

Read Genesis 23:1-2

- What unique detail is recorded in the first verse?
- What does this tell you about the age of Isaac at the time of his mother's death?



Read Genesis 23:3-6

- What problem did Abraham face?
- Verse 3 states: "Then Abraham got up from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites." Where did the Hittites come from?
 - Genesis 10:1 – These are the family records of Noah's sons, Shem, **Ham**, and Japheth. They also had sons after the flood.
 - Genesis 10:6 – Ham's sons: Cush, Egypt, Put, and **Canaan**.
 - Genesis 10:15-18 – Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn, then **Heth**, the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the Canaanite clans scattered.
- What was the Hittites response?

Read Genesis 23:7-9

- Abraham here shows he is not asking for a gift; he intends to pay for the burial land. Why does he do this in the presence of the people?

Read Genesis 23:10-20

- In view of Abraham's specific request (v.9), does something in Ephron's counterproposal strike you as strange?
- Notice here that Ephron offers not just the cave that Abraham asked for, but also the entire field. Is Ephron generous, or is there more to this?
- Here we have an example of bartering in the ancient world. To understand this section it is helpful to understand bartering customs. What was the bartering/haggling custom?
- Consider this: "As a starting point for the negotiations, Ephron suggested that the land was worth 400 shekels of silver. Compared with land values discovered in ancient Babylonian records, this suggested price seems exorbitant. We're led to think that Ephron expected a counteroffer from Abraham, after which serious bargaining could begin."
(People's Bible: Genesis, p.191)
- Note: God had promised this land to Abraham and his descendants, yet in his lifetime, this field and cave would be the only land he would personally own within the Promised Land. Also note that Sarah was not the only one buried here...
 - Genesis 49:29-33 – ²⁹ Then he commanded them: "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite. ³⁰ The cave is in the field of Machpelah near Mamre, in the land of Canaan. This is the field Abraham purchased from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site. ³¹ Abraham and his wife Sarah are buried there, Isaac and his wife Rebekah are buried there, and I buried Leah there. ³² The field and the cave in it were purchased from the Hittites." ³³ When Jacob had finished instructing his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and died. He was gathered to his people.
 - Genesis 50:12-14 – ¹² So Jacob's sons did for him what he had commanded them. ¹³ They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave at Machpelah in the field near Mamre, which Abraham had purchased as a burial site from Ephron the Hittite. ¹⁴ After Joseph buried his father, he returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had gone with him to bury his father.

Read Genesis 24:1-4

- The chapter begins with the words “Abraham was now old.” How old was he? (cf. 25:20)
- Abraham here makes his servant swear an oath. Why did oaths involve putting your hand under someone’s thigh?
- It seems strange that Abraham would put a servant in charge of finding a wife for Isaac. Why didn’t Abraham do this himself?



Read Genesis 24:5-9

- How did Abraham’s servant show that he shared his master’s deep reverence for the LORD?

Read Genesis 24:10-14

- As the servant left, we are told that “the servant took 10 of his master’s camels and departed with all kinds of his master’s goods in hand” (v.10). Evaluate the following purposes for those goods.
 - provided evidence of good faith
 - established the social standing of the groom
 - sealed the covenant between two families
 - reimbursed the father for the loss of a worker
 - served as prepaid alimony in case of desertion/divorce

- What is the distance between Hebron and Aram Naharaim?

- How long would such a journey take?

- In setting up terms in verses 12-14, wasn’t the servant acting presumptuously in dictating to God how he was to point out the woman of his choice?

- What would the suggested qualifications say about the girl?

- Note: One camel can drink twenty gallons. If her jug held five gallons, watering ten camels may have given her an hour’s work.

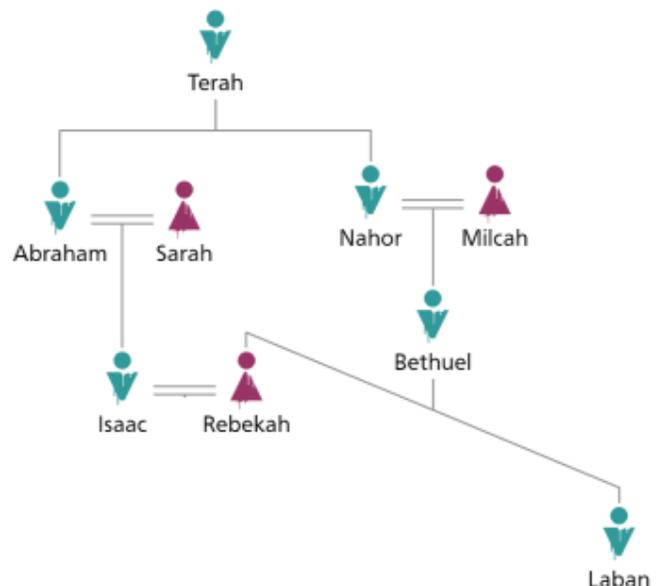
Read Genesis 24:15-21

- What is amazing about God’s answer to this servant’s prayer?

Read Genesis 24:22-27

- To express his appreciation for the kindness Rebekah had just shown him, the servant took out a gold nose ring and gold bracelets that Abraham had sent along and offered them to her as gifts. Note how much those would be worth.
 - From the NIV footnote:
 - nose ring = 1/5 of an ounce
 - each bracelet = about 4 ounces
 - Price of Gold per ounce (as of 12/1/15) = \$1067.10
 - Therefore...
 - Nose ring worth \$213.42
 - Each bracelet worth \$4,268.40
 - Total value of gifts = \$8,750.22
- Note that this was not the “bride-price,” since that was paid to the father; besides, at that moment Abraham’s servant had not yet found out who this young lady was and/or whether she would accompany him.
- What purpose, then, did these gifts serve?

- In verse 23 the servant asked a very important question, “Who’s daughter are you?” Why was this very personal question such a crucial one? *(Note: In verse 15, Moses identified this girl for the reader, but Abraham’s servant did not learn of her identity until later.)*



- The servant did not yet know whether Rebekah would return with him, yet, what did he do?

Read Genesis 24:22-27

- It seems strange that we are told “The girl ran and told *her mother’s household* about these things.” Why not *her father’s household*?
 - Various interpretations are offered...
 1. “The family was a matriarchy.” (But Laban is the spokesman in this chapter.)
 2. “Rebekah’s father Bethuel was dead.” (But he speaks in v. 50.)
 3. “It’s the natural thing for a girl to share news like this with her mother first.” (But Laban figures prominently in the proceedings, vv. 29ff.)
 4. “<a@ here = grandmother Milcah, Nahor’s widow” named in vv. 15, 24 and 47.
This had been her ancestral house, where she continued to live even after her husband’s death. Although her son Bethuel and his family lived there with her, it was still thought of as the home of Rebekah’s grandmother.
- How does the servant show the seriousness with which he carried out his assignment?

Read Genesis 24:34-49

- “Several matters received special emphasis in the servant’s presentation. He introduced the matter of Abraham’s wealth and emphasized that at Abraham’s death his estate would pass to Isaac. He explained that Isaac was born when Abraham was an old man. (Rebekah’s father, Bethuel, might otherwise have wondered about a possible generation gap between his cousin Isaac and his daughter Rebekah). Most striking in the servant’s speech to Rebekah’s family is his use of God’s Old Testament covenant name. Father Abraham’s interest was not just in getting his son married but in finding a proper wife for the heir of God’s covenant promises.” *(People’s Bible: Genesis, p.200)*

- Note: there is no marriage proposal. The servant simply relates the story and lets the details speak for themselves.

Read Genesis 24:50-51

- On what basis did Laban and Bethuel give their consent to Rebekah's marriage to Isaac? Notice how they refer to God.
- What do you see in verse 50 which explains why Abraham wanted Isaac's wife to come from this background?

Read Genesis 24:52-58

- What two kinds of gifts did the servant give?
- Rebekah's family requested (v. 55): "Let the girl stay with us for about 10 days. Then she can go." Why does that request seem reasonable?
- They decided to ask Rebekah's opinion. In the light of the significance of verse 51, how is Rebekah's answer to be understood?
- Put yourself in Rebekah's shoes, what emotions are going through your mind?

Read Genesis 24:59-61

- What sounds familiar in this blessing spoken to Rebekah?
- Note: Rebekah is not leaving alone. She has various servants going with her including the woman (Deborah 35:8) who nursed her.

Read Genesis 24:62-67

- We are told here that Isaac was returning from Beer-lahai-roi. Do you remember the last time we heard about this place?
- What was Isaac doing in the field when they arrived?
- Explain: What we see taking place here is a Common Law Marriage.
- Note: Isaac married Rebekah without ever seeing her face.
- Explain: Genesis 24 is not a romantic love story, but a vivid portrayal of faith in action.
- Evaluate: Chapter 24 is more about the promises of a Savior to come than about a bride for Isaac.