

Keturah Was Abraham's Concubine

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Keturah Was Abraham's Wife
(*Gen. 25:1*)

Keturah Was Abraham's Concubine
(*1Chr. 1:32*)

After Hagar departed (*Gen. 16:6*), scripture does not support the position that Abraham married another woman until after the death of his first wife Sarah. Therefore, Keturah was not a concubine in the stereotypical sense, which involves having a second wife while one's first wife is still alive.

(see: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concubinage)

Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah.² So Sarah died in Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her (*Gen. 23:1-2*; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

Abraham married another wife (after Sarah's death) whose name was Keturah (*Gen. 25:1*; Ed. note in parenthesis; The Jerusalem Bible).

With this brief background, the term concubine would have been applied to Keturah denoting her as a second wife or lesser wife, in stature, following Sarah's death. It could also have been applied to indicate that Keturah came from a lower social status as all these conditions could be applied to concubines.

Now the sons born to Keturah, Abraham's concubine, were Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. The sons of Jokshan were Sheba and Dedan (*1Chr. 1:32*).

Because both secular historical accounts and Biblical commentary on Keturah are limited, it can only be assumed which of the above conditions applied to Keturah, if not all of them. Having said that, scripture leaves no doubt that all the children born to Keturah were given much less by way of an inheritance, which indicates a lower status.

And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac.

⁶But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubine which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east (*Gen. 25:5-6*; emphasis added).

Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that the term concubine was used only to denote Keturah's status in relationship to Sarah and/or that her social position was regarded as lower. Many have assumed that the caste system, associated with the modern nation of India, is unique to that country. However, this is not correct because it was extant throughout many cultures and religions in earlier civilizations (see: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caste_system_in_India).

Some Bible commentators have claimed that Keturah may have been Abraham's concubine prior to Sarah's death, but this is speculative and not supported by scripture (see: 'Arabia and the Bible' (1934), pp.37-53 by J.A. Montgomery; 'Genesis, Bible Student's Commentary' (1981), 2:72-73 by G. Ch. Aalders). It is also highly unlikely that Abraham would have taken another wife prior to Sarah's death based on the tremendous family upheaval that occurred when he took Hagar as a concubine, or surrogate mother, because Sarah could not have children of her own (cf. *Gen. 16:1-6*). Therefore, the term concubine in *1Chronicles 1:32* would have been used to denote Keturah's status in relationship to Sarah and/or to her status in society, and had nothing to do with her having a

sexual relationship with Abraham prior to Sarah's death.

Finally, Abraham's previous relationship with Hagar occurred before he came to a more complete understanding of God's law and commands. By the time of Sarah's death, Abraham had a very good understanding of God's way of living. Therefore, as the leader of his family, he would not have broken God's law regarding having multiple wives (Gen. 18:17-19; cf. Dt. 17:17). Not only was Abraham recognized as a leader within his own family, but also as a leader by those outside.

And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, ⁶Hear us, my lord: **You are a mighty prince among us;** (therefore) bury your dead (referring to Sarah) in the choicest of our burial places. None of us will withhold from you his burial place, that you may bury your dead (Gen. 23:5-6; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Based on Abraham's obedience to God's word, he would not have taken another wife prior to Sarah's death. Therefore, when the term concubine was applied to Keturah, it would have denoted her status in comparison to Sarah and/or her status in society during Abraham's lifetime. So there is no contradiction in scripture. Instead, it is a misapplication of conventional thinking, regarding what a concubine is, to state that 1Chronicles 1:32 contradicts Genesis 25:1.

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