A Bride for Isaac

Bible Stories Anthology — Genesis 24

Copyright 2026

Distribution of this study as is in its entirety is permitted & encouraged.

Author: John Lobota

Research Assistant: Claude Cowork

papertiq@bellsouth.net

> **Romans 15:4** *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

Why These Stories Were Written — Romans 15:4

Paul had just quoted a thousand-year-old psalm and applied it to Christ (Romans 15:3, quoting Psalm 69:9), and then he explained why he could: *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*. **Written aforetime** — the scriptures that already stood before this present age of grace opened at Pentecost: the record God gave through Moses, the prophets and the writings, along with the Gospel accounts of Christ's earthly ministry, which belong to that same time before Pentecost. (When Paul wrote these words, the scriptures he had in hand were the Hebrew scriptures; the Gospels had not yet been written down.) **Written for our learning** — "learning" is the Greek word for *teaching*, the very word rendered "doctrine" in 2 Timothy 3:16. These are not quaint tales; they are doctrine in narrative form. Adam, Ruth and David never knew us, but God did, and He had their lives recorded with us in mind — written *for* us, though not all of it written *to* us, which is why we read Israel's history as our instruction and not as our marching orders. **Through patience and comfort of the scriptures** — "patience" is literally *remaining under*, the staying power we gain from watching men and women stay under a load; "comfort" is a *calling alongside*, the strength God brings when He meets them there, which is why Paul calls Him "the God of patience and consolation" in the very next verse. **That we might have hope** — not a wish, but confident expectation: the return of Jesus Christ and everlasting life with Him. That is why these accounts exist, and it is how they should be read.

Ten Camels and a Prayer

An old servant sat his camels down beside a well at sundown, five hundred miles from home, and prayed.

He had been sent on an errand that seemed impossible. His master, the aged Abraham, had made him swear an oath to find a wife for Isaac, the son of the promise — not from the Canaanites all around them, but from Abraham's own family, far away in Mesopotamia. He did not know the family. He did not know the woman. He did not know whether she would come. All he had was his master's confidence that God would **"send his angel before thee."**

So he asked God for a sign — a very practical one. And before he had finished praying, a young woman came down to the well with a pitcher on her shoulder.

Genesis 24 is the longest chapter in the book of Genesis: sixty-seven verses for what could have been told in five. It lingers. It repeats. It tells the whole story twice, once as it happened and once as the servant told it. There are no visions in it, no voices from heaven, no miracles of fire. God is never seen. Yet on every page He is guiding, answering and arranging, through prayer, through ordinary choices, and through a young woman's willingness to go.

This is a story about how God leads His people in the ordinary things of life — and about a woman who said, **"I will go,"** to marry a man she had never seen.

The Setting

When. Sarah had died at 127 (Genesis 23:1), when Isaac was about 37. Isaac married at forty (Genesis 25:20). So this story takes place about three years after Sarah's death. Abraham was about 140, **"old, and well stricken in age"** (Genesis 24:1). He would live to 175.

Where. It begins in the south of Canaan, where Abraham lived among the Canaanites, and moves some five hundred miles north-east to **"Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor"** (Genesis 24:10). The Hebrew is *Aram-naharaim*, "Aram of the two rivers" — the land between the Euphrates and its tributaries, around Haran, where Abraham's brother Nahor had settled.

Who. Abraham; his eldest servant, never named in the chapter; Isaac; and in Mesopotamia, the family of Abraham's brother Nahor — his son Bethuel, Bethuel's son Laban, and Bethuel's daughter Rebekah. Genesis had already recorded her birth, almost in passing, right after Abraham offered Isaac on Moriah: **"And Bethuel begat Rebekah"** (Genesis 22:23). God was already preparing the next step.

The administration. This is the **Patriarchal** administration, from the Fall to the giving of the Law at Sinai, when God dealt with men through the heads of families and a man stood right with God by believing what God said. God had promised Abraham a seed through Isaac (Genesis 21:12). That promise now required Isaac to have a wife.

The problem. Abraham lived among the Canaanites, whose religion and morals were already heading toward the iniquity God said would one day be **"full"** (Genesis 15:16). A Canaanite wife would bring Canaanite gods into the home of the promise. The family back in Mesopotamia were not perfect worshippers either — Laban would later keep household idols (Genesis 31:19, 30) — but they were kin, and they knew the name of the LORD.

The Story, Told Faithfully

The Oath

> **Genesis 24:1** *And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.*
>
> **Genesis 24:2** *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:*
>
> **Genesis 24:3** *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:*
>
> **Genesis 24:4** *But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.*

"The LORD had blessed Abraham in all things." More than fifty years had passed since the covenant between the pieces. God had kept every word: a son, wealth, a name, protection. But the promise of countless descendants still rested on one unmarried man.

"His eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had." The chief steward of the household, trusted with everything. Genesis never gives his name here. Many have supposed he was Eliezer of Damascus, whom Abraham once expected to be his heir (Genesis 15:2). That may be so, but the text does not say, and it may be significant that it does not. The servant in this story is known only by whom he serves.

“Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh.” This was a solemn oath custom, found again when Jacob made Joseph swear to bury him in Canaan (Genesis 47:29). “Thigh” here is the Hebrew *yarek*, used in scripture of the loins, the place from which a man’s descendants come (Genesis 46:26, where “loins” translates the same word). To place the hand there was to swear by the source of life and posterity — and in Abraham’s case, by the very place that bore the sign of the covenant, circumcision. The oath was tied to the promise of the seed. Using a word for one part of the body to indicate the nearby part, without naming it, is a form of **euphemism**, a gentle and modest way of speaking.

“By the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth.” Abraham did not swear the servant by the gods of the land. He swore him by the one God who owns both heaven and earth.

“Thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites.” Marriage would bind Isaac’s line to a people and a religion God had already marked for judgment. The Law would later say the same thing to all Israel: **“Neither shalt thou make marriages with them”** (Deuteronomy 7:3).

“But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred.” Back to the land Abraham had left.

“Bring Not My Son Thither Again”

> **Genesis 24:5** *And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?*
>
> **Genesis 24:6** *And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.*
>
> **Genesis 24:7** *The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father’s house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.*
>
> **Genesis 24:8** *And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again.*
>
> **Genesis 24:9** *And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter.*

“Peradventure the woman will not be willing.” A sensible question. Would a young woman leave her family to travel five hundred miles and marry a stranger? And if not, should Isaac go back to her?

“Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.” Abraham was firm. God had called him *out* of that land and promised *this* one to his seed. Isaac must not go back. The bride would have to come to him.

“He shall send his angel before thee.” Abraham’s confidence rested on God’s past faithfulness: *the God who took me from my father’s house … and sware unto me … he shall send his angel.* Abraham had learned over sixty years that the God who promises also provides. The word “angel” means *messenger*; God would go ahead and prepare the way.

“Then thou shalt be clear from this my oath.” If the woman refused, the servant would be released. Abraham did not ask him to force anyone. The bride must be willing.

The Well at Evening

> **Genesis 24:10** *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.*
>
> **Genesis 24:11** *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.*

"Ten camels." Camels were costly animals, a sign of great wealth, and ten of them could carry a long journey's supplies and a rich collection of gifts. (Some critics have said camels were not yet in use in Abraham's day. They were uncommon, but not unknown: an Old Syrian cylinder seal from about 1800 B.C. already shows riders on a camel. Their rarity is exactly what made ten of them impressive.)

"For all the goods of his master were in his hand." The servant came with his master's full authority and his master's wealth.

"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." In the villages of the East, drawing water was the work of the young women, and they came out in the cool of the evening. The well outside the town was the one place a stranger could expect to meet the daughters of the town. The servant chose his place and his time well.

The First Prayer for Guidance

> **Genesis 24:12** *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.*
>
> **Genesis 24:13** *Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water:*
>
> **Genesis 24:14** *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.*

This is the first prayer in the Bible asking God for guidance in a particular choice, and it is worth studying.

"O LORD God of my master Abraham." The servant prayed to the God he had seen at work in his master's life.

"Send me good speed this day." Literally *cause it to happen before me today* — make it meet me. He asked God to arrange the circumstances.

"And shew kindness unto my master Abraham." "Kindness" is the Hebrew *chesed* — steadfast love, covenant loyalty, the faithful love God shows to those bound to Him. The word runs all through this chapter (verses 12, 14, 27, 49). The servant was not asking God for a favour; he was asking Him to keep faith with His own covenant.

The sign. He did not ask for fire from heaven or a voice. He asked for something that would reveal a woman's character. Any polite girl might give a traveller a drink. But to offer, unasked, to water ten thirsty camels was another matter entirely. A camel after a long desert journey can drink twenty gallons of water or more. Ten camels could need well over a hundred gallons — drawn by hand, a pitcher at a time, carried up from the spring. The woman who volunteered for that was generous, hard-working and

kind to a stranger. The sign the servant asked for was a test of exactly the qualities a wife for Isaac would need.

Before He Had Done Speaking

> **Genesis 24:15** *And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.*
>
> **Genesis 24:16** *And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.*

"Before he had done speaking." God answered before the prayer was finished. Centuries later He would promise Israel, **"before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear"** (Isaiah 65:24).

"Rebekah … who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother." The reader is told at once who she is. The servant does not yet know. We watch him find out.

"The damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her." Scripture says it plainly: she was beautiful, and she was chaste.

> **Genesis 24:17** *And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.*
>
> **Genesis 24:18** *And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.*
>
> **Genesis 24:19** *And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.*
>
> **Genesis 24:20** *And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels.*
>
> **Genesis 24:21** *And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.*

"Drink, my lord." She called a stranger "lord," the ordinary courtesy of the East.

"And she hasted … and ran again unto the well." Notice the verbs: *hasted*, *hasted*, *ran*. She did not merely agree to water the camels; she threw herself into it. She did exactly what the servant had asked God for, and more than he asked of her.

"And the man wondering at her held his peace." He stood there silent, watching, hardly able to believe it — **"to wit whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not."** He did not jump to conclusions. He waited to see.

The Gifts, and the Worship

> **Genesis 24:22** *And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold;*
>
> **Genesis 24:23** *And said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?*

> **Genesis 24:24** *And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor.*
>
> **Genesis 24:25** *She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.*
>
> **Genesis 24:26** *And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD.*
>
> **Genesis 24:27** *And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.*

"A golden earring of half a shekel weight." The Hebrew *nezem* can be an earring or a nose ring, and later, retelling the story, the servant says **"I put the earring upon her face"** (Genesis 24:47) — so it was a nose ring, a common ornament for women in the ancient East and still worn in many parts of the world. Half a shekel is about a fifth of an ounce of gold.

"Two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold." About four ounces of gold. These were not casual gifts. They told Rebekah's family that the man came from someone very wealthy and very serious.

"Whose daughter art thou?" Now the crucial question — and the answer was the one he had hoped for: *the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor*. Abraham's own brother's granddaughter.

"The man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD." His first act was not to congratulate himself but to worship God, right there at the well.

"Who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth." *Chesed* and *emeth* — steadfast love and faithfulness. They are the two words God would later use of Himself at Sinai: **"abundant in goodness and truth"** (Exodus 34:6).

"I being in the way, the LORD led me." This is one of the great sentences in the chapter. The servant did not sit at home waiting for a vision. He set out on the errand, and as he went, God guided his steps. Guidance often comes that way: while we are walking in the path of obedience, God directs. **"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths"** (Proverbs 3:6).

Laban

> **Genesis 24:28** *And the damsel ran, and told them of her mother's house these things.*
>
> **Genesis 24:29** *And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well.*
>
> **Genesis 24:30** *And it came to pass, when he saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well.*
>
> **Genesis 24:31** *And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the LORD; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels.*

"Her mother's house." In the East, the women's quarters were the natural place for a daughter to bring such news, and her mother is mentioned several times in the story. Her father Bethuel appears only once.

“Laban ran out unto the man.” Rebekah’s brother. Notice what brought him running: **“when he saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister’s hands.”** It is a small detail, but it is not idle. Many years later Laban would cheat Jacob of his wages again and again (Genesis 31:7). As this series understands it, the storyteller lets us see his eye for gold from the start.

“Come in, thou blessed of the LORD.” Laban used the right words. He knew the name of the LORD. Whether he knew the LORD is another matter.

The Errand Before the Meal

> **Genesis 24:32** *And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men’s feet that were with him.*
>
> **Genesis 24:33** *And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on.*

“I will not eat, until I have told mine errand.” In the East, hospitality came first: the guest washed, ate, rested, and only then spoke of business. The servant refused. His master’s business came before his own comfort.

The Story Told Again

> **Genesis 24:34** *And he said, I am Abraham’s servant.*
>
> **Genesis 24:35** *And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses.*
>
> **Genesis 24:36** *And Sarah my master’s wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath.*
>
> **Genesis 24:37** *And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell:*
>
> **Genesis 24:38** *But thou shalt go unto my father’s house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.*
>
> **Genesis 24:39** *And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me.*
>
> **Genesis 24:40** *And he said unto me, The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father’s house:*
>
> **Genesis 24:41** *Then shalt thou be clear from this my oath, when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give not thee one, thou shalt be clear from my oath.*
>
> **Genesis 24:42** *And I came this day unto the well, and said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go:*
>
> **Genesis 24:43** *Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink;*
>
> **Genesis 24:44** *And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman whom the LORD hath appointed out for my master’s son.*

> **Genesis 24:45** *And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew water: and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee.*
>
> **Genesis 24:46** *And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also.*
>
> **Genesis 24:47** *And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the earring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands.*
>
> **Genesis 24:48** *And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son.*
>
> **Genesis 24:49** *And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.*

The servant told the whole story over again, and Moses records it almost word for word. Why repeat it? Partly because this was how Hebrew storytellers underlined what mattered. But the retelling also shows the servant's wisdom. Listen to what he stresses:

- **"The LORD hath blessed my master greatly"** — God's blessing, not Abraham's cleverness.
- **"Unto him hath he given all that he hath"** — Isaac was the sole heir.
- **"The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee"** — his master's faith.
- **"Before I had done speaking in mine heart"** — the prayer was answered before it was finished.
- **"Which had led me in the right way"** — God's leading.

He also told it with tact. He left out Abraham's warning about not bringing Isaac back, which the family might have found insulting. And he put his question about her family before the gift of the jewellery, though at the well he had brought out the jewellery first. He was not deceiving them; he was telling a true story in the way most likely to win their consent.

"That I may turn to the right hand, or to the left." An **idiom**: *so that I know which way to go.* He asked for a plain answer.

"The Thing Proceedeth From the LORD"

> **Genesis 24:50** *Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good.*
>
> **Genesis 24:51** *Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken.*
>
> **Genesis 24:52** *And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth.*
>
> **Genesis 24:53** *And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.*

"The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good." Even Laban could see that God's hand was in it. "Bad or good" is a figure of speech, naming two opposites to mean *anything at all* — we cannot say a word against it. This way of naming two extremes to include everything between them is called **merismus**.

“He worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth.” The second time the servant worshipped. Every step of his success he turned into praise.

“Jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment.” The formal betrothal gifts to the bride, and **“precious things”** to her brother and mother. In the ancient East a bridegroom’s family gave gifts to the bride’s family when a marriage was agreed. The gifts sealed the betrothal.

“I Will Go”

> **Genesis 24:54** *And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master.*
>
> **Genesis 24:55** *And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go.*
>
> **Genesis 24:56** *And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master.*
>
> **Genesis 24:57** *And they said, We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth.*
>
> **Genesis 24:58** *And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.*

“Send me away unto my master.” The next morning, the servant was ready to leave.

“Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten.” The Hebrew is literally *days or ten* — a year or ten months, some have read it, or a few days, perhaps ten. Either way, the family wanted to delay. It was natural: they were losing a daughter and sister, five hundred miles away, perhaps forever.

“Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way.” When God has plainly opened a door, delay can become disobedience.

“We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth.” They left it to Rebekah. Abraham had said the woman must be willing, and she was asked.

“Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.” Two words in Hebrew: *elekh*, “I will go.” She had never seen Isaac. She knew of him only what the servant had told her. She was leaving everything she knew — her country, her kindred and her father’s house — just as Abraham had, a lifetime before, on nothing but the word of a messenger. As this series understands it, that was faith of the same kind.

The Blessing and the Journey

> **Genesis 24:59** *And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham’s servant, and his men.*
>
> **Genesis 24:60** *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.*
>
> **Genesis 24:61** *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.*

“Her nurse.” Her name was Deborah, and she stayed with Rebekah the rest of her life; Genesis records her death and burial long afterward (Genesis 35:8). A family’s nurse was a lifelong companion.

“Be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.” Rebekah’s family blessed her with words remarkably like God’s own promise to Abraham on

Moriah: **“thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies”** (Genesis 22:17). “Thousands of millions” is literally *thousands of ten-thousands* — a number beyond counting. It is **hyperbole**, a deliberate overstatement to express a great wish. The city gate was where power sat — elders, judges and defenders — and to possess the gate of one’s enemies was to rule over them.

“And followed the man.” Rebekah followed the servant home — a journey of weeks — to a bridegroom she had never seen.

Isaac in the Field

> **Genesis 24:62** *And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi; for he dwelt in the south country.*
>
> **Genesis 24:63** *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.*
>
> **Genesis 24:64** *And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel.*
>
> **Genesis 24:65** *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 vail, and covered herself.*

“The well Lahai-roi.” The name means “the well of the Living One who sees me.” It was the well where the angel of the LORD had found Hagar in her despair (Genesis 16:14). Isaac made his home near it, in the south.

“Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide.” The Hebrew word, *suach*, is rare, and its meaning is not certain — to meditate, to pray, or perhaps simply to walk. Isaac was out in the fields at evening, alone, still grieving his mother. And as he lifted up his eyes, the camels were coming.

“She lighted off the camel.” Rebekah got down at once — a sign of respect, in the East, on meeting someone of rank.

“What man is this?” … “It is my master.” The servant had called Abraham his master all through the story. Now he calls Isaac his master. As this series understands it, the change is deliberate: Abraham had given Isaac all that he had (24:36), and the servant’s loyalty passed with it.

“She took a vail, and covered herself.” A bride in the ancient East was veiled when she was brought to her bridegroom, and the veil was removed only after the marriage. (Jacob would one day be deceived under exactly that custom, Genesis 29:23-25.) Rebekah’s veil was modesty and a sign that she came as his bride.

“And He Loved Her”

> **Genesis 24:66** *And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done.*
>
> **Genesis 24:67** *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.*

“The servant told Isaac all things that he had done.” The faithful servant gave a full account to his master.

“Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent.” Sarah’s tent had stood empty for three years. Now it had a mistress again.

“And took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her.” This is the first time scripture says a husband loved his wife. Their marriage was arranged by others, as nearly every marriage in the ancient world was. But the love that followed was real, and God thought it worth recording.

“And Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.” The God who arranged the marriage also healed a grieving son.

Where the Story Leads

To the Messiah

The line of promise continued. Everything God had promised Abraham — the seed through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed — depended on Isaac having a family. Rebekah, too, would prove barren, and Isaac prayed, and **“the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived”** (Genesis 25:21). Through her came Jacob, and through Jacob the twelve tribes, and through Judah, David, and at last the Messiah. Luke’s genealogy runs **“the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham”** (Luke 3:34).

The picture many have seen. Bible teachers have long seen a picture in this chapter: a father who sends his trusted servant to a far country to bring home a bride for his son; a son who had been offered up on the mountain (Genesis 22) and now waits at home; a servant who speaks not of himself but only of his master and his master’s son; and a bride who has never seen the son but believes the servant’s word and says, *I will go.* As this series understands it, the picture is a fair and beautiful one, and it reminds us of those who love the Lord Jesus Christ though they have never seen Him — **“Whom having not seen, ye love”** (1 Peter 1:8). But it is a picture drawn by readers, not an interpretation the Bible itself gives, and it should be held as an illustration, not pressed as doctrine.

To the Grace Administration

The body of Christ. In this administration the church is **“his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all”** (Ephesians 1:23). Paul does use marriage to show how Christ loves the church: **“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”** (Ephesians 5:25), and he calls the union of husband and wife **“a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church”** (Ephesians 5:32). Christ loved the church enough to give Himself for it — He died, was raised, and ascended to the right hand of God, where He is head over all things to the church. The love Isaac had for Rebekah is a small reflection of that.

Guidance through prayer. The servant prayed for guidance in a specific decision, and God answered. Believers today are told the same: **“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him”** (James 1:5). **“In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”** (Philippians 4:6). And God leads His children today by the gift of holy spirit within: **“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”** (Romans 8:14).

“I being in the way.” The servant was guided while he was on the road, doing what he had been told. The same is true now. Paul prayed that believers might be **“filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”** (Colossians 1:9) — and knowledge of His will grows as we walk in what we already know.

Marriage in the Lord. Abraham would not have his son married to a Canaanite. The New Testament gives believers the same principle: marry **"only in the Lord"** (1 Corinthians 7:39), and **"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers"** (2 Corinthians 6:14). The choice of a husband or wife is one of the most important a believer ever makes, and God cares about it.

To the Topic of God's Guidance

- **Pray specifically.** The servant asked for a particular sign.
- **Look for character.** The sign he asked for revealed kindness and diligence.
- **Watch quietly.** He "held his peace" until he was sure.
- **Worship when God answers.** He bowed his head at once.
- **Keep walking.** "I being in the way, the LORD led me."
- **Do not delay when God has opened the door.** "Hinder me not."
- **God works through willing hearts.** Rebekah was asked, and chose to go.

The Main Takeaway

Abraham sent his faithful servant to find a wife for Isaac from his own kindred, trusting God to go before him; the servant prayed for a specific sign that would reveal a godly woman's character, God answered before he finished praying, and Rebekah — who had never seen Isaac — believed the servant's word and said "I will go," so that the line of the promise continued toward the Messiah; God guides those who pray and keep walking in the way He has set before them.

- **God cares about ordinary decisions,** including whom we marry.
- **Prayer for guidance is answered** — sometimes before we finish praying.
- **Character matters more than appearance,** though Rebekah had both.
- **God leads us while we are in the way,** obeying what we know.
- **Faith says "I will go"** on the strength of God's word.
- **God comforts the grieving** through the gifts He brings.

For Our Learning — The People

- **Abraham.** About 140, old and blessed; sent his servant with an oath and a confident faith.
- **The eldest servant.** Unnamed; ruler of Abraham's household; prayed, waited, worshipped, and did not rest until his errand was done. Often supposed to be Eliezer of Damascus.
- **Isaac.** About 40; the son of promise; grieving his mother; loved Rebekah.
- **Rebekah.** Daughter of Bethuel, granddaughter of Nahor; beautiful, chaste, generous and energetic; left her home to marry a man she had never seen.
- **Bethuel.** Rebekah's father, son of Nahor and Milcah.
- **Laban.** Rebekah's brother; quick to notice gold; later Jacob's father-in-law.
- **Rebekah's mother.** Unnamed; with Laban, asked for a delay.
- **Deborah.** Rebekah's nurse, who went with her and stayed with her for life.
- **Sarah.** Isaac's mother, recently dead; Rebekah was brought into her tent.

For Our Learning — Customs and Orientalisms

- **The hand under the thigh.** A solemn oath by the source of one's descendants.
- **Arranged marriages.** Parents or trusted servants chose a bride, usually from within the wider family.
- **Marrying within the kindred.** Common among the patriarchs to keep the family line and its faith.
- **Women at the well at evening.** Drawing water was young women's work, done in the cool of the day.
- **Watering camels.** A thirsty camel drinks a great deal; watering ten was heavy work.
- **Nose rings and bracelets.** Gold ornaments were gifts of value and signs of betrothal.
- **Hospitality.** Water for the feet, fodder for the animals, food for the guest.
- **Betrothal gifts.** Presents to the bride and her family sealed the agreement.
- **A nurse.** A family's nurse stayed with the girl she had raised for life.
- **Dismounting before a man of rank.** A sign of respect.
- **The bridal veil.** The bride came veiled to her husband.
- **The mother's tent.** The chief wife's tent, passed to the new mistress of the household.

For Our Learning — Figures of Speech

A figure of speech is a deliberate departure from the plain, ordinary way of saying something, used by God to add emphasis and feeling. These are the ones in this story:

- **Euphemism** — a modest phrase in place of a direct one. "Put … thy hand under my thigh" (24:2).
- **Idiom** — an expression whose meaning comes from the language's own usage. "Well stricken in age" (24:1): very old. "That I may turn to the right hand, or to the left" (24:49): that I may know what to do.
- **Merismus** — two opposites to mean everything. "We cannot speak unto thee bad or good" (24:50): we cannot say anything against it.
- **Hyperbole** — deliberate exaggeration. "The mother of thousands of millions" (24:60).
- **Repetition** — the whole story told twice (24:12-27, 34-49), and *chesed*, "kindness," returning again and again, to underline God's faithfulness.

What the Bible Actually Says

- **The servant is never named in Genesis 24.**
- **Abraham forbade a Canaanite wife** and forbade Isaac to leave the land.
- **The servant prayed for a sign that tested character,** not for a miracle.
- **God answered before he had finished praying.**
- **The "earring" was put "upon her face"** — a nose ring.
- **Rebekah was asked, and chose to go** (24:57-58).
- **She had never seen Isaac** before she agreed.

- **This is the first time scripture says a husband loved his wife** (24:67).
- **Isaac was forty when he married** (25:20), about three years after his mother died.
- **The bride-of-Christ picture is drawn by readers,** not stated by the text.

God's Will and Intent

- **God keeps His promises** from one generation to the next.
- **God guides those who ask Him,** often through ordinary means.
- **God cares whom His people marry.**
- **God works with willing hearts,** not forced ones.
- **God shows steadfast love and faithfulness** to those bound to Him.
- **God comforts those who mourn.**
- **God was preparing the line of the Messiah** in every step.