

## **Eliezer Finds a Virtuous Wife for Isaac**

In this week's *Parshah*, Abraham specifically tells *Eliezer* (Gen. 15:2) from which people to look for a wife for his son Isaac. Clearly, the family (faith) background of our children's potential spouses should be taken into consideration: *"<sup>1</sup>Now Abraham was old, advanced in years, (very old) and Adonai blessed Abraham in everything. <sup>2</sup>Then Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household who managed everything that belonged to him, 'Now put your hand under my thigh, <sup>3</sup>so that I may make you take an oath by Adonai, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from among the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I am dwelling. <sup>4</sup>On the contrary, to my land and to my relatives you must go and get a wife for my son Isaac'"* (Gen 24:3-4).

*Eliezer* is a Hebrew name which means *"God is my succor."* Succor is not a common English word (it is common in Spanish, *socorro*) and it means *'To give assistance/help to in time of want, difficulty, or distress.'* Finding a proper life partner is indeed a matter of great concern and importance and especially for the son of promise. Abraham entrusts a *gentile* – the most trusted servant in his household – to give God's succor to the situation. *Eliezer* was a servant/steward but had considerable responsibility as the number one person in the household. How important is this gentile in the Almighty's plan? This is a beautiful *Torah* picture of the exalted place gentiles will have in God's Plan throughout the ages. Abraham's household is also a *Torah* picture of the Messianic age consisting for both Jews and Gentiles together in the Household of Faith. In that sense, *Eliezer* is the first Messianic Gentile mentioned in Scripture and he was there in the very beginning, faithfully serving Abraham our Father and being worthy of the inheritance!

Many people believe that Abraham was trying to prevent Isaac from marrying into the idolatry prevalent among the Canaanites. However, we know that Abraham's Family was involved in idol worship (Joshua 24:2). According to many Jewish scholars the determining factor was the moral degradation of the Canaanite society – their society was notoriously sinful and practiced abominable customs in their pagan idol worship. He had no choice. He could not choose another believer for his son's wife because he could not find any. So, he chose to the next best thing. Instead of subjecting himself and his household to the sin and degradation of the society around them by choosing a wife for Isaac from them, he sought one from a people who, although may not have been believers like he was, were nonetheless relatively free from the debauchery of the Canaanite society.

The cultural, spiritual and family background of the people our children marry matters more than we think. The saying is true that we marry not just our spouse, but their family, too. In fact, it has been said that *'six people get married in every wedding: (1) the person he thinks he is, (2) the person she thinks he is, (3) the person he really is, (4) the person she thinks she is, (5) the person he thinks she is, and (6) the person she really is.'* To our people *Adonai* gave instructions to marry Jewish mates. A reasonable application would be for us to marry 'grafted-in believers' if not Messianic Believers. Scripture admonishes us to: *"<sup>14</sup>Do not yoke yourselves together in a team with unbelievers. For how can righteousness and lawlessness be partners? What fellowship does light have with darkness?"* (2 Cor. 6:14)

*Who can find a virtuous woman? Eliezer* shared Abraham's trust in *Adonai* – they served the same God! *In prayer*, he devises a series of confirmations in which he could not only be guided by *Adonai* but also observe the potential bride's virtue and character. Ultimately, it is her virtue (character) that accomplishes the task at hand. What did *Eliezer* observe in Rebekah?

**Hospitality:** The first characteristic *Eliezer* would have noticed is hospitality. Hospitality is important to *Adonai*? In offering *Eliezer* some water, she could easily have said, 'Get your own water, I am not your servant?' Even at her young age Rebekah had hospitality within her. When *Eliezer* asked for a drink, she willingly lowered her full pitcher to him. Evidently, this maiden knew how to treat strangers and visitors.

**Cooperative:** Another characteristic *Eliezer* discovered about *Rebekah* was that she was cooperative, and not disagreeable. When he asked for some water, she did not murmur and send him to one of the other women. Instead, she herself gave him some without complaint.

**Industrious:** A third trait the servant saw was that *Rebekah* was that she was a hard worker. When she gave *Eliezer* a drink, it was not merely a matter of taking out a cup and pouring. There was much more to it than that. First, the heavy clay water pitcher was either on her head (common in the Near East) or on her shoulder. At any rate, the text indicates that she had to “lower her pitcher.” It took a strenuous effort to fill the pitcher, to lift it from the well to where she was carrying it, and then lower it for him to drink. But that was not all. She then offered to provide water for all of the camels to drink.

The camel is considered the ship of the desert. They can go for days without drinking because they store enough water for such purposes. When it is time to drink—it is time to drink! To make matters more difficult, there were ten camels in *Eliezer's* caravan. *Rebekah* offered to water them all!

**Considerate:** The offer to water the camels pointed to another trait as well as her industriousness. It showed that *Rebekah* was sensitive to others' needs and considerate – of both animals and people. She had a kind heart.

**Inner Beauty:** The text describes *Rebekah* as “...very good looking” (*Gen. 24:16*). She possessed physical beauty and goodness in her heart. There may be some who think this characteristic is not an important consideration for a potential spouse. Scripture states: “*Charm is deceptive and beauty is vain...*” (*Prov. 31:30*) Nevertheless, does it hurt to find a beautiful wife if she is beautiful on the inside as well as the outside? Moreover, who defines *beautiful*? Perhaps *Eliezer* knew what Isaac thought was a beautiful woman – after all *Isaac* was over thirty-seven years old and most certainly discussed such matters around the house. Hence, perhaps *Eliezer* knew that *Rebekah* was the kind of girl that Isaac would consider to be beautiful.

**Chastity:** One of the most important things that a potential bride should possess is her chastity. This was something that *Eliezer* noted about *Rebekah*, which was passed on through the generations so that Moses could later record it in the *Torah*: “*a girl of marriageable age, and she was a virgin*” (*Gen. 24:16*). First, we take note of *Rebekah's* age. The Hebrew calls her a *na'arah*. This is something like a teenager. Other sources indicate that *Rebekah* was a teenager at that time (*Yevanot 61b* and *Tosafot*). Also and without doubt, the text makes it clear that she was a virgin (*betulah*) “*whom no man had known*” (*KJV*).

**Obedience to the Lord:** The last characteristic that we will examine is *Rebekah's* willingness to marry Isaac. *Eliezer* explained the whole plan and purpose for his arrival to *Rebekah's* family. Her brother and mother agreed to let her go back with *Eliezer*, but they stipulated that she must wait, (*Gen. 24:55*). The ensuing disagreement resulted in the idea to consult *Rebekah* to see what she thought. So they said: “*We'll call the young woman and let's ask her opinion*” (*Gen. 24:57*). It is important to see here that *Rebekah* was not forced to abide by the wishes of the matchmaker or her family but her opinion mattered. *Rebekah* was willing to follow *Eliezer* to Abraham's home to marry Isaac. No one should be coerced, pressured, or forced into marriage. *Rebekah* certainly was not, and theirs proved to be a great and Godly marriage.

### Prayer – the **Secret** of Finding God's Choice for a Wife

Not only did Abraham pray about his son's future wife but we also see *Eliezer* praying about the situation. The amazing thing about this prayer was that even as he was talking to the Lord about the matter the answer was simultaneously happening, for out came *Rebekah* to draw water.

This is something that the Lord does frequently when we pray. He assures us, “*Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear*” (*Is. 65:24*). *Eliezer's* experience with the Lord is a clear testimony to the truth of what Isaiah wrote.

Both *Eliezer* and Abraham knew the secret of finding a wife. They both fervently prayed and sought God's guidance. Armed with all of the above principles plus consistent prayer, the Lord blessed his search by providing *Rebekah* for Isaac. She proved to be just the right wife for him.