

Our Choice

Michael Heiss—August 19, 2017

Good morning, everyone! As most of you know, I love history, a student of history: names, dates, places, famous people, successful people. In fact, I have a folder at home labeled Great Personalities. I've always been fascinated about what make successful people successful.

Recently I went through a series of CDs from the History Channel. It was on the Men Who Built America. If you get a chance to see it, do so. It took a period of time from 1865 to about 1915-1920 and talks about the building of the country, the forging of the economic prowess that became the United States.

- Cornelius Vanderbilt: king of railroads
- John D. Rockefeller—king of oil
- Andrew Carnegie—king of steel

And I didn't know it, but Carnegie was almost down and out and he gambled everything on building a steel bridge across the Mississippi River. They said it couldn't be done. Well, he did it.

- J.P. Morgan—finance and banking
- Henry Ford--transportation

All these men had certain characteristics: drive, zeal, purpose and steadfastness. They would not accept *no* for an answer. Failure was not an option. In some cases they were absolutely ruthless in their pursuits. But they did not fail; they succeeded brilliantly.

If you would ever like to see one of these men, ever want to see one in action—sort of a descendant of them—I can give you his address: 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C.; he resides on the second floor of a big White House and works in the Oval Office; that's it: **Donald Trump!** He's of the same mold, the same character. He's a fighter, as were all these men.

Today, we're not going to look at any of them. We're going to look at an individual who lived a long time ago, well before the emergence of Israel even as a nation. A person who made a decision with 24 hours—had to—that would alter the history of the world, a remarkable person!

She is probably one of the most underrated figures in the Bible, and I trust that you noticed with such subtlety that I let you know her gender. Yes, it's a woman—a remarkable one—who was willing to give up everything to answer a call. She did it within 24 hours. She was better than me; I couldn't do within 24 hours, but she did!

Without further verbiage on my part, remember these are real people, so let's take a

glimpse, a look, a peek into the life and times of a woman named Rebekah. Our story begins in Gen. 24.

Genesis 24:1: “And Abraham was old, well advanced in age. And the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had...” (vs 1-2).

Here was a servant who had control of everything that Abraham had at this point. Sort of like Joseph in Egypt with Potifer. He was pretty much the manager of all of Abraham's positions and Abraham is going to give him an incredible commission. Abraham says:

Verse 3: “...that you shall not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell. But you shall go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac” (vs 3-4).

Eliezer is trying to take this in. ‘What? Go where? How? What if she says *no*? Shall I allow your son to go back to where he came from?’ There are two things Abraham is adamant about:

1. do not take my son back there, God called me out of there
2. don't let him marry one of these local Canaanite girls

If the girl says no, back wherever, and he's not in the land of Canaan—not to take one of them—what's going to happen? Well, *Abraham has no problem with it!* He's not called *the father of the faithful* for nothing.

Verse 7: “The LORD, the God of heaven, Who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred, and Who spoke to me, and Who swore to me, saying, ‘To your seed I will give this land’—**He shall send His angel before you. And you shall take a wife for my son from there.**”

Abraham had absolute faith that the angel would lead Eliezer and that they would find a woman.

Verse 10: “And the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master and departed, for all the goods of his master were in his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia to the city of Nahor. And he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, the time that women go out to draw *water*” (vs 10-11).

Notice what Eliezer says, and first of all he prays to God. *Good idea! Smart move!*

Verse 12: “And he said, ‘O LORD, God of my master Abraham...’” This is the first time in the Bible, by the way, that we have a case where a servant asked God for favors on behalf of his master. I’m not saying that nobody else ever did that, but this is the first recording of such an event.

“...I pray You, **send me good speed this day**, and show kindness to my master Abraham” (v 12). There’s more than meets the eye here. This is a good translation and in English that most of them are like that. That’s not the force of the Hebrew, the force of the Hebrew is *make this day successful, today and now!*

That’s getting a little bold, don’t you think? But then again, Eliezer knew Abraham, and he understood the God of Abraham. Or, we might say, if you recall any of the Clint Eastwood *Dirty Harry* movies: *make my day!* This is what Eliezer is praying: *make the day successful.*

Verse 13: “Behold, I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water. And let it be that the young woman to whom I shall say, ‘Let down your pitcher, please, so that I may drink,’ that she shall say, ‘Drink, and I will give your camels drink also.’ *Let her be* the one that You have appointed for Your servant Isaac...” (vs 13-14).

Do you get that, what he’s saying? *You, O God, are the One Who is going to appoint this woman!*

“...And by it I shall know that **You** have...” (v 14)—appointed. ‘Not me, not Abraham.’ Abraham is out of the picture now. It’s God Who is going to do this, according to the faith of Eliezer.

Verse 15: “And it came to pass before he had finished speaking... [before the thought left his mind; right on queue here comes Rebekah]: ...that behold, Rebekah came out...”

Remember, God is writing this script; He’s moving. He is laying the foundation for what is to become the nation of Israel. Eliezer doesn’t know that, but he knows that God is going to work this out.

Rebekah came, “...who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah... [v 16]: And the young woman *was* very beautiful to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her. And she went down to the well and filled her pitcher, and came up. And the servant ran to meet her, and said, ‘Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher.’ And she said, ‘Drink, my lord.’ And she hurried and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave a drink to him. And when she had finished giving him drink, she said, ‘I will draw *water* for your camels also until they have

finished drinking’” (vs 15-19).

That’s exactly what Eliezer asked God to have happen. You talk about an instant answer to prayer.

Verse 20: “And she hurried, and emptied her pitcher... [v 21]: And the man was watching her, **keeping silent...**” Again, there’s more than meets the eye here, because you don’t get the force of the Hebrew.

Eliezer wasn’t just watching her, the force is that he was *staring at her; fixated on her.* ‘I think she’s the one!’ It said, that he was in silence. But that word *silence* has more of the force of speechless! He wasn’t just silent, he couldn’t even get any words out of his mouth. This is real!

Verse 22: “And it came to pass, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight...” In other words, he sort of brought Abraham’s ‘Tiffany’ collection with him.

Verse 23: “And he said, ‘Whose daughter are you? Please tell me. Is there room in your father’s house for us to stay?’ And she said to him, ‘I *am* the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.’” (vs 23-24).

Verse 26: “And the man bowed down *his head*, and worshiped the LORD. And he said, ‘Blessed *be* the LORD, God of my master Abraham, Who has not left my master destitute of His mercy and His Truth.... [now talking to himself]: ...The LORD led me, I *being* in the way, to the house of my master’s brothers’” (vs 26-27).

Abraham had said, ‘The angel of the Lord will go before you.’ And indeed it did. The of course, we know the story. We’re not going into great detail here, but she runs, she tells Laban her brother and Bethuel her father, ‘Look, what happened, I was there by the well, this man came this happened and that happened.

Of course, Laban her brother, v 30: “...when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, ‘So spoke the man to me,’ he came to the man. And behold, he stood by the camels at the well. And he said, ‘Come in, blessed of the LORD. Why do you stand outside?....’” (vs 30-31).

Eliezer comes in, v 33: “And *food* was set before him to eat. But he said, ‘I will not eat until I have told my errand.’....” A *man on a mission* and he’s not going to eat until he talks. Wouldn’t you like a servant like that? *You bet you would!*

Verse 34: “And he said, ‘I *am* Abraham’s servant. And the LORD has blessed my master greatly, and he has become great.... [v 36]: And Sarah, my master’s wife, bore a son to my master

when she was old. And he has given to him all that he has” (vs 34-36). And now ‘I have come to get a wife for him.’

He describes what happened at the well, what he said, what he thought and Rebekah’s answer. Then he said:

Verse 48: “And I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD... [v 49]: And now, if you will deal kindly and truthfully with my master, tell me. And if not, tell me so that I may turn to the right hand or to the left.”

And Laban gave a remarkable answer; even though his man wasn’t a servant of God, he was a shyster, the biggest crook in the East. All you have to do is read what he did with Jacob later. But he did recognize that there was a God! He was not going to mess with that God.

If you remember, when he was chasing after Jacob to overtake him, he said, ‘I was coming after you Jacob, but the Lord talked to me.’ In essence what God told him was, ‘Jacob is My boy! Don’t you touch him, or else!’ Laban was not in an all-fired hurry to find out what the ‘or else’ might be.

Verse 50: “And Laban and Bethuel answered and said, ‘The thing has come forth from the LORD. **We cannot speak to you bad or good.**’” This phrase is the Hebrew of equivalent of nothing. ‘I cannot accept it, cannot deny it,’ nothing! But the force of the Hebrew begins a little different than “...The thing has come forth from the LORD....” But in the Hebrew the order is reversed; the operative words are *from the Lord issued forth this thing, this matter*. Laban backs off, and he says:

Verse 51: “Behold, Rebekah is before you; take *her* and go. And let her be the wife of your master’s son, even as the LORD has spoken.’ And it came to pass, when Abraham’s servant heard their words, he worshiped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth. And the servant brought forth jewelry of silver and jewelry...” (vs 51-53)—and had a wonderful time, a big feast.

Verse 56: “And he said to them, ‘Do not hinder me since the LORD has prospered my way. Send me away, that I may go away to my master.’”

Verse 55_[transcriber’s correction]: “And her brother and her mother said, ‘Let the young woman stay with us perhaps ten days....’” ‘Maybe we can talk her out of it.’ They don’t want her to go. But they can’t say that; they’re hoping to get her to say it.

Verse 57: “And they said, ‘We will call the young woman and inquire of her directly.’ And they called Rebekah...” (vs 57-58). Finally the woman gets to say something. Rebekah gets to put her ‘two cents’ in. She’s been silent this whole time.

“...and said to her, ‘Will you go with this man?’...” (v 58). In other words, ‘Rebekah, do you really want to go?’ She doesn’t say that it would be nice to spend a few more days here. *No!*

“...And she said, ‘**I will go**’” (v 58).

Now, I’m sorry ladies; I’ve heard of blind dates, but not blind marriages where you have a choice. I’ve heard of arranged marriages where kings get together that and they cement alliances and you’re going to marry my daughter or son and so forth. The woman has no choice!

Rebekah had a choice! She didn’t have to go, but she did. She said, “...I will go.” She makes a decision within 24 hours. She just met this Eliezer maybe four or five o’clock the day before, because he came at the time that the women come out to draw water. That’s late in the afternoon, and it isn’t even noon the next day and she’s saying, “...**I will go.**”

- Why?
- Why would she do that?
- What made her?

Matthew 10:37: “The one who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and the one who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And the one who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me” (vs 37-38).

This is the position in which Rebekah found herself. In some respects this is what Tibia in the movie *Fiddler on the Roof* is going to marry off his second daughter to this revolutionary who is in Siberia. He’s at the train station with his second daughter and she sings this delightful song: ‘Once I was happy to be where I was, what I was’—and talks about her life—‘Now I’m going, I’m leaving far from the place I love.’ As the train pulls in, she says to her father, ‘We may never see each other again.’ And Tibia said, ‘We’ll leave it in God’s hands.’

This is the position that Rebekah was in. She knew this; she knew that it was a call from God. What hints do we have of that?

Remember, Rebekah is there; she’s listening to this. Genesis 24:50: “And Laban and Bethuel answered and said, ‘The thing has come forth from the LORD.’...” They all knew that this was from God. Not anybody else, it was from God.

Eliezer said, ‘Let it be the one You [God] have chosen.’ Now here she is having to make a choice. She’s going to leave her father, mother, sister, brother, everything that she has, everything she’s ever known.

Remember, back in those days, no cars, trains, planes; she's never going to get back to Mesopotamia. There are no phones, no smart phones, dumb phones, cell phones. She's leaving everything behind her because she knows it is of God. ***She never looked back!***

How many of us can say that? *She did! We can say it of her!*

Romans 1:17: "For therein *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith unto faith, according as it is written: **'The just shall live by faith.'**"

Habakkuk 2:4: "Behold, his soul is puffed up, *and* is not upright; but **the just shall live by his faith.**"

By this decision, *Rebekah altered the history of the world!* She went on to become the wife of Isaac, therefore, the mother of Jacob, who is the father of 12 sons from whom descended the 12 tribes of Israel. From one of them was to come forth the lion of the tribe Judah, the Son of God Himself!

She altered history! It's true that God has many ways of doing things; He has contingency plans! He could have worked out something else, sure He could have, but He wasn't going to; he didn't have to.

Why? *God knew Rebekah!* Remember when God 'stirred up the spirit' of Cyrus? *All God had to do was stir up Rebekah!* He knew that she was a decent woman, one who would serve and give. Remember when Eliezer said, 'Let the woman serve who would draw water. He didn't ask for one of wealth or brains, or who was high bred. No! *A woman who would serve!* Rebekah was sensitive to that call, and she did. *Incredible!*

I believe that Rebekah is highly underrated. Like anybody else she had her faults, she had her short comings, and one of them, just like Sarah, got help God out with the blessings and the sons and so forth. She couldn't quite leave well enough alone in that regard, but that's another story for another time.

I would ask you to read all of Gen. 24 slowly and carefully, verse by verse, getting the feel. Remember, they are real people, making real decisions, with real emotions. If you do, it's my firm conviction that you will come away with a much better appreciation and respect for this woman named Rebekah.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Genesis 24:1-4, 7, 10-24, 26-27, 30-31, 33-36, 48-53, 56, 55, 57-58
- 2) Matthew 10:37-38
- 3) Genesis 24:50

- 4) Romans 1:17
- 5) Habakkuk 2:4

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