

## GENESIS

### Lesson 27 - Chapter 27

#### READ GEN 27 all

Permit me to quote a profound statement made by the great 19th century Jewish Christian scholar, and perhaps the man whose readings have influenced me 2nd only to the Torah itself, Alfred Edersheim: ***“ If there is any point on which we should anxiously be on our guard, it is that of ‘tempting God’. We do so tempt the Lord when, listening to our own inclinations, we put once more to question that which He has already clearly settled. Where God has decided, NEVER let us doubt, nor lag behind”.***

How often have we all suffered from seeing clearly God’s requirement of us, but asking Him for another and different decision that better suits our personal agenda, or our view of what ought to be. This is what Isaac did, and it created nothing but trouble.

This chapter opens with the old, blind, and sickly Isaac telling Esau to go hunt some meat as part of a commemorative meal that was part and parcel with the blessing Isaac wanted to bestow upon Esau. This, of course, was in no wise what God had told Isaac, through his wife Rebecca that was to occur. Had Isaac, all those years ago, simply decided to ignore what his wife had told him.....perhaps skeptical? Had he formed such a bond with Esau that he could not bear the thought of taking this all-important blessing from his beloved son, knowing it would humiliate and crush him? Or, did he think that perhaps God would allow him to simply go his own way, rebel, and bless it anyway?

I must readily admit, that after several years of study.....reading the wonderful works of some of the great Hebrew sages of old.....my conclusion has changed a little over time. It is interesting, is it not, that the matter of the birthright.....that is, who would be ***behkor***, the firstborn.....is really never the issue in this narrative? Some of you may be scratching your heads thinking, and then what is this all about? Or better yet, MY Bible seems to make this all about the birthright! Well, we’ll deal with that as we go, but let me show you something that might ease your minds just a bit: look at verse 36. ***NAS Genesis 27:36 Then he (Esau) 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?"***

By the time we reach this chapter, the issue of the birthright has apparently already been resolved. Reluctantly, Isaac seems to have accepted it at some point before this scene, and Esau was most aware that was the case. My study of birthright and blessings shows that the two things aren’t necessarily connected. The matter of the birthright, for the most part, is settled automatically at the birth of the first boy child. Certainly, if that child should die, then it

muddies the waters; but invariably the 2nd boy child would automatically gain the right his deceased brother held.....and if the 2nd boy child died, the 3rd would gain the birthright and so on. And, there would be no ceremony nor ritual attached, so well was this thoroughly imbedded in both law and tradition of that era. So, the traditional blessings bestowed upon the family near the end of the family leader's life meant something else. In other words, it's not so much that at the end of the life of the current family leader that everyone waits breathlessly to see who will be the NEW family leader...who will be designated the bekhor. We all can picture the greedy family members sitting in a circle, staring in great anticipation at the lawyer, as he gets ready to read the will; like children staring at the gifts under a Christmas tree; hoping, but not at all certain what awaits them.

We need to understand that the firstborn didn't get EVERYTHING; just the largest portion.....the Bible calls it the Double portion. And, along with that double portion, he gets the right of leadership over the clan. Now, what amounted to a double portion undoubtedly varied depending on the situation. Double doesn't necessarily mean that the firstborn son gets precisely double of all his brothers. This doesn't necessarily mean that an exact inventory of wealth was done to make sure each got exactly their proper share. It could, and probably did, happen that way particularly in later eras. More often, these portions were approximates; a double portion could have been anything from a little bit more than the others, to practically everything of value. It was all up to good old dad.

So, what we're witnessing here is about **the blessing**, not a decision about who is bekhor. And, the blessing in this case is about dividing up wealth. And, just like for us today.....and probably since time immemorial for everyone.... The inheriting children generally feel that if one gets **more** than the others that means one was more loved than the others. Or if one gets **less** than the others, then it means he or she is less loved or valued than the others.

We're told in verse 1 that Isaac was very old when he decided to perform the blessing. He was nearly blind as well. Now was he near death? He probably thought so, though it didn't prove to be the case. He was 137 years old at this time. But, stop and think for a second what that infers as to the age of Jacob and Esau. They were born, we're told, when Isaac was about 60. So, these "boys", were in their mid to late 70's!! Well, **that** sure destroys these wonderful mental pictures we have of a couple of virile young men being led around by their sly mother, or of an athletic Esau out killing game at a moments notice for this blessing!

Rebecca, the mother of these twin boys, overhears Isaac's instructions to the obviously delighted Esau, and she conspires to overturn Isaac's intentions. Esau was continuing to prove his unfitness to carry on the divine line that God had begun with Abraham. Rebecca was likely thinking that if her doddling old husband refused to carry out God's will, she would.....doing whatever it took.....even if it included deception.

After all, doesn't this end, ordained by God, justify whatever means it takes to achieve it? Wouldn't God rather have the goal of his plan accomplished.....and all of the stuff that went with it..... even if wrong was done to make it happen? This must be one of the most difficult parts of a Believer's walk with God; putting our full trust in Him to accomplish His will, even if at the moment all of our intellect and senses and logic and sense of fairness and life

experience tells us it can't happen within the circumstances at hand.

Rebecca tells Jacob what is happening in his father's tent, and he joins with her plan: and that plan is for Jacob to impersonate Esau. Jacob is a bit reluctant; not because he thinks what they are doing may be wrong, but rather that they may be discovered and then have to bear the consequences. Going so far as to put on Esau's clothing, even attaching goatskins to his arms and neck to imitate Esau's naturally hairy body, Jacob goes into his father's tent. Skeptical at first, Isaac's senses tell him something might not be quite right; but Isaac is convinced enough that this is indeed Esau before him, so he pronounces the blessing upon Jacob. The Hebrew word used here for blessing is **berakhah**, and it is a very common Hebrew word we'll find throughout the OT.

Let's read now, the words of the berakhah, the blessing that Isaac pronounced upon Jacob all the while thinking it was Esau:

**NAS Genesis 27:28 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."**

Now, without doubt, this blessing includes certain words and terms that rightly confer blessing on the bechor; for instance, "be a master over your brothers". So, while Isaac was not arguing over the technical aspect of who was DESIGNATED as firstborn, he was using his prerogatives to decide exactly who got what. And, it was more or less his intention to give Esau much of what the bechor should have traditionally received.

This is somewhat like when, after WWII, President Truman relieved General Macarthur of his command. General Macarthur didn't stop being a 5 star general, or a man of great power and position in the military. President Truman just made it so that Macarthur had nothing and no one to exercise that power over. Isaac isn't trying to say Jacob isn't the firstborn; he's just trying to take most of the rights of the firstborn away from Jacob and give them to Esau.....just another way to skin a cat.

Further, it seems that most times that the berakhah, the blessing, is pronounced, it is more or less making official that which was, by tradition, long ago settled. For instance, a rich man sets up a will, signs a power of attorney that the will is NEVER to be changed under any circumstances, by anyone including himself, and then inconveniently lives another 10 years. The matters have all been decided and written in stone; how much each inheritor to receive is determined and is not changeable; but, nothing takes effect until he dies and the will is read. This blessing, this berakhah, is similar to the reading of the will in that although things have long been decided, no transfer of wealth or authority had yet taken place.

Well, the deed is done. Jacob has received the blessing God intended for him; he held-on to the birthright God told his mother he'd have, AND, he received authority..... the power to lead the clan. But, no doubt Jacob felt none of the inner joy and sense of humility before God that should have been present after being anointed as the bearer of the line of covenant promise

that was so important for the future of all mankind. For Jacob had done wrong in making sure to obtain it...his deception was sin against God...and his conscience probably dogged him for the rest of his life. It's amazing: Jacob went through all these contortions and pulled off all of these hurtful deceptions only to receive that which **never** could have been denied him anyway, because the Lord had already determined it.

But, now, the other shoe drops: Esau arrives back from his successful hunt, prepares the meat, and goes into his father's tent ready and eager to receive his inheritance. A surprised Isaac knows immediately that he's been duped, and though he feels for Esau, there is nothing that can be done for a blessing of this sort, once given, is irreversible for ANY reason. Esau is distraught, and begs for SOME type of blessing. Let me remind you of the words of verse 36, where Esau speaks of TWO things that had been taken from him: his birthright and his blessings. And, he speaks of the firstborn birthright loss as a thing of the past, and the loss of the blessing meant for him as a thing happening "now". Esau did not go into the tent expecting to be named the bechor. Esau simply wanted LOTS of wealth and power. He didn't want the hassles and burdens associated with being the bechor, he just wanted the material rewards that the bechor was entitled to.

Now Isaac blesses Esau.....but he is limited in what he can offer Esau. The blessing Isaac gives him takes place in Vs 39 and 40. The words in Vs 39 have been under scrutiny by various scholars for many years; and I'd like you to pay very close attention to something that has led followers of Yahweh....Jewish and Christian.....into trouble time an again. It is that we attempt to resolve what seems like a contradiction in the Bible, and it winds up becoming doctrine and tradition. And, that doctrine and tradition leads us down pathways that blind us to the Scriptural truth.

**Tradition** renders V39 (everyone please look at this verse in your Bibles) **"Your home will be the richness of the earth and the dew of heaven from above"**. Sometimes it will say "fatness" instead of richness". Yet, LITERALLY the verse reads "Behold, **AWAY** from the richness of the earth and **AWAY** from the dew of heaven will be your home".

Why the obvious difference? Why would even the Hebrews read right over the "away" part, and rationalize it out of existence? Why would gentile Christians follow suit? There does not seem to be a clear-cut reason that one could hang his hat on, and there certainly seems to be no conspiracy involved. The NASB changed decades ago to reflect this literal translation of "away from". Alfred Edersheim stated over 100 years ago that this verse had been mistranslated when it showed Esau going to a fertile and lovely place complete with ample rains.

There seems to be a long standing effort to tie V28, showing that Isaac appears to be giving a very similar blessing to Jacob, as to Esau, about where they will each live. A blessing that Isaac gave in an attempt to inject fairness, and to make-up for the injustice done to Esau by his brother Jacob. But, taking one look at the original Hebrew makes that unlikely, as entirely different words are used to describe the nature of blessing to Jacob and the nature of the blessing to Esau.

In V28, the Hebrew shows God, through Isaac actively giving richness of land to Jacob, and in V39 it shows in Hebrew that Isaac is telling Esau he will be **held away** from richness of land. And, when one realizes that Edom....the land of Esau.... is located at the south end of the Dead Sea, and then stretching a short distance into the Arabian Peninsula, which was at that time, and has always been, arid and an inhospitable land, it is puzzling why this verse was EVER translated **incorrectly** as showing Esau being blessed to live in a lovely fertile place. One begins to suspect that at one time long ago, there was sympathy for Esau and his plight, and indeed, the ancient Rabbis and Scribes seem to have felt sorry for Esau, to varying degrees. And, when we can step back and think about this whole episode, can't we find some very good reason for compassion for Esau? After all, his destiny seems to have been set before his birth. And, Jacob was hardly up and up in this whole matter; plus, it is certain that Esau's mother OPENLY favored and sided with Jacob. So, was it God's intention to CURSE Esau, or merely to not BLESS him with all the rights of the firstborn? These are the questions the ancient Scribes and Sages wrestled with.

Rashi, a highly regarded Hebrew sage who was greatly influential on modern Judaism, lived during the time of the 1st Christian Crusades, in the 11th Century AD. He had much to say about Esau, and in obvious attempt to validate the earlier sages' sympathetic views on Esau, Rashi wrote that he saw Esau as a "type". He equated Esau, currently, in his day, to Italy and Rome, and Jacob to Israel and Jerusalem. That makes lots of sense for his day and time, because "the church" was the Roman Catholic Church based in Rome, Italy; and the Catholic Church had for centuries been the primary persecutor of the Jewish people. During the 1st Crusade, which Rashi personally witnessed, thousands upon thousands of Jews were forcibly converted to Christianity by the Crusaders, many MORE thousands were martyred simply for being Jews, and thousands more put to the sword when the Crusaders reached Jerusalem. Rashi went so far as to explain that the blessing we see in Gen. 27:39 that speaks of the fatness and the richness of the land, refers to the wonderfully rich volcanic soils of Italy and Rome. Further, that because it was well understood by all the sages that Esau was destined to become an enemy of Israel, that Esau represents the Roman Catholic Church.....or as he saw it in those days....simply "the church".

Anyway, this traditional Hebrew view of Esau that shows both sympathy at his plight as well as acknowledgement of his destiny as an enemy of Israel, shows up in attempt to mush the words of V39 around to indicate that Esau at least received SOME favor from God, through his father Isaac.....but history shows that the reality is quite different. Recently, I have heard some speakers, and read some articles, attempting to rationalize away the rather obvious mistranslation of V39 by saying that "fatness" is really just another way of saying "oily".....in other words, saying that fat equates to oil. The idea here is to explain how it is that the Bible says Esau, who would found a territory called Edom, was destined to live in a place of richness which, by definition, would lead him to prosperity; when in fact Edom has always been a desert wasteland where eking out a living was tough. So, by changing the word "fatness" to "oiliness", then voila, we see how rich the Arab Sheiks are because of their oil reserves, and this fixes the whole problem. WRONG! Even if that horribly strained argument of changing "fat" to "oil" was workable...which, in the Hebrew language, the language this was written, and it is **not**..... the part of the Arabian Peninsula that was included in the territory of Edom has no oil. The southern part of Jordon is where most of Edom used to be, and Jordon has practically

no oil at all; and south of Jordon, where the remainder of Edom was located, is nowhere near the Saudi Arabian oil fields. NO..... the term “fat of the earth” is just another standard and easily recognized Hebrew expression; it just means “the finest fruits and produce from the earth”.

In any case, when one correctly translates the first part of Esau's blessing.....that Esau and his descendants will be held AWAY from fertile lands..... the final part of it, and Esau's response, makes a lot more sense; his blessing resembled more a curse than a blessing. Had Esau been happily blessed, and thereby destined that he would reside in a wonderful place, living off the richness of the land, would he have been so determined to kill Jacob? It's pretty hard to see. But, being cursed that he would reside AWAY from the fat of the land, cursed that he would live in a fairly desolate place where it didn't often rain, one could see why he would burn with homicidal anger and envy towards his conniving brother. This curse to be separated from rich lands, combined with the blessings given to Jacob, served to set Esau, later to be called Edom, against Jacob, later to be called Israel, for all time. And, that is certainly what we have seen played out in history.

Even in the time of Jesus....some 1800 years after this blessing of Isaac upon his twin sons..... the hated King Herod was himself a result of this curse on Esau: for at the time of Jesus, the name of the land of Edom was known in the Greek language as Idumea.....and Edom was King Herod's people, heritage and homeland. You see, that evil and bloodthirsty King Herod.....the King Herod who sold out to Rome and became their puppet..... was a descendant of Esau.

The Bible shows how Esau mixed with the descendants of ANOTHER group of people who would have had very good reason.....at least in their minds.....for hating Israel **eternally**. And, that group of people Esau mixed with was the descendants of Ishmael.....that earlier tragic story in Genesis of a PHYSICALLY firstborn son of the greatest Patriarch, Abraham, being rejected and denied the right to carry the mantle as the inheritor of the covenant promise. And, we'll discuss some of that mixing as we get to the later chapters of Genesis.

For now, just know that much, though my no means all, of the Arab world carries with them the genes of Esau. In particular, a large segment of the Turkish population is related to Esau, as are most Syrians, and the Kurdish people of Iraq. We should all at least have HEARD of the Ottoman Empire which ruled the Middle East for many centuries.....from about 1300 to just after WWI; the Ottomans' were a dominant tribe in the nation of Turkey.....and it was these particular Turks who are descendants of Esau. And, of course, these Turks are Muslim, and we know from Bible prophecy that the Turks are going to play a primary role in the events of Revelation as enemies of Israel.

The thing we must also understand is that the majority of Muslims in the world are related to Esau....even the ones in Afghanistan. So, this enmity that would occur between twin brothers, Jacob and Esau, almost 4000 years ago, has everything to do with the condition of the world now, what led up to our current situation, and how it will all play out leading up to, and through, the Great Tribulation.

Looking a little more at the blessing....or really, curse.....that Esau was given, it says, “ by your

sword you shall live". In other words, violence and pillaging shall be Esau's way of gaining wealth and prosperity. And, as I have explained on a number of occasions, these prophetic blessings have MORE effect on the person's future descendants than on the person who originally received the blessing; and that is what we find as we follow the progress of Esau's line. Esau's descendants didn't become shepherds.....they became conquerors and bands of robbers who descended on caravans that passed through their lands. War was their way of life; war is even at the heart of what is now their religion; Islam.

Further, the blessing also says ".....and you shall serve your brother...but when you grow restive, you shall break the yoke from your neck...."

It was King David who was the first descendant of Jacob to rule over the descendants of Esau, as prophesied in the blessing of Isaac. Edom wore the yoke of Israeli domination on their neck from about 1000 BC to about 735 BC.....a longer period of time than the United States has been a nation. It was King Ahaz of Judah who lost control of the Edomite nation, and not since then have the descendants of Esau admitted to being under the control of an Israelite. And, hopefully, this also helps to explain the determination of the so-called Palestinians, today, to be free of any control under the thumb of the re-born nation of Israel.....because most Palestinians recognize that they are descendants of Esau.

This chapter ends with Rebecca insisting that Jacob leave, immediately, to escape Esau's wrath. She told him he should go back up north, in Mesopotamia, to her family...specifically, to her brother Laban's home. She approached Isaac with this idea, and convinced him it was a prudent course of action not by suggesting to Isaac that Esau might kill Jacob, but rather by appealing to Isaac's hatred of the pagan tribes that surrounded them. Esau had, some time earlier, married two Canaanite women.....Hittites to be specific..... and this tormented Isaac and Rivka. Rivka told Isaac they needed to send Jacob away lest he did the same thing! And, he most certainly agreed. Remember, though, that this is not a couple of parents sending their young child off to fend for himself: Jacob was in his 70's at this time.