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Two Nations, One Womb

25: 19-26

Two nations, one womb 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? Why did God tell Rebekah and not Isaac? If God knew that Rebekah would not tell her husband this vital information, would he not merely have told Isaac? But He did not? What does that tell us about Isaac? Might he already have his mind made up on who he was going to bless, and not have been open to blessing Jacob? 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?

Parashah 6: Tol'dot (History) 25:19-28:9

(see my commentary on Deuteronomy, to see link click [Af](#) - Parashah)

The Key People include Jacob, Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, Abimelech king of the Philistines, daughters of Het, Laban, and more wives for Esau.

The Scenes include Gerar, Beersheba, Isaac's three wells, Shibah, and Paddan Aram.

The Main Events include ADONAI speaking to Rebecca, the birth of two nations, the birthright traded for some stew, famine, prosperity in Gerar, Isaac's blessing for Jacob when tricked by hairy skin, the blessing reaffirmed, Jacob sent to Laban to avoid the wrath of Esau, and to get a wife, and Isaac bestowing the Abrahamic blessing on Jacob - the next generation to receive divine favor.

It is easy to read through the accounts about the patriarchs and get lost in the detail. When we examine the passages closely it seems that all we see are human decisions, human error, and human strength or weakness. It is like standing very close to an oil painting where we can see each brush stroke clearly but can miss the overall theme of the painting. The same

peril might await us in our Torah studies if we do not take the time to step back a little from the text in order to see the big picture that **the Holy One** is unfolding before us.

Parashah Tol'dot is a good example of this. Here we vividly witness human dealings, deceptions, conflict, and even hatred. Lest we get lost in the mire of biased human reactions and dealings; we must analyze these actions through the sovereign eyes of **God**. Thus, we will study this parashah to see what we can learn about divine sovereignty. The sovereignty of **God** is a recurrent theme throughout the Torah. For example, it will surface again in the story of **Joseph** (to see link click [Iw](#) - **The Written Account of the Generations of Jacob**). The repetition of this theme in the Torah means, among other things, that **the LORD** wants us to keep it fresh in our minds. **ADONAI** wants to encourage and strengthen us with this revelation of **Himself**.

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. Parashah Tol'dot tells the story of the birth of **Jacob** and **Esau**. It was only in the previous chapter that we learned about the marriage of **Isaac** and **Rebekah**. Now the progressively unfolding story of redemption in **Genesis** introduces the next main character, **Jacob**. **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. Like his father Abraham, Isaac was faced with a marriage which was barren of children. Now it would take another act of **God** to overcome **Rebekah's** barrenness. **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**. Did this ever prove to be a prophetic jostling! The twins have been fighting ever since. **She** asked **herself**, **"Why is this happening to me?"** The struggle of these **two boys**, which began before **their birth**, represents the struggle that still goes on today. There is a struggle between light and darkness, between good and evil, between **the Spirit** and the flesh that **Paul** sets before us (see the commentary on [Romans Cc - The Reality of the Inner Conflict](#)).⁴⁰⁶

God's sovereign hand is also demonstrated in the actual birth of the twins, **Jacob** and **Esau**. The first evidence of this is in the prophecy that **He** gave to reassure **Rebekah**. **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)**. The struggle which begun in **her** womb would continue throughout **their** lives and throughout the history of **their** respective nations. **This is a very important part of the prophecy because it will reveal the godly motivation behind Sarah and Jacob's actions regarding the blessing that would be needed to carry on the line of the coming Messiah.**

Romans 9:10-12 emphasizes the importance of **ADONAI's** statement to **Rebekah** (see the commentary on [Romans Cq - The Explanation of Isra'el's Past Paradox](#)). **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 **Esau** 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 Esau'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).

By giving **Jacob** a name from a Hebrew root which means *heel*, **his parents** were unwittingly contributing an important part toward the fulfillment of the prophecy given by YHVH earlier in **Genesis** (see **Be - He Will Crush Your Head, and You Will Strike His Heel**). This was the first messianic prophecy, which would ultimately take place between **Messiah** and **Satan**. **The Messiah**, however, will be from **Jacob**, *the heel*. In addition, as **the people of God** chosen to bring light and salvation into the world, which is totally contrary to Satan's purposes, **the people of the heel** (Irsra'el) would suffer. But, we also know from both the prophecy above and in other parts of Scripture, that **Messiah** and **the remnant of Isra'el** will be victorious.

Did **Isaac** and **Rebekah** know all of this; of course not. But like so many of us, **they** were being used without being aware of it - as instruments of the sovereignty of **God** to help carry out **His** unfolding plan of redemption. In the end, **they** named **their** second twin the name which **the Eternal One** had decided in all eternity past that **He** should have; **Jacob** (later called **Isra'el**) *the heel*.

All the mothers of the nation of **Isra'el** were not able to conceive and have children naturally. All were barren. **Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel**, and **Hannah** all had to have a miracle to give birth to **their** children. But why? **ADONAI** wanted to be clearly seen in the births of the major historical heroes in the path to our salvation. Of course, the most out of the ordinary was the birth of **Yeshua** our **Messiah** that is not a birth given by a barren woman, but a birth given by a woman who knew no man!