

Genesis 27 - Jacob Deceptively Gains the Blessing of Isaac

A. Rebekah and Jacob plot to deceive Isaac.

1. (1-4) Isaac's deathbed request to Esau.

a. **Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old:** Isaac believes his time has come to die, and this is his way of "settling his affairs," sort of a last will and testament. Although, Martin Luther calculated Isaac's age to be 137 at this point, he lived to be 180. He lived 43 more years.

b. **That my soul may bless you before I die:** Strangely, Isaac insisted on giving the blessing to Esau, the one God did not choose, who despised his birthright, and who has married pagan wives. It seems Isaac plainly operated in the flesh here, thinking only of the good food he received from Esau's hunting.

2. (5-10) Rebekah advises Jacob to deceive his father Isaac.

a. **Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you:** Instead of trusting God to fulfill what He had promised in Genesis 25:23, she goes about to "do what is right" in the flesh. Good intentions don't justify acting in the flesh.

b. **I will make savory food from them for your father, such as he loves:** But again, Isaac is no less scheming than Rebekah. In the willfulness of his old age, he is determined to pass on the blessing to Esau, despite what the LORD has said and what the boys have shown with their lives.

i. The fact Isaac is trying to dispense the blessing secretly shows he knew what he was wrong. Sadly, in this house, no one trusted anyone else.

3. (11-17) Preparations are made for Jacob's deceptive attempt to steal the blessing.

a. **Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him:** Jacob, true to his name "trickster" is all too willing to go along with this plan. His only concern is whether or not it will *succeed*.

i. When we are willing to abandon the question of right and wrong, and when our only concern is "what works," we have bought into the modern idea of *pragmatism*, as much of the church has today.

b. **His father . . . Rebekah . . . Esau . . . Jacob:** Significantly, at this point, each of these actors in this drama are in the flesh and not in the spirit. Even Esau, in agreeing to Isaac's plan to give him the birthright, disregarded his previous promise to allow Jacob to have the birthright.

i. The worst aspect of this all is they seem to regard the blessing as "magical," as something detached from God's wisdom and will. But the most Isaac can do is recognize God's call and blessing on Jacob. Only God can truly bestow the blessing. Esau could receive the blessing from Isaac a hundred times, but it only matters if God in heaven honors it.

B. Jacob receives the blessing Isaac intended for Esau.

1. (18-27a) Jacob lies to his father, pretending to be Esau.

a. **I am Esau your firstborn:** Sometimes it is difficult to discern a lie, and whether it is sin or not comes back to the question of intent. But other times it is not difficult at all, and Jacob clearly lies here.

b. **Because the Lord your God brought it to me:** Jacob, the trickster, did not hesitate to bring in God as a party to his deception.

i. How can he do this? Simply because his only concern is “what works.” Since he knows God wants him to have the birthright, he will justify any lie or sin he commits in the pursuit of the birthright and say he is making a stand for righteousness!

ii. Jacob probably used the promise and calling of God as an excuse for sin; he justified it to himself by saying his sinful conduct was fulfilling the promise of God.

c. **Are you really my son Esau?** Even under repeated questioning Jacob stayed confirmed in his lie. Partially, Jacob took advantage of his father’s good nature. Isaac probably would not believe his Jacob would lie to him so repeatedly.

2. (27b-29) The blessing is given to Jacob.

a. **And blessed him:** Isaac blesses Jacob as the spiritual head of the family. Isaac had the right to pass on this blessing related to the covenant of Abraham, not Ishmael. The son (Jacob or Esau) who received this blessing was able to pass it on to his descendants.

b. **May God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth:** The words of the blessing are filled with pictures of the LORD’s rich bounty, and they echo some of the words of the covenant God made with Abraham.

c. **Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you:** Again, it is important to see it wasn’t the bestowal of these words upon Jacob that made him blessed. Instead, Jacob was blessed because God chose him long before (Genesis 26:23). What mattered is that *God said the older shall serve the younger* (back in Genesis 25:23), not that *Isaac said be master over your brethren*.

i. “The point is that the sovereign will of God is done, in spite of our or any other person’s opposition to it.” (Boice)

C. Esau discovers the deception of Jacob.

1. (30-38) Esau’s grief at discovering Jacob’s deception.

a. **Isaac trembled exceedingly:** This phrase is very strong. It could be translated, “Isaac trembled most excessively with a great trembling.” (Morris) Isaac was troubled because he knew he had tried to box God in, to defeat God’s plan, and God had beaten him. He realized he would always be defeated when he tried to resist God’s will, even when he didn’t like it. And he came to learn that despite his arrogance against God’s will, God’s will was glorious.

i. Later, in Hebrews 11:20, it says “*By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*” Where was the faith? Here it is, after Isaac’s attempt to thwart the will of God has been destroyed and he said of Jacob, “**and indeed he shall be blessed.**”

c. **He took away my birthright:** Both Isaac and Esau are grieved when they figure out what Jacob did, and *now* Esau is concerned about the birthright! Previously (in Genesis 25:22-34), he was willing to sell his birthright for a bowl of stew, and he *despised his birthright*. Now he wanted the material and political advantages of the birthright.

i. When he saw it as a spiritual birthright, Esau did not value the birthright, but now that he sees it in material and political terms, he wanted it.

d. **He took away my birthright:** Esau is also more than willing to rewrite history. Though he is right in accusing Jacob of acting true to his nature when he took the birthright from Esau the first time, he neglects to mention he sold the birthright for a bowl of stew, and he *despised his birthright*.

i. Esau cannot truly say that Jacob **took away my birthright**. Esau gave it away, and God is Lord over the birthright anyway.

e. **Bless me, even me also, O my father!** This is more spiritual concern than we have ever seen in Esau, though even this is colored with material and political concern.

f. **Esau lifted up his voice and wept:** Esau's tears were the tears of frustrated selfishness, not of regret for his own sin and despising of his birthright.

i. *Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears. (Hebrews 12:15-17)*

2. (39-40) Isaac gives a limited blessing to Esau.

Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: “Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; and it shall come to pass, when you become restless, that you shall break his yoke from your neck.”

a. **Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth:** Barnhouse (and others) indicate the “blessing” Isaac bestowed on Esau actually says, “*your dwelling shall be from the fatness of the earth.*” That is, Esau and his descendants would be desert-dwellers.

b. **You shall serve your brother:** Esau would be under Jacob, but not forever. The promise also was that Esau would **break his yoke from your neck**.

3. (41-46) Esau's anger; Rebekah makes plans for Jacob to flee.

So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, “The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, “Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you by intending to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. And stay with him a few days, until your brother’s fury turns away, until your brother’s anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?” And Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these who are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?”

a. **Then I will kill my brother Jacob:** Esau’s somewhat spiritual concern for the blessing of his father quickly vanishes in a bitter hatred of Jacob, a bitter hatred having murderous intent. Esau planned to kill Jacob as soon as Isaac died, and this is a *comfort* to Esau.

i. Revenge is a comforting thought to those who feel they have been wronged like Esau. If only Esau knew Isaac would live another 43 years!

ii. Perhaps Esau was going to test just how blessed Jacob was. His intention may have been to kill him in an attempt to defeat God’s revealed will regarding the birthright.

b. **Stay with him a few days:** The **few days** Jacob was to stay with Laban and Rebekah’s family in Haran will turn out to be more than 20 years. Yet, God will fulfill His purpose in all of it.

c. **If Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these who are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?** Rebekah successfully maneuvered Isaac into telling Jacob to leave. “Rebekah’s diplomatic victory was complete; but she would never see her son again.” (Kidner)