

GENESIS

Chapter 27

Isaac Blesses Jacob

When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau his older son and said to him, "My son"; and he answered, "Here I am." 2 He said, "Behold, I am old; I do not know the day of my death. 3 Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me, 4 and prepare for me delicious food, such as I love, and bring it to me so that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die." 5 Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it, 6 Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, 7 'Bring me game and prepare for me delicious food, that I may eat it and bless you before the LORD before I die.' 8 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice as I command you. 9 Go to the flock and bring me two good young goats, so that I may prepare from them delicious food for your father, such as he loves. 10 And you shall bring it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies." 11 But Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "Behold, my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. 12 Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be mocking him and bring a curse upon myself and not a blessing." 13 His mother said to him, "Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, bring them to me." 14 So he went and took them and brought them to his mother, and his mother prepared delicious food, such as his father loved. 15 Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her older son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. 16 And the skins of the young goats she put on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. 17 And she put the delicious food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. 18 So he went in to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" 19 Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me." 20 But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" He answered, "Because the LORD your God granted me success." 21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not." 22 So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, who felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." 23 And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands. So he blessed him. 24 He said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He answered, "I am." 25 Then he said, "Bring it near to me, that I may eat of my son's game and bless you." So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. 26 Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near and kiss me, my son." 27 So he came near and kissed him. And Isaac smelled the smell of his garments and blessed him and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed! 28 May God give you of the dew of heaven and plenty of the fatness of the earth and wine. 29 Let your peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!" 30 As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, Esau his brother came in from his hunting. 31 He also prepared delicious food and brought it to his father. And he said to his

father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me." 32 His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." 33 Then Isaac trembled very violently and said, "Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed." 34 As soon as 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!" 35 But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing." 36 Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times. He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." Then he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" 37 Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Behold, I have made him lord over you, and all his brothers I have given to him for servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son?" 38 Esau said to his father, "Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father." And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. 39 Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: "Behold, away from the fatness of the earth shall your dwelling be, and away from the dew of heaven on high. 40 By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; but when you grow restless you shall break his yoke from your neck." 41 Now Esau hated 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 approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob." 42 But the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son and said to him, "Behold, your brother Esau comforts himself about you by planning to kill you. 43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice. Arise, flee to Laban my brother in Haran 44 and stay with him a while, until your brother's fury turns away— 45 until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereft of you both in one day?" 46 Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I loathe my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women like these, one of the women of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

27:1 *eyes were dim so that he could not see.* In ancient times, blindness and near blindness were common among elderly people (see 48:10; 1Sa 4:15). (CSB)

As God carries out His great good plan for mankind He must often overrule the stubborn, misguided efforts of His own children. This chapter paints a picture of the family of Isaac which is not flattering – not to any of the four people involved. (PBC)

Isaac was the head of this important family. As husband and father, he had the primary responsibility of leading his family in the way of the Lord. Isaac was now an old man, in declining health; he seems here to have been on a sickbed (see 27:31). (PBC)

27:4 *delicious food such as I love.* Rebekah and Jacob took advantage of Isaac's love for a certain kind of food (see vv. 9, 14). (CSB)

Emphasizes Isaac's earnest wish to bless Esau despite the Lord's words (25:23) and Esau's false conduct (25:29-34; 26:34-35). By asking for a tasty meal in the midst of poor judgment, Isaac acted like Esau, who foolishly traded his birthright for stew. (TLSB)

may bless you before I die. Oral statements, including deathbed bequests (see 49:28–33), had legal force in ancient Near Eastern law. (CSB)

Before he died Isaac wanted to transmit the right of the firstborn to his favored son. (PBC)

blessing. It would be at a special meal that he would announce: Esau will succeed me as head of the family and will receive a double share of my estate,” which must indeed have been sizable. (PBC)

It is difficult to appreciate or even defend Isaac’s action. He knew that God had designated Jacob, not Esau to be the bearer of the promise. Perhaps Isaac had convinced himself that even if he gave the blessing to Esau God’s original intent would somehow not be violated. Furthermore, even though Esau was his favorite son Isaac overlooked the flaws in Esau’s character which disqualified him from being the covenant link. At the conclusion of the last chapter we noted that by marrying two heathen women Esau had shown total indifference to the Lord’s promise. Isaac’s intention here to reverse God’s decree was sinful. (PBC)

Esau shared in the guilt of that sin. Surely his parents had told him about the special revelation God had given them prior to his birth. Furthermore, in agreeing to his father’s plan, Esau violated his oath to Jacob at the time he had sold the birthright. (PBC)

27:5 The other two members of the family don’t exactly come off smelling like roses here either. Rebekah’s scheming and Jacob’s lying do little to glorify God or to demonstrate that they trusted God to carry out His promises. It has been argued, by Luther among others, that it was not wrong for Jacob to take what God had promised to him. God may indeed overrule the evil plans of sinful people, but surely He does not need them or approve of them. All four members of Jacob’s family were involved here in dishonest business, and for that each of them paid an awful price, as we shall see. (PBC)

listening. Eavesdropping. (CSB)

When Rebekah overheard Isaac explain his perverse plan to give the blessing to his favorite son, she was desperate. She realized that when the patriarch’s pronounced the Messianic blessing they did so as the Lord’s spokesmen, speaking for Him as though He was pronouncing the blessing Himself. (PBC)

27:6 *Rebekah.* Throughout the Jacob story the author develops a wordplay on “birthright” (*bekorah*) and “blessing” (*berakah*), both of which Jacob seeks to obtain; and Rebekah (*ribqah*) does her best to further the cause of her favorite son. (CSB)

said to her son Jacob. The parental favoritism mentioned in 25:28 is about to bear its poisonous fruit. (CSB)

She was afraid that if she didn’t act quickly, before Esau returned from hunting, Jacob would forever have lost the blessing. Rebekah knew, on the one hand, that her husband was evading the express will of God. But in her otherwise laudable attempt to further God’s will, she likewise stooped to dishonesty.

27:8 *my son,... do what I tell you.* Rebekah proves to be just as deceitful as Jacob, whose very name signifies deceit (see NIV text notes on v. 36; 25:26). (CSB)

Rebekah remembered the Lord’s promise (25:23) and acted to secure the blessing for Jacob. Seeing that Isaac was acting against the Lord’s will, she deemed any means appropriate, even deceiving her husband. (TLSB)

In Rebekah’s reaction to Isaac’s plan we can hear her sinful nature speaking. Her motivation was not the glory of God but the welfare of her favorite son. (PBC)

Two wrongs don't make a right. Shows what happens when one loses touch with Scripture. Also shows what happens with we take things into our own hands and force an issue.

27:9-10 *prepare* – She would use her cooking ability to deceive her husband into thinking that the goat meat he was eating was wild game, and she convinced Jacob to deceive his nearly blind father into giving him the coveted blessing while imagining he was blessing Esau. (PBC)

27:11-12 *but* – Jacob's response was not entirely unbecoming to the heir of God's messianic promise. Instead of, "Mother, are you asking me to lie?" his response was, "What if I get caught? I could end up with father's curse resting on me instead of his blessing!" (PBC)

27:13 *let the curse be on me*. Cf. the similar self-imprecation in Mt 27:25. (CSB)

Rebekah did not directly address Jacob's concern (v. 12). She merely demonstrated conviction regarding the Lord's word, even at the risk of Isaac's curse. (TLSB)

"You do as I say" satisfied Jacob. (PBC)

27:15 *best garments* – Suggests an important religious ceremony. (TLSB)

To make his lie more believable, Jacob even put on some of Esau's clothing, knowing it would have Esau's characteristic scent. (PBC)

house – Hebrew can generically refer to a household or a tent. (TLSB)

27:19 *your firstborn* – Merely the false statement "I am Esau" would have been sufficient. Sensing Isaac's suspicion, Jacob overreacted and tried to strengthen his lie. The Hebrew for "firstborn" resembles "blessing." Jacob sought the blessing of the firstborn. (TLSB)

He tried to imitate Esau's voice, so that the aged patriarch was confused. He was lying through his teeth, he was behaving lovelessly to his father, to whom he owed obedience and respect. (PBC)

27:20 *your God*. Consistent with Jacob's language elsewhere (31:5, 42; 32:9). Not until his safe return from Haran did he speak of the Lord as his own God (cf. 28:20–22; 33:18–20). (CSB)

When his father asked how he could have returned from the hunt so quickly, Jacob even dragged God's name into the deceit. That's blasphemy. (PBC)

Cf. 31:5, 42; 32:9. Jacob did not confess Yahweh to be his own God until he returned from Haran (28:20-22; 33:18:18-20).

27:21 *COME NEAR SO I CAN TOUCH YOU* – To this Luther comments: "If I had been Jacob I would have dropped the dish and run from the scene as though my head were on fire. (PBC)

27:22 , wearing Esau's clothing and with the skin of goats covering his neck and arms, drew closer and acted out the lie his mother had concocted. (PBC)

27:23 *so he blessed him* – Here, "bless" refers to the beginning of the ritual and all its parts: the kiss, meal, and pronounced words of blessing. (TLSB)

27:24 *Are you really my son Esau?* To the very end of the charade, Isaac remained suspicious. (CSB)

27:26 *kiss me* – A kiss is part of the final blessing ritual. The physical touch indicates the transfer of authority from the dying father to the son. (TLSB)

27:27-40 Although Isaac wished to undo the Lord’s favor to Jacob, the Lord worked through their shortcomings to fulfill His promise. Jacob indeed was blessed undeservedly to receive earthly gifts and to be the vessel to carry on the family line leading to Christ. In contrast, Esau received the misfortune he deserved. Cf. Heb. 12:16-17. (TLSB)

27:27 *kissed him*. In his attempt to obtain the covenant blessing, Jacob the father of Israel betrayed with a kiss. Jesus the great Son of Israel, who ultimately obtained the blessing for Israel, was betrayed with a kiss (Mt 26:48–49; Lk 22:48). (CSB)

smell –This was used also to describe the Messiah, who would sacrifice Himself as a fragrant offering (Eph.5:2). Cf. Heb. 11:20. (TLSB)

smell of the field that the Lord has blessed – Isaac intended this blessing for Esau, whose venue was the open field, where flocks would feed and he would hunt. In true faith, Isaac looked forward to the promised Messiah. However, the Messiah would be born from the offspring of Jacob. (TLSB)

27:28 Luther: “The godly should acknowledge that they have their earthly things because God gives and blesses. Nor should they dream, as the heathen and the unbelievers do, that either the good or the evil things in this life come about by chance. On the contrary, they should acknowledge that these great gifts come from God” (AE 5:138). (TLSB)

Jacob said nothing about the Messianic blessing but pronounced only material prosperity on the son he imagined to be Esau. “May God give you of heaven’s dew.” In the Negev, a land of minimal rainfall, the dew is an important source of moisture, especially during the long rainless season. (PBC)

27:29 *Be lord over your brothers*. Isaac was unwittingly blessing Jacob and thus fulfilling God’s promise to Rebekah in 25:23. (CSB)

curses...blesses – Isaac promised that Jacob and his offspring would dwell in the fruitful land of Canaan, have temporal wealth, dominion over many nations, the right and honor of the firstborn, the high priestly and royal honor, and God’s constant favor. God would be a friend to those who intended good to Jacob and his offspring. God would be a foe to those who opposed them. But above all, Isaac looked to the coming Messiah in this blessing. It is He who would be born from Jacob’s offspring, who is the true firstborn, the King of kings, the one High Priest, from whom all blessing comes and whom all nations must serve. (TLSB)

This statement Isaac had no business making. He was trying to divert to Esau a blessing God had designated for Jacob. (PBC)

The fact that God overruled Isaac’s presumptuous self-will and saw to it that Jacob got the promised blessing does not excuse the treachery of either Rebekah or Jacob. Sin remains sin, and both mother and son lived to feel God’s displeasure over their sin. The fact that God on another occasion overruled Judas’s dastardly act of betraying the Savior and actually used it to rescue the whole world of sinners will not excuse Judas on Judgment Day either. (PBC)

27:32 *your firstborn* – Esau ironically called himself the firstborn, though he had sold this right to Jacob. (TLSB)

27:33 *Isaac trembled* – It’s not difficult to understand why Isaac trembled violently when Esau returned from the hunt; it’s shattering discovery to learn one has been deceived by one’s own wife and son. But is it possible Isaac trembled also because he realized he had just gone head-to-head with God and come off second-best? Isaac is keenly aware that God had rebuked him, and properly so. (PBC)

indeed he shall be blessed. The ancient world believed that blessings and curses had a kind of magical power to accomplish what they pronounced. But Isaac, as heir and steward of God’s covenant blessing, acknowledged that he had solemnly transmitted that heritage to Jacob by way of a legally binding bequest (see note on v. 4). (CSB)

The gifts and calling of God had been promised and would remain on the line of Jacob. Cf. Rm. 11:29. Isaac seems to have sensed that the right son has, in fact, received the blessing. Luther: “Such statements cannot and must not be changed, for God does not change His gifts. He does not revoke Baptism, absolution, and the other gifts He bestows through His Word. If He forgives me my sins, then they have truly been forgiven” (AE 5:149). (TLSB)

27:34 *great and bitter cry.* Esau’s tears “could bring about no change of mind” (Heb 12:17). (CSB)

27:35-36 *deceitfully...cheated* – While the Lord does not approve of sin, He works even through human frailty to carry out His gracious will. (TLSB)

27:36 *He took my birthright, and now he’s taken my blessing!* The Hebrew for “birthright” is *bekorah*, and for “blessing” it is *berakah*. Though Esau tried to separate birthright from blessing, the former led inevitably to the latter, since both involved the inheritance of the firstborn (see Heb 12:16–17). (CSB)

27:37 *made him lord over you* – Luther: “Jacob’s blessing includes the three hierarchies: the domestic, the royal, and the priestly. For the purpose of administering these three he also gives him the goods of the world. In the state he has the rule and government among the people, in the church he has the stewardship of the forgiveness of sins and of eternal life” (AE 5:155). (TLSB)

all his brothers – This is a Hebrew term used broadly for family members (e.g., the Shemites); may refer to Israel’s conquests during the time of Joshua’s conquest or of the monarchy. (TLSB)

27:39-40 Just as both Cain and Ishmael were estranged from the land of their families, so also Esau would live in Edom, away from the more prosperous Israelite region. Edom and Israel would become longstanding rivals. Cf. 1 Ki. 11:14-22; Ob. 10-14. (TLSB)

What the Spirit of God did direct Isaac to give his older son was a prediction of what lay ahead for Esau and his descendants. Esau’s descendants lived in the land south of the Dead Sea – a barren, rocky land, ill-suited for agriculture. It is perhaps worth noting that Isaac’s words to his sons about the dew contain a play on words, a pun. The phrases translated “of heaven’s dew (v. 28) and “away from the dew of heaven” (v. 39) are identical in Hebrew. The sacred writer used a form of literary artistry to make the contrast between the father’s words to Jacob and those to Esau all the more striking. (PBC)

If the future homeland of Esau’s descendants, the Edomites, was not suited for agriculture, what did the future hold? “You will live by the sword,” by continued violence, “and you will serve your brother.” The truthfulness of this prophecy was demonstrated during the reigns of King Saul (1 Samuel 14:47) and of King David (2 Samuel 8:14). The Edomites would be a second-rate power, although on occasion they would manage temporarily to throw off their yoke (2 Kings 8:20-22; 21:8-10). (PBC)

27:39 *away from the fatness of earth.* Cf. v. 28. Isaac's secondary blessing of Esau could be only a parody of his primary blessing of Jacob. (CSB)

Jacob Flees to Laban

41 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."⁴² 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."⁴³ Now then, my son, do what I say: Flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran.⁴⁴ Stay with him for a while until your brother's fury subsides.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?"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."

27:41 *days of mourning* – Seven-day period of mourning after his father's imminent death. (TLSB)

Esau realized at once that the future his father had predicted for him was anything but bright. Blinded by anger, he failed to see God's overruling hand in what had happened. (PBC)

27:43 *obey my voice.* Bad advice earlier (see vv. 8, 13), but sensible counsel this time. (CSB)

The whole unlovely transaction, recorded in minute detail in this chapter, must be regarded as a net loss for Rebekah and Jacob. They actually gained nothing God hadn't already promised them. Instead they both lost much. When Rebekah learned of Esau's murderous scheme, she arranged to have Jacob go to her brother's house in Haran, 500 miles north. (PBC)

27:44 *a while.* Twenty years, as it turned out (see 31:38, 41). (CSB)

The Lord of the calendar stretched that out to twenty years, and by the time her favorite son returned home Rebekah was dead. (PBC)

God saw to it that Jacob received more than the blessing. Jacob had to enroll in God's training school. Although the blessings of the birthright entitled him to a double share of the inheritance of a very wealthy father, Jacob left home with only a staff in his hand (Gen. 32:10). AS he later looked back over his life he said: "My years have been few and difficult" (Gen. 47:9). For the next twenty years God would be working to purify the faith of this patriarch, to cleanse it of self-trust and dishonesty and falsehood. (PBC)

27:45 *forgetta* – knowing Esau's erratic nature, Rebekah hoped his anger would pass. (TLSB)

both. Either Jacob and Isaac or Jacob and Esau, who would become a target for blood revenge if he killed Jacob (cf. 2Sa 14:6–7). (CSB)

If Esau killed Jacob, the nearest relative would be obligated to kill Esau. Thus, she feared the loss of both of her sons. (TLSB)

27:46 We are not told what the wives of Esau did. Very likely they continued to practice idolatrous religion with its abominations. (CSB)

Rebekah feared that Jacob, like Esau, would be estranged from God's people by Hittite wives. (TLSB)

Ch 27 Deceptive Jacob, scheming Rebekah, unwitting Isaac, and impulsive Esau all fall short of the Lord's perfect standard. Our hope cannot rest on human nature or accomplishments. We share in this fallen humanity and often act like these biblical figures. Despite this sorry state, Christ became our substitute. He loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. He was cursed so we may be blessed (Gal 3:13). Through the means of grace (Gospel and Sacraments), we receive the blessings of Christ's saving acts. • Lord, we thank You for providing a salvation that does not rely on our virtue or accomplishments. Amen. (TLSB)