

Genesis Lesson 16: Genesis 24-25

Lecture

- Genesis 24 opens with Abraham charging his oldest servant, who was in charge of all his possessions, with going back to his clan to locate a wife for Isaac. There are several key points in verses 1-9.
 - Abraham's servant is asked to swear an oath to Abraham by placing his hand under Abraham's thigh, used here as a euphemism for genitalia.
 - Scholars are unsure about the meaning of placing his hand under the thigh, but perhaps it is symbolic of the descendants of Abraham to come through Isaac.
 - The servant may not have worshipped the Lord. A good clue to this comes from Genesis 24:12 when the servant prays, "O Lord, God of my master Abraham."
 - The oath has several parts:
 - The servant will not take a wife for Isaac from among the Canaanites.
 - The servant must go to the land of Abraham's kindred to find a wife.
 - Under no circumstances is the servant to take Isaac back to Mesopotamia.
 - The Lord will send his angel before the servant to pave the way for his task.
 - If the woman the servant finds will not return to Canaan, then the servant is freed from his oath.

- Abraham wants to ensure that:
 - Isaac will remain in Canaan and will not remain in Mesopotamia, under the influence of his clan, who are polytheists. In this, Abraham was remarkably prescient. We will see later in Genesis 28 – 30, when Isaac sends his son Jacob back to Mesopotamia, that Jacob will become ensnared by Laban into serving 14 years for him.
 - Abraham’s hold on the land is tenuous at best. He only owns a well, a field, and a cave. His descendants will not possess the land for another 400 years.
 - John Walton points out that, when the Israelites do begin their conquest of Canaan and start to kill the inhabitants, they can claim that they are not related to them by blood.
 - Isaac will not marry a Canaanite, whom God had already doomed to destruction (“the sins of the Amorites”) and whom Abraham knew were sinful people.
- Moving forward in the story, the servant heads off on his journey to Mesopotamia, taking with him 10 of Abraham’s camels as well as choice gifts.
 - Some of these gifts will be the bride price. In a culture where manual labor was prized, the bride price compensated the family for the loss of a laborer.
 - Do you remember where the camels came from? They were a gift from Pharaoh to Abram in Genesis 12:16, presumably as a bride price for Sarai.
 - How far did the servant travel?
 - The passage does not tell us if his starting point was Hebron or Beersheba, nor do we know the exact location of the city of Nahor. A rough approximation would be 300 to 400 miles.
 - Camels can travel 25 to 30 miles per day. So, the journey could have taken 10 to 16 days, or even longer if they stopped to rest along the way.

- How did the servant know which way to go?
 - Truthfully, the routes were limited, and he probably followed a known caravan route.
 - Perhaps the promised angel (Genesis 24:7) led the way.
- When the servant reaches the city of Nahor, he prays that the Lord grant his success. He further asks for a sign that the young woman whom he asks for water will give him water and will also offer to water his camels.
 - Camels can drink up to 25-40 gallons of water at one time.
 - A typical jug of water at the time likely held 3 gallons.
 - Thus, offering to water 10 camels meant drawing water over 80 times.
 - The servant has selected a situation which will clearly indicate that God is acting in this situation.
- Who is the young woman at the well? She is Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel, who was the son of Milcah and Nahor. Nahor was Abraham's brother. (Genesis 11:27-29) and Milcah was the daughter of his other brother Haran.
- The servant next begins the negotiation with Rebekah's family for her hand in marriage to Isaac.
 - Rebekah is the daughter of Bethuel, but it is Laban who conducts the negotiations for the family.
 - This suggests that Bethuel may be too elderly or unwell to do so. We know Bethuel is still alive because both he and Laban give their approval to the marriage in verse 50.

- The servant, who never identifies himself or Isaac by name, states his case to Laban and the other family members.
 - Abraham has been greatly blessed by the Lord and is quite wealthy, as the servant outlines his possessions: flocks, herds, silver, gold, servants, camels, and donkeys.
 - Isaac was born to Sarah when she was old, so Isaac could still be young enough to attract a bride. (He was about 40 years old.)
 - Abraham walks with Yahweh. This statement may have carried some weight with Laban and the other family members, who did not worship Yahweh, as we will see in Genesis 31. Laban and the others must have concurred that Abraham's perceived wealth did come from Yahweh. How else might he have acquired this in Canaan?
 - Abraham intends to give all he has to his son. We do not know if Abraham has already stated this to the servant, but it is explicitly stated in Genesis 25:5.
 - Having established Isaac as a worthy bridegroom, the servant then relates the oath he has taken. This expresses the seriousness of his mission.
 - The servant then relates his prayer that the Lord would give him a sign that He was prospering the servant's way.
 - The servant concludes his discourse with:
 - "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 24:49
 - He puts not so subtle pressure on Abraham's kin to demonstrate their love and faithfulness to Abraham.
 - If they do not want Rebekah to marry Abraham's son, the servant will move on to more fertile fields, so to speak.

- Laban and Bethuel, realizing that the Lord, in his providence, has orchestrated this entire situation, give their approval.
 - As Victor Hamilton states, “Because Yahweh has made his decision, Laban no longer has the privilege of making his own decision.”
- After the bride price has been paid for Rebekah, the servant is ready to leave the next morning.
 - Rebekah’s family want her to remain with them another 10 days.
 - The 10 days would enable the family to ascertain a little more about Abraham’s servant and about Abraham’s son.
 - And 10 days would give them more time to prepare Rebekah for her journey.
 - But the servant will brook no delay.
 - Rebekah is asked for her opinion. She is not giving her consent to the marriage; that has already been arranged without her consent. She is being asked if she is willing to leave that day.
 - Rebekah consents and, accompanied by her nurse (whom we learn from Genesis 35:8 is named Deborah), she departs for Canaan with Abraham’s servant.
- What should we glean from the story of Abraham’s death in Genesis 25:1-18?
 - These passages fulfill a number of prophecies to Abraham.
 - Genesis 17:5: God made Abraham the father of a multitude of nations. This is evidenced by the nations who arose from Keturah’s sons and Ishmael’s sons.
 - Genesis 17:20: Ishmael will be fruitful, will be the father of 12 princes, and will become a great nation.
 - Genesis 16: 12: Ishmael would dwell over against all his kinsmen.
 - Genesis 15:15: Abraham would be buried in a good old age.

- Genesis 25:8 is worth reviewing.
 - “Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.”
 - “Gathered to his people” precedes Abraham’s burial in verse 9 and suggests a belief that Abraham’s soul was reunited with his dead relatives in the afterlife.
 - The term “gathered to his people” is only used 10 times in the Old Testament and all 10 times are in the Pentateuch. The 6 people named are: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Aaron.
- Genesis 25 continues with the story of Isaac and Rebekah and their sons Esau and Jacob.
 - God had orchestrated the selection of Rebekah to be Isaac’s wife. But she is barren.
 - How can a barren woman continue the family line through Isaac?
 - It will take another act of God to help Rebekah conceive.
 - And we see in this section that neither Isaac nor Rebekah tries to take things into their own hands. Isaac prays to God to open Rebekah’s womb and God answers his prayer.
 - This is the first of many instances of Isaac’s great persistence in prayer, according to Gordon Wenham.
 - Rebekah’s pregnancy is anything but easy as she pregnant with twins.

- Genesis 25:22 might be read, “If it is like this, why am I here?” Her pregnancy has driven her to despair.
 - Genesis 25:22 says that Rebekah “went to inquire of the Lord.”
 - This would generally involve consulting a prophet.
 - “(Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he said, “Come, let us go to the seer,” for today’s “prophet” was formerly called a seer.)” 1 Samuel 9:9
 - Did she consult Abraham, whom God had already declared to be a prophet? We have no way of knowing as the scripture is silent on this.
- She inquires of the Lord for an explanation about her pregnancy, and God tells her that 2 nations will come from her womb, the 2 nations will be divided, and the older shall serve the younger.
 - Notice that the Lord’s message does not suggest that the younger is better or favored by God. The message focuses on the destiny of the descendants.
 - Also, there is no mention of twins. The oracle from God is enigmatic.
 - Little did she know but it will take until the time of King David for the prophecy to fully come true.
 - 2 Samuel 8:12-14 records that David (descendant of Jacob) subjugated the Edomites (descendants of Esau) and “the Edomites became David’s servants.”
 - Even then, the Edomites continued to fight against Israel, resulting in multiple prophets saying that Edom will ultimately be destroyed.
 - In 400 BC, the Nabatean Arabs drive the Edomites from their ancestral lands.

- Esau, being the firstborn, would typically receive a double share of his father's inheritance.
 - In the case of Esau and Jacob, the inheritance would be divided into 3 parts and Esau would receive 2/3, while Jacob would receive 1/3.
 - The difference in inheritance was profound and would have been burdensome in the case of twins born minutes apart.
 - One could easily understand the bitterness and jealousy that might erupt between the 2 brothers, especially since each parent had a personal favorite between the 2 brothers.
 - When Esau returns hungry after a hunting trip and asks for food, Jacob could have shown kindness to his brother. Instead, he responds with an outrageous demand.

- Esau values his birthright so little that he is willing to trade it for a bowl of stew.
 - He holds his birthright in contempt.
 - Given that Isaac inherited all of what Abraham possessed, Isaac would have been wealthy, so the birthright would have been quite valuable.
 - It is not clear from the Scripture if Esau sold Jacob his entire 2/3 share or if he only sold him a 1/3 share, so that Jacob's share would now be 2/3.
 - Esau maintains his position in the family as firstborn, nevertheless.
 - Notice that Jacob makes Esau swear an oath about the birthright before he gives Esau the stew. He clearly does not trust his brother. And, as we will see, his brother should not trust him either.
 - After eating and drinking, Esau says nothing and went on his way. Does Esau feel bitterness towards his brother or is he ashamed of what he just did?
 - John Walton says, "If he so lightly esteems his material birthright, what reason is there to believe that he will value a covenantal birthright?"

- Jacob, meanwhile, will be the nation through whom the blessings of Abraham will continue.
 - Despite Jacob's conniving and sinfulness, God will preserve him, bless him, and use him to fulfill God's purposes.

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Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. Ruth 1:16-17

1. Read Genesis 24:1-9.

a. Based on other Genesis verses, how old was Abraham at this point?

Abraham was 137 years old when Sarah died, so he was at least that old at the start of Genesis 24.

b. What had God done for Abraham?

And the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. Genesis 24:1

c. What did Abraham want his servant to do?

And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, 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." Genesis 24:2-4

d. How do the verses explain Abraham's trust in this servant?

And Abraham said to **his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he had...** Genesis 24:2

e. Why didn't Abraham want his son to marry a Canaanite?

- God had already told Abraham about the sins of the Amorites (the Canaanites.) And it is likely that Abraham had witnessed some of these sins during his sojourn in Beersheba and Hebron. And he was certainly aware of the sins of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, since God destroyed those 2 cities.
- Abraham wanted a wife for Isaac from a family he trusted.
- He feared that a Canaanite wife would draw Isaac's eyes away from the Lord.

- f. Why was it necessary for Isaac to take a wife? (Hint: consider Genesis 13:16, Genesis 21:12, and Genesis 22:17.)

Isaac was the child of the promise. It was through Isaac that the descendants of Abraham would be blessed and that the covenant of the land would be fulfilled. Isaac needed a wife to produce the descendants.

- g. What was the servant's concern and how did Abraham allay that concern?

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. Genesis 24:5-7

- h. Why didn't Abraham want Isaac to accompany the servant to Abraham's family in Mesopotamia?

Isaac's future is in Canaan, not Mesopotamia. Abraham did not want Isaac to reside in Mesopotamia.

2. Read Genesis 24:10-27.

- a. How did the servant express his faith in his mission?

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. 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

b. How did God answer the servant's request?

Before he had finished 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 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."** Genesis 24:15-19

c. Who was the woman?

Rebekah was the daughter of Bethuel, who was the son of Milcah and Nahor, Abram's brother.

d. What was the familial (genetic) relationship between this woman and Isaac?

Rebekah was Isaac's cousin 1 times removed.

e. What traits do you note about the woman? How do these traits answer the servant's prayer?

- Rebekah was attractive.
- Rebekah was virgin.
- Rebekah was kind and polite to strangers.
- Rebekah was willing to draw extra water for the camels.
- Rebekah's actions mirror exactly what the servant had prayed for.

f. What did the servant give the woman? Why do you think he did this?

- 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 Genesis 24:22
- The servant was demonstrating his master's wealth and was thanking Rebekah for her act of watering his camels.
- It was down-payment on a bride price.

- g. When the woman explained who she was, what did the servant do?
“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 LORD²⁷ 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.”** Genesis 24:23-27
- h. What traits do you note about the servant?
- He worshipped the Lord, the God of his master Abraham.
 - He was faithful to the task Abraham had given him.

3. Read Genesis 24:28-60.

- a. How was the servant received by Rebekah’s brother Laban?
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
- b. What did the servant tell Laban and the other members of his household?
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. Genesis 24:34-36

- c. What did the servant ask Laban and Bethuel?
- 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 24:47-49
 - The servant wanted to know if Laban and Bethuel would let him take Rebekah back to be Isaac’s wife.
- d. What was their response?
- 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.” Genesis 24:50-51
- e. What did the servant do next and why do you think he did this?
- 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. Genesis 24:52-53
 - Abraham’s servant is again thanking the Lord, the God of his master Abraham, for answering his prayers and for fulfilling Abraham’s request.
 - The servant is paying a bride price for Rebekah.
- f. What occurred the next morning?
- 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.” Genesis 24:54-55
- g. What was the servant’s response?
- 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.” Genesis 24:56

- h. How do Laban and his mother handle the situation?
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?” Genesis 24:57-58
- i. What was Rebekah’s decision?
She said, “I will go.” Genesis 24:58
- j. What does Rebekah’s decision say about her character?
Rebekah was obedient to what was clearly a God-directed set of events.
- k. Who went along with Rebekah from her household? Why?
- So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham’s servant and his men. Genesis 24:59
 - Her nurse was there to protect Rebekah’s reputation and her virginity and she would provide company to Rebekah as she left her family forever.
- l. What blessing did Laban’s siblings give Rebekah?
- 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!” Genesis 24:60
- m. How did the family unknowingly offer a blessing promised in Genesis 22:17?
I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies,¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, Genesis 22:17-18
4. Read Genesis 24:61-67.
- a. Where did the servant, Rebekah, and the others go next?
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. Genesis 24:61
- b. Where was Isaac and what was he doing when the travelers encountered him?
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. Genesis 24:62-63

- c. What did the servant tell Isaac?
And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Genesis 24:66
- d. What do you think Isaac was thinking about his father's actions to secure a wife for him?
He was grateful that his father had gone to so much trouble.
- e. What do you think Isaac thought about Rebekah?
She was attractive, respectful to strangers, kind to animals, brave, and modest.
- f. How did Isaac feel about Rebekah?
Then 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 24:67
- g. What did Isaac do next?
He married Rebekah.

5. Read Genesis 25:1-11.

- a. What had Abraham done?
Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. Genesis 25:1
- b. Why do you think he took this action?
He was lonely after Sarah's death.
- c. What information do you learn from 1 Chronicles 1:32?
The sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: she bore Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. The sons of Jokshan: Sheba and Dedan. ³³ The sons of Midian: Ephah, Epher, Hanoah, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the descendants of Keturah. 1 Chronicles 1:32-33
- d. How many more sons of Abraham are listed in verse 2?
6
- e. What did Abraham do for Isaac?
Abraham gave all he had to Isaac. Genesis 25:5

- f. What did Abraham do for his other sons?
But to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country. Genesis 25:6
- g. What else did Abraham do with his other sons and why?
- Isaac sent his sons from Keturah away to the east country.
 - He did not want Isaac to have conflict with these other sons.
 - The covenant of the land was through Isaac.
- h. How old was Abraham when he died?
175
- i. How is he described in this passage?
Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. Genesis 25:8
- j. How does this passage fulfill Genesis 15:15?
As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. Genesis 15:15
- k. Who buried Abraham and where?
Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, ¹⁰ the field that Abraham purchased from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried, with Sarah his wife. Genesis 25:9-10
- l. What did God do for Isaac?
After the death of Abraham, God blessed Isaac his son. Genesis 25:11
- m. What did this signify?
God continued to bless Isaac's prosperity in Canaan and blessed him as the child of the promise.
- n. Where was Isaac living?
And Isaac settled at Beer-lahai-roi. Genesis 25:11

- o. According to Genesis 16:14, who was associated with this land?
- Hagar
 - So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, “You are a God of seeing,” for she said, “Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.”¹⁴ Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered. Genesis 16:13-14

6. Read Genesis 25:12-18.

- a. How many sons did Ishmael have?
12
- b. How does this passage fulfill Genesis 17:20?
- These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages and by their encampments, twelve princes according to their tribes. Genesis 25:16
 - As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation. Genesis 17:20
- c. How old was Ishmael when he died?
137
- d. Where did Ishmael’s descendants settle?
They settled from Havilah to Shur, which is opposite Egypt in the direction of Assyria. He settled over against all his kinsmen. Genesis 25:18
- e. How does this passage describe Ishmael’s descendants’ relationship to the descendants of Isaac and Keturah?
He settled over against all his kinsmen. Genesis 25:18

7. Read Genesis 25:19-26.

- a. How old was Isaac when he married Rebekah?

and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife.
Genesis 25:20

- b. What problem did Rebekah have?
And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. Genesis 25:21
- c. What did Isaac do about the situation?
Isaac prayed to the Lord that Rebekah could conceive and bear a child.
- d. How is what Isaac did different than what his father Abraham did?
Isaac prayed to the Lord but Abraham took Hagar as a 2nd wife.
- e. What did the Lord do?
And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. Genesis 25:21
- f. Why did Rebekah inquire of the Lord?
The children struggled together within her, and she said, “If it is thus, why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. Genesis 25:22
- g. How do you interpret the phrase “inquire of the Lord?”
Rebekah prayed to the Lord to understand what was occurring.
- h. Put the Lord’s answer to Rebekah in your own words.
Each of your 2 children will become a nation and they will be divided. One child (and one nation) will be stronger than the other. The oldest child will serve the youngest child.
- i. What do the Lord’s words to Rebekah suggest about the future of these 2 brothers?
Each will have descendants who will form their own nation, and the 2 nations will be in opposition to each other.
- j. How are the twin boys described?
The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. ²⁶ Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau’s heel, so his name was called Jacob. Genesis 25:25-26

- k. What do the boys' names mean?
- The name Jacob resembles the Hebrew word for heel and has the connotation of deceiver or supplanter. Jacob is an abbreviation for Jacob-el, meaning "May El protect him."
 - The name Esau means ruddy and like a hairy garment.
- l. How old was Isaac at this time?
61
- m. How long had Rebekah been barren?
20 years
8. Read Genesis 25:27-34.
- a. Describe the 2 boys and their relationship to their parents.
When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. ²⁸ Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Genesis 25:27-28
- b. Who was entitled to the birthright and why? (Also see Hebrews 12:16.)
- Esau was entitled to the birthright because he was the first-born son.
 - that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. Hebrews 12:16
- c. Why was Esau willing to give up his birthright?
- Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. ³⁰ And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.) Genesis 25:29-30
 - Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" Genesis 25:32
- d. What was Esau's attitude about his birthright?
His birthright was worth only a meal that he did not have to cook.

- e. What does this say about his character and his relationship to his father?
He had a weak character and did not value his relationship with his father. He did not care if he gave up the rights and privileges associated with the birthright.
- f. What does this passage suggest about Jacob's character?
- Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now."³² Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?"³³ Jacob said, "Swear to me now." Genesis 25:31-33
 - This passage demonstrated Jacob is a schemer and willing to take advantage of his brother.
- g. Do you think Jacob was aware of God's statements to Rebekah from Genesis 25:23? Why or why not?
It is hard to say if Jacob was aware of God's statements to Rebekah that "the older shall serve the younger." (Genesis 25:23). Nevertheless, Jacob saw an opportunity to grab his brother's birthright and advance his own station in life.

Genesis Lesson 16

Genesis 24-25

Genesis 24:1-9 (A Wife for Isaac)

- Abraham's Servant Is Asked to Swear an Oath to Abraham by Placing His Hand Under Abraham's Thigh
 - A Euphemism for Genitalia
 - Scholars Are Unsure About the Meaning
 - Perhaps Symbolic of Abraham's Descendants Through Isaac
- The Servant May Not Have Worshipped the Lord (See Genesis 24:12)

Abraham Sends His Servant



Abraham Sends His Servant to Find a Wife for Isaac; Southern Netherlands; circa 1500; Schnutgen Museum, Cologne, Germany; copyright: www.Wikimedia.org

The Oath to Abraham

- The Servant Will Not Take a Wife from Among the Canaanites
- The Servant Must Go to the Land of Abraham's Kindred
- The Servant Cannot Take Isaac Back to Mesopotamia
- The Lord Will Send His Angel Before the Servant
- If the Woman Will Not Return to Canaan, the Servant Is Freed from His Oath

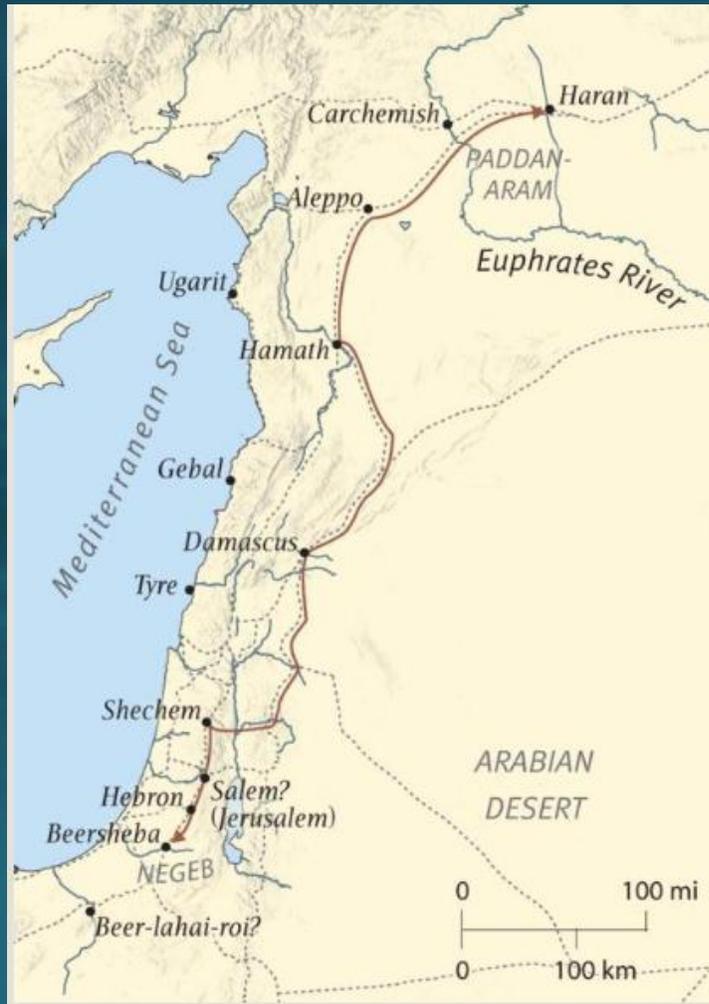
Abraham Wants to Ensure That:

- Isaac Remains in Canaan, Not Mesopotamia
 - Abraham's Clan is Polytheistic
 - Jacob Gets Ensnared by Laban into Serving 14 Years
 - Abraham's Hold on the Land in Canaan is Tenuous
 - John Walton: When the Israelites Begin Their Conquest of Canaan, They Can Claim They Are Not Related to the Canaanites by Blood
- Isaac Will Not Marry a Canaanite, Whom God Had Already Doomed to Destruction and Abraham Knew Were Sinful

The Servant Heads Off on His Journey

- He Takes with Him 10 Camels and Choice Gifts
 - Some of the Gifts Are a Bride Price, Which Compensated the Family for the Loss of a Laborer
 - Remember the Camels? (A Gift from Pharaoh in Genesis 12:16)
- How Far Did the Servant Travel?
 - About 300 to 400 Miles
 - Camels Can Travel 25 to 30 Miles a Day; the Journey Could Have Taken 10 to 16 Days, or Even Longer
- How Did the Servant Know the Way?
 - Routes Were Limited; Probably Followed a Known Caravan Route
 - Perhaps the Promised Angel Led the Way (Genesis 24:7)

Traveling to Nahor



Copyright: ESV Study Bible; Crossway

The Servant Prays at Nahor

- For the Lord to Grant His Success
- For a Sign That a Young Woman Would Give Him Water and Also Offer to Water His Camels
 - Camels Can Drink up to 25-40 Gallons of Water at One Time
 - A Typical Water Jug Held 3 Gallons
 - Offering to Water 10 Camels Meant Drawing Water over 80 Times
 - The Servant Selected a Situation Which Will Clearly Indicate that God Is Acting Here

Asking for Rebecca's Hand

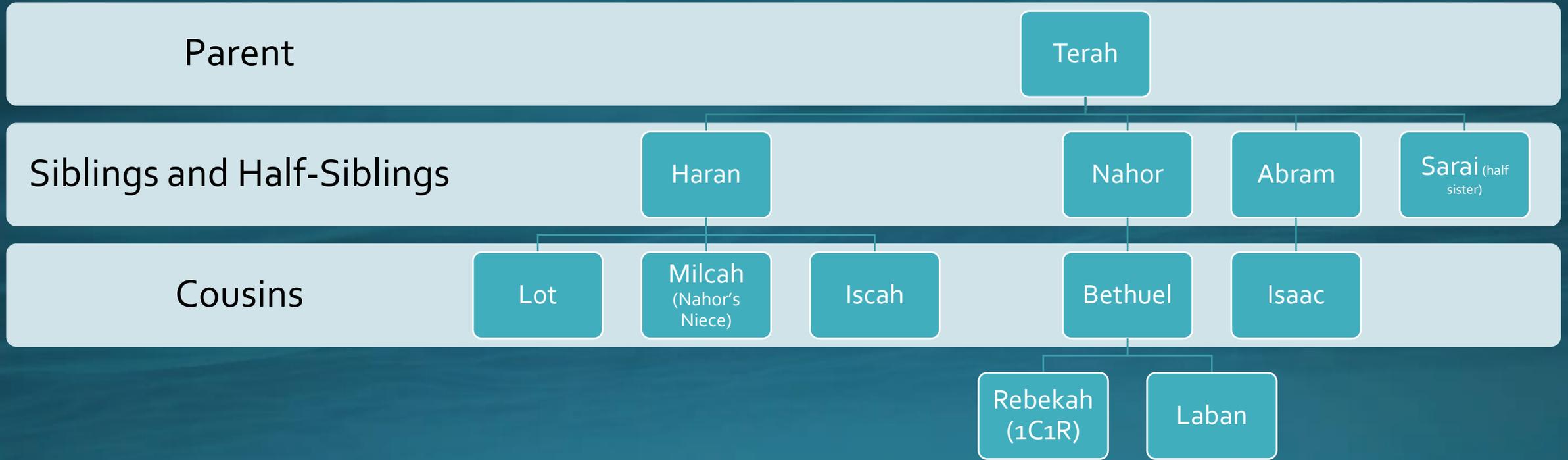


Eliezer Asking for Rebecca to Marry Isaac; Maarten de Vos; 1562; copyright: Fine Art Museum, Rouen, France

Who Is the Young Woman at the Well?

- Rebekah, Daughter of Bethuel
- Bethuel Was the Son of Milcah and Nahor
- Nahor Was Abraham's Brother
- Milcah Was the Daughter of Abraham's Other Brother

The Family of Terah



Negotiating for a Bride for Isaac

- Rebekah Is the Daughter of Bethuel, But Laban Conducts the Negotiations
- Suggests Bethuel Was Too Elderly or Was Unwell; But Still Alive (Genesis 24:50)
- The Servant Never Identifies Himself or Isaac by Name

The Servant States His Case

- Abraham Has Been Greatly Blessed by the Lord and Is Quite Wealthy
- Isaac Could Still Be Young Enough to Attract a Bride
- Abraham Walks with Yahweh; How Else Could He Have Acquired Wealth in Canaan?
- Abraham Intends to Give All He Has to His Son; Explicitly Stated in Genesis 25:5
- The Servant Relates His Oath, Which Expresses the Seriousness of His Mission
- The Servant Relates His Prayer for a Sign from the Lord

The Servant States His Case

- He Concludes With:
 - Are You Going to Show Steadfast Love and Faithfulness to Abraham?
 - Not So Subtle Pressure on Abraham's King
 - If They Do Not Want Rebekah to Marry Abraham's Son, the Servant Will Move on to More Fertile Fields
- Laban and Bethuel Realize the Lord Has Orchestrated This Situation; They Give Approval
- Victor Hamilton, "Because Yahweh Has Made His Decision, Laban No Longer Has the Privilege of Making His Own Decision"

The Servant Is Ready to Leave

- Rebekah's Family Want Her to Remain 10 Days
 - To Learn More about Abraham's Servant
 - To Prepare Rebekah for Her Journey
- The Servant Will Brook No Delay
- Rebekah Is Asked Her Opinion About Leaving, Not About the Marriage (Arranged without Her Consent)
- Rebekah Consents and Departs with Her Nurse, Deborah (Genesis 35:8)

Rebekah Bids Her Family Goodbye



Rebecca Bidding Farewell to Her Family; Maarten de Vos; 1562; Fine Art Museum, Rouen, France

Rebecca Meets Isaac



The Veiled Rebekah; Giovanni Maria Benzoni;1864; copyright: The High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia

Abraham's Death (Genesis 25:1-18)

- Fulfills a Number of Prophecies to Abraham
 - Genesis 17:5 (the Father of a Multitude of Nations)
 - Genesis 17:20 (Ishmael Will Be the Father of 12 Princes and Become a Great Nation)
 - Genesis 16:12 (Ishmael Would Be Against His Kinsmen)
 - Genesis 15:15 (Abraham Would Be Buried in a Good Old Age)

Abraham's Death (Genesis 25:8)

- “Gathered to His People” Precedes Abraham's Burial in Verse 9
- Suggests a Belief that Abraham's Soul Was Reunited with His Dead Relatives in the Afterlife
- Only Used 10 Times in the Old Testament; All in the Pentateuch
- 6 People Named: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Aaron

Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob

- How Can a Barren Woman Continue the Family Line?
- Another Act of God Is Needed
- Neither Isaac nor Rebekah Tries to Take Things Into Their Own Hands
- Isaac Prays and God Answers His Prayer
- Gordan Wenham: the 1st of Many Instance of Isaac's Great Persistence in Prayer

Rebekah's Pregnancy

- Not Easy with Twins; Driven to Despair
- Genesis 25:22: "If it Is Like This, Why Am I Here?"
- She "Went to Inquire of the Lord"
- Would Generally Involve Consulting a Prophet
- 1 Samuel 9:9
- Did She Consult Abraham, the Prophet? Scripture Is Silent

The Oracle from God

- 2 Nations Which Will Be divided and the Older Shall Serve the Younger
- Does Not Suggest That the Younger is Better or More Favored by God
- Message Focuses on the Destiny of Descendants
- No Mention of Twins; the Oracle is Enigmatic
- It Will Take Until the Time of King David for the Prophecy to Fully Come True
- 2 Samuel 8:12-14
- The Edomites Continued to Fight Against Israel
- Multiple Prophets Say That Edom Will Ultimately Be Destroyed
- In 400 BC, the Nabatean Arabs Drive the Edomites from Their Ancestral Lands

Esau and Jacob

- As Firstborn, Esau Would Receive a Double Share of His Father's Inheritance; $\frac{2}{3}$ for Esau; $\frac{1}{3}$ for Jacob
- The Difference Was Profound and Burdensome in the Case of Twins
- One Could Easily Understand the Bitterness and Jealousy, Especially Since Each Parent Had a Personal Favorite
- When Esau Returns from Hunting and Asks for Food, Jacob Could Have Shown Kindness
- Instead, He Makes an Outrageous Demand

Esau Sells His Birthright



Esau Selling His Birthright to Jacob for a Pottage of Lentils; Nicolas Tournier; 17th Century; copyright: Sotheby's, London, England, United Kingdom

Esau and Jacob

- Esau Holds His Birthright in Contempt
- Isaac Would Have Been Wealthy, Making the Birthright Valuable
- Not Clear if Esau Sold His Entire $\frac{2}{3}$ Share or if He Only Sold $\frac{1}{3}$
- Esau Maintains His Position as Firstborn
- Jacob Makes Esau Swear an Oath; He Does Not Trust Him
- Esau Should Not Trust Jacob Either
- After Eating and Drinking, Esau Says Nothing and Leaves; Bitterness? Shame?
- John Walton: "Would He Even Value a Covenantal Birthright?"
- The Blessings of Abraham Will Continue Through Jacob
- Despite Jacob's Conniving and Sinfulness, God Will Preserve Him, Bless Him, and Use Him to Fulfill God's Purposes