

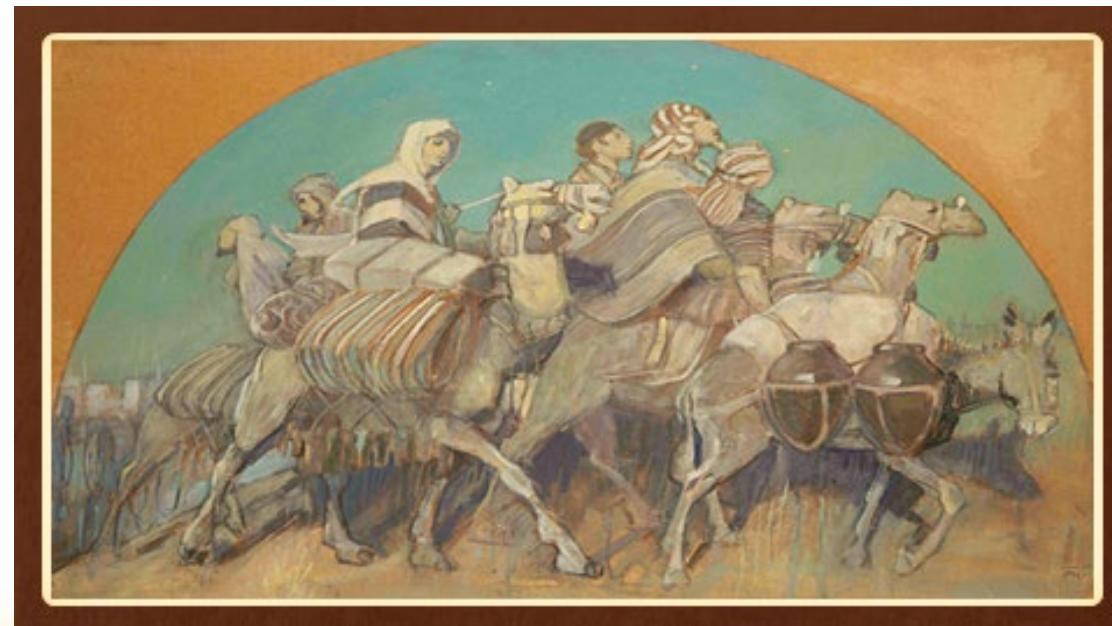
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Day 8 Isaac & Rebekah: Genesis 22-28

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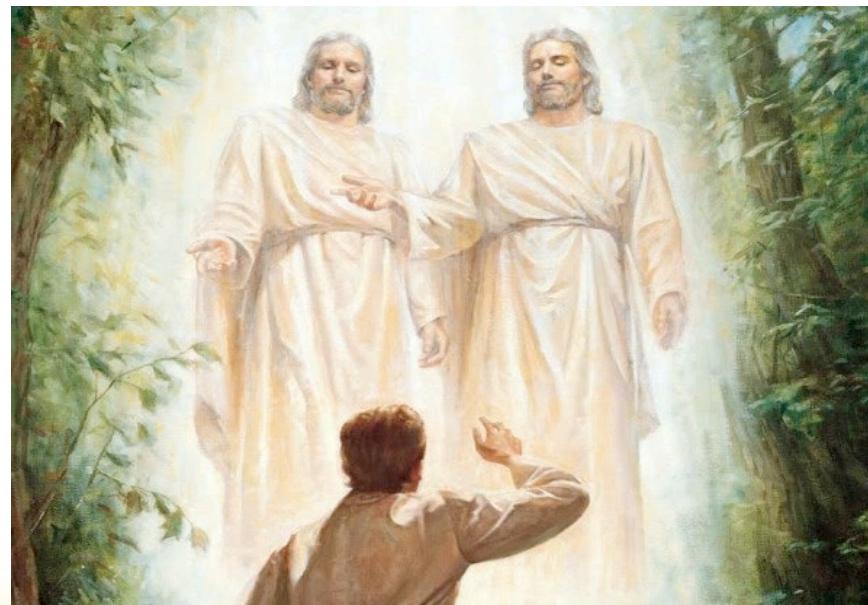
Narrative Theology

- Narrative theology is the idea that Christian theology's use of the Bible should focus on a narrative representation of the faith rather than the development of a set of propositions reasoned from the Scriptures themselves or what is commonly called a “systematic theology.” Basically, narrative theology is a fairly broad term, but oftentimes it is that approach to theology that primarily looks to the meaning in story.



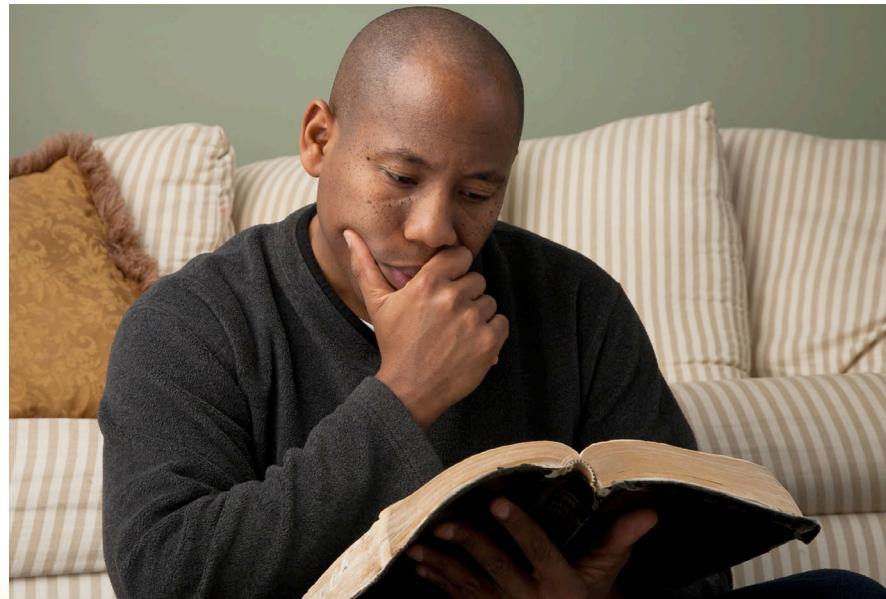
Narrative Theology

- **Narrative theology teaches that the Bible is seen as the story of God's interaction with His people.** Supporters of narrative theology maintain that this does not mean the Bible doesn't make propositional truth assertions, but that the primary purpose of Scripture is to record the relationship between God and His people and how we today, in this post-modern world, can continue in this story.



Narrative Theology

- For example, the Bible's stories are there to teach us truth; we are supposed to learn from those truths, and to apply these lessons to our lives. As such, we should interpret and apply these stories according to the original intentions of the authors of Scripture—this is why the stories have been preserved for us (see Romans 15:4).



Why does God Teach Through Stories?

WHY IS MUCH OF THE BIBLE AND THE BOOK OF MORMON IN
STORY FORM RATHER THAN SERMON OR THEOLOGICAL
TREATISE?

Why Stories?

- To explain human action,
- to articulate the structures of human consciousness,
- to depict the identity of agents,
- to account for the historical development of traditions,
- to make meaning out of chaos,
- to display the content of Christian convictions

Command to Sacrifice Isaac: Abrahamic Test

The *Aqedah* or “Binding” (22:1–19)

- The Command (22:1–2) God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.
 - “tempt” in 22:1 is better translated “test” or “prove”
 - Note the references to Abraham’s “only son” whom he “loves.” **Why? When Abraham also loves Ishmael?**
 - Mount Moriah was later identified with the Temple Mount (2 Chr 3:1)
- The Attempted Sacrifice (22:3–10)
 - On KVJ “lad” (22:5; also 22:12): Josephus said he was 25, the Talmud 37.
 - Abraham seems to trust that God would raise Isaac from the dead if he went forward with the sacrifice. Hebrews 11:19, NIV: **“Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead**, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.”
- 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”
- 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)



“My fathers having turned from
their righteousness . . .
endeavored to take away my life.”
(Abraham 1:5 – 7)

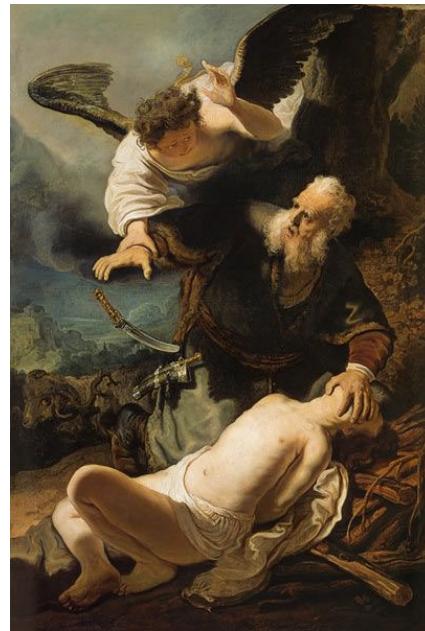
Why did God command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac?

1. THIS WASN'T ABRAHAM'S FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH GOD. Abraham obeyed God's unexpected command because he trusted God's promise and knew him to be good and trustworthy.
2. ABRAHAM DIDN'T THINK ISAAC WOULD DIE. When they reached the mountain, Abraham told his servant, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you" (Genesis 22:5). The text is careful to include both Abraham and Isaac in the return journey.

Or consider Isaac's question about where the lamb for the sacrifice would come from. Abraham responds, "**God himself will provide the lamb**" (Genesis 22:8). It seems Abraham prepared himself to do what God asked, but he expected something else to happen.

3. PROPHETIC REENACTMENT

The story of Abraham and Isaac takes on a larger significance when you place it in the context of prophetic reenactment. Throughout the Bible, God asked prophets to reenact in miniature things that he would do on a larger scale. The acts themselves seem strange until you see them as an acted out allegory. Then you start asking different questions. When we view the story through the lens of prophetic reenactment, we ask, "What did God intend for us to learn through this?"

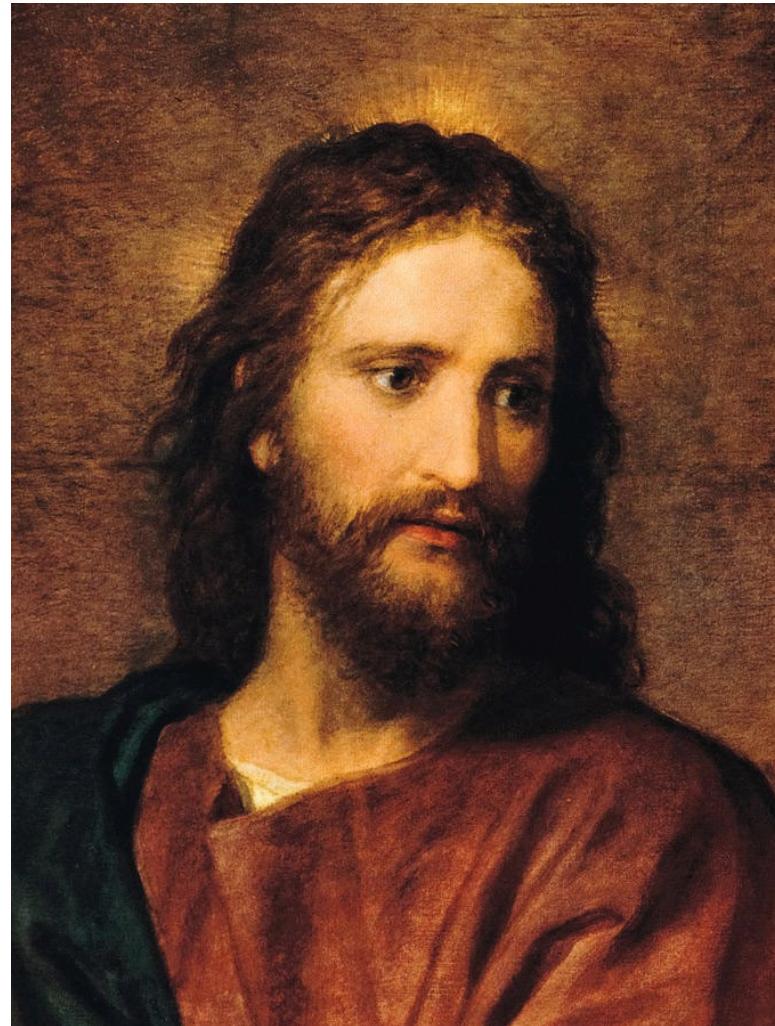


Genesis 22 Points to Jesus: Jesus is an innocent son who went willingly up the mountain to be crucified. Abraham is God who will graciously give us all things.

"In time each person will receive a 'customized challenge' to determine his [or her] dedication to God. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that before one can have [their] calling and election made sure, they must be 'thoroughly proved.' God must find 'that the [individual] is determined to serve Him at all hazards.'" -Elder Neal A. Maxwell, 1989 Sidney Symposium on the Old Testament

President Hugh B Brown said, 'Abraham needed to learn something about Abraham.' By being tested, all of us will one day know how much our hearts are really set on the kingdom of God." -Truman G. Madsen, Joseph Smith the Prophet, p. 92

“No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude, and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God . . . and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire and which will make us more like our Father and Mother in heaven.” -Orson F. Whitney (As quoted in *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, p.98).



I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.
John 14:18

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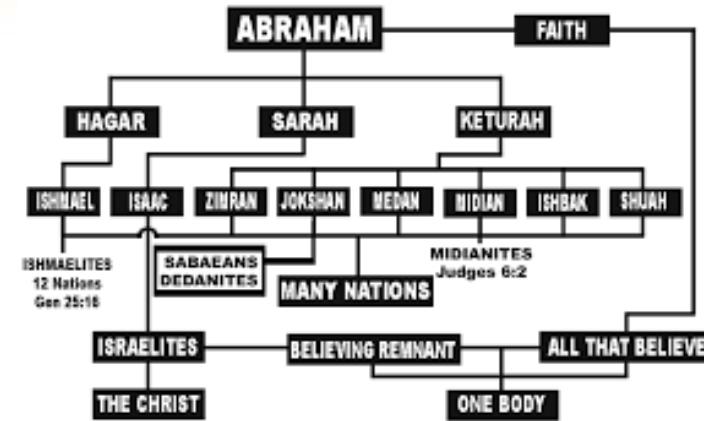
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To teach that child sacrifice would not be a part of this religion and worship of God.

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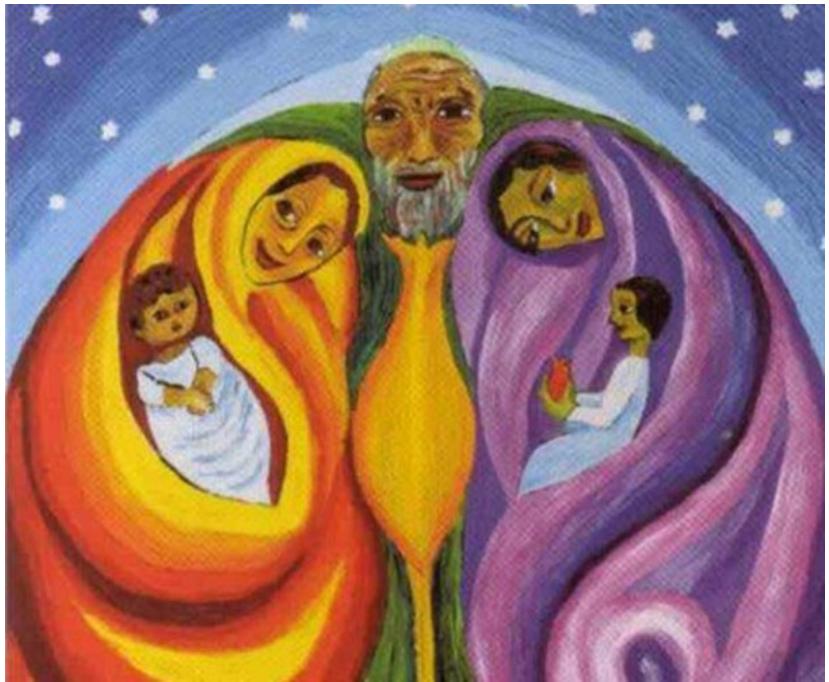
Abraham's Final Days (25:1–10)

- Abraham Marries Keturah and has 6 sons (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 (25:5–6)
 - Other sons received “gifts” and were “sent away
 - Isaac received all that his father had . . .
- Abraham Dies and is Buried (25:7–10)
 - “a good old age” was 175 years
 - 25:9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah—hopefully this speaks to reconciliation
- 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’ story. Promise of descendants comes more quickly with Ishmael*



25:1–6 “The descendants of Abraham from his wife Keturah are names of places or tribes in Arabia. Keturah’s name means ‘incense,’ which seems to refer to the incense trade from southern Arabia. Midian, the region in northwest Arabia where Moses flees and settles (Ex 2.15–22). Sheba, the wealthy southern Arabian kingdom whose queen visits Solomon (1 Kings 10.1–13). The genealogical split between the children of Hagar and the children of Keturah distinguish the Arabs of the Syrian and Sinai deserts (the Ishmaelites), who were primarily pastoralists, from the peoples of the Arabian peninsula, in whose southern regions were settled nations wealthy from trade in incense, spices, and gold” (footnote NSRV Harper Collins Study Bible).

So what now? How do we use their story to move forward? To personally apply the counsel from our Prophet Russell M. Nelson “to build bridges of cooperation instead of walls of segregation.” “To lead out in abandoning attitudes and actions of prejudice . . . [and] to promote respect for all of God’s children” (October 2020)?



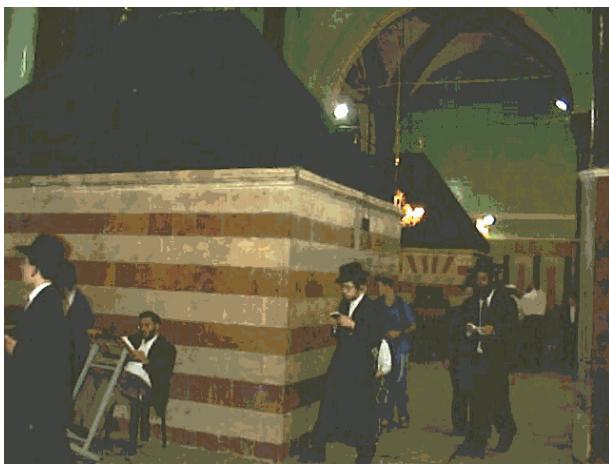
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Hopefully this speaks to reconciliation

25:1-6 6 sons from Keturah and 12 sons from Ishmael. All of these individuals and their descendants are a part of God's plan and his promises. Promise of descendants is fulfilled more rapidly in the other lines.

The story of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Hagar, and Ishmael suggest a different reality. Divine blessing of one nation does not require divine cursing of others. God has enough grace and goodness for all. God chose to have a particular relationship with the Israelites, but God did not reject the rest of the world. Rather, the Israelites would be the means by which God would finally redeem the whole world (Dr. Japinga 17-18)

What is a responsible and just way to deal with power and privilege? How can we be in solidarity with one another? How do we make sure that we do not do things at the expense of others?

Machpelah



The Cave of the Patriarchs or Tomb of the Patriarchs, known to Jews as the Cave of Machpelah and to Muslims as the Sanctuary of Abraham, is a series of caves situated 30 kilometres south of Jerusalem in the heart of the Old City of Hebron in the West Bank.
6. Isaac



Renewing the Covenant with Jacob

God's blessing of Isaac: first mentioned in passing 25:11 And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac.

Next to reassure Isaac when he is faced with a famine: 26: 2-5 And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

**Land, posterity, blessings: because Abraham obeyed*



Rebekah: an active agent for God

- The author presents her in a positive light & gives her actions a divine mandate.
- Rebekah's hospitality echoes Abraham's 24:15-21 cf Abraham 18:1-8. **She is God's divine answer to Abraham's servant**
- Rebekah's bravery to leave her family and follow God's will: "**I will go**"
 - Cf Nephi 3:7 father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.
- Rebekah's blessing from her family parallels Abraham's blessing from God cf 22:17.
 - 6o And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.
- Married 20 years & still no children. Isaac is now 60 and Rebekah is likely around 35
 - 25:21 And Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.



Rebecca erblickt Isaak von ferne.

Und Rebecca hat ihre Augen auf und sahe Isaak, . . . und sprach zu dem Knecht: wer ist der Mann, der mir entgegenkumt auf dem Felde? Der Knecht sprach: das ist mein Herr.
I Mose. Kap. 24. v. 64. 65.

Rebekah like Hagar Receives Divine Communication

25:22 And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the Lord. And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.



"From these revelations we learn that there are no limitations placed upon any of us. Revelations are not reserved for a limited few or for those called to positions of importance in the Church. It is not position in the Church that confers spiritual gifts. It is not being a bishop, a stake president, or an apostle that makes revelation and salvation available. . . . Rather it is personal righteousness; it is keeping the commandments; it is seeking the Lord while he may be found. "God is no respecter of persons. He will give revelation to me and to you on the same terms and conditions. I can see what Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon saw in the vision of the degrees of glory -- and so can you. I can entertain angels and see God, I can receive an outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit -- and so can you." (Elder Bruce R. McConkie, Oct. 1969)

What is the Birthright? Difference in birthright order is an important theme throughout. Why?

"The firstborn son had the first right to receive the birthright inheritance and the birthright blessing. The birthright inheritance dealt with physical property, such as flocks and herds. Unless the father had determined otherwise at the father's death, the physical property was to be divided into balanced portions equal to the number of sons, plus one.

The eldest son received the double portion. With the inheritance, he assumed responsibility for his mother and unmarried sisters. He also was to be a financial resource for his brothers in times of hardship. Basically he provided for the physical welfare of the family and usually served as the social-political leader of the family or clan. The birthright blessing was spiritual. In the patriarchal order of the priesthood, it included the keys of the priesthood and the authority to preside as the religious leader of the family or clan. Rather than automatically belonging to the eldest son, it was given to the most righteous son. In fact, for all the patriarchal families with more than one son, the birthright blessing went to a younger son: Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Ephraim each received the birthright blessing even though none of them was an eldest son. One reason why some negative, almost sordid information was given in Genesis about some of the sons in these families was to demonstrate why they had lost the birthright blessings. The prerogative for both the birthright inheritance and the birthright blessing originally rested

exclusively with the father. He could give gifts (as Abraham did to Keturah's sons in Gen. 25:6), pass out the inheritance (compare the story of the prodigal son who received his early in Luke 15:11-12) and pronounce the blessing (see Gen. 27:30-36). Jacob received his blessing initially through deceit, but eventually acquired it in full integrity (see Gen. 27:30-36; 28:1-4). After the time of Moses, the inheritance automatically went to the eldest son, regardless of whether or not his mother was the first or favored wife (see Deut. 21:15-17). The birthright blessing was still conditional." (Victor L. Ludlow, *Unlocking the Old Testament*, 16-17.)

Why Birthright theme? God as no respecter of persons; based on your individual worthiness

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And think not
to say within
yourselves, We
have Abraham
to our father: for
I. say unto you,
that God is able
of these stones
to raise up
children unto
Abraham.
Matthew 3:9

"The LORD said unto her [Rebekah], Two nations are in thy womb... and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." (Genesis 25:23)

1) From beginning, LORD told Rebekah that Jacob would receive birthright.

“And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?... Thus Esau despised his birthright.” (Gen 25:32-34)

2) From beginning, Esau despised his birthright and actually sold it for a mess of pottage.

“Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.” (Gen 26:34-35)

3) Esau disqualified himself through disobedience: marrying outside covenant.

**“May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and numerous . . .
May he give to you the blessing of Abraham** (Genesis 28:3-4)

4) Even after Isaac discovered the deception, he chose not to remove Jacob’s blessing.

“I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land wheron thou liest, to thee will I give it.” (Genesis 28:13)

5) After all this, Jehovah renewed the Abrahamic Covenant through Jacob.

Rebekah's plan and initiative to bring about God's will
How should we understand Rebekah & Jacob's actions?



The narrative helps us to feel empathy for Esau even as it shows that Jacob should have the birthright. Why?

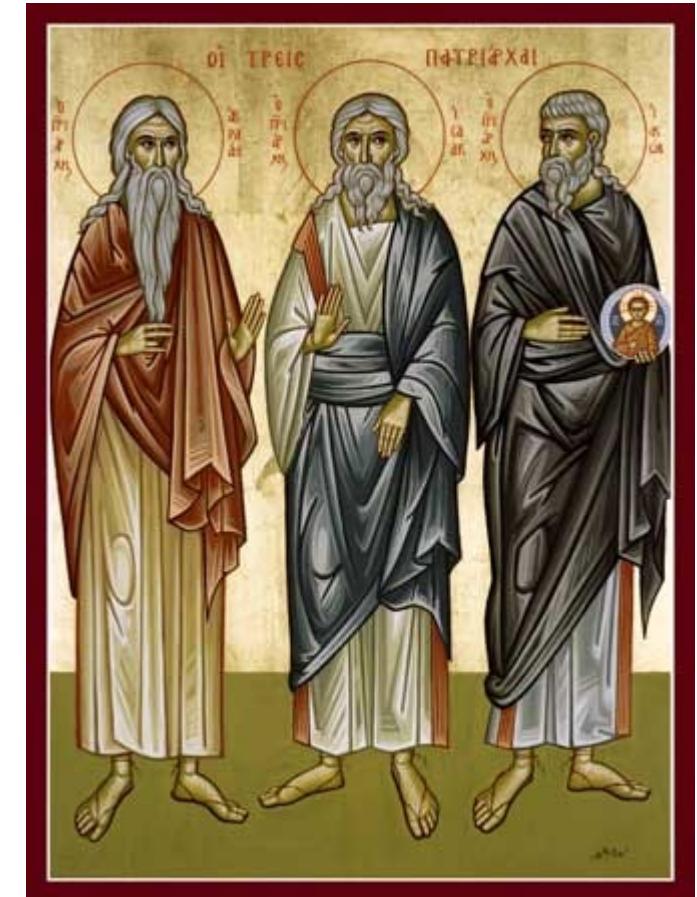
27:34-38 And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. 35 And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing. 36 And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? 37 And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son? 38 And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.



The Bible is able to honestly entertain contradictions and ambiguity, without compromising its fundamental messages.

How did ancient authors intend us to view the Patriarchs and Matriarchs?

“The stories of Genesis 12-50 are often understood to be presenting the ancestors as paradigmatic figures, as role models whose behavior should be emulated by the community. Probably this way of reading the stories is very old, for it is customary to view the ancestors in this idealized fashion. However, these stories were likely not understood this way during the biblical period. The biblical text corroborates this claim. It contains more than a hundred references to Abraham and Jacob outside of Genesis. (Isaac is hardly mentioned just as he is hardly mentioned in Genesis.) . . . However, never once does Moses tell the Israelites to remember the Patriarchs and to emulate their behavior. Even Isaiah 51:2, an exilic prophetic text that opens ‘Look to Abraham your father/ And to Sarah who brought you forth,’ does not continue by saying that you should follow their acts. Prophetic literature and Psalms offer many opportunities to encourage the people to emulate their ancestors, but this is *never done once*, implying that they were not viewed as role models in the biblical period” (Dr. Brettler, How to Read the Jewish Bible 51).



How should we view the Patriarch & Matriarchs?



We do not support a developmental view of Gospel Knowledge: Harriet Beecher Stowe emphasizes repeatedly that the patriarchs were childlike in their knowledge and moral growth: 'Men and women, in that age of the world, seem to have practiced deceit and spoken lies, as children do, from immaturity and want of deep reflection'; '[they] speak out of their hearts with the simplicity of little children'. According to Stowe, they lived during 'the world's infancy' and 'the Father God...looks down on [them]...as a mother on the quarrels of little children in the nursery'. The developmental view, as Stowe illustrates, was very useful for believers because it freed them from 'the obligation to justify all the proceedings of patriarchs and prophets [such as lying, polygamy, and incest] by the advanced rules of Christian morality'.

We reverence them for their faithfulness and the covenants they obtained from God. Their flaws may be manifold, but this does not disqualify them from being God's chosen instruments. Might we also see the acknowledgement of their imperfections and messiness in the Old Testament as an opportunity to breath a big sigh of relief and to realize that God continues to work with us with all our imperfections and our messiness?

- Perhaps these scriptural examples show that even after we make an error we can still be used by the Lord – they are examples for our sake
- God keeps working with us. What he requires of us is "a contrite spirit and a broken heart."
- *Yea, verily, verily I say unto you, if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men. Alma 48:17*
- This is not because Captain Moroni was perfect but because he always chose God and placed him first.
- We will make mistakes as we try to do this and as we interact with others, but we keep going.

Resilient faith must allow for complexity!

The emphasis should not be on the obstacles, but on the constantly renewed promise. This portion of the books serves as note of encouragement—it might seem impossible for the promise to be fulfilled, yet the promises, the divine blessing, is right around the corner. Yes, God saves us with our imperfections and short comings. He keeps reaching out after us. Remember that the Old Testament is the story of God's interactions with mankind. What do we learn?



He is working to save us despite our stubbornness
I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb . . . For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee . . . I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. (Isaiah 48:8-10 cf 1 Nephi 20:8-10)

As members of the Church, if we chart a course leading to eternal life; if we begin the processes of spiritual rebirth, and are going in the right direction; if we chart a course of sanctifying our souls, and degree by degree are going in that direction; and if we chart a course of becoming perfect, and, step by step and phase by phase, are perfecting our souls by overcoming the world, then it is absolutely guaranteed—there is no question whatever about it—we shall gain eternal life. Even though we have spiritual rebirth ahead of us, perfection ahead of us, the full degree of sanctification ahead of us, if we chart a course and follow it to the best of our ability in this life, then when we go out of this life we'll continue in exactly that same course. We'll no longer be subject to the passions and the appetites of the flesh. We will have passed successfully the tests of this mortal probation and in due course we'll get the fulness of our Father's kingdom—and that means eternal life in his everlasting presence. Elder Bruce R. McConkie, "Jesus Christ and Him Crucified"

Jacob receives his own covenantal promises from the Lord



Isaac in Bethel

28:12-15 And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. **And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.**

What Happens, What is Significant?

- Learns of God for himself
 - Becomes a prophet
 - Is promised his seed would be blessed
 - Is promised God would be with him
 - Learns of the Sanctity of God and Space
 - Receives his endowment (see quote below)
 - Personal part: “I will be with thee & I will bring thee again into this land.” *Why useful?*

“Jacob realized that the covenants he made with the Lord there were the rungs on the ladder that he himself would have to climb in order to obtain the promised blessings — blessings that would entitle him to enter heaven and associate with the Lord. Because he had met the Lord and entered into covenants with him there, Jacob considered the site so sacred that he named the place Bethel, a contraction of Beth-Elohim, which means literally ‘the House of the Lord’.... Temples are to us all what Bethel was to Jacob.” -Elder Marion G. Romney, “Temples — The Gates to Heaven,” Ensign (Mar. 1971): 16.



**Regardless if Isaac was fooled,
God is not fooled – Jacob received
the blessing meant for him**