

Rebekah

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Rebek'ah (Heb. *Ribkah'*, רִבְקָה, *a noose, i.e. ensnarer*; Sept., New Test., and Josephus, Ῥεβέκκα), the daughter of Bethuel ([Ge 22:23](#)) and sister of Laban, married to Isaac, who stood in the relation of a first cousin to her father and to Lot. She is first presented to us in the account of the mission of Eliezer to Padanaram (ch. 24), in which his interview with Rebekah, her consent and marriage, are related. B.C. 2023. The elder branch of the family remained at Haran when Abraham removed to the land of Canaan, and it is there that we first meet with Laban, as taking the leading part in the betrothal of his sister Rebekah to her cousin Isaac (24:10, 29-60; 27:43; 29:4). Bethuel, his father, plays so insignificant a part in the whole transaction, being in fact only mentioned once, and that *after* his son (24:50), that various conjectures have been formed to explain it. Josephus asserts that Bethuel was (lead, and that Laban was the head of the house and his sister's natural guardian (*Ant. i, 16, 2*), in which case "Bethuel" must have crept into the text inadvertently, or be supposed, with some (Adam Clarke, *ad loc.*), to be the name of another brother of Rebekah. Le Clerc (*in Pent.*) mentions the conjecture that Bethuel was absent at first, but returned in time to give his consent to the marriage. The mode adopted by Prof. Blunt (*Undesigned Coincidences*, p. 35) to explain what he terms "the consistent insignificance of Bethutel," viz. that he was incapacitated from taking the management of his family by age or imbecility, is most ingenious; but the

prominence of Laban may be sufficiently explained by the custom of the country, which then, as now (see Niebuhr, quoted by Rosenmuller, *ad loc.*), gave the brothers the main share in the arrangement of their sister's marriage and the defence of her honor (comp. [Ge 34:13](#); [Jg 21:22](#); [2Sa 13:20-29](#)). *SEE BETHUEL*. The whole chapter has been pointed out as uniting most of the circumstances of a pattern marriage — the sanction of parents, the guidance of God, the domestic occupation of Rebekah, her beauty, courteous kindness, willing consent and modesty, and success in retaining her husband's love. For nineteen years she was childless; then, after the prayers of Isaac and her journey to inquire of the Lord, Esau and Jacob were born; and, while the younger was more particularly the companion and favorite of his mother ([Ge 25:19-28](#)), the elder became a grief of mind to her ([26:35](#)). When Isaac was driven by a famine into the lawless country of the Philistines, Rebekah's beauty became, as was apprehended, a source of danger to her husband. But Abimelech was restrained by a sense of justice such as the conduct of his predecessor (ch. 20) in the case of Sarah would not lead Isaac to expect. It was probably a considerable time afterwards when Rebekah suggested the deceit that was practiced by Jacob on his blind father. She directed and aided him in carrying it out, foresaw the probable consequence of Esau's anger, and prevented it by moving Isaac to send Jacob away to Padan-aram (ch. 27) to her own kindred ([Ge 29:12](#)). B.C. 1927. The Targum Pseudo-Jon. states ([Ge 35:8](#)) that the news of her death was brought to Jacob at Allon-bachuth. It has been conjectured that she died during his sojourn in Padan-aram; for her nurse appears to have left Isaac's dwelling and gone back to Padan-aram before that period (comp. [Ge 24:59](#); [Ge 25:8](#)), and Rebekah is not mentioned when Jacob returns to his father, nor do we hear of her burial

till it is incidentally mentioned by Jacob on his death-bed ([Ge 49:31](#)). Paul ([Ro 9:10](#)) refers to her as being made acquainted with the purpose of God regarding her children before they were born. For comments on the whole history of Rebekah, see Origen, *Hom. in Genesis* 10 and 12; Chrysostom, *Hom. in Genesis*, p. 48- 54. Rebekah's inquiry of God, and the answer given to her, are discussed by Deyling, *Obser. Sac.* i, 12, p. 53 sq., and in an essay by J. A. Schmid in *Nov. Thes. Theol. - philolog.* i, 188; also by Ebersbach (Helmst. 1712). The agreement of the description of Rebekah in Genesis 22 with modern Eastern customs and scenes is well noticed by Thomson, *Land and Book*, 2, 403. [SEE ISAAC](#); [SEE JACOB](#).