

## Genesis 24

This is the second of three transitional chapters. These chapters contain the death of Sarah (23), the finding of a wife for Isaac (24) and the death of Abraham (25). These chapters move the story of the Promise forward from the first to the second generation.

The story, which appears to be about nothing more than finding a wife for Abraham and Sarah's son Isaac, is actually a continuation of the story of God's covenant promise to Abraham. This covenant promise was that not only would God bless Abraham and Sarah with land, offspring and economic prosperity, but that through them the entire world would be blessed or recreated into the world God desired it to be. If we look closely at the story, we can see these themes play out.

First there is the land. When Abraham sends his servant to look for a wife for Isaac, the instructions are first, that the servant is not to look for this wife among the local people (who were not part of the lineage of the Promise). Instead, the servant is to return to Abraham and Sarah's homeland and find a relative for Isaac to wed. Second, the servant is to not take Isaac with him, thus insuring that Isaac will not abandon the land that God has promised.

Second, there is the issue of offspring. The Promise will only work if Isaac, the miracle child, is able to have his own children. The story is crafted in such a way as to keep the reader in suspense as to whether the servant will be successful in his search. In fact, the criterion for the search (finding a relative who will act in a certain manner and in a certain time-frame) would seem to make success doubtful. Perhaps as doubtful as Abraham and Sarah having Isaac in their older years. Yet, once again, God, to whom the servant prays, proves that God's promises are sure and certain, as we read of the servant finding the right woman, named Rebecca. The story teller adds some other elements intended to keep the outcome in doubt (Rebecca's parents trying to delay or prevent her from going), but in the end she goes, and Isaac loves her.

Third, there is the issue of the blessing, or economic prosperity. While this is not central to the story, we can see this theme arise in the blessing that Rebecca's parents give as she is leaving. *"May you our sister, become thousands of myriads; may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes."* (vs. 60). This is one way of saying, may you have offspring who will be economic assets, but also will you control land such that you will prosper.

Finally, one of the interesting aspects of this story is that Rebecca is given the choice to go with the servant, or not. While this would be highly unlikely in times when women were possessions of their fathers', it is a theological claim, that Rebecca, like Abraham chooses to make the journey in order to fulfill the promise.

**Reflection:** While, the relationship between Isaac and Rebecca is often portrayed as a "love story," they are no more than transitional characters, taking the reader from the extended Abraham stories, to the extended Jacob/Joseph stories. Even so, the major themes of the Promise, as noted above, are woven into their rather short time in the spotlight. In some ways, the briefness of this spotlight can be a reminder for us, that we don't have to be major actors in the story of the Promise, to be part of God's world transforming work. Each of us plays our part, and each part is as important as any other.

Questions:

1. What is something that you have done that impacted the life of another person? How do you see that as part of God's world transforming story?
2. How would you describe your role in God's Promise story?

3. How do you relate to the characters in this story?