

引言 INTRODUCTION

Setback can be a positive thing if react to it with a right attitude. American inventor Thomas Edison had many failures before he achieved successes. One of his greatest contributions was the making of light bulbs. The device had been around for forty years when Edison took on the project. At that time, the existing design was too costly to make and too short-lived. From 1878 to 1880 Edison and his associates tested at least three thousand different theories to develop an efficient lamp. The light bulbs we now use are not much different from what Edison produced. An electrical current passes through a filament in a vacuum globe until it heats up and glows. The biggest challenge for Edison was to find the right material to make the filament. He tried no fewer than six thousand plant fibers he could find. Finally, his persistence paid off. Edison made a light bulb using carbonized bamboo that could last for 1,200 hours. Over his lifetime, Edison owned more than one thousand patents, including microphone, phonograph, battery, etc. He commented as he looked back: “Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration.” Edison understood that failure is not the end of story. It only proves that a certain way does not work. In our story today, the Israelites suffered major losses in the battlefield. God has lessons for us to learn from losses too. It can be an opportunity to examine our relationship with Him. It is a three-step process of stop, turn then move.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 士氣受挫敗 Ego Deflated

The prophecy about the fate of Eli’s family finally came true. God would use the Philistines to exercise His judgment. The Israelites and the Philistines were in a battle. The Israelites suffered an initial loss, and that deflated their ego. **Verses 1-3** describe the confrontation. The Philistines were some local people living near the Mediterranean coast. Archaeology shows that they had a high degree of civilization. They knew how to make iron tools. That gave them an advantage in wars. They were recurring enemies since the Israelites entered Canaan. Their most famous warrior was Goliath the giant. Unfortunately, the Israelites were overpowered in this fight, and they lost 4,000 soldiers. The elders then called a meeting to evaluate the situation. They concluded that God allowed them to fall to their opponents. Their analysis was correct, although their solution was wrong. God does not save us and let us go independent. He stays active in the world and in our lives. When we have success, we should give thanks to Him. When we encounter setback, we go to the Lord and ask what lessons He wants us to learn. However, those elders came to their decision without even asking God. They did not ask Eli or his sons to present a sacrifice and inquire of the Lord either. They thought that since God did not go with them to the battlefield, they should bring the ark along to the next battle. The ark was the most sacred item in the tabernacle. It was basically a wooden chest covered with gold coating. The box symbolizes God’s presence. The elders surely remembered how some priests carried the ark and divided the water of the Jordan River, and how they circled around Jericho with the ark and caused the walls to crumble. They said in verse 3: “... **Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh, it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies.**” They

expected it, meaning the chest, but not God to save them. They expected the ark of the covenant to give them magic power. The problem was, they had the ark but they forgot the covenant. Back then their ancestors prevailed over a river and a fortified city because God was with them. They had victory when they followed God's commands. In comparison, the current Israelites disobeyed God. They had an altar and they had priests to present offerings, but they did not have a heart for God. They had the Law but they ignored it. God will be with us when we are with Him. Thirty years ago I visited an American church when I came to the U.S. I forgot everything the pastor taught except one thing. He said many Christians only want to use God for their own gain. He is right! We expect God to fulfill our requests. We see politicians go to big churches to shake hand with well-known pastors. They even go to Rome to meet with the Pope. Looking religious is worth doing if it helps their career. Do we often use God too? We often treat Him like our personal assistant. We go to God only when we have urgent needs. We call Jesus Lord on our lips, but we want to play the boss in our hearts. Some Christians agrees that the Bible is a good moral book to study, but not truths to believe and practice. They go to church to look for a religious excitement but they do not want to experience God in their daily life. They attend a service without worshipping God. We should not be believers in a church only but look like atheists in daily life. God can use losses to deflate our ego. He wants us to stop and reflect on our attitude and actions. Our reaction should not be: "Lord, how come you do you not give me success?" Rather, it should be: "Lord, how should I make adjustments to obey Your will?" Perhaps we rely on our wisdom but not God's wisdom. Or we have not prayed enough. Or we have to wait for God's timing. There may even be sins that we need to confess. We must listen to God's guidance, and follow Him as the Lord of our lives.

2. 士兵遭慘敗 Army Defeated

The Israelites regrouped and fought against the Philistines a second time. Unfortunately, the Israel army was defeated again. They carried the ark with them to the battlefield. Eli's two sons also traveled with the troop. There was a great uproar when the soldiers saw the ark. Their lucky charm gave a big boost to their morale. They thought it would be a sure win this time. How did their enemies respond? Look at [verse 7-9](#). People relied on spiritual force in ancient warfare, not just in Star Wars! Whoever won indicated that the deity they worshipped was stronger than their opponents'. The Philistines believed in many idols. Therefore, they reasoned that there must be multiple gods helping the Israelites. If those gods could prevail over the mighty Egyptian army, then no one could stand before them. It is reassuring to know that even your enemies realize that God is on your side. That reminds me of a young Christian. He was considered a genius because he finished school way earlier than most people did. Therefore, he was the youngest employee in his office. His colleagues knew that he is a Christian. They attributed his performance to his faith. Being an Asian working among Americans can be intimidating. But no one dared to bully him because they know that God is with him. The Philistines heard of God's mighty power. But they turned their fear into courage. There was only one way to find out who were the better fighters. The Philistines dispatched their soldiers and met with the Israelites. [Verse 10-11](#) tell us the outcome. Israel suffered a terrible defeat. They lost many more men compared to the first battle. Among those who lost their lives were Eli's two sons. That fulfilled God's prophecy that they would die on the same day. Worse still, the Philistines took away the ark. The Israelites thought they could repeat the successes of their ancestors at the Jordan River and Jericho. We can easily reduce our faith to rituals and procedures too. After all, that is what many religions

practice. You ancestors might prepare a roasted pig, burn some paper money and incense, ask a monk to say some chants, then they expected to get the results they wanted. It is a purely self-centered consumer mentality. We focus on success but God looks for our submission. We want results but God care about our relationship with Him. Our God can never be manipulated by our wishes. A story in Acts 19 illustrates that point. Paul took the gospel to Ephesus. Just like he did in other cities, he performed miracles to heal the sick and cast out demons. Verse 11 states: **And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul.** The apostle was not a superman but a servant of God. The Lord was the true hero. Some Jews tried to imitate what Paul did. They said to demons: “In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.” Did it work? Verse 15-16 tell us: **15 But the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?” 16 And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.** That was quite humiliating. When God’s power is in us, not only do the people around us know it, the devil does too. But God’s power is not something for us to show off as if we are superior to others. Supernatural power is not the only way to verify God’s presence in us. Today, God rarely gives us that kind of gift. But every Christian has the Holy Spirit lives in us. He helps us overcome our selfishness and sinfulness. He enables us to love others as ourselves. He provides us grace to forgive those who offended us, and courage to apologize to those we hurt. He gives us patience while we are on the edge. Essentially, the Holy Spirit transforms us to be more like Jesus.

3. 榮耀離子民 Glory Departed

The Israelites lost in two successive battles. Their ego was deflated and their army was defeated. But the worst outcome was that God’s glory departed from them. A messenger went back to convey the bad news to Eli. The passage says Eli’s heart trembled for the ark. Most likely, Eli worried about his two sons as well. He might wonder if God’s judgment on them would come that day. There is no peace in the conscience of a sinner. The only way to restore peace is to confess before God. Do not delay if the Holy Spirit convicts you in your heart. Finally, the messenger spoke in **verse 17-18**. Eli knew that God’s words would come true. What shocked him was that the enemies took away the ark. How could it be? The ark was Israel’s glory. The tabernacle would only be a tent without the ark. Worship would become meaningless. There was nowhere for a priest to sprinkle animal’s blood. Most importantly, if God could not protect the ark, then how could He protect His people? Eli fell backward and died in a tragic way. If we put too much attention to religious images on the outside, we can easily lose sight of our faith in God on the inside. Some Buddhists place a little statue in their cars, wear beads on their wrists and put religious décors at home. Those objects make them feel secure. Brothers and sisters: what reminds you of God’s presence? A cross around your neck and a wrist-band with a Bible verse on it are good reminders. Besides, every believers has the Bible. When you read it daily, God’s truth will sink into your heart. It gives you instructions when you have doubts and cautions you when you face temptations. You can enjoy God’s peace even when you are busy and the surrounding is noisy. God judged a priest family and the ark was snatched away. Everyone must be devastated and confused. There was a side-story that helped the Israelites make sense of the outcome. Just then Eli’s daughter-in-law was about to give birth to her baby. Eventually, she died in her labor after she heard those bad news. She said something significant in **verse 21-22** in her last breath. The word “chabod” means glory. Adding the prefix “I” will flip the meaning 180

degrees. Similar examples in English are normal versus abnormal and typical versus atypical. An ordinary woman understood the true meaning in the lost battle. Spiritual discernment reflects how close we are with God. Jesus says in Matthew 5:8 that: **“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”** We see God not with our physical but with spiritual eyes. You do not need a seminary degree, a title in a church board or even long years in the faith to do that. All it takes is a child-like faith and keep God’s Word in mind. Then you can see things from God’s perspective. Then we can know His will and act accordingly. In this case, this new mom shared God’s grief. What was lost was not only a wooden chest, but God’s glory. The Israelites sought after their own glory instead of God’s glory. Christians throughout history committed the same mistake. Many cathedrals in Europe later became sight-seeing attractions. They draw tourists but not worshippers. Some beautiful antique Bibles turned into museum collections. Do not let your faith turn into a hobby or some lifeless displays. It does not matter how many Bible you have on your bookshelf. Are you reading it every day? It does not matter how many crosses or Bible story pictures you hang on the walls. How much do you believe in God and practice His truth? It does not matter how many years you have been a Christian. Are you are still growing in your relationship with God? When we focus on God’s glory, then our personal glory will become unimportant.

結論 CONCLUSION

God can use a loss to help us examine our relationship with Him. It is a three-step process of stop, turn then move. We can get wisdom when we stop and consider our situation with a spiritual eye-sight. By God’s grace, we turn back to the right direction. Then we move on and start a new journey. A setback will become a stumbling block if we are stuck in it. However, it can change into a stepping stone for our faith if we switch our focus back to God. Our story does not have a happy ending. Soldiers were killed and the ark was stolen. People were sad and puzzled. God is mindful of His glory more than we can imagine. He demonstrated His power in His way and timing. You can read the next two chapters this week if you want a spoiler alert to the story. I will say this: God can turn a loss into a victory. It happened two thousand years ago when Jesus died on the cross. The mockers cheered, saying that Jesus could not even save Himself. Jesus’ followers were crushed and ran for their lives. Satan thought he won. How could anything good come out from the death of the Son of God? No one had expected Jesus to come back to life three days later. Jesus proved that He is God. Those who put their trust in Him will have eternal life. God can turn a loss into a victory. He has yet to finish writing your story. Turn to Jesus! He will lead your way out of a loss.

引言 INTRODUCTION

挫折可以帶來益處，只要我們以正確的態度來面對。美國發明家愛迪生在取得成功之前經歷了許多失敗。他最偉大的貢獻之一是製造燈泡。當愛迪生開始這個項目時，該設備已經存在了四十年。當時，現有的設計製造成本太高，壽命也太短。從 1878 年到 1880 年，愛迪生和他的團隊測試了至少三千種不同的理論來研究新的燈泡。我們現在使用的燈泡與愛迪生所做的沒有太大區別。電流通過真空玻璃球中的燈絲，直到它變熱並發光。愛迪生面臨的最大挑戰是找到合適的材料來製造燈絲。他嘗試了至少六千種植物纖維。終於，他的堅持得到了回報。愛迪生用碳化的竹子製作了一個可以持續使用 1200 小時的燈泡。愛迪生一生擁有一千多項專利，包括麥克風、留聲機、電池等。他回首過去時總結說：「天才是百分之一的靈感和百分之九十九的汗水。」愛迪生明白失敗並不是故事的結局，它只能證明某些方法行不通。在我們今天的故事中，以色列人在戰場上遭受了重大損失。神也希望我們從錯誤中學習，也許那是我們檢視與神的關係的機會。在過程中有三個步驟：停止、轉彎、再前進。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 士氣受挫敗 Ego Deflated

關於以利一家結局的預言終於應驗了。神會使用非利士人來執行祂的審判。以色列人和非利士人在戰場交鋒。以色列人遭受了初步的損失，讓他們士氣受到挫敗。**第 1-3 節**描述了當時的戰況。非利士人是居住在地中海沿岸的一些土著。考古學發現他們有高度的文明。他們知道如何製造鐵器工具。這使他們在戰爭中佔據優勢。自從以色列人進入迦南以來，非利士人經常與他們對抗。非利士人中最有名的戰士是巨人歌利亞。不幸的是，以色列人在這場戰事中輸了，並且損失了四千名士兵。於是長老們開會評估情況。他們得出的結論是，神允許他們敗在敵人的手中。雖然他們的分析是正確的，但是他們的解決方案是錯誤的。神拯救我們之後，並沒有讓我們我行我素。祂繼續參與在世界和我們的生活中。當我們成功時，我們應該感謝神。當我們遇到挫折時，我們應該去求問主，祂要我們學習什麼教訓。然而，那些長老沒有問神，就自作主張做出了決定。他們也沒有要求以利或他的兒子獻祭求問主。他們想，既然神沒有和他們一起去打仗，那就應該帶著約櫃去下一場戰爭。約櫃是會幕中最神聖的物品。它基本上是一個包金的木箱，象徵著神的同在。長老們一定記得曾經有

祭司抬著約櫃分開約旦河的水，以及他們帶著約櫃繞著耶利哥，使城牆倒塌。他們在第 3 節中說：「... 我們不如將耶和華的約櫃從示羅抬到我們這裡來，好在我們中間救我們脫離敵人的手。」他們期待那個箱子，而不是神來拯救他們。他們認為約櫃能賦予他們魔力。問題是，他們有櫃，卻忘記了神的約。他們的祖先能克服一條河和一座堅固的城市，乃是因為神與他們同在。當他們遵行神的命令時，他們就得勝了。相比之下，目前的以色列人不順服神。他們有祭壇，也有祭司來獻祭，但他們對神沒有心。他們有律法，但他們卻不去遵守它。當我們與神同在時，神就會與我們同在。三十年前，當我來到美國時，我參加過一家美國教會。那位牧師所教導的事情，我只記得一件。他說，許多基督徒只想利用神達到個人目的。他是對的！我們期待神滿足我們的要求。我們看到政客們去大教堂與知名牧師握手。他們甚至去羅馬拜訪教宗。只要有助於他們的政治前途，看起來虔誠是值得的。我們也經常使用神嗎？我們常常把神看作私人助理一樣。只有當我們有緊急需要時，我們才會去找神。我們口稱耶穌為主，但我們的內心卻想要充當老闆。一些基督徒同意聖經是一本值得學習的道德教材，但不是值得相信和實踐的真理。他們去教會尋找宗教的刺激，但他們不期望在日常生活中經歷神。他們參加聚會但沒有敬拜神。我們不應該只在教會裡當信徒，但在日常生活卻活得像無神論者。神可以用困難來挫敗我們的士氣。祂希望我們停下來反思我們的態度和行為。我們的反應不應該是：「主啊，祢為什麼沒有讓我成功？」我們應該去問：「主啊，我必須如何調整才能順服祢的旨意？」也許我們依靠自己的智慧，而不是神的智慧。或者我們禱告不足。或者我們必須等待神的時機。甚至可能有我們需要承認的罪。我們必須聽從神的帶領，承認祂是我們生命的主。

2. 士兵遭慘敗 Army Defeated

以色列人重組兵力，再度與非利士人作戰。可惜，以色列士兵再次遭慘敗。他們帶著約櫃上戰場。以利的兩個兒子也跟隨部隊一起進發。士兵們看到約櫃時大聲歡呼。他們的護身符大大地鼓舞了他們的士氣。他們認為這一次一定會贏。他們的敵人如何回應？請看第 7-9 節。人們在古代戰爭中依靠精神力量，而不僅僅是在星球大戰中！誰贏了，就證明那一方的神明比較強大。非利士人信奉多神。因此，他們推斷必然有多個神明幫助以色列人。如果這些神明連威猛的埃及軍隊都能打敗，那麼沒有人能站在他們面前。如果你的敵人也意識到神站在你那邊，那是一件好事。這讓我想起了一位年輕的基督徒。他被認為是個天才，因為他很早便完成學業。因此，他是在辦公室裡最年輕的員工。他的同事都知道他是基督徒，他們也把他的工作表現歸功於他的信仰。作為在美國人中間工作的亞洲人可能會令人膽怯。但是沒有人敢欺負他，因為他們知道神與他同在。非利士人聽說神的大能，但他們把恐懼變成了勇氣。只有一個方法

可以證明誰是更利害的戰士。非利士人打發士兵去赴戰。**第 10-11 節**告訴我們結果。以色列遭遇到慘敗。他們比第一場戰爭失去了更多的士兵，其中也包括以利的兩個兒子。這應驗了神的預言，他們會在同一天去世。更糟糕的是，非利士人奪走了約櫃。以色列人以為他們可以重複他們祖先在約旦河和耶利哥的成功。我們也可能把信仰簡化為儀式和程序。畢竟，這是許多宗教的做法。你們有些人的祖先準備一隻烤豬，燒些紙錢和香，請和尚念經，然後他們期望得到想要的結果。這是一種純粹以自我為中心的消費者心態。我們只求成功，但神卻要求我們的順服。我們想要得到結果，但是神關心我們與祂的關係。我們的神不會被我們的慾望所操縱。使徒行傳 19 章的一個故事說明了這一點。保羅把福音帶到以弗所。就像他在其他城市所做的那樣，他行神蹟醫病趕鬼。**第 11 節說：神藉保羅的手行了些非常的奇事。**保羅不是超人，他只是神的僕人。主才是幕後英雄。一些猶太人試圖仿效保羅的做法。他們對邪靈說：「我奉保羅所傳的耶穌敕令你們出來！」它奏效了嗎？**15-16 節告訴我們：15 惡鬼回答他們說：「耶穌我認識，保羅我也知道。你們卻是誰呢？」16 惡鬼所附的人就跳在他們身上，勝了其中二人，制伏他們，叫他們赤著身子受了傷，從那房子裡逃出去了。**那真是太丟人了。當神的力量運行在我們裡面時，不僅我們周圍的人察覺到，連魔鬼也會知道。但神的大能並不是讓我們炫耀的東西，彷彿我們比別人優越。超自然的力量並不是驗證神同在的唯一方法。今天，神很少給人這種的能力。但是每個基督徒都有聖靈住在他們裡面。聖靈幫助我們克服自我中心和罪。祂使我們能夠愛人如己。祂賜我們恩典，幫助我們饒恕那些冒犯我們的人的。祂也給我們勇氣，向被我們傷害的人道歉的。當我們心裡焦急時，祂給了我們耐心。總個來說，聖靈使我們變得更像耶穌。

3. 榮耀離子民 Glory Departed

以色列人在連續兩次戰事中都輸了。他們的士氣受挫敗，他們的士兵遭慘敗。但最不幸的結果是神的榮耀離開了他們。一個使者回去把壞消息告訴以利。經文說以利的心裡為約櫃擔憂。很可能，以利也擔心他的兩個兒子。他想要知道神對他們的審判是否會在那一天臨到。罪人的良心沒有平安。重拾平安的唯一方法是在神面前認罪。如果聖靈在你心裡提醒你的罪，不要拖延，要趕快承認。結果，使者在**第 17-18 節**傳達信息。以利知道神的話一定會實現。令他震驚的是，敵人奪走了約櫃。怎麼會這樣？約櫃是以色列的榮耀。沒有約櫃，會幕只是一個帳棚。敬拜將變得毫無意義。祭師沒有地方可以灑動物的血。最重要的是，如果神不能保護約櫃，那祂怎能保護自己的子民呢？以利向後倒下，當場慘死。如果我們過分關注外表的宗教標誌，我們很容易忽略裡面對神的信心。一些佛教徒在他們的車裡放一個小雕像，在手腕上戴上珠子，把宗教裝飾品放在家裡。這些物品讓他們感到平安。弟兄姊妹：什麼東西提醒你神的同

在？脖子上的十字架和帶有經文的手環是很好的提醒。此外，每個信徒都有聖經。當你每天讀聖經時，神的真理便會深入你的心裡。當你有疑惑時，它給你指示，當你面對試探時，它給你警告。即使你很忙，周圍很嘈雜，你也可以享受神的平安。神審判一個祭司家族，約櫃被搶走了。每個人都可能感到沮喪和困惑。有一段插曲幫助以色列人理解整件事情的含義。剛好在那時，以利的一個媳婦要生孩子。當她在聽到那些壞消息後，她在分娩中死去。她在第 21-22 節最後一口氣說了一些重要的話。“chabod” 這個詞的意思是榮耀。在前面加上 “I” 便將意思倒過來。類似的例子是正常與不正常以及典型與非典型。一個普通的婦人明白了這場敗仗的真正含義。屬靈的辨別能力反映出我們與神的關係。耶穌在馬太福音 5:8 中說：「清心的人有福了！因為他們必得見神。」我們不是用肉眼，而是用屬靈的眼睛看神。你不需要有神學院學位、教會同工的頭銜，甚至不需要信主多年才能做到這一點。你只需要有孩子般單純的信心，記住神的話語，便能從神的角度看待事物。然後我們就可以明白神的旨意並樂意遵行。在這段經文中，這位新媽媽分擔了神的憂傷。失去的不僅是一個木箱，而且是神的榮耀。以色列人追求自己的榮耀，而不是神的榮耀。歷史上許多基督徒都犯了同樣的錯誤。很多歐洲的大教堂後來成為觀光景點。他們吸引遊客，而不是吸引崇拜的人。一些漂亮的古董聖經變成了博物館收藏品。不要讓你的信仰變成一種嗜好或一些毫無生命的擺設。你的書架上有多少本聖經並不重要。你每天都在讀嗎？你的牆上掛了多少十字架或聖經故事圖片並不重要。你相信神並遵守祂的真理嗎？不管你做了多少年的基督徒，你與神的關係還在成長嗎？當我們專注於神的榮耀時，我們個人的榮耀就變得不重要了。

結論 CONCLUSION

神希望我們從錯誤中學習，藉此檢視與祂的關係。在過程中有三個步驟：停止、轉彎、再前進。當我們停下來以屬靈的眼光考慮我們的處境時，我們就能獲得智慧。靠著神的恩典，我們轉彎回到正確的方向。然後我們繼續前進，開始新的旅程。如果我們陷在困境中，挫折將會成為絆腳石。但是，如果我們將注意力轉向神，挫折就會變成我們信心的踏腳石。我們的故事沒有圓滿的結局。士兵被殺，約櫃被搶。以色列人感到悲傷和困惑。但是神比我們想像的更關心祂的榮耀。祂以自己的方式和時間展示祂的能力。如果你想要知道故事的發展，你可以在本週閱讀接下來的兩章。我可以向你預告：神可以將失敗變成勝利。在兩千年前，耶穌死在十字架上。很多人嘲笑耶穌，說祂連自己都救不了。耶穌跟隨者的心碎了，他們也只顧著逃命。撒旦以為他贏了。神兒子的死怎麼可能有什麼好結果呢？沒有人預料到耶穌會在三天後復活。耶穌證明祂是神。信靠祂的人將獲得永生。神能夠反敗為勝。祂還沒有寫完你的人生故事。轉向耶穌！祂會帶領你走出困境。