

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

The passage today is about the two boys of Isaac and Rebekah. I happen to have two sons as well. When I first became a dad, people would ask me: “Do you have any children?” I often answered them: “I have double the trouble at home.” Some senior folks would lecture me for saying that. Therefore, I changed my reply later and said: “God gave me a second blessing.” Isaac and Rebekah seemed to have a mix of double-trouble and a second blessing. As we come to chapter 25, there is a transition in Abraham’s story. This father of many was about to pass the baton to his son Isaac. The first 18 verses cover a few things. First, the later life of Abraham, his death and burial. Second, Abraham sent all other children away and made Isaac the only person to inherit all he had. Third, the author wraps up the life of Ishmael, the half-brother of Isaac. We find Ishmael’s genealogy, his death and the territory of his descendants. After settling all those details, the focus is switched to Isaac. Two weeks ago, we studied the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. Abraham sent a servant back to his hometown a thousand miles away and brought back a bride. God intended to bless this couple. Just like the experience of many Biblical characters, God’s goodness overcomes human weakness and even sinfulness in future stories. It proves over and over again that God can accomplish His will despite our wit. God does not need us in His plans; but we need Him in our lives. Those who follow Him will truly be blessed.

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

### 1. 不孕的問題 Problem with Conception

This happy marriage soon hit a road-block. Rebekah had a problem with conception. We begin our reading from **verse 19 to 23**. It looked like history repeated itself in the family. Rebekah’s mother-in-law Sarah had the same problem. The major difference was how Isaac solved the issue. Unlike his father, Isaac did not get a second wife to produce a baby. Instead, he prayed for his wife. Verse 21 may sound like an instant noodle-soup answer from God. If you compare verses 20 and 26, you will know how long the couple had to wait. It was a 20-year delay! God wanted this couple to be patient. He then flipped the switch at the perfect timing. Finally, Rebekah conceived. But something unusual happened. There was pushing and shoving in her womb. The moms among us can testify that developing babies in the tummy do move. After all, they are living human beings! Rebekah was puzzled. There was no ultrasound technology back then to check what was going on inside. In her frustration, Rebekah prayed just like her husband did. God replied to her in verse 23 ...**“Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.”** A few things to note. First, it was a twin. Second, the babies would be the ancestors of two nations. Third, the younger sibling would be the more powerful one. The clashing was an early sign of future conflicts. God chose to bless Isaac over his older half-brother. God planned to do the same thing to Rebekah’s future

babies. What can we learn so far in the story? Isaac prayed when he faced an uncontrollable situation. Husbands: God assigns you as the spiritual leader in the family. You should gather your wife and kids to pray when dealing with major issues. Perhaps dad's job security is uncertain, or mom will have a medical checkup. You recognize God as the Lord of the family as you pray. Rebekah also prayed when she came across an unknown situation. Prayer is a humbling experience. We will not turn to God until we admit we can't and only God can. However, prayer is unlike calling technical support. The goals are not only to understand what goes wrong and how to resolve the matter. The key is to submit to God. We let Him take charge. We determine to follow Him in the direction He will guide us to.

## 2. 先天的問題 Problem at Inception

It did not take long for Rebekah to witness the fight between her twins. The two babies had problems right at inception. Let us continue to read **verse 24 to 28**. The first baby was unique in his appearance. He was hairy and he had a red skin-tone. The parents thus gave him the name Esau, meaning "hairy." I feel bad for him. I imagine people would giggle every time he introduced himself. My mom gave me a nickname "sweet potato" when I was a baby because I was chubby. I hated it when neighbors called me that! Esau was not only red and hairy. He had a red-neck character too. He enjoyed an outdoor life and he loved to hunt. If Esau lived in the south today, he would wear camouflage clothes and drive a pickup truck hauling a boat or an all-terrain-vehicle. Esau was a tough dude. Whereas, his brother was odd in a different way. He held onto Esau's heel at birth. It was as if he were fighting to get out first. Therefore, he was given the name Jacob, which means "to grab." Unlike his brother, Jacob was a quiet and an indoor person. Their contrasting personalities contribute to future conflicts. To make the matter worse, their parents showed partiality. Verse 28 tells us: **Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob**. Isaac was a fan of the exotic food Esau caught. On the other hand, Rebekah favored Jacob as her mama's boy. Such bias paved the way to tension in the family. Parents: you must treat your kids the same. Do not say to them: "How come you are not good at math, music or sports like your sibling?" The answer is that they did not come from a cookie-cutter. You should love them not because of what they look like, what they can do or how they will pay you back. You cherish them because they are gifts from God. Do not force them to follow the world's template either. They do not need to attend certain schools, study particular majors and pick specific careers to be counted as so-called successful. Your task is to bring them up according to Biblical principles and help them receive Jesus when they are still at home. In their upbringing, pay attention to what they are good at doing and help them develop one's potentials. That reminds me of a conversation between my wife and I when our older son was no more than two-year-old. We were in the car and he was in his car-seat at the back. My wife asked what profession I prefer my son to have. I said: "I don't mind even if the Lord assigns him to scrub toilets." Then someone protested: "No!" I asked why not. The little guy replied: "Because it stinks!" As long as he follows the Lord, it is not a bad idea to become the best toilet-scrubber.

### 3. 欺騙的問題 Problem from Deception

Soon the twins grew up. Next, we see a problem arising from deception due to Jacob's scheme. Look at **verse 29 to 34**. Esau came home exhausted and starving. Jacob just prepared some lentil soup. There are different kinds of lentil beans. This one is red, matching the skin color of Esau. He could not wait and asked his younger brother for some of it. Jacob seized the moment and deceived his brother. He asked Esau to give him his birthright in exchange for the stew. In many cultures, the first-born son will inherit the estate from the father. The Law of Moses later specifies that the oldest son will get a double portion of the inheritance over his younger brothers. Esau did not think for a moment and agreed with the request. He said in verse 32: ...**"I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?"** He thought he was about to die of hunger. Jacob then asked Esau to make an oath to prove that he was serious. The deal was sealed. When the writer of Hebrews looks back at the incident, he comments in 12:16-17 of the book: **16 That no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. 17 For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.** He previews what happened later when Rebekah conspired with Jacob to snatch the blessings from Isaac at his old age. Esau finally realized that he made a terrible mistake by giving up his birthright. Sadly, the decision was irreversible. The first-born right and God's blessings that follow would go to Jacob. Esau fell for an instant gain because he overlooked the long-term privilege. It shows how powerful temptations are. Satan guarantees us immediate profit at the expense of our loyalty to God. As little as one look, a press of a button or a casual "yes" may lead us to a wrong path. How can we guard ourselves from sinning? The simple answer is: if we follow the Lord's leading then we will not follow the devil's lies. The Bible says we are in a spiritual warfare. Routine training prepares soldiers for the battlefield. We must saturate our minds with God's Word on a daily basis. There is no short-cut. We can react godly only if we think Biblically. Otherwise, we will act on impulse and go with the flow. The difference is whether to gratify ourselves or to glorify God.

### 4. 破例的應許 Promise of Exception

So far we see a mix bag of God's blessings and human brokenness. An infertile lady became a mom. Each parent had their own favorite child. The younger brother deceived his sibling. All looks like a plot from a soap opera. In the midst of the messy situation, God declared a promise of exception. Listen again to God's message in verse 23: ...**"Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger."** God chose the second child even before the twins were born. The two sons would become two nations. Esau and Jacob were the ancestors of Edom and Israel, respectively. The two countries became enemies down the road. Paul explains the significance of this prophecy in Romans 9:11-12 – **11 Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad — in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls — 12 she was told, "The older will serve the younger."** God decided to favor Jacob over Esau prior to their struggles in the womb, Jacob grabbing Esau's heel and the lentil soup trickery. It proves that God is

sovereign over people's actions. The fact that Jacob's deception fulfilled God's plan does not mean that God approved of sin. We see in latter stories that Jacob suffered consequences due to his wickedness. He faced a death threat from Esau. He was cheated by his uncle Laban. One of his legs was crippled by God. Jealousy among his twelve sons led to betrayal. Jacob was heart-broken when he thought that his favorite son was killed. Jacob had a bitter-sweet life. But he was blessed by God to become the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. The fact that God can achieve beautiful outcomes despite our bad choices should not be a green light to sin. "Do good and be blessed" is a command that comes with a promise. Regardless, if God could use a person like Jacob, He can use us too. We do not choose God, it is He who chooses us. Birth-order, family background, education and economic status and appearance do not matter to God. We have the same starting point as lost children. Through Jesus, God issues us a promise of exception. Whether it is a wild person like Esau or a wicked person like Jacob, God can change any sinner into a saint. You can be saved today only because of the mercy of God. Furthermore, only by God's grace can we accomplish His plans in us.

## 結論 CONCLUSION

God can accomplish His will despite our wit. His plans will not be derailed by people's character flaws and even sins. God used Isaac's family even though every member was an imperfect person. Their common issue is self-centeredness. Isaac and Rebekah each had their preferred son. Esau was short-sighted. Jacob was sneaky. They fixed their eyes on what they could get. But they ignored what God planned to achieve through their lives. God included broken people like them in His covenant. God intended to bless them if they obeyed Him. However, they traded what they could get now for what God promised to give them later. Talking about bad trade, Jesus got the worst deal of all. The King of all kings came into the world and became a servant. He sacrificed everything for us so that we can receive God's abundant grace. He died for our sins so that we can be forgiven. He gave up His life to provide a new life for us. Through Jesus, we are adopted into God's family. He lavishes us with privileges and promises. In Christ, we find love, acceptance, joy, hope and all the benefits God will give to us. All these blessings are yours if you accept this gift of salvation. Admit your sins to God and receive Jesus into your heart with a simple faith. For those who recognize Jesus as your Savior and Lord, you are in God's covenant. It is an honorable title to be called God's children. Duties go hand-in-hand with this status. As such, you must demonstrate your birthright wherever God sends you to. You must live like a child of God in all you do.

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

今天的經文是關於以撒和利百加的兩個兒子。我自己正好也有兩個兒子。當我剛剛成為父親時，人們常常問我：「你有孩子嗎？」我便回答他們：「我家裡有雙倍的煩惱。」有些長輩會因為我這樣說而責備我。因此，後來我改口說：「神賜給我第二次的祝福。」以撒和利百加似乎同時經歷了「雙倍的煩惱」與「第二次祝福」。當我們來到第 25 章時，亞伯拉罕的故事出現了一個轉折。這位多國之父即將把接力棒交給他的兒子以撒。前 18 節的經文交代了幾件事情。第一，是亞伯拉罕晚年的生活、他的去世與埋葬。第二，亞伯拉罕把其他的孩子都打發離開，使以撒成為唯一繼承產業的人。第三，作者為以實瑪利——以撒的同父異母兄弟——的一生作了總結。我們看到以實瑪利的家譜、他的去世，以及他後裔所居住的地區。講完這些細節之後，焦點便轉向以撒。兩週前，我們讀了以撒和利百加的婚姻。亞伯拉罕差遣一位僕人，回到他一千英里之外的故鄉，帶回了一位新娘。神計劃要祝福這對夫妻。正如許多聖經人物的經歷一樣，在以後的故事中，我們看見神的美善勝過人的軟弱，甚至罪性。這一再證明，神能夠跨越我們的小聰明，成就祂的旨意。神的計劃並不需要我們，但我們的生命中卻需要祂。凡跟隨祂的人，必然真正蒙福。

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

### 1. 不孕的問題 Problem with Conception

這段幸福的婚姻很快就碰到了難關。利百加遇到不孕的問題。我們先來看第 19 至 23 節。看起來，家族的歷史再次重演。利百加的婆婆撒拉也曾經面對同樣的問題。不同之處在於以撒如何解決這個難題。與他的父親不同，以撒沒有再娶第二個妻子來生孩子；他卻是為妻子禱告。第 21 節看起來好像神給了方便麵那麼快速的回應。但若你比較第 20 節和第 26 節，就會知道這對夫妻其實等了很久——整整二十年！神要這對夫妻學習忍耐，然後在最完美的時刻為他們開路。終於，利百加懷孕了。然而，接著又發生了一件不尋常的事。她腹中出現推擠、衝撞的情形。在座的母親們都可以作見證，正在發育的胎兒確實會在母腹中活動，畢竟他們是活生生的人！利百加感到困惑。當然，那時候沒有超音波儀器可以檢查裡面究竟發生了什麼事。在困惑與煩惱中，利百加也像她的丈夫一樣向神禱告。神在第 23 節回答她說：...「兩國在你腹內；兩族要從你身上出來。這族必強於那族；將來大的要服事小的。」這裡有幾個值得注意的地方。第一，她懷的是雙胞胎。第二，這兩個孩子將成為兩個民族的祖先。第三，年幼的那一個將比年長的更強盛。腹中的衝撞，其實是未來衝突的預兆。神揀選祝福以撒，而不是他同父異母的哥哥；同樣神也計劃



在利百加未來的孩子身上做同樣的事。到目前為止，我們能從這段故事中學到什麼呢？當以撒面對一個自己無法掌握的處境時，他選擇禱告。各位作丈夫的：神指派你成為家庭中的屬靈領袖。當面對重大問題時，你應當帶領妻子和孩子一起禱告。也許是爸爸的工作前景不確定，或是媽媽即將接受身體檢查。當你禱告時，就是承認神是這個家庭的主。利百加在遇到未知的情況時，也選擇了禱告。禱告是使一個人謙卑的過程。除非我們承認自己不能、唯有神能，我們才會轉向神。然而，禱告並不像打電話給技術支援，只是為了找出問題的所在、以及該如何解決。禱告的關鍵在於順服神，讓祂來掌權，並立定心志跟隨祂所指引的方向前行。

## 2. 先天的問題 Problem at Inception

利百加很快就親眼目睹了她這對雙胞胎之間的爭鬥。兩個孩子似乎有一些先天的問題。讓我們繼續讀**第 24 到 28 節**。頭一個出生的嬰孩在外表上十分特別：他渾身是毛，皮膚呈紅色，因此父母給他取名叫以掃，意思是「有毛」。我替他感到有點難過，可以想像每次他自我介紹時，聽到的人可能都會偷笑。我小時候因為很胖，我媽媽給我取了一個綽號叫「地瓜」。鄰居這樣叫我時，我非常討厭！以掃不只是紅又多毛，他的性格也很粗獷。他喜歡戶外生活，也熱愛打獵。如果以掃活在今天的美國南方，他大概會穿著迷彩衣服，開著一輛卡車，後面拖著船或越野車。以掃是個典型的硬漢子。相比之下，他的弟弟卻以另一種方式顯得與眾不同。他出生時抓住了以掃的腳跟，彷彿在爭著要先出來一樣。因此，他被取名為雅各，意思是「抓住」。與哥哥不同，雅各個性安靜，喜歡待在家裡。兄弟兩人截然不同的性格，為日後的衝突作預告。更糟的是，他們的父母還偏心。第 28 節告訴我們：**以撒愛以掃，因為常吃他的野味；利百加卻愛雅各**。以撒喜歡以掃所打來的特別食物；而利百加卻偏愛那個貼心的兒子。這樣的偏心為家庭以後的不和鋪路。親愛的家長們，你們一定要公平地對待每一個孩子。不要對他們說：「你為什麼不像你的哥哥姐姐那樣擅長數學、音樂或運動？」答案很簡單，因為他們不是用同一個模子刻出來的。你們愛他們，不是因為他們的外表、專長，或將來能怎樣回報你們。你們珍惜孩子，因為他們是神所賜的禮物。也不要逼他們去跟從世界的標準。他們不一定要進某些學校、讀某些科系、選擇某些職業，才算是所謂的成功。你們的責任，是按照聖經的原則培育他們。當他們仍然還住在家中的時候，幫助他們認識並接受耶穌。在成長的過程中，要留意他們擅長什麼，並幫助他們發展那些潛能。這讓我想起一段往事。當我們的大兒子還不到兩歲時，我和妻子有一次在車上聊天。他坐在後座的兒童安全座椅上。我妻子問我，希望將來兒子從事什麼職業。我回答說：「就算主安排他去刷馬桶，我也不介意。」立刻就有人抗議說：「不要！」我問為什麼，那小傢伙回答：「因為臭臭！」只要他跟隨主，即使成為最好的刷馬桶工人，也未嘗不是一件好事。

### 3. 欺騙的問題 Problem from Deception

不久之後，這對雙胞胎漸漸長大。接下來，我們看到雅各的詭計，因而產生欺騙的問題。請看第 29 到 34 節。以掃筋疲力盡、飢餓難耐地回到家中，而雅各正好煮了一鍋扁豆湯。扁豆有不同的種類，這一種是紅色的，正好和以掃的膚色接近。以掃等不及了，便向弟弟要一些湯喝。雅各抓住了這個機會，欺騙了他的哥哥。他要求以掃用長子的名分來交換一碗湯。在許多文化中，長子將承繼父親的產業。後來在摩西律法中，更清楚規定長子所得的產業要比弟弟們多一倍。以掃連想都沒想就答應了這個要求。他在第 32 節說：...「我將要死，這長子的名分於我有什麼益處呢？」他以為自己快要餓死了。於是，雅各要求以掃起誓，證明他是認真的。結果，這筆交易就這樣決定了。當希伯來書的作者回顧這件事時，在 12:16-17 如此評論：16 恐怕有淫亂的，有貪戀世俗如以掃的，他因一點食物把自己長子的名分賣了。17 後來想要承受父所祝的福，竟被棄絕，雖然號哭切求，卻得不著門路，使他父親的心意回轉。這是你們知道的。這段話預告了後來所發生的事。在以撒晚年的時候，利百加與雅各串通，騙取了原本要留給以掃的祝福。以掃終於才明白放棄長子名分是一個極其嚴重、且無法挽回的錯誤。長子的權利，以及從神而來的祝福，最終都歸給了雅各。以掃因為貪圖一時的好處，忽略了長遠的特權，最終付上了慘痛的代價。這顯示出試探的力量是何等巨大。撒但常常用即時的利益作為引誘，換取我們對神的忠誠。也許只是看一眼、按一個鍵，或是一個隨口的答應，就把我們帶到錯誤的道路。那麼，我們要如何防備自己不犯罪呢？簡單的答案是：若我們跟隨主的引導，就不會聽從魔鬼的謊言。聖經告訴我們，人生是一場屬靈的爭戰。士兵需要平日的訓練，才能在戰場上站立得住。同樣地，我們也必須每天用神的話語充滿我們的心思意念，沒有任何捷徑。唯有當聖經引導我們的思考時，我們才能作出敬虔的回應。否則，我們就會憑一時衝動行事，隨波逐流。關鍵的差別在於：我們是要滿足自己的慾望，還是要榮耀神。

### 4. 破例的應許 Promise of Exception

到目前為止，我們看到的是一幅交織著神的祝福與人的敗壞的畫面。一位不能生育的女子成了母親；父母各自偏愛不同的孩子；弟弟欺騙了哥哥。這一切看起來就像一齣連續劇的情節。然而，在這混亂不堪的處境中，神卻宣告了一個破例的應許。讓我們再次聽聽神在第 23 節所說的話：...「兩國在你腹內；兩族要從你身上出來。這族必強於那族；將來大的要服事小的。」在雙胞胎尚未出生之前，神就已經揀選了小兒子。這兩個孩子將成為兩個民族的祖先。以掃和雅各，分別成了以東和以色列的始祖。日後，這兩個國家彼此為敵。保羅在羅馬書 9:11-12 解釋了這個預言的意義：11 雙子還沒有生下來，善惡還沒有做出來，只因要顯明神揀選人的旨意，不在乎人的行為，乃在乎召人的主。12 神就對利百加說：「將來大的要服事小的。」神早已決定要揀選雅各而不是以掃，這是發生在他們還在母腹中爭鬥、雅各

抓住以掃的腳跟、以及紅豆湯事件之前。這證明神的主權超越人的行為。然而，雅各的欺騙成就了神的計劃，並不代表神認可罪。在後來的故事中，我們看到雅各因自己的詭詐而承擔後果。以掃威脅要殺死雅各；雅各被舅舅拉班欺騙；後來神摸了雅各的大腿，使他成了瘸子；他十二個兒子之間的嫉妒導致了背叛；當他以為自己最心愛的兒子死了時，心碎不已。雅各的一生可說是苦中帶甜。然而，神仍然祝福他，使他成為以色列十二支派的父親。神能在我們錯誤的選擇中成就美好的結果，這並不是給我們犯罪的通行證。「行善必蒙福」是一個帶著應許的命令。無論如何，如果神能使用像雅各這樣的人，祂也同樣能使用我們。因為不是我們選擇神，而是神選擇了我們。出生的順序、家庭背景、教育程度、經濟狀況或外表，在神眼中都不重要。我們的起步點都是迷失的孩子。藉著耶穌，神向我們頒布了一個破例的應許。無論是像以掃那樣粗獷的人，還是像雅各那樣邪惡的人，神都能把任何罪人改變成為聖徒。你今天能得救，完全是因為神的憐憫；同樣地，也唯有靠著神的恩典，我們才能成就神在我們生命中的計劃。

## 結論 CONCLUSION

神能夠跨越我們的小聰明，成就祂的旨意。性格的缺陷，甚至罪，都無法使神的計劃出軌。神使用了以撒的家庭，雖然其中每一位成員都並不完美。他們共同的問題是以自我為中心。以撒和利百加各自偏愛不同的孩子；以掃目光短淺；雅各詭詐狡猾。他們都只專注於自己能得到的東西，卻忽略了神要藉著他們的生命所達到的目標。然而，神就是把這樣破碎的人放在祂的盟約之中。神本來要因著他們的順服而賜福給他們，但他們卻用眼前的利益，交換了神所應許的祝福。說到最糟糕的交易，沒有任何人的損失比耶穌更大了。萬王之王來到世上，反倒成了僕人；祂為了我們犧牲了一切，使我們可以領受神豐盛的恩典。祂為我們的罪而死，使我們得著赦免；祂捨棄自己的生命，讓我們得到新的生命。藉著耶穌，我們得以進入神的家中，神把各樣的特權與應許加給我們。在基督裡，我們得著愛、接納、喜樂、盼望，以及神要賜給我們的一切福分。只要你接受這份救恩的禮物，這一切祝福就屬於你。你必須向神認罪，以單純的信心接受耶穌到你的心裡。對那些承認耶穌是救主和生命之主的人，你是在神的盟約之中。能被稱為神的兒女，是一個極其尊貴的身分；而這個身分也伴隨著責任。因此，無論神把你差遣到哪裡，你都要活出你作為神兒女的名分，在一切所行的事上，活出神兒女該有的樣式。