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Genesis 24 NRSV -- The Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah

1 Now Abraham was old, advanced in years, and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. ² Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his house, who had charge of all that he had, “Put your hand under my thigh, ³ and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live, ⁴ but will go to my country and to my kindred and get 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 birth 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.

10 Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, taking all kinds of choice gifts from his master, and he set out and went to Aram-naharaim, to the city of Nahor. ¹¹ He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water; it was toward 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 I am standing here by the spring of water, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴ Let the young woman to whom I shall say, ‘Please offer 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.”

15 Before he had finished speaking, there was Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, coming out with her water jar on her shoulder. ¹⁶ The young woman was very fair to look upon, a virgin, whom no man had known. 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 sip a little water from your jar.” ¹⁸ “Drink, my lord,” she said and quickly lowered her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink. ¹⁹ When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, “I will draw 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, and she drew for all his camels. ²¹ The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether or not the Lord had made his journey successful.

22 When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold nose ring weighing a half shekel and two bracelets for her arms weighing ten gold shekels²³ and said, "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 son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor."²⁵ She added, "We have plenty of straw and fodder and a place 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 on the way to the house of my master's kin."

28 Then the young woman ran and told her mother's household about these things.²⁹ Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban, and Laban ran out to the man, to the spring.³⁰ As soon as he had seen the nose ring and the bracelets on his sister's arms and when he heard the words of his sister Rebekah, "Thus the man spoke to me," he went to the man, and there he was, standing by the camels at the spring.³¹ He said, "Come in, O blessed of the Lord. Why do you stand outside when I have prepared the house and a place for the camels?"³² So the man came into the house, and Laban unloaded the camels and gave him straw and fodder for the camels and 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 told my errand." He said, "Speak on."

34 So he said, "I am Abraham's servant.³⁵ The Lord has greatly blessed my master, and he has become wealthy; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and donkeys.³⁶ And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old, and he has given him 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 live,³⁸ but you shall go to my father's house, to my kindred, and get a wife for my son.' ³⁹I said to my master, 'Perhaps the woman will not follow me.'⁴⁰ But he said to me, 'The Lord, before whom I walk, will send his angel with you and make your way successful. You shall get a wife for my son from my kindred, from my father's house.'⁴¹ Then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my kindred; even 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, God of my master Abraham, if now you will only make successful the way I am going!⁴³ I am standing here by the spring of water; let the young woman who comes out to draw, 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.'

45 "Before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her water jar on her shoulder, and she went down to the spring and drew. I said to her, 'Please let me drink.'⁴⁶ She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder and said, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels.' So I drank, and she also watered the camels.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 obtain the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son.⁴⁹ Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so that I may turn either to the right hand or to the left."

50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered, "The thing comes from the Lord; we cannot speak to you anything bad or good."⁵¹ Look, 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 ground 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 Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank, and they spent the night there. When they rose in the morning, he said, "Send me back 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 made my journey successful; let me go that I may go to my master."⁵⁷ They said, "We will 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."⁵⁹ So they sent away their sister**

Scripture Lesson: Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67 – NRSV

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58 And they called Rebekah and said to her, “Will you go with this man?” She said, “I will.” ⁵⁹ So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with Abraham’s servant and his men. ⁶⁰ And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,

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61 Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man, and the servant took Rebekah and went his way.

62 Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi and was settled in the Negeb. ⁶³ Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field, and, looking up, he saw camels coming. ⁶⁴ And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel ⁶⁵ and said to the servant, “Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?” The servant said, “It is my master.” So she took her veil and covered herself. ⁶⁶ And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. ⁶⁷ Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death

The Thirsty Matchmaker – Genesis 24:1-67

- A. After two harrowing stories featuring the near death of both Ishmael and Isaac, we come to the longest chapter and narrative in Genesis.
 1. Today we have a LOVE STORY. It is a love story that begins with a problem.
 2. Isaac, the promised child from God, the heir to the covenant that includes a promise of a great name and a great people, NEEDS A WIFE.
 3. Local girls could not fulfil the Abraham’s requirements that a wife from Isaac must come from within the family clan. This required a search back home among Abraham’s extended family.
 4. Abraham was too old to travel. Sending Isaac was too dangerous. So the trusted servant, the administrator of all of Abraham’s holds was assigned the responsibility.
 5. Terms were determined: you must not take my son (2x). You must not find a wife for him among Canaanite women. The bride must come from family,
 6. The future of the global promise hangs entirely on Isaac’s finding the right wife. Isaac must never leave the Canaan to go back to It Mesopotamia.
- B. The servant took an oath promising to the stipulation from Abraham. Then started out on the trip. He took ten camels loaded with expensive gifts. The party included The servant, camel drovers, a security guard, food service people. Taking about 4 weeks, the caravan traveled about 20-25 miles a day. The distance was about 500 miles (from here to Oceanside CA or to Eugene, OR)
- C. It was evening when they arrived at their destination. They were outside the gate of Haran just as women were coming to the well to draw water.
 1. Women met at the well while the men met at the gate of the city.
 2. The servant prayed. He put forth a proposal to YHWH. Let the choice be a young woman who when asked for water offered a drink and then furthered offered to water the ten camels.
 3. The first to the well was Rebekah. She carried a water jar on her shoulder. The narrator provides her pedigree. The servant requests a drink. It is provided and then she offers to water all ten camels.
 4. The servant watched as she proceeded to water all the camels.

D. Watering: pass by this action too quickly. Almost and offhanded thought that she watered the ten camels. This was a significant act. Shows character.

1. There was a three and a five-gallon watering jar. It was thick walled, made of clay and weighed 7-11 lbs. When filled with water they weighed 32-53 lbs.
2. The servant asked for a sip of the water. Rebekah offered to water the 10 Camels. A dehydrated camel could drink up to 30 gallons of water. That's six 5-gallon buckets with 80 8 oz water bottle in each.
3. The well and spring. A large hole with steep steps down to the water's edge would be located just outside the city gate and wall. Gathering place for women. Getting water for the night.
4. Rebekah went with a 11 lb empty jar and climbed back up with a 55 lb full jar resting on her shoulder. And she did this at least 100 times.
5. Significant commitment. The Rebekah passes the test while the servant stands and watches.
6. He produces gifts, among which are a gold nose ring and two gold bracelets having a current value of nearly \$20,000. He asks about her family and about a place to stay (the whole caravan). She is one of Abraham's closest kin and they do have room.
7. Immediate worship of God, grateful for God's hessed or steadfast love.

E. Rebekah runs home. Tell's her mother's household and Laban, Rebekah's brother RUNS back to the well. Typically, he had noted the nose ring and bracelets. Invited the caravan home. He unloaded the camels. Fed them, Washed the servant's feet and those of his men and invited them to eat.

F. The servant refused to eat. Then the story unfolds. I am Abraham's formally known as Abram, servant.

1. Abraham is now rich and he tells what he has. He tells that Abraham's son of his old age, Isaac, needs a wife. The Canaanite women of the area are unacceptable. He must find a wife from among Abraham's kin.
2. He had taken an oath that he would bring back someone from his family. He tells of his prayer at the well and how it seems that Rebekah is an answer to his prayer. He would like to take her back to Isaac to be his wife, the Lord has revealed this.
3. Bethuel (father) and Laban (brother) based on the Lord's affirmation, responded, take her and go. Laban and noted the cargo that would become the family's gift for the loss of a daughter.
4. Then they brought out gifts for Rebekah: God, silver, garments and gave to Rebekah. He gave to her mother and brother costly ornaments. The deal is sealed.

5. With that, the servant and the men could sit and eat.

G. In the morning, the caravan was ready to go. There was some pushback. Send me back, the servant requested. Give us

1. This is a family of tricksters and perhaps one was intended her. Let the woman remain with us for a while, at least 10 days, and then she can go. The word "days" is unsure in the text. It could be days, weeks, months, not sure of the limiting factor. She can go but not yet.
2. They decided to ask Rebekah what she wanted. She get's a voice. So they called her. Will you go with this man? I will go!
3. So, they sent her away, Rebekah with her nurse (Deborah), with all her maids. The four-week trip from Haran to Aleppo/Carchemish to Damascus, over into trans-Jordan, crossing the Jordon river just below Galilee, then on to the ridge route along the Patriarchs Highway (Shechem to Bethel to Hebron) and then on to the Negeb.
4. Are we there yet?

H. Four weeks passed. It was evening. They crested a ridge and Rebekah looked up and saw a man walking. She slipped quickly from her camel (some commentators suggest that she fell off) and asked, Who is that? The servant replied that is Isaac.

1. Rebekah puts on her veil. The moment she put it on, she officially accepted the marriage covenant. It signaled that she was no longer single or available Vail – acceptance of the marriage contract.
2. The servant reported on the trip. Then Isaac took Rebekah to her mother's tent. In patriarchal society, the primary chieftain's wife presided over her own separate, private domestic domain within the larger nomadic encampment. When Sarah died her personal tent complex was left vacant, leaving a massive leadership void. When Isaac brought her to his mother's tent, Rebekah was legally and socially installed as the new governing Matriarch of the Covenant.
3. He took Rebeckah, she became his wife, and **ISAAC LOVED HER**. This is the first time love is used between husband and wife in the Bible.
4. There is now a future for the Covenant. The name will be honored, a great nation will arise and ALL the world will be blessed.

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NOTES:

The text explicitly states that ***Isaac loved Rebekah. It marks a revolutionary moment in the biblical narrative.***

The first time the word LOVE is used between husband and wife in the Bible.

Ancient marriages were rarely built on romantic love; instead, they were arranged economic and political alliances.

Sequence

- Isaac brought her into the tent
- She became his wife
- He loved her

Here, marriage became the foundation where love was deliberately chosen and grown.

Isaac is the only patriarch who remained strictly monogamous his entire life.

Rebekah faced decades of heartbreaking infertility.

Since Isaac loved Rebekah means he respected her fierce independent spirit.

She was a woman of bold action

- Volunteered to leave her home immediately
- She made decisive moves
- She had an immense influence over the future of the family

The well of the living one who sees – Hagar gave it that name. This is where Isaac was staying.

A.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

B.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

C.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

D.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

E.

- 1.
- 2.
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F.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

G.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

H.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

I.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

J.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

K.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

L.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

M.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.