

## Genesis 24: Isaac and Rebekah

### I. Promises

- A. *24:1 Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. 2 And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his house, who had charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh, 3 and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, 4 but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac." 5 The servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land; must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?" 6 Abraham said to him, "See to it that you do not take my son back there. 7 The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your descendants I will give this land,' he will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. 8 But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this oath of mine; only you must not take my son back there." 9 So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.*
- B. Isaac would have been forty years old by now. It is interesting that no wife has yet been arranged for him! Would not Abraham have been anxious to see grandchildren? Indeed in great numbers! But here it is forty years later and little has been done. Now, sensing the end of his life near Abraham makes arrangements.
- C. Perhaps it is due to advanced years that Abraham deposes his servant (Eliezar of 15:2?) It was usual for a father to arrange a marriage for his son but they were usually much younger.
- D. The criteria that she be not from among the Canaanites but from among his kindred is understandable but Abraham will not permit Isaac to go there. Recall that God had called Abraham from there and he understood that he was not to go back. Abraham attests to this in verse 7. No more wandering for Abraham!
- E. The form of the oath, the hand under the thigh is a traditional one and is an exceptionally strong one. In effect, it involved swearing by the genitals, the transmitters of life. Thus the servant is obliged to do exactly as he has said. Abraham does issue an exception clause in verse 8 since the oath is so solemn. Whatever the case, Isaac is not to go back there. One of his sons, Jacob, will later break this ban on return.
- F. Abraham is confident of the outcome. God will send his angel to arrange the whole thing (V. 7)

## II. Procession

- A. *10 Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, taking all sorts of choice gifts from his master; and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. 11 And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time when women go out to draw water.*
- B. The servant returns to the region of Haran where Abraham and his family had lived for a time after setting out from Ur. It was in Haran where Abram had been called to leave his kindred and set out (Gen 11:31ff)
- C. Ten camels illustrate how wealthy Abraham was.
- D. The wealth will be used as gifts to the bride's family and a type of dowry.

## III. Prayer

- A. *12 And he said, "O LORD, God of my master Abraham, grant me success today, I pray thee, and show steadfast love to my master Abraham. 13 Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. 14 Let the maiden to whom I shall say, 'Pray let down your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels' -- let her be the one whom thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac. By this I shall know that thou hast shown steadfast love to my master."*
- B. The servant sets up some pretty specific criteria for God to meet!
- C. Basically he is looking for a woman who is not only gracious, but anticipates the needs of others!
- D. Would that prayer would routinely precede the choice of a spouse. Too often the method today is to "fall in love" which treats the whole thing as though it was an event to which one passively yielded rather than allow marriage to be a consciously sought relationship guided by God.

## IV. Presentation

- A. *15 Before he had done speaking, behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her water jar upon her shoulder. 16 The maiden was very fair to look upon, a virgin, whom no man had known. She went down to the spring, and filled her jar, and came up. 17 Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, "Pray give me a little water to drink from your jar." 18 She said, "Drink, my lord"; and she quickly let down her jar upon her hand, and gave him a drink. 19 When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw for your camels also, until they have done drinking." 20 So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran again to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels. 21*

*The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether the LORD had prospered his journey or not.*

- B. Rebekah - the meaning of the name is unclear but generally it means: fettering or tying up (by beauty?) She is probably just a young girl in her early teens at this time. She was "very fair to look upon"
  - C. Her father Bethuel is probably dead since the negotiations are left to her brother Laban. Bethuel was Abraham's nephew. Hence she is a first cousin to Isaac.
  - D. Her offer to water the camels also is the sign for which the servant asked. But notice, the servant did not immediately conclude she was the one, he gazed upon her to learn if she was the one. What was the purpose of this gaze? To see if she was good looking? To determine if she were single? It is uncertain.
- V. Proposal
- A. ***22 When the camels had done drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half shekel, and two bracelets for her arms weighing ten gold shekels, 23 and said, "Tell me whose daughter you are. Is there room in your father's house for us to lodge in?" 24 She said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor." 25 She added, "We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in." 26 The man bowed his head and worshiped the LORD, 27 and said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master. As for me, the LORD has led me in the way to the house of my master's kinsmen."***
  - B. The servant's certitude that she is the woman is affirmed by his gaze and so he presents her with jewelry and requests to see her family. His certitude is reaffirmed when he discovers she is kin to Abraham and Isaac.
- VI. Permissions -
- A. ***28 Then the maiden ran and told her mother's household about these things 29 Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban; and Laban ran out to the man, to the spring. 30 When he saw the ring, and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, "Thus the man spoke to me," he went to the man; and behold, he was standing by the camels at the spring. 31 He said, "Come in, O blessed of the LORD; why do you stand outside? For I have prepared the house and a place for the camels." 32 So the man came into the house; and Laban ungirded the camels, and gave him straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him. 33 Then food was set before him to eat; but he said, "I will not eat until I have told my errand." He said, "Speak on." 34 So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. 35 The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become great; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold,***

*menservants and maidservants, camels and asses. 36 And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and to him he has given all that he has. 37 My master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell; 38 but you shall go to my father's house and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son.' 39 I said to my master, 'Perhaps the woman will not follow me.' 40 But he said to me, 'The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with you and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my kindred and from my father's house; 41 then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my kindred; and if they will not give her to you, you will be free from my oath.' 42 "I came today to the spring, and said, 'O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if now thou wilt prosper the way which I go, 43 behold, I am standing by the spring of water; let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, "Pray give me a little water from your jar to drink," 44 and who will say to me, "Drink, and I will draw for your camels also," let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master's son.' 45 "Before I had done speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came out with her water jar on her shoulder; and she went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, 'Pray let me drink.' 46 She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink, and I will give your camels drink also.' So I drank, and she gave the camels drink also. 47 Then I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him.' So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her arms. 48 Then I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. 49 Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand or to the left." 50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered, "The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you bad or good. 51 Behold, Rebekah is before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has spoken."*

VII. Payments -

A. *52 When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the earth before the LORD. 53 And the servant brought forth jewelry of silver and of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave to her brother and to her mother costly ornaments. 54 And he and the men who were with him ate and drank, and they spent the night there.*

VIII. Pressing -

A. *When they arose in the morning, he said, "Send me back to my master." 55 Her brother and her mother said, "Let the maiden remain with us a while, at least ten days; after that she may go." 56 But he said to them, "Do not delay me, since the LORD has prospered my way; let me go that I may go to my master." 57 They said, "We will call the maiden, and ask her." 58 And they called Rebekah, and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will*

*go." 59 So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men.*

B. Blessing

IX. Prayers

A. *60 And they blessed Rebekah, and said to her, "Our sister, be the mother of thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them!"*

- X. Procession -
- A. ***61 Then Rebekah and her maids arose, and rode upon the camels and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. 62 Now Isaac had come from Beerlahairoi, and was dwelling in the Negeb.***
  - B. ***Beerlahairoi*** - well of a living (One) my Seer; or well of living vision.
  - C. What is he doing here? Drifting toward Egypt? Following his father's old example?
- XI. Presentation -
- A. ***63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there were camels coming. 64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she alighted from the camel, 65 and said to the servant, "Who is the man yonder, walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself. 66 And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.***
  - B.
- XII. Partnership -
- A. ***67 Then Isaac brought her into the tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.***
  - B.