

## Shaken to the Core 9-2-07

Genesis 27:1-40

In our last chapter we saw Isaac rise out of fear and deception to great heights of trusting in the LORD who had promised to be with him and bless him. Abimelech saw that the LORD was with him and sought an alliance. Isaac was stepping into the role of prince with integrity and trust in the God who provided water for his increasing flocks. But in the current chapter, he has settled into the comfort of God's blessing. He seems to be fixated on his favorite meals. Worst of all, he had decided that he knew better than God. I'm sure Rebecca would not let him forget that it was the younger that would rule over the older. (Genesis 25:23) He knew that was God's plan. The very same thing had happened him and his brother. So why was he intent on blessing Esau instead of Jacob?

We learned that Esau was his favorite. (Genesis 25:28) The preparation of the wild game was a factor, but I think there was much more. Have you seen fathers that try to vicariously live their sports fantasies through their son? Keep in mind that the blessed seed is predicted to crush the head of the serpent. (Genesis 3:15) Did Isaac fall into the same faulty expectations that first century Israel would have, a Messiah warrior, a superman that could defeat any foe? Or was he trying to score one more victory in the ongoing battle with his headstrong wife? Whatever the reason, Isaac had decided he would oppose God's choice.

<sup>4</sup> 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." Isaac would live another 20 years at least, but he didn't know that, and with his failed eyesight, he thought he had better take care of this important matter before it was too late. The word in the NIV "like" is "love" in the KJV. It could be translated "cherish", "the tasty food I cherish". We can see the association with carnal indulgencies and an intentional effort to act against God's revealed will. The two usually go together. (Proverbs 23:1,2)

Esau headed off to the fields with his bow and weapons. Rebecca had overheard the conversation. Tent walls aren't great for keeping secrets. This reminds us of Sarah who from within her tent overheard the LORD and laughed at His prediction that she would have a child. (Genesis 18:10-13) That child was Isaac. Surely Rebecca had heard the story a hundred times and yet she failed to relate the two situations. Sarah had laughed at God's ability to bring His will to pass and now Rebecca was doing the same. How easily we discern the faults of others while we are unable to see our own. She began plotting to bring about God's will by deceit.

She called Jacob in and ordered him, <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies." She thought that unless she intervened, the prediction of God would not come to pass. She emphasized the importance and finality of the blessing by adding to Isaac's words, "in the presence of the LORD". She justified her deception with the thought that it was God's will. It is so easy for us to do the same. But God does not

**Commented [notes1]:** 23 The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."

**Commented [notes2]:** 28 Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

**Commented [notes3]:** 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

**Commented [notes4]:** 1 When you sit to dine with a ruler, note well what is before you, 2 and put a knife to your throat if you are given to gluttony.

**Commented [notes5]:** 10 Then the LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.  
11 Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing.  
12 So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"  
13 Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?'"

need our help, and he certainly doesn't desire our unrighteous acts involved in bringing His will to pass. We don't need to exaggerate our testimony to win someone to Christ. We don't need to use unethical practices to provide a living for our family. God will direct and bless us when we do things in righteousness, things that are consistent with His character. (Psalm 36:3)

**Commented [notes6]:** 3 The words of his mouth are wicked and deceitful; he has ceased to be wise and to do good.

Jacob could see the potential for disaster in the plan. <sup>11</sup> *Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "But my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I'm a man with smooth skin. <sup>12</sup> 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."* The blessing would undoubtedly involve the laying on of hands for the blessing. Jacob knew that touch would give him away. Esau was hairy, and he was smooth. The word for "smooth" in Hebrew has the same double meaning that our word has. "He is a smooth talker", means that the person can say things in a way that can convince you of something untrue. "Slick" might be closer to the Hebrew idea. Genesis is overflowing with sound alike words and words of double meanings, repeated scenarios and word picture clues. Another example is Esau's skill at hunting. Nimrod was a great hunter. (Genesis 10:9) The characters share the same base desires. These clues prepare us for the outcome.

**Commented [notes7]:** 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD."

Rebekah took full responsibility for the scheme and even said she would accept the curse if one was given. She was willing to risk it all to see that her choice of sons received the blessing. Her actions resulted in her never seeing her son again. Apparently she preceded Isaac in death before Jacob returned from his exile. When we justify sin to have our personal preference, the cost may be losing the very thing we hoped to save. (Matthew 16:25) If you are tempted to use religious spin to justify your personal desire, beware! The powerful desires of our heart can justify almost anything, even playing God.

**Commented [notes8]:** 25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

While Esau was out hunting, Jacob brought in a few young goats from the herd. His mother prepared them like she knew Isaac loved it. She knew a way to a man's heart. Then she used the skins to cover Jacob's neck and hands and put him in Esau's best clothes. How strange he must have looked, almost comical if it weren't for the fear on his face. I imagine he was trembling as he entered Isaac's tent with the plate heaped with goat meat and fresh bread.

<sup>18</sup> *He went to his father and said, "My father." "Yes, my son," he answered. "Who is it?"* <sup>19</sup> *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."* This is his first lie. Did he choke on the words, "I am Esau your firstborn"? Declaring himself to be Esau and the firstborn was a double lie and accentuated the fact that what he was doing was altogether crooked. (Psalm 120:2)

**Commented [notes9]:** 2 Save me, O LORD, from lying lips and from deceitful tongues.

<sup>20</sup> *Isaac asked his son, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?" "The LORD your God gave me success," he replied.* Lie number two is blasphemous. (Psalm 52:2-4) Jacob declares that JHWH was helping him find the game. When we drag God into our lie, we sink to an all time low. Now the tension really begins.

**Commented [notes10]:** 2 Your tongue plots destruction; it is like a sharpened razor, you who practice deceit.  
3 You love evil rather than good, falsehood rather than speaking the truth. Selah  
4 You love every harmful word, O you deceitful tongue!

<sup>21</sup> 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." <sup>22</sup> 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." Jacob's heart must have been racing as he approached his father. Jacob was right, the voice gave him away. But Rebekah's trick worked just as she had planned. Isaac chose the wrong son because of his senses and now those same senses were deceiving him into blessing the right son. If our senses lead us, they can just as well deceive us! (Proverbs 3:5)

**Commented [notes11]:** 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

<sup>24</sup> "Are you really my son Esau?" he asked. "I am," he replied. Three times was the charm. Isaac fell for the third lie. The irrevocable blessing was about to be given, but first, Isaac had to eat. Food first, blessing last, a strange order. It was the birth order, carnal and then spiritual. It is the order of our life because we are fallen.

There was one more moment of heart pounding tension. <sup>26</sup> Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come here, my son, and kiss me." <sup>27a</sup> So he went to him and kissed him. Imagine receiving the kiss you knew was for your brother, wondering if at any second you'd be discovered and forever have your father's disdain. How did he keep from shaking? What flood of emotions must have engulfed Jacob!

This "my father" and "my son" exchange took place previously with Isaac, only that time Isaac was the son and Abraham was the father. It was on Mount Moriah where the promise was renewed. It was about to be confirmed again through Isaac but not in the way Isaac thought. Isaac ate his fill and blessed Jacob disguised as Esau. He musters his strength and clarity of mind to seal the favor upon his son Esau, but it is Jacob that is being blessed. (Isaiah 46:10)

**Commented [notes12]:** 10 I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

The blessing had four parts. "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed. The smell reminded Isaac of the Promised Land, rich and productive.

<sup>28</sup> May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness-- an abundance of grain and new wine. Israel depends on the humid air to bring dew throughout the majority of the year when there are no rains. Dew pictured refreshment and rejuvenation. The picture the words paint is of prosperity and blessing. (Deuteronomy 33:13)

**Commented [notes13]:** 13 About Joseph he said: "May the LORD bless his land with the precious dew from heaven above and with the deep waters that lie below;

<sup>29</sup> 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. This was an utter rejection of God's word before their births. Isaac wanted the power, might and authority to be in the hands of Esau. He wanted to be certain the word of the Lord was utterly turned around. In doing so he was fulfilling it in detail. We stand in awe as God causes the wrath of man to praise Him. (Psalm 76:10) Of his own free will he defied God's word and to his chagrin ended up bringing it to pass.

**Commented [notes14]:** 10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

*May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed.* "If there was any doubt that Isaac wanted Esau to be the superhero to inherit and fulfill the promise given to Eve, this fourth part of the blessing should make it clear. These

were the words to Abraham in **Genesis 12:2,3**. Isaac wanted Esau to be the promised seed in spite of what God had said.

No sooner had Jacob left in his Esau costume, than Esau entered. Though God wasn't orchestrating the deception, we can't help but see his hand keeping Esau from walking in on his father and Jacob in disguise. I shudder to think of how that kind of an encounter would have ended. Jacob was probably putting back Esau's clothes when Esau came to his father with the same word Jacob had uttered earlier. *"My father, sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing."*

The reality must have come crashing in on Isaac, but on top of that, the realization that he had strayed from the Lord. <sup>32</sup> *His father Isaac asked him, "Who are you?" "I am your son," he answered, "your firstborn, Esau."* <sup>33</sup> *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!"* God's word came to pass in spite of Isaac's insistence that Esau be the one. He must have suddenly realized how far he had backslidden and that God had caught him using his own weakness for the sensual. (**Job 42:5,6**) I think that is the reason for the violent trembling. Thank God that our backsliding often results in these heart-shattering wake up calls. We think of Nathan's words to David (**2Samuel 12:7**), Saul on the road to Damascus (**Acts 9:3,4**), and the prodigal desiring the pig slop (**Luke 15:16,17**). The mercy of God allows the consequences of sin to slap us in the face.

Though Esau had nonchalantly sold his birthright, he wanted this blessing. Perhaps growing older had given him a more mature outlook. Without this blessing he'd end up with nothing. <sup>34</sup> *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 in Isaac's zeal to see Esau get it all, he had given it all to Jacob. There was nothing left. The blessing he gave Esau was almost an opposite of what he had pronounced over Isaac. I believe that in the realization of how far he had backslidden, he realized that God was sovereign and brought His word to pass. Isaac knew there was no way to change the will of God. (**Numbers 11:23**)

He promised Esau that his home would be away from the richness of the earth and the dew of heaven, that he would live by the sword, and that he would serve his brother. He did offer one ray of hope, that when he grew restless, he would throw off the yoke.

Before you get too sympathetic for Esau, remember the words of Hebrews 12:15-17 that covered last week. <sup>15</sup> *See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.* <sup>16</sup> *See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.* <sup>17</sup> *Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.* He went down in history as what not to be. He was godless, immoral, and bitter. Israel did subjugate the Edomites and they did throw off the

**Commented [notes15]:** 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

**Commented [notes16]:** 5 My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. 6 Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

**Commented [notes17]:** 7 Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul.

**Commented [notes18]:** 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.

**Commented [notes19]:** 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. 17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!

**Commented [notes20]:** 23 The LORD answered Moses, "Is the LORD's arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you."

yoke. Isaac's oracle came to pass in detail during the days of the kings. (2Chronicles 21:10)

This story has no righteous characters. They were all sinners. Rebekah thought she needed to help God out and lied and brought others into her lie to bring her will to pass. She ended up never seeing her favorite son again. Isaac boldly tried to defy God. He ended up broken and defeated by his wife and son, but more importantly by God. God shook him to the core. We can only hope the tragedy kept him close to the Lord during the remaining 20 years of his long life. Godless and immoral Esau left with a seething bitterness and added to his sins by marrying an Ishmaelite woman. Jacob went off to reap what he had sown. His uncle would deceive him as he had deceived his aged father. The home was torn apart, never to be the same. (Job 4:8)

What would have happened if Rebecca had not intervened? Do you think God could have fulfilled His word all on His own? The tragedy, hard feelings, and the separations, all would have been avoided. How often we think we have a better idea, only to create a disaster! Then we turn around and ask God how He could have let it happen. We were only trying to help God out. Well, there was that little matter of trying to have our own way, but we'd rather not examine that aspect. It's easier to blame God. (Genesis 3:12)

Rebekah had a better idea for bringing God's will to pass. Remember, when you make excuses for sin, it usually ends in disaster. Let God bring it to pass, especially if your desire is wrapped up in it. (Psalm 37:5)

Isaac had a better idea for a savior, testosterone driven Esau. Our Savior rarely intervenes the way you think He will. He rarely comes in with a strong arm. He'd rather change the hard heart. That has a more lasting effect. (Ezekiel 11:19)

Isaac had allowed his heart to be hardened to the Word of God. I don't think he one day said, "I'm going to defy God and pick Esau!" It probably happened to him like it happens to us. A compromise here and a compromise there and soon we have justified in our mind doing what we want, regardless of God's Word. He was supposed to bless Isaac, but he preferred Esau. His love for the tasty game and preference for Esau's manliness drew his heart away from God's will to the point that it no longer bothered him. Maybe he even thought he had changed God's mind. But in that moment of realization that God had His way, he came to the realization of the hardness of his heart.

The psalmist tells us to bless the Lord! (Psalm 34:1) Isaac's hardness of heart had him desiring to bless the father of the enemies of God's people instead of the ancestor of Messiah. When our hearts are hardened by love for our own choice of "tasty game", we bless, or kneel before, what is drawing us away from God instead of to Him. Before we are slapped in the face with a sudden realization that we have turned against God, before we have our own violent trembling, let us turn away from anything we would kneel before other than the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me. Bless His holy name!

**Commented [notes21]:** 10 To this day Edom has been in rebellion against Judah. Libnah revolted at the same time, because Jehoram had forsaken the LORD, the God of his fathers.

**Commented [notes22]:** 8 As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it.

**Commented [notes23]:** 12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

**Commented [notes24]:** 5 Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:

**Commented [notes25]:** 19 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.

**Commented [notes26]:** 1 I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.