The Patriarchs from the book of Genesis Part 19 – January 21, 2024

With input from https://www.bibleref.com/Genesis24

The Genesis Record by Henry Morris pages 401-409

We return to the story of Abraham’s servant finding a wife for Isaac in Genesis 24. Listed as “his trusted servant” this is likely Eliezer, from Genesis 15:2 because at that time, Eliezer would probably have been considered Abraham's "most trusted" servant. The man Abraham speaks to here, decades later, might be the same person, and many interpreters assume this is the case. However, chapter 24 never specifically names him, so this could be a different person.

This trusted servant travels to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor (not necessarily the name of the city but the city where Abraham’s brother resided and had many offspring, but it also could be the city of Nahor, due to Nahor’s success and wealth).

We concluded with the prayer of the servant when he arrived at a well:

**Genesis 24:13-14:** *Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water; 14 now may it be that the young woman to whom I say, ‘Please let down your jar so that I may drink,’ and who answers, ‘Drink, and I will water your camels also’—may she be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master.”*

We see in the next verses that Rebekah was, indeed, the right woman for Isaac. She was the daughter of Bethuel, Abraham’s nephew. Beyond this, she was a beautiful woman who had maintained her sexual purity—essential to the preservation of a godly seed. Seemingly, she was the first to appear and the only woman there at the moment. Everything the servant saw suggested that this woman was a candidate for the test he had devised.

**Genesis 24:15-21:** *15 And it came about, before he had finished speaking…* note the servant was praying out loud his plan to test for finding the right wife for Isaac. This is one of many indications in the passage that this servant was vocal and fearless about his trust and relationship with God. Also note that he did not have to wait. He was still finishing his sentence when God was answering.

*And it came about, before he had finished speaking that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor, came out with her jar on her shoulder.* Notice that we, as the reader, get to know she is qualified before the rest of the story unfolds.

*16 The young woman was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had had relations with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar, and came up.*

*17 Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, “Please let me drink a little water from your jar.” 18 And she said, “Drink, my lord”; then she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink. 19 Now when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, “I will also draw water for your camels until they have finished drinking.”*

*20 So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels. 21 Meanwhile, the man was taking a close look at her in silence, to find out whether the Lord had made his journey successful or not.*

The emphasis on Rebekah acting "quickly" seems to confirm that this is unprompted behavior. She's sincerely acting out of good will, not being coerced or manipulated with guilt.

This is a key feature in how Abraham's servant has approached his task to find a wife for Isaac. His prayer specifically asked God to send a woman of character. Rebekah's beauty is certainly a good thing, but it's not the primary trait this man is looking for.

*22 When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half-shekel, and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels in gold,*

Apparently convinced that God has led him to Rebekah as a potential bride for Isaac, Abraham's servant takes the next steps in making the proposal, to secure her as a wife for his master's son. He starts by giving her very generous gifts of a gold ring and two bracelets. The weight of these items communicates their value. A half-shekel, also referred to as a beka, was about 1/5 of an ounce. These gifts, weighing more than 4 ounces, would have been worth thousands of dollars, in their modern equivalent.

Rebekah may have assumed that the servant was repaying her act of generosity in watering his camels. She doesn't know that he is beginning negotiations for her hand in marriage by the giving of gifts and demonstrating just how wealthy his master is.

*23 and he said, “Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room for us to stay overnight at your father’s house?” 24 She said to him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah’s son, whom she bore to Nahor.” 25 Again she said to him, “We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to stay overnight.”*

After she has received his gifts, perhaps he hopes she will be more willing to extend further hospitality. The servant also asks who her father is. Her answer in the following verse will further confirm for him that the Lord has indeed arranged this encounter with Rebekah. His mission from Abraham was to find a wife from among Abraham's extended family in Mesopotamia (Genesis 24:3–4). Her answer confirms that God has, indeed, sent the right bride for Isaac.

*26 Then the man bowed low and worshiped the Lord. 27 And he said, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned His kindness and His trustworthiness toward my master; as for me, the Lord has guided me in the way to the house of my master’s brothers.”*

Do we remember to not only thank the Lord for answering prayers but worship Him as well?

Finally, the servant includes himself in the prayer, giving God the credit for leading him not only to some distant relation of Abraham's, but to Abraham's own immediate family relations.

One note: It was apparently common in this era and in Abraham's family for close relatives to marry each other. This early in human history, there was apparently little risk of genetic issues resulting from the offspring of family members, and God had not yet forbidden Israel from marriages between close relatives. In fact, it will become clear that God very much intended for Isaac to marry his cousin Rebekah for the purpose of creating a people that were uniquely His own.

*28 Then the young woman ran and told her mother’s household about these things. 29 Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban; and Laban ran outside to the man at the spring. 30 When he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister’s wrists, and when he heard the words of his sister Rebekah, saying, “This is what the man said to me,” he went to the man; and behold, he was standing by the camels at the spring. 31 And he said, “Come in, blessed of the Lord! Why do you stand outside, since I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels?”*

Suddenly a new character—and a complication—bursts onto the scene of this unfolding drama. Rebekah had run home to tell the news about this stranger, his wealth, his connection to the family, and his interest in staying with them (Genesis 24:28). Now her brother Laban runs back to the spring, the well, where Abraham's servant remains waiting, or it is possible that the servant has come to the house but remains outside.

As Rebekah's brother, Laban will play a role in the decision of whether to accept the coming marriage proposal for Rebekah and to allow her to travel and settle away from the family. He will also play a role later in Genesis when Jacob, the son of Rebekah and Isaac, comes to him looking for a wife of his own in Genesis 29. The role of brothers, or fathers, in accepting marriage proposals, was common in that time; this was part of why Abraham had attempted to pretend that he was only Sarah's brother in years past in Genesis 12:11–13 then again in Genesis 20:2.

*32 So the man entered the house. Then Laban unloaded the camels, and he gave straw and feed to the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him.*

After being warmly invited to stay at their household by Laban, Rebekah's brother, Abraham's servant arrives with his company of camels and servants. The passage provides some historical perspective on what that would look like. The camels would be unharnessed and provided food. All of the men are given the opportunity to wash their feet, which would have been quite filthy from a journey across the open country.

*33 But when food was set before him to eat, he said, “I will not eat until I have stated my business.” And he said, “Speak on.”*

*34 So he said, “I am Abraham’s servant. 35 The Lord has greatly blessed my master, so that he has become rich; and He has given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and servants and slave women, and camels and donkeys. 36 Now my master’s wife Sarah bore a son to my master in her old age, and he has given him all that he has.*

**Henry Morris:** Since the servant was making a proposal of marriage, it was of course proper to give a clear statement of his master’s financial status, which he did most impressively, ascribing all the credit for Abraham’s wealth to God rather than to his business acumen. He also noted that Isaac had been made sole heir for all this wealth and its attendant responsibility. He mentioned too, the fact of Isaac’s miraculous birth, coming at such a time that he was approximately the same age as Rebekah.

*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 live; 38 but you shall go to my father’s house and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son.’*

He starts by answering the obvious question: Why has Isaac not married a local girl? The servant's oath answers the question: Abraham forbids it.

Isaac must not marry any of the women in Canaan. This was an issue of culture and spirituality for Abraham, not one of race. His concern was about mixing the godless approach of the Canaanites with that of his family. Later, this prohibition would become an official part of God's law for the people of Israel in Deuteronomy 7:1–4.

*39 Then I said to my master, ‘Suppose the woman does not follow me.’ 40 And he said to me, ‘The Lord, before whom I have walked, will send His angel with you to make your journey successful, and you will take a wife for my son from my relatives and from my father’s house; 41 then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my relatives; and if they do not give her to you, you will be free from my oath.’*

Now he shares Abraham's response: The Lord will intervene. More specifically, the Lord will send an angel to give the mission success. Abraham knows this because he himself has walked with the Lord. Abraham insists that the servant will succeed: He will take a wife for Isaac from among Abraham's people. As the servant will explain, he has also seen evidence that God is working to bring Rebekah back to Canaan.

*42 “So I came today to the spring, and said, ‘Lord, God of my master Abraham, if now You will make my journey on which I have been going successful; 43 behold, I am standing by the spring, and may it be that the young unmarried woman who comes out to draw water, and to whom I say, “Please let me drink a little water from your jar”; 44 and she says to me, “You 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 finished speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder, and went down to the spring and drew water, and I said to her, ‘Please let me drink.’ 46 She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder, and said, ‘Drink, and I will water your camels also’; so I drank, and she watered the camels also.*

*47 Then I asked her, and said, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ And she said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor’s son, whom Milcah bore to him’; and I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her wrists. 48 And I bowed low and worshiped the Lord, and blessed the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who had guided me in the right way to take the daughter of my master’s brother for his son. 49 So now if you are going to deal kindly and truthfully with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me now, so that I may turn to the right or the left.”*

*50 Then Laban and Bethuel replied, “The matter has come from the Lord; so we cannot speak to you bad or good. 51 Here is Rebekah before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master’s son, as the Lord has spoken.”*

*52 When Abraham’s servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the ground before the Lord.*

The servant was not at all shy about worshiping the Lord in front of Rebekah or describing his worship of God to her family. In fact, the Lord was the central character in the servant's story, acting to bring about the best possible result, at least from the servant's perspective.

It's unclear what Bethuel, Laban, and Rebekah thought about this God of Abraham. They lived in a part of the world known for its worship of the moon. The worship of various gods was built into the culture of the day.

Did they know of Abraham's Lord specifically or simply accept the idea of Him as one of many possible unknown gods in the world? How much had Abraham told them about his visit from the Lord before he moved away? We just don't know.

*53 And the servant brought out articles of silver and articles of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother.*

His oath does not require that a woman return with him to Canaan. The servant is bound only to seek out the right woman—not to come back with a marriageable woman at all costs. But God gets the glory for answering Abraham and the servant’s prayers.

*54 Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night. When they got up in the morning, he said, “Send me away to my master.”*

*55 But her brother and her mother said, “Let the young woman stay with us a few days, say ten; afterward she may go.” 56 However, he said to them, “Do not delay me, since the Lord has prospered my way. Send me away so that I may go to my master.”*

Abraham's servant insisted on not being delayed. His reason is hard to understand: "since the Lord has prospered my way." Did the servant feel that delaying their departure would somehow dishonor the success God had granted to him? Perhaps he was concerned that, given time to think about their agreement, Rebekah's family might change their mind. He might have assumed that, since God had granted his request to find the right woman so quickly, that God also intended this mission to be completed as soon as possible.

One more possibility is that the servant was concerned Abraham might die before he could get back with this wife for Isaac. Abraham's words to the servant at the beginning of this chapter did sound like those of a dying man. Though Abraham went on to live several more decades, perhaps his health status was questionable for a season. And, lest we forget, Abraham is more than 130 years old at this point (Genesis 23:1–2).

In any case, the servant wants to leave—immediately!

*57 And they said, “We will call the young woman and ask her.”*

Now for the first time, Rebekah is allowed a say in the matter. The family suggests they ask her if she is willing to go with Abraham's servant so quickly.

*58 Then they called Rebekah and said to her, “Will you go with this man?” And she said, “I will go.” 59 So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse with Abraham’s servant and his men.*

Along with Rebekah, they send her nurse, likely a caregiving servant/nanny who has helped to raise Rebekah from a small child. We will learn later that the nurse's name is Deborah (Genesis 35:8). They also send along with Rebekah some of her "young women" or servant girls.

*60 And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,*

*“May you, our sister,*

*Become thousands of ten thousands,*

*And may your descendants possess*

*The gate of those who hate them.”*

Upon her departure to travel to the land of Canaan to marry Isaac, Rebekah's family blessed her, their sister, with this poem that may have been a traditional type of wedding blessing for a bride. However, it includes very similar language to the Lord's promises of blessing to Abraham earlier in Genesis (Genesis 22:17).

Because of God's promises to Abraham, and because Rebekah would give birth to Jacob, the next in the covenant line of Israel, these blessings on her will absolutely come to pass. She will become, through her offspring, thousands of ten thousands, and her offspring will conquer their enemies, possessing the gates of their cities. Her son Jacob will be renamed Israel by God, making Rebekah—literally—the mother of God's chosen people.

Let’s look at the NIV of verse 60: *And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, 'Our sister, may you increase to thousands upon thousands; may your offspring possess the cities of their enemies.'*

This is a prophetic ‘blessing’ they send her with: after her offspring multiply to thousands of ten thousands, which they have today, her offspring will possess the cities of their enemies. And those enemies won’t like it and will have continuous, on-going conflict until the King of Kings and Lord of Lords comes to deliver them.

*61 Then Rebekah got up with her female attendants, and they mounted the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.*

*Isaac Marries Rebekah*

*62 Now Isaac had come back from a journey to Beer-lahai-roi; for he was living in the Negev. 63 Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening; and he raised his eyes and looked, and behold, camels were coming.*

*64 Rebekah raised her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she dismounted from the camel. 65 She said to the servant, “Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?” And the servant said, “He is my master.” Then she took her veil and covered herself.*

*66 The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. 67 Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her; so Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.*

Here, the story of the wedding of Isaac and Rebekah reaches its conclusion. In this moment, Isaac and Rebekah seem to step into the shoes of Abraham and Sarah. He gives her his mother's tent. He soon marries her and begins to love her. Their relationship comforts him in the loss of Sarah. This is the first mention of Isaac's emotional response to his mother's death, which took place approximately three years before his marriage to Rebekah.

The following chapter will describe the death of Abraham. Isaac will now become the patriarch of the family of the people of God.