

This lesson spanning chapters 27-29 comprises a fast-forward view of the early years of Jacob's adult life. During this span of time he steals the blessing of his brother Esau, gets sent to the land of his ancestry to find a wife, has an encounter with the God of his fathers at Bethel, and eventually ends up with two wives.

**Genesis 27:1-27:** Isaac in his old age wants to bestow his blessing on Esau, his eldest son, before he dies and so sends him out hunting for venison in order to prepare a meal for Isaac to eat before giving the blessing. However, because Jacob is Rebekah's favorite son and she wants him to receive the blessing, she conceives a plan to deceive Isaac, who was essentially blind at this point, into placing the blessing upon Jacob instead of Esau. Following his mother's instructions, Jacob pretends to be his brother and brings a meal to his father that Rebekah had prepared while Esau is still away hunting. Although doubtful at first, Isaac becomes convinced that Jacob is Esau and proceeds to give the blessing.

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### Genesis 27

<sup>28</sup> Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: <sup>29</sup> Let people 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* he that blesseth thee.

The act of bestowing a blessing on someone was believed to produce the benefits spoken. However, the blessings pronounced by Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. seem to be supernaturally prophetic in nature and simply predict the future that the LORD has determined for the recipient rather than creating it. Here the blessing on Jacob predicts prosperity and superiority as well as the promises from the LORD inherited from his grandfather Abraham.

<sup>30</sup> 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.

Jacob had barely left Isaac's tent after receiving the blessing before Esau returned from hunting with the meal of venison as his father had instructed.

**Verses 31-40:** Esau has returned for his blessing, but both he and his father come to the realization that Jacob has deceitfully stolen Esau's blessing. Esau pleads with his father to bless him, even if it is the "leftovers." Isaac pronounces a blessing, saying that Esau will serve his brother, but that there will be times when he will be able to free himself from his brother's domination over him.

<sup>41</sup> 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.

**"And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him"** – Esau had already complained because Jacob had taken his birthright (v. 36) and now Jacob had stolen the blessing intended for him. He saw what kind of man Jacob was and hated him for what he had done.

**"and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand"** – This was a common phrase in that culture when referring to the imminent death of a parent. Esau was expecting Isaac to die soon and out of respect he did not want to act on his hatred for Jacob and kill his father's son while his father was still alive.

**"then will I slay my brother Jacob"** – Esau planned to murder his brother in revenge once their father had died.

**Verses 42-46:** Rebekah is told about Esau's plan to kill Jacob and so she decides to send Jacob away to spend some time with his uncle Laban until Esau's anger subsides. In order to cause this to happen she tells Isaac that if Jacob were to choose a wife locally it would drive her crazy to have one of these women in the family. No doubt Isaac remembered that his wife Rebekah came from his relatives in area of Haran and so he chooses to have Jacob get his wife from the same place.

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### Genesis 28

<sup>1</sup> And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. <sup>2</sup> Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother.

**"And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged [to give orders to] him"** – This statement seems to be a summary of the next few verses. The idea planted by Rebekah brings fruit as Isaac now calls Jacob to himself to send him away to take a wife.

**"and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan"** – This charge is what Abraham had instructed for Isaac (Gen. 24:3).

**"Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother"** – This is exactly what Rebekah was wanting (Gen. 27:43). Padan-aram ("plain of Aram") was in upper Mesopotamia near Haran. Jacob, like his father, would be marrying his cousin, which was a common occurrence in those days.

<sup>3</sup> And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; <sup>4</sup> And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

Isaac proceeds with the blessing by essentially repeating the blessings that the LORD had already promised to Abraham.

**Verses 5-12:** After seeing that his father did not want his sons to marry Canaanite women, Esau goes to the descendants of Ishmael (a branch of Abraham's descendants) and chooses a wife from them. Meanwhile Jacob, on his journey to Haran, stops to spend the night in an open field and dreams of a ladder reaching from the earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending on it in a graphic portrayal of God's involvement in the affairs of earth. Jacob will name the place Beth-El and it is 6 miles north of Jerusalem and about 50 miles north of Beer-sheba (where he had begun his journey).

<sup>13</sup> And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I *am* the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; <sup>14</sup> And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

**“And, behold, the LORD stood above it”** – The LORD stands above the ladder, sovereignly governing the activities of the angels as they go to and from the earth. They carry out His instructions and report back to Him.

**“and said, I *am* the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac”** – The LORD identifies Himself as the same God that Abraham and Isaac both served.

**“the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed...”** - The LORD renews the promises He made to Abraham and Isaac, now applying them to Jacob. The promises mentioned here are (1) to give Jacob and his descendants the land of Canaan; (2) his descendants will multiply exceedingly, filling the land; (3) the LORD will bless the entire world through Jacob and his descendants.

<sup>15</sup> And, behold, I *am* with thee, and will keep thee in all *places* whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done *that* which I have spoken to thee of.

Jacob may have been concerned that the LORD would not bless him since he was leaving the land of Canaan to go to Haran, but the LORD assures Jacob that He has every intention of fulfilling the promises He has made and that He will not leave Jacob until these promises are fulfilled. He would be with Jacob and watch over him during this journey and would be sure to bring Jacob home again. Take note that, like Abraham, Jacob has not earned these blessings and that they only come through the grace of God.

**Verses 16-18:** Jacob awakes from his dream in awe and amazement of the presence of the LORD in that place. He takes the stone that he had been using for a pillow and sets it up as a marker, consecrating it by pouring oil on it. Jacob has encountered the LORD and he wants to commemorate the place so that he doesn't forget what has happened here.

<sup>19</sup> And he called the name of that place Beth-el: but the name of that city *was called* Luz at the first.

Moses gives us both the new name (Beth-el) and the ancient name of the city near where Jacob had this encounter. The name Beth-el means “house of God” and reflects Jacob's belief about the place (v. 17) as an abode of God and a gateway between earth and heaven (v. 17).

<sup>20</sup> And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, <sup>21</sup> So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: <sup>22</sup> And this stone, which I have set *for* a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

**“And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me...”** - The Hebrew word for “if” can be just as easily translated “since” and commentators are divided on whether or not Jacob's vow is conditional or based on faith that God will do as He promised. Whether Jacob is saying “If God will be with me” or “Since God will be with me,” he is basing his vow on the fulfillment of God's promises to bless him.

**“then shall the LORD be my God”** – Jacob is declaring his allegiance to the God that will fulfill the promises made during his dream.

**“And this stone, which I have set *for* a pillar, shall be God's house”** – The stone Jacob set for a pillar will be a marker representing the location of the “house of God” (Beth-el).

**“and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee”** – Tithing appears to have been a known practice and Jacob promises to express his appreciation for God's blessings by giving a tenth of them back to God.

**Genesis 29:1-24:** Jacob travels on to where his uncle Laban lives, meets Rachel, the daughter of Laban, and falls in love. He agrees to work for Laban for seven years to gain Rachel as his wife, but on the wedding night Laban substitutes Leah his older daughter instead of Rachel.

Genesis 29

<sup>25</sup> And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it *was* Leah: and he said to Laban, What *is* this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? <sup>26</sup> And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. <sup>27</sup> Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.

**“And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it *was* Leah”** - The wedding customs of the day required that the bride wear a veil until the time the marriage was consummated. Apparently it was after dark when the two were alone and so it was not until the sun came up the next morning that Jacob realized he had consummated the marriage with the wrong sister.

**“and he said to Laban, What *is* this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?”** - Jacob, whose name means “supplanter,” has been a deceiver all his life. It is ironic that the deceiver has now been deceived.

**“And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn”** – It's unclear whether this was a legitimate local custom or if Laban is just making excuses. If it was a legitimate custom then Laban had deceitfully neglected to inform Jacob of it beforehand.

**“Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years”** – Laban cleverly manipulates Jacob to work for him for another seven years because he knows Jacob is willing to do so because of his love for Rachel.

<sup>28</sup> And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also. <sup>29</sup> And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid. <sup>30</sup> And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.

It's unclear whether Rachel is given to Jacob before he works another seven years or at the conclusion of it. However, Jacob sows the seeds of family discord by favoring Rachel over Leah. He continues the habit of showing favoritism years later when he favors Joseph (Rachel's son) above his other sons. Both the polygamy and the favoritism will only cause trouble and heartache in the years ahead.