

## Lecture Seven

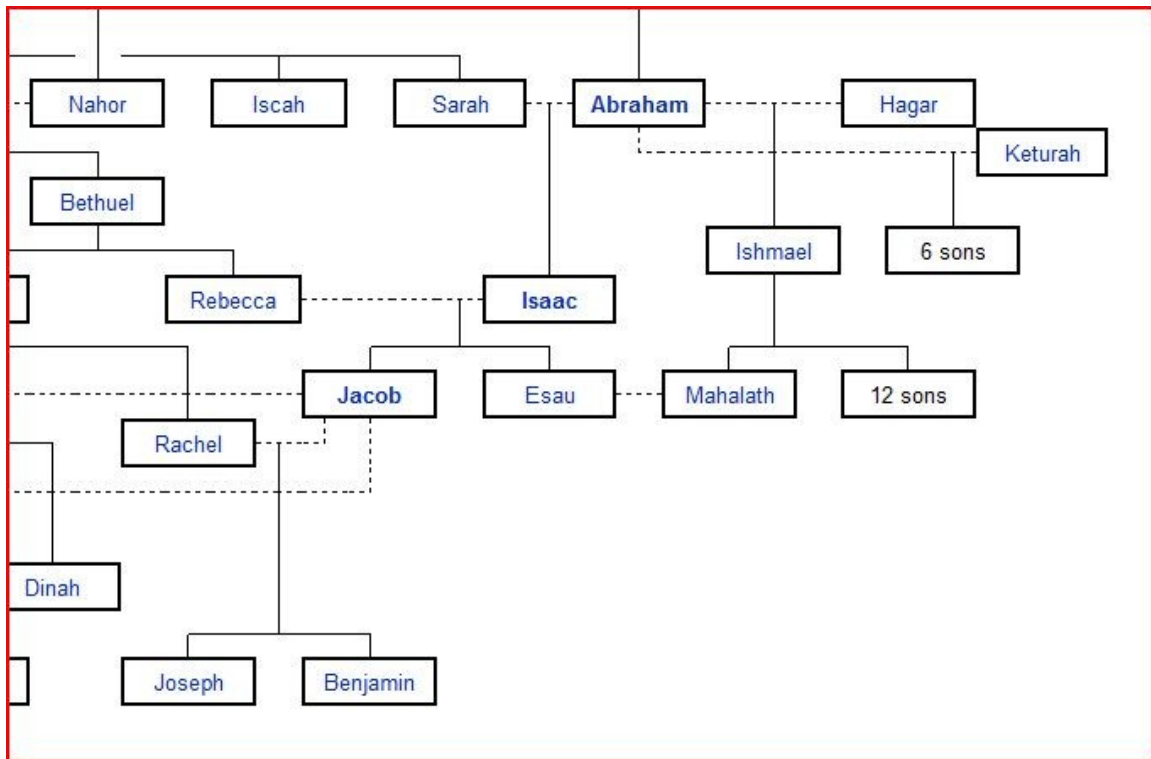
**Monotheism** : belief in a single God

Observe the importance of Abraham to the three monotheistic faiths of the world :

*For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him. (Gen. 18:19).*

Jesus Christ was called the "Son of David," and "Son of Abraham" (Mt. 1:1).

Muhammad is quoted in the Quran as saying, "Without doubt, among men, the nearest of kin to Abraham, are those who follow him, as are also this Apostle [Muhammad] and those who believe [Muslims]" (Q. 3:68).



There is a dual component of physical and spiritual blessings.

Through him would come the lineage that produced Jesus Christ. This included gentile bloodlines.

A promise that Isaac's seed would be blessed because of Abraham.

This is the birthright inheritance bestowed on Jacob by his father Isaac.

God established the covenant with Isaac because his father Abraham obeyed and followed God.

## **Isaac**

Isaac was the subject of the most difficult test of Abraham's faith: God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering. (Gen 22).

But this test is also an extraordinary demonstration of Isaac's own faith, because according to Jewish tradition, Isaac knew that he was to be sacrificed; yet he did not resist, and was united with his father in dedication.

At the last moment, God sent an angel to stop the sacrifice. It is interesting to note that child sacrifice was a common practice in the region at the time.

REMEMBER: To people of the time, the surprising thing about this story is not the fact that God asked Abraham to sacrifice his child, but that God stopped him!

Isaac later married Rebecca, who bore him fraternal twin sons: Jacob and Esau. (Gen 25).

## **Jacob (Israel)**

Jacob and his brother Esau were at war with each other even before they were born. They struggled within Rebecca's womb. Esau was Isaac's favourite, because he was a good hunter, but the more spiritually-minded Jacob was Rebecca's favourite.

Esau had little regard for the spiritual heritage of his forefathers, and sold his birthright of spiritual leadership to Jacob for a bowl of lentil stew.

When Isaac was growing old, Rebecca tricked him into giving Jacob a blessing meant for Esau. Esau was angry about this, and about the birthright, so Jacob fled to live with his uncle, where he met his beloved Rachel. Jacob was deceived into marrying Rachel's older sister, Leah, but later married Rachel as well, and Rachel and Leah's maidservants, Bilhah and Zilpah. Between these four women, Jacob fathered 12 sons and one daughter.

After many years living with and working for his uncle/father-in-law, Jacob returned to his homeland and sought reconciliation with his brother Esau. He prayed to God and gave his brother gifts. The night before he went to meet his brother, he sent his wives, sons, and things across the river, and was alone with God.

That night, he wrestled with a man until the break of day. As the dawn broke, Jacob demanded a blessing from the man, and the "man" revealed himself as an angel. He blessed Jacob and gave him the name "Israel" meaning "the one who wrestled with God". That is why Jewish people are generally referred to as the Children of Israel, signifying descent from Jacob. The next day, Jacob met Esau and was welcomed by him.

## **Children of Israel**

Jacob fathered 12 sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph and Benjamin. They are the ancestors of the tribes of Israel, and the ones for whom the tribes are named. Joseph is the father of two tribes: Manasseh and Ephraim.

Joseph's older brothers were jealous of him, because he was the favorite of their father, and because he had visions that he would lead them all. They sold Joseph into slavery and convinced their father that Joseph was dead.

The Old Testament tells us that this was all part of God's plan: Joseph was brought into Egypt, where his ability to interpret visions earned him a place in the Pharaoh's court, paving the way for his family's later settlement in Egypt.

## **The Exodus and the Giving of the Torah**

As centuries passed, the descendants of Israel became slaves in Egypt. They suffered greatly under the hand of later Pharaohs. But Yahweh brought the Children of Israel out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses .

## **Next Week: The Exodus**