

Isaac

I am the middle patriarch, sort of the transition between Abraham and Jacob. Sure, I had a dramatic beginning – I was born when my father was 100 and my mother 90. And I almost had a dramatic end -- nearly sacrificed as a burnt offering on the mountain of the LORD. But otherwise my life was relatively unremarkable.

My father, Abraham, formerly Abram, received the covenant. He came to Canaan by faith and received the promise, "To your offspring I will give this land." He led a small army to rescue his nephew Lot. He was blessed by the legendary Melchizedek. He even bargained with the LORD for the fate of Sodom, but the city was finally destroyed because there were not even 10 righteous people in it. He had to be willing to kill me – at the LORD's command -- as a sacrifice, despite the promise that through me the promise would be fulfilled. After Sarah died, he fathered six more sons by Keturah.

My son, Jacob had a very eventful life, starting with being born grasping his twin brother's heel. That theme continued as he manipulated first-born Esau to give up his birthright and schemed to induce me to bestow the primary blessing to him as well. He had to work 14 years for the wife he wanted. I got Rebekah by just sending a servant to my relatives in Haran to pick up the girl chosen by the LORD.

I was 40 when I married Rebekah and it appeared that she was barren. So, I prayed, and the LORD answered my prayer. Then Rebekah inquired of the LORD because there was jostling within her. The LORD said, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." Esau was an outdoors person and Jacob was a homebody.

About the only significant thing I ever did was during a famine when we went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines in Gerar. The LORD had told me, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws."

Rebekah was a beautiful woman and it was the custom for kings to take beautiful women from those visiting their country and killing their husbands if they were married. So, I told them that she was my sister. One day when Abimelech saw me caressing Rebekah like a wife, not like a sister, he summoned me. He was genuinely frightened that if she had been taken it would have brought guilt on them. They had a pretty good idea of sexual morality for godless pagans! Abimelech ordered that if anyone did anything to me or Rebekah, they would be put to death.

The LORD then began to bless us with our crops and our herds. It was not because I was an honorable man! It was purely the grace of the LORD. I became so wealthy that the Philistines asked me to move away to make more room. But then Abimelech came and asked for a treaty and an oath of friendship.

I lived to see my sons grow up. Esau married two Hittite women who were a distress to Rebekah. When he heard us complain about the Hittite wives, he married an Ishmaelite woman in addition. We sent Jacob to our family home in Haran to marry a relative. When he returned 20 years later, he was a father of 11 sons and a daughter and had great wealth in livestock. His beloved wife Rachel died as the 12th son, Benjamin, was born. I lived 180 years and was blessed by the LORD far beyond what I deserved.

That was my life, not particularly dramatic or heroic. I was cowardly and did not fully trust the LORD to protect me. Yet I was allowed to prosper and received the same promise as my father Abraham, that “through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed.” Is your life a bit boring and your character flawed? You can still be a link in the plan that the LORD himself has for his future Kingdom! It is all by the grace of the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob!

Genesis 21 - 27