

Text: Genesis 27:1-46

Title: Jacob and Rebekah Deceive Isaac

Truth: Choose the way of faith over the way of pragmatism.

Date/Location: Sunday April 16, 2023 at FBC

Introduction

In this section of Genesis, Jacob once again supplants¹ Esau. He “supplanted” him before in 25:29-34 by scheming to take the birthright, the place of the firstborn. This status allowed its “owner” to oversee the clan going forward after the death of the patriarch and provided a double portion of the inheritance. Perhaps this “inequity” was because the older would have more ongoing responsibilities to run the household than the younger one, but also simply because of the honor of being firstborn.

I. Jacob Deceives to Receive a Blessing, 27:1-29

- A. In Isaac’s culture, it was important to pass on a blessing to the eldest son when near death. In this case, it was especially important because that blessing carried Abrahamic covenant implications. But Isaac died at 180 years of age as recorded in Genesis 35:28. This was several decades future. Evidently it was a bit of a “false alarm” that he thought his death was imminent. He ignored several facts and went ahead to give the blessing to Esau, who was his favored son (25:28).
- B. From several Bible verses, we can accurately estimate Isaac’s age in this account to be 137 years (see the Appendix). Since he was 60 when the twins were born (25:26), this makes Jacob and Esau at this time 77 years old. Jacob the supplanter pulled off this birthright-caper at 77 years of age. He was *not* in his late teens or 20s when he did this stunt. His mother Rebekah was, say, 18 when she married, and 20 years of waiting for the twins to come, so she was 38. Plus, the 77 years of age of her twins means she was 115 at this time. All I can say is that they both were old enough to know better!

¹ To take the place of and serve as a substitute for especially by reason of superior excellence or power (Merriam-Webster).

- C. They should not have deceived to get their own way; they should not have lied to an old man who was almost entirely blind and probably did not taste food very well; they did not exhibit trust in God to fulfill His promise that the older would serve the younger. This is a common theme in the past chapters, is it not? Abraham did not trust God about protecting him regarding his beautiful wife (twice). Isaac failed on that count as well. Eve did not trust God about the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Lot did not trust God and obey Him about where he lived and about leaving Sodom before the firestorm. Abraham and Sarah did not trust God about having son Isaac and instead tried their own scheme.
- D. Rebekah intercepted the information that a blessing from Isaac was imminent, and informed Jacob to quickly get ready, disguise himself, and steal the blessing from his brother. This only worked because his father was basically blind.
- E. Jacob's initial reaction was not thoroughly holy. He was worried he would be found out. This feeling should have led him in a direction away from his mother's plan. But he listened to his mom—which was wrong in this case—and carried out her deceptive plan.
- F. The ruse worked. Jacob gets Isaac to say the blessing formula over him. From our vantage point, we cannot explain how this is legitimate or "holds water." It is a blessing gotten under false pretenses, so it would seem null and void. But Isaac in verse 33 said that the blessing on the younger son, the first one to come in, was real. It was "binding" in a sense. It could not be taken back. But it caused serious consequences in future years.
- G. Notice Isaac's use of Abrahamic covenant language in 27:29 where the curses and blessings are mentioned. Remember that these are personal but extend to his descendants as well.

II. Esau Too Late, 27:30-40

- A. Esau came too late and received the leftovers of the blessings. He had done exactly what he was asked to do. At first blush, this seems unfair. But remember that he did despise his birthright (25:34). The Bible's evaluation of this is given in Hebrews 12:16, where it calls Esau a profane person. This was a manifestation of

his departure from the faith of his family. He did not care, blew it off, or however similarly you might describe it. He was not a *religious* fellow in the good sense of that term.

- B. Esau cried, but it was already done. His distaste for his birthright came back to haunt him. He wanted the firstborn blessing without the birthright, as if the two were separable, but they are not.
- C. Isaac realized that he had been deceived. But his trembling probably was related to a realization of God's words in 25:23, his wrong-headed favoritism of Esau, and his belief that he was passing down the blessing to the firstborn instead of the second, which was not God's will. He was thinking badly for many years.

III. Jacob Has to Leave, 27:41-46

- A. To sooth his anger, he planned to kill his brother as soon as dad was dead. You would think he is a hot head 20-year-old, but the brothers are 77! Rebekah got wind of his plan and sent Jacob away to her brother Laban until Esau could cool down. It is here that Jacob finds his wife (wives), as we will see in upcoming chapters, and is himself the victim of deceptive tactics by his father-in-law.
- B. Another reason that he must leave is to find a wife. If he took a pagan wife like his brother Esau, Rebekah could not take it. Mom and dad sent him away to save his life and find a wife.

Conclusion

Note that Jacob could have and should have received his father's blessing—and God's blessing—another way. We are 100% confident that God never requires us to sin to be in His will (James 1:13). We are also certain that if we believe in God, He will take care of things. But sometimes God allows these sorts of things in His plan to accomplish His purposes. I do not claim to understand how all that works, but I read it Scripture and the nature of the God whom I know means I can trust Him about this matter even though I don't have it all figured out.

What should Jacob and Rebekah have done? **First**, they should have recited to Isaac God's words from 77-78 years earlier recorded in Genesis 25:23. God revealed them to her in answer to her prayer

about the struggle that she felt inside of her womb. This was God's plan for the lads. **Second**, Jacob and his mother should have reminded Isaac that his eldest son had exhibited extreme disrespect by despising the birthright. He sold it to his (slightly) younger brother. Legally, it belonged to the younger brother. Esau swore that he did not want it. This action not only showed disrespect for God, but also for his dad. Oh, that hurts to even hear it! **Third**, Esau exhibited a lack of concern for his family by his choice of marriage partners. He was OK with going down the pagan route, not believing the God of Abraham and Isaac. **Finally**, both parents should have abandoned their favoritism.

MAP

Appendix: The Ages of Isaac and Jacob in Genesis 27

1. Isaac's son Jacob was 130 years when he met Pharaoh (47:9).
2. The famine had been ongoing for 2 years already, so Jacob was 128 when the famine began (45:6).
3. Joseph was 30 when he began to serve Pharaoh. There were 7 years of plenty and 2 years of famine, so Joseph was 37 when the famine began and 39 when Jacob appeared before Pharaoh (41:46-47). Putting this together with the above, we can determine that Jacob was 130 and Joseph 39 when they saw each other and the elder met Pharaoh, so Jacob must have been about 91 when Joseph was born. This means that Joseph, who was about 17 when he was sold into slavery, had not seen his father for 22 years.
4. Jacob had served Laban for 20 years altogether and 6 of those years were after the birth of Joseph (31:41). It was at the end of the first 14 years that Joseph was born to Jacob (30:24-25). In other words, Joseph was born at year 14 of Jacob's service, which is the year when Jacob was 91. Subtracting $91 - 14$, this would make Jacob 77 when he left to serve Laban, around the time he and his brother Esau appear in Genesis 27. [His dad had been first married at 40; now he is waiting until 77...well, $77+7 = 84$. This is quite an advanced age. Evidently people were a bit more youthful.]
5. Since Isaac was 60 when the twins were born (25:26), he was $60 + 77 = 137$ years of age when chapter 27 occurred.

6. Isaac lived 43 more years until age 180 (35:28).
7. Jacob lived to age 147 (47:28).
8. Joseph lived to the age of 110 (50:26). By the time he died, the fledgling nation of Israel had been in Egypt already for $110 - 39 = 71$ years.