

# Genesis 24: Structure and Scenes

THE THEMATIC QUESTION: HOW WILL THE BLESSING BE CONTINUED INTO THE NEXT GENERATION?

Option	Risk
Isaac takes a local wife (rejected by Abraham in his instructions to the servant in v. 3)	risk of dilution of faith in YHWH in favor of Canaanite religion (Ba`al) and the way of life "outside empire"
Abraham goes himself to get a wife for Isaac from the old country (too old)	Risk that prospective wife will not go with him
Send Isaac back to Mesopotamia (the servant's proposal in v. 5)	Risk that he would settle there and defeat God's plan

## **Recollection in Genesis 24 of original call in Genesis 12:1-3**

"native land": 24:4, 7,  
"father's house": 24:7, 38, 40  
"to the land": 24:5, 7  
"blessing": 24:1, 35  
"becoming great": 24:35  
"go" : 17 times! ("take" also 14 times, as in "take" a wife)

## **other links between Gen 24 and Abraham/Sarah cycle**

24:13: the "spring of water" echoing Hagar, 16:7, 21:19

24:13: "daughters of the men of the city" (sometimes translated "townspeople"), echoing Sodom, 19:4, 8

24:16: fourfold description of Rebekah matches 22:2, fourfold description of Isaac, 22.2

24:17-20: parallel to Abraham's provision of hospitality in 18:4-8 ("a little water," "hurried," "ran")

24:22: wealth/purchase measured in shekels, recalling 23:15, 16, the cave price (shekels not elsewhere in Gen)

24:29-33: contrast Laban's highly self-interested and Abraham's disinterested provision of hospitality, also with Lot's in 19:2, all linked by "wash feet" (18:4, 19:2, 24:32; cf. 43:24), "outside" the city and the house (19:10, 16, 17, 24:31) and "prepared"/"turned" (18:22, 24:31)

24:60: Laban's blessing of Rebekah echoing angel's blessing of Abraham, 22.17

## **the question of Gen 25:1-18**

midrash tradition identifies "Keturah" with "Hagar," thus explaining both the joint burial of Abraham by Isaac and Ishmael (but not the other later sons!), Isaac's settlement at Beer-lahai-roi, the site of Hagar's divine rescue, 16:14, and the following genealogy of Ishmael in 25:12-17.

## COMPARISON OF ABRAHAM/SERVANT ENCOUNTER WITH RETELLING

Original	Retelling
v. 4: "Canaanites, among whom I live"	v. 37: "Canaanites, in whose land I live"
v. 4: "will go to my country"	v. 38: "you shall go to my father's house"
v. 5: "Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land"	v. 39: "'Perhaps the woman will not follow me.'"
v. 5: "must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?" v. 6: "Abraham said to him, 'See to it that you do not take my son back there.'"	v. 39: (omitted)
v. 7: "YHWH, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your offspring I will give this land,' he will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there."	v. 40: "'YHWH, before whom I walk, will send his angel with you and make your way successful. You shall get a wife for my son from my kindred, from my father's house.'"
v. 8: "But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this oath of mine; only you must not take my son back there."	v. 41: "Then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my kindred; even if they will not give her to you, you will be free from my oath."

## COMPARISON OF SERVANT/REBEKAH ENCOUNTER WITH RETELLING

Original	Retelling
v. 12: "O YHWH, God of my master Abraham, <i>please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham.</i> "	v. 42: "'O YHWH, the God of my master Abraham, <i>if now you will only make successful the way I am going!</i> '"
v. 13-14: "I am standing here by the spring of water, <i>and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water.</i> Let the <i>girl</i> to whom I shall say, 'Please <i>offer</i> your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels' --let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. <i>By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master.</i> "	v. 43-44: "I am standing here by the spring of water; let the <i>young woman who comes out to draw</i> , to whom I shall say, 'Please <i>give me a little water</i> from your jar to drink,' and who will say to me, 'Drink, and I will draw for your camels <i>also</i> '--let her be the woman whom YHWH has appointed for <i>my master's son.</i> "
v. 15: Before he had finished speaking, there was Rebekah, <i>who was born to Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother</i> , coming out with her water jar on her shoulder. v. 17: "Please let me <i>sip a little water from your jar.</i> "	v. 45: "Before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her water jar on her shoulder; and she went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, 'Please let me drink.'"
v. 18-19: (break between offer to him to drink and offer to water the camels " <i>until they have finished drinking</i> ")	v. 46: "She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels.'"
v. 22-23: When the camels had finished drinking, the man <i>took a gold nose-ring weighing a half shekel, and two bracelets for her arms weighing ten gold shekels</i> , and said, " <i>Tell me whose daughter you are. Is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?</i> "	v. 47: "Then I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him.' So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her arms."
v. 25: "She added, 'We have plenty of straw and fodder and a place to spend the night.'"	v. 47: (omitted)
v. 26-27: "The man bowed his head and worshiped YHWH and said, "Blessed be YHWH, the God of my master Abraham, <i>who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master. As for me, YHWH has led me on the way to the house of my master's kin.</i> "	v. 48-49: "Then I bowed my head and worshiped YHWH, and blessed YHWH, the God of my master Abraham, <i>who had led me by the right way to obtain the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so that I may turn either to the right hand or to the left.</i> "