

A Good Shepherd Sacred Story

Rebekah

Adapted by:
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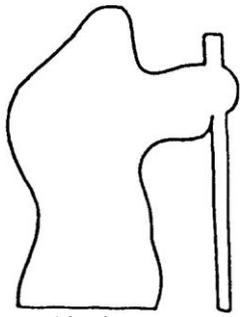
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REBEKAH ... MATERIALS

-medium wicker basket to hold

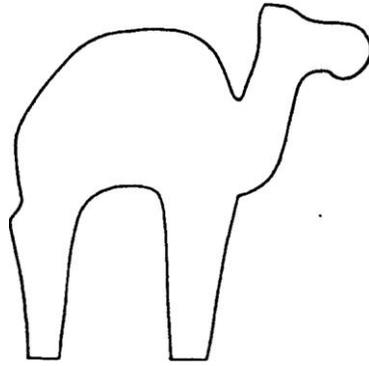
- wooden Abraham figure
- wooden servant figure
- wooden Rebekah figure
- wooden camel figure
- wooden Laban figure
- wooden Bethuel figure
- wooden mother figure
- wooden Isaac figure



Abraham



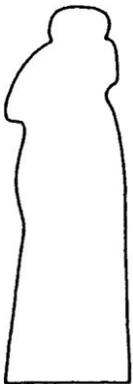
Servant



Camel



Rebekah
Isaac



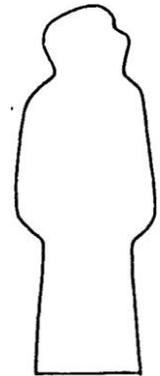
Laban



Bethuel



Mother



REBEKAH ... GENESIS 24 AND 27

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the story basket from the shelf and return to the circle.

Allow 10-15 seconds of silence as you reverently touch one or more of the wooden figures to center yourself and the children.

Using no figures remind the children of the previous story.

Place the Isaac figure to one side of the storytelling area.

Place the servant in the center of the story telling area.

Move the servant figure and the camel figure away from you toward the top of the storytelling area.

Turn the figures to one side.

Touch the servant figure as you speak of praying.

Move the Rebekah figure from the basket toward the servant figure.

Stop the Rebekah figure a short distance from the servant and camel figures.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

All the words to this story are inside of me. Will you please make silence with me so I can find all the words to this story?

Many of you know the story of Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah. His name means laughter.

When Isaac grew up, Abraham was concerned that he marry someone from his own tribe. His wife Sarah was dead.

So Abraham sent his servant to Syria, near his old home, to find a wife for his son, Isaac.

The servant traveled many days until he came to northern Syria where Abraham's brother, Nahor, lived

When he got there he let the camels rest outside the city, near the well.

The servant was worried that he wouldn't find the right woman and he prayed to God that God would give him some kind of sign when he found the right woman.

While he was still praying a beautiful young woman came by with a water jar on her shoulder.

Her name was Rebekah, and she was from Nahor's family.

Move Rebekah just past the servant.

Rebekah walked past Abraham's servant and went to the well to fill her water jar.

Turn Rebekah around and move the servant toward her.

When she got ready to leave, the servant ran to her and said, "Please let me have a drink of water."

Move Rebekah close to the servant.

Rebekah replied, "I'll be happy to." She held her water jar for the servant to drink. Then she said, "Now I will give all of your camels water."

Move Rebekah close to the camel and back again several times.

It took many trips to the well, but Rebekah gave all the camels water. The servant said nothing, but watched her the whole time.

Touch the servant figure as you speak

He wanted to know if this was the woman God wanted Isaac to marry.

Touch first Rebekah and then the servant.

When Rebekah finished the servant gave her a gold ring and two gold bracelets he had brought along.

Touch the servant.

Then he said, "Tell me who your father is. Does he have room for me and my men to spend the night."

First touch Rebekah and then nod your head as you speak of the accommodations.

Rebekah said, "My father is Bethuel, the son of Nahor and Milcah. And we have room for you and your men and straw and feed for your camels."

Put your hands together in prayer as you speak of the servant.

Then the servant prayed, thanking God for leading him to the right place to find Abraham's family.

Move Rebekah back toward you, stopping close to the center of the storytelling area. Place Laban and Bethuel near her.

Rebekah went right home and told her family everything that happened. She showed them her ring and bracelets.

Move Laban slightly away from the others.

Her brother, Laban, heard what she said and he waited outside to greet the servant and his men.

Move Laban, Bethuel and the servant to the center of the storytelling area.

Touch the servant as you speak.

Turn the servant toward Laban and Bethuel.

Rest your hand first on Laban and then on Bethuel.

Move your hands from one side to the other as you pantomime giving gifts.

Place Rebekah's mother with the others.

Hold up both hands, with fingers extended for "ten days."

Touch each of the family members.

Place Rebekah with the group

Move the servant, Rebekah and the camel to the same side you started with at the beginning of the story.

Place the Isaac figure near the servant and Rebekah.

Place Isaac and Rebekah close to each other.

Place your hand on Rebekah as you speak.

Then food was brought for them to eat. But Abraham's servant said, "Before I eat, I must tell you why I've come."

And he told them about Abraham and Isaac and meeting Rebekah.

Then the servant said, "Now will you let Rebekah come with me and be Isaac's wife?"

Laban and Bethuel said, "God has done this and we have no choice. Rebekah may go with you and marry Isaac."

Then the servant gave them many gifts that Abraham had sent along.

In the morning the servant told Rebekah's mother and brother that he wanted to leave to go back to his home.

They said, "Let her stay ten days and then she may go."

But the servant was anxious to go. Finally her family said, "Let's ask Rebekah what she wants to do."

Rebekah listened to them and then said she was ready to leave immediately.

They left and went back to Abraham and Isaac's home.

When they arrived, the servant told Isaac everything that had happened.

Isaac and Rebekah were married. Isaac loved Rebekah and she made him happy.

Later Rebekah and Isaac had twin sons and Rebekah helped one son trick his father. But that is another story for another time.

\WONDERING QUESTIONS

I wonder why Isaac didn't pick his own wife?

I wonder if Rebekah was afraid when she left her home?

I wonder if Rebekah ever saw her family again?

Place all the wooden figures in the basket one at a time.

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

After speaking, stand and carry the basket back to its shelf. Return to the circle and sit down.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

Dismiss the children when everyone has had a chance to choose his/her work.

I wonder what you will do for your work today? Let's begin.

REBEKAH ... TEACHER HELPS

I have chosen to tell mainly the story of Rebekah being found and asked to be Isaac's wife. Although there is much more to her story, it can be found in detail in the Summer Year One stories, Birth of Twins and Sold Birthright. It may be helpful to tell both of those stories following this one.

In the Bible this story follows the story of the death of Isaac's mother, Sarah. We can assume that Isaac felt her loss deeply. Perhaps that is some of the motivation Abraham has in his urgency to find a wife for his son. The other may have been his realization of his own mortality and his desire for an heir from this much loved child.

The very basic assumptions of this story are foreign to most of us. We do not live in a culture where fathers pick their son's wives. Nor are we comfortable with a woman who would just accept that a stranger was to be her husband, or a man that she would be his wife. It may take a little explaining to help the children get past those cultural differences. You may choose to explain to them that in Isaac's time this was a very

common occurrence. None of the parties involved would have thought there was anything unusual at all in the process Abraham used to find his cherished son a wife. In fact, they were probably impressed that he sent a servant such a distance to find just the right person. It was very important for Abraham that Isaac marry someone who was a Yahwist, someone who believed in God. He believed his best chance to that kind of a wife was to find a bride from his own people.

The servant knew that his task was very important. He set off for a far away place that he most likely did not know. When he got to the city he offered a prayer that God would give him a sign when he found the right person. It's difficult to tell from the text if it is Rebekah's hospitality or the fact that she is from Abraham's family that is the sign the servant requested.

We do know a little about Rebekah from this story. She is said to be young and beautiful. But it is perhaps her actions that make her the most lovely. She not only agreed to give water to a stranger, which was an action that would have been expected of her. She volunteered to water his camels as well. In Genesis 24:10 we read that Abraham loaded ten camels with gifts. He also sent along others to help the senior servant. So at the least, Rebekah watered ten camels with her one watering jar. That would have been a big job.

We have to wonder why she was so quick to offer her home to the servant and his men. Was it only hospitality or did the heavy gold ring and bracelets aid the decision? By the way, the text notes that the ring was for her nose. Some traditions come back again and again. Perhaps we need to add shrewd or astute to our description of Rebekah. She may have realized the potential for her future in the words of this servant. Either way, she invited the servant and his men to her home and then ran on ahead quickly to tell her family what had happened.

Note that it is her brother, Laban, who meets the men and offers them hospitality. In the stories of Jacob, Laban is an important player. We have this introduction of him, early in the saga. (For more stories about Laban see Autumn, Year 2 stories; Jacob and Rachel and Jacob Tricks Laban.) Before the hospitality of a meal was accepted the servant explained why he was there. He told the whole story, including the part of asking God for direction. When they heard the story both Rebekah's brother, Laban, and father, Bethuel, indicate that since this was God's choice they must agree to it.

The story moves quickly from this point on. The servant wanted to leave the next day. There was a tradition of giving the bride a ten-day period with her family to say good-bye, since she might never see them again. It is Rebekah's mother who enters the scene at this point and insists the ten-day time be honored. But the servant is persistent. Finally the family gives Rebekah the choice. "Are you willing to go with him now?" When Rebekah said yes, an old family woman servant was sent with her to her new homeland. There is nothing said about the trip until they arrived back in Canaan. The servant told his story one more time, this time to Isaac. Isaac made her his wife in the tent of his mother, Sarah. This would have been a very special place for Isaac and indicates

the importance his mother had in his life. It is also an indication of Isaac's love for Rebekah that the text says that she was a comfort for him over the loss of his mother.

The wondering questions in our story today begin with wondering why Isaac didn't pick his own wife. Although we know something of the answer to that, I still think it's worth the children's thoughts. They may have ideas about the relationship between Isaac and Abraham that will influence their answers. Although I didn't tell it in the story, if you read Genesis 24 you will note that Abraham gave the servant permission to fail in finding a suitable wife for Isaac, but he forbade the servant from ever taking Isaac with him for the search. You may choose to share that with older children if you like and wonder about it as well.

The second wondering question asks if they think Rebekah was afraid when she left her home with the servant. I think the responses will move from afraid to excited and happy. Some of the children will express great fear at the thought of a person moving so far away with someone they don't really know, while others will treat it as an adventure. The younger children probably won't realize the finality of what happened in the story, while the older children will know and perhaps be more thoughtful in their responses.

Our final wondering question asks if they think Rebekah ever saw her family again. We don't have any account that she did, but it is possible. Again, the responses may be fairly age appropriate. Little ones will most likely say that Rebekah went to visit her family or they went to visit her. The older children will have more understanding of the distance and the hardships involved in travel at that time. It can be a good thing to show the children, particularly the older children, a map showing the distance between the two places and the kind of land that had to be traveled to get from one land to the other.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

The servant asked God for a sign that he would find the right woman for Isaac to have as a wife. Have you ever asked God for a sign? Did it work? Do you think God gives us signs regularly? How else might we be sure we're doing what God wants us to do?

Moving can be very hard. Some of you have moved and left good friends, grandparents or cousins behind. What was the hardest part of the move for you? Can you imagine leaving your whole family, and not seeing them again? Do you think you could do that?

The Bible says that Isaac loved Rebekah when he met her. Do you think Isaac really loved her immediately? The Bible says nothing of how Rebekah felt about Isaac. If you could imagine being Rebekah, how do you think you would feel? Have you ever met someone whom you liked instantly and remained friends with a long time? What made that a good relationship?