

# Jacob Deceives Esau and Isaac

Genesis 25:27-34; 27:1-40

Abraham lived another 35 years after Isaac's wedding, and during that time, he took a new wife who bore him six more children. After he died, he was buried with his wife Sarah. It's interesting to note that he was buried by Isaac and Ishmael. Ishmael and his mother, Hagar, had been kicked out of Abraham's household. Certainly Ishmael had little love for Isaac. But apparently the two were able to put aside their differences to honor their departed father.

In the meantime, Isaac and Rebekah had twin boys, Jacob and Esau. Esau, the firstborn, was Isaac's favorite, and Jacob was Rebekah's favorite. Such favoritism seldom leads to a healthy, honest home life.

The first deception we see in the story of Jacob and Esau appears to be Jacob's alone. One might call it extortion. When Esau came in hungry from the fields and demanded some of the stew Jacob was cooking, Jacob quickly responded that he would exchange the stew for Esau's birthright. His quick response indicates that he had been scheming to steal the birthright, which was considered a precious gift from God. It entitled Esau to a double portion of the inheritance. The bearer of the birthright was also considered the head of the family. When Esau swore the oath that Jacob demanded, he entered a legal agreement giving up that birthright. He gave up all that God had given him as the firstborn.

Though Esau had lost the birthright, Isaac could still give him the fatherly blessing before he died, and Isaac was determined to do that. Rebekah initiated the second deception. She heard Isaac's instructions to Esau and proposed a plan to Jacob. To be fair to Rebekah, we should consider that she might have thought she was doing her part to make sure that God's message to her described in

Genesis 25:23 came true. God had promised that the older of her twin sons would serve the younger. Whatever her motives, she helped Jacob deceive his aged father into giving him the blessing intended for Esau.

This deception devastated the family. Esau vowed to kill Jacob as soon as their father died (Genesis 27:41). Jacob had to flee the land, never to see his mother alive again.

This story is somewhat difficult because in the end God's will was accomplished even though it was done through human deceit and dishonesty. God can work through broken, imperfect people to do his will, but he still expects and wants us to live with integrity and to strive for purity. The family in this story was shattered by dishonesty. May we seek to be honest in all we do—and to let God accomplish what he wants to do through us as we follow him faithfully.

## **Devotion for Leaders**

**The One Thing:** When we choose honesty and trust God with an outcome, he honors and protects us. This path is not always easy, but it will bring us closer to Jesus.

**Weaving Faith Into Your Life:** Everyone is tempted to be dishonest at one time or another. Have you ever been dishonest with God? with yourself? with others? We need courage to step out of deception and commit to truthfulness. Take a moment to ask God to bring to mind any dishonesty. Confess your weakness to God, and ask for his strength and integrity.