

## *Making Change That Lasts: Rebekah at the Well*

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July 7, 2019

The goal of spiritual living is to bring goodness and truth together in our lives so that we have the desire and the know-how to make the changes we want. The inner meaning of the story of finding a bride for Isaac offers us insight about how to do this.

Isaac stands for good in the rational – the deeper part of our mind. Isaac needs a bride. Desire alone is not enough. Desire or goodness needs truth to give it form, to make it a reality. The process of sending a servant out is an image of seeking out truths that are compatible with what we love.

The servant set up a test--who will offer to get water for the camels as well as himself? Rebekah did so, showing a good heart. Rebekah represents a desire or affection for truth that is full of innocence. Our reading today described how no one is instructed by truth, but by an affection for truth. We know this from so much experience. Tell someone an idea they don't want to hear and no matter how convincingly you put together the ideas they will oppose you. A true spiritual seeker is one who loves the truth so much that he or she will be willing to change old opinions in the face of that new truth. This willingness to be open to a truth is because it is the Lord's.

Rebekah came, carrying a pitcher on her shoulder and lowered it down to water the servant's camels. The essence of the meaning is addressed in this teaching: "All factual knowledge is a vessel for truth, and all truth is a vessel for good. Factual knowledge without truth is an empty vessel, and so is truth without good; but factual knowledge in which truth is held is a vessel that is filled, as is truth in which good is held." (*Arcana Coelestia* 3068)

When you come to church you learn new facts – spiritual principles, suggestions of application, a particular new way of seeing a part of the Word. Each of those facts is like data – a dead piece of knowledge. Some days you put those facts into your memory, go home and forget them. They have no use, like the things gathering dust in your basement.

But if you are motivated by an affection for truth, then truth fills those facts, just like Rebekah filled her pitcher. You've probably been sitting in church not getting much out of the talk when something sparked your interest. All of a sudden you are riveted. Your affection for truth came alive and you were animated, full of life.

Similarly, you have likely come to church and listened to an interesting sermon, found it stimulating, but then struggled to remember what it was about the next day. Our reading described that as having an empty vessel. Possibly what happened is that you were interested in the ideas, the affection for truth was stimulated, but it didn't get as far as the affection for good, which is the desire to use that truth to change your life. When that is stimulated, then the facts are filled with an understanding of truth which is motivated by love of goodness from within. Ideally there are vessels within vessels in our lives. Facts are vessels for truths, which are vessels for goodness. When we have sufficient quantities of each, arranged in order together, we are able to make changes and stick with them in our lives.

Lessons: Genesis 24:10-26; *Arcana Coelestia* 3066:2, 3068