

Abraham Sent a Servant to Get a Wife for Isaac

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the importance of the cave that Abraham bought as a place to bury Sarah when she died. As we come to chapter 24, we see that we have one other very important event in the life of Abraham as he made the arrangements to find a bride for Isaac.

Genesis 24:1-4 says, “Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, ‘Please, put your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac.’” We see that God said that Abraham was old and well advanced in age. Genesis 25:20 says, “Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian.” The fact that Isaac was forty years old when he married means that Abraham was about a hundred and forty years old when he sent the servant to get a bride for Isaac. This means that it was approximately three years after the death of Sarah, since we saw that she was a hundred and twenty-seven years old when she died.

The Lord had greatly blessed Abraham. He wanted Isaac to take a wife that had a similar background rather than a Canaanite wife. One day, Abraham called the oldest servant of his house. The word translated “that ruled over” means *to cause to rule or to give dominion over*. This meant that this servant was the steward who managed all of the business affairs of Abraham. Abraham had this servant take an oath that he would not get a wife for Isaac from among the Canaanites. In that day, we see that the usual way to make an oath was to place the hand under the thigh of the person who was giving the oath. Genesis 47:29-30 says, “When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, ‘Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place.’ And he said, ‘I will do as you have said.’” In this case, Jacob was asking Joseph to promise to bury Jacob in the cave of Machpelah.

The promise that Abraham was asking the servant to make actually contained two parts. The first was not to take a wife for Isaac from the Canaanites. The second part was to go to the country where his family lived to get a wife from among the relatives there. In that time, a young man did not usually choose who he was going to marry. Instead, that decision was usually made by his father. A generation later, Isaac told Jacob, in Genesis 28:1-2, “Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: ‘You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother.’” Here, we see that Isaac sent Jacob back to the next generation of the same family to get a wife. In contrast, Genesis 26:34-35 tells us that Esau rebelled and chose two wives, which brought great sorrow to his parents. Those verses say, “When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives, Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and

Rebekah.”

The servant had one question for Abraham before he was ready to carry out the oath that Abraham was requesting him to make. Genesis 24:5 says, “And the servant said to him, ‘Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?’” Here, we see that the servant had a very practical question since Abraham was asking him to go and get a wife that he did not know and had never seen. This also meant that the girl would not know the servant and had never seen either the servant or Isaac, the one who would become her future husband. Abraham understood the question of the servant. We will see that he said if the woman would not come, the servant would be free of the oath.

We see that the servant actually made a statement and then asked Abraham a question. The servant realized that this would be a very unusual situation and that is why he said, “Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land.” The servant realized he was being asked to go to a city that was four hundred and fifty miles away from the place where Abraham and Isaac were now living. He also realized that he would be a total stranger to the young woman. This oldest servant was probably Eliezer, who was mentioned in Genesis 15:2, where we read, “But Abram said, ‘Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’” Since Abraham was seventy-five when he left his brother and family in Nahor and he was now a hundred and forty years old, that meant he had not seen any of the family members in Nahor for sixty-five years. It also meant his family had not seen any of the servants of Abraham for sixty-five years, so, the servant knew that no one from Abraham’s relatives would recognize him.

That is why the servant asked the question, “Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?” Here, we see that the servant thought that the family would have to meet Isaac before they would consent to allow one of the girls from their family to be taken as a bride to marry a man who lived four hundred and fifty miles away whom none of them had ever seen. We see the answer of Abraham, in Genesis 24:6-9, where we read, “But Abraham said to him, ‘Beware that you do not take my son back there. The Lord God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, ‘To your descendants I give this land,’ He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there.’ So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.” By this answer, we see again the faith of Abraham in God. We also see that the servant had developed a faith in God because of all of the things he had learned from Abraham through the years.

Abraham did not want his son to be taken back to the city where his family lived. Abraham had believed the word that God had spoken to him that the Lord would give him this land. As a result, he had confidence that God would provide Isaac with a wife who would be willing to serve God in this land with Isaac, without Isaac having to leave the land of promise to return to the city where the family of Abraham was located. As a result, Abraham explained to the servant how God would work in the hearts of the family and the heart of the young woman. Abraham said that the Lord God of heaven would send His angel before the servant to prepare the hearts of the family and the heart of the young woman. It was going to take the servant a period of time to travel the four hundred and fifty miles by camel to that city. During the time the servant was traveling, Abraham expected the Lord to work through the angel to prepare the hearts of the family

and the young woman.

Abraham shows us that he had a great understanding of the way the Lord works in the hearts of people, even though the various books of the Bible had not yet been written. In the New Testament, Christ told the disciples, in John 14:26, ““But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”” We have seen, in the previous chapters, that the Lord spoke to Abraham many times. Sometimes, the Lord spoke to Abraham face-to-face (these were Old Testament appearances of Christ). Sometimes, the Lord spoke through an angel. Abraham did not know how the angel would communicate the message to his family, but he had faith that God would use an angel to prepare his family and the young woman for the arrival of the servant.

That is why Abraham expected the family to agree and the young woman to return with the servant and those with him when he returned to the land of Canaan. As a result, Abraham told the servant that he would be free of the oath if the young woman was not willing to travel with him to become the wife of Isaac. Abraham had complete confidence that the young woman would come with the servant to become the bride of Isaac. Abraham explained to the servant what he was to do if the woman was not willing to follow him. He told the servant that he would be released from the oath. Then, he told the servant what he was not to do. Abraham said that the servant was not to take Isaac back to the land of his relatives. God had said in Genesis 12:1, “Now the Lord had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.’” Abraham did not want his son to return to that land.

Once the servant had his question answered, we see in Genesis 24:9 that “...the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.” The servant was satisfied because Abraham took the time to explain to the servant that he would not be under the oath if the woman was unwilling to leave her family and country and return with him as a bride for Isaac. Abraham gave us an example of the fact that we need to answer the questions of those we lead so they know why they are asked to do what we ask them to do. We will see in the coming topics how God rewarded the faith of Abraham and helped the servant to grow in his trust in the Lord.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand what the Lord teaches in His Word so they can also learn to trust the Lord to work in the various situations in which He places them. Then, they will become effective servants of the Lord because they know the Lord will guide them and work in their lives and through their lives as they trust and follow Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children that they can trust the Lord to work in and through their lives.