

Genesis 24:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

Analysis

And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Be... This passage is part of the Abrahamic narratives which shift from universal human history to God's particular covenant people. The Abraham cycle (Genesis 12-25) demonstrates God's sovereign election, covenant faithfulness, and the development of faith through testing and promise fulfillment.

Central themes include God's unconditional covenant promises (land, descendants, blessing to nations), the call to faith and obedience, the testing of faith through delays and impossibilities, the contrast between divine promises and human schemes, and God's gracious persistence despite human failures. Abraham emerges as the father of faith whose trust in God's promises becomes the model for all believers (Romans 4, Galatians 3, Hebrews 11).

Theologically, these narratives establish:

1. salvation by grace through faith rather than works
2. covenant as God's gracious initiative binding Himself to His people
3. the necessity of patient trust when promises seem impossible
4. the consequences of attempting to fulfill God's promises through human effort

5. the pattern of divine testing producing mature faith.

The Abraham cycle foreshadows Christ as the ultimate seed through whom blessing extends to all nations (Galatians 3:16).

Historical Context

The patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12-50) reflect the cultural, social, and legal customs of the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE). Archaeological discoveries including the Mari tablets, Nuzi tablets, and Egyptian records confirm many details: nomadic pastoralism, covenant-making ceremonies, marriage customs, property laws, and international travel patterns described in Genesis.

The cultural practices reflected include: treaty/covenant forms (Genesis 15), bride-price customs (Genesis 24, 29), inheritance laws favoring firstborn sons (Genesis 25, 27), adoption practices (Genesis 15, 30), levirate-type arrangements (Genesis 38), and Egyptian administrative systems (Genesis 41, 47). These parallels confirm Genesis's historical reliability while showing how God worked within ancient cultural frameworks to accomplish His purposes.

For later Israelites, these narratives established their identity as Abraham's descendants, explained their claim to Canaan, justified their possession of Joseph's bones (Exodus 13:19), and provided models of faith despite imperfection. The patriarchs' failures and God's faithfulness encouraged Israel that covenant relationship depended on God's grace rather than human merit. The movement from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt set the stage for the Exodus and conquest narratives.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does understanding this verse shape our doctrine of humanity, sin, or salvation?
2. What specific changes in thinking or behavior does this verse call us to make?
3. What connections can we trace from this verse to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Interlinear Text

וְהָיָה	לְדַבֵּר	כָּל הַ	טָרָם	הָ וְאֵת	וְהָיָה
H2009	H1696	H3615	H2962	H1931	H1961
	speaking	And it came to pass before he had done			
מֶלֶךְ הָ	בֶּן	לְבֶתוּאֵל ל	יָלְדָה	אֲשֶׁר	יָצָא
H4435	H1121	H1328	H3205	H834	H3318
son	of Milcah	to Bethuel	was born	who	came out
שָׁמָּה:	עַל	וְכַדָּהּ	אֶבְרָהָם	אָחִי	נָח וְ
H7926	H5921	H3537	H85	H251	H5152
upon her shoulder	with her pitcher	Abraham's	brother	of Nahor	the wife

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 11:29 (Parallel theme): And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.

Isaiah 65:24 (Kingdom): And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

Genesis 24:45 (Kingdom): And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew water: and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee.