

# Isaac

Later Career of Abraham and Early Life of Isaac: Command to Sacrifice Isaac; Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. Abraham's Final Days. History of Isaac and His sons: Esau Sells His Birthright to Jacob; Isaac and Abimelech—not again! Esau's Hittite Wives set the stage for his loss of blessing.

## Later Career of Abraham and Early Life of Isaac (21:1–25:11)

- Birth of Isaac (21:1–7)
  - The name *Yiṣḥāq* means “he laughs” → Sarah had first laughed in disbelief, then in joy!
- **Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away** (21:8–21)
  - Starts out seeming like a story about a dysfunctional family and wifely and sibling rivalry, but it turns into a story of answered prayer (Hagar's) and deliverance
- Abraham and Abimelech Make a Covenant (21:22–34)
- **Command to Sacrifice Isaac** (22:1–19, more below)
- Children of Nahor (22:20–24)
  - Sets up the coming story of Isaac's marriage to Rebekah
- **Sarah's Death and Burial** (23:1–20)
- **Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah** (24:1–67, more below)
- Abraham's Final Days (25:1–10, more below)

## Command to Sacrifice Isaac

### The *Aqedah* or “Binding” (22:1–19)

- **The Command (22:1–2)**
  - “tempt” in 22:1 is better translated “test” or “prove”
  - Note the references to Abraham’s “only son” whom he “loves”
  - Mount Moriah was later identified with the Temple Mount
- **The Attempted Sacrifice (22:3–10)**
  - On KJV “lad” (22:5; also 22:12): Josephus said he was 25, the Talmud 37!
  - Did Abraham trust that God would raise Isaac from the dead if he went forward with the sacrifice?
- **The Intervention (22:11–14)**
  - Not only does an angel stop Abraham, but a ram is miraculously provided
  - “the LORD shall be seen” in 22:14 is a wordplay that better means “YHWH will provide”
    - Some scholars think this text reflects early practices of child sacrifice that the Hebrews abandoned
    - Jewish commentators struggled
    - Christians see it as prefiguring the sacrifice of Christ → since God’s only Son will die, Abraham’s does not need to!
- **The Covenant Renewed (22:15–19)**
  - A blessing for demonstrated obedience? Note the evidence of an *oath*, “**By myself I have sworn . . .**” (22:16; cf. Gen 15:25–40 JST; Heb 6:13–17, 7:17–28; D&C 84:33–45 n.b. 39–40)

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## Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah (24:1–67)

- **Possible literary foil for Ishmael who had Canaanite wives**
- **Eliezer** (named in 15:2), the steward of Abraham was not of the covenant line (he was from Damascus) but he did recognize his master’s God
  - He makes a plan to find Isaac a wife and prays about it
  - Again God blesses and helps those who ask for it
  - *Eliezer also thanks and worships God publicly*
- Rebekah’ motivations
  - Just jewelry?
  - **“I will go” (24:58): what was her spiritual preparation?**
- Rebekah as a comfort for Isaac after the loss of his mother

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## Abraham's Final Days (25:1–10)

- Abraham Marries **Keturah** (25:1–4)
  - One of her descendants was **Midian**
  - Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, comes from this line
    - *D&C 84:6 teaches that Moses received the priesthood from him*
- Inheritances (2:5–6)
  - Other sons received "gifts" and were "sent away"
  - **Isaac received all that his father had . . .**
- Abraham Dies and is Buried (2:7–10)
  - "a good old age" was 175 years
  - "gathered to his people" and buried in the cave Machpelah where Sarah was buried
- Abraham's Sons (25:11–25)
  - **Isaac Blessed by God** (25:11)
  - **Descendants of Ishmael** (25:12–18)
    - *This "generations list" (tôlēdot) is a foil for Isaac's story*

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## Machpelah



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## History of Isaac and his Sons (25:19–36:43)

- Birth and Youth of Esau (hairy) and Jacob (*Yā'akōv*, “supplanter”) (25:19–27)
- Esau Sells His Birthright (25:28–34)
- Covenant Renewed with Isaac (26:1–5)
- Isaac and Abimelech (26:6–33; “father-king,” not necessarily the same Abimelech as in the Abraham story)
  - A “Lie” about Rebekah (26:6–11)
    - Patriarchal misbehavior again, or do we have the whole story?
  - Isaac Prospers (26:12–16)
  - Strife between Abimelech and Isaac’s Herdmen (26:17–23)
  - Isaac again Blessed (24–25)
  - Oath between Isaac and Abimelech (26:26–33)
- Esau’s Hittite Wives (26:34–35)
  - Helps explain the following loss of his blessing . . .

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