



A Deceiver

God accomplishes His purposes through flawed families and people.

GENESIS 27:18-30

There's a story about the first mate of a ship who despised the captain. In the ship's log, he wrote: "The captain was sober today when he was on the bridge." The truth of the matter was the captain was always sober when he was on the bridge. The first mate's written words may have been truthful, nevertheless what he communicated was misleading and deceitful. Deceitfulness is an egregious sin and will always come with consequences. Nevertheless, God is able to accomplish His purposes through flawed and even deceitful people.

- How should knowing that God is able to accomplish His purposes through flawed people impact us?
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UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

GENESIS 25:19–27:46

Genesis 25:19–27:46 contains the account of Isaac. The longer narratives concerning Abraham and Jacob tend to overshadow the account of Isaac. The importance of the Isaac narrative, however, should not be overlooked. First, it demonstrates God’s faithfulness to fulfill the covenant promises He had made to Abraham and his offspring through Isaac. Second, even though Isaac at times displayed a weakness in character, he sought to be a godly man. Isaac was unusual in his day because he had only one wife and loved her dearly. Most men of his station had multiple wives and concubines. Like Sarah, Rebekah was barren. Unlike Abraham, Isaac did not scheme a way to make the promises of God come to pass. Instead, he prayed on Rebekah’s behalf, and the Lord answered his prayer by opening Rebekah’s womb to conceive (Gen. 25:21).

Isaac and Rebekah were married twenty years before Rebekah gave birth to their twin sons, Esau and Jacob. They made a mistake by each showing favoritism to their sons, Isaac toward Esau and Rebekah toward Jacob. This became a factor later on. As the two boys grew up, they had different personalities and pursuits. Esau was an outdoorsman, and Jacob was a homebody. Esau seems to have been somewhat carefree and therefore careless when it came to what really mattered. Jacob, on the other hand, appears to have been much more astute and shrewd.

In chapter 26, God reaffirmed to Isaac the covenant He had made with Abraham. Nonetheless, Isaac had issues with his neighbors, the Philistines. He followed Abraham’s poor example and lied about Rebekah being his wife, telling his neighbors that she was his sister. Ultimately, God protected them. Then there was more conflict with the Philistines regarding access to water rights. Again, God appeared to Isaac and reaffirmed His covenant to Abraham by continuing to bless Isaac and his offspring. Isaac and his family were flawed, but God was faithful nonetheless to use them to fulfill His purposes.

- **As you read Genesis 27:18-30 reflect on how God uses flawed and sinful people to accomplish His purposes.**
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EXPLORE THE TEXT

TRAP SET (GEN. 27:18-20)

¹⁸ When he came to his father, he said, “My father.” And he answered, “Here I am. Who are you, my son?” ¹⁹ Jacob replied to his father, “I am Esau, your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may bless me.” ²⁰ But Isaac said to his son, “How did you ever find it so quickly, my son?” He replied, “Because the LORD your God made it happen for me.”

VERSE 18

Genesis 25 reveals the rivalry between Esau and Jacob, and that their parents had chosen sides in this rivalry. (See “Sibling Rivalry as a Biblical Theme,” p. 127.) Genesis 25:28 states that “Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for wild game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.” Many years had passed, and Isaac was old and blind. However, Isaac had not lost his appreciation for the wild game Esau brought home. Because Esau was his first born and his favorite son, Isaac determined to bestow his greatest blessing on him. Isaac instructed Esau to hunt some game and to serve it to him as Isaac bestowed his blessing upon his eldest son.

Rebekah overheard their conversation and quickly devised a scheme to stop what they were about to do. It is probable she had not forgotten that the Lord had told her when her twins were still in the womb—that the “older will serve the younger” (25:23). Even so, what she and Jacob did is not condoned. She instructed Jacob to help her prepare a delicious meal for Isaac. Next, she helped Jacob to disguise himself as Esau and then go to present the dish to his father so that Isaac would pronounce his blessing on Jacob instead of Esau.

Jacob was hesitant to go along with his mother’s ploy, not because it was morally wrong but because Isaac might recognize the deception and curse Jacob instead. What they were conspiring to do was deserving of a curse. Once Rebekah assured him that she would take the curse herself if it came to that, Jacob was ready to go through with it.

With this in mind, dressed up in Esau’s clothes and the skins of young goats to cover his smooth skin, Jacob went through with the plan and approached Isaac saying, ***My father.*** He said these words of affection to conceal his deceit. Apparently, Isaac recognized something was off, because he asked Jacob, ***Who are you, my son?*** If Isaac was aware of the Lord’s words to Rebekah that the older would serve the

younger, then that may explain Isaac's heightened suspicions throughout the entire narrative on top of the duplicity he encountered. It would also suggest that Isaac possibly was allowing his favoritism of Esau to supersede God's revealed will for the future of his two sons.

DID YOU KNOW?

The theme of the unexpected one being the recipient of the blessing runs throughout Scripture. Isaac was chosen instead of Ishmael, Jacob instead of Esau, David over his older brothers, and Samuel over Eli's sons. God chose insignificant Israel over the more powerful nations. Hebrew slaves, not Egyptian pharaohs, received God's blessing. In the New Testament, news of Jesus's birth was first revealed to shepherds in the fields rather than to kings and rulers in mansions and palaces.

VERSE 19

Jacob responded to his father's inquiry with a blatant lie. He not only deceived his father but also defrauded his brother by saying he was Isaac's **firstborn**. This calls to mind the exploitation of Esau when Jacob took his birthright from him (25:29-34). One might say that a deal is a deal, but taking your brother's inheritance for a bowl of stew is theft. This also anticipates how Jacob will be deceived himself in a matter concerning a firstborn (29:26).

To add to this despicable deed, Jacob told his father, ***I have done as you told me***. Jacob emphasized his faithful obedience to his father while in the act of deceiving and dishonoring his father. To continue the charade, Jacob invited his father to sit up and eat some of ***my game***, as if he had acquired it while out hunting. All these things Jacob did so that his father would bless him, and he was anxious for Isaac to do so before the real Esau returned.

VERSE 20

Suspicious about the situation, Isaac asked how it was possible to find his game ***so quickly***. Jacob reached an all-time low by responding that it was God who made it happen. No doubt, according to God's words to Rebekah, it was God's will for Jacob to be greater than Esau (25:22-23). But there was nothing godly about the underhanded way this mother and son were seeking to make it happen. Appealing to God's help as he lied, Jacob's deceitful reply was nothing short of blasphemous.

- How do people today try to fool others to get a blessing?
How do they try to include God in their schemes?
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KEY DOCTRINE: *The Family*

Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. (See Proverbs 24:3; Ephesians 6:1-4.)

DECEPTION CARRIED OUT (GEN. 27:21-27)

²¹ Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come closer so I can touch you, my son. Are you really my son Esau or not?” ²² So Jacob came closer to his father Isaac. When he touched him, he said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” ²³ He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him. ²⁴ Again he asked, “Are you really my son Esau?” And he replied, “I am.” ²⁵ Then he said, “Bring it closer to me, and let me eat some of my son’s game so that I can bless you.” Jacob brought it closer to him, and he ate; he brought him wine, and he drank. ²⁶ Then his father Isaac said to him, “Please come closer and kiss me, my son.” ²⁷ So he came closer and kissed him. When Isaac smelled his clothes, he blessed him and said: Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed.

VERSES 21-22

Isaac continued to question the veracity of Jacob’s claim to be Esau. Therefore, for the second time, Isaac tried to discover the true identity of the son who stood before him. He asked Jacob to **come closer** so that he could **touch** him. Esau was an extremely hairy man, and Jacob had smooth skin. Though he was blind (27:1), Isaac thought he could verify if it was truly Esau who was speaking to him by feeling his hairy hands.

When Isaac felt Jacob’s hands, he was dumbfounded because he recognized Jacob’s voice that had been speaking to him, but the hands he touched felt like those of Esau. It is interesting to note that Jacob said as little as possible to Isaac after this.

VERSES 23-24

The disguise Rebekah put together for Jacob was enough to trick Isaac into believing that Jacob was Esau. The short phrase, **so he blessed him**, clarifies to the reader that it was this test (vv. 21-22) that began convincing Isaac that Jacob was Esau despite his apprehensions to do so. Nevertheless, Isaac asked Jacob a second time, **Are you really my son Esau?** Jacob replied, **I am**. In Hebrew, this is only one word. Jacob said as little as possible in order to keep up his charade. Also, this was the third time Jacob asserted his false identity to his father. It was Jacob's trifecta of deceit.

VERSES 25-27

Now that Isaac was convinced that Jacob was Esau, Isaac requested the meal his son had prepared him. This was another triumph for Rebekah. The "delicious food" she prepared (27:17) was enough like the meal of wild game Esau would have prepared that Isaac was incapable of discerning the difference. Bringing his father plenty of **wine** to drink as he ate the delicious food probably also helped Jacob pull off the deception.

Following this celebratory meal, Isaac asked his beloved son to **come closer** to him and **kiss** him. Once again, the tension in the story mounts. Everything so far had gone in Jacob's favor. But this would put Jacob in the closest possible proximity to his father. The **kiss** could have been part of the ritual of bestowing a blessing or simply an expression of affection. When Jacob kissed his father, Isaac **smelled his clothes**, that is, the clothes of Esau. Esau was Isaac's favorite son because he was an outdoorsman, and Isaac loved **the smell of a field** that Esau carried with him.

Rebekah's disguise for Jacob proved to be successful again (27:15). As long as Jacob could get the blessing to happen before Esau returned, their plan would be a success. Moreover, Jacob's kiss—that which was meant to be a symbol of love and affection for his father—sealed his treachery. Jacob's deceitful kiss would only be superseded by the treachery of Judas when he betrayed our Lord Jesus with a kiss (Matt. 26:48-49).

 **When is it healthy to remain skeptical about a person's claims?**

DID YOU KNOW?

In the ancient Near East, the firstborn was not automatically the recipient of the paternal blessing; it came solely at the discretion of the father, who generally granted the blessing at the end of his life. Once transmitted, however, the blessing could not be revoked or altered.

BLESSING GRANTED (GEN. 27:28-30)

²⁸ **May God give to you — from the dew of the sky and from the richness of the land — an abundance of grain and new wine. ²⁹ May peoples serve you and nations bow in worship to you. Be master over your relatives; may your mother’s sons bow in worship to you. Those who curse you will be cursed, and those who bless you will be blessed.**

³⁰ **As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob and Jacob had left the presence of his father Isaac, his brother Esau arrived from his hunting.**

VERSE 28

The first part of Isaac’s blessing on Jacob was agricultural fertility. Water, *the dew of the sky*, was arguably the most important resource for people living in the land of Canaan—they were mostly farmers and shepherds. Their crops and herds could not flourish without water. Closely tied to the first component of the blessing was the second: rich, fertile, productive lands. *An abundance of grain and new wine* would be evidence of these blessings. These expressions taken together express a comprehensive description of God’s material blessing on Jacob

VERSE 29-30

Verse 29 describes the rise of a powerful nation. *Peoples* and *nations* would bow down to Jacob in submission and honor. Closer to home, Jacob would be *master over* his *relatives*, and his *mother’s sons* would *bow* down to him. Esau was Jacob’s only brother, but the term *relatives* can extend to the descendants of a brother and *sons* extends to grandsons, great grandsons, and so forth. Also, echoing God’s promise to Abraham, those who *cursed* Jacob would be *cursed*, and those who *blessed* him would be *blessed* (12:3). Jacob would be the one to carry forward God’s covenant with Abraham. He was wrong to deceive his father. Nevertheless, God still used the situation to extend the covenant blessing according to His plans and purposes.

