

“Trick or Treat?” (Genesis 26:34-28:9)

This past Monday, many Americans celebrated Halloween, or if you prefer “Helloween.” Children who participate in Halloween go door to door and announce, “Trick or Treat.” The hope is that they will receive a piece of candy...or two...or three. Yet, there is always the risk that they will be stiffed by some cheapskate, or worse yet, be poisoned by some sicko. “Trick or Treat” has inevitable consequences, either positive or negative.

In this section of Genesis, we discover that Isaac’s family lived by “Trick or Treat.” Yet, in pursuit of a “treat,” Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob all succumbed to trickery. As a result, the consequences proved devastating. The Scottish novelist and poet, Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), wrote in his poem *Marmion*: “Oh what a tangled web we weave / When first we practice to deceive.”¹ How true! In Genesis 26:34-28:9, we will learn that *faith is living without scheming*. Put positively, faith means obeying God no matter how we feel, what we think, or what might happen.²

Like many biblical passages, this one has bookends. Two reports of Esau’s pagan marriages (26:34-35 and 28:6-9) frame the major account (27:1-28:5), providing a prologue and epilogue. The main account then centers on Isaac giving the blessing to Jacob.³ Let’s begin with the first bookend. In 26:34-35,⁴ Moses writes, “**When Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; and they brought grief** [lit. “bitterness of spirit”] **to Isaac and Rebekah.**”⁵ Esau marries at age 40, just as his father Isaac did (25:20). Esau, however, marries two Hittite women from the land of Canaan (36:2). Abraham warned his servant not to take a wife for Isaac from among the wicked Canaanites, who would not give up their gods for their husbands (24:3).⁶ Thus, the servant found Rebekah from the country and family of Abraham (24:15f). Esau, who had earlier despised his birthright (25:34), shows that he has no interest in the spiritual dimension of the blessing that Isaac wants to give him. Moses implicates Isaac as well, because he made no arrangements for his son’s marriage. Compare this with his father, Abraham, who sent his servant 500 miles away to get a suitable wife for Isaac (24:1). Fathers, are you praying for future spouses for each of your children? When it comes time for your sons or daughters to marry are you willing and committed to help them make a wise decision?

This lengthy passage is like a theatrical play that separates into five scenes.⁷ As we work our way through this narrative, follow along as if you’re watching a live, theater play.

Act One (27:1-4). In 27:1-4, Moses writes: “**Now it came about, when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, ‘My son.’ And he said to him, ‘Here I am.’⁸ Isaac said, ‘Behold now, I am old and I do not know the day of my death.’⁹ Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me; and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul¹⁰ may bless¹¹ you before I die.”¹² Abraham’s life ended with happiness, success, and a strong character. In contrast, physical and spiritual decay marked Isaac’s old age. As Isaac grew older, he “hardened his heart” instead of his arteries.¹³ In the willfulness of his old age, Isaac is determined to pass on the blessing to Esau, despite what the Lord has said (25:23) and what the boys have shown with their lives. The fact that he attempted to make this transaction without the knowledge of his wife, Rebekah, and his son, Jacob, compound his sin.¹⁴ Normally the blessing would have been given before the entire family. But here we find that Isaac is doing in secret what should have been a very public transaction. Why? Because he knew he was wrong!¹⁵ *Faith is living without scheming*. Do you ever scheme when you want your way? Do you make decisions without including your spouse? Are you afraid you will lose out**

on “getting your way” if you include others? Beware! It is likely that your heart is set on illegitimate desires.

In Isaac’s case, his insistence on a “good meal” before the blessing recalls Esau’s own trading of the birthright for a pot of stew, and thus casts Isaac in a similar role to that of Esau (25:27-34). Interestingly, the word “**game**” is repeated eight times and “**savory dish**” six times. This emphasis suggests that Isaac is ruled by his senses. Furthermore, a “**savory dish**” is the object of Isaac’s “**love**.” In this story of a fractured family, the word “**love**” appears only in the context of food.¹⁶ And though it was reported earlier that Isaac loved Esau (25:28), he now seems to love his food more than his sons. How pitiful! Where did Esau get his gluttonous appetite? His dad! Isaac’s taste for game is stronger than his taste for the Lord. Isaac is more consumed with his gut than God’s glory¹⁷ (Ps 141:4).¹⁸ I think of the *Tombstone Pizza* commercial: What do you want on your tombstone? Well, Isaac wanted venison on his tombstone. All he cared about was his favorite meal.

Parents, is your taste for food, drink, money, career, hobbies, or the good life stronger than your taste for the Lord? Are these tastes stronger than your love for your children? Do these tastes cause you to value what your children do but not who they are? Do you know who they are? Do you enter into their lives and ask them how they feel? Do you know their hearts? Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt 6:21). And if you keep pouring it out without respect to God’s Word, you may find yourself, even on your deathbed, blessing your children in the wrong way or not blessing them at all. Parents, taste and see that the Lord is good (Ps 34:8), infinitely more satisfying than your other tastes, and you’ll value your children in a new way. Seek to know your children and love them for who they are, not for whom you think they are, or for what you’d like them to be.

Parents, are you blessing your children? If so, how are you blessing them? What qualities are you encouraging? Many parents are more drawn to temporary achievements than eternal treasures. They get more excited about straight A’s, touchdowns, and prosperity than spiritual growth. In that they bless these to the exclusion of their children’s relationship with the Lord, they show their children where they think fulfillment is found. They are more than happy to take responsibility for encouraging these qualities, but they refuse to relate to and teach their children in the ways of the Lord. Often, they are more than willing to take them to church and hand them over to Sunday school teachers and youth staff. But they refuse to enter the place where it matters most. Parents, I encourage you to enter the spiritual lives of your children. It’s your responsibility to teach them the Scriptures, pray with them, and point them to Christ. It will be the best investment you ever make in your children.¹⁹

Act Two (27:5-17). In 27:5-10, our story intensifies: “**Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game to bring home, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, ‘Behold, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying, ‘Bring me some game and prepare a savory dish for me, that I may eat, and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.’ ‘Now therefore, my son, listen to me as I command you. Go now to the flock and bring me two choice young goats from there, that I may prepare them as a savory dish for your father, such as he loves. Then you shall bring it to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death.’”²⁰ The Hebrew form of the word “**listening**” suggests that this was a habit, a pattern of behavior, not a happenstance. Her behavior gives us an idea of the level of mistrust and poor communication they had in their family. What should Rebekah have done in this circumstance? She knew Isaac was wrong in what he conspired to do. Jacob was the son whom God had chosen to be the “heir of promise.” Thus, the first thing Rebekah should have done was to speak honestly and directly with her husband about his wicked plan. Submission to authority never includes silence toward evil. We are to “speak the truth in love” (Eph 4:15), even to those in authority over us (cf. Acts 16:35-40). Having fulfilled her responsibility to warn her husband of the consequences of the evil he had planned, Rebekah**

should have been content to leave the matter in God's capable and sovereign hands. *Faith is living without scheming.*

In 27:11-12, **“Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, ‘Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man. Perhaps my father will feel me, then I will be as a deceiver in his sight, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing.’”** Jacob questions the effectiveness of the plan but not its scruples. He was worried about the eleventh commandment: “Thou shall not get caught.”²¹ He's afraid that Isaac, who can't see, will recognize him by touch and perceive him as a **“deceiver.”** Jacob doesn't seem much concerned about how God perceives him. Yet, the Scriptures teach that “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb 11:6a). And *faith is living without scheming.*

Rebekah responds to Jacob with these words: **“But his mother said to him, ‘Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me’”** (27:13). Rebekah replies in the words of mothers throughout history, “Just do what I say.” In volunteering to absorb any curse that Jacob incurs, Rebekah is heightening the urgency of her case, although any curse incurred by one person could not be transferred to another. So even in this she is deceptive but effective in carrying out her plan.

After his mom's reassuring words, Jacob threw caution to the wind: **“So he went and got them, and brought them to his mother; and his mother made savory food such as his father loved. Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. And she put the skins of the young goats on his hands [She made him a pair of gloves.] and on the smooth part of his neck.”**²² [Apparently, Esau was so hairy that he had dreadlocks on his back. Rebekah must have felt like she was dressing Jacob up for Halloween.] **She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob”** (27:14-17). Rebekah always has an answer for every question and a solution for every problem. She is strong, resourceful, decisive, and cunning. She has to be, being married to Isaac. He taught her everything he knew about lying and deceiving; and she was a great understudy! She posed as the faithful, loving wife, but under all of this she sought to further Jacob's interests, even at the expense of her husband, Isaac. Rebekah, not Jacob, was the mastermind behind the plot to outwit Isaac and obtain his blessing for Jacob. She informed Jacob of the situation. She devised a plan to deceive Isaac. This plan was far too complex to have been put together on spur of the moment. Obviously, Rebekah had been thinking about this day for years. Many of the props were already prepared and ready: the expertly fashioned goatskin gloves and neck coverings, the garments belonging to Esau, who probably wasn't living in his parent's home but in his own house with his two Hittite wives, and the deceptive recipe available that made goat meat taste like venison.

One question: If this was so brazenly wrong, why did Jacob do it?

- *Jacob was under pressure from his mother.*²³ Many young men and women strive to please Dad and Mom. While this can be honorable, it can also lead to sin when it is not in faith. Last week, I watched a Michael Jordan interview on *60 Minutes*. What stood out the most was the fact that, on national TV, Jordan acknowledged that he was driven to greatness to prove his parents wrong. Jordan's parents didn't believe he would amount to anything so he pushed himself to be the best.
- *Jacob wanted the blessing badly.* He was ruled by greed. He wanted what he wanted when he wanted it. He followed Mom's plan. Yet, *faith is living without scheming.*
- *Jacob believed the end justified the means.* I think Jacob said to himself, “God wants me to have the blessing, so if I have to cheat a little bit to get it that's all right. God will understand.” Jacob is half right. God did want him to have the blessing. And God did understand what he was doing. But that didn't make it right. God wants us to follow His plan, not our own.

- *Jacob didn't respect his father sufficiently.* When sons and daughters don't respect Dad, all kinds of problems erupt. Father, earn respect by living a godly life before your children.

Clearly, Rebekah is the prime mover-and-shaker in this story. She is also the dominant leader in this family. It appears that Isaac has abdicated his position of spiritual leadership in favor of his wife. Husbands, when you relinquish your responsibility to spiritually lead your home, you give up the greatest position and privilege in your life. And when you do so, the family deteriorates...sometimes rather quickly.

Isaac makes important plans without Rebekah (27:1-4), and then Rebekah makes her own plans to usurp his plans (27:5-17). They've squared off against each other without even talking about it, and they've turned their children into weapons against each other. In Genesis 24, their marriage was seemingly a match made in heaven. Where did this marriage, which had such a promising beginning, get off track? We know at least this much: Isaac drifted away from the Lord, and the two of them failed to communicate. Our marriages often get off track in the same way. The most important thing we can do for our marriage is cultivate our own relationship with the Lord. The second most important thing we can do is to communicate with each other—to share our hearts with one another, to listen to one another, to talk through decisions and differences. If we drift from the Lord and if we fail to communicate, we'll find ourselves living essentially separate lives, just as Isaac and Rebekah. And our children, like Jacob and Esau, will suffer for it.

Rebekah has denied her husband and her marriage. Her priority should be to become one with and to support her husband. But we see that her child is more important to her than her husband. Spouses, do not ever allow your children to become more important than your marriage. One of the tragedies I see today, in the church and in the world, is that spouses are better parents than they are spouses. And when the kids leave the nest, their marriage disintegrates. Are you building your marriage while your children are still at home? Do you recognize that, apart from sharing Christ with your children, the greatest gift you can offer them is to observe a godly marriage? Spouses, love each other. Build a healthy marriage.

Act Three (27:18-29). The relationship between Jacob and Esau is like a boxing match.²⁴ The first round occurred at birth (25:21-28) and the second round was over the birthright (25:29-34). Here we have the third round of Jacob's battle with Esau. In all three rounds Jacob manipulated his brother.²⁵ Moses writes: **"Then he came to his father and said, 'My father.' And he said, 'Here I am. Who are you, my son?'"**²⁶ **Jacob said to his father, 'I am Esau your firstborn; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me.'** Isaac said to his son, **'How is it that you have it so quickly, my son?'** And he said, **'Because the LORD your God caused it to happen to me.'** [This is blasphemy! Notice also he identifies the Lord as "your" God but not "my" God, because he has not yet embraced the Lord. But then his father has given him no good reason to embrace the Lord. Jacob will have to find the Lord on his own, because he's getting no help from his father.] **Then Isaac said to Jacob, 'Please come close, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not.'** So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, **'The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.'** He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he **blessed** him. [This blessing is more like a greeting.²⁸] **And he said, 'Are you really my son Esau?'** And he said, **'I am.'** So he said, **'Bring it to me, and I will eat of my son's game, that I may bless you.'** And he brought it to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, **'Please come close and kiss me, my son.'** So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he **blessed** him and said, **'See, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed; Now²⁹ may God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and an abundance of grain and**

new wine [personal prosperity]; May peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you; be master of your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you [pre-eminence]. Cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you [protection by God].”³⁰

In this scenario, who is deceiving whom? On one hand Jacob is definitely deceiving his father, Isaac. However, Isaac—because he thinks Jacob is really Esau—thinks he is deceiving Jacob by giving the blessing to Esau. Both intend to deceive the other; only Jacob succeeds. The most amazing point is that through this act of deception, God's will was done! Why? Because God's choice (Jacob) did in fact end up with the blessing. That doesn't justify the deception, but it does demonstrate how God works through the weakness of sinful men to accomplish his purposes. This story, seen in that light, is a story of the sovereignty of God.³¹

Over the years I've heard many Christians justify their sin and disobedience to God by making God an accomplice to their sin: “The Lord came to me in a dream and told me to leave my wife and family.” “The Lord showed in the Bible that I don't have to pay my taxes.” “The Lord has given me a wonderful peace about having sex with my girlfriend or boyfriend. There is nothing wrong with it as long we are monogamous.” These are nothing but pious platitudes to conceal and justify sin! If you're going to sin, please be honest with yourself and others. Don't sin in the name of the Lord. Call it what it is. Don't spiritualize your sin. Be man or woman enough to own up to your sin. God may be sovereign enough to accomplish His will in spite of your sin, but He's not the author of sin.

Act Four (27:30-45). Moses writes, “**Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.** [Talk about a close call. Jacob missed Esau “by that much.”] **Then he also made savory food, and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, ‘Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me.’ Isaac his father said to him, ‘Who are you?’ [No doubt Isaac is thinking, Déjà vu.] And he said, ‘I am your son, your firstborn, Esau.’ Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, ‘Who was he then that hunted game and brought it to me, so that I ate of all of it before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed.’ When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, ‘Bless me, even me also, O my father!’ [Can you imagine the emotions that Esau must have experienced at this moment? I'm sure he has probably never been angrier in his entire life.] And he said, ‘Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing.’ Then he said, ‘Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.’ And he said, ‘Have you not reserved a blessing for me?’ But Isaac replied to Esau, ‘Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?’ Once the blessing was given, it had the force of a legal contract and could not be revoked.³² The irony of it all was that since Isaac had tried to give everything to Esau, there was nothing left for his favorite son—it had all had been given to Jacob. **Esau said to his father, ‘Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.’ So Esau lifted his voice and wept. Then Isaac his father answered and said to him, ‘Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling, and away from the dew of heaven from above. ‘By your sword you shall live, and your brother you shall serve; but it shall come about when you become restless, that you will break his yoke from your neck.’ So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, ‘The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.’ [Esau got mad and was seeking to get even.] Now when the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him, ‘Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you by planning to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban! Stay****

with him a few days, until your brother's fury subsides, until your brother's anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him.

Then I will send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?"

Rebekah feared the loss of both her sons as a result of her plot (27:45). Esau might have killed Jacob, and Esau then might have fled or the avenger of blood might have slain him (cf. 9:6).³³

Act Five (27:46-28:5). In 27:46, **"Rebekah said to Isaac, 'I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?'"**³⁴ Let me interpret this for you, husbands. Rebekah is saying to Isaac, "If my life isn't worth living, yours won't be either." When Rebekah fears for Jacob's life, she goes to Isaac, and by using a logical reason that Jacob needed a wife, she manipulates Isaac into sending Jacob away. In effect, she's giving Isaac a cover story. Her real goal is to protect him, not to find him a wife. Isaac agrees, calling Jacob to his side, repeating the Abrahamic blessing, and sending him off to Haran to find a wife. She successfully maneuvered Isaac into telling Jacob to leave. Rebekah's manipulative language to spare Jacob again displays the poverty of Isaac and Rebekah's relationship. They do not seem able to communicate honestly with one another on important spiritual matters.

In 28:1-5, Moses writes, **"So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, 'You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. May God Almighty [*El Shaddai*, 17:1] bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham.'** Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau." Isaac evidently realized that his desire to give the blessing to Esau was not God's will, so having given it to Jacob (27:27-29), he blessed him further (28:1-4).³⁵ This account is another remarkable demonstration of God's ability to use the sins of men and women to accomplish His purposes and at the same time discipline the sinners for their sins.³⁶

Our closing bookend is found in 28:6-9 where Moses pens these tragic words: **"Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take to himself a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he charged him, saying, 'You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,' and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Paddan-aram. So Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan displeased his father Isaac; and Esau went to Ishmael, and married, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth."** Esau rebelled against his parents' wishes by marrying another pagan wife.³⁷ Since he didn't get his way, he wanted everyone to be miserable (cf. 26:35). How do you respond when you don't get your own way? Do you make others suffer by pouting or acting out? This is further evidence of scheming. Yet, the message of this story is clear: *Faith is living without scheming.*

In the end, all four players paid a huge price for their sin.

- Isaac: He lost all credibility as a spiritual leader in his family. His plans backfired. In his effort to give Esau everything, he was able to give him nothing. He never saw his son, Jacob, again. His relationship with his wife was severely damaged.
- Esau: He had led a sexually immoral and godless lifestyle (Heb 12:16-17). He forfeited his birthright and lost his blessing. He had to spend the rest of his life asking, "What if...?"

- Rebekah: Her relationship with her husband, Isaac, was severely damaged. She is forever remembered as a scheming deceiver. She never saw Jacob again—the only son she really loved.
- Jacob: He lived a life of isolation from his family for the next 20 years. He has humiliated his father. He never saw his father or mother alive again. He is homeless. He is fleeing for his life. He is estranged from his brother. He spent the next 20 years looking over his shoulder in fear of his brother.³⁸ Furthermore, because Jacob left and Esau stayed home, Jacob forfeited all the material prosperity that would have been his through his inheritance from Isaac.³⁹ Jacob refused to wait on God (Ps 37:15). *Faith is living without scheming.*

The bottom line is this: Everyone in the family sought the blessings of God without bending the knee to God. And everyone lost!⁴⁰ Sin does not pay! Hebrews 11:25b tells us that its pleasure is “passing,” “fleeting” (*NET, ESV*), and only “for a season” (*KJV*). In the end, sin leads to death (Jas 1:13-15).

Fortunately, man’s sin can never frustrate the will of God, but it can fulfill it. Despite the sin and deceit of this family, the purpose of God, expressed to Rebekah in 25:23, was fulfilled exactly!⁴¹ God loves to work in spite of people. He can and will always accomplish His purposes, with our without our help. But we should exercise faith in the midst of our lives so we will experience God’s blessings instead of His discipline. *Faith is living without scheming.* I challenge you today to exercise faith by obeying God, no matter how we feel, what we think, or what might happen.⁴²

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Notes

¹ For a brief biography of Sir Walter Scott see <http://www.lucidcafe.com/library/95aug/scott.html> (11/4/05).

² Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Authentic: Genesis 25-50* (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor, 1997), 26-27.

³ Ross sees a chiasmic structure in this account:

A Isaac and the son of the *brkh/bkrh* (=Esau) (27:1-5).

B Rebekah sends Jacob on the stage (27:6-17).

C Jacob appears before Isaac and receives blessing (27:18-29).

C' Esau appears before Isaac and receives antiblessing (27:30-40).

B' Rebekah sends Jacob from the stage (27:41-45).

A' Isaac and the son of *brkh/bkrh* (=Jacob!) (27:46-28:5) See Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, 474.

⁴ Gen 26:34-35 is best read as an introduction to Genesis 27. They cast quite a different light on the events of that chapter. Just before the account of the mischievous blessing of Jacob, we are told that Esau, from whom the blessing was stolen, had married Hittite women and that they were a source of grief to both Isaac and Rebekah. These verses, then, take their place along with 25:29-34 as background to the central event of chapter 27, the blessing of Jacob. These preliminary notices put into perspective the cunning deed of Jacob and Rebekah. They demonstrate that Esau was not fit to inherit the blessing. John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis: EBC* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), Electronic ed.

⁵ Constable writes, "We can identify three purposes for this brief section. First, Moses explains and justifies the reason for Jacob's later departure for Paddanaram (27:46-28:2). Second, Moses identified the ancestors of the Edomites who later played a major role in Israel's history. Third, Moses revealed Esau's carnal character again. Esau showed no interest in the special calling of his family but sought to establish himself as a great man in the world by marrying Canaanite women (cf. 11:4). These were evidently the daughters of Canaanite lords. The Canaanites were, of course, under God's curse (9:25-27)." Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Genesis* (<http://www.sonlight.com/constable/notes/pdf/genesis.pdf>, 2005), 191.

⁶ Later in this passage, Isaac also warns Jacob against marrying a Canaanite (Gen 28:1).

⁷ Some commentaries break the scenes down differently. Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988 [2002 ed.]), 473-74 and J.P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975), 101.

⁸ Isaac's dim eyes match his dim spiritual sensitivities. The words "my son" and "here I am," which also appear along with the words "my father" in Genesis 27:18 set this story up as a parody of Genesis 22:1-19, where the same words are used. In the Genesis 22 story, both Abraham and his young son, Isaac, employ the words, "here I am" to convey trusting availability. In the Genesis 22 story, Abraham obeys God, and Isaac obeys Abraham. In this story Isaac takes the role of God but orders not a holy sacrifice but an unholy dish of food. Esau is the obedient son in Isaac's ill-conceived plan, which blows up in both of their faces.

⁹ Isaac is 100 years old here (Gen 25:26; 26:34) and lived to be 180 (35:28). Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 376. Other commentators suggest Isaac was 137 years old at this time.

¹⁰ Isaac's desire that his "soul" would bless Esau indicates how intensely passionate he was about it. This is more than saying, "I desire with all my heart." It was with his whole being. Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, 476. Even on what he thinks is his deathbed, he is pouring out his soul without respect to the Word of God.

¹¹ The Hebrew noun "bless" (*barak*) occurs seven times and its verbal form 21 times.

¹² The blessing concerns fruitfulness, dominion, and protection (Gen 27:27-29). The birthright, which Esau sold to Jacob, concerns inheritance. In this family, both the birthright and the blessing are connected to the Lord; however, from Isaac and Esau's perspective, they are separate. They think that the blessing is up for grabs. However, because both the birthright and the blessing are connected to the Lord they cannot be so easily separated. The writer of Hebrews sees a connection between the birthright and the blessing, for he says that after Esau sold the birthright, God, through Isaac, rejected him when he sought the blessing (Heb 12:16-17).

¹³ Gene A. Getz, *Jacob: Following God Without Looking Back* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 41.

¹⁴ Isaac ignores the fact that Esau is spiritually unqualified for the blessing. Isaac ignored the irresponsible behavior of Esau. Esau was irresponsible, the kind of guy who just lived for today, the kind of guy who had little interest in God. He married two women who were pagans and not worshippers of God. We're told at the end of chapter 26 that this brought untold disappointment to Isaac and Rebekah. But now Isaac puts all that out of his mind. Denial.

¹⁵ Before selling his birthright, Esau exaggerated his condition and said he was so hungry that he was about to die. Now Isaac, wondering if he is about to die, exaggerates his condition in order to bless the wrong son. Again, like son, like father.

¹⁶ The word “love” is usually used for personal relationships, such as a man’s love for a woman (Gen 24:67; 29:18, 20, 30, 32; 34:3). Waltke, *Genesis*, 377.

¹⁷ See also Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Vol. 2: WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1994), 206.

¹⁸ Someone has well said, “The end of life reveals the ends of life.” Wiersbe, *Be Authentic*, 25.

¹⁹ Scott Grant, “A Son Unloved: Wrestling with God: The Jacob Narrative” (Genesis 26:34-27:29): <http://www.pbc.org/dp/grant/jacob/4867.html>

²⁰ The law, which later came through Moses, said, “Cursed is he who misleads a blind person on the road” (Deut 27:18).

²¹ Wiersbe, *Be Authentic*, 27.

²² The plan is carried out with garments and the skins of goats. Jacob himself would later be deceived when his sons dipped the garment of Joseph, his favorite son, in the blood of a goat to make him think that Joseph had been killed (Gen 37:31-33).

²³ Hamilton comments, “He who is later capable of wrestling with God wrestles little with his mother or with his conscience.” Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50*: NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 217.

²⁴ We don’t have to look very far in Genesis to find dysfunctional family relationships. Consider the very first family—Adam and Eve who blamed each other for their own disobedience. Consider their children—Cain murdered his brother Abel. Consider Noah’s three sons—Ham disgraced his father by uncovering his nakedness. Consider Abraham and Sarah—He lied about his wife, calling her his sister. His nephew Lot turned out to be a major disappointment.

²⁵ If course, in light of God’s promise this was completely unnecessary (see Gen 25:23).

²⁶ When Abraham was ordered by God to sacrifice Isaac, Isaac approached Abraham with the words, “My father.” Abraham responded, “Here I am, my son.” Isaac wanted to know the whereabouts of the sacrificial lamb. Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son” (Genesis 22). Although the words of greeting are the same in Genesis 27, the beautiful story of a son’s trust for a father and a father’s trust in the Lord is replaced by the tragic story of familial deceit and favoritism. Isaac, the son who trusted a father who trusted the Lord, has now become a father who fails to trust the Lord and is deceived by a son.

²⁷ Jacob calls himself the “firstborn.” Later, he himself will be deceived and be stuck with a “firstborn” wife that he doesn’t want (Gen 29:26).

²⁸ Or as Constable suggests, “The response to Isaac’s blessing in Gen 27:23 is proleptic; it refers to the blessing in 27:27-29, not another blessing that preceded this one. Isaac uttered his blessing (27:27-29) in poetic language and God’s Spirit doubtless inspired it since it proved to be prophetic (cf. 49:1-27; Deut 33; et al.). It was an oracle.” Constable, *Notes on Genesis*, 195.

²⁹ The Genesis 22 story culminated with a substitution. Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac when the angel of the Lord stopped him. Immediately thereafter, Abraham found a ram to offer in place of Isaac. The Genesis 27 parody of Genesis 22 culminates when Jacob substitutes himself for Esau.

³⁰ Jacob had already received the blessing of the Promised Land through the birthright that he obtained. In Genesis 27:28, Isaac blesses Jacob with fruitfulness in the Promised Land (Deut 7:13). The dew of heaven provides irrigation. The fatness of the earth is rain. Grain and new wine evoke the image of a banquet, overflowing with joy (Ps 4:7). In 27:29, Isaac blesses Jacob with dominion over the nations and his family. “Peoples” and “nations” are in parallel construction, as are “brothers” and “your mother’s sons.” “Peoples” and “nations” would be the Gentile peoples and nations. “Brothers” and “your mother’s sons” would be Rebekah’s descendants through Esau, who would also become Gentiles. Finally, the curses and blessings called for equate with God’s protection and are particularly linked to dominion (Num 24:9).

³¹ This reminds me of the words Joseph utters many years later: “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” (Gen 50:20). Both Isaac and Jacob had less than noble motives, but God overruled their bad motives to insure that His will was ultimately done.

³² The point of these reiterations of the effect of the blessing is primarily to underscore the irretrievability of the lost blessing and hence the certainty of the fulfillment of the blessing itself. By showing that the blessing was irrevocable, even by the father who gave the blessing, the writer underscores an important feature of the blessing. It is out of man’s hands. It cannot even be revoked. It will come to pass, just as it was given. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, Electronic. Ed.

³³ Waltke, *Genesis*, 382. Several scholars think Rebekah means that when Isaac dies Esau will kill Jacob, and she does not want to mourn the loss of two family members at the same time. But Isaac is not a near antecedent to “you.”

³⁴ Rebekah used her dislike for Esau's wives as an excuse to gain Isaac's permission for Jacob to go to Paddan-aram. Evidently Rebekah had kept Esau's hatred for Jacob from his aged father because she believed Isaac was near death (Gen 27:41).

³⁵ Besides in that culture a paternal blessing, much more a divine oracle, such as the one Isaac had uttered, was irrevocable. By showing that the blessing was irrevocable, even by the father who gave the blessing, the writer underscores an important feature of the blessing—its fulfillment is out of human hands. John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 191.

³⁶ Many years later the aged Jacob blessed Joseph's younger son Ephraim rather than his older brother Manasseh (Gen 48:14-19). He must have remembered how he had deceived his father Isaac to get his blessing. Joseph's approach to Jacob on that occasion was honorable by contrast, and his life was free of the consequences of deceit. This was not true of Jacob's life. Jacob reaped what he sowed (Gal 6:7). Laban later deceived him, and later still his own sons (in the case of the sale of Joseph) did so even more cruelly than he deceived Isaac.

³⁷ See also Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 192.

³⁸ This was Rebekah's reward for her meddling. This is not a close-knit family. There are definite problems in the relationships. Notice that Esau and Jacob do not interact. Notice that Esau and Rebekah do not interact. It looks like we have Isaac and Jacob interacting, but remember that Isaac thinks it's Esau. And finally and perhaps most importantly: Isaac and Rebekah do not interact until the whole thing is over and she wants Isaac to send Jacob away. So Genesis 27 shows us again that Jacob could not wait on God to fulfill His promise to Rebekah.

³⁹ Pritchard, "Portrait of a Dysfunctional Family."

⁴⁰ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 354.

⁴¹ See Proverbs 16:9 and 19:21.

⁴² Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Authentic: Genesis 25-50* (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor, 1997), 26-27.