

## Electronic Reserves

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An answer that is superogatory like Rebekka!  
elegant, beautiful, and

(10)

1. Rebekah is characterized as a fitting wife for Abraham's son Isaac, because she displays <sup>certain key</sup> ~~many of the~~ characteristics of Abraham himself. First, she is extremely hospitable. She ~~gives~~ <sup>gives</sup> the servant of Abraham a drink and lets him drink fully from her pitch until he is satisfied. After satisfying the servant's request, she offers on her own to water his camels, thus passing the test the servant had devised to determine Isaac's bride. She energetically goes back and forth from well to camels to water them until they are satisfied. All of this activity, especially the use of key words such as "made haste," echo the activity of Abraham in Ch. 18 when he is visited by the 3 men who are probably the LORD and two angels. However, Rebekah's activity shows she is a woman of initiative, which prefigures the initiative she'll take in the covenant story of Jacob and Esau. However, despite her initiative, she is ~~also~~ <sup>also</sup> polite and respectful of proper custom ~~and~~ concerning hospitality. Therefore, although she ~~is~~ tells Abraham's servant about their accommodations - she does not offer to let him stay; instead, she lets Laban & Bethuel (her brother and father) make the deal. And so, she is again like Abraham in that her boldness and strength is tempered with a proper humility. Finally, when there is a first controversy over the immediacy or delay of her departure to Canaan with the servant, she shows bravery and obedience to the will of God: when the question is put to her about what she wants to do, she simply says, "I will go." Like Abraham, she is willing to leave family and homeland in order to take her proper part in God's plan of the ~~structure~~ <sup>formation</sup> of His chosen people. The chapter also mentions that she (like her mother-in-law Sarah) ~~is~~ and her daughter-in-law (Rachel) is very beautiful.

is her sense of initiative and activity in this scene, as opposed to the absence of her prospective husband who will become the most passive of the patriarchs. & Indeed, Rebekka's character foreshadows her chosenness to be Isaac's wife and typifies their marriage and life.

Also, Laban's interest in Abraham's wealth functions in contrast to Rebekka's generosity.

- (10) (2) When Abraham sends his servant to 'the land of my birth' in the beginning of Genesis 24, he desires that the servant return with a suitable wife for his son, Isaac. Swearing an oath by placing his hand 'under my thigh', the servant agrees that the wife shall not be a Canaanite, but a woman from Mesopotamia. Presumably, intermarriage here would compromise the inheritance of Canaan, promised by YHWH in Gen 12, 15, 17, etc. Furthermore, the wife must return to Canaan - Isaac is not to go to live with her. Again, <sup>redundant</sup> departure from the land is explicitly proscribed as it would compromise the inheritance of Canaan. When the servant arrives in Haran and has been welcomed first by Rebekka (see #1), he then comes to the house of Bethuel, seemingly presided over by Laban, to 'tell my tale'. Although he is not dishonest, he relates Abraham's instructions in a way that emphasize Rebekka as the chosen one to be the wife of Isaac. Whereas Abraham sent him to 'the land of my birth', this becomes

↑ implication?

also 'the land of my kin' and 'my father's house'.  
Furthermore, it is not Rebekka's 'no' that would  
release him from his promise, but the  
✓ refusal of her kin to release her. The servant  
presumes that Rebekka consents, and is now  
trying to market this betrothal to the family.  
The servant also stresses Abraham's wealth,  
his status as elect, and identifies Isaac  
as ~~the~~ the sole heir, a child of  
his parents' old age. Finally, the giving  
of gifts is now placed to honor Rebekka's  
family pedigree, rather than her hospitality  
alone. This servant makes an excellent case  
for betrothal and, after a short quarrel over  
a delay in departure, successfully returns  
to Canaan with Rebekka.

(20)

## Essay

Levenson rightly states that "The trials [of the righteous] that appear to be their humiliation are, in fact, the means of their exaltation, proof positive that their special destiny is based on other than caprice." This reality can be seen vividly in the lives of both Abraham and Jacob, both chosen, <sup>and beloved</sup> by God, and both put through a gauntlet of trials that ultimately prove their worth and merit of their exaltation as sons of God.

Abraham, to whom the covenant is first given like "a bolt out of the blue," seems to have been chosen capriciously by God. ~~However,~~ <sup>he ~~was~~ is</sup> not described as being a man of exceptional virtue or spiritual integrity, yet as his story unfolds, it becomes clear, due to his ~~constant~~ consistent faith and obedience in the midst of his many trials, that ✓ God did indeed choose ~~him~~ the right Mesopotamian.

For example, as soon as Abraham receives the Land of Canaan, he is sent ✓ into exile to Egypt thanks to a severe famine. There he ~~receives~~ must pass

his wife off as his sister in order to preserve both of their lives. Yet God spares Abram and Sarai, plagues Pharaoh until he gives Sarai back, and Abram ends up leaving in a much wealthier, ✓ exalted state than when he entered Egypt as a refugee.

When his brother Haran dies, leaving him to adopt his nephew Lot, Lot's family and servants eventually become numerous and they are forced to split the land. This seems to run counter to God's covenant with Abram, but Abram ✓ allows Lot to choose his own land, so Lot takes the fertile land, while Abraham receives the remainder as a gift from God. His humiliation has become exaltation and we begin to see that perhaps ✓ God knew what he was doing when he chose Abraham.

The years Abram must endure without any offspring, combined with the near-death of his son Ishmael when Sarai finally gives him her maid Hagar as a wife, make way for his ultimate exaltation with the miraculous birth of Isaac. The

years of humiliation he endured are turned into the ~~great~~ fulfillment of God's promise of an heir born of his beloved wife, Sarah.

✓ Finally, Abraham's most intense trial, test of faith and love for God, and his most bitter humiliation comes in the akedah, in which he is asked to offer his only son, his beloved son, Isaac to God. He must bind Isaac, put the wood for the altar on Isaac's back, and lift the knife to slay his son before God ~~so~~ interrupts him, stopping Abraham's hand with "Now I know you are a fearer of God." It is only in Abraham's humiliation, in his willingness to give up all that he loves, all that God has promised, for love of the God who gave him those gifts and made him chosen, that he is able to truly actualize the benefits of being God's beloved son. ~~As~~ Abraham's willingness to persevere in faith and obedience throughout his series of trials undoubtedly shows God's wisdom in choosing him to be the "father of many nations." (→)

Jacob, Abraham's grandson, must also go through a series of humiliations, out of which he "prevails" as Israel, thus giving great merit to God's choice ~~at~~ <sup>during</sup> Rebekah's pregnancy.

No sooner does Jacob steal his brother's birthright and thus become the "chosen one" does he have to flee his homeland for fear of his fratricide brother. Once he reaches the house of Laban, his uncle, and meets his beloved wife Rachel, he is practically enslaved to his greedy and miserly uncle for fourteen years, ~~most~~ tricked into marrying Leah, Rachel's sister, before he can be with his beloved, must pay for his own trickery in the past, amass his own wealth ~~ex nihilo~~, humble himself before his brother whom he usurped, wrestle with an angel, and ultimately experience the near-death of his beloved son, Joseph.

In all of these humiliations, however, Jacob emerges as the epitome of generosity, <sup>???</sup> faithfulness, spiritual insight, ~~and~~ despite his beginnings as a trickster. Thus,

he, like his grandfather, shows  
God's choice to once again be  
deliberate and infinitely wise.

20

perfect

## Essay

B) As Alter describes it, the type-scene of an annunciation contains 3 basic parts: 1) condition of barrenness; 2) actual annunciation (announcement) of coming child, usually to the mother; and 3) the fulfillment of the announcement in the child's birth. This set pattern appears to be violated in Gen 18-21 in its initial manifestation, which is the announcement of Isaac's birth to Sarah. This instance violates the type-scene, or is otherwise especially extraordinary, in three ways. First, the announcement is displaced from the mother to the father; Sarah actually saves drops on her own annunciation as the mysterious visitors tell Abraham of the impending birth. This reflects Ab.'s special role as first patriarch of the chosen people. Second, both Abraham and Sarah's old age creates a more 'compound' obstacle to be overcome as opposed to the 'simple' obstacle of barrenness. <sup>seen as most anomalous</sup> Most importantly, the large break in between the announcement in Gen 18 and the birth ~~of Isaac~~ a few chapters later is highly unconventional and might even seem inexplicable or careless. However, it is

(i.e. giving  
proof-by-  
justification)

neither of these, for the stories in this  
'break' serve to further reform the  
announcement story of Abraham and  
Sarah, creating contracts with other  
characters and structures and thus  
highlighting the appropriateness of God's  
choice of this couple ~~as the recipients~~  
Abraham - as the recipients of ~~the~~ promise.

In the second part of ch 15  
Ab. converses with God and eventually  
intercedes for him on behalf of the cities  
of Sodom & Gomorrah. This passage  
presents Ab. first as having a strong  
sense of justice; indeed, he is  
expected Ab. himself to establish a  
just society as the recipient of the  
divine promise. ~~This~~ This contrasts  
with the more pathetic voices of the  
Sodomites who appear in the next scene.  
Also, Ab. comes across as a bold  
intercessor who actively ~~participates~~ his  
part in the promise, unlike the weak  
passive character exhibited by his nephew L of

The next scene shows Lot  
receiving the divine messengers/visitors,  
and again he comes off negatively, in  
contrast to his uncle (cf. beginning of ch 18)

~~Whereas~~ Ab. ran about in the heat of the day, attending his three visitors and preparing a feast of milk, fresh bread, curds, fatted calf, and such. Lot too is gracious, but he has only 2 visitors (~~is~~ ~~are~~ these only the two accompanying angels); ~~waiting~~ only to greet them in the cool of the evening, he offers them unleavened bread and a ~~place~~ place to stay. ~~The~~ Ab. simply goes above and beyond in his tremendous hospitality, again highlighting his worthiness of being chosen, and Lot suffers by comparison.

~~The~~ The image of Lot suffers even more when a mob of Sodomite men come to the door, hoping to gang-rape the visitors. While he does plead for their safety, Lot shockingly offers his two ~~sons~~ unmarried (but betrotted) daughters to the mob instead.

~~almost outside.~~ ~~The~~ Also, when he goes to warn his sons-in-law about the impending destruction, they laugh in his face, and when Lot finally does leave the city w/ his wife (who soon becomes a pillar of salt as punishment

for 'looking back') and daughters, it is after a delay. In short, unlike his upright, completely faithful and respected uncle, Lot is immoral, vacillating, and a laughing stock (not that those around him are much better!). This scene also points to the value of moral behavior, and the destruction, literal or figurative, awaiting the societies that do not live godly lives.

When Lot and his daughters move to a cave outside Zoar, the implicit judgment on Lot for offering them to the mob becomes realized. The scene harkens back to the post-diluvian scene earlier, where after the great catastrophe of the flood, Noah and his family remain, and Ham (w/ some brand of sexual connotation) 'sees' his father's nakedness. In similar ~~sort~~ fashion, having concluded that all humanity other than they has been wiped out by the 'rain of fire' from heaven, each daughter in turn is deflowered by her own father and has a son by him. The situation is even more ironic in contrast w/ Ab.

to continue the  
chosen line

and Sarah, who will soon bring a  
promised child into the world by  
miraculous means. The daughters,  
~~sons~~ on the other hand, resort  
to sordid/immoral means to keep  
what they believe to be the remnant  
of humanity alive.

✓ Sarah in Gerar, echoes the Sodom story at first  
the strangers fearing for their 'sexual  
safety' in a foreign land. It also  
echoes ch. 12's sojourn in Egypt in  
that Sarah is passed off as Ab.'s  
sister and enters a harem (ironically,  
this time as she is about to become  
mother to the promised son), and in that  
the king and his people are afflicted as  
a result. In this instance, however, there  
is no mention of famine or of Sarah's  
beauty; Ab. gives no reason initially  
for passing Sarah off as his sister,  
the king learns of his error through  
a threatening dream rather than sold  
by affliction; and the king, Abimelech,  
proves himself to be an upright  
man who (almost) courageously  
upbraids the prophet, Abraham

✓ Car sat

The most telling detail, though, is that the Lord had closed the wombs of Abim.'s people while Ab. & Sarah were among them, whereas in contrast God will ~~straitaway~~ open the heretofore barren Sarah's womb at last.

Thus, these inserted stories point to the unevenness / unpredictability of the world into which Isaac will be born: to the import of moral uprightness for those peoples who hope to survive and endure and most importantly, the justification, mainly by contrast to others, that Ab. and Sarah are indeed worthy to be God's elect.