

Genesis 25:19-34  
Our Response to the Revealed Will of God

**Introduction:** In this section we will see Isaac (25:19-27:46, 35:28-29) and Jacob (28-35). These are men with whom God restates the covenant which He had made with Abraham. The people of Israel need to know that Yahweh keeps His covenant faithfully, despite human failure.

**1) Yahweh continues to fulfill His promise to Abraham** (the birth of Isaac and his sons)—**25:19-26**

- John Sailhamer writes: Isaac is an important link in the line of Abraham, but as an individual character within the narratives he is given little attention.
- a) The generations of Abraham's son Isaac—25:19-20
  - i) This is the 8<sup>th</sup> use of this marker in Genesis. (25:19-35:20)
    - (1) Isaac is born @ 2065 BC.
    - (2) He will die at the age of 180 @ 1885 BC. (cf. Gen. 35:28)
  - ii) In a culture where the normal age to marry was late teens, Isaac is over double that age. **But it is more important to marry the right person than to marry early.** (MBC) (25:20)
    - (1) Isaac gets married to his second-cousin Rebekah @ 2025 BC.
- b) The obstacle for Isaac and Rebekah—25:21
  - i) Rebekah is barren, like Sarah before her in 11:30.
    - (1) This increases the tension in the story line. Will God's promise be fulfilled? If so, how?
    - (2) How awkward, considering her family's optimistic blessing in Gen. 24:60.
  - ii) Isaac prays for his wife.
    - (1) Unlike Abraham ...
      - (a) It is not recorded that Abraham prays (16:1-4).
      - (b) Isaac does not resort to the fleshly choice of the concubine.
    - (2) Isaac apparently recognizes that the fulfillment of the promised seed to Abraham was not to accomplished by mere human effort.
    - (3) He **MUST** depend on God. There are no other options.
      - (a) The test is for Abraham, Abraham's servant who "found" Rebekah (chapter 24), Isaac, Rebekah, and us.
  - iii) Yahweh eventually answers Isaac's prayer 20 years later. (25:26)
    - (1) The twins are born @ 2005 BC.
- c) Rebekah's pregnancy—25:22-23
  - i) Rebekah's pregnancy is marked by significant unsettledness. (25:22)
    - (1) "Children" is literally "sons."
    - (2) The fear of miscarriage is real.
    - (3) Following her husband's wise example of prayer, Rebekah turns to Yahweh instead of human wisdom.

- (a) Perhaps looking for an answer as to why God's **frown** has suddenly replaced God's **smile**. (Kidner)
- ii) Yahweh reveals His will poetically to Rebekah. (25:23)
  - God doesn't always do this for everyone.
  - (1) How many children she will give birth to.
  - (2) What their futures will be like **generally**.
    - (a) The sons will eventually become distinct nations and ethnic groups.
  - (3) What their futures will be like **specifically**.
    - (a) Suggests ongoing rivalry and conflict.
      - (i) It is one thing for children to fight in the womb, it's quite another when they fight in the back seat on the way to get groceries, and yet another when they fight as teens and adults.
      - (b) Indicates the supremacy of Jacob over Esau.
- iii) The oracle reveals that all of Jacob's scheming was unnecessary in the final analysis. He would have become the dominant nation without using deception to steal his brother's blessing. (NET)
- d) The birth of Abraham's grandsons, Jacob and Esau—25:24-26
  - i) We learn here that Isaac married thirty-five years before Abraham died, that Rebekah was barren for twenty years, and that Abraham would have lived to see Jacob and Esau begin to grow up (to @ 15 years old). The death of Abraham was recorded in the first part of the chapter as a "tidying up" of one generation before beginning the account of the next. (NET)
  - ii) God's grace to Rebekah and Isaac, Abraham, and us.

## 2) Esau scorns Yahweh's covenant—25:27-34

- Esau's *life* is more important to him than the covenant; he shows contempt for his birthright (and his part in the covenant?): it is no more important than a bowl of beans: "What do I care? I am about to die!" (David Dorsey)
- a) Remember the warning from this story in Heb. 12:14-17.

## 3) Things we need to remember:

- a) Psalm 31:15—*My times are in Your hand; Deliver me from the hand of my enemies and from those who pursue me.*
- b) Psalm 34:1—*I will bless Yahweh at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.*
- c) Psalm 62:8—*Trust in Him at all times, O people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah.*

Genesis 26:1-23  
Living With Unbelieving Neighbors

**Introduction:** Similarities to Gen. 12:10-20 and 20:1-18. These events seem to take place before the birth of the sons in 25:24-34.

**1) Yahweh restates His covenant to Isaac—26:1-5**

- a) The circumstances—26:1
  - i) We haven't heard of the Philistines since Gen. 21:32, 34.
  - ii) Remember, Abraham had a total of eight sons through three different women. This chapter focuses on the chosen one, Isaac.
  - iii) Abimelech, like Pharaoh, is a title/throne name.
- b) The commands—26:2-3a
  - i) Negative: Don't go down to Egypt for immediate satisfaction
    - (1) This seems to indicate Isaac was planning to do as his father had done years earlier. (cf. 12:10-20)
      - (a) God knows his plans before he puts them into practice.
      - (b) Remember Prov. 16:9: *The heart of man plans his way, But Yahweh directs his steps.*
    - (2) His less-than-perfect faith shows that he cannot earn the right to inherit the covenant. It is all of grace!
  - ii) Positive: stay where you belong for the long-term, yet now unseen, satisfaction
    - (1) Dwell in the Land (where there is a famine)
    - (2) Sojourn (temporary resident, no legal rights) in this Land
      - (a) Israel gains custody of the Land 600 years later.
- c) The promises restated from God's covenant with Abraham—26:3b-4
  - i) God's presence with Isaac, God's blessing of Isaac, God's gift of the lands, God's fulfillment of the oath, God's multiplication of descendants, God's gift of the lands, blessings from the nations (lit. "they will bless themselves") through Isaac's descendants.
  - ii) This includes the lands mentioned in Gen. 15:19-21.
  - iii) Quoted in Acts 3:25.
- d) The reason—26:5
  - i) Abraham obeyed God comprehensively by exercising genuine faith. Isaac must also now obey God comprehensively by exercising genuine faith.

**2) Isaac struggles to remember the covenant—26:6-23**

- a) Isaac obeys Yahweh's commands—26:6 (cf. 26:2-3a)
  - i) He stayed in Gerar which is in the Promised Land, just like Abraham (cf. 20:1)
  - ii) They apparently lived close to the king's palace. (cf. 26:8)
- b) Isaac initially yields to the temptation of fear and self-preservation and lies about Rebekah—26:7

- i) Just like Abraham in Gen. 12:13-19 & 20:2-5.
    - (1) At least with Abraham the lie was half true.
  - ii) Do the men of Gerar have evil intentions? There is no mention of it. This seems to be an imagined danger rather than actual.
  - iii) Lying is one evidence of unbelief. It is our feeble attempt to protect ourselves because we think God is not doing enough.
- c) Isaac's sin is exposed by an unbeliever—26:8-11
- i) Play on words: Isaac was Isaac-ing with his wife. (26:8)
  - ii) Did the Philistine leaders track Abraham and Isaac and remember what Yahweh had said to an earlier Abimelech in 20:7?
  - iii) Abimelech acknowledges the reality of communal guilt and the possibility of appropriate judgment.
    - (1) He also admits that his people might easily have participated in such a sin. Their moral standards are low.
    - (2) This show that Abimelech understood that Isaac was a force to be reckoned with and not a mere transient.
  - iv) In His wise providence, Yahweh uses the conscience of this man to restrain their sinful behavior. This is common grace in action!
- d) Yahweh rapidly prospers Isaac, resulting in internal jealousy and the external battle of the wells—26:12-22 (cf. promised blessing in 26:3-4)
- i) Isaac leaves the city of Gerar—26:12-17
    - (1) Yahweh grants him an abundant harvest in time of famine. A normal harvest was 25-50-fold. This partially fulfills 26:3. However, the blessing is not due to Isaac's faithful obedience.
    - (2) God's blessing of the elect may result in feelings of distress for the unrighteous.
    - (3) The Philistines are prevented by their king from abusing Isaac and Rebekah, so they eventually resort to vandalizing the wells.
    - (4) The king orders Isaac to leave due to Yahweh's blessing. Perhaps this is rooted in concern for their well-being.
  - ii) Isaac has several wells dug—26:18-22
    - Naming something indicates a claim of ownership.
    - Filling a well says to the transients, "You are not welcome here."
    - (1) Esek—the well of legal contention/argument (26:19-20)
    - (2) Sitnah—the well of enmity/opposition (26:21)
    - (3) Rehoboth—the well of broad/wide open places (26:22)
  - iii) Isaac relocates to Beersheba (the well of seven)—26:23
    - (1) This is @ 20 miles to the east-southeast.
  - iv) While God's blessing is a wonderful thing, it does not necessarily eliminate conflict with other people.

### 3) Things we need to remember:

- a) A faith that can't be tested can't be trusted. (Wiersbe)

- b) You may be able to run from famine, but you can't run from yourself. You take your flesh and your sin with you wherever you go.
- c) Remember Romans 5:1-5

Genesis 26:23-35  
Living Well with Your Neighbors

**Introduction:**

**1) Yahweh restates His covenant to Isaac—26:23-25**

- Beersheba is @ 20 miles to the east-southeast of Gerar from last time. This had been his father's home area earlier (cf. 21:33ff)
- a) Yahweh's activity—26:24
  - i) Yahweh appears to Isaac at night.
  - ii) Yahweh identifies Himself—*I am the God of your father, Abraham;*
  - iii) Yahweh restates His covenant promises.
    - (1) Yahweh's command—*Do not fear*
      - (a) Yahweh's presence is the reason—*for I am with you*
    - (2) Yahweh's blessing of Isaac personally—*I will bless you*
      - (a) The third statement of Yahweh blessing Isaac. (cf. 26:3, 12)
    - (3) Yahweh's fruitfulness of descendants—*and multiply your seed*
      - (a) Yahweh's servant is the basis—*for the sake of My servant Abraham*
  - iv) This is designed to reassure Isaac considering the **past** jealousy, vandalism, and hostility experienced in Gerar.
  - v) This is also designed to reassure Isaac considering the **future** visit from Abimelech in 26:26-33)
- b) Isaac's response, both acts demonstrate his faith—26:25
  - i) Expressing devotion and submission to Yahweh—like Abraham (cf. 12:7-8; 13:3-4, 18; 22:9)
    - (1) Built an altar.
    - (2) Called upon the name of Yahweh.
  - ii) Expressing his right to an unclaimed portion of the Land.
    - (1) Pitched his tent.
    - (2) Begins the process of digging a well, which is completed in 26:32.

**2) Isaac agrees to a covenant with his neighbor—26:26-33**

- a) Abimelech comes to Isaac. (26:26-31)
  - i) The entourage includes the king, his trusted political advisor, and his military commander. (26:26)
    - (1) They appear to be uncomfortable with a powerful, prosperous neighbor such as Isaac. He is viewed as a potential threat.
    - (2) Abimelech appears to be vulnerable.
  - ii) Isaac asks a legitimate question. (26:27)
    - (1) He perceives their earlier actions as hostile.
  - iii) The unbelievers acknowledge Yahweh's blessing of Isaac. (26:28a, 29b)
    - (1) As with Abraham earlier (cf. 21:22)
    - (2) This is an observation, not a pronouncement.

- iv) The unbelievers want Isaac's promise (a curse-oath and a covenant) not to destroy them. (26:28b-29ab)
  - (1) He reminds Isaac of the events earlier in 26:7-11.
  - (2) Renewing their earlier covenant with Abraham. (cf. 21:23-24, 31)
- v) Isaac validates the covenant with a ceremonial banquet. (26:30)
  - (1) Illustrates Prov. 16:7, *When a man's ways are pleasing to Yahweh, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.*
- vi) The covenant is made by both parties. (26:31)
- b) Isaac names (establishing ownership of) the fourth new well. (26:32-33)
  - i) Imagine the excitement of finding water in near-desert territory.
  - ii) Cf. with Abraham's action in 21:31.

### 3) Things we need to remember:

- a) Unbelievers can perceive God's gracious sovereignty displayed in our lives.
- b) God's common grace can be displayed in unbelievers wanting to live in peace with believers.
- c) Isaac illustrates what Romans 12:17-21 instructs us: <sup>17</sup> *Never paying back evil for evil to anyone, respecting what is good in the sight of all men,* <sup>18</sup> *if possible, so far as it depends on you, being at peace with all men,* <sup>19</sup> *never taking your own revenge, beloved—instead leave room for the wrath of God. For it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.* <sup>20</sup> *"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD."* <sup>21</sup> *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Gen. 26:34-27:29  
Isaac and Jacob the Deceiver

**Introduction:** To be understood in light of 25:28.

**1) ISAAC IS GRIEVED by his son Esau—26:34-35**

- This will demonstrate how unfit Esau is for the blessing, but also how foolish Isaac is to attempt to bless Esau in 27:1-40. (Allen Ross)
- a) Isaac is currently @ 100 years old. (cf. 26:24; 25:26)
- b) Bracket # 1: Esau marries two women who are not worshippers of Yahweh.
  - i) Note that the later instructions to Jacob (28:1, 6-9) imply that Isaac had not instructed his sons earlier.
  - ii) Nahum Sarna makes three observations:
    - (1) Broke the family expectations by getting married apart from his parents' directions.
    - (2) Broke the family expectations by marrying outside the distant relatives.
    - (3) Dishonored the clan by intermarrying Gentile women, saying they were more desirable than the clan's women.
  - iii) Judith does not appear in the list of Esau's wives in 36:2-3.
- c) Bracket # 2: Esau will eventually marry a third wife, Mahalath. (28:9)
- d) Thirty-seven years will pass between 26:35 and 27:1.

**2) ISAAC IS DECEIVED by his son Jacob—27:1-29**

- This will demonstrate how unfit Jacob is for the blessing, but also how foolish Isaac is to attempt to bless Esau in 27:1-40.
- Shows the suspenseful realization of the promise in 25:23, the older will serve the younger.
- Isaac is now 137 years old. He will live another forty-three years. He will live long enough to see his 12 grandsons by Jacob. (cf. 35:22-27)
- His twin sons are now 77 years old!
- The word "bless/blessing" is used 28x in 26:34-28:9.
- Perhaps Esau has broken his earlier oath to Jacob. (cf. 25:33)
- a) **Scene 1: the ceremonial meal is ANTICIPATED—27:1-4**
  - i) This chapter portrays an entire family attempting to carry out their responsibilities by their physical senses, without faith. (Allen Ross)
  - ii) Perhaps Isaac is motivated by the death of his half-brother Ishmael, who died at the age of 137, 14 years earlier. (cf. 25:17)
  - iii) "My soul may bless you" indicates that the blessing will be made with all Isaac's desire and vitality. (NET)
  - iv) Isaac's intention is contradictory to the previous revelation from God. (cf. 25:23)
- b) **Scene 2: the ceremonial meal is PREPARED—27:5-17**



- i) So Rebekah, rather than trusting God to accomplish His purposes, when overhearing Isaac's intention, initiated a plot to deceive her husband into blessing her favored son Jacob instead (27:5–13). (Moody BC)
- ii) All four characters are guilty: (Moody BC)
  - (1) Isaac: overlooks God's intended recipient of the blessing, chooses to ignore Esau's earlier sale of the birthright and God's earlier revelation about his sons,
  - (2) Rebekah: guilty of eavesdropping, deception using food, Esau's ceremonial clothes, and animal skins,
    - (a) Rebekah is careful to identify Isaac and Esau in relation to Jacob and not to herself. Thus, Isaac is *your father* (not "my husband") and Esau is *your brother* (not "my son"). (Victor Hamilton)
    - (b) Apparently very skilled with cooking and handwork.
  - (3) Esau: overlooks God's intended recipient of the blessing,
  - (4) Jacob: guilty of deception and impersonation, kiss of treachery, lack of faith that God would fulfill his earlier revelation.
    - (a) Jacob's concern wasn't "Is it right?" but "Is it safe?" He was worried about the eleventh commandment: "Thou shalt not get caught." (Warren Wiersbe)
- c) **Scene 3: the ceremonial meal is FULFILLED—27:18-29**
  - i) Jacob lies to counter Isaac's three-fold suspicion. (27:20, 22, 24)
  - ii) Note the description of Yahweh as Isaac's God but not Jacob's God. (cf. 28:21)
  - iii) The blessing entails:
    - (1) Jacob's relationship with creation: prosperity—27:28
    - (2) Jacob's relationship with others: authority—27:29

### 3) Things we need to remember:

- a) All the human senses are mentioned in this section, and all the senses fail Isaac. So much for "trusting your gut", "trust your feelings", etc.
  - i) **Sight** (27:1), **taste** (27:4, 9, 25, 31), **hearing** (27:1, 5-6, 22), **touch** (27:11-12, 21), and **smell** (27:27).
- b) We don't need to help God out. There is no place for lies or deception in our lives. Ps. 32:2.

Isaac and Esau the Profane  
Genesis 27:30-40

**Introduction:** This is the last of the four scenes introduced last time in 27:1-29. Isaac and Esau respond to Jacob's deception. Remember that the concept of bless/blessing occurs 22x in this chapter, 17x as a verb, 5x as a noun.

**1) The timing—27:30**

- a) Soon after the events of 27:18-29, but long enough for Jacob to escape detection by Esau.

**2) Esau's ceremonial meal—27:31**

- a) This picks up the story from 27:4.
- b) Esau has resolutely obeyed his father, just as Jacob has resolutely obeyed his mother. (Victor Hamilton)

**3) Isaac's legitimate questions—27:32-33**

- a) Identification question: Who are you?
- b) Clarification question: Who was it that came to me earlier?

**4) Esau's bitterness expressed—27:34-36**

- a) Emotional distress—27:34a *exceedingly great and bitter cry/yell*
  - i) While Esau did not much care for the spiritual ramifications and benefits of this blessing, he did want its material blessings and promise of military superiority. (Arnold Fruchtenbaum)
- b) Intense desire—27:34b *Bless me, me also, O my father!*
  - i) Isaac makes a distorted observation: Jacob had come with deception, but Jacob had NOT taken Esau's blessing. It belonged to Jacob all along.
  - ii) He knows his father cannot cancel the blessing on Jacob. Words can never be unsaid.
- c) Accusatory outburst—27:35-36a *Is he not rightly named Jacob [ya'aqob], for he has supplanted [aqab] me these two times?*
  - i) Remember the explanation earlier in 25:26 [aqeb, heel]. He changes the focus of Jacob's name from neutral to negative.
- d) Inaccurate interpretation—27:36b
  - i) Of the **past**: *He took away my birthright.*
    - (1) Remember, Esau deliberately sold it!
  - ii) Of the **present**: *Now he has taken away my blessing.*
  - iii) His wrong assumptions lead to his wrong interpretations.
- e) In other words: I've lost EVERYTHING and my brother has gained EVERYTHING.
- f) Note that there is no hint of repentance, because he plans to kill his brother as soon as their father is dead. (cf. 27:41)

**5) Isaac's blessing explained a second time—27:37-38**

**6) Isaac's blessing explained a third time—27:39-40**

- a) As John Sailhamer writes: The point of these repetitions of the various aspects of the blessing is primarily to underscore the irretrievability of the lost blessing and hence the certainty of the fulfillment of the blessing itself. By showing that the blessing was irrevocable, even by the father who gave the blessing, the writer underscores an important feature of the blessing—its fulfillment is out of human hands. It cannot even be revoked. It will come to pass, just as it was given.
- b) Esau's descendants live in a region far less fertile than the Land of Israel.
- c) Esau's descendants live in a violent relationship with their neighbors.
- d) Esau's descendants will have a relationship with Israel.
  - i) Edom/Esau was defeated by Saul (1 Sam. 14:47) and dominated by David (2 Sam. 8:14).
  - ii) In @ 850 BC, Edom/ revolted against the southern kingdom in 2 Kings 8:20-22.
  - iii) An entire book of the OT is devoted to God's punishment of Edom/Esau, Obadiah.
- e) This is not what Esau was hoping for, but it does fulfill what Yahweh had said in 25:23.

**7) Things we need to remember:**

- a) Jacob is never condemned by God; only by his enemies (Esau & Laban).
- b) Isaac did not bless Jacob in faith, but he did have faith that his blessing on Jacob would be fulfilled (Heb. 11:20).
- c) Remorse is never the same as genuine repentance (Heb. 12:14-17).