

Dear Friends,

GENESIS 24: 28-67

Abraham's servant Eliezer has found the ideal wife for Isaac. She is Rebekah. As Abraham was a blessing to others, so is she. She has rushed home to tell her family of the stranger she just met at the well. He has given her gifts. A valuable nose ring and two even more valuable bracelets. Her brother Laban spots them immediately. If it were a cartoon, shekel signs would appear in his eyes and in his mind, he would hear the sound of a cash register going "Ker-Ching". We will meet Laban again in Genesis. A lot of information about him is given to us in this detail of what his eyes first notice as soon as Rebekah enters.

Laban rushes out to meet Eliezer. He is very courteous. He says, "Come in, O blessed of the Lord. The house is prepared. There is space for your camels". Laban unloads the camels. Perhaps he's a little curious about what's contained in the baggage the camels have been carrying. He wonders if there are more valuable gifts packed away and ready to be given. He takes care of the camels and brings water for Eliezer and his companions to wash their feet. Food is brought. But Eliezer does not want to eat until he has discharged his mission. He is in a hurry. He wants to get back with good news of his success before Abraham dies. Laban invites him to go ahead.

Eliezer's task is to persuade the family to allow Rebekah to go with him and become Isaac's wife. He gives them three reasons to allow this. One, they are family. Two, Abraham is very wealthy. He gives a list of Abraham's assets: flocks, herds, silver, gold, male and female slaves, camels, donkeys. And Abraham has passed on all of this to Isaac. It's in their material interests to accept the match. And three, God's hand has been at work in bringing Rebekah to Eliezer's attention. God has given him a sign that she is the right person. That's evidence that this match is the will of God. And they would surely not like to go against what God requires would they? The family accept his arguments. They say, "Behold, Rebekah is before you, take her and go."

Great. Success. Well not quite. Remember Abraham said that the woman had to be willing to go with Eliezer. Somehow, she needs to give her consent.

Eliezer brings out more gifts. Silver and gold jewellery and clothes for Rebekah. Valuable ornaments for her mother and for Laban. They eat and drink and then rest for the night.

The next morning Eliezer is keen to go. He wants to get back to Abraham so that Abraham can die, knowing what happened, with the loose ends having been tied up. But Rebekah's family want a delay. They say, "Let her stay for another ten days or so, then she may go". Eliezer insists that he would really like to go now. It's urgent for him to get back. They decide to ask Rebekah what she wants. They say, "Will you go?" She says, "I will". In Hebrew "I will" is just one word. It's a verb that was

also used earlier in Genesis when Abraham was commanded to leave his home for a land that God would show him.

Rebekah's "Yes", her consent, reveal her as a new Abraham. Both leave their country, their family, their home for a land that they do not know. In a way she is even braver than Abraham. Abraham went with family, servants, all kinds of wealth. Abraham had a call from God giving him assurance. Rebekah goes off with just her nurse and her maids. She goes to a land that she does not know to be given a husband that she does not know.

As she leaves her family bless her. They pray that she will be fruitful that she will have "Thousands of myriads". I'm not sure what she thinks about that. Maybe she thinks "I'd prefer to have just one. Or perhaps twins. That would be okay. They would surely play nicely together".

They travel back to Isaac's home. Isaac is out walking, meditating in the fields. A solitary man, rather lonely, one who doesn't laugh anymore. He looks up and sees camels coming. Rebekah, on her camel, looks up and sees Isaac. She quickly slips down from the camel. She does everything quickly. She says to Eliezer. "Who is the man over there walking in the field, coming to meet us?"

"It is my master" says Eliezer. Wait a minute. Isaac isn't your master. Abraham is. Maybe Eliezer did not make it in time. Perhaps Abraham died. There is a tiny bit more about Abraham after this story, but his last recorded words were to send Eliezer to find a companion for Isaac. As Moses never got to see the promised land, perhaps Abraham never got to know that Eliezer's journey met with success. Sometimes we have to accept uncertainty. We really want to know what's going to happen next. But that is not always for us to know. What we can know is that God doesn't stop working. God will not leave us without the light of faith. God will not leave us without the light of love. There will always be people who will be a blessing to us. There will always be people to whom we may be a blessing.

Rebekah takes her veil and covers herself. Isaac and Rebekah go into his mother Sarah's tent. I imagine that at first, they are nervous, they fumble awkwardly. They are a little earnest and serious. But maybe at some point Rebekah finds something funny and has to stifle a laugh. Isaac at first is troubled. Is he doing something wrong? Then he too sees the funny side. And they laugh together. And it's the first time he has laughed in ages. And in that moment, they both know that they are going to be all right. They take each other. They become husband and wife. And it says that Isaac loved Rebekah. He is the first man in the Bible to be described as loving a woman.

And that's what happened when Isaac met Rebekah.

God bless you,

Tony