



20261018 - Genesis 24 - Eliezer – A Faithful Servant finds a Suitable Wife for his Master

Last week we read that Sarah died in Hebron at the age of 127. Isaac was 37 years old when she died. As we continue our Torah study this morning, we come to the story of Isaac finding a wife. This is the longest chapter in Genesis. I think the best way to study this is to work through the chapter while I comment as we go.

Isaac and Rebekah

24 *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 household [probably Eliezer], who had charge of all that he had, “Put your hand under my thigh, ³ that I may make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and God 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 kindred, and who spoke to me and swore to me, ‘To your offspring 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. (Genesis 24:1-9, ESV with author's notes in brackets).*

Let us pray.

A few things jump out at us as we read this passage. It is a bit strange that Abraham is in charge of finding a wife for Isaac, but we must remember that in the ancient Middle East, parents would choose mates for their children. We will find that the children participate, in that when Rebecca is found, she must give her own consent to the marriage. Let's assume today that the servant in this story is Eliezer. This is most likely the same servant whom Abraham spoke of when he was entreating the Lord for an heir.

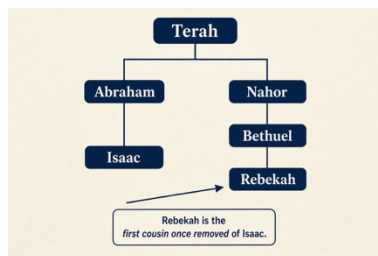
¹*After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” ² But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” (Genesis 15:1-3, ESV).*

Sometimes we have our moments of darkest despair right before a spiritual breakthrough. This statement concerning Eliezer is right before the most quoted verse about Abraham in the Bible. His statement of fear is followed by belief. ⁴*And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:6, ESV).*

The statement of putting his hand “under his thigh” to swear always brings questions. The ancient rabbis interpreted this word *yarek* to mean a man’s “private parts” from which his seed came. In a sense, it meant swearing by the promise of what would come from Abraham’s seed. Likewise, the text points out the necessity of choosing a spiritually like-minded spouse. Hence, Abraham sends Eliezer to a like-minded family instead of finding a wife for him among the Canaanites. Perhaps he didn’t want Eliezer to take Isaac back to Chaldea because Isaac might be influenced by paganism there, too. Abraham insisted that Isaac stay in the promised land.

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. ¹² And he said, “O Lord, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today 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 young woman to whom I shall say, ‘Please 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 you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master.” (Genesis 24:10-14, ESV).

He took these camels as a “bride price.” This is something different from a dowry. The “bride price” was paid by the groom’s family to the bride’s family. It had several purposes. One was to show financial stability, and the other was to compensate the bride’s family for the labor they would have lost from their daughter. A dowry is totally different. The bride’s family paid it to the bride as a guarantee of her inheritance. So Eliezer made his way to Nahor with the goods to pay the bride price, and he settled his camels by the water well there. Eliezer then made a very specific request to God, asking for a sign in the words a prospective bride would speak.



¹⁵ Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah [meaning “to bind” “to secure”. Essentially that she was “captivating and ensnaring”], who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her water jar on her shoulder. ¹⁶ The young woman was very attractive in appearance, a maiden 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, “Please 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 water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking.” ²⁰ So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran again to the well to draw water, 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. (Genesis 24:15-21, ESV with author’s notes in brackets).

This beautiful account shows that Rebekah was a chaste virgin who knew how to work. I’ve been going through this chapter in detail with our young adults, and I’ve emphasized how important it is to know how to work and to find a spouse who does. Marriage takes a lot of work, and both people in a marriage have work to do. It is important to find and marry a person who knows how to work.



²² When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half shekel, and two bracelets for her arms weighing ten gold shekels, ²³ and said, "Please tell me whose daughter you are. Is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?" 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 plenty of both straw and fodder, and room to spend the night."

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." ²⁸ Then the young woman ran and told her mother's household about these things. (Genesis 24:22-28, ESV).

We find in Rebekah not only a hard worker, but someone with a heart for hospitality. You know, hospitality is one of the requirements of being an elder or the wife of an elder.



²⁹ Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban. Laban ran out toward the man, to the spring. ³⁰ As soon as he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and 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 to the house and unharnessed the camels, and gave straw and fodder to the camels, and there was 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 said what I have to say." He said, "Speak on." (Genesis 24:29-33, ESV).

This is our biblical introduction to Laban. Remember, Laban will someday be Jacob's father-in-law when Jacob returns there and marries Laban's daughters, Leah and Rachel.

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, male servants and female servants, camels and donkeys. 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 clan 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 have walked, will send his angel with you and prosper your way. You shall take a wife for my son from my clan and from my father's house. ⁴¹ Then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my clan. 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 you are prospering the way that I go, ⁴³ behold, I am standing by the spring of water. Let the virgin who comes out to draw water, to whom I shall say, "Please 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.’ (Genesis 24:34-44, ESV).

In verses 34-44 Eliezer recounts the events at the well.

⁴⁵ “Before I had finished speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came out with her water jar on her shoulder, and she went down to the spring and drew water. I said to her, ‘Please 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 are going to show steadfast love and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left.” (Genesis 24:45-49, ESV).

The first thing Eliezer did after his prayer was answered was to take time to worship the Lord. So often, we forget that we even prayed about something when it is answered.

⁵⁰ Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, “The thing has come 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.” ⁵² When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the earth before the Lord. ⁵³ And the servant brought out jewelry of silver and of gold, and garments, 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. When they arose in the morning, he said, “Send me away to my master.” ⁵⁵ Her brother and her mother said, “Let the young woman 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. Send me away that I may go to my master.” ⁵⁷ They said, “Let us call the young woman 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. ⁶⁰ And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,

“Our sister, may you become
thousands of ten thousands,
and may your offspring possess
the gate of those who hate him!”

⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her young women arose and rode on the camels and followed the man. Thus, the servant took Rebekah and went his way.



⁶² Now Isaac had returned from Beer-lahai-roi and was dwelling in the Negeb. ⁶³ And Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening. And he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, there were camels coming. ⁶⁴ And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she dismounted from the camel ⁶⁵ and said to the servant, “Who is that man, walking in the field to meet us?” The servant said, “It is my master.” So she took her veil and

covered herself. ⁶⁶And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. ⁶⁷Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. So, Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. (Genesis 24:50-67, ESV).

There was great significance to Isaac “taking” Rebekah in his mother’s tent. Sarah had died three years prior, and the family was without a matriarch. By establishing Rebekah in his mother’s tent, he was declaring that she was the new matriarch of the family and all of the covenantal promises made through Sarah now passed into and through Rebekah. The Midrash says that three miracles happened when she was taken in his mother’s tent: 1) the shabbat candles burned from one Friday until the next Friday, 2) a blessing rested on the dough in the kneading trough, and 3) the Shekinah glory hovered over her tent. I think these are sweet sentiments that show the early rabbis understood that in taking up residence in Sarah’s tent, Rebekah was spiritually and physically blessed.

What can we learn from this Story?

- **Trust in Divine Guidance – *God will give you wisdom. (James 1:5)***
Eliezer (God is my Help) relied completely on God, not human guesswork, to find the right spouse for his master’s son. He prayed specifically for a clear sign at the well, showing that seeking God's will brings clarity. I’m not sure this is how we should find a spouse, but it doesn’t hurt to ask. About a month before I met Sandy, I asked the Lord to bring my wife to my front door. A week later, Sandy showed up at my front door.
- **The Power of Prayer – *We have not because we ask not. (James 4:2)***
Eliezer began and ended his mission with prayer. This narrative shows that God answers prayers—sometimes even before the prayer is finished—in His perfect timing. Eliezer didn’t specify what Rebekah should look like or what her training would be. He only stipulated that she would be the woman God led him to and that she would know how to work.
- **Rebekah had a Servant's Heart and Kindness – *Whatever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord. (Colossians 3:23)***
She showed extraordinary character by not only giving Eliezer water but also voluntarily drawing water for all of his thirsty camels. I did a little calculating, and camels drink 50 gallons of water, and there were ten of them. That's 500 gallons of water. That is 100 five-gallon buckets. This hard work and willingness to serve others highlighted an inner goodness that went far beyond basic courtesy. She was a wife worth having.
- **Courage and Faith to Act on what we determine to be God’s direction. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you. (Psalm 32:8, NIV).***

Rebekah had to make a major life choice to leave her family behind and journey to marry a man she had never met. Her willingness to go demonstrated profound faith and courage. We too should be prayed up enough that when God leads us to do something, we do it.

- **Faith-Centered Marriages - *(Unequally Yoked): Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14, ESV).*** This applies broadly to

close partnerships and all other kinds of intimacies. It is most often applied to marriages because two people with opposite core faiths and value systems will end up pulling in different directions. That wears both parties out!

The marriage of Isaac and Rebekah illustrates that marriages are best when built on a shared, mature faith and God's clear direction.

I think the overall message in this passage is the forgotten Eliezer. He is the unsung hero in the passage. We see a picture of a true and faithful servant. He was the heir-apparent to the childless couple, Abraham and Sarah. He would have inherited all their land and riches had no other son been born. Yet Eliezer did all he could to honor the promises God had made to Abraham. We don't know exactly what his relationship with God was, but we do know he prayed. And then he moved forward with a plan. We need to pray, listen, and move. We, too, need to be servants of God, not looking for the benefits that come from that obedience, but rather obeying because of our love for our Master.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.