



The following is the summary of the Sunday sermon that is sent to the body at Steadfast in an email called "The Weekly"

Genesis 27-28

Jacob Owns the Covenant

Hebrews 12:16-17 declare that Esau sold his birthright and traded away the blessing. But, as we review the family of Isaac and Rebekah, we discover that all participants are at fault in the narrative of Genesis 27: Isaac knew the oracle of God that the elder would serve the younger; yet he set himself to thwart it by blessing Esau. Esau also knew of the oracle but was willing to break his commitment to it. Rebekah and Jacob, with a just cause based on God's oracle, went about seeking the blessing by deception—not by faith and trust in God. Both would achieve the victory, but it would reap the fruit of hatred and separation—Rebekah would never see Jacob again. Parental preference and the subsequent dysfunction show that all family members bear responsibility for this tragedy.

The tragic narrative of chapter 27 is prefaced by the words that close chapter 26—Esau had taken a wife, Judith—a Canaanite (of the Hittites). This defiant act brought a "bitterness of spirit" to Isaac and Rebekah (26:35).

Jacob Secures His Father's Blessing, 27:1-46

Scene #1—Isaac seeks to bless Esau, vv. 1-5

Isaac is about 100 years old and losing his sight. He seeks to bless Esau—as his firstborn son—in defiance of what God had declared. But, with echoes of chapter 25, a meal of venison was involved to secure the blessing.

Scene #2—Rebekah seeks Isaac's blessing through deception, vv. 6-17

Why didn't Rebekah simply confront Isaac, which was the wisest response to overhearing Isaac's pledge to Esau (see v. 5)? Her favorite was Jacob; Esau was Isaac's favorite. Family communication, openness and trust did not characterize Isaac's family. Out of fear of being caught, Jacob is at first hesitant to agree to Rebekah's schemes.

Scene #3—Jacob deceives his father and receives the blessing, vv. 18-29

Two lies are at the heart of the deception (lie #1 in v. 19 and lie #2 in v. 20). The first lie was deception; the second was blasphemy. Isaac's blessing (vv. 27-29) had four parts: [1] the smell of the fields, as a symbol of fertility; [2] the actual fertility of the fields; [3] Jacob was to be lord over his brethren and over the nations; [4] the Abrahamic Covenant's element of

protection (Genesis 12:3). Jacob got the blessing but at a huge cost: He would never see his mother again; he would run for his life; he was pursued by misfortune such that at the end of his life he declared, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life." [Genesis 47:9]

Scene #4–The dark side of the blessing, vv. 30-40

When the deception was discovered, Isaac "trembled" and Esau cried out with an "exceedingly great and bitter cry" (v. 34). He also came to understand the meaning of Jacob's name—deceiver, manipulator, trickster (v. 35). Esau also laments the loss of the birthright and the blessing (v. 36). Isaac does bless Esau: He would live off the fat of the land, but he would serve his brother Jacob until he leaves and founds Edom.

Scene #5–Esau vows to kill Jacob, vv. 41-45

Jacob was now the object of his brother's wrath. Therefore, Rebekah hatched another plan—Jacob would flee to Paddam Aram and stay with her brother "for a while" (v. 44) until Esau settled down. The trip to Paddam Aram also had another purpose—to secure a wife from Laban's family (28:1-5). As Isaac declared, this would secure the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant for Jacob.

Jacob Owns the Abrahamic Covenant 28:10-20

Now God begins his transformation of Jacob from a fugitive as a result of his sin into a worthy worshiper. As he was traveling to Haran to be with Laban, Rebekah's brother, he stopped for the night to sleep. In a dream, the Lord appeared to him.

The Lord appears to Jacob, vv. 10-15

As he dreamed, Jacob saw a "ladder" ("a stairway to heaven," connecting earth to heaven) where there was access to God. The second feature of the dream is angels "ascending and descending" on the stairway, suggesting their presence on earth and their access to heaven. The presence of the angels communicated God's protection of Jacob, the recipient of His covenantal promises. Standing over the stairway, apparently at the top of the stairway, was the LORD—Yahweh.

As Yahweh spoke to Jacob, He extended the covenantal promises previously communicated to the other patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac. God identified Himself as the God of the Abrahamic covenant (v. 13). God then declared that Jacob would receive the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant (vv. 13-14). Although Jacob had been deceitful in gaining the blessing, God in His grace gave it to him; and though he was fleeing from the land, God promised him the land. Finally, God promised to protect Jacob (v. 15). God's protective presence guaranteed the fulfillment of the covenantal promises.

Jacob worships God, vv. 16-22

Jacob responded with worshipful fear (v. 17) and presented an offering to God in v. 18. Next, he dedicated this place as "Bethel" ("house of God"), thereby transforming it from a Canaanite

town called Luz into a place of worship of the one true God. Jacob then confirmed his worship with an oath: God had promised to be with him, to keep him, bless him, and return him in peace—to be his God. Therefore, Jacob promised that Bethel would be a place of worship and that he would tithe, a tangible expression of his gratitude and submission to God.

A final comment: In John 1:51, Jesus identified Himself as the ladder linking earth and heaven. The former “house of God” has been superseded by Jesus, for He is the complete and final revelation of God. He is full of grace and truth; the one who will provide permanent and complete access to God.

Dr. Jim Eckman