

## General Comments on Genesis 25-27

Isaac is not presented as his father's equal. While the Lord converses with Abraham, sends angels to him and covenants with him, this doesn't occur with Isaac. Isaac gets two unsolicited visits (cf. 26:2-5, 24) where the Lord tells Isaac what to do and says He will bless him because of his father, Abraham (cf. 26:24). Isaac is presented as someone caught up in events occurring around him and not particularly spiritual in any significant way. He isn't a bad guy, he just doesn't measure up to his father's stature, and doesn't appear to even try to. His wife is more attune to the ways of the Lord than he is. We have something of the reverse of Abraham and Sarah with Isaac and Rebekah.

The underlying theology is there doesn't have to be an uninterrupted line of Abraham-quality individuals in the family in order to keep the covenant alive. The Lord has made the promise, it will be kept regardless of quality of the patriarch, and He will just have to do His thing as He can to keep His side of the covenant going, regardless of who is on earth, waiting for someone good to work with, in this case the reformed Jacob.

At its core, if you strip away the theology, this is a story about a wealthy farming family with an out-of-touch dad, a workhorse mother, and two very different sons. The older son likes to be out in the wild, going hunting and generally being away from the farm. He also likes wild women, so he marries local girls, whom his mother disapproves of.

The younger son stays at home and helps his mother run the farm. The younger son wants control of the farm, so he schemes to take away the inheritance of the older brother, so he has complete control of the farm when the father dies. The older brother doesn't really care that much about it, so he gives his inheritance away. When the father plans on using his blessing to undo the give-away of the inheritance, the mother has to take action. Neither the mother nor the younger son want the farm to go to the older son, since he cares nothing for it and makes no effort to manage it. The younger son again tricks the father, with his mother's assistance, to take complete control of the farm.

When the older brother finds out the younger brother has once again tricked him, he plans to murder the younger brother, once the father dies. The hired hands hear about it and warn the mother, since they are loyal to her, and don't want to work

for the older brother. She comes up with a plan to protect the younger son and the servants, by using the older son's lousy wives as an excuse to send Jacob away from the family farm until the older brother cools down. Isaac is only too happy to get rid of the younger son, because of what he has done, so he sends him off with a blessing to go stay with his in-laws, leaving the family farm to the older brother, as originally intended.

### **Character Analysis on Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Esau**

Isaac and Rebekah are presented as the opposites of Abraham and Sarai. Abraham is the spiritually prominent one in the marriage with Sarah, but Rebekah is the spiritually prominent one in the marriage with Isaac. Thus, the couples are cast as opposites. Jacob and Esau are also cast as opposites, with each parent choosing their favorite.

#### **Isaac**

Unlike Abraham, and his son Jacob, Isaac's name goes unchanged. While his name was divinely instituted, it is a less than flattering one, not unlike Jacob's. On both accounts with the name changes of Abraham and Jacob it occurs at the point of covenant making. We have no such covenant making with Isaac. All of the covenant statements made involving Isaac are presented in the context of the continuation of the covenant made with his father (cf. 26:2-5 26:24) which Isaac does heed but which he did not initiate.

The text suggests Isaac's love for Rebekah was more ardor than anything else, a result of his displacing his emotions onto her from being grieved over his mother's death (cf. 24:67)

"Isaac pleaded with the Lord on behalf of his wife" (cf. 25:21), this suggests he did it at her behest and not of his own volition. Interestingly enough, at no point does the text ever present Isaac as initiating contact with the Lord entirely on his own over some matter.

Isaac favors Esau for rather superficial reasons (cf. 25:28), and this despite his boorish and rebellious behavior.

"She is my sister" (cf. 26:7), while Abraham was telling the truth in a less than altogether forthright manner, here Isaac blatantly lies. However, later, he is observed indiscreetly fooling around with her and his deceit is exposed (cf. 26:8).

Isaac permits Esau to marry Hittite women (i.e., more generally Canaanitish), which causes serious intra-family strife (cf. 26:34-35). Only afterwards does he prohibit Jacob from doing the same, and that after the prompting of Rebekah (cf. 27:46-28:4).

"His eyes were too dim to see" (cf. 27:1), while the context is blatantly physical, there are obvious spiritual implications as the subsequent exchange is his mis-blessing as a result of his relying upon his physical senses and therefore being deceived.

After the deception of the blessing, Isaac realizes that things turned out as they were supposed to be and blesses Jacob again with the blessing of his father Abraham (cf. 28:3-4).

### **Rebekah**

She voluntarily lugs water for the family and for the servant's camel (cf. 24:15-20), even though her family is wealthy and she has servants (cf. 24:59-61) and brothers (cf. 31:1) who can do the work. She doesn't have to work, but does so anyway.

Rebekah accepts the mission of Abraham's servant and the divine guidance concerning her betrothal to Isaac (cf. 24:15-67).

She apparently prompts Isaac to plead before the Lord on her behalf presumably because of the lack of fulfilment of her marriage blessing appearing in 24:60. Unlike Sarai, she does not resort to concubinage even though she does have a handmaid as did Sarai.

After conceiving, the pregnancy becomes difficult and this prompts her to seek revelation from the Lord. She goes and inquires of the Lord and receives revelation explaining the matter (cf. 25:22-23). Curiously enough, she doesn't

appear to share this revelation with Isaac, suggesting Isaac is not receptive to such things.

Rebekah favors Jacob over Esau (cf. 25:28). Whether this is a result of the revelation she received or simply because Esau was a boor, or both, is not stated.

She prompts Jacob to trick Isaac into obtaining his blessing, and presents herself as willing to take the potential curse upon herself in the event the act of deception is discovered (cf. 27:5-17). The entire plan is conceived and orchestrated by Rebekah. Her motivation for the plan is not altogether clear, but in all likelihood is her perception of the earlier revelation indicating the younger son will succeed over the elder.

She prompts Isaac to send Jacob away, to save him from Esau's murderous intent (cf. 27:43), and also insists that Isaac prohibit him from marrying Hittite woman (cf. 27:46).

### **Esau**

In the womb he and Jacob struggle and this is presented as a type of their physical and spiritual struggles against each other in mortality. The two sons are presented as dichotomies at this point (cf. 25:22-23).

Growing up, he becomes a skillful hunter, a man of the outdoors (cf. 25:27). This kind of lifestyle is not looked well upon in the Torah, compare the characterization of Nimrod, the only other hunter identified by name (cf. 10:9). All of the patriarchs are presented as agriculturalists or pastoralists. Also consider when Cain is driven out of the presence of the Lord he is cursed such that he will have to live the life of a hunter (cf. 4:11-12). Isaac also pronounces something of a "blessing" upon him wherein he states "by your sword shall you live" (cf. 27:40), not a prediction which bodes well.

In coming back unsuccessful from a hunting expedition (hunger is a common covenant curse) he reveals he is willing to eat blood (cf. 25:30, which something forbidden under the Noachide covenant, cf. 9:4). And subsequently sells his birthright for something to eat, "thus did Esau spurn the birthright" (cf. 25:34). One would presume that

Esau had little use for the blessing because he was not a pastoralist, so there was no desire on his part to get a double portion of something that had no value to him. In this exchange we also learn that Esau is a pig when it comes to eating, as the Hebrew in 25:30 for "gulp down" (JPS) or "feed me" is the stem "l-`-t" which in rabbinic Hebrew is the used to refer to the feeding of animals.

He marries two Hittite (i.e., more generally Canaanite) women, obviously "daughters of men", something very much frowned on by the early patriarchs, cf. 6:2.

Esau wants his father's blessing because therein it contains promises of dominance over family issues and blessings of physical well-being, and when denied of it he weeps bitterly, and begs for an additional blessing (cf. 27:34-38). This shows his great desire to be the master as well as be physically well off. His anger over losing the blessing turns into murderous intent and he plans on killing Jacob shortly after Isaac's death (cf. 27:41), presumably to obtain all that Jacob had robbed from him in the blessing.

Attempts to ingratiate himself with Isaac and Rebekah by taking on additional non-Hittite/non-Canaanite wives (cf. 28:6-9), suggesting clear lack of insight into the nature of the problems he has created.

### **Jacob**

A pastoralist (cf. 25:27), perhaps a "momma's boy" (cf. 25:28). That Jacob is no "tough guy" is plain when he must flee before Esau's murderous plans rather than stand up to him (cf. 27:43).

Refuses to feed his own brother unless he gives up his birthright by oath (cf. 25:29-34). Jacob wants the birthright, but later is not interested in the blessing enough to take the initiative in getting it. This would indicate his desire for material things as opposed to spiritual things, as he must be spurred on by Rebekah for the blessing.

In the deception of Isaac in obtaining the blessing, he is more worried about getting caught than the ethics of the

situation (cf. 27:11-12). Rebekah has to prompt him to get the blessing (cf. 27:6-10), indicating his lack of connection with the will of the Lord concerning the matter as the matter had been predicted by revelation. He is unwilling to go through with Rebekah's plan until she accepts the responsibility for it in case things goes awry (cf. 27:13). He also blatantly lies to Isaac (cf. 27:19).

Is familiar with things spiritual (cf. 28:17-19), but only when the going gets rough does he really get religious (cf. 28:20-22).

The text presents an interesting set of flawed characters. Rebekah is presented as the one always taking the initiative when it comes to spiritual matters (naturally, with the exception of Isaac's decision to disburse the blessing). Otherwise, Isaac seems to sit back and just let things happen. He is agreeable on spiritual things, but isn't an initiator at all like Abraham was. And when it comes to blessing one of his two sons, well, neither one of them is particularly zealous when it comes to matters of religion so what difference does it make? So he rather arbitrarily selects Esau, despite all of his flaws, because he has always provided wild game and he is the firstborn after all, so why not? Esau appears to be a regular wild man who spent plenty of time away from camp hunting things and running amok, ultimately having his fancy tickled by foreign women. These foreign women were a regular pain to their in-laws, but what does he care? He probably wasn't around much anyway so it didn't matter to him. Jacob, on the other hand, hangs around camp and is more interested in obtaining material things using spiritual means as a ploy for obtaining them.

Most interesting to me is the lack of communication between them. Isaac and Rebekah don't seem to talk much at all when it comes to spiritual things, and this leads to acts of deception being employed between them. Esau and Jacob obviously don't talk much either, having little in common. This is a classic offshoot from the Garden of Eden account, as good communication between Adam and Eve resulted in her not being entirely sure of what the commands were pertaining to the Tree of Knowledge and therefore opening her up for deception by the serpent. The moral of the story: Failure to communicate, with God and each other, causes real problems in people's lives.

### **In Defense of Jacob**

Many people who read the account of Jacob obtaining the birthright and blessing from Esau feel that Jacob's performance is worthy of derision. Perhaps it was early on, but some go on to harbor negative feelings for Jacob despite the blessings the Lord bestows upon him. Some feel that the Lord simply had no choice in the matter as patriarchy demanded that one of Isaac's natural sons inherit the blessings of Abraham and Jacob was the better of the two. The reader should analyze the account with greater effort in order to discover the deeper meanings which are present and the Lord's motives for endorsing a deceitfully obtained blessing.

### **Endorsement of the Blessing**

Both Isaac and the Lord endorse the blessing after Jacob deceitfully receives it. Could not Isaac have revoked the blessing, or the Lord simply refused to honor it as it was obtained deceitfully? Isaac realizes that Jacob's actions are in fulfillment of Rebekah's prophecy as Esau announces that Jacob has obtained both the birthright and the blessing, and is rightly named "Supplanter" (27:36-37). Isaac therefore endorses the blessing upon Jacob and pronounces another on Esau (27:39-40). The prophecy given to Rebekah of the Lord (25:22-23) clearly illustrates the Lord's anticipating the events to come where Jacob will supplant Esau, thereby endorsing in advance Isaac's blessing upon Jacob. But, what of Jacob's subtlety? Rebekah's prophecy foretells the importance of the types shown forth in that Esau and Jacob will represent "two nations...and two manners of people." Thus, Jacob's unrighteous actions previous to receiving the blessing are shown forth as a type.

### **Esau and Jacob**

While the accounts are not overly detailed as far as personalities are concerned, some safe deductions can be made. It is plain that Esau cared nothing for his birthright, as he gave it up for some stew (Genesis 25:34). It is not surprising Esau would give up the birthright so easily as he was a man of the field and the birthright entitled him to a double share of Isaac's possessions. But, of what use are tents, sheep and land to a hunter? Esau obviously failed to look beyond the physical benefits of obtaining the birthright. Furthermore, after Jacob

duped Isaac into obtaining Esau's blessing, Esau contemplates murder (27:41). And Rebekah's fear for Jacob's life shows the threat was not idle. Clearly Esau was no man of God.

Some insight into Jacob's character is given when he refuses to feed his own starving brother (25:31). Only on obtaining the birthright by oath does Jacob feed him. This action also indirectly shows Jacob's interests were mainly in obtaining the birthright so as to get the double portion of the inheritance, as Jacob exercised initiative in obtaining the birthright, while apparently doing little to curry his father's favor so as to obtain the blessing honestly. Furthermore, when told by his mother to pose as Esau, Jacob's reaction is fear of being caught rather than pangs of guilt over acting in a deceitful manner. These actions paint a picture of someone who is interested mainly in worldly things. Assuming that Jacob knew of Rebekah's prophecy (which is a safe assumption as he swears an oath in 27:20 referring to the Lord's sanctioning the blessing of Jacob in place of Esau), it is also possible that Jacob was simply resting on his laurels after obtaining the birthright from Esau. Trusting that the prophecy would be fulfilled regardless, he didn't bother to do his part and gain his father's blessing honestly. He simply sat back and waited for the work of the Lord commence without helping it along. While it is possible that Jacob was simply not religious at all, it is more likely that Jacob was somewhat spiritual, but initially without strong convictions. Evidence for his being familiar with spiritual things would be his accepting the vision of the ladder as genuine, sanctifying the stone by anointing it with oil and covenanting with the Lord (28: 12-22).

### **Esau and Jacob as Types**

Esau was rightful heir to the birthright, but sold it out of hunger for a bowl of stew and some bread. Being in want for food is a typical covenant malediction, as those who are disobedient are not blessed by the abundance of the earth. Esau's selling the birthright for food is also symbolic of rejecting spiritual blessings, both temporal and eternal, for worldly things. Esau desires his father's blessing but is far from worthy, as is displayed by forfeiting the birthright and in his murderous nature



(27:41). This displays selfishness and open rebellion against the Abrahamic covenant. His marriage to non-believers further displays his disregard for the covenant as he makes worldly covenants rather than heavenly ones.

Jacob obtains the birthright from the rightful inheritor, and gets the very same blessing his father was to pronounce upon the favored son. This represents those who have the birthright to the inheritance being supplanted by those who are more worthy, and the supplanters receive the same exact blessings the natural and rightful heir would have received. Jacob is somewhat religious but caught up in the ways of the world until he is forced to flee for his life, and upon realizing his position he repents and covenants with the Lord, which is typical of the exodus.

Old Testament prophets who use Esau (also referred to as Edom or Idumea) as a type present him as one who disregards the Lord and indulges in worldly things. Thus, Esau as a type represents the wicked world, but a more specific interpretation of the willful rebellion of natural Israel against the covenant can also be applied (Isaiah 34:5-6; 63:1, Jeremiah 49:8-10, Ezekiel 35:5, Obadiah 1:6-18, Malachi 1:1-4). Jacob, as a type, represents the repentant in general, and more specifically the gentiles who embrace the gospel and receive the blessings of natural Israel (Isaiah 14:1; 41:8, Jeremiah 46:28, Hosea 12:2-6).

Jacob's actions were not above reproach, but he repented, and became favored of the Lord. Christ taught the parable of the two sons in Matthew 21:28-32 wherein the first son says to his father "I will not" but later went, and the second son says "I will" then goes not. Christ states the first son is the one who actually does the father's bidding and will enter in before the second son. This parable is broadly interpreted to imply that the first son represents Ephraim and the second son represents Judah. In light of the preceding discussion, the parable is also descriptive of the relationship between Isaac, Esau and Jacob. The reader should recognize the symbolism in Jacob's actions rather than fault him.

#### **Comments on Genesis 25**

This chapter draws a close to Abraham's life, and also closes the door on all of Abraham's children except for Isaac.

The chapter then introduces Isaac's children, Esau and Jacob and begins tracing the history of Abraham's birthright.

1 THEN again Abraham took a wife, and her name [was] Keturah. 2 And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. 3 And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim. 4 And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these [were] the children of Keturah. 5 And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. 6 But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.

v1-6 After Sarah's death Abraham takes an additional wife and has some more sons, but note he always sends them away from home just as Ishmael was sent away. Obviously, this was to avoid disputes over inheritance, as Abraham had willed everything to Isaac (v. 5).

7 And these [are] the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years. 8 Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full [of years]; and was gathered to his people. 9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which [is] before Mamre; 10 The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife. 11 And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahairoi.

v7-11 Abraham's death is noted, and interestingly enough Ishmael returns to assist Isaac in burying him. It seems likely Isaac had little or no memory of Ishmael from his childhood since he and Hagar were sent away when Isaac was quite young. While it is possible they interacted some afterwards the does not suggest that at all. The reader would have to presume Isaac contacted Ishmael and let him know concerning their father's demise. They were at the very least amiable towards one another.

Note Abraham is buried at the same site as Sarai, something Ishmael might not have been favorably disposed towards. Also note that in v. 11 it is Isaac whom the Lord blesses and not Ishmael, according to the preceding events where Isaac is chosen over Ishmael.

v8 "and was gathered to his people", the Jewish Publication

Society renders this phrase "he was gathered to his kin" and their Torah Commentary on Genesis states:

This phrase, peculiar to the Torah, is also used of Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Aaron, and Moses. An analysis of the contexts in which it is found reveals that it is to be distinguished from death itself because it is employed of Abraham, Aaron and Moses, none of whom was buried with his forefathers. It is also not identical with interment in general because the report of burial follows this phrase, and the difference between the two is especially blatant in the case of Jacob, who was interred quite a while after being "gathered to his kin". It would seem, therefore, that the existence of this idiom, as of the corresponding figure "to lie down with one's fathers", testifies to a belief that, despite his mortality and perishability, man possesses an immortal element that survives the loss of life. Death is looked upon as a transition to an afterlife where one is united with one's ancestors. This interpretation contradicts the widespread, but apparently erroneous, view that such a notion is unknown in Israel until later times.

12 Now these [are] the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham: 13 And these [are] the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam, 14 And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa, 15 Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah: 16 These [are] the sons of Ishmael, and these [are] their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations. 17 And these [are] the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people. 18 And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that [is] before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: [and] he died in the presence of all his brethren.

v12-18 Ishmael's genealogy is reviewed. This text is apparently located here with Abraham's demise because it is the last time the reader encounters Ishmael alive. As such, his lineage and demise is traced.

The text also serves to effectively terminate the discussion of the other branches of Abraham's lineage. The covenant is to continue through Isaac, so all of Abraham's other

children are largely ignored from this point on.

19 And these [are] the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac: 20 And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian. 21 And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she [was] barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

22 And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If [it be] so, why [am] I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD. 23 And the LORD said unto her, Two nations [are] in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and [the one] people shall be stronger than [the other] people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

24 And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, [there were] twins in her womb. 25 And the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. 26 And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac [was] threescore years old when she bare them.

v19-34 Abraham's son Isaac (v. 19) is forty years old when he marries Rebecca (v. 20). She is having difficulty conceiving, so Isaac petitions the Lord on her behalf and she conceives (v. 21). However, after she conceives the pregnancy is a difficult one and she wonders if it is worth it, so she prays to the Lord (v. 22). The Lord informs her the struggle in her womb prefigures the struggle her two sons will have throughout their lives and their children's lives (v. 23). When she delivers the two boys (v. 24) the first comes out covered with red hair so he is named "Esau" (v. 25) and the second son comes out grasping the first one's heel so he is called "Jacob" (v. 26).

v19 From this point on through the rest of the Hebrew Bible the history is of Abraham's lineage through Isaac.

v25 "they called his name Esau", The Hebrew "esau" is a synonym of the Seir, which is a play on the Hebrew "se`ar" which translates to the English "hair".

v26 "his name was called Jacob", the name is a play on the Hebrew "`aqeb" which translates to the English "heel".

27 And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob [was] a plain man, dwelling in tents. 28 And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of [his] venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

29 And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he [was] faint: 30 And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red [pottage]; for I [am] faint: therefore was his name called Edom. 31 And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. 32 And Esau said, Behold, I [am] at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? 33 And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised [his] birthright.

v27-34. Esau grows up to be a skilled hunter and is Isaac's favored son. Jacob grows up to be a mild-mannered man who tends to stay in the camp and is Rebecca's favorite son (v. 27-28). Jacob stirs up some trouble for his brother Esau the next time he comes back from the hunt empty-handed (v. 29). Esau sees some reddish stew and asks Jacob for some (v. 30). Jacob asks for the birthright in exchange (v. 31). Esau rationalizes that the birthright is useless to him if he dead anyway so, why not? (v. 32) Jacob insists Esau formally swear the birthright to him, and Esau does so (v. 33). Jacob then feeds Esau and after eating he goes off, and this is how Esau spurned his birthright (v. 34).

v29 "Jacob sod pottage", Everett Fox in The Five Books of Moses renders this phrase "boiling boiled-stew" and states, "This phrase may connote plotting, as in our English 'cook up,' 'brew,' 'concoct,' or 'stir up' trouble. Other forms of the Hebrew denote 'insolence' or 'intentional evil.'" Thus, Jacob is intentionally planning and plotting to get the birthright from Esau.

v30 "Feed me", the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) translation renders this "Give me some of that red stuff to gulp down, for I am famished". The JPS Torah Commentary on Genesis states, "In rabbinic Hebrew the stem l-`-t is employed for the feeding of animals. Its use here, unique in the Bible, is suggestive of Esau's boorish manners." The intent of the Hebrew is to show that Esau is not just a man of the wild, he is pretty much an animal himself.

"red pottage", the JPS renders it "red stuff" and the JPS Torah Commentary on Genesis states:

Hebrew ha-`adom ha-`adom. The repetition may indicate

"deep red". The description provides another etiology, this time explicit, for Esau being called Edom. At the same time `adom is close in sound to dam, "blood". Word play involving "Edom" and dam occurs in several texts. Blood was considered to constitute the life-essence and was widely believed to contain magical properties. It was a symbol of strength and vitality. A suggestion that Esau thought the "red stuff" to be blood broth is most plausible. His primitive instincts were aroused by the sight. He expected his vitality to be renewed by drinking it."

Thus, Esau is expressing his willingness and desire to eat blood, something explicitly prohibited under the Noachide covenant, cf. 9:4. Jacob's plan is to tempt Esau with what he will think is blood stew. This would be especially tempting on an occasion when Esau came back from an unsuccessful hunting expedition.

v32 "I am at the point to die", the JPS renders this "I am at the point of death". The JPS Torah Commentary on Genesis then states, "Literally, 'I am going to die'. This statement either refers to the generally perilous life he led as a hunter or is an exaggerated description of his present condition." It is probably the former over the latter as if Jacob was in camp then Esau could have easily obtained food from anyone else there as well.

v33 Jacob isn't switching his single share for Esau's double portion. He is obtaining all three portions, so he has the entire inheritance for himself. Esau legally gets nothing of Isaac's estate.

v34 "lentils", either Jacob made use of an Egyptian lentils which are red or he added something to the stew to make it look red, because the typical middle eastern lentil is yellowish or light brown in color when cooked. Thus, Jacob was setting a trap for Esau knowing he liked to eat blood. Returning from an unsuccessful hunt would have his appetite whetted for such a dish. So it is quite probable Jacob set Esau up planning all along to get the birthright from him, rather than relying on some happenstance situation.

"thus Esau despised his birthright", as Esau was a wild man

who spent more time hunting than tending to the things around camp, it is no surprise he doesn't value a greater share of his father's domestic life. What use does a hunter have for such sedentary things? However, Jacob was quite the opposite. He was in camp pretty much all of the time. For Jacob, obtaining the control of his father's estate was essential for the camp's long term well-being. Under Esau's majority control his father's estate would languish, but under Jacob's control the estate would flourish (cf. ch. 30-31 where Jacob exhibits his skill at livestock). This is something he personally wants, and also something Rebekah wants as well, as is seen in ch. 27.

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