

Chapter Two

Jacob & Esau's Quarrel



“UPON ABRAHAM’S DEATH Isaac inherits the birthright of patriarch and continues to live his father’s lifestyle. What a tremendous responsibility on the shoulders of Isaac to become the head and spiritual leader of God’s people. Like his father he faithfully serves and honours God. Thus God blesses Isaac and says to him in the land of Gerard:

‘Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.’ Genesis 26:3-5

Now with passing time Rebekah becomes pregnant, bearing twin sons. And in her womb the boys struggle for supremacy.

...and she said, ‘If all is well, why am I like this.’ So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her:

‘Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger.’ Genesis 25: 22-23

And so with God’s foreseeing eye, Esau and Jacob are born, and as they are delivered in birth the younger brother takes hold of his older brother’s heel. Alas this is a sign of coming troubles which in the end divides the family. And really this outcome begins with favouritism between the two parents.

So the boys grew.

And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Genesis 25:27-28

Being the first born, Esau is next in line to inherit the birthright of Patriarch.

But true to God's prediction this will never be realized in Esau's life. For more and more Esau is caught up in worldly pursuits of life, visiting the heathen people and eventually marrying two Hittite women. One thing leads to another until Esau despises his spiritual birthright.

Now Jacob has a very different outlook on life. For you see, more and more Jacob values the family birthright and the very thought of gaining and having this inheritance for himself possesses his mind.

One day Esau returns from the field and sees Jacob cooking a meal over the fire. The delicious aroma wafts towards Esau, weary and hungry from hunting. Esau said to Jacob,

'...please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary...' Genesis 25:30

And so seizing the moment, with a coveting gesture Jacob says to Esau,

'Sell me your birthright as of this day.' And Esau said, *'Look I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?'* Then Jacob said, *'Swear to me as of this day.'* So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Genesis 25:32-34

Now this agreement between the two brothers is by word only. To complete the birthright transaction binding their father's blessing is needed. And this is where the plot thickens. For you see mother Rebekah thinks her favourite son Jacob should receive the birthright.

In due time, Isaac decides the time has come to bless Esau with the birthright of the eldest son. With this in mind, Isaac sends Esau out to hunt game that on his return his favorite son might prepare a savoury dish and receive his father's blessing.

Now Rebekah overhears Isaac's conversation with Esau. Isaac is almost blind and alas through trickery Rebekah plans to steal the birthright blessing from Esau and bestow it upon Jacob. And so Rebekah speaks to Jacob about her subtle plan. She tells Jacob to slaughter two kid goats that she might prepare a savoury dish for his father. But Jacob sees a flaw in the plan and hesitates.

And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, 'Look, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth skinned man. Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing.' But his mother said to him, *'Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me.'* Genesis 27:11-13

In a short while Jacob brings the goat meat to his mother and Rebekah prepares a savoury dish, and encourages Jacob to impersonate Esau.

Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. And she put the skin of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. Then she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hands of her son Jacob. Genesis 27: 15-17

And so while Esau is away hunting game Jacob enters their father's tent.

Jacob said to his father, 'I am Esau your first born; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me.' But Isaac said to his son, 'How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?' And he said, 'Because the Lord your God brought it to me.' Genesis 27:19-20

Well, deceiving another human being is one thing but to implicate God in the spurious plan is quite another. But evil only leads to more evil.

Now Isaac becomes suspicious and, said to Jacob,

'Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not.' So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, 'The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.' And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his Brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. Genesis 27:21-23

Then his father Isaac said to him, 'Come near now and kiss me, my son.' And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and he blessed him and said:

*'Surely, the smell of my son
Is like the smell of a field
Which the Lord has blessed.
Therefore may God give you
Of the dew of heaven,
Of the fatness of the earth,
And plenty of grain and wine.
Let peoples serve you,*

*And nations bow down to you.
Be master over your brethren,
And let your mother's sons bow down to you.
Cursed be everyone who curses you,
And blessed be those who bless you!" Genesis 27:26-29*

With the irreversible blessing of his father, through deceit, Jacob steals the birthright blessing from Esau.

Now it happened, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother comes in from his hunting. He also had made savoury food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father,

'Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that your soul may bless me.' And his father Isaac said to him, 'Who are you?' So he said, 'I am your son, your firstborn, Esau.' Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, 'Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him—and indeed he shall be blessed.' When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, 'Bless me also, O my father!' But he said, 'Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing.' And Esau said, 'Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!' Genesis 27:30-36

Storming with rage Esau goes out from his father and threatens to kill Jacob.

So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, 'The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob.' And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, 'Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you by intending to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran.' Genesis 27:41-43

Escaping with his life, Jacob leaves behind all that is near and dear to his heart. Alas reaping the consequences of their deceit, mother and son are parted for the rest of their earthly lives. And Rebekah's words echo through the lonely nights,

'Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me.'
Genesis 27:13

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. Galatians 6: 7

Even as I have seen, Those who plow iniquity And sow trouble reap the same...' Job 4: 8

And so all alone in his sorry stricken state Jacob stumbles on under the blistering sun.

Until he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: 'I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.'

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.' And he was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!' Genesis 28:11-17

Yes, in this awesome place filled with God's holy presence Jacob repents of his sin and commits his life to the great King, to serve Him always, in honesty and truth.

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God.' Genesis 28:20-21

With new hope surging through his being,

Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the East. Genesis 29:1

And there Jacob meets his uncle Laban who owns large herds and flocks of livestock, goats, sheep and oxen. Very soon Jacob works for Laban shepherding the herds and flocks. And very soon Jacob falls in love with Laban's younger daughter Rachel. Laban agrees that after seven years of service, Jacob shall receive Rachel as his bride, for his wages. But deceit waves its evil wand yet again. This time Jacob is the receiver of deceit when on his wedding night Laban supplants his younger daughter Rachel with his eldest daughter Leah. Yes, in a strange turn of events, Jacob is deceived by his father-in-law.

So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah. And he said to Laban, 'What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?' Genesis 29:25

Now to make amends, Laban gives Rachel to Jacob also, as his second wife but with conditions.

And Laban said, 'It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the first born. Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years.' Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also. Genesis 29: 26-28

You see, the cultural custom in Jacob's time was a seven day feast and celebration following a wedding. If Jacob had refused to continue the marriage to Leah, this would have brought great shame on Leah and also on her entire family. What a difficult decision for Jacob!

And so, Jacob, by default is married to two women. As time goes by Leah gives birth to four sons, but sadly her sister Rachel cannot conceive.

Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, 'Give me children, or else I die!'

And Jacob's anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, 'Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?' So she said, 'Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear a child on my knees, that I also may have children by her.' Genesis 30: 1-3

And so in the culture of the day, Rachel's maid Bilhah, bears a son to Jacob.

Yet this arrangement only fuels rivalry between the two sisters. To gain Jacob's favor a contest begins to see who can bear Jacob the most sons. And to aid them in their quest both sisters give their maids to Jacob to bear children for them.

Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. And she conceived and bore a son, and said, 'God has taken away my reproach.' So she called his name Joseph, and said, 'The Lord shall add to me another son.' Genesis 30: 22-24

During his stay at Haran, Jacob fathers 11 sons, and these sons are destined to play a large role in the future growth of God's nation in the world.

And so as the years pass by in the land of the east, with God's blessing, Jacob becomes very successful. In addition to wages Jacob acquires large flocks and herds of livestock. But all too soon, Jacob's growing wealth only stirs up envy among his brother-in-laws.

Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, 'Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has acquired all this wealth.' And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it was not favorable toward him as before. Then the LORD said to Jacob, 'Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you.' Genesis 31:1-3"

Recalling the broken relationship between Jacob and his twin brother Esau, a dark cloud of apprehension envelops us. What will Esau make of Jacob's homecoming? Will he still seek his brother's life when Jacob returns?

This Man assures us, Jacob's future and the safety of his people lie in God's promise, and I will be with you.

"Without questioning God's command of promise, Jacob arises with his family and servants and driving the livestock before them they begin their long journey toward Jacob's home land.

So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, 'This is God's camp.' And he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, 'Speak thus to my lord Esau, "Thus your servant Jacob says: 'I have dwelt with Laban and stayed there until now. I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.'" Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, 'We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.' Genesis 32:1-6

Hearing this threatening news Jacob divides his people and livestock into two

STRENGTH FOR LIFE

We have learned that STRENGTH is a simple and powerful way to:

- Learn why being healthy is vital at this time in the world;
- Assess your health and think about how you live NOW;
- Be open to learn how to take care of the body God has given you;
- Grow stronger daily and tactfully share with others.

Yes, STRENGTH is a simple and powerful way to open our eyes and heart to God's love for us. He has given His health principles in STRENGTH, so that each of us may be FREE in our lifestyle choices.

"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32

These messages of love, like a scattering of good, strong seed, must be sown again and again in our lives, for there is much that looks and sounds good, but will only produce weeds and not good results in our lives. God has His people spreading these good seeds in many ways. For instance, one very well known health programme is called NEW START.

Wherever you are in this world, brother or sister, these wonderful health principles are for you! You can be blessed with STRENGTH. How do I know? Because God is faithful to those who are willing to try His ways.

"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your STRENGTH." Mark 12:30 *(my emphasis)*

Then your light shall break forth like the morning,

Your healing shall spring forth speedily,

And your righteousness shall go before you;

The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;

You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'"

Jeremiah 58:8-9

STRENGTH

Sunlight

Trust in God

Rest & Recreation

Exercise

Nutrition

Good Air

Temperance

Healing Water

Next CHAPTER BY CHAPTER we will begin to explore each of these health principles, that you may pick up some seeds, sow them in your life and see what happens! A prayerful experimental mindset dissolves anxiety!

Let us pray for STRENGTH in each of our lives, dear friends, IN THESE LAST DAYS, in the name of our Father in heaven and His only begotten Son, whom we know as our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

companies.

Should Esau attack, at least one company might just escape with their lives. Now Jacob prays earnestly to God:

‘O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, “Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you.” I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children. For You said, “I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.”’ Genesis 32:9-12

And with this prayer Jacob sends Esau gifts: Servants set out driving herds and flocks of livestock – goats, sheep, camels and donkeys.

‘For he said, “I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me.”

So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp.

And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok. He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. Genesis 32:20-25

As those powerful hands grip Jacob’s trembling body he wrestles for his very life. Racing through his mind is the dreaded thought that Esau has found him, to kill him. The battle intensifies and it seems as if the assailant is stirring up the murky depths of Jacob’s troubled soul. Again Jacob’s sordid past looms before him and like never before he craves complete deliverance from sin.

Suddenly as if his eyes are spiritually opened, Jacob realises his assailant is the Son of God. Now he senses an opportunity for victory, not over his opponent but over his own sinful self. And so tightening his grip upon the Son with tears of repentance, Jacob empties his sinful life before the Saviour and like never before an incoming peace floods Jacob’s soul with God’s acceptance and forgiveness. The Son of God says

to Jacob,

*'Let Me go, for the day breaks.' But he said, 'I will not let You go unless You bless me!' So He said to him, 'What is your name?' He said, 'Jacob.' And He said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.' Then Jacob asked, saying, 'Tell me Your name, I pray.' And He said, 'Why is it that you ask about My name?' And He blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: 'For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.' Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip.
Genesis 32:26-31*

And so gathering his wives and children Jacob,

divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. He put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last. Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. Genesis 33: 1-3

Bowing in humility Jacob comes before his twin brother, the warlike Esau stands before Jacob, flanked by 400 men, weapons gleaming in the morning sun. Now life and death hangs in the balance of Esau's command. But like a sweet babbling brook, Jacob's humble repentance skips and runs over Esau's stony heart. Suddenly, in a beautiful act of forgiveness,

Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. Genesis 33: 4

Thus by God's wonderful grace the rivalry between the twin brothers is miraculously healed forever,

'...for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.' Genesis 32:28

Praise God!

*'But as for me, I would seek God,
And to God I would commit my cause
who does great things, and unsearchable,
Marvelous things without number.' Job 5: 8-9
'Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects;*

*Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty,
For He bruises but He binds up;
He wounds, but His hands make whole,
He shall deliver you in six troubles, yes, in seven no evil shall touch you. Job 5:17-19*

After a happy meeting, Jacob and Esau depart and go their separate ways.

Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the city. And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money. Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel. Genesis 33: 17-20

And the meaning? El Elohe Israel, means the God of Israel.

Centuries later the name Israel becomes the name of God's nation made up of 12 tribes. And these 12 tribes grow from Jacob's 12 sons bearing their names.

For you see in the land of Canaan, Rachel gives birth to Benjamin, Jacob's twelfth son.

In spite of brewing trouble, Jacob's 12 sons are destined to become the 12 patriarchs of the 12 tribes of Israel.

Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs. Acts 7:8

Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: the sons of Leah were Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; the sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin; the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, were Dan and Naphtali; and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, were Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Padan Aram. Genesis 35:22 -26"

And so with the guidance of This Man we stand on the brink of this momentous event: The growing of God's nation into multitudes of people.

We pause in quiet contemplation, considering where the destiny of our lives might lead. But like the patriarchs of old, we too must choose to leave this in God's guiding hands of providence.