

Rebekah, a Beautiful Bride for Isaac

(Genesis 24, 25:19-26; Luke 3:23-38)

By

Joelee Chamberlain

The Bible is full of interesting true stories, isn't it? Now, many of the stories in the Bible are about men, aren't they? But there are also interesting stories about women. And today I'm going to tell you one of those. I think you'll really enjoy it.

This true story takes place almost 4,000 years ago and is about a beautiful young woman and how she got a husband. Oooh! That sounds interesting, doesn't it?! We find this story in the very first book of the Bible, in Genesis. But first I'll need to give you a little background.

Okay, I've told you about Abraham before, haven't I? Well, Abraham had a brother whose name was Nahor. When the Lord told Abraham to leave his home and move to a land that the Lord would show him, Abraham took his wife Sarah and went. And Nahor went with his brother Abraham, too, and so did their father Terah.

After traveling a long way, they all settled down in a place called Haran. After a while their father Terah died. Then Abraham left Haran and moved farther down into the land of Canaan. Then after many more years Abraham and his wife Sarah had a son whom they named Isaac.

Now, when Abraham moved down into Canaan, this time Nahor hadn't gone with his brother Abraham. No. Instead, Nahor had stayed up in Haran. And there Nahor and his wife had lots of children and grandchildren. The name of one of Nahor's grandsons was Laban, and the name of one of Nahor's granddaughters was Rebekah. Laban and Rebekah were brother and sister. And that granddaughter Rebekah is whom we're going to talk about today. Would you like that?

All right, then. Rebekah was a beautiful girl. She was also kind and a hard worker, and at the time our true story begins here, Rebekah was probably a teenager, and she wasn't married.

Now, do you have chores? Well, Rebekah had chores, too, and one of her chores was to get water for the family. Get water? Couldn't she just turn on a faucet and get water? No!! They didn't have running water. Instead, there was a well outside of the city where Nahor and his family lived, and it was the job of the girls and women of the city to go to that well and get the water for their families. They would take big pitchers and carry them out to the well. Then they would fill the pitchers with water and carry the pitchers home. And today in many places in the world, this is still the way people get their water, straight from wells or rivers.

But how did they get the water from the well? There were 2 types of wells then that I know about. With one kind, they stood by the well and lowered a bucket or pitcher into the water and then pulled the full bucket or pitcher up again. But the other kind of well had steps leading down to where the water was, and they had to go down the steps, fill their bucket or pitcher, and then climb back up the steps. Whew! That's a lot of hard work, isn't it?! But the kind with the steps seems to have been the kind of well that Rebekah had outside of her city, since the Bible says that she went

down to fill her pitcher and then came up again.

Okay, now for our story. Where Rebekah lived the women would go out in the evening to get water for their families. And one evening Rebekah was going out to the well at the time that the other women were going. She had her big pitcher on her shoulder as she walked along. She got to the well, went down into it, filled her pitcher, than came back up out of the well.

Now, as Rebekah and the other women were getting water, there was a man standing there by the well. He had other men with him, and they had 10 camels with them. They looked as if they had been traveling for a long time from some far away country. This traveller went up to Rebekah and said to her, "Please give me a drink of water from your pitcher."

Rebekah said to him, "Yes, do have a drink, sir." And she hurried and took the pitcher quickly down from her shoulder so he could have a drink. After he had drunk some of the water, Rebekah said, "I'll get some more water and give it to your camels, too, until they've had enough to drink."

Now, that was very kind of Rebekah to offer to water the camels, wasn't it? But that was going to be a very hard job for her to do! It wouldn't be like giving 10 dogs a drink of water. No. You see, camels are not only very big, but they drink lots and lots of water!! I've read that a thirsty camel can drink as much as 30 gallons (about 114 liters!) of water in just a few minutes!!

Well, Rebekah couldn't just get a hose and turn on a faucet and fill the watering trough for the camels, could she? No! She had to use her pitcher. And even the empty pitcher was probably rather heavy, as it was probably pottery that was made from clay. Just imagine how heavy it was when it was full of water!

But Rebekah had said that she would do this, so, as the other women were getting the water for their families, Rebekah began working. She went down the steps into the well to where the water was, filled the pitcher with water, climbed back up the steps, and then emptied the heavy pitcher of water into the watering trough. She had to do this many, many times! Up and down and back and forth! Up and down and back and forth! Up and down and back and forth! I don't know how big her pitcher was, so I'm not sure, but it probably took her 5 or 6 or more trips of going up and down and then going back and forth between the well and the watering trough in order to water each camel! Why, to get enough water for 10 camels, it seems to me that it probably took her between 50 and 70 or even more trips back and forth to the well to water all of those camels!

So, while the other women got water for their families, Rebekah began getting water for the camels. The traveller watched as Rebekah ran up and down and up and down those steps with her pitcher and went back and forth and back and forth between the well and the watering trough for probably a half an hour or more. Wow! That's a lot of work, isn't it?! But she did it!! I think she must have been strong to do that, too, don't you?!

The traveller didn't say anything until she had finished and his camels weren't thirsty anymore. (By the way, though the Bible doesn't say, I'm sure that Rebekah gave water to the men who were travelling with him, too.)

Well, when Rebekah was finally through giving water to those 10 thirsty camels, the man took out 2 gold bracelets and a gold what was probably a nose ring (though some translations say "earring") and gave them to her. Then he said to her, "Whose daughter are you? And, please, is there room in your father's house for us to stay?"

Rebekah said, "I am Nahor's granddaughter." Then she said, "Yes, you can stay with us. And we have enough food for the camels, too."

Now, it may sound strange to us that this traveller would ask to stay at their house and that Rebekah would say he could without having asked her parents. But, you see, in those days there weren't hotels as there are now. So when people were traveling and came to a town, they might ask around for a place to stay at someone's house. And it was the polite thing for a family to let travellers stay with them when they came to town. So Rebekah must have known that it was all right to say this to the traveller and the men with him.

Anyway, after Rebekah said this, do you think they just started walking toward her parents' home? No. Instead Rebekah saw the traveller just stand there and bow his head and begin praying to the Lord! The traveller said, "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham Who has been so good to my master. The Lord has led me to my master's relatives!"

I wonder what Rebekah thought as he was doing this! I imagine she was surprised and wondered what he was talking about! But the Bible doesn't say what Rebekah was thinking.

But what do you think Rebekah did then? Do you think she stopped and talked with this strange man? No! She just ran to her mother's house and told them what had happened! I don't know, but I imagine she was sort of confused! (I would have been!)

Now, Rebekah's brother Laban was there at the house, and Laban saw the gold bracelets and the gold nose ring that the traveller had given to Rebekah. Then Laban ran out to where the stranger and his men and the camels were by the well, and he said to them, "Come in! Why are you standing here? I have the house ready and room for your camels."

So they all went with Laban. First they took care of the camels and gave them food. And Laban gave the men water to wash their dusty feet (remember, they just wore sandals). And then food was put in front of them.

But the stranger said, "I'm not going to eat until I tell you why I have come." Then he said, "I am the servant of Abraham."

Why, Abraham was the brother of Laban and Rebekah's grandfather Nahor, wasn't he?! I imagine they were very surprised to hear that this stranger had come from their Great-uncle Abraham! And though the Bible doesn't tell us what they were thinking, they probably wondered why had he come way up here. But let's go on and find out why, okay?

Well, then Abraham's servant said, "And the Lord has made my master very rich. He has

many different kinds of herds, and he has servants and gold and silver. And Sarah, my master's wife, bore a son for my master when she was old." (That would be Isaac, wouldn't it?)

And he said, "And my master has given their son everything he has. And my master made me promise not to let his son marry one of the idol-worshipping Canaanite women where they live. Instead, my master told me to go way up here to his relatives and find a wife here for his son Isaac."

Then the servant explained just what had happened after he had gotten way up there. He told Rebekah's brother Laban and their father that when he had gotten outside of the city and by the well, that it was evening time, the time of the day that the women would go out to get water from the well. And the servant told them that then he'd begun praying to the Lord and had said, "O Lord God of my master Abraham, please be kind to my master. Help me to do quickly what I came for."

And he went on to tell them that he'd prayed for a sign from the Lord. He said that he'd told the Lord, "I'm here by this well, and the women are coming out to get water. Please let it happen that the young woman whom I ask to give me a drink of water and who will then say to me, 'Yes, drink, and I'll give your camels water to drink, too,' please let her be the one that is to be Isaac's wife. That way I'll know you're being kind to my master."

The servant then told them, "And before I had even finished praying, here came Rebekah. And she said and did what I had just asked the Lord about!"

Then Abraham's servant said to them, "So please, be kind to my master, and tell me what I can do." (He meant would they let Rebekah go back with him to marry Isaac.)

Then Laban and his father said, "The Lord is doing this, so we have nothing to say about it. Look, Rebekah is right here. Yes, you may have her for a wife for your master's son, just as the Lord has said."

I know that it seems strange to us that they didn't seem to have asked Rebekah then what she thought about this and what she'd like to do, but that seems to be the way things were done then.

Anyway, when Abraham's servant heard what Rebekah's father and her brother Laban had said, he bowed down to the ground and worshipped the Lord Who had been so good to him.

After thanking the Lord, the servant took out all sorts of presents that he'd brought, and he gave them to Rebekah and to her family. There were silver jewelry and gold jewelry and nice clothes. Then after he'd done that, the servant and the men with him finally ate a meal, and then they spent the night there.

Well, the next morning the servant got up, and he was ready to go back home again right away. He said, "Let me go back to my master now."

But Rebekah's mother and her brother Laban said, "Oh, let Rebekah stay with us at least for a few days! Then she can go."

I don't know if they wanted to have a party for Rebekah or just what. The Bible doesn't say. But they didn't want her to have to leave right away. After all, she was going to go a long ways away, and probably they would never see her again.

But the servant said to them, "The Lord has done what I came here for; don't make me wait. Let me go back now to my master."

So they said to Abraham's servant, "We will call Rebekah and ask her what she wants to do."

So Rebekah was called, and they said to her, "Will you go with this man?"

And Rebekah said, "Yes, I will go with him."

So then they let Abraham's servant go and let him take Rebekah with him. They also sent with Rebekah a special woman who had helped take care of her when she was little and some maidservants. Then Rebekah's family blessed her and said, "May you have many descendants and may they do very well."

Then Rebekah, the woman, and the maidservants all got on the camels and started off with Abraham's servant. I think that was very brave of Rebekah to do that, don't you? To leave all of her family right away and take a long journey on camels to marry someone she didn't know anything about! I think I would have been sort of scared! But the Bible doesn't tell us what Rebekah was thinking nor how she felt. Anyway, the Lord was helping Abraham's servant, wasn't He?

Well, they all rode off on the camels, and they rode and rode for many days. It was a very long journey back to where Abraham lived, probably about a month of traveling! (Remember, they didn't have cars!) Finally they began getting near to where Abraham lived. Then one evening as they were riding along, Rebekah looked up, and she saw a man walking in a field. The man looked as if he were thinking. Then Rebekah saw the man look up and see their camels coming along. And Rebekah saw the man then start walking toward them.

Then Rebekah asked the servant, "Who is that man that is walking in the field to meet us?"

The servant said, "It is my master."

Well, Rebekah knew he meant Isaac! Of course, she had never seen Isaac before, but she knew then that this was the man she was coming all that way to marry! So she got down off of her camel, and she put on a veil. Back then, this was the polite and modest thing for her to do.

When Isaac got to where they were, the servant told Isaac all about his trip and how things had gone. The Bible doesn't say, but I imagine that Isaac must have been very happy! And I imagine Abraham was also very happy that the servant had been able to find a good wife for his son Isaac, though the Bible doesn't tell us that either. But let's go on with the story, okay?!

Now, they lived in big tents there, and Isaac's mother Sarah had had a beautiful, big tent. But Sarah had died 3 years before the time of our story here. So now Isaac took Rebekah to Sarah's beautiful tent and gave it to her; it was to be Rebekah's tent now. Then Isaac and Rebekah got married, and he loved her. Isaac had been sad after his mother had died, but now he felt better, since he had such a lovely wife.

So now Rebekah and Isaac were married, and, of course, they wanted to have children of their own. But they didn't have any children for many years, and this made them unhappy. But Isaac prayed to the Lord, and a little while later Rebekah had twin boys. Their names were Jacob and Esau.

Now, you've heard of Rebekah's son Jacob before, haven't you?! Yes, Jacob was very important. When Jacob grew up, he became the father of 12 sons, and the descendants of these 12 sons became the 12 tribes of Israel, the children of Israel, the Jews. didn't they? In fact, in the Bible sometimes the Lord calls Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So that means that Rebekah (Jacob's mother) became the ancestress of all of the Jews, didn't she?!

Do you remember who were some of Jacob's sons (Rebekah's grandsons)? Yes, one of them was Joseph (who had the coat of many colors and was sold as a slave by his brothers and became the big ruler in Egypt). And another of Jacob's sons was Levi. And Levi became the ancestor of all of the Jewish priests of the Lord. So that means that Rebekah (Levi's grandmother) became the ancestress of all of the Jewish priests of the Lord, didn't she?!

But who else was one of Levi's brothers? Yes, Judah. Let's see, Judah, Judah, Judah. Hmm. Oh! Do you remember who was one of Judah's descendants? Yes, David was one of Judah's descendants, David who killed Goliath and later became the great king of Israel! And all of the kings of the southern nation of the Jews were descended from Judah. So Rebekah (Judah's grandmother) also became the ancestress of King David and many other kings, didn't she?!

But who else was descended from Rebekah and her son Jacob and then from her grandson Judah, someone who was even more important than King David? Yes, Jesus was descended from Judah! You see, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was descended from Judah which means that Jesus was also descended from Judah! Jesus, the Son of God, Who loves us so very much that He came to earth as a man so He could die on the cross for our sins, Jesus was descended from Rebekah and her grandson Judah! Of course, Jesus didn't stay dead, did He? No, 3 days later Jesus was alive again. Lots of people saw Him alive, and then He went back to heaven, and He is still alive in heaven. But someday Jesus is coming back, isn't He? And if we believe in the Lord Jesus, trust in Him to forgive our sins, then someday we can be with Him forever!

So, let's see, now. Since Jesus is descended from Judah, and Judah is a son of Jacob, and Jacob is the son of Isaac, and Rebekah was married to Isaac. That means that Rebekah, the girl who got water for her family and who had so kindly watered all of those camels, is the great-great-great-great-grandmother of Jesus!! Isn't that interesting?

Yes, Rebekah was a very important woman. Did you enjoy the story of how the beautiful Rebekah got a husband who loved her? And did you enjoy hearing how all of the Jewish priests

were descended from her? And that King David was descended from her? And many other kings? In fact, that all of the Jews are descended from her? But, most importantly, that one of her descendants is our Saviour, Jesus Christ? Did you enjoy hearing all of that? I hope so.