

## **Introduction**

We generally do not place any connection between the preceding narrative, the Akeidah or sacrifice of Isaac, and the death of Sarah, Isaac's mother. Scripture was not written with chapter and verse designations creating separation between narratives. Many of the sages traditionally connect these two events by Sarah being told by Satan what Abraham is doing in sacrificing Isaac. In these traditional stories we see the nature of Satan, always against God and always against man. Satan first appears to Abraham as an old man and tells him this mission is foolishness. When this does not deter Abraham, Satan appears to Isaac as a winsome and somewhat regal young man and tells Isaac of what is to happen when they reach the appointed place and that Isaac must refuse his crazy father. When that fails Satan disguises himself as a deep and rapidly moving river which is very difficult to cross. Abraham remembers there is no such river to cross on this road and realizes it is again Satan. Abraham rebukes Satan and Satan flees from this righteous man.

Satan's next ploy is to again, in the guise of an old man, tell Sarah what is happening on Mount Moriah, only Satan reports Isaac was indeed killed on the altar. Sarah is grief stricken but accepts that this is the will of God - Satan is unable to shatter the faith of these godly people. Sarah and her servants leave Beer-Sheba and go to Hebron in search of Abraham and the sacrificial party. When she cannot locate them, and since she is accepting of the fate of Isaac as God's will, Satan comes again to her again and informs her that Isaac is indeed safe and living and was not sacrificed as earlier reported. In her joy and excitement, Sarah cannot contain her joy and she dies. Sarah is 127 years old when she dies, leaving Isaac when he is but 37 years old. (As recorded in "The Book of Jasher")

## **Chapter 23 The death of Sarah**

V. 1-4 As the writer consistently does, the person's end of life is stated with about as much fanfare and emotion as a typical modern day grave stone. Moses sums up Sara's life by beginning this parsha with "*Sarah's lifetime was one hundred years, twenty years and seven years*". Sarah's life time was 127 years and she died in Hebron in the land of Canaan. Abraham came to eulogize her and make arrangements for her burial.

**Who are the children of Heth cited in this passage?** Genesis 10:15 cites Heth as the second son of Canaan, son of Ham, son of Noah.

V. 5, 6 The children of Heth offer Abraham the use of any of their own burial places for Sarah, even the choicest of locations. This speaks to the great respect the people had for Abraham and Sarah.

V. 7-9 Abraham knows exactly what property he wants for the burial site, the Cave of Machpelah, at the edge of the field, owned by Ephron the son of Zohar.

**A Legendary Story:** When I was in Israel in March 2014 a Jewish woman I was visiting with in Hebron told me this story. Abraham had discovered this cave when he was chasing or searching for some lost sheep. When he came into the cave at Machpelah, he has a spiritual experience and realized this is the very cave where Adam and Eve had been buried. It was the place of union between Garden Eden and the world. The locals, being children of Canaan, did not have the same spiritual connection Abraham enjoyed and therefore had no idea this cave was a most sacred and special place. This awareness of the cave being a special, sacred location is why Abraham insisted on purchasing this specific piece of property as a burial site. The Book of Jasher records this story as well.

V. 7-15 The recordings of the negotiation between Abraham and Ephron tells us several interesting things:

- Abraham is revered and respected. He has lived among these people for many years since coming to the land and they understand his God has a special covering over Abraham.
- Abraham is careful to actually purchase the property for its fair value to insure he is not beholding to any one of them. Think about Abraham's refusal to accept any booty from the Sodomites because he did not want anyone to think he had become wealthy by any source other than the Living God.
- The negotiations take place at the city gates where such matters were publically settled.
- In today's market, the value of the 400 pieces of silver is about \$3,300.
- According to most estimates, the field was roughly 400 yards x 400 yards.

V. 16-30 Scripture is very clear that Abraham paid the full price for the property and a record of this purchase is recorded for all time. This proves the ownership, not only when the Israelites come in and take the land under the leadership of Joshua, but is a valid statement of ownership even today. The purchase of two other properties in Canaan are recorded in scripture: Gen. 33:19 - Jacob purchases the property where he erects an altar in Shechem; and the threshing floor on Mount Moriah (Temple Mount) purchased by David in I Chronicles 21:25. All of these properties today are primarily under the control of the Palestinian Muslims, as is the well given to Abraham by Abimelech we read about last week in Genesis 21.

#### **Chapter 24 Abraham seeks a bride for Isaac**

Abraham feels the burden of insuring Isaac does not marry a local woman, a daughter of Ham. The land of Canaan is the land of the descendents of Ham and the descendents of Shem are far north and to the east. Keeping with the thought that the

Bible is the written Plan of Redemption for fallen man, it is critical that the promised redemptive Messiah comes through a pure bloodline and the lineage of Shem is the line God has chosen. It is imperative that Isaac, the son of promise, marries within the proper bloodline.

V. 1-4 Abraham sends his most trusted and senior servant, presumably Eliezer, to make the journey to the land, Haran, about 500 miles away, where family lives. Bethuel is a nephew of Abraham, the son of Abraham's brother, Nahor (Genesis 22:22).

***“Place your hand under my thigh”*** - there are at least two explanations of this practice:

1. Literally, take hold my organ of circumcision, the object of my most sacred relationship with God. In later years pledges and oaths would be made holding a Torah scroll. This represents the most significant of oaths.
2. This practice shows the standing of each man, the master and the servant. The servant is showing his servitude and social standing by taking a more humble posture with one who is clearly a superior. Today we might just shake hands while looking each other in the eye and verbally pledging our oath. Or, a really well constructed and signed contract might suffice.

V. 5-8 What if the young lady will not come with me, shall I take Isaac to her? No! God has brought us to this land to give it to us and our descendents. “God will send an angel before you”. The same God who provided the ram in the thicket will go before you and will provide - **Yehovah Yira** - **“Our God provides”**.

**The elder Servant who controlled all that Abraham owned: Who was he?**

It is interesting that in this entire narrative we are not told the name of the servant Abraham sent on this most important of all missions. The earliest manuscripts citing Eliezer as the trusted servant is Genesis Rabah, a very early recorded Midrash (collection of rabbinic commentaries, written around 400 AD). Most Jewish and Christian scholars recognize the probability of Eliezer as the trusted servant, to some degree based on Abram's statement to God in Genesis 15:2-4.

The fact that the trusted servant is not named throughout this entire chapter leads us to believe that the reader is not to see this passage simply as a literal history of how Isaac got a wife, which it is, but to ask, “What is the deeper, spiritual story being told here”?

We discussed last week that there are many representations of Yeshua, Jesus Christ, seen in Isaac, especially in the comparison of the sacrifice of Isaac and the crucifixion. I believe these comparisons continue in the Chapter 24, and the reason the servant is not named is because he represents the Holy Spirit, being sent to a far away land (earth) to retrieve the Bride of Christ, to her betrothed husband, in the Promised Land. Rebekah represents the first Israel, and then the church.

Look at these comparisons of the unnamed servant and the Holy Spirit:

- The servant is highly trusted by the master; he is the only one the master, Abraham, will trust for this assignment.
- The servant got Rebekah to leave her old life behind, and almost all she had, to be married to Isaac in a new life. This, too, is the calling of the followers of Christ.
- John 16:13 of the New Testament tells us of the Holy Spirit “He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak”. In this story we see how the unnamed servant takes very specific instructions from Abraham, and repeats them, almost verbatim, to Rebekah’s family.
- The servant brings the good gifts of his master for the bride. The church receives the gifts of God from the Holy Spirit. (Romans 12; Galatians 5)
- In this chapter, the unnamed servant refers to both Abraham *and* Isaac as his master. (see vv. 9, 10, 27, 35, 36, 37, 42, 48, 50, 52 as referring to Abraham and v. 65 as referring to Isaac. This is a picture of how the Holy Spirit is co-equal with God and Christ the Messiah. This is similar in nature to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity/Triune nature of God.
- According to <http://www.abarim-publications.com>, Eliezer’s name appears to mean ‘God’s help’ or ‘helper of God’
- The name Eliezer is a compound of two elements. The first part is the word אֱלֹהִים (Elohim), the common abbreviation of **Elohim**, meaning God (or gods). The second part comes from the verb עָזַר (azar 1598) meaning help, support. This verb is quite common and used in all expected ways. Most notable is its usage in describing the function of Eve to Adam, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone, I will make him a helper (ezer) suitable for him’ (<http://www.abarim-publications.com/>).

Taken from, “Pondering Scripture, An Uncommon Commentary”

V. 9-14 - The servant did more than pack the minivan to head to the old country about 500 miles away: 10 camels; loaded with silver, gold, garments, food and drink (V. 52). And where was Eliezer headed? Paddan Aram in Mesopotamia. This is the area of Haran, the location Abraham and his family stopped over for a few years after leaving the Ur of the Chaldeas. When God called Abraham to leave and go to The Promised Land, Nahor, father of Bethuel and the rest of his family remained in Paddan Aram.



As Eliezer leads his camels to a well for water he prays for God's leading in finding this wife for his master's son. *"Hashem, God of my master Abraham, may You so arrange it for me this day that You do kindness with my master Abraham. Behold, I am standing here by the spring of water and the daughters of the townsmen come out to draw water. Let it be that the maiden to whom I shall say, 'Please tip over your jug that I may drink' and who replies, 'Drink and I will even water your camels', her will You have designated for your servant, for Isaac, and I may know through her that You have done kindness with my master."*

- How would you go about finding a wife for your master's son if this was your task?
  - Eliezer learned to trust God and the power of prayer from his master.
  - Trust God to show him the one he needed to contact.
  - Sometimes signs show a lack of faith. This prayer for a sign showed the urgency of the task at hand and reliance on God Himself to make the right connection.
  - Abraham has assured Eliezer that angels would be going before him.

V. 15 Before Eliezer could complete his prayer, God answered by ushering Rebekah out to the well. The Plan of Redemption is critical to unfold and God, as author of the

Plan, is also the developer of the Plan. Rebekah is His chosen bride for the son of promise.

- Daughter of Bethuel, son of Nahor
- She had the water jug on her shoulder
- Fair to look at (remember how beautiful Sarah was)
- A virgin
- And she responded as if she had heard the requests Eliezer had made of God

V. 21 Eliezer is shocked. We find him almost second guessing because this has happened in such a scripted manner.

- The next test, will she accept the nose ring and bracelets? **And what is the picture provided by this jewelry?**
  - ½ shekel - the redemption or ransom price (silver, atonement) of the first born sons to build the Tabernacle. (Exodus 30:11-16) However, this ring is of gold - representing the Deity of Hashem, purity and royalty
  - 10 gold shekels (bracelets) - The Torah (Ten Commands) as jewelry upon her arm

Rebekah presents the perfect picture of the Bride of Christ.

V. 26 Bowing and prostrating himself to Hashem, Eliezer prayed, ***“Blessed is Hashem, God of my master Abraham, Who has not withheld His kindness and truth from my master. As for me, Hashem has guided me on the way to the house of my master’s brothers”.***

### **Putting it into Perspective:**

This is a story depicting God, Christ, and the Church as the Bride of Christ. Abraham is a great king with an only son, the one He loves. In chapter 22 Isaac presents a picture of the crucified Christ. The king, Abraham (God) sends His servant, Eliezer, into the world, Paddan Aram, to find a bride for the Son. Rebecca represents the bride of Christ. The Bride is made up of, first Israel, and later, all who come to the Father through the Son (church). The redemption price is paid, a ½ shekel nose ring made of gold. The bride can be identified because she wears the gold bracelets, weighing 10 shekels (Ten Commandments of Torah).

Rebecca is willing to leave her family and comfortable surroundings to become the bride. The Hebrew Bride before the Pentecost in Acts 2 is marked by circumcision, the Hebrew and Gentile Bride of Christ following Acts 2 is marked by baptism.

### **The Family**

We now see the inner workings of a most unusual (Rebekah’s) family, half of the genetic pool God will use to begin building His “called out” nation, the very cradle of the Messiah to the world.

V. 28-33 Rebekah runs to her mother, a most appropriate response for a young women in these circumstances.

**Laban** - Rebekah's brother inserts himself into the story at this point, taking almost a paternal role. Perhaps the father, Bethuel, like his uncle Abraham, is quite old and Laban, the son, is functioning in much the way a father normally would. We will see much more of Laban and more fully understand his character in the next generation, Jacob's story.

V. 34-46 Introductions, reports of Abraham's great favor in the eyes of God, and Abraham's great standing in the communities of southern Canaan.

- My master is wealthy
- His wife Sarah bore him one son in his old age
- Abraham required the wife of Isaac come from the family and thus sent Eliezer to Haran
- This son, Isaac, will inherit all his father has (he will become quite wealthy)
- Abraham worships the One and Only True God, Hashem
- Abraham is a reasonable and fair man - if Eliezer is unable to fulfill this most important of all missions, he will be absolved of the oath he made with his master
- V. 42-46 God is at work in the plan and Rebekah is the woman God has anointed for this mission
- Will you allow me to take Rebekah home to my master?

V. 50-54 Bethuel and Laban agree Rebekah should be given to Abraham as a wife for Isaac.

- Eliezer prostrates himself before Hashem on thanksgiving
- Gifts are given from the 10 camels
  - The servant gave Rebekah articles of silver and gold, and new clothesThe Christian is clothed in new clothes as he/she comes up out of the water of baptism (Galatians 3:27; Colossians 3:10-17)
- The men ate and drank
- The next morning Eliezer says, "Let's go"

V. 55-58 **But let's wait a year or so!** We see the work of Laban here. Sure she can go, but just not today. Perhaps Laban is stalling to see if Abraham will up the bride price and they may receive more of Abraham's wealth in this marriage deal

- This was not acceptable to Eliezer. He was on a mission for his master, and God Himself. Today is the day!
- Luke 9:57-62 Jesus says, "Follow me!" and does not take excuses for waiting.
- **"Let's ask Rebekah"**. Many sages go to this verse and state a woman should always have a say in the marriage process, even in an arranged marriage. This fits with the justice and personal rights proclaimed throughout Torah.

- Rebekah stats the affirmative, “I will go and I will go today!”

V. 59-61 There are tears and blessings as Rebekah makes ready for the long trip back to Canaan. The camels were relieved of some of the gold, silver, garments and food they carried to Paddan Aram, now they carry Rebekah’s servant girls and their belongings.

- The blessing for their daughter, ***“Our sister, may you come to be thousands of myriads, and may your offspring inherit the gate of its foes”***.
  - May our sister Rebekah be fertile and provide her husband with many children - a great sign of true wealth
  - May her offspring never be oppressed, may they always be mighty and in control (Similar to the blessing on Abraham in Genesis 22:17)
  - The Kingdom of God is to be established and the gates of Hades shall prevail against them

#### V. 62-67 Isaac and Rebekah

- Isaac comes from a place of prayer, Beer-lahai-roi, a place that recalled God’s mercy to the previous generation. This was apparently in the Negev, a most desert part of Canaan to the south of Hebron.
- It was towards evening. The sages say Abraham instituted Morning Prayer and Isaac instituted Afternoon Prayer. Jacob is credited for instituting Evening Prayers.
- A movie could be made on the introduction of Isaac and Rebekah. It is a star born romance, with all the energy and wonderment that Adam and Eve surely felt when finally introduced.
- Isaac brought her into Sarah’s tent, married her, and Isaac loved Rebekah just as Christ loves His bride!

### Chapter 25: 1-18 Summing up the Life of Abraham

V. 1-6 Abraham remarries, Ketura, and she bore him 6 sons.

- Ketura is often thought in Jewish tradition to be Hagar, the concubine he sent away along with Ishmael. The tradition is Hagar (stranger) was renamed Ketura (Fragrance or Incense) because her deeds became as righteous as the ketores, incense.
- Of the 6 sons, we will learn more about the descendents of Midian. The Midianites play prominently as the Children of Israel wander between Egypt and Canaan. Moses hides for 40 years in the land of the Midianites.

- Abraham's role in God's plan for redemption is complete, he has secured a wife for Isaac and the redemption story now passes to Isaac and Rebecca. Abraham is allowed to live his life out, about 38 more years in peace and fulfillment.
- Abraham gives gifts to these sons and sends them off to the east and south-east, but his estate and the land of Canaan passes to (through) Isaac, the son of promise.
- The sons are sent away and are not allowed to stay in Canaan and compete with Isaac. (syncretism - the mixing of two opposing principles or philosophies)

V. 7-11 Abraham dies at the ripe old age of 175 years.

- He lived to an old age, mature and content, and he was gathered to his people.
- Isaac and Ishmael come together to bury their father in the Cave at Machpelah in Hebron.
- After the death of Abraham God blessed Isaac.

V. 12-18 Scripture provides a short genealogy of Ishmael

- Ishmael's sons are chieftains and leaders of people, cities and strongholds.
- Ishmael dies at the age of 137 years (about the age of Abraham when he sacrificed Isaac at Mount Moriah).