

## **Rebecca: Woman of Faith Part 7**

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#### **What most people don't realize**

The story that we are dealing with – the story of the “stolen blessing” – as with every other narrative, can be looked at from the different perspectives. We can try to see it through Jacob's eyes, Isaac's eyes or Esau's eyes – and maybe, at some point we will: It is a very complex story indeed, and each additional angle would certainly deepen our understanding. For now, however, we will try to see it through Rebecca's eyes, as we are putting the finishing strokes on our biblical portrait of this beautiful godly woman.

I would like to remind you of two things we have already learned about Rebecca in our previous articles—two things that most people don't realize when thinking of this story. First, she is a very old woman by now. If her sons are 77 years old, she is more than one hundred. Think of it: Many, many years ago, when she was a young woman, when she was pregnant, she received a prophecy from God and all these years she has been patiently waiting for this prophecy to be fulfilled. However, the years went by and nothing happened. By now, not only is she tired of waiting, but she has probably – because such is our human nature – been having haunting thoughts, such as: What if it's my fault? Did God want me to do something, and I just missed it?

And she has no-one to share these thoughts with. Because the second thing we learned, was about her changed, or even damaged relationship with Isaac. Could it be a tragic aftermath of their sister/wife story in Gerar, when Isaac was unwilling to name Rebekah as his wife? It certainly seems like this. In Genesis 25, we still find them being very close: Isaac is faithfully interceding for his wife in this chapter, while in Genesis 27 we see a completely different picture already: Isaac is planning to bless Esau, and he is not sharing this with Rebecca.

Something changed dramatically between chapters 25 and 27, and it would be a safe guess to suggest that it happened in chapter 26, after the sister/wife story. As my dear friend Henrietta Wisbey wrote, responding to my thoughts about Isaac and Rebecca in the class: “Maybe there has been a wounding, a betrayal of trust, especially with one who has been entrusted with the guardianship of that relationship—perhaps some damage has occurred which reveals itself over a period of time and there is a gradual erosion, a wearing away of the desire to share the secrets of one's heart. Consequently, there is a closing up, a withdrawal and consequent loss.”

## The Main Question

So, there is a closing up, a withdrawal and consequent loss, and as a result Rebecca is completely alone with her thoughts. I believe she thinks a lot about those crucial moments of her life: when, as a young girl she said “yes” to the servant and to God so unreservedly and so boldly, and when, 20 years later she finally became pregnant and heard God speak to her about her sons. Perhaps she compares these stories: as a young girl she was very decisive, not afraid to take very bold actions, and maybe now God is again waiting for her decision, for her decisive action? She had been waiting upon the Lord for so long, and perhaps she thinks that God is waiting for her response – as He waited then, almost a hundred years ago. Isn't it a question we all struggle with at times: should I just wait upon the Lord – or is there something He wants me to do?

We might remember here that the first audience of the book of Genesis was the generation of the Exodus. The stories of Genesis, first of all, were meant to speak deeply and convincingly to the Israelites who had just left Egypt and sought to survive as a people. The question that Rebecca is struggling with was also very relevant for the generation of the Exodus: Does God remember what He said? So many years have passed – does he remember His own promise? Is He going to fulfill His word?

## Prophetic Story

Perhaps these were the thoughts running through Rebecca's head when our story began and she overheard the conversation between Isaac and Esau. It might have seemed to her that finally the moment had come for her quick decision and actions; once again, like in Genesis 24, she needed to make a very quick decision; once again, it was a matter of just a few hours before something irreparable and irreversible happened.

Had not God distinctly pointed out Jacob as heir to His promises and to Abraham's blessing? She will only be fulfilling the will of God; she will be doing the right thing, trying to prevent her husband from a terrible mistake—from blessing the wrong son. There is no doubt that she loves both sons: [Genesis 27:45](#) shows that very clearly—she is a mother who loves both her children, but loves them differently. She knows God's will, and once again, as in Genesis 24, she is able to make a very quick decision—saying “yes” to God's will. She is saying “yes” to God. She is choosing very questionable means, of course, but probably her heart was all about pleasing God and fulfilling His will.

That is why we also need to look for the deeper, prophetic layers of this story, because there is certainly more to this narrative than just moral question marks: this story is one of the deepest and most prophetic stories found in the book of Genesis. There are many deep connections and hints to be found here.

For example, two goats, as Rashi pointed out: why did Isaac's menu consist of two goats? Or the special garment of Esau that Rebecca gave to Jacob: this double set – the special clothes and the slaughtered animal – occurs several times in the book of Genesis, and each time it covers up some serious sin, starting from the Fall in Genesis 3: "According to Midrash, Esau's treasured garments which were kept with Rebekah, were the same garments that God had made for Adam. This Midrash is supported by the fact that the first two times that we find the words *skin* and *clothed* in the Torah are in the stories of Adam and Eve, and Rebekah and her sons, respectively.

It is said that Rebekah dressed Jacob in these vestments from Eden, as if to say, 'In the very same skins that Adam wore, when he was expelled from the Garden, shall you wear, when you bring your father the savory food that I have prepared. The garments that marked man's expulsion from the Garden shall mark the beginning of his return.'"[\[1\]](#)

Questions:

What do you learn about symbolism in this story? How does the legacy of Adam and Eve affect us today?

Contrast the decisions of Rebecca as a young woman and as an older woman. Did she lose her fellowship with God?

What do you learn about the blessing of Jacob in this story? What implications does it have for the future? How can you bless someone else?