

Genesis 27 The Stolen Blessing

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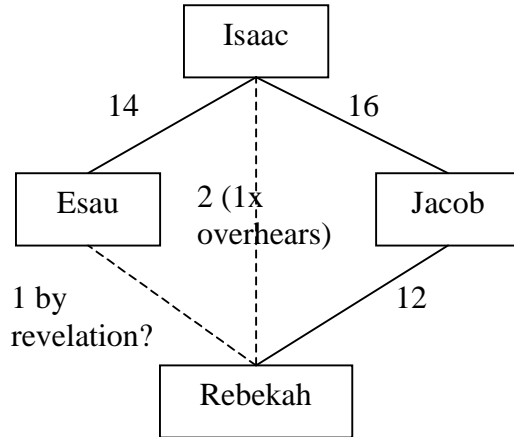
Overview

Review ch. 25:20-34.

- v.23, promise of Jacob's preeminence
- v.28, the parents' partiality
- vv.29-34, Jacob's purchase of the birthright.

The theme of this chapter is Jacob's theft of the *blessing*, to be distinguished from the *birthright* at the end of ch. 25.

- "Birthright" *bekorah* is literally "first-borned-ness." This status conveyed on the holder a double portion of the inheritance and the position of being the family's head in the next generation. Given the promise of seed and blessing granted to Abraham, this status would have a special, spiritual meaning.



	Isaac	Rebekah	Esau	Jacob
Isaac	0	2 (1x overhears)	14	16 (12 as Esau)
Rebekah	1	0	1 by revelationbb	12
Esau	14	0	0	0

- "Blessing" *berakah* is the father's prayer for God's bounty to a son. It would naturally encompass the benefits of the birthright, but as the example of Jacob's blessing on the sons of Joseph shows (48:14), it is ultimately guided by parental discretion rather than birth order.

The overall structure is: a broad chiasm, with additions in the second half to build tension. Note the structure as we read it through.

Esau's Wives	26:34-35 (Hittites)	28:6-9 (Ishmaelite)
Isaac Calls and Charges a Son	1-6 (Esau, to get venison)	27:46-28:5 (Jacob, to get a wife)
Rebekah Counsels Jacob	5-17	41-45
A son feeds his father	18-29 (Jacob)	30-40 (Esau)

Read through the chapter.

The story is noteworthy for who talks with whom, recalling the favoritism revealed in 25:28. The table and figure list # of verses.

- Esau and Jacob never speak directly.
- Rebekah speaks only to Jacob, excepting overhearing (5) and complaining briefly (46) to Isaac and hearing a rumor (42) about Esau.
- Isaac speaks to both sons (14 vv to Esau and 16 to Jacob), but in 12 of Jacob's 16 vv, he thinks he is talking to Esau.

Chronology:

9/26/2003

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	Isaac	Jacob	Joseph	
25:20	40			Isaac marries Rebekah
25:26	60	0		Jacob and Esau born
28:5	(117)	(57)		Jacob leaves Canaan for Haran. (NB: Waltke makes Isaac 100 on the basis of 25:26; 26:34, but 27:1 marks a temporal discontinuity, see van der Merwe, <i>Hebrew Studies</i> 40, p. 83ff.)
30:25; 31:38, 41	(151)	(91)	0	Joseph born six years before Jacob leaves Haran (see 31:38, and Clarke on 31:55 demonstrating a total of 40 years in Haran).
41:1			(28)	Joseph imprisoned at least two years before he interprets Pharaoh's dream, thus while Isaac is still alive.
35:27-29	180	(120)	(29)	Isaac dies
41:46		(121)	30	Joseph meets Pharaoh
45:6; 47:9		130	(39)	Jacob enters Egypt; Joseph @ 41:46 + 7 yrs plenty + 2 yrs famine
47:28		147	(56)	Jacob dies
50:26			110	Joseph dies

A recurrent theme in this story is how faith and carnality blend in inextricable ways. How deceitful are our hearts (Jer 17:9), and how guarded we must be, lest the flesh run away with our spiritual values. Ends do not justify the means. Faith in God means not only desiring what he desires, but trusting him to bring it about, even when everything we see appears ranged against it.

Each of the first four paragraphs, the first half of the chiasm, emphasizes the distinctive sin of a member of the family.

26:34-35, Esau's Hittite Wives

And Esau was forty years old.—The phrase is exactly the same as in 25:20, reporting the marriage of Isaac to Rebekah. The verbal similarity underscores the difference between the two cases:

- Isaac married only one wife, the only one of the patriarchs to have been totally faithful to his wife. Esau starts out with two.
- Isaac married a woman from his own kindred; Esau married women from the pagan people of the land, whom Israel was to displace. The Hittites are named explicitly in 15:20 as among the wicked Amorites (v.16).
- Isaac married the woman chosen explicitly for him by his father's most trusted servant; Esau's wives brought grief to his parents.

Isaac must share the blame; he does not take the lead, as Abraham did, in finding a suitable wife for his son. His special favoritism for his eldest son (25:28) may have led to a certain laxness in dealing with him.

[They] were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.—Given how little Isaac and Rebekah say to one another, this appears to be the only thing they shared in common. In fact, it is the subject of the only conversation between them, in v.46. This grief is like that of Lot in Sodom (2 Pet 2:8); it shows that in spite of their obvious shortcomings, manifest in this chapter, both Isaac and Rebekah had a heart for the things of the Lord. We will see that each of them manifests this faith, but in defective ways.

Application: Esau's sin is that he does not value his family ties, but is concerned only for his own fleshly appetites. Though he will be bitter that his mother and brother deprive him of the blessing, his own marriage shows that he actually does not value his parent's opinion very highly. Married at the same age as his father, his own choice of wives contrasts sharply with Isaac's submission to Abraham's direction, and brings grief to his parents. Had he valued their opinion more highly in the first place, perhaps Rebekah would not have felt so constrained to secure the blessing for Jacob.

27:1-4, Isaac Sends Esau for Venison

Seventeen years pass after Esau's marriage, seventeen years in which Isaac and Rebekah mourn their son's choice of spouses (26:35). It ought to be clear to him that Esau is no fit vehicle for the patriarchal blessing. In addition, he must have known of the promise God made to Rebekah (25:23) that "the elder shall serve the younger." In spite of that, when Isaac thinks that the time has come for him to die, he attempts to deliver the blessing to Esau, and not to Jacob. Waltke: "Isaac fails because he follows his mouth, not his heart." His heart told him Esau's spiritual weakness, while his mouth longed for Esau's game.

Isaac ... called ... Esau went.—Compare the corresponding paragraph at the end, 28:1-5, in which again Isaac calls and charges a son, and the son goes forth.

1 My son: ... Behold, here am I.—This expression is reminiscent of something Isaac had said years before on Mount Moriah, when he called to his father, "My father," and Abraham responded, "Here am I" (22:7). We will hear this rare phrase echoed again in v.18, suggesting that Moses wishes us to compare this chapter with ch. 22. There as here, the faith of one generation must be passed to the next.

2, I am old, I know not the day of my death.—He is 117. His mother died at 127 (23:1), and his sight has already failed, a very tangible sign of deterioration. So it is right for him to be prepared to pass from this earth, although in fact he survived another 63 years! Both sons ask him to "arise" (19, 31), suggesting he is bed-stricken.

4 Savoury meat, such as I love.—This is a key phrase throughout the story (vv. 9, 14), reminding us of Isaac's weakness.

That my soul may bless thee before I die.—At least, Isaac recognizes that he must pass the blessing on. Here we see his faith manifested, although he is wrong to try to evade the divine oracle granting the blessing to Jacob. Furthermore, the word "that" shows that his motive is wrong: he views offering the blessing as a way to gain yet another bowl of Esau's stew. He is willing to trade the blessing, properly belonging to Jacob, to Esau in exchange for food, just as Esau was willing to exchange the birthright, properly his own, to Jacob in exchange for food. The same weakness we have seen in the son is here evident in the father. Calvin: "Wonderfully was the faith of the holy man blended with a foolish and inconsiderate carnal affection."

5 And Rebekah heard.—This is a linked keyword transition to the next paragraph, setting us up for her counterplot. Compare her hearing a rumor concerning Esau's hatred for Isaac in v.42. This is the only interaction she has with Esau.

5-6 his son ... her son.—Emphasizes the split within the family.

Application: Isaac's sin is that he views the blessing as his personal possession, to dispense how he will, rather than seeing it as a trust from God for which he is the steward, and which he must

discharge according to God's command. Here is an important difference between the spiritual and the carnal Christian. Both recognize God as the *source* of their blessings, but one feels that now they are his absolutely to dispose of as he pleases, while the other recognizes that they are held in trust and under divine authority.

5-17, Rebekah and Jacob

bless thee before the LORD.—Rebekah extends what Isaac actually said. He simply promised Esau to “bless thee,” but she adds the words, “before the Lord.” Here we see that her concern is to procure for Jacob the preeminence that God had promised her he would enjoy. She is like Isaac: her faith also is mixed with carnality. She is right to cling to the promise of God for her son, but wrong to deceive in order to achieve it.

8 Obey my voice according to that which I command thee.—Here and in verses 13 and 43 she says, “Obey my voice,” and she describes her instructions as a “command.” This language reveals her authoritative, domineering manner. The only use of the verb “to command” in Abraham's household is in 18:19, where God recognizes that Abraham will “command his children and his household after him.” The only use in Isaac's household is of Rebekah. Thus it is that Sarah, and not Rebekah, becomes the model for the godly wife in the NT (1 Pet 3:1-6).

10 that he may bless thee.—Note again the causal particle “that” (“in order that”). She has detected Isaac's weakness for food, and now she will exploit that to win the blessing for Jacob. Instead of trusting God, she is appealing to her husband's carnality.

I shall seem to him as a deceiver.—Literally, “a mocker.” Jacob fully recognizes how disrespectful it is to take advantage of his father's blindness and to subvert his declared purpose. The only other use of the verb in the OT is in 2 Chron 36:16, where it describes how Israel mocked God's messengers until he sent them into captivity in Babylon. The chronicler may in fact have Gen 27 in mind; Jacob also is exiled as a result of his mockery.

15 Rebekah took.—She likewise fully recognizes the deception involved, as she deliberately seeks to disguise Jacob's odor and the texture of his skin.

What should Jacob and Rebekah have done?

- Respectfully confronted Isaac, as Bathsheba and Nathan did with David at the time of Solomon's succession (1 Kings 1:17ff). They brought David the message, “My Lord, thou swarest” (v.17); how much more powerful to remind Isaac, “My Lord, God has promised”?
- If he still persisted in his stubbornness, they should have left their case in God's hands. It is after all his promise; it is up to him to bring it to pass. They must not “do evil, that good may come” (Rom 3:8)

Application: Rebekah's sin is the opposite of Isaac's. He neglected the revelation of God's will concerning the proper heir. She was so zealous for it that she sought to achieve it in her own strength, even at the expense of deception and reversing the home order, rather than trusting God to bring it about. Fleshly zeal is as wrong as disobedience.

18-29, Jacob Deceives Isaac

18 My father ... Here *am* I; who *art* thou, my son?—Compare 22:7, Isaac’s own call to Abraham on Moriah, asking, “Where is the lamb?” Now he questions the authenticity of the game that Jacob brings him.

19 And Jacob said.—Jacob is thrice deceptive:

- “I *am* Esau,” but he is really Jacob.
- “I have done according as thou badest me,” but in fact he has not obeyed Isaac, but rather Rebekah, working counter to Isaac’s expressed desires.
- “my venison,” but it isn’t venison (Heb. “game”)

Isaac expresses his suspicion in several ways. This repetition emphasizes his uncertainty that the blessing is going to the right person. In the corresponding paragraph on the other side of the chiasm, when Esau presents himself for blessing, there is repetition again, but this time emphasizing Isaac’s *certainty* that in fact he did the right thing in blessing Jacob.

Time.—20, “How *is it* that thou hast found *it* so quickly?” As the hunters among us can testify, capturing a wild animal is not like dropping in at the supermarket. One might expect to take a few days.

Jacob’s answer is the first use of the phrase “thy God” in the Bible: “Because the LORD thy God brought *it* to me.” He does not yet acknowledge the Lord as his own God. His talk with God at Bethel (28:21) shows that he recognizes this difference. Here indeed is a case of taking the name of the Lord in vain.

Voice.—He asks to feel Jacob (21), because “The voice *is* Jacob's voice,” but because of the hairy skins over his hands, he concludes, “the hands *are* the hands of Esau” (22).

Question.—He asks him explicitly, “*Art* thou my very son Esau?” (24). In the face of this direct challenge, Jacob repeats his lie.

Odor.—Finally, in 26-27, he asks Jacob to come near, and smells him. Rebekah’s precaution concerning the garments was not in vain.

27-29, The Blessing.—Finally, he delivers the desired blessing. It is instructive to compare this blessing with the one that God gave Abraham, as recorded in chapters 12 and 22.

12:1-3,7	27:27-29
I will show thee ... a land Unto thy seed will I give this land (7)	28 Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine:
And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great	29 Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee:
3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee	cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed <i>be</i> he that blesseth thee.
and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.	

- Corresponding to the promise of the *land*, Isaac focuses not on the possession of the territory, but on its fruitfulness. This is not an invalid blessing, for Moses blesses Israel

before his death in much the same terms (Deut 33:28). However, Moses ends with this; for Isaac, it is the first thing in view. His own weakness for tasty food is evident.

- Nothing is said about numerous *offspring*, but only about the privileges of the one being blessed within the family. The language about submissions suggests that Isaac has in mind the oracle at the birth of the twins (25:23). Notably, he attempts to reverse this oracle. The oracle says that the elder should serve the younger, but Isaac, who thinks he is blessing Esau, says, “Be lord over thy brethren.”
- The blessings and curses are distinct:
 - The order is inverted: bless before curse in ch. 12, curse before bless here.
 - They are passive rather than active. Is he less focused on God as the source of the blessing? (Wenham)
 - More importantly, where God envisioned only a few who would curse Abraham (“him,” singular) and many who would bless him, Isaac reverses the number; many will curse him and only a few bless him.
- There is no reference at all to a blessing on “all families of the earth.”

Application: Jacob’s sin is deception, pure and simple. He does not care that among the six things that the Lord hates are a lying tongue, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren (Prov 6:17,19).

30-40, Esau Returns to Isaac

Now we enter the second half of the chiasm, and it will prove useful to note the similarities and differences in each paragraph to its counterpart in the first half.

30 (timing).—Moses emphasizes that Jacob just barely escaped being discovered by Esau. .

31 Esau ... came ... made.—v. 31 should be translated as simple past. Even while he is preparing the food, it is already too late.

Contrast Esau’s conduct with Jacob’s. Esau does as his father tells him, and is truthful in what he report. Jacob lies and seeks to circumvent his father’s will. Yet Jacob receives the divine blessing, and Esau does not, emphasizing that God’s gift is of grace and not of merit. Calvin: “Esau obeys his father, brings him the produce of his hunting, prepares for his father the food obtained by his own labor, and speaks nothing but the truth: in short, we find nothing in him which is not worthy of praise. Jacob never leaves his home, substitutes a kid for venison, insinuates himself by many lies, brings nothing which would properly commend him, but in many things deserves reprehension. Hence it must be acknowledged, that the cause of this event is not to be traced to works, but that it lies hid in the eternal counsel of God.”

32-33, Isaac’s Response.—It has three aspects:

- Confusion: “who art thou?” (compare v.18, “Who art thou, my son?”) “Who then has taken venison...?” (*eypho* strengthens interrogative; no local sense). In his mind, Esau has already come, been blessed, and gone, so initially he has no context within which to interpret this visit. This confusion corresponds with the uncertainty he felt in the first half concerning Jacob’s identity.

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- Agitation: “Isaac trembled very exceedingly.” As he realizes what has happened, he is visibly disturbed.
- Resolution: “yea, and he shall be blessed.” This resolution suggests that at this point, Isaac begins to put it all together. His purpose was thwarted, but the divine purpose was not. Isaac neither can nor will seek to turn back what has happened. Thus “by faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau,” Heb 11:20. In both paragraphs, Isaac ends up blessing Jacob—in the first mistakenly, but here deliberately. Thus the blessing is ratified. This is confirmed by the fact that when Isaac later sends Jacob away to Haran, there is not the least hint of reproof for what he has done in taking the blessing.

34-38, Esau’s Request.—Three times Esau shows that he does not understand the uniqueness of the divine blessing communicated through Isaac:

- 34, “Bless me, *even* me **also**, O my father”
- 36, “Hast thou not **reserved** a blessing for me?”
- 38, “Hast thou **but one** blessing, my father? bless me, *even* me **also**, O my father.”

He seeks another blessing than the one given to Jacob. He must have understood from his father’s instruction that the blessing that Jacob received was the sole channel of blessing from God. Now he faces a choice:

- To share at all in that blessing, he must submit himself to his brother. This would be humiliating, but would make him partaker of the spiritual blessings God was providing through the chosen family.
- Instead, he severs himself from the family of promise, preferring to seek another blessing, which must necessarily be a carnal one.

Comparison with the earlier paragraph reminds us that Jacob (at least under his mother’s prompting) did treasure the one divine blessing.

In the face of Esau’s repeated entreaties, Isaac insists that the blessing is staying where it is. In the corresponding member of the earlier panel, Isaac’s repetition showed his uncertainty about the recipient of the blessing. Here he has become confident that the right son received the blessing.

39, Isaac blesses Esau.—Isaac declares Esau’s future, but it can hardly be considered a blessing. Each element of it is more a burden than a boon, and represents a reversal of one of the clauses of Jacob’s blessing in 28-29.

Jacob, 28-29	Esau, 39-40
28 Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth,	thy dwelling shall be [of] the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above
and plenty of corn and wine:	40 And by thy sword shalt thou live,
29 Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother’s sons bow down to thee:	and shalt serve thy brother;
cursed <i>be</i> every one that curseth thee, and blessed <i>be</i> he that blesseth thee.	and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

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- In the promises concerning dew and fatness, the preposition “of, from” is the same Hebrew word, but differs in meaning between the two.
 - In 28, Isaac prays that God would give Jacob “of dew ... of fatness,” that is, a share of (“some of”) these important blessings.
 - In 29, it has the sense of “away from.” Esau is told that he will live away from the fruitful land, and in fact his territory, to the south and across the Arabah to the east, is more desolate.
- Building on this agricultural bounty, Jacob’s economy would be mainly agricultural, but Esau, excluded from the arable land, is told, “by thy sword shalt thou live.” This is not just the life of a hunter, but of a warrior and bandit. Compare Ishmael’s twin roles in 21:20 (archer), 16:12 (anti-social).
- As Jacob was told he would “be lord over thy brethren,” so Esau is told, “thou shalt serve thy brother.”
- In contrast to the protection assured Jacob from “every one that curseth thee,” Esau’s line is doomed to perpetual struggle with Jacob. K&D: The Edomites were
 - defeated by Saul (1Sa_14:47)
 - subjugated by David (2Sa_8:14); and,
 - an attempt at revolt under Solomon (1Ki_11:14.),
 - the time of Joram, when they rebelled (2 Ki 8:20).
 - subdued again by Amaziah (2Ki_14:7; 2Ch_25:11.),
 - remained in subjection under Uzziah and Jotham (2Ki_14:22; 2Ch_26:2).
 - in the reign of Ahaz they shook the yoke of Judah entirely off (2Ki_16:6; 2Ch_28:17)
 - completely conquered by John Hyrcanus about b.c. 129, compelled to submit to circumcision, and incorporated in the Jewish state (Josephus, Ant. xiii. 9, 1, xv. 7, 9).
 - through Antipater and Herod, they established an Idumaeen dynasty over Judea, which lasted till the complete dissolution of the Jewish state.

Clearly, this vision goes well beyond the life of Esau himself, as the writer to the Hebrews recognized, when he said that “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come” (11:20).

34, 38, Esau’s cry.—Heb 12:17 comments on this paragraph. After describing in v.16 the affair of the birthright, he writes, “For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” He is presenting Esau as an example of the danger of being a “fornicator or profane person.” V.16 shows his disregard for spiritual values; v.17 shows the consequence.

- “afterward,” that is, after the affair with the birthright.
- “would,” that is, desired to. He threw the birthright away, then later wanted to have the blessing. Some who initially disregard the things of God think that they can come back later and take possession of them. Chiastically the last clause of the verse comes back to this: “though he sought it [the blessing, as the gender of the pronoun shows] with tears.”

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- “rejected,” by Isaac, who refused to change his mind.
- “found no place of repentance.” The expression has been misunderstood in two different ways.
 - Some think the reference is to Isaac’s unwillingness to repent: “he found no change of heart on Isaac’s part.” It certainly is true that Isaac did not repent of his choice, but we’ll see that the expression says more than this.
 - Others make this the basis of a claim that Esau found himself unable to come to true repentance: “he found no repentance in his own heart.” But his tears and bitter cry suggest that he did deeply regret what he had done.

In fact, the expression “place of repentance” is a legal one (see Alford), referring to an opportunity when repentance could make a difference. The “repentance” in view is indeed Esau’s, but the “place” that is needed would have to be in Isaac. Repentance must be both offered and accepted. The writer does not challenge the depth of Esau’s remorse. Rather, there was no opportunity for that repentance to make a difference.

We can see this most clearly in the one other place in the Greek Bible that the expression “place of repentance” occurs, in the Apocrypha at Wisdom 12:10, describing how God dealt with the nations whom he cast out before Israel.

8 Nevertheless even those thou sparedst as men, and didst send wasps, forerunners of thine host, to destroy them by little and little. 9 Not that thou wast unable to bring the ungodly under the hand of the righteous in battle, or to destroy them at once with cruel beasts, or with one rough word: 10 But executing thy judgments upon them by little and little, thou gavest them **place of repentance**.

That is, he brought the conquest on slowly so that those like Rahab with a mind to repent, could do so with good advantage.

Esau’s attempt to reclaim the blessing after first despising it is an example of the principle presented in Isa 55:6 (“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near”) and 2 Cor 6:2 (“For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”). The door of salvation does not stand open forever. There is a day of salvation, an acceptable time. Those who spurn God at such a time may not have another chance. Prov 1:20-31; Psa 2.

More generally, let every one of us stay tender to the movings of God’s Holy Spirit. Let us never presume on his longsuffering, or assume that the opportunity he gives us to obey today, will still be there tomorrow. We may repent, even bitterly, as Esau did, but once the place of repentance is gone, it will be to no avail. But if we respond immediately when God speaks, how great will be our joy in serving him.

41-45, Rebekah Arranges Jacob’s Departure

Again, consider the similarities to the corresponding member in the first half of the chiasm.

Instruction to Deceive, 2-9	Instruction to Flee, 41-45
2 And [Isaac] said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: 3 Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; 4 And	⁴¹ And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at

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make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.	hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.
⁵ And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son.	⁴² And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah:
⁶ And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, ⁷ Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death.	and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, <i>purposing</i> to kill thee.
⁸ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee.	⁴³ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice;
⁹ Go now to the flock, ...	and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; ...

41-42a, inciting utterance.—Both conversations between Rebekah and Jacob are initiated when she overhears something said by someone else, and in both cases this utterance concerns Isaac’s impending death. In the first instance it was Isaac’s instruction to Esau to kill venison; in the second, it is Esau’s decision to kill Jacob.

Esau’s true inner motives are revealed in the eagerness with which he anticipates his father’s death.

There is a tension between the clauses “Esau spoke in his heart,” that is, to himself, and “these words of Esau ... were told to Rebekah.” Perhaps we are meant to understand that the Lord revealed Esau’s plans Rebekah.

42b-45, instructions to Jacob.—Note the same tone of authority with which she took matters into her own hands in 6ff. Her analysis of the situation combines deep insight with grave miscalculations.

- Her fear of being deprived of both of them probably reflects the role of the kinsman redeemer. If Esau slays Jacob, he in turn will be at risk as a murderer, probably from one of Ishmael’s sons, who would have the duty to avenge Jacob’s death.
- She views Esau’s anger as superficial, resulting from his emotional character, and anticipates that it will blow over. In this she is correct as regards the individual, though she does not rightly judge the deep enmity that his descendants will harbor for Jacob, in accordance with Isaac’s prophecy.
- Her notion that “a few days” will suffice and that she herself “will send and fetch thee from thence” is completely off the mark. This is the last we see of her. She never again sees her favorite son, or any of his descendants. The few days, in the event, last 40 years (31:38-41). The outcome of her scheming is to lose all contact with Jacob.
- 45, “That which thou hast done unto him”: How self-righteous! This was all her idea. It was she who put Jacob up to it, she who calmed his commendable caution, she who worked out the details of the deception. At the least she should have said, “that which **we** have done unto him.”

Application: Our fleshly actions cannot frustrate God’s purposes, but they may bring great grief to ourselves.

27:46-28:5, Isaac Sends Jacob to Haran

27:1-6	27:46-28:5
¹ And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, ... ² And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death:	⁴⁶ And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these <i>which are</i> of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?
he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, <i>here am I</i> .	¹ And Isaac called Jacob,
	A. and blessed him,
³ Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; ⁴ And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring <i>it</i> to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die. ⁵ And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son.	B. and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. ² Arise, go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother.
	A. ³ And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; ⁴ And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.
	B. ⁵ And Isaac sent away Jacob:
And Esau went to the field to hunt <i>for</i> venison, and to bring <i>it</i> .	and he went to Padanaram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

1, 46, Motivation.—In both cases Isaac is motivated by the thought of death—his own in v.1, Rebekah’s in 46.

Rebekah does not give Isaac the same motive she gives Jacob. She does not want to grieve Isaac with the knowledge that his eldest son is plotting to murder Jacob—and no doubt, as a mother, she does not want to Esau to suffer unnecessarily at Isaac’s hand. Yet her reason is not false. We know already (26:35) that both Isaac and Rebekah regretted Esau’s choice of wives, and this is no doubt a legitimate complaint on Rebekah’s part.

So he summons a son—first Esau, then Jacob.

3, 28:1b-5a, Blessing and Charge.—The balance of this section is an alternation between Blessing and Charge, only the second of which corresponds to Isaac’s earlier words to Esau.

- To Esau, the blessing was conditional on execution of the charge: “take, go, take, make, bring, that my soul may bless thee.” This was to be a blessing based on the candidate’s personal merit and obedience.
- To Jacob, he now gives blessing and charge concurrently: “Isaac ... blessed him and charged him.” This is an unconditional blessing, grounded solely in Isaac’s love of Jacob.

The shift may be the result of deliberate meditation by Isaac. Originally, he attempted to give a blessing based on merit, but God frustrated this plan, and caused the blessing to land on a most undeserving recipient. Now Isaac understands that one cannot earn God’s blessings; they are grounded solely in his grace, and motivate, rather than result from, obedience to him.

Genesis 27 The Stolen Blessing

Note in v.6 that “Esau saw” the actions here described. The natural interpretation is that these events, unlike all the earlier paragraphs, are done as a family. It was usual for a patriarch to gather his children together to give his final blessing, so that all would understand what he said to each: compare Jacob’s blessings to his sons in ch. 49, and Joseph’s to his brothers in 50:24,25. Isaac was irregular in wishing to give the blessing to Esau in private. Now it appears that he recognizes the importance of being open.

The **Charge**: Esau was told to “go ... and take [capture] venison.” Now Jacob is told to “go ... and take [different word] a wife.” Both are sent out to bring something back.

But why did Isaac send Jacob off for his wife, when his own father had sent a servant to bring the wife back? He cannot have been ignorant of the tension between Esau and Jacob, and perhaps senses the danger that his wife is reluctant to make explicit.

The **Blessing** focuses on offspring, the one element of the Abrahamic blessing that Isaac omitted in the original blessing to Jacob in 28-29, and an element particularly appropriate in sending his son off to find a wife. Compare this blessing clause by clause with 28-29 and with 12:1-3, 7:

12:1-3,7	27:28-29	28:3-4
I will show thee ... a land Unto thy seed will I give this land (7)	28 Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine:	4 And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.
And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great	29 Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee:	3 And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people;
3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee	curst be every one that curseth thee, and blessed <i>be</i> he that blesseth thee.	
and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.		

- The blessing this time is explicitly linked with that of God to Abraham.
 - V.4, “blessing of Abraham”
 - V.3, “God Almighty,” El Shaddai. This is the second occurrence in Genesis of this title for God; the first was in 17:1, when God announced to Abraham the coming birth of Isaac. When we studied the name in ch. 17, we saw that it refers to God’s great power, not abstractly, but in bringing blessing to his people. Delitzsch: “El Shaddai is the God who so constrains natures that it does his will, and so subdues it that it bows to and serves grace.”
- The blessing of the land is explicit, not just because of the good food that it provides. But note that it is “the land wherein thou art a stranger.” The promise is explicitly focused on the generations after Jacob.
- An abundant offspring is now explicit.

Genesis 27 The Stolen Blessing

But there is still no mention of the messianic element of the blessing, that “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” This does not come until 28:14, when God himself appears to Jacob.

5b, he went to Padanaram.—Jacob, like Esau in the first panel, obeys his father’s charge.

28:6-9, Esau’s Ishmaelite Wife

Here we are told twice (6, 8) that Esau “saw.” The first refers to the events of vv. 1-5. The second appears to be a conclusion that he draws from these events.

7 his father and his mother.—Though their attitudes toward their sons may have differed, they were united on the matter of how they should marry; recall 26:35.

The daughters of Canaan pleased not his father.—From the charge they gave to Isaac, he draws this conclusion. Still, he is concerned to please only “his father,” with no reference to Rebekah.

To remedy this situation he takes another wife from Ishmael’s family. But he sadly misses the point. It is not the *absence* of a related wife that grieves them, but the *presence* of the Hittite women. Godliness is not just a matter of adding a veneer of spiritual practices to a sinful life, but of putting away what is displeasing to the Lord.

Notes

Hanni Kuhn’s analysis: chiasmic in thematic participants, with Esau at extremes and center.

		On stage (Thematic 1 st)	Locale	Notes
1	26:34-35	E	Hittites Camp	
2	27:1-5	I + E	Isaac’s tent	
3	6-13	R + J	Rebekah’s tent	This division is critical to giving the right # of Rebekah paragraphs
4	14-17	R + J		
5a	18-23	J + I	Isaac’s tent	
5b	24-29	I + J		
6a	30-	E + I		
6b	-40	I + E		Center
7	41	E	Camp	
8	42-45	R + J	Rebekah’s tent	
9	46	R + I	Isaac’s tent	
10	28:1-5	I + J		
11	6-9	E	Camp Ishmael’s	

The focus on Esau reinforces the vision we have had of him in ch. 25: fleshly, not at all like his father.