

The Book of Genesis

Lesson 24

Chapter 27:1 – 28:5

Isaac's Savory Dish

Genesis 27:1 Now it came about, when Isaac was old, and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." And he said to him, "Here I am." ² And Isaac said, "Behold now, I am old *and* I do not know the day of my death. ³ "Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me; ⁴ and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die." ⁵ And Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game to bring *home*,

It is interesting that this passage indicates that Isaac was old and his eyesight was extremely poor. How old was Isaac at this point in his life? We do not know exactly; however, with information in the rest of Genesis, we can estimate his age within a few years.

At the end of the book of Genesis we will learn that Jacob was 147 years old when he died. Comparing that to the age of his son Joseph, Jacob was 91 when Joseph was born. At the beginning of the next chapter, Isaac will send Jacob to Mesopotamia to get a wife and Jacob will stay there for 20 -21 years. Joseph will be born just before Jacob begins his attempt to leave Mesopotamia and return to Canaan Land. Therefore, Jacob was about 71 years old at the time of this story and Isaac was 131. Isaac will live to be 180 years old which means he will live 49 more years basically blind and in poor health. Isaac was not going to die at the end of this story. Although he did not know how long he would live, he mentioned that he felt like he was about to die.

As an old man, Isaac was ready to give Esau his blessing that rightfully belonged to him because of his birthright. Isaac was probably aware that Esau had sold that right to Jacob for a bowl of sod pottage, but the blessing was different from the birthright. Picture this! Isaac, age 131, sent his 71-year-old son to kill some wild game in order to prepare a tasty meal so he could give his son a proper blessing.

Rebekah's Plan

Genesis 27:6 Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Behold, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying, ⁷ 'Bring me *some* game and prepare a savory dish for me, that I may eat, and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.'

⁸ "Now therefore, my son, listen to me as I command you. ⁹ "Go now to the flock and bring me two choice kids from there, that I may prepare them *as* a savory dish for your father, such as he loves. ¹⁰ "Then you shall bring *it* to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death."

Rebekah was intent on derailing Isaac's plan! She wanted her second son to receive the blessing instead of Isaac's favorite son. The matter at hand had become extremely complicated. Esau was the first-born and rightfully owed Isaac's blessing. However, Jacob had purchased the birthright from Esau at a moment when Esau was famished and thinking more of his temporary need than his long-term provisions. Did Isaac and Rebekah know about the sale of the birthright? Probably. Did Esau remember what he had done? Absolutely! Did Esau think that Jacob would hold him to the deal he had made? Yes! Did Esau expect Jacob to steal his blessing? Probably not! Jacob owned the birthright, purchased in a legal sale but this event was about the father's blessing; the two were different and Esau could still have the blessing from Isaac; he had not sold his father's blessing to Jacob. Evidently, the twins were still warring against each other at the age of 71 and Rebekah was part of the problem.

Jacob's Answer

Genesis 27:11 And Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man. ¹² " Perhaps my father will feel me, then I shall be as a deceiver in his sight; and I shall bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing."

Did Jacob understand the importance and penalty of deceiving his blind father? We have not seen this thought before in the Scripture. Evidently, it was a well-established concept of the time. The LORD will confirm this law to Moses.

Deuteronomy 27:18 Cursed is he who misleads a blind *person* on the road.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.

The problem seems to be the deception; Jacob had already tricked Esau into selling his birthright. Jacob plainly understands that if he does what his mother wants him to do, he will be cursed. Rebekah's plan is fraught with deception.

Rebekah's Reply

Genesis 27:13 But his mother said to him, "Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get *them* for me." ¹⁴ So he went and got *them*, and brought *them* to his mother; and his mother made savory food such as his father loved. ¹⁵ Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. ¹⁶ And she put the skins of the kids on his

hands and on the smooth part of his neck. ¹⁷ She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob.

Can a person transfer a curse from one to another? No. Can Jacob be innocent in following his mother's instruction? No. Jacob was just as guilty as Rebekah when he participated in her plan. We might notice at this point in the passage that Jacob was more sensitive in his conscience than Rebekah.

According to the Septuagint text, the "best garment of Esau" was actually his outer holy robe that he wore on the Sabbath and that possibly indicates why it was in Rebekah's care. More than likely, this robe was inherited from an ancestor and kept in a chest to protect it from insects.

Jacob's Deception of Isaac

Genesis 27:18 Then he came to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" ¹⁹ And Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your first-born; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me." ²⁰ And Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have *it* so quickly, my son?" And he said, " Because the LORD your God caused *it* to happen to me." ²¹ Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come close, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not." ²² So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." ²³ And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. ²⁴ And he said, "Are you really my son Esau?" And he said, "I am." ²⁵ So he said, "Bring *it* to me, and I will eat of my son's game, that I may bless you." And he brought *it* to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank. ²⁶ Then his father Isaac said to him, "Please come close and kiss me, my son." ²⁷ So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said, "See, the smell of my son Is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed;

Jacob lied to his father in three different ways in this passage. First, he claimed to be Esau, an outright lie. Second, he gave his father goat's meat and claimed that it was venison. Third, he concealed his smooth skin with goat's fur. In collaboration with his mother, Jacob and Rebekah were both guilty of outright deception and the action of the two cannot be defended or explained away as Godly in any way.

The prophecy of the LORD in response to Rebekah's request while the twins were in the womb stated that the older would serve the younger. Rebekah and Jacob should have waited on the LORD to bring that to pass instead of conniving a way to fulfill the prophecy. This action cannot be sanctioned.

Isaac was deceived by all three tricks - the testimony of the voice in his ear, the touch of the hair on his fingers and the smell of the herb used to protect the robe in his nostrils. The voice and the hair were not enough to prove to Isaac that it was Esau. A kiss was needed that would get the son close enough to smell the thyme or lavender gathered from the field. The odor sealed the deception.

Blessing from the Land, Nations, Family

Genesis 27:28 Now may God give you of the dew of heaven, And of the fatness of the earth, And an abundance of grain and new wine; ²⁹ May peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you; Be master of your brothers, And may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, And blessed be those who bless you."

The blessing of Isaac contains nine facets. What is the dew of Heaven? What is the fatness of the earth? What does it mean when it promises an abundance of grain and wine? The first three represent the best of what God's agriculture on the earth can provide for his son. The blessing basically asks for the LORD to be faithful to water the crops of the ground so they will continually provide a bounty that will bring forth grain beyond measure and great quantities of wine for each year. Isaac wants his son to experience the best of the earthly provisions for the rest of his life.

Which people will serve him? Which nations will bow down? The second two revert to the promise given to Abraham in the covenant with the LORD. That covenant was reaffirmed to Isaac by the LORD at least twice as revealed in the past chapters in Genesis. Isaac was passing on to his son a blessing in line with that of the promise given to Abraham and Isaac. It was a promise of many nations from his descendants that included kings and lords. All those kings and lords would trace their history to this son as well as his father and grandfather. The people will serve the rulers of his lineage and bow before them.

Who are his brothers? Who are his mother's brothers? These two aspects point to his son specifically; he will rule over all his brothers and his mother's sons. His brothers include his twin and all the descendant brothers of both twins. Rebekah was his mother and her brothers were the descendants of Nahor; therefore, all his kin who lived in Mesopotamia would also bow down to him.

Who will curse him? Who will bless him? The last two facets are the LORD's to fulfill. In Canaan Land, Isaac and his clan lived surrounded by enemies who envied the LORD's blessing on Abraham and Isaac. This son will be no different. From Babylon, Egypt, Assyria and beyond, nations everywhere will hate this son and his descendants. Isaac's blessing promises that

the LORD will curse those who curse this son; conversely, the LORD will bless those who bless this son.

Esau and Isaac

Genesis 27:30 Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. ³¹ Then he also made savory food, and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, " Let my father arise, and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me." ³² And Isaac his father said to him, " Who are you?" And he said, "I am your son, your first-born, Esau." ³³ Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, "Who was he then that hunted game and brought *it* to me, so that I ate of all *of it* before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed." ³⁴ When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, *even* me also, O my father!"

Once again, Esau realized that Jacob had tripped him by the heel. He had sold his birthright for a bowl of sod pottage and now the culmination was complete and the possibility of having his father's blessing was gone. Cry as he would, no tears could bring that right back to him. Such blessing could be given to but one son. Begging for a blessing in this case would do no good but he begged his father anyway.

Isaac's Words

Genesis 27:35 And he said, " Your brother came deceitfully, and has taken away your blessing."

Even Isaac recognized that Jacob had acquired the blessing through deceit. In that culture, a stolen blessing belonged to the one who received the blessing, even by deceit.

Esau's Plea

Genesis 27: 36 Then he 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?"

Specifically, Jacob had tricked Esau twice. The first time Esau willingly fell into the trap; the second time Esau was taken advantage of by his brother and mother. Distraught, Esau pleaded for a single blessing from his father.

Jacob Master of Esau

Genesis 27:37 But Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?" ³⁸ And Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, *even* me also, O my father." So Esau lifted his voice and wept.

In this passage, Isaac explained the breadth of his blessing given to Jacob; it was all encompassing with nothing left for Esau. Esau, at the age of 71, was broken.

Isaac's Prophecy

Genesis 27:39 Then Isaac his father answered and said to him, "Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling, And away from the dew of heaven from above. ⁴⁰ "And by your sword you shall live, And your brother you shall serve; But it shall come about when you become restless, That you shall break his yoke from your neck."

Isaac cannot give Esau a blessing but he can give a prophecy for his life. Isaac's prophecy is the exact opposite of the blessing on Jacob. The land would not produce abundantly for Esau and the water of heaven would not come easily to his agricultural efforts. He would not have nations bow to him; rather, he would have to defend himself with his sword against the nations. Jacob would not serve Esau but the reverse would be true. The one ray of hope for Esau was given to him in the last instruction. Jacob would not be able to control Esau completely!

The blessing for Jacob was for him and his descendants; the prophecy for Esau was the same. Today, both are still in effect and can be seen in the daily news from that part of the world. The Edomites are restricted by the Jews but not totally controlled. The Edomites are a thorn in the side of the Jews.

Esau's Grudge

Genesis 27:41 So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, " The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

The passage is plain; Esau was angry enough to kill Jacob; however, he would not kill Jacob until after the death of Isaac and that was not any time soon. Isaac, Esau and probably Rebekah and Jacob thought that the end of Isaac's days was near, but Isaac actually lived 49 more years as a blind old man, probably semi-bed-ridden. Esau would wait to kill Jacob; if he killed him during Isaac's life, it would tarnish Isaac's love for him.

Rebekah's Marriage Instruction

Genesis 27:42 Now when the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him, "Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you, *by planning* to kill you.⁴³ "Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban!⁴⁴ "And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury subsides,⁴⁵ until your brother's anger against you subsides, and he forgets what you did to him. Then I shall send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?"

Rebekah instructed Jacob to flee to her home with her brother in Haran. She said in the instruction "a few days" but it was a month's journey to Haran and a month's journey to return. If he stayed a few days in Haran, it is plausible that Rebekah was thinking that if Jacob could be away from Esau for 90 days or so, the death threat would subside. That timing would not be the case; as we will discover in the next chapter, Jacob will become sidetracked for a little more than twenty years in Haran when he meets the love of his life.

Rebekah's Regret

Genesis 27:46 And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

We can only wonder what the daughters of Heth did that grieved Rebekah so much that she doubted the purpose and future of her own life. Esau had married at least two of them by this point in the story. Were the customs of the wives of the Canaanites so different from Rebekah's that she hated the daughters-in-law, or was she just disgusted with Canaanites in general and wanted a Semite daughter-in-law for her beloved son Jacob? We do not know.

Chapter 28:1-5

Rebekah's Marriage Instruction

Genesis 28:1 So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan."² "Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother."³ "And may God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples."⁴ "May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you; that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham."⁵ Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

Isaac agreed with Rebekah; Jacob should not take a wife from the Canaanites. Therefore, he sent Jacob to Rebekah's family to find a wife. At that time, Isaac spoke a prayer over Jacob.

May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you; that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham.

We might correctly infer from this prayer that Isaac was not expecting Jacob to return until he had become wealthy on his own with herds and servants and married with many children. With that thinking, Isaac prayed that when Jacob returned to Canaan Land, he would be ready to take possession of the land that the LORD promised to his father Abraham and confirmed in his own life.