

LESSON 9
Genesis 24-27

CHAPTER 24

Abraham commands that Isaac shall not marry a Canaanite—The Lord guides Abraham's servant in choosing Rebekah as a wife for Isaac—Rebekah blessed to be the mother of thousands of millions—She marries Isaac.

1 AND Abraham was old, and (being) well ^astricken (advanced in age) in age: and the LORD had ^bblessed Abraham in all ^cthings.

2 And Abraham said unto his eldest ^aservant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put (forth), I pray thee, thy hand under my ^bthigh (hand);—(They are going to shake hands in a covenant.)

3 And I will make thee ^aswear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt ^bnot take a ^cwife unto my son(,) of the daughters of the ^dCanaanites, among whom I dwell: **(Why doesn't Abraham want Isaac to take a wife from among the Canaanites? For one thing, the Canaanites probably didn't possess the right to the priesthood.** From Abraham 1, we learn that the right to the priesthood was partly a matter of lineage. It appears that Canaan, one of the sons of Ham, was cursed pertaining to the priesthood, and it was this same Canaan who settled the land of Canaan. (Genesis 9:18-27; 10:6, 15-19; Abraham 1:21-22, 26-27.) One of Canaan's sons was Heth (Genesis 10:15), and when Esau later married two of the daughters of Heth, those marriages "were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah." (Genesis 26:34-35.) Rebekah tells Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" (Genesis 27:46.) Abraham would have been particularly aware of priesthood rights; he says, "The records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in mine own hands." (Abraham 1:31.) At any rate, **it is unlikely that a woman of Canaan, unless converted, would have raised Isaac's children to believe in Abraham's God. They might even have persuaded Isaac to believe in their gods.** Abraham probably knew the fate of Lot and his children, some of whom had intermarried with the unbelieving inhabitants of Sodom and were consequently destroyed with them. (Genesis 19:14.) He may also have felt that a woman separated from her kindred and culture was more likely to come under his and Isaac's influence than one living among her relatives. Feasting upon the Word, Dennis Packard, Sandra Packard)

4 But thou shalt go unto my ^acountry, (This is a trip of about 500 miles. It will take the servant between 4 and 7 weeks to get there.) and to my ^bkindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac. (Why does Abraham select his steward for the important mission of finding Isaac a wife? Why didn't he go himself to arrange the marriage? The five-hundred-mile trip from the Beersheba-Hebron area to Haran was likely an arduous one, especially difficult for someone of Abraham's age—perhaps another reason why his age is emphasized at the beginning of the chapter. Feasting upon the Word, Dennis Packard, Sandra Packard)

5 And the servant said unto him, a ^aPeradventure (Perhaps) the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: (then I) must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? (.)

6 And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. (He doesn't want to put Isaac in danger by allowing him to travel outside their home land.)

7 ¶ The ^aLORD God of heaven, which took me from my ^bfather's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that ^aswore (swear) unto me, saying, Unto ^cthy seed (thee) will I give this ^cland; he shall send his ^dangel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.

8 And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this ^amy (thine) oath: only bring not my son thither again. (If the woman does not come with you, your promise is fulfilled.)

9 And the servant put his hand under the ~~athigh~~ (hand) of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter. (Covenant made.)

10 ¶ And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master *were* in his hand: and he arose, and went to ^aMesopotamia, (Aram-Naharaim; i.e. Aram of the two rivers) unto the city of ^bNahor. (Abraham's brother.)

11 And he made his camels to kneel down without the city (,) by a well of water (,) at the time of the evening, ~~even~~ the time that women go out to draw *water*.

12 (The servant asks for a sign to know the woman that is to marry Isaac:) And he said, O ^aLORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee (this day), ~~bsend me good speed this day, and~~ (that thou wouldst) shew kindness unto my master Abraham (, and send me good speed).

13 Behold, I stand *here* by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw ^awater:

14 And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: ~~let the same~~ (her) ~~be she that~~ (the one whom) thou hast ^aappointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.

15 ¶ And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to ^aBethuel, son of ^bMilcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother (Rebekah was Isaac's first cousin once removed.), with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

16 And the damsel (being a virgin,) was **very fair to look upon**, a virgin, (such as the servant of Abraham had not seen,) neither had any man ^bknown (the like unto) her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up. (The KJV suggests that Rebekah was very beautiful, but the JST says that **she was the most beautiful woman the servant had ever seen**. Old Testament Student Manual, p. 84.)

17 And the servant **ran to meet her**, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.

18 And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.

19 And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw ~~water~~ for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.

20 And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw ~~water~~, and drew for all his camels. (10 camels. One camel drinks between 30 and 50 gallons at one time. They can drink 30 gallons in about 10 minutes. She could have fetched between 300-500 gallons of water. This could have been a ton and a half of water.)

21 And the man (,) wondering at her (,) held his peace, ~~to-wit~~ (pondering in his heart) whether the LORD had made his journey ^aprosperous or not.

22 And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden ^aear(-)ring (Heb ring) of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten *shekels* weight of gold;

23 And said, Whose daughter *art* thou? tell me, I pray thee: (and) is there room *in* thy father's house for us to lodge in?

24 And she said unto him, I *am* the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, which she bare unto ^aNahor.

25 She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.

26 And the man ^abowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD. (The sign has been given.)

27 And he said, Blessed ~~be~~ (is) the ^aLORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left ~~destitute~~ my master (destitute) of his ^bmercy and his truth: (and when) I (was) ~~being~~ in the way, the LORD ^cled me to the house of my master's brethren.

28 And the damsel ran (to the house), and told ~~them~~ of her mother's house these things.

29 ¶ And Rebekah had a brother, ~~and his~~ (whose) name *was* Laban: and ^aLaban ran out ~~unto~~ the man, unto the well.

30 And it came to pass, when he saw the ear(-)ring(s) and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; ~~that he~~ (and I) came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well.

31 And he said, Come in, thou ^ablessed of the LORD; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels.

32 ¶ And the man came into the house: and he ~~ungirded~~ (unburdened) his camels, and gave straw and ^aprovender for the camels, and water to ^bwash his feet, and the men's feet that ~~were~~ (came) with him.

33 And there was set ~~meat~~ (food) before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he (Laban) said, Speak on.

34 And he said, I *am* Abraham's servant.

35 And the LORD hath ^ablessed my master greatly; and he is become ^bgreat: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses.

36 And Sarah my master's wife bare a ^ason to my master when she was ^bold: and unto him hath he ^cgiven all that he hath.

37 And my master made me ^aswear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell:

38 But thou shalt go unto my ^afather's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.

39 And I said unto my master, ~~a~~Peradventure (Perhaps) the woman will not follow me.

40 And he said unto me, The ^aLORD, before whom I ^bwalk, will send his angel with thee, and (he will) prosper thy way; and ~~thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house:~~

41 Then shalt thou be clear ~~from this~~ (of) my oath. When thou comest to my kindred, and if they give (thee) not ~~thee one~~ (a wife for my son), thou shalt be clear from my oath.

42 And I came this day unto the well, and said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, if now thou ~~do~~ (wilt) prosper my way which I go:

43 Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw *water*, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink;

44 And (if) she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels; ~~let~~ the same ~~be~~ (is) the woman whom the LORD hath ^aappointed out for my master's son.

45 And before I had done speaking in ~~mine~~ (my) ^aheart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew *water*: and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee.

46 And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her *shoulder*, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also.

47 And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter *art* thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I ~~put~~ (gave) the ^aear(-)ring(s) (Heb ring on her nose) ~~upon~~ (unto) her *faee*, (to put into her ears,) and the bracelets upon her hands.

48 And I ^abowed down my head, and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, ~~which~~ (who) had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's ^bdaughter unto his son.

49 And now if ~~ye will~~ (thou wilt) deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left. (Here's the important question. Can I take Rebekah with me to marry Isaac?)

50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot ^aspeak unto thee bad or good.

51 Behold, Rebekah *is* before thee, take *her*, and go, and let her be thy master's son's ^awife, as the LORD hath spoken. (Does Rebekah have anything to say about it? Verse 58-yes.)

52 And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard ~~their~~ (these) words, he worshipped the LORD, *bowing himself* to the earth.

53 And the servant brought forth ^ajewels (Heb things of silver and gold) of silver, and jewels of gold,

and raiment, and gave *them* to Rebekah. He gave also to her brother(,) and to her mother(,) precious things.

54 And they did eat and drink, he and the men that *were* with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master.

55 And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few (at the least ten) days, at the least ten; after that she shall go.

56 And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath ^aprospered my way; send me away(,) that I may go (un)to my master.

57 And they said, We will call the damsel, and e(i)nquire at her mouth.

58 And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.

59 And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her ^anurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men.

60 And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, (O) Thou art our sister, be thou the another (blessed) of thousands (--) of millions, and let thy seed possess the ^bgate of those ~~which~~ (who) ^chate them. (Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: "If you hope to have an eternal companion who has certain spiritual qualities, then you must strive to develop those spiritual qualities in yourself. Then someone who has those qualities will be attracted to you" (in "Understanding Heavenly Father's Plan"; lds.org/prophets -and -apostles/ unto -all -the -world/ understanding -heavenly -fathers -plan).)

61 ¶ And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

62 And Isaac came from the way of the ^awell La(-)hai-roi; for he dwelt in the south country.

63 And Isaac went out to ^ameditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels ~~were~~ coming.

64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, ^ashe (IE she dismounted) lighted off the camel.

65 For she ~~had~~ said unto the servant, What man *is* this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant *had* said, It *is* my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself.

66 And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done.

67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; (The wedding ceremony was most likely performed by Abraham.) and he loved her: and Isaac was ^acomforted after his mother's ^bdeath. (President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency: "Now, there are those among you fine young members of the Church who might never marry. Although they are worthy in every way, they may never find someone to whom they will be sealed in the temple of the Lord in this life. . . . I cannot tell you why one individual's prayers are answered one way while someone else's are answered differently. But this I can tell you: the righteous desires of your hearts will be fulfilled. . . . The brief span of this life is nothing in comparison with eternity. And if only we can hope and exercise faith and joyfully endure to the end . . . there, in that great heavenly future, we will have the fulfillment of the righteous desires of our hearts and so very much more that we can scarcely comprehend now" ("The Reflection in the Water" [Church Educational System devotional, Nov. 1, 2009]; LDS.org).)

What character qualities did Rebekah have that made her a good wife?

THE sacred narrative now turns to the history of Isaac, the heir to the promises, still marking in its course the same dealings on the part of God which had characterized the life of Abraham. Viewed in connection with the Divine promises, the marriage of Isaac would necessarily appear a subject of the deepest importance to Abraham. Two things were quite firmly settled in the mind of the patriarch: Isaac must on no account take a wife from among the Canaanites around, - he must not enter into alliance with those who were to be dispossessed of the land; and Jehovah, who had so often proved a faithful God,

and in obedience to whose will he now refused what might have seemed highly advantageous connections, would Himself provide a suitable partner for Isaac. These two convictions determined Abraham's conduct, as they also guided that of "his eldest servant," whom Abraham commissioned to execute his wishes, and who, in general, seems to have been deeply imbued with the spirit of his master.

Some time before (Genesis 22:20) Abraham had been informed that his brother Nahor, whom he left behind in Haran, had been blessed with numerous descendants. To him the patriarch now dispatched "his servant, the elder of his house, who ruled over all that was his" - generally supposed to have been Eliezer of Damascus (Genesis 15:2), though at that time he must, like his master, have been far advanced in years. But before departing, he made him swear by Jehovah - since this matter concerned the very essence of the covenant - to avoid every alliance with the Canaanites, and to apply to his "kindred." And when the servant put before him the possibility, that the execution of this wish might render it necessary for Isaac to return to the land whence Abraham had come, the patriarch emphatically negated the suggestion, as equally contrary to the Divine will, while his faith anticipated no difficulty, but calmly trusted the result in God's hands. In all this Abraham had no fresh revelation from heaven; nor needed he any. He only applied to present circumstances what he had formerly received as the will of God, just as in all circumstances of life we need no fresh communication from above - only to understand and to apply the will of God as revealed to us in His holy word.

The result proved how true had been Abraham's expectations. Arrived at Haran, Abraham's servant made it a matter of prayer that God would "prosper his way," for even when in the way of God's appointment, we must seek and ask His special blessing. There, as he stood outside the city by the well to which, according to the custom of the East, the maidens would resort at even to draw water for their households, it naturally occurred to him to connect in his prayer a mark of that religious courtesy, hospitality, and kindness to which he had been accustomed in his master's house, with the kindred of Abraham, and hence with the object of his journey. His prayer was scarcely finished when the answer came. "Before he had done speaking" (Comp. Daniel 9:20, 21) Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came to the well by which the stranger stood with his camels. Her appearance was exceedingly prepossessing ("the damsel was very fair to look upon"), and her bearing modest and becoming. According to the sign on which he had fixed in his own mind, he asked her for water to drink; and according to the same sign, she exceeded his request by drawing for his camels also. But even so Abraham's servant did not yield to his first impressions; only at the literality of the answer to his prayer, "the man wondering at her, held his peace, to know whether Jehovah had made his way prosperous or not." Before asking further who her kindred were, and seeking their hospitality, he rewarded her kindness by splendid presents. But when the answers of Rebekah showed him that Jehovah had actually led him straight "to the house of his master's brethren," the man, fairly overcome by his feelings, "bowed down his head, and worshipped Jehovah."

The description of what now ensued is not only exceedingly graphic, but true to the life. It is said that Rebekah "ran and told her mother's house," that is, evidently to the female portion of the household. Next, Laban, Rebekah's brother, seeing the jewels and hearing her tale, hastens to invite the stranger with true Eastern profusion of welcome. But the terms in which Laban, partially at least an idolater, addressed Abraham's servant: "Thou blessed of Jehovah," remind us how easily the language of Abraham - in other words, religious language, is picked up by those who have really no claim to use it. The servant of Abraham, on the other hand, is quite like his master in his dignified bearing and earnestness of purpose. Before accepting hospitality at the hands of Bethuel and Laban, he will have an answer to the commission on which he has been sent, nor can persuasions or entreaty prevail on him to prolong his stay, even over the following day. With the full consent of Rebekah, the caravan returns to

Canaan. Once more it is evening when the end of the journey is reached. It so happens that Isaac has "gone out to meditate in the field" - an expression which implies religious communion with God, probably in connection with this very marriage - when he meets the returning caravan. Rebekah receives her future husband with the becoming modesty of an Eastern bride, and the heart-happiness of the son of promise is secured to him in union with her whom the Lord Himself had "provided" as his wife. Isaac was at the time of his marriage forty years old. Edersheim, OT, Vol 1, Ch 15

(The Cave of Machpelah is the world's most ancient Jewish site and the second holiest place for the Jewish people, after Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The cave and the adjoining field were purchased—at full market price—by Abraham some 3700 years ago. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah are all later buried in the same Cave of Machpelah. These are considered the patriarchs and matriarchs of the Jewish people. The only one who is missing is Rachel, who was buried near Bethlehem where she died in childbirth. The double cave, a mystery of thousands of years, was uncovered several years ago beneath the massive building, revealing artifacts from the Early Israelite Period (some 30 centuries ago). The structure was built during the Second Temple Period (about two thousand years ago) by Herod, King of Judea, providing a place for gatherings and Jewish prayers at the graves of the Patriarchs. This uniquely impressive building is the only one that stands intact and still fulfills its original function after thousands of years. Foreign conquerors and invaders used the site for their own purposes, depending on their religious orientation: the Byzantines and Crusaders transformed it into a church and the Muslims rendered it a mosque. About 700 years ago, the Muslim Mamelukes conquered Hebron, declared the structure a mosque and forbade entry to Jews, who were not allowed past the seventh step on a staircase outside the building. Upon the liberation of Hebron in 1967, the Chief Rabbi of the Israel Defense Forces, the late Major-General Rabbi Shlomo Goren, was the first Jew to enter the Cave of Machpelah. Since then, Jews have been struggling to regain their prayer rights at the site, still run by the Muslim Waqf (Religious Trust) that took control during the Arab conquest. Many restrictions are imposed on Jewish prayers and customs at the Tomb of the Patriarchs despite the site's significance, primacy and sanctity in Jewish heritage and history. Over 300,000 people visit Ma'arat HaMachpelah annually. The structure is divided into three rooms: Ohel Avraham, Ohel Yitzhak, and Ohel Ya'akov. Presently Jews have no access to Ohel Yitzhak, the largest room, with the exception of 10 days a year. The Jewish Virtual Library. When the excavated the cave in 1993, it was empty. That's because these people have been resurrected. Photo taken in 1906.)

THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES CALLED GENESIS CHAPTER 25

Abraham marries, has seed, dies, and is buried in the cave of Machpelah—His generation through Ishmael set forth—Rebekah conceives, and Jacob and Esau struggle in her womb—The Lord reveals their destiny to Rebekah—Esau sells his birthright for a mess of pottage.

- 1 THEN again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah.
- 2 And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and ^aMedan, and ^bMidian, (Moses was ordained to the priesthood by his father-in-law Jethro, who was a priest of Midian. Maybe Midian was ordained to the priesthood by his father Abraham which then was bestowed upon Jethro.) and Ishbak, and Shuah.
- 3 And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim.
- 4 And the sons of ^aMidian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of ^bKeturah.

5 ¶ And ^aAbraham ^bgave all that he had unto Isaac. (The birthright son)

6 But unto the sons of the ^aconcubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and ^bsent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the ^ceast country.

7 And these *are* the ^adays (number) of the years of ^bAbraham's life which he lived, ^an hundred threescore and fifteen years. (175 years old)

8 Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good ^aold age, an old man, and full *of years*; and was ^bgathered to his people. (This phrase means that Abraham went into the spirit world and met his people there.)

9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael ^aburied him in the cave of ^bMachpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which *is* before Mamre;

10 The field which Abraham ^apurchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham ^bburied, and Sarah his wife.

11 ¶ And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the ^awell Lahai-roi.

12 ¶ Now these *are* the ^agenerations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom ^bHagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, ^cbare unto Abraham:

13 And these *are* the names of the sons of ^aIshmael, by their names, according to their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam,

14 And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa,

15 Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah:

16 These *are* the sons of Ishmael, and these *are* their names, by their towns, and by their castles; ^atwelve princes according to their nations.

17 And these *are* the (number of the) years of the life of Ishmael, ^an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people.

18 And they dwelt from ^aHavilah unto ^bShur, that *is* before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: *and* he died in the presence of all his brethren.

19 ¶ And these *are* the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: ^aAbraham begat Isaac:

20 And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of ^aBethuel the Syrian of ^bPadan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

21 And Isaac ⁱ(e)ntreated the LORD for his ^awife, (that she might bare children,) because she *was* ^bbarren: and the LORD was ^ci(e)ntreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. (Just in this these two verses, 20 years pass. Isaac was 40 when he was married and 60 when the boys were born.)

22 And the children struggled together within her (womb); and she said, If ~~it be so~~ (I am with child), why ~~am I~~ (is it) thus (with me)? And she went to ^aenquire of the LORD.

23 And the LORD said unto her, ^aTwo nations *are* in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and *the one* people shall be stronger than *the other* people; and **the ^belder shall serve the younger.** (The younger, Jacob, shall have the birthright – Esau will serve Jacob.)

24 ¶ And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, *there were* twins in her womb.

25 And the first came out red, all over like ^an hairy garment; and they called his name ^bEsau. (Hairy)

26 And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's ^aheel; and his ^bname was called ^cJacob: (the meaning of which is "He shall follow at the heel," a Hebrew idiom meaning "he shall assail, overreach, or supplant") and Isaac *was* threescore (60) years old when she bare them. (It appears that the birthright births of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are miraculous in nature, much like the birth of Jesus. Perhaps these births are types of Christ's birth.)

27 And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning ^ahunter, a man of the field; and Jacob *was* a ^bplain (Heb whole, complete, perfect, simple, plain) man, dwelling in ^ctents.

28 And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of *his* ^avenison: but ^bRebekah loved Jacob. (Is it okay to have favorites?)

29 ¶ And Jacob sod pottage (beef or vegetable stew): and Esau came from the field, and he *was* faint:
30 And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red *pottage*; for I *am* faint: therefore was his name called ^aEdom. (Red. Edom means red. Esau's descendants are found among the Arab nations of today.)

31 And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy ^abirthright. (Esau did not have respect for the birthright blessings.)

32 And Esau said, Behold, I *am* at the point to die (of dying): and what profit shall this birthright do to (profit) me? (This rationalization seems to reflect more scorn than hunger. Jacob would almost certainly have succored Esau freely if his life were in jeopardy. The point of this account seems to be primarily to show how little value Esau placed on the birthright. His immediate bodily needs were more important to him than the rights of the covenant. Additional evidence of this attitude is Esau's marriages to Canaanite women, which broke the covenant line (see Genesis 26:34–35). The birthright itself should have been a treasured thing. The highly desirable birthright blessing is the right to the presidency, or keys, of the priesthood. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: "It appears that anciently under the Patriarchal Order certain special blessings, rights, powers, and privileges—collectively called the *birthright*—passed from the father to his *firstborn son*. (Gen. 43:33.) In later ages special blessings and prerogatives have been poured out upon *all* the worthy descendants of some who gained special blessings and birthrights anciently. (3 Ne. 20:25–27.) Justification for this system, in large part, lies in the pre-existent preparation and training of those born in the lines destined to inherit preferential endowments." (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 87.) In the patriarchal order this birthright was passed from father to son, who was often, but not always, the eldest son. Righteousness was a more important factor than being the firstborn. Old Testament Student Manual, p. 85. Dallin H. Oaks: "The firstborn, Esau, 'despised his birthright' (Genesis 25:34). Jacob, the second twin, desired it. Jacob valued the spiritual, while Esau sought the things of this world. . . . Many Esaus have given up something of eternal value in order to satisfy a momentary hunger for the things of the world" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 76; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 61; see also Genesis 25:30))

33 And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.
34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised *his* birthright.

CHAPTER 26

The Lord promises Isaac posterity as the stars of heaven in number—In his seed all nations shall be blessed—The Lord prospers Isaac, temporally and spiritually, for Abraham's sake—Isaac offers sacrifices—Esau marries Hittite wives to the sorrow of his parents.

1 AND there was a ^afamine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto ^bAbimelech king of the ^cPhilistines unto Gerar. (Abimelech was king during Abraham, too. It is probable that Abimelech is a title. It means, son of the king.)

2 And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of:

3 ^aSojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will ^bbless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these ^ccountries, and I will perform the ^doath which I sware unto Abraham thy father;

4 And I will make thy ^aseed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the ^bnations of the earth be blessed;

5 Because that Abraham ^aobeyed my voice, and kept my ^bcharge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

6 ¶ And Isaac dwelt in ^aGerar:

7 And the men of the place asked *him* of (concerning) his wife; and he said, She *is* my ^asister: (This was a truthful comment. She was his cousin.) for he feared to say, *She is* my wife; lest, ~~said he,~~ the men of the place should kill me for (to get) Rebekah; because she *was* ^bfair to look upon.

8 And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac *was* sporting with Rebekah his wife.

9 And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she *is* thy wife: and how saidst thou, She *is* my sister? And Isaac said unto him, (I said it) Because I ~~said~~ (feared), Lest I die for her.

10 And ^aAbimelech said, What *is* this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might lightly have ^blien (or lain) with thy wife, and thou shouldest have ^cbrought guiltiness upon us.

11 And Abimelech charged all *his* people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.

12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an ^ahundredfold: (Heb And the man continually increased in wealth until he was very wealthy) and the LORD ^bblessed him.

13 ^aAnd the man waxed ^bgreat, and went forward, and grew until he became very great:

14 For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines ^aenvied him.

15 For all the ^awells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines ^bhad stopped them, and filled them with earth.

16 And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much ^amightier than we.

17 ¶ And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their ^anames after the names by which his father had called them.

19 And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.

20 And the herdmen of Gerar did ^astrive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water *is* ours: and he called the name of the well ^bEsek; (strife) because they strove with him.

21 And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it ^aSitnah. (opposition)

22 And he ^aremoved from thence, and digged another well; and for that they ^bstrove not: and he called the name of it ^cRehoboth; (broad open places) and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be ^dfruitful in the land.

23 And he went up from thence to ^aBeer-sheba.

24 And the ^aLORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I *am* the God of Abraham thy father: ^bfear not, for ^cI *am* with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy ^dseed for my servant Abraham's sake.

25 And he builded an ^aaltar there, and called upon the ^bname of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

26 ¶ Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and ^aPhichol the chief captain of his army.

27 And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye ^ahate me, and have sent me away from you?

28 And they said, We saw certainly that the ^aLORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, *even* betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee;

29 That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in ^apeace: thou *art* now the ^bblessed of the LORD.

30 And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink.

31 And they ^arose (arose early) up betimes in the morning, and ^bsware one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.

32 And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which

they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water.

33 And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city is ^aBeer-sheba (well of an oath) unto this day.

34 ¶ And Esau was forty years old when he took to ^awife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: (Esau is again showing his contempt for his birthright by marrying someone who would not raise children in righteousness.)

35 Which were a ^agrief (bitterness of spirit meaning great sorrow or grief) of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah. (Faithful church members often have children who stray from the gospel and cause grief to their parents.)

CHAPTER 27

Rebekah guides Jacob in seeking blessings—Jacob is blessed to have dominion and rule over peoples and nations—Esau hates Jacob and plans to slay him—Rebekah fears lest Jacob marry one of the daughters of Heth.

1 AND it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were ^adim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, *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 ^aquiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and ^btake (Heb hunt) me *some venison*;

4 And make me ^asavoury meat, such as I love, and bring *it* to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die. (Isaac was going to go against the prophecy of the Lord by giving Esau the primary blessing. But Rebekah showed a lack of faith by taking things into her own hands. This shows the weakness of these great people who later we learn have become exalted. "This is one of the most remarkable complications of life, showing in the clearest manner that a higher hand guides the threads of history, so that neither sin nor error can ultimately entangle them. Each one weaves the threads which are committed to him according to his own views and desires; but at last, when the texture is complete, we behold in it the pattern which the Master had long devised, and towards which each laborer had only contributed one or another feature." At the time of which we write Isaac was one hundred and thirty-seven years old - an age at which his half-brother Ishmael had died, fourteen years before; and though Isaac was destined to live yet forty- three years longer (Genesis 35:28), the decay of his sight, and other infirmities, brought the thought of death very near to him. Under these circumstances he resolved formally to bestow the privileges naturally belonging to the first-born upon Esau. With this, however, he coupled, as a sort of preliminary condition, that Esau should bring and prepare for him some venison. Possibly he regarded the finding of the game as a sort of providential sign, and the preparation of it as a token of affection. There would be nothing strange in this, for those who believe in God, and yet for some reason refuse implicitly to follow His directions, are always on the outlook for some "sign" to justify them in setting aside the clear intimations of His will. But Rebekah had overheard the conversation between her husband and her son. Probably she had long been apprehensive of some such event, and on the outlook for it. And now the danger seemed most pressing. Another hour, and the blessing might for ever be lost to Jacob. Humanly speaking, safety lay in quick resolution and decided action. It mattered not what were the means employed, if only the end were attained. Had not God distinctly pointed out Jacob as heir to the promises? Had not Esau proved himself utterly unfit for it, and that even before he married those Canaanitish women? She could only be fulfilling the will of God when she kept her husband from so great a wrong, and secured to her son what God had intended him to possess. Thus Rebekah probably argued in her own mind. To be sure, if she had had the faith of Abraham, who was ready on Mount Moriah to offer up his own son, believing that, if it were to be so, God was able to raise him from the dead, she would not have acted, not even felt, nor feared, as she did.

But then her motives were very mixed, even though she kept the promise steadily in view, and her faith was weak and imperfect, even though she imagined herself to be carrying out the will of God. Such hours come to most of us, when it almost seems as if necessity obliged and holy wisdom prompted us to accomplish, in our own strength, that which, nevertheless, we should leave in God's hand. If once we enter on such a course, it will probably not be long before we cast to the winds any scruples about the means to be employed, so that we secure the object desired, and which possibly may seem to us in accordance with the will of God. Here also faith is the only true remedy: faith, which leaves God to carry out His own purposes, content to trust Him absolutely, and to follow Him whithersoever He leadeth. And God's way is never through the thicket of human cunning and devices. "He that believeth shall not make haste;" nor need he, for God will do it all for him. Edersheim, Vol 1, Ch 15)

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 ^aRebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying,

7 Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD 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 savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth:

10 And thou shalt bring *it* to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.

11 And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother *is* a ^ahairy 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 savoury meat, such as his father loved.

15 And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which *were* with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son:

16 And she put the ^askins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck:

17 And she gave the savoury meat 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 firstborn; 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 the LORD thy God brought *it* to me.

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 ^anear, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and ^bblessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son *is* as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed:

28 Therefore God give thee of the ^adew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine:

29 Let people ^aserve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons ^bbow down to thee: cursed *be* every one that curseth thee, and ^cblessed *be* he that ^dblesseth thee. (In pursuance of her purpose, Rebekah proposed to Jacob to take advantage of his father's dim sight, and to personate Esau. He was to put on his brother's dress, which bore the smell of the aromatic herbs and bushes among which he was wont to hunt, and to cover his smooth skin with a kind of fur; while Rebekah would prepare a dish which his father would not be able to distinguish from the venison which Esau was to make ready for him. It is remarkable, that although Jacob at first objected, his scruples were caused rather by fear of detection than from a sense of the wrong proposed. But Rebekah quieted his misgivings, - possibly trusting, that since she was doing, as she thought, the will of God, she could not but succeed. In point of fact, Jacob found his part more difficult than he could have expected. Deceit, equivocation, and lying, repeated again and again, were required to allay the growing suspicions of the old man. At last Jacob succeeded - with what shame and remorse we can readily imagine - in diverting his father's doubts; and Isaac bestowed upon him "the blessing," and with it the birthright. But it deserves special notice, that while this blessing assigned to him both the land of Canaan and lordship over his brethren, there is in it but the faintest allusion to the great promise to Abraham. The only words which can be supposed to refer to it are these: "Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee." (Genesis 27:29) But this is manifestly very different from the blessing of Abraham, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 22:18) It is clear that Isaac imagined he had blessed Esau, and that he did not dare confer upon him the spiritual privileges attached to the birthright. So, after all, Jacob and Rebekah did not attain that which they had sought! Edersheim, Vol 1, Ch 15)

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 had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and 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 firstborn Esau.

33 And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where *is* he that hath ^ataken venison (Heb hunted game), and brought *it* me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and **have ^bblessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed.** (In spite of how it happened, Jacob is to receive the birthright blessing.)

34 And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, *even* me also, O my father.

35 And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.

36 And he said, Is not he rightly named ^aJacob? (A supplanter) for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my ^bbirthright; 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 ^aservants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?

38 And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, *even* me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and ^awept. (Jacob had scarcely left the presence of his father, when Esau entered with the venison he had prepared. If Isaac, Rebekah, and Jacob had been each wrong in their share in the transaction, Esau deserves at least equal blame. Not to speak of his previous knowledge of the will of God on this point, he disguised from his brother Jacob that he was about to obtain from his father's favor that which he had actually sold to Jacob! Surely, there was here quite as

great dishonesty, cunning, and untruthfulness as on the part of Jacob. When Isaac now discovered the deceit which had been practiced upon him, he "trembled very exceedingly," but he refused to recall the blessing he had pronounced: "I have blessed him - yea, and he shall be blessed." Now, for the first time, the mist which in this matter had so long hung about Isaac's spiritual vision, seems dispelled. He sees the finger of God, who had averted the danger which his own weakness had caused. Thus, while all parties in the transaction had been in error and sin, God brought about His own purpose, and Isaac recognized this fact. Now, for the first time also, Esau obtained a glimpse of what he had really lost. We read, that "afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears." (Hebrews 12:17) At his earnest entreaty for some kind of blessing, Isaac pronounced what in reality was a prophecy of the future of Edom. (Edersheim, Vol 1, Ch 15)

39 And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above;

40 And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy ^abrother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt ^bbreak his ^cyoke from off thy neck. (The story of how Jacob obtained the birthright blessing from Isaac with the help of his mother is a troubling one in many respects. Typically, commentators who do not have access to latter-day scriptures come to one of two conclusions: either they emphasize Esau's unworthiness for the birthright and therefore justify the deception, or else they criticize Jacob's shrewd and crafty nature. A more complete knowledge of gospel principles, however, may pose some additional problems. Can a person deceive a patriarch and get a blessing that belongs to someone else? Was Jacob a deceitful and crafty man? Was Isaac blindly favorable to certain children? Can one be dishonest and still get a valid patriarchal blessing? The following points should be carefully considered: 1. As the record in Genesis now reads, there is little option but to conclude that Rebekah and Jacob deliberately deceived Isaac and that Jacob explicitly lied to his father. Rebekah and Jacob believed the deception was necessary because Isaac obviously favored Esau. Joseph Smith, however, taught that certain errors had crept into the Bible through "ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests." TPJS, p. 327. For example, a comparison of the early chapters of Genesis with the fuller accounts revealed to the Prophet (now found in the books of Moses and Abraham) shows how much has been lost. It is possible that the story of Jacob's obtaining the birthright has also lost much or been changed by unbelievers. These changes could then explain the contradictions. 2. Rebekah knew by personal revelation that Jacob was to be the son of the covenant (25:22-23). Jacob reluctantly gave in to his mother's wishes after she told him that she would take the responsibility for what they were about to do. 3. Although the early patriarchs and their wives were great and righteous men and women who eventually were exalted and perfected (D&C 132:37), this fact does not mean that they were perfect in every aspect while in mortality. If the story is correct as found in Genesis, Isaac may have been temporarily shortsighted in favoring Esau. Or Rebekah may have had insufficient faith in the Lord to let him work his will and therefore undertook a plan of her own to ensure that the promised blessings would come to pass. These shortcomings do not lessen their later greatness and their eventual perfection. 4. Whatever the explanation for the circumstances surrounding the reception of the blessing, one thing is perfectly clear. Priesthood holders are given the keys to bind and loose on earth and have that action validated in heaven. **Once Isaac learned of the deception, he could have revoked the blessing and given it to Esau. Instead, he told Esau, "Yea, and he shall be blessed"** (27:33). Later, when Jacob was preparing to leave for Padan-aram to escape Esau's wrath, Isaac clearly gave him the blessing of Abraham (28:3-4), an additional proof that Jacob received the blessing meant for him and that Isaac confirmed it upon him. Thus, if the Genesis record is correct as it now is, Jacob, like others, received a call and a promise of eventual blessings because of his potential and in spite of his weaknesses. Like anyone, he had then to live worthily in order to obtain the promised blessings. Old Testament Student Manual, p. 85-86. God chose Jacob over Esau while the two

were yet in Rebecca's womb and before either, as far as the works of this life are concerned, had earned any preferential status. Why? It is a pure matter of pre-existence. Jacob was coming into the world with greater spiritual capacity than Esau; he was foreordained to a special work; he was elected to serve in a chosen capacity. Then through the lineage of Jacob, God sent those valiant spirits, those noble and great ones, who in his infinite wisdom and foreknowledge he knew would be inclined to serve him. Through Esau came those spirits of lesser valiance and devotion. Hence, in the very nature of things, many of Jacob's seed were righteous in this life, and many of Esau's were wicked, causing Malachi to say in the Lord's name, some fifteen hundred years later, that God loved the house of Jacob and hated the house of Esau. (Mal. 1:2-3.) Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the New Testament, Vol 2, How the Law of Election Works.*)

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 these 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. (For, that Isaac was now acting in faith, and that he discerned how, without knowing it, he had blessed, not according to his own inclination, but according to the will and purpose of God, appears from the subsequent history. It seems that Esau, full of hatred and envy, resolved to rid himself of his rival by murdering his brother, only deferring the execution of his purpose till after the death of his father, which he also believed to be near at hand. Somehow Rebekah, ever watchful, obtained tidings of this; and knowing her elder son's quick temper, which, however violent, did not long harbor anger, she resolved to send Jacob away to her brother Laban, for "a few days," as she fondly imagined, after which she would "send and fetch" him "from thence." But kindness towards her husband prompted her to keep from him Esau's murderous plan, and to plead as a reason for Jacob's temporary departure that which, no doubt, was also a strong motive in her own mind, that Jacob should marry one of her kindred. For, as she said, "If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life be to me?" Petulant as was her language, her reasoning was just, and Isaac knew it from painful experience of Esau's wives. And now Isaac expressly sent Jacob to Laban, to seek him a wife; and in so doing, this time consciously and wittingly, renewed the blessing which formerly had been fraudulently obtained from him. Now also the patriarch speaks clearly and unmistakably, not only reiterating the very terms of the covenant-blessing in all their fullness, but especially adding these words: "God Almighty . . . give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee." Thus Isaac's dimness of spiritual sight had at last wholly passed away. But the darkness around Esau seems to only have grown deeper and deeper. Upon learning what charge Isaac had given his son, and apparently for the first time awakening to the fact that "the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac* his father," he took "Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael" as a third wife - as if he had mended matters by forming an alliance with him whom Abraham had, by God's command, "cast out!" Thus the spiritual incapacity and unfitness of Esau appeared at every step, even where he tried to act kindly and dutifully. Edersheim, Vol 1, Ch 15)

43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, ^aflee thou to Laban my ^bbrother to ^cHaran;

44 And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away;

45 Until thy brother's ^aanger 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 deprived also of you both in one day?

46 And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the ^adaughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these *which are* of the daughters of the land, (**Marrying outside of the covenant.**) what good shall my life do me? ("Esau was also blessed—with the bounties of the earth, and with the potential to cast off the yoke of oppression; but like most of us he valued what he had lost after it was gone and rued the day he had traded the birthright off to Jacob. He bitterly resolved to get revenge by fratricide when he saw the blessing of transmittal of the birthright actually confirmed upon

the head of him to whom he had bartered the right to it. The alert and resourceful Rebekah averted a double tragedy (loss of both sons—one by murder and one by execution, as the law of Genesis 9:6 would require) by proposing to Isaac that they send Jacob away to find a proper wife in her home land. Thus she would remove him from harm proposed by Esau until feelings could cool. The proposition that he be sent for a proper wife apparently was approved immediately by Isaac, for doubtless he saw that it was true, as Rebekah said, that their life's mission would be frustrated if Jacob married as Esau had." (Rasmussen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1:47.)

(The appearance of the children did not belie their character when they grew up. The wild disposition of Esau, which found occupation in the roaming life of a hunter, reminds us of Ishmael; while Jacob, gentle and domestic, sought his pleasures at home. **As is so often the case, Isaac and Rebekah made favorites of the sons who had the opposite of their own disposition.** The quiet, retiring Isaac preferred his bold, daring, strong, roaming elder son; while Rebekah, who was naturally energetic, felt chiefly drawn to her gentle son Jacob. Yet at bottom Esau also was weak and easily depressed, as appeared in his tears and impotent reproaches when he found himself really deprived of the blessing; while Jacob, too, like his mother, impetuous, was ever ready to take matters into his own hands. We repeat it, that all parties must at the time have been aware that, even before the birth of the children, the word of God had designated Jacob as heir of the promises. **But Isaac's preference for Esau made him reluctant to fall in with the Divine arrangement;** while the impetuosity of Rebekah and of Jacob prompted them to bring about in their own way the fulfillment of God's promise, instead of believingly waiting to see when and how the Lord would do it. Thus it came that Jacob, watching his opportunities, soon found occasion to take advantage of his brother. One day Esau returned from the chase "faint" with hunger. **The sight of a mess of lentils, which to this day is a favorite dish in Syria and Egypt, induced him, unaccustomed and unable as he was to control the desires of the moment, to barter away his birthright for this "red" pottage.** The circumstances become the more readily intelligible when we remember, besides the unbridled disposition of Esau, that, as Lightfoot has pointed out, it was a time of commencing famine in the land. For, immediately afterwards (Genesis 26:1), we read that "there was a famine in the land," greater even than that at the time of Abraham, and which compelled Isaac for a season to leave Canaan. From this event, so characteristic and decisive in his history, Esau, after the custom of the East, obtained the name of Edom, or "red," from the color of "the mess of pottage" for which he had sold his birthright.

In regard to the conduct of the two brothers in this matter, we must note, that Scripture in no way excuses nor apologizes for that of Jacob. According to its wont, it simply states the facts, and makes neither comment nor remark upon them. That it leaves to "the logic of facts;" and the terrible trials which were so soon to drive Jacob from his home, and which kept him so long a bondsman in a strange land, are themselves a sufficient Divine commentary upon the transaction. Moreover, it is very remarkable that Jacob never in his after-life appealed to his purchase of the birthright. But so far as Esau is concerned only one opinion can be entertained of his conduct. We are too apt to imagine that because Jacob wronged or took advantage of Esau, therefore Esau was right. The opposite of this is the case. When we ask ourselves what Jacob intended to purchase, or Esau to sell in the "birthright," we answer that in later times it conveyed a double share of the paternal possessions. (Deuteronomy 21:17) In patriarchal days it included "lordship" over the rest of the family, and especially succession to that spiritual blessing which through Abraham was to flow out into the world (Genesis 27:27, 29), together with possession of the land of Canaan and covenant-communion with Jehovah. (Genesis 28:4) **What of these things was spiritual, we may readily believe, Esau discredited and despised, and what was temporal, but yet future, as his after conduct shows, he imagined he might still obtain either by his father's favor or by violence. But that for the momentary gratification of the lowest sensual**

appetites he should have been ready to barter away such unspeakably precious and holy privileges, proved him, in the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 12:16), to have been "a profane person," and therefore quite unfitted to become the heir of the promises. For profanity consists in this: for the sensual gratification or amusement of the moment to give up that which is spiritual and unseen; to be careless of that which is holy, so as to snatch the present enjoyment, - in short, practically not to deem anything holy at all, if it stands in the way of present pleasure. Scripture puts it down as the bitter self-condemnation which Esau, by his conduct, pronounced upon himself: "and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way; thus Esau despised his birthright."

Before farther following the history of Isaac's trials and joys, it seems desirable to make here a few general remarks, for the purpose of explaining the conduct alike of Isaac and of Jacob, and its bearing on the history of the covenant. It has been common to describe Abraham as the man of faith, Isaac as the model of patient bearing, and Jacob as the man of active working; and in the two latter cases to connect the spiritual fruits, which were the outcome of their faith, with their natural characters also. All this is quite correct; but, in our opinion, it is necessary to take a broader view of the whole matter. **Let it be borne in mind, that God had both made and established His covenant with Abraham. The history of Isaac and Jacob, on the other hand, rather represents the hindrances to the covenant. These are just the same as we daily meet in our own walk of faith. They arise from opposite causes, according as in our weakness we either lag behind, or in our haste go before God. Isaac lagged behind, Jacob tried to go before God; and their history exhibits the dangers and difficulties arising from each of these causes, just as, on the other hand, God's dealings with them show how mercifully, how wisely, and yet how holily He knew to remove these hindrances out of the way, and to uproot these sins from their hearts and lives. Accordingly, we shall consider the history of Isaac and Jacob as that of the hindrances of the covenant and of their removal.**

Viewed in this light we understand all the better, not only Jacob's attempt to purchase the "birthright" - as if Esau had had the power of selling it! - but what followed that transaction? It seems that a grievous famine induced Isaac to leave his settlement, and it naturally occurred to him in so doing to follow in the wake of his father Abraham, and to go into Egypt. But when he had reached Gerar, the residence of Abimelech, king of the Philistines, where Abraham had previously sojourned, "Jehovah appeared unto him," and specially directed him to remain there, at the same time renewing to him the promises He had made to Abraham. Both in this direction and in the renewal of blessing we recognize the kindness of the Lord, Who would not expose Isaac to the greater trials of Egypt, and would strengthen and encourage his faith. Apparently, he had on reaching Gerar not said that Rebekah was his wife; and when he was, at last, "asked" about it, the want of courage which had prompted the equivocation, ripened into actual falsehood. Imitating in this the example of Abraham, he passed off his wife as his sister. But here also the kindness of the Lord interposed to spare him a trial greater than he might have been able to bear. His deceit was detected before his wife had been taken by any one; and an order given by Abimelech - whether the same who ruled at the time of Abraham, or his successor - secured her future safety. The famine seems now to have become so intense, that Isaac began to till land for himself. And God blessed him with an unusually large return - still further to encourage his faith amidst its trials. Commonly, even in very fruitful parts of Palestine, the yield is from twenty-five to fifty times that which had been sown; and in one small district, even eighty times that of wheat, and one hundred times that of barley. But Isaac at once "received an hundredfold" - to show him that even in a year of famine God could make the most ample provision for His servant. The increasing wealth of Isaac excited the envy of the Philistines. Disputes arose, and they stopped up the wells which Abraham had digged. At last, even Abimelech, friendly as he was, advised him to leave the place. Isaac removed to the valley of Gerar. But there also

similar contentions arose; and Isaac once more returned to Abraham's old settlement at Beersheba. Here Jehovah again appeared unto him, to confirm, on his re-entering the land, the promises previously made. Beersheba had also its name given it a second time. For Abimelech, accompanied by his chief captain and his privy councilor, came to Isaac to renew the covenant which had formerly been there made between the Philistines and Abraham. Isaac was now at peace with all around. Better still, "he builded an altar" in Beersheba, "and called upon the name of Jehovah." But in the high day of his prosperity fresh trials awaited him. His eldest son Esau, now forty years old, took two Canaanitish wives, "which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah." Assuredly, if Isaac had not "lagged far behind," he would in this have recognized the final and full unfitness of Esau to have "the birthright." But the same tendency which had hitherto kept him at best undecided, led, ere it was finally broken, to a further and a far deeper sorrow than any he had yet experienced. Edersheim, Vol 1. Ch 15.)

