

Genesis Lesson 17: Genesis 26-28

Lecture

- Genesis 26 opens with a reiteration of the covenant God made with Abraham and now it is being confirmed with Isaac.
 - If Esau and Jacob were age 20 when Esau sold his birthright, then Isaac would be at least 80 years old at this point. (Isaac was 60 when they were born.)
 - We should pay attention to the end of Genesis 26:4 because God is making new stipulations with the covenant.
 - “Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.”
 - In Genesis 22:18, God had reaffirmed his covenant with Abraham “because you have obeyed my voice.”
 - John Walton explains this further.
 - Commandments are demands which require an obligation on the part of the hearer.
 - An example would be the command to Lot to flee Sodom.
 - Statutes are regulations which bring order and set boundaries and limits.
 - An example would be the ordinance of circumcision.
 - Laws were a divine authority which the community recognized as binding.
 - An example would be the law that circumcision should occur on the 8th day after birth.

- Genesis 27 opens with Isaac being old and blind. Apparently, his health was such that he felt the need to pronounce a patriarchal blessing upon Esau, his first-born.
 - In reality, Genesis 35:28 tells us that Isaac lives to be 180. He lived to see his son Jacob return from Paddan-aram with 12 sons and 1 daughter.
 - Culturally, a father would call all his male children together for the occasion. We will see this occur with Jacob in Genesis 49 and Joseph in Genesis 50.
 - The fact that Isaac has called only Esau to him raises questions the chapter does not answer, and we are also left to wonder what Jacob thought about his exclusion.
 - He need not have worried because Rebekah knew what was happening.
 - What was the patriarchal blessing?
 - First, it had nothing to do with the birthright or material goods.
 - The patriarchal blessing was important from a social perspective, according to John Walton.
 - The father and the son took the blessing with equal gravity.
 - The blessing would impact the destiny of the son.
 - We know the patriarchal blessing was important, because both Rebekah and Jacob go to great lengths to ensure that Jacob receives the blessing meant for Esau.
 - Also, we learn from Genesis 27: 33-40 that Isaac cannot take back the blessing once he has pronounced it upon Jacob.

- Second, the patriarchal blessing was not a covenantal blessing.
 - These are not prophetic messages from God. Isaac uses first person grammar to indicate he owns the statements.
 - A covenantal blessing was one which only God could bestow.
 - God will confirm the covenantal blessings upon Jacob in Genesis 28: 13-15.
 - Lastly, we might say that God used the patriarchal blessing Isaac bestowed upon Jacob to fulfill God's plans for Jacob to be the recipient of the covenantal blessings.
 - Another key point we should understand at this point is that the birthright included no claim to the land of Canaan other than the well Abraham dug at Beersheba and the field and cave at Mamre which he bought.
 - Abraham gave all he had to Isaac (Genesis 25:5), which would have included this property.
 - Unfortunately, Genesis 26:15 tells us that the Philistines had filled this well (and others) with dirt, so it was of no value.
- We might be tempted to see Genesis 25:29-34 as a story about not despising the benefits one is born with (as Esau did) or the sin of exploiting someone's needs for one's own advantage (as Jacob did).
 - Rather, we ought to look at Genesis 25 **and** Genesis 27 as stories which tell us about the character of Jacob and Esau and how these play into the unfolding story of the covenant.
 - A secondary theme is the building tension between the 2 brothers which will evolve into hatred on Esau's part which will continue with the nation of Edom.
 - Both Jacob and Esau have significant character flaws.
 - Jacob was a grasping deceiver and a liar. Esau was weak-minded. Each man was jealous of the other.

- Nevertheless, God can use their character flaws to achieve his desired end result.
- And, as we will see later in Genesis 33, God will even orchestrate a rapprochement between Jacob and Esau.
- A few comments about the blessings of Jacob and Esau are appropriate at this point.
 - The blessings pronounced upon Jacob have 2 parts: Genesis 27:27-29 and Genesis 29: 3-4.
 - In the first part, the blessing includes what Jacob is (verse 27), what Jacob will receive (verse 28), and what Jacob's relationship with others will be (verse 29).
 - Jacob carries with him the smell of the field blessed by the Lord, because he is wearing a goatskin. A field was a place where flocks were pastured and men like Esau hunted.
 - Next, Isaac wanted God to grant his son rain, rich harvests, and new wine; in essence this was a fertility blessing.
 - This blessing is something of an oxymoron as it would have been more appropriate for Jacob than Esau.
 - Jacob, masquerading as Esau, receives no blessings for his hunting skills.
 - The final part of the blessing echoes the birth oracle of Genesis 25:23 and the promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:3. This blessing was one of political supremacy for the one being blessed.
 - Victor Hamilton points out that Isaac has unknowingly spoken the truth with his words, "Cursed be everyone who curses you and blessed be everyone who blesses you!"
 - Who cursed Jacob? Esau.
 - Who blessed Jacob and was blessed? Isaac, blessed with 12 grandsons.

- In the 2nd part of the blessing of Jacob, Isaac restates God’s promises to Abraham and asks that God give the blessings of Abraham to Jacob and his offspring. Specifically, that God would make Jacob fruitful and enable his descendants to take possession of the land of Canaan.
 - The blessing given to Esau is in Genesis 27: 39-40.
 - This blessing does not state who Esau is but does include what Esau will receive (verse 39) and Esau’s relationship with others (verse 40).
 - Esau will receive the opposite of Jacob.
 - Jacob will receive rain and the earth’s production.
 - Esau will receive neither, suggesting that his dwelling will be in an arid land. Certainly, this describes Edom, a dry wilderness southeast of the Dead Sea.
 - As for Esau’s relationship with others, we see again that this echoes the oracle of Genesis 25:23.
 - Esau will live by the sword (no longer a hunter), suggesting the militant future of the nation of Edom.
 - Esau (Edom) will serve Jacob (Israel) until Edom throws off the yoke placed upon them by King David (see 2 Kings 8).
 - After the fall of Jerusalem under King Nebuchadnezzar, Edom took revenge on Judah (see Obadiah).
- We conclude this lesson with a discussion of Jacob’s dream from Genesis 28:10-22.
 - Jacob is on his way to Haran to go to the home of Laban, his mother’s brother, with the goal of seeking a wife from among Laban’s daughters.
 - Jacob is no spring chicken at this point, being about 77 years old, about the age of Abram when he left Haran for Canaan.
 - He left Beersheba and headed towards Haran, stopping about 2 days into his journey at “a certain place”.

- The area between Bethel and Ai was sacred to Abraham as he built an altar there and twice called upon the name of the Lord.
- Jacob dreamed of a ladder (or a flight of steps) which rested on earth and whose top reached into heaven.
- The angels of God were ascending and descending on the ladder (flight of steps).
 - Above the stairway stood the Lord and he spoke to Jacob.
- Contrast this with the Tower of Babel where the people of Babylon wanted to build a tower which reached the heavens.
 - What Jacob described was similar to the Mesopotamian Ziggurats (see picture).
 - He had never seen one but may have heard about it from family members or he knew the story of the Tower of Babel, which also describes a Ziggurat.
 - In Mesopotamian religions, the messengers of the gods used the stairways to move from one realm to another and the gods descended the stairs to be worshipped at temples.
 - What is different here is that in Jacob's dream, God is standing above the stairway and is not using it.
- The Lord (Yahweh) speaks to Jacob in the dream, identifies himself, and confers the covenantal blessings to Abraham.
 - First, he identifies himself as the Lord, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac. This was necessary as Jacob had never had a direct encounter with God. The double title "the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac" recalls the promises and blessings given to each of them.
 - The covenantal blessings of the land, descendants, and all peoples being blessed through you and your offspring are now spoken to Jacob.
 - God also adds a unique promise for Jacob not given to Abraham and Isaac:
 - I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go.

- Jacob was the first person in the Bible to hear the assurance, “I am with you.” This promise was repeated to Moses, Joshua, and Gideon.
 - Jesus’ appellation of Emmanuel, “God with us,” speaks of God’s continuing presence with his people.
 - Hebrews 13:5 states, “for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”
 - “I will watch over you wherever you go” is reminiscent of the priestly prayer from Numbers 6:24, “The Lord bless you and keep you,” and also Psalm 121:8, “The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.”
 - I will bring you back to this land. This promise must have been a great comfort to Jacob during his 20-year sojourn in Paddan-Aram.
 - I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. God’s protection of Jacob will outlast all of his journeys.
- When Jacob awakens, he realizes that his dream has been about God and the place where he slept was sacred, without him even realizing it. This is Jacob’s first theophany.
 - He refers to the place as the house of God and the gate of heaven.
 - Bethel means house of God and that is what Jacob named the place of his dream.
 - This is ironic because after the death of Solomon, when there was a divided monarchy, Bethel would become the site of pagan cult worship to bull calves.
 - The gate of heaven is perhaps a reference to witnessing, in the dream, the Lord and the angels coming and going.
 - Jacob puts up the stone he slept on as a standing stone – an Ebenezer. He pours oil on it, which was a form of consecration.

- Next, Jacob hedges his bets. He makes a vow:
 - If God sees me through this journey, including food and clothing, and sees me safely home to my father’s house, then – and only then—will Yahweh be his God.
 - He will call the pillar he set up God’s house and he will give God a tithe of all he acquires in the future.
 - We have already seen from Jacob’s comment to Isaac in Genesis 27: 20 (“Because the Lord your God granted me success”) that Jacob’s relationship with the Lord needs maturing.
 - John Walton says that Jacob is in “wait and see mode.”
 - And, he says “In contrast to Abraham’s being tested by God, Jacob has taken the role of doing the testing.”
- It will take another encounter with God in Genesis 32:22-32 before Jacob fully trusts the Lord and his spiritual maturity has improved.

Genesis Lesson 17: Genesis 26-28

Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. Psalms 32:2

1. Read Genesis 26:1-6.

a. What was happening at this time?

There was famine in the land.

b. Where did Isaac go?

Isaac went to Gerar to Abimelech king of the Philistines.

c. What did the Lord say to Isaac when he appeared to him?

And the LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. ³ Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. ⁴ I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, ⁵ because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." Genesis 26:2-5

d. Why are the Lord's words important?

- The Lord would confirm with Isaac the promises and covenant he made with Abraham, specifically the promise of blessing all the nations through Isaac's offspring and the covenant of the land.
- Genesis 17:21 says that God told Abraham that he would establish his covenant with Isaac.

e. What characteristics of Abraham did God prize?

Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. Genesis 26:5

f. What would have been the logical reason for Isaac to go to Egypt?

Typically, when there was famine in the land of Canaan, there was food in Egypt.

2. Read Genesis 26:7-11.

- a. What did Isaac do next in Gerar and why?

So Isaac settled in Gerar. ⁷ When the men of the place asked him about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,” for he feared to say, “My wife,” thinking, “lest the men of the place should kill me because of Rebekah,” because she was attractive in appearance. Genesis 26:6-7

- b. How is this story similar to and different from the one recorded in Genesis 20?

- In both accounts, Abraham and Isaac claimed their wives were their sisters.
- Sarah was Abraham’s half-sister, but Rebekah was Isaac’s cousin.
- In Genesis 26, the story does not say that Isaac discussed this lie ahead of time with Rebekah, as Abraham had done with Sarah.

- c. Why do you think Isaac did this?

He feared for his life.

- d. What was King Abimelech’s concern and what did he do about it?

When he had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out of a window and saw Isaac laughing with Rebekah his wife. ⁹ So Abimelech called Isaac and said, “Behold, she is your wife. How then could you say, ‘She is my sister?’” Isaac said to him, “Because I thought, ‘Lest I die because of her.’” ¹⁰ Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.” ¹¹ So Abimelech warned all the people, saying, “Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.” Genesis 26:8-11

3. Read Genesis 26:12-33.

- a. What happened to Isaac in Gerar?

And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The LORD blessed him, ¹³ and the man became rich, and gained more and more until he became very wealthy. ¹⁴ He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants, so that the Philistines envied him. Genesis 26:12-14

- b. How did the Philistines react to this?
- They envied him.
 - Now the Philistines had stopped and filled with earth all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father. Genesis 26:15
- c. How did King Abimelech try to solve the problem?
And Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we." Genesis 26:16
- d. How did Isaac respond?
So Isaac departed from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there. Genesis 26:17
- e. What kept happening to Isaac after he left Gerar?
And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, which the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham. And he gave them the names that his father had given them. ¹⁹ But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water, ²⁰ the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." So he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him. ²¹ Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that also, so he called its name Sitnah. ²² And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. Genesis 26:18-22
- f. Why do you think Isaac chose to stay in Abimelech's land?
He was prospering there.
- g. How do verses 22-23 relate to God's promises in verse 2?
- And the LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. ³ Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, Genesis 26:2-3
 - And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, saying, "For now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."
²³ From there he went up to Beersheba. Genesis 26:22-23

- h. What did the Lord say when he appeared to Isaac this time?
And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, “I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham’s sake.” Genesis 26:24
- i. What did Isaac do in response?
So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac’s servants dug a well. Genesis 26:25
- j. What happened at the next encounter between Isaac and King Abimelech?
When Abimelech went to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phicol the commander of his army,²⁷ Isaac said to them, “Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me and have sent me away from you?”²⁸ They said, “We see plainly that the LORD has been with you. **So we said, let there be a sworn pact between us, between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you,**²⁹ **that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD.**”³⁰ **So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank.**³¹ In the morning they rose early and exchanged oaths. And Isaac sent them on their way, and they departed from him in peace.³² That same day Isaac’s servants came and told him about the well that they had dug and said to him, “We have found water.”³³ He called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day. Genesis 26:26-33
4. Read Genesis 26:34-35.
- a. What did Esau do which was a source of grief to Isaac and Rebecca?
When Esau was forty years old, he took Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite to be his wife, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite,³⁵ and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah. Genesis 26:34-35
- b. Why was this a source of grief?
The Hittites did not worship the Lord.
5. Read Genesis 27:1-29 and review Genesis 25:22-23.
- a. Which of Isaac’s sons was entitled to get the birthright?
Esau

- b. Which of Isaac's sons had God determined would be the superior of the 2?
Jacob
- c. What did Isaac want Esau to do before he blessed him and why?
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. Genesis 27:3-4
- d. Why do you think Isaac wanted to bless Esau, when God had already determined which son would inherit the covenant?
Esau was his first-born son.
- e. What was Rebecca's plan when she heard about this?
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."
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. Genesis 27:5-17
- f. Do you think Rebecca needed to intervene? Why or why not?
No, she did not intervene because God had already pre-determined that the blessings of God would flow through Jacob, the 2nd-born son.

g. What lies did Jacob tell his father?

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. Genesis 27:18-25

h. Do you detect anything in this passage which indicates that Isaac was suspicious of who brought him the wild game?

- How did you hunt game and cook it so quickly?
- Please come near me that I may feel you.
- The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.
- Are you really my son Esau?

i. List the key points of Isaac’s blessing of Jacob.

- May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine. ²⁹ Let 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! Genesis 27:28-29
- May God give you rain, crops, grain, and wine.
- Peoples will serve and nations will bow down to you.
- You will be lord over your brothers, and they will bow down to you.
- Everyone you curse you will be cursed and everyone who blesses you will be blessed.

- j. How does this blessing compare to God's words in Genesis 25:22-23?
- Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger." Genesis 25:23
 - In Genesis 27, the one Isaac blessed would be lord over his brothers. They would be subservient to him.
- k. Review Genesis 12:2-3. How does Isaac's blessing compare to God's promises to Abraham?
- And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Genesis 12:2-3
 - Genesis 27 also repeats the blessings to those who bless you and curses upon those who curse you statement.

6. Read Genesis 27:30-45.

- a. What did Esau do next?

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." Genesis 27:30-31

- b. What did Isaac say and do when he learned the real Esau was before him?

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." Genesis 27:32-33

- c. What was Esau's reaction?

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!" Genesis 27:34

- d. What were Isaac's responses to Esau?

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." Genesis 27:35-40

- e. Esau had previously given away his birthright to Jacob in Genesis 25:29-34. Do you think Esau's reactions in the Genesis 27 passage are consistent with the Genesis 25 passage?

No, Jacob did not take away Esau's birthright. Esau gave it away for a bowl of lentil stew.

- f. What kind of blessing did Isaac finally give Esau?

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. Genesis 27:39-40

- g. What was Esau's response to this whole situation?

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." Genesis 27:41

- h. What was Rebecca's concern for Jacob and what was her solution?

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 Haran⁴⁴ 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?" Genesis 27:42-45

7. Read Genesis 27:46 – Genesis 28:9.

- a. What was Rebecca's next concern for Jacob?

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?" Genesis 27:46

- b. Did Rebecca have any concern for Esau at all? What might it have been?

- Rebekah did not express any direct concern for Esau. However, if Esau killed Jacob, then Esau would have to flee away from the family (or he might be killed by other people in the community) and then she would lose both of her sons. The law given to Noah in Genesis 9:6 commanded that Esau be put to death for killing Jacob.
- Rebekah may also have feared she would lose both Isaac and Jacob to death on the same day.

- c. How might God have been at work in the lives of Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob and Esau?

- God blessed Isaac and Rebecca with sons to continue their line.
- God blessed Isaac by confirming upon him the promises and covenant he made with Abraham.
- God prospered Isaac.
- God selected Jacob to continue the covenant.
- God protected Jacob from Esau's plans to kill him.

d. What direction does Isaac give to Jacob next?

Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and directed him, “You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women. ² Arise, go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father, and take as your wife from there one of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother. ³ God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. ⁴ May he give the blessing of Abraham to you and to your offspring with you, that you may take possession of the land of your sojournings that God gave to Abraham!” ⁵ Thus Isaac sent Jacob away. And he went to Paddan-aram, to Laban, the son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob’s and Esau’s mother. Genesis 28:1-5

e. What does Esau do next to try to please his father?

Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he directed him, “You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women,” ⁷ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and gone to Paddan-aram. ⁸ So when Esau saw that the Canaanite women did not please Isaac his father, ⁹ Esau went to Ishmael and took as his wife, besides the wives he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebaioth. Genesis 28:6-9

f. What was Esau’s logic?

A wife from Ishmael would gain his parent’s approval.

g. Do you think this was a good decision on Esau’s part?

- No. We have no scriptural reference at this point, but it is highly unlikely that Ishmael’s family worshipped the Lord.
- There was probably conflict between Esau’s Hittite wives and this new wife from Ishmael’s family.

8. Read Genesis 28:10-22.

a. What did Jacob dream about?

Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. ¹² And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! Genesis 28:10-12

- b. How did the Lord identify himself to Jacob in the dream?

And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, “I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. Genesis 28:13

- c. What did the Lord promise Jacob?

The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. ¹⁴ Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” Genesis 28:13-15

- d. When Jacob awoke, how did he respond?

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.” ¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

¹⁸ So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. ¹⁹ He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first. ²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, ²¹ so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, ²² and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God’s house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you.” Genesis 28:16-22

- e. Looking at Jacob’s vow in verses 20-22, do you sense that Jacob believed that the Lord would fulfill his earlier promises?

No, he starts of his vow with “if” and he names all the things he expects God to do for him.

Genesis Lesson 17

Genesis 26-28

Covenant Confirmed with Isaac

- Isaac Would Be at Least 80 Years Old
- Genesis 26:4 Is a New Stipulation About Commandments, Statutes, and Laws
- Commandments: Demands Which Require an Obligation on the Part of the Hearer; Example: Command to Lot to Flee Sodom
- Statutes: Regulations Which Bring Order and Set Boundaries and Limits; Example: the Ordinance of Circumcision
- Laws: A Divine Authority Which the Community Recognized as Binding; Example: Circumcision on the 8th Day After Birth

Isaac Wants to Bless Esau

- Isaac Is Old and Blind; His Health was Poor
- Genesis 35:28: Isaac Lives to be 180; He Lives to See Jacob Return from Paddan-aram with 12 Sons and 1 Daughter
- Culturally, a Father Would Gather All His Male Children Together for the Patriarchal Blessing (See Genesis 49 and 50)
- Why Is Isaac Going to Bless Only Esau?
- What Did Jacob Think about This Exclusion?
- Rebekah Knew What Was Happening

The Patriarchal Blessing

- It Had Nothing to Do with Birthright or Material Goods
 - The Blessing Was Important from a Social Perspective
 - The Father and Son Took It with Equal Gravity
 - The Blessing Would Impact the Destiny of the Son
 - We Know It Was Important; Rebekah and Jacob Go to Great Lengths to Ensure that Jacob Receives the Blessing Meant for Esau
 - Isaac Cannot Take Back the Blessing Once Pronounced on Jacob (Genesis 27:33-40)

The Patriarchal Blessing

- It Was Not a Covenantal Blessing
 - No Prophetic Messages from God
 - Issac Uses 1st Person Grammer; He Owns the Statements
 - Only God Could Bestow a Covenantal Blessing
 - God Will Confirm the Covenantal Blessings on Jacob in Gensis 28: 13-15
- Lastly, God Used the Patriarchal Blessing Isaac Bestowed upon Jacob to Fulfill God's Plans for Jacob to Be the Recipient of the Covenantal Blessings
- The Birthright Included No Claim to the Land of Canaan other than the Well at Beersheba and the Field and Cave at Mamre
 - Isaac Inherited This Property; the Philistines Had Filled in the Well, Making It of No Value

Genesis 25:29-34

- Not Just a Story About Despising the Benefits One Is Born with or the Sin of Exploiting Someone's Needs for One's Own Advantage
- Look at Both Genesis 25 and 27 as Stories which Tell Us about the Character of Jacob and Esau and How These Play into the Covenantal Story
- Another Theme: the Tension Between the 2 Brothers Will Evolve into Hatred on Esau's Part and Which Continues with Edom
- Both Jacob and Esau Have Significant Character Flaws; Jacob: a Grasping Deceiver and a Liar; Esau: Weak-minded; Each Man Was Jealous of the Other
- God Can Use Their Character Flaws to Achieve His End Result
- God Will Later Orchestrate a Rapprochement Between Jacob and Esau

The Blessings of Jacob

- 2 Parts: Genesis 27:27-29 and Genesis 29:3-4
- The Blessing Includes: What Jacob Is; What Jacob Will Receive; What Jacob's Relationships with Others Will Be
 - Jacob Carries the Smell of the Field
 - Isaac Wanted God to Grant His Son Rain, Rich Harvests, and New Wine; More Appropriate for Jacob than Esau
 - Jacob Receives No Blessings for His Hunting Skills
 - Final Part Echoes the Birth Oracles of Genesis 25:23 and the Promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:3; Political Supremacy

Isaac Blesses Jacob



Isaac Blesses Jacob; Govert Flinck; circa 1636; Catherine Convent Museum, Utrecht, The Netherlands; copyright: www.Wikimedia.org

The Blessings of Jacob

- Victor Hamilton: Isaac Has Unknowingly Spoken the Truth with His Words on Curses and Blessings
 - Who Cursed Jacob? Esau
 - Who Blessed Jacob and Was Blessed? Isaac, Blessed with 12 Grandsons
- In the 2nd Blessing, Isaac Restates God's Promises to Abraham
 - He Asks that God Give the Blessings to Jacob and His Offspring
 - That God Would Make Jacob Fruitful
 - That God Would Enable Jacob's Descendants to Take Possession of Canaan

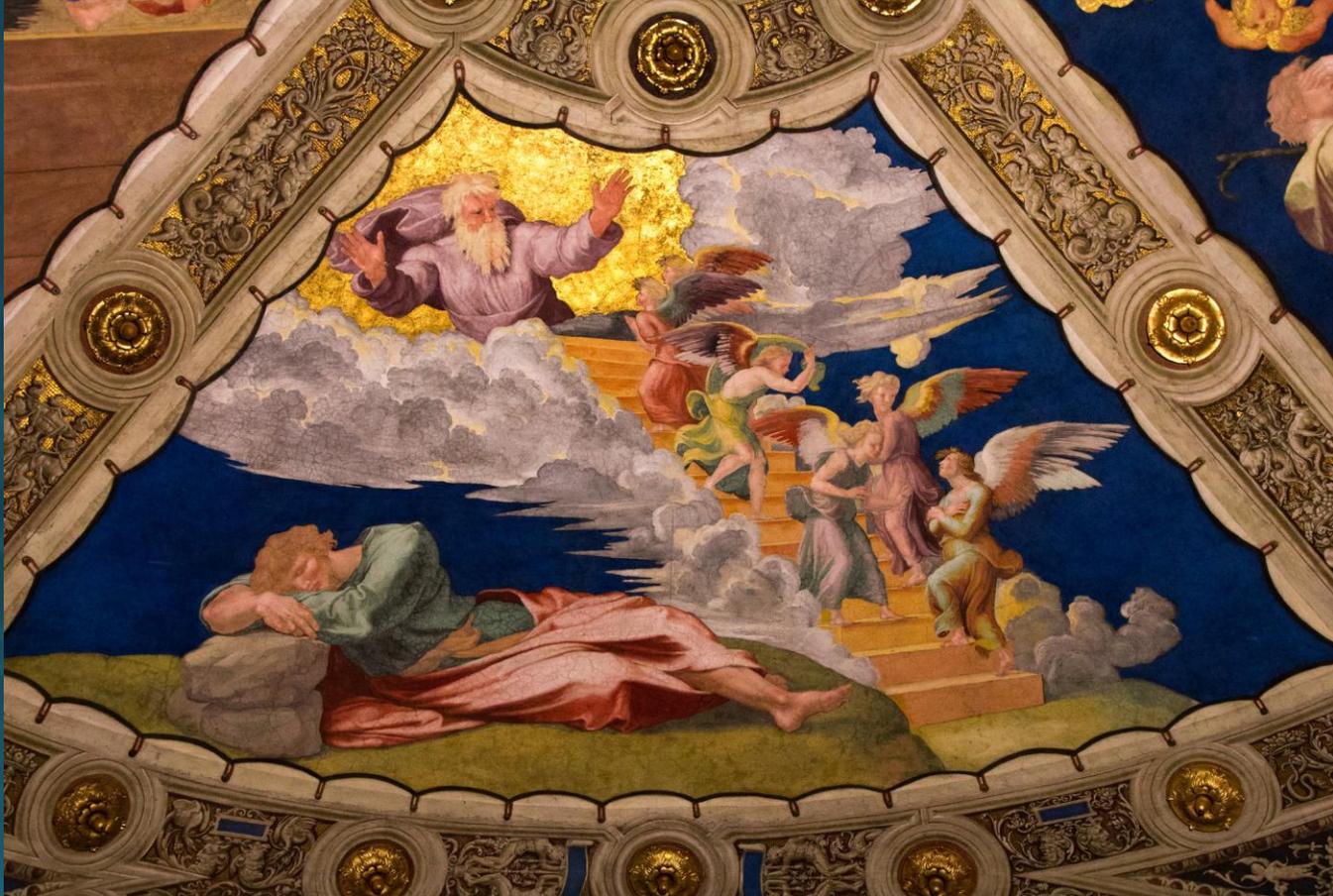
The Blessings of Esau (Genesis 27:39-40)

- Does Not State Who Esau Is; Does Include What Esau Will Receive and Esau's Relationship with Others
- Esau Will Receive the Opposite of Jacob
 - Jacob Will Receive Rain and the Earth's Production
 - Esau Will Receive Neither, Suggesting His Dwelling Will Be in an Arid Land; Describes Edom, a Dry Wilderness Southeast of the Dead Sea
- Esau's Relationship with Others Echoes Genesis 25:23
 - Esau Will Live by the Sword; the Militant Future of Edom
 - Esau (Edom) Will Serve Jacob (Israel) until Edom Throws off the Yoke Placed upon Them by King David (2 Kings 8)
 - After the Fall of Jerusalem, Edom Took Revenge on Judah (Obadiah)

Jacob's Dream (Genesis 28:10-22)

- Jacob Is on His Way to Haran to Seek a Wife; He Is about 77 Years Old
- He Stops 2 Days into His Journey at "a Certain Place")
- The Area Between Bethel and Ai was Sacred to Abraham Who Built an Altar There and Twice Called upon the Name of the Lord
- Jacob Dreamed of a Ladder (Flight of Steps) which Rested on Earth and Whose Top Reached into Heaven
- The Angels of God Were Ascending and Descending
- Above the Stairway Stood the Lord; He Spoke to Jacob

Jacob's Dream at Bethel



Jacob's Dream; Raphael; Raphael Rooms, Vatican Museum and Galleries, Vatican City

Jacob's Dream (Genesis 28:10-22)

- Contrast This with the Tower of Babel
- Jacob Described a Mesopotamian Ziggurat
- In Mesopotamian Religions, the Messengers of the gods Used the Stairways to Move from One Realm to Another; the gods Descended the Stairs to Be Worshipped at Temples
- In Jacob's Dream, God Is Standing above the Stairway and Not Using It

The Ziggurat at Ur



The Ziggurat at Ur (modern-day Iraq); copyright: wikimediacommons.org

Jacob's Dream (Genesis 28:10-22): Yahweh Speaks

- The Lord Identifies Himself as the Lord, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac
- Necessary Because Jacob Had Never Had a Direct Encounter with God
- The Double Title Recalls the Promises and Blessings Given to Each of Them
- The Covenantal Blessings of Land, Descendants, and All Peoples Blessed Through You and Your Offspring Are Now Spoken to Jacob

Jacob's Dream (Genesis 28:10-22): Yahweh Speaks

- God Adds a Unique Promise Not Given to Abraham and Isaac
- "I Am with You and Will Watch over You Wherever You Go"
- Jacob Was the First Person to Hear This Assurance; Repeated to Moses, Joshua, and Gideon
- Jesus' Appellation of Emmanuel, "God with Us", Speaks of God's Continuing Presence with His People
- Hebrews 13:5
- Reminiscent of the Priestly Pray of Numbers 6:24
- "I Will Bring You Back to This Land"; Would Be a Great Comfort to Jacob during His 20-Year Sojourn in Paddan-Aram
- "I Will Not Leave You until I have Done What I Promised You"; God's Protection on Jacob Will Outlast All His Journeys

Jacob Awakens from His Dream

- His Dream Has Been about God
- The Place Where He Slept Was Sacred
- Jacob's 1st Theophany
- He Refers to the Place as "the House of God" and "the Gate of Heaven"; Bethel = House of God
- Ironic; During the Divided Monarchy, Bethel Would Become the Site of Pagan Cult Worship to Bull Calves
- "the Gate of Heaven" = Witnessing the Lord and the Angels Coming and Going
- Jacob Sets up a Standing Stone, an Ebenezer, and Pours Oil on It to Consecrate It

Jacob at Bethel



Jacob at Bethel; James Smetham; circa 1800's; Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, England, United Kingdom

Jacob Hedges His Bets with a Vow

- *If* God Sees Me Through This Journey, Including Food and Clothing, and Sees Me Safely Home to My Father's House, Then Yahweh Will Be My God
- He Will Call the Pillar He Set up *God's House* and Will Tithe of All He Acquires in the Future
- Jacob's Relationship with the Lord Needs Maturing
- John Walton: "Jacob Is in Wait and See Mode"; "In Contrast to Abraham's Being Tested by God, Jacob Has Taken the Role of Doing the Testing"
- It Will Take Another Encounter with God in Genesis 32:22-32 Before Jacob Fully Trusts the Lord