

## Rebecca, Woman of Faith, Part One

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Genesis 24, witnessing Abraham's servant being sent to find a wife for his young master. The story of Isaac and Rebecca's love is one of the most beautiful love stories in Torah. The truly wonderful thing about this story is the amazing fact that, before it became a story of love, it was a story of faith. It took the faith of several people for this story to become a story of true love.

First of all, of course, we are amazed (again!) by the faith of Abraham, who had no doubt that God Himself would take care of choosing a wife for Isaac:

*<sup>7</sup> The Lord God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.*

This story certainly demanded great faith from Abraham's senior servant (probably Eliezer, though his name is not mentioned in this chapter). Although by this time, he must have already witnessed many miracles that the Lord had performed in his master's life, it would still have taken a good deal of faith to even undertake this journey, and to trust that the Lord would send him to the right girl. When he arrives and stands by the well outside the city, he prays for success ("good speed" or "good fortune", depending on translation) — if translated literally, he is asking God to "make this day happen before me" (הַיּוֹם לְפָנַי נֵאֱ-הִקְרָה). It's important to note that this is the very first prayer for divine guidance that we find in the Bible.

*<sup>12</sup> O Lord God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham.*

Then he prays for a kind and humble girl. Pay close attention: he is not praying for her looks or wealth: It is her kind and serving attitude and behavior that he is putting as a sign before God. We all know that his terms were met immediately and precisely, and we also know that he was absolutely overwhelmed by this immediate answer.

<sup>21</sup> *And the man, wondering at her, remained silent so as to know whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not.*

The word translated here as “remained silent”, might also mean: “to be speechless”. I think that was exactly what was happening to Eliezer: not only was he silent, he was absolutely speechless as he saw God’s handwriting in this story!

It is even more amazing to see this invisible reality of God’s presence and guidance, becoming visible and obvious to everyone – even to those who don’t know God. Rebecca’s father and brother, after they hear the servant’s testimony, say some surprising words (one imagines even the servant was absolutely shocked to hear these words from non-believing people):

<sup>50</sup> *Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, “The thing comes from the Lord; we cannot speak to you either bad or good.”*

*Mi-Adonai Yatza Ha-Davar* – “this thing came from the Lord!” How obvious the Lord’s presence must have been for people who didn’t know Him to speak these words!

However, the most incredible character here is undoubtedly Rebecca herself; the most amazing part of this story is the faith of this young woman, and quite honestly, I can think of no faith stronger than that which Rebecca portrays here. When the servant appears from nowhere, and presents before her the choice of her life—whether she will go with him to be a wife for Abraham’s son—she says: “Yes”, and this is another ‘Yes’ to God, as we see many times throughout this book— another story of entering God’s plan and God’s blessings by surrendering one’s life to Him.

<sup>58</sup> *Then they called Rebekah and said to her, “Will you go with this man?”*

*And she said, “I will go.”*

The character and faith of Abraham is constantly admired, and rightly so—at the age of 75 he willingly left his home to go the Land that God promised to show him. However, we rarely hear similar praise for Rebecca, who made the same choice, and even more decisively and drastically. We don’t know for sure the

length of time between Abraham first hearing God's command, and him actually leaving his home: it could have been days, weeks, months, or maybe even years. We only know that he did go, and we praise him for that. But we do know for sure that Rebecca made this crucial choice and left her home, in one day. Imagine: they didn't have phones or internet; they didn't have cars or planes; and for her to leave her home like this meant to leave it for good and probably never see her family again. The fact that she was able to make such a definitive decision to leave behind everything and everyone she knew and loved, bears witness to an absolutely outstanding character! Not only did she make the decision that changed her life forever within one day (and, by the way, it changed the life of the whole of humanity as well), but the very next morning, instead of begging for a merciful delay, she was ready to go.

Let us try to understand what Rebecca went through: She didn't grow up in a family of true believers, as Isaac did; she didn't know God, as Isaac did; but when Eliezer appeared before her that day, out of nowhere, somehow she knew that it was not *just* this servant, but Somebody in him and beyond him— Somebody much more than him—who stepped into her life and claimed this life. I suppose, like all young girls, she was interested in her future husband, but she knew almost nothing about him and had never seen him, so he was still not very real to her. However, that 'Somebody' who touched her heart through Eliezer, was so real that she decided at once that she wanted *Him* in her life. She surrendered her life to Him in that one amazing life-changing decision of faith, a decision made so simply and so quickly, trusting Him with her husband and with her whole life—and I believe she never looked back from that time forward.

Questions:

Re-read Eliezer's prayer. What factors made his prayer effective?

Would you have been courageous enough to do what Rebecca did? Why or why not?

What was your family of origin like? Were they people of faith? How did shape your spirituality both positively and negatively?