

Dear Friends,

GENESIS 24: 10-14

Eliezer has been sent to find a bride for Isaac, Abraham and Sarah's son. He is to go to the land of Abraham's birth and find her amongst Abraham's family. And it's important that she be willing to come, Eliezer is not obliged to bring her back if she does not give her consent.

Eliezer sets out with ten camels and all kinds of valuable gifts. That is a display of great wealth. It may help to persuade the woman and her family to agree to a marriage. The journey is over 300 miles. The land over which they travel is very difficult. There are dangers along the way. It is not certain that Eliezer will be able to complete the journey. Should a woman be willing to return with him it is not certain that they will be able to get safely back again. Camels would cover between 25 and 50 miles a day. So, the journey could easily have taken a couple of weeks. That gave Eliezer plenty of time to think about the job he had been given. It gave him time to work on the job description. What kind of woman would be suitable? Perhaps he remembered those moments when Abraham had been at his best, when he really had been a blessing to others, helping them to flourish, helping them to live life to the full. Maybe particularly that occasion when strangers had unexpectedly turned up and Abraham had immediately rushed around taking care of them, doing all he could to do justice to their needs. Someone like that, Eliezer thought. That's what I'm looking for, someone like that.

And how would he be able to find the person who was like that in amongst all the other people who might be available. He hit upon a plan. He would go to the well. The well is the traditional site in the Bible for speed dating. At the well he would say to a woman who had just collected water, "Please give me a drink." She in response would give him a drink, but would also, without being asked give water to the camels as well. So, he has two items in the criteria for a suitable bride. Two items that he needs to tick off in order to know that a particular woman is right. One, she gives him a drink and two she also waters the camels.

Eliezer arrives. He goes to the well. He prays. So far in Genesis, God has appeared to people and they have had conversations. This is the first time that someone does what we do. Eliezer prays in his heart to an unseen God who he trusts is with him. He prays that his mission will be successful. Abraham told him that God would send an angel before him. He hopes to have that help now. Some people think that Eliezer over complicates things with his test to find the right woman. He even takes a long time before making sure that the candidate is from Abraham's family, which was an important part of Abraham's criteria. I however, like the idea of there being a partnership between the hand of God and the minds of people. Eliezer prays and asks for God's help but he also uses common sense and imagination to help him to make the right decision.

The women begin to arrive at the well to draw water. Which, if any of them, will be the one he seeks?

God bless you,

Tony