



Genesis 23:1-26:5: A New Chapter Begins

These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham fathered Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife.

– Genesis 25:19-20 ESV

- **A shift in the focus**

So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba. – Genesis 22:19 ESV

- Isaac is no longer mentioned
- There is a shift in the focus of the narrative

*Now after these things it was told to Abraham, "Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: Uz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel." (**Bethuel fathered Rebekah.**) These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. – Genesis 22:20-23 ESV*

- Moses introduces a new character: Rebekah
 - o Abraham will be replaced by Isaac
 - o Sarah will be replaced by Rebekah

- The death of Sarah –

*Sarah lived 127 years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. **And Sarah died** at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, **and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.** – Genesis 23:1-2 ESV*

- o Sarah was 65 when they left Haran
- o 52 years have passed
- o She had been far from perfect
- o But she had been a woman of faith

It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them. – Hebrews 11:11-12 ESV

- Sarah died 37 years after Isaac’s birth
 - His birth was the last time she was mentioned
 - Her last recorded words are not flattering

“Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.” – Genesis 12:10 ESV

- Isaac is 37-years-old when she dies
- She never met any of her grandchildren

*All these people died **still believing what God had promised them**. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. – Hebrews 11:13 NLT*

- Sarah **kept believing** for 37 years!

- Abraham buried Sarah
 - He negotiated the purchase of land
 - The only land he ever owned in Canaan
 - And it would also become his burial plot

*Abraham lived for 175 years, and **he died at a ripe old age**, having lived a long and satisfying life. He breathed his last and joined his ancestors in death. His sons Isaac and Ishmael **buried him in the cave of Machpelah**, near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite. This was the field Abraham had purchased from the Hittites and where he had buried his wife Sarah. After Abraham’s death, God blessed his son Isaac, who settled near Beer-lahai-roi in the Negev. – Genesis 25:7-11 NLT*

- **A busy four decades**

- 38 busy years pass before Abraham dies
 - He finds a bride for Isaac
 - He also remarries and fathers 6 sons
 - And becomes a grandfather and great-grandfather
- God had blessed Abraham

*“Chapter 24 is the longest of all the chapters in the book of Genesis, and it is a love story. But it is less about the love that develops between Isaac and Rebekah than it is about the love of God for Abraham and his descendants.” – Ken Miller, *Devotionary™ on Genesis**

- But there was one last thing
 - o Abraham knew that Isaac needed a wife
 - o But he didn't want her to be a Canaanite
 - o So, he sends his servant on a mission
 - o And he makes him swear a strange oath

“Put your hand under my thigh, that I may make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac.” – Genesis 24:2-4 ESV

- o A very **personal** oath
thigh – *yārēk* (yaw-rake)
 thigh, side, loin (the seat of procreative power)

“...thigh is undoubtedly a euphemism for genitalia, in the light of passages such as Gen. 46:26 and Exodus 1:5, where a man's children are said to come from his thigh. Holding Abraham's membrum in his hand, the servant promises to carry out Abraham's wishes ...taking the membrum – now circumcised as a covenant sign – into the hand, is a way of invoking the presence of God at this moment.” – Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*

So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master and swore to him concerning this matter. – Genesis 24:9 ESV

- **And it just so happened...**



- Abraham sends his servant back to Haran
- He is to seek out the clan of Abraham

*Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, **Nahor**, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot. Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred, in Ur of the Chaldeans. And Abram and **Nahor** took wives. The name of Abram's*

wife was Sarai, and the name of **Nahor's wife, Milcah**, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah. – Genesis 11:27-29 ESV

- This story shouts the sovereignty of God
- His handiwork is all over it
 - o God guides the servant to Haran
 - o He ends up at just the right well
 - o At just the right time of day
 - o One of Nahor's granddaughters shows up
 - o She just happens to be beautiful

We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps. – Proverbs 16:9 NLT

The steps of a man are ordered by the LORD who takes delight in his journey. – Psalm 37:23 NLT

- The servant had asked for a sign
 - o And God had graciously obliged
 - o Rebekah was the obvious answer
 - o And the servant gave God the credit

The man bowed his head and worshiped the LORD and said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master." – Genesis 24:26-27 ESV

- **The stage is set**

- The servant returned home with Rebekah
- Isaac and Rebekah were married
- And the next phase of God's plan began
- A case of déjà vu
 - o Rebekah proves to be barren
 - o Isaac prays for her healing – **for 20 years**
 - o Another delay in the promise
 - Abraham had fathered 6 more sons
 - Ishmael had fathered 12 sons
 - But Isaac remained without an heir
 - So, he prayed, watched, and waited

- Rebekah conceived

And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. The children struggled together within her... – Genesis 25:21-22 ESV

- o She is informed by God that she is having twins
 - But the two boys will be in conflict with one another

“God was informing Rebekah and Isaac that they would be used to produce two nations through whom He would accomplish His divine plan of redemption. God could have blessed this couple with a single child, but He had other plans. At this point, His purpose for placing two sons in Rebekah’s womb remains obscure and difficult to ascertain. And His plan for those two sons to result in two nations that stand diametrically opposed to one another remains a mystery.” – Ken Miller, *Devotionary™ on Genesis*

- A fractured family with a shared future
 - o Chapter 25 ends on a dark note
 - o Esau has treated his birthright with disdain
 - o Jacob has cheated his brother through deceit
 - o And yet God is sovereign over all

- **A famine in the land**

Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. – Genesis 26:1 ESV

- God forbids Isaac from following his father’s example
- He reiterates the promises once again

Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. – Genesis 26:3 ESV

- **Discussion questions**

How do a fractured family and a devastating famine reveal God’s sovereignty? How could any of this be His plan?

Why would God provide Rebekah with two sons but then warn her that they would never get along? What purpose could God have for this blessing/curse?

Why is it unwise to judge God’s character based on the state of our circumstances? How are we guilty of doing so?