

# A Rood Awakening!

Presents

# *Awakening in the Word*

By Glenn McWilliams of TK TORAH KEEPERS  
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## THE OVERVIEW

This portion marks a major transition in the patriarchal narrative. Within the text of our portion we shall hear the last words of the patriarch Abraham, and our attention will slowly begin to switch to Isaac, the chosen seed of Abraham. This week's portion is part one of two portions which focus upon the story of Abraham securing a wife for his son Isaac. The story begins with the dialogue between Abraham and his trusted servant. The bulk of the portion, however, involves the servant's journey to Abraham's former homeland and his encounter with Rebekah and her family. There are numerous topics within this portion that will help to lay the foundation stones for later portions.

## THE OUTLINE

There are various patterns in this narrative that make it possible to break the portion down into different segments. In the larger story, which incorporates both this week's and next week's portions, we may break the story down the following way:

- a. Canaan: Abraham and his servant (man and man) Genesis 24:1-9
- b. Mesopotamia: The servant and Rebekah (man and woman) Genesis 24:10-27
- b. Mesopotamia: The servant and Laban (man and man) Genesis 24:28-58
- a. Canaan: Isaac and Rebekah (man and woman) Genesis 24:59-67

The outline for our immediate portion is simple.

- Genesis 24:1-9           The commissioning of Abraham's servant
- Genesis 24:10-14       The servant's journey and prayer
- Genesis 24:15-27       The encounter with Rebekah
- Genesis 24:28-41       The encounter with Rebekah's family

## SUGGESTED STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who is the servant?
2. Why does Abraham send a servant to find a wife for Isaac?
3. Why could Isaac not journey to Mesopotamia?
4. What criteria make a young woman fit to be Isaac's wife?
5. Why could Isaac not marry a Canaanite woman?
6. What do we learn about marriage from this text?
7. Why does Abraham make his trusted servant swear an oath?
8. What is the "thigh" ritual all about?
9. What are we called to swear by?
10. What are Abraham's last words?
11. What is revealed about Rebekah?
12. What is so significant about the servant's prayer?

**THE TEXT**

**Genesis 24:1-41** *And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and YHWH had blessed Abraham in all things. <sup>2</sup>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: <sup>3</sup>and I will make thee swear by YHWH, the Elohim of heaven, and the Elohim of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: <sup>4</sup>but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac. <sup>5</sup>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? <sup>6</sup>And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. <sup>7</sup>YHWH Elohim 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 messenger before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter. <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>And he said, O YHWH Elohim of my master Abraham, I pray Thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. <sup>13</sup>Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher. <sup>18</sup>And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.*

<sup>19</sup>And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. <sup>20</sup>And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels. <sup>21</sup>And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether YHWH had made his journey prosperous or not. <sup>22</sup>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; <sup>23</sup>and said, Whose daughter art thou? Tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in? <sup>24</sup>And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor. <sup>25</sup>She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in. <sup>26</sup>And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped YHWH. <sup>27</sup>And he said, Blessed be YHWH Elohim of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of His mercy and His truth: I being in the way, YHWH led me to the house of my master's brethren. <sup>28</sup>And the damsel ran, and told them of her mother's house these things. <sup>29</sup>And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well. <sup>30</sup>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. <sup>31</sup>And he said, Come in, thou blessed of YHWH; wherefore standest thou without? For I have prepared the house, and room for the camels. <sup>32</sup>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. <sup>33</sup>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. <sup>34</sup>And he said, I am Abraham's servant. <sup>35</sup>And YHWH 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. <sup>36</sup>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. <sup>37</sup>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: <sup>38</sup>but thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son. <sup>39</sup>And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me. <sup>40</sup>And he said unto me, YHWH, 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: <sup>41</sup>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.

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Our Torah portion this week is part one of two portions that cover the story of Abraham's efforts to secure an appropriate wife for his son Isaac. No other story in the book of Genesis occupies as many verses as this one. Chapter 24 is the longest chapter in the book of Genesis, containing sixty-seven verses in all. This chapter also marks the transition between the story of the patriarch Abraham and the patriarch Isaac. It is in this week's portion that we receive the last recorded words of father Abraham. It is almost as if the journey of the servant is the vehicle by which our attention is carried from Abraham and Sarah to their son Isaac and his wife Rebekah. Needless to say, there are many important lessons to be learned from this portion. Therefore, let us delve into our narrative and lay valuable foundation stones upon which we will build further understanding next week as we study the conclusion of the story.

The first part of our narrative begins with a dialogue between Abraham and his servant concerning the procurement of a wife for Abraham's son Isaac. There are several questions that we must address right at the start of this study. First, let us address the question of why Abraham is seeking a wife for Isaac. The answer to this question is found in the opening verses of last week's portion as well as in the opening verse of this week's portion.

**Genesis 23:1-2** *And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah. <sup>2</sup>And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.*

**Genesis 24:1** *And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and YHWH had blessed Abraham in all things.*

With the death of Sarah his wife and his own advanced age, Abraham is keenly aware of his own mortality. From the very beginning of his calling and journey, the promises of the Sovereign One have focused upon the inheritance of a specific land and an abundance of seed.

**Genesis 12:1-3** *Now YHWH had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: <sup>2</sup>and I will make of thee **a great nation**, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: <sup>3</sup>and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*

**Genesis 12:6-7** *And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. <sup>7</sup>And YHWH appeared unto Abram, and said, **Unto thy seed will I give this land**: and there builded he an altar unto YHWH, who appeared unto him.*

**Genesis 13:14-17** *And YHWH said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: <sup>15</sup>**for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.** <sup>16</sup>**And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that***

**if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.**

<sup>17</sup>Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

**Genesis 15:4-7** And, behold, the word of YHWH came unto him, saying, This [Abram's servant] shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. <sup>5</sup>And He brought him forth abroad, and said, **Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be.** <sup>6</sup>And he believed in YHWH; and He counted it to him for righteousness. <sup>7</sup>And He said unto him, I am YHWH that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, **to give thee this land to inherit it.**

**Genesis 15:18-21** In the same day YHWH made a covenant with Abram, saying, **Unto thy seed have I given this land,** from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: <sup>19</sup>the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, <sup>20</sup>and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, <sup>21</sup>and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

**Genesis 17:4-8** As for Me, behold, My covenant is with thee, and **thou shalt be a father of many nations.** <sup>5</sup>Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for **a father of many nations** have I made thee. <sup>6</sup>And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and **I will make nations of thee,** and kings shall come out of thee. <sup>7</sup>And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be an Elohim unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. <sup>8</sup>**And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession;** and I will be their Elohim.

**Genesis 17:15-16** And Elohim said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. <sup>16</sup>And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and **she shall be a mother of nations;** kings of people shall be of her.

**Genesis 18:9-15** And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. <sup>10</sup>And He said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah **thy wife shall have a son.** And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. <sup>11</sup>Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. <sup>12</sup>Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? <sup>13</sup>And YHWH said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? <sup>14</sup>Is any thing too hard for YHWH? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and **Sarah shall have a son.** <sup>15</sup>Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And He said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.

**Genesis 24:7** YHWH Elohim 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 messenger before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.

As we have previously noted, there was a time in Abraham's life when he questioned whether the Sovereign One would indeed keep His promises.

**Genesis 15:2-3** And Abram said, Adonai YHWH, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? <sup>3</sup>And Abram said, Behold, to me Thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

YHWH has proved Himself faithful to Abraham and Sarah. As our portion repeatedly testifies, YHWH has blessed Abraham in all things.

**Genesis 24:1** *And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and YHWH had blessed Abraham in all things.*

**Genesis 24:35-36** *And YHWH 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. <sup>36</sup>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.*

Now that YHWH has faithfully fulfilled His promises to Abraham to bless him with land, seed, riches, and an honored name, Abraham realizes that if his “seed” is to be as numerous as the dust of the earth, the sands of the sea, and the stars of the heavens, then Isaac is to be the one to fulfill this part of the promise. In other words, for all of these promises to be realized, the line of Abraham must continue. The Torah has consistently and emphatically removed any question as to through whom the line and heritage of Abraham is to be continued. Repeatedly YHWH points to Isaac as Abraham’s true heir. Even after YHWH reveals that Sarah will give birth to Abraham’s heir and Abraham pleads for Ishmael to be his heir,<sup>1</sup> the Sovereign One emphatically states that it will be Isaac that will inherit the covenant.

**Genesis 17:21** *But My covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.*

We may likewise recall that only Isaac passes through the cutting of the circumcision of Abraham. The Sovereign One delays Isaac’s birth until after Abraham is circumcised. After Isaac’s birth and weaning party, the Sovereign One instructs Abraham to liberate Hagar and her son, thereby removing from Ishmael any legal claim to Abraham’s estate. Abraham is to separate the son of the bondwoman from the son of Sarah, for Isaac is to be the true heir.

**Genesis 21:12** *And Elohim said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; **for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.***

Now it is time for Abraham to assure that the promised blessings of YHWH continue. For this to happen, Isaac must produce “seed” that will be a part the final fulfillment of YHWH’S promises. As protector and keeper of the covenant, Abraham must assure that it will continue. We may remember that just prior to the destruction of the cities of the plain, the Holy One expressed His confidence in Abraham to assure that his offspring would indeed continue in the covenant.

**Genesis 18:19** *For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, **and they shall keep the way of YHWH, to do justice and judgment;** that YHWH may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him.*

For YHWH to bring upon Abraham all that He has promised him, Abraham must assure the continuance of his seed to future generations. Therefore, as a faithful member of the covenant, Abraham faces his own advanced age and mortality and seeks to continue the line while there is still time. To this end, Abraham calls upon his most trusted servant.

Before we go any further in the matter of Abraham’s interaction with his servant, let us first pause to understand the significance of what has just been demonstrated. We should recognize that while the heart of YHWH is to bless Abraham, and while it is the character of YHWH to fulfill His promises, Abraham is not merely a passive agent in the fulfillment of these promises. We must remember that Abraham is a covenant partner with YHWH in the fulfillment of these promises. In other words, it is the

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 17:18

heart of the Sovereign One to bring all of these blessings upon Abraham and his seed, but it is not the nature of the Sovereign One to thrust these blessings upon one who is not willing to receive them or be held accountable for them.

Abraham must, by his own faith and faithfulness, be found worthy of such blessings. YHWH makes His will to bless the seed of Abraham known to him through His promises and His willingness to bind Himself by covenant with Abraham and his descendants. We should not understand these blessings to be automatic. "The seed of Abraham" must not disqualify itself from being considered "the seed of Abraham" through rebellious and offensive behavior. Likewise, by our obedience, we must demonstrate our willingness to be an active participant in the covenant relationship.

The Torah, Yeshua, and the apostle Shaul make it extremely clear that merely being the biological seed of Abraham is not enough to assure that one is an heir of Abraham. We have already witnessed that Ishmael, who is clearly the biological seed of Abraham, is not an heir of the covenant. We should likewise remember Esau, who, although he is a biological descendant of Abraham, is not counted as worthy of being an heir of the covenant.

**Genesis 21:12** *And Elohim said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.*

**Genesis 25:31-34** *And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. <sup>32</sup>And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? <sup>33</sup>And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. <sup>34</sup>Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.*

**John 8:39-44** *They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Yeshua saith unto them, **If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.** <sup>40</sup>But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of Elohim: this did not Abraham. <sup>41</sup>Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even Elohim. <sup>42</sup>Yeshua said unto them, If Elohim were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from Elohim; neither came I of myself, but He sent me. <sup>43</sup>Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. <sup>44</sup>Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

**Romans 4:16** *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.*

**Romans 9:7** *Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.*

**Galatians 3:7** *Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*

We must be clear to understand that merely being a biological descendant of Abraham does not qualify anyone to receive the covenantal blessings. We may also state here that neither does vain obedience gain one qualification to be counted among the heirs of Abraham. Mere circumcision, empty ritual, or legalistic fulfilling of the letter of the law do not qualify one to be an heir of Abraham. Neither does intellectually assenting to a philosophical truth qualify one to be an heir of Abraham. To be an heir of Abraham one must willingly submit oneself to a loving and living relationship with the Sovereign Elohim of

the heavens and the earth. This is the example of Abraham. One must lovingly, willingly, and completely walk with the Sovereign Creator of the universe as Abraham did.

**Genesis 24:40** *And he said unto me, YHWH, 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.*

In our portion this week we witness Abraham as a willing partner and participant in YHWH'S divine plan to multiply Abraham's seed and to bless that seed with a land. Let us also recognize that each one of us who has been called to join himself to the covenant people of YHWH likewise has a role to play in the Creator's divine drama. We are all to be active, willing, and obedient participants in the Creator's plan of redemption, deliverance, and restoration of the universe.

Understanding the responsibility that is on his shoulders for the continuance of the divine drama that is unfolding before his own eyes, Abraham seeks to find an appropriate wife for his son and heir. Recognizing his own mortality and advanced age as well as the length of the trip that is to be made, Abraham commits this task to his most trusted servant. The Torah does not tell us who this servant is. Throughout the narrative the servant remains nameless. Many have drawn a connection between this trusted servant and the servant that Abraham earlier referred to as his possible heir.

**Genesis 15:2** *And Abram said, Adonai YHWH, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this **Eliezer of Damascus**?*

I believe that we may safely draw a connection between this Eliezer of Damascus and the servant that Abraham sends to Aram-naharaim or Mesopotamia to find a wife for Isaac. We should note that in the above text Eliezer is referred to as the "steward" of Abraham's house. In our portion this servant is said to be Abraham's eldest servant who has rule over all that Abraham has. The fact that Abraham respects and trusts this servant so completely and yet his name does not merit mention in our portion demands that we ask why such an honored servant should remain nameless.

I would suggest that the Torah means no disrespect toward the servant. In fact, I believe that the Torah is telling us that this servant is no other than Eliezer of Damascus. The absence of his name in our portion, however, may simply be a way of assuring that there is no confusion as to who Abraham's rightful heir is. Eliezer is indeed a faithful servant worthy of admiration, respect, and even honor, but he is not Abraham's heir. This has already been made quite clear in the Torah.

**Genesis 15:3-4** *And Abram said, Behold, to me Thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. <sup>4</sup>And, behold, the word of YHWH came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.*

Thus, by merely alluding to his identity, the Torah gives honor to Eliezer while at the same time eliminating any possible confusion as to who the true heir is. The fact that Eliezer remains nameless in our portion likewise assures the smooth transition of focus from the patriarch Abraham to the patriarch Isaac.

The next question we might ask is why Abraham delegates a matter as critical as finding an appropriate wife for a patriarch of the Hebrew people to a servant. We have already stated one possible answer to this question. Abraham is very advanced in years and may feel himself too fragile for such a demanding trip. Sarah, who was ten years younger than Abraham, has already died. Abraham is asking that a wife for Isaac be chosen from among his own kinfolk back in Mesopotamia. To complete such a journey will require at least five months. Abraham has already made this journey once in his lifetime; therefore, he knows how rigorous and demanding it is. The solution is either to send Isaac on the journey or to send his most trusted servant. Here we may ask why Abraham does not send Isaac back to the land of his kinfolk to choose his own wife, as Isaac does with his son Jacob.

**Genesis 28:1-3** *And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. <sup>2</sup>Arise, go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. <sup>3</sup>And El Shaddai bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people.*

I am suggesting that there are at least three potential answers as to why Abraham does not send Isaac. First, it may be due to the fact that Abraham is advanced in years. Since his wife Sarah has already passed on, if Isaac were to go, Abraham would be left without family to care for him. It may be that Abraham does not desire to be separated from Isaac in his final days. We may remember that both Joseph and later Benjamin were protected by their father and generally kept close to home.

**Genesis 44:20** *And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.*

**Genesis 37:3** *Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.*

We should understand that in ancient cultures, children were responsible for the care of their parents. Generally, the youngest child or children would still be home with their aging and incapacitated parents; therefore, it often fell to the youngest children to care for them. Since Ishmael has already been expelled and Isaac is Abraham's only heir, it is quite understandable that the aging Abraham desires his son to remain at home instead of sending him away for over five months and exposing him to numerous dangers. Therefore, it would seem that Abraham is choosing wisely in keeping the heir of the covenant promises home and sending a trusted servant to fulfill this important task.

A second possible reason that Abraham does not send Isaac to find a wife for himself may have to do with the fact that Isaac was bound upon the altar and is, in many respects, sanctified. Therefore, it could be that Abraham is convicted that Isaac should not leave the promised land, but instead should hold his ground and protect his level of sanctity. This view is supported in our portion by the words of Abraham.

**Genesis 24:7** *YHWH Elohim 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.*

Abraham's emphasis on the fact that the land is part of the covenant seems to imply that Isaac is not to forsake the land to move elsewhere. We may note here that Isaac is the only patriarch who is born in the land, lives his entire life in the land, and even dies and is buried in the land. Only once in his life does Isaac seek to leave the land of promise due to famine, but the Sovereign One prevents him from leaving and confirms the covenant with him.

**Genesis 26:1-5** *And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. <sup>2</sup>And YHWH appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: <sup>3</sup>sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; <sup>4</sup>and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; <sup>5</sup>because that Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.*

A third possible reason for Abraham prohibiting Isaac from leaving to find a wife may be found in the oath that Abraham imposes upon his servant. Clearly Abraham commissions his servant to find a suitable wife for Isaac, but Abraham gives certain specifics that are to be followed. The basic outline of the

commission given to Abraham's servant is made up of one positive charge and two negative charges. Let us first look at the positive charge and then at the two negative charges.

**Genesis 24:3-8** *And I will make thee swear by YHWH, the Elohim of heaven, and the Elohim of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:<sup>4</sup> but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac. <sup>5</sup>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? <sup>6</sup>And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. <sup>7</sup>YHWH Elohim 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. <sup>8</sup>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.*

The positive charge, found in verse 4, is the command that Isaac's wife is to come from Abraham's country and kindred. Here we should recognize the connection to Abraham's own calling to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house.

**Genesis 12:1** *Now YHWH had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.*

This is alluded to again in Abraham's own words to his servant:

**Genesis 24:7** *YHWH Elohim 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.*

A suitable wife for Isaac is clearly to come from the same lineage as Abraham. We may recall Abraham's genealogy from our earlier studies: Shem, Arphaxad, Salah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah, and Abram.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Abraham establishes the criterion that the wife of his son must be from the righteous line of Shem.

This is further substantiated when we look at the first negative charge given to Abraham's servant – that he not take a wife from among the Canaanite women where Abraham and Isaac dwell. Here we would do well to recall that the Canaanites are the descendants of Canaan, the cursed son of Ham.

**Genesis 9:25** *And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.*

Abraham is not willing to mix the blessed line with the cursed line.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, Abraham commands his servant to leave Canaan and return to the homeland of the descendants of Shem, the righteous line, to find an appropriate wife for Isaac. We too should recognize that we are indeed to make a distinction between righteousness and unrighteousness.

It is interesting that there is no mention of Isaac's prospective wife's religious orientation. Some have argued that the reason that Abraham forbids Isaac to marry a Canaanite woman is because the Canaanites are heathen idolaters. Here we must remember that Abraham's people are likewise polytheistic, heathen idolaters. In fact, Rebekah's own family members are polytheistic idolaters.

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<sup>2</sup> Genesis 11:10-26

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 6:2-3

**Joshua 24:2** *And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith YHWH Elohim of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and **they served other elohim.***

**Genesis 31:30-32** *And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast **thou stolen my elohim?** <sup>31</sup>And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me. <sup>32</sup>With whomsoever thou findest **thy elohim**, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.*

Does this mean that Abraham has no concern about idolatry? The answer to this question is found in the second negative charge that is given to Abraham's servant.

**Genesis 24:6** *And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.*

**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.*

Twice in this exchange between the patriarch and his servant the command is given that Isaac is not to leave the land of promise and go to Abraham's former homeland. It is in this prohibition that we witness Abraham's wisdom. Abraham realizes that his family members are heathen, polytheistic idolaters, just as the Canaanites are. While they are not of the cursed line, they are nonetheless guilty of the same idolatry. But what Abraham also realizes is the fact that family is a powerful influence upon a husband and wife. If Isaac were to marry an idolater from the land of Canaan and make his home there, his wife's family would exert pressure and influence on the married couple to participate in their family's cultic traditions. Surrounded by idolaters, Isaac would have to stand alone in his worship of the One True Elohim of heaven and earth.

Abraham fears that Isaac will be overwhelmed by his wife's family; therefore, he feels it is wiser to send his servant to this distant land to choose a wife for Isaac. Abraham reasons that the great distance separating Isaac and his wife from her homeland will cut them off from her family's meddling influence and their pagan ways. Isaac's wife will be quicker to cleave to her husband and adopt his faith and practices if she is separated from her family. For this reason Abraham forbids Isaac from going to the land of his prospective wife. If Isaac were to make the trip to Mesopotamia, he might succumb to the pressure and influence of his wife's family and not return to the land of promise. For this reason Abraham charges his servant to go to the homeland of the descendants of Shem, find a suitable wife for Isaac, and bring her back to him. Under no circumstances is the servant to take Isaac to his prospective bride.

Now that we understand why Abraham chooses a servant to find a wife for Isaac instead of sending Isaac himself, we must ask why it is necessary for the servant to swear an oath to Abraham. We should also ask the meaning of the peculiar ritual that the servant is asked to perform.

While leaving the servant nameless for the reasons we discussed above, we should note that the Torah tells us that this servant was no mere servant.

**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.*

Here we see that this man is Abraham's eldest servant and is entrusted with all of Abraham's great wealth. If this servant is indeed Eliezer, as I have suggested, then we know that he is the steward of Abraham's estate. It should be clear to us that to hold such an important and honored position one would have to be trustworthy. If Abraham can trust this servant with the whole of his estate, then why is it necessary for him to swear an oath to Abraham concerning this commission? Is it possible that Abraham does not trust his servant?

I will suggest that Abraham does indeed trust his eldest servant and steward, as is demonstrated by the fact that Abraham's whole estate is under his administration. The purpose of the oath is not so much a matter of trust as it is a matter of resolve. Swearing an oath is the same as entering into a covenant. By swearing an oath, the servant is binding himself to Abraham. Being a trustworthy servant, he will be compelled by his own integrity to complete his calling just as he has sworn. Abraham knows that the path is long and the calling difficult. Even his servant is concerned about the potential for failure, recognizing that although he might find an appropriate or suitable woman for Isaac, there is always the chance that she might not leave her country, her kindred, and her father's house. Abraham does not want his servant to quit his calling in frustration; he wants him to be resolved to fulfill his commission in spite of any potential pitfalls and failures. By making him swear a solemn oath, Abraham is counting upon his servant's integrity and trustworthiness to give him the resolve to fulfill this vital mission. We should in no way infer from this oath that Abraham doesn't trust his servant; instead, Abraham is counting on his servant's integrity and trustworthiness to fulfill his oath.

Sadly, the exact oath Abraham's servant swears is not recorded for us in the Torah. Instead, there is the allusion to a peculiar ritual connected to the making of the oath.

**Genesis 24:2-3** *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:<sup>3</sup> and I will make thee swear by YHWH, the Elohim of heaven, and the Elohim of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell.*

We witness a similar oath being administered by Jacob to Joseph a little later on in the Torah.

**Genesis 47:29** *And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt.*

These are the only two instances of such a ritual taking place in the Torah. Both are administered by one of the aging patriarchs. Both of these instances also involve travel. The question is, what is meant by putting one's hand "under the thigh" of the one administering the oath? Most scholars seem to agree that this particular phrase is a euphemism for the reproductive organs. Nahum M. Sarna writes:

*Gestures accompanying oath-taking are universal in the ancient world. Most frequently, they involve the raising of a hand, as in 14:22, and /or the holding of a ritual object. In later times, a Torah scroll, phylacteries, or a Bible might be held for such a purpose.<sup>4</sup>*

Concerning the peculiar ritual in our portion, Sarna goes on to write:

*The unusual nature of the present act leaves any explanation uncertain. Interpreters are unanimous that the "thigh" refers to the genital organ. This may be a reference to circumcision: Holding the circumcised membrum, called the "sign of the covenant" in 17:11, may invoke the presence and power of God as the guarantor of the oath.<sup>5</sup>*

Others likewise confirm that the expression "under the thigh" is being used euphemistically.

*Under my thigh—thigh is a euphemism for the male organ; offspring, too, are described as literally coming out of the [father's] thigh (46:26; Exodus 1:5). Rashi explains why Abraham chose it for use in certifying the oath. One who takes an oath must place his hand on some sacred object, such as a Torah scroll or tefillin...Because circumcision*

<sup>4</sup> The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis, Nahum M. Sarna, Jewish Publication Society, Pg. 162

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

*was the first precept given to Abraham, and because he fulfilled it through much pain, it was particularly precious to him, so Abraham asked Eliezer to take his oath upon it.*<sup>6</sup>

*Abraham instructed his servant: Put your hand under my thigh, a prelude to the servant's act of swearing. "Thigh" is undoubtedly a euphemism for genitalia, in the light of passages such as Gen. 46:26 and Exod. 1:5, where a man's children are said to come from his thigh. Holding Abraham's membrum in his hand, the servant promises to carry out Abraham's wishes.*<sup>7</sup>

*"Thigh" (cf. 47:29) is a euphemism for the procreative organ. This act either symbolized that the yet unborn children would avenge any violation of the oath or solemnized the oath in the sign of his covenant.*<sup>8</sup>

Clearly the bulk of biblical scholars, both old and new, agree that the word "thigh" is used euphemistically to refer to the male organ. It is also agreed upon that the reason for the servant's putting his hand upon the membrum of Abraham was for the purpose of swearing by something sacred – in this case, the circumcised gland of Abraham. We do know from extra-biblical evidence that such rituals were the custom in the Ancient Near-East. A Babylonian letter was found with such a ritual oath contained in it.

*Thus you (have said to me): "Let your envoy grasp my testicles and my penis, and then I will give (it) to you." Concerning (??) then what you have said to me, (I am dispatching to you) Burriya the son of Menanum.*<sup>9</sup>

While I agree with scholars that the word "thigh" is a euphemism for the genitalia, I disagree with their opinion as to why this ritual was used. First, let us take note that Abraham's servant, in referring to the oath, agrees that there is some type of curse attached to it. While Abraham only uses the more positive *shava* (*shin, vet, ayin*) when referring to the oath, his servant concludes his report by referring to the oath<sup>10</sup> as the more negative *ala* (*aleph, lammed, hey*), which implies a curse. It is difficult to believe that Abraham has his servant swear a curse upon himself using the sign of the covenant. Even more convincing is the fact that Abraham's servant was circumcised. We should remember that this servant was the steward of Abraham's house prior to the Covenant of Circumcision. Abraham received the command to circumcise himself and his entire household.

**Genesis 17:23** *And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as Elohim had said unto him.*

We may assume, therefore, that this servant was circumcised the same day that Abraham was circumcised. If it is necessary for him to put his hand on some sacred object to swear his oath, then we must ask why he does not swear by his own circumcision. Is it not enough for Abraham's servant to swear an oath with his hand on his own genitals, swearing to be "cut off" from the covenant promises if he does not fulfill his vow? Can it not be said that by placing his hand on his own gland, he is invoking a curse upon his own "seed" if he violates the oath? Clearly the idea that one must be touching some

<sup>6</sup> The Schottenstein Edition Interlinear Chumash, Volume 1: Bereishis / Genesis, ArtScroll / Mesorah Publications, Pg. 120

<sup>7</sup> New International Commentary on the Old Testament, The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50, Victor P. Hamilton, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Pg.139

<sup>8</sup> Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition: King James Version, Moody Publishers, Pg. 38

<sup>9</sup> Touching the Sexual Organs as an Oath Ceremony in an Akkadian Letter, Vetus Testamentum 37 (1987), Meir Malul, Pp. 491-492

<sup>10</sup> Genesis 24:41

sacred object when he swears an oath does not explain why the servant has to put his hand on Abraham's genitals.

Further eroding this concept is the fact that the Torah never instructs us to put our hand on anything when we are swearing an oath. Instead, we are instructed by the Torah only to swear by the name YHWH.

**Leviticus 19:12** *And ye shall not swear by My name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy Elohim: I am YHWH.*

**Numbers 30:2** *If a man vow a vow unto YHWH, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.*

**Deuteronomy 6:13** *Thou shalt fear YHWH thy Elohim, and serve Him, and shalt swear by His name.*

**Deuteronomy 10:20** *Thou shalt fear YHWH thy Elohim; Him shalt thou serve, and to Him shalt thou cleave, and swear by His name.*

We should recall here that Messiah Yeshua rebuked the Pharisees, who were swearing by sacred things and using them as loopholes to get around the prohibition against swearing falsely "by My name." By swearing by these sacred objects, it seems that the Pharisees felt they were no longer restrained by the prohibition against false swearing.

**Matthew 23:16-22** *Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! <sup>17</sup>Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? <sup>18</sup>And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. <sup>19</sup>Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? <sup>20</sup>Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. <sup>21</sup>And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth therein. <sup>22</sup>And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of Elohim, and by Him that sitteth thereon.*

Clearly we are discouraged by the Torah and Messiah from swearing by anything other than the name of YHWH. This alone is sufficient for any oath, be it a blessing or a curse. Again, therefore, we must ask why it is important for the servant to put his hand under Abraham's "thigh."

I would suggest to you that this action has to do more with the servant's status as a slave than it does with swearing by something sacred. The Torah teaches us that there is a difference between a Hebrew slave and a non-Hebrew slave.

**Leviticus 25:35-46** *And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. <sup>36</sup>Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy Elohim; that thy brother may live with thee. <sup>37</sup>Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase. <sup>38</sup>I am YHWH your Elohim, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your Elohim. <sup>39</sup>And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: <sup>40</sup>but as an hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubile: <sup>41</sup>and then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return. <sup>42</sup>For they are My servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen. <sup>43</sup>Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour; but shalt fear thy Elohim. <sup>44</sup>Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and*

*bondmaids. <sup>45</sup>Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession. <sup>46</sup>And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever: but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigour.*

Clearly the status of a non-Hebrew slave is that of a “possession” that will be passed down as an inheritance to one’s children. In the case of Abraham’s servant Eliezer, we have already been informed that he is from Damascus; he is not a Hebrew. Given Abraham’s advanced age, I am going to suggest that the reason the servant places his hand upon Abraham’s genitals is to demonstrate his loyalty to the “seed” of Abraham. In other words, this oath is not just with Abraham; it is with Abraham’s descendants as well. The servant’s commission is clearly for the sake of the seed of Abraham; therefore, it is most appropriate that he place his hand upon the symbol of the “seed” to make his oath.

We may note here that making his servant swear this oath and prohibiting him from allowing Isaac to marry a Canaanite woman or return to the land of Mesopotamia constitute Abraham’s last words in the Torah. I believe that we should consider seriously this calling of separation from the paganism of the world around us. The apostle Shaul likewise warns us of being unequally yoked.

**2 Corinthians 6:14-17** *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? <sup>15</sup>And what concord hath Messiah with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? <sup>16</sup>And what agreement hath the temple of Elohim with idols? For ye are the temple of the living Elohim; as Elohim hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their Elohim, and they shall be My people. <sup>17</sup>Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith YHWH, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.*

There is yet another peculiarity in this portion. Not only do we hear the last words of Abraham; we are also allowed to listen in to the personal prayer of Abraham’s servant as he sets out to fulfill his calling. We should note that this servant is a circumcised believer in YHWH, the Elohim of Abraham. After a lengthy journey, he stops by a well and asks YHWH to bless his master with fulfillment.

**Genesis 24:12-14** *And he said, O YHWH Elohim of my master Abraham, I pray Thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. <sup>13</sup>Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: <sup>14</sup>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 for personal guidance recorded in the Torah. We have witnessed Abraham interceding for Sodom and Gomorrah, but this is a personal, heartfelt prayer for personal aid. What makes this prayer even more powerful is that it is found upon the lips of a slave. Enhancing the power of this prayer even further is the fact that YHWH, the Elohim of Abraham, grants this slave his heart’s prayer.

**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.*

Here we witness that social rank has nothing to do with prayer. We also note that YHWH answers the prayer before Abraham’s servant is even finished speaking it. The Creator clearly knows what is in our hearts and minds before we even utter it. Yeshua himself teaches us the same truth.

**Matthew 6:8** *Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.*

**Matthew 6:32** *(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

**Romans 8:26** *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

In our portion Abraham prophetically tells his faithful servant that a divine messenger will precede him and bring him success. The servant's prayer is in accord with the will of the Sovereign One and success is indeed quickly granted.

While Abraham's servant trusts that YHWH will indeed bring forth an appropriate wife for Isaac, nonetheless, he has to establish a means of knowing that he is discerning YHWH'S choice. Therefore, he lays down certain criteria for the wife of Isaac. First, she must be an industrious young woman who participates in providing and caring for the needs of her family. Second, she must show hospitality similar to that of Abraham and provide drink for a stranger. Third, she must not hesitate to care also for a stranger's animals. In the servant's case, it will be providing water for ten camels. This is no small feat, considering that a camel can drink up to 25 gallons of water after travelling a great distance.

Here we should recognize that YHWH goes beyond the servant's simple criteria to meet Abraham's original intent. Rebekah is not just another girl from Mesopotamia; she is a beautiful, young virgin from the very house of Abraham's father. Rebekah also proves herself to be a worthy and suitable wife for Isaac.

In the reporting of Rebekah's activities we cannot help but note the similarities between Rebekah's words and deeds and those of Abraham. Let us remember when the three visitors showed up in the heat of the day at Abraham's tent. Abraham ran to greet them, bowed before them, offered water for their feet, encouraged them to rest themselves in the shade of his trees, offered them a morsel of food, and then ran hither and yon to provide them with a feast.<sup>11</sup> Now it is Rebekah who quickly displays extreme hospitality, providing drink not only for the stranger but for his camels as well.

**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.*

After all of this labor Rebekah reveals her lineage, but not her name. She then offers even further provision and hospitality. It is at this point that Abraham's servant is sure that YHWH has indeed heard his prayer and granted his master favor. The servant clearly attributes his success to YHWH.

**Genesis 24:26-27** *And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped YHWH. <sup>27</sup>And he said, Blessed be YHWH Elohim of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of His mercy and His truth: I being in the way, YHWH led me to the house of my master's brethren.*

Rebekah then runs to inform her brother of the visitor who blessed her, and Laban likewise runs to meet this stranger. It is unfortunate that many of the sages see Laban as a greedy, disrespectful rogue whose actions are only motivated by the possibility of gain. The sages teach that Laban, seeing the gold and silver gifts given to his sister, runs to see what gifts he might receive from the generous stranger. All of Laban's displays of hospitality are then held to be suspect. Instead of seeing a display of hospitality in Laban's helping to unload the camels, some of the sages teach that Laban volunteers so that he might rifle through the packs and steal the valuables that may be contained in them. But all of this is foreign to

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<sup>11</sup> Genesis 18:1-8

the Torah. While Laban does indeed later prove to be a bit deceptive in dealing with Jacob, there is no evidence of this in our portion. Therefore, we must assume that all the hospitality shown to the servant of Abraham is genuine.

We should note, however, that Abraham's servant uses a great deal of tact in relaying his story to Rebekah's family. While he clearly conveys the true purpose of his journey, we note that he does so in such a way as to avoid any possibility of an offense that would prevent his complete success. He omits all reference to Abraham's calling to leave his former homeland as well as the prohibition against Isaac returning. Although Abraham made no mention of a curse in his request to his servant to swear an oath, in order to heighten the urgency of his ordeal his servant refers to his oath using the word *ala*,<sup>12</sup> which implies that it is not an oath but a curse he is under.

Part two of this story will continue in next week's portion.

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<sup>12</sup> Genesis 24:41

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