

JACOB AND HIS PARENTS

Genesis 25:19 - 27:40

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau

Key-location: Canaan

Key-repetitions:

- Conflict between: Isaac and Rebekah over their children; Jacob and Esau over the rights of the firstborn.
- Jacob took advantage of others: traded stew in exchange for Esau's birthright (Gen 25:29-34); deceived his father Isaac in order to receive the blessing promised to his brother Esau (Gen 27:1-29).
- Isaac kept trying to verify which son brought him food: Isaac asked which son was he (Gen 27:18); Isaac asked how he found the game so quickly (Gen 27:20); Isaac touched him to determine if he were Esau (Gen 27:21-22); Isaac asked him if he were really his son Esau (Gen 27:24) Isaac asked him to kiss him, and he caught the smell of Esau's clothes (Gen 27:27).

Key-attitudes:

- Isaac's preference for Esau and Rebekah's preference for Jacob.
- Jacob's selfishness and greed.
- Conflict between Jacob and Esau, and Rebekah and Isaac.
- Isaac's doubts that Jacob was Esau.
- Isaac's outrage at being deceived by his son Jacob.
- Esau's bitter anger at Jacob.

Initial-situation:

The Lord promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore, and that through his offspring all nations would be blessed. God said that his promises would be fulfilled through Isaac's descendants. Isaac took Rebekah to be his wife.

Initial-problem:

Rebekah was barren. Isaac prayed, and Rebekah became pregnant with twins who butted heads while still inside her womb.

Final-situation:

Jacob deceived his blind father Isaac into giving him the blessing that Isaac intended to give to his oldest son, Esau. Esau planned to kill his brother Jacob.

BIBLE STORY

Isaac, Rebekah, and Their Twin Sons

Abraham's son, Isaac, was forty years old when he married Rebekah, sister of Laban. Rebekah couldn't get pregnant. Isaac prayed to the Lord for Rebekah. Isaac was sixty-years-old when God answered his prayer and Rebekah became pregnant with twins. The Lord told Rebekah, "Two people are butting heads while still in your body; one people will be stronger than the other and the older will serve the younger" (Gen 25:19-23).

The first baby was born red; his whole body was like a hairy robe; he was named Esau (*Hairy*). His twin brother followed, his hand grasping Esau's heel. He was named Jacob (*Heel*).

The boys grew. Esau became an expert hunter while Jacob stayed among the tents. Isaac, the father, loved wild game and he loved Esau; however, Rebekah, the mother, loved Jacob (Gen 25:19-28).

Once Jacob was cooking stew when Esau came in from hunting and was starved. Esau told Jacob, "Give me that red stew! I'm starved!"

Jacob replied, "Make me a trade: my stew for your birthright as firstborn."

Esau said, "I'm about to die; what good is the birthright if I'm dead?" Esau swore an oath, selling his rights as the firstborn to Jacob. Esau ate, drank, got up, and left (Gen 25:29-34).

The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. I'll bless you and increase the number of your descendants because of my servant Abraham" (Gen 26:23-25).

Jacob Deceives His Father in Order to Get His Brother's Blessing

Isaac was old and nearly blind when he called for Esau, his older son. Isaac said, "My son, I'm now an old man and don't know when I might die. Get your quiver of arrows and bow. Hunt some wild game and prepare the tasty food I love. Bring it to me to eat; then I will bless you before I die" (Gen 27:1-4).

Rebekah was eavesdropping as Isaac spoke to Esau. Esau left to hunt game. Rebekah told her son Jacob, "I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, 'Bring me some game and prepare me tasty food to eat, so that I may bless you before I die.' Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: Go out to our flock and get two of the best young goats. I'll prepare them into a meal for your father, just the way he likes it. Then take the meal to your father to eat and he'll bless you before he dies."

Jacob replied, "But Mother, Esau is a hairy man, and I have smooth skin. If Father touches me, he'll think I'm tricking him. I'll bring down a curse on myself instead of a blessing."

His mother answered, "My son, let the curse fall on me. Just go and get the young goats for me."

Jacob got the goats and brought them to his mother. Rebekah prepared tasty food. She took Esau's best clothes and put them on Jacob. She also covered Jacob's hands and

the smooth part of his neck with goatskins. Then she gave Jacob the food she had prepared (Gen 27:5-17).

Jacob went to his father and said, "My Father."

Isaac said, "Yes, which son are you?"

Jacob answered, "I'm Esau your firstborn. I've done what you told me. Please sit up and eat some meat of the animal which I hunted for you. Then bless me."

Isaac asked his son, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?"

Jacob replied, "The Lord your God gave me success."

Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near so I can touch you, to know if you really are my son Esau or not."

Jacob moved close to his father. Isaac touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau. Are you really my son Esau?"

Jacob replied, "I am."

Isaac said, "My son, bring me some of your game. I'll eat it and bless you." Jacob brought it to his father and he ate. Then Isaac said, "Come close my son, and kiss me."

Jacob kissed his father. Isaac caught the smell of Esau's clothes. Finally, Isaac blessed Jacob and said, "The smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed. May God give you dew from the sky, fertile fields on earth, and an abundance of grain and new wine. May nations serve you; may people bow down to you. May you be master over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed; those who bless you be blessed" (Gen 27:18-29).

Jacob received the blessing and left his father's presence. Then Esau returned from hunting, prepared a meal, and brought it to his father. Esau said, "My father, sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may bless me."

Isaac asked Esau, "Who are you?"

Esau answered, "I'm your son, your firstborn, Esau."

Isaac trembled violently and said, "Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him. It's too late to take back my blessing!"

Esau sobbed violently. He bitterly cried out to his father, "Bless me also, my father!"

But Isaac said, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing."

Esau said, "Not for nothing was he named Jacob, the Heel. Twice he's tricked me: First he took my birthright; now he's taken my blessing! Haven't you saved a blessing for me?"

Isaac answered, "I made him master over you and made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. What can I possibly do for you, my son?"

Esau sobbed inconsolably.

Esau hated Jacob. He brooded, "The days to mourn my father's death are near; then I'll kill my brother Jacob" (Gen 27:30-41).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What problems did Isaac and Rebekah experience in their family?
2. What are some of the ways that parents today contribute to problems in their own home?
3. How did Jacob obtain Esau's birthright and his father's blessing?
4. What were the consequences of Jacob's deception within his own home?
5. Today, what are some of the consequences of a family member deceiving another family member?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **When a parent favors one child more than another, conflict is generated in the home.** Isaac loved Esau, the hunter, while Rebekah loved Jacob, the son who cooked (Gen 25:27-28). There was serious conflict in their home.
2. **When a married partner gives priority to a child rather than his/her spouse, communication problems are generated.** Isaac loved Esau, while Rebekah loved Jacob. Rebekah learned about Isaac's plans to bless Esau by eavesdropping instead of being informed by her husband (Gen 27:5). She also helped her favorite son, Jacob, deceive his father and his brother (Gen 27:5-17).
3. **It is not God's will for a person to do evil expecting it to bring about positive results.** It was not God's will for Rebekah and Jacob to deceive Isaac and betray Esau in order to receive the paternal blessing, expecting that the results would be positive (Gen 27:1-35).
4. **The person who cunningly takes advantage of others will have enemies.** Twice Jacob took advantage of Esau: when he traded Esau stew for his birthright and when he deceived his father to receive Esau's blessing. After those events, Esau hated Jacob (Gen 27:36-41).
5. **The person who doesn't appreciate privileges will lose them.** Esau didn't attribute value to the covenant between God and Abraham, nor to the privileges of being the firstborn son. He traded his firstborn rights for bread and stew (Gen 25:29-34).

6. **The person who is most attractive to his fellow man, may not be the person God chooses to use.** Esau the hunter was more attractive than Jacob the cook. However, Esau was godless because he sought immediate gratification, and didn't value spiritual privileges (Heb 12:16).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Interaction with Characters in Story:

Invite listeners to interact with characters in the story by asking a question. What would you like to say:

- To Rebekah and Isaac, who each have their favorite son?
- To Rebekah, when she is eavesdropping on her husband Isaac and her son Esau?
- To Jacob, when his mother suggested he deceive his father and steal his brother Esau's blessing?
- To Esau, when he discovered brother Jacob had tricked his father and taken his promised blessing?