

Bible Hour Study of Genesis

August 31, 2025

Deception and Grace

The story of Jacob:

- Jacob's story ranges from 25:19 – 35:29
- Jacob is the father of the Israelite tribes
- In comparison to some other Biblical characters, Jacob is a more complex character
- Another story showing that the unexpected person gets the blessing from God – Jacob is neither the oldest son nor the better person
 - God's choice is not bound by social and cultural expectations

Chiasm in Jacob's Story

- A. Encounter between Jacob and Esau (25:21-34; 27)
- B. Encounter with God and departure from home (28)
- C. Acquisitions of wives, Leah and Rachel (29:1-30)
- D. **Fertility: the birth of Jacob's children (29:31-30:34)**
- D. **Fertility: the growth of Jacob's flocks (30:25-43)**
- C. Jacob's removal of his wives from their father's household (31:1-32:1)
- B. Encounter with God on return home (32:22-32)
- A. Reunion encounter between Jacob and Esau (33:1-33:17)

The Drama Begins

I. Isaac's Sons are Born (Genesis 25:19-34)

¹⁹ Now these are *the records* of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham became the father of Isaac; ²⁰ and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife.

²¹ Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived. ²² But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I *this way*?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. ²³ The Lord said to her,

- Foreshadowing what is to come
- 'went' could imply that she went to a nearby place of worship
 - Ancient practice of seeking a divine oracle at a local sanctuary
- God has the sovereign right to do as he deems fit
 - "...For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel...it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants....there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins...for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls...So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." (Romans 9:6-16)
 - God chooses according to His divine wisdom, love, and goodness – we don't always perceive this
- Ancient law of primogeniture (law of the firstborn)

“Two nations are in your womb;
 And two peoples will be separated from your body;
 And one people shall be stronger than the other;
 And the older shall serve the younger.”

²⁴ When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵ Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. ²⁶ Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau’s heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them.

²⁷ When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents. ²⁸ Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. ²⁹ When Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished; ³⁰ and Esau said to Jacob, “Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished.” Therefore his name was called Edom. ³¹ But Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.” ³² Esau said, “Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?” ³³ And Jacob said, “First swear to me”; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate

- Double share of the father’s property
- Leader of the family
- Spiritual leader of the family
- God’s election of the younger son shows that God’s people are the product of His sovereign intervention in men’s affairs
- Hebrew **se’ar** means ‘hairy’ – get the name Esau, play on the word ‘Seir’, where the Edomites will live
 - Esau’s other name, Edom, comes from **‘adomi** which means ‘red’
- Hebrew **‘ageb** is the word for heel – **Ya’aqob** (Jacob) means ‘he clutches the heel’ or ‘he supplants’
 - Jacob’s name can also mean ‘may God protect or reward’
- Hostility between the Israelites and the Edomites is continuous throughout the story of Israel
- 20 years after Isaac marries Rebekah
- Connection to Cain and Abel – tension between the hunter and the home dweller, as well as the older and the younger brother
- Esau was strong and a hunter – similar character to Ham and Nimrod
 - Isaac’s favorite because he got good food
- Jacob described as ‘peaceful’ – **tam** – means complete or blameless, perfect
 - Used ironically here to describe his smooth skin and his deceptive nature
 - Jacob was the favored of Rebekah
- Esau depicted as a dull person and outwitted on an empty stomach
 - Thought little of his spiritual heritage and is more concerned with the physical of the here and now
- Birthright included the inheritance rights of the firstborn
 - Verbal oath was all that was required to make the transaction legal
 - At the heart of the birthright were the covenant promises that Isaac had inherited from Abraham
 - In rejecting it, Esau proved himself to be ‘godless’
 - “See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.” (Heb. 12:15-16)

and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

- Jacob was seeking a way to gain advantage over the other, even though God had already stated that he would be over his brother
 - Lack of trust in God

II. All the Deceptions and Blessings (Gen. 26:34-27:46)

³⁴ When Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; ³⁵ and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

Now it came about, when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." And he said to him, "Here I am." ² Isaac said, "Behold now, I am old *and* I do not know the day of my death. ³ Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me; ⁴ and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die."

⁵ Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game to bring *home*, ⁶ Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Behold, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying, ⁷ 'Bring me *some* game and prepare a savory dish for me, that I may eat, and bless you in the presence of the Lord before my death.' ⁸ Now therefore, my son, listen to me as I command you. ⁹ Go now to the flock and bring me two choice young goats from there, that I may prepare them as a savory dish for your father, such as he loves. ¹⁰ Then you shall bring *it* to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death."

¹¹ Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man. ¹² Perhaps my father will feel me, then I will be as a deceiver in his sight, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing." ¹³ But his mother said to him, "Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get *them* for me." ¹⁴ So he went and got *them*, and brought *them* to his mother; and his

- Rebekah and Jacob's behavior resembles 'trickster' traditions in other cultures, where a culture here flourishes through underhanded tactics
 - Pattern repeated throughout Genesis
 - Women had little power and often had to use unconventional means to accomplish their goals
- Esau was married to 2 Canaanites
- It was customary to gather all children before death to explain their wishes
 - Believed blessings had a tangible power that determined character and destiny
- Isaac differs and calls only Esau
 - Trying to go against what God has said in trying to pass the blessing to his favorite – also wants good food
 - Knows that Rachel will interfere if she knows
- Rebekah counteracts Isaac's deception, but creating her own
 - Instead of trusting in God and that His will be carried out – she decides to 'help' God's plan be achieved
- Jacob raises reasonable objections
 - Not about if it's the moral thing to do
 - Concerned about being caught
 - **Chalag** = smooth – same word used for faithless, to flatter – think smooth talker

mother made savory food such as his father loved. ¹⁵ Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. ¹⁶ And she put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. ¹⁷ She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob.

¹⁸ Then he came 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. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me." ²⁰ Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have *it* so quickly, my son?" And he said, "Because the Lord your God caused *it* to happen to me." ²¹ Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come close, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not." ²² So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." ²³ He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him.

²⁴ And he said, "Are you really my son Esau?" And he said, "I am." ²⁵ So he said, "Bring *it* to me, and I will eat of my son's game, that I may bless you." And he brought *it* to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank. ²⁶ Then his father Isaac said to him, "Please come close and kiss me, my son." ²⁷ So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said, "See, the smell of my son

Is like the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed;

²⁸ Now may God give you of the dew of heaven,

And of the fatness of the earth,

And an abundance of grain and new wine;

²⁹ May peoples serve you,

And nations bow down to you;

Be master of your brothers,

And may your mother's sons bow down to you.

Cursed be those who curse you,

And blessed be those who bless you."

- God uses the flawed choices of flawed human beings to accomplish His will for His people – He still does this
- Rebekah covers all the bases to ensure that Isaac will be deceived
- All four of them have a lack of trust among themselves and worse, a lack of trust in God
- Isaac is expecting Esau – is suspicious of the voice and it's too soon
- Jacob lies outright
 - In the future, Jacob will suffer for his deception
 - ▶ With Laban
 - ▶ Later will be forced to identify himself
- Jacob consistently says 'your God' – won't identify as his own God until much later
- To the very end, Isaac is suspicious
- Kiss is part of the formal ceremony of passing on the 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
- Blessed with good fertile land, abundant crops, and authority over other nations and over the rest of his family
- Isaac is so upset that he's physically shaking
 - Is it because he's been deceived or because his plan didn't work?
- Isaac realizes that God's plan still continued despite him trying to work against it
- Isaac had already given the blessing by a legally binding bequest
- Esau's reaction proves that he is not worthy of the blessing
 - Similar to Cain's reaction
 - "For you know that even afterwards, when he desired

³⁰ Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. ³¹ Then he also made savory 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 Isaac his father said to him, “Who are you?” And he said, “I am your son, your firstborn, Esau.” ³³ Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, “Who was he then that hunted game and brought *it* to me, so that I ate of all of *it* before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed.”

³⁴ When 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 And he said, “Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing.” ³⁶ Then he said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.” And he said, “Have you not reserved a blessing for me?” ³⁷ But Isaac replied to Esau, “Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?” ³⁸ Esau said to his father, “Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, *even* me also, O my father.” So Esau lifted his voice and wept.

³⁹ Then Isaac his father answered and said to him, “Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling,
And away from the dew of heaven from above.

⁴⁰ “By your sword you shall live,
And your brother you shall serve;
But it shall come about when you become restless,
That you will break his yoke from your neck.”

⁴¹ So Esau bore a grudge against 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 near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” ⁴² Now when the words of her elder son Esau

to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.” (Heb. 12:17)

- Esau tried to separate birthright from blessing – first leads to the second
 - **bekorati** = My birthright – also blames Jacob for losing this, although he was also at fault
 - **birkati** = My blessing
- Isaac’s secondary blessing is a parody of his primary blessing of Jacob
 - ²⁸ Now may God give you of the dew of heaven,
And of the fatness of the earth,
And an abundance of grain and new wine;
²⁹ May peoples serve you,
And nations bow down to you;
Be master of your brothers,
And may your mother’s sons bow down to you.
Cursed be those who curse you,
And blessed be those who bless you.”
- Edomites serve Israel and break free and take their revenge (2 Kings 8:20-22)
 - Eventual doom predicted in Obadiah
- Rebekah’s description of Esau’s – human nature to comfort ourselves with a plan to take revenge on those who have hurt us
- Marriage within the family = distinction from other inhabitants of Canaan
 - Those who don’t marry from Aram are written out of the ancestry of Israel
 - Maintaining a distinction allows Israelites to take the land of Canaan

were reported to Rebekah, she sent and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him, “Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you *by planning* to kill you. ⁴³ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban! ⁴⁴ Stay with him a few days, until your brother’s fury subsides, ⁴⁵ until your brother’s anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?” ⁴⁶ Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?”

► If there were closer family ties, taking the land would violate the rights of people they were related to

- Deut. 7:3-4
- A few days = +/- 20 years
- Either losing Jacob and Isaac or Jacob and Esau
- Everyone loses – Esau doesn’t get the blessing, Isaac is sent away, Rebekah never sees her son, Isaac doesn’t get his way

III. Jacob Sent Away (Gen. 28:1-9)

So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. ² Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother. ³ May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. ⁴ May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham.” ⁵ Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

⁶ Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take to himself a wife from there, *and that* when he blessed him he charged him, saying, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,” ⁷ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Paddan-aram. ⁸ So Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan displeased his father Isaac; ⁹ and Esau went to Ishmael, and married, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebaioth.

- Paddan-aram = ‘plain of Aram’ another name for Aram-naharaim (Mesopotamia)
- Isaac receives Abraham’s blessing from Isaac
- Esau already had 2 daughters from the Hittites (Canaanites)
 - Either didn’t know he shouldn’t marry them or just ignored the advice
 - Now trying to repair some damage and earn his father’s approval by marrying from Ishmael’s family, outside the Canaanites

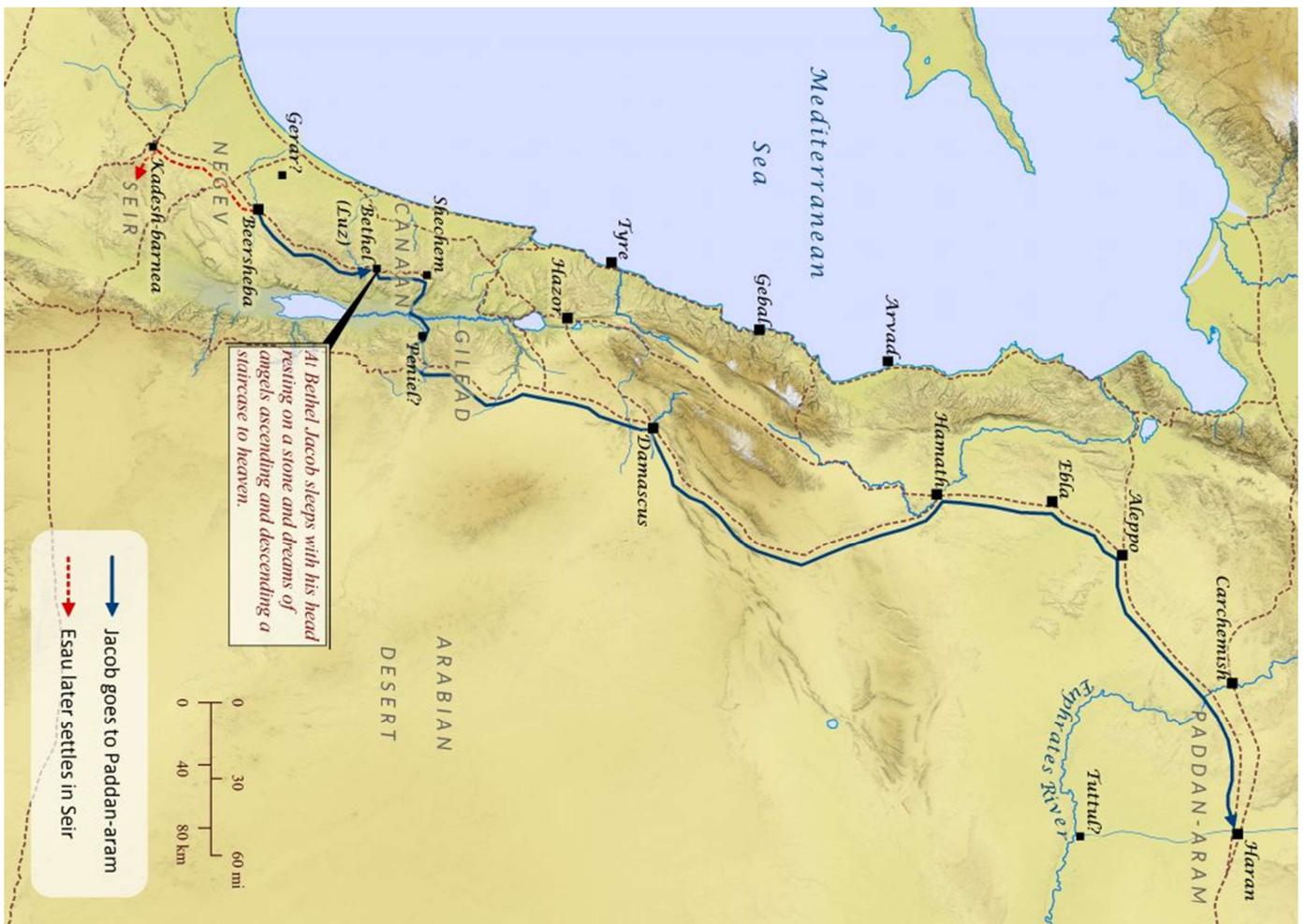
IV. Jacob's Dream Encounter (Gen. 28:10-22)

¹⁰ Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. ¹² He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants.

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." ¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." ¹⁷ 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 Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top. ¹⁹ He called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz. ²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, ²¹ and I return to my father's house in safety, then the Lord will be my God. ²² This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

- Bethel was one of the two major royal sanctuaries of the Northern Kingdom – here depicted as unsettled
- In ancient times headrests were often quite hard, people were used to sleeping on the ground
- Ladder was probably a stairway mounted to the sloping side of a ziggurat
 - Bridge between heaven and Earth
 - Think tower of Babel
- A sign that the Lord is offering to be Jacob's God and giving him the same blessing as his forefathers
 - Jesus calls himself the bridge between heaven and earth (John 1:51; 14:6)
 - Promise is similar to the one given to Abraham after his split from Lot (13:14-17)
- This promise could also be pointing forward to Jesus Christ
 - Makes it possible for all people to become the people of God
- Bethel = house of El (house of God) – a place where God came to Earth
 - Consecrates the place with a pillar and oil
 - Place will continue to be meaningful well into Israel's future – a place where God meets His people
- Still doesn't acknowledging God directly of being his God
 - Gives a conditional statement for God – wasn't very submissive to God – God teaches him submission through Laban
 - Giving a tenth – acknowledging the Lord as his God and King



Family of Abraham

