

The Book of Genesis

Chapter 27

27:1 *When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see,...* (NIV)

Weak Eyes

This seemed to be a genetic problem which was passed on to his son Jacob: "*Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see.*" (48:10)

27:1 (cont.)-4 *...he called for Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." "Here I am," he answered. Isaac said, "I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death. Now then, get your weapons [Hebrew: "keley" = instruments of any kind]—your quiver and bow—and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die.*" (NIV)

Binding Covenant

Beginning with God's covenant with Noah after the Flood, the indication is that a covenant was not considered binding unless an animal had been killed, cut in two and the parties had shared it.

27:5-10 *Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, 'Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the LORD before I die.' Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies."* (NIV)

Jacob over Esau

We are never told if Rebekah told Isaac that God had told her "*the elder would serve the younger.*" If she had, it would seem that Isaac would have discussed this with God earlier to see whether he should pronounce the blessing on Jacob.

27:11-12 *Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "But my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I'm a man with smooth skin. What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing."* (NIV)

Jacob & Rebekah's Deception

Jacob did not object to deceiving his father, but did not believe he could actually pass for his brother.

27:13 *His mother said to him, "My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me."* (NIV)

Rebekah was sure the deception would work, based on the prophecy God had given her before the twins were born.

27:14-17 *So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it. Then Rebekah took the best clothes of Esau her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins. Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made.* (NIV)

According to tradition, the "best clothes of Esau" referred to the "garment of skins" that God had made for Adam, which had been passed down, possessed even by Nimrod, eventually coming into Esau's possession.

The coverings over Jacob's hands must have been tight-fitting gloves in order to pass the scrutiny of Isaac's examination.

27:18-20 *He went to his father and said, "My father." "Yes, my son," he answered. "Who is it?" Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may give me your blessing." Isaac asked his son, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?" "The LORD your God gave me success," he replied.* (NIV)

At this point, Jacob refers to Isaac's God because:

1. As a son of a patriarch he was obligated to mention the God of the family in reference to the patriarch
2. He had not yet been called to a personal relationship with God.

27:21-29 *Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not." Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him. "Are you really my son Esau?" he asked. "I am," he replied. Then he said, "My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing." Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come here, my son, and kiss me." So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed. May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness—an abundance of grain and new wine. May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed." (NIV)*

The Blessing

Moses is quoting the exact blessing, using "Elohim," the name by which the patriarchs knew God. Isaac used "Elohim" rather than "El Shaddai" [Heaper of blessings], because "Elohim" [God of justice or judgment] shows that the blessings will ultimately be realized only when his descendants are obedient to the conditions of the covenant. God will judge whether future generations will have these blessings, or

whether they will be withheld. The latter part of the blessing ["*Be lord over your brothers...*"] was a ritualistic statement that gave the recipient the right to become the new patriarch and have authority over all the other members of the household.

Although Jacob procured the blessing in a deceitful way, God had determined that he would receive it before he was born in order to emphasize His promises were predicated on His will, not on birth order nor human efforts. Paul explains this in ROM 9:8-15, "...*They which are the children of the flesh...are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise...Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived...(the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that [NEB] God's selective purpose might stand, based not upon men's deeds but upon the call of God); It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger."*

God chose Jacob over Esau because He was showing that His plan was based solely upon what He, as God, chose to do, not what man decided based upon his choices or laws.

27:30-33 After Isaac finished blessing him and Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting. He too prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Then he said to him, "My father, sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing." His father Isaac asked him, "Who are you?" "I am your son," he answered, "your firstborn, Esau." Isaac trembled violently and said, "Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him—and indeed he will be blessed!" (NIV)

The blessing was irrevocable.

27:34-35 When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me—me too, my father!" But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing." Esau said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!" Then he asked, "Haven't you reserved any blessing for me?" (NIV)

Prophetic Statement

According to Joseph's statement in 41:32, the reason the dream of abundance and famine was given to Pharaoh in two forms was because the matter has been firmly decided by God. Esau's statement was prophetic. God had decided before Jacob's birth that he would receive the promises made to Abraham, and by the acquisition of both the **birthright** [bekorah] and the **blessing** [berakah] the matter was concluded.

27:37 Isaac answered Esau, "I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. So what can I possibly do for you, my son?" (NIV)

Esau's Blessing

The birthright was what the firstborn received as his right of being born first—a double portion (DEU 21:17). The birthright automatically came to the firstborn. However, the actual designation of the double portion wasn't carried out until later, toward the end of the father's life. All of the ramifications of the birthright were confirmed at a blessing ceremony, at which time the blessings which came with the

birthright were enumerated. Esau still qualified for 1/3 of Isaac's inheritance. Just like Reuben later lost the birthright, but received a blessing along with the other tribes, so Esau could still receive a blessing. He might have thought he could possibly regain the birthright through a blessing. However, due to the blessing given to Jacob, whatever blessings Isaac would give Esau would automatically become Jacob's.

27:38-39 And Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. 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.

This is the reference that Paul uses in HEB 12:17. When Esau wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears. Isaac goes on to give him a blessing, even though it would become Jacob's. The blessing entailed "fatness" which is from a Hebrew root word which can mean oil.

27:40 By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; but when you break loose [NIV: "grow restless"], you shall break his yoke from your neck." (NRS)

Breaking Jacob's Yoke

Esau's descendants became very restless once Israel became an established state. Wars against Israel were launched in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973. During this period of restlessness, Esau was prophesied to break Jacob's yoke. In 1973 the yoke of the control of Esau's oil reserves which Jacob had enjoyed for decades was broken when the Middle East oil-producing countries cut off their oil shipments.

27:41-44 Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob." When Rebekah was told what her older son Esau had said, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Your brother Esau is consoling himself with the thought of killing you. Now then, my son, do what I say: Flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran. Stay with him for a while until your brother's fury subsides. (NIV)

Time Frame

Jacob was gone 40 years. Since Rebekah is not mentioned after Jacob returned, it is assumed she died while he was away.

27:45 When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him, I'll send word for you to come back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?" (NIV)

Sending Jacob Away

There is no indication that she ever sent him word. If Esau killed Jacob, the patriarchal law required an avenger of blood to kill him.

27:46 Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I'm disgusted with living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living." (NIV)

Rebekah used this guise to get Isaac to send Jacob away because she did not want to tell him the truth about Esau's threat. Since the Hittite wives of Esau were a "source of grief" to Isaac (26:35), Rebekah probably figured that Isaac would not hesitate to agree with her proposal.