

Genesis 24 Rebecca and Isaac

Yesterday- 4th July. America celebrating what was multiple invasions, journeying and travelling to make a nation.

Today's Genesis passage involves lots of leaving and settling anew. Abraham in Caanan. Rebecca being prepared to leave her area north of the Euphrates. Yet many nations are now saying immigration has gone too far. Even to the extent of hate-speak. In a nation of immigrants how can we ever return to a 'pure-blood' Australia. This passage does have one theme of following a 'bloodline' by Abraham seeking a bride from now distant relatives. Was it about purity of worship when both families were surrounded by cultures with multiple gods? Was it about marrying within a culture to ease conflict? Later Israel as a nation remembered to look after the foreigner (aliens) 'as you were once foreigners'

Exclusivity - ???. Through Abraham and Sarah all nations will be blessed was their promise as we heard about in Faith Conversations this week.

This seeking of marriage within a familiar culture raises the question of how far to we take a passage to make generalised spiritual rules. We will hear of yokes in other passages. Within churches it was once an important practice not to be 'yoked unequally'.

2 Corinthians 6:14 - "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?"

Meaning don't form binding alliances or intimate relationships with unbelievers.

In this story we find people of advancing age making grand decisions

Abram - sends out an envoy with presents (to illustrate his wealth) to find a bride for his son

Laban - Rebecca's brother takes the bait of all this ostentatious wealth and lets his daughter go with the servant of a foreigner he probably will never meet

But we find a remarkable youngster - Rebecca. In a story that must have parallels with Jesus meeting a woman at the well in Samaria. The servant of Abraham devises an elaborate method to be sure he has the right wife for his master's son. If he meets some woman at the well and he is supplied with a drink and then the camels are supplied this is the right wife. It comes to pass and she is also a distant relative.

We lose something because of our easy turn-on-the-tap culture. Draw water for 10 camels. How long will it take? As much as you could lift from the well about 200 times. **Demo with the kids**

Rebecca, as opposed to Isaac, is the proactive, hard-working, executive type. And young, good looking, strong also is good. Rebecca even means to bind or join with connotations of captivating beauty. She makes decisions for herself. She risks this new adventure (or is she lured by the prospect of wealth and the security that that brings).

Isaac seems to be still the mummy's boy. Father has to seek a bride for him even though he is well-passed the dating and betrothal age. He still sleeps in his dead mother's tent and grieves until his marriage to Rebecca relieves the pain.

I have a lot of sympathy for Isaac. It would take a long time to forgive a father who had a knife to your throat and was about to sacrifice you and burn your body. Part of this grander story could be that it takes a long time to reverse a lack of trust. The implication is don't destroy trust in the first place. Although not directly linked, was Sarah's death linked to the sacrifice of her son incident.

God does not speak or intervene in this story. You might deduce that he directed events but in the description it is people who make the decisions and lead the action. We do learn more about their character in earlier and later chapters.

Let's have a look at the characters in the reading.

Abraham - the keeper of culture. Desire to keep wealth in the family. The leader with respect for his age and wealth.

Abraham's servant - envoy, manager, trusted

Rebecca - open, adventurous, the leaving the past for the future. Who can blame her for leaving when wealth offered security for herself and her children. This is not today.

Laban - impressed by wealth and future stability, takes opportunity

Isaac - passive, moves with other's actions. Love for Rebecca.

In a patriarchal culture, love within marriage is an added option. I am reminded of Reb Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof asking Golda if she loves him when they have been married 25 years.

Isaac, fortunately for him but unrelated to the great destiny of Israel as a nation, does love Rebecca.

Two questions for you.

Who are you most like right now?

Where is our church right now in the characters in the story?

Considering that long-term planning is taking place.