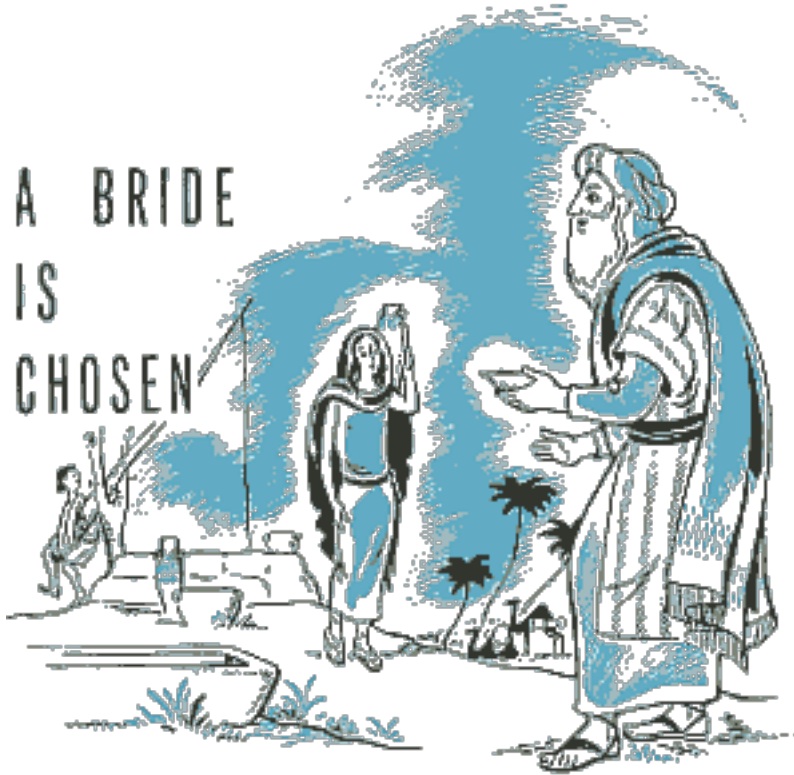


A BRIDE IS CHOSEN



MOST boys and girls get married when they grow up to be men and women. It has always been that way, and that is why Isaac, who lived about four thousand years ago, got married. As you will remember from our last story, Isaac was born because God kept his promise to Abraham that he would have a child. This meant that Isaac was a very special child, because God wanted him to be born, and wanted to use him and his children to bring great joy to all the people of the world.

So when Isaac was old enough to get married, his father considered it very important that he have the right kind of wife. I am quite sure if any of us were living in a foreign land where the people were all different from us, we would be thinking about our home country, and if anyone in our family planned to get married, we would prefer him to marry someone from our own country.

Well, that is the way Abraham felt about it.

You see, Abraham had journeyed a long, long way from his home country to the place where he was living when Isaac was born. Of course God wanted him to live in this new country, because it was the land that he had promised. It was the land of Canaan. That land is now called Israel, and it is still referred to by many people as the Promised Land. The people living there at that time were strangers to Abraham, and he knew God would not want Isaac to marry one of these strangers. So what do you suppose he did?

Well, he didn't let Isaac himself seek for someone to marry. No, what Abraham did was to talk the whole matter over with his very best and most faithful servant, whose name was Eliezer. He asked Eliezer to go back to the land from which they had come, and there find Abraham's family. From that family he was to select a very nice girl and bring her back to be Isaac's wife.

Eliezer thought this would be almost too difficult for him to do. He was afraid, you see, that the girl he would choose would not want to come back with him. But Abraham was sure that this was the way God wanted Isaac to obtain a wife. So he told Eliezer that if the girl he selected did not want to come with him he would not be blamed. Eliezer agreed to do the best he could. Abraham told him that God would send one of his angels to lead him in his search for the wife he was to bring back to Isaac. Abraham knew that God, having promised to bless his children and the whole world, would make sure that Isaac had a good wife.

God's promises always come true!

Eliezer got ready for the long journey back to Abraham's home country. There still were no railroad trains or automobiles. They didn't have any steamships, either. Maybe you think Eliezer went by airplane, but he didn't, because there were no airplanes. How, then, did he travel? He traveled on the back of a camel! That is the animal with a big hump on its back.

But Eliezer used more than one camel. He took ten camels with him. Now, of course, Eliezer did not need ten camels on which to ride. But this was a very long journey, and he had to take food and

water, and probably tents in which to sleep at night, so camels were needed to help carry all these things. It must have been exciting when Eliezer and the ten camels started off on that long trip! Of course, Eliezer could not take care of all those animals by himself, so it was necessary that others go along with him. Perhaps Eliezer and some of the others rode on the camels, while some of them may have walked. Thus they started off to find a wife for Isaac. Probably Abraham and Isaac both watched Eliezer and the camels as they started on that long journey. I wouldn't be surprised if Isaac wished he could go along too. But in those days that was not the proper thing to. Isaac had to wait at home for his wife until Eliezer returned and brought her to him. The Bible doesn't tell us how long they were away on that journey, but it must have been a long time. Finally, though, they traveled in Mesopotamia, near a city called Nahor. They arrived toward the close of day. Now we must remember that cities in those days weren't like our cities today. Some of the people who lived in the city of Nahor were farmers and raisers of cattle and sheep. When they need water for themselves and for their flocks it was necessary to go outside of the city where there were wells. There they would fill large pitchers with water and carry them back to their homes.

When Eliezer came near to the city of Nahor, he stopped near a well of water. As it was toward evening he knew that before long someone would be out from the city to get water from that well. At that time the women were the ones who carried the water. Probably the men had to work very hard, and the women thought that it would be a good idea to help them by bringing the water. Eliezer had great faith in God, and he knew that God wanted him to find the right woman to be Isaac's wife. So he prayed while waiting at the well. He asked God to help him decide this very important matter. Eliezer's plan was that when a young lady came out to draw water from the well he would ask her for a drink of water from her pitcher. If she gave him water, and also said that she would like to give water to his camels, then he would know that this was the right girl. He asked God to let it be this way.

Eliezer waited only a short time, when along came a young lady by the name of Rebekah, with her water pitcher upon her shoulder. The Bible says that she was a very beautiful young woman. After she had filled her pitcher with water from the well, Eliezer went up to her and asked for a drink of water. She was very friendly. Not only did she give him a drink, but she also offered to get water for his camels.

Eliezer was quite surprised that the very first young lady to come out to the well should be so willing to give him water, and also to water the camels. He had asked the Lord to let it be this way, yet he wanted to make very sure that Rebekah was really the right young lady to be Isaac's wife. So he said to her, "Whose daughter are you?" And she said, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, and the grand child of Nahor."

Nahor was a brother of Abraham; so you see when Eliezer found this out he knew that he was among Abraham's people. Then he was almost certain that Rebekah was the young lady to become Isaac's wife. Eliezer had brought with him a large gold earring, and two beautiful gold bracelets. He gave these to Rebekah, and asked her if there was room in her father's house for him to stay that night. Rebekah was really very nice about it. She told Eliezer they had plenty of room for him, and that they had food for the camels, and a place for them to stay. This made Eliezer very happy indeed, because now he was sure that the angel of the Lord had brought him to the right people, and that he had already found a good wife for Isaac.

Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban. When he heard of Eliezer's visit, he ran out to the well and invited him to come into their home. He did this because he knew that God was blessing Abraham, and he knew that God would bless them if they were good to Eliezer, the servant of Abraham. They fixed up the house for the company, and arranged a place for the camels, and they were all comfortably settled for the night. Rebekah's family, were very kind and generous, and prepared a delicious meal for Eliezer. They

asked him to eat, but he explained that he would not eat anything until he had told them why he had come.

They were very anxious to know why he had made such a long journey, and they asked him to tell them all about it. So Eliezer related a wonderful story about his master, Abraham. Probably these relatives of Abraham had often wondered how he had been getting along since he left home so many years before, and I can imagine how interested they were to hear Eliezer's story, telling them how good God had been to Abraham. He explained that God had given Abraham cattle and sheep, and silver and gold, and many men and women to help him, and that he had ever so many camels and other valuable possessions.

Then he told them about Abraham's boy Isaac—what a fine young man he was and that he was to have all of Abraham's possessions. Then came the interesting part of his story. He explained that Abraham wanted Isaac to have a wife from among his own people, and that he had been sent all the way to Mesopotamia to get acquainted with the family, and to select a wife for Isaac and take her back to him.

Then he explained how he met Rebekah at the well, and how good she had been in giving him water for himself and for the carriers. He said he knew from this that Rebekah was the one whom God had chosen to be Isaac's wife. When he had finished telling this wonderful story, Rebekah's father and Laban, her brother, said that they were sure God wanted it just that way. They said to him: "Here is Rebekah, take her, and let her be Isaac's wife as the Lord has said."

Abraham was a very rich man, and when he sent Eliezer to find a wife for Isaac he gave him a large supply of beautiful jewelry, and fine clothing to take with him. Eliezer gave a great deal of this to Rebekah; and he also gave presents to her brother and to her mother.

Early in the morning Eliezer wanted to start back home, but it was all so very sudden for the family, that they wanted Rebekah to remain with them for at least ten days. That would have meant that

Eliezer would have to remain too. But he didn't agree to this, so the family said that whatever Rebekah decided would be all right with them. Then they called Rebekah, and asked her if she wanted to go right away, or if she would rather wait awhile. And Rebekah said, "I will go."

So they sent Rebekah away, and a nurse went with her. Together with Eliezer and his servants, they started back on those ten camels on the long return trip to the land God promised to Abraham, where Abraham was now living.

The Bible doesn't tell us anything about that long journey back to Abraham's home and to Isaac, but when they were nearly home Isaac went out into the field in the evening where he could be alone to think about God and all the wonderful things that God had done for him. And as he was sitting there thinking, he looked up and saw the camels coming in the distance.

At just about the same time Rebekah, who was riding on one of those camels, saw Isaac. She asked Eliezer who the man was that she saw in the field, and Eliezer explained that it was Isaac, the man she had come all the way from Mesopotamia to marry. She got right down off her camel, covered her face with a veil, and went to meet her future husband, Isaac. The Bible says that they loved each other, so we are glad that God blessed Eliezer in finding such a good wife for Isaac.

QUESTIONS

- Whom did Abraham send to look for a wife for Isaac, and where did he go to find her?
- How did Eliezer find out who it was that God wanted to be the wife of Isaac?
- Where was Isaac when Rebekah first saw him?