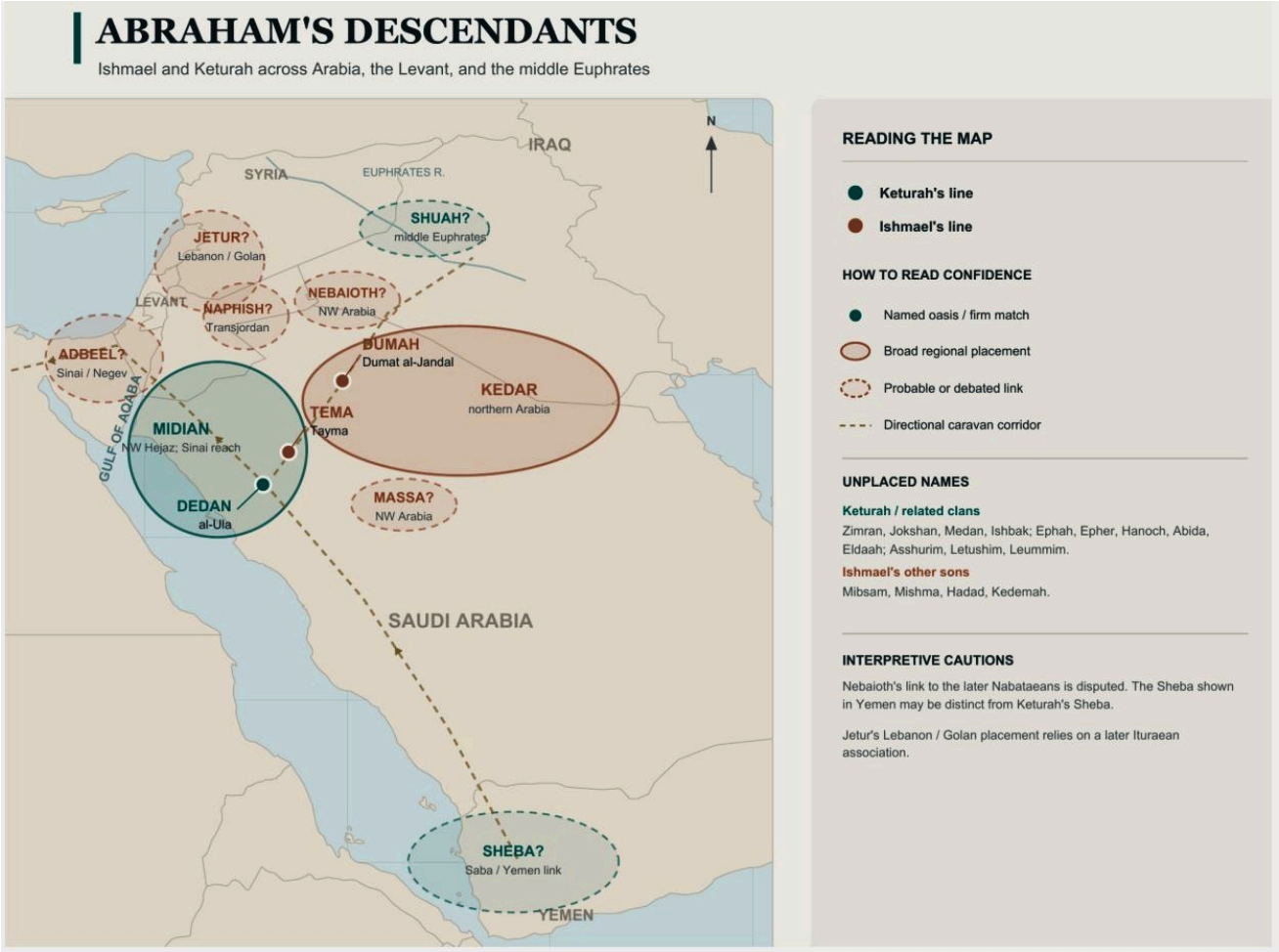
Genesis 25



The map shows a "best guess" of where the tribes went to. Only with the two darker areas is there reasonable certainty.

Sermon Outline

- God chose Sarah's son for the blessing (vv. 1-18)
  - Not Abraham's sons in general (vv. 1-11)
    - Keturah's sons were sent east; everything went to Isaac.
  - Not Abraham's firstborn (vv. 12-18)
    - Ishmael was blessed with twelve sons, but he was not the line.
- God chose Isaac's younger son (vv. 19-34)
  - Not the expected pattern (vv. 19-26)
    - a barren wife, twins, and "the older shall serve the younger."
  - Not the one with the birthright (vv. 27-34)
    - Esau despised it; Jacob, content and "complete," received it.

He chose Israel over great nations, and He chose the church.

Notes for further study.

• Keturah and the inheritance (Gen 25:1–6)

- Keturah was a secondary wife (concubine), and her sons were not Abraham's heirs.
  - "Another wife" (25:1) is called one of Abraham's "concubines" in 25:6, and 1 Chr 1:32 calls her "concubine."
- Isaac was the sole heir (25:5; cf. 24:36).
  - The other sons received gifts and were sent away (25:6), which protected Isaac's position.
  - This parallels the earlier dismissal of Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 21:14) and the separation of Lot (Gen 13:11).
- Patriarchal practice of choosing an heir apart from birth order differs from, and precedes, Deut 21:15–17.
- The Keturah tribes belong to the Arabian and Syro-Arabian desert and its spice trade.
  - The name Keturah is linked to incense or spices (ketoret; Deut 33:10).
  - Many of the names are obscure.
  - Sheba and Dedan are place-linked names that also appear in Gen 10:7.

- **Pattern:** Abraham's sons by Keturah (and Ishmael) settle the Arabian Peninsula's northern and western rim, the Transjordan and the Sinai/Negev, which is the caravan-trade corridor between Egypt, Mesopotamia and southern Arabia. Gen 25:6 says Abraham sent Keturah's sons "east," and Genesis 25:18 puts Ishmael's line "from Havilah to Shur, east of Egypt, toward Assyria." Identifications below are marked by confidence.
  - **Midian** (firm). Northwest Arabia, east of the Gulf of Aqaba (the Hejaz), with reach into Sinai and the Negev. Moses fled there and married Jethro's daughter. Midianites seduced Israel at Baal-peor (Num 25, 31) and were routed by Gideon (Judges 6-8). Gen 37 uses "Midianite" and "Ishmaelite" for the same caravan that bought Joseph, as does Judges 8:24, so the groups overlapped in trade and identity. Qurayyah-ware pottery in the Hejaz is the usual archaeological marker. The sons Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah are Midianite clans. Ephah recurs in Isa 60:6 (camels from Midian and Ephah) and likely matches Assyrian "Haiapa" in northwest Arabia.
  - **Medan** (probable) Medan sometimes gets used interchangeably with Midian, suggesting they lived near one another and later intermarried, with Medanites getting subsumed by the Midianites. Genesis 37:36 literally says "Medanites", but several translations use "Midianites" to prevent confusion.
  - **Dedan** (firm). The oasis of al-Ula in northwest Arabia, a caravan hub (Isa 21:13; Ezek 27:20; Jer 25:23). It later became the Lihyanite kingdom. A separate Cushite Dedan appears in Gen 10:7.
  - **Sheba** (probable, debated). Linked to the Sabaeans of southwest Arabia (Yemen), the Queen of Sheba's incense-trading kingdom. Genesis lists three Shebas (Genesis 10:7, 10:28, 25:3), so this one may be a northern Arabian group of the same trading network. The Sabean raiders in Job 1:15 fit that.
  - **Shuah** (probable). Job's friend Bildad is a "Shuhite" (Job 2:11). Assyrian Suhu on the middle Euphrates is a candidate.

- **Asshurim, Letushim, Leummim** (Dedan's sons). Arabian tribes, otherwise unattested.
- **Zimran, Jokshan, Ishbak**. Mostly obscure. Ishbak is sometimes linked to Assyrian "Iasbuq" in the Syrian desert region. Treat these as uncertain.

- **Midian is the most prominent descendant.**
  - Midianite traders took Joseph to Egypt (Gen 37:25–28, 36).
  - Moses took refuge in Midian and married there (Exod 2:15–21; 3:1; 18:1–24).
  - Midian later opposed Israel (Num 25:6–18; Judg 6–8).
- **The list shows Abraham becoming "father of many nations."** This fulfills the promises of Gen 17:2, 4–6; 15:15; 16:10; 17:20; 17:21.
- **"The land of the east" (qedem) is the desert region east of Canaan.** It may be a proper name (cf. Judg 6:3; 7:12; Isa 11:14).
- **The chapter is not in strict chronological order.** Abraham (175 years, 25:7) outlived the twins' birth (25:26) by about fifteen years (cf. 21:5).
- **The Keturah and Ishmael genealogies reflect an early period.**
  - The term "Arab" does not appear in them, though it came into use only in the ninth century BC.
  - Midian is treated as kin, implying a time before the later conflicts (cf. Exod 18:1–12; Num 10:29).

B. Abraham's death (Gen 25:7–11)

- He lived 175 years, 100 of them in Canaan (25:7; cf. 12:4). His "good old age" fulfills God's promise in Gen 15:15.
- Isaac and Ishmael together buried him at Machpelah, beside Sarah (25:9–10; cf. 23:17–20). The cave became the family tomb.
- "God blessed Isaac" (25:11) confirms Isaac as heir.
  - It echoes God's blessing of Abraham (24:1) and the promise of 17:21.
  - It marks the transition to the next generation (cf. Josh 1:1; Judg 1:1; 2 Sam 1:1).
- Beer Lahai Roi links to Gen 24:62 and 16:14.

C. Ishmael's line (Gen 25:12–18)

- Genesis records the non-chosen line before returning to the chosen one. Ishmael's genealogy precedes Isaac's story, as Esau's (Gen 36) precedes Jacob's.
- The twelve sons and "twelve rulers" (25:13–16) fulfill promises about Ishmael. The promises are Gen 16:10–12; 17:20; 21:13, 18.
- The names are tribes of an Arabian confederation, attested in Assyrian records and the prophets (Isa 21:11–17; 42:11; 60:7; Jer 25:23; 49:28).
- Keturah and Ishmael tribal names intermingle, showing shifting tribal allegiances (cf. Isa 60:6–7; Jer 25:23; Ezek 27:21).
- Ishmael lived 137 years and was "gathered to his people" (25:17).
- "Villages" and "encampments" (25:16) describe unfortified, nomadic-style settlements. The Hebrew word for "tribes" (ʾummâ) denotes a nomadic tribal unit, a term also known from the Mari texts.
- The territory lay "from Havilah to Shur" (25:18; cf. 2:11; 16:7). This is an Arabian and Sinai caravan region, and "Asshur" here is not the Mesopotamian kingdom.

- 25:18 deliberately echoes Gen 16:12.
- Jetur and Naphish connect to the Hagrites (1 Chr 5:10, 19) and the Itureans (Luke 3:1).

• D. The birth of Jacob and Esau (Gen 25:19–26)

- Isaac married Rebekah at 40 and became a father at 60, after twenty barren years (25:20, 26).
  - Rebekah's family was Aramean (Gen 24).
  - Her age is not given because she was still of childbearing age.
- Her barrenness echoes Sarah's (11:30) and puts the promise at risk (12:2).
  - It is ironic given the blessing she left home with (24:60).
  - Unlike Abraham and Sarah (Gen 16), Isaac and Rebekah did not turn to a concubine.
- Isaac interceded and God answered (25:21).
  - The verb ʿātar is also used of Moses' intercession in Exod 8–10.
  - The barrenness ended by deliberate divine action, a sign the offspring were chosen for God's purposes.
- The struggle in the womb is violent (the verb rāṣaṣ) and foreshadows lifelong conflict (25:22).
- The oracle (25:23) concerns two nations, Israel and Edom, not only two boys.
  - It is programmatic for the whole Jacob cycle.
  - Israel's rule over Edom is traced to David (2 Sam 8:12–14).
  - Edom's earlier, stronger statehood is noted (Gen 36:31; 32:6).
- Israel and Edom are kin yet long-time rivals (Deut 23:8; Num 20:14–21; Obad 10; Mal 1:2).
- The names are wordplays, not strict etymologies.
  - "Esau" is linked to ʾadmônî ("reddish," giving "Edom") and śēʿār ("hairy," giving "Seir").
  - The Hebrew etymology of "Esau" is uncertain. Arabic "covered" has been suggested.
  - "Jacob" is linked to ʿāqēb ("heel," cf. 27:36; Hos 12:3–4).
  - Edom's land is itself reddish, from its hills or sandstone.
- Jacob's grasp of the heel shows him active at birth, trying to catch up with or supplant Esau (cf. Hos 12:4).
- "Jacob" is historically a protective name ("May El protect").

• The birthright (Gen 25:27–34)

- The brothers are contrasted (25:27–28).
  - Esau is the hunter and man of the open country.
  - Jacob is the quiet man of the tents.
  - Isaac loved Esau for his game, and Rebekah loved Jacob.
  - This favoritism anticipates Gen 27.
- Esau is portrayed unflatteringly: impulsive, crude, and careless of his birthright.
- Hunting was permitted but not esteemed in Israel (Lev 17:13; Deut 14:5). Esau is Israel's only named hunter besides Nimrod (Gen 10:9).

- Esau's request to "gulp down" the stew (lāʿaṭ, 25:30) is crude. The verb is used elsewhere of feeding animals.
- Wordplay links Jacob's cooking (zîd) to Esau's hunting (ṣayid) (25:29). The verb can also mean "act presumptuously."
- The birthright was the firstborn's privilege, centrally a double share of the inheritance (Deut 21:15–17).
  - Similar practice is attested at Mari, Nuzi, and in Middle Assyrian law.
- Inheritance rights could be sold or transferred between brothers. The closest parallels are from Nuzi and Hurrian culture.
- The firstborn was sacred to God and held family headship (Exod 13:13–15; Num 3:40–41). Later, the Levites displaced the firstborn in cultic privilege.
- Jacob required an oath (25:33), which made the deal binding.
- Esau exaggerated his need ("I am about to die," 25:32).
- The rapid sequence of verbs in 25:34 ("gave… ate… drank… got up… went out") shows Esau's indifference. The same style appears in Gen 3:1–7.
- The narrator condemns Esau ("Esau despised his birthright," 25:34) but does not explicitly condemn Jacob. Jacob is nonetheless portrayed as calculating and exploitative.
- The birthright and the blessing are related but distinct.
  - Esau treats them separately in Gen 27:36.
  - The wordplay bĕkōrâ ("birthright") and bĕrākâ ("blessing") points ahead to Gen 27.
  - Esau will soon seek the blessing despite the sale.
- Paul cites Gen 25:23 to show that election rests on God's call, not merit or ethnicity (Rom 9:10–13; Mal 1:2–3).
- Heb 12:15–17 uses Esau as a warning example.

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