

ABRAHAM'S INSTRUCTION | GENESIS 24:1-4

Abraham, coming to the end of life, must now take measures to make sure that he passes the covenant on to Isaac, the covenant son. To do so, he calls his **eldest servant** and gives him some specific instruction. This servant is *perhaps* Eleazer, mentioned previously in Genesis, but we cannot be certain. The servant's name is never given in this current account, though he plays a major role.

The servant is given very clear instructions and made to **swear by the LORD** that he will **not take a wife...of the daughters of the Canaanites**. Abraham appears to be concerned that Isaac will marry one of the *cursed children of Cain*, and Abraham wants to make sure that the *blessed* family doesn't get mixed in with the *cursed* family.

FURTHER INSTRUCTION | GENESIS 24:5-9

The servant brings up a very practical matter: *what if no woman wants to leave her family and marry a man she's never met?* Abraham's answer tells us something of the importance of the covenant that he is feeling, when he insists that the servant not allow Isaac to return to the land from which Abraham came (v. 6). Abraham may not have done much to secure the land, but now he sees the importance of not leaving it. This is so important to Abraham that he gives the instruction twice, **bring not my son thither again** (v. 8).

THE SEARCH BEGINS | GENESIS 24:10-14

The servant departs with **ten camels** and **all the goods of his master** (v. 10) to impress a young woman to be a bride. Camel usage in that day was *newly developed* in Egypt, as far as known history reveals. Abraham likely got the camels from Egypt when he was there (Gen. 12:16). His use of camels certainly shows great wealth and sophistication.

The servant goes to **the city of Nahor** (v. 10), who was the brother of Abraham. In verses 12-14 the servant prays to God, making a "deal" with God as to how he would know who the wife-to-be would be. While the text does not say so, perhaps the servant devises the test to look for kindness, hospitality, and a willing spirit.

MEET REBEKAH | GENESIS 24:15-28

Rebekah is introduced with more detail than given most women in the Scripture, including Sarah (who was just introduced as "Abraham's wife"). Rebekah

is introduced first by her lineage in verse 15 (she was Abraham's great niece, Isaac's first cousin once removed). In verse 16 she was introduced by her physical and moral characteristics (a beautiful, chaste virgin). In verses 17-26 she is introduced as a woman of kindness, hospitality, and hard work.

Take note that the author seems to know that which only omniscience could know. For example, Rebekah's purity and the servant's prayer of v. 28.

THE ENGAGEMENT DINNER | GENESIS 24:29-61

A most unusual thing takes place in these verses. The account of Abraham, his instructions, the servant and his camels, the well and Rebekah's hospitality, etc., is repeated *almost word for word*. The most significant difference is that the first account (vv. 10-14) is the "Torah account" while the second (vv. 29-54) is the servant's first-hand account. Why is the Scripture, which is normally so efficient with its verbiage, so *verbose* on this account, giving it back-to-back almost word-for-word? The answer is: *we don't know*. Perhaps it is to show us that the book of Genesis *knows more than the first-hand account*, and thus has God as its author?

In the end, both Rebekah's brother and father give approval for the engagement, recognizing that **The thing proceedeth from the LORD** (v. 50). There was a short "skirmish" at the end, with an attempted delay, but this was quickly resolved.

THE WEDDING | GENESIS 24:62-67

The first time Rebekah sees Isaac he is in the field meditating (v. 63, the first and only time this word **meditate** is in the Bible). When Rebekah saw him, **she lighted off the camel** (v. 64). The word translated **lighted** means something more than "got down." Scholars debate whether she *fell off* (the more traditional understanding) or she *sprang off* (as translated by Darby). But as soon as she confirms that it is Isaac she does something peculiar: **she took a veil, and covered herself** (v. 65). This act is itself veiled in mystery. Was it already a custom or did Rebekah create the custom of a *veiled bride*? We do not fully know, but **Isaac took Rebekah, and she became his wife** (v. 67) This should not be understood as an immediate wedding, for **Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent** (v. 67), which was in another location (compare 23:1). Then the Scripture tells us that **he loved her** (v. 67), which becomes the first time that an explicit testimony of love between husband and wife is found in Scripture.

Just as with funeral customs seen in the death of Sarah, we see wedding customs that last to our time in this ancient story. While we do not fully understand all that is involved, there is something positive about grounding a marriage and family in ancient tradition, even in symbolisms that may be lost to us.