

Knowing the idolatry of the residents of Canaan, Abraham sends his servant back to his own land to find a suitable wife for his son Isaac. The narrative is a lesson to Christians on the importance of following the guidance of the LORD to only marry other Christians in order to avoid the conflict of being unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14).

The previous chapter describes the death of Sarah at the age of 127, after which Abraham buys a field with a cave from Ephron the Hittite and buries her in the cave.

¹ And Abraham was old, *and well stricken in age*: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.

“And Abraham was old, *and well stricken in age*” – Abraham was ten years older than Sarah and so he was at least 137 at this point. Since Sarah had recently died he may have been thinking that he may not have many years left himself and should start thinking about the future of his son.

“and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things” – The LORD had blessed Abraham and taken care of his needs, and so perhaps now his mind turned to the needs of his son Isaac. No doubt he wanted his son to be as blessed by God as he had been.

² And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: ³ And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: ⁴ But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

“And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had” – This servant was most likely Eliezer of Damascus, the steward of his house (Gen. 15:2).

“Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh” – This is the same method of making a solemn pledge that Jacob requires of Joseph in Gen. 47:29 when he asks Joseph to promise to bury him in the land of Canaan instead of Egypt. The origin and nature of the custom of putting one’s hand under another man’s thigh has been debated by commentators. Here the Hebrew word for “thigh” is translated “loins” elsewhere in scripture so it seems that the custom involves puts one’s hand under the part of the other man’s anatomy that has been circumcised, thus associating the pledge with the LORD’s covenant of circumcision and making the pledge just as binding.

“And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth” – Abraham has the servant complete the pledge by swearing by the LORD that he will do as Abraham instructs.

“that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell” – In Abraham’s day the parents made marital arrangements for their children, and Abraham is adamant that Isaac not marry a Canaanite woman. No doubt he was afraid that having such an idol worshiping marriage partner might lead Isaac away from serving the LORD. This very thing happens to Solomon after he marries women from other nations (1 Kings 11:4 *“For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.”*)

“But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac” – In the culture of the day it was not unusual for the parents to make marital arrangements for their child to marry someone from within their own extended family, often a first cousin. Abraham obviously believed that someone from his own family would be a better match for his son and would not influence him toward idolatry.

Verses 5-9: The servant asks about the possibility of taking Isaac back to the region from which Abraham had come if the potential wife would not agree to marry Isaac without meeting him first. Abraham responds with strict instructions that Isaac is not to leave Canaan and if the woman is unwilling then the servant would be free from the pledge. Abraham knew that the LORD had promised the land of Canaan to Abraham’s descendants and he did not want to take the chance that Isaac might not return to Canaan after finding a wife in the land where Abraham came from. After this clarification the servant completes the pledge to do as Abraham has instructed.

¹⁰ And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master *were* in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.

“And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed” – The servant took everything he needed for the journey (provisions, other servants, gifts for the woman and her family, etc.) and the camels necessary for carrying them.

“for all the goods of his master *were* in his hand” – Being the steward of Abraham’s household, he had the ability to take whatever was needed to accomplish the task that Abraham had instructed him to do.

“and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor” – Mesopotamia was the region where Babylon would eventually be built. Nahor was Abraham’s brother, so the servant had come to the city where Nahor’s family had settled.

¹¹ And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, *even* the time that women go out to draw *water*.

When the servant arrives at the city, he sees the public well outside the city and has his camels kneel nearby. Having the camels kneel was a means of letting them rest after the long journey. The evening was the customary time for the women to come to the public well and draw water since it was cooler. It’s not exactly clear if the servant arrived in the evening or if he waited until the evening to have his camels kneel, but it seems from the prayer he prays that this time of day provided an opportunity to find a suitable wife for Isaac.

¹² And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. ¹³ Behold, I stand *here* by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: ¹⁴ And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: *let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.*

“And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham” – The servant prays to the God of his master Abraham. The servant describes the LORD as the “God of my master Abraham” so perhaps because he didn’t share the faith of Abraham. However, he prays and worships the LORD later in this chapter so it’s more likely that he had learned to have faith in the LORD from Abraham. It may be that he appeals to the LORD as the God of Abraham knowing the special relationship that Abraham had with the LORD.

“I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham” – He asks that the LORD would send him “good speed” (success) in accomplishing his task. Helping him succeed would be a kindness to Abraham.

“Behold, I stand *here* by the well of water...” - The servant lays out a scenario through which he asks the LORD to guide him to the correct woman to be a wife to Isaac. He would ask each of the women coming to draw water at the public well for a drink and the LORD would cause the correct woman to not only give him a drink but also voluntarily draw water for the camels. Drawing enough water to satisfy ten camels is no trivial task and says something about the woman who would volunteer for such a task.

“and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master” – When the servant saw a woman satisfy these conditions then he would know that it was the LORD that was showing kindness to Abraham by answering the servant’s prayer.

Verses 15-57: Before this servant had finished his prayer the LORD was already sending the answer to the well. Rebekah, who was the daughter of Isaac’s cousin Bethuel (son of Nahor and Milcah) was heading to the well with her pitcher on her shoulder. The servant hurries to her and asks for a drink and she volunteers to water his camels as well. He’s still not sure if she was the LORD’s choice and so he asks about her family and discovers their relation to Abraham. She offers shelter for the night for him and the servants with him and they go home with her. Once there he explains to the family his purpose for being there and how the LORD had answered his prayer. They recognize the LORD’s guidance in this matter and are willing to allow Rebekah to go with Abraham’s servant if she is willing.

⁵⁸ And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.

Rebekah recognizes the LORD’s hand in the situation and exhibits her faith by going with the servant to marry a man she has never met.

⁵⁹ And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham’s servant, and his men. ⁶⁰ And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou *art* our sister, be thou *the mother* of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them. ⁶¹ And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

They allow the servant to leave with Rebekah after bestowing a blessing on her that she have millions of descendants. She leaves with her nurse (likely the woman servant who raised her and attended to her needs even into adulthood) and “damsels” (other maidservants).

⁶² And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi; for he dwelt in the south country. ⁶³ And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels *were* coming.

It appears that Isaac did not live under Abraham’s “roof” but had established his own homestead in the southern portion of Canaan. This particular evening he had wandered out into a field to think about things when he saw the camels of his father’s steward returning from their long trip. Apparently the servant was delivering Rebekah to Isaac’s residence instead of Abraham’s.

⁶⁴ And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. ⁶⁵ For she *had* said unto the servant, What man *is* this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant *had* said, It *is* my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself.

When Rebekah saw Isaac walking toward the caravan to meet it, she asks the servant who this man was. When the servant identifies him as Isaac, the one to whom she is to be married, she puts on her veil and gets off her camel to meet him. The custom of the day required that she wear the veil in the presence of her betrothed until the wedding day.

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

“And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done” – The servant explains everything that had transpired to bring Rebekah here.

“And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife” – His mother Sarah had been the most important woman in Isaac’s life but she had died a few years earlier in chapter 23. Rebekah now becomes his wife.

“and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s *death*” – Isaac’s love for Rebekah fills the void left after the death of his mother.