

The Patriarchs

Genesis Chapter 27: 1-46 Theft of the Blessing

March 3rd, 2019

Isaac Plans for his Death

Genesis 27: 1-4 (ESV) ¹ When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau his older son and said to him, “My son”; and he answered, “Here I am.” ² He said, “Behold, I am old; I do not know the day of my death. ³ Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me, ⁴ and prepare for me delicious food, such as I love, and bring it to me so that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.”

Question for Discussion: What is going on here in the first four verses of Genesis chapter 27? What is the significance of the events?

Primogeniture - the state of being the firstborn child. The right of succession belonging to the firstborn child, by which the whole real estate of an intestate passed to the eldest son.

Although Isaac feared that he might be nearing his death, in reality, he was to live at least another 20 years...

Genesis 31: 41 (ESV) ⁴¹ These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times.

Genesis 35: 27-29 (ESV) ²⁷ And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned. ²⁸ Now the days of Isaac were 180 years. ²⁹ And Isaac breathed his last, and he died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Rebekah and Jacob Deceive Isaac

Genesis 27: 5-17 (ESV) ⁵ Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it, ⁶ Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, ⁷ ‘Bring me game and prepare for me delicious food, that I may eat it and bless you before the Lord before I die.’ ⁸ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice as I command you. ⁹ Go to the flock and bring me two good young goats, so that I may prepare from them delicious food for your father, such as he loves. ¹⁰ And you shall bring it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies.” ¹¹ But Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “Behold, my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. ¹² Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be mocking him and bring a curse upon myself and not a blessing.” ¹³ His mother said to him, “Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, bring them to me.”

¹⁴ So he went and took them and brought them to his mother, and his mother prepared delicious food, such as his father loved. ¹⁵ Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her older son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. ¹⁶ And the skins of the young goats she put on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. ¹⁷ And she put the delicious food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

In verses 5 and 6 it's interesting the way the narrator references Jacob as "her son" <Rebekah's> "*Rebekah said to her son Jacob...*" and Esau is identified as "his son" <Isaac's> "*when Isaac spoke to his son Esau...*". Obviously this points to the depth of the conflict in the family.

Question for Discussion: From reading the first 17 verses in Genesis chapter 27, what can we learn about the family dynamics in Isaac's household? Does the depth of dysfunctionality surprise you considering that this is the lineage through which God has chosen to bless all of mankind? Are there any lessons we can take here with respect to our own family trees?

Isaac Blesses Jacob

Genesis 27:18-29 (ESV)¹⁸ *So he went in to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?"*¹⁹ *Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me."*²⁰ *But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" He answered, "Because the Lord your God granted me success."*²¹ *Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not."*²² *So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, who felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau."*²³ *And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands. So he blessed him.*²⁴ *He said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He answered, "I am."*²⁵ *Then he said, "Bring it near to me, that I may eat of my son's game and bless you." So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank.*

²⁶ *Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near and kiss me, my son."*²⁷ *So he came near and kissed him. And Isaac smelled the smell of his garments and blessed him and said,*

*"See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed!"*²⁸ *May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine.*²⁹ *Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!"*

Questions for Discussion: In chapter 25, Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a pot of stew. What is it that Jacob is scheming here to acquire? What is the difference between the birthright that Esau sold and the blessing that Jacob deceptively secures from his father Isaac?

Questions for Discussion: If we compare and contrast the sale of the birthright in chapter 25, to Isaac's blessing on Jacob here in chapter 27, what are some main points of difference between the two? Which do you feel was more valuable...the birthright sold to Jacob in chapter 25, or the blessing given by his father here in chapter 27? Why?

Jacob lies to his father Isaac four times in verses 19-24...

- **Verse 19...**¹⁹ *Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn..."*
- **Verse 19...**¹⁹ *... I have done as you told me...*
- **Verse 20...**²⁰ *... He answered, "Because the Lord your God granted me success."*

Genesis 25:22-23 (ESV)²² *The children struggled together within her, and she said, "If it is thus, why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord.*²³ *And the Lord said to her, "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."*

- **Verse 24...**²⁴ *He said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He answered, "I am."*

Question for Discussion: Jacob has now exploited Esau's weakness in order to receive his brother's birthright, AND has now deceptively stolen Isaac's blessing from Esau. How can we reconcile God's will that the older would serve the younger (prophesied in chapter 25), with the means by which this prophesy was fulfilled?

Isaac and Esau Learn of Jacob's Deception

Genesis 27:30-40 (ESV) ³⁰ *As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, Esau his brother came in from his hunting.* ³¹ *He also prepared delicious food and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me."* ³² *His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau."* ³³ *Then Isaac trembled very violently and said, "Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed."* ³⁴ *As soon as Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!"* ³⁵ *But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing."* ³⁶ *Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times. He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." Then he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?"* ³⁷ *Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Behold, I have made him lord over you, and all his brothers I have given to him for servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son?"* ³⁸ *Esau said to his father, "Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father." And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.*

³⁹ *Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: "Behold, away from the fatness of the earth shall your dwelling be, and away from the dew of heaven on high.* ⁴⁰ *By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; but when you grow restless you shall break his yoke from your neck."*

Esau's request of his father is more respectful than Jacob's, expressed in the Hebrew third person (yāqūm/yō'kal), and by the words chosen in his address to his father "**Let my father arise and eat of his son's game**".

The word "trembled" (hārad) conveys the physical shaking, manifesting a person's terror. Isaac's immediate apprehension was due to the irrevocable nature of the blessing he had bestowed, "*and indeed he will be blessed!*"

Esau appeals here for a blessing also, presumably a comparable one, but Isaac has no blessing of value left since Jacob by treachery received the full endowment, constituting the sole power and wealth of the father. Isaac referring to "Your blessing" here means that the blessing given to Jacob was the one he had intended for Esau as the firstborn.

Although Esau pleads with his father Isaac for a blessing as well, he is only able to give his son an anti-blessing. Esau's blessing consists of only three lines, half the length of the benevolent blessing intended initially for him.

Isaac's "Blessing" for Esau Consists Only of Three Lines

The first line "*Behold, away from the fatness of the earth shall your dwelling be...*", possesses no divine invocation as in Jacob's case, "*May **God** give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth...*".

The language Isaac uses here in response to his son Esau, reverses the divinely beneficial wording in vv. 28-29

Esau's "dwelling" will be Edom's wilderness, east of the Arabah toward the desert. Isaac regretfully informs his eldest son that he will be a castaway and outsider.

The second line of his blessing also defines his way of life by the word "live" (ḥāyâ), that is, to "remain alive." This indicates only survival, not a lifestyle of prosperity and abundance

The third line depicts Esau as a domesticated animal that shows his true character as a wild, rebellious beast by eventually breaking free from its yoke.

Question for Discussion: Why do you think Isaac was unable to also bless Esau in the way that he had blessed Jacob?

There is a similarity in the characters of Ishmael and Esau. Ishmael was also prophesied by God to be...

Genesis 16: 12 (ESV) ¹² *He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen."*

Esau Plots the Murder of Jacob

Genesis 27:41-45 (ESV) ⁴¹ *Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob." But the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son and said to him, "Behold, your brother Esau comforts himself about you by planning to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice. Arise, flee to Laban my brother in Haran and stay with him a while, until your brother's fury turns away— until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereft of you both in one day?"*

Esau's anger festered into a plan to murder his brother once his father had passed away. It is interesting again, that Esau felt free to act only at the death of his father. By waiting until after his father's passing to act, he exhibits a reverence for his father that his brother Jacob does not yet possess.

After Rebekah becomes aware of Esau's intentions, for the third time in this chapter she commands Jacob to follow her instructions, urging him to flee to her brother Laban in Haran. Ironically, her intention for Jacob to only stay there only for "a while", turns into twenty years of hard labor.

Question for Discussion: Rebekah tells Jacob to flee to Laban in order to avoid being killed by Esau. She ends her appeal by making the statement..."Why should I be bereft of you both in one day?" What does she mean by this statement?