

ABRAHAM'S SECOND FAMILY | GENESIS 25:1-6

If most of us were given a “pop quiz” on Abraham, we would say that he had one wife (Sarah), one concubine (Hagar), and two sons (Ishmael and Isaac). But Genesis 25 lets us know that the common understanding is simply not true.

In verse 1 we are introduced to Keturah, who is introduced as Abraham's wife. However, in 1 Chronicles 1:32 Keturah is referred to as Abraham's concubine. In verse 6 it is also suggested that she was one of several concubines. So, is she a wife or a concubine? I am going to settle with *concubine* for two reasons. First, the Hebrew word translated **wife** in verse 1 is אִשָּׁה [isha], which is also translated *woman*. And a concubine is a woman, so the word could be used for either wife or concubine. Second, 1 Chronicles is considered to be *God's opinion Israel's history*, and 1 Chronicles 1:32 specifically uses the word **concubine**.

And who is this concubine named Keturah? There is a very popular teaching among Jews that *Keturah is Hagar*. While not accepted by all Jewish sages, the idea is at least always addressed by every sage, whether they accept it or not. Teachers like Rashi taught that she was called Keturah (which means “bound”) because Hagar was faithful to Abraham in the time in which she was exiled. In the end, the argument is built on lots of speculation. Probably the biggest argument against it (other than silence) is that Genesis 25:6 speaks of **concubines**, and Hagar and Keturah would be the most natural understanding of the plural reference. Furthermore, in most understandings, a concubine does not have the same legal status as a wife, and neither Keturah nor her children appear to have much legal standing (as v. 6 will display).

The six additional children of Abraham are listed, along with some of their offspring. Virtually nothing is known about them. Keturah and her children are mentioned in the writings of Josephus, but with little more information. It is contested whether Midian (v. 2) is the father of the Midianites, but likely so.

x Verse 5 gives testimony to the fact that Abraham now fully trusts that Isaac is the recipient of the covenant. It further testifies that Keturah and her children have very little legal-standing. Abraham **gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son** (v. 6). Note that Isaac is **his son** while the others are **the sons of the concubines**.

Why does the Genesis account even record this “second family?” It is perhaps simply given as accurate historic record. It could also be that God wanted us to have yet even more verification that Isaac was the son of promise.

ABRAHAM'S DEATH AND BURIAL | GENESIS 25:7-10

It is noted that Abraham lived 175 years. The Hebrew did not have numerals, so numbers were always written out in words. The use of the word **threescore** is completely related to the English language at the time of translation. The Hebrew does not have such a phrase. It is unknown why the translators sometimes used terms like **seventy and five** (Gen. 12:4) and other times used the *score* terminology. Likely the only reason is beauty of speech.

Verse 8 is the first of many times the Bible uses the phrase **gave up the ghost** (v. 17 is the second). It is translated from a Hebrew phrase that refers to a person's *last breath*. The 175 years of Abraham's life are summarized in a positive commentary (and may it be so for us).

In verses 9-10, once again (yet more briefly than with the original purchase), the details of the purchase of **the cave of Machpelah** are mentioned. We are also told that **his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him**, letting us know that the relationship between the two is at least civil, if not close.

LESSONS LEARNED

In seventeen weeks of learning about Abraham, here are some lessons we have learned:

- There is much, much more to the Scripture than we ever imagined. On any page you can find countless theological truths along with items from history that have been lost to modern memory. In addition, studying the historical interpretations and thoughts from these passages through the ages gives insight into both forgotten truths and mankind's sometimes illogical assumptions (and his need to fill in the blanks!).
- Abraham as both *family man* and his family as *family disfunction* becomes evident. He was possibly chosen because God knew he would have the family values to pass the new covenant down to the next generation. But he also failed in family life many times and in obvious ways.
- Western civilization began with Abraham, and a knowledge of his life is fundamental to understanding our Judeo-Christian culture.
- God's commitment to His promises is encouraging, even to us who are not the recipients of the Abrahamic promise.