

He has intently remembered Ibrahim's matters  
and his grandchildren  
and his grandchildren's grandchildren

All, yes, to all of them he showed His mercy.

## NOTES

### Luke 2.36–37 How old was Anna?

Luke 2.36–37 presents a minor but difficult problem for the translator. Was Anna eighty-four years old as the Translator's Handbook on Luke tells us, or was she more than one hundred as TEV suggests? Was she a widow eighty-four years old or was she a widow for eighty-four years? The Handbook has the support of KJV, RSV, NEB, TT, as well as Goodspeed, C. K. Williams and W. Barclay. TEV has the support of RV, Knox, and Moffatt. (I am referring only to the versions I have at hand at present.)

Some versions, and many commentaries, indicate that both are possible renderings of the original. H. K. Luce, in the Cambridge Greek New Testament on Luke summarizes the problem effectively:

"Luke has made an awkward sentence out of the description of Anna: and it is not clear how old she is stated to be. If he means that she had been a widow for 84 years after seven years of married life, she is well over 100, an age not impossible, apparently, at the time. Others think that 84 years is her age, including her youth, married life and—in that case—about 60 years of widowhood."

Luke makes it clear in verse 36 that she was *very* old by the use of a pleonasm (*probēbēkuia en hēmerais pollais*). Then he mentions three stages of her life. The length of virginity is not stated. The married life lasted only for seven years. Then she was a widow for the rest of her life. The translator has to decide whether the eighty-four represents the "rest of her life" or the whole of her life.

If Luke, out of kindness for the future translator, had used the same construction for the "eighty-four years" as for the "seven years" there would have been no ambiguity. Since he describes Anna with remarkable detail, it is to be expected that he used his construction deliberately. Plummer, in the International Critical Commentary on Luke, recognizes that both renderings are possible, but considers it more likely that the evangelist intended us to understand that Anna was more than a hundred years old. His note on the passage seems to explain the Greek sentence more satisfactorily than any other comment that I have seen:

"She was of great age because she had lived seven years as a wife and eighty-four years *by herself* (Rom. 7.25) as a widow. The *heōs* draws attention to the great length of her widowhood, 'up to as much as' (Mt. 18.21–22). That she should be considerably over a hundred years is not incredible."