

WOMEN OF THE BIBLE 5 - REBEKAH

'BEFORE HE HAD FINISHED SPEAKING, THERE WAS REBEKAH, COMING OUT WITH HER WATER JAR ON HER SHOULDER. THE GIRL WAS VERY FAIR TO LOOK UPON, A YOUNG GIRL, WHOM NO MAN HAD KNOWN. SHE WENT DOWN TO THE SPRING, FILLED HER JAR, AND CAME UP.'

*Genesis 24:15-67
King James Version (KJV)*



15 And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

16 And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.

17 And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.

18 And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.

19 And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.

20 And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels.

21 And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not.

22 And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold;

23 And said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?

24 And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor.

25 She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.

26 And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the Lord.

27 And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.

28 And the damsel ran, and told them of her mother's house these things.

29 And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well.

30 And it came to pass, when he saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well.

31 And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels.

32 And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him.

33 And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on.

34 And he said, I am Abraham's servant.

35 And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses.

36 And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath.

37 And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell:

38 But thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.

39 And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me.

40 And he said unto me, The Lord, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house:

41 Then shalt thou be clear from this my oath, when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give not thee one, thou shalt be clear from my oath.

42 And I came this day unto the well, and said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go:

43 Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink;

44 And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman whom the Lord hath appointed out for my master's son.

45 And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew water: and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee.

46 And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also.

47 And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, the daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the earring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands.

48 And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the Lord, and blessed the Lord God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son.

49 And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.

50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the Lord: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good.

51 Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken.

52 And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth.

53 And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.

54 And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master.

55 And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go.

56 And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master.

57 And they said, We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth.

58 And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.

59 And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men.

60 And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.

61 And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

62 And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country.

63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming.

64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel.

65 For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself.

66 And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done.

67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.



24:15-67 The blessing of an Unselfish Woman (Rebekah)

WOMEN. Rebekah, the Syrian, was the granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother (22:23). Rebekah's name refers to "*tying or binding up*," implying that her beauty was so great, it could literally "captivate" or "fascinate" men. She is introduced as a diligently industrious and beautifully sensitive girl. Her willingness to serve Eleazar and her readiness to draw water for all 10 of the thirsty camels dramatize this. Lesson in the way God provides surprising rewards for servant-spirited souls is seen in what happened to Rebekah. Little did she know those camels were carrying untold gifts for her and her family. Her will to wait for her family's blessing before accepting the invitation to leave for a marriage to Isaac, who was a wealthy prince of the ancient world, is a model for today. How many marriages today would be different if:

- 1) The Holy Spirit were the guide,
- 2) If prayer and worship were the order of the day, and
- 3) If the couple had the blessing of the family?

24:22 Golden earring: As much a part of a woman's jewelry as earrings today.

24:27 I being in the way is literal translation. It may be interpreted as the ecstatic servant's remark. "The Lord led me – me – straight to the house!" His initial response was a few moments of joyous worship.

24:48 Brother is not as specific as our English "*brother*": it could mean "*nephew*" or simply "*relative*" (see **14:14**). Rebekah was actually the daughter of Abraham's nephew, Bethuel.

24:53 These were the wedding gifts, the dowry.

24:54 Abraham's servant was impatient to share the testimony of his miracle at home.

24:62 Lahai-rol was a well in the southern part of the country, perhaps about 12 miles northwest of Kadesh. (see 16:13, 14)

24:63 Isaac was not colorful like his father Abraham, nor his son Jacob. He was quiet, thoughtful, 40 years old, and still unmarried. His life primarily an interlude between two high points.

WHO WAS REBEKAH ?

The story of Rebekah showed that women can be just as ambitious, loving, deceitful and self-sacrificing as men. A woman's individual personality shapes her, not their gender.

God's plan for humanity is beyond our understanding. The Bible does not flinch from showing the complexity of human nature. **Rebekah deceived her aged husband and betrayed her older son.** The other members of her family are also less than perfect. **Yet** God uses them for His purpose.

Fulfillment of God's promise: this story shows the gradual unfolding of God's plan. **Sarah and Abraham will have many descendants and become a great nation.**

Rebekah was beautiful, shrewd, energetic, physically robust and strong-willed. We first meet her at the **well of Aram-naharaim**, where she showed that she was willing to work, and confident enough to speak without fear to the strangers who had been sent by Abraham to find a wife for Isaac.

Her Character

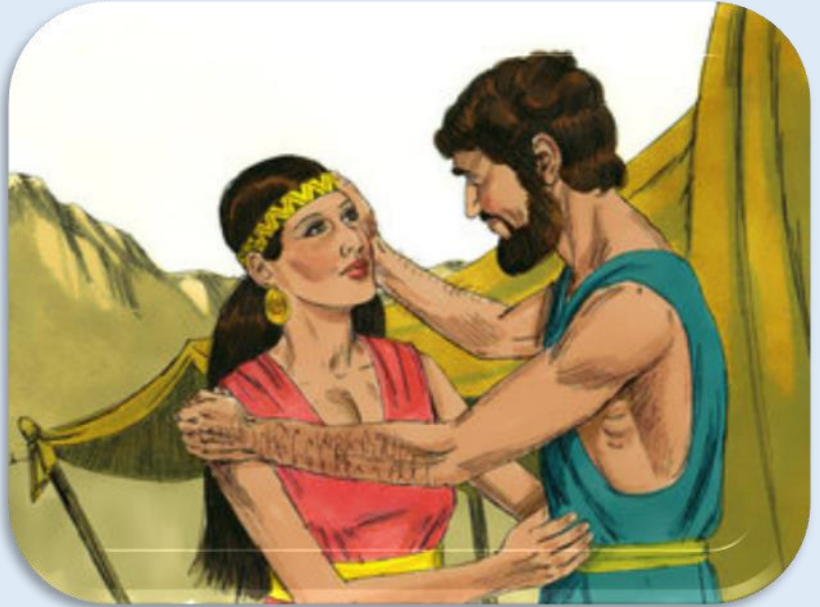
As a maiden around twenty years of age, Rebekah was "*fair to look upon*," and was a virgin, and had a childlike simplicity. There was no trace of wantonness in her. As with her mother-in-law, Sarah, beauty carried its dangers. During his sojourn in Gerar, Isaac feared lest

the physical charms of his wife might excite the desire of the king of Gerar and so he lied. Thus Isaac passed Rebekah off as his sister—a course of action which might have had dire consequences

Beautiful Rebekah had been taken by Abimelech, but one day as he looked out of the window he saw Isaac caressing Rebekah, and he knew that he had been deceived. Isaac's untruthfulness was discovered, and the heir of God's promises was rebuked by a heathen king for his lying and deception. In the providence of God, Abimelech, an idolater, was made the protector of the child of promise (*Psalm 17:13*).

Her Deception

Chicanery is described as the act of one who deliberately deceives, and this was **Rebekah's sin**. The destiny of her favorite son, Jacob, was strongly influenced by his mother's strong-mindedness, and thus she became the authoress of the treacherous plan to deprive Esau of his father's blessing. Isaac is old, feeble and blind, and informs the members of his household that the time has come to give Esau, officially, what was left to him after selling his birthright, namely, the blessing which carried with it the recognition of his headship, the ratification of the birthright. So Isaac told his favorite son to take his bow and arrow and go into the fields, hunt for his much-liked venison, and make a savory meal.

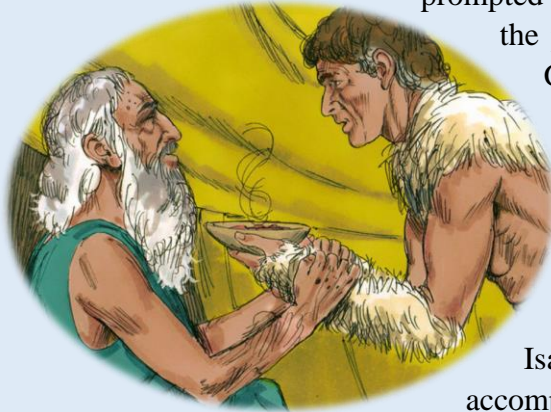


Rebekah overheard, and her deceitful heart was stirred to action. She set about to thwart her husband's purpose. Her favorite son must not be displaced, and her hopes for him dashed to the ground, by the impetuous hunter whom Isaac loved. Cunningly she devised the plan of impersonation. While Esau was out in the fields hunting, Rebekah told Jacob to go to a flock nearby and bring two kids for her to dress and cook and pass off as venison. While cautious about his mother's duplicity, he had no conscience against it. What made Jacob hesitant was the fact that his brother was a hairy man, while his own skin was smooth, and that if his father felt him and sensed the deception, he would not bless him, but curse him.

Rebekah, however, was equal to this fear of Jacob, and he followed the counsels of his treacherous mother. He put the skin of the kids upon his hands and upon his neck, thus making himself feel and smell like Esau, and so deceived his aged, blind father. Doubtless Rebekah stood nearby in convenient concealment to see how her ill-conceived ruse would succeed. Smelling Esau's clothes, and feeling the false hairy hands, Isaac was a little doubtful and said,

“*The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.*” But reassured by the repeated lies of Jacob, the deceived father bestowed the unalterable blessing upon his son, and Jacob, by fraud, became the father of Israel’s race. To his discredit, he played the role successfully which his mother had drilled into him with masterly skill. Covetous of the sacred, patriarchal blessing for her favorite son, Rebekah felt she had to resort to duplicity to gain her ends, and in doing so she prostituted parental authority.

There are some writers who try to justify the actions of Rebekah by saying that she was prompted to take the course she did concerning Jacob because of



the prediction that, “*the elder shall serve the younger,*” but God had no need of trickery and deceit to fulfill His promise. Ambitious for her son, Rebekah sacrificed the

love of her husband, the loss of the esteem of her elder son, and the peace of her soul, for the idolized son whose face she never saw again. Without doubt, Jacob was the divinely-appointed heir of Abraham (*Genesis 25:23*), and Rebekah seeking to overrule the purpose of

Isaac in his blessing of Esau, resorted to deceit to accomplish the will of God. Her guiding principle was, “*Let us*

do evil that good may come” (*Romans 3:8*), but wrong is never right (*James 1:20*).

REBEKAH and the Blessing

Betrothal and Marriage

When Rebekah and Isaac met, it seems to have been love at first sight. He took her to the tent that had once belonged to his mother Sarah - this tent was to be Rebekah's now.

- ✚ **Chapter One: The betrothal and marriage of Rebekah.** It becomes obvious from the outset of this story that **God is the real matchmaker in the marriage** when the servant related to Rebekah’s family (the indications of God’s guidance), her brother, and her father agreed. “*The matter comes from the Lord,*” they said (*Gen. 24:50*).

From the well, Rebekah led the men to her home to introduce them to her family. Her brother Laban spoke as head of the house, inviting them to stay in his household. This suggests that their father Bethuel **was** alive, but for some reason was incapable of acting as head of the household. A proposal of marriage, on behalf of Isaac, was made and it was accepted by Rebekah and by her family.

The phrase *'Isaac loved her'* is used, something most unusual for the biblical text. Rebekah comforted Isaac after his mother's death; the deep bond that Isaac had with Sarah was replaced by his love for Rebekah.

- ❖ In an age of virtual universal polygamy, Isaac took no handmaid, concubine, or second wife. Rebekah and he were bound together by the bonds of a mutual affection, and although childless, yet became the parents of two sons who were destined to be the ancestors of different nations.

✚ **Chapter Two: The birth and youth of Esau and Jacob** (*Genesis 25:19-34*). Motherhood came to Rebekah late in life when Isaac was an aging man. Twenty years she had been childless, and conscious of God's promise that the Abrahamic Covenant could not be broken, Isaac besought God that his long barren wife might conceive, and the Lord graciously answered his earnest intercession (*Genesis 25:19-34*).

When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle, so they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel, so he was named Jacob.

From the start, Esau was a **'man's man'**, good at hunting and outdoors activities, confident, careless, unconcerned. He had a good relationship with his father. He married two Hittite (*non-Hebrew*) women who did not get on well with Rebekah and Isaac (*Genesis 26:34-35*).

Jacob was quiet, more thoughtful, more interested in learning. He did not particularly enjoy outdoors activities. He depended on his intelligence and his wits rather than on brute strength. The clash between these two young men echoes the continuing struggle between the nomadic hunter and the settled agriculturalist of today.

✚ **Chapter Three: Rebekah's Favoritism Brought Sorrow**

Rebekah's diabolical plan was to help Jacob impersonate Esau so that blind old Isaac would be fooled into blessing him instead of his brother. Jacob did not like the idea because Esau was a hairy man and he was smooth. It was likely that his dad would put his hands on him, feel his smooth skin, and his deceit would be exposed, bringing him a curse rather than a blessing. But Rebekah offered to assume any curse upon herself and urged him to go ahead and do as she said. Her offer sounded so sacrificial, but it was sinful and sick.

In the modern world, we admire honesty and integrity. The actions of Rebekah and Jacob seem underhand to us. In ancient times, however, this duo of schemers would have been admired.

Trickery and cunning were valued, because the world was dangerous and unpredictable, and people needed every advantage they could get, to survive. Rebekah may have hated what she had to do - but it was necessary, given Esau's impetuous foolishness and the long term effect it would have on the tribe.

Rebekah and Jacob had forgotten what truth was. With the help of some goat skins, the two tricksters pulled off their deceitful plot. Isaac trembled when he later discovered that he had been victimized by his wife and son, but he would not reverse the blessing. He had blessed Jacob, and "**he shall be blessed,**" he confidently affirmed (*Gen. 27:33*). Isaac realized that God had overruled his original intentions even though it was by an act of deceit. His willingness to accept it from God was such a significant expression of faith in God's sovereign control of his circumstances that it earned him mention in faith's hall of fame (*Heb. 11:20*).

Esau did not have that much faith, however. He vowed to kill his brother. But as we might expect, Rebekah came up with another ingenious idea. When she heard what Esau intended to do, she called Jacob in and said to him, "Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you, by planning to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban! And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury subsides, until your brother's anger against you subsides, and he forgets what you did to him. Then I shall send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?" (*Gen. 27:42-45*).

In order to get Isaac to agree to her plan, she had to deceive him again. It was another masterful performance. You can almost feel the melodrama as she exclaims, "I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?" (*Gen. 27:46*). So Isaac dutifully called Jacob in and instructed him to go to Haran to find a wife. One deception usually does demand another, until the life of the deceiver is a hopeless web of despair.

One of the last picture we have of Rebekah is when she unhappily witnessed the swift departure of her beloved son. "*A strong-minded, decisive girl had grown into an autocratic matriarch,*" and ends her days a heartbroken and despondent woman. When she died **we are not told**. Isaac, although much older than Rebekah, was still living when Jacob returned to Canaan over 20 years later. It is assumed that she died during Jacob's long absence, and was buried in the cave of Machpelah near Hebron (*Genesis 49:31*).

Scripture References—*Genesis 22:23; 24; 25:20-28; 26:6-35; 27; 28:5; 29:12; 35:8; 49:31; Romans 9:6-16*



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