

## Adam Clarke:

## Introduction

Abraham, being solicitous to get his son Isaac property married, calls his confidential servant, probably Eliezer, and makes him swear that he will not take a wife for Isaac from among the Canaanites, Genesis 24:1-3, but from among his own kindred, Genesis 24:4. The servant proposes certain difficulties, Genesis 24:5, which Abraham removes by giving him the strongest assurances of God's direction in the business, Genesis 24:6, Genesis 24:7, and then specifies the conditions of the oath, Genesis 24:8. The form of the oath itself, Genesis 24:9. The servant makes preparations for his journey, and sets out for Mesopotamia, the residence of Abraham's kindred, Genesis 24:10. Arrives at a well near to the place, Genesis 24:11. His prayer to God, Genesis 24:12-14. Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, son of Nahor, Abraham's brother, comes to the well to draw water, Genesis 24:15. She is described, Genesis 24:16. Conversation between her and Abraham's servant, in which every thing took place according to his prayer to God, Genesis 24:17-21. He makes her presents, and learns whose daughter she is, Genesis 24:22-24. She invites him to her father's house, Genesis 24:25. He returns thanks to God for having thus far given him a prosperous journey, Genesis 24:26, Genesis 24:27. Rebekah runs home and informs her family, Genesis 24:28; on which her brother Laban comes out, and invites the servant home, Genesis 24:29-31. His reception, Genesis 24:32, Genesis 24:33. Tells his errand, Genesis 24:34, and how he had proceeded in executing the trust reposed in him, Genesis 24:35-48. Requests an answer, Genesis 24:49. The family of Rebekah consent that she should become the wife of Isaac, Genesis 24:50, Genesis 24:51. The servant worships God, Genesis 24:52, and gives presents to Milcah, Laban, and Rebekah, Genesis 24:53. He requests to be dismissed, Genesis 24:54-56. Rebekah, being consulted, consents to go, Genesis 24:57, Genesis 24:58. She is accompanied by her nurse, Genesis 24:59; and having received the blessing of her parents and relatives, Genesis 24:60, she departs with the servant of Abraham, Genesis 24:61. They are met by Isaac, who was on an evening walk for the purpose of meditation, Genesis 24:62-65. The servant relates to Isaac all that he had done, Genesis 24:66. Isaac and Rebekah are married, Genesis 24:67.

## Verse 1

And Abraham was old - He was now about one hundred and forty years of age, and consequently Isaac was forty, being born when his father was one hundred years old. See Genesis 21:5; Genesis 25:20.

## Verse 2

Eldest servant - As this eldest servant is stated to have been the ruler over all that he had, it is very likely that Eliezer is meant. See Genesis 15:2, Genesis 15:3.

Put, I pray thee, thy hand - See note on Genesis 24:9.

## Verse 3

I will make thee swear - See note on Genesis 24:9.

Of the Canaanites - Because these had already been devoted to slavery, etc., and it would have been utterly inconsistent as well with prudence as with the design of God to have united the child and heir of the promise with one who was under a curse, though that curse might be considered to be only of a political nature. See the curse of Canaan, Genesis 9:25 (note).

## Verse 4

My country - Mesopotamia, called here Abraham's country, because it was the place where the family of Haran, his brother, had settled; and where himself had remained a considerable time with his father Terah. In this family, as well as in that of Nahor, the true religion had been in some sort preserved, though afterwards considerably corrupted; see Genesis 31:19.

And take a wife unto my son - A young man in Bengal is precisely in the same circumstances as Isaac; he has nothing to do in the choice of a wife; parents employ others to seek wives for their sons. Those who leave their homes in search of employment always marry their children in their own country, and among their acquaintance at home; never among the people with whom they reside. In Asiatic countries this custom has prevailed from the infancy of the human race. See Ward's Hindoo Customs.

## Verse 5

Peradventure the woman will not be willing - We may see, says Calmet, by this and other passages of Scripture, Joshua 9:18, what the sentiments of the ancients were relative to an oath. They believed they were bound precisely by what was spoken, and had no liberty to interpret the intentions of those to whom the oath was



humanity, condescension, and other qualities which promised a discreet and virtuous wife, he puts his prayer upon such a discreet, rational footing, as to be a proper example for all to imitate who would not tempt the providence of God, by expecting extraordinary signs to be given them for the determination of cases which they are capable of deciding by a proper use of their rational faculties.â€• This is all very good; but certainly the case referred to here is such a one as required especial direction from God; a case which no use of the rational faculties, without Divine influence, could be sufficient to determine. It is easy to run into extremes, and it is very natural so to do. In all things the assistance and blessing of God are necessary, even where human strength and wisdom have the fullest and freest sphere of action; but there are numberless cases, of infinite consequence to man, where his strength and prudence can be of little or no avail, and where the God of all grace must work all things according to the counsel of his own will. To expect the accomplishment of any good end, without a proper use of the means, is the most reprehensible enthusiasm; and to suppose that any good can be done or procured without the blessing and mercy of God, merely because proper means are used, is not less reprehensible. Plan, scheme, and labor like Eliezer, and then, by earnest faith and prayer, commit the whole to the direction and blessing of God.

### Verse 15

**Behold, Rebekah came out - How admirably had the providence of God adapted every circumstance to the necessity of the case, and so as in the most punctual manner to answer the prayer which his servant had offered up!**

### Verse 19

I will draw water for thy camels also - Had Rebekah done no more than Eliezer had prayed for, we might have supposed that she acted not as a free agent, but was impelled to it by the absolutely controlling power of God; but as she exceeds all that was requested, we see that it sprang from her native benevolence, and sets her conduct in the most amiable point of view.

### Verse 21

The man, wondering at her - And he was so lost in wonder and astonishment at her simplicity, innocence, and benevolence, that he permitted this delicate female to draw water for ten camels, without ever attempting to afford her any kind of assistance! I know not which to admire most, the benevolence and condescension of Rebekah, or the cold and apparently stupid indifference of the servant of Abraham. Surely they are both of an uncommon cast.

### Verse 22

The man took a golden ear-ring - x x-x° x-x"x' (nezem zahab). That this could not be an ear-ring is very probable from its being in the singular number. The margin calls it a jewel for the forehead; but it most likely means a jewel for the nose, or nose-ring, which is in universal use through all parts of Arabia and Persia, particularly among young women. They are generally worn in the left nostril. The word is very properly translated ἰνὸς ἐφ' ὠτὶνος ἀνὰ τῆς ᾤτης, an ornament for the nose, by Symmachus.

**Half a shekel - For the weight of a shekel, See note Genesis 20:16.**

**And two bracelets - x•x©x x™ x!xžx™x“x™x• (usheney tsemidim). As (tsemidim) comes from x!xžx“ (tsamad), to join or couple together, it may very properly mean bracelets, or whatever may clasp round the arms or legs; for rings and ornaments are worn round both by females in India and Persia. The small part of the leg is generally decorated in this way, and so is the whole arm from the shoulder to the wrist. As these (tsemidim) were given to Rebekah for her hands, it sufficiently distinguishes them from a similar ornament used for the ankles.**

In different parts of the sacred writings there are allusions to ornaments of various kinds still in use in different Asiatic countries. They are of seven different sorts. 1. for the forehead; 2. for the nose; 3. for the ears; 4. for the arms; 5. for the fingers; 6. for the neck and breast; 7. for the ankles. See Genesis 24:22, Genesis 24:47; also Ezekiel 16:12; Proverbs 11:22; Isaiah 3:21; Genesis 35:4; Exodus 32:2, Exodus 32:3; Job 42:11; Judges 8:24. The principal female ornaments are enumerated in the third chapter of Isaiah, which are very nearly the same that are in use in Persia and India to the present time.

### Verse 26

**Bowed down his head, and worshipped** - Two acts of adoration are mentioned here;

1. Bowing the head,  $\mathbf{x}^{\text{TM}}\mathbf{x}\S\mathbf{x}$ “ (yikkod); and  
2. Prostration upon the earth,  $\mathbf{x}\bullet\mathbf{x}^{\text{TM}}\mathbf{x}\textcircled{\mathbf{x}}\mathbf{x}^{\mathbf{a}}\mathbf{x}\text{—}\mathbf{x}$ • (vaiyishtaehu).

The bowing of the head was to Rebekah, to return her thanks for her kind invitation. The prostration was to Jehovah, in gratitude for the success with which he had favored him.

#### Verse 27

The Lord led me - By desire of his master he went out on this journey; and as he acknowledged God in all his ways, the Lord directed all his steps.

#### Verse 28

Her mother's house - Some have conjectured from this that her father Bethuel was dead; and the person called Bethuel, Genesis 24:50, was a younger brother. This is possible, but the mother's house might be mentioned were even the father alive; for in Asiatic countries the women have apartments entirely separate from those of the men, in which their little children and grown-up daughters reside with them. This was probably the case here, though it is very likely that Bethuel was dead, as the whole business appears to be conducted by Rebekah's brothers.

#### Verse 31

Thou blessed of the Lord - Probably a usual mode of wishing prosperity, as he that is blessed of the Lord is worthy of all respect; for, enjoying the Divine favor, he is in possession of the sum of happiness.

#### Verse 32

Provender for the camels - These were the first objects of his care; for a good man is merciful to his beast.

Water to wash his feet - Thus it thus appears that he had servants with him; and as the fatigues of the journey must have fallen as heavily upon them as upon himself, so we find no distinction made, but water is provided to wash their feet also.

#### Verse 33

I will not eat until I have told - In Hindoostan it is not unusual for a Brahmin to enter a house and sit down, and when meat is offered, refuse to eat till he has obtained the object of his errand. Here is a servant who had his master's interest more at heart than his own. He refuses to take even necessary refreshment till he knows whether he is likely to accomplish the object of his journey. Did not our blessed Lord allude to the conduct of Abraham's servant, John 4:34: My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work?

#### Verse 36

Unto him hath he given all that he hath - He has made Isaac his sole heir. These things appear to be spoken to show the relatives of Rebekah that his master's son was a proper match for her; for even in those primitive times there was regard had to the suitableness of station and rank in life, as well as of education, in order to render a match comfortable. Persons of dissimilar habits, as well as of dissimilar religious principles, are never likely to be very happy in a married life. Even the poor and the rich may better meet together in matrimonial alliances than the religious and the profane, the well-bred and the vulgar. A person may be unequally yoked in a great variety of ways: Bear ye one another's burdens is the command of God; but where there is unsuitableness in the dispositions, education, mental capacity, etc., of the persons, then one side is obliged to bear the whole burden, and endless dissatisfaction is the result. See at the end, Genesis 24:67 (note).

#### Verse 42

O Lord God of my master - As Abraham was the friend of God, Eliezer makes use of this to give weight and consequence to his petitions.

#### Verse 43

When the virgin - *ḥā'almah* (haalmah), from *ḥā'alam* (alam), to hide, cover, or conceal; a pure virgin, a woman not uncovered, and in this respect still concealed from man. The same as *ḥā'athalah* (bethulah), Genesis 24:16, which, from the explanation there given, incontestably means a virgin in the proper sense of the word - a young woman, not that is covered or kept at home, the common gloss, but who was not uncovered in the delicate sense in which the Scripture uses this word. See this interpretation vindicated on Isaiah 7:14 (note).

#### Verse 45

Before I had done speaking in mine heart - So we find that the whole of this prayer, so circumstantially related Genesis 24:12-14, and again Genesis 24:42-44, was mental, and heard only by that God to whom it was directed. It would have been improper to have used public prayer on the occasion, as his servants could have felt no particular interest in the accomplishment of his petitions, because they were not concerned in them, having none of the responsibility of this mission.

## Verse 49

That I may turn to the right hand or to the left - That is, That I may go elsewhere and seek a proper match for the son of my master. Some have imagined that Eliezer intimated by these expressions that if he did not succeed in obtaining Rebekah, he would go and seek for a wife either among the descendants of Ishmael or the descendants of Lot. This interpretation is fanciful.

## Verse 50

Laban and Bethuel - These seem both to be brothers, of whom Laban was the eldest and chief; for the opinion of Josephus appears to be very correct, viz., that Bethuel, the father, had been some time dead. See note Genesis 24:28.

Bad or good - We can neither speak for nor against; it seems to be entirely the work of God, and we cordially submit: consult Rebekah; if she be willing, take her and go. See note Genesis 24:58.

## Verse 53

Jewels of silver, and jewels of gold - The word  $\times\text{æ}\times^{\text{TM}}$  (keley), which we here translate jewels signifies properly vessels or instruments; and those presented by Eliezer might have been of various kinds. What he had given before, Genesis 24:22, was in token of respect, what he gave now appears to have been in the way of dowry.

Precious things -  $\times\check{\text{x}}'\times^{\text{a}}$  (migdanoth). This word is used to express exquisite fruits or delicacies, Deuteronomy 33:13-16; precious plants or flowers, Song of Solomon 4:16; Song of Solomon 7:13. But it may mean gifts in general, though rather of an inferior kind to those mentioned above.

## Verse 54

And they did eat and drink - When Eliezer had got a favorable answer, then he and his servants sat down to meat; this he had refused to do till he had told his message, Genesis 24:33.

## Verse 55

Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten - The original is very abrupt and obscure, because we are not acquainted with the precise meaning of the form of speech which is here used;  $\times^{\text{TM}}\times\check{\text{x}}^{\text{TM}}\times^{\bullet}\times^{\bullet}\times^{\bullet}\times^{\bullet}\times^{\bullet}\times^{\bullet}$  (yamim o asor) Days or Ten, probably meaning a year or ten months, as the margin reads it, or a week or ten days. This latter is the most likely sense, as there would be no propriety after having given their consent that she should go, in detaining her for a year or ten months. In matters of simple phraseology, or in those which concern peculiar customs, the Septuagint translation, especially in the Pentateuch, where it is most accurate and pure, may be considered a legitimate judge; this translation renders the words  $\acute{\alpha}\frac{1}{4}\text{ῑ}\frac{1}{4}\text{ῑ}\mu\acute{\iota}\cdot\acute{\iota}\pm\acute{\iota}$ ,  $\acute{\alpha}\frac{1}{2}\text{ῑ}\text{ῑ}\mu\acute{\iota}\cdot\acute{\iota}\frac{1}{2}\text{ῑ}\mu\acute{\iota}\cdot\pm$ , about ten days. Houbigant contends strongly that instead of the words  $\times^{\text{TM}}\times\check{\text{x}}^{\text{TM}}\times^{\bullet}\times^{\bullet}\times^{\bullet}\times^{\bullet}\times^{\bullet}\times^{\bullet}$  (yamim o asor), days or ten, we should read  $\times\text{—}\times^{\text{TM}}\times^{\text{TM}}\times\check{\text{x}}^{\text{TM}}\times^{\bullet}$  (chodesh yamim), a month of days, i.e., a full month; without which emendation he asserts, locus explicari non possit, â€œthe passage cannot be explained.â€• This emendation is supported by the Syriac version, which reads here (yerach yomin), a month of days, or a full month. The reader may adopt the Syriac or the Septuagint, as he judges best.

## Verse 58

Wilt thou go with this man? - So it appears it was left ultimately to the choice of Rebekah whether she would accept the proposals now made to her, unless we suppose that the question meant, Wilt thou go immediately, or stay with us a month longer? She said, I will go - It fully appears to be the will of God that it should be so, and I consent. This at once determined the whole business.

## Verse 59

And her nurse - Whose name, we learn from Genesis 35:8, was Deborah, and who, as a second mother, was deemed proper to accompany Rebekah. This was a measure dictated by good sense and prudence. Rebekah had other female attendants. See Genesis 24:61.

## Verse 60

Be thou the mother of thousands of millions -  $\times\text{æ}\times^{\bullet}\times\text{æ}\times^{\text{TM}}\times^{\text{TM}}\times^{\text{TM}}\times^{\text{TM}}\times^{\text{TM}}\times^{\text{TM}}$  (lealphey rebabah), for thousands ten thousand, or for myriads of thousands, a large family being ever considered, in ancient times, as a proof of the peculiar blessing and favor of God. Similar addresses to a daughter, when she is going from her fatherâ€™s house to live with her husband, are very common among the Hindoos; such as, â€œBe thou the mother of a son,â€• â€œBe thou the wife of a king,â€• etc. See Ward.



**Verse 62**

And Isaac came - Concerning this well see Genesis 16:13, Genesis 16:14, etc. As it appears from Genesis 25:11, that Isaac dwelt at the well Lahai-roi, it has been conjectured that he had now come on a visit to his aged father at Beersheba, where he waited in expectation of his bride.

For he dwelt in the south country - The southern part of the land of Canaan. See Genesis 12:9.

**Verse 63**

Isaac went out to meditate - *לשׁוּבָה* (*lasuach*), to bend down the body, or the mind, or both. He was probably in deep thought, with his eyes fixed upon the ground. What the subject of his meditation was it is useless to inquire; he was a pious man, and could not be triflingly employed.

**Verse 65**

She took a veil - *כִּסְיוֹת* (*hatstsaif*). This is the first time this word occurs, and it is of doubtful signification; but most agree to render it a veil or a cloak. The former is the most likely, as it was generally used by women in the east as a sign of chastity, modesty, and subjection.

**Verse 67**

Sarah's tent - Sarah being dead, her tent became now appropriated to the use of Rebekah.

And took Rebekah, etc. - After what form this was done we are not told; or whether there was any form used on the occasion, more than solemnly receiving her as the person whom God had chosen to be his wife; for it appears from Genesis 24:66 that the servant told him all the especial providential circumstances which had marked his journey. The primitive form of marriage we have already seen, Genesis 2:23, Genesis 2:24, which, it is likely, as far as form was attended to, was that which was commonly used in all the patriarchal times.

In this chapter we have an affecting and edifying display of that providence by which God disposes and governs the affairs of the universe, descending to the minutest particulars, and managing the great whole by directing and influencing all its parts. This particular or especial providence we see is not confined to work by general laws; it is wise and intelligent, for it is the mind, the will, and energy of God; it steps out of common ways, and takes particular directions, as endlessly varied human necessities may need, or the establishment and maintenance of godliness in the earth may require. What a history of providential occurrences, coming all in answer to the prayer and faith of a simple, humble individual, does this chapter exhibit!

As Abraham's servant has God's glory only in view in the errand on which he is going, he may well expect the Divine direction. See with what simplicity and confidence he prays to God! He even prescribes the way in which the Divine choice and approbation shall be made known; and God honors the purity of his motives and his pious faith, by giving him precisely the answer he wished. How honorable in the sight of God is simplicity of heart! It has nothing to fear, and all good to hope for; whereas a spirit warped by self-interest and worldly views is always uncertain and agitated, as it is ever seeking that from its own counsels, projects, and schemes, which should be sought in God alone. In every place the upright man meets with his God; his heart acknowledges his Maker, and his Maker acknowledges him; for such a one the whole economy of providence and grace is ever at work.

Abraham's solicitude to get a suitable wife for his son is worthy of the most serious regard. He was well aware that if Isaac formed a matrimonial alliance with the Canaanites it might be ruinous to his piety, and prevent the dissemination of the true religion; therefore he binds his most trusty servant by a solemn oath not to take a wife for his son from the daughters of Canaan, but from his own kindred, among whom the knowledge of the true God was best preserved. Others had different rays of the light of truth, but Abraham's family alone had the truth; and to the descendants of this family were the promises made.

How careful should parents be to procure alliances for their children with those who fear God, as so much of the peace and comfort of the children, and the happiness of their posterity, depend on this circumstance! But alas! how many sacrifice the comfort and salvation of their offspring at the shrine of Mammon! If they can procure rich husbands and wives for their daughters and sons, then all, in their apprehension, is well. Marriages of this kind may be considered as mere bargain and sale; for there is scarcely ever any reference to God or eternity in them. The Divine institution of marriage is left out of sight; and the persons are united, not properly to each other, in the love, fear, and according to the ordinance of God, but they are wedded to so many thousand pounds sterling, and to so many houses, fields, etc. Thus like goes to like, metal to metal, earth to earth. Marriages formed on such principles are mere licensed adulteries. Let such contractors hear these awful words of God: *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?* James 4:4. See note on Genesis 24:36.

Although under the patriarchal dispensation parents had a kind of absolute authority over their children, and might dispose of them as they pleased in general cases, yet it appears that in matrimonial connections they were under no compulsion. The suitable person was pointed out and recommended; but it does not appear that

children were forced, against the whole tide of their affections, to take those persons who were the objects of the parentâ€™s choice. Wilt thou go with this man? was, in all likelihood, deemed essential to the completion of the contract; and by the answer, I will go, was the contract fully ratified. Thus the persons were ultimately left to their own choice, though the most prudent and proper means were no doubt used in order to direct and fix it. Whether this was precisely the plan followed in primitive times we cannot absolutely say: they were times of great simplicity; and probably connections on the mere principle of affection, independently of all other considerations, seldom existed. And it must be allowed that matches formed on the sole principle of convenience might as well be formed by the parents as by any others; and in Asiatic countries it was generally so, for there the female seldom presumes to have a choice of her own.

In all cases of this kind the child should invariably consult the experience and wisdom of the parents; and the parents should ever pay much respect to the feelings of the child, nor oppose an alliance which may be in all other respects suitable, because there may be a lack of property on one side of the intended match. If parents would proceed in this way, God would pour his blessing on their seed, and his Spirit upon their offspring.