

God focuses on Abraham

12:1 Now JEHOVAH had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your relatives, and from your father's house,¹ to the land that I will show you. **2** And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. **3** And I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you;² and all the families of the earth shall be blessed through you."³

4 So Abram departed, as JEHOVAH had spoken to him,⁴ and Lot went with him.⁵ And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. **5** And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all the goods that they had accumulated, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran;⁶ and they went out to go into the land of Canaan. And they came to the land of Canaan. **6** And Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the oak of Moreh;⁷ and at that time the Canaanites were in that land. **7** Then JEHOVAH appeared to Abram,⁸ and said, "I will give this land to your descendants." And there he built an altar to JEHOVAH, who had appeared to him. **8** And he moved from there to a mountain east of Bethel, and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west, and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to JEHOVAH and called on the name of JEHOVAH.⁹ **9** Then Abram journeyed, going toward the south.

10 And there was a famine in that land, and because the famine was severe, Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there. **11** And it came to pass, when he was about to enter Egypt, that

¹ Abram's obedience was incomplete. He did leave the land, but he took his father (who cost him fifteen years in Haran) and his nephew Lot (who would be a lot of trouble). God sovereignly chose Abram to begin the family and the nation through whom the Messiah, the Savior of the world, would come. But in order for Abram to start a new relationship with Jehovah, He had to get him away from Nahor and Ur. Nahor, Abram's older brother, was presumably sixty years older than Abram, and would become the head of the family when their father died. In 31:30 Laban refers to his "gods", the family idols, which he had inherited from Bethuel, his father, who had inherited them from Nahor. In order to start something new, God had to get Abram out of Ur.

¹ Corinthians 10:11 says, "Now all these things happened to them as examples and were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." The following chapters are full of experiences, many of which are negative. I understand that the main lesson God wants to give us with this, is that everything we do has consequences, sometimes in the long run. It is not recorded that Abram consulted God before taking Hagar, and the consequences are with us to this day. It is also true that the experiences illustrate the scope of the Fall, as well as the scope of God's grace and mercy.

² Notice that the blessing is plural, while the cursing is singular. "Those who bless" is generic, offering a general principle. "Him who curses" is specific; God will personally curse that person!! It is clear in the context that the "you" includes his descendants; that is made explicit in 22:18. To curse Israel is probably not a good idea!

³ All these promises would be fulfilled in the long run. Abram was 60 years old when he left Ur, but Isaac would not be born until 40 years later, when Abram was 100 years old (God having changed his name to Abraham a year earlier). This first communication that Jehovah gave to Abram was simple, more comprehensive, including the blessing of all the families of the earth. In 22:18 Jehovah makes clear that the blessing will come through his descendants. Indeed, as Paul wrote in Romans 3:2, "the oracles of God were entrusted" to the Jews. The book of Job was written before there was a Jew, properly speaking, but all the rest of the Old Testament, and it is to it that Paul refers, was written by Jews. By the way, all of the books of the New Testament were also written by Jews (with the exception of the two books by Luke). "The Oracles of God" are the written Revelation given by God to the human race. Even more important, the Messiah, the Savior of the world, was a descendant of Abraham. There is no greater blessing than Salvation.

⁴ Fifteen years earlier!

⁵ Abram should not have taken Lot with him. Aside from the trouble Lot caused, if he had stayed in Haran, or even in Ur, he would not have produced the Moabites and Ammonites, who were always a negative presence in the land.

⁶ As we will see later, that was probably around 1,000 people!

⁷ I find that to be curious; that tree must have been impressive.

⁸ Jehovah had already spoken to Abram (12:1), but here, once he was finally, after fifteen years, in the promised land, Jehovah appeared to him. God materialized in some way that Abram could see him; this enabled Abram to recognize Him on future occasions.

⁹ Because the name represents the person, Abram placed himself under Jehovah's authority and protection. And in Egypt Jehovah did indeed protect him.

he said to Sarai his wife: "Indeed I know that you are a woman beautiful to look at. **12** And it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife', and they will kill me, but keep you alive. **13** Please say that you are my sister,¹ that it may go well with me for your sake, and my soul may live because of you." **14** And it came to pass, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she was very beautiful. **15** And Pharaoh's princes saw her, and praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. **16** And he treated Abram well for her sake; and he gained sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female slaves, female donkeys and camels. **17** But JEHOVAH plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.² **18** Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this that you have done to me? Why didn't you tell me that she was your wife? **19** Why did you say, 'She is my sister'? That is why I took her to be my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife, take her and go!" **20** And Pharaoh gave orders to his men concerning him, and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had.³

13:1 Then Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him. **2** And Abram was very rich in cattle, silver, and gold. **3** And he made his way from the Negev to Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai; **4** to the place of the altar which he had made there before; and Abram called upon the name of JEHOVAH there.

5 Now Lot, who was going with Abram, also had flocks, cattle, and tents.⁴ **6** And the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together; for their goods were so great, that they could not dwell together. **7** And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle; and at that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites dwelt in that land.⁵ **8** Then Abram said to Lot: "Please let there be no contention between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. **9** Is not the whole land before you? Well then, separate from me; if you go to the left, I will go to the right; or if you go to the right, I will go to the left."⁶ **10** And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the plain of the Jordan, that it was all well-watered (before JEHOVAH destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah), even as the garden of JEHOVAH,⁷ as the land of Egypt, going toward Zoar.⁸ **11** Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed east, and they separated from each other. **12** Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and

¹ In fact, she was his half-sister, daughter of the same father, but another mother (Genesis 20:12), but the intention was to deceive the Egyptians. If on the one hand it was cowardice on Abram's part, on the other hand, for at least twenty years, Sarai had not become pregnant, she was barren, which was a shame for her, and a disappointment for him—the fact that she was beautiful did not give her children.

² We do not know what the plagues were, nor how God made Pharaoh know what the problem was. Also, it all happened within a short time, before Pharaoh slept with Sarai.

³ Dear me, what a sad story! Was Abram a "blessing" in Egypt? Poor Pharaoh was not to blame, he was deceived. Abram got an earful, but he also became rich. But if Pharaoh was not to blame, why did God punish him so severely? I understand that God was protecting Sarai; He did not allow her to be defiled, nor to stay in Egypt, because the Messiah would come through her, and she had not yet given birth to Isaac, whose father had to be Abram. Usually God lets us act freely, taking the consequences, but when it is necessary to protect the Plan, He intervenes sovereignly.

⁴ He had inherited all that from his father before he left Ur, except that what he had doubtless increased during the fifteen years in Haran. The "tents" presumably refers to people.

⁵ In other words, the land was not empty, and there would be competition for its use.

⁶ Abram offering the choice to Lot was noble and generous, and since Lot was selfish and self-centered, he accepted. And he chose exactly what seemed to be the most privileged area of the region.

⁷ The expression is probably poetic, evoking a very pleasant place. The garden of Eden no longer existed, and no one living at that time would know what it was like.

⁸ Zoar was not far from Sodom, unless this was a second one somewhere in Egypt. The reference to Egypt probably referred to Goshen, which was well-watered.

Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain, and moved his tent as far as Sodom.¹ **13** Now the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners against JEHOVAH—exceedingly.²

14 After Lot parted from him,³ JEHOVAH said to Abram: "Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are—to the north, to the south, to the east and to the west. **15** For all the land which you see I will give to you, and to your descendants, forever.⁴ **16** And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, your descendants also could be numbered. **17** Arise, walk through the land, in its length and in its breadth; for to you I will give it."⁵ **18** Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre,⁶ which are in Hebron; and he built an altar there to JEHOVAH.⁷

Abram delivers Lot

14:1 And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goyim, **2** that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, with Birsha king of Gomorrah, with Shinab king of Admah, with Shemeber king of Zeboim, and with the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). **3** All these gathered together in the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea).⁸ **4** For they had served Chedorlaomer twelve years, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

5 In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came, and struck the *Rephaim* in Ashteroth-karnaim, the *Zuzim* in Ham, the *Emim* in Shaveh-kiriathaim⁹ **6** and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness. **7** Then they returned and came to En-mishpat (which is Kadesh), and struck all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazazon-tamar.¹⁰ **8** Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out, and they set the battle in array against them in the valley of Siddim, **9** against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goyim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar: four kings against five. **10** Now the valley of Siddim was full of asphalt pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; some fell there, and the rest fled to a mountain. **11** And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their food, and departed. **12** They also took Lot the son of Abram's brother, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

13 But one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew,¹¹ who dwelt by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, Eshcol's brother, and Aner's brother; they were Abram's allies. **14** And when Abram heard that his brother¹² was taken captive, he led out his three hundred and eighteen

¹ Did Lot know nothing of the nature of Sodom? It seems that Sodom was the most important city, politically.

² Why does the Text say that they were "sinners against JEHOVAH" and "exceedingly"? Of course, all sin is against Jehovah, but they were especially bad. Their appetite for anal sex did not stop at angelic beings, and there were probably *Nephilim* among them.

³ Finally, Abram was entirely freed from his kindred, which was part of the first command that God gave him, and God renewed the promise in much more detail.

⁴ "Forever"—it seems that in God's mind the land of Canaan belongs to Israel, always, even when not occupied or controlled by it.

⁵ We have no record that Abram obeyed this command to go through the land.

⁶ Why are the oak trees emphasized? Well, they did all their cooking with wood, and oak wood is good firewood.

⁷ This was the third altar that Abram built to Jehovah. He was leaving his 'mark' on the land.

⁸ The 'Salt Sea', or Dead Sea, was the result of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and did not yet exist at that time; but Moses, writing centuries later, gives this clarification.

⁹ Those three races were hybrid races, like the *Nephilim*.

¹⁰ Why did the Holy Spirit lead Moses to record the names of peoples and places in such detail and precision? What sense would it make, or difference would it make centuries later? Because God's written Revelation has always been a historical and true record, not a 'religious book'.

¹¹ This is the first occurrence of the word 'Hebrew', which became the patronymic of Abraham and his descendants.

¹² The term is used *lato sensu*, Lot being his nephew, but it is likely that they felt like brothers, being of the same age, more or less, and having been raised together.

trained men, born in his house,¹ and went in pursuit as far as Dan.² **15** Then he divided his servants and attacked them by night, and smote them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is on the left side of Damascus.³ **16** And he brought back all the goods, and also brought his brother Lot, with his goods, as well as the women and the people.⁴

17 And when Abram had returned, after striking Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him,⁵ at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's valley. **18** And Melchizedek king of Salem brought bread and wine;⁶ and he was priest of the Most-High God. **19** And he blessed him, and said: "Blessed be Abram by the Most-High God, Owner of heaven and earth. **20** And blessed be the Most-High God, who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.⁷ **21** Then the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people, and take the goods for yourself." **22** But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted up my hand to JEHOVAH, the Most-High God, Owner of heaven and earth,⁸ **23** that I will not take from a thread to a sandal-strap, or anything that is yours; lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'⁹ **24** –nothing for me; only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men that went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre;¹⁰ let them take their portion."

God and Abram

15.1 After these things the word of JEHOVAH came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward will be exceedingly great."¹¹ **2** Then Abram said, "Lord JEHOVAH, what will you give me, since I am still childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" **3** Then Abram said, "Really, You have given me no descendant; indeed, one born in my house will be my heir!" **4** Then the word of JEHOVAH came to him, saying, "This one will not be your heir; but he who will come out of your own body, he shall be your heir". **5** Then He took him outside,¹² and said, "Look now toward the heavens and count the stars,¹³ if you are able to count

¹ This is impressive. If they were "born in his house", they were not mercenaries. With women and children, and old men, the community that Abram led probably numbered over a thousand people. That was a lot of people! On the other hand, with so many men capable of war, taking action against him would be risky.

² Abram did not stay at home; he commanded the operation.

³ Since they were heading north, the left would be the west side.

⁴ Now it is obvious that God helped Abram, because the four kings would have many more men than Abram. Hebron was only about forty km from Salem (Jerusalem). Did Abram know nothing of Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the Most-High God? I imagine that Abram had asked God's blessing through Melchizedek, which is why he tithed. It is also obvious that Abram's interest was to rescue Lot, not the others. And God helped Abram, even though He knew what would happen to Lot later. Perhaps God was giving Lot one last chance to correct his life; he should have left Sodom.

⁵ The king of Sodom had not been taken prisoner.

⁶ What was Melchizedek doing so far from Jerusalem? How did he know when and where Abram was coming? I do not doubt that there was supernatural involvement.

⁷ Hebrews 7:1-7 gives us an inspired commentary on this meeting between Melchizedek and Abram. The figure of Melchizedek is a bit of a mystery. Since he is "priest of the Most-High", how is it that such an office has never been spoken of before? And how is it that Abram submitted to him without objection? And where did the idea of 'tithing' come from? If Melchizedek was a manifestation of Jehovah, who had appeared to Abram before, then Abram's attitude was natural. Hebrews 7:7 – "Now without dispute, the lesser is blessed by the greater". Melchizedek was greater than Abram.

⁸ Abram repeats the titles of God given by Melchizedek, but adds His name, Jehovah; but he had raised his hand before leaving. He had certainly asked for God's help.

⁹ Abram was already very rich, and he did not need the spoil. Further, anything from Sodom would be contaminated by the utterly wicked life of the inhabitants, and would do no good.

¹⁰ We are not told how many fighting men they had, but they would be added to Abram's 318.

¹¹ Would such a reward be in Heaven? Here on earth Abraham was already very rich, and he appeals to the fact that he has no son.

¹² To take him out, God had to be there. In the first verse God used a vision, but from verse four on, He was present.

¹³ To see the stars, it had to be at night.

them". And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be". 6 And he believed in JEHOVAH, and He reckoned it to him for righteousness.¹

7 Then He said to him, "I am JEHOVAH, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it". 8 And he said, "My Lord JEHOVAH, how shall I know that I shall inherit it?"² 9 And He said unto him, "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove and a young pigeon". 10 So he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and he placed each half opposite the other;³ but he did not divide the birds. 11 And the birds of prey came down on the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.⁴

12 And it happened, when the sun was going down, that a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, a terrible and dense darkness fell upon him.⁵ 13 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs—and will be enslaved and mistreated—for four hundred years.⁶ 14 But I also will judge the nation whom they will serve;⁷ and afterward they will come out with great wealth.⁸ 15 And you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age.⁹ 16 And in the fourth generation they shall return here;¹⁰ for the measure of the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."¹¹ 17 And it came to pass, when the sun had set and it was dark, that behold, a smoking portable stove and a torch of fire that passed between those halves!¹² 18 That same day JEHOVAH made a covenant with Abram, saying: "I have

¹ Well, that took some believing!

² Verse 6 says he believed, but here he asks for confirmation. The cruel truth was that he was still childless. In verses 13 to 16 God gives a more detailed answer. Abraham questioned God, and He answered, but the experience was not pleasant.

³ Separating the front half from the back half would be easier than splitting the carcass from end to end. Presumably God had told him to kill the animals in that way. They were not burned, so it was not a normal offering.

⁴ This all happened during the day, presumably the immediately following one.

⁵ The prophecy he was about to receive was also dark, but evidently that was an unusual darkness; a very unpleasant one.

⁶ This verse should be understood as a chiasmus, a common structure in the Bible:

- A. your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs
- B. and will be enslaved
- B. and mistreated
- A. for four hundred years.

A careful comparison of the relevant passages shows that the 400 years include from Isaac's weaning to the exodus (1891 to 1491 B.C.). Since Jacob moved to Egypt in 1706, Abraham's descendants were foreigners in Canaan for 185 years, and then were foreigners in Egypt (where they were enslaved) for 215 years. The exodus occurred 144 years after Joseph's death, so the period of slave labor must have been somewhat less, perhaps around 100 years. (I owe the analysis given above to Dr. Floyd N. Jones.)

⁷ Indeed, God punished Egypt with some severity.

⁸ Exodus 12:35-36 records that they plundered the Egyptians, taking away a lot of wealth.

⁹ In fact, he died peacefully at the age of 175, Genesis 25:7-8.

¹⁰ Verse 15 recounts Abraham's death; So the "fourth generation" of verse 16 must be reckoned after that death. Jacob was born well before his grandfather's death, and therefore the calculation must begin with a son of his. I understand that the four generations were: Levi (lived 137 years), Kohath (lived 133 years), Amram (lived 137 years) and Moses (lived 120 years) (Exodus 6:16-20). Only these first three are given a record of the years they lived (in Exodus 6), which was certainly on purpose.

¹¹ Alas, this statement leaves me melancholy. Is there a 'measure of wickedness' for every evildoer? Do countries have this measure? A congress that has already filled barrels with corruption—is there no point in praying against it? Notice that God Himself declared that the measure was not full, meaning that He knew the point at which it would be, and He would not shorten the interval. It is Sovereignty in action. The Amorites were descendants of Canaan, whom Noah had cursed. Perhaps the curse resulted in a certain measure of iniquity. Exodus 20:5 says that God Himself "visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation". Does God determine a 'measure' for the iniquity? I confess that I would like to understand this subject better, but to this day I have not found a better explanation.

¹² We are not told what the purpose of the stove and torch may have been. For that matter, we are not told the purpose of the whole procedure. However, I asked the Holy Spirit to illumine me about the episode, and this is what

given this land to your descendants, from the river of Egypt¹ to the great river, the River Euphrates;² **19** including the Kenite, the Kenizzite, the Kadmonite, **20** the Hittite, the Perizzite, the *Rephaim*, **21** the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Girgashite, and the Jebusite."³

Hagar

16:1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian slave girl, whose name was Hagar. **2** And Sarai said to Abram, "Indeed, JEHOVAH has kept me from bearing;⁴ please go in to my slave girl, maybe I can build a family through her." And Abram listened to Sarai. **3** So Sarai, Abram's wife, took her slave girl Hagar, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife; Abram had been living in the land of Canaan for ten years.⁵ **4** And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.⁶ **5** Then Sarai said to Abram: "My grievance be upon you! I gave my slave girl into your arms; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes; may JEHOVAH judge between you and me!"⁷ **6** So Abram said to Sarai, "Indeed, your slave girl is in your hand; do to her what is good in your eyes". Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her face.

7 And the Angel of JEHOVAH⁸ found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. **8** And He said, "Hagar, slave girl of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" And she said, "I am running away from the face of my mistress Sarai".⁹ **9** Then the Angel of JEHOVAH said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand".¹⁰ **10** The Angel of JEHOVAH continued, "I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they will not be numbered for multitude." **11** And the Angel of JEHOVAH said to her: "Indeed, you are with child, and you will give birth to a son, and you shall call his name Ishmael;¹¹ because JEHOVAH has

came to me. The animals represent projects that we undertake on behalf of Christ's Kingdom (like sacrifices). The heifer stands for big ones, the goat and ram for middle-sized ones, and the birds for small ones. Any three-year-old animal is mature, full-grown, so the projects are in effect. The buzzards represent Satan's servants, who work to contaminate and diminish what we have achieved, and like Abraham, we have to keep alert to try to stop them. Then there are times when God puts us in the dark, without explanation, which is very unpleasant! Isaiah 50:10-11 refers to this. The stove will burn some of the contamination, and the torch will expose the extent of the damage: they are things that God does. That is what came to me. It serves as an application, if no more.

¹ This river was not the Nile, but a stream south of Gaza.

² As far as we know, the people of Israel never occupied this entire area; not to the Euphrates. Is it a reference to the Millennial Messianic Kingdom? Until then God had promised Canaan, but now He increases the size.

³ That was ten ethnic groups, one of which was hybrid. It was the land that those groups occupied that God gave.

⁴ It had been 25 years since they left Ur, and we do not know how many years they had been married when they left. What is certain is that Sarai had lost any hope of having a child. She introduced Jehovah into the question, saying that He was responsible for her not having a child. In that case, was she going against God's will by offering Hagar?

⁵ Abram was already 85 years old. Romans 4:19 states that Abraham "did not consider his own body, already dead (being about a hundred years old)." Paul declares that Abraham had become impotent before he fathered Isaac. This means that he had gone into decline much earlier, and no one would know that better than Sarai. Perhaps that is the explanation for why she offered Hagar—she knew of the Promise and that Abram needed a descendant. Until that moment, God had not revealed that the mother would be Sarah herself, only that Abram would have a son. It was when he was 99 years old that God changed his name to Abraham, and Sarai's name to Sarah. And it was only then that God revealed that it would be Sarah who would give birth to the son of the Promise. (In passing, God revived Abraham to such good effect that he later fathered six sons with Keturah!)

⁶ But that was perfectly predictable.

⁷ How so? It was she who asked Abram to take the slave girl. It seems that she was blaming Abram for having accepted the proposal. On the other hand, we are not told that Abram sought to know God's will for the case. If he had, surely God would have said not to do it, thus avoiding the negative consequences, that last until our days.

⁸ This is the first mention of the Angel of Jehovah, who was Jehovah Himself.

⁹ She didn't say where she was going, probably because she didn't know. It is not said that she was afraid or uncomfortable; she answered normally.

¹⁰ Why did God send her back? Well, she was carrying Abram's son.

¹¹ The name means: God hears.

considered your affliction. **12** And he shall be a wild donkey of a man: his hand shall be against everyone, and the hand of everyone against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brothers."¹ **13** And she called the name of JEHOVAH, who spoke to her, 'You are the God who sees'; for she said, "Have I also looked upon Him who sees me?"² **14** That is why the well was called *Beer-lahai-roi*;³ indeed, it is between Kadesh and Bered. **15** And Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. **16** And Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

Circumcision becomes the sign of the Covenant

17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, JEHOVAH appeared to Abram and said to him: "I am Almighty God;⁴ walk in my presence, and be blameless. **2** And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly."⁵ **3** Then Abram fell on his face, and God spoke with him, saying: **4** "As for me, indeed, my covenant is with you, and you will be a father of many nations; **5** And your name shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham⁶; for I have made you the father of many nations."⁷ **6** And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come out from you. **7** And I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your descendants after you throughout their generations, by an everlasting covenant, to be God to you, and to your descendants after you. **8** And I will give to you, and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession;⁸ and I will be their God."⁹

9 Then God said to Abraham:¹⁰ "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. **10** This is my covenant which you must keep, between me and you¹¹ and your descendants after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.¹² **11** You [pl] shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, which shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. **12** The eight-day-old son among you shall be circumcised,¹³ every male in your generations, whether he is born in your house or bought for money from any foreigner, who is not your descendant. **13** He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised; my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

¹ Why does it say "all" the brothers; Isaac was only one. Abraham had six sons by Keturah (Genesis 25:1-2).

² The Text does not say that the Angel appeared to her, but the way in which she expressed herself almost gives the idea that she saw something.

³ The name means: the well of him who lives and sees me.

⁴ The name in Hebrew is *El Shaddai*.

⁵ But why did God each time emphasize the numerous offspring? Well, at that time, what was the reason for living? Was it just existing, living well? The main objective was to leave descendants.

⁶ The name means: father of a multitude.

⁷ God used the past tense because He had already determined what He said.

⁸ In 15:18 God promised the area up to the Euphrates River, but here He returns to the land of Canaan. "Everlasting" presumably means until the end of this world.

⁹ The reason for the covenant was to be their God. But since every covenant has two sides, to effectively receive God's blessing depends on our behavior. And it is possible to change gods, as some have done.

¹⁰ From here the new name is used: Abraham.

¹¹ This pronoun is plural rather than singular. It would include Ishmael and the other males who were part of Abraham's household at that time, of which there were hundreds.

¹² Circumcision was the symbol of the covenant, which was perpetual. God said, "You must keep," so that the obligation of Abraham's descendants to circumcise their sons will never end. This is what verse 13 says: "My covenant in your flesh is an everlasting covenant."

¹³ "Eight days" – two different blood-clotting agents, vitamin K and prothrombin, reach their highest level in the blood (110% of normal) on a person's eighth day, so that is the best day of a lifetime for minor surgery. 4,000 years ago, who but the Creator knew this when He determined the procedure for Abraham? It was not a sadistic procedure, as if God liked to see a baby suffer. It was a matter of hygiene and health; a woman with a circumcised husband does not get cervical cancer.

14 And an uncircumcised male, whose flesh of the foreskin is not circumcised, his soul shall be cut off from his people;¹ he has broken my covenant."

15 God also said to Abraham: "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah will be her name.² **16** For I will bless her and also give you a son by her; indeed, I have blessed her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall be from her." **17** Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart: "Will a son be born to a hundred-year-old man?³ And will Sarah give birth at the age of ninety?" **18** And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!"⁴ **19** And God said: "Sarah your wife will surely bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac;⁵ I will establish my covenant with him and with his descendants after him, for an everlasting covenant. **20** And as for Ishmael, I have heard you; indeed, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; he shall beget twelve chiefs, and I will make him a great nation. **21** But it is with Isaac that I will establish my covenant, whom Sarah will bear to you at this time, next year." **22** When God had finished talking with Abraham, He ascended.

23 Then Abraham took his son Ishmael, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the people of Abraham's house; and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskin that very day, just as God had said to him. **24** Abraham was ninety-nine years old when the flesh of his foreskin was circumcised. **25** And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when the flesh of his foreskin was circumcised. **26** Abraham and Ishmael his son were circumcised on the same day. **27** And all the males of his household, those born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.⁶

Abraham saves Lot

18:1 Then JEHOVAH appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. **2** And he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men standing near him. And when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. **3** And he said: "My Lord,⁷ if I have now found favor in your sight, I beg you not to pass on from your [sg] servant. **4** Please, let a little water be brought, and wash your [pl] feet, and rest under the tree. **5** And I will bring you a morsel of bread to refresh your heart; that is why you have come to your servant; then you may pass on." And they said, "Do so, as you have said". **6** So Abraham ran into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Hurry, knead three measures of fine flour, and make cakes!" **7** Then Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, and gave it to a young man, who hastened to prepare it. **8** And he took curds and milk, and the veal which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree; and they ate.⁸

9 And they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "There in the tent." **10** And He said,⁹ "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life;¹⁰ and indeed, Sarah your wife

¹ This expression seems to indicate the death penalty.

² The name means: princess.

³ At that time, men were still procreating at well over 100 years old, but Abraham had already lost this ability (Romans 4:19).

⁴ Abraham had affection for Ishmael, and in effect was asking that he be the son of the Promise.

⁵ The name means: he laughs.

⁶ This time Abraham obeyed completely. The men would be unable to fight for three days, but God doubtless protected them.

⁷ Since Jehovah had already appeared to him, Abraham recognized Him and addressed Him.

⁸ They were Jehovah the Son and two angels, materialized. They ate without needing food. Why? I suppose it went along with pretending to be men.

⁹ In verse 9 the verb is plural, but here it changes to singular. It is Jehovah who speaks (verse 13).

¹⁰ The phrase "the time of life" presumably refers to the nine months of gestation, although we do not know if it took longer at that time, since people also lived longer.

shall bear a son". (And Sarah was listening at the door of the tent behind him.¹) **11** Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well advanced in age; the custom of women had ceased for Sarah.² **12** And Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "Being old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" **13** And JEHOVAH said to Abraham: "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Indeed, will I really bear, I who am old?' **14** Is anything too hard for JEHOVAH? At the appointed time³ I will return to you,⁴ according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." **15** And Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh", because she was afraid; and He said, "No, you really did laugh!"

16 Then the men got up to leave and started out toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to guide them.⁵ **17** And JEHOVAH said: "Shall I conceal from Abraham what I am doing, **18** since Abraham will certainly become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him? **19** For I have known him,⁶ in order that he may command his sons and his household after him, to keep the way of JEHOVAH, to practice righteousness and justice; that JEHOVAH may bring upon Abraham what he has spoken about him."⁷ **20** Then JEHOVAH said: "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous,⁸ **21** I will go down now⁹ and see if indeed they have done according to the outcry that has come to me; and if not, I will know it."¹⁰

22 Then the men departed from there and went toward Sodom; but Abraham still stood before JEHOVAH. **23** Then Abraham spoke up and said: "Would you actually destroy the righteous with the wicked? **24** If perchance there be fifty righteous within the city, would you destroy it even so, and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are within it? **25** Far be it from you that you should do such a thing, to kill the righteous with the wicked; so that the righteous should be like the wicked; far be it from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?"¹¹ **26** Then JEHOVAH said, "If I find fifty righteous people within the city¹² of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake." **27** Then Abraham answered and said: "Indeed now, I, dust and ashes, have presumed to speak to the Lord. **28** If five righteous are lacking from the fifty, would you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And He said, "If I find forty-five there, I will not destroy." **29** And he spoke to Him yet again, and said, "And if forty be found there?" And He said, "I will not do it for the sake of forty." **30** And he said, "Please, my Lord, do not be angry because I speak, 'If thirty be found there?'" And He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." **31** And he said, "Indeed now, I have presumed to speak to the Lord, 'If twenty be found there?'" And He said, "I will not destroy for the sake of the twenty." **32** Then he said, "Please, my Lord, do not be angry

¹ Of course she would! She wanted to know what was going on, and Jehovah spoke loudly enough so that she could hear—He knew that she was listening.

² Her menopause was already history.

³ "Appointed" by whom? By God.

⁴ Why did God have to 'return'? Perhaps He was affirming His involvement in the pregnancy, from beginning to end.

⁵ This was presumably just a pretext for going along, since they certainly did not need help to find the way. Abraham knew that something serious was going to happen. When Jehovah shows up, it is serious!!

⁶ To know in the sense of recognizing, or choosing.

⁷ This is interesting. Jehovah spoke out loud for Abraham to hear. And why would he do that? Presumably to get Abraham to make the intercession that he did. God could have remained silent and Abraham would not have known anything. God knew He was going to save Lot. As for the content of verse 19, each individual must "keep the way of Jehovah" in order to receive the declared blessings.

⁸ Chapter 19 clarifies that this sin was anal sex – the men even wanted to rape the angels!

⁹ When the Text says that God 'descends', it is because He will act sovereignly. Abraham understood that judgment had already been determined, and he wanted to save Lot.

¹⁰ But He already knew the answer. The way He expressed Himself was part of the reason He promoted this encounter with Abraham.

¹¹ "The Judge of all the earth" could only be Jehovah Himself. Abraham knew who He was. Who did Abraham think that he was, wanting to teach God about justice!? Since that was exactly what God had foreseen, it worked out.

¹² It had to be within the city.

because I speak just once more, 'If ten be found there?'"¹ And He said, "I will not destroy for the sake of the ten." **33** And when JEHOVAH had finished speaking with Abraham, He departed; and Abraham returned to his place.

19:1 Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom.² When Lot saw them, he rose up to meet them, and bowed his face to the earth.³ **2** And he said, "Indeed, my lords, please come into your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." And they said, "No, we will spend the night in the square". **3** But he insisted with them strongly;⁴ so they went with him and entered his house. And he made them a meal, baking unleavened bread, and they ate.⁵

4 But before they lay down, the men of the city surrounded the house, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people of all the neighborhoods.⁶ **5** And they called to Lot, and said to him: "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them sexually."⁷ **6** Then Lot went out to them and shut the door behind him. **7** And he said: "My brothers, please do not act so wickedly! **8** Come now, I have two daughters who have not known a man;⁸ please let me bring them out to you, and do with them as you will; only do nothing to these men, since that is why they have come under the protection of my roof."⁹ **9** But they said, "Stand back!" and went on: "This fellow came in to sojourn, and wants to judge everything. Now we will do worse to you than to them." And they attacked the man, Lot, and started to break down the door. **10** But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. **11** And they struck the men at the door of the house with blindness,¹⁰ both small and great, so that they wearied themselves to find the door.¹¹

12 Then the men said to Lot: "Whom else do you have here? Take them out of this place: son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and all whom you have¹² in this city. **13** For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against them has become very great before JEHOVAH,¹³ and JEHOVAH has sent us to destroy it." **14** So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were

¹ Why did Abraham insist until he reached ten? 19:14 mentions "his sons-in-law", plural, who would be at least two, making eight in the family. But if there were three, it would make ten in the family. It appears that Abraham did not believe that Lot had made a difference for good in Sodom. In fact, in addition to not winning anyone, Lot lost his own family.

² This means that he had already achieved some importance in the city. The fact that Abraham rescued the people for Lot's sake certainly contributed – see verse 9 below.

³ It seems that Lot realized, somehow, that they were not ordinary people. Perhaps, through his association with Abram, he had some knowledge of the supernatural.

⁴ Lot knew that it would not work at all for them to stay in the square.

⁵ Again, being materialized angels, they did not need to eat. But if they were presenting themselves as men, it would be part of the 'play'. But why was the bread 'unleavened'? Leavening takes time, which Lot did not have.

⁶ But how did the whole city find out in time to participate? Was it by demonic action?

⁷ Jude 7 states that those men "went after a different kind of flesh". Be that as it may, the 'flesh' that an angel has when it materializes, is not human flesh. The men of Sodom also knew that the angels were not ordinary people, and they wanted to rape them.

⁸ They were virgins.

⁹ Why did Lot offer up his daughters; was it because he knew that the two men were angels? At that time hospitality was taken very seriously, and Lot would do his best to protect his guests. Even so, to offer his own daughters was an abomination. The cruel fact was that Lot was in a 'dead end street'.

¹⁰ Here it became clear that the two were supernatural. Obviously the men outside didn't expect that.

¹¹ Wow, even though they were blind, they did not give up! They were certainly demonized. However, the angels were probably also involved, or the men could have found the door by feel. In any case, the angels would not let them break down the door.

¹² The angels declare that God will take into consideration any people Lot had 'won' in the city, even though they knew that he had no one.

¹³ Who was doing the 'crying', who was denouncing the iniquity? Daniel 4:17 speaks of "watchers", presumably a certain kind of angel; perhaps they were the ones.

married to his daughters, and said, "Get up, get out of this place, for JEHOVAH is about to destroy the city!" But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.¹

15 When the day dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Get up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here,² lest you be destroyed in the punishment of the city". **16** But he lingered, so the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, JEHOVAH having mercy on him; and they brought him out and put him outside the city.³ **17** And it came to pass, when they had brought them out, that he said:⁴ "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stop anywhere in the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be destroyed." **18** And Lot said to them: "Oh no, Lord! **19** Indeed now, your servant has found grace in your sight, and you have magnified your mercy which you have shown to me by saving my life; but I am not able to escape to the mountain, lest the calamity overtake me and I die.⁵ **20** Look, that city is near to flee to, and it is small; please let me escape there, (is it not small?), that my soul may live." **21** And he said to him: "See, I have accepted you in this matter also, so as not to destroy the city of which you have spoken. **22** Hurry, escape there! For I cannot do anything until you have arrived there."⁶ (So the name of the city was called Zoar.)⁷

23 The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. **24** Then JEHOVAH Himself rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah from the heavens. **25** And He destroyed those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and the produce of the soil. **26** But Lot's wife, who was behind him, looked back, and became a pillar of salt.⁸ **27** And Abraham got up early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before JEHOVAH. **28** And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, yes indeed, the smoke of the land that went up like the smoke of a furnace.⁹ **29** When God destroyed the cities of the plain, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of destruction,¹⁰ when he destroyed the cities in which Lot had dwelt.¹¹

30 Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him, because he was afraid to dwell in Zoar;¹²

¹ The husbands' attitude condemned Lot's married daughters, but they probably agreed with their husbands.

² "Take" meaning to take them out of the city. "Your two daughters who are here" indicates that there were others who were not there.

³ The angels took them out by force, because they were under obligation to spare them (see verse 22). Each angel took two people.

⁴ One of the two was the boss, and he spoke. It is to him that Lot addresses himself in verses 18 to 20.

⁵ Probably Lot was not in a physical condition to run very far, and he doubted that he would have the strength to reach the mountain. He was afraid of dying.

⁶ Obviously the angel had been ordered to spare Lot, at any cost.

⁷ The name means: small. It is also true that Lot saved that village, otherwise it would have been destroyed as well.

⁸ Certainly she was not in physical condition to run, and she was not enjoying having to leave the city. She could have been some distance behind Lot when she looked back. The destruction certainly made quite a bit of noise that she heard. Looking back had been forbidden. In Luke 17:32, Sovereign Jesus affirmed the historicity of the pillar of salt.

⁹ Would he have known that Lot was delivered? Perhaps he was shaken, thinking that Lot was destroyed too. Jehovah had said that He would spare the city for ten, and since He did not spare it, there were not the ten.

¹⁰ Here we have a clear statement that God saved Lot because of Abraham, despite the negative consequences that followed. Indeed, it would have been better for Lot to die in Sodom. I see a lesson for us here. Sometimes we pray 'for' someone based on our emotions, without thinking about God's will. And sometimes God answers those prayers, but the consequences are negative; it gets worse for the person for whom we prayed. We should always seek to know what the Father is doing (John 5:19). Further, when God chooses us, He does not turn us into robots, He respects our choices, but we and others must live with the consequences.

¹¹ The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah created the Dead Sea, totally altering the Jordan River valley. In order for all of this to enter the Historical Record, God saw fit to include Lot's story in this Record.

¹² Why was he afraid? Well, the pillar of salt would be very visible, as well as the ruins of Sodom, and Lot lost everything; He only had the clothes that he wore. Without being able to pay, there was no way to stay in the city. And the angel's command was to flee to the mountain.

and he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave.¹ **31** Then the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is no man in the land to come in to us, according to the custom of all the earth. **32** Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him, that we may keep alive our father's progeny."² **33** So they made their father drink wine that night; and the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down, nor when she got up.³ **34** And it came to pass the next day that the firstborn said to the younger, "Now then, I lay with my father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in and lie with him, that we may keep alive our father's progeny." **35** Then they made their father drink wine that night also; and the younger arose and lay with him; and he did not know when she lay down, nor when she got up. **36** Thus both of Lot's daughters were with child by their father. **37** The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. **38** And the younger also gave birth to a son and called his name Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the Ammonites to this day.⁴

Poor Abimelech!

20:1 And Abraham moved from there to the land of the south, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur;⁵ and he stopped in Gerar. **2** And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister". And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.⁶ **3** But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him: "Listen! You are about to die because of the woman you have taken, because she has a husband." **4** But Abimelech had not come near her, and he said: "Lord, will you actually kill a righteous nation? **5** Didn't he himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she, even she herself said, 'He is my brother'. In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this."⁷ **6** And God said to him in a dream: "Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart; so I

¹ Why did Lot not return to Abraham, who would surely care for him? Perhaps he was ashamed, and it would be too humiliating to return as a beggar.

² The main function of women was to produce children, and there was no man for them. And Lot was already without a wife, and he had no way of having descendants. That is to say, male descendants, because he already had daughters.

³ That could not have been the normal procedure. One wonders if there was demonic participation.

⁴ Lot should have died in Sodom.

⁵ Abraham was probably sad and shaken by the destruction of Sodom and Lot as well, as far as he knew. It was natural for him to want to change the landscape.

⁶ Our tendency is to say, "Not again!" But let's go slowly. First, Abraham was an ordinary human being, with the weaknesses we all have, not a superman (and he didn't have the Holy Spirit, like we do). Second, I would say that he was demonized. How so? Satan has always been committed to overthrowing the plan of salvation. He brought about the Flood with the hybrid race of the *Nephilim*. Since the spirit and life are transmitted by the male sperm, if Satan had succeeded in contaminating everyone, there would have been no 'seed of the woman' (3:15). The moment God chose Abram and the land of Canaan, Satan had a new target. From Deuteronomy 2:10-12 and 20-21 we can understand that already in the time of Abraham, and even before, other mixed races had emerged, with impressive size.

The severity used by God in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah indicates that the level of wickedness there was unusual. Although the text does not directly speak of giants in Sodom, we can deduce that there were, because Deuteronomy 2:10-12 says that Moab, who occupied what was left of the area controlled by Sodom and Gomorrah (which was not under the Dead Sea), took the area from the *Emim* (who were the same size as the *Anakim*) – it appears that there were several mixed races of that type.

Sara was 90 years old; why did Abimelech become interested in such an old woman? I deduce from the Text that Sarah was already pregnant with Isaac, and Abraham absolutely should not have done what he did. The situation was so serious that God intervened energetically and without delay. Demons are cowards and like to attack the weak; and Abraham was emotionally shaken by Lot's death (as he had imagined). Do not forget that Satan had a special interest in preventing the birth of Isaac. But that is not all; when God decides to use a person in a special way, that person will be watched and attacked by Satan, without doubt, to this day! (Since he is not omnipresent, he presumably assigns a demon to watch the person.)

⁷ It seems that at that time it was normal for a king to take a woman just because he wanted to; it was part of the culture. That was why the king thought he was innocent.

myself kept you from sinning against me; that is why I did not allow you to touch her. 7 Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet,¹ and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you and all your people will surely die."²

8 So Abimelech got up early in the morning, called all his servants, and spoke all these words in their hearing; and the men were very afraid. 9 Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? In what way have I offended you, that you should bring such a sin upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that ought not to be done."³ 10 And Abimelech said further to Abraham, "What did you have in view to do such a thing?" 11 And Abraham said, "Because I thought, 'Surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me for my wife's sake'. 12 Yet she really is my sister, my father's daughter, but not my mother's daughter; and she became my wife. 13 And when God made me a wanderer from my father's house, I said to her, 'This is the kindness that you will do me in every place wherever we come; say of me, "He is my brother".'" "

14 Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, male and female slaves, and gave them to Abraham, and restored Sarah his wife to him. 15 And Abimelech said, "Indeed, my land is before you; live where it pleases you". 16 And to Sarah he said: "Indeed, I have given your brother a thousand *pieces* of silver. This is to make up for the offense against you in the sight of all those who are with you, and that all may consider you to be vindicated." 17 And Abraham prayed to God,⁴ and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants, so that they had children. 18 For JEHOVAH had closed up every womb of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, the wife of Abraham.

The birth of Isaac

21:1 And JEHOVAH visited Sarah, as he had said;⁵ yes, JEHOVAH did for Sarah as he had promised. 2 And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the appointed time, which God had spoken to him. 3 And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah had borne to him, Isaac. 4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac his son was born to him. 6 And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears it will laugh with me". 7 And she added: "Who would have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? for I have borne him a son in his old age."

8 And the child grew and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. 9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking. 10 So she said to Abraham, "Send away this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, with Isaac". 11 And the matter was very distressing to

¹ Romans 11:29—"God's gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable." That is, God does not revoke them; what we do with them is another story. Abraham's being a prophet was determined by God and did not depend on his behavior. I see an important principle here: there is a sense in which the office is more important than the person who has that office; that is, God respects the office in spite of the person. Abraham had behaved badly, but being a prophet, God would listen to his prayer. Aaron had serious problems, but he was the High-priest. Kings had authority, in spite of their personal lives. Peter had his problems, but Jesus gave him the keys. A judge has authority, in spite of who he is. And so on. The principle holds for the choice of Israel, as a people or nation. God chose to deliver His Oracles to the human race through them, and the Messiah, the Savior of the world, came through them. And there is the throne of David, that the Messiah has yet to sit upon, but He will.

² The threat could not have been more serious, total destruction. God was really bent on saving Sarah and Isaac.

³ Absolutely; the man's complaint was more than justified.

⁴ God had said that Abraham would pray for them, and he must have told Abraham what to pray for. In such a short time there would be no way to know about the closed wombs, by normal means.

⁵ As is typical with Hebrew discourse structure, the topic changes without maintaining chronological sequence. Wanting to keep the sequence, the translation would be: And JEHOVAH had visited Sarah, as He had said; yes, JEHOVAH had done for Sarah as He had promised.

Abraham because of his son.¹ **12** But God said to Abraham: "Do not be distressed because of the boy, and your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice, for in Isaac your seed shall be called. **13** Yet I will also make a nation of the bondwoman's son, because he is your descendant." **14** So Abraham got up early in the morning, took bread and a skin of water, and putting them on Hagar's shoulder he gave her the boy, and sent her away.² So she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

15 The water in the skin was finished, and she put the boy under one of the bushes. **16** Then she went and sat down about a bow shot away from him; for she said, "Let me not see the death of the boy". And sitting down she raised her voice and wept sobbing.³ **17** And God heard the voice of the boy,⁴ and the Angel of God called to Hagar from the heavens, and said to her: "What is it, Hagar? Do not be afraid, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. **18** Get up, lift the boy up and take him by the hand; for I will make him a great nation." **19** And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink. **20** And God was with the boy;⁵ and he grew up and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.⁶ **21** He dwelt in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took him a wife from the land of Egypt.⁷

22 And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech, with Phichol the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying: "God is with you in all that you do. **23** Now therefore, swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my grandson. According to the kindness with which I have treated you, you will treat me and the land wherein you have sojourned." **24** And Abraham said, "I will swear". **25** Then Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had taken by force. **26** Then Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this thing; and you also did not tell me, nor did I hear it until today". **27** Then Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech; and they both made a covenant. **28** Then Abraham set seven ewe-lambs of the flock by themselves. **29** And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What do these seven ewe-lambs mean, which you have set by themselves?" **30** And he said, "You will receive these seven ewe-lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well". **31** That is why the place was called Beersheba,⁸ because they both swore there. **32** So they made a covenant in Beersheba. Then Abimelech got up, and Phichol the commander of his army, and they returned to the land of the Philistines. **33** And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called on the name of JEHOVAH, the Everlasting God.⁹ **34** And Abraham lived in the land of the Philistines many days.

Moriah!

22:1 And it came to pass after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am". **2** Then He said: "Take now your son, your only son whom

¹ All said and done, Ishmael was his son, and Abraham had affection for him (remember 17:18).

² That was tough! Poor Hagar was not to blame; she was merely a piece on the chessboard. She wandered around because she didn't know where to go. But God kept an eye on her.

³ Poor thing! She had plenty of reason.

⁴ We do not know what the boy said. But certainly the fact that he was rejected by his own father left a negative mark on his soul (remember the prophecy in 16:12). He was already a teenager.

⁵ God took care of the boy, and of the mother too (He created the well of water), but that did not eliminate the suffering.

⁶ He lived by hunting, a very different life from the one he had at his father's house.

⁷ She was Egyptian and had relatives there.

⁸ The name means: well of the oath.

⁹ In Hebrew it is: *El Olam*.

you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering¹ on one of the mountains, which I will indicate to you." **3** Then Abraham got up early in the morning, and saddled his donkey,² and took with him two of his young men, and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering.³ He got up and went to the place that God had told him. **4** On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. **5** And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the youth will go over there, where we will worship, and we will return to you."⁴

6 Then Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire,⁵ and the knife in his hand, and they both went together. **7** Then Isaac spoke to Abraham his father, and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "We have the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" **8** And Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son."⁶ And both went on together. **9** Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son⁷ and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. **10** Then Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to kill his son.⁸ **11** But the Angel of JEHOVAH called to him from the heavens, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." **12** Then He said, "Do not lay your hand on the youth, nor do anything to him; for now I know that you are a God-fearer, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."⁹

13 Then Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked; and there, behind him, was a ram, caught by its horns in a thicket. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering, instead of his son. **14** And Abraham called the name of that place, JEHOVAH Jireh;¹⁰ as it is said to this day: 'In the mount of JEHOVAH¹¹ it will be provided'. **15** Then the Angel of JEHOVAH called to Abraham a second time from the heavens, **16** and said: "By myself I have sworn, says JEHOVAH, 'Because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son: **17** I will certainly bless you and multiply your offspring like the stars of the heavens, and like the sand on the seashore; and your descendants will possess the gate of their enemies. **18** Through your descendant all the ethnic nations of the earth shall be blessed; because you have obeyed my voice."¹² **19** Then Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.

¹ I think we can agree that the test was very hard, not to say cruel, but Abraham obeyed without delay, even though God bluntly stated that he was to kill his son. 2 Chronicles 3:1 records that Solomon built the temple on Mount Moriah. Golgotha is nearby.

² Presumably the donkey was used to carry the firewood, water, and food, not for Abraham to ride. They would be away from home for at least five days.

³ Abraham did not know Moriah, and he did not know what kind of wood he would have there. Also, the firewood had to be dry, not green. The safe thing to do was to take adequate firewood.

⁴ Notice the plural, "we will return". How could Isaac come back dead and burned? Hebrews 11:17-19 offers an inspired commentary on this test. "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; yes, he who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his only-begotten, of whom it had been said, 'Through Isaac will your seed be reckoned', calculating that God was indeed able to raise him from the dead; from where in fact he did receive him, figuratively speaking." In fact, they returned together.

⁵ Abraham must have taken a brazier with live coals when he left. They spent the night twice on the way and would want fire. And they renewed the embers.

⁶ The answer was indirect. If Abraham really expected that God would provide the lamb, God waited until the last moment.

⁷ Isaac was a young man strong enough to carry the wood. He could have defended himself by forbidding his father to tie him up, but he meekly submitted. Perhaps there was sovereign action of God in the case.

⁸ Isaac would not be burned alive. In fact, none of the animal sacrifices were burned alive; they were killed first.

⁹ Presumably God knew beforehand, but Abraham had to prove it. See James 2:21-24.

¹⁰ The name means, Jehovah will provide.

¹¹ 'In the mount of JEHOVAH': that was a special mount.

¹² But God had already promised all this, without preconditions. I wonder why God kept repeating the Promise.

20 And it came to pass after these things that Abraham was told, saying, "Indeed, Milcah also has borne sons to your brother Nahor: **21** "Uz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, **22** Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel." **23** And Bethuel begot Rebekah. Milcah bore those eight to Nahor, Abraham's brother. **24** And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, she also bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.¹

Sarah's death and burial

23:1 Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; those were the years of Sarah's life.²
2 Sarah died in Kiriatharba (which is Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.³ **3** Then Abraham stood up from beside his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, **4** "I am a stranger and a sojourner among you; give me the possession⁴ of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of sight". **5** And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him: **6** "Hear us, my lord;⁵ you are a prince of God⁶ among us. Bury your dead in the best of our burying-places. None of us will withhold from you his burying-place, so that you may bury your dead." **7** Then Abraham stood up and bowed down to the people of the land, to the sons of Heth. **8** And he spoke with them, saying: "If it is your wish that I bury my dead out of my sight, hear me and intercede for me with Ephron the son of Zohar, **9** that he may give to me the cave of Machpelah, which he has, which is at the end of his field. Let him give it to me at the full price as a possession of a burying-place among you."

10 Now Ephron was sitting in the midst of the sons of Heth. And Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the sons of Heth, of all who entered the gate of his city, saying: **11** "No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field and the cave that is in it; I give it to you in the presence of the sons of my people; bury your dead." **12** Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land; **13** and he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, "If only you would hear me; I will give the price of the field; take it from me, that I may bury my dead there". **14** And Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him: **15** "My lord, hear me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver. What is that between me and you? So bury your dead."⁷ **16** And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out to Ephron the silver which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, standard among the merchants.

17 So the field of Ephron which was in Machpelah, opposite Mamre, the field and the cave that was in it, and all the trees that were in the field,⁸ that were within all the surrounding borders, **18** were confirmed to Abraham as a possession before the sons of Heth, before all who

¹ Nahor had twelve sons, quite apart from daughters. Evidently it was standard procedure to have more than one wife.

² If Sarah died at the age of 127, Abraham was 137 and Isaac was 37.

³ If he came from Beersheba, he had a journey of about 60 km, in a straight line; they were living in separate places. Sarah certainly only learned the purpose of the trip to Moriah after the fact, when she asked her son for a report. Considering the whole idea to be abhorrent, she may have rebelled against Jehovah and Abraham, and eventually moved to Hebron, a familiar place. Naturally, she was accompanied by enough servants and cattle to protect and maintain her. Surely Abraham was told that she was dying.

⁴ He was asking to buy it.

⁵ One of the chiefs spoke for everyone.

⁶ This is what the Text says. It could be 'of the gods' or seen as hyperbole, but they well knew that Abraham was a servant of Jehovah, who blessed him exceedingly. There was an altar to Jehovah there.

⁷ That whole conversation was certainly the way in which such a subject was conducted at the time. Abraham knew he would have to pay, and Ephron probably charged plenty, but Abraham could afford it, and that cave served the family for generations.

⁸ Why were the trees mentioned? I suppose they would hide the entrance to the cave, at least from a distance. There had to be a hill, for there to be a cave, and any travel would go around the hill.

entered the gate of his city. **19** And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, opposite Mamre, which is Hebron, in the land of Canaan. **20** So the field and the cave that is in it were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth for possession of a burying-place.

A bride for Isaac

24:1 Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age, and JEHOVAH had blessed Abraham in all things. **2** And Abraham said to his slave, the oldest of his household, who ruled over all that he had: "Please put your hand under my thigh, **3** and I will make you swear by JEHOVAH, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell. **4** But you shall go to my country and to my kindred, to take a wife for my son Isaac." **5** And the slave said to him, "Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me into this land; must I take your son back to the land from which you came?" **6** And Abraham said to him: "You be careful that you do not take my son back there! **7** JEHOVAH, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from my native land, who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, 'I will give this land to your descendants', He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. **8** If the woman does not want to follow you, then you will be free from this my oath; only do not take my son back there." **9** Then the slave put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.¹

10 Then the slave took ten of his master's camels and set out, taking with him all manner of his master's good things.² He rose up and left for Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. **11** And he made the camels kneel outside the city, by a well of water, in the evening, the time when the women went out to draw water. **12** And he said: "O JEHOVAH, the God of my master Abraham! Please give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. **13** Finally, I am standing by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. **14** Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please lower your pitcher that I may drink', and she says, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels', let it be she whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master."³

15 And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that really, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder. **16** Now the young woman was very good looking, a virgin, whom no man had known; and she went down to the well, filled her pitcher and came back up. **17** Then the slave ran to meet her, and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher". **18** And she said, "Drink, my lord"; and she hurried and lowered her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him a drink. **19** And when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will also draw water for your camels, until they have finished drinking". **20** And she hurried and emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran again to the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels.⁴ **21** And the man watched her in silence, to know whether JEHOVAH had prospered his journey or not.

22 So when the camels had finished drinking, the man took a nose ring of gold, weighing half a shekel, and two gold bracelets for her wrists, weighing ten *shekels*. **23** And he said: "Whose daughter are you? Tell me, please, is there room in your father's house for us to lodge?" **24** And

¹ In that culture and at that time, this procedure must have been customary for solemn oaths.

² He wasn't going to get there empty-handed!

³ The servant gave God plenty of detail!

⁴ The girl was not afraid of work, and was helpful (perhaps God had helped too); for ten thirsty camels, that was a lot of water!

she said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor".¹ 25 She also said to him, "We have plenty of straw and fodder, and room to lodge". 26 Then the man bowed down and worshipped JEHOVAH. 27 And he said, "Blessed be JEHOVAH, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His goodness and His truth toward my master; as for me, JEHOVAH has led me on the way to the house of my master's relatives." 28 So the young woman ran and told these things to her mother's household.

29 Now Rebekah had a brother, whose name was Laban; and Laban ran out to the man at the well. 30 When he saw the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he heard the words of his sister Rebekah, saying, "Thus the man spoke to me", then he went to the man, who was standing by the camels at the well.² 31 And he said: "Come in, blessed of JEHOVAH;³ why are you standing outside? For I have prepared the house, and the place for the camels." 32 Then the man went into the house. And he [Laban] unloaded the camels, and gave straw and fodder to the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the feet of the men with him.⁴

33 Then food was placed before him to eat, but he said, "I will not eat until I have spoken my message". And *Laban* said, "Well speak!" 34 So he said: "I am Abraham's slave. 35 JEHOVAH has blessed my master very much, and he has become great. Yes, He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, and camels and donkeys. 36 And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old; to whom he has given all that he has. 37 And my master made me swear, saying: 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell. 38 Rather, you shall go to my father's house, and to my family, and take a wife for my son.' 39 Then I said to my master, 'Perhaps the woman will not follow me'. 40 And he said to me: 'JEHOVAH, before whom I walk,⁵ will send His angel with you, and prosper your way. And you shall take a wife for my son from my family, from my father's house. 41 When you have come to my family, then you will be released from my oath; if they do not give one to you, you will be released from my oath.'

42 "Now today I came to the well, and said: 'O JEHOVAH, the God of my master Abraham! Please prosper my way in which I go. 43 As you see, I am standing by the well of water; let it be therefore that the young woman who comes out to draw water, to whom I say, "Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher", 44 and she says to me, "Drink, and I will also draw for your camels"; let her be the woman whom JEHOVAH has appointed for my master's son.' 45 Before I had finished speaking in my heart, yes indeed, Rebekah came out with her pitcher on her shoulder, went down to the well, and drew. Then I said to her, 'Please give me a drink'. 46 And she hurried, lowered her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels!'; so I drank, and she also watered the camels. 47 Then I asked her, and said, 'Whose daughter are you?' And she said, 'Bethuel's, a son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him'. So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her wrists. 48 And I bowed down and worshipped JEHOVAH, and blessed

¹ Bethuel was the eighth son of Nahor by Milcah. Nahor was sixty years older than Abram, and Abram was a hundred years old when Isaac was born. Even though Bethuel was the eighth son, he could easily have been sixty years older than Isaac, or even more. Isaac was forty at the time, which would give Bethuel a hundred years. Perhaps that was why Laban conducted the business, rather than his father.

² Well, well, Laban had his problems, but he wasn't stupid. Someone who paid for a small service with gold and who had ten camels – Laban wasted no time!

³ Note that Laban used God's personal name.

⁴ Carrying so much wealth, he certainly had armed guards, maybe five or six.

⁵ What does "before whom I walk" mean? God is watching everything that we do, whether we keep that in mind, or not. But here Abraham affirms that Jehovah has a special interest in the case.

JEHOVAH, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the way of truth to take the daughter of my master's brother for his son. 49 So now, if you will deal kindly and faithfully with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right or to the left."

50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said: "The thing has come from JEHOVAH;¹ we cannot speak to you bad or good. 51 Here is Rebekah before you; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, as JEHOVAH has spoken." 52 When Abraham's slave heard their words, he bowed down to the earth before JEHOVAH. 53 And the slave brought out vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; and he gave precious things to her brother and to her mother.² 54 Then they ate and drank,³ he and the men who were with him, and spent the night. When they got up in the morning, he said, "Send me away to my master". 55 But her brother and her mother said, "Let the young woman stay with us at least ten days, then she may go". 56 But he said to them, "Do not detain me, since JEHOVAH has prospered my way; send me away, that I may go to my master".⁴ 57 So they said, "We will call the young woman and ask her personally". 58 Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go!"⁵

59 Then they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's slave and his men. 60 And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, "Our sister, may you become the mother of thousands of ten-thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them!" 61 Then Rebekah and her maidservants⁶ got up, mounted the camels, and followed the man. So the slave took Rebekah and departed. 62 Now Isaac had come from *Beer-lahai-roi*,⁷ for he dwelt in the land of the south.⁸ 63 And Isaac went out into the field to meditate in the evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and the camels were coming! 64 Rebekah also had looked up and seen Isaac, and she dismounted from the camel. 65 For she had said to the slave, "Who is that man who is walking in the field to meet us?" And the slave said, "He is my master". Then she took her veil and covered herself. 66 And the slave told Isaac all the things that he had done. 67 Then Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. Thus Isaac was comforted for his mother.

The death of Abraham

25:1 Now Abraham had taken another wife, and her name was Keturah.⁹ 2 And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. 3 And Jokshan begot Sheba and Dedan; and

¹ Why did God record this repetitive repetition, which might seem unnecessary to us? It seems to me that it was to emphasize Jehovah's direct participation from the beginning to the end of the story, which, by the way, convinced Bethuel and Laban. They recognized Jehovah's hand and submitted without protest.

² All of that certainly helped the environment!

³ That whole conversation didn't take that long; so they did not really suffer because of the delay.

⁴ For him it would be ten days lost. He wanted to give the woman to Isaac as soon as possible.

⁵ Well, for the first time in her life Rebecca had gold. At that time, marriage was based on financial condition and social position, and not on emotion or passion (although love could come). If she was still single, it was because she had no attractive option near by. So she gladly said, "I will go!"

⁶ "Maidservants" is plural, so that in addition to the nurse there was at least one more. The number would be limited by the number of camels available.

⁷ The name means: the well of him who lives and sees me.

⁸ He would have come to Beersheba, where his father was living, for verse 67 mentions "the tent of his mother Sarah." Although Sarah had died in Hebron, she would have had a tent in Beersheba. But this was several years after her death; why was her tent still available?

⁹ 1 Chronicles 1:32 says that Keturah was Abraham's concubine, and verse 6 here mentions "concubines", plural. Hagar was a concubine, no doubt. If Sarah rebelled against Abraham and Jehovah because of Moriah, Abraham may have begun with Keturah before Sarah's death. What is certain is that Sarah was not with Abraham when she died.

the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim and Leummim. **4** And the sons of Midian were Ephah, Ephher, Hanoah, Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were sons of Keturah. **5** And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac; **6** But to the sons of Abraham's concubines that he had, Abraham gave gifts; and while he was still alive he sent them away from his son Isaac, and sent them eastward to an eastern land.¹

7 These are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, one hundred and seventy-five years. **8** And Abraham expired and died in a good old age, aged and full of years, and he was gathered to his people. **9** And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, opposite Mamre, **10** the field which Abraham had bought from the sons of Heth. That is where Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife. **11** And it came to pass, after Abraham's death, that God blessed Isaac his son; and Isaac dwelt by the well *Beer-lahai-roi*.

12 Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maidservant, bore to Abraham. **13** These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, name by name, according to their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael was Nebaioth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, **14** Mishma, Dumah, Massa, **15** Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. **16** These were the sons of Ishmael, and these were their names in their settlements and in their camps; twelve chiefs according to their clans. **17** These were the years of Ishmael's life, one hundred and thirty-seven years;² and he expired and died, and was gathered to his people. **18** (They dwelt from Havilah as far as Shur, which is opposite Egypt, as one goes toward Asshur; he had settled over against all his brothers.³)

19 Now these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begot Isaac. **20** And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah the daughter of Bethuel, an Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. **21** And Isaac pleaded with JEHOVAH on behalf of his wife, because she was barren;⁴ and JEHOVAH was entreated by him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. **22** And the babies struggled together inside her. So she said, "I wonder what is happening to me". And she went to ask JEHOVAH.⁵ **23** And JEHOVAH said to her: "There are two nations in your womb, yes, two peoples will be separated from your body; one people will be stronger than the other people; and the older will serve the younger."⁶

24 And when her days were fulfilled to give birth, indeed, she had twins in her womb. **25** And the first came out red, his whole body like a hairy garment; so they called his name Esau.⁷ **26** And afterward his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob.⁸ Isaac was sixty years old⁹ when she bore them. **27** And the boys grew up, and Esau became an expert hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents.

28 Isaac loved Esau because he liked game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. **29** Now Jacob had prepared a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was faint from hunger. **30** And Esau said

¹ They may have gone together, as a family. Since they had certainly been circumcised, and were Abraham's descendants, I wonder what became of them.

² Since Isaac died at the age of 180, he lived 43 years longer than did Ishmael.

³ These would have to be Keturah's sons, and this is the last mention they receive.

⁴ Since Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born, Rebekah had been married for nineteen years when she conceived. It was natural for Isaac to plead with Jehovah, for without a son the promises could not be fulfilled.

⁵ She did the right thing, inquiring of Jehovah, and He answered!

⁶ She certainly told Isaac this, so that he knew that Jehovah had chosen the younger.

⁷ The name means: hairy.

⁸ The name means: place-taker.

⁹ Since he died at 180, he lived for 120 more years.

to Jacob, "Quick, let me eat of that red stuff, the red stuff over there, because I'm famished!" That is why his name was called Edom.¹ **31** Then Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright today". **32** And Esau said, "Hey, I am dying; so what *good will* the birthright do me?"**33** And Jacob said, "Swear to me today". So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. **34** And Jacob gave Esau bread and the stew of lentils; and he ate and drank, and got up and left. Thus Esau despised the birthright.

God blesses Isaac

26:1 And there was a famine in the land, besides the first famine, which was in the days of Abraham; and Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines, to Gerar. **2** And JEHOVAH appeared to him, and said: "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land that I indicate to you. **3** Stay in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for I will give all these lands to you and your descendants, and will establish the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. **4** And I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and will give all these lands to your descendants; and through your descendant all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves;² **5** For Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my precepts, my statutes, and my laws."³ **6** So Isaac dwelt in Gerar.

7 And the men of the place asked about his wife, and he said, "She is my sister";⁴ for he was afraid to say, "She is my wife", 'lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah'; because she was good looking. **8** Now it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked through a window, and saw Isaac caressing Rebekah his wife!⁵ **9** Then Abimelech called Isaac, and said, "Indeed, she is your wife; so how could you say, 'She is my sister'?" And Isaac said to him, "Because I said, 'Lest I die because of her'." **10** And Abimelech said: "What is this that you have done to us? One of the people could easily have lain with your wife,⁶ and you would have brought guilt upon us." **11** And Abimelech charged all the people, saying, "Whoever touches this man or his wife will surely be put to death!"

12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped that same year a hundredfold, because JEHOVAH was blessing him. **13** And the man became great, and grew rich, until he became very rich; **14** for he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and many slaves; so that the Philistines envied him. **15** And all the wells which his father's slaves had dug in the days of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up and filled with earth.⁷ **16** Then Abimelech said to Isaac, "Depart from us; for you are more powerful than we are."⁸

17 So Isaac departed from there, encamped in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. **18** And Isaac dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father, and which the Philistines had filled up after the death of Abraham; and he called them by the names

¹ The name means: red.

² If I am not mistaken, the verb here is in the reflexive voice, which is why I translated it that way. When someone surrenders to Sovereign Jesus, he receives God's protection and blessing. So, we could say that this person, by making this decision, is blessing himself. The same thing happens when a nation decides to obey God's laws.

³ We have no record of all these things; God must have given him instructions that are not in the Text. In fact, during the hundred years that Abraham dwelt in the land of Canaan, certainly much more happened than is reported in the Text.

⁴ Not again! In Abraham's case, it was a half-truth, but here it was simply a lie.

⁵ This case is curious. For the king to see what he saw, he had to be on a second or third floor. That the king's palace had more than one floor would not be surprising, but how could Isaac's tent be so close to the palace? How was there even room for that, and how was it allowed?

⁶ "One of the people" – if it was the same Abimelech who suffered with Abraham, he had already been 'scalded' and would not repeat it; but even if it was a son, he was already grown when the affair with Abraham happened, and he would not have forgotten.

⁷ Water was difficult to find, and therefore precious. To stop up a well would be nonsense. The Philistines must have been really mad, or maybe demonized.

⁸ Indeed, Isaac's presence was already problematic.

which his father had called them. **19** Isaac's slaves also dug in an arroyo, and found there a well of living water. **20** But the shepherds of Gerar contended with Isaac's shepherds, saying, "The water is ours!" So he called the name of the well Esek,¹ because they contended with him.² **21** Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over it also; so he called its name Sitnah.³ **22** And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he called its name Rehoboth,⁴ and said, "For now JEHOVAH has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

23 Then he went up from there to Beersheba.⁵ **24** And JEHOVAH appeared to him that very night, and said: "I am the God of your father Abraham; do not be afraid, for I am with you; and I will bless you and multiply your descendants, because of Abraham my servant." **25** Then he built an altar there, and called on the name of JEHOVAH, and pitched his tent there; and Isaac's slaves dug a well there.

26 Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his aide, and Phichol the commander of his army. **27** And Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, since you hate me and sent me away from you?" **28** And they said: "We have clearly seen that JEHOVAH is with you. So we said: 'Let there now be an oath between us, between us and you; and let us make a covenant with you: **29** that you will do us no harm, since we have not touched you, and since we have only done you good, and let you go in peace'—you being the blessed one of JEHOVAH."⁶ **30** Then he made a feast for them, and they ate and drank. **31** And they got up early in the morning and swore an oath with one another; then Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace. **32** And it came to pass that same day, that Isaac's slaves came and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him, "We have found water". **33** And he called its name Shibah; so the name of the city is Beersheba, to this day.⁷

34 Now when Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. **35** And they were a grief of spirit to Isaac and Rebekah.

Jacob is blessed

27:1 Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old, and his eyes became so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, "My son". And he said to him, "Here I am". **2** And he said: "The fact is, I am old; I do not know the day of my death."⁸ **3** Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver, and your bow, and go out to the field, and hunt game for me. **4** And make me tasty food, such as I love,⁹ and bring it to me that I may eat; that my soul may bless you before I die."¹⁰

5 Now Rebekah heard what Isaac said to his son Esau. And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring it. **6** Then Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying: "Indeed, I heard your father

¹ The name means: contention.

² At least they didn't stop it up! But it appears that the people of the valley were not enjoying Isaac's presence either.

³ The name means: opposition.

⁴ The name means: space.

⁵ Isaac knew this place very well; it was there that his father lived, and it was there that he received Rebekah.

⁶ Notice that they called God by his proper name, Jehovah. "You are the blessed one of JEHOVAH"—they understood that Jehovah was responsible for Isaac's extraordinary prosperity. But the fact that they went to Beersheba to ask for an alliance showed a concern of some size; they didn't want to fight with that God!

⁷ Now Abraham had already dug a well there and named it Beersheba. But Abraham had died, and Isaac was absent for a time. The inhabitants of the place would have taken the well, a logical thing, and Isaac was forced to dig another one, giving it the same name that his father had given.

⁸ He was 137 years old, and died at 180. But being completely blind, life was no longer 'fun'.

⁹ Being blind, the pleasure he still had was eating.

¹⁰ That was serious. Isaac well knew that Jehovah had said that the elder would serve the younger, and he must have heard of the episode when Esau sold the birthright to Jacob. Therefore, the decision to give Esau the greatest blessing was a rebellion against Jehovah, a fact that he came to recognize (verse 33).

speaking to your brother Esau saying, 7 'Bring me game, and make me tasty food, that I may eat, and bless you before JEHOVAH before I die.'¹ 8 Now therefore, my son, hear my voice in what I command you: 9 Go now to the flock, and bring me from there two good kids of the goats, and I will make tasty food for your father, such as he loves. 10 And you shall take it to your father, that he may eat it, and that he may bless you before his death." 11 Then Jacob said to Rebekah his mother: "You know that Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. 12 Perhaps my father will feel me, and I will seem to be a deceiver to him; and I will bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing." 13 And his mother said to him, "Your curse be upon me, my son; only listen to my voice and go, get them for me". 14 And he went and got them, and brought them to his mother; and his mother made tasty food, such as his father loved. 15 Then Rebekah took the best clothes of her older son Esau, that were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. 16 And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands, and on the smooth of his neck. 17 And she gave the tasty food and the bread which she had prepared into the hand of her son Jacob.

18 So he went to his father, and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am; who are you, my son?" 19 And Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done as you said to me; please get up, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me." 20 But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you found it so quickly, my son?"² And he said, "Because JEHOVAH your God brought it to me".³ 21 And Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near now, that I may feel you, my son; whether you are really my son Esau or not". 22 So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau".⁴ 23 And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like the hands of Esau his brother; so he blessed him. 24 And he said, "Are you really my son Esau?" And he said, "I am". 25 Then he said, "Bring it to me and I will eat of my son's game, that my soul may bless you". So he took it to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine, and he drank. 26 Then his father Isaac said to him, "Now come and kiss me, my son".⁵ 27 And he came and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothes, blessed him and said: "Indeed, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which JEHOVAH has blessed. 28 So then, may God give you of the dew of the heavens, and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. 29 Let nations serve you, and peoples bow down to you. Be a ruler to your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you."

30 And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely left the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. 31 And he also made tasty food, and brought it to his father; and said to his father, "Let my father get up and eat of his son's game, that your soul may bless me". 32 And his father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" And he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau". 33 Then Isaac trembled violently,⁶ and said: "Who then was the one who hunted game and brought it to me? And I ate from all before you came, and blessed him; and indeed he shall be blessed!"⁷ 34 When Esau heard his father's

¹ Rebekah understood what Isaac was about to do, and she knew that it represented rebellion against Jehovah's stated will. Whether or not we agree with what she did, the fact is that God used her to thwart Isaac's plan.

² Isaac was suspicious; the difficulty was the voice. Even if Jacob tried to copy Esau's way of speaking, he could hardly copy it perfectly, precisely because of the quality of the voice.

³ That was a lie, pure and simple! It took a deal of 'daring' to introduce Jehovah into the plot.

⁴ It was the voice, but how could Jacob's hands be hairy?

⁵ Isaac was reluctant, he was still suspicious.

⁶ The Hebrew expression here is very strong; Isaac was terrified, realizing that he was in rebellion against Jehovah.

⁷ Isaac recognized that, even though he was deceived, he did the right thing: he blessed Jacob; and he declared that it would remain so. Hebrews 12:16-17 affirms this: "Let no one be a fornicator or worldly like Esau, who in exchange for one meal gave up his birthright. Because you do indeed know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the

words, he cried out with a great and very bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, me also, my father!" **35** But he said, "Your brother came with deceit and took your blessing". **36** Then he said: "That is why his name is called Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times. He took my birthright, and now he has taken my blessing!"¹ And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" **37** Then Isaac answered and said to Esau: "Indeed, I have made him your ruler, and all his brothers I have given to him as servants; I have sustained him with grain and wine. What then can I do for you, my son?" **38** And Esau said to his father: "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, me also, my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept. **39** Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: "Yes, your dwelling will have the fatness of the earth, and the dew from the heavens above. **40** And you shall live by your sword, and serve your brother; but when you become free, you will shake off his yoke from your neck."

41 So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said in his heart, 'The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob'. **42** And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah,² so she sent and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him: "Look, your brother Esau is comforting himself concerning you, intending to kill you. **43** Now therefore, my son, listen to my voice in your own interest: arise and flee to Laban my brother, to Haran.³ **44** And stay with him a few days, until the fury of your brother turns away;⁴ **45** until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send to bring you back from there.⁵ Why should I be bereaved of you both on the same day?" **46** And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as the daughters of the land, what *good will* life be to me?"

Jacob

28:1 Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: "You must not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. **2** Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father, and take from there a wife of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother.⁶ **3** And may Almighty God bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a community of peoples; **4** and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham." **5** So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, the son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.⁷

6 Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram, to take a wife for himself from there, and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, "You must

blessing, he was rejected; he found no place for a change of mind, though he sought it diligently with tears." Neither Isaac nor God changed his mind; Jacob was in and Esau was out.

¹ Esau was the kind of person who never takes responsibility for what he does; he always blames others, or the circumstances. Jacob did not 'take' the birthright, Esau sold it, knowing what he was doing. Since he had sold the birthright, he was no longer entitled to the blessing.

² Surely Esau had spoken of his purpose openly, somewhere (perhaps to his women), which made it possible for it to get to Rebekah.

³ 28:2 says that Laban lived in Paddan-aram; she may have said half the name.

⁴ Rebekah was afraid that Esau would not wait; taken by fury, he could act at any moment.

⁵ But she never saw Jacob again. That is a deduction, because, curiously, her death is not recorded. What is recorded is the death of her nurse (Genesis 35:8). It is also recorded that she was buried in Machpelah (Genesis 49:31). Esau must not have liked his mother very much, and Isaac, being blind, could do nothing.

⁶ Evidently they were not yet aware of the dangers of inbreeding, and it was a tradition within the family. That may be why both Sarai and Rebekah were sterile, as was Rachel. With Jacob things began to change, since two of his four wives were from outside the family. As for Jacob's sons, none of them married within the family.

⁷ Esau had married when he was forty (26:34), and Isaac was 100. Now Isaac was 137, so the twins were 77 years old, and Esau probably had grown children. Therefore he would have had his own little compound, some distance away from Isaac's. Jacob probably left while it was dark, and it took a while for Esau to learn what had happened.

not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan"; 7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Paddan-aram. 8 And when Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan were displeasing to Isaac his father, 9 then Esau went to Ishmael, and took as his wife, besides the wives he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, the son of Abraham, the sister of Nebaioth.¹

¹ Mahalath was the sister of Nebaioth. 25:13 says that Nebaioth was Ishmael's firstborn.