the mystery of "election"! Including to this day!

Our lesson ended on a disturbing note! Verses 27-28 say that, "when the boys grew up, Esau became a skilled hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents. Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob!" O boy! And so, we see the "marriage made in heaven" becoming a divided home and a dysfunctional family! And these are God's people!

The applications for us are pretty obvious and explicit! Where's this heading? Where are we heading? See you next week!

Men, go with God this week! Love your wife, be to blessing to your family, and leave a legacy like Abraham!

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