

## **Are You There God? It's Me, Abraham's Servant, Carson.**

Genesis 24 by Patty Friesen July 9/23

Are you there God? It's me, Abraham's servant. I'm not given a name in the Bible but you can call me Carson. I am his oldest servant and I have been with Lord Abraham since we were boys and with Lady Sarah since their marriage in Haran in Babylon. I overheard when you called my lord and lady to follow you to the land of Canaan where you said they would become a nation to be a blessing to all nations. Yet there was no child for decades and we wandered around Canaan in a drought. Hungry, we headed to Egypt where Abraham lied and told Pharaoh Sarah was his sister. I told him not to do it and sure enough, Pharaoh caught them making out and kicked us out of Egypt. One of the slaves given by Pharaoh to Sarah was Hagar and that didn't turn out very well either. It was Sarah's idea that Hagar be a surrogate parent but she got very jealous when Hagar was pregnant. Hagar ran away for a while and told me afterward an angel from God came to her and told her she would bore a son to Abraham named Ishmael - God hears. She in turn gave God the name, El- Roi meaning God sees. Hagar came back home and had Ishmael but it's been a domestic disaster ever since.

This family is a gong show. Why God, you would choose this ancient, lying, jealous couple to try to make a holy people, is beyond me. I guess it shows that you are not choosing your people based on their merits or even positive attitude. I've heard them both laugh at you. I guess it shows if anything good can happen with these two = it truly is you who is at work here in their lives.

Are you still there God? It's me again. Carson, the servant. You did it - Sarah and Abraham finally had a son. Unbelievable. We're all laughing for joy about it. That

precious boy born to that ancient couple - Abraham 100 years old and Sarah in her 90s. Thank you for this tremendous gift. I still don't know how you are going to make a great nation out of this one little weak spoiled kid. It all feels very tenuous yet. Sarah was very jealous and sent Hagar and Ishmael away. I know that was very hard for Abraham who was very attached to Ishmael. I stayed in touch with Hagar and Ishmael as Abraham sent them child support over the years.

I can't believe what you asked Abraham to do - sacrifice Isaac, this teenage child of the promise of a nation to bless all the people of the world? What were you thinking God? I've got to hand it to Abraham. He trusts you. He loaded up Isaac who was asking where was the lamb for the sacrifice and we headed out to the mountains to build an altar to you. He bound Isaac upon it and was going to kill him when you finally intervened and provided a ram caught in the bushes instead. Poor Isaac was scared witless, as was Abraham and me. I don't like that kind of testing God. You know Abraham's heart - why put him to the test and make him sacrifice a human life like all the pagan nations around us? Were you setting a precedent that you are *not* that kind of God who wants human sacrifice? Were you setting yourself apart from the other gods? It looks like Abraham's relationship with you didn't suffer from this weird event but mine has.

Why is this journey with you such a struggle - full of drought and infertility and jealousy? This journey with you is such an unknowing; full of weirdness and paradox - full of promises between things hoped for and not fulfilled. I don't know what you are up to half the time God. Next time don't call me, I'll call you...

Are you there God? I know - I'm calling on you again. I know my prayers are either Help, Help or Thank you, Thank you. This time it's help, help. Big time. Sarah has died and we are all in mourning especially Isaac. It's time he moved out and got married anyhow. Abraham called me into his tent as he has done every day of our life together and asked me to go find a wife for Isaac from his people back in Haran, Babylon because he didn't like the pagan, child sacrificing ways of the nations around us and didn't want Isaac led into that kind of life.

I'm not a match-maker God. I'm not even married myself. How am I supposed to find the right fit for Isaac? Am I supposed to interview all the eligible candidates and pick the best one? What do I ask them? And what if the one I think Isaac should marry doesn't want to come back to dried-out Canaan with me - should I take Isaac back to Babylon? Abraham said no way am I to take Isaac back to Babylon - the bride has to come here and if she doesn't I'm free from my oath to find Isaac a wife. Great. This feels like a wild goose chase but if I've learned anything over these years with Abraham and Sarah and Hagar - it is that despite being the Holy One, God of gods and Creator of Heaven and Earth, you are also the Living One who sees and hears us as individuals so please help me on this journey.

Are you there God? We've made it here to Babylon - what a long arduous journey. We're outside Abraham's ancestral city of Nahor - named after Abraham's brother and I've made the camels kneel down by the well to wait until the women come out of the city to the well to draw water. So please Lord, grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham. I am standing here by the spring of water and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. Let the girl to

whom I say, Please offer your jar that I may drink, and who shall say Drink and I will also water your camels - let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master. I know it's a bit of a gamble - but I don't know what else to do and I have to trust your leading in this.

Thank you, thank you, thank you God. A confident, strong young woman came and I asked for water from the well and she let me drink and she offered to water my camels as well. The camels had a good long drink and I just watched her hoping you'd say something God but I guess this couldn't be a more clear sign. I gave her a gold nose ring and two bracelets for her arms worth a ton in gold and asked her whose daughter she was. I am Rebecca, the daughter of Bethuel son of my grandmother Milcah whom she bore to my grandfather Nahor. We have plenty of straw and food and a place to spend the night.

Thank you, thank you, thank you God. You have not forsaken your steadfast love and faithfulness to my master Abraham and have led me right to the house of my master's kin. Rebecca went to her mother's household and told them about our encounter and when her brother Laban saw all the loot I gave Rebecca, he ran out to greet me and said, "Come in, O blessed of the Lord. Why do you stand outside when I have prepared the house and a place for the camels?" Laban fed the camels and washed my feet and set the meal before me but I told him I couldn't eat until I told him everything I had come for. So I told Laban and his father Bethuel about how God had blessed Abraham and Sarah since they left Haran and how Sarah bore Abraham a son in their old age and now she had died and this son needs a wife from his home

community. I told them how I asked God to have the young strong woman who would let me have a drink of water and water my camels to be the one for Isaac. And sure, enough there came Rebecca and everything happened as I asked. Now if you will deal loyally and truly with my master tell me, and if not, tell me, so that I may turn either to the right or to the left.

Laban and Bethuel said, "The thing comes from the Lord so we cannot speak to you anything bad or good. Look, Rebecca is before you - if she is willing to go - she can go and be the wife of your master's son." What a relief. Then I could eat and drink and be merry and I gave silver and gold jewelry and rich garments to Rebecca and Laban and their mother. They wanted to keep Rebecca for another 10 days but she said she was ready to go and so she and her maids and nurse mounted the camels I had brought and went with me. It was a long trip but we finally drew near to home, there was Isaac out in the evening walking the fields and he looked up and saw the camels had passengers so his eyes got big. This arranged marriage was a risk on both their parts. Rebecca asked me if that was her master's son so she jumped off the camel and veiled herself and after I told Isaac everything that had happened and that I believed God had found him a good match, he believed me and took Rebecca into his mother Sarah's tent and she became his wife. Weddings were that simple back then but despite it being an arranged marriage, Isaac loved Rebecca and was comforted after his mother's death.

So, you are there God, after all. I know we have a rocky relationship - that I only talk to you when I need help but I'm proud you used me to help move the promise of your blessing to all people ahead for one more generation. I guess that's how we learn to trust you as each generation experiences you for themselves. Please be with

Rebecca and Isaac and their children - that they may also call on you and trust in you when their lives get complicated. Amen.