

Genesis 24:1-5

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Abraham has grown old, but his son is not married and has no children of his own. Abraham commands his servant to swear that he will not find a Canaanite wife for Isaac, but rather will go to Haran and find a wife from Abraham's family there. The servant doubts if this is possible.

Abraham's story is nearing to a close. He will die in the next chapter, [Genesis 25](#). First, he has one final thing he wants to accomplish.

Abraham is *old and advanced in age*, and *the LORD had blessed him in every way*. He draws near to the end of his life, for he is both *old and advanced in age*, a repetition likely meant to emphasize how aged he is at this point. He has lived a full life, rich in reward and meaning, for the *LORD has blessed him in every way*. Abraham has lived a life of faithful obedience to God; he married a godly woman ([Hebrews 11:11](#)), he acquired wealth, he won military victories, he gained the respect of his neighbors though he was a foreigner among them, and he was given a son of Promise, Isaac. Yet, in Abraham's old age, his son is unmarried. God's promise that Abraham's descendants will be as numerous as the stars rests on Isaac having children himself, perpetuating the family line.

So Abraham resolves to find his son a wife. He calls for *his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned* to give him the task of seeking a wife for Isaac. The servant remains unnamed throughout this chapter, but tradition tells that it was Eliezer, a servant who was once mentioned as Abraham's only heir before he had children ([Genesis 15:2](#)).

Speaking to this servant, Abraham asks him to *swear an oath, Please place your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live*. The first part of Abraham's request is that Isaac not take a wife *from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I live*. This explains why Isaac had no wife. Perhaps Abraham has kept an eye out for a woman of character, from a family of character, and had come to despair that any would live up to his standards. [Leviticus 18](#) lists behaviors common to the Canaanite culture 400

years later. Assuming it was similar (as is inferred in [Genesis 15:16](#)) Abraham would want to do everything he could to deter his son from such influences.

So Abraham devised a plan, telling his servant *but you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac*. Abraham was married to his half-sister. He desired his son to marry from among his relatives. At this time in history this was still common. The human gene pool was apparently still close enough to the original creation to allow this. However, such intermarriage could have contributed to the substantial decay in lifespans that can be noted in Genesis.

Apparently oaths of that time were made sometimes by the oath-taker placing his *hand under the thigh* of the person to whom he was submitting. Abraham asks his servant to *swear* several things. First, that he *shall not take a wife for Isaac from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom they lived*. The reason for this is that the Canaanites worship idols and commit various abhorrent sins. Theirs was a culture where the strong dominated the weak. They are in rebellion against God's desire for people to love and serve one another.

God wants Abraham to follow His ways, not the world's ways. This is the fabric of God's covenant with Abraham, and with Israel later on, that they should live life the way God designed it to be lived. This blesses each individual as well as the community. The Canaanites are a constant example of how not to live. God's people are warned not to associate with the Canaanites, because they will be corrupted into living the Canaanite lifestyle ([Exodus 34:11-16](#); [Deuteronomy 7:1-4](#); [Judges 3:6](#); [1 Kings 11:1-13](#); [Ezra 9:2,12](#)). The Canaanites practiced all kinds of exploitative immorality: bestiality and child-sacrifice, to name a few ([Leviticus 18:23](#), [Deuteronomy 12:31](#)). The books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus contain chapters upon chapters of forbidden acts that the Israelites must not perform, all of which were things they had seen in Egypt or would see in Canaan. God called Israel, and the patriarch Abraham ([Genesis 17:1](#)), to reject the practices of the world, and to be holy, following God's ways.

God gave the Canaanites, specifically the Amorites, time to repent from their sins. As he told Abraham when first establishing a covenant with him, "[Your descendants] will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete" ([Genesis 15:16](#)). Their "iniquity" being "not yet complete" meant that God was still giving them time to turn away from their sins. All sin is grievous to God, but He is patient and merciful. To a point. Prior to Noah's flood, God was patient and the entire world filled with violence ([Genesis 6:11](#)).

It seems now God gives time, but not so much time that it creates a culture of irreversible violence. God gave the Amorites 400 years to turn away from their wickedness, but they never repented, and so were judged by God by the giving of the land to the Israelites ([Deuteronomy 9:4-6](#)).

Abraham desires Isaac to be wed to someone of the same values and beliefs. The principle of marrying someone who has the same beliefs and values exists in the New Testament as well. [2 Corinthians 6:14](#) tells us, “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?” There is profound wisdom in marrying a fellow believer. This provides a basis for both husband and wife to have unity around a common mission, to serve God and one another, since they are operating from the same faith. This provides an excellent basis for them to encourage one another to live a life of faithful obedience to God, who desires all to love and serve others. Two people seeking the best for the other is a foundation for an excellent partnership.

Rather than find a local Canaanite woman for Isaac to marry, Abraham charged his servant to *go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac*.

Though Abraham had lived in Canaan for around 65 years, he calls Haran his *country*, for it was the *country* where his father had settled. It was also where God spoke to him, telling him to,

“Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father’s house,
To the land which I will show you.”
([Genesis 12:1](#))

The *servant* was to *swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth* that he would do what Abraham asked. The *LORD* is referred to twice—as the *God of heaven and the God of earth*—to describe the fullness of His authority. Heaven and earth make up all of creation, and *the LORD* is *God* over all of it. For the *servant* to swear by *God* was to put his life in God’s hands, because God will presumably hold Abraham’s *servant* to his promise. It was an oath demanding total responsibility to fulfill what was promised.

The *servant* asks Abraham a question, seeming to worry that he may not be able to achieve this goal, *Suppose the woman is not willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?*

Essentially, the servant expects that any *woman* he finds in Haran won't be *willing* to leave the land of her family to follow a stranger into Canaan. If this is the case, the servant wonders if it would be easier to *take Isaac back to the land from where Abraham came.*

Biblical Text:

¹ Now Abraham was old, advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in every way. ² Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned, "Please place your hand under my thigh, ³ and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live, ⁴ but you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac." ⁵The servant said to him, "Suppose the woman is not willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?"