

# Rebekah

HER NAME PROBABLY MEANS

*“Loop” or “Tie”*

**HER CHARACTER:** Hardworking and generous, her faith was so great that she left her home forever to marry a man she had never seen or met. Yet she played favorites with her sons and failed to trust God fully for the promise he had made.

**HER SORROW:** That she was barren for the first twenty years of her married life, and that she never again set eyes on her favorite son, Jacob, after he fled from his brother Esau.

**HER JOY:** That God had gone to extraordinary lengths to pursue her, to invite her to become part of his people and his promises.

**KEY SCRIPTURES:** Genesis 24; 25:19–34; 26:1–28:9

## *Monday*

HER STORY

The sun was dipping beyond the western rim of the sky as the young woman approached the well outside the town of Nahor, five hundred miles northeast of Canaan. It was women’s work to fetch fresh water each evening, and Rebekah hoisted the brimming jug to her shoulder, welcoming its cooling touch against her skin.

As she turned to go, a stranger greeted her, asking for a drink. Obliging, she offered to draw water for his camels as well. Rebekah noticed the look of surprised pleasure that flashed across his face. Ten

camels could put away a lot of water, she knew. But had she overheard his whispered prayer just moments earlier, her astonishment would have exceeded his: “O LORD, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. May it be that when I say to a girl, ‘Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,’ and she says, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels too’—let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac.”

A simple gesture. A generous response. A young woman’s future altered in a moment’s time. The man Rebekah encountered at the well, Abraham’s servant, had embarked on a sacred mission—to find Isaac a wife from among Abraham’s own people rather than from among the surrounding Canaanites. Like her great-aunt Sarah before her, Rebekah would make the journey south to embrace a future she could hardly glimpse. Betrothed to a man twice her age, whose name meant “Laughter,” she felt a sudden giddiness rise inside her. The God of Abraham and Sarah was wooing her, calling her name and no other, offering a share in the promise. God was forging a new nation to be his own people.

Isaac was forty when he first set eyes on Rebekah. Perhaps his heart echoed the joy of that first man, “Here at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!” So Isaac and Rebekah entered the tent of his mother Sarah and made love. And the Bible says that Rebekah comforted Isaac after the death of his mother.

Rebekah was beautiful and strong like Sarah, yet she bore no children for the first twenty years of her life with Isaac. Would she suffer as Sarah did the curse of barrenness? Isaac prayed and God heard, giving her not one, but two sons, who wrestled inside her womb. And God told her: “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.”

During the delivery, Jacob grasped the heel of his brother Esau, as though striving for first position. Though second by birth, he was first in his mother’s affections. But his father loved Esau best.

Years later, when Isaac was old and nearly blind, he summoned his firstborn, Esau. “Take your quiver and bow and hunt some wild game for me. Prepare the kind of meal I like, and I will give you my blessing before I die.”



But the clever Rebekah overheard and called quickly to Jacob, suggesting a scheme to trick the blessing from Isaac. Disguised as Esau, Jacob presented himself to his father for the much-coveted blessing.

Isaac then blessed Jacob, thinking he was blessing Esau: "May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed."

Isaac had stretched out his hand and passed the choicest blessing to his younger son, thus recalling the words spoken about the two children jostling for position in Rebekah's womb. The benediction thus given could not be withdrawn, despite the deceit, despite Esau's tears, and despite his vow to kill Jacob.

Afraid lest Esau take revenge, Rebekah persuaded Isaac to send Jacob north to find a wife from among her brother Laban's daughters.

As the years passed, Rebekah must have longed to embrace her younger son, hoping for the privilege of enfolding his children in her embrace. But more than twenty years would pass before Jacob returned. And though Isaac would live to welcome his son, Rebekah would not.

When Rebekah was a young girl, God had invited her to play a vital role in the story of his people. He had gone to great lengths to pursue her. Like Sarah, she would become a matriarch of God's people, and like Sarah, her heart would divide itself between faith and doubt, believing that God's promise required her intervention. Finding it difficult to rest in the promise God had made, she resorted to trickery to achieve it.

The results, mirroring her own heart, were mixed. Though Jacob indeed became heir to the promise, he was driven from his home and the mother who loved him too well. In addition, he and his descendants would forever be at odds with Esau and his people, the Edomites. Two thousand years later, Herod the Great, who hailed from Idumea (the Greek and Roman name for Edom) would slaughter many innocent children in his attempt to destroy the infant Jesus.

Yet God was still at work, graciously using a woman whose response to him was far less than perfect, in order to accomplish his purposes.

## JEWELRY

*“Then I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms.” ...  
Then the servant brought out gold and silver jewelry and articles of  
clothing and gave them to Rebekah.*

—GENESIS 24:47, 53

A nose ring! Often taken as a sign of rebellious youth today, a nose ring was an acceptable form of adornment in ancient times. When Abraham’s servant realized Rebekah was the woman Isaac was to marry, he immediately got out the jewels he had brought along for the occasion. He gave her two gold bracelets and a gold nose ring. Rebekah quickly slipped the jewelry on and ran home with shining eyes to tell her family what had occurred.

A nose ring is mentioned only two other times in Scripture—in Proverbs 11 and Ezekiel 16. In Ezekiel 16, God is describing in allegorical terms how much he loves the city of Jerusalem. He lovingly bathes her, then dresses her in wonderfully rich clothing and soft leather sandals. He then tenderly adorns her with jewelry. “I put bracelets on your arms and a necklace around your neck, and I put a ring on your nose, earrings on your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. So you were adorned with gold and silver” (Ezekiel 16:11–13).

The Old Testament mentions jewels and jewelry numerous times. Women and men both wore earrings (Exodus 32:2). They also commonly wore “armlets, bracelets, signet rings, earrings and necklaces” (Numbers 31:50). The Israelites took most of their jewelry from others while at war; gold and silver and gemstones are often listed among the booty taken during a raid. According to 2 Samuel 8:11, David gained enormous amounts of gold and silver and bronze when he conquered the nations surrounding Israel. He dedicated all of it to the Lord, and his son Solomon used it to build the fabulous temple in Jerusalem. Believe it or not, Solomon had so much wealth in his



kingdom that he “made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stones” (2 Chronicles 1:15).

In the NIV, the Greek word for various female adornments is translated “jewelry” only once. In speaking to wives, Peter urges them to pay more attention to their inner beauty than their outward beauty. “Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes,” he says. “Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight” (1 Peter 3:3–4). Evidently, the women of New Testament times were as fascinated with jewelry as the women of Old Testament times—and the women of our times. How easy it is to look in the mirror to assess our outward appearance, forgetting to spend much time at all examining our inner appearance.

Tomorrow morning, when you put your rings on your fingers, also put on a spirit of peace. When you put your earrings on your ears, put them on with a cheerful attitude. When you clasp your necklace around your neck, clasp a sweet spirit to your heart also. The jewelry you wear won’t make much difference in your day, but the spirit you wear will.

## HER LEGACY IN SCRIPTURE

### Read Genesis 24:15-27

1. What does this first information about young Rebekah tell you about her looks and her character? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How are you like Rebekah? How are you different from her? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Read Genesis 24:28-50

3. In these verses Abraham's servant tell Rebekah's family how he met her, emphasizing the Lord's blessing and involvement throughout. How does Rebekah's family respond? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Read Genesis 24:52-52

4. Three simple words in verse 58 changed Rebekah's life forever. Who was she like in her willingness to go where she had never been before? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. How would you react if God called you away from home and family? What would have to happen to make you obey?\_\_\_\_\_

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**Read Genesis 24:67**

6. These are some of the sweetest words about marriage found in the Bible. In your own words, describe what you think Isaac and Rebekah's marriage was like in these early days.\_\_\_\_\_

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**Read Genesis 25:28**

7. These are some of the saddest words about parenting found in the Bible. Describe how you think their parents' favoritism affected Jacob and Esau and their relationship.\_\_\_\_\_

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8. Many children grow up thinking their parents favored one sibling or another. If you have children, how can you avoid such thinking in them?\_\_\_\_\_

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**Read Genesis 27:1-28:9**

9. Why do you think Rebekah resorted to trickery to gain the promise given to her when she was pregnant? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Describe how you think Rebekah might have felt ten years later. Do you think she regretted her actions? \_\_\_\_\_

11. How are Rebekah's actions like those of her mother-in-law Sarah? \_\_\_\_\_

12. The story of Rebekah is rich and colorful. In one sentence summarize what you would like to learn from her life? \_\_\_\_\_



## HER PROMISE

*R*ebekah heard Abraham's servant describe how he had prayed and how he was sure she was the woman God intended for Isaac. God himself had divinely orchestrated the events. Rebekah seemed to have known that and, when asked, answered simply, "I will go."

Did Rebekah fully realize God's plan for her? Was she open to following that plan? Or was she simply entranced with the romantic notions of a young girl looking for her knight in shining armor? Whatever her motivation, the events *were* planned by God, and he was able and willing to faithfully continue to fulfill his promises through her.

God's faithfulness, despite our waywardness and contrariness, is evident both throughout Scripture and throughout our lives. He will be faithful; he promises.

### Promises in Scripture

*Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.*

—DEUTERONOMY 7:9

*The LORD is faithful to all his promises  
and loving toward all he has made.*

—PSALM 145:13

*Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.*

—HEBREWS 10:23

## HER LEGACY OF PRAYER

*Our sister, may you increase to thousands upon thousands; may your offspring possess the gates of their enemies.*

—GENESIS 24:60

- REFLECT ON: Genesis 27.
- PRAISE GOD: Because unlike Isaac, who had only one blessing to give his children, God has blessings uniquely designed for each of us.
- OFFER THANKS: That God doesn't wait until we are perfect to involve us in his plans.
- CONFESS: Any tendency to try to control the future rather than trusting God to shape it according to his timetable.
- ASK GOD: To protect you from playing favorites with your own children and to trust that he has a generous plan for each one.

### Lift Your Heart

Take a few minutes this week to write a blessing card for each of your children. Use a simple index card or decorate the card with stickers, stencils, or line drawings. (If you don't have children of your own, you can do this for a niece or nephew or another special child in your life.)

Start by praying for each child, asking God's blessing on their lives. Then write out the blessings you sense God wants for them. Tuck the blessing cards under their pillows or place them next to their dinner plates. Tell them these are some of the ways you are asking God to bless them. Be sure to keep a copy of each card for yourself so you can make those blessings a subject of frequent prayer.

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*Lord, you give us the power to bless our children, through our example, our teaching, our love, and our prayers. May our children surpass us in faith. In all their struggles may they sense your nearness, and may their joy be renewed each morning. May each of them become the kind of person who attracts others to you. I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.*