

Forever

“Rahab, Rahab, WAKE UP!”

“Mh hm?”

“Rahab, get your little bottom out of bed. You’ll be late, and we all know how Old Jezreel feels about *that*.” I was out of bed in a split second. Old Jezreel gets mad when we’re late. I quickly ate my breakfast and ran out the door, not too late to hear Mom say, “make sure you count the sheep by ones and not by tens, and don’t -don’t forget I love you.”

“All right, mom.” She sounded pretty brave, considering Dad’s in bed about to die.

These are the words that started every day for me. Little did I know today was different, extremely different.

As I dragged myself to the pasture with my flock, Shem and Abram, two shepherd boys, started making fun of me, like every day. They do it because I’m a girl, and I’m shepherding for my papa. “Your dad needs to toughen up. Ha-ha!” Every day I ignore them, but for some reason that day I couldn’t take it and THAT is an understatement.

“How would you feel if your morning started off with boys making fun of you?” I said to them.

“Rahab!” said Old Jezreel. “Would you watch Levi’s sheep today as well, please?”

I only said “sure.” What else could I say? Now I had 200 sheep to count (by ones) instead of 100. Great.

It started to get dark. I’m not so confident in the dark because my Papa fell once and broke his arm in the dark. So, the boys do what they normally do, tease me. This time I decided to ignore them. I started to count my sheep (by ones) before I went home. “1, 2, 3 ...

In the background I could hear “afraid of the dark, afraid of the dark ...”

“7, 8, 9 ...”

“Afraid of the dark, afraid of the dark ...”

“Twelve, thirteen, fourteen ...It might make life easier if you were quiet!” I shouted.

Old Shepherd Jezreel looked my way with eyebrows raised. I gulped. “Fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen...”

“Look!” cried Shem and Abram with their eyes wide. “Oh my goodness, there’s a sun in the nighttime!”

“Don’t be sil- “I started to say, but then I looked up. They were right. Out of the ‘sun’ came a glorious shining angel. I was terrified. I hate to admit it, but I hid behind a rock. The boys (and the other shepherds) were so terrified they didn’t call me names.

“Do not be scared,” said the Angel, “For I bring great news.” I crawled out from behind the safety of my rock to listen. “Tonight a child is born and he will be called the Messiah. You will find him wrapped in swaddling

clothes, sleeping in a manger.” Then all these other ‘suns’ came and all the angels said “Glory to the Lord on High, Peace on Earth, goodwill towards men.” As soon as it was over I selected my best baby lamb for the Christ Child and ran as fast as I could to Bethlehem. I tried hard to not giggle at the faces of the people as we ran past them.

As I neared the stable I could see a quiet, sweet, young girl. Across from her was a tall, young man with a smile. In the middle, of all things, was a feed trough! Coming out of it was a shining light. It wasn’t the same light as the angels. As I paused by the feed trough, I saw His face. When I looked at His face, I felt peace. I also was truly sorry for yelling at Shem and Abram. I was sorry for whining about counting sheep by ones. I did something I’d never done before. *Dear Christ Child, I am sorry for all the things I’ve done and please make my Papa better soon. Amen.*

I had prayed, and it felt good. Before we left I gave the Baby my baby lamb, and He smiled the most beautiful smile I had ever seen. After seeing the Christ child we ran through the streets telling everyone the wonderful news. Then Old Jezreel said “Rahab, you must be tired. You don’t have to count the sheep tonight.” I yelled a thank you over my shoulder as I ran home.

When I got home, my mother opened the door and from the table came a man. He got up and said “How’s my girl?” I gasped.

Sinking into a hug I said “Papa!”

“Oh how I love you, Rahab.” My papa said.

In my mind I said a thank you prayer to the Christ child who had changed my life. Forever.

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