

Genesis 25:5-11

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Isaac inherits all of Abraham's possessions. Abraham gives gifts to his other sons and sends them east of Canaan to settle away from Isaac. Abraham dies when he is 175 years old. Isaac and Ishmael bury him in the cave of Machpelah where Sarah was buried. Isaac settles near Beer-lahai-roi.

At his death, *Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac* (vs 5). Abraham was wealthy throughout much of his life. He was a rancher or a herdsman, accumulating great numbers of animals and money, "Now Abram was very rich in livestock, silver and in gold" (Genesis 13:2). This is what Isaac received as the inheritor and owner of the birthright of his father's estate at his death. However, Abraham did provide for his other sons while he was still living.

But to the sons of his concubines (Hagar and Keturah) Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the east (vs 6). While Abraham *was still living*, he essentially headed off a potential rivalry between Isaac and his other sons by sending them *away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the east*. Although Abraham made a clear separation of his other sons from Ishmael (*sent them away*), it seems they remained in the vicinity, as Ishmael will attend Abraham's funeral.

Abraham showed wisdom in seeking to prevent dispute or open war between his children. Abraham took a similar action when he and his nephew Lot settled in Canaan; their herdsmen were in conflict, so Abraham decided he and Lot should go separate ways to prevent further strife between the families (Genesis 13:8-9). It seems likely that Abraham's division with Lot would be similar to this episode in chapter 25, where Lot was clearly separate, with a clear border between them, but in the vicinity. This is somewhat ironic, given that the great family rivalries that will erupt are within the lineage of the child of promise, beginning with Abraham's grandsons Jacob and Esau, followed by great division between Jacob's son Joseph and his brothers, who sold him into slavery (Genesis 37:28).

Isaac was the favored son; he was the only son Abraham had with his beloved wife Sarah. Abraham was so committed to Sarah that while she lived he did not take other wives, as was the custom for wealthy men like him, until Sarah lost hope in having

children. Even then, Abraham took a concubine only at Sarah's request (Genesis 16:2).

Though Abraham clearly loved his other sons, their futures did not concern Abraham as much as Isaac's did. Isaac was the son of promise, and the owner of the birthright. Canaan was the Promised Land, and Isaac was to never leave it (Genesis 24:6-8, Genesis 26:2). The other sons of Abraham could establish their houses *east* of Canaan. To put them on firm footing, he *gave gifts* to these *sons*. Probably livestock and some money, so that they weren't starting from nothing.

These are all the years of Abraham's life that he lived, one hundred and seventy-five years. Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people (vv 7-8).

Abraham's incredible life of faith comes to an end, and it seems he is perfectly happy with how it turned out. He died an *old man* who was *satisfied with life*. Similar language is used to describe the deaths of Isaac, David, and Job (Genesis 35:29; 1 Chronicles 29:28; Job 42:17). It would seem a major part of this was because Abraham followed God's direction throughout his life. When Jesus offers an image of how faithfulness will be rewarded in Matthew 8, He includes an image of a great honor banquet in His kingdom where Gentiles are seated at the table of honor with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This would indicate that the faith of all three is worthy of great honor. This is encouraging given that Abraham's obedience was partial for many years and Jacob began his adult life as a deceiver.

This "happy ending" fulfilled part of God's covenant with Abraham, that he would be blessed, and die peacefully at a *ripe old age* of *one hundred and seventy-five* (Genesis 12:2, 15:15). It is interesting to note that ages were decaying after the time of Noah's flood, but at this point *one hundred and seventy-five* was considered a *ripe old age*.

Abraham's forefather Shem, one of Noah's three sons, lived five hundred years after he begot Abraham's forefather Arphaxad (Genesis 11:11). Adding up the ages for each descendant of Arphaxad as listed in Genesis 11, Abraham was born 290 years after Arphaxad, which means Abraham died 465 years after Arphaxad was born. Shem lived 500 years after Arphaxad was born (Genesis 11:11). Therefore, Abraham's great-great-great-great-great-great grandfather Shem would have slightly outlived Abraham. The first three generations from Shem lived over four hundred years. Then the lifespan decayed to around two hundred. The fact that by the time of Abraham 175 was considered a *ripe old age* indicates a further decay of lifespan.

Abraham's grandson Joseph will live one hundred and ten years (Genesis 50:22). By the time of King David, roughly five hundred years after Joseph, the average life span was down to 70 years (Psalm 90:10). Part of this decay could have stemmed from environmental factors, since the earth at the time of Noah was destroyed by Noah's flood (2 Peter 3:6). Degradation of the gene pool could also have played a role, since it was common for families to intermarry during this era; Abraham's wife Sarah was his half-sister, for example (Genesis 20:12).

That Abraham *was gathered to his people* (vs 8) is just a metaphorical phrase meaning that he was now among those who had died before him.

Then Abraham's sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, facing Mamre, the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth; there Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife (vv 9-10). This calls back to the episode in Genesis 23. When Sarah died, Abraham went to the Hittites and purchased a *field* owned by Ephron the son of Zohar. The *field* was *facing Mamre*, which was where Abraham settled near the oak trees there, where he built an altar, and where he was visited by God and told that he would have a son with Sarah.

At the end of the *field of Ephron* was the *cave of Machpelah* where Abraham *buried* Sarah. Now he too was laid to rest in this same cave, together with his beloved wife Sarah. This cave was where Isaac was ultimately buried too, as was Jacob (Genesis 49:29-32).

It is noteworthy that Ishmael was present for Abraham's burial. Both of Abraham's *sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him* (vs 9). Ishmael had been sent away from Abraham's household when he was a young man. He grew up in the wilderness of Paran (a large desert in the eastern Sinai Peninsula) and became an archer (Genesis 21:20-21). However, the death of his father reunited him with his half-brother Isaac, and the pair peacefully buried him. Although later in time there is record of war between descendants of Ishmael and descendants of Isaac, there is no biblical account of strife between Hebrews and Ishmaelites. This would indicate that there was peace among the two branches of Abraham for some time.

With the *death of Abraham*, the saga of God's covenant continues with Isaac, whom *God blessed* (vs 11). The blessing appears to include an appointment of birthright, that Isaac would be the heir responsible to govern the family. Isaac lived *by Beer-lahai-roi* (vs 11). *Beer-lahai-roi* was a well in the south of Canaan in the Negev, a desert region (Genesis 16:14). The well's name means "the well of the living one who sees me," so called by Hagar when God spoke to her there. This was where Isaac and Rebekah first met and were married (Genesis 24:62-67). [\(See Map\)](#)

Biblical Text

⁵ Now Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac; ⁶ but to the sons of his concubines, Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the east. ⁷ These are all the years of Abraham's life that he lived, one hundred and seventy-five years. ⁸ Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied *with life*; and he was gathered to his people. ⁹ Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, facing Mamre, ¹⁰ the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth; there Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife. ¹¹ It came about after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac lived by Beer-lahai-roi.