

Old Testament Lesson 10

BIRTHRIGHT BLESSINGS; MARRIAGE IN THE COVENANT

Prepared by Duane S. Crowther, March 2002

1. Events in Abraham's Old Age, and in the Lives of Isaac and Jacob

A. *Genesis 24:1-67*: Abraham [age 140] *sent his servants north to Haran to find a wife for Isaac* [age 40, *Gen. 25:20*] from among his kindred [so Isaac could marry a worthy woman and fulfill his destiny under the Abrahamic Covenant]. The Lord led the servant to find **Rebekah** (daughter of Bethuel, son of Abraham's brother Nahor and his wife Milkah). Rebekah returned to Beersheba with the servants and married Isaac.

B. *Genesis 25:1-6*: **Abraham married Keturah**, and they had six sons. He also had sons by several concubines (which were given to him under the law: see *D&C 132:37*).

C. *Genesis 25:7-10*: **Abraham died at age 175** and was buried alongside his wife Sarah, by his sons Isaac and Ishmael, in the cave of Machpelah in Hebron.

D, *Genesis 25:12-16*: **The generations of Ishmael**: he fathered 12 sons who were "princes" of "nations" who lived throughout Canaan. Ishmael died at age 137.

E. *Genesis 25:19-26*: When **Rebekah** had long been barren, Isaac [age 60, *Gen. 25:26*] intreated the Lord, and *she conceived twins. Rebekah sought revelation* from the Lord, who told her: "Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." [v. 23] When the twins were born, **Esau** was born first, **Jacob**, the second-born, caught his brother's heel as he emerged from the womb.

F. *Genesis 25:27-34*: **Esau**, the hunter, *sold his birthright* to his brother Jacob, a "plain man," for a bowl of pottage of lentils.

G. *Genesis 26:1-23*: **The third "She is my sister" experience** [see again *Gen. 12:10-20* (Abraham in Egypt, with Pharaoh) and *Gen. 20:1-18* (Abraham among the Philistines, with Abimelech, king of the Philistines, in Gerar)].

H. *Genesis 26:13-23, 32-33*: **Isaac "waxed great,"** moved from Gerar to Beersheba; found water there and named the place *Beersheba*, as Abraham had previously done. [Compare *Gen. 26:32-33 & 21:22-31*.]

I. *Genesis 26:24*: The **Lord appeared to Isaac** and said: "I am the God of Abraham thy Father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake."

J. *Genesis 26:26-31*: **Abimelech** came to Beersheba from Gerar, proposed and *made a "non-aggression" treaty with Isaac*: "We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee, . . . thou art now the blessed of the Lord." [vv. 28-29]

K. *Genesis 27:1-40*: Guided by Rebekah, **Jacob deceived his almost-blind father, Isaac, and received the birthright blessing** which he had bought from Esau: "God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee." [vv. 28-29]

1. **Esau complained**: "he took away my birthright; . . . now he hath taken away my blessing." [v. 36]

2. **Jacob told Esau**: "I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants: and with corn and wine I have sustained him." [v. 37]

3. "**The birthright** was usually passed from father to eldest son. Receiving this birthright meant that the eldest son would inherit a double share of the family wealth, and in return he

would preside over the family and take care of his mother and sisters after his father's death."
[*Old Testament Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*, p. 42]

4. **Esau received a lesser blessing** from Isaac: "Thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." [vv. 39-40] [Esau became father of the *Edomites*.]

5. "**In determining the heir to the covenant**, the Lord chose **Isaac** over his older brother **Ishmael** (Galatians 4:22-23), **Jacob** over his older brother **Esau**, **Joseph** over his older brother **Reuben** (1 Chronicles 5:1-2), and **Ephraim** over his older brother **Manasseh** (Genesis 48:17-20). What does this suggest about how we become qualified for God's callings and blessings?"
[*Old Testament Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*, p. 43]

L. *Genesis 28:1-7, 28:1-13*: **Isaac** forbade his son to marry a Canaanite woman, and **sent Jacob** north to Padan-aram [Haran, see map 9] **to marry one of the daughters of Laban** [Rebekah's brother]. [vv. 1-2] He repeated the promise of great posterity made to Abraham. [vv. 3-4] **Jacob met Rachel** by the well and watered Laban's sheep. He stayed with Laban a month, then 20 years.

M. *Genesis 28:8-9*: **Esau**, seeing that his previous wives from Canaan displeased his parents [see Gen. 26:34-35], **took another wife**, Mahalath, who was a daughter of Ishmael.

N. *Genesis 28:10-22*: En route to Haran, **Jacob had a vision** when he was in Beth-el [map 10], in which he saw a ladder which reached up into heaven, with angels on it. The Lord appeared and told him: (1) I am the Lord of Abraham and Isaac. (2) I will give the land where you are to you and your seed. (3) Your seed will be [as numerous as] the dust of the earth, and will spread abroad north, south, east and west. (4) "in thee and in thy seed shall the families of the earth be blessed." (5) I am with thee, and will keep thee [safe] (6) and will bring thee again into this land. [vv. 13-15]
Jacob vowed a vow, saying that if the Lord would do all of the above, "of all that thou shalt give me *I will surely give the tenth unto thee*." [vv. 20-22]

O. *Genesis 29:15-30*: **Jacob contracted with Laban** that he would serve Laban seven years for the hand of Rachel, the younger sister of Leah. At the end of the seven years, Laban gave him **Leah**, instead. After a honeymoon week with her, **Laban gave him Rachel also**, but committed him to another seven years of service.

P. *Genesis 29:31-35; 30:1-24*: **Jacob's 12 sons and a daughter**:

1. By **Leah**: (1) Reuben, (2) Simeon, (3) Levi, (4) Judah, (9) Issachar, (10) Zebulun, (10a) Dinah [a daughter]
2. By Rachel's maid, **Bilhah**: (5) Dan, (6) Naphtali
3. By Leah's maid, **Zilpah**: (7) Gad, (8) Asher
4. By **Rachel**: (11) Joseph, (12) Benjamin [see Genesis 35:16-20]

2. Notes:

A. **Rebekah's willingness to serve others**: "A camel can drink up to 30 gallons in one day, so Rebekah would have had to draw a great deal of water to satisfy 10 camels." [*Ibid.*, p. 42]

B. **The importance of temple marriage**: **Howard W. Hunter**: "Let us plan for and teach and plead with our children to marry in the house of the Lord. Let us reaffirm more vigorously than we ever have in the past that it does matter where you marry and by what authority you are pronounced man and wife." [*Ensign*, November 1994, p. 88] **Spencer W. Kimball**: "Religious differences are fundamental differences. Religious differences imply wider areas of conflict. Church loyalties and family loyalties clash. Children's lives are often frustrated. . . . without a common faith, trouble lies ahead for the marriage. There are some exceptions but the rule is a harsh and unhappy one. . . . True, a small

percentage have finally been baptized after marrying Church members. . . . They are our blessed minority. . . . But the majority did not join the Church and . . . friction, frustration and divorce marked a great many of their marriages.” [The Miracle of Forgiveness, pp. 241-242]

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