

March 12, 2017 - Purim! and Death of Abraham, Ishmael's Sons
Torah Readings - Gen. 25:1-18 - Death of Abraham, Ishmael's Sons
Psalm 18 (again)
Haftorah - Isaiah 14:1-2

Keturah

Abraham took a wife, or rather, "had taken" a wife - it's not clear which.

The Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem say she is the same with Hagar, other Jewish commentators reject this. Some say this passage suggests she was Abraham's secondary wife or concubine before the death of Sarah, possibly even when he was in Haran. Others say after her death. The text does not explain it.

The problem: Abraham was 137 years of age at Sarah's death, and lived to be 175. If it was a thing beyond nature for a man a hundred years old to have a son (Genesis 17:17) how much more improbable, then, after 40 more years had passed by.

The list of Abraham's Descendants by Keturah preserves the recollection of an early connection between the ancestors of Israel and the clans or tribes on the borders of the North Arabian desert. The genealogy of Keturah is found again in a shortened form in 1 Chronicles 1:32.

Keturah means "incense."

Death of Abraham

Genesis 25:8 - Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people.

Gave up the ghost" means "breathed out the breath of life"

God had promised him (**Genesis 15:15**) "And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age."

The phrases "gathered to his people," and "to go to thy fathers" (Genesis 15:15), and "to sleep with my fathers" (Genesis 47:30; cf. Deuteronomy 31:16) and being "gathered to one's fathers" (Judges 2:10) all speak of the the reunion in Sheol with those who have gone before, and therefore presupposes faith in the personal continuance of a man after death.

"Full of years" means "satiated." He had tasted the sweet and the bitter in this world, and like Solomon found this world was "Vanity of vanities! all is vanity and vexation of spirit." We are told he died in the "hope of a better, heavenly country, a city "not made with hands."

Hebrews 11:13-16 - "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but

having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

In The 'Bosom of Abraham'

In most of the Old Testament, resurrection and what happens after death is only hinted at. In the centuries before Christ - sparked by the martyrdoms by Antiochus and the wars of the Maccabees - expectation of the Messiah grew, and Jewish writings exploded in illustrations of heaven and paradise, along with apocalyptic visions of the final victory of God over evil.

In the pseudepigraphical Apocalypse of Zephaniah the river has a ferryman equivalent to Charon in Greek myth, but replaced by an angel. On the other side is the Bosom of Abraham : "You have escaped from the Abyss and Hades, now you will cross over the crossing place... to all the righteous ones, namely Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Enoch, Elijah and David." In this story Abraham was not idle in the Bosom of Abraham; he acted as intercessor for those in the fiery part of Hades.

"After our death in this fashion [as martyrs] Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will receive us and all our forefathers will praise us" (4 Maccabees 13:17)

"In the world to come Abraham sits at the gate of Gehenna, permitting none to enter who bears the seal of the covenant," according to Rabbi Levi in Genesis Rabba 67.

Jesus and the New Testament writers accepted some of these visions and clarified them for us.

Luke 16:22-23 - "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."

Matthew 8:11 - "And I tell you that many will come from the East and West and will eat with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."

It was considered by first-century Jews a mark of special honor and favor for one to be allowed to lie in the bosom of the master of the feast (cf. John 13:23) They conceived of the reward of the righteous dead as a sharing in a banquet given by Abraham, "the father of the faithful" (cf. Matthew 8:11-), and of the highest form of that reward as lying in "Abraham's Bosom."