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A WIFE FOR ISAAC
(Gen. 24:1 – 25:11)

One day Abraham summoned
The steward of his house:
Eliezer of Damascus,
Loyal to him and his late spouse.

‘‘God has promised that I’ll become
A great and holy nation,
But how can Isaac accomplish that
Without procreation?

‘‘So, Eliezer, I charge you now
With finding for him a wife,
The girls of Canaan I’ve ruled out—
Their idolatry is rife.

‘‘So, return now to my family -
To my own kith and kin -
Where you’ll be sure to find a girl
Wholly free of sin.

‘‘But if you encounter difficulty
In discovering her whereabouts,
Be sure to seek God’s guiding hand
To remove any doubts.’’

‘‘But, master,’’ asked the servant true,
‘‘What if the girl is unwilling to
Return with me to this Promised Land -
Am I still bound by your demand?’’

‘‘Indeed, you are, unequivocally,
So, lay your hand upon my knee
And swear by the Lord of heaven above,
Who, throughout my life, has shown me love,
That you’ll never make my son return
To evil Chaldea -
The land I spurn.’’

Eliezer gave his solemn oath,

And set out on his mission,
With ten camels and countless gifts—
Like a man of high position.

Arriving at the day's end,
He approached a local well,
Reining in his camels to give them drink,
He wondered if God would foretell
Which, of the girls he could see
Was the one chosen from above to be
Isaac's wife and a matriarch
To their future progeny.

''If, when I ask for water,
Not only does she comply,
But says, 'I will also provide
For your camels a generous supply' -
Let that be the sign that she is the one
Chosen by you,
Most High.''

It immediately became apparent
That God had answered his plea,
For the maiden replied verbatim,
Filling him with ecstasy.

He presented her with costly gifts,
Two bracelets, and a ring of gold;
He asked her name and if travelers
Were welcome in her household.

''Rebecca, daughter of Betuel,''
She replied with a winsome smile,
''We've provisions for your animals,
And, with pleasure, stay awhile.

''You've travelled from Canaan—
That's clear for all to see,
Do you know my grandpa, Nahor,
And Abraham's family?''

When he heard those words
Eliezer bowed down
In awe to the Lord above,
''Blessed be you,'' he fervently cried,
''Who unites family in love.''

Just then, her brother Laban arrived—
A crafty, scheming man—
And seeing the camels and the gifts dispensed,

He immediately hit on a plan.

‘‘Why, dear friend, are you standing outside?
Please repair to my humble abode,
To refresh yourself and eat your fill,
Before you start to unload.’’

A sumptuous meal was prepared for him,
But he refused to pick up a spoon:
‘‘I cannot start till I’ve had my say,
I promise I’ll eat soon.

‘‘I’m the faithful servant of Abraham,
Brother of your granddad,
God made my master a wealthy man,
Blessing everything he had.

‘‘Isaac, the apple of his eye,
Has yet to be wed.
When it comes to girls
He’s rather shy,
So, I’ve been sent instead
To locate his heaven-sent twin-soul—
Who’ll be the crown of his head.

‘‘God has led me to this place
And to your very home.
Meeting Rebekah, a girl unique,
I’ve no longer need to roam.

‘‘Let me take her back with me,
To become Isaac’s wife.
She’ll comfort him for the loss of his mum,
And brighten up his life.’’

Laban and her mum and dad
Looked long at Rebekah’s gifts:
‘‘O, forgive me,’’ said Eliezer,
‘‘I’ve truly been remiss.
I’ve come with ten camels
Bearing a dowry fit for a queen,
And rewards for you if you’ll agree,
And if she herself is keen.’’

‘‘Of course, I wish to marry
The great Prince Abraham’s son,’’
Interjected Rebekah,
‘‘Whether or not he’s handsome!’’

So, the matter was quickly concluded,

And Eliezer was wined and dined,
They toasted the two young people
Whose lives they'd just entwined.

To the gentle and pure Rebekah
They bade farewell next day,
Convinced she'd be happy and thrive
And be blessed in every way.

''Our beautiful daughter and sister''—
Their parting words rang out—
''Be the matriarch of countless tribes,
Whose enemies they'll rout.''

As the bridal cavalcade arrived
At Isaac's home in Ur,
He was praying in a nearby field,
And feeling quite unsure
Of the marital step he was about to take,
And of what would lie in store.

When Rebekah caught sight of him,
She covered her face with a veil -
He looked much distracted
And decidedly pale.

Before long they were married,
And she occupied Sarah's tent.
Isaac's grief was assuaged
By a love clearly heaven-sent.

Abraham took another wife,
Keturah was her name,
By her he had six more sons,
All of whom gained fame.

He showered on Isaac all he had,
And to the other sons a bequest.
At a hundred and seventy-five he died,
Leaving just one request:

''Let my Ishmael be summoned
When I am laid to rest.
I loved him— tell him that—
Though it was for the best
That he lived his life
In his own way—
No faith in God professed.''

Ishmael returned,

And the brothers embraced.
They buried their father
In the hallowed place
That he had bought
All those years before -
Joining Sarah there
For evermore.

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