

Comments on Genesis 27

This chapter presents the famous, or infamous, story of Jacob's stealing his brother Esau's blessing. The chapter is bracketed as was the previous one, this time framed by Esau's marital activities in 26:34-35 and 28:6-9. These marriages typify Esau, offering explanation as to why the father's blessing was thwarted.

With respect to Rebekah's part in the story, we see later in ch. 29-31 the behavior of her brother Laban. His behavior is similarly problematic when it comes to family relationships, suggesting this is the kind of family environment they grew up in. Clearly, the example presented is a negative one, telling the reader that this is not the way to raise a family, as it only leads to conflict, which could be lethal.

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. ² And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: 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; 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.

v1-4 Isaac senses the end of his life is near (v. 2), so he summons his favored son (v. 1) to go and hunt for him one last time (v. 3), and then he will bless him before he dies (v. 4).

Isaac's dying wish isn't that his oldest son be a great spiritual man, it is for a tasty final meal.

v4 "that my soul may bless thee", the Hebrew for "soul" is nefesh, and implies the intended blessing is a spiritual one with its source being God and not himself, cf. v. 7, 28. Isaac's intent here is to give an inspired blessing, but he is clearly not inspired at this point.

"before I die", Isaac doesn't end up dying for quite some time. He survives Jacob's twenty years at Laban's house (ch. 28-31), the reconciliation between Esau and Jacob (ch. 32-33), the treachery of Jacob's sons (ch. 34), Jacob's family move to Bethel, and the birth of Benjamin (v. 35) before he dies (35:28-29). This is well over another twenty years, but during those years we hear nothing from or about Isaac at all, so perhaps old

age has overtaken him.

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. ⁶ And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, ⁷ Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death. ⁸ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. 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: ¹⁰ And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death. ¹¹ And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: 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. ¹³ And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. ¹⁴ And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved. 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: ¹⁶ And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: ¹⁷ And she gave the saoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

v5-17 Rebecca hears what Isaac says to Esau and relates it to Jacob (v. 5-7). She comes up with a plan and insists he act on it (v. 8), so that Jacob is blessed instead of Esau (v. 9-10). Jacob raises concerns (v. 11-12), she addresses the concerns (v. 13), and Jacob does what she tells him to do, while she prepares the disguise and food (v. 14-17).

v7 "bless thee before the Lord before my death", the JPS renders this as "bless you, with the Lord's approval, before I die" and indicates it is most literally "bless you, in the presence of the Lord, before I die". Here is an important difference. The JPS rendering shows there is subtle irony in Isaac's statement when he says he wants to give him this blessing "with the Lord's approval". Obviously, it is not the Lord's will, per Rebekah's revelation and the resulting outcome. Thus, the mix up is foreshadowed by Isaac's own statement.

v8 "obey my voice...I command thee", Rebecca knows what she is doing is dishonest and risky, so she takes responsibility for what she is telling Jacob to do, per v. 13. She is not hatching

a plan with Jacob, she has come up with it on her own and insists he do it. If things go bad, Jacob has recourse to blame his mother. Rebekah's actions are an attempt to do the Lord's will (cf. 25:23), against her husband's will, and she is willing to take the fall for a bad outcome.

v14 "he went...fetched...brought", the Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary on Genesis states "The Hebrew has a staccato succession of three short verbs: 'He went, he took, he brought'. The effect is a picture of Jacob performing the unpleasant deed with nervous haste."

¹⁸ And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? ¹⁹ And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first born; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. 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. 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. 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. ²³ And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. ²⁴ And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am. 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. ²⁶ And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. 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: ²⁸ Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: 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.

v18-29 Jacob plays the role and deceives his father, who is suspicious, but relents after multiple tests (v. 18-27), and blesses Jacob instead of Esau (v. 27-29), fulfilling the Lord's prophecy he was apparently unaware of (cf. 25:23).

v20 Jacob uses the Lord's name in vain in effort to bolster the credibility of the lie. Either that, or Jacob is privy to Rebekah's revelation and this is an obscure reference to that

prediction being fulfilled. It seems more likely it is the former over the latter as there is no indication Rebekah discloses her revelation. And, Jacob blatantly already lied in v. 19, so he is clearly willing to be dishonest. The willingness to engage in blasphemy shows Jacob is not a spiritual man at this point. Isaac's unwillingness to accept the veracity of the oath, never mind it is false, shows Isaac is also not a spiritually minded man. Neither of them take religious oaths like this seriously.

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. 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.

³² And Isaac his father said unto him, who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau. 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.

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. ³⁵ And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing. 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? 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?

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. 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; 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.

v30-40 Immediately after Isaac unintentionally blesses Jacob, Esau comes in with the requested food and asks for the blessing (v. 30-31). Isaac is stunned, and realizes he has been tricked by Jacob (v. 32-33). Esau is distraught and asks for the blessing anyway (v. 34), which Isaac says he cannot do (v. 35). Esau curses Jacob (v. 36) and Isaac laments the blessing he has put on Jacob at Esau's expense, so what is left for him to do (v.

37)? Esau begs for a blessing anyway and wails over his misfortune (v. 38), so Isaac relents and blesses him to prosper from the abundance of the earth (v. 39), since he has no control over the estate, and he will eventually overcome Jacob's preeminence (v. 40).

v33 "yea, and he shall be blessed", Isaac is initially shocked, but realizes that if the blessing was an inspired one then God could not have been deceived and therefore the blessing received by Jacob was the one God intended him to have.

v36 In his anger, Esau resorts to personal attacks and juvenile name calling, again indicative of his character.

v37 Isaac had intended to give this blessing of physical control and dominance of the family to Esau at Jacob's expense, having no real insight into the spiritual implications of the blessing of the sons. Isaac's concerns were solely physical in the blessing, who had control over the property of the estate.

v38 "has thou but one blessing", since Isaac's blessing was for control of the physical estate, there isn't anything else Isaac can give Esau from this perspective. Had Isaac's focus been on spiritual things and Esau's interest been in spiritual things, then, yes, he could have given Esau his own blessing, but neither were interested in spiritual things.

v40 "when thou shalt have the dominion", a poor translation. The NAS renders it "when you become restless" and the JSP renders it "when you grow restive".

"break his yoke from off thy neck", the physical reading on this passage is probably the reconciliation in ch. 33. The spiritual interpretation of this passage would be the lineage of Esau acceptance of the gospel, cf. Gal. 5:1.

The irony in v. 40 is that Isaac is blessing Esau to overcome the material loss he just suffered to Jacob, when the Lord's interests in the matter are not over the material things, but the spiritual and eternal implications of the blessing, per the covenant with Abraham. Even as this unfolds, Isaac is still focused on physical and material things, not recognizing the greater aspects.

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. 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. ⁴³ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; ⁴⁴ And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; 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?

v41-45 Esau's anger and hate turn murderous (v. 41), and when Rebekah hears about it, presumably through the servants she sends Jacob to go live with her brother until the threat passes (v. 42-44).

v42 This simple verse conveys much. It implies the servants of the household are more loyal to Rebekah and Jacob than Isaac and Esau, and that Rebekah really runs the household and estate. Isaac and Esau do not have the loyalty, fear or respect of the servants.

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?

v46 Rebekah comes up with a scheme to get Jacob away from Esau to protect him, but does so discreetly, to also protect the servants who informed on Esau.

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