

**Genesis 27:30-45**  
**Deception and Blessing, part 2**

Jacob had done the deed. With the help of, indeed at the instigation of, his mother, he had taken the well-prepared meal that his father expected, secured the goat skins from the butchered animal on his hands and neck, and entered his blind father's tent to pose as the favored son, Esau.

As we recall, Isaac had believed he was dying and had wanted to put his affairs in order. To that end, he had called his favorite son, Esau, into his tent and asked him to go hunting for the delicious game that he preferred. He promised that when the two had eaten this meal together, he would give his son the coveted blessing.

But his wife had overheard. Rebekah, of course, preferred the other son, Jacob, and was not willing to let him be slighted. So she came up with a plan to have Jacob trick her husband into giving him Esau's blessing. Time was of the essence, as there was no knowing when Esau might return with his kill. So Rebekah and Jacob orchestrated their scheme and Jacob carried it out. The minor glitch of Isaac recognizing the voice of Jacob was overcome, and the blessing was stolen.

But now Esau returned. And once again the Scriptural narrative unfolds by offering the reader conversations between two people. In verses 1-4 it had been Isaac and Esau. In verses 5-17 it was Rebekah and Jacob. In verses 18-29 it was Isaac and Jacob. In the passage we will look at today verses 30-40 will be a conversation between Isaac and Esau, verses 41-45 Rebekah and Jacob again, and finally in verse 46 Rebekah and Isaac. And yet, through it all, we will continue to see God working His perfect sovereign will through the actions of sinful, fallen humanity.

**The Plan Discovered**

Jacob had eaten and ran. Having received the blessing, Jacob left the scene without a word. After all, though wearing Esau's clothing and donning the goat skins to his hands and neck at convinced Isaac that Jacob smelled and felt like Esau, Isaac had recognized his voice and there was no need to speak further and risk giving himself away. And it was just in time, too, because, "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" (v. 30). A few moments more and Jacob would have been discovered in the act. But we cannot assume this was mere coincidence. As with the entire narrative, as with all of history, this was God's sovereign plan working itself out. Moments matter, and the fact is that we must either attribute these moments to God, Himself, or we must simply acknowledge that they are left to chance.

So, not knowing that Jacob had already stolen his blessing, Esau returned from the hunt with his kill. God had given him success and, when he returned home, he (or more likely one of the servants) went about preparing the meal for his father. Esau "made savory food, and brought it to his father" (v. 31). Esau made his way proudly making his way into his father's tent. He was carrying the delicious meal, and he anticipated only good things. He and his father would share a meal together. No doubt Isaac would compliment Esau on his excellent hunting skills and praise the robust flavor of the freshly killed game. Esau knew that he had been an obedient son (ironically, Jacob had also been obedient to his mother,

though not to his father). Expectations raised high, Esau and his father looked forward to enjoying the meal, and then his father would pronounce the blessing.

So, Esau entered the tent and “said to his father, ‘let my father arise and eat of his son’s game, that you may bless me’” (v.31). While similar to Jacob’s his brother’s “get up, please, sit and eat” (Genesis 27:31), the use of the third person added a sense of dignity and respect to the occasion. Esau showed more deference to his father, the patriarch of the family. Perhaps because Esau was not in the hurry that Jacob had been, he had more time for the niceties of ceremony that such a celebration demanded. In fact, Esau was to receive his father’s blessing, and he no doubt wanted to savor the moment.

But Isaac had not expected another visitor. He had, perhaps, decided to rest after the meal he had just finished eating and was just dozing off when he heard Esau enter. Hearing, but not being able to see, the person who had just pushed the tent flap aside, “Isaac his father said to him, ‘who are you?’” (v. 32). Astonished at not being expected, Esau replied “I am your son, your firstborn, Esau” (v. 32). Did he wonder if his father’s illness was worse than he thought? Did he fear his father might not be physically and mentally able to offer the blessing? Scripture does not give us insights into Esau’s thoughts. Certainly, though, he could not have immediately suspected that Jacob had had something to do with his father’s momentary confusion.

But Esau’s response did emphasize his place in the household. He was the first born. If his father was simply confused, Esau wanted to make things clear. He was the first born, and he was there to receive the blessing. But Isaac was not confused. He was furious. Spewing out words in rapid succession, “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’” (v. 33).

The description of Isaac’s emotions could not be made more clear in Scripture. The language used does not exaggerate the intensity of Isaac’s feelings. Scripture used the same language to describe the time when the people of Israel encountered Yahweh at Mount Sinai. There, the agitation upon them was severe in the extreme.

“<sup>16</sup>So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. <sup>17</sup>And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain” (Exodus 19:16).

Isaac’s body convulsed as if he were in the presence of God.

And, surely, Isaac’s question was rhetorical. He must have suddenly realized that his ears had not deceived him, though his nose and sense of touch had. It had been the voice of Jacob, because it was Jacob. In the rush of emotion, Isaac did not know yet how he had been tricked, but he knew now that tricked he had been. Yet, he made no attempt to rescind his blessing. He knew that it was the nature of a blessing was that it was irrevocable.

But Esau was not so willing to accept the fact that his blessing had been irretrievably lost. “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!’” (v. 34). It is difficult to know how to read this. Esau is a character in Scripture that provokes the reader to have mixed feelings. Esau is certainly pitiable, having had his blessing taken by his younger, treacherous brother. Yet, Esau also sounds something like a spoiled child who, realizing that he was not going to get something he wanted, was throwing a tantrum. Clearly Esau regarded the loss of the blessing as more significant than the loss of the birthright.

However we interpret Esau, Scripture makes it clear that his emotions are even greater than those of Isaac. His cry is the same intense word for the despairing wail that came out of Egypt after the death of the firstborn,

“<sup>29</sup>Now it came about at midnight that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of cattle. <sup>30</sup>Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead” (Exodus 12:29-30).

So, whether we feel sorry for him or not, Esau was indeed suffering.

And his suffering was increased by the fact that Isaac refused to change his mind. Acknowledging the act, Isaac said, “your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing” (v. 35). Isaac did not try to hide the fact that he had been fooled. He did not offer any mitigating circumstances, though he could have blamed his poor eyesight or his failing health. Neither did he make any excuses for Jacob. Perhaps having regained himself, Isaac seems to speak matter-of-factly, with resignation that what had been done had been done and there was nothing he could do about it. Whether received sincerely or not, the blessing, once given, could not be revoked. Isaac knew this, and Esau was having to come to understand it as well.

Though unlikely, perhaps it would have eased Esau’s pain somewhat to know that one day Jacob would be the victim of such treachery by a family member himself. The story is familiar.

“<sup>21</sup>Then Jacob said to Laban, ‘give me my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her.’ <sup>22</sup>Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast. <sup>23</sup>Now in the evening he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her. <sup>24</sup>Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. <sup>25</sup>So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, ‘what is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?’ <sup>26</sup>But Laban said, ‘it is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn. <sup>27</sup>Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years’” (Genesis 29:21-27).

We cannot fail to see the irony. In this narrative, Jacob, the younger brother, tricked his father into giving him what was by right the blessing of the first born. Later, Jacob himself will be tricked by being given the first born of Laban’s daughters, when in fact he had chosen the younger for his bride.

Continuing to try to persuade his father to give him some kind of blessing, Esau's exasperation was directed first at Jacob, but also at his unwitting father who had so easily been duped. "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?'" (v. 36). Whether the report of Jacob having taken away Esau's birthright was new to Isaac, Scripture does not say. In any case, Isaac did not ask about the previous encounter, but simply "replied 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?'" (v. 37).

One point to make is to see how easily Esau equated the treachery of Jacob in stealing his blessing, with the transaction regarding the birthright. Esau glossed over his role in the birthright episode. He did not disclose his disregard for the birthright, or how easily and flippantly he let it go. To Esau, Jacob "took away my birthright" (v. 36), when in fact Esau had traded it for a bowl of stew. Esau also shifted blame to Isaac. He reproached his father for his lack of foresight in not reserving a part of the blessing in case he was fooled. Esau simply could not understand why his father had not been more careful and made certain he was giving his blessing to the correct son.

Painfully, Isaac recounted to Esau the blessing he had given Jacob. He had "made him your master . . . and with grain and new wine I have sustained him" (v. 37). The emphasis now was less on what Jacob had done, than on who Jacob had become. The blessing Isaac had given was complete. All had been bestowed, there was nothing left for Esau to claim.

But Esau still would not give up. He would take any blessing his father could offer. "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" (v. 38). Mournfully, Esau was beginning to realize how much he had lost. But Isaac had nothing to give his son. He could only reply not with a blessing, but with something that seemed more like a curse,

<sup>39</sup>Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling,  
And away from the dew of heaven from above.

<sup>40</sup>By your sword you shall live,  
And your brother you shall serve;  
But it shall come about when you become restless,  
That you will break his yoke from your neck" (v. 39-40).

The parallels between this oracle, and the blessing Jacob received are striking, and a comparison of the two is worthwhile. To Jacob, Isaac had said,

<sup>27</sup>See, the smell of my son  
Is like the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed;

<sup>28</sup>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;

<sup>29</sup>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" (Genesis 27:27-29).

First, we can notice that Isaac did not invoke the Lord in his oracle to Esau, as he had done with Jacob (Genesis 27:28). To Esau, Isaac had not given a blessing from the Lord, but simply stated the realities of Esau's having not received the blessing given to Jacob. As Jacob's received the 'fatness of the earth, and an abundance of grain and new wine" (v. 28), Esau was sent "away from the fertility of the earth . . . and away from the dew of heaven" (v. 39). While Jacob was promised that "peoples [will] serve you, and nations bow down to you" (v. 29), Esau was told that "by your sword you shall live" (v. 39). Finally, while Jacob was told that he would "be master of your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you" (v.29), Esau was told that "your brother you shall serve" (v. 40).

This was bleak in the extreme. Esau would struggle to survive. He would have no success in agriculture. He would endure only by fighting, and yet he would ultimately be defeated and come under the authority of his brother's family line.

But within this very discouraging oracle, Esau had heard one hopeful hint. Isaac said that "it shall come about when you become restless, that you will break his yoke from your neck" (v. 40). The metaphor was that of the line of Esau being like a domesticated animal that longed to return to the wild. The language reminds the reader of Ishamel, that "wild donkey of a man" (Genesis 16:12), who also led a life in the desert wastelands of Canaan. And history would bear out Isaac's prophecy. The descendants of Esau were the Edomites, and their interaction with the neighboring Israelites was marked by violence and struggle.

During the Exodus, "Edom, however, said to him, 'you shall not pass through us, or I will come out with the sword against you'" (Numbers 20:18).

In the time of Saul, "Now when Saul had taken the kingdom over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, the sons of Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines; and wherever he turned, he inflicted punishment" (1 Samuel 14:47).

In the times of David and Solomon, "<sup>14</sup>Then the Lord raised up an adversary to Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was of the royal line in Edom. <sup>15</sup>For it came about, when David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army had gone up to bury the slain, and had struck down every male in Edom <sup>16</sup>(for Joab and all Israel stayed there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom)" (1 Kings 11:14-16).

During the Divided Kingdom, "<sup>20</sup>In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves. <sup>21</sup>Then Joram crossed over to Zair, and all his chariots with him. And he arose by night and struck the Edomites who had surrounded him and the captains of the chariots; but his army fled to their tents. <sup>22</sup>So Edom revolted against Judah to this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time" (2 Kings, 8:20-22).

## **Revenge and Escape**

But the promise that one day he would eventually break the yoke of his younger brother did not assuage Esau's anger. Instead, "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'" (v. 41). Esau planned fratricide. Similar to Cain, Esau was prompted by anger. And similar to Cain, Esau plotted his revenge.

This idea of harboring a grudge describes an emotion that, in Scripture, is invariably linked with the threat of violent retaliation. It is the same word used by Joseph's brothers when they realized that their brother was alive and in charge of all of Egypt (Genesis 50:15). They knew they were entirely in his control and at his mercy. They feared that the resentment Joseph carried would manifest itself in their destruction. Though Joseph carried no such resentment, his brothers feared it nonetheless. Esau felt the same desire to avenge himself on his brother that Joseph's brothers felt threatened by. Yet, interestingly, Esau seemed to feel able to act on his anger only after his father had died. Though he must have known that he was the favored son, and much preferred to Jacob, he still did not wish to cause his father grief by taking away even a less liked son.

While Esau plotted in his heart, somehow, again, however, Rebekah heard what was going to happen. In this case, however, it seems she was not listening to the conversation. After all, Esau had "said to himself" what he was going to do to Jacob. Therefore, either Esau must have told someone, or else a person (perhaps a servant of Esau's) discerned from Esau's actions and the circumstances of the stolen blessing, and concluded what was going to happen. It would not even be out of character to think that Rebekah closely watched Esau expecting some retaliation for the loss of the blessing. In any case, someone found out that Esau was planning the murder of his brother and reported it to Rebekah.

And again, Rebekah had a plan. <sup>42</sup>"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. <sup>43</sup>Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban!'" (v. 42-43). Rebekah had a contingency for every emergency, it seemed. In this case, she relied upon the good nature of her brother, still living in Paddan Aram, to take in her son (his nephew) and protect him. Such a journey was not unreasonable. After all, Abraham had sent a servant to that same family to procure a wife for Isaac, as Rebekah well knew. Rebekah must have reasoned that with Jacob gone, Esau would not be angry enough to pursue him. Perhaps out of sight would be out of mind.

So, again Rebekah commanded Jacob to obey her, and again he followed her instructions. That Rebekah thought this would not impair Jacob's ability to inherit the family property was indicated by the timetable she set. <sup>44</sup>"Stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury subsides, <sup>45</sup>until your brother's anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?" (v. 44-45). Both Rebekah and Jacob must have realized that any lengthy removal of Jacob from Canaan would *de facto* result in Esau obtaining both the bartered birthright and the stolen blessing. Yet, time would prove that Rebekah was quite unrealistic, and from

Jacob's later behavior, it is doubtful that he had believed her sanguine prediction that Esau's anger would subside in a few days. In fact, some twenty years later, when returning from Paddan-Aram,

“<sup>3</sup>Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. <sup>4</sup>He also commanded them saying, ‘thus you shall say to my lord Esau: “thus says your servant Jacob, ‘I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed until now; <sup>5</sup>I have oxen and donkeys and flocks and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.’”””

“<sup>6</sup>The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, ‘we came to your brother Esau, and furthermore he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.’ <sup>7</sup>Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and the herds and the camels, into two companies; <sup>8</sup>for he said, ‘if Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the company which is left will escape’” (Genesis 32:3-8).

Even twenty years later, Jacob doubted that his brother had forgiven him. So, it turned out that it was not the subsiding of Esau's wrath but the anger of Laban that would prompt Jacob to leave Paddan-Aram and return home. And when he returned, he would make peace with both his father, Isaac (Genesis 35:27), and his brother (Genesis 33:4). But sadly, Scripture makes no further mention of Rebekah, except of the place of her burial (Genesis 49:31). Her reunion with her favorite son after twenty years exile is omitted from Scripture. So we are left to speculate how her meddling impacted her relationship with her husband and her sons.

### **Takeaways**

It is heartbreaking when familial relationships are marked by deceit and untruth. Trust is lost, and intimacy is crushed. Usually the destruction is not as impactful as that of this family. Few of us will be exiled from the ones we love for two decades, but it is not unheard of. May God equip us through His Holy Spirit to be people of truth, especially to those closest to us, so that we may enjoy all that He has for us in our relationships.