

# Genesis 23-25

THE ROAD AHEAD

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## Opening Thoughts

- \* We come now to the end of Abraham's life
- \* Focus of these next few chapters is Abraham "setting things in order"
- \* He addresses three major items ...
  - ◆ Family burial site - Gen 23
  - ◆ Wife for Isaac - Gen 24
- \* Thereafter his death, God's promises fulfilled ... and the transition of power to Isaac - Gen 25:1-18

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## Opening Thoughts

- \* These final chapters are about closure and narrowing the focus
  - ◆ Abraham “finishes well” and passes the ball to Isaac
  - ◆ Ishmael fades from the picture — God having fulfilled His promises to Hagar
  - ◆ The “Nations” diminish and THE NATION takes center stage ... and more-so with Jacob
  - ◆ AND Isaac becomes the carrier of God’s covenant

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## Structure of Gen 23

- \* The parting — vv. 1-2
- \* The procurement — vv. 3-18
- \* The placing (interment) — vv. 19-20
- \* **What is the main point of this chapter?**
  - ◆ In ANE culture you were buried in the place that you considered to be your “ancestral home”
  - ◆ So ... Abraham’s actions show he acknowledged Canaan as his temporal HOME, revealing his faith in God’s promises

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# The Parting

- \* Sarah is 127 years old at her death - v. 1
  - ◆ Placing Isaac's age at 37-38 (she was 90-91 when he was born ... cf. Gen 17:17)
- \* Abraham mourns her death - v. 2
  - ◆ Sarah died in Hebron ... in the "land of Canaan"
    - Repeated for emphasis in v. 19
  - ◆ We see Abraham's genuine ... and customary ... grief expressed in mourning her death
  - ◆ But he doesn't linger in self pity, proceeding to make her burial arrangements

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# The Parting

- \* Like Isaac's birth ... the reporting of Sarah's death is brief - almost to point of seeming cold
- \* But it's not ... And a good lesson for us
- 👤 We rightly grieve over the death of a loved one ... but, as believers, we also recognize that they have gone on eternal life and we continue on with temporal life.

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# The Procurement

- \* From here we now turn to this elaborate account of Abraham's procuring a burial site
- \* There are two parts to the process
  - ◆ The preamble — vv. 3-7
  - ◆ The procurement proper — vv. 8-18
- \* The process is ...
  - ◆ Formal, Elaborate, High-Context, and Wise

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# The Procurement

- \* Why does the procurement proceed in two parts?
  - ◆ Abraham wants BOTH general and specific "buy-in"
- \* The preamble — vv. 3-7
  - ◆ In this first part, Abraham speaks to the "people of the land" ... the sons of Heth
    - Possibly the line of Ham and his son Canaan - cf Gen 10:15
    - Most commentators trace the sons of Heth to the Hittites ... a people group first identified in Gen 15:20
  - ◆ He starts with a general appeal — because he wants full buy-in from "the community"

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# The Procurement

- \* Abraham emphasizes his status in v. 4
- \* Why does he mention this?
  - ◆ To emphasize he is subject to their mercy - he has no "legal" standing in the land
- \* His request in v. 4 is a little tricky
- \* What does it look like Abraham is asking for?
  - ◆ It looks like he is asking for a gift ... "a freebie" (give me)
- \* How do we know this is not his intent?
  - ◆ The narrative dispels this ... need to read ahead to a v. 9 makes explicit, AND
  - ◆ You have to know some Hebrew — BDB definition 1 "o" ... "to give for money"

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# The Procurement

- ◆ The idea in this preamble is to establish whether they will allow Abraham to have land at all ...
- ◆ Still in many countries today, foreigners cannot "have or buy" land ... "dirt" is important
- \* Verses 5-6 affirm their willingness, noting
  - ◆ Abraham's prominence, and ...
  - ◆ Their full endorsement
    - Take the choicest grave from among us
    - None of us will refuse

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# The Procurement

- \* That said, it is possible the offer is a disingenuous attempt to block “land acquisition” or keep Abraham “indebted” to them ... some commentators think so — I don’t
- \* Abraham closes the “preamble” in v. 7 with a sign of respect — got up and bowed
- \* Now the procurement proper begins in v. 8
  - ◆ Abraham asks for the “people” to approach a specific land owner (Ephron) on his behalf
- \* In v. 9, Abraham proffers four terms — **what are they?**

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# The Procurement

- ◆ A particular burial site
- ◆ A price - “full value”
- ◆ A public witness to the transaction
- ◆ A purpose - for a burial site — **Why is this important?**
  - ▶ To allay any fears he wants to “assemble land”
- \* Verses 10-16 then record “the art of the deal”
  - ◆ Ephron was already sitting at the gate ... **so why didn’t Abraham address him directly?**
    - ▶ This was the custom so as to allow both parties to “save face” if a deal was not forthcoming!

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# The Procurement

- ◆ Ephron extends the same offer (not expecting it to be accepted) in vv. 10-11 .. but adds a little twist
- ◆ What new idea does Ephron introduce?
  - ▶ He wants Abraham to buy the whole field
- ◆ Do you know why?
  - ▶ This was due to the way “taxes” were assessed
- ◆ Abraham again acknowledges the offer by bowing and then addresses Ephron directly in v. 13

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# The Procurement

- ◆ What is Abraham doing in v. 13?
  - ▶ Reaffirming his intention to compensate Ephron
  - ▶ Accepting Ephron's new term ... “I will give the price of the field”
  - ▶ AND ... Asking for the price!
- ◆ Ephron names his price .. 400 shekels of silver .. in v. 15 — which was a princely sum for the mighty prince 😊
  - ▶ Ephron was either extorting a high price or expecting Abraham to make a counter offer ... can't really say
  - ▶ In either event, Abraham lacks any real bargaining power

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# The Procurement

- \* Abraham pays the price with no haggling in v. 16
- \* What and how does Abraham display in this process overall and in v. 16?
  - ◆ What = Wisdom
  - ◆ How = Excessive courtesy
    - Pursued public and particular support for the deal,
    - No haggling — and one more BIG one, what is it?
    - Don't be **indebted** to others ... Turn back to Gen 14:21-23

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# The Procurement

- \* Then one more step in vv. 17-18 ... What?
  - ◆ He “recorded” the transaction
  - ◆ Clearly identified the property boundaries - v. 17a
  - ◆ Obtained a **deed** for the property — the transaction was conveyed “legally” - v. 17b-18
- \* So at this point, Abraham owns two parcels in the land
  - ◆ The “Well of Seven” ... AKA Beersheba (Gen 21:30ff)
  - ◆ The burial cave and associated field

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## The Placing (Interment)

- \* Abraham buries Sarah - v. 19
  - ◆ Note the repeated emphasis of “in the land of Canaan”
  - ◆ Over time — Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Leah will be buried at this site
- \* Reaffirms his possession and legal right to the land - v. 20

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## Closing Thoughts

- \* Death should be a time that genuine believers proclaim their faith most boldly ... *Why?*
  - ◆ Because we have hope in God's promises!
- \* Abraham's burial of Sarah in Canaan is proof of his unwavering faith in the future
  - ◆ Remember Gen 15:12-14 [READ]
- \* Which brings us to Chapter 24 .. and Abraham's “final order of business” to end well

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# Genesis 24

A BRIDE FOR ISAAC

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## Opening Thoughts

- \* What is the main theme of chapter 24?
  - ◆ "Faith in Action"
- \* There are three examples ... what are they?
  - ◆ Abraham's faith in God and his servant
  - ◆ The servant's faith in God to provide
  - ◆ Rebekah's faith in the unknown (her departing)

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## Opening Thoughts

- \* But there is one more important aspect of faith found in this chapter .. **What is it?**
  - ◆ God's faithfulness
  - ◆ Expressed in a Hebrew word we see for the 1<sup>st</sup> time
  - ◆ The word **חַסֵּד** which means — Lovingkindness
    - Of God in 24:12, 14, 27 ... in graciously meeting our needs
    - Of men in 24:49 ... toward their fellow-man

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## Structure of Gen 24

- \* The commission — vv. 1-9
- \* The courtship — vv. 10-21
- \* The confirmation — vv. 22-54a
- \* The conniving — vv. 54b-57
- \* The consent — vv. 58-61
- \* The consummation — vv. 62-67

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# The Commission

- \* Having "buried" Sarah, Abraham turns his attention to his last order of business ...
- \* A wife for Isaac
- \* What do we learn from v. 1?
  - ◆ Abraham is too old to travel
  - ◆ God had blessed Abraham in every way!
- \* So Abraham commissions his servant to carry out the arrangements on his behalf
  - ◆ An oath was requested ... note the "please" of v. 2b
  - ◆ The intimacy of the "mode" is intended to denote solemnity

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# The Commission

- \* What is being sworn upon?
  - ◆ The LORD — the God of heaven & earth in case you are confused by who I mean
- \* What are the key details of the commission?
  - ◆ The "wife pool" - vv. 3-4
    - ▶ No Canaanite woman
    - ▶ From my relatives
  - ◆ Isaac shall not accompany you! - v. 5

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# The Commission

- \* What lesson can we learn from the servants question in v. 5?
  - ◆ It's good to clarify terms when you are making a binding agreement with someone ... particularly a spouse!
  - ◆ It's also good to have a fair partner ... see v. 8
- \* What does Abraham demonstrate in v.7?
  - ◆ His "continued" faith in God's provision
  - ◆ Note the past tense of "provision" and the future tense of "confidence" ...
  - ◆ Essentially he says ... The God who **did** and swore these things before (past tense) **will do** (present tense) this thing also.

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# The Commission

- \* In v. 8 Abraham relieves the servant of things outside his control, but reaffirms the prohibition to take Isaac out of the land
- \* Why do you think Abraham emphasizes this?
  - ◆ He doesn't want Isaac to develop any divided affections
  - ◆ K & S faced this often in the mission field
- \* In v. 9, Abraham's servant accepts the commission

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# The Courtship

- \* This next scene plays out in two parts
  - ◆ Part 1 records the servant's "plan of attack" in vv. 10-14
  - ◆ Part 2 records God's response in vv. 15-21
- \* Part 1 — The plan of attack
  - ◆ Two verses record the 400 mile journey - vv. 10-11
    - Servant sets out with 10 camels and the "dowry"
    - Setting course for Haran (city of Nahor) in Mesopotamia
    - Upon arrival ... **who knows how many days later** ... he "sets up shop" at a strategic time and place

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# The Courtship

- ◆ **What is the cornerstone of the servant's plan?**
  - A petition (prayer) for God's lovingkindness - v. 12
  - Lovingkindness = tenderness and consideration toward others
- ◆ **How does the servant propose to "know" God's lovingkindness?**
  - Through a simple question & answer dialog - v. 14
  - Part of which is simple ... part of which is quite labor intensive!
    - ◆ A thirsty camel can consume 30 or more GALLONS of water

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# The Courtship

- ◆ Do you think his “test” was random or deliberate?
  - ▶ Deliberate
- ◆ What do you think the servant was looking for?
  - ▶ Certain character qualities ... in my opinion
- ◆ What three in particular?
  - ▶ Kindness
  - ▶ Takes initiative
  - ▶ Hard working!!!!

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# The Courtship

- ◆ Note that the servant defines both the test and is specific about the answer
- ◆ Only by this can he be certain that he has received God's lovingkindness and [God's choice](#)
- ◆ Note also that the servant's motive is to fulfill his master's task and not for his personal glory ...
- ◆ Revealing a loyal, obedient, and humble servant
  - ▶ Which speaks well of Abraham's household management

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# The Courtship

- \* Part 2 - God's response
  - ◆ What is the first thing we note about God's response?
    - ▶ The IMMEDIACY - v. 15a
  - ◆ Verses 15b-16 are obviously "contextual commentary" for the readers sake
    - ▶ They report Rebekah's lineage, her beauty, and her purity
  - ◆ Why did the servant run to meet Rebekah? - v. 17
    - ▶ I have NO IDEA!

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# The Courtship

- ◆ Rebekah's response - w. 18-19
  - ▶ She gives the servant water and offers to "water" his camels
- ◆ To which the servant says ... hallelujah, Amen!!
- ◆ NOT IN MY BIBLE
- ◆ Has the Q&R sign been fulfilled in w. 18-19?
  - ▶ YES
- ◆ So what is the point of w. 20-21 ... why doesn't the narrative just jump to v. 22?

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# The Courtship

- ▶ DISCERNMENT — He wanted to observe Rebekah's character before his next move
- ▶ Not a bad idea considering what is at stake ...
- ◆ Rebekah indeed fulfills the task and now the servant is sure he has "his man" ... er, "his woman"
- \* From this point we move on to an elaborate "confirmation" process in vv. 22-51 ...

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... Which we will pick up next week 😊



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