

Isaac and Rebekah, Fulfilling Hearts' Desires

Introduction:

Sarah died in Hebron; she had lived 127 years. Abraham mourned her. Even though he was considered an outsider, he asked the Hittites to let him buy some land to bury her. The Hittites replied that he was not an outsider to them. They saw him as a prince with God. They wanted him to bury Sarah in the best of their burial plots. Abraham wanted Ephron the Hittite's cave at Machpelah and offered him money for it. Ephron wanted to give it to Abraham as a gift, but Abraham refused to just take it. He insisted on paying for it. So Ephron's field next to Mamre with all its trees and cave became Abraham's property. (Remember Abraham liked to camp out under the oak trees at Mamre?) He buried Sarah in the Cave at Machpelah in the land of Canaan.

Abraham grew old. God had blessed him in every way. Isaac was lonely and missing his mother. So Abraham had his oldest servant who oversaw his household come to him. He said, **"Put your hand under my thigh and swear by GOD—God of Heaven, God of Earth—that you will not get a wife for my son from among the young women of the Canaanites here, but will go to the land of my birth and get a wife for my son Isaac."**(Genesis 24:2-4)

The servant asked Abraham what to do if the woman refused to return to Canaan with him. He asked if he should then take Isaac to her. This was Abraham's reply: **"Oh no. Never. By no means are you to take my son back there. GOD, the God of Heaven, took me from the home of my father and from the country of my birth and spoke to me in solemn promise, 'I'm giving *this* land to your descendants.' This God will send his angel ahead of you to get a wife for my son. And if the woman won't come, you are free from this oath you've sworn to me. But under no circumstances are you to take my son back there."**(Genesis 24:6-8)

So Abraham's servant took the oath. He took ten camels loaded with gifts and headed toward Mesopotamia to the city of Nahor.

Story:

When Abraham's servant got outside the city, he made the camels kneel by a well where the women came to draw water. He prayed to God: **"O GOD, God of my master Abraham, make things go smoothly this day; treat my master Abraham well! As I stand here by the spring while the young women of the town come out to get water, let the girl to whom I say, 'Lower your jug and give me a drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and let me also water your camels'—let her be the woman you have picked out for your servant Isaac. Then I'll know that you're working graciously behind the scenes for my master."** (Genesis 24:10-14)

The servant had barely finished praying when a young woman approached the well. She was Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel. (Bethuel's mother was Milcah and his father was

Nahor, Abraham's brother. Rebekah was Nahor's granddaughter and Abraham's great niece.) Rebekah was very beautiful. She carried a water jug on her shoulder so Abraham's servant asked her for a drink. She said he could and held the jug while he sipped from it. When he was no longer thirsty, she said she'd water his camels too. To do this she had to carry the jug back and forth to a watering trough many times till the camels were all satisfied. Abraham's servant watched in amazement. He wondered if she was the answer to his prayers.

Once the camels were finished drinking, the servant brought out gifts for Rebekah—a gold nose ring and two bracelets. He asked her about her family and if there was room for them to stay with her family that night. She told him that she was Bethuel's daughter and that Milcah and Nahor were her grandparents. She said that there was plenty of room in her father's house and plenty of feed and grain too.

The servant was overwhelmed. While Rebekah ran to tell her family the news, he bowed and worshiped God. He could hardly believe how good God had been to his master Abraham in leading him to his brother's family to find a wife for Isaac!

Rebekah's brother, Laban, went out to meet this man. He had seen Rebekah's gold jewelry and was interested in learning more. Laban welcomed the servant into their house.

So Abraham's servant and those with him entered the house. Their camels were fed. Their feet were washed. They were offered food, but the servant refused to eat until he had told his story.

Abraham's servant said: "My master is Abraham. God has richly blessed him in the land of Canaan. Sarah, his wife, gave him a son in his old age. That son is Isaac who will inherit his entire wealth. My master sent me to find a wife for his son among his family. He told me an angel would go before me and prepare the way. Today, I came to the well and prayed for God to send the wife for Isaac. I asked God for her to give me a drink and then offer to water the camels. Just as I finished praying, Rebekah approached the well. Not only did she allow me to drink my fill, she watered the camels as well. I asked her whose daughter she was and she replied she was the daughter of Bethuel whose parents were Milcah and Nahor. So I gave her two gold bracelets and a gold nose ring as gifts. Then I bowed and worshiped God who led me to my master's family to find a wife for Isaac. Please tell me what you plan to do--is it going to be a 'yes' or a 'no'?"

Both Laban and Bethuel could see God's hand in the matter and said Rebekah could go with him. Then Abraham's servant brought out gifts of gold and silver jewelry and fine clothes and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious gifts to her brother and mother.

The servant and his assistants ate supper and spent the night. First thing the next morning, he asked to return to his master. Her brother and mother asked for Rebekah to be allowed to wait ten days before she left them. Abraham's servant didn't want to wait. He said that God had worked everything out so well; he wanted to return quickly to his

master. They sent for Rebekah and asked her what she wanted to do. She said she was ready to leave with him right away.

They sent Rebekah with a nurse to accompany her on the journey. They blessed her saying, “Our sister, may tens of thousands descend from you! May your descendants own the gates of their enemies!”

Isaac was living in the Negev. He had just returned from the city of Beer Lahai Roi. It was evening, and he was meditating in his field when he looked up and saw camels coming. Rebekah, too, looked up and saw Isaac. She got off her camel and asked who that man was in the field. The servant replied that it was his master Isaac so she took her veil and covered herself.

After the servant told Isaac the whole story of his trip, Isaac married Rebekah and took her to his mother’s tent. She brought him comfort after the death of his mother, Sarah.

Summary:

It may not seem like every little detail of your life matters to God, but it does. Did you notice how it mattered to Abraham that his son’s wife was not from Canaan but from among his family? Abraham did not want the children of the promise to be mixed in with idol worshipers. He had so much faith about this matter that he told his servant an angel would go before him to prepare the way and help him find a wife for Isaac.

What a witness it must have been to Abraham’s servant to once again see God bless Abraham and grant his heart’s desire! No sooner had the servant prayed than God brought the answer to his prayers—very specifically, just like he asked. Not only was Rebekah from Abraham’s relatives, she was kind, hard-working, and beautiful too! What a wonderful answer to his prayers!

The Bible tells us that God wants to give us exceeding, abundantly beyond all we can ask, think or even imagine. You see God cared about the desires of Abraham’s heart and also about the desires of Isaac’s heart. Isaac was sad over his mother’s death and lonely so God provided a beautiful wife to comfort him.

God wants to grant us our heart’s desires too. This is what Psalm 37:3, 4 (NLT) says on this subject:

**“Trust in the LORD and do good.
Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.**

**Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you your heart's desires. ”**

Discussion Questions:

1. How old was Sarah when she died?
2. Where did Abraham want to bury her?
3. What kind of reputation did Abraham have with the Hittites?
4. Why do you think Abraham insisted on buying the land for Sarah’s burial?
5. How did Isaac feel after his mother’s death?
6. Where did Abraham tell his servant to go to look for Isaac’s wife? Why?
7. When Abraham’s servant arrived in Nahor, what did he pray?
8. How did God answer his prayers?
9. What gifts did the servant give Rebekah when he met her?
10. Describe Rebekah.
11. Why did Rebekah’s family agree to let her go home with a stranger?
12. What happened when Isaac saw Rebekah?
13. Let’s memorize Psalm 37:3, 4 this week. **“Trust in the LORD and do good.
Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you your heart's desires. ”**