

PART THIRTY-NINE

THE STORY OF ISAAC: THE TWINS AND THE BLESSING

(Genesis 27:1-45)

The Biblical Account

1 And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his elder son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Here am I. 2 And he 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 venison; 4 and make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it 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. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. 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 savory food, that I may eat, and bless thee before Jehovah before my death. 8 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. 9 Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savory food for thy father, such as he loveth: 10 and thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, so that he may bless thee before his death. 11 And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. 12 My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. 13 And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son; only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. 14 And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savory food, such as his father loved. 15 And Rebekah took the goodly gar-

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ments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son; 16 and she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: 17 and she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

18 And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? 19 And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first-born; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. 20 And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because Jehovah thy God sent me good speed. 21 And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. 22 and Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. 23 And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. 24 And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am. 25 And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank. 26 And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. 27 And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said.

See, the smell of my son

Is the smell of a field which Jehovah hath blessed:

28 And God gave thee of the dew of heaven,

And of the fatness of the earth,

And plenty of grain and new wine:

29 Let peoples serve thee,

And nations bow down to thee:

Be lord over thy brethren,

And let thy mother's sons bow down to thee:

Cursed be every one that curseth thee,

And blessed be every one that blesseth thee

30 *And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. 31 And he also made savory food, and brought it unto his father; and he said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. 32 And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy first-born, Esau. 33 And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who then is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed. 34 When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. 35 And he said, Thy brother came with guile, and hath taken away thy blessing. 36 And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? 37 And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with grain and new wine have I sustained him: and what then shall I do for thee, my son? 38 And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me even also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept. 39 And Isaac his father answered and said unto him,*

Behold, of the fatness of the earth shall be thy dwelling,

And of the dew of heaven from above;

40 *And by thy sword shalt thou live, and thou shalt serve thy brother;*

And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt break loose,

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That thou shalt shake his yoke from off thy neck.

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 hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. 42 And the words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah; and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. 43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; 44 and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; 45 until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence; why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?

1. *Significance of the Patriarchal Blessing.* The "modernistic" critical explanation of this section is clearly stated by Skinner (ICCG, 368) as follows: "This vivid and circumstantial narrative, which is to be read immediately after 25:34 (or 25:28), gives yet another explanation of the historical fact that Israel, the younger people, had outstripped Edom in the race for power and prosperity. The clever but heartless stratagem by which Rebekah succeeds in thwarting the intention of Isaac, and diverting the blessing from Esau to Jacob, is related with great vivacity, and with an indifference to moral considerations which has been thought surprising in a writer with the fine ethical insight of J (Di). [Di here stands for the German critic Dillmann]. It must be remembered, however, that 'J' is a collective symbol, and embraces many tales which sink to the level of ordinary popular morality. We may fairly conclude with Gu. [272: Gu is for Gunkel] that narratives of this stamp were too firmly rooted in the mind of the people to be omitted from any collection of national traditions." The student should not forget that

these hypothetical "writers" are all *hypothetical*; that the hypothetical Codes are likewise hypothetical, since no external evidence can be produced to confirm their existence or that of their authors or "redactors." All phases of the Documentary Theory of the Pentateuch are completely without benefit of evidential support externally, and there is little or no agreement among the critics themselves in the matter of allocating verses, sentences and phrases to the various respective writers and redactors. Hence, it follows that all conclusions drawn from the internal evidence of the text is based on *inference*, and that the inference is not necessary inference. I insert this explanatory statement here to caution the student to be wary of these analytical theories which have been spun out of the critics' separate imaginations much in the manner in which a spider spins its web out of its own being (to use an illustration offered by Sir Francis Bacon in his *Novum Organon*). There is no valid ground for not accepting these accounts of the significant events in the lives of the patriarchs at face value. They certainly serve to show us that human character (motivations, attitudes, virtues, faults and foibles) is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Cornfeld (AtD, 81) writes: "Ancient belief held that words spoken in blessing, or in curse on solemn occasions, were efficacious and had the power, as though by magic, to produce the intended result. The blessing of the father was binding, and when Isaac discovered the deceit he held his blessing to be effective, even though it had been granted under false pretences. . . . In patriarchal society, the effectiveness of the blessing was well understood. In Nuzu a man repeated in court the blessing his father had given him on his death-bed, willing him a wife. The terms of such a blessing were upheld by the Court. The Nuzu tablets recognized oral blessings and death-bed wills."

Acts of blessing may be classified as follows: (1)

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Those in which God is said to bless men (Gen. 1:28, 22:17). "God's blessing is accompanied with that virtue which renders his blessing effectual, and which is expressed by it. Since God is eternal and omnipresent, his omniscience and omnipotence cause His blessings to avail in the present life in respect to all things, and also in the life to come." (2) Those in which men are said to bless God (Psa. 103:1, 2; 145:1-3, etc.). "This is when they ascribe to Him those characteristics which are His, acknowledge His sovereignty, express gratitude for His mercies, etc." (3) Those in which men bless their fellow-men when, as in ancient times, under the spirit of prophecy, they predicted blessings to come upon them. (Cf. Jacob and his sons, Gen. 49:1-28, Heb. 11:21; Moses and the children of Israel, Deut. 33:1-29). "Men bless their fellow-men when they express good wishes and pray God in their behalf." It was the duty and privilege of the priests to bless the people in the name of the Lord. The form of the priestly benediction was prescribed in the Law: see Num. 6:24-26: here the promise was added that God would fulfil the words of the blessing. This blessing was pronounced by the priest with uplifted hands, after every morning and evening sacrifice, as recorded of Aaron (Lev. 9:22), and to it the people responded by uttering an amen. This blessing was regularly pronounced at the close of the service in the synagogues. The Levites appear also to have had the power of conferring the blessing (2 Chron. 30:27), and the same privilege was accorded the king, as the viceroy of the Most High (2 Sam. 6:18, 1 Ki. 8:55). Our Lord is said to have blessed little children (Mark 10:16, Luke 24:50), Note also that blessing occurred on the occasion of the institution of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26). (See UBD, s.v., p. 134).

Leupold obviously gives us the clearest explanation of the subject before us. He writes (EG, 737): "Esau, knowing his father's love for game, had no doubt shown this

token of love many a time before this and had noted what pleasure it afforded his father. In this instance the momentous thing is that the father purposes 'to bless' his son. Esau well understood what this involved. This was a custom, apparently well established at this time, that godly men before their end bestowed their parting blessing upon their children. Such a blessing, had it been merely a pious wish of a pious man, would have had its worth and value. In it would have been concentrated the substance of all his prayers for his children. Any godly son would already on this score alone have valued such a blessing highly. However, the blessings of godly men, especially of the patriarchs, had another valuable element in them: they were prophetic in character. Before his end many a patriarch was taught by God's Spirit to speak words of great moment, that indicated to a large extent the future destiny of the one blessed. In other words, *the elements of benediction and prediction* blended in the final blessing. It appears from the brief nature of Isaac's statement that this higher character of the blessing was so well understood as to require no explanation. From all this one sees that *the crude ideas of magic were far removed from these blessings.*" (Italics mine—C.C.). For similar instances, see Gen. 48:10ff.; 50:24ff.; Deut. 33; Josh. 23; 2 Sam. 23:1ff.; 1 Ki. 2:1ff.; 2 Ki. 13:14ff.

2. *Isaac Purposes to Bless Esau* (vv. 1-5). We have here the first reported instance of the infirmities of old age and consequent shortening of life. Isaac was then in his 137th year, a figure based on the following calculation: Joseph was thirty years old when he was first introduced to Pharaoh (41:46), and when Jacob went into Egypt, thirty-nine, as the seven years of abundance and two of famine had then passed (41:47, 45:6); but Jacob at that time was 130 years old (47:9); this means that Joseph was born before Jacob was 91; and as his birth took place in the fourteenth year of Jacob's sojourn in Mesopotamia (cf.

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30:25 and 29:18, 21, 27); it follows that Jacob's flight to Laban occurred in the 77th year of his own life and the 137th of Isaac's. (See KD, BCOTP, 273, 274, fn.). Murphy finds that Isaac was 136 years old at the time of the bestowal of the blessing. "Joseph was in his thirtieth year when he stood before Pharaoh, and therefore thirty-nine when Jacob came down to Egypt at the age of one hundred and thirty. When Joseph was born, therefore, Jacob was ninety-one, and he had sojourned fourteen years in Padan-Aram. Hence Jacob's flight to Laban took place when he was seventy-seven, and therefore in the one hundred and thirty-sixth year of Isaac" (MG, 381). What was the cause of Isaac's failing sight at this relatively early age? The Rabbinical speculations are rather fantastic and indeed amusing. Isaac's eyes were dim, according to one view, from old age; according to another "as a punishment for not restraining Esau in his wickedness, as happened to Eli"; according to other notions, "through the smoke of the incense which his daughters-in-law offered to idols"; or, "when Isaac lay bound on the altar for a sacrifice, the angels wept over him, and their tears dropped into his eyes, and dimmed them"; or, finally, "this happened to him that Jacob might receive the blessings" (SC, 150).

The approach of infirmity of sight certainly warned Isaac "to perform the solemn act by which, as prophet as well as father, he was to hand down the blessing of Abraham to another generation. Of course he designed for Esau the blessing which, once given, was the authoritative and irrevocable act of the patriarchal power; and he desired Esau to prepare a feast of venison for the occasion. Esau was not likely to confess the sale of his birthright, nor could Jacob venture openly to claim the benefit of his trick. Whether Rebekah knew of that transaction, or whether moved by partiality only, she came to the aid of her favorite son, and devised the stratagem by which Jacob obtained his father's blessing" (OTH, 94). "Isaac

had not yet come to the conclusion that Jacob was heir of the promise. The communication from the Lord to Rebekah concerning her yet unborn sons in the form in which it is handed down to us merely determines that the elder shall serve the younger. This fact Isaac seems to have thought might not imply the transference of the birthright; and if he was aware of the transaction between Esau and Jacob, he may not have regarded it as valid. Hence he makes arrangements for bestowing the paternal blessing on Esau, his elder son, whom he also loved" (MG, 381). "In the calmness of determination Isaac directs Esau to prepare savory meat, such as he loved, that he may have his vigor renewed and his spirits revived for the solemn business of bestowing that blessing, which he held to be fraught with more than ordinary benefits" (MG, 381). "It must be observed that Isaac was in the wrong when he attempted to give Esau the blessing. He could not have been ignorant of God's decree about the sons before they were born. However much we deplore the acts of Rebekah and Jacob, the greater fault was with Isaac and Esau" (OTH, 94). We suggest that the proper title for the study before us would be, "The Parents, The Twins, and the Blessing." *Both parents were more deeply involved in these transactions than were the sons themselves.*

"Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death," said Isaac; yet he lived forty-three years longer (35:28). "Without regard to the words which were spoken by God with reference to the children before their birth, and without taking any notice of Esau's frivolous barter of his birthright and his ungodly connections with the Canaanites, Isaac maintained his preference for Esau, and directed him therefore to take his things (hunting gear), his quiver and bow, to hunt game and prepare a savory dish, that he might eat, and his soul might bless him. As his preference for Esau was fostered and strength-

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ened by, if it did not spring from, his liking for game (25:28), so now he wished to raise his spirits for imparting the blessing by a dish of venison prepared to his taste. In this the infirmity of the flesh is evident. At the same time, it was not merely because of his partiality for Esau, but unquestionably on account of the natural rights of the firstborn, that he wished to impart the blessing to him, just as the desire to do this before his death arose from the consciousness of his patriarchal call" (BCOTP, 274).

"He [Isaac] seems to have apprehended the near approach of dissolution (but he lived forty-three years longer, 35:28). And believing that the conveyance of the patriarchal benediction was a solemn duty incumbent on him, he was desirous of stimulating all his energies for that great effort, by partaking, apparently for the last time, of a favorite dish which had often refreshed and invigorated his wasted frame. It is difficult to imagine him ignorant of the Divine purpose (cf. 25:23). But natural affection, prevailing through age and infirmity, prompted him to entail the honors and powers of the birthright on his eldest son; and perhaps he was not aware of what Esau had done (cf. 25:34). The deathbed benediction of the patriarchs was not simply the last farewell blessing of a father to his children, though that, pronounced with all the fulness and energy of concentrated feeling, carries in every word an impressive significance which penetrates the inmost parts of the filial heart, and is often felt there long after the tongue that uttered it is silent in the grave. The dying benediction of the patriarchs had a mysterious import: it was a supernatural act, in performing which they were free agents indeed; still mere instruments employed by an overruling power to execute His purposes of grace. It was, in fact, a testamentary conveyance of the promise, bequeathed with great solemnity in a formal address, called a BLESSING (vv. 30, 36; 22:17, 18 [Greek,

eulogese]; Heb. 11:20), which, consisting partly of prayers and partly of predictions, was an authoritative appropriation of the covenant promises to the person who inherited the right of primogeniture. Abraham, indeed, had not performed this last ceremony, because it had been virtually done before his death, on the expulsion of Ishmael (25:5), and by the bestowment of the patrimonial inheritance on Isaac (25:5), as directed by the oracle (cf. 17:21 with 21:12, last clause). But Isaac (as also Jacob) had more than one son in *his* family, and, in the belief of his approaching death, was animated by a sacred impulse to do what was still unperformed, and his heart prompted as right—that of transmitting the honors of primogeniture to his elder son” (Jamieson, CECG, 194).

Note especially v. 4, last clause: “*that my soul may bless thee before I die.*” That is to say “that, invigorated with the savory meat, I may bestow upon thee my blessing, constituting thee heir of all the benefits promised to me and my father Abraham: vv. 27-29; ch. 28:3, 4, 48:15; Deut. 31, 33; Heb. 11:20” (SIBG, 258). “Isaac intended to bless him that God’s promise to Abraham, that his seed would inherit the land, should be fulfilled through Esau. Presumably Rebekah had never told Isaac of the prophecy that the elder would serve the younger, 25:23” (SC, 150). “The expression ‘that my *soul* may bless thee’ does involve a bit more than the bare fact that the word ‘soul’ is used as a substitute for the personal pronoun. The expression actually indicates the participation of one’s inmost being in the activity involved” (Leupold, EG, 738). “As if the expiring *nephes* gathered up all its forces in a single potent and prophetic wish. The universal belief in the efficacy of a dying utterance appears often in the New Testament” (Skinner, ICCG, 369).

3. *Rebekah’s Stratagem* (vv. 6-17). Rebekah *happened to be listening* (JB, 45) when Isaac was talking with his son Esau (cf. 18:10). But—did she just *happen* to be

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listening, or was she *eavesdropping*, constantly on guard to protect the interests of her favorite? Her jealousy aroused by what she overheard, "she instantly devises a scheme whose daring and ingenuity illustrate the Hebrew notion of capable and quick-witted womanhood" (ICCG, 370). Apparently her plan was formed quickly: indeed the likelihood is that she had the plan ready in case of just such an eventuality as this. Everything that follows makes Rebekah's initiative in the scheme more obvious. "She is a woman of quick decision, as she was from the moment of her first meeting with Abraham's servant as well as on the occasion of her assent to the proposition to go back to Isaac at once" (EG, 740). (Cf. 24:15-27, 55-60). As she unfolds her stratagem, Jacob obeys her at once. The fact that he sees a possible flaw, however, makes it crystal clear that he is not averse to carrying out her orders. His objection shows enough shrewdness on his part (vv. 11-12) "to throw his mother's resourcefulness into bolder relief." But it is obvious that his demurrer was not on any moral ground, but solely on the ground of *expediency*, namely, *that he might get caught red-handed in trying to perpetrate the deception*. To this Rebekah replied, "Upon me be the curse, my son," to which she added the demand that he *obey her voice*, that is, without question. Evidently she knew what she was doing, and so had made preparation for any eventuality. *Rebekah was truly in command of the situation: no doubt about it*. "Jacob views the matter more coolly, and starts a difficulty. He may be found out to be a deceiver, and bring his father's curse upon him. Rebekah, anticipating no such issue, undertakes to bear the curse that she conceived would never come. Only let him obey" (Murphy, MG, 381). "Jacob's chief difficulty was removed. He had been more afraid of detection than of duplicity. His mother, however, proved more resolute than he in carrying through the plan. Jacob provides the materials, Rebekah prepares them. After more than

ninety years of married life she must have known pretty well what 'his father loved' " (Leupold, EG, 743). Rebekah takes the festal raiment and puts it on Jacob: "the fact that this would have been put on Esau proves once more that the blessing was a religious ceremony." "Since the clothes were in Rebekah's charge, Esau must have been still an unmarried man" (ICCG, 370). Rebekah's part is now ended and Jacob is left on his own resources. v. 13—"The maner in which she [Rebekah] imprecates the curse cannot be justified; but, from the promise of God, and from Jacob's having obtained the birthright, ch. 25:23, 33, she was confident of a happy issue" (SIBG, 258). "The narrative stresses throughout that Esau was the elder and Jacob the younger, and this is done to the credit of Rebekah. Although a mother would normally recognize that the blessings and birthright belonged to the firstborn, she was determined that they should go to Jacob, because she perceived Esau's unfitness for them" (SC, 151).

4. *Jacob Obtains the Blessing* (vv. 18-29). Jacob, without further objection, obeys his mother. She clothes him in Esau's festal raiment and puts the skins of the kids on his hands and his neck. ("The camel-goat affords a hair which bears a great resemblance to that of natural growth, and is used as a substitute for it," Murphy, MG, 382). The strange interview between father and son now begins. "The scheme planned by the mother was to be executed by the son in the father's bed-chamber; and it is painful to think of the deliberate falsehoods, as well as daring profanity, he resorted to. The disguise, though wanting one thing, which had nearly upset the whole plot, succeeded in misleading Isaac; and while giving his paternal embrace, the old man was roused into a state of high satisfaction and delight" (CECG, 195). Isaac is reclining on his couch, in the feebleness of advancing years. His first reaction is to express surprise that the visitor could have had such good fortune in his hunting and in the

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preparation of the savory meal so quickly. Jacob blandly replied, hypocritically it would seem, "Because Jehovah thy God sent me God speed," that is, Yahweh has providentially come to my assistance. "To bring God into the lie seems blasphemous to us but the oriental mentality would see no wrong in it, being used to ascribe every event to God, ignoring 'secondary causes'" (JB, 47). (It is difficult, I think, for us to dismiss the matter so nonchalantly). "By making the utterance doubly solemn, 'Yahweh, thy God,' the hypocritical pretense is made the more odious" (EG, 745). On hearing Jacob's voice Isaac became suspicious, and bade Jacob come nearer, that he might feel him. This Jacob did, but because his hands appeared hairy like Esau's, Isaac did not recognize him; "so he blessed him." "In this remark (v. 23) the writer gives the result of Jacob's attempt; so that the blessing is mentioned proleptically here, and refers to the formal blessing described afterwards, and not to the first greeting and salutation" (BCOTP, 275). "The bewildered father now puts Jacob to a severer test. He feels him, but discerns him not. The ear notes a difference, but the hand feels the hairy skin resembling Esau's; the eyes give no testimony." Still there is lingering doubt: Isaac puts the crucial question: "Art thou my very son Esau?" The issue is joined: there is no evasion of this question (cf. Jesus and the High Priest, Matt. 26:63-64) Jacob now resorts to the *outright lie*: "I am" (v. 24). Isaac, his doubt now apparently allayed, calls for the repast and partakes of it.

The Kiss, vv. 26, 27. Originally the act of kissing had a symbolical character. Here it is a sign of affection between a parent and a child; in ch. 29:13 between relatives. It was also a token of friendship (2 Sam. 20:9, Matt. 26:48; Luke 7:45, 15:20; Acts 20:37). The kissing of princes was a symbol of homage (1 Sam. 10:1, Ps. 2:12). The Rabbis permitted only three kinds of kisses—the kiss of reverence, of reception, and of dismissal. The kiss of

charity (love, peace) was practised among disciples in the early church (Rom. 16:16, 1 Cor. 16:20, 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26, 1 Pet. 5:4).

"The kiss appears here for the first time as the token of true love and deep affection. Isaac asks for this token from his son. The treachery of the act cannot be condoned on Jacob's part: the token of true love is debased to a means of deception. The Old Testament parallel (2 Sam. 20:9) as well as that of the New Testament (Matt. 26:49 and parallels) comes to one's mind involuntarily" (EG, 749). "The kiss of Christian brotherhood and the kiss of Judas are here enclosed in one" (Lange).

The Perfumed Raiment, v. 27. "But the smell of goatskin is most offensive. This, however, teaches that they had the fragrance of the Garden of Eden (Rashi). This comment is to be understood as follows: According to tradition, the garment had belonged to Adam, and had passed from him to Nimrod and thence to Esau. Adam had worn it in Eden, and it still retained its fragrance (Nachmanides). It was perfumed (Rashbam)" (SC, 152). (But, "we must not think of our European goats; whose skins would be quite unsuitable for any such deception. 'It is the camel-goat of the East, whose black, silk-like hair was used even by the Romans as a substitute for human hair'"—BCOTP, 279, fn.). And Isaac smelled the smell of Jacob's raiment: "not deliberately, in order to detect whether they belonged to a shepherd or a huntsman, but accidentally, while in the act of kissing. The odor of Esau's garments, impregnated with the fragrance of the aromatic herbs of Palestine, excited the dull sensibilities of the aged prophet, suggesting to his mind pictures of freshness and fertility, and inspiring him to pour forth his promised benediction; *and blessed him* (not a second time, the statement in v. 23 being inserted only by anticipation)" (PCG, 338). "The aromatic odors of the Syrian fields and meadows often impart a strong fragrance to the

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person and clothes, as has been noticed by many travelers. This may have been the reason for besmearing the 'goodly raiment' with fragrant perfumes. It is not improbable, that in such a skilfully-contrived scheme, where not the smallest circumstance seems to have been omitted or forgotten that could render the counterfeit complete, means were used for scenting the clothes with which Jacob was invested, to be the more like those of Esau—newly returned from the field" (CECG, 196). "The smelling of the garments seems to have a twofold significance: on the one hand it is a final test of Esau's identity (otherwise the disguise, v. 15, would have no meaning), on the other it supplies the sensuous impression which suggests the words of the blessing" (ICCG, 371). (Note: "the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which Yahweh hath blessed," v. 27). "Isaac regarded the smell of Jacob's garment as a token that God had intended to bless him abundantly, and to render him a particular blessing to others" (SIBG, 258). "After eating, Isaac kissed his son as a sign of his paternal affection, and in doing so he smelt the odor of his clothes, *i.e.*, the clothes of Esau, which were thoroughly scented with the odor of the fields, and then imparted his blessing" (BCOTP, 275).

The Blessing, vv. 27-29. Isaac now gives the kiss of paternal affection and pronounces the benediction. Murphy (MG, 382) notes the threefold character of the blessing. 1. It contains, first, *a fertile soil*. "The smell of a field which Yahweh hath blessed" (cf. Deut. 33:23). "The dew of heaven" (an abundance of this was especially precious in a land where rainfall is limited to two seasons of the year). "Fatness of the earth" (Num. 13:20, Isa. 5:1, 28:1: "a proportion of this to match and render available the dew of heaven"). "Plenty of grain and new wine" ("often combined with 'oil' in pictures of agricultural felicity; cf. Deut. 7:13, Hos. 2:8, 22). 2 It contains, second, *a numerous and powerful offspring*. "Let

peoples serve thee" (pre-eminence among the neighboring nations: cf. 25:23, 2 Sam. 8). "*Be lord over thy brethren*" (pre-eminence among his kindred: "Isaac does not seem to have grasped the full meaning of the prediction, "The elder shall serve the younger," (Murphy). But—can we be sure that Rebekah had told Isaac of this prediction, 25:23?) 3. It contains, third, *temporal and spiritual prosperity*. Let everyone that curseth thee be cursed; and let everyone that blesseth thee be blessed. "This is the only part of the blessing that directly comprises spiritual things." "In this blessing Isaac at once requested and predicted the benefits mentioned. These temporal favors were more remarkable under the Old Testament than under the New, and represented the spiritual and temporal influences and fullness of the New Covenant and of the church of God: cf. Deut. 32:2, Isa. 45:8; 1 Cor. 1:30, 3:22; Rev. 1:6, 5:10; Eph. 1:3" (SIBG, 258). "On the whole, who would not covet such a blessing? Bestowed by a godly father upon a godly and a deserving son in accordance with the will and purpose of God, it surely would constitute a precious heritage" (Leupold, EG, 751). "The blessing is partly natural and partly political, and deals, of course, not with the personal history of Jacob, but with the future greatness of Israel. Its nearest analogies are the blessings on Joseph (Gen. 49:22-26, Deut. 33:13-16)" (ICCG, 371).

5. *Esau's Bitterness and Hatred* (vv. 30-41). Note how very nearly Jacob was caught redhanded (v. 30). "He had just about closed the door, divested himself of the borrowed garments and the kidskin disguise, when his brother appeared on the scene" (EG, 751). "Scarcely had the former scene been concluded, when the fraud was discovered. The emotions of Isaac, as well as Esau, may easily be imagined—the astonished, alarm, and sorrow of the one, the disappointment and indignation of the other. But a moment's reflection convinced the aged patriarch that the transfer of the blessing was 'of the Lord,' and now

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irrevocable. The importunities of Esau, however, overpowered him; and as the prophetic afflatus was upon the patriarch, he gave utterance to what was probably as pleasing to a man of Esau's character as the honors of primogeniture would have been" (CECG, 197). Esau comes in, but it is too late. He uses practically the same words that Isaac had used (cf. "that thy soul may bless me," vv. 19, 31): this fact shows how carefully Jacob (or Rebekah) had planned the deception: "he knew about what Esau would say when stepping into his father's presence." Pained perplexity stands out in Isaac's question, v. 33, "who then is he that hath taken venison"? etc. But by the time the question is fully uttered, the illusion is dispelled: Isaac knows who has perpetrated the deception. "Isaac knows it was Jacob. Isaac sees how God's providence checked him in his unwise and wicked enterprise. From this point onward there is no longer any unclearness as to what God wanted in reference to the two sons. Therefore the brief but conclusive, 'yea, blessed shall he be.' But his trembling was caused by seeing the hand of God in what had transpired" (EG, 753). "Jacob had no doubt perpetrated a fraud, at the instigation of his mother; and if Esau had been worthy in other respects, and above all if the blessing had been designed for him, its bestowment on another would have been either prevented or regarded as null and void. But Isaac now felt that, whatever was the misconduct of Jacob in interfering, and especially in employing unworthy means to accomplish his end, he himself was culpable in allowing carnal considerations to draw his preference to Esau, who was otherwise unworthy. He knew too that the paternal benediction flowed not from the bias of the parent, but from the Spirit of God guiding his will, and therefore when pronounced could not be revoked. Hence he was now convinced that it was the design of Providence that the spiritual blessing should fall on the line of Jacob"

(MG, 383). V. 33: "*and blessed shall he be*": "not that Isaac now acquiesces in the ruling of Providence, and *refuses* to withdraw the blessing; but that such an oracle once uttered is in its nature irrevocable" (ICCG, 372). (This is undoubtedly the meaning of Heb. 12:16, 17).

Vv. 34-38: "The grief of Esau is distressing to witness, especially as he had been comparatively blameless in this particular instance. But still it is to be remembered that his heart had not been open to the paramount importance of spiritual things. Isaac now perceives that Jacob has gained the blessing by deceit. Esau marks the propriety of his name, the wrestler who trips up the heel, and pleads pathetically for at least some blessing. His father enumerates what he has done for Jacob, and asks what more he can do for Esau, who then exclaims, *Hast thou but one blessing?*" Had Esau in the interim between his bartering the birthright for a mess of pottage, and this incident of the blessing, come to have a more adequate understanding of these institutions and privileges? We must doubt it. "Esau's conduct in this case does not impress us favorably. His unmanly tears are quite unworthy of him. His 'exceedingly loud and bitter outcry' is further evidence of lack of self-control. He who never aspired after higher things now wants this blessing as though his future hopes depended all and only on the paternal blessing. We cannot help but feel that a superstitious overvaluation of the blessing is involved. In fact, he now wants, as though it were his own, that which he had wilfully resigned under oath. The right to the blessing which Esau now desires was lost long ago. In fact, up to this point there was a double conspiracy afoot. Isaac and Esau, though not admitting it was so, were conspiring to deflect to Esau a blessing both knew he had forfeited, in fact, was never destined to have. But at the same time Rebekah and Jacob were consciously conspiring to obtain

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what God had destined for Jacob and what Jacob had also secured from Esau" (EG, 753).

What an emotional scene this was! How intensely dramatic! Old Isaac *trembled very exceedingly* (v. 33): was he not keenly conscious now of the *carnality* (his love of well-cooked venison) which had all along prompted his preference for Esau? Was he aware of Esau's bartering away of the birthright? Was he aware of the Divine prediction that "the elder should serve the younger"? If so, did He now realize that he was presuming to obstruct God's Eternal Purpose respecting Messiah? If so, no wonder that he trembled! As for Esau, he "cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry" (v. 34) and bawled out the words, "*Is he not rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birth-right; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing.*" ("Jacob" means "Supplanter," literally, "Overreacher"). What a clear case of what Freudians call *projection*: Isaac could not have taken his birthright, if he, Esau, had had any respect for it! Isaac's gain was the direct consequence of Esau's profanity. And what of Jacob in this incident of the blessing? He has slunk away from the scene entirely, having accomplished his deception. We cannot help thinking he was somewhere with his mother awaiting developments, but inwardly gratified that their plans had succeeded. "The purely literary aspects of this vivid account require little comment. Tension mounts constantly as Isaac, sightless and never altogether convinced by the evidence of his other senses, resorts to one test after another: his visitor sounds like Jacob, but says he is Esau, yet the hunt took much less time than expected; the skin feels like Esau's and the food tastes right; the lips betray nothing, but the clothes smell of the chase; so it has to be Esau after all! The reader is all but won over by the drama of Jacob's ordeal, when Esau's return restores the proper perspective. The scene between Isaac and Esau,

both so shaken and helpless, could scarcely be surpassed for pathos. Most poignant of all is the stark fact that the deed cannot be undone. For all the actors in this piece are but tools of fate which—purposeful though it must be—can itself be neither deciphered nor side-stepped by man” (ABG, 213). (See *infra* on the subject of Divine election).

The Blessing of Esau, vv. 39-40. “My brother has supplanted me twice,” cried Esau, “haven’t you any blessing left for me, father?” “Though there is truth in what Esau says, he does not do well to play the part of injured innocence. His birthright he sold right cheerfully, and was far more at fault in the selling of it than Jacob in the buying. The blessing, on the other hand, had been destined for Jacob by God long ago, and Esau knew it” (EG, 755). *But did Esau know this?* We are told by some that Rebekah would never have kept secret from Isaac the Divine oracle of 25:23. But can we be sure about this, considering the strong-willed woman that Rebekah was? However, the meaningful blessing having been bestowed on Jacob, there was no calling it back. “A blessing in the sense in which Esau wants it cannot be bestowed, for that would require the cancellation of the blessing just bestowed” (*i.e.*, on Jacob). “Poor Esau’s grief is pathetic, a startling case of seeking a good thing too late. The blessing of the father seems to be the one thing of the whole spiritual heritage that has impressed Esau. Unfortunately, it is not the chief thing” (EG, 755). “So Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.” So shall the lost, when they find it is everlastingly too late, cry for the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them and hide them “from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb” (Rev. 6:15, 16).

V. 38: “*Is that the only blessing thou hast?*” cries Esau. He does not even imagine that the blessing can be revoked, but he still hopes that perhaps a second (inferior)

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blessing might be granted him. "Those tears of Esau, the sensuous, wild, impulsive man—almost like the cry of some trapped creature—are among the most pathetic in the Bible" (Davidson, *Hebrews*, 242, quoted ICCG, 373). His importunity elicits, says Skinner, what is virtually a curse, though put in terms similar to those of v. 29. Literally, it reads:

"Away from the fat places of the earth shall thy dwelling be;

And away from the dew of heaven above!"

"Here, after a noun of place, the preposition denotes distance or separation; for example, Prov. 20:3. The pastoral life has been distasteful to Esau, and so shall it be with his race. The land of Edom was accordingly a comparative wilderness, Mal. 1:3" (MG, 383). The "blessing" imported that Esau and his seed should inhabit Mt. Seir, a soil then only moderately fertile (cf. Gen. 36:1-8, Deut. 2:5). Seir was the rather rugged region extending southward from the Dead Sea, east of the valley of Arabah: "far from the fatness of the earth and dew of heaven from above" (Unger, UBD, 991, 992). The rest of Isaac's pronouncement was predictive, signifying that Esau's progeny should live much by war, violence, and rapine; should be subjected to the Hebrew yoke, but should at times cast it off. "And so it was; the historical relation of Edom to Israel assumed the form of a constant reiteration of servitude, revolt, and reconquest." After a long period of independence at first, the Edomites were defeated by Saul (1 Sam. 14:47) and subjugated by David (2 Sam. 8:14); and, in spite of an attempt at revolt under Solomon (1 Ki. 11:14ff.), they remained subject to the kingdom of Judah until the time of Joram, when they rebelled (2 Ki. 8:16ff.) They were subdued again by Amaziah (2 Ki. 14:7; 2 Chron. 25:11ff.), and remained in subjection under Uzziah and Jotham (2 Ki. 14:22, 2 Chron. 26:2). It was not until the reign of Ahaz that they shook the

yoke of Judah entirely off (2 Ki. 16:6, 2 Chron. 18:17), without Judah being ever able to reduce them again. At length, however, they were completely conquered by John Hyrcanus about B.C. 129, compelled to submit to circumcision, and incorporated in the Jewish state (Josephus, *Ant.* 13, 9, 1; 15, 7, 9). At a still later period, through Antipater and Herod, they established an Idumean dynasty over Judea, which lasted till the complete dissolution of the Jewish state. (See BCOTP, Keil and Delitzsch, 279).

Esau's Vindictiveness, vv. 41-45. Esau hated Jacob: and hate is a passion never satisfied until it kills. It is scarcely to be wondered at, however, that Esau resented Jacob's deceit and vowed revenge. Esau said in his heart, "*The days of mourning for my father is at hand*; then will I slay my brother Jacob." "The days of mourning for my father": a common Oriental expression for the death of a parent. This, we are told, was a period of seven days. "It very frequently happens in the East that brothers at variance wait for the death of their father to avenge amongst themselves their private quarrels" (CECG, 197). "He would put off his intended fratricide that he might not hurt his father's mind" (BCOTP, 280). Another view: "In this manner Esau hoped to recover both birth-right and blessing; but Isaac nevertheless lived about forty-three years after." "Esau was afraid to attempt any open violence during his father's life. The disease under which Isaac was laboring had brought on premature debility, and it appears to have greatly affected his sight. He must have in a great measure recovered from it, however, for he lived for forty years after Jacob's departure" (SIBG, 259). "He did not wish to grieve his father by taking revenge while he was alive" (SC, 156).

Rebekah to the Rescue. In some way, or by someone, Esau's threat was made known to Rebekah, and, as usual, she was prepared to meet the crisis. She advised (in reality, *ordered*) Jacob to protect himself from Esau's threatened

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vengeance by fleeing to her brother Laban in Haran, and remaining there "a few days," as she mildly put it, until his brother's wrath was subdued.

"Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?" This refers to the law of Goelism, by which the nearest of kin would be obliged to avenge the death of Jacob upon his brother" (CECG, 198). "The writer has in view the custom of blood-revenge (cf. 2 Sam. 14:7), though in the case supposed there would be no one to execute it" (ICCG, 374). (But would not Jacob's offspring be required to do this? (Cf. Gen. 4:14-15). "Killing Jacob would expose Esau to the death penalty, through blood vengeance or otherwise" (ABG, 210). "In order to obtain Isaac's consent to this plan, without hurting his feelings by telling him of Esau's murderous intentions, she spoke to him of her troubles on account of the Hittite wives of Esau, and the weariness of life that she should feel if Jacob also were to marry one of the daughters of the land, and so introduced the idea of sending Jacob to her relatives in Mesopotamia, with a view to marriage there" (BCOTP, 280).

The recapitulation of this incident by Keil-Deiltsch is so thorough and so obviously accurate that we feel justified in including it at this point: "Thus the words of Isaac to his two sons were fulfilled—words which are justly said to have been spoken 'in faith concerning things to come' (Heb. 11:20). For the blessing was a prophecy, and that not merely in the case of Esau, but in that of Jacob also; although Isaac was deceived with regard to the person of the latter. Jacob remained blessed, therefore, because, according to the predetermination of God, the elder was to serve the younger; but the deceit by which his mother prompted him to secure the blessing was never approved. On the contrary, the sin was followed by immediate punishment. Rebekah was obliged to send her pet son into a foreign land, away from his father's house, and in an

utterly destitute condition. She did not see him for twenty years, even if she lived till his return, and possibly never saw him again. Jacob had to atone for his sin against both brother and father by a long and painful exile, in the midst of privation, anxiety, fraud, and want. Isaac was punished for retaining his preference for Esau, in opposition to the revealed will of Jehovah, by the success of Jacob's stratagem; and Esau for his contempt of the birthright, by the loss of the blessing of the first-born. In this way a higher hand prevailed above the acts of sinful men, bringing the counsel and will of Jehovah to eventual triumph, in opposition to human thought and will" (BCOTP, 297).

6. *The Problem of Divine Election.* We need recall here certain facts about Divine knowledge and election. We must start from the fact that man is predestined only to be free, that is, to have the power of choice. (In the final analysis, it is neither heredity nor environment nor both, but the *I*—the self, the person—who makes the choice. Hence, a man's choices, and the acts proceeding therefrom constitute God's foreknowledge, or to be specific, His *knowledge*. Therefore, the acts of the parents and the twins, in the story before us, were not the consequences of an arbitrary foreordination on God's part, nor of the influence of some such non-entity as "fate," "fortune," "destiny," and the like, but of the motivations, choices, and acts of the persons involved. Though *known* by Him, as He knows in a single thought, the entire space-time continuum, they were not necessarily foreordained. He simply allowed them to occur by not interfering to prevent their occurrence. (See Part Thirty-seven *supra*, under v. 23, of ch. 25, caption, "The Prophetic Communication"). To hold that God necessitates everything that man does, including even his acceptance or rejection of the redemption provided for him by Divine grace, is to make God responsible for everything that occurs, both good and evil.

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This is not only unscriptural: it is an insult to the Almighty. (Cf. Ezek. 18:32, John 5:40, 1 Tim. 2:4, Jas. 1:13, 2 Pet. 3:9). Although it may appear at first glance that the choice of Jacob over Esau was an arbitrary one, our human hindsight certainly supports God's "foresight" in making it. True, Jacob's character was not anything to brag about, especially in his earlier years, but after his experience at Peniel he seems to have been a changed man with a changed name, Israel (32:22-32); certainly it was of nobler quality all along than that of Esau, as proved by their different attitudes toward Divine institutions—rights and responsibilities—such as those of the birthright and the blessing (Exo. 13:11-16, Deut. 21:17). Hence the Divine election in this case was not arbitrary, but justly based on the Divine knowledge of the basic righteousness of Jacob by way of contrast with the sheer *secularism* ("profanity") of Esau.

Hurrian Parallels. We are especially indebted to Dr. Speiser for his information regarding Hurrian parallels of the Hebrew stories of the parents, the twins, and the transference of the birthright and the blessing. These Hurrian sources from Nuzi, we are told, "mirror social conditions and customs in the patriarchal center at Haran." Birthright, for instance, "in Hurrian society was often a matter of the father's discretion rather than chronological priority. Moreover, of all the paternal dispositions, the one that took the form of a deathbed declaration carried the greatest weight. One such recorded statement actually safeguards the rights of the youngest son against possible claims by his older brothers. Another is introduced by the formula, 'I have now grown old,' which leads up to an oral allocation of the testator's property, or, in other words, a deathbed 'blessing.'" (For further details, Dr. Speiser refers the student to his discussion in the *Journal of Biblical Literature and Exegesis*, 74 [1955,], 252f.).

Again: "Isaac's opening words in the present instance

reflect thus an old and authentic usage. The background is Hurrian, which accords with the fact that Haran, where the patriarchs had their roots, was old Hurrian territory. On the socio-legal level, therefore, the account is a correct measure of early relations between Hebrews and Hurrians. With Seir—a synonym of Esau—assigned in Deut. 2:12 to the Horites (even though not all of them can be equated with Hurrians), it would not be surprising if the same account should also echo remote historical rivalries between the same two groups. At any rate, tradition succeeded in preserving the accurate setting of this narrative precisely because the subject matter was deemed to be of great consequence. In essence, this matter was the continuity of the biblical process itself, a process traced through a line that did not always hold the upper hand. Legally, the older son was entitled to a double and preferential share of the inheritance, especially in Hurrian society. But since the status of the older son could be regulated by a father's pronouncement, irrespective of chronological precedent, and since the legacy in this instance had been established by divine covenant, the emphasis of tradition on the transfer of the birthright in a deathbed blessing—with Yahweh's approval (cf. vs. 7)—can readily be appreciated" (ABG, 212-213). Hurrian parallels of various details of the story of the relations between Jacob and Laban will be found in subsequent sections.

FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

An Unpleasant Picture of Family Life

All four of the participants in the domestic drama paid, in one way or another, for their sins of parental bias, outright deception, indifference to sacred institutions, disregard of family unity and welfare, mediocre fatherhood and overzealous mother-love. A family of four, all of whom were in the wrong. Note the following outline:

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1. The father's scheming, vv. 1-4. Isaac evidently was not near death, for he lived on for more than forty years. It may be assumed that he knew God's will (25:23); otherwise, it must be assumed that Rebekah could never have reported to him regarding this Divine pronouncement. (Of course this latter view is not outside the realm of possibility by any means). If Isaac knew what was God's will in the matter, he deliberately set about to thwart it. Esau probably also knew, in which case he showed himself more than ready to fall in with his father's scheme. In any case Isaac could hardly lay claim to any great measure of family control. He was without doubt a genuinely henpecked man.

2. The mother's counter-plot (vv. 5-17). Rebekah's aim was commendable, we might agree, but her methods were wrong. Jacob saw the risk involved (v. 12) but was overborne by his domineering mother.

3. The younger son's deception (vv. 18-29). The lies were terrible, one might well say, unpardonable. It was in response to these lies, that the father's benediction, with some misgiving, followed.

4. The elder son's humiliation (vv. 30-40). Sympathy for Esau cannot hide the fact of his "profanity." He had sold his birthright for "a mess of pottage." If he had, in the meantime, come to realize the true nature of the blessing, it was too late: he could not change that which, once given, was irrevocable. This we believe to be the meaning of Heb. 12:17.

5. The denouement (vv. 41-46). Esau's anger was to be expected: it was natural. However, because Isaac did not die, he could only vent his rage on Jacob. Rebekah, of course, took action immediately to thwart his threatened revenge; but with all her resourcefulness she could not foresee either that she might never meet Jacob again or that her brother Laban would prove to be as great a plotter as she had been.

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All in all, it was a family "mess." But it is also another case of the Bible's *realism*. The Bible is pre-eminently the Book of Life! It pictures life exactly as men and women live it in this world, never exaggerating their virtues, never ignoring their faults.

"The Result of the Deception. The blessing of a dying father was believed by Oriental peoples to exert an important influence over the life of his descendants. Probably Rebekah and Jacob feared that Jacob might thereby lose the advantage he had already gained by his bargain with Esau. The steps they took to deceive the aged patriarch were wholly discreditable from the standpoint of a modern conscience. Jacob and his mother did not attempt to justify their act. The guilty pair did not remain unpunished. A train of bitter consequences ensued. 1. Jacob's punishment was exile from the family home. 2. He had deprived himself at a stroke of everything on which he set great value. 3. It was the sort of retribution he needed. His scheming mother suffered too. Despite her masterfulness and whole-souled devotion, she never saw the face of her favorite son again" (HH, 40).

For Meditation: "Some very solemn and searching lessons for us all. (1) The end does *not* justify the means. (2) The results of sin are inevitable (all four suffered irreparably). (3) The will of God will be done in spite of man's effort to thwart it (Psa. 33:10; Prov. 16:9, 19:21)" (TPCC, 54). In addition to all this, there was the terrible threat hanging over the household (v. 45). "This is not a rhetorical question. By the laws of blood revenge, if Esau killed Jacob, the clan would in turn kill him. We have a parallel in the tragedy of the woman of Tekoa (2 Sam. 14:5-7)" (Cornfeld, AtD, 81). The prospect of a bloodbath that might ensue within the tribe was not an improbable one: hence Jacob's flight, at the command of his mother, to her distant kinsman in Haran. *Learn:* "1. That those who attempt to deceive others are

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not infrequently themselves deceived. 2. That those who set out on a sinful course are liable to sink deeper into sin than they expected. 3. That deception practised by a son against a father, at a mother's instigation, is a monstrous and unnatural display of wickedness. 4. That God can accomplish His own designs by means of man's crimes, without either relieving them of guilt or Himself being the author of sin. 5. That the blessing of God maketh rich and addeth no sorrow therewith. 6. That the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (PCG, 340); that is "without variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (Jas. 1:17) according to the demands of Absolute justice tempered with mercy. Finally, "The prediction of a nation's or a person's future does not interfere with the free operation of the human will" (*ibid.*, 343).

The Parents and the Twins: Characterizations

(1) "Rebekah and Jacob deceived Isaac in order to obtain the blessing. Esau, long before this, had sold the birthright (25:27-34) to his brother. God would undoubtedly have worked out His will for Jacob to obtain the blessing in the end without resort to fraud. This incident is a sad illustration of what happens when believers seek to promote the will of God by dishonest means. Jacob had to pay the price in long years of exile" (HSB, 45).

(2) "The ethics of the case should be scrutinized a bit more closely. That Jacob was in part at fault has not been denied. That Esau was far more at fault has been pointed out. This contrast is usually overlooked. Jacob has been criticized quite roundly, and the greater sinner, Esau, is pitied and represented as quite within his rights. That the whole is a most regrettable domestic tangle cannot be denied, and, as is usually the case in such tangles, every member involved bore his share of guilt. But if it be overlooked that Jacob's aspirations were high and good and in every sense commendable, and besides based on a sure promise of God, a distorted view of the case must result. They that insist on distorting the incident claim that the account practically indicates that Jacob was rewarded with a blessing for his treachery. The following facts should be held over against such a claim to show just retribution is visited on Jacob for his treachery: 1. Rebekah and Jacob apparently never saw one another again after the separation that grew out of this deceit—an experience painful for both; 2. Jacob, deceiver of his father, was more cruelly deceived by his own sons in the case of the sale of Joseph and the torn coat of many colors; 3. from having been a

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man of means and influence Jacob is demoted to a position of hard rigorous service for twenty years" (EG, 758).

(3) "It is quite common, in reviewing the present narrative, to place Rebekah and Jacob too much under the shadows of sin, in comparison with Isaac. Isaac's sin does not consist alone in his arbitrary determination to present Esau with the blessing of the theocratic birthright, although Rebekah received the divine sentence respecting her children before their birth, and which, no doubt, she had mentioned to him; and although Esau had manifested already, by his marriage with the daughters of Heth, his want of the theocratic faith, and by his bartering with Jacob, his carnal disposition, and his contempt of the birthright—thus viewed, indeed, his son admits of palliation through several excuses. The clear right of the first-born seemed to oppose itself to the dark oracle of God, Jacob's prudence to Esau's frank and generous disposition, the quiet shepherd-life of Jacob to Esau's stateliness and power, and on the other hand, Esau's misalliances to Jacob's continued celibacy. And although Isaac may have been too weak to enjoy the venison obtained for him by Esau, yet the true-hearted care of the son for his father's infirmity and age, is also of some importance. But the manner in which Isaac intends to bless Esau, places his offense in a clearer light. He intends to bless him solemnly in unbecoming secrecy, without the knowledge of Rebekah and Jacob, or of his house. The preparation of the venison is scarcely to be regarded as if he was to be inspired for the blessing by the eating of this 'dainty dish,' or of this token of filial affection. This preparation, at least, in its main point of view; is an excuse to gain time and place for the secret act. In this point of view, the act of Rebekah appears in a different light. It is a woman's shrewdness that crosses the shrewdly calculated project of Isaac. He is caught in a net of his own sinful prudence. A want of divine confidence may be recognized through all his actions. It is no real presentation of death that urges him now to bless Esau. But he now *anticipates* his closing hours and Jehovah's decision, because he wishes to put an end to his inward uncertainty which annoyed him. Just as Abraham anticipated the divine decision in his connection with Hagar, so Isaac, in his eager and hearty performance of an act belonging to his last days, while he lived yet many years. With this, therefore, is also connected the improper combination of the act of blessing with the meal, as well as the uneasy apprehension lest he should be interrupted in his plan (see ver. 18), and a suspicious and strained expectation which was not at first caused by the voice of Jacob. Rebekah, however, has so far the advantage of him that she, in her deception, has the divine assurance that Jacob was the heir, while Isaac, in his preceding secrecy, has, on his side, only human descent and his human reason, without any inward spiritual certainty. But Rebekah's sin consists in thinking that she must save the divine election of Jacob by means of human deception and a so-called white-lie. Isaac, at that critical moment, would have been far less able to pronounce the blessing of Abraham upon Esau, than afterward Balaam, standing far below him, could have cursed the people of Israel at the critical moment

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of its history. For the words of the spirit and of the promise are never left to human caprice. Rebekah, therefore, sinned against Isaac through a want of candor, just as Isaac before had sinned against Rebekah through a like deceit. The divine decree would also have been fulfilled without her assistance, if she had had the necessary measure of faith. Of course, when compared with Isaac's fatal error, Rebekah was right. Though she deceived him greatly, misled her favorite son, and alienated Esau from her, there was yet something saving in her action according to her intentions, even for Isaac himself and for both her sons. For to Esau the most comprehensive blessing might have become a curse. He was not fitted for it. Just as Rebekah thinks to oppose cunning to cunning in order to save the divine blessing through Isaac, and thus secure a heavenly right, so also Jacob secures a human right in buying of Esau the right of the firstborn. But now the tragic consequences of the first officious anticipation, which Isaac incurred, as well as that of the second, of which Rebekah becomes guilty, were soon to appear. The tragic consequences of the hasty conduct and the mutual deceptions in the family of Isaac: Esau threatens to become a fratricide, and this threat repeats itself in the conduct of Joseph's brothers, who also believed that they saw in Joseph a brother unjustly preferred, and came very near killing him. Jacob must become a fugitive for many a long year, and perhaps yield up to Esau the external inheritance for the most part or entirely. The patriarchal dignity is obscured; Rebekah is obliged to send her favorite son abroad, and perhaps never see him again. The bold expression, 'Upon me be thy curse,' may be regarded as having a bright side; for she, as protectress of Jacob's blessing always enjoys a share in his blessing. But the sinful element in it was the wrong application of her assurance of faith to the act of deception, which she herself undertook, and to which she persuaded Jacob; and for which she must atone, perhaps, by many a long year of melancholy solitude and through the joylessness which immediately spread itself over the family affairs of the household. With all this, however, Isaac was kept from a grave offence, and the true relation of things secured by the pretended necessity for her prevarication. Through this catastrophe Isaac came to a full understanding of the divine decree. Esau attained the fullest development of his peculiar characteristics, and Jacob was directed to his journey of faith, and to his marriage, without which the promise could not even be fulfilled" (Lange, CDHCG, 516).

(4) "How could Isaac have been so grossly deceived by Jacob and his mother? He was not only blind, but old, so that he could not distinguish with accuracy, either by the touch of his shrivelled hand or by the ear, now dull of hearing. It must be further remembered that Esau was from his birth a hairy person. He was now a man, full grown, and no doubt as rough and shaggy as any he-goat. Jacob was of the same age, and his whole history shows that he was eminently shrewd and cunning. He got that from his mother, who on this occasion plied all her arts to make the deception perfect. She fitted out Jacob with Esau's well-known clothes, strongly

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scented with such odors as he was accustomed to use. The ladies and dandies in ancient times delighted to make their 'raiment smell like the smell of a field which the Lord had blessed'; and at this day they scent their gala garments with such rich and powerful spicery that the very street along which they walk is perfumed. It is highly probable that Jacob, a plain man, given to cattle and husbandry, utterly eschewed these odoriferous vanities, and this would greatly aid in the deception. Poor old Isaac felt the garments, and smelled the still more distinguishing perfumes of Esau, and though the voice was Jacob's, yet he could not doubt that the person before him was—what he solemnly protested that he was—his firstborn. The extreme improbability of deception would make him less suspicious, and, so far as the hair and the perfume are concerned, I have seen many Arabs who might now play such a game with entire success. All this is easy and plain in comparison with the great fact that this treachery and perjury, under most aggravating accompaniments, should be in a sense ratified and prospered by the all-seeing God of justice. It is well to remember, however, that though the blessing, once solemnly bestowed, according to established custom in such cases, could not be recalled, yet, in the overruling providence of God, the guilty parties were made to eat the bitter fruit of their sin during their whole lives. In this matter they sowed to the wind and reaped the whirlwind. We set out on this line of remark by saying that in several of the known incidents in Isaac's history, few though they be, he does not appear to advantage. Even in this transaction, where he, now old, blind and helpless, was so cruelly betrayed by his wife and deceived by his son, he is unfortunately at fault in the main question. He was wrong and Rebekah was right on the real point of issue; and, what is more, Isaac's judgment in regard to the person most proper to be invested with the great office of transmitting the true faith and the true line of descent for the promised Messiah was determined by a pitiful relish for 'savory meat.' Alas, for poor human nature! There is none of it without dross; and mountains of mud must be washed to get one diamond as large as a pea" (Thomson, LB, 561-562).

(5) In the case of Rebekah we have a case of "emotion" evilly used. One of Frederick W. Robertson's notable sermons was on the subject, "Isaac Blessing His Sons." In this, as he touched upon the words of Rebekah, *Upon me be thy curse, my son*, "he set forth unforgettably the truth that even the most passionate human devotion, if unprincipled, will not bless but destroy. In her ambition for Jacob, Rebekah stopped at nothing. If evil means seemed necessary, she would assume the consequences. Said Robertson: 'Here you see the idolatry of the woman; sacrificing her husband, her elder son, high principle, her own soul, for an idolized person. . . . Do not mistake. No one ever loved child, brother, sister, too much. It is not the intensity of affection, but its interference with truth and duty, that makes it idolatry. Rebekah loved her son more than truth, *i.e.*, more than God. . . . The only true affection is that which is subordinate to a higher. . . . Compare, for instance, Rebekah's love for Jacob with that of Abraham for his son Isaac. Abraham was ready to

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sacrifice his son to duty, Rebekah sacrificed truth and duty to her son. Which loved a son most?—which was the nobler love? Though Rebekah was willing to take the consequences of the wrong entirely upon herself, she could not do it. They involved Jacob—as the punishment of the evil which Lady Macbeth prompted involved Macbeth. The sin of deception was not originally Jacob's, but when he acquiesced in his mother's suggestion, it became his too. So he went on to increasingly gross and deliberate falsehood until he became capable of the blasphemous lie of telling his father, Isaac, when the old man asked how he could so quickly have secured the venison which he, Jacob, was offering under the pretense that he was Esau, 'The Lord thy God brought it to me' (vs. 20). So the lesson of Jacob's relationship to Rebekah is summed up in Robertson's vivid words, 'Beware of that affection which cares for your happiness more than for your honor' (IBG, 681-682).

"A character study of Rebekah is significant more in the questions it provokes than in the answers. The O.T. writers do not often draw a neat moral at the end of a description. They give the facts even though they may be inconsistent and confused, and leave us to interpret them as best we can. . . . The story of Rebekah had an idyllic beginning." [Note at this point the picture given us of Rebekah as a girl, ch. 24, as follows: "Her natural charm and winsomeness (vs. 16); her swift and kindly friendliness (vs. 18); the happy-heartedness which made her do not only what was asked of her but more (vs. 19); her quick and sure decisiveness (vs. 58); her ability to command a great devotion. Isaac loved her when he first saw her (vs. 67), and apparently he loved no other woman but Rebekah all his life. Here, in an age and in a society where polygamy was familiar, is *monogamous marriage*. So in the marriage service of the Book of Common Prayer through many generations there was the petition that 'as Isaac and Rebekah lived faithfully together, so these persons may surely perform the vow and covenant betwixt them made.'"] "But what followed was not idyllic. It was the uncomfortable realization of this that made the revisers of the American Book of Common Prayer omit in the 1920's the reference to the mutual faithfulness of Isaac and Rebekah which had been in the inherited book for centuries. That reference was put there originally because Isaac and Rebekah were the one notable pair among the patriarchs who were monogamous. But the fact that a man or woman has only one mate does not of itself make a marriage successful. Divorce is not the only thing that destroys a marriage; there may be a gradual divergence so wide and deep that the essential marriage is destroyed even though the shell of it remains. It takes more than staying together to keep a man and woman 'faithful.' To be faithful they must create and cherish mutual sympathies, mutual convictions, mutual aims. . . . The only road of faithfulness is when both are humbly and truly trying to walk God's way. Any preparation for marriage is hollow unless it is filled with that conviction. The divergence between Isaac and Rebekah came out of their different regard for their two sons. . . . For that divided favoritism perhaps both were to blame, but Rebekah more aggressively so than

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Isaac. Her love for Jacob was so fiercely jealous that it broke loose from any larger loyalty. As between her twin sons, she wanted Jacob to have the best of everything, no matter how he got it; and to that end she would not scruple at trickery and unfairness both toward her husband and her son Esau. There was something of the tigress in Rebekah, instinctively protecting the cub that by physical comparison was inferior. So she could come to the point of saying to Jacob, 'Upon me be thy curse, my son; only obey my voice' (27:13). Thus the Rebekah at the well has become an altogether different woman; scheming for Jacob to steal the birthright, pushing both Esau and Isaac for the moment out of her regard, unscrupulous because one purpose only obsessed her. It was not that she wanted to hurt anybody, she might have said. It was just that she was so determined to do what she thought would help Jacob that she was blind to anything or anybody that might get hurt. And all the while what she was doing was in the name of love. A study in character here, and of the way in which an emotion essentially beautiful may become perverted. It is instinctive and right that a woman should love passionately. But the greatest love must always be subject to a greater loyalty: loyalty to truth, to honor, to the relationship of life to God. Rebekah forgot that, and she corrupted Jacob as she tried to cherish him. As it is the passion of her love that can make a woman wonderful, so it is the failure to keep that love purified by the light of God that can make love ruinous. Jezebel is pictured as one of the evil women of the Bible, but it may be that originally she was not deliberately evil. She loved Ahab, proudly, fiercely, but with blind disregard for everything except what Ahab wanted; and see what she did to Ahab. Consider Lady Macbeth; read the story of Steerforth and his mother in *David Copperfield*. In every congregation there is a woman who is repeating the story of Rebekah—a mother who secretly encourages her son in self-indulgence and extravagance, or presses her unworthy scheme in order that her daughter may be 'a social success.' She is expressing what she thinks is her devotion, but that does not make it the less demoralizing. What ought to be great qualities of heart can end in deadly hurtfulness if love is not purified and disciplined by principles that have come from God. Yet even out of the unlovely chapter of Rebekah's life there emerges something fine. Why did Rebekah prefer Jacob? Was it because of a woman's insight which can be more sensitive to unseen values than a man is likely to be? Isaac preferred Esau, the bluff and virile son, the full-blooded and physically more attractive man. But Jacob, in spite of limitations and glaring faults, had something which Esau did not have. In the Hebrew family, the birthright was at least in part a spiritual privilege. It meant that the holder of it would be a shaper of ideas and ideals. Esau, who lived mostly by the lusty dictates of the body, was indifferent to these: not so Jacob. He had a belief in spiritual destiny, dim and distorted at first, but nevertheless so stubborn that ultimately it would prevail. Rebekah saw this, and she was determined to protect it. Thus the thought of Rebekah ends like an unsolved equation. She represents the

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woman's greatest contribution to the race, viz., the ability to recognize and to cherish those qualities in her child by which the future may be shaped. In that primitive family she advanced her purpose by the stratagems of a relentless shrewdness that laid all other loyalties aside. How can the relationship between husband and wife in this Christian Era be so developed that the insights of Rebekah may not have to stoop to dishonesty in order to be expressed?" (IBG, Exposition, 655, 667-669. The Exposition section, by Dr. Bowie, of this volume on Genesis is certainly outstanding and makes it worth having in every preacher's library—C.C.).

(6) "That the story before us poses a moral problem, among many others, was already clear in biblical times—although this point has been suppressed by many of the later moralizers. Both Hosea (12:4) and Jer. (9:3) allude to Jacob's treatment of Esau with manifest disapproval. What is more, the author himself, by dealing so sensitively with the hapless plight in which Isaac and Esau find themselves through no fault of their own (cf. especially vss. 33-38), demonstrates beyond any doubt that his personal sympathies are with the victims. It is, furthermore, a fact that Jacob himself did not think up the scheme; he acted, though not without remonstrance and uneasiness, under pressure from his strong-willed mother; and he had to pay for his misdeed with twenty years of exile. . . . The fate of individuals caught up in the mainstream of history will often seem incomprehensible; for history is but the unfolding of a divine master plan, many details of which must forever remain a mystery to mortals" (Speiser, ABG, 211). (Concerning Heb. 12:17, Milligan writes, correctly we think, as follows: "What is the meaning of this? Does the Apostle mean repentance on the part of Esau, or on the part of his father Isaac? . . . In either case the lesson taught is about the same. For whatever construction is put on the several words of this sentence, it must be obvious that the object of the Apostle is to remind his readers, that the mistake of Esau, once committed, was committed forever: that no possible change of his mind could in any way affect a change in the mind and purpose so obtained forgiveness, is I think possible; but not so with regard to his despised birthrights. These by one foolish and irreligious act had been irrecoverably lost" (*Commentary on Hebrews*, 356). of God. . . . That he may have afterward repented of his sins, and

(7) Finally, this excellent summation: "The *moral aspect* of the transaction is plain to those who are willing to see that the Bible represents the patriarchs as 'men compassed with infirmity,' favored by the grace of God, but not at all endowed with sinless perfection. It is just this, in fact, that makes their lives a moral lesson for us. Examples have occurred in the lives of Abraham and Isaac; but the whole career of Jacob is the history of a growing moral discipline. God is not honored by glossing over the patriarch's great faults of character, which are corrected by the discipline of severe suffering. We need not withhold indignant censure from Rebekah's cupidity on behalf of her favorite son—so like her family—and the mean deceit to which she tempts him. Nor is Isaac free from the blame of that foolish fondness, which, as is usual with moral

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weakness, gives occasion to crime in others. What, then, is the difference between them and Esau? Simply this—that they, in their hearts, honored the God whom he despised, though their piety was corrupted by their selfish passions. Jacob valued the blessing which he purchased wrongfully, and sought more wrongfully to secure. But Esau, whose conduct was equally unprincipled in desiring to receive the blessing which was no longer his, was rightly 'rejected, when he would have inherited the blessing' (Heb. 12:17). His selfish sorrow and resentment could not recall the choice he had made, or stand in the place of genuine repentance. 'He found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears,' and he is held forth as a great example of unavailing regret for spiritual blessings wantonly thrown away" (Smith-Fields, OTH, 95-96).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART THIRTY-NINE

1. Why should we accept these accounts of incidents in the lives of the patriarchs at face value? What do they prove concerning human character?
2. In patriarchal society how was the paternal *blessing* understood?
3. List the various kinds of acts of blessing mentioned in Scripture, and explain the meaning of each kind.
4. What elements were blended together in the final patriarchal blessing?
5. What special significance attached to the patriarchal blessings of Abraham and Isaac?
6. Do we find any evidence of magic in these blessings?
7. What caused Isaac to decide to bestow the blessing at once? How explain this, in view of the fact that he lived more than forty years longer?
8. How old was Isaac at this time? What are some of the rabbinical explanations of Isaac's infirmities, especially his failing eyesight?
9. What did Isaac wish to do for his eldest son, and why? What does the text indicate about Isaac's gourmet taste as a factor in his decision?
10. Is it likely that Isaac knew about the Divine oracle, 25:23, concerning the respective destinies of the twins? Give reasons for your answer.

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11. May we assume that Isaac knew about Esau's barter of the birthright "for a mess of pottage"? If so, on what grounds?
12. How did Rebekah learn of Isaac's conversation with Esau regarding the bestowal of the blessing on him?
13. Explain what the statement, "that my soul may bless thee before I die," means?
14. What opinion prevails generally regarding the efficacy of a dying utterance?
15. Explain Rebekah's stratagem in detail. To what extent, do you think, Jacob participated in it willingly?
16. What light does Rebekah's statement, "Upon me be thy curse, my son," throw upon her attitude and character. Are we not justified in calling this a form of blasphemy?
17. What shows that Jacob was more afraid of detection than of the duplicity? What light does this cast upon the distinction between morality and expediency?
18. What was the Divine oracle with respect to the separate destinies of the twins?
19. State the details of the scene between Isaac and Jacob. How is Isaac's lingering doubt finally dissipated? What caused him to be suspicious in the first place?
20. When Isaac expressed surprise at what he thought was *Esau's* unusually quick return with the cooked venison, what hypocritical explanation did Jacob make to reassure his father?
21. Give examples of situations in our time in which such hypocritical invocations of God's help are offered as explanation. Would not this be what the Freudians name *projection*?
22. Of how many outright lies did Jacob become guilty in his scene with his father?
23. What three kinds of kisses were permitted by the rabbis?

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24. How does the kiss (vv. 26, 27) remind us of the New Testament parallel (Matt. 26:49)?
25. How account for the perfumed raiment which Jacob donned on this occasion? How did this determine Isaac's decision?
26. What were the three parts of the paternal blessing? What significant spiritual development was implicit in this blessing??
27. How did Isaac become aware finally of the deception which had been perpetrated?
28. What were the emotional reactions of both Isaac and Esau when they learned the truth? What caused Isaac to *tremble very exceedingly*?
29. What was the long-term relation between this paternal blessing and our Christian faith?
30. What was the significance of Esau's cry, "Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?"
31. Can we say that Esau's reaction was a "manly" one? Or would you say that he acted like "a spoiled brat"?
32. Have we any reason for supposing that Esau had gained a deeper appreciation of the import of the blessing than he had manifested with reference to the birthright?
33. Explain the sheer *drama* that was present in this scene between Esau and his father.
34. Analyze the personal blessing now bestowed on Esau. Show how the details of this blessing were actualized in subsequent history. Who were the Edomites? The Idumeans?
35. What revenge did Esau threaten to wreak upon Jacob? What prevented his execution of this vengeance at once?
36. Show how Rebekah again came to Jacob's rescue. What did she tell him to do?
37. Explain her statement, "Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?"

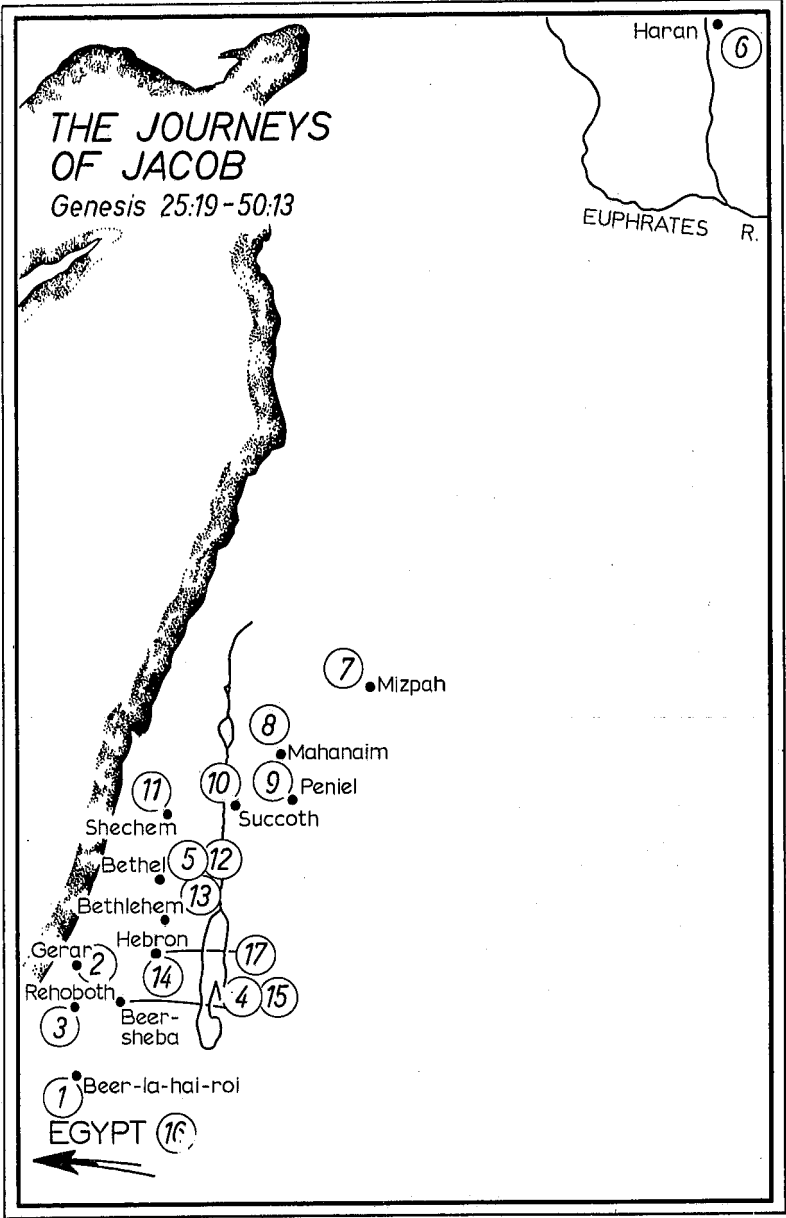
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38. What were the ultimate consequences of this event for Esau and for Jacob?
39. What punishment did each of the four principals suffer?
40. Were not the parents more responsible for what happened than the twins were? Explain.
41. Explain fully the problem of the Divine election of Jacob over Esau for inclusion in the Messianic genealogy.
42. On what grounds are we justified in concluding that Jacob was the more worthy of the two to be included in the Messianic Line?
43. What was Esau's besetting sin? Explain how this sin occurs today in the attitude of so many toward the ordinances of Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper.
44. Is not the professing church in our Era persistently guilty of disrespect for Divine institutions?
45. Explain the Hurrian parallels of the details of this Old Testament story. How account for these facts?
46. Explain how this story is truly "an unpleasant picture of family life."
47. Why is this designated another instance of Biblical realism?
48. What are some of the important lessons for us to derive from this story?
49. Explain how the schemes of the parents in no wise altered the actualization of God's Purposes.
50. Why do we say that Rebekah's part in this entire transaction was essentially a lack of faith? In what sense can the same be said of the other three principals?
51. Explain how that in Rebekah's case we have an account of a laudable emotion "evilly used."
52. What charges can we rightly bring against each of the four members of this *dramatis personae*?
53. What good can we say of each of them?
54. How is the fact to be explained that the marriage of

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Isaac and Rebekah, completely out of line with the common practice of the time, was a monogamous marriage? Does this mean that it was necessarily one of devoted love?

55. In what sense must deep personal love be devoted to higher values than personal satisfaction? What should these higher values be? In what sense can such deep personal love become ruinous?
56. Is there such a thing as "smother love"? Explain
57. Give Milligan's interpretation of Hebrews 12:17.
58. On what continuing values does monogamous marriage depend?
59. What elements stand out in the character of Jacob to give him the higher moral and spiritual status?
60. What elements stand out in Esau's character to justify God's rejection of him?



THE PATRIARCHAL PERIOD
LIFE AND JOURNEYS OF JACOB

1. *Beer-la-hai-roi*; Gen. 25:19-34
 - a. Birth of Jacob and Esau.
 - b. Birthright sold.
2. *Gerar*; 26:1-21
 - a. Accompanies parents.
3. *Rehoboth*; 26:22
 - a. With father here.
4. *Beersheba*; 26:23-28:9
 - a. (Jehovah's appearance to Isaac; The covenant with Abimelech)
 - b. (Esau's two wives)
 - c. Jacob obtains the blessing. 27:1-45.
 - d. Jacob sent away; 28:1-9.
5. *Bethel*; 28:10-22.
 - a. Jacob's dream.
6. *Haran*; 29:1-31:21
 - a. Jacob's dealings with Laban.
 - b. Jacob's wives and children.
7. *Mizpah*; 31:22-55
 - a. Final meeting and covenant of Laban and Jacob.
8. *Mahanaim*; 32:1-21
 - a. Meeting with the angels.
 - b. Preparations to meet Esau.
9. *Peniel*; 32:22-33:16
 - a. Wrestling with angel; 32:22-32.
 - b. Meeting with Esau 33:1-16.
10. *Succoth*; 33:17
 - a. House and booths built.
11. *Shechem*; 33:18 35:5
 - a. Purchase of ground; 33:18-20.
 - b. Sin of Shechem; 34:1-31.
 - c. Command to go to Bethel; 35:1-5.
12. *Bethel*; 35:6-15
 - a. Altar built.
 - b. Deborah dies.
 - c. The blessing of God.
13. *Bethlehem*; 35:16-20
 - a. Death of Rachel and birth of Benjamin.
14. *Hebron*; 35:21-45:28
 - a. Sin of Reuben; 35:21-22.
 - b. Death of Isaac;
 - c. Descendants of Esau; Ch. 36.
 - d. The story of Joseph; 37:1-45:28.
15. *Beersheba*; 46:1-7
 - a. God appears as Jacob goes to Egypt.
16. *Egypt*; 46:8-50:6
 - a. Jacob's family sojourns in Egypt.
17. *Hebron*; 50:7-13
 - a. Burial of Jacob.