

## Mid-Week Meditation September 23 – week of September 20, 2020

### Genesis 24

You may remember, from last week's meditation, we witnessed the death of Sarah. As a part of that story, we saw that Abraham procured a burial site for his beloved Sarah near the town of Hebron. By the way, the town of Hebron, and the tomb of Sarah, at the cave of Machpelah are places that still exist, and you can go and visit the tomb of Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob and Joseph; all the patriarchs and their wives, except Rachal. Rachal is buried in Bethlehem. Now the story we shared today has to do with the story of Abraham procuring a wife for Isaac. We see that Abraham is very old. Probably way too old to make a long journey. So, he goes to his trusted servant, the one in charge of all of his belongings and he asks him to swear an oath, that he would go to Abraham's home country and find his Son, Isaac, a wife from amongst Abraham's own relatives, and his own country. I know that the way the oath is described, the servant placing his hand under Abraham's thigh, sounds kind of creepy, but that is just the way an oath was sworn back in Abraham's time. I am sure that there are ways in our world that would seem creepy to Abraham too. Abraham was very specific in this oath, about the idea that Isaac could not marry a Canaanite woman. The servant asks Abraham, what if the woman from your home country will not come back with me. Should I then, take Isaac to her, and to your native land? And Abraham says emphatically that Isaac must stay here in the land that God has promise to him and all of his offspring. Then Abraham says, if the woman that God shows you will not come back here with you, then you are released from this covenant we have shared this day.

In order to completely understand this story, we have to go back to the beginning of this story about Abraham. You remember that Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldeans. Abraham's father was named Terah and Abraham had two brothers who were named Haran and Nahor. Way back in chapter 11, you may remember that Tarah, Abraham, Sarah, and Lot were called by God to leave their country, and Tarah's household, and go to the place where God would show them. And, of course, we know that Abraham's final destination was Canaan, the land of God's promise. But on the way to Canaan, they stopped in a place that was eventually called Haran, which was up in the general area of where Damascus is, in the northeastern part of modern-day Syria. Apparently, sometime after Abraham left Haran, the rest of Abraham's family migrated from Ur which is way to the south, to the area of Haran. Presumably, Haran was named for Abraham's brother. Near the town of Haran was the town of Nahor, presumably named after Abraham's other brother Nahor. That is the place that Abraham was asking his servant to go to in order to find a bride for his son, Isaac. So, this servant packed up all the things that he needed. He took ten camels, and all kinds of good things from his master; the sort of things that he might use to entice a bride to be willing to come and live in a desert region with Isaac. Now, this was a journey that was about 400 miles, so Abraham could not make this journey in his old age. So the servant left for the region of Aram Naharium, the region where the towns of Haran and Nahor were located. After this long journey, the servant arrived in the town of Nahor and went to the well outside the city. It was the end of the day, when women would come to the well to get water. Abraham's servant prayed for a sign. He prayed that God would show kindness to his master, Abraham. He said, "May it be that when I say to a girl, please let down your jar that I may have a drink", and she says, "Drink, and I will water your camels too". Let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master, Abraham.

Almost before he finished his prayer, Rebekah came along with a jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel, who was the son of Nahor, and Nahor was the brother of Abraham, making Rebekah Abraham's great niece. You are going to have to trust me on that. When Abraham's servant asked Rebekah for a drink, she gave it to him gladly, and then hurried back to get plenty of water for all ten of the camels. Abraham's servant took this as a sign, the sign that he had prayed for. He knew now, that it was God's will for Rebekah to be the wife of his servant's son Isaac.

After she had watered his camels, this servant of Abraham gave Rebekah a golden nose ring and two gold bracelets to offer his thanks for her hospitality, but also, no doubt, as an incentive for her to eventually return with him to be Isaac's bride. Abraham's servant then asked Rebekah if her family had the room for him to stay over night before his journey back. Rebekah told this stranger who she was, the daughter of Bethuel, and she told him there was plenty of room for him to stay at her family's home.

Right there and then, Abraham's servant bowed down and worshipped the Lord and said right out loud, praise be to the Lord, the God of my master Abraham who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the Lord has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives.

And then the girl, Rebekah, ran and told her mother's household about all the things that had happened at the well. She showed Abraham's servant to her home. As the evening wore in, Abraham's servant learned that Rebekah was Abraham's relative, and that she would be a good match for Isaac.

We will pick up the rest of this story next week, but there are a few things that I think we can take away from this part of the story. One thing we can learn from, is the faithful attitude of Abraham's servant. He showed faith and patience as he sought after God's will. And then he didn't wait a single second to praise God. The servant of Abraham prayed right there at the well, when his prayers had been answered, not later when he was out of view of others.

I thought that it was interesting that Isaac had no part in this story to speak of at all. Again, the father picking a bride for the son is the way it worked back then, but it seems a little strange that there seems to be no input from Isaac.

Abraham's part is interesting also. I haven't really decided if he is being faithful to God because, perhaps this is what God told him to do. Or, is he again, trying to orchestrate God's will, by sending his servant off with such specific instructions? The one thing that Abraham has learned, is that, if the plan to find Isaac a wife fails, and the servant returns home because the woman he found was not willing to return to the promised land, then Abraham knows that he must accept that to be God's will, and feel confident that the Lord will provide, just like he has so many times before in the story of Abraham and Sarah.

Rebekah and her family seem to have had a part in how God's plan for Isaac, and the generations after Isaac, would play out too. God's plan depended on the free will of Rebekah and her father. Of Course, God's will can be accomplished in many different ways and using all kinds of God's people. That has been true in every generation of God's people. And, it works exactly that way in our lives too.

Also, I was impressed with the faith of the servant who was representing Abraham. He was behaving with more faith than was often demonstrated by Abraham himself, the father of our faith. Although, I think this covenant that was made between God, Abraham and this servant, demonstrated Abraham's patience with God's plan more so than in Abraham's past. Think how badly Abraham would have wanted to make this journey himself, but his age would not permit it, so now, all he could do was wait to see what the answer would be, upon the return of his servant. Our lives involve waiting, and often depending on others in this very same way.

I thought that the criteria that Abraham's servant chose was very interesting. The sign that Rebekah would be the one for Isaac seemed to be kindness and generosity. Although the scripture says that Rebekah was very beautiful and that she was a virgin, the sign that she was the one that God sent, was simply that she was kind and generous, as demonstrated by the fact that she would draw enough water from the well to provide for ten thirsty camels. I read where a thirsty camel will drink about 25 gallons of water. For the ten camel that would be about 250 gallons of water; no small task. It seems like the criteria that Rebekah was based on was inside her heart. And yet, Abraham's servant was prepared to offer Rebekah's family plenty of monetary incentive to entice them to let Rebekah take her place as Isaac's wife. We will see next week if Rebekah returns with Abraham's servant to take her place as one of God's chosen people, as an heir to the land and the glorious spirit that God has promised to Isaac and his family and his descendants.

Let us pray...