

Two Nations, One Womb

25: 19-26

DIG: How long did Isaac and Rebekah pray for a son? What did ADONAI prophecy to Rebekah about the twins even before they were born? Who would serve who? What do the names of the boys mean? Why should Jacob's name never be translated deceiver? Why is that important?

REFLECT: What have you been praying for? Is waiting on the Lord difficult for you? Is ADONAI's timing perfect, or have you taken matters into your own hands? Can you let God be God?

This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac, and what became of Isaac was Esau and Jacob. Abraham became the father of Isaac (Hebrew: Yitz'chak), and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from the plain of Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean (25:19-20). Aram was the son of Shem, so the Arameans were Semites. **This is the line through which the Seed of the woman (3:15), or the Messiah, comes, so this is the Seed son.**

As Isaac grew up, his mother Sarah and his father Abraham told him the story of his miraculous birth. They told him how much they longed for him and how much they prayed, year after year, that ADONAI would send him to them. Sarah was barren, but they prayed. An act of God brought Rebekah and Isaac together. Now it will take another act of God to overcome her barrenness.⁴⁰³ Isaac had learned from his parents that he was the son of promise, and that it would be through him and his descendants that the Messiah would come. He had learned from his father the pain of trying to give the LORD a helping hand by having a child with his handmaiden, and he had vowed within himself that he would never repeat that mistake. What was left for him to do? Yitz'chak then prayed to ADONAI on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. And, just as Sarah and Abraham had waited twenty-five years before Isaac was born, Rebekah and Isaac also waited twenty.⁴⁰⁴ But then the LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant (25:21).

Waiting on ADONAI is an act of faith, the greatest thing ever required of us humans. Not faith in the outcome we are dictating to God, but faith in His character, faith in Himself. It is resting in perfect confidence that He will guide in the right way, at the right time. He will supply our need. He will fulfill His written Word. He will give us the very best if we trust, believe and have faith in Him.⁴⁰⁵

During Rebekah's difficult pregnancy, the babies jostled each other within her, and she asked herself, "Why is this happening to me?" **Why is my pain so great?** The struggle of these two boys, which began before their birth, represents the struggle that still goes on in the world today. There is a struggle between light and darkness, between good and evil, between the Spirit and the flesh that Paul sets before us in **Romans 7**.⁴⁰⁶

So she went to inquire of ADONAI (25:22), and He prophesied to her. The content of the prophecy is in the form of Hebrew poetry, which is not based upon rhythm or rhyme, but it is based upon parallelism. The first line is: **Two nations are in your womb**. The Hebrew word for nations is *goyim*, which means both Jewish and Gentile nations. The Jewish nation of Isra'el will be from Jacob (Hebrew: Ya'akov), and the Gentile nation will be from Esau (later the nation of Edom). In Hebrew poetry the second line either completes the thought of the first line, or says the same thing in different words. Therefore, the second line is: **and two peoples from within you will be separated**. Then comes line number three: **One people will be stronger than the other**, because Isra'el will be stronger than Edom. And then the fourth line completes the thought of the third: **and the older will serve the younger (Second Samuel 8:12-14)**, because Edom would be enslaved to Isra'el (25:23).

Romans 9:10-12 emphasizes the importance of ADONAI's statement to Rebekah. Before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose in election might stand, she was told that the older will serve the younger. The LORD's choice of Jacob, the younger, to inherit his covenant promise was made before the boys were even born. This showed that the choice did not depend on what either did. God is free to choose as He wills. The fact that Esav proved to be uninterested in spiritual things shows how wise His choices are.⁴⁰⁷

I am sure that she treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart, just as Mary would do in the future (Luke 2:19). But should she do more than that? Surely she should tell her husband? But what about the boys? Would there be any problems if she told them? Should she let the LORD work it out and not say anything? Or should she get involved?

Scripture has already provided two instances of fraternal rivalry: Cain and Abel, and Ishmael and Isaac. Both times the elder brother emerges in a less than desirable light. The case is no different with Esau and Jacob.⁴⁰⁸ This prophecy hardly brought any comfort to Rebekah. It explained her pain, but it raised more questions than it answered. When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb (25:24). They came from the same womb, but they were worlds apart.

The first to come out was red or the Hebrew word *admoni* which means *ruddy or reddishness*, and that became the basis for the name of his nation *edom*, meaning *red*, **and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau**, which means *hairy* (25:25). So his personal name was because **he** was born **hairy**, and the name of **his** nation was based on the color of **his** hair.

After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esav's heel. The Hebrew word for **heel** is *akeiv*, which is also seen in the words of the prophet **Hosea** when **he** said: **In the womb he grasped his brother's heel** (Hosea 12:3). And just as **Esau** was named by his appearance, **Jacob** was named by his action, **so he was named Ya'akov**, which is the same root word for *heel*. The primary meaning of his name is *the one who takes by the heel, or heel holder*. And there is no negative connotation here. But the secondary meaning of his name is *supplanter*, which is a neutral term to be determined by the context (**Genesis 27:36; Jeremiah 9:4**). His name should *never* be translated *deceiver*. In **the LORD's** perfect timing, **Yitz'chak** was sixty years old when **Rebekah** gave birth to them (25:26).