

Introduction

Abraham's story is not a story of a perfect man, but of a perfect God who gently and consistently led him forward in faith. The story concludes with two genealogies bracketing his death. The first genealogy (vv. 1–6) lists the sons Abraham has with another wife, Keturah. The second genealogy (vv. 12–18) lists the descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's son through Hagar (his wife Sarah's servant). The names in these genealogies, like earlier genealogies in Genesis, seem to correspond to people groups and places. However, of the names in the list, only Midian and Ishbak can be identified with places or people groups with certainty.¹

Abraham was one of the most important men of the Bible. He is mentioned 70 times in the New Testament alone. Only Moses is mentioned more times in the New Testament (80 times).

Additional Information:

Keturah - Second wife of Abraham. It is unclear whether he married her before or after Sarah's death ([Gn 25:1](#)). Keturah's status was not identical to that of Sarah. She is called a concubine ([Gn 25:6](#), cf. [1 Chr 1:32](#)), and her sons were presented with gifts instead of receiving a share in the inheritance. Keturah's sons were the ancestors of tribes with which Israel came into contact after the conquest, especially Midian and Jokshan's sons Sheba and Dedan ([Gn 25:3](#)). As far as can be determined, the tribes settled in the north and central regions of the northern Euphrates as far as the central sections of the Arabian desert. They were merchants ([Gn 37](#)) and shepherds ([Ex 2:16](#)). They were involved in international trade: "A multitude of camels shall cover you [the land], the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord" ([Is 60:6](#)). The queen of Sheba, a descendant of Jokshan ([Gn 25:3](#)), came to Solomon to initiate trade relations: "She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels bearing spices, and very much gold, and precious stones ([1 Kgs 10:2](#))."²

Midian - The term here refers to the land of Midian, which was in northwest Arabia, east of the Gulf of Aqaba. As a clan (or confederacy of clans), the Midianites were located in a widespread area from Midian to the northern borders of Egypt. Midianite traders purchased Joseph from his brothers ([Gen 37:25,28](#); compare [Judg 8:24](#)) and sold him to Ishmaelites ([Gen 37:28](#)).³

Midian and his descendants figure prominently only in the early history of Israel, in connection with Abraham ([Gn 25:1–6](#)), Joseph ([Gn 37:25–36](#)). Moses ([Ex 2:15–3:1](#)), Balaam ([Nm 22:1–6](#); [25](#); [31:1–20](#)), and Gideon ([Jgs 6:1–8:28](#)).

¹ John D. Barry et al., Faithlife Study Bible (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), [Ge 25:1–18](#).

² Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, "Keturah," in Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1262.

³ John D. Barry et al., Faithlife Study Bible (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), [Ge 25:2](#).

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By calling Midian and his full brothers “the sons of Keturah” ([Gn 25:4](#); [1 Chr 1:32, 33](#)), the Bible carefully distinguishes them from Isaac, the son of Sarah, who was the one through whom God’s promise to Abraham would be fulfilled ([Gn 12:1–3](#); [17:15–21](#)). In fact, Abraham and the Israelites regarded these other sons as having no more inheritance rights than a concubine’s sons (25:5, 6; [1 Chr 1:31](#)).

Expelled from Abraham’s family, for Isaac’s sake, they became (semi) nomadic peoples of the deserts east and south of Palestine ([Gn 25:5, 6](#)).⁴

Firstborn - This term refers to the firstborn son in a family ([Luke 2:7](#)). Paul figuratively refers to Christ as the firstborn (prōtotokos) of all creation ([Col 1:15](#)), meaning that he existed before creation. New Testament authors also refer to Christ as the firstborn (prōtotokos) of God ([Heb 1:6](#)) and the firstborn from the dead ([Col 1:18](#); [Rev 1:15](#)).⁵

Birthright - (בְּכֹרָה, bekhōrah). The special privileges granted to a firstborn son ([Gen 25:33](#); [1 Chr 5:1](#); [2 Chr 21:3](#)). The concept may be implied or intended in the New Testament (with the usage of πρωτότοκος, prōtotokos; in [Rom 8:29](#) “because those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”; [Col 1:18](#) “He is the head of the body, the church, as well as the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead, so that he himself may become first in all things.”; [Heb 1:4–6](#) “Thus he became so far better than the angels as he has inherited a name superior to theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, “**You are my son! Today I have fathered you**”? And in another place he says, “**I will be his father and he will be my son.**” But when he again brings his firstborn into the world, he says, “**Let all the angels of God worship him!**””⁶

Inheritance The portion of possessions that transfers to an heir upon the owner’s death. The Old Testament presents inheritance principally in the context of legal dealings concerning property. It also applies these basic ideas to the theological statements of the land as Israel’s inheritance and Israel as God’s inheritance. The New Testament deals with inheritance largely as the promised eternal kingdom of God shared by those called by grace.⁷

Name Meanings:

Esau = "hairy"

Edom = "red"

⁴ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Midian, Midianite,” in Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1456.

⁵ Dougald McLaurin III, “Ancestry and Posterity,” in Lexham Theological Wordbook, ed. Douglas Mangum et al., Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

⁶ John D. Barry et al., eds., “Birthright,” in The Lexham Bible Dictionary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

⁷ Chad Chambers, “Inheritance,” in The Lexham Bible Dictionary, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

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Jacob = "heel holder" or "supplanter" or "layer of snares". Additionally, the idea of a "heel-catcher" *meant* something in that day. It had the idea of "trickster," "con-man," "scoundrel," or "rascal." It wasn't a compliment.

Observation

1. What is the prophecy about the nations of Jacob & Esau, where did you see this division happening before? (read also Genesis 27:37-40)

2. What character traits did God see from before Jacob and Esau were born? What character traits do you see on display in Jacob and Esau?

Interpretation

3. *Why was Jacob so determined to get the birthright?*

4. What does [Genesis 25](#) tell us about "God's ways" in His dealings with Abraham and his descendants? (Hebrews 12:16; [Romans 9:10-13](#))

5. How does the gradual unfolding of God's promises in [Genesis 25](#) reflect His character and faithfulness?

6. How can understanding the lives of those in [Genesis 25](#) encourage us to stay faithful to God's calling in our own lives?

Application

7. Which character in [Genesis 25](#) do you find the most relatable, and why?