

Genesis 27

In Genesis 25:23, God predicted that the older son of Isaac and Rebekah will serve the younger and the younger would be a “stronger people.” Whether he knew of the prophecy or not, Jacob, the younger brother, began maneuvering to assume control of the family estate by swindling his older brother, Esau, out of the birthright (25:29-34). We do not know the relationship between the birthright and the family “blessing,” but in this chapter, Jacob will deceive Dad into blessing the youngest son rather than the oldest son. The result is a blessing for Jacob in the long term, but in the short term he leaves Mom and Dad and stays away for twenty years.

TRANSLATION - 27:1-13:

1 Then it was that Isaac grew old and his eyes became inexpressive to see and he called Esau, his son, the oldest and he said to him, “My Son.” And he said to him, “Here I am.”

2 Then he said, “Behold, please, I am growing old. I do not know the day of my death. **3** So now, Take up, please, your equipment, your quiver-belt and your bow and go out to the field and hunt for me wild game. **4** And make for me delicacies just as I love and bring it to me and I will eat it on account of my soul blessing you, before I die.”

5 But Rebekah heard Isaac speaking to Esau, his son, and Esau went out to the field to hunt wild game to bring. **6** So Rebekah said to Jacob, her son, saying, “Behold, I heard your father speaking to Esau, your brother, saying, **7** Bring to me wild game and make for me delicacies and I will eat and I will bless you before Jehovah, before I die.’ **8** So now, my son, listen to my voice, to which I am commanding you. **9** Go, please, to the flock and take for me from there two kids of the female goats, good ones and I will make them delicacies for your father just as he loves. **10** And I will bring to your father and he will eat on account of which he will bless you before he dies.”

11 Then Jacob said to Rebekah, his mother, “Behold, Esau, my brother, [is] a man hairy and I myself [am] a man smooth. **12** Perhaps my father will feel me and I will be in his eyes as a deceiver and I will bring on myself a curse and not a blessing.”

13 So she said to him, his mother, “On me your curse, my son. Only listen to my voice and go, take for me.”

WORDS:

“Became inexpressive” (ver. 1) is used seventeen times; it means “dim, dark, expressionless, colorless, or disheartened.” “Hunt” and “wild game” (ver. 3) are related words; one is a verb, the other a noun. “Delicacies” (ver. 4) is largely found here (verses 4, 7, 9, 14, 17, 31; but also Prov. 23:3, 6). “Smooth” (ver. 11; 10 times) means “smooth, slippery, or flattering.” “Feel” (ver. 12; 10 times) means “to feel, touch, or grope.” “Deceiver” (ver. 12) means to “profane, mock someone, or ridicule.” It is only used one other place, in 2 Chron. 36:16. “Curse” (82 times) means to be “small, insignificant, contempt.”

COMMENTS:

Isaac is now growing old; however, he will not die until 35:28-29 at 180 years old. If chapters 26 and 27 are closely spaced chronologically, then Isaac would be about 100 years old now (25:26; 26:34). Yet on this occasion, he thinks death is soon. He therefore asks Esau to get his hunting equipment ready and to go, find some wild game. With just the two of them present, Isaac wants to share a meal he loves with his oldest son so he can bless him. The word family for “bless” is used 22 times in this chapter! The verb is used seventeen times and the noun, five times. Also, observe the times Esau is referred to as “Isaac’s son” and Jacob as “Rebekah’s son.”

As we explained in chapter 25, we do not know what relationship there was between the birthright (from that chapter) and the blessing in this chapter. If Isaac knew, and we

presume he did, about God's prophecy that the elder will serve the younger (25:23), then it appears that Isaac is trying to work around God's choice of Jacob.

Rebekah, however, will have none of that. She knows Jacob has been chosen and she will insist, even deceitfully, that Jacob will be the one. None of the characters in the account come through unscathed. Rebekah spoke privately to Jacob and shared with him what she had overheard Isaac saying to Esau. She calls on Jacob to listen to her and do what she says. He is to take goats out of the flock and bring them to her and she will make a meal for Isaac. Then, Isaac will bless Jacob, adding the blessing to the birthright, before he dies.

Jacob is more concerned about getting caught than he is about being deceitful. Esau is hairy; Jacob is smooth. If Isaac feels him, the deceit will be exposed and Jacob will, ironically, live up to his name - a "deceiver"! Jacob believed he would bring a curse on himself.

Rebekah responded that the curse would fall on her. Was she so confident in her scheme that she has no fear of her plan failing? She calls on Jacob a second time to listen to her.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - Rebekah knew the prophecy of God. Surely she had informed Isaac. Yet neither of them go to God to ask His direction in any of this. Nor does Esau or Jacob. Rebekah and Jacob choose improper methods (deceit) to accomplish a noble goal (fulfilling God's prophecy of Jacob's leadership).

Contemporaries of Moses - Israel will need to learn from this account that it is not possible to subvert God's plans. No amount of human wisdom can nullify the wisdom of God. The Law will condemn those who take advantage of the handicapped and blind (Lev. 19:14; Deut. 27:18), as Jacob and Rebekah do Isaac.

TRANSLATION - 27:14-29:

14 So he went and took and brought to his mother and she made, his mother, delicacies just as his father loves. **15** Then Rebekah took the garments of Esau, her son, the oldest, the best [garments] which [was] with her in the house and she put them on Jacob, her son, the youngest. **16** And the skins of the kids of the female goats, she put on his hands and on the smoothness of his neck. **17** Then she gave the delicacies and the bread which she made in hand of Jacob, her son.

18 And he came to his father, and he said, "My father." And he said, "Behold, who [are] you, my son?" **19** So Jacob said to his father, "I [am] Esau, your firstborn. I have done just as you have spoken to me. Raise up, please. Sit up and eat from my wild game on account of your blessing me, your soul."

20 So Isaac said to his son, "What [is] this? You have hurried to find, my son?" And he said, "Because Jehovah, your God, has prospered before me." **21** Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Approach, please, and let me feel you, my son. Are you yourself my son, Esau, or not?"

22 So Jacob approached to Isaac, his father, and he touched him and said, "The voice [is] the voice of Jacob but the hands [are] the hands of Esau." **23** He did not recognize that they were his hands as the hands of Esau, his brother, hairy, and he blessed him.

24 And he said, "[Are] you yourself my son, Esau?" And he said, "I am."

25 And he said, "Approach to me and let me eat from the wild game, my son, on account of my blessing you, my soul." And he approached him and he ate and he brought to him wine and he drank.

26 Then he said to him, Isaac, his father, "Approach, please, and kiss me, my son." **27** Then he approached and he kissed him and he smelled the scent of his clothes and he blessed him and he said, "See, the scent of my son [is] as the scent of the field which Jehovah blessed him. **28** Let God give to you the dew of the heavens and the fatness of the earth and much grain and sweet wine. **29** Let nations serve you and let them bow down to you. To nations you

must be a warrior to your brother, and let them bow down to you, the sons of your mother. Those cursing you, I will curse and those blessing you, I will bless.”

WORDS:

“Garments” (ver. 15; 216 times) is a broad, general term. “Prospered” (ver. 20; 22 times) means “to encounter, meet, happen;” it was first seen in 14:17; 15:10. “Approach” (ver. 21; 125 times) can mean to approach to worship or to sacrifice. The verb is used six times in verses 21-27. “Recognize” (ver. 23; 50 times) means to “recognize, investigate, be acquainted with.” “Smelled” (ver. 27) and “scent” are related words. The verb is used 14 times and can mean “get relief, smell.” They are related words to “Spirit.” “Grain” (ver. 28; 40 times) is grain or corn. “Sweet wine” (38 times, often - 20 times - with grain or oil as produce) can be “must, fresh or new wine, or even the grape still on the vine.” “Curse” (ver. 29) is the word for “curse” found in 5:29 and 12:3.

COMMENTS:

Jacob does what his mom told him and brought the goats to Rebekah. She, in turn, makes the food Isaac loves. The focus of this section of the chapter is what Mom is doing. Jacob is the subject of three verbs in ver. 14. Rebekah then took the best of Esau’s clothes and put them on Jacob. Rebekah also took the hairy skin of the goats and fashioned them into some kind of covering for Jacob’s hands, arms, and neck, the likeliest places Isaac would feel or touch. Finally, Rebekah gave the food to Jacob to present to Isaac.

Jacob does as his mother has planned. Isaac asks who is the man in front of him, surprised that he was successful so quickly. Jacob answers, lying, that he is Esau, the firstborn. Then Jacob gets right to the point, calling on his dad to get up, sit up, and eat and get about extending the blessing.

Isaac seems to be suspicious, since Jacob was successful so quickly. Jacob responds that Jehovah God (notice he refers to God as “your” God), had made Jacob prosper (cf. 24:12, this text, and 50:20). Jacob will not be the first to use God’s name in a way that supports his own behavior. How could Isaac argue with success extended by Jehovah God? Still suspicious, Isaac asks Jacob to come closer so he can feel him. He asks again, “Are you my son, Esau, or not?”

Jacob approached Isaac, no doubt nervous about being exposed. Isaac touched the hairy goat skin and acknowledged that the voice was, in fact, the voice of Jacob but the hands were the hairy hands of Esau. So, speaking in general, in ver. 23, Isaac blessed Jacob, thinking he was blessing Esau.

He asked again, in ver. 24, “Are you my son, Esau?” And Jacob lied again, “I am.” He will lie about his identity three times (27:19, 20, 24).

So Isaac asked him again to come closer and bring the food so that Isaac could bless him. Jacob approached his dad, ate the “wild game” with wine and Isaac ate and drank. The blessing is found in verses 27-29. Isaac asked Jacob to come closer and he kissed him. This seems to have been another effort on Isaac’s part to resolve the doubts in his heart and mind. He smelled as Jacob leaned over and he smelled the clothes of Esau. Consequently, Isaac blessed Jacob.

Isaac called on God to bless Jacob with the dew of the heavens. In a land with limited rainfall, dew sometimes was the only moisture that would refresh the land. Isaac called on God to bless Jacob with the “fatness of the earth,” a rich and abundant harvest, with grain and sweet wine. Isaac called on God to make the nations serve Jacob and bow down to him in service. Isaac called on God to make Jacob a warrior before the nations as they bow down to him. Isaac called on God to curse those who curse Jacob and bless those who bless Jacob. In an ironic twist, it will be Jacob’s sons who will bow down to Esau (33:3, 6-7).

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - Jacob has had to deceive nearly all of Isaac's senses. His heart was, no doubt, throbbing in his chest out of anxiety of being discovered. Isaac, on his part, is being deceived from every direction. The voice is Jacob's and this causes enough suspicion for Isaac to ask several times to have his doubts relieved. Eventually, they are and Isaac gives the blessing to Jacob as God had earlier predicted.

Contemporaries of Moses - The nation of Israel are the descendants of Jacob. They were to be God's chosen nation as opposed to Esau's descendants, the Edomites. God promised Israel plentiful crops in the land if they would stay faithful to Him (Deut. 7:13; 11:14; 33:28).

Later Hebrew writers - The Edomites (descendants of Esau) were subjugated by Kings Saul (1 Sam. 14:47) and David (2 Sam 8:14). They found freedom briefly under King Joram (2 Kings 8:20-22; 2 Chron. 21:8-10) but were subdued again by King Amaziah (2 Kings 14:7; 2 Chron. 25:11ff). They finally found freedom under King Ahaz (2 Kings 16:5-6; 2 Chron. 28:17).

NT writers - The Hebrew writer will praise Isaac for blessing Jacob and Esau in faith (11:20).

TRANSLATION - 27:30-41:

30 And it happened just as Isaac had finished to bless Jacob and it was to go out he went out Jacob went out from the presence of Isaac, his father that Esau, his brother came from his hunting. **31** And he made even himself delicacies and brought to his father and said to his father, "Let him arise, my father, and let him eat from the wild game of his son on account of his blessing my soul."

32 So Isaac said to him, his father, "Who [are] you?" And he said, "I [am] your son, your firstborn, Esau." **33** And Isaac trembled a great trembling extremely much and he said, "Who then [is] he, the hunter of wild game? And he brought to me and I ate from all before you came and I blessed him; even blessed he will be."

34 When Esau heard the words of his father that he cried out a great cry and bitter extremely much and he said to his father, "Bless me, even me, my father!"

35 And he said, "Your brother came in deceit and he took your blessing."

36 So he said, "Is not he called his name Jacob because he deceived me this twice, my birthright he took and behold now he took my blessing." And he said, "Did not you set aside for me a blessing?"

37 Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Behold, a warrior I made him to you and all his brothers I gave to him for servants and grain and sweet wine I have sustained him and for a second then, what will I do my son?"

38 Esau said to his father, "The blessing after this to you, my father. Bless me, even me, my father?" And Esau raised his voice and wept.

39 So Isaac answered, his father, and said to him, "Behold, the fatness of the earth will be your dwelling place and the dew of the heavens on all. **40** And by your sword you will live and your brother you will serve and he will be just as you roam freely and tear away on him from on your neck. **41** So Esau was hostile to Jacob, on the blessing which his father blessed him and Esau said in his heart, "The days are approaching for the mourning of my father; then I will kill Jacob my brother."

WORDS:

"Trembled" (39 times) and "trembling" (9 times; ver. 33) are related words, meaning to "tremble, shudder, quake." "Cried out" (55 times) and "a great cry" (21 times; ver. 34) are also related words. "Jacob" and "deceived" (ver. 36) are related words (cf. Jer. 9:4; Hosea 12:2). "Set aside" (ver. 36) is found in Num. 11:17, 25; Ezek. 42:6; Ecc. 2:10. "Sustained" (ver. 37; 48 times) means to sustain or support. "Subdued" (ver. 40) means to "roam freely, tear loose." "Tear away" (10 times) can mean to "pull away or rescue." "Was hostile" (ver. 41) can mean to "hate or be opposed to."

GRAMMAR:

“To go out he went out” is the Hebrew emphatic construction with an infinitive absolute followed by the same verb in the imperfect.

COMMENTS:

Moses is clear in ver. 30 that Jacob had no sooner left the room until Esau came in, after hunting, with his own food prepared with the wild game. Esau’s words in ver. 31 are very similar to Jacob’s in ver. 19. But Isaac is now perplexed: “Who are you?” (ver. 32). Esau responds. Then, Isaac “trembled a great trembling extremely much.” The Hebrew could hardly express Isaac’s fear more graphically. He has now realized that he gave the blessing to someone else rather than Esau. If he was intentionally trying to subvert God’s plans, he knows he has made an utter wreck of that. So, he wonders aloud, “Who then is he, whom I blessed?” Could Isaac, having known God’s original intention, be afraid that he has been found out?

Esau immediately knows what has happened! Then, he “cried out a great cry and bitter, extremely much”, matching in distress his father’s panic and calls on Dad to bless him as well. The cry which Esau uttered is as intense as the trembling of Isaac. They have both been deceived! In ver. 35, we see the explicit acknowledgement by Isaac that he was deceived by the deceiver.

Esau recognizes the appropriateness of his brother’s name, having deceived Esau twice. Of course, the first occasion, with the birthright, was Esau’s fault and he gave it up without deception (25:29-34). Esau hoped that Isaac had kept (?) a second blessing for him. The fact that Isaac did not reserve any blessing for the second son (which was supposed to have been Jacob), shows he had no intention of so doing.

Isaac responded that he had made Jacob the warrior and everyone else in the family would be serving Jacob. Isaac comments that he had asked God to bless Jacob with “grain and sweet wine.”

Esau calls once again on his dad to bless him, with something, with anything! Esau cried loudly. Isaac then calls on God to give Esau the “fatness of the earth” and the dew of the heavens. Yet, Esau will live by his sword and will serve his brother until he tears himself away. These were not words Esau was hoping to hear!

From that moment, Esau was hostile to Jacob and determined in his heart that once Isaac died, Esau would kill his brother.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - Isaac has no one to blame but himself for trying to subvert God’s prophecy. Blessings were normally huge family gatherings and social occasions. Isaac was trying to pass on the blessing covertly, with just the two present. He should not be surprised that God subverted him instead. The same thing can be said of Esau, whether he knew about the prophecy or not. Jacob had the birthright. How could Esau be given the blessing now?

NT writers - The Hebrew writer will warn Christians not to follow the example of Esau who was short-sighted (12:16-17).

TRANSLATION - 27:42-46:

42 Then it was announced to Rebekah the words of Esau, her son, the oldest and she sent and she called to Jacob, her son, the youngest, and she said to him, “Behold, Esau, your brother, is being comforted [from the idea] to kill you. **43** So now, my son, listen to my voice and arise. Flee, yourself, to Laban, my brother, toward Haran. **44** And remain with him a few days until which passes the rage of your brother. **45** Until passes the anger of your brother with you and he forgets what you did to him and I will send and I will take you from there. What - Will I be bereaved even both [of you, in] one day?”

46 So Rebekah said to Isaac, “I loathe my life from the face of the daughters of Heth if Jacob is taking a wife from the daughters of Heth, as these daughters of the land? What to me [is] life?”

WORDS:

“Flee” (ver. 43; 63 times) means to “run away, flee, or pass through.” “Passes” (ver. 44, 45) is a verb used frequently. Here, it suggests the idea of turning back, turning around, or passing by. “Rage” (125 times) means “wrath, heat, or poison.” In this context, it is synonymous with “anger” (ver. 45; 277 times). This word can also mean “nose or nostril.” “Bereaved” (ver. 46; 24 times) means “to become childless.” “Loathe” (ver. 46) means “to feel disgust, or repugnance, frighten or horrify.”

ARCHAEOLOGY:

Haran is about 10 miles (16 km) north of the Syrian border with Turkey. It was an important commercial center, being on a major east-west trade route linking the Tigris River with Mesopotamia. It was also a center of worship of the moon god, Sin (see 11:31-32; 24:1-7, 24 and chapters 29-31).

COMMENTS:

Someone overheard Esau plotting the death of his brother, so Rebekah acts quickly to save Jacob’s life and his role as leader of the family. She again calls on Jacob to listen to her and do what she says. Her scheme is for Jacob to go to his uncle’s house, Laban, near Haran and remain there until Esau gets over his anger. Rebekah inadvertently assumes that it will only be “a few days.” Rebekah is afraid that she will be “bereaved” of both sons in one day: Jacob killed by Esau and Esau either killed by a near relative or exiled for his crime.

So, Rebekah appeals to Isaac to send Jacob to her homeland, to find a wife, as Abraham’s servant had done for Isaac himself (chapter 24). Rebekah suggests that life will not be worth living if Jacob finds a wife from the Canaanites. She does not know that she will never see Jacob again (as far as the text is concerned). By contrast, the wounds between Esau and Jacob will be healed after twenty years (33:1-17).

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - Rather than trying to reconcile the whole family or explain to Isaac what was happening, if simply to inform him of God’s prophecy (if she had not yet done so), Rebekah decides to send Jacob away. She does a good thing for a bad reason. Abraham did not want Isaac marrying a member of a Canaanite family which was destined for destruction. It is reasonable that Jacob should also get a wife from the family, not from a nation which would be destroyed at some point in the future. Yet her motivation was simply to avoid the consequences of the choices that she had made relative to deceiving Isaac. It will be twenty years before Jacob returns home, but Rebekah will be dead by then.