

THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

"[The] interaction between the brothers illustrates the ways divisions between parents affect relations between children. These two brothers bargain with each other for favors and see each other as rivals, rather than showing the sort of brotherly love the Lord intended families to display."

—Barnabe Assohoto & Samuel Ngewa, *The Africa Bible Commentary*

"God & Jacob—His Early Life"

Jacob & Esau: Genesis 25:22-28

The Prophecy → The older would serve the younger.

- This is a reversal of what would have been assumed at the time and is demonstrating that God's plans are not bound by cultural _____.
- When the boys are born, their names reflect the unique circumstances of their births.

"Esau" →

His name is perhaps derived from the Hebrew word 'as-ah, meaning "to press or squeeze," a reference that in all likelihood refers to Rebekah's tumultuous pregnancy.

"Jacob" →

Jacob's name means "one who takes by the heel." It carries the idea of being a usurper.

The Deeds of Jacob: Genesis 25:29-34; 27:1-29

1. The Purchase of Esau's Birthright

Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom. Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." —25:29-39

- The birthright was an important aspect of Ancient Near Eastern cultures.
 - ⇒ The oldest child would receive a double portion of the inheritance.
 - ⇒ The oldest would take the position of headship within the family structure.

Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.—25:31-34

- Esau's focus is on the immediate gratification of his physical desires rather than on the long-term blessings and promises of God.
- The author (Moses) uses the Hebrew literary device of repeating "and + a verb" so that the audience considers the deliberate nature of what Esau is doing.

→ Esau's actions showed that he did not value his birthright and consider it something worthy of being _____ or protected.

2. The Deception of his Father and the Stealing of Esau's Blessing

- **Gen. 26:34-35** describe Esau's marriages to Hittite women as the background of the events in Ch. 27. Though Esau has flippantly sold his birthright and has taken wives from among the Canaanites, Isaac still desires to see God's promises to Abraham pass to him.
- Rebekah overheard Isaac's instructions and immediately commanded her favored son, Jacob, to prepare himself to impersonate Esau so that he might be the recipient of the blessing.

So he went in to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" 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." 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." —Gen. 27:18-20

- Jacob invoked the Lord's name in his deception of his father in order to explain how he was so quickly able to obtain game.
- In order to confirm that this was Esau, Isaac called him to come close so that he might bless him.

Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near and kiss me, my son." So he came near and kissed him. And Isaac smelled the smell of his garments and blessed him and said, "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed! May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine. 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!"—Gen. 27:27-29

The blessing concerned **Material Prosperity (27:27b-28a)**, **Fertility (27:28b)**, **Headship (27:29a)**, and the inheritance of the promises given by God to Abraham (27:29b)

- Esau's reaction to finding out that his blessing had been stolen was to begin to plot Jacob's murder.

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."—Gen. 27:41

Lessons from the Life of Esau

1. Esau's carelessness with his birthright demonstrated his carelessness in other areas of life, particularly his _____.

Heb. 12:16-17— [See to it] that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

2. Esau had a disdain for the authority of _____ demonstrated in his spiteful actions towards his _____. (Gen. 28:6-9)

Jacob's Vision of Yahweh: Genesis 28:10-52

Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. 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. —Gen. 28:10-11

Point of Emphasis:

Because of his sinful actions, Jacob was forced to flee from his father's household and from the land which his father and grandfather had been promised. He was forced to _____ the very things which he thought he had obtained through his deceptions.

- It is probable that this vision was a response to the things that Jacob had been considering in his mind and heart that night (Dan. 2:29)
- The vision was of a large staircase that reached from earth to heaven and which was traveled in each direction by angels, with Yahweh at the top.
- Yahweh identified Himself as the God of Abraham and Isaac and then made Jacob the same promises He had made to them:
 - ⇒ *"The land...I will give to you and your offspring."* → Gen. 15:18 and 26:3
 - ⇒ *"Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth..."* → Gen. 15:5 and 26:4a
 - ⇒ *"...in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed."* → Gen. 12:3; 22:18 and 26:4b
- Jacob responded to the vision in an emphatic way, recognizing this as a place where Yahweh is to be worshipped.

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." 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." 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. He called the name of that place Bethel..."

- Jacob recognized the uniqueness of this place in terms of the worship of Yahweh
 - ⇒ *"...set it up for a pillar and poured oil on top of it."* (Gen. 31:34; 35:24)

Point of Emphasis: Jacob recognized the _____ of Yahweh among His people in the land which He had promised to them.

New Testament Connection: John 1:51

1. In His _____, Jesus is God was God who came to dwell among us.

John 1:14—And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

2. In His _____, Jesus granted to us full access to the presence of God.

Heb. 10:19-22—Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.