
GENESIS 25:1 Abraham took another wife, and her name was Keturah.

Abraham marries Keturah, Gen 25:1. Their issue, Gen 25:2-4. Makes Isaac his heir, Gen 25:5; but gives portions to the sons of his concubines, and sends them eastward from Isaac, to find settlements, Gen 25:6. Abraham's age, Gen 25:7, and death, Gen 25:8. Is buried by his sons Isaac and Ishmael in the cave of Machpelah, Gen 25:9, Gen 25:10. God's blessing upon Isaac, Gen 25:11. The generations of Ishmael, Gen 25:12-16. His age, Gen 25:17, and death, Gen 25:18. Of the generations of Isaac, Gen 25:19, who was married in his fortieth year, Gen 25:20. Rebekah his wife being barren, on his prayer to God she conceives, Gen 25:21. She inquires of the Lord concerning her state, Gen 25:22. The Lord's answer, Gen 25:23. She is delivered of twins, Gen 25:24. Peculiarities in the birth of her sons Esau and Jacob, from which they had their names, Gen 25:25, Gen 25:26. Their different manner of life, Gen 25:27, Gen 25:28. Esau, returning from the field faint, begs pottage from his brother, Gen 25:29, Gen 25:30. Jacob refuses to grant him any but on condition of his selling him his birthright, Gen 25:31. Esau, ready to die, parts with his birthright to save his life, Gen 25:32. Jacob causes him to confirm the sale with an oath, Gen 25:33. He receives bread and pottage of lentils, and departs, Gen 25:34.

Verse 1

Then again Abraham took a wife - When Abraham took Keturah we are not informed; it might have been in the lifetime of Sarah; and the original $\eta\theta\upsilon$ vaiyoseph, and he added, etc., seems to give some countenance to this opinion. Indeed it is not very likely that he had the children mentioned here after the death of Sarah; and from the circumstances of his age, feebleness, etc., at the birth of Isaac, it is still more improbable. Even at that age, forty years before the marriage of Isaac, the birth of his son is considered as not less miraculous on his part than on the part of Sarah; for the apostle expressly says, Rom 4:19, that Abraham considered not his own body Now Dead, when he was about a hundred years old, nor the Deadness of Sarah's womb; hence we learn that they were both past the procreation of children, insomuch that the birth of Isaac is ever represented as supernatural. It is therefore very improbable that he had any child after the birth of Isaac; and therefore we may well suppose that Moses had related this transaction out of its chronological order, which is not infrequent in the sacred writings, when a variety of important facts relative to the accomplishment of some grand design are thought necessary to be produced in a connected series. On this account intervening matters of a different complexion are referred to a future time. Perhaps we may be justified in reading the verse: "And Abraham had added, and had taken a wife (besides Hagar) whose name was Keturah," etc. The chronology in the margin dates this marriage with Keturah A. M. 2154, nine years after the death of Sarah, A. M. 2145. Jonathan ben Uzziel and the Jerusalem Targum both assert that Keturah was the same as Hagar. Some rabbins, and with them Dr. Hammond, are of the same opinion; but both Hagar and Keturah are so distinguished in the Scriptures, that the opinion seems destitute of probability.

GENESIS 25:2 She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

Verse 2

Zimran - Stephanus Byzantinus mentions a city in Arabia Felix called Zadram, which some suppose to have been named from this son of Keturah; but it is more likely, as Calmet observes, that all these sons of Abraham resided in Arabia Deserta; and Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, lib. vi., c. 28, mentions a people in that country called Zamarenians, who were probably the descendants of this person.

Jokshan - Several learned men have been of opinion that this Jokshan was the same as Kachtan, the father of the Arabs. The testimonies in favor of this opinion see in Dr. Hunt's *Oration, De Antiquitate*, etc., *Linguae Arabicae*, p. 4. Calmet supposes that the Cataneans, who inhabited a part of Arabia Deserta, sprang from this Jokshan.

Medan, and Midian - Probably those who peopled that part of Arabia Petraea contiguous to the land of Moab eastward of the Dead Sea. St. Jerome terms the people of this country Madinaeans; and Ptolemy mentions a people called Madianites, who dwelt in the same place.

Ishbak - From this person Calmet supposes the brook Jabbok, which has its source in the mountains of Gilead, and falls into the sea of Tiberias, took its name.

Shuah - Or Shuach. From this man the Sacceans, near to Batanla, at the extremity of Arabia Deserta, towards Syria, are supposed to have sprung. Bildad the Shuhite, one of Job's friends, is supposed to have descended from this son of Abraham.

GENESIS 25:3 Jokshan became the father of Sheba, and Dedan. The sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim.

Verse 3

Sheba - From whom sprang the Sabeans, who robbed Job of his cattle. See Bochart and Calmet.

Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim - We know not who these were, but as each name is plural they must have been tribes or families, and not individuals. Onkelos interprets these words of persons dwelling in camps, tents, and islands; and Jonathan ben Uzziel calls them merchants, artificers, and heads or chiefs of people.

GENESIS 25:4 The sons of Midian: Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.

Verse 4

Ephah, and Epher, etc. - Of these we know no more than of the preceding; an abundance of conjectures is already furnished by the commentators.

GENESIS 25:5 Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac,

Verse 5

Gave all that he had unto Isaac - His principal flocks, and especially his right to the land of Canaan, including a confirmation to him and his posterity of whatever was contained in the promises of God.

GENESIS 25:6 but to the sons of Abraham's concubines, Abraham gave gifts. He sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, to the east country.

Verse 6

Unto the sons of the concubines - Viz., Hagar and Keturah, Abraham gave gifts. Cattle for breed, seed to sow the land, and implements for husbandry, may be what is here intended.

And sent them away - while he yet lived - Lest after his death they should dispute a settlement in the Land of Promise with Isaac; therefore he very prudently sent them to procure settlements during his lifetime, that they might be under no temptation to dispute the settlement with Isaac in Canaan. From this circumstance arose that law which has prevailed in almost all countries, of giving the estates to the eldest son by a lawful wife; for though concubines, or wives of the second rank, were perfectly legitimate in those ancient times, yet their children did not inherit, except in case of the failure of legal issue, and with the consent of the lawful wife; and it is very properly observed by Calmet, that it was in consequence of the consent of Leah and Rachel that the children of their slaves by Jacob had a common and equal lot with the rest. By a law of Solon all natural children were excluded from the paternal inheritance, but their fathers were permitted to give them any sum not beyond a thousand drachma by way of present. Eastward, unto the east country - Arabia Deserta, which was eastward of Beer-sheba, where Abraham lived.

GENESIS 25:7 These are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred seventy-five years.

Verse 7

The days of the years, etc. - There is a beauty in this expression which is not sufficiently regarded. Good men do not live by centuries, though many such have lived several hundred years, nor do they count their lives even by years, but by days, living as if they were the creatures only of A Day; having no more time than they can with any propriety call their own, and living that day in reference to eternity.

GENESIS 25:8 Abraham gave up the spirit, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years, and was gathered to his people.

Verse 8

Then Abraham gave up the ghost - Highly as I value our translation for general accuracy, fidelity, and elegance, I must beg leave to dissent from this version. The original word יגוּעַ yigva, from the root גוּעַ gava, signifies to pant for breath, to expire, to cease from breathing, or to breathe one's last; and

here, and wherever the original word is used, the simple term expired would be the proper expression. In our translation this expression occurs Gen 25:8, Gen 25:17; Gen 35:29; Gen 44:33; Job 3:11; Job 10:18; Job 11:20; Job 13:19; Job 14:10; Lam 1:19; in all of which places the original is גוע gava. It occurs also in our translation, Jer 15:9, but there the original is נפחה נפשה naphecah naphshah, she breathed out her soul; the verb גוע gava not being used. Now as our English word ghost, from the Anglo-Saxon gast, an inmate, inhabitant, guest, (a casual visitant), also a spirit, is now restricted among us to the latter meaning, always signifying the immortal spirit or soul of man, the guest of the body; and as giving up the spirit, ghost, or soul, is an act not proper to man, though commending it to God, in our last moments, is both an act of faith and piety; and as giving up the ghost, i.e., dismissing his spirit from his body, is attributed to Jesus Christ, to whom alone it is proper, I therefore object against its use in every other case.

Every man since the fall has not only been liable to death, but has deserved it, as all have forfeited their lives because of sin. Jesus Christ, as born immaculate, and having never sinned, had not forfeited his life, and therefore may be considered as naturally and properly immortal. No man, says he, taketh it - my life, from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again: therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again, Joh 10:17, Joh 10:18. Hence we rightly translate Mat 27:50, ἀφῆκε τὸ πνεῦμα, he gave up the ghost; i.e., he dismissed his spirit that he might die for the sin of the world. The Evangelist St. Joh 19:30, makes use of an expression to the same import, which we translate in the same way, παρέδωκε τὸ πνεῦμα, he delivered up his spirit. We translate Mar 15:37, and Luk 23:46, he gave up the ghost, but not correctly, because the word in both these places is very different, ἐξέπνευσε, he breathed his last, or expired, though in the latter place (Luk 23:46) there is an equivalent expression, Ὁ Θεέ, εἰς τὰς χεῖρας παρατίθειμαι τὸ πνεῦμα μου, I commit my spirit, i.e., I place my soul in thy hand; proving that the act was his own, that no man could take his life away from him, that he did not die by the perfidy of his disciple, or the malice of the Jews, but by his own free act. Thus He Laid Down his life for the sheep. Of Ananias and Sapphira, Act 5:5, Act 5:10, and of Herod, Act 12:23, our translation says they gave up the ghost; but the word in both places is ἐξέψυξε, which simply means to breathe out, to expire, or die; but in no case, either by the Septuagint in the Old or any of the sacred writers in the New Testament, is ἀφῆκε τὸ πνεῦμα or παρέδωκε τὸ πνεῦμα, he dismissed his spirit or delivered up his spirit, spoken of any person but Christ. Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, etc., breathed their last; Ananias, Sapphira, and Herod expired; but none, Jesus Christ excepted, gave up the ghost, dismissed, or delivered up his own spirit, and was consequently free among the dead. Of the patriarchs, etc., the Septuagint uses the word ἐκλείπων, failing, or κατεπαύσε, he ceased or rested.

An old man - Viz., one hundred and seventy-five, the youngest of all the patriarchs; and full of years. The word years is not in the text; but as our translators saw that some word was necessary to fill up the text, they added this in italics. It is probable that the true word is יָמִים' yamim, days, as in Gen 35:29; and this reading is found in several of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., in the Samaritan text, Septuagint, Vulgate, Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Chaldee. On these authorities it might be safely admitted into the text.

Being full of days, or full of years - To be satiated with days or life, has been in use among different nations to express the termination of life, and especially life ended without reluctance. It seems to be a metaphor taken from a guest regaled by a plentiful banquet, and is thus used by the Roman poets. Lucretius, lib. iii., ver. 947, ridiculing those who were unreasonably attached to life, and grievously afflicted at the prospect of death, addresses them in the following manner: -

Quid mortem congemis, ac fies?

Nam si grata fuit tibi vita anteacta, priorque,
 Et non omnia pertusum congesta quasi in vas
 Commoda perfluxere, atque ingrata interiere:
 Cur non, ut Plenus Vitae Conviva, Recedis?
 Fond mortal, what's the matter, thou dost sigh?
 Why all these fears because thou once must die?
 For if the race thou hast already run
 Was pleasant, if with joy thou saw'st the sun,
 If all thy pleasures did not pass thy mind
 As through a sieve, but left some sweets behind,
 Why dost thou not then, like a Thankful Guest,
 Rise cheerfully from life's Abundant Feast?
 Creech.

Et nec opinanti mors ad caput astitit ante,
 Quam Satur, ac Plenus possis discedere rerum
 Ib. ver. 972.

And unexpected hasty death destroys,
 Before thy greedy mind is Full of Joys. Idem.
 Horace makes use of the same figure: -
 Inde fit, ut raro, qui se vixisse beatum
 Dicat, et exacto Contentus tempore vitae
 Cedat, ut Conviva Satur, reperire queamus.
 Sat. l. i. Sat. i. ver. 117.

From hence how few, like Sated Guests, depart From life's Full Banquet with a cheerful heart?
 Francis.

The same image is expressed with strong ridicule in his last Epistle -

Lusisti satis, edisti satis, atque bibisti;
 Tempus Abire tibi est.
 Epist. l. ii., ver. 216.

Thou hast eaten, drunk, and play'd Enough; then why So stark reluctant to leave off, and Die?

The poet Statius uses abire paratum Plenum vita, "prepared to depart, being Full of Life," in exactly the same sense: -

Dubio quem non in turbine rerum
 Deprendet suprema dies; sed abire paratum,
 Acts Plenum Vita. Sylv. l. ii., Villa Surrentina, ver. 128.

The man whose mighty soul is not immersed in dubious whirl of secular concerns, His final hour ne'er takes him by surprise, But, Full of Life, he stands Prepared to Die.

It was the opinion of Aristotle that a man should depart from life as he should rise from a banquet. Thus Abraham died Full of days, and Satisfied with life, but in a widely different spirit from that recommended by the above writers - He left life with a hope full of immortality, which they could never boast; for He saw the day of Christ, and was glad; and his hope was crowned, for here it is expressly said, He was gathered to his fathers; surely not to the bodies of his sleeping ancestors, who were buried in Chaldea and not in Canaan, nor with his fathers in any sense, for he was

deposited in the cave where his Wife alone slept; but he was gathered to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven; Heb 12:23.

GENESIS 25:9 Isaac and Ishmael, his sons, buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron, the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre,

Verse 9

His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him - Though Ishmael and his mother had been expelled from Abraham's family on the account of Isaac, yet, as he was under the same obligation to a most loving affectionate father as his brother Isaac, if any personal feuds remained, they agreed to bury them on this occasion, that both might dutifully join in doing the last offices to a parent who was an honor to them and to human nature: and, considering the rejection of Ishmael from the inheritance, this transaction shows his character in an amiable point of view; for though he was a wild man, (see Gen 16:12), yet this appellation appears to be more characteristic of his habits of life than of his disposition.

For the character of Abraham see the conclusion of this chapter, Gen 25:34 (note).

GENESIS 25:10 the field which Abraham purchased of the children of Heth. Abraham was buried there with Sarah, his wife.

GENESIS 25:11 After the death of Abraham, God blessed Isaac, his son. Isaac lived by Beer Lahai Roi.

Verse 11

God blessed his son Isaac - The peculiar blessings and influences by which Abraham had been distinguished now rested upon Isaac; but how little do we hear in him of the work of faith, the patience of hope, and the labor of love! Only one Abraham and one Christ ever appeared among men; there have been some successful imitators, there should have been many.

GENESIS 25:12 Now this is the history of the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bore to Abraham.

Verse 12

These are the generations of Ishmael - The object of the inspired writer seems to be to show how the promises of God were fulfilled to both the branches of Abraham's family. Isaac has been already referred to; God blessed him according to the promise. He had also promised to multiply Ishmael, and an account of his generation is introduced to show how exactly the promise had also been fulfilled to him.

GENESIS 25:13 These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to the order of their birth: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth, then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,

Verse 13

Nebajoth - From whom came the Nabatheans, whose capital was Petra, or, according to Strabo, Nabathea. They dwelt in Arabia Petraea, and extended themselves on the east towards Arabia Deserta.

Kedar - The founder of the Cedreans, who dwelt near to the Nabatheans. The descendants of Kedar form a part of the Saracens.

Adbeel, and Mibsam - Where these were situated is not known.

GENESIS 25:14 Mishma, Dumah, Massa,

Verse 14

Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa - Where the first and last of these settled is not known; but it is probable that Dumah gave his name to a place called Dumah in Arabia. See a prophecy concerning this place, Isa 21:11 (note), from which we find that it was in the vicinity of Mount Seir.

These three names have passed into a proverb among the Hebrews, because of their signification. מִשְׁמַע mishma signifies Hearing; דוּמָה dumah, Silence; and מַשָּׂא massa, Patience. Hence, "Hear much, say little, and bear much," tantamount to the famous maxim of the Stoics, Ἀνεχου και ἀπεχου, "Sustain and abstain," is supposed to be the spirit of the original words.

GENESIS 25:15 Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.

Verse 15

Hadar - This name should be read Hadad as in 1Chr 1:30. This reading is supported by more than three hundred MSS., versions, and printed editions. See Clarke at Gen 25:18 (note).

Tema - Supposed to be a place in Arabia Deserta, the same of which Job speaks, Job 6:19.

Jetur - From whom came the Itureans, who occupied a small tract of country beyond Jordan, which was afterwards possessed by the half-tribe of Manasseh.

Naphish - These are evidently the same people mentioned 1Chr 5:19, who, with the Itureans and the people of Nadab, assisted the Hagarenes against the Israelites, but were overcome by the two tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

Kedemah - Probably the descendants of this person dwelt at Kedemoth, a place mentioned Deu 2:26. I wish the reader to observe, that concerning those ancient tribes mentioned here or elsewhere in the Pentateuch little is known; nor of their places of settlement have we more certain information. On this subject many learned men have toiled hard with but little fruit of their labor.

Those who wish to enter into discussions of this nature must consult Bochart's Geographia Sacra, Calmet, etc.

GENESIS 25:16 These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their villages, and by their encampments: twelve princes, according to their nations.

Verse 16

These are their names - By which their descendants were called. Their towns - places of encampment in the wilderness, such as have been used by the Arabs from the remotest times. Their castles, תִּירוֹתָם tirotham, their towers, probably mountain tops, fortified rocks, and fastnesses of various kinds in woods and hilly countries.

GENESIS 25:17 These are the years of the life of Ishmael: one hundred thirty-seven years. He gave up the spirit and died, and was gathered to his people.

GENESIS 25:18 They lived from Havilah to Shur that is before Egypt, as you go toward Assyria. He lived opposite all his relatives.

Verse 18

They dwelt from Havilah unto Shur - The descendants of Ishmael possessed all that country which extends from east to west, from Havilah on the Euphrates, near its junction with the Tigris, to the desert of Shur eastward of Egypt; and which extends along the isthmus of Suez, which separates the Red Sea from the Mediterranean.

As thou goest toward Assyria - "These words," says Calmet, "may refer either to Egypt, to Shur, or to Havilah. The desert of Shur is on the road from Egypt to Assyria in traversing Arabia Petraea, and in passing by the country of Havilah. I know not," adds he, "whether Ashshurah in the text may not mark out rather the Asshurim descended from Keturah, than the Assyrians, who were the descendants of Asshur the son of Shem."

He died in the presence of all his brethren - The original will not well bear this translation. In Gen 25:17 it is said, He gave up the ghost and died, and was gathered to his people. Then follows the account of the district occupied by the Ishmaelites, at the conclusion of which it is added על פני כל נַפְלֵי אֶחָיו נָפַל al peney col echaiv naphal, "It (the lot or district) Fell (or was divided to him) in the presence of all his brethren:" and this was exactly agreeable to the promise of God, Gen 16:12, He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren; and to show that this promise had been strictly fulfilled, it is here remarked that his lot or inheritance was assigned him by Divine Providence, contiguous to that of the other branches of the family. The same word, נַפְלֵי naphal, is used Jos 23:4, for to divide by lot.

On the subject of writing the same proper name variously in our common Bibles, the following observations and tables will not be unacceptable to the reader. "Men who have read their Bible with care," says Dr. Kennicott, "must have remarked that the name of the same person is often expressed differently in different places. Indeed the variation is sometimes so great that we can scarcely persuade ourselves that one and the same person is really meant. A uniform expression of proper

names is diligently attended to in other books: perhaps in every other book, except the Old Testament. But here we find strange variety in the expression, and consequently great confusion: and indeed there is scarcely any one general source of error which calls for more careful correction than the same proper names now wrongly expressed. I shall add here, from the Pentateuch, some proper names which are strangely varied: first, twenty-three names expressed differently in the Hebrew text itself, and seventeen of them in our English translation; and then thirty-one names expressed uniformly in the Hebrew yet differently in the English. "Nothing can be more clear than that these fifty-four proper names (at least the far greater part of them) should be expressed with the very same letters, in the places where they are now different. In the second list, instances 6, 10, and 13, have been corrected and expressed uniformly in the English Bible printed at Oxford in 1769. And surely the same justice in the translation should be done to the rest of these proper names, and to all others through the Bible; at least, where the original words are now properly the same. Who would not wonder at seeing the same persons named both Simon and Shimon, Richard and Ricard? And can we then admit here both Seth and Sheth, Rachel and Rahel? Again: whoever could admit (as above) both Gaza and Azzak, with Rameses and Raamses, should not object to London and Ondon, with Amsterdam and Amstradam. In short, in a history far more interesting than any other, the names of persons and places should be distinguished accurately, and defined with exact uniformity. And no true critic will think lightly of this advice of Origen, *Contemnenda non est accurata circa Nomina diligentia ei, qui voluit probe intelligere sanctas literas?* No person who desires thoroughly to understand the sacred writings, should undervalue a scrupulous attention to the proper names." - Kennicott's Remarks.

GENESIS 25:19 This is the history of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham became the father of Isaac.

Verse 19

These are the generations of Isaac - This is the history of Isaac and his family. Here the sixth section of the law begins, called תולדת יעחק toledoth yitschak; as the fifth, called חיי שרה chaiye Sarah, which begins with Genesis 23, ends at the preceding verse.

GENESIS 25:20 Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Paddan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian, to be his wife.

GENESIS 25:21 Isaac entreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. The LORD was entreated by him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Verse 21

Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife - Isaac and Rebekah had now lived nineteen years together without having a child; for he was forty years old when he married Rebekah, Gen 25:20, and he was threescore years of age when Jacob and Esau were born, Gen 25:26. Hence it is evident they had lived nineteen years together without having a child.

The form of the original in this place is worthy of notice: Isaac entreated Jehovah, לִנְכַח אִשְׁתּוֹ lenochach ishto, directly, purposely, especially, for his wife. Ainsworth thinks the words imply their praying together for this thing; and the rabbins say that "Isaac and Rebekah went on purpose to Mount Moriah, where he had been bound, and prayed together there that they might have a son." God was pleased to exercise the faith of Isaac previous to the birth of Jacob, as he had exercised that of Abraham previous to his own birth.

GENESIS 25:22 The children struggled together within her. She said, "If it be so, why do I live?" She went to inquire of the LORD.

Verse 22

The children struggled together - יִתְרָצְצוּ yithrotsatsu, they dashed against or bruised each other, there was a violent agitation, so that the mother was apprehensive both of her own and her children's safety; and, supposing this was an uncommon case, she went to inquire of the Lord, as the good women in the present day would go to consult a surgeon or physician; for intercourse with God is not so common now, as it was in those times of great primitive simplicity. There are different opinions concerning the manner in which Rebekah inquired of the Lord. Some think it was by faith and prayer simply; others, that she went to Shem or Melchizedek; but Shem is supposed to have been dead ten years before this time; but as Abraham was yet alive, she might have gone to him, and consulted the Lord through his means. It is most likely that a prophet or priest was applied to on this occasion. It appears she was in considerable perplexity, hence that imperfect speech, If so, why am I thus? the simple meaning of which is probably this; if I must suffer such things, why did I ever wish to have a child? A speech not uncommon to mothers in their first pregnancy.

GENESIS 25:23 The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb. Two peoples will be separated from your body. The one people will be stronger than the other people. The elder will serve the younger."

Verse 23

Two nations are in thy womb - "We have," says Bishop Newton, "in the prophecies delivered respecting the sons of Isaac, ample proof that these prophecies were not meant so much of single persons as of whole nations descended from them; for what was predicted concerning Esau and Jacob was not verified in themselves, but in their posterity. The Edomites were the offspring of Esau, the Israelites were of Jacob; and who but the Author and Giver of life could foresee that two children in the womb would multiply into two nations? Jacob had twelve sons, and their descendants were all united and incorporated into one nation; and what an overruling providence was it that two nations should arise from the two sons only of Isaac! and that they should be two such different nations! The Edomites and Israelites have been from the beginning two such different people in their manners, customs, and religion, as to be at perpetual variance among themselves. The children struggled together in the womb, which was an omen of their future disagreement; and when they grew up to manhood, they manifested very different inclinations. Esau was a cunning hunter, and delighted in the sports of the field; Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents - minding his sheep and

his cattle. The religion of the Jews is well known; but whatever the Edomites were at first, in process of time they became idolaters. When Amaziah king of Judah overthrew them, he brought their gods, and set them up to be his gods. The king of Edom having refused a passage to the Israelites through his territories on their return from Egypt, the history of the Edomites afterwards is little more than the history of their wars with the Jews."

The one people shall be stronger than the other people - The same author continues to observe, that "for some time the family of Esau was the more powerful of the two, there having been dukes and kings in Edom before there was any king in Israel; but David and his captains made an entire conquest of the Edomites, slew several thousands of them, and compelled the rest to become tributaries, and planted garrisons among them to secure their obedience. In this state of servitude they continued about one hundred and fifty years, without a king of their own, being governed by deputies or viceroys appointed by the kings of Judah; but in the days of Jehoram they revolted, recovered their liberties, and set up a king of their own. Afterwards Amaziah, king of Judah, gave them a total overthrow in the valley of Salt; and Azariah took Elath, a commodious harbor on the Red Sea, from them. Judas Maccabeus also attacked and defeated them with a loss of more than twenty thousand at two different times, and took their chief city Hebron. At last Hyrcanus his nephew took other cities from them, and reduced them to the necessity of leaving their country or embracing the Jewish religion; on which they submitted to be circumcised, and become proselytes to the Jewish religion, and were ever afterwards incorporated into the Jewish Church and nation."

The elder shall serve the younger - "This passage," says Dr. Dodd, "serves for a key to explain the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where the words are quoted; for it proves to a demonstration that this cannot be meant of God's arbitrary predestination of particular persons to eternal happiness or misery, without any regard to their merit or demerit - a doctrine which some have most impiously fathered on God, who is the best of beings, and who cannot possibly hate, far less absolutely doom to misery, any creature that he has made: but that it means only his bestowing greater external favors, or, if you please, higher opportunities for knowing and doing their duty, upon some men, than he does upon others; and that merely according to his own wise purpose, without any regard to their merits or demerits, as having a right to confer greater or smaller degrees or perfection on whom he pleases."

The doctrine of unconditional predestination to eternal life and eternal death cannot be supported by the example of God's dealings with Esau and Jacob, or with the Edomites and Israelites. After long reprobation the Edomites were incorporated among the Jews, and have ever since been undistinguishable members in the Jewish Church. The Jews, on the contrary, the elect of God, have been cut off and reprobated, and continue so to this day. If a time should ever come when the Jews shall all believe in Christ Jesus, which is a general opinion, then the Edomites, which are now absorbed among them, shall also become the elect. And even now Isaac finds both his children within the pale of the Jewish Church, equally entitled to the promises of salvation by Christ Jesus, of whom he was the most expressive and the most illustrious type. See the account of Abraham's offering, Genesis 22 (note).

GENESIS 25:24 When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.

Verse 24

There were twins - תּוֹמִים thomim, from which comes Thomas, properly interpreted by the word Δίδυμος, Didymus, which signifies a twin; so the first person who was called Thomas or Didymus, we may take for granted, had this name from the circumstance of his being a twin.

GENESIS 25:25 The first came out red all over, like a hairy garment. They named him Esau.

Verse 25

Red, all over like a hairy garment - This simply means that he was covered all over with red hair or down; and that this must be intended here is sufficiently evident from another part of his history, where Rebekah, in order to make her favourite son Jacob pass for his brother Esau, was obliged to take the skins of kids, and put them upon his hands and on the smooth part of his neck.

They called his name Esau - It is difficult to assign the proper meaning of the original עֵשָׂו esau or esav; if we derive it from עָשָׂה asah it must signify made, performed, and, according to some, perfected; esa in Arabic signifies to make firm or hard, and also to come to man's estate, to grow old. Probably he had this name from his appearing to be more perfect, robust, etc., than his brother.

GENESIS 25:26 After that, his brother came out, and his hand had hold on Esau's heel. He was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

Verse 26

His name was called Jacob - יַעֲקֹב Yaccob, from עֲקַב akab, to defraud, deceive, to supplant, i.e., to overthrow a person by tripping up his heels. Hence this name was given to Jacob, because it was found he had laid hold on his brother's heel, which was emblematical of his supplanting Esau, and defrauding him of his birthright.

GENESIS 25:27 The boys grew. Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field. Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents.

Verse 27

A man of the field - אִישׁ שָׂדֵה ish sadeh, one who supported himself and family by hunting and by agriculture.

Jacob was a plain man - אִישׁ תָּם ish tam, a perfect or upright man; dwelling in tents - subsisting by breeding and tending cattle, which was considered in those early times the most perfect employment; and in this sense the word תָּם tam, should be here understood, as in its moral meaning it certainly could not be applied to Jacob till after his name was changed, after which time only his character stands fair and unblemished. See Gen 32:26-30.

GENESIS 25:28 Now Isaac loved Esau, because he ate his venison. Rebekah loved Jacob.

Verse 28

Isaac loved Esau - but Rebekah loved Jacob - This is an early proof of unwarrantable parental attachment to one child in preference to another. Isaac loved Esau, and Rebekah loved Jacob; and in consequence of this the interests of the family were divided, and the house set in opposition to itself. The fruits of this unreasonable and foolish attachment were afterwards seen in a long catalogue of both natural and moral evils among the descendants of both families.

GENESIS 25:29 Jacob boiled stew. Esau came in from the field, and he was famished.

Verse 29

Sod pottage - יֵזַד נִזִּיד yazed nazid, he boiled a boiling; and this we are informed, Gen 25:34, was of אֲדָשִׁים adashim, what the Septuagint render φακος, and we, following them and the Vulgate lens, translate lentils, a sort of pulse. Dr. Shaw casts some light on this passage, speaking of the inhabitants of Barbary. "Beans, lentils, kidney beans, and garvancos," says he, "are the chiefest of their pulse kind; beans, when boiled and stewed with oil and garlic, are the principal food of persons of all distinctions; lentils are dressed in the same manner with beans, dissolving easily into a mass, and making a pottage of a chocolate color. This we find was the red pottage which Esau, from thence called Edom, exchanged for his birthright." Shaw's Travels, p. 140, 4th. edit.

GENESIS 25:30 Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am famished." Therefore his name was called Edom.

Verse 30

I am faint - It appears from the whole of this transaction, that Esau was so completely exhausted by fatigue that he must have perished had he not obtained some immediate refreshment. He had been either hunting or laboring in the field, and was now returning for the purpose of getting some food, but had been so exhausted that his strength utterly failed before he had time to make the necessary preparations.

GENESIS 25:31 Jacob said, "First, sell me your birthright."

Verse 31

Sell me this day thy birthright - What the בכורה bechorah or birthright was, has greatly divided both ancient and modern commentators. It is generally supposed that the following rights were attached to the primogeniture:

1. Authority and superiority over the rest of the family.
2. A double portion of the paternal inheritance.
3. The peculiar benediction of the father.
4. The priesthood, previous to its establishment in the family of Aaron.

Calmet controverts most of these rights, and with apparent reason, and seems to think that the double portion of the paternal inheritance was the only incontestable right which the first-born possessed; the others were such as were rather conceded to the first-born, than fixed by any law in the family. However this may be, it appears,

1. That the first-born were peculiarly consecrated to God, Exo 22:29.
2. Were next in honor to their parents, Gen 49:3.
3. Had a double portion of their father's goods, Deu 21:17.
4. Succeeded him in the government of the family or kingdom, 2Chr 21:3.
5. Had the sole right of conducting the service of God, both at the tabernacle and temple; and hence the tribe of Levi, which was taken in lieu of the first-born, had the sole right of administration in the service of God, Num 8:14-18; and hence we may presume, had originally a right to the priesthood previous to the giving of the law; but however this might have been, afterwards the priesthood is never reckoned among the privileges of the first-born.

That the birthright was a matter of very great importance, there can be no room to doubt; and that it was a transferable property, the transaction here sufficiently proves.

GENESIS 25:32 Esau said, "Behold, I am about to die. What good is the birthright to me?"

GENESIS 25:33 Jacob said, "Swear to me first." He swore to him. He sold his birthright to Jacob.

GENESIS 25:34 Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils. He ate and drank, rose up, and went his way. So Esau despised his birthright.

Verse 34

Pottage of lentils - See note Gen 25:29.

Thus Esau despised his birthright - On this account the apostle, Heb 12:16, calls Esau a profane person, because he had, by this act, alienated from himself and family those spiritual offices connected with the rights of primogeniture. While we condemn Esau for this bad action, (for he should rather have perished than have alienated this right), and while we consider it as a proof that his mind was little affected with Divine or spiritual things, what shall we say of his most unnatural brother Jacob, who refused to let him have a morsel of food to preserve him from death, unless he gave him up his birthright? Surely he who bought it, in such circumstances, was as bad as he who sold it. Thus Jacob verified his right to the name of supplanter, a name which in its first imposition appears to have had no other object in view than the circumstance of his catching his brother by the heel; but all his subsequent conduct proved that it was truly descriptive of the qualities of his mind, as his whole life, till the time his name was changed, (and then he had a change of nature), was a

tissue of cunning and deception, the principles of which had been very early instilled into him by a mother whose regard for truth and righteousness appears to have been very superficial. See on Genesis 27 (note).

The death of Abraham, recorded in this chapter, naturally calls to mind the virtues and excellences of this extraordinary man. His obedience to the call of God, and faith in his promises, stand supereminent. No wonders, signs, or miraculous displays of the great and terrible God, as Israel required in Egypt, were used or were necessary to cause Abraham to believe and obey. He left his own land, not knowing where he was going, or for what purpose God had called him to remove. Exposed to various hardships, in danger of losing his life, and of witnessing the violation of his wife, he still obeyed and went on; courageous, humane, and disinterested, he cheerfully risked his life for the welfare of others; and, contented with having rescued the captives and avenged the oppressed, he refused to accept even the spoils he had taken from the enemy whom his skill and valor had vanquished. At the same time he considers the excellency of the power to be of God, and acknowledges this by giving to him the tenth of those spoils of which he would reserve nothing for his private use. His obedience to God, in offering up his son Isaac, we have already seen and admired; together with the generosity of his temper, and that respectful decency of conduct towards superiors and inferiors for which he was so peculiarly remarkable; see on Genesis 23 (note). Without disputing with his Maker, or doubting in his heart, he credited every thing that God had spoken; hence he always walked in a plain way. The authority of God was always sufficient for Abraham; he did not weary himself to find reasons for any line of conduct which he knew God had prescribed; it was his duty to obey; the success and the event he left with God. His obedience was as prompt as it was complete. As soon as he hears the voice of God, he girds himself to his work! Not a moment is lost! How rare is such conduct! But should not we do likewise? The present moment and its duties are ours; every past moment was once present; every future will be present; and, while we are thinking on the subject, the present is past, for life is made up of the past and the present. Are our past moments the cause of deep regret and humiliation? Then let us use the present so as not to increase this lamentable cause of our distresses. In other words, let us now believe-love-obey. Regardless of all consequences, let us, like Abraham, follow the directions of God's word, and the openings of his providence, and leave all events to Him who doth all things well.

See to what a state of moral excellence the grace of God can exalt a character, when there is simple, implicit faith, and prompt obedience! Abraham walked before God, and Abraham was perfect. Perhaps no human being ever exhibited a fairer, fuller portrait of the perfect man than Abraham. The more I consider the character of this most amiable patriarch, the more I think the saying of Calmet justifiable: "In the life of Abraham," says he, "we find an epitome of the whole law of nature, of the written law, and of the Gospel of Christ. He has manifested in his own person those virtues, for which reason and philosophy could scarcely find out names, when striving to sketch the character of their sophist - wise or perfect man. St. Ambrose very properly observes that 'philosophy itself could not equal, in its descriptions and wishes, what was exemplified by this great man in the whole of his conduct.' *Magnus plane vir, quem votis suis philosophia non potuit aequare; denique minus est quod illa finxit quam quod ille gessit.* The Law which God gave to Moses, and in which he has proposed the great duties of the law of nature, seems to be a copy of the life of Abraham. This patriarch, without being under the law, has performed the most essential duties it requires; and as to the Gospel, its grand object was that on which he had fixed his eye - that Jesus Whose day he rejoiced to see; and as to its spirit and design, they were wondrously exemplified in that faith which was imputed to him for righteousness, receiving that grace which conformed his whole heart and life to the will of his Maker, and enabled him to persevere unto death. 'Abraham,' says the writer of Ecclesiasticus, 44:20, etc., 'was a great father of many people: in glory was there none like unto him,

who kept the law of the Most high, and was in covenant with him. He established the covenant in his flesh, and when he was tried he was found faithful." See Calmet.

As a son, as a husband, as a father, as a neighbor, as a sovereign, and above all as a man of God, he stands unrivalled; so that under the most exalted and perfect of all dispensations, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he is proposed and recommended as the model and pattern according to which the faith, obedience, and perseverance of the followers of the Messiah are to be formed. Reader, while you admire the man, do not forget the God that made him so great, so good, and so useful. Even Abraham had nothing but what he had received; from the free unmerited mercy of God proceeded all his excellences; but he was a worker together with God, and therefore did not receive the grace of God in vain. Go thou, believe, love, obey, and persevere in like manner.