

Genesis 26-27

Jacob & Esau

Chapter 26 serves as a summary of the life of Isaac and Rebekah. We see some of their highs and lows as their life is compressed into 35 verses

We enter into the only chapter fully devoted to Isaac.

While he is a key player in the genesis narrative he lives under the shadow of Abraham then takes a back seat as the story focuses upon Jacob

Two New Testament sections specifically reference Isaac

The first, located in Romans 9 we already discussed when we covered Genesis 25

The second,

Hebrews 11:20

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

And we will discuss this further when we get to chapter 27

This chapter reveals a few key details regarding Isaac

The settings was a famine that put the family on the move from **Beer-Lahai-Roi** toward Egypt

Beer-Lahai-Roi

- Where God met Hagar when she fled from Sarah – Gen 16:14
- Where Isaac meditated as he waited upon his wife - Gen 24:62

It is on this journey that The Lord appeared to Isaac

This is the first of two recorded appearances of the Lord to Isaac

Although it seems clear that he had heard the voice of the Lord earlier when God called out to Abraham not to sacrifice his son

God commands him not to go to Egypt

Famine drove Isaac to look toward Egypt.

Canaan was dependent upon regular rainfall; the Nile River watered Egypt. When drought came it would be natural to look south to Egypt for help. Isaac is instructed not to go to Egypt and promised that God would not only sustain him but magnificently multiply him.

It is in a time of trouble that Isaac hears from the lord.

Instead of going to Egypt Isaac heads south to a place known as Gerar

Gerar played a role earlier in the narrative of Genesis and is the location where Abraham first encountered Abimelech the king.

Abimelech is a title rather than a name. This is not the same person who Abraham met more than a century earlier.

[It is here in Gerar that God passed on the Abrahamic covenant to Isaac](#)

Genesis 26:3-5

Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and **ble**ss** you**; for to you and your descendants I **give all these lands**, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. **4** And I will make your **descendants multiply** as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all **these lands**; and in **your seed** all the nations of the earth shall be **bless**ed****; **5** because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.”

Here we see the four aspects of the Abrahamic covenant reviewed:

- I will bless you
- Give you land
- Multiply descendants
- In your seed all earth will be blessed

Again it is worth noting that Paul considered this part of the covenant an early form of the gospel

Galatians 3:8

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.”

We will see this same covenant passed from Isaac to Jacob and his descendants. It seems that it is always the plan of God that the Gospel be passed on. It was given to Israel to give to the world.

Failure in Gerar

Gerar is situated in south/west Israel right in the heart of Philistine country

While Philistines occupied certain portions of south/west Canaan the majority still lived on the island of Crete and would not fill Canaan until centuries later. It was the failure of Israel to occupy the land that gave place for the Philistines to take over the south

Gerar was the same place where Abraham stayed and pretended Sarah was his sister

Because Gerar was a philistine city and a place of grave danger, Isaac chose to protect himself by coming up with a plan that involved lying about his relationship with Rebekah

Genesis 26:7

And the men of the place asked about his wife. And he said, “*She is my sister*”; for he was afraid to say, “*She is my wife,*” because he thought, “lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she *is* beautiful to behold.”

3 Things seem to be that cause of his failure:

Fear

Gen 25:7 tells us he was afraid

Fear, while a strong motivator rarely leads to good decisions

Doubt

Gen 25:9 suggests that doubt also played a role

God promised Isaac that he would live in the land, not that he would be killed for the sake of his wife. Instead of trusting in the promises of Scripture, Isaac allowed his circumstances and his emotions to determine his actions.

The example of his father

The sins of the fathers are often repeated upon the children

It is an undeniable fact of life that children will learn from the behaviors of their parents. While there were many positive lessons that Isaac took from Abraham, he also learned from experience the way that Abraham handled stressful situations.

“The story reminds us that there is no richer inheritance into which a man can enter than a godly parentage, but that, after all every man has to fight his own battles and work out his own salvation”

G. Campbell Morgan

As much as may have been wrong with Jacob, we never read of him practicing this particular sin. It seems that he “Broke the mold.”

There is also something to be learned from the reaction of Abimelech

Genesis 26:10

“And Abimelech said, “What *is* this you have done to us? One of the people might soon have lain with your wife, and you would have **brought guilt on us.**”

Even a pagan culture, known for immorality knew that it was wrong to take another man’s wife

We get a summary of the years Isaac spent in Gerar

Genesis 26:13-14

The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous; for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants. So the Philistines envied him.

The remainder of the chapter focuses upon the difficulties Isaac faces as a result of the blessings of The Lord. Much of the events hinge upon a series of wells dug by Isaac and his servants

6 wells are mentioned in the chapter

- Isaac first re-dug the wells of his father
- Then he began to dig wells of his own. Each one stirred controversy with the inhabitants of the area

Isaac was very prosperous in Gerar and this prosperity led to difficulty among the philistines. Jealousy and envy led them to fill up the wells that he had dug for his livestock, servants and family. Instead of becoming bitter he dug more wells. The more he dug the more they opposed until finally he dug in a place where they left him alone.

Some see in this an example for ministry

We often get upset and even discouraged from serving when we get shut down in an attempt to do something for The Lord. A better approach is to keep going until you find an area where things are not being done. It is sad how much time is wasted fighting over the same sheep while there remains no shortage of sinners in the world.

The chapter closes with a little further insight into the character of Esau

Genesis 26:34-35

When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.

For each of the descendants of Abraham emphasis is placed upon whom they will marry. It was important for Isaac to wait many years for the Lord to provide the right person and Jacob will be sent away from Canaan to select his bride. Idolatry may have been a contributing factor as to why Isaac sent him to Haran, there must however have been other factors as well since Laban himself worshipped idols. (They were hidden later in Rachel's bags)

The New Testament in no way restricts a believer from marrying another person because of ethnicity. There are however restrictions put upon marriage.

A believer may not marry a person:

Of the same gender
When they are already married

When they are not a believer

Other conditions to consider is whether or not that person has a similar call of God upon their lives as you do. The person you marry will either be your ministry or will help support you in the ministry.

It seems that one of the key areas that Esau failed in was by rejecting the counsel of his parents. When it comes to relationships it is important that we are willing to listen to those who have spoken godly advice into our lives in the past. If you are unwilling to listen to others, that in itself is a red flag and may suggest that you are putting a relationship above your relationship with Christ.

Chapter 27 focuses on the blessing passed from Isaac to Jacob.

Isaac is a key player in the narrative and the longest living of the patriarchs, however his early years are lived under the shadow of Abraham and soon takes a back seat in the story to his son Jacob.

The New Testament refers to the life and ministry of Isaac by simply stating:

Hebrews 11:20

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

The writer of Hebrews is referring to the events recorded here in Genesis 27

The word **ble**ss, **bles**sed or **bles**sing appears 23 times in the chapter

To understand the events of this chapter it is important to keep in mind the call of God on Abraham

Genesis 12:1-3

Now the Lord had said to Abram:

“Get out of your country,

From your family

And from your father’s house,

To a land that I will show you.

I will make you a great nation;

I will bless you

And make your **name great**;
And you shall be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you **all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**”

Abraham was hand selected by God out of the world for the purpose of bringing the Messiah to mankind. In His infinite wisdom God chose to take a man and make a nation as the conduit in which the Messiah would come.

Israel is not the church but in many ways serves as an illustration of the church. We see today that God’s method of bringing the Messiah to the world is through His church. People are saved, disciple and sent.

In Genesis 26 this promise is passed on to Isaac

Genesis 26:3-4

Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants **I give all these lands**, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father.

4 And I will make your **descendants multiply** as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and **in your seed** all the nations of the **earth shall be blessed**;

In Genesis 25 Rebekah was told that the blessing would be passed to the younger of her two sons

Genesis 25:23

And the Lord said to her:

“Two nations *are* in your womb,

Two peoples shall be separated from your body;

One people shall be stronger than the other,

And **the older shall serve the younger.**”

Here in Genesis 27 we find Isaac attempting to pass the blessing intended for Jacob to his son Esau

Genesis 27:4

And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring *it* to me that I may eat, that **my soul may bless you** before I die.”

Before we look at the details of this chapter lets take a moment to consider the idea of blessings and curses.

As Isaac considers his health and that it is looking as though his life will be coming to an end, he seeks to pass along an inheritance as well as a blessing to his twin sons. The inheritance was referred to back in Genesis 25 and called “the birth right” The blessing is a prophetic promise that was spoken over the children. The power of the promise lies not in the words of Abraham but in the Word of God. It would be wrong to think that the spoken word of Isaac controlled the destiny of his children. Instead we should keep in mind that what was promised by Isaac was earlier promised by God.

At the end of our services we share the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:24-26

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be
gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance
upon you, And give you peace

These are promises that God wants to shower upon His people. The power is in the fact they are promises of God. If I were to stand and promise health, wealth and happy sailing there would be nothing to back these kind of promises.

There is wisdom in parents speaking the word of God over their children. It serves as a reminder to the parents and the children as to what God wants to accomplish in their lives and can be offered in the form of a prayer asking God to accomplish those promises in their lives.

Exposition

The chapter can easily be broken into 5 scenes based upon its content

Scene 1 – Isaac and Esau Genesis 27:1-4

Isaac was old

Isaac was 60 years old when his two sons were born (Gen. 25:24-26)

According to Jewish tradition, Jacob and Esau were 63 years old at the time of the blessings, making Isaac 123 years old at the time. He died at the age of 180 (Gen. 35:28-29), making him the longest living of the three patriarchs

Thinking that his life is over Isaac wants to pass the blessing intended for Jacob to his favorite son Esau.

Without giving reasons why the narrative makes it clear that Isaac loved Esau above Jacob and resisted the will of God in passing the blessing to his younger son.

Genesis 27:4

And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring *it* to me that I may eat, that **my soul may bless you** before I die.”

Part of this may have been cultural

Jacob will come face to face with this when he attempts to marry Rachel and gets stuck with Leah. Laban says it is against their customs to put the younger in front of the older.

Cultural taboos have often stood in the way of personal Christian growth and ministry. It is not uncommon for us to revert back to our culture rather than stand against culture with for the Word of God.

Keep in mind the teaching of God's word is counter-cultural in every culture.

Part of it may have been personal

Genesis 25:28

And Isaac loved Esau because he ate *of his game*, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Isaac's love for Esau was based upon his accomplishments. This seems to have been an unhealthy drive in Esau as he sought to earn the favor of his father. (See Gen 28:8-9)

Scene 2 – Rebekah and Jacob – Genesis 27:5-17

Upon over hearing Isaac's plan, Rebekah comes up with one of her own. She decides that the best course of action is to have Jacob pretend to be Esau and bring lamb in place of venison. She dresses him in Esau's garments and to cover up for the obvious differences between the two boys she manufactures from goat skin a covering that would resemble the hairy arms of Esau.

Each character in the story bears some level of guilt in their actions

- Isaac's guilt is that he was unwilling to submit to the word of God because of culture and personal
- Esau's guilt was knowing that God had given the first place to his twin brother he was unwilling to submit

This same struggle will be seen in Saul as he refuses to submit to the will of God and support David as Israel's new king. I have often wondered what the story would read like if Saul viewed himself as a worthy #2 and came alongside David in support of his calling. Too often men fight for a position rather than seeking God for how they might best serve in the kingdom

- Rebekah's guilt is seen in the text before us

She had a promise from God regarding Jacob, but she lacked the faith to wait on the Lord to work out his purposes. Upon hearing that Isaac wants to bless Esau, she panics and takes matters into her own hands. Not only do her actions mess things up, but it also feeds the character of Jacob, a character that will face 20 years of trials in order to have it sanctified.

The New Testament uses the actions of Sarah with Abraham as an illustration of the value of a wife submitting to her husband. We might site Rebekah's actions to show the danger of failing to submit.

If she had submitted, God would have shown a way of stopping Isaac from passing the blessing to the wrong son and Jacob would have learned the value of trusting the Lord.

- Jacob's guilt is seen in his unwillingness to stand up for what was right and joining in the manipulation of his father

Scene 3 – Isaac and Jacob – Genesis 27:18-29

Jacob enters the chambers of his father and begins to weave a blanket of lies. He lies about who he was and what they were eating but his greatest lie is in blaming the Lord for his actions:

Genesis 27:20

But Isaac said to his son, "How *is it* that you have found *it* so quickly, my son?"

And he said, "Because the Lord your God brought *it* to me."

Isaac was ill and thought that death was at his doorstep so he sent his son Esau into the field to hunt and make him his favorite meal. It was his intention at the meal to pass a blessing on to Esau. When Rebekah heard his plan, she came up with a scheme of her own. She knew that God intended this blessing for Jacob so she dressed him in animal skin, prepared a meal, and attempted to deceive her husband. Jacob dressed the part and brought the meal to his father. When questioned as to who he was and how he had acquired the game so quickly he replied "it is me Esau and the Lord brought it to me."

Let's examine that statement. Was this actually the Lord? There is no question that it was the Lord's intention for the blessing to be given to Jacob not Esau. But the way these events transpired was anything but the Lord. Lying, deceiving, and manipulating are never the pathway that leads to the will of God. Instead of scheming the proper response should have been praying, trusting and submitting to the Word of God.

It seems to me that many are guilty of these same sins today. We realize that God has made us promises but rather than trusting and obeying we stray from Him in order to get what we desire. This is most common in relationships. A lonely Christian will

venture out, get involved in an unhealthy relationship and convince themselves that it must be the Lord. Circumstances, emotions and coincidence are inaccurate tests to determine God's best for our lives. Looking into the Word and living in obedience is a much safer approach to walking in the will of God.

Be careful not to go your own way and blame the results on God.

It would be worth taking a few moments to consider how Isaac was so easily deceived

By his own admission he was old and getting ready to die. However, he will live for decades after this event. It seems that Isaac was guilty of letting his age and physical condition cause him to stop living for the Lord and begin to wait to die.

I recently heard of an older man who resigned from all his areas of ministry citing Jesus and his reference to "New wine in new wineskins." While I agree that God wants to do new things and that He will always be raising up a new generation to get involved that does not mean that the older generation is obsolete. Instead of stepping out of ministry or standing in the way of change it would be best to guide that change with our years of wisdom.

One of the major failures in Israel's history came about because Rehoboam refused to listen to the counsel of the older men in ministry. What a different story it would have been if he had allowed his youthful zeal to be guided with proven wisdom.

Another contributing factor was that Isaac trusted in his senses. It is clear from the story that his senses were deteriorating. He cannot tell the difference in texture between a man's hands and a goat, he cannot taste the difference between lamb and wild game and his eyes are so far gone he cannot tell who walked into the room. While it might be easy to say that his senses deceived him, it is worth remembering that our senses are never the best way to determine the will of God.

How often I have heard Christians cite their own feelings in support of clearly ungodly actions. It is very common to hear people even put the blame on God and say "The Lord told me..."

Jeremiah 23:38

But since you say, 'The oracle of the Lord!' therefore thus says the Lord: 'Because you say this word, "The oracle of the Lord!" and I have sent to you, saying, "Do not say, 'The oracle of the Lord!'"

It would do us all good to be a bit more careful in claiming to have heard from the Lord when in reality we are basing things upon our emotions.

The way to be sure what is from the Lord is to look into the pages of His word and do what it says.

Inadvertently Isaac passes the blessing on to Jacob

Genesis 27:27-29

And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said:

"Surely, the smell of my son
Is like the smell of a field
Which the Lord has blessed.
Therefore may God give you
Of the dew of heaven,
Of the fatness of the earth,
And plenty of grain and wine.
Let peoples serve you,
And nations bow down to you.
Be master over your brethren,
And **let your mother's sons bow down to you.**
Cursed *be* everyone who curses you,
And blessed *be* those who bless you!"

We will see that he ultimately passes the blessing voluntarily

Scene 4 – Isaac and Esau – Genesis 27:30-40

When Esau enters the chamber he and Isaac both are confused and enraged that Jacob and Rebekah have deceived them. Their anger is unreasonable for they too were involved in an act of trickery. Both Esau and Isaac knew that the plan of God was for the blessing to be passed to Jacob. They are sneaking around trying to outwit God

Upon realizing that the blessing has been given to Jacob Esau weeps

Genesis 27:34

When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, “Bless me—me also, O my father!”

This passage is commented on in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 12:16-17

Lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found **no place for repentance**, though he sought it diligently with tears. Passage

Esau’s actions illustrate faulty repentance

2 Corinthians 7:10

For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.*

While he wept he did not truly repent, his weeping was over the loss of the blessing not over the ungodly nature of his actions.

Isaac does pass a blessing on to Esau. This message is prophetic of what God will do with his descendants

Genesis 27:39-40

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.
By your sword you shall live,
And you shall serve your brother;
And **it shall come to pass**, when you become restless,
That you shall break his yoke from your neck.”

The descendants of Esau are known as the Edomites. A name derived from the nickname given to Esau when he traded his birthright for a bowl of soup. Earlier God had promised to make a nation of Esau and here we are told that the nation will become restless and break away from Israel.

Edom is located slightly east of Israel in what is today known as Jordan.

While Israel spent 400 years enslaved in Egypt, the descendants of Esau established themselves in Edom.

Although God considered the Edomites as the brothers of Israel, they were a constant irritant and threat to Israel.

- Judges 11:16-17 - They refused Israel passage through Edom during the Wilderness Years
- 1Samuel 14:47 - They joined forces and did battle against Saul
- 2Samuel 8:14 - They were subdued under the reign of David
- 2Kings 16:5-6 - They occupied lands within Israel's borders during the monarchy period

The book of Obadiah declares Edom will fall to their enemies because of pride and wickedness. He saw in a vision, an angelic messenger rallying the nations against Edom. His prophecies were fulfilled in history.

580 B.C. - Nebuchadnezzar's forces attacked and defeated Edom

550 B.C. - Nabataea Arabs, once allies with Edom, turned on them and drove them out of their capital city; Malachi 1:3 may refer to this event

312 B.C. - They were defeated by Alexander the Great

175 B.C. - Josephus records that Edom was defeated by the Maccabees and most were converted to Judaism.

“Adam Clarke's commentary, Matthew Henry, and Jamieson, Fausset and Brown all see the prophecies against Edom as being fulfilled partly by an invasion by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar in the early B.C., and partly by the Maccabees.

Jeremiah 25:21 specifically predicts the humbling of Edom by Babylon, the same power that conquered Jerusalem 5 years before the destruction of Edom.”

Edomites do not exist today. The descendants of Esau were scattered and no record remains.

Scene 5 – Jacob, Esau and Rebekah – Genesis 27:41-

Esau's reaction to losing the blessing is that he plans the murder of his twin brother, but decides to wait until the death of his dad. When Rebekah gets word she warns Jacob and plans for him to flee to Padan Aram

Two phrases reveal the tragedy of a family that failed to trust the Lord and played favorites with their children

First – Vs 44 – Rebekah sends him off for a few days, but will never see him again. She will die before he returns

Second – vs 45 – Rebekah declares “Why should I be bereaved of both of you in one day?”

Her actions had cost her relationship with Esau

Favoritism is a deadly game