

Sent: Wednesday, February 27, 2019 6:54 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Genesis 25:19-34-28:9

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" (Psalm 133:1)
Brothers "dwelling in unity"? In the case of the twin brothers, Jacob and Esau, it was not to be! The "struggle" actually began, according to Genesis 25:22, "in the womb of Rebekah" (saying something profoundly important about where life actually begins!)--where their destinies were determined! Interestingly, God revealed to Rebekah (and not to Isaac!) that "two nations... and two peoples would be separated from her body... and that the older one (that would be Esau) would serve the younger" (and that would be Jacob)!

That God's choice here would go counter to the cultural norm, with the younger being chosen over the "firstborn," is not new in our study of Genesis! How about Abel over Cain and Isaac over Ishmael? That Isaac didn't get it, at least not until late in the game, in the case of Jacob only added to the intensity and dramatic unfolding of this lesson's story!

Romans 9:8-13 says that "it is not the children of flesh who are children of God, but children of promise who are regarded as descendants" and that God's choice of Jacob had nothing to do with his "works but because of Him (God) who calls"!

In keeping with our story-line, Genesis 25:27-28 says that "when the boys grew up, Esau became a skilled hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents. Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob!" And so, we see the "marriage (we thought was) made in heaven," becoming increasingly tense and divided! Becoming the quintessential dysfunctional home!

The real breaking-point seemed to come when Jacob, apparently acting on his own, "cooked up" a scheme to "steal" the all-important birthright from Esau! This is recorded in Genesis 25:28-34! Seems that Jacob placed a much higher value on it than Esau did! In fact, Genesis 25 ends with the words: "Thus Esau despised his birthright!" (The apostle Paul, in Hebrews 12:16, admonishes his readers "not to be an immoral and godless man like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal!" Wow!)

Years later (moving on to Genesis 27), when Isaac was "old and his eyes were too dim to see," and he perhaps thought he was dying (although he would apparently go on to live another 40 or so years--with little or no notoriety), he spoke to Esau about "hunting game" and preparing a "savory meal" for him, so that he might "bless him before he died"! Oops! Isaac was obviously still determined to give the blessing to Esau, and not to Jacob--despite the revelation to Rebekah years earlier that Jacob was the one chosen by God, and despite the fact that Esau had "sold" his birthright to Jacob (all of which you'd think must have been known to him)! And despite Esau's marriage to two Hittite wives which, Genesis 25:35 say, brought grief to (both) Isaac and Rebekah! (What's especially ironic about this later point is that Abraham had specifically gone to great lengths to ensure that Isaac himself would not marry a Canaanite woman, when he sent his trusted servant, back to Mesopotamia to find Rebekah!)

Well, Rebekah (the "wonder woman" chosen for Isaac) just happened to be "listening in" to Isaac's conversation with Esau and immediately responded with her own plan of action! You know the rest of the story! How she "cooked up" a scheme, with Jacob's participation, to pose Jacob as Esau, and thus to deceive Isaac into giving the "blessing" to Jacob (where it rightfully belonged, as it all turns out)! The scheme worked, of course, much to the chagrin of Isaac and the anger and rage it spurred in Esau!

The whole rigged-up affair was appalling and totally evil! The multiple bold-faced lies spoken to his father by Jacob! The length to which both Rebekah and Jacob went to deceive Isaac! The betrayal of Isaac with a "kiss"! The pleading of Esau for some kind of "left-over" blessing! The "grudge" and his determination to "kill his brother" after Isaac passes! And the consequences of it all! A truly Shakespearean drama that unfolded! (Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. used to say over and over: "It's never right to do wrong in order to get a chance to do right!")

The story takes a surprising twist, however, as we come to Genesis 28! Isaac seems to finally see the light, maybe after hearing Rebekah say that she was "tired of life" because of Esau's wives! And so he calls for Jacob, and charges him "not to take a wife from the daughters of Canaan... but to go back to the house of Bethuel... and there to take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother!" Wow! (Sounding a whole lot more like his father, Abraham!)

And then Isaac re-states "the blessing" to Jacob! "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples (the "Children of Israel")! May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham!" Wow!

But as the story turns to such a blessed closure, we're also left with some downsides! One of the saddest portions of Scripture in the Bible perhaps is Genesis 28:6-9 as we "see what Esau saw," as he was witness to Isaac's charge and blessing to Jacob! I want to call it "the sad sight of Esau seeing!" Imagine the oldest son of Isaac and Rebekah hearing the words coming from his father to his brother, Jacob, the one who "supplanted" him, and the one he now hated! And the ill-advised steps he took to try to make up for his mistakes and to re-gain favor with his father, by going to Ishmael and marrying one of his daughters, "besides the wives that he had"! Wow!

Well, what's the bottom line?

Jacob flees to Haran, where he himself will be subjected to some "trickery" from Rebekah's brother, Laban, and Rebekah most likely never sees her "favorite" son again (no mention of it in Scripture)! Isaac would pass from the scene of the Genesis account, despite apparently living for another 40 years or so. Esau would plot his revenge on Jacob!

The most amazing thing of all is that God's plan for His covenant promises, including a coming Redeemer, to bless all the nations of the world through the descendants of Abraham is still intact!

And so we see, through our study of Genesis, how God uses sinful mankind to accomplish His plan for the ages! And the lessons for us are many! How about learning to "wait on the Lord," and "trusting in Him alone," rather than so quickly taking matters into our own hands! (Joel Benson left us Proverbs 3:5-6!) How about communicating better with our family, loving our wives more, and "dwelling in unity" with our "brothers" (and sisters)?

Well, more to come on Jacob and Esau as we head on to Genesis 28:10-30:24!

Meanwhile, go with God, my brothers, and be a "blessing"!

Lowell