

Introduction: Denial is one of the greatest human flaws. It is the ‘stuff’ of tragedy. We can always rationalize our actions as good, or maybe okay, or at least ‘better than most’. *** But the truth is that all of us fall short of what we were created to be by God. Yes! We all were created by God to be His representatives on earth. *** I know this puts me in a minority in the United States, and especially in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. But, God does exist. He did make us. And, He makes the rules for us to follow to be blessed by Him. *** His rules are custom designed for us so our relationships may flourish and prosper. Our first relationship must be with Him. From this relationship flow all other relationships: in families, in communities, in service to others, and in our vocation – calling in English. *** Today we look at the family of Abraham’s son Isaac, particularly concerning Isaac’s twin sons Esau and Jacob. Beginning with Abraham, this family puts the ‘fun’ in dysfunctional! *** When Abraham was eighty-seven years old he and Sarah still had no sons. So she induces him to go into her servant girl Hagar, and Abraham fathers Ishmael. Twelve years later Sarah finally has a son – Isaac. She then commands her husband to send Hagar and Ishmael away. (Genesis 16-21) *** Abraham arranged a marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. After twenty years, when Isaac was sixty years old, they had twin sons. Isaac favored Esau, his first-born son, because he was a hunter and a man’s man. Rebekah favored Jacob, her younger son, because he was quiet and stayed home with her, he was somewhat of a momma’s boy. As time goes by, Esau sells his brother his birthright. Today, we heard how Jacob got Isaac’s blessing through deception. Esau plans to kill Jacob when Isaac dies, so Rebekah commands Isaac to send him to her brother. Soon, Jacob has a dramatic and gracious encounter with the God of his father and grandfather. (Genesis 24-28) *** In John’s Gospel, the fifth man who follows Jesus is Nathanael. He comes to Jesus with skepticism, but comes to faith in Him. Jesus then tells all His followers that they will have the same gracious vision and experience of the Presence of God that Jacob had. *** We are now ready to dig into the details in order to mine pure gold that will give us a better relationship with God, and better relationships with each other.

I. Isaac plans to bless Esau, but Rebekah arranges for Jacob to get the blessing. (*Genesis 27:1-4, 15-23*)

- A. As Isaac’s death draws near, he commands Esau to hunt game for him and prepare savory food for him to eat, then he will bless Esau. (*Genesis 27:1-4*)
1. Because Isaac was old and his eyes were dim, he called his older son and said, ‘My son’, and he said, ‘Behold me!’; and he said, ‘Behold! I am old and do not know the day I’ll die’. (*Verses 1-2*)
Esau: Isaac favored Esau because he was an outdoorsman who hunted food and cooked it right.
Old: He lived at least twenty more years and died at one-hundred-eighty (*Genesis 31:28; 35:28*).
 2. Now thou must take thy quiver and bow, go and hunt game and thou must prepare savory food which I love; and, thou will bring it to me and I will eat and will myself bless thee before I die. (*Verses 3-4*)
Hunt: Lamb and goat were domestic meats. People hunted venison and deer. Isaac preferred game.
Savory: Meat was often cooked with onions, garlic, leeks, cumin and coriander. Isaac may have taught his favorite son from an early age the precise mixture of these ingredients that he loved.
Bless: He ended with the promise of a blessing for his son who was born first.
- B. Rebekah dresses Jacob in Esau’s clothes, puts hairy skins on his flesh, then Jacob presents himself to his father as Esau, and Isaac hesitantly blesses Jacob. (*Genesis 27:15-23*)
1. Then Rebekah took Esau’s best clothes, which were in the house, and put them on Jacob and she put skins from young goats on his hands and the smooth part of his neck. (*Verses 15-16*)
Jacob: Rebekah (her name means ensnarer) acts on behalf of her favorite son. Jacob is passive.
Disguise: Esau must have hunted in his ordinary clothes. Esau’s name means hairy. He came out of the womb with a lot of hair (*Genesis 25:25*). She disguises her favorite to get the blessing.
 2. She gave Jacob the savory meat and the bread which she prepared. (*Verse 17*)
Deception: She also knows Isaac’s favorite recipe. Because she uses domestic meat, she must prepare it flawlessly. She takes advantage of her husband’s diminished faculties to trick him.
 3. Jacob greets his father who asks him who he is; Jacob said he is Esau thy first-born, and he did as he was told; thou must rise, sit and eat of my venison that thy soul will bless me. (*Verses 18-19*)
Jacob greets Isaac: As Jacob greets Isaac, expecting Esau, the voice was not what Isaac expected.
Outright lie: Every word Jacob speaks is a lie. Isaac does not know Rebekah heard him (*verses 5-7*).
 4. When Isaac wonders how Esau found the game so quickly, Jacob answers, ‘Because Yahweh, your God, made it happen for me’. (*Verse 20*)
Not Yahweh: Jacob lies again and this time brings in Yahweh not as his God, but as his father’s God. God had nothing to do with it. Everything was Rebekah, his mother’s, doing.
 5. Then Isaac said, ‘Thou must come my son and I will feel thee, if thou be my very son Esau, or not’. (*Verse 21*)
Concern: Isaac is skeptical about the son who is in front of him. He needs more information. So he makes his son come closer to get more information.
 6. Then Jacob drew near to his father who felt him and said, ‘The voice is Jacob’s but the hands are Esau’s’; and, he did not recognize him because his hands were hairy like his brother’s; and then he blessed him’. (*Verses 22-23*)
Voice no-hands yes: Isaac expresses his confusion, but unwisely trusts his touch over his hearing.
Gives blessing: The result is he blesses his younger son Jacob because his wife Rebekah deceived him. Jacob is not innocent because his desire for the blessing made him complicit with his mother.

II. Isaac sends Jacob to his mother's brother, he dreams of a ladder to heaven, then Yahweh confirms His Word to Abraham and Isaac; Jesus expands on the vision. (Genesis 28:10-18; John 1:50-51)

- A. Two days from Beersheba Jacob sleeps on a stone and dreams a vision of angels on a ladder from earth to heaven; after His baptism, Jesus applies the vision to many people. (Genesis 28:10-12; John 1:50-51)
1. Then Jacob went out from Beersheba towards Haran, and he reached a place and stayed there because the sun had gone down; then he took a stone and laid it under his head and laid down. (Verses 10-11)
Sent away: When Rebekah heard Esau planned to kill his brother, she commanded Isaac to send Jacob to her brother in Haran, about one thousand miles from Beersheba (Genesis 27:41-46).
Stone pillow: In the wilderness of the Middle East, Jacob could only rest his head on a stone.
 2. Then Jacob dreamed: Behold! A ladder was standing on earth and the top reached heaven; and behold! The angels of God were ascending and descending on it. (Verse 12; John 1:50-51)
Vision in dream: As Jacob fell asleep he must have felt: this is rock bottom. He had participated in the dysfunctional favoritism of his family. His brother wanted him dead. Now he is alone on a one thousand mile wilderness journey. Then he sees heaven and angels coming to him. What grace!

Heaven is close to broken people

Nathanael and others: Jesus picks up on what God did for the individual father of the nation of Israel when He told Nathanael (gift of God) and other followers He had called that in the future His many followers would have the same vision of the nearness of God. Jesus brings God's grace to all.

- B. Yahweh renews to Jacob The Word He gave to Abraham and Isaac; upon awakening, Jacob proclaims he was ignorant of Yahweh's Presence and calls the awesome place the house of God. (Genesis 28:13-18)
1. Behold! Yahweh was standing above, 'Behold! I (am) Yahweh the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you are lying I will give to thee and thy descendants'. (Verse 13)
Gift of land: Yahweh affirms to Jacob His Word concerning the gift of land to Abraham and his descendants when He pledged to give His life for His covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:12-21). Even though Jacob is running from his sins, Yahweh reveals Himself to him.

God reveals Himself to those trying to outrun sin

2. And your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, spread out in every direction; and, all the families of the earth have been blessed by you and your descendants. (Verse 14)
Numerous descendants: The 'dust of the earth' was one of the first Words Yahweh gave to Abraham (Genesis 13:18).
All families on earth blessed: This is the fifth time in three generations Yahweh has given His Word about all nations being blessed through Abraham and his line (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4). Now He gives it to a man running from his sin against God and his twin brother.

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3. And Behold! I (am) with thee and have kept thee wherever thou will go; and I have brought thee back and will not leave thee until I have done what I have spoken to thee. (Verse 15)
With thee: This is the greatest Word God gives people: His continual Presence with them!
NOT leave: And what a comfort to know that He does NOT leave His people alone until He accomplishes all He has spoken to them. What a revelation to Jacob. What grace to us!

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4. Then Jacob awoke and said, 'Surely Yahweh is in this place and I did not know it'. (Verse 16)
Presence: Because of his sin, for which he was named, of seeking to supplant his brother, when Jacob fell asleep he was ignorant of God. Now God has graciously given him knowledge. May we receive knowledge that God's grace can free us from our sins and we can live knowing Him (John 17:1-3).
Warning: The author of Hebrews warned people so no one would come short of the grace of God ... being unholy like Esau. Who sold his birthright for a single meal ... [and] ... when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance (Hebrews 12:15-17).
5. Then Jacob was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place: none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven'. (Verse 17)
Awesome place: May we realize that true blessing comes from being in The Presence of The Awesome Covenant God. Being IN Christ is our awesome place.
Beth-Elohim: The house of God is 'Beth-Elohim'. Bethel was a two days journey from Beersheba.
Gate of heaven: From his ladder vision, Jacob believed this is his gate to God. Jesus is our 'gate' to God (John 10:7-10). Let us praise God because Jesus revealed He opens heaven to all sinners.

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Conclusion: People need to bless and be blessed, but people do deceive others to gain the blessing they desire. The offended person may seek the life of the offender causing him to flee in loneliness and discomfort. But, The Gracious God who loves people, can and will reveal Himself to the sinner who may then come to acknowledge His Presence and revere Him in awe.

God reveals Himself to those trying to outrun sin