

Genesis

Chapter 27



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The Jewish Study Bible: Jacob acquires Esau’s blessing. This story, one of the masterpieces of biblical narrative artistry, exhibits both charming comedy and intense pathos. Jacob having purchased his brother’s status of first-born in a questionable fashion (25:29-34), acquires his paternal blessing as well. He does so in a way that advances the divine plan but also utilizes deceit and brings hardship on all involved.¹

Torah Class: Permit me to quote a profound statement made by the great 19th century Jewish Christian scholar, and perhaps the man whose readings have influenced me 2nd only to the Torah itself, Alfred Edersheim: “*If there is any point on which we should anxiously be on our guard, it is that of ‘tempting God’. We do so tempt the Lord when, listening to our own inclinations, we put once more to question that which He has already clearly settled. Where God has decided, NEVER let us doubt, nor lag behind*”.

How often have we all suffered from seeing clearly God’s requirement of us, but asking Him for another and different decision that better suits our personal agenda, or our view of what ought to be. This is what Isaac did, and it created nothing but trouble.²

Bible Knowledge Commentary: The deception of Jacob for the blessing (27:1-40)

God expects His servants to carry out their spiritual responsibilities by faith. Unfortunately faith is not always present and then matters become complicated. This chapter portrays an entire family attempting to carry out their responsibilities by their physical senses, without faith. This is the familiar story of how Jacob got the blessing of his father Isaac through deception. It is a story of the fragmenting of a family over spiritual matters!

All participants were at fault. Isaac knew of God’s oracle to Rebekah (25:23) that the elder would serve the younger; yet he set out to thwart it by blessing Esau! Esau, agreeing to the plan, broke the oath he had made with Jacob (25:33). Rebekah and Jacob, with a just cause, each tried to achieve God’s blessing by deception, without faith or love. Theirs would be the victory, but they would reap hatred and separation for Rebekah never saw Jacob again! So the conflict between Jacob and Esau was greatly deepened by Jacob’s pursuit—he wanted what belonged to the firstborn, the blessing. Yet the story is not just about Jacob. He alone did not destroy the family; parental preference did.

¹The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin and Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

² Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

Genesis 27:1

And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, *here am I*.

[when Isaac was old] Isaac was about 138 years old at this time. He lived 42 years after the time he thought he was going to die. So, evidently he was healed by God (Genesis 35:27-28). He died at the age of 180 (Genesis 35:28), only 10 years before his son Jacob went into Egypt (Genesis 47:9).

Isaac was old—It is conjectured, on good grounds, that Isaac was now about one hundred and seventeen years of age, and Jacob about fifty-seven; though the commonly received opinion makes Isaac one hundred and thirty-seven, and Jacob seventy-seven.³

and his eyes were dim—This was probably the effect of that affliction, of what kind we know not, under which Isaac now labored; and from which, as well as from the affliction, he probably recovered, as it is certain he lived forty if not forty-three years after this time, for he lived till the return of Jacob from Padan-aram.⁴

Chumash; Classic Questions: Why was Isaac's vision weak?

Rashi: Because of the smoke of the above-mentioned [wives of Esau] who would burn incense in idol worship.

Another explanation: When Isaac was bound on the altar and his father was about to slaughter him, the heavens opened and the ministering angels looked on and wept. Their tears fell upon Isaac's eyes and as a result, his eyes became dim.

Another explanation: To enable Jacob to take the blessings.

Rashbam: Isaac's eyes dimmed from old age.

Sifsel Chachamim: First Rashi offers an explanation which is based on the juxtaposition of verses (since the previous verse alludes to the idol worship of Esau's wives).

However, this leaves the reader with the question; How could god cause this to happen to Isaac? Therefore Rashi brings the latter reason, that Isaac blindness was to enable Jacob to take the blessings. However, we are still left with the question: Why did Rebekah not become blind too from the smoke? Therefore, Rashi brings the additional explanation that Isaac's eyes had already been weakened at the *Akeida*, therefore his eyes were more severely affected by the smoke.

The Explanation: Towards the end of *Parshas Chayel Sarah*, the Torah states that, "After Abraham died, God blessed Isaac his son" (25:11). Rashi explains why it was God, and not Abraham, who blessed Isaac: "Even though God gave over the blessings to Abraham, he was afraid to bless Isaac since he foresaw Esau coming forth from him. He said, Let the Master of blessings come and bless whoever He pleases! So god coma and blessed him."

Thus, on reaching our verse, that, "the vision of his (Isaac's) eyes was dimmed," Rashi was troubled by an obvious question: If God personally blessed Isaac, then how is it

³Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

⁴Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

possible that he should lose his sight? Surely God's blessing should have spared him from this aggravation?

Thus, Rashi searched for an explanation why Isaac's loss of vision was not due to his old age, but rather, due to some external factor. In the final analysis, Rashi found it necessary to bring three interpretations, since each of them have their own respective advantages and disadvantages:

a.) Rashi's first explanation: smoke damage

This explanation is preferable as it is indicated by the Torah itself. In the previous verse, we read that Esau and his wives, "tormented Isaac and Rebekah" (26:35), and Rashi writes that this was due to their idol worship. In the following verse we read that, "Isaac had grown old. The vision of his eyes had dimmed: (27:1) so it follows that Isaac's visual impediment here in 27:1 was caused by the idol worship mentioned in 26:35. Since this is the most contextually preferable solution, Rashi cited it as the first and primary interpretation.

However, this explanation alone is insufficient, as we are left with two questions: Presumably, Esau and his family would not have burned incense to idols in Isaac's presence – they probably lived in a separate residence in any case – so why should Isaac have been affected by the smoke? And, if Isaac was affected, why was Rebekah not harmed too?⁵

Chumash; "The Last word"

Rather than take away Isaac's sight, God could have made Isaac give the blessing willingly to Jacob in a very simple manner: he could have revealed to Isaac that Esau was in fact a wicked person. From this we can learn to what extremes a person should go to avoid speaking negatively about another Jew. For God was willing to allow Isaac to lose his sight rather than to speak badly about Esau.⁶

Genesis 27:2

And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death:

[I know not the day of my death]

Seven Examples of God Revealing Death - Dake

1. Jacob (time of revelation before death, one day; Genesis 48:1; Genesis 49:29-33)
2. Aaron (one day; Numbers 20:23-29)
3. Moses (one day; Deut. 31:2; Deut. 32:48-52; Deut. 34:1-8)
4. Joshua (one day; Joshua 23:14)
5. Hezekiah (one day, but changed to fifteen years; 2 Kings 20:1-8; Isaiah 38)
6. Ezekiel's wife (one day; Ezekiel 24:15-20)
7. A rich fool (a few hours; Luke 12:16)

No man knows the day of his death, unless God reveals it to him; nor does he have a set time to die, even though he is appointed to die (Hebrews 9:27). We have one example of

⁵ Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

⁶ Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

an evil spirit revealing death—that of Saul (1 Samuel 28:19 with 1 Chron. 10:13-14). There are conditions which will extend life beyond what may be otherwise expected.⁷

Fourteen Proofs that There Is No Set Time to Die - Dake

1. It was said to Abimelech, You are a dead man unless you give up this man's wife (Genesis 20:3-7).
2. Honor parents, that your days may be long upon earth (Exodus 20:12; Ephes. 6:2).
3. Because of your sins you will quickly perish (Leviticus 26; Deut. 28).
4. The Lord shall keep the poor alive (Psalm 41:1-2).
5. The wicked shall not live out half their days (Psalm 55:23).
6. With long life will I satisfy him (providing he meets the conditions of Psalm 91).
7. Keep My words, for length of days, and long life shall they add to you (Proverbs 3:1-2).
8. The years of the wicked shall be shortened (Proverbs 10:25,27).
9. He that hardens his neck shall suddenly be destroyed (Proverbs 29:1).
10. I will add to your days fifteen years (Isaiah 38:5).
11. I am deprived of the rest of my years (Isaiah 38:10).
12. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many have died (1 Cor. 11:29-30).
13. He that will love life, and see good days, let him keep his mouth from evil (1 Peter 3:10-11).
14. Many have been cut off because of sins. They could have lived longer if they had not sinned, and judgment had not become necessary (Exodus 9:15; Exodus 12:15,19; Exodus 30:33; Exodus 31:14; Leviticus 7:20-27; Leviticus 17:4-14; Leviticus 18:29; Leviticus 19:8; Leviticus 20:3-18; Numbers 9:13; Numbers 15:30-31; Numbers 19:13,20; etc.).

Genesis 27:3

Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me *some* venison;

Missler: Issac offered to bless Esau. Note Isaac's weak eyesight and old age (137 years old). Moreover, stress is placed on the love he had for wild game and tasty food. His palate governed his heart.⁸

⁷ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

⁸ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

Genesis 27:4

And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring *it* to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.

Genesis 25:28 has already established Isaac's preference for Esau, who as the first-born son (27:19), should receive his father's prime blessing anyway. Isaac's instruction to hunt him some game recalls the rather shallow reason for his favoring the uncouth Esau. There may also be a notion here that eating will fortify his innermost self that is, his life-force, ("*nefesh*," v.4) so that he may impart a more powerful blessing to his son. Since Isaac is blind, this chapter emphasizes his other senses. He identifies "Esau" by touching his hands, tasting him through a kiss, and smelling his clothing. His sense of hearing tells him that something may be amiss. Esau's response to his aged father's summons, Here I am (v. 1), recalls the refrain of the "Akedah (22:1, 7, 11), another but very different story of a loving father and the near-loss of his beloved son.⁹

That I may eat—The blessing which Isaac was to confer on his son was a species of Divine right, and must be communicated with appropriate ceremonies. As eating and drinking were used among the Asiatics on almost all religious occasions, and especially in making and confirming covenants, it is reasonable to suppose that something of this kind was essentially necessary on this occasion, and that Isaac could not convey the right till he had eaten of the meat provided for the purpose by him who was to receive the blessing. As Isaac was now old, and in a feeble and languishing condition, it was necessary that the flesh used on this occasion should be prepared so as to invite the appetite, that a sufficiency of it might be taken to revive and recruit his drooping strength, that he might be the better able to go through the whole of this ceremony.

This seems to be the sole reason why savory meat is so particularly mentioned in the text. When we consider, 1. That no covenant was deemed binding unless the parties had eaten together; 2. That to convey this blessing some rite of this kind was necessary; and, 3. That Isaac's strength was now greatly exhausted, insomuch that he supposed himself to be dying; we shall at once see why meat was required on this occasion, and why that meat was to be prepared so as to deserve the epithet of savory.¹⁰

deathbed blessings. Blessings or curses pronounced by the patriarch of the family were always taken seriously and considered binding. Such pronouncements from a patriarch's deathbed would be even more momentous. In this text, however, Isaac is not portrayed as being on his deathbed, merely aged enough that he wants to put his house in order by providing the traditional blessing.¹¹

proper atmosphere for blessings. While the feast that Esau is to prepare may provide a pleasant atmosphere and appropriate mood for the blessing, it also provides the context of celebration that would accompany significant events, much as we might go out to dinner at a fancy restaurant.

⁹The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

¹⁰ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

¹¹ Bible Background Commentary

We have seen that Isaac was an outstanding man, a great man. Abimelech and the Philistines came to make a treaty with him since they feared him. He was patient and peace loving but also prominent and powerful. Here, however, he reveals that weakness of the flesh. All during his life, Esau had been his favorite while Jacob had been the favorite of Rebekah. Esau was the outdoor boy who would go out and bring in a deer or some other animal. He would barbecue it, and the old man would enjoy it. Now Isaac is very old and he wants to bless his favorite son. He knows very well that God has said the elder will serve the younger, but he bypasses that because he wants to bless Esau. So he tells Esau to go out and bring in some meat and he will bless him because of it. What a revelation this is of this family.

Have you noticed the family strife since we have come to this last major section of Genesis? There was strife in the family of Abraham because of Hagar. Now there is strife in this family over these twins.¹²

Torah Class: This chapter opens with the old, blind, and sickly Isaac telling Esau to go hunt some meat as part of a commemorative meal that was part and parcel with the blessing Isaac wanted to bestow upon Esau. This, of course, was in no wise what God had told Isaac, through his wife Rebecca that was to occur. Had Isaac, all those years ago, simply decided to ignore what his wife had told him.....perhaps skeptical? Had he formed such a bond with Esau that he could not bear the thought of taking this all-important blessing from his beloved son, knowing it would humiliate and crush him? Or, did he think that perhaps God would allow him to simply go his own way, rebel, and bless it anyway?

I must readily admit, that after several years of study.....reading the wonderful works of some of the great Hebrew sages of old.....my conclusion has changed a little over time. It is interesting, is it not, that the matter of the birthright.....that is, who would be *behkor*, the firstborn.....is really never the issue in this narrative? Some of you may be scratching your heads thinking, and then what is this all about? Or better yet, MY Bible seems to make this all about the birthright! Well, we'll deal with that as we go, but let me show you something that might ease your minds just a bit: look at verse 36. NAS

Genesis 27:36 *Then he (Esau) said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?"*

By the time we reach this chapter, the issue of the birthright has apparently already been resolved. Reluctantly, Isaac seems to have accepted it at some point before this scene, and Esau was most aware that was the case. My study of birthright and blessings shows that the two things aren't necessarily connected. The matter of the birthright, for the most part, is settled automatically at the birth of the first boy child. Certainly, if that child should die, then it muddies the waters; but invariably the 2nd boy child would automatically gain the right his deceased brother held.....and if the 2nd boy child died, the 3rd would gain the birthright and so on. And, there would be no ceremony nor ritual attached, so well was this thoroughly imbedded in both law and tradition of that era. So, the traditional blessings bestowed upon the family near the end of the family leader's life meant something else. In other words, it's not so much that at the end of the life of the

¹²McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:112). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

current family leader that everyone waits breathlessly to see who will be the NEW family leader...who will be designated the bekhor. We all can picture the greedy family members sitting in a circle, staring in great anticipation at the lawyer, as he gets ready to read the will; like children staring at the gifts under a Christmas tree; hoping, but not at all certain what awaits them.

We need to understand that the firstborn didn't get EVERYTHING; just the largest portion.....the Bible calls it the Double portion. And, along with that double portion, he gets the right of leadership over the clan. Now, what amounted to a double portion undoubtedly varied depending on the situation. Double doesn't necessarily mean that the firstborn son gets precisely double of all his brothers. This doesn't necessarily mean that an exact inventory of wealth was done to make sure each got exactly their proper share. It could, and probably did, happen that way particularly in later eras. More often, these portions were approximates; a double portion could have been anything from a little bit more than the others, to practically everything of value. It was all up to good old dad. So, what we're witnessing here is about *the blessing*, not a decision about who is bekhor. And, the blessing in this case is about dividing up wealth. And, just like for us today... ..and probably since time immemorial for everyone.... The inheriting children generally feel that if one gets *more* than the others that means one was more loved than the others. Or if one gets *less* than the others, then it means he or she is less loved or valued than the others.

We're told in verse 1 that Isaac was very old when he decided to perform the blessing. He was nearly blind as well. Now was he near death? He probably thought so, though it didn't prove to be the case. He was 137 years old at this time. But, stop and think for a second what that infers as to the age of Jacob and Esau. They were born, we're told, when Isaac was about 60. So, these "boys", were in their mid to late 70's!! Well, *that* sure destroys these wonderful mental pictures we have of a couple of virile young men being led around by their sly mother, or of an athletic Esau out killing game at a moments notice for this blessing!¹³

Ramban: "That my soul may bless thee" It was Isaac's intent to bless Esau that he merit the blessing of Abraham to inherit the land and to become the one with whom God would make the covenant since he was the firstborn.

It would appear that Rebekah never told Isaac of the prophecy which God had related to her, i.e., *And the elder shall serve the younger*, else how would Isaac transgress the commandment of the Eternal, seeing that it shall not prosper. Now at first she did not tell it to him due to ethical modesty, for the verse, *And she went to inquire of the Eternal*, suggests that she went without Isaac's permission. [Perhaps she did not tell him because] she said, "I need not relate a prophecy to a prophet for Isaac is greater than the one who told it to me. And now she did not want to tell him, "So was it said to me in the name of God before I gave birth," for she reasoned that because of his love for Esau he will not bless Jacob, but the will leave everything in the hands of Heaven. And she further knew that by this arrangement of hers, Jacob will be blessed from Isaac's mouth by an undivided heart and a willing mind. Perhaps these are causes induced by God so that

¹³ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

Jacob would be blessed, and Esau as well with the blessing of the sword, And by Him alone actions are weighed.¹⁴

Genesis 27:5

And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it.

[Esau went to the field to hunt for venison] Esau didn't find his venison before this and lost his birthright (Genesis 25:27-34). Now he lost his blessing because he was late finding it.

Genesis 27:6

And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying,

Missler: Rebekah sent Jacob into action to stop Isaac. Her favorite son, Jacob, already had the birthright; she was determined that he should receive the blessing, too, from the lips of the Lord's representative, so that all would be well with the divine inheritance.

Genesis 27:7

Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death.

[Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat] His carnal appetite caused him to forget God's word and Esau's oath (Genesis 25:23,31-34). Thus he was tricked into right action by his wife and younger son.

[bless thee before the LORD before my death] The phrase intimates more than a common blessing. This is proven in Genesis 27:28-29. Isaac must have known that God desired to bless Jacob instead of Esau, for it was revealed by Him to Rebekah (Genesis 25:23). Isaac finally did bless him (Hebrews 11:20; Romans 10:17). His carnality was dictating to him when he tried to bless Esau instead. Esau was careful to gratify his father's fleshly appetite (Genesis 25:28). Isaac wished to repay his many favors by this one blessing. He recognized his own lawful right as the priestly and prophetic head of his house to bless the firstborn and give him all the birthright signified. But in this case, as with Ephraim (Genesis 48:8-22), God commanded the natural order be set aside and the blessing be given the one of His choice (Genesis 25:23; Malachi 1:2-3; Romans 9:11-13; see note, *Genesis 9:24).

¹⁴ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

Ramban: “And I will bless thee before the eternal before my death” In this entire section, the expression, *before the Eternal*, is not mentioned except in this place. This is because his mother said to Jacob, “The blessing will be *before the Eternal* with the *Ruach Hakodesh*, and if Esau your brother be blessed with it, it will remain with his children forever, and you will have no standing before him.”¹⁵

Genesis 27:8

Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee.

Chrysostom: “This is a mother’s love” See a mother’s affection or rather God’s designs: He it was who prompted her to make plans and also made sure all turned out well. Do you see the mother’s excellent planning? See also Jacob’s circumspection in showing his mildness of manner in his reply. “He replied to his mother, “My brother Esau is hairy, whereas my skin is smooth. Perhaps my father may touch me and I will appear ridiculous to him and bring myself a curse and not blessing”. Remarkable the child’s dutifulness and his respect for his father: “I am afraid,” he says. “My efforts may have the contrary effect. I may seem out of step with my father’s wishes and win a curse instead of blessing.” So what does Rebekah do, this extraordinary woman of great affection? Since she was not concocting this only out of her own thinking but was also implementing the prediction from on high, she took every care to banish fear from the child and instill courage so as to bring off the plan. Instead of promising him that he would be able to deceive his father and elude detection, what did she say? “Let the curse on you fall on me, child; just heed my word, and go and fetch it for me.” “Even if anything like this should happen,” she is saying, “you personally will suffer no harm. So don’t be afraid: take heart,” “Heed my word,” and do what I advise you. This really is a mother’s love, readily accepting everything for her child’s sake.¹⁶

Genesis 27:9

Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth:

¹⁵ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

¹⁶ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

Genesis 27:10

And thou shalt bring *it* to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.

Rebekah spake unto Jacob—She prized the blessing as invaluable; she knew that God intended it for the younger son [Genesis 25:23]; and in her anxiety to secure its being conferred on the right object—on one who cared for religion—she acted in the sincerity of faith; but in crooked policy—with unenlightened zeal; on the false principle that the end would sanctify the means.¹⁷

When Rebekah learned that Isaac was preparing to bless Esau, she quickly devised a plan to trick him into blessing Jacob instead. Although God had already told her that Jacob would become the family leader (Genesis 25:23-26), Rebekah took matters into her own hands. She resorted to doing something wrong to try to bring about what God had already said would happen. For Rebekah, the end justified the means. No matter how good we think our goals are, we should not attempt to achieve them by doing what is wrong. Would God approve of the methods you are using to accomplish your goals?¹⁸

Genesis 27:11

And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother *is* a hairy man, and I *am* a smooth man:

Jacob said, Esau my brother is a hairy man—It is remarkable that his scruples were founded, not on the evil of the act, but on the risk and consequences of deception.

Torah Class: Rebecca, the mother of these twin boys, overhears Isaac's instructions to the obviously delighted Esau, and she conspires to overturn Isaac's intentions. Esau was continuing to prove his unfitness to carry on the divine line that God had begun with Abraham. Rebecca was likely thinking that if her doddling old husband refused to carry out God's will, she would.....doing whatever it took.....even if it included deception. After all, doesn't this end, ordained by God, justify whatever means it takes to achieve it? Wouldn't God rather have the goal of his plan accomplished....and all of the stuff that went with it..... even if wrong was done to make it happen? This must be one of the most difficult parts of a Believer's walk with God; putting our full trust in Him to accomplish His will, even if at the moment all of our intellect and senses and logic and sense of fairness and life experience tells us it can't happen within the circumstances at hand.

Rebecca tells Jacob what is happening in his father's tent, and he joins with her plan: and that plan is for Jacob to impersonate Esau. Jacob is a bit reluctant; not because he thinks what they are doing may be wrong, but rather that they may be discovered and

¹⁷ JFB Commentary

¹⁸ Life Application Notes

then have to bear the consequences. Going so far as to put on Esau's clothing, even attaching goatskins to his arms and neck to imitate Esau's naturally hairy body, Jacob goes into his father's tent. Skeptical at first, Isaac's senses tell him something might not be quite right; but Isaac is convinced enough that this is indeed Esau before him, so he pronounces the blessing upon Jacob. The Hebrew word used here for blessing is *berakhah*, and it is a very common Hebrew word we'll find throughout the OT.¹⁹

Genesis 27:12

My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.

Missler: Rebekah seemed certain she could duplicate the taste of meat from wild game with goat's meat. But Jacob was not so sure he could deceive his father. After all, Jacob said, if Isaac touched him, Isaac would know the difference between Esau's hairy skin and Jacob's smooth skin. Jacob had no guilt—only fear—regarding the plan. But the blessing was in danger and all must be risked, including even the possibility of a curse on Rebekah.

How we react to a moral dilemma often exposes our real motives. Frequently we are more worried about getting caught than about doing what is right. Jacob did not seem concerned about the deceitfulness of his mother's plan; instead he was afraid of getting in trouble while carrying it out. If you are worried about getting caught, you are probably in a position that is less than honest. Let your fear of getting caught be a warning to do right. Jacob paid a huge price for carrying out this dishonest plan.²⁰

Ramban: "Perhaps my father will feel me" The reason that Isaac will feel him is not for the purpose of recognition. Instead, Jacob said, "Perhaps he will bring me near him to kiss me or to put his hand on my face in the manner of a father demonstrating affection for his son, and in feeling me he will discover that I am smooth."

Now I wonder why Jacob was not afraid of vocal recognition for all people are recognizable by their voice as our Rabbis have said, "How is a blind man permitted to live with his wife? And how are people permitted to live with their wives at nighttime? Only by vocal recognition."²¹

¹⁹ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

²⁰ Life Application Notes

²¹ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

Genesis 27:13

And his mother said unto him, Upon me *be* thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me *them*.

Once again, it is the mother who arranges the fulfillment of the divine plan, to the benefit of the second-born son, and in a manner that is morally offensive to a high degree (cf. 21:9-13). It is curious, however, that in seeking to allay her favored son's worry (vv. 11-13), Rebekah never mentions the prenatal oracle that announced the Lord's preference for the younger twin (25:23). Rashbam thinks it was trust in that oracle that enables her to discount the curse Jacob fears. But note that the Tanakh gives no indication that Jacob ever saw his mother alive again after this disquieting episode.²²

curse appropriation. Rebekah responds to Jacob's fears of bringing a curse on himself by appropriating to herself any curse that may result. Can she do that? As this chapter demonstrates, a blessing is not transferable, and neither is the pronouncement of a curse. But in this case Rebekah is most likely referring to the consequences of the curse rather than the curse itself. Since deity is the enforcer of the curse, this acknowledgment that she has forced Jacob to deceive his father would target her if a curse was to result.²³

Jacob hesitated when he heard Rebekah's deceitful plan. Although he questioned it for the wrong reason (fear of getting caught), he protested and thus gave her one last chance to reconsider. But Rebekah had become so wrapped up in her plan that she no longer saw clearly what she was doing. Sin had trapped her and was degrading her character. Correcting yourself in the middle of doing wrong may bring hurt and disappointment, but it also will bring freedom from sin's control.²⁴

Hippolytus; Rebekah's Command: *Fulfilled in the church:* We can see that the words spoken by Rebekah a long time ago have now been fulfilled in the church. The words "Let you curse be on me, my son" show that now certain people offend the church by their blasphemies, because she worships the Crucified, and for that reason they throw curses and contempt at us. In fact, the passion of the Lord is held to be a curse for the unbelievers, whereas his life is peace for those who believe. The apostle says, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. That is what the Savior has now accomplished by the cross. By his obedience he has erased the curse of Adam, which was received in the law: "You are dust, and to dust you shall return."²⁵

²²The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

²³ Bible Background Commentary

²⁴ Life Application Notes

²⁵ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

Genesis 27:14

And he went, and fetched, and brought *them* to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved.

Genesis 27:15

And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which *were* with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son:

Ramban: “Esau her elder son, Jacob her younger son” The reason why Scripture mentions this is to accentuate the unusual action of the righteous one, for parents customarily give recognition to the firstborn in blessing, honor, and gift, but she, knowing of the righteousness of the younger and the wickedness of the elder, went to all this trouble to transfer the blessing and the honor from the elder to the younger. Similarly, it says further on, *And the words of Esau her elder son were and told to Rebekah, and she sent and called Jacob her younger son.*²⁶

Genesis 27:16

And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck:

Genesis 27:17

And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

[savoury meat] Highly-seasoned food was favored in the East. Salt, spices, onions, garlic, saffron, mint, and various other herbs were used to flavor foods (Exodus 12:8; Numbers 11:5; Luke 11:42).

Genesis 27:18

And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I; who *art* thou, my son?

²⁶ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

Genesis 27:19

And Jacob said unto his father, I *am* Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.

Genesis 27:20

And Isaac said unto his son, How *is it* that thou hast found *it* so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God brought *it* to me.

Believe me, this boy at this particular point is typical of pious frauds. You find many such frauds even in fundamental circles today. They talk about the Lord leading them. My, sometimes the Lord “leads” them to do some very unusual things! I find out sometimes that Christian men think they can do things that the Mafia would be arrested for. But these men can very piously pray about it and *say* that it is the Lord’s will. Believe me, Jacob at this point is a pious fraud. The Lord had nothing to do with this deception.²⁷

Genesis 27:21

And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou *be* my very son Esau or not.

Prodded by his mother Jacob lied twice to his father, first, about his identity and second, that God had given him success (in hunting, v. 20).

Chumash: Classic Questions: “Why did Isaac tell Jacob to come closer?”

Rashi: Isaac said to himself, “Esau doesn’t usually mention God’s name, but his man said: “Because God, your God, brought it.”

Midrash: Isaac said, “I know that Esau doesn’t mention god’s name, and this man did mention it. He must be Jacob and not Esau.”

Toras Menachem: At first glance, Rashi appears to differ in opinion from the Midrash: Rashi writes that, “Esau doesn’t usually mention God’s Name.” Whereas the Midrash stresses that, “Esau doesn’t mention God’s Name.” suggesting that he never mentioned it.

However, at the literal level we can only conclude that Esau never mentioned god’s Name, otherwise the casual reference to God in verse 20 would not have aroused Isaac’s suspicion. Rashi’s intention here must be that Esau never mentioned God’s Name, and he does not differ with the Midrash. Their slightly different phraseology is thus inconsequential in this instance.²⁸

²⁷ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:113). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²⁸ Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

Genesis 27:22

And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau.

[**he felt him**] Isaac must have had a sickness which affected his eyes and made him think he was dying. But he recovered and saw Jacob on his return from Padan-aram about twenty years later. He died just ten years before Jacob went into Egypt (Genesis 25:26; Genesis 35:28; Genesis 47:9). This is the only case in Scripture where a man depended upon feeling. That he was deceived is a clear lesson to Christians.

Genesis 27:23

And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him.

Genesis 27:24

And he said, *Art* thou my very son Esau? And he said, *I am*.

Three times the old man voiced his suspicion. But deceived by his senses of touch and smell, he blessed Jacob, thinking he was Esau.

Although Jacob got the blessing he wanted, deceiving his father cost him dearly. These are some of the consequences of that deceit: (1) he never saw his mother again; (2) his brother wanted to kill him; (3) he was deceived by his uncle, Laban; (4) his family became torn by strife; (5) Esau became the founder of an enemy nation; (6) he was exiled from his family for years. Ironically, Jacob would have received the birthright and blessing anyway (Genesis 25:23). Imagine how different his life would have been had he and his mother waited for God to work his way, in his time!²⁹

Genesis 27:25

And he said, *Bring it* near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought *it* near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank.

²⁹ Life Application Notes

Genesis 27:26

And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son.

Genesis 27:27

And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed:

[raiment] In the East, clothing marked the social rank and position. The firstborn had an official garment as the priest and head of the house. The one that Jacob wore had the smell of the field to complete the deception. It was perfect except for the voice. Even God was credited with helping him find the meat so soon (Genesis 27:20)! This is the worst part about it, showing the nature of the falsehood. God certainly was not a party to this plot.

The passage is full of suspense and high drama as Isaac uses his senses of touch, hearing, taste, and smell to ascertain that it is Esau rather than an impersonator who is serving him the tasty game. There is probably also a note of broad humor in vv. 22-23. Should not a blind man have put more trust in his hearing than in his touch, and just how hairy was Esau that the skin of a goat could be mistaken for his hands? Jacob's answer in v. 20 beautifully encapsulates the dual causation that drives this narrative. On the one hand, he is lying to his father. On the other he is expressing, perhaps unwittingly, the fact that it is God's preference, not his father's that has arranged his unlikely success.³⁰

[Kissed] The symbol of affection became a means of deception and betrayal, as also in 2 Sam. 20:9 (Joab) and Matt. 26:49 (Judas).

Chumash; Classic Questions: "What "fragrance" did Isaac smell?"

Rashi: Surely there is no odor more offensive than that of goat's hair? [which Jacob was wearing –see v. 16]. This teaches us that the fragrance of the Garden of Eden entered with him [and it was this fragrance that is referred to in v. 27]. "The fragrance of a field, which God has blessed," indicates it had a pleasant fragrance, that of a field of apples. This is how our Sages explain it.

Sifsei Chachamim suggests that the aroma came from Esau's garments, which were originally owned by Adam in the Garden of Eden. This argument is based on an earlier comment of Rashi to v. 15. The Torah describes Esau's garments as "the clean ones," as Onkelos renders. Another explanation; the garments that he had coveted from Nimrod. Rashi does mention that Esau acquired his garments from Nimrod.

Due to the question in v. 27, Rashi understood that the Torah is hinting here, at the literal level, to the Midrashic teaching that the aroma of the Garden of Eden entered with Jacob.

Since Isaac was not aware that the aroma of the Garden had entered the room, he presumed that Jacob must have picked up the pleasant smell while he was cooking the

³⁰The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

“**tasty food,**” which obviously involved the use of spices and sweet-smelling cooking agents. Thus, Rashi rejected the notion that Isaac thought he was smelling a field of grasses and flowers, since these items are not used in cooking. Rather, Rashi accepted the Midrashic account that he smelled like a field of apples, since apples could be used when cooking:”tasty foods.”³¹

Genesis 27:28

Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine:

It predicted that Jacob would be blessed above Esau in material and spiritual things. This is the first prophecy of Isaac (cp. Genesis 27:39-40). Jacob received a tenfold prophetic blessing:

1. God will give you the dew of heaven (Genesis 27:28)
2. God will give you the fatness of the earth (Genesis 27:28)
3. God will give you plenty of corn (wheat, Genesis 27:28,37)
4. God will give you plenty of wine (vineyards, Genesis 27:28,37)
5. God will let people serve you (Genesis 27:29)
6. God will let nations bow down to you (Genesis 27:29)
7. You will be lord over your brethren (Genesis 27:29,37)
8. God will let your brothers bow to you (Genesis 27:29,37)
9. Cursed are those who curse you (Genesis 27:29)
10. Blessed are those who bless you (Genesis 27:29)³²

God give thee of the dew of heaven—To an Oriental mind, this phraseology implied the highest flow of prosperity. The copious fall of dew is indispensable to the fruitfulness of lands, which would be otherwise arid and sterile through the violent heat; and it abounds most in hilly regions, such as Canaan, hence called the "fat land" (Neh. 9:25, 35).³³

Ramban: In my opinion the correct interpretation is that God’s gift is steady and there is never any interruption in it. Therefore he says, “*So God give thee for the extent of your days upon your land of the dew of heaven, and give thee of the fat places of the earth,*” meaning the fattest of all lands, even as it is written, *The beauty of all lands.*³⁴

³¹ Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

³² Dake’s Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

³³ JFB Commentary

³⁴ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

Genesis 27:29

Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed *be* every one that curseth thee, and blessed *be* he that blesseth thee.

The blessing included prosperity in crops, domination over other nations and his brothers, cursing on those who cursed him, and blessing on those who blessed him.

Jacob's mastery over his brothers (the plural need not be taken literally) is probably connected to King David's subjection of the Edomites (2 Sam 8:13-14). Note also the Abrahamic resonance of the end of the verse (cf. Gen. 12:3).³⁵

nature of blessing. The blessing that Isaac bestows on Jacob (whom he mistakes for Esau) grants him fertility of the ground, dominion over other nations, including those descended from siblings, and a boomerang effect for curses and blessings. These are typical elements for the patriarchal blessing and have no relationship to either material inheritance or to the covenant, though some of these features are also present in the covenant benefits that the Lord promises to Israel. They constitute the foundational elements of survival and prosperity.³⁶

Let people serve thee—fulfilled in the discomfiture of the hostile tribes that opposed the Israelites in the wilderness; and in the pre-eminence and power they attained after their national establishment in the promised land. This blessing was not realized to Jacob, but to his descendants; and the temporal blessings promised were but a shadow of those spiritual ones, which formed the grand distinction of Jacob's posterity.³⁷

Torah Class: Now, without doubt, this blessing includes certain words and terms that rightly confer blessing on the bechor; for instance, "be a master over your brothers". So, while Isaac was not arguing over the technical aspect of who was DESIGNATED as firstborn, he was using his prerogatives to decide exactly who got what. And, it was more or less his intention to give Esau much of what the bechor should have traditionally received. This is somewhat like when, after WWII, President Truman relieved General MacArthur of his command. General MacArthur didn't stop being a 5 star general, or a man of great power and position in the military. President Truman just made it so that MacArthur had nothing and no one to exercise that power over. Isaac isn't trying to say Jacob isn't the firstborn; he's just trying to take most of the rights of the firstborn away from Jacob and give them to Esau.....just another way to skin a cat.

Further, it seems that most times that the berakhah, the blessing, is pronounced, it is more or less making official that which was, by tradition, long ago settled. For instance, a rich man sets up a will, signs a power of attorney that the will is NEVER to be changed under any circumstances, by anyone including himself, and then inconveniently lives another 10 years. The matters have all been decided and written in stone; how much each

³⁵The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

³⁶ Bible Background Commentary

³⁷ JFB Commentary

inheritor to receive is determined and is not changeable; but, nothing takes effect until he dies and the will is read. This blessing, this berakhah, is similar to the reading of the will in that although things have long been decided, no transfer of wealth or authority had yet taken place.

Well, the deed is done. Jacob has received the blessing God intended for him; he held on to the birthright God told his mother he'd have, AND, he received authority..... the power to lead the clan. But, no doubt Jacob felt none of the inner joy and sense of humility before God that should have been present after being anointed as the bearer of the line of covenant promise that was so important for the future of all mankind. For Jacob had done wrong in making sure to obtain it...his deception was sin against God...and his conscience probably dogged him for the rest of his life. It's amazing: Jacob went through all these contortions and pulled off all of these hurtful deceptions only to receive that which *never* could have been denied him anyway, because the Lord had already determined it.³⁸

Ramban: "Cursed by every one that curseth thee, and blessed be every one that blesseth thee" But in the case of Balaam it ways, Blessed be everyone that blesseth thee, and cursed be everyone that curseth thee. [The reason for this change in order is that] the righteous begin with affliction and ultimately attain tranquility, so that those who curse them precede those who bless them. But the wicked experience tranquility first and their end is affliction. Hence Balaam mentioned the blessing before the curse. This is Rashi's language quoting Bereshith Rabbah.

But if this be so, why did the Holy One, blessed be He, say to Abraham, And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee? This however is no difficulty since He concludes there, And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. Thus there is a blessing at the beginning and at the end. It may be as we have explained it there, that He speaks in terms of both an individual and many, suggesting that Abraham will be universally blessed, and the single person who will curse him will be cursed.³⁹

Genesis 27:30

And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

Genesis 27:31

And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.

³⁸ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

³⁹ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

Genesis 27:32

And Isaac his father said unto him, Who *art* thou? And he said, I *am* thy son, thy firstborn Esau.

Isaac was seized with great fear which perhaps reminded him of God's will. So, he let the blessing stand (Genesis 27:33; cp. Luke 22:61 where Peter forgot Jesus' words until Christ looked at him).

Genesis 27:33

And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where *is* he that hath taken venison, and brought *it* me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, *and* he shall be blessed.

Isaac trembled violently over what had happened and Esau was very bitter and angry. Isaac knew he had been tampering with God's plan and had been overruled; there was no going back now. He recognized that God's will for his sons is better than his own for them.

(Heb 11:20) *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*

Chumash: Toras Menachem: Why was Isaac “extremely bewildered” by the thought that he had blessed the wrong son? Surely this was an over-reaction?

However, Isaac's primary concern was not that he had blessed the wrong person, but rather, that he had lost the status of “a perfect burnt offering,” a Divine assurance of purity and perfection. It now appeared that he had not been given special protection from above to prevent him from giving the blessing to the wrong son.

Thus, when he discovered that Esau had in fact sold the birthright to Jacob, Isaac was relieved that he had, after all, been protected from above against blessing the wrong son, and his apparent “mistake” was actually Divinely inspired.⁴⁰

Genesis 27:34

And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, *even* me also, O my father.

⁴⁰ Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

Genesis 27:35

And he said, Thy brother came with subtlety, and hath taken away thy blessing.

The pathos is palpable, and the sympathy for Esau is in marked contrast to exilic and postexilic literature in which Esau / Edom epitomizes evil and betrayal (e.g., Ps 137:7; Jer 49:7-22; Obadiah; Isa 34:5; 63:1-6). In rabbinic and medieval Jewish literature, he becomes a cipher for the Roman Empire and then Christendom, and the highly pejorative portrayal of him there reflects the painful experience of the Jews at the hands of those powers.⁴¹

Esau came in from his hunting—Scarcely had the former scene been concluded, when the fraud was discovered. The emotions of Isaac, as well as Esau, may easily be imagined—the astonishment, alarm, and sorrow of the one; the disappointment and indignation of the other. But a moment's reflection convinced the aged patriarch that the transfer of the blessing was "of the Lord," and now irrevocable. The importunities of Esau, however, overpowered him; and as the prophetic afflatus was upon the patriarch, he added what was probably as pleasing to a man of Esau's character as the other would have been.⁴²

Genesis 27:36

And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

[he took away my birthright] False, because he willingly sold it (Genesis 25:26-34).

[blessing] Many believe blessing and birthright are the same, possible slight difference.

Birthright (“*bekhora*”) and blessing (“*berakha*”) have the same three consonants. Though continuing to believe passionately in the chosenness of Jacob / Israel, the prophet Jeremiah sees in Jacob’s deceit a paradigm of the chosen people at their worst and just cause for God’s impending punishment (Jer 9:3-8).⁴³

⁴¹The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

⁴²JFB Commentary

⁴³The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

Genesis 27:37

And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?

Isaac still desired to bless his beloved son and did so in a small way, compared to Jacob's blessing (Genesis 27:39-40).

The reversal of the order of fertility and domination of vv. 28-29 reflects the reversal of Esau's expectations.⁴⁴

“I have made.” Isaac explains to Esau, “I have made him lord . . . I have sustained him.” The first-person forms show that Isaac is not suggesting that this blessing is a prophetic proclamation from deity. Neither does Isaac call on deity to perform it. Similar formulas in Mesopotamia regularly invoke deity in such blessings and curses.⁴⁵

Before the father died, he performed a ceremony of blessing, in which he officially handed over the birthright to the rightful heir. Although the firstborn son was entitled to the birthright, it was not actually his until the blessing was pronounced. Before the blessing was given, the father could take the birthright away from the oldest son and give it to a more deserving son. But after the blessing was given, the birthright could no longer be taken away. This is why fathers usually waited until late in life to pronounce the blessing. Although Jacob had been given the birthright by his older brother years before, he still needed his father's blessing to make it binding.⁴⁶

Genesis 27:38

And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, *even* me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.

[lifted up his voice, and wept] Esau was seventy-eight and a fornicator. Sin dulled his spiritual senses. See Hebrews 12:16-17.

(Heb 12:16) *Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.*

⁴⁴ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

⁴⁵ Bible Background Commentary

⁴⁶ Life Application Notes

Genesis 27:39

And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above;

Sixfold Prophetic Blessing of Esau

1. The fatness of the earth (Genesis 27:39)
2. The dew of heaven (Genesis 27:39; cp. Genesis 27:28)
3. To be a warring nation (Genesis 27:40)
4. To be a servant of Jacob (Genesis 27:40)
5. Partial and temporary dominion (Genesis 27:40)
6. Freedom from Jacob's yoke (Genesis 27:40)

[thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth] Esau possessed the land of Edom, a fruitful place. See Hebrews 11:20.

(Heb 11:20) By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

[dew of heaven] The dew of heaven is a symbol of God's blessings of earth (Genesis 27:28,39; Deut. 32:2; Deut. 33:13,28; Psalm 133:3; Proverbs 3:20; Proverbs 19:12; Hosea 14:5).

Genesis 27:40

And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

Missler: All that was left was a blessing for a profane person. The Edomites, Esau's descendants, would live in a land less fertile than Palestine. Also Esau would live by force, be subservient to Jacob, and be restless (cf. Ishmael, 16:12). Though Esau was not personally subject to his brother, his posterity were tributary to the Israelites, till the reign of Joram when they revolted and established a kingdom of their own (2Kgs 8:20; 2Chr 21:8–10). *[The descendants of Esau intermarried with those of Ishmael and the sons of Keturah.]*

[by thy sword shalt thou live] The Edomites (Esau's descendants) were a warring people for many generations. See note, *Genesis 25:23.

[serve thy brother] Israel ruled Edom for long periods (1 Samuel 14:47; 2 Samuel 8:14; 2 Kings 14:7).

[thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck] Edom finally threw off the yoke of Israel (2 Kings 8:20-22; 2 Chron. 21:8-10).

Like Ishmael (17:20; 21:13, 18), Esau receives a blessing that is formidable but inferior to his younger brother's. The prophecy of Esau's breaking free from subjugation to Jacob may be connected to Edom's successful rebellions in the 9th or 8th centuries (2 Kings 8:20-22; 2 Chron 28:17).⁴⁷

no negation of blessing. The power of the spoken word was such that it could not be "unsaid"—this is true even outside the realm of superstition in that many words spoken do the benefit or damage they intend regardless of any second thoughts the speaker may have. The pronouncement regarding Esau's destiny thus reflects the realities of the previously uttered blessing on Jacob. It would not be considered a curse because it assumes continuing existence and eventual freedom.⁴⁸

Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth—The first part is a promise of temporal prosperity, made in the same terms as Jacob's [Genesis 27:28] —the second part refers to the roving life of hunting freebooters, which he and his descendants should lead. Though Esau was not personally subject to his brother, his posterity were tributary to the Israelites, till the reign of Joram when they revolted and established a kingdom of their own (2 Kings 8:20; 2 Chron. 21:8-10).⁴⁹

Torah Class: But, now, the other shoe drops: Esau arrives back from his successful hunt, prepares the meat, and goes into his father's tent ready and eager to receive his inheritance. A surprised Isaac knows immediately that he's been duped, and though he feels for Esau, there is nothing that can be done for a blessing of this sort, once given, is irreversible for ANY reason. Esau is distraught, and begs for SOME type of blessing. Let me remind you of the words of verse 36, where Esau speaks of TWO things that had been taken from him: his birthright and his blessings. And, he speaks of the firstborn birthright loss as a thing of the past, and the loss of the blessing meant for him as a thing happening "now".

Esau did not go into the tent expecting to be named the bekhör. Esau simply wanted LOTS of wealth and power. He didn't want the hassles and burdens associated with being the bekhör, he just wanted the material rewards that the bekhör was entitled to.

Now Isaac blesses Esau.....but he is limited in what he can offer Esau. The blessing Isaac gives him takes place in Vs 39 and 40. The words in Vs 39 have been under scrutiny by various scholars for many years; and I'd like you to pay very close attention to something that has led followers of Yahweh....Jewish and Christian....into trouble time an again. It is that we attempt to resolve what seems like a contradiction in the Bible, and it winds up becoming doctrine and tradition. And, that doctrine and tradition leads us down pathways that blind us to the Scriptural truth.

Tradition renders V39 (everyone please look at this verse in your Bibles) "***Your home will be the richness of the earth and the dew of heaven from above***". Sometimes it will say "fatness" instead of richness". Yet, LITERALLY the verse reads "Behold, **AWAY** from the richness of the earth and **AWAY** from the dew of heaven will be your home".

⁴⁷ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

⁴⁸ Bible Background Commentary

⁴⁹ JFB Commentary

Why the obvious difference? Why would even the Hebrews read right over the “away” part, and rationalize it out of existence? Why would gentile Christians follow suit? There does not seem to be a clear-cut reason that one could hang his hat on, and there certainly seems to be no conspiracy involved. The NASB changed decades ago to reflect this literal translation of “away from”. Alfred Edersheim stated over 100 years ago that this verse had been mistranslated when it showed Esau going to a fertile and lovely place complete with ample rains.

There seems to be a long standing effort to tie V28, showing that Isaac appears to be giving a very similar blessing to Jacob, as to Esau, about where they will each live. A blessing that Isaac gave in an attempt to inject fairness, and to make-up for the injustice done to Esau by his brother Jacob. But, taking one look at the original Hebrew makes that unlikely, as entirely different words are used to describe the nature of blessing to Jacob and the nature of the blessing to Esau.

In V28, the Hebrew shows God, through Isaac actively giving richness of land to Jacob, and in V39 it shows in Hebrew that Isaac is telling Esau he will be *held away* from richness of land. And, when one realizes that Edom...the land of Esau... is located at the south end of the Dead Sea, and then stretching a short distance into the Arabian Peninsula, which was at that time, and has always been, arid and an inhospitable land, it is puzzling why this verse was EVER translated *incorrectly* as showing Esau being blessed to live in a lovely fertile place. One begins to suspect that at one time long ago, there was sympathy for Esau and his plight, and indeed, the ancient Rabbis and Scribes seem to have felt sorry for Esau, to varying degrees. And, when we can step back and think about this whole episode, can't we find some very good reason for compassion for Esau? After all, his destiny seems to have been set before his birth. And, Jacob was hardly up and up in this whole matter; plus, it is certain that Esau's mother OPENLY favored and sided with Jacob. So, was it God's intention to CURSE Esau, or merely to not BLESS him with all the rights of the firstborn? These are the questions the ancient Scribes and Sages wrestled with.

Rashi, a highly regarded Hebrew sage who was greatly influential on modern Judaism, lived during the time of the 1st Christian Crusades, in the 11th Century AD. He had much to say about Esau, and in obvious attempt to validate the earlier sages' sympathetic views on Esau, Rashi wrote that he saw Esau as a “type”. He equated Esau, currently, in his day, to Italy and Rome, and Jacob to Israel and Jerusalem. That makes lots of sense for his day and time, because “the church” was the Roman Catholic Church based in Rome, Italy; and the Catholic Church had for centuries been the primary persecutor of the Jewish people. During the 1st Crusade, which Rashi personally witnessed, thousands upon thousands of Jews were forcibly converted to Christianity by the Crusaders, many MORE thousands were martyred simply for being Jews, and thousands more put to the sword when the Crusaders reached Jerusalem. Rashi went so far as to explain that the blessing we see in Gen. 27:39 that speaks of the fatness and the richness of the land, refers to the wonderfully rich volcanic soils of Italy and Rome. Further, that because it was well understood by all the sages that Esau was destined to become an enemy of Israel, that Esau represents the Roman Catholic Church....or as he saw it in those days....simply “the church”.

Anyway, this traditional Hebrew view of Esau that shows both sympathy at his plight as well as acknowledgement of his destiny as an enemy of Israel, shows up in attempt to mosh the words of V39 around to indicate that Esau at least received SOME favor from God, through his father Isaac.....but history shows that the reality is quite different. Recently, I have heard some speakers, and read some articles, attempting to rationalize away the rather obvious mistranslation of V39 by saying that “fatness” is really just another way of saying “oily”.....in other words, saying that fat equates to oil. The idea here is to explain how it is that the Bible says Esau, who would found a territory called Edom, was destined to live in a place of richness which, by definition, would lead him to prosperity; when in fact Edom has always been a desert wasteland where seeking out a living was tough. So, by changing the word “fatness” to “oiliness”, then voila, we see how rich the Arab Sheiks are because of their oil reserves, and this fixes the whole problem. WRONG! Even if that horribly strained argument of changing “fat” to “oil” was workable... which, in the Hebrew language, the language this was written, and it is *not*.... the part of the Arabian Peninsula that was included in the territory of Edom has no oil. The southern part of Jordon is where most of Edom used to be, and Jordon has practically no oil at all; and south of Jordon, where the remainder of Edom was located, is nowhere near the Saudi Arabian oil fields. NO.... the term “fat of the earth” is just another standard and easily recognized Hebrew expression; it just means “the finest fruits and produce from the earth”.

In any case, when one correctly translates the first part of Esau’s blessing.....that Esau and his descendants will be held AWAY from fertile lands..... the final part of it, and Esau’s response, makes a lot more sense; his blessing resembled more a curse than a blessing. Had Esau been happily blessed, and thereby destined that he would reside in a wonderful place, living off the richness of the land, would he have been so determined to kill Jacob? It’s pretty hard to see. But, being cursed that he would reside AWAY from the fat of the land, cursed that he would live in a fairly desolate place where it didn’t often rain, one could see why he would burn with homicidal anger and envy towards his conniving brother. This curse to be separated from rich lands, combined with the blessings given to Jacob, served to set Esau, later to be called Edom, against Jacob, later to be called Israel, for all time. And, that is certainly what we have seen played out in history.

Even in the time of Jesus....some 1800 years after this blessing of Isaac upon his twin sons..... the hated King Herod was himself a result of this curse on Esau: for at the time of Jesus, the name of the land of Edom was known in the Greek language as Idumea.....and Edom was King Herod’s people, heritage and homeland. You see, that evil and bloodthirsty King Herod.....the King Herod who sold out to Rome and became their puppet..... was a descendant of Esau.

The Bible shows how Esau mixed with the descendants of ANOTHER group of people who would have had very good reason.....at least in their minds.....for hating Israel *eternally*. And, that group of people Esau mixed with was the descendants of Ishmael... ..that earlier tragic story in Genesis of a PHYSICALLY firstborn son of the greatest Patriarch, Abraham, being rejected and denied the right to carry the mantle as the inheritor of the covenant promise. And, we’ll discuss some of that mixing as we get to the later chapters of Genesis.

For now, just know that much, though my no means all, of the Arab world carries with them the genes of Esau. In particular, a large segment of the Turkish population is related to Esau, as are most Syrians, and the Kurdish people of Iraq. We should all at least have HEARD of the Ottoman Empire which ruled the Middle East for many centuries..... .from about 1300 to just after WWI; the Ottomans' were a dominant tribe in the nation of Turkey.....and it was these particular Turks who are descendants of Esau. And, of course, these Turks are Muslim, and we know from Bible prophecy that the Turks are going to play a primary role in the events of Revelation as enemies of Israel.

The thing we must also understand is that the majority of Muslims in the world are related to Esau....even the ones in Afghanistan. So, this enmity that would occur between twin brothers, Jacob and Esau, almost 4000 years ago, has everything to do with the condition of the world now, what led up to our current situation, and how it will all play out leading up to, and through, the Great Tribulation.

Looking a little more at the blessing....or really, curse.....that Esau was given, it says, "by your sword you shall live". In other words, violence and pillaging shall be Esau's way of gaining wealth and prosperity. And, as I have explained on a number of occasions, these prophetic blessings have MORE effect on the person's future descendants than on the person who originally received the blessing; and that is what we find as we follow the progress of Esau's line. Esau's descendants didn't become shepherds.....they became conquerors and bands of robbers who descended on caravans that passed through their lands. War was their way of life; war is even at the heart of what is now their religion; Islam.

Further, the blessing also says ".....and you shall serve your brother...but when you grow restive, you shall break the yoke from your neck...."

It was King David who was the first descendant of Jacob to rule over the descendants of Esau, as prophesied in the blessing of Isaac. Edom wore the yoke of Israeli domination on their neck from about 1000 BC to about 735 BC.....a longer period of time than the United States has been a nation. It was King Ahaz of Judah who lost control of the Edomite nation, and not since then have the descendants of Esau admitted to being under the control of an Israelite. And, hopefully, this also helps to explain the determination of the so-called Palestinians, today, to be free of any control under the thumb of the re-born nation of Israel.....because most Palestinians recognize that they are descendants of Esau.⁵⁰

Genesis 27:41

And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.

[hated] Esau seems to have passed this hatred to his offspring, for they were always ready to war with Jacob's descendants. See Genesis 25:23.

⁵⁰ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

[days of mourning for my father] The formal, ceremonial mourning for the dead, which lasted seven to seventy days (Genesis 50:1-3,10; 1 Samuel 31:13; Job 2:13).

27:41 Esau was so angry at Jacob that he failed to see his own wrong in giving away the birthright in the first place. Jealous anger blinds us from seeing the benefits we have and makes us dwell on what we don't have.

When Esau lost the valuable family blessing, his future suddenly changed. Reacting in anger, he decided to kill Jacob. When you lose something of great value, or if others conspire against you and succeed, anger is the first and most natural reaction. But you can control your feelings by (1) recognizing your reaction for what it is, (2) praying for strength, and (3) asking God for help to see the opportunities that even your bad situation may provide.⁵¹

Ambrose; *“Rebekah preferred a just son to an unjust one”* But we shouldn't leave his parents without excuse for having preferred their younger son to the elder. At the same time we must take care so that no one, in the turning to their example, would make a unfair judgment between his sons or suppose that he should love the one and esteem the other less. From this line of conduct fraternal hatreds are aroused and the crime of fratricide is contrived to gain a worthless sum of money. Let children be nurtured with an equal measure of devotion. Granted that one's love may fasten more upon some trait in a child who is more agreeable or similar to oneself, the exercise of justice ought to be the same in regard to all. The more that is given to the child that is loved and who seeks his brother's love, the more is taken away from the one who is burdened with jealousy at the unfair preferment. Esau threatened that he would kill his brother. Neither the fact of brotherhood nor respect for their parents kept him from his fratricidal madness, and he grieved that the blessing had been snatched away from him, whereas he should have proved himself worthy of it by forbearance rather than by crime.

However, Rebekah did not prefer one son to another son but a just son to an unjust one. And indeed with that pious mother, God's mysterious plan was more important than her offspring. She did not so much prefer Jacob to his brother; rather, she offered him to the Lord, for she knew that he could protect the gift that the Lord had bestowed. In the Lord she took counsel also for her other son; she withdrew him from God's disfavor, lest he incur graver culpability if he lost the grace of the blessing he did receive.⁵²

⁵¹ Life Application Notes

⁵² Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

Genesis 27:42

And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, *purposing* to kill thee.

Her partiality for Jacob was well known. A shrewd woman, she advised against revenge or going to Isaac about it. Her plan was to send Jacob away until Esau cooled down.

Ramban: “And she sent and called Jacob” The meaning thereof is that Jacob was in another place, not in the tent of his father and mother, since he was hiding from his brother Esau who was complaining about him, and he was ashamed or afraid of him.⁵³

Genesis 27:43

Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran;

Here again we see Rebekah taking things into her own hands. She tells Jacob, “You are going to have to leave home.” Little did she know that she would pay for her part in this, her sin. She never saw this boy again. She said she would send him over there for a little while, but it was a long while and she died before he got back.

We must remember that Jacob is her favorite. She wants Jacob to go to her brother, Laban, and that is where she will send him. This is where Jacob is going to learn his lesson. This is where the chickens will come home to roost. Old Uncle Laban is going to put him through school and teach him a few things. Jacob thought he was clever, but Uncle Laban is an expert at cleverness. Poor Jacob will find he is just an amateur, and he is going to cry out to God in desperation before it is all over.⁵⁴

Genesis 27:44

And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother’s fury turn away;

[few days] Her "few days" were twenty years (Genesis 31:41). She never saw Jacob again. The family paid a bitter price for their sins—years of separation.

⁵³ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

⁵⁴ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:115). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Genesis 27:45

Until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget *that* which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?

[then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day] She never kept this promise. Perhaps it was never safe to bring him back, for Esau seems to have kept his hatred until Jacob prayed and God changed him (Genesis 32:6-33:17).

[why should I be deprived also of you?] Question 67. Next, 'Genesis 27:46. She was no doubt deprived of both, because she never saw Jacob again, and Esau probably lost respect for her because of her plots against him.

[both] If she had been concerned about both she wouldn't have plotted against Esau. Maybe she remembered the prophecy of Genesis 25:23 and was seeking to help God fulfill it. Maybe she had Genesis 9:6 in mind. If Esau killed Jacob, he would be subject to the death penalty, meaning she would lose both.

Esau's murderous grudge (v. 41) recalls the incident of Cain and Abel (4:3-8); less directly, Rebekah's intervention foreshadows tragic events in the life of David (2 Sam 14:1-24, esp. vv. 4-7).⁵⁵

these words of Esau were told Rebekah—Poor woman! she now early begins to reap the bitter fruits of her fraudulent device; she is obliged to part with her son, for whom she planned it, never, probably, seeing him again; and he felt the retributive justice of heaven fall upon him heavily in his own future family.⁵⁶

Why should I be deprived of you both?—This refers to the law of Goelism, by which the nearest of kin would be obliged to avenge the death of Jacob upon his brother.

Notice that she says she will send him away for a few days. A few days lengthened to twenty years, and during that interval she died. She never saw her boy, her pet, her favorite, again.

We can picture the life of Rebekah during those years when we consider that Esau probably did not think much of his mother after that little episode.⁵⁷

Torah Class: This chapter ends with Rebecca insisting that Jacob leave, immediately, to escape Esau's wrath. She told him he should go back up north, in Mesopotamia, to her family...specifically, to her brother Laban's home. She approached Isaac with this idea,

⁵⁵ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

⁵⁶ JFB Commentary

⁵⁷ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:115). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

and convinced him it was a prudent course of action not by suggesting to Isaac that Esau might kill Jacob, but rather by appealing to Isaac's hatred of the pagan tribes that surrounded them. Esau had, some time earlier, married two Canaanite women....Hittites to be specific..... and this tormented Isaac and Rivka. Rivka told Isaac they needed to send Jacob away lest he did the same thing! And, he most certainly agreed. Remember, though, that this is not a couple of parents sending their young child off to fend for himself: Jacob was in his 70's at this time.⁵⁸

Genesis 27:46

And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these *which are* of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?

This passage begins the transition to the Laban stories. Because of his deception Jacob had to flee from home. But the occasion introduced the motif of his taking a wife from his relatives in the East. Whereas Isaac had remained in the land while Abraham's servant had gone to find and fetch his wife (chap. 24), Jacob's journey was necessitated by the imminent danger of being killed by his angry brother (27:41-42). Moreover, God would deal with Jacob severely under the hand of Laban, his uncle. Indeed, the sojourn out of the land in several ways parallels the later sojourn of Jacob's family in Egypt. Rebekah told Jacob about Esau's anger, and urged him to go immediately to her brother Laban in Haran.

This was perhaps her cunning way of getting Isaac to send Jacob away on a legitimate trip—to seek a wife. She had not been thus concerned about her 77-year-old bachelor son before, as far as we know.

Rebekah said to Isaac—Another pretext Rebekah's cunning had to devise to obtain her husband's consent to Jacob's journey to Mesopotamia; and she succeeded by touching the aged patriarch in a tender point, afflicting to his pious heart—the proper marriage of their younger son.⁵⁹

Remember that Esau had married these heathen, godless women. Already that was bringing sorrow into the home, and even Rebekah was overwhelmed by it. Now she tells Isaac that if Jacob stays there he will probably do the same thing. She could use this as an excellent excuse to get Jacob away from home to protect him from Esau. She has this little conference with Isaac to convince him that the thing to do is to send Jacob back to her family, to her brother Laban. Remember how Abraham's servant had gone there to get her. So now the point is to get Jacob back there to find a wife, but also to get him out of danger. Very frankly, I think that if he had stayed at home, Esau would have tried to

⁵⁸ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

⁵⁹ JFB Commentary

kill him. However, the way it turned out, Rebekah was the first to die, and Jacob got back for his father's funeral. But he never again saw his mother.⁶⁰

Chrysostom: "Help from on high" Notice how she found a plausible excuse. You see, whenever help from on high comes to support us, problems become simple and difficulties easy. So, since she too had the Lord of all seconding her intention, he put into her mind everything capable of bringing to realization the plan in process for her son's survival. "I am disgusted with life on account of the daughters of the Hittites. If Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of this land, what meaning would life have for me? Here there seems to be a reference to the immorality of Esau's wives and the fact that they proved a source of great disgust to Isaac and Rebekah. Sacred Scripture narrated to us previously, you remember, that Esau took wives from the Hittites and Hivites: "They were at odds with Isaac and Rebekah." So, wishing to remind him of this, she more or less says to him, "You know how Esau's wives made life unpleasant for me, and how on account of their hostility, I am now alienated from all the daughters of the Hittites and hate the lot of them on their account. So if it happens that Jacob takes a wife from among them, what hope of survival would then be left for me? I mean, "If we can't put up with them, if even Jacob goes so far as to marry one of the daughters of this land, life is over for us."⁶¹

Jacob—A 77-Year-Old Bachelor - Dake

That Jacob was 77 at this time seems evident from a study of several passages. It's necessary to take into account Joseph's age when Jacob went to Egypt with his family, and figure back to this time. From Genesis 41:46-54 and Genesis 45:5-9 we learn that Joseph was 30 "when he stood before Pharaoh" at the beginning of 7 plentiful years. After those 7 years and 2 more years (of famine), when Joseph was 39, his brothers, their families, and their father Jacob came down to be with him in Egypt. Jacob was then 130 (Genesis 47:9). This means that Jacob was 91 when Joseph was born in Haran. It was then that Jacob wanted to return from Haran to his own people in Canaan, but Laban persuaded him to remain 6 more years (Genesis 30:25-28; Genesis 31:38-41). Since the entire stay in Haran was 20 years, of which 6 were spent after Joseph's birth, then we know that Joseph was born in the 14th year of Jacob in Haran. Counting back 14 years from his age of 91 at Joseph's birth, we thus find him to have been about 77 when he first came to Haran looking for a wife. He was perhaps 78 when his first son was born and 97 when he finally returned to Isaac and Esau after the 20 years with Laban.⁶²

⁶⁰McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:115). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶¹ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

⁶²Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

Book of Jasher:

CHAPTER 29

1 And Isaac the son of Abraham became old and advanced in days, and his eyes became heavy through age; they were dim and could not see.

2 At that time Isaac called unto Esau his son, saying, Get I pray thee thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, rise up and go forth into the field and get me some venison, and make me savory meat and bring it to me, that I may eat in order that I may bless thee before my death, as I have now become old and gray-headed.

3 And Esau did so; and he took his weapon and went forth into the field to hunt for venison, as usual, to bring to his father as he had ordered him, so that he might bless him.

4 And Rebecca heard all the words that Isaac had spoken unto Esau, and she hastened and called her son Jacob, saying, Thus did thy father speak unto thy brother Esau, and thus did I hear, now therefore hasten thou and make that which I shall tell thee.

5 Rise up and go, I pray thee, to the flock and fetch me two fine kids of the goats, and I will get the savory meat for thy father, and thou shalt bring the savory meat that he may eat before thy brother shall have come from the chase, in order that thy father may bless thee.

6 And Jacob hastened and did as his mother had commanded him, and he made the savory meat and brought it before his father before Esau had come from his chase.

7 And Isaac said unto Jacob, Who art thou, my son? And he said, I am thy first born Esau, I have done as thou didst order me, now therefore rise up I pray thee, and eat of my hunt, in order that thy soul may bless me as thou didst speak unto me.

8 And Isaac rose up and he ate and he drank, and his heart was comforted, and he blessed Jacob and Jacob went away from his father; and as soon as Isaac had blessed Jacob and he had gone away from him, behold Esau came from his hunt from the field, and he also made savory meat and brought it to his father to eat thereof and to bless him.

9 And Isaac said unto Esau, And who was he that has taken venison and brought it me before thou camest and whom I did bless? And Esau knew that his brother Jacob had done this, and the anger of Esau was kindled against his brother Jacob that he had acted thus toward him.

10 And Esau said, Is he not rightly called Jacob? for he has supplanted me twice, he took away my birthright and now he has taken away my blessing; and Esau wept greatly; and when Isaac heard the voice of his son Esau weeping, Isaac said unto Esau, What can I do, my son, thy brother came with subtlety and took away thy blessing; and Esau hated his brother Jacob on account of the blessing that his father had given him, and his anger was greatly roused against him.

11 And Jacob was very much afraid of his brother Esau, and he rose up and fled to the house of Eber the son of Shem, and he concealed himself there on account of his brother, and Jacob was sixty-three years old when he went forth from the land of Canaan from Hebron, and Jacob was concealed in Eber's house fourteen years on account of his brother Esau, and he there continued to learn the ways of the Lord and his commandments.

12 And when Esau saw that Jacob had fled and escaped from him, and that Jacob had cunningly obtained the blessing, then Esau

grieved exceedingly, and he was also vexed at his father and mother; and he also rose up and took his wife and went away from his father and mother to the land of Seir, and he dwelt there; and Esau saw there a woman from amongst the daughters of Heth whose name was Bosmath, the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and he took her for a wife in addition to his first wife, and Esau called her name Adah, saying the blessing had in that time passed from him.

13 And Esau dwelt in the land of Seir six months without seeing his father and mother, and afterward Esau took his wives and rose up and returned to the land of Canaan, and Esau placed his two wives in his father's house in Hebron.

14 And the wives of Esau vexed and provoked Isaac and Rebecca with their works, for they walked not in the ways of the Lord, but served their father's gods of wood and stone as their father had taught them, and they were more wicked than their father.

15 And they went according to the evil desires of their hearts, and they sacrificed and burnt incense to the Baalim, and Isaac and Rebecca became weary of them.

16 And Rebecca said, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good then is life unto me?

17 And in those days Adah the wife of Esau conceived and bare him a son, and Esau called the name of the son that was born unto him Eliphaz, and Esau was sixty-five years old when she bare him.

18 And Ishmael the son of Abraham died in those days, in the sixty-fourth year of the life of Jacob, and all the days that Ishmael lived were one hundred and thirty-seven years and he died.

19 And when Isaac heard that Ishmael was dead he mourned for him, and Isaac lamented over him many days.

20 And at the end of fourteen years of Jacob's residing in the house of Eber, Jacob desired to see his father and mother, and Jacob came to the house of his father and mother to Hebron, and Esau had in those days forgotten what Jacob had done to him in having taken the blessing from him in those days.

21 And when Esau saw Jacob coming to his father and mother he remembered what Jacob had done to him, and he was greatly incensed against him and he sought to slay him.

22 And Isaac the son of Abraham was old and advanced in days, and Esau said, Now my father's time is drawing nigh that he must die, and when he shall die I will slay my brother Jacob.

23 And this was told to Rebecca, and she hastened and sent and called for Jacob her son, and she said unto him, Arise, go and flee to Haran to my brother Laban, and remain there for some time, until thy brother's anger be turned from thee and then shalt thou come back.⁶³

⁶³ The Book of Jasher, Faithfully Translated 1840, Hebrew to English, J.H.Perry & Co, Salt Lake City UT

Missler Chapter Summary:

All participants were at fault: Isaac attempted to thwart God's plan by blessing Esau; Esau broke the oath he had made with Jacob; Rebekah and Jacob tried to achieve God's blessing by deception. Their victory would reap hatred and separation; Rebekah never saw Jacob again. Jacob alone did not destroy the family; parental preference did.

So in a sense Rebekah and Jacob won, though they gained nothing that God would not have given them anyway; and they lost much. Their family life was destroyed, and each had to bear lonely hours of separation, disillusionment, and regret. Rebekah would never see her favorite son again, and Jacob would have to face life without a father, mother, or brother. Yet God would work through their conniving. Their activities only succeeded in doing what God's oracle had predicted. God's program will triumph, often in spite of human activities. Natural senses play a conspicuous part—especially the sense of taste in which Isaac prided himself, but which gave him the wrong answer.⁶⁴

Gleanings in Genesis; Pink

We are now ready to look at the sad scene which Gen. 27 presents to us. "And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; And make me savory meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die" (Gen. 27:14). Why was it that Isaac desired to partake of venison from Esau *before* blessing him? Does not Gen. 25:28 answer the question—"And Isaac loved Esau *because* he did eat of his venison." In view of this statement it would seem, then, that Isaac desired to enkindle or intensify his affections for Esau, so that he might bless him with all his heart. But surely Isaac's eyes were "dim" spiritually as well as physically. Let us not forget that what we read here at the beginning of Gen. 27 follows immediately after the record of Esau marrying the two heathen wives. Thus it will be seen that Isaac's wrong in being partial to Esau was greatly aggravated by treating so lightly his son's affront to the glory of Jehovah—and all for a meal of venison! Alas, what a terrible thing is the flesh with its "affections and lusts" *even in a believer*, yea, more terrible than in an unbeliever. But worst of all, Isaac's partiality toward Esau was a plain disregard of God's word to Rebekah that Esau should "serve" Jacob (Gen. 25:23). By comparing Heb. 11:20 with Rom. 10:7 it is certain that Isaac had himself "heard" this.

"And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son...and Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savory meat for thy father, such as he loveth: and thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death" (vs. 6–10). How like Sarah before her, who, in a similar "evil hour" imagined that she could give effect to the Divine promise by fleshly expediences (Gen. 16:2). As another has suggested "they

⁶⁴ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

both acted on that God dishonoring proverb that ‘The Lord helps those who help themselves,’“ whereas the truth is, the Lord helps those who have come to the *end* of themselves. If Rebekah really had confidence in the Divine promise she might well have followed tranquilly the path of duty, assured that in due time God would Himself bring His word to pass.

“And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I *am* a smooth man: my father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing” (vs. 11, 12). How the character of Jacob comes out here! He reveals his native shrewdness and foresight, but instead of shrinking back in horror from the sin. He appears to have been occupied only with what might prove its unpleasant consequences.

“And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. And he went and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savory meat, such as his father loved. And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son, Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son: And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: and she gave the savory meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob” (vs. 13–17). It is difficult to say who was most to blame, Jacob or his mother. Rebekah was the one to whom God had directly made known His purpose respecting her two sons, and, be it noted, the wife of Isaac was no heathen but, instead, one who knew the Lord—cf. “She went to enquire of the Lord” (25:22). Her course was plain: she should have trusted the Lord to bring to nought the carnal design of Isaac, but she took the way of the flesh, plotted against her husband, and taught her son to deceive his father. Yet in condemning Rebekah we are reminded of Rom. 2:1, “Therefore thou art inexcusable O man, whosoever thou art that judgest:: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.”

We refrain from quoting at length the verses that follow. Jacob complies with his mother’s suggestion, and adds sin to sin. First he impersonates his brother, tells lies to his father, and ends by going the awful length of bringing in the name of the Lord God (v. 20). To what fearful lengths will sin quickly lead us once we take the first wrong step! A similar progression in evil is seen (by way of implication) in Ps. 1:1: the one who “walks” in the counsel of the ungodly will soon be found “standing” in the way of sinners, and then it will not be long ere he is discovered “sitting” in the seat of the scornful.

At first suspicious, Isaac’s fears were allayed by his son’s duplicity, and the blessing was given, “and he came near and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed: therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: islet people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother’s sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee” (vs. 27-29).

It is to be noted that the “blessing” which Jacob here receives from the lips of his father was far below the blessed string of promises which he received directly from God when wholly cast upon His grace (see 28:13-15).

We need not tarry long on the pathetic sequel. No sooner had Jacob left his father’s presence than Esau comes in with his venison and says, “let my father arise and eat of his

son's venison, that thy soul may bless me." Then it is that Isaac discovers the deception that has been practiced upon him, and he "trembled very exceedingly." Esau learns of his brother's duplicity, and with a great and exceeding bitter cry says, "Bless me, even me also, O my father," only to hear Isaac say, "Thy brother came with subtlety, and hath taken away thy blessing.... behold I have made him thy lord." Esau renews his request saying, "Hast thou but one blessing, my father, Bless me, even me, also." Then it was that Isaac uttered that prophecy that received such a striking fulfillment in the centuries that followed—"Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother: and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck" (vs. 39, 40). For Esau "serving his brother" *see* 2 Sam. 8:14 (David was a descendant of Jacob); and for "thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck" *see* 2 Chron. 21:8.

Above we have noticed that when Isaac discovered that he had blessed Jacob instead of Esau he "trembled very exceedingly." This was the turning point in the incident, the point where, for the first time, light breaks in on this dark scene. It was horror which was awakened in his soul as he now fully realized that he had been pitting himself against the expressed mind of Jehovah. It is beautiful to notice that instead of "cursing" Jacob (as his son had feared, see v. 12) now that Isaac discovers how God had graciously overruled his wrong doing, he bowed in self-judgment, and "trembled with a great trembling greatly" (margin). Then it was that faith found expression in the words "And he *shall* be blest" (v. 33). He knew now that God had been securing what He had declared before the sons were born. It is this which the Spirit seizes on in Heb. 11:20, "By *faith* Isaac blest Jacob and Esau concerning things to come."

Many are the lessons illustrated and exemplified in the above incident. We can do little more than name a few of the most important. 1. How many today are, like Esau, bartering Divine privileges for carnal gratification. 2. Beware of doing evil that good may come. What shame and sorrow they do make for themselves who in their zeal for good do not scruple to use wrong means. Thus it was with Rebekah and Jacob. 3. Let us seek grace to prevent natural affections overriding love for God and His revealed will. 4. Remember the unchanging law of Sowing and Reaping. How striking to observe that it was Rebekah, not Isaac, who sent her beloved child away! She it was who led him into grievous sin, and she it was whom God caused to be the instrument of his exile. She, poor thing, suggested that he find refuge in the home of Laban her brother for "some days." Little did she imagine that her favorite child would have to remain there for twenty years, and that never again should she behold him in the flesh. Ah! the mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small, and we might add "surely." And during those long years Jacob was to be *cheated* by Laban as he had cheated Isaac. 5. Learn the utter futility of seeking to foil God: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. 9:16); neither Isaac's "willing" nor Esau's "running" could defeat the purpose of Jehovah. "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord that shall stand" (Prov. 19:21). Man proposes but God disposes.

Finally, have we not here, deeply hidden, a beautiful picture of the Gospel. Jacob found acceptance with his lather and received his blessing because he sheltered behind the name of the father's firstborn, beloved son, and was clothed with his garments which

diffused to Isaac an excellent odor. In like manner, we as sinners, find acceptance before God and receive His blessing as we shelter behind the name of *His* beloved Firstborn, and as we are clothed with the robe of righteousness which we receive from Him thus coming before the father in the merits of His Son who "hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for *a sweet smelling savor*" (Eph. 5:2).⁶⁵

Edersheim: IF there is any point on which we should anxiously be on our guard, it is that of "tempting God." We do so tempt the Lord when, listening to our own inclinations, we put once more to the question that which He has already clearly settled. Where God has decided, never let us doubt, nor lag behind. But if anything might be described as clearly settled by God, it was, surely, the calling of Jacob and the rejection of Esau. It had been expressly foretold in prophecy even before the children were born; and Esau had also afterwards proved himself wholly unfit to be the heir of the promise, first by his light-minded profanity, and next by his alliance with the Canaanites, than which nothing could have more directly run counter to the will of God, and to the purposes of the covenant. Despite these clear indications, Isaac did lag behind, reluctant to follow the direction of God. In truth, he had thrown his natural affections as a makeweight into the scale. As we shall presently show, Isaac hesitated, indeed, to allot unto Esau the spiritual part of the blessing; but what he regarded as the natural rights of the first-born appeared to him inalienable, and these he meant now formally to recognize by bestowing upon him the blessing.

A German writer aptly observes: "This is one of the most remarkable complications of life, showing in the clearest manner that a higher hand guides the threads of history, so that neither sin nor error can ultimately entangle them. Each one weaves the threads which are committed to him according to his own views and desires; but at last, when the texture is complete, we behold in it the pattern which the Master had long devised, and towards which each laborer had only contributed one or another feature." At the time of which we write Isaac was one hundred and thirty-seven years old * - an age at which his half-brother Ishmael had died, fourteen years before; and though Isaac was destined to live yet forty- three years longer (Genesis 35:28), the decay of his sight, and other infirmities, brought the thought of death very near to him.

* The age of Isaac is thus ascertained: When Joseph stood before Pharaoh (Genesis 41:46), he was thirty years old, and hence thirty-nine when Jacob came into Egypt. But at that time Jacob was one hundred and thirty years of age (Genesis 47:9). Hence, Jacob must have been ninety-one years old when Joseph was born; and as this happened in the fourteenth year of Jacob's stay with Laban, Jacob's flight from his home must have taken place in the seventy-seventh year of his own, and the one hundred and thirty-seventh of his father Isaac's life.

Under these circumstances he resolved formally to bestow the privileges naturally belonging to the first-born upon Esau. With this, however, he coupled, as a sort of

⁶⁵Pink, A. W. (2005). *Gleanings in Genesis* (240). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

preliminary condition, that Esau should bring and prepare for him some venison. Possibly he regarded the finding of the game as a sort of providential sign, and the preparation of it as a token of affection. There would be nothing strange in this, for those who believe in God, and yet for some reason refuse implicitly to follow His directions, are always on the outlook for some "sign" to justify them in setting aside the clear intimations of His will. But Rebekah had overheard the conversation between her husband and her son. Probably she had long been apprehensive of some such event, and on the outlook for it. And now the danger seemed most pressing. Another hour, and the blessing might for ever be lost to Jacob. Humanly speaking, safety lay in quick resolution and decided action. It mattered not what were the means employed, if only the end were attained. Had not God distinctly pointed out Jacob as heir to the promises? Had not Esau proved himself utterly unfit for it, and that even before he married those Canaanitish women? She could only be fulfilling the will of God when she kept her husband from so great a wrong, and secured to her son what God had intended him to possess. Thus Rebekah probably argued in her own mind. To be sure, if she had had the faith of Abraham, who was ready on Mount Moriah to offer up his own son, believing that, if it were to be so, God was able to raise him from the dead, she would not have acted, not even felt, nor feared, as she did. But then her motives were very mixed, even though she kept the promise steadily in view, and her faith was weak and imperfect, even though she imagined herself to be carrying out the will of God. Such hours come to most of us, when it almost seems as if necessity obliged and holy wisdom prompted us to accomplish, in our own strength, that which, nevertheless, we should leave in God's hand. If once we enter on such a course, it will probably not be long before we cast to the winds any scruples about the means to be employed, so that we secure the object desired, and which possibly may seem to us in accordance with the will of God. Here also faith is the only true remedy: faith, which leaves God to carry out His own purposes, content to trust Him absolutely, and to follow Him whithersoever He leadeth. And God's way is never through the thicket of human cunning and devices. "He that believeth shall not make haste;" nor need he, for God will do it all for him.

In pursuance of her purpose, Rebekah proposed to Jacob to take advantage of his father's dim sight, and to personate Esau. He was to put on his brother's dress, which bore the smell of the aromatic herbs and bushes among which he was wont to hunt, and to cover his smooth skin with a kind of fur; while Rebekah would prepare a dish which his father would not be able to distinguish from the venison which Esau was to make ready for him. It is remarkable, that although Jacob at first objected, his scruples were caused rather by fear of detection than from a sense of the wrong proposed. But Rebekah quieted his misgivings, - possibly trusting, that since she was doing, as she thought, the will of God, she could not but succeed. In point of fact, Jacob found his part more difficult than he could have expected. Deceit, equivocation, and lying, repeated again and again, were required to allay the growing suspicions of the old man. At last Jacob succeeded - with what shame and remorse we can readily imagine - in diverting his father's doubts; and Isaac bestowed upon him "the blessing," and with it the birthright. But it deserves special notice, that while this blessing assigned to him both the land of Canaan and lordship over his brethren, there is in it but the faintest allusion to the great promise to Abraham. The only words which can be supposed to refer to it are these: "Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee." (Genesis 27:29) But this is manifestly

very different from the blessing of Abraham, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 22:18)

It is clear that Isaac imagined he had blessed Esau, and that he did not dare confer upon him the spiritual privileges attached to the birthright. So, after all, Jacob and Rebekah did not attain that which they had sought! Jacob had scarcely left the presence of his father, when Esau entered with the venison he had prepared. If Isaac, Rebekah, and Jacob had been each wrong in their share in the transaction, Esau deserves at least equal blame. Not to speak of his previous knowledge of the will of God on this point, he disguised from his brother Jacob that he was about to obtain from his father's favor that which he had actually sold to Jacob! Surely, there was here quite as great dishonesty, cunning, and untruthfulness as on the part of Jacob. When Isaac now discovered the deceit which had been practiced upon him, he "trembled very exceedingly," but he refused to recall the blessing he had pronounced: "I have blessed him - yea, and he shall be blessed." Now, for the first time, the mist which in this matter had so long hung about Isaac's spiritual vision, seems dispelled. He sees the finger of God, who had averted the danger which his own weakness had caused. Thus, while all parties in the transaction had been in error and sin, God brought about His own purpose, and Isaac recognized this fact. Now, for the first time also, Esau obtained a glimpse of what he had really lost. We read, that "afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears."(Hebrews 12:17)

At his earnest entreaty for some kind of blessing, Isaac pronounced what in reality was a prophecy of the future of Edom. Translating it literally, it reads: "Behold, thy dwelling shall be without fatness of the earth, And without the dew of heaven from above."

This describes the general aspect of the sterile mountains of Edom; after which the patriarch continues, by sketching the future history of the Edomites: "But by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; Yet it shall come to pass that, as thou shakest it, thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck."

The last sentence, it has been well remarked, refers to the varying success of the future struggles between Israel and Edom, and introduces into the blessing of Jacob an element of judgment. And when we compare the words of Isaac with the history of Israel and Edom, down to the time when Herod, the Idumean, possessed himself of the throne of David, we see how correctly the whole has been summed up in the Epistle to the Hebrews (11:20): "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come."

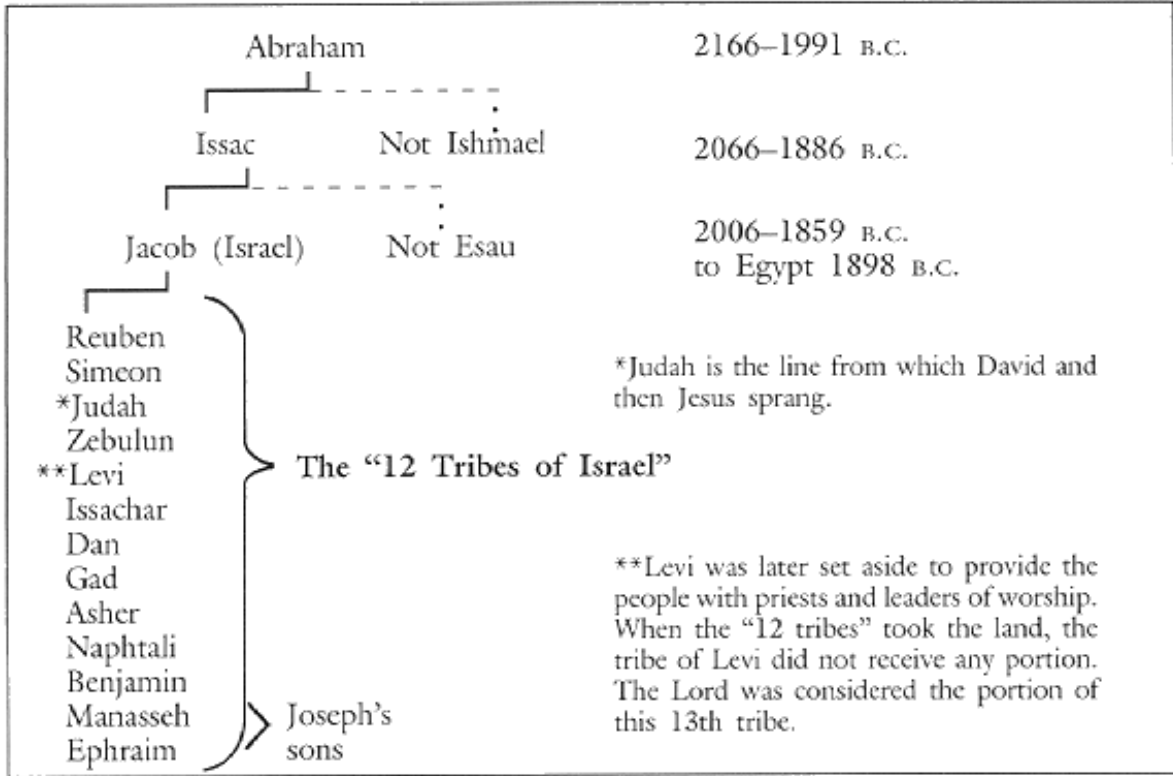
For, that Isaac was now acting in faith, and that he discerned how, without knowing it, he had blessed, not according to his own inclination, but according to the will and purpose of God, appears from the subsequent history. It seems that Esau, full of hatred and envy, resolved to rid himself of his rival by murdering his brother, only deferring the execution of his purpose till after the death of his father, which he also believed to be near at hand. Somehow Rebekah, ever watchful, obtained tidings of this; and knowing her elder son's quick temper, which, however violent, did not long harbor anger, she resolved to send Jacob away to her brother Laban, for "a few days," as she fondly imagined, after which

she would "send and fetch" him "from thence." But kindness towards her husband prompted her to keep from him Esau's murderous plan, and to plead as a reason for Jacob's temporary departure that which, no doubt, was also a strong motive in her own mind, that Jacob should marry one of her kindred. For, as she said, "If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life be to me?" Petulant as was her language, her reasoning was just, and Isaac knew it from painful experience of Esau's wives. And now Isaac expressly sent Jacob to Laban, to seek him a wife; and in so doing, this time consciously and wittingly, renewed the blessing which formerly had been fraudulently obtained from him. Now also the patriarch speaks clearly and unmistakably, not only reiterating the very terms of the covenant-blessing in all their fullness, but especially adding these words: "God Almighty . . . give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee." Thus Isaac's dimness of spiritual sight had at last wholly passed away. But the darkness around Esau seems to only have grown deeper and deeper. Upon learning what charge Isaac had given his son, and apparently for the first time awakening to the fact that "the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac* his father," he took "Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael" as a third wife - as if he had mended matters by forming an alliance with him whom Abraham had, by God's command, "cast out!" Thus the spiritual incapacity and unfitness of Esau appeared at every step, even where he tried to act kindly and dutifully.

* There is no mention here that Esau dreaded God's displeasure, or even thought of it. We may remember our earthly, and yet, alas, forget our heavenly Father.

To conclude, by altering and adapting the language of a German writer: After this event Isaac lived other forty-three years. But he no more appears in this history. Its thread is now taken up by Jacob, on whom the promise has devolved. Scripture only records that Isaac was gathered to his fathers when one hundred and eighty years old, and full of days, and that he was buried in the cave of Machpelah by Esau and Jacob, whom he had the joy of seeing by his death-bed as reconciled brothers. When Jacob left, his father dwelt at Beersheba. The desire to be nearer to his father's burying-place may have been the ground of his later settlement in Mamre, where he died. (Genesis 35:27-29) Rebekah, who at parting had so confidently promised to let Jacob know whenever Esau's anger was appeased, may have died even before her favorite son returned to Canaan. At any rate the promised message was never delivered, nor is her name mentioned on Jacob's return.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Alfred Edersheim, Bible History, Old Testament, studylight.org



The Covenant Line in Genesis