

Are You There God? It's Me, Rebecca.

Genesis 24-28 by Patty Friesen July 23/23

Are you there God? It's me, Rebecca. You can call me Becca for short. I've come to inquire of you here at Hagar's well where she came when she was pregnant and in trouble. There are places all over this land where you would meet our ancestors and they would name the place after you. There's a place near here when Sarah and Abraham first came that was called Beth-el, meaning house of God. When Abraham was on the mountain with Isaac, you provided a ram for their sacrifice and Abraham named that place Jehovah Jirah, my Provider. There's a place where When Hagar ran away from Abraham and Sarah, you met her here and comforted her with a name for her son after your own name, "Ishma-el" God hears and you promised to be with him. Hagar named you back calling you El-Roi – God who sees and she named this well, Beer-ha-el-roi – the Well of the Living One who Sees Me.

I need you to see me now, God. Isaac came here to pray for us to get pregnant after 20 years of trying, and I'm finally pregnant but it's been a rough go. I've come to inquire of you what's going on with these babies who are always fighting within my womb.

You've been with me all my life. When I was growing up in Haran, we knew who you were. You weren't only with Abraham and Sarah, you were with my grandparents, Milcah and Nahor also and with my parents and now with me and Laban. I'd ask you to help me find my lost sheep. I'd ask you to help my brother Laban stop being a jerk. I'd ask you to help me find a good husband and if possible to get out of that boring little

town. I loved to hear about different places from the travelling caravans that came through Haran.

From travelling caravans, we'd occasionally hear about Uncle Abraham and Auntie Sarah living in Canaan where they believed God had called them. They were always kind of strange but people said they had gotten stranger. The Lord, El, promised to give them land and descendants even though they didn't even have one child. They kept moving south all the way to Egypt and then things really went south and they got kicked out of Egypt and came back to Canaan where they still didn't have a child. There was drama with Abram and Hagar their Egyptian slave that bore a son Ishmael but we never considered him part of the family. Finally cousin Isaac was born when Sarah was 90.

We hadn't heard from Uncle Abraham for awhile but he sent word that Auntie Sarah had died and we didn't hear anything for awhile until one evening I went out to the spring to water our flocks and there was a stranger there with his large entourage of 10 kneeling camels. He asked me for a drink of water. I gave it to him and offered to water his 10 camels as well. Those camels drank a lot of water. It took a long time but I'm strong and a hard worker. After they slurped and burped their last drop, the stranger came up to me all teary-eyed and gave me a gold nose ring and two gold bracelets that I put on right away. They must have been worth thousands. He asked who I was and if there was room in my father's house for the night. I told him, "I am Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel, son of Milcah and Nahor. We have plenty of straw and food for you and your animals to spend the night." At that, the poor old man burst into tears,

“Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham and Sarah who has not forsaken steadfast love and faithfulness toward my master. As for me, God must be my Lord as well since God has led me right to the house of my master’s kin.”

Brother Laban made a big fuss over the stranger and got all the animals fed and bedded down for the night and washed his guest’s feet and those of his camel-drivers and set down supper in front of them. But the old man refused to eat until he had told his side of the story. He told us his name was Carson, Abraham’s servant and how God had blessed Abraham with many flocks and herds, silver and gold and how finally in Abraham’s old age, Sarah had borne him a son named Isaac and then had died. Abraham made Carson promise before he died to not find Isaac a wife from among the Canaanites but go back to his homeland and find a wife from among his own people.

Mom and Laban said, “Ask Rebekah what she wants. Will you go with this man?” I was ready to go – I was ready for an adventure and to run my own household so I answered I will. It was a long journey back on those camels but one evening, Carson said we were getting closer and in the sunset, there was a man walking in the fields who looked up. Carson said, “That’s Isaac.” I got off my camel and Carson told Isaac everything and we went home and that was our wedding. I’ve been lucky in my arranged marriage. Isaac loves me and that doesn’t happen to every couple but then Isaac said he was praying for me in the fields when we first met and I’ve been talking to you a long time about a husband, God – so maybe we had the best matchmaker possible. It truly has been a love story – Isaac never took another wife or concubine. I’ve been the only one.

Carson told Isaac - Happy Wife, Happy Life and I have been happy and loved by Isaac but we have not been able to have children for 20 years. One can have all the wealth in the world but if you don't have what you really want, it doesn't mean much. Isaac prayed to God for me and I got pregnant with twins no less but what an awful pregnancy. I've been sick for the first trimester and then once they were big enough to fight, the twins fought through the second and third trimester. I always heard twins were a double blessing but these are double trouble! Can you tell me what's going on?
(Turn away and turn back)

Are you there God? It's me, Rebecca. Remember when you told me there were two divided nations within my womb - one stronger than the other and the eldest would serve the younger. Finally they came out of the womb - Esau first all red and hairy and Jacob grabbing his heel. They couldn't be more different. Isaac was already 60 when we had them and taught Esau to hunt game so Isaac loved him but Jacob like to stay home with me in the tent and I loved him. This was before we knew parenting psychology and shouldn't play favourites as it had disastrous results in our family.

Esau came in from the field hungry one day and smelled Isaac's lentil stew and asked for some and Jacob said, "Only if you sell me your birthright." Esau said, "What good is a birthright to being the firstborn if I die before Dad?" Esau not only despised his birthright but he despised Isaac and I as parents and married two Hittite women, one of whom was the daughter of Elon the Hittite – that obnoxious venture capitalist! Those Hittite daughters-in-law made life miserable for us, always demanding more money to invest in Elon's schemes. (26:35) Esau's obedience to those heathen women and their gods told me he wouldn't make a good head of the family when Isaac died. Esau had

already given away his rights as firstborn but I knew Isaac would give him his blessing before he died and Esau would take his place as head of the family.

One day when Isaac was quite old and blind, he told Esau to hunt him some fresh game and fix it for him before he gave Esau his blessing of land and success before he died. I overheard the conversation and told Jacob to go get two choice kid goats and I'd fix them for Isaac. Jacob said, "But Mom, Esau is hairy and Dad will know that I'm not him and will curse me instead of bless me." I told Jacob, "Let Isaac's curse be upon me." I cooked those goats and put their skins on the backs of Jacob's hands and neck and dressed him in Esau's clothes and sent him in to his father with the meal.

Isaac asked him how he found the game so quickly and Jacob replied wisely - the Lord gave me success. Isaac was suspicious and said, Let me feel you to see if you are really my son Esau for the voice is of Jacob. Isaac felt the goat hair on Jacob's hands and smelled his clothes and said with relief, "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field the Lord has blessed. May God give you the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you and nations bow down to you."

As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of his father, his brother Esau came in from hunting. He also prepared savoury food and brought it to Isaac and said, let my father sit up and eat of his son's game so that you may bless me." Isaac said, "Who are you?" Esau said, "I am your firstborn son, Esau." Then Isaac started shaking and said, "Who was it that brought the food before and I blessed him?" Esau's cried out, "Bless me too my father!" Isaac told him, "your brother has deceitfully taken away your blessing." Then rage filled

Esau and he said, Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. Once father has died, I will kill him.”

I knew I had to get Jacob out of there. I told Jacob to flee to my brother Laban in Haran, Aramea and stay with him until Esau’s anger subsides and I will send for him. I also told Isaac that I was tired of the Hittite women, meaning Esau’s wives and that Jacob needed to marry someone from my clan. Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him to go to Haran and find a wife among his cousins. When Esau heard that Isaac had sent Jacob to Haran to find a non-Canaanite wife, he went out and married Ishmael’s daughter as his third wife just to spite us.

Why must families be so torn apart by sibling rivalry and jealousy? It’s been so since the beginning of time and the first siblings - Cain and Abel. I know Isaac and I have made mistakes parenting but can you work with our family in spite of ourselves. How will Jacob fare? He is alone and vulnerable and could be killed along the way by strangers if Esau doesn’t kill him first. Are you there God? Will you help him? Will you continue to provide for the next generations? We don’t know what lies ahead for the next generation but you have been our God in the past. Will you be a steadfast presence for all of us in the future as we continue to call on you?