

**Reading Genesis & Exodus as Christian Scripture for the Church Today**  
**Diocese of Chichester Online Book Group for The Year of the Old Testament 2023:**  
**Genesis 11:10-25:18 - Abraham (21/6/23)**

**11:10 – new section marker: “This is the family history of Shem”**

11:27, “This is the family history of Terah”

25:12, “This is the family history of Ishmael”

25:19, “This is the family history of Isaac” (the story of Jacob and Esau)

The headings here are adapted from Wenham p259:

**11:27-32 – Genealogical introduction – “This is the genealogy of Terah”**

From this point on, the rest of the book of Genesis relates to the story of Abraham and his family, which of course shapes the whole Old Testament.

From the cosmic beginnings of Genesis, we come now to a family saga, but one with worldwide significance.

Like a vast inter-generational novel or a great soap opera - the consequences of actions for those around and for future generations.

A connected web of stories - interwoven lives and relationships.

God’s work through the mess and tangle of life.

A host of characters

Tragedy, hope, love, life, death, advance and reversal, restoration

The stuff of human life.

We trace the line of the covenant, but we also see relationships with the nations.

As we’ve seen before, the text has great skill and artistry. The tales are movingly told.

We have both very human stories (with striking universal and particular features), and the miraculous presence of God himself. How do these stories shape our story / touch us?

Genesis will be dominated now by the stories of Abraham (& Isaac), Jacob and Joseph. Their stories have various similarities to one another and to the future history of Israel. Wenham points out commonalities (p257): leaving homes, quarrelling brothers, going to(wards) Egypt, wives / Joseph attempted to be seduced, barrenness, favour to younger sons, brides met at a well, promises of children / land / blessing, gentiles acknowledge their blessing, burial in cave of Machpelah. We’ll keep an eye out for this kind of repetition (maybe with change), typology and for symbolism / recurring motifs.

Westermann saw a chiastic structure (Wenham, p262):

Chapter 12: Birth of a child

Chapter 13: Lot

Chapters 15-17: Promises

Chapters 18-19: Lot

Chapters 20-25: Birth of a child

Alexander suggests (Wenham, p263):

Sarah endangered: Abraham in Egypt (12:10-13:1)

Lot episodes I (13:2-14:24)

Covenant with Abraham (15:1-21)

Birth of Ishmael (16:1-16)

### Covenant with Abraham (17:1-27)

Lot episodes (18:1-19:38)

Sarah endangered (20:1-18)

Like Adam and Noah (5:32), Terah is a father of three sons (11:27) – a new Adam / Noah / a new epoch / a new humanity?

The premature death of Terah's (probably firstborn son) Haran (11:28), but his name / family line are preserved

11:27 – "Abram" – "Ab" = "Father"; "rum" = "high / exalted";

17:5 – "Abraham" = "Father of a multitude"

Family tree of Terah (Wenham, p272)

### 12:1-9 – Call and promises to Abraham and first journey

12:1-3 – the promises to Abraham, Isaac (26:3-4) and Jacob (27:28-29) all fall into seven clauses (a perfect number).

"Bless" is used five times in vv2-3, perhaps corresponding to the five times curses have been pronounced in the preceding chapters (3:14, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25) – in a way might we say the curses will be (somewhat) undone through the promises to Abraham and his seed?

(The call to Abraham to go somewhere God will indicate is repeated in 22:2)

Sarai is Abraham's half-sister (daughter of Terah) – 20:12

Wenham: "within the book of Genesis no section is more significant than 11:27-12:9" (p281)

In 12:1-9, Abraham "is portrayed as traversing the land of promise from end to end. Symbolically taking possession of it..." (p282) "his actions... are an acted prophecy. They foreshadow the day when Israel will take possession of the whole land and worship the LORD there." (p283)

The promises to Abraham (12:2-3, which will be repeated / expanded / clarified in 15; 17; 22:15-18):

(1) People – many descendants – cf. the original instruction to humanity to multiply 1:28

(2) Place – promised land (13:14-17)

(3) Blessing – a great name etc. (cf. Babel – 11:4; 12:2) – blessing for the nations (cf. the curse on the nations at Babel) – cf. Israel, later, a light for the nations – this one family chosen for the sake of the world (cf. the Christian church, a new Israel, salt and light to the world etc.) – election not intended to be something selfish and insular but brings a vocation with it, an overflowing spreading blessing

The promises to Abraham fulfilled in the Messiah, the Seed, God's man

Abraham's name (*abram*) also sounds like the word for blessing (*abarekeka*)

Allusions to Genesis 12 in Isaiah 19:24; Jer 4:2

Keep an eye on these themes of people / descendants, place, blessing. To what extent are they fulfilled in Genesis / the Torah? What future fulfilment is to come?

The great problem of an heir; the real and legal possession of a little bit of the promised land by the end of the Abraham story

The nations being blessed through Abraham – cf. Sodom, Abimelech – Acts 3:25; Galatians 3:8

The promises to Abraham as a basis of a Bible Overview:

Graham Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom; According to Plan* (on biblical theology)

Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the story line of the Bible* (IVP) - see table & diagram – figures 42 & 43, pp149f) – The theme of Kingdom of God (people, place, blessing):

Patterned - Eden

Perished – Fall  
 Promised – to Abraham  
 Partial – OT Israel – Exile  
 Prophesied – return from Exile – Messiah  
 Present – Earthly ministry of Jesus (a foretaste of the kingdom of God in all its fullness)  
 Proclaimed – The church age, gospel preached to all the nations who can join the family of Abraham by faith and share in the blessings  
 Perfected – New Creation

Abraham's life follows a symmetrical pattern:

75 years with his father  
 25 years without father or son  
 75 years with his son (Cassuto, cited in Wenham, p278)

The problem of an heir for Abraham: Lot? (Eliezer of Damascus? – 15:2) Ishmael? Isaac!  
 Abraham takes Lot – continuing the line of Haran (12:4) – an adopted son or a brother? Does Abraham think that Lot might be his heir, through whom the promises will be fulfilled?

12:6 - Shechem – a place of family division – Joseph (Genesis 37) – division of southern and northern kingdom (1 Kings & 2 Chronicles)

12:8 - Ai – later, failure to enter into the land

### **12:10-20 – Famine drives Abram and Sarai in Egypt**

12:10 – Famine drives Abraham to Egypt, as it will later with Jacob (47:4; also famine on 26:1 – Isaac goes to Abimelech king of the Philistines at Gerar) – threat – repeats Exodus story – plagues on Pharaoh (12:17) – Abraham sent away with his belongings (12:20)

Abraham a rather unheroic hero? Cunning? God's grace despite Abraham's sin? / weakness?  
 Abraham not a blessing to the nations here!

Morality in Old Testament narrative – often not explicit – be careful about reading in (eisegesis rather than exegesis, that is reading into the text things that might not be there rather than getting out of the text what the human author and / or God intends) – moral lessons may not be the main point, rather we are concerned with salvation-history, tracing the purposes of God etc.

12:12ff - Abraham tells a half-truth if not a total outright lie – he deceives - ? plays for time – Abraham as husband is an obstacle to them taking Sarai's beauty, someone to be got rid of, leaving the rest of his party exposed, whereas Sarai's brother would be the marriage broker to be courted – Abraham might protect Sarai and those dependant on him better in this way? (Brothers who try to delay their sister's marriages – Rebekah 24:55; Dinah 34:13-17)

(Abraham fears that he will be killed and his wife spared; cf. the later Pharaoh killing the baby boys and sparing the baby girls – Ex 1:16)

Similarly ch. 20 (Abraham again); 26:7 – Isaac, Rebekah and Abimelech

Sarai is about 65 years old and is thought outstandingly attractive. Calvin said childless women preserve their beauty longer than mothers!

A Fall Story?

Sarai and the trees of the garden are beautiful / pleasant – 2:9; 12:11; seeing, desiring – 3:6-7; 12:15-16

12:18 – “What have you done?” – exactly the same question to Eve (3:13) similarly to Cain (4:10) and 20:9; 26:10.

V20 – sent away – cf. 3:23; and Exodus 3-11 – cf. Ex 11:1; 12:32

Abraham leaves Egypt with possessions cf. Exodus 12:35-36

(cf. prophecy of bondage in Egypt 15:13-16)

(cf. Is 40-55 – the return from exile in Babylon is repeatedly compared to the Exodus and the call of Abram)

Sarai – wife / sister – she is in fact Abraham’s half-sister;

Lot – son / brother, heir or rival? Division – Lot not going to be the heir (ch. 13)

Genesis seems to love juxtapositions – compare and contrast these pairs

Abraham and Lot

Cain and Abel

Ishmael and Isaac

Sarah and Hagar

Rebecca and Rachel

Jacob and Esau

Judah and Joseph

Abraham doesn’t build a city (he lives in tents) or a babel-like tower; he builds an altar to the LORD – a response of worship to the promises of God. Abraham doesn’t just want to make his own name great; he looks to the LORD and wants to praise God’s name, who will make his name great 12:7; 13:18.

### **13:1-18 – Abraham and Lot separate**

13:5-6 – similar wrangles between Isaac and the Philistines (26:12-22) and Jacob and Laban (30:43) and Jacob and Esau (36:6-7)

13:10 – a reminder of Eden (Isa 51:3; 2:8-14, well-watered) - Looking, seeing, choosing, going East might again be seen as negative (East of Eden 3:24; 4:16; 11:1f)

Not as good as it looks – or at least it won’t be good for Lot! (1 Sam 16:7)

13:13 – evil – 6:5; 8:21

“Lot, when he fancied he was living in paradise, was nearly plunged into the depths of hell” (Calvin)

Abraham’s open-handed generosity rewarded – trusting God not hoarding

Also echoes of the Exodus (Wenham, p300)

The uncountability of those who belong to the family of Abraham by faith (Rev 7:9)

### **14:1-24 – Abram rescues Lot**

Ch 14 – cf. Genesis 9 and the curses 9:24ff

Abraham acts rather like a king / tribal leader – he is a significant figure, not just a lone pilgrim / with his nuclear family

(Echo of Gideon’s 300 men and night time attack? – Judges 7)

A foreshadowing of the conquest of the land under Joshua – the playing out of the history of Israel in advance – Abraham has spied out the land and now he takes possession of it

Contrast the grudging attitude of the King of Sodom towards Abraham (18-20) and Melchizedek’s acknowledgement of divine blessing on Abraham (22-24)

V14 – so Abraham’s group was likely well over 1000 – 300 would seem a sizable army by Canaanite standards

14:18 - Melchizedek – King of Salem (? Jerusalem) – Priest – bread and wine – Christ the greater Melchizedek

V20 – later tithe legislation – Num 18; Lev 27:30-33  
 Cf. Ps 110 – the Davidic king a priest like Melchizedek; Heb 5-7

14:22-15:1 – God will make Abraham great (no human being)

### **15:1-21 – Covenant with Abram**

A repetition, clarification, expansion of the promises. Particularly, v4, the promise of an heir from his own body, not Lot nor Eliezer of Damascus

V6 – Romans 4:3 - James 2:22 – Abraham’s faith demonstrated by his actions

15:9 - The five species of animals offered in the sacrificial system – The sacrifices represent the people – God walking with his people (Lev 26:12)

Cf. Jer 34:18 – God invoking a curse on himself if he does not keep the covenant?

Leviticus 1, dividing up sacrifices – the sacrifices recall this covenant between God and his people and God’s oath

V11 - The birds of prey may represent foreign attack (cf. ch. 14). Birds stand for the nations in the parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:32; cf. Dan 4) and Satan in the parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:4, 19)

15:12 - Abraham’s sleep – cf. Adam and the animals, a deep sleep, woman, taking, giving, listening to the wife, seeing / eyes (God sees, v13), blame, fleeing, finding, judgement, increase / multiply 15:10, Gen 3:16 – 16:1-5 – another Fall story! – Eve built from Adam; Sarah wants to be built up (16:2)

15:18 - Covenant – 6:18; 9:9-17

Abraham a prophet, priest and king (Wenham, p335)

(References to Wenham after this point are to his Word Biblical Commentary (volume 2) Genesis 16-50)

### **16:1-16 – Birth of Ishmael to the slave girl Hagar**

On the structure of chapter 16, see Wenham p3f

16:1 – Hagar’s Egyptian status – a reversal of the Exodus story : here, by contrast, the people of God oppress the Egyptian – Sarah is like an Egyptian slave master (same word used) - and God hears Hagar (sees and cares) and meets her in the wilderness (v6 – “humiliated” also used on 15:13; Ex 1:12. “Ran away” – Ex 14:5)

“Hagar” may mean “flight”, anticipating her future fleeing

Childlessness a serious problem in the ancient world (name, legacy, welfare etc.) and seen as a failure / lack of blessing

Sarah blames God for his mistake in not giving her a child and sets about to rectify it! (Works not faith, human wisdom and “power” not trusting God, his timing, his ways)

Another Fall story:

V2 – Abraham obeys / listens to his wife as in 3:17

V3 – echoes 3:6 – the wife takes and gives to her husband

V5 – blame-shifting – 3:12-13

V7 – The Angel of the LORD – looks like a man but is God 18:2, 22; Judges 6:11-22; 13:3-22. The Fathers took this to be the pre-incarnate Son.

V8 – unlike Adam (3:9) and Cain (4:9), Hagar answers very honestly and straightforwardly  
 V10 – “I shall greatly multiply” echoes the promises of 17:2; 22:17; 26:24 and also the curse of 3:6.  
 Hagar is blessed, rather than cursed.  
 V11 – oppression, v6, v9. 29:32; 1 Sam 1:11; Ex 3:7; 4:31; Dt 26:7  
 Cf. Mary the mother of Jesus, similarly humbly obeys God’s word – her son brings blessing to many

### **17:1-27 – Covenant of Circumcision**

On similarities to chapter 16; the chiasmic structure (centred on vv9-14); or two parallel panels (vv1-14; 16-27) see Wenham, p17f

Abraham and Sarah’s new names

V2 – “I shall multiply exceedingly” is an anagram of Abraham

Circumcision – Israel as a new body of people, cut off, differentiated from the nations, a distinct identity, marked out - Ex 22, 8<sup>th</sup> day separation, sacrifice, dedication to God

V5 – “Abraham” – “father of a multitude”

V6 – v2 – being fruitful and multiplying recalls 1:28; 8:17; 9:1, 7- a new epoch for humanity

V7 – the heart of the covenant is this special relationship with God: I will be their God and they will be my people

V10 - Circumcision was practiced by the majority of Israel’s neighbours, including the Egyptians, Canaanites and Arabs.

A permeant mark is suitable to an everlasting covenant (vv7, 13, 19)

“Circumcision” of other parts of the body ears, lips, heart (Jer 6:10; 9:24-25)

Circumcision as a kind of taming / domesticating / making fruitful / pruning – Leviticus 19 – the circumcision of trees – Israelite fertility is not to be wild – cleansing

Leviticus 12 - a sort of symbolic castration / death

Grace not works, not by man’s power – circumcision is done to the son, not something done by him  
 Collective solidarity

The importance of the body (Romans 12:1)

The cross as a bloody cutting off in death

Those who don’t have the cutting off of circumcision will be cut off from the people

NT references to circumcision: Romans 2, 3, 4; Colossians 2; Galatians 5-6

Cf. baptism as a New Testament covenant sign

V17 – “Isaac” = laughter – Abraham’s laugh of joy – Sarah’s laughter (18:12-15) - Ishmael’s laughing, mocking, making sport of (21:9), Ishmael is Isaac, he is a threatening rival to Isaac – Isaac laughs (ESV) with Rebecca (sports, plays, NIV caressing, 26:8)

### **18:1-15 – Divine visitation to Abram**

Cf. Abraham & Lot

Cf. Destruction of Sodom and flood – one righteous man and his family saved, followed by intoxication and shameful treatment by children

Verbal connections with the flood story: 18:16, 6:9 (walking / going); 18:19, 18:23-326:9, 7:1 (righteousness); The LORD seeing the wickedness etc. in 18:17-21 akin to 6:5-8; “ruin”; shutting the door; favour; remembering

19:29 – “God remembered Abraham” (not Lot!) cf. 8:1 – “God remembered Noah”

Wenham, p41: chiasm 18:16-19:29 – centred on 19:12-13

Similarities between chapters 18 and 19 – see Wenham, p43f

V1 – contrast the midday with the night of Sodom – 19v1ff

Entertaining angels unawares Heb 13:2 – Abraham’s hospitality contrasts with the hostility of Sodom – Ezekiel 16

V1 – The LORD – v2 – Three men

Vv9-10 - They / he shift – the Angel of the LORD – God himself (the pre-incarnate son) and two angels? – Three visitors, two angels go on to Sodom (19v1)

V6 - Excessive measures of flour – a lavish feast

V9 – cf. 3:9; 4:9

Vv12-15 Sarah laughs – an unexpected surprise, “Isaac” = laughter, will be defined by a turning of the tables

2 Kings 4 – the Shunamite and her son (“next year” in v10 and in 2 Kings 4:16f) – Isaac and the son are both miraculously born and brought back from the dead

### **18:16-33 – Abraham’s intercession for Sodom**

V17 - God conferring with Abraham, the friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7; James 2:23) – like a prophet (20:7), a member of God’s council with whom he deliberates (Amos 3:7; Jer 23:18) cf. Moses’ intercession Ex 32-34; 1 Sam 12:23; Amos 7:1-9; Jer 14:7-9, 13; 15:1

V20 – cf. the outcry of Abel’s blood on 4:10

V21 - Cf. Babel 11:5, 7 – going down to see – a divine inspection

The visit of the two angels to Sodom (perhaps the LORD does not visit as he cannot endure sin) - Moses and Aaron go to test Egypt; Two spies went to Jericho; Jesus sends out his disciples two by two: how will they be received? A testing of hospitality. Will it result in blessing or judgement? (Guilt established by two witnesses – Dt 17:6; 19:15).

V23ff - Abraham begs the angels to stay (v3); Abraham begs for Sodom

A negotiating / bargaining (but kind of in reverse!) – God just keeps saying yes, not driving a hard bargain – God is very generous and merciful

Why 10? Lot and his family?

Sodom an ugly society where people use or are used, whereas Abraham is to be a faithful father (18:19)

### **19:1-29 – Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah**

Lot sitting in the gateway of the city – a person of standing, where business is done, disputes are settled

Lot alone welcomes the visitors – the people of Sodom inhospitable (contrast Abraham)

Cf. chapter 18 – hospitality and a feast but now unleavened bread (v3) - suggesting haste? – cf.

Abraham’s hurry – a pointer to Exodus – circumcision in preparation (ch. 17 and Exodus 4) – the angels going to pass by (as in Passover)?

V5ff - A threat at the doorway – staying inside for safety – Passover – Rahab at Jericho (visitors to a city saved)

V8 - Were the daughters inside or not? Is Lot playing for time?

V9 - Cf. the resentment of Moses as Judge – Ex 2:14

V10 – shutting the door cf. the shutting of the door of the ark - 8:9

## Similarities with Judges 19

V11 - Miracle with Elisha – blindness – 2 Kings 6:18

V17ff – as Abraham pleaded for Sodom, Lot pleads for “Zoar” (=“small”)

v17 – “swept away” – Flood language, judgement coming

The destruction of Sodom also foreshadows the fate of the Canaanite inhabitants of the promised land

The LORD is merciful to fearful, weak, selfish Lot

A kind of Exodus from Sodom, but not with the blessing of the Exodus

v19 - Movement towards the mountain – the spies in the promised land – Israel to Sinai - Elijah

Sarah is going to be fruitful; Lot’s wife becomes unfruitful – Lot’s two daughters; Abraham’s two sons – a promise at a doorway (of the tent); a threat at a doorway; the closing of a door, the opening of a womb;

Pillar of salt / a pillar of memory (Gen 28)

V29 – echoes 8:1 – Lot saved for Abraham’s sake

Other references to Sodom and Gomorrah: Lev 18:3-30; 20:22-23; Is 1:9; 3:9; Jer 23:14; Am 4:11; Dt 29:23; 32:32; Is 13:19; Jer 49:18; Zeph 2:9; Mt 10:15; 11:23; Lk 10:12; 17:26-32

2 Pt 2:6-8

### 19:30-38 - Lot’s daughters’ incest with him

Like much of Abraham’s story, a story about the problem of getting heirs

Drunkness and uncovering of nakedness / sin against the father with consequences for future generations – Noah and Lot cf. ch. 9

Lot’s daughters desperate / traumatised ? in a post-apocalyptic context

A fall story

Cf. Lot’s offer of his daughters to the people of Sodom – their virginity is sacrificed to their father

Cf. Tamar and her sexual relations with her father-in-law Judah so as to get an heir (Genesis 38)

Rich Lot who had a promising future is reduced to living in a cave

### 20:1-18 – The move to Gerar: Abimelech takes Sarah into his harem

Chiasm vv1-18 centred on v18

Cf. chapter 12 (Abraham in Egypt); 26 (Isaac, Rebekah and Abimelech)

V1 – journeyed & settled echo 12:9-10

The region of Sodom had been previously like Eden, but Abraham is now driven toward Egypt (possibly by need). (The Philistines are associated with Egypt).

Abraham’s consistent approach of saying Sarah is his sister

Abimelech is principally blamed – v3, charge; vv4-5, defence; v6-7 God’s sentence

V3 – Dt 22:22 the only other occurrence of “she is married” lit. owned by an owner

Parallels with Exodus

A threat not only to the bride but to the seed – will Isaac be born according to the promise?

An assault by the serpent on the woman and her seed

The judgement on Abimelech and his people corresponds to the assault on the seed

Maybe Sarah seems like an attractive consort, a strategic alliance

V7 - Abraham the prophet (first use of this word in the Bible) – 20v7 – Abraham the intercessor who has influence with God, blessing the nations (cf. Abraham’s intercession for Sodom); Moses the great intercessor (also Samuel, Jeremiah, Amos); Job 42:8.

Vv9 – “What have you done?” as in 12:18 and 3:13



V14 – parallels 12:16 – 1000 shekels an enormous sum of money – a shekel = 12g – cf. Dt 22:29 – a Babylonian labourer might receive about half a shekel a month  
 Abraham as priest (builder of altars), king, prophet (increasing maturity)  
 Abimelech seeks blessing through Abraham (the nations are blessed through Abraham! 12:3; 18:18)  
 V18 echoes 16:2, the LORD's closing of Sarah's womb

### **21:1-21 – Isaac born; Ishmael leaves (v9ff)**

V1 – at long last! All as God has promised. God has done what seemed impossible - Cf. 1 Sam 2:21  
 v6 – the joyful birth of “Isaac” (“laughter”)  
 v9 – Ishmael – “laughs” / mocks / jests / makes fun of / could be playing / Isaacs / a competitive rival. Only one Isaac wanted! Ishmael can't be allowed to *play* that role. 19:21; Ex 32:6; Judges 16:25  
 V10 – cf. 15:4 – Eliezer of Damascus will not be Abraham's heir  
 V12 – Listening to the wife - 16:2; 3:17  
 V13 – cf. the promise concerning Ishmael in 17:20  
 V17 – “God heard” contains Ishmael's name – 16:11  
 V19 – seeing cf. 22:13; 2 Kings 6:17, 20 – Elisha's prayer concerning opening of eyes  
 Vv20-21 – cf. 16:12 – the prophecy about Ishmael  
 Sarah's behaviour vv6-7, v10 - cf. James 3:9 – blessing and cursing  
 1 Samuel 8 – the LORD doing as requested (though there is wickedness in the request)  
 Romans 9:7 quotes v12  
 Galatians 4:21-31 – the allegory of Hagar (Sinai, Jerusalem) and Sarah (the heavenly Jerusalem)

V20 - Ishmael, an archer - Hunters – Nimrod (10:9) – Esau (27v3, 5ff) – “wild ass” (16:12) – cf. God's people more likely to be shepherds than hunters

The birth of John the Baptist (a desert character – somewhat like Ishmael) preparing the way for Jesus. John the Baptist must become less so that Jesus must become greater. Ishmael as a kind of forerunner of Isaac who has to diminish so that Isaac may increase

1 Kings 19 – Elijah going into the wilderness, lad left behind, asking for death under a tree, provision, looking – Jezebel like Sarah (who casts out)  
 Cf. Genesis 37 – the selling of Joseph into slavery, cast out to the wilderness, seeing far off, lack of water, eating, Ishmaelites

### **21:22-34 – Abraham makes a covenant with Abimelech**

The covenant between Abraham and Abimelech – the nations are blessed through Abraham (12:12)  
 Cf. Abimelech's taking of Sarah, claim of ignorance, setting right, sheep  
 V23, 24, 28, 29, 30 – “swear” plays on the name Beersheba (v32f) – v28, seven is also a component of the word “Beersheba” = “well of oath” – “well” = “b'r” – v25, 30  
 V26 – Abimelech as in ch. 20 a man of good intentions who is not aware of something  
 Abraham's ? possession of the well - the promise of the land is beginning to be fulfilled in a small way?

### **22:1-19 – The testing of Abraham – the near sacrifice of Isaac**

Wenham: “the aesthetic and theological summit of the whole story of Abraham” (p99); “No other story in Genesis, indeed in the whole OT, can match the sacrifice of Isaac for haunting beauty of its theological depth.” (p112)

Abraham's life defined by sacrifice of past and future – laying down something in the present for the sake of hope, trusting – surrendering to God, giving to God that God might bless and give back / build up / make great – letting go not clinging on / grasping

Close parallel between chapter 21 and 22:

Here Abraham fulfils a role like Hagar's, Isaac like Ishmael

Similarities: early rising, taking the child (lad) and other things to another land, placing things on shoulders, the point of death, angelic deliverance, fear, hearing / obeying, inheritance, descendants / nation, eyes opened / seeing, promise to be with the boy, marriage of a foreign woman.

Cf. Ishmael under the shrub; lamb in the thicket

Also similarities to the Hagar and Ishmael story in chapter 16 (see further Wenham, p99f).

V2 and 12:1 – the first and last divine speeches to Abraham parallel one another

Wenham: "the whole of 22:1-19 reverberates with the echoes of earlier parts of the Abraham cycle" (p100)

V4 - Third day Abraham looks up – 40:20 – Third day lifting up of cup bearer and baker

Cf. Israel's testing in the wilderness and their three-day journey to worship God at Mount Sinai – seen from afar - Moses going up alone leaving the people down below

Cf. Day of Atonement ritual (Lev 16) – two goats: Ishmael and Isaac? Ishmael goes off into the wilderness, Isaac is nearly sacrificed

Chiasm around vv6c-10 (Wenham, p100)

Four main panels with verbal connections (Wenham, p101)

V1 – Abraham is tested – his true nature is revealed by this trial – later God will test Israel

2 Kings 4 – The Shulamite woman - a woman who has a child in her old age according to the promise and a dying son – a far off mountain

Abraham – "here I am" x3 – v1, v7, v11 – 37:13, Joseph, "Here I am"

Hagar distances herself from Ishmael (21:16); Abraham is present to God and to his son

Chiasm – son with the wood tied to his back (v6); son tied to the wood (v10) – going together (v8)

V6 – Genesis Rabbah, the Jewish Midrash, comments that Isaac with the wood on his back is like a condemned man, carrying his cross

A very radical test: called to give up everything. Think of the consequences for his relationship with Sarah and the LORD. Would Sarah ever forgive him? How would Abraham feel about God?

Abraham's initial call required leaving family / past / roots behind and go – sending out to a place you will be shown – now Abraham is asked to give up his family future!

V2 – "Your son, your only son, whom you love" – stressing the importance of Isaac to Abraham

Abraham simply obeys God and trusts God

V2 – On child sacrifice – Micah 6:7; Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; Judges 11:31-41- 2 Kings 3:27; 17:17

First born sons belong to God – Ex 22:29; 34:20

Isaac like Samiel (1 Samuel 1) a longed-for child dedicated to the LORD, given up to the LORD – note other echoes of the Samuel story in Abraham's: rival wife, opening of the womb, going up, weaning

Cf. 1 Samuel 3 – "here I am" – devastating news between father and son (judgement on Eli's sons)

Commenting v8, Calvin urges taking refuge in God's Providence: "God will provide himself": "This example is proposed for our imitation. Whenever the Lord gives a command, many things are perpetually occurring to enfeeble our purpose: means fail, we are destitute of counsel, all avenues seem closed. In such straits, the only remedy against despondency is, to leave the event to God, in

order that he may open a way for us where there is none. For as we act unjustly towards God when we hope for nothing from him but what our senses can perceive, so we pay Him the highest honor, when, in affairs of perplexity, we nevertheless entirely acquiesce in his providence." (Commentary on Genesis)

V9 – The word for “binding” occurs only here in the OT and the story is known to Jewish readers as “The Aqedah”, the binding of Isaac

V9 - A son who willingly accepts the will of his father than he be sacrificed (submits to being bound)

V12 – “Now I know” - omnisciently and eternally, of course! – anthropomorphic language again – it is confirmed / proved / demonstrated – Abraham has passed the test (cf. 18:21)

V12 – cf. Job 1:1 – his fear of God is also demonstrated through loss and in a mysterious test

Jean Danielou, *From Shadow To Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers* – Book III treats The Sacrifice of Isaac

Tertulian: *Adv. Marc.* III, 18: The fact that the sacrifice was not actually offered shows that it was done in type. It was carried out only in Jesus Christ. Isaac and Jesus carrying the wood / cross (*Adv. Jud.* 10, 13).

Irenaeus, we take up our cross “as Isaac his wood, and follow” (*Adv. Haer.* Ib)

Tertullian and Augustine both think the brier-thicket suggests Jesus’ crown of thorns (Citiv. Dei, XVI, 39)

Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* I, 232 bears witness to a tradition that Isaac consented voluntarily to his death. Athanasius, *Hom. Pasch.* VI, 8 also attributes the idea to the Jews.

Hippolytus of Rome says “Isaac offers his life for the world” (*Comm. Cant.* II, p1)

V13 - Substitutionary offering – the ram dies in the place of Isaac, instead of him

22:2, 14 - Mount Moriah = the temple mount, the place of sacrifice (2 Chronicles 3:1) – The LORD will provide another Lamb on this mountain!

V16 – the first and only divine oath in the patriarchal stories

Isaiah 53:7-10

Rm 8:31f echoes v12

Jn 3:16

The heavenly voice at Jesus’ baptism: “This is my beloved Son” – cf. Gen 22:2, 12, 16 LXX (“only”=*agapetos*, “beloved”)

1 Peter 1:19f

James 2:21-23

Cf. *Lo, the full, final sacrifice* (Op. 26) composed by Gerald Finzi in 1946 drawing on poems by Richard Crashaw (c. 1613-1649) translations of Latin hymns by Thomas Aquinas: “Lo, the full, final sacrifice / On which all figures fix’d their eyes, /The ransom’d Isaac, and his ram;”

## **22:20 -24 – Genealogy of Nahor / Rebekah etc.**

### **23:1-20 – Purchase of burial ground in the promised land**

25:9-10; 49:29-32; 50:13 refer back to the purchase of the cave

v1 - Sarah’s age - 127 – provinces in Esther 1:1 – a connection with Esther? – taken by a king because of their beauty, hiding their identities, a threat to the seed, fraternal protection

Burial in the land of promise an act of faith

Abraham seeks an actual legal possession in the land (not just as an honoured guest) – 23v3ff

v16 – 400 shekels of silver – a very high price – 50 years wages for a labourer – cf. Potter’s Field which is bought with Judas’ 30 shekels of silver (other land purchases 2 Sam 24:24; Jer 32:9; 1 Kings 16:24) – Abraham very wealthy! A possession in the land of promise really matters to Abraham – either this is quite a substantial piece of land or Abraham was ripped off!

Cf. Abraham didn't want to receive from the King of Sodom, doesn't want to be bound to the Hittites Heb 11:13-16 (cf. v4)

### **24:1-67 – Betrothal of Rebekah to Isaac**

The longest account in Genesis. A wife for Isaac is, of course, important for the fulfilment of God's promises.

Chapter 24 – a transition from Abraham to Isaac (the last words of Abraham in vv1-9)

The bride for Isaac has to be like Abraham, willing to make a journey like Abraham's away from her home and people

Again, generous hospitality like the extreme hospitality Abraham showed in chapter 18 (cf. v20 and 18:2-7, hurry, quickly, run)

Women at a well – marriage theme – Jacob and Rachel (29:2-14), Moses and Zipporah (Exodus 2), Jesus and the Samaritan woman also talk of marriages etc. (John 4)

Jacob will later similarly go back to Mesopotamia to find a wife (28:1-2).

On not marrying foreigners: Ex 34:16; Dt 7:3; Judg 3:6; 14:3; 1 Kings 11:1-2; Ezra 10; Neh 13:23-27; Mal 2:11; and cf. 1 Cor 7:39; 2 Cor 6:14-18

Origen: "Christ wishes to wed you, too, and for that reason sends his servant to you. This servant is the word of the prophets. You cannot be wed to Christ, if you have not at first received him"

(*Homilies on Genesis*, X, 2; Baehrens, pp94-95)

V29ff - Laban has an eye to material gain – v30, Camels were rare and luxurious and suggest wealth

The servant and Rebekah are hurrying; Laban is delaying

V60 – Rebekah's name is related to blessing (*berakah*) – cf. 22:17

More than answered prayer - Eph 3:20!

### **25:1-11 – Conclusion: The death and burial of Abraham**

For a family tree of Abraham and Keturah, see Wenham p157

Vv9-10 – Jacob and Esau will later similarly come together to bury their father Isaac (35:29)

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Galatians 3:6 – the promise of a seed to Abraham (singular) = Christ

Galatians 4:22-28

Danielou: "The substitution of the younger for the elder... was considered a type of the substitution of the Christian people for its elder brother the Jewish people." (p122)

Cf. Stephen's account of this in Acts 7

Hebrews 11

Romans 4

By the end of the Abraham story, the promises to Abraham have begun to be fulfilled in a very small way: he has an heir, and a small plot in the promised land, and he has been blessed, and he has been a blessing to some gentiles. There's a long way to go!

### **Further resources**

The Bible Talk Podcast from 9Marks from September 2020 works through Genesis in three chapter chunks - <https://open.spotify.com/show/139LZLksR8JMzbXOviIRRM>

Dale Ralph Davis, *Faith of our Fathers: Expositions of Genesis 12-25* (Christian Focus)

Jonty Rhodes, *Raiding the Lost Ark: Recovering The Gospel Of The Covenant King* (IVP)

Theopolis - <https://theopolisinstitute.com/search/?s=Abraham> – podcast series in the Life of Abraham with James Jordan Episode 614 onwards

Paul R. Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations: The Patriarchal Promise and its Covenantal Development in Genesis* (Bloomsbury) - (A friend commented: His view is occasionally misrepresented: while he argues that biographically there is more than one divine covenant with Abraham, there is of course only one Abrahamic covenant by the end of the book of Genesis.)

**Next time:** Wed 5<sup>th</sup> July – Genesis 25:19-36:40 – Isaac and Jacob