

Chapter 24

Abrahams feruant adiured and fent by him into Mefopotamia, to feke a wife for Ifaac, 12. prayeth to God for a figne, findeth Rebecca, 34. and demanding her for this purpofe, 50. with her parents, 58. and her owne confent, she goeth with him, 67. is married to Ifaac: who therby is comforted for the death of his mother.

And Abraham was old, and of manie dayes: and our Lord had bleffed him in al things. ² And he faid to the elder feruant of his houfe, which was ruler ouer al that he had: Put thy hand vnder my thighe, ³ that I may adiure thee by our Lord, God of heauen and earth, that thou ^a)take not a wife for my fonne, of the daughters of the Cananites, among whom I dwel: ⁴ but that thou goe vnto myne owne countrie and kindred, and thence take a wife for my fonne Ifaac. ⁵ The feruant answered: If the woman wil not come with me into this land, whether muft I bring thy fonne backe againe to the place, from whence thou dideft come forth? ⁶ And Abraham faid: Beware thou neuer bring my fonne backe againe thither. ⁷ Our Lord God of heauen, which tooke me out of my fathers houfe, and out of my natiue countrie, which fpake to me, and fware to me, faying: To thy fede wil I geue this land: he fhall fend his Angel before thee, and thou fhalt take from thence a wife for my fonne: ⁸ but if the woman wil not folow thee, thou fhalt not be bound by the oath: only bring not my fonne thither againe. ⁹ The feruant therefore put his hand vnder the thigh of Abraham his lord, and fware to him vpon this worde. ¹⁰ And he tooke tenne camels of his lords heard, and departed, of al his goods carying fomething with him, and fetting forward went on into Mefopotamia to the citie of Nachor. ¹¹ And when he had

^a In choofing a wife a vertuous flock and familie efpecially true faith and religion, are before al other things to be confidered & preferred. *S. Amb. li. 1. c. 9. de Abrah. S. Chrifoft. ho. 48. in Gen.*

made the camels lye downe without the towne beside a wel of water at euen, at the time when wemen are wont to come forth to drawe water, he said: ¹² O Lord God of my lord Abraham, mete me to day, I befeech thee, and doe mercifully with my maister Abraham. ¹³ Behold I stand nigh to the fountaine of water, and the daughters of the inhabitors of this citie, wil come forth to drawe water. ¹⁴ Therefore the maid, to whom I shal say: Bowe downe thy tankard that I may drinke: and she shal answere: Drinke, yea to thy camels also wil I geue drinke: she it is, whom thou haft provided for thy seruant Isaac: and by this I shal vnderstand, that thou haft delt mercifully with my maister. ¹⁵ Neyther had he yet ended these wordes within him selfe, & behold Rebecca came forth, the daughter of Bathuel, the sonne of Melcha wife to Nachor the brother of Abraham, hauing a tankard on her shoulder: ¹⁶ a passing comely maide, & most beautiful virgin, & not knowen to man: and she was gone downe to the fountaine, and had filled her tankard, and came backe. ¹⁷ And the seruant ranne to mete her, and said: Geue me a litle water to drinke of thy tankard. ¹⁸ Who answered: Drinke my lord. And quickly she let downe the tankard vpon her arme, and gaue him drinke. ¹⁹ And when he had druncke, she added: but for thy camels also I wil drawe water, til al doe drinke. ²⁰ And powring out the tankard into the troughes, she ranne backe to the wel to drawe water: and being drawn gaue it to al the camels. ²¹ But he musing beheld her with filence, desirous to know whether our Lord had made his iourney prosperous, or not. ²² And after that the camels had drunck, the man plucked forth golden earelettes, weying two ficles: and as manie braceletts of tenne ficles weight. ²³ And he said to her: Whose daughter art thou? shew me: is there anie place in thy fathers house to lodge? ²⁴ Who answered: I am the daughter of Bathuel, the sonne of Melcha, whom she bare to Nachor. ²⁵ And she added, saying: Of strawe also and hay we haue good store, and a large place to lodge in. ²⁶ The man bowed him selfe, and adored our Lord, ²⁷ saying: Blessed be the Lord God of my lord Abraham, that hath

not taken away his mercie & truth from my lord, and hath brought me the ftreight way into the houfe of my lords brother. ²⁸ The maide therfore ranne, and reported into ^aher mothers houfe al things that fhe had heard. ²⁹ And Rebecca had a brother named Laban, who in al haift went forth to the man, where the fountaine was. ³⁰ And when he had feene the eareletts and braceletts in his fifters hands, and had heard al her words reporting: Thefe words fpake the man vnto me: he came to the man which ftoode befide the camels, and nighe to the fountaine of water: ³¹ and faid to him: Come in, thou bleffed of our Lord: Why ftandeft thou without? I haue prepared the houfe, and a place for the camels. ³² And he brought him in into his lodging: and he vnharneffed the camels, and gaue ftrawe and hay, and water to wash his feet, and of the men that were come with him. ³³ And bread was fet before him. Who faid: I wil not eate, til I fpeake my meffage. He answered him: Speake. ³⁴ And he faid: I am the feruant of Abraham: ³⁵ and our Lord hath bleffed my lord wonderfully, and he is magnified: and he hath geuen him sheepe, and oxen, filuer and gold, men feruants and wemen feruants, camels, and affes. ³⁶ And Sara my lordes wife hath borne my lord a fonne in her old age, and he hath geuen him al things that he had. ³⁷ And my lord adiured me faying: Thou fhalt not take a wife for my fonne of the Chananites, in whose land I dwel: ³⁸ but thou fhalt goe to my fathers houfe, and of mine owne kinred fhalt thou take a wife for my fonne: ³⁹ but I answered my Lord: What if the woman wil not come with me? ⁴⁰ Our Lord, faith he, in whose fight I walke, wil fend his Angel with thee, and wil direct thy way: and thou shalt take a wife for my fonne of myne owne kinred, and of my fathers houfe. ⁴¹ Thou shalt be innocent from my curfe, when thou shalt come to my kinne, and they wil not geue her thee. ⁴² I came therfore to day to the wel of water, and faid: O Lord God of my lord Abraham, if thou haft directed my way, wherin I

^a Her father hauing perhaps manie wiues and euerie one a feueral houfe fhe went to her mothers houfe.

now walke, ⁴³ behold I ftand besides the wel of water, and the virgin, that shal come forth to drawe water, when she shal heare me say: Geue me a litle water to drinke of thy tankard: ⁴⁴ and she shal say to me: Drinke both thou and for thy camels I wil drawe alfo: that is the woman, which our Lord hath prepared for my maisters fonne. ⁴⁵ And whilest I pondered thefe things fecretly with my felfe, Rebecca appeared comming with a tankard, which she caried vpon her shoulder: and she went downe to the fountaine, & drew water. And I faid to her: Geue me a litle to drinke. ⁴⁶ Who fpedlie let downe the tankard from her shoulder, and faid to me: Drinke both thou, and to thy camels I wil geue drinke. I dranke, and she watered the cammels. ⁴⁷ And I asked her, and faid: Whofe daughter art thou? who answered: I am the daughter of Bathuel, the fonne of Nachor, whom Melcha bare him. I hoong therfore earelettes to adorne her face, and I put braceletts vpon her hands. ⁴⁸ And proftrate I adored our Lord, bleffing the Lord God of my lord Abraham, who hath brought me the ftraight way to take the daughter of my lords brother for his fonne. ⁴⁹ Wherefore if you doe according to mercie and truth with my lord, fhew me: but if it please you otherwise, that alfo tel me, that I may goe to the right hand, or to the left. ⁵⁰ And Laban and Bathuel answered: From our Lord the word hath proceded: we can not fpeake any other thing with thee besides his pleafure. ⁵¹ Behold Rebecca is before thee, take her and goe thy waies, and let her be the wife of thy lords fonne, as our Lord hath fpoken. ⁵² Which when Abrahams feruant heard, falling downe he adored our Lord to the grounde. ⁵³ And taking forth veffel of filuer, and gold, and garments, gaue them to Rebecca for a present. To her brothers alfo, and to her mother he offred giftes. ⁵⁴ A banquet was made, and eating and drinking together thy lodged there. And in the morning, the feruant arofe, and faid: Difmiffe me, that I may goe to my lord. ⁵⁵ And her brother, and mother answered: Let the maide tarie at the leaft tenne days with vs, and after she shal depart. ⁵⁶ Stay me not, faid he, becaufe our Lord hath directed my way: difmiffe me

that I may goe on to my lord. ⁵⁷ And they said: Let vs call the maid, and ^{a)}aske her wil. ⁵⁸ And being called, when she was come, she asked: Wilt thou goe with this man? who said: I wil goe. ⁵⁹ They dismissed her therefore, and her nurse, and Abrahams seruant, and his companie, ⁶⁰ wishing prosperitie to their sister, and saying: Thou art our sister, encrease thou into thousand thousands, and thy seed possesse the gates of their enemies. ⁶¹ Therefore Rebecca, and her maides being set vpon camels, folowed the man: who with speed returned vnto his lord, and ⁶² the same time Isaac walked along the way, that leadeth to the well of the Liuing and the feing, so called: for he dwelt in the fourth countrie; ⁶³ and he was gone forth to ^{b)}meditate in the field, the day now being well spent: and when he had cast vp his eyes, he saw camels coming a farre off. ⁶⁴ Rebecca also, when she saw Isaac, lighted of the camel, ⁶⁵ and said to the seruant: Who is that man which cometh towards vs along the field? And he said to her: The same is my lord. But she quickly taking her cloake, couered her selfe. ⁶⁶ And the seruant told Isaac all things that he had done. ⁶⁷ Who brought her into the tent of Sara his mother, and tooke her to wife: and he loued her so much, that it did moderate the sorrowe, which was chanced of his mothers death.

ANNOTATIONS

14 The maide to vvhom I shal say.) Obseruation of speeches called ominous, which are interpreted to signifie good or euil luck, are sometimes superstitious, & suggested by euil spirits, who now & then telling, or insinuating some truth, get credite, and so allure men to attend to such vaine, vncertaine, and vnlawful signes, as S. Augustin testifieth (*li. 2. de Gen. ad lit. c. 17. & li. 12. c. 22.*) Neuertheles such signes are sometimes lawfully obserued, & desired from God, as the same Doctor disputeth (*li. quest. super*

Ominous speeches
sometimes
superstitious.

Sometimes lawful.

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- ^a As children ought not to marry without their parents good liking: so the parties owne consent is most necessarie. *S. Amb. Epist. 43.*
^b *Suach* signifieth to speake confideratly with hart or mouth. Here S. Ambrose (*li. 1. c. 1. de Isaac*) and S. Aug. (*q. 69. in Gen.*) vnderstand it of mental prayer.

Ioan. 14. *Gen. q. 53.*) and S. Chriſtoſtome teacheth more clerly (*ho. 45. in Gen.*) likewiſe S. Theodoret (*q. 73. in Gen.*) But whoſoever will not erre in particular caſes, muſt follow either expreſſe Scripture, or the iudgement of the Church, which is alwayes directed by the ſpirite of truth. And touching this prayer of Abrahams ſervant, and his deſire of this determinate ſigne, to know the maide, whom God had provided to be Iſaacs wife, the fathers generally hold that it was religious, deuout, and diſcrete. For he being careful of his maſters buſines, and not truſting his owne iudgement, but relying vpon that Abraham had ſaid, *Our Lord ſhal ſend his Angel before thee*, commended ſo weightie a cauſe to God by prayer, the Angel ſuggeſting both to him to deſire, and to the maide to performe (as the euent ſheweth) ſuch qualities and vertues in her, as were moſt agreeable to the great charitie and hospitalitie dayly practiſed in Abrahams houſe, moſt conuenient and neceſſarie (as he diſcretly conſidered) for that familie, and good of manie. The like obſeruations were approved in Gedeon, and Ionathas. And to pray for ſuch ſignes in ſome caſe, or for manifeſt miracles is alſo approved by the Apoſtles example praying God *To ſhevv by ſote vvhich of the tvvo he had choſen to the Apoſtleship, in place of Iudas*. And that he would extend his hand to cures, & ſignes, & wonders, to be done by the name of his holie ſonne IESVS.

Holie Scripture and the Church are iudges of doubtful obſeruations. Eliezers prayer, for a particular ſigne, was lawful, deuout, and diſcrete.

Iudic. 7. 1. Reg. 14.

Act. 1. & 4.