Esau

Introduction

The life of Esau is a tragic story because even though he was born into a home of great privilege, which had a tremendous spiritual heritage, he remained an unbeliever. At no time in his life, did he ever place his faith in the God of his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac, who is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Esau was born into a family that was ordained by God to receive the promises, privileges, responsibilities and blessings of the covenant God made with Abraham. His brother Jacob would be in the line of Christ and the father of the nation of Israel, which would be the vehicle used by God to bring in the Savior of the world.

God blessed Esau by making him the progenitor of a great nation as well, namely, the nation of Edom, yet he never accepted Christ as his Savior and thus now resides in “Torments,” which is the temporary fire for the souls of unbelievers from every dispensation according to Luke 16:19-31. Eventually, like all unbelievers he will be transferred to the Great White Throne Judgment according to Revelation 20:11-15 and from there will be cast into the eternal Lake of Fire because of his rejection of Jesus Christ as his Savior.
Esau’s Parents

Genesis 25:19-20 records the family history of Isaac and as a part of this history Genesis 25:21 records Rebekah’s problem with getting pregnant. In this passage we see that Isaac, in response to this problem, prays to the Lord to resolve Rebekah’s problem of infertility. The Lord fulfills Isaac’s prayer request twenty years later since Genesis 25:21 records Isaac as being forty when he married Rebekah and Genesis 25:26 records Isaac as being sixty when Rebekah had twins.

Genesis 25:19 begins a new section in Genesis, which ends in Genesis 35:29 and constitutes the eighth book in Genesis presenting to us the family history of Isaac and in particular Jacob whose name was later changed by the Lord to “Israel.” The emphasis in this section is upon Jacob since he would carry on the line of Christ.

Up to this point in Genesis, the book has taught that the human nature of Jesus Christ would come from the line of Seth (Luke 3:38) and Shem (Gen. 9:24-27; Luke 3:36), Abraham (Gen. 12:3) and Isaac (Gen. 17:19).

At the forefront of Jacob’s story is his struggle with his twin brother, Esau, which was a fulfillment of the Lord’s prophecy to Rebekah in Genesis 25:22-23.

The names that the Lord gives to the twins pokes fun at them both since the name “Esau” means, “hairy,” implying an animalistic nature and the name “Jacob” means, “heel,” implying grasping.

Jacob has his name changed by the Lord to “Israel” after his return to the land of Canaan from Paddan Aram and his struggle with the preincarnate Christ.

The name “Israel” means “the one who struggles with God and humans and who prevails.”

Genesis 25:19 Now these are the records of the generations of Isaac, Abraham’s son: Abraham became the father of Isaac; 20 and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. (NASU)

“These are the records of the generations of Isaac” refers to the family history of Isaac, which follows in Genesis 25:19-35:29 as indicated by the noun toledhoth, “the records of the generations” which is always used as an introduction to what follows.

In Genesis 25:19, the noun toledhoth introduces the eighth section of the book of Genesis, which is completed in Genesis 35:29 and centers upon Jacob who like his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham are ancestors of the human nature of Jesus Christ.

The statement “Abraham became the father of Isaac” emphasizes Isaac’s role as the successor of Abraham in fulfillment of the promise made by the Lord to Abraham recorded in Genesis 21:12.
Isaac and Jacob both took Aramean wives (Gen. 25:20; 28:5) and in fact, Jacob is called the “wandering Aramean” in Deuteronomy 26:5. Therefore, “Paddan Aram” refers to the city of Nahor where Abraham’s brother founded a city and named it after himself and was the place that Abraham’s servant found Rebekah, Isaac’s wife.

**Genesis 25:21** Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived. (NASU)
Rebekah’s Pregnancy

Genesis 25:22-23 records Rebekah’s problems involved with her pregnancy and her inquiring of the Lord as to the meaning of it. In this passage, the Lord responds to her inquiry by prophesying of the family history of the two children who were named, “Esau” and “Jacob.”

**Genesis 25:22** But the children struggled together within her; and she said, “If it is so, why then am I this way?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. (NASU)

By indicating that there is to be more than one child, the narrator, Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit takes the reader into his confidence. Of course, Rebekah at the time did not know that she was carrying twins and that they were struggling with each other in her womb.

“Struggle” is the verb *ratsats*, which is in the rare hithpoel stem meaning “to crush each other.” The verb *ratsats* implies an extraordinary violent struggle taking place in the womb of Rebekah, which she understood to be far greater than normal, and thus of great significance. This struggle among the fetuses in Rebekah’s womb foreshadowed the relationship of the children and their descendants later on in history. So Rebekah is experiencing an unusually difficult pregnancy and fears of miscarrying. Rebekah thought she was simply carrying the next generation but little did she know that she was carrying twins.

The rivalry of Jacob and Esau begins in the womb of Rebekah and would progress from her womb to the troubled delivery of the twins (25:26), and to their differences in profession (25:27) as well as to the opposing preferences of the parents (25:28). This struggle in the womb of Rebekah would also foreshadow Jacob’s struggle with the preincarnate Christ (32:22-32).

The struggle of the twins, Esau and Jacob foreshadowed the struggles between Jacob and Esau in the following events: (1) Jacob secures the birthright (Genesis 25:27-34). (2) Jacob steals Esau’s blessing (Genesis 27:1-40). (3) Jacob prevails with Esau and secures his good will (Genesis 32:1-33:16).

The rivalry between Jacob and Esau spilled over into conflicts between their parents, Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 27:1-46) and it also effected Jacob and his wives as well as his wives with each other (Genesis 30:1-24) and Jacob and Laban (Genesis 29:14b-31:55).

So because of the violent and unusual way that the fetuses were struggling within her, Rebekah inquires of the Lord in prayer as to the meaning of it all.

The fact that Rebekah is recorded as having “**went to inquire of the Lord**” indicates that she sought out the Lord in prayer in order to ascertain the meaning of this struggle taking place in her womb. Of course, Rebekah was unaware that she was carrying twins.
The question Rebekah asks is “elliptical” meaning that words such as copulas (“is”) are left out because of Rebekah’s anxiety and urgent desire to find relief from this problem pregnancy and to understand the significance of it.

“If” is the conditional particle `im, which introduces the protasis of a 1st class condition, which indicates the assumption of truth for the sake of argument.

A conditional sentence has an “if” part and a “then” part. The “if” introduces the “protasis” and “then” introduces the “apodasis.” Often, the “protasis” often introduces the “cause” and the “apodasis” the “effect.”

In Genesis 25:22, the particle `im, “if” is introducing a protasis, which presents the “cause” of Rebekah’s pregnancy, which is of course, the sovereign will of God.

Now, remember the question of Rebekah’s is “elliptical” and so therefore, we can translate or paraphrase the interrogative particle as “if, it is Your will.” Rebekah recognizes that children are a gift from the Lord (Psalm 127:3).

The adverb ken, “so” introduces the apodasis, which presents the “effect” of her getting pregnant by the sovereign will of God.

“Why” is the interrogative particle lammah, which is a compound word composed of the preposition l, “to me” and the adverb mah, “why” therefore, the word literally means, “why…to me.”

The preposition l is called a “lamed of disadvantage” meaning that Rebekah considers this unusual and difficult pregnancy to be to her disadvantage or uncomfortable.

Therefore, she is saying in effect, “Why am I having this happen to me, which is very uncomfortable.”

The demonstrative pronoun zeh, “this” is pointing to Rebekah’s unusual and difficult pregnancy.

The interrogative particle lammah becomes emphatic when it is used with the demonstrative pronoun zeh, “this.”

The demonstrative pronoun zeh, “this” when attached to the interrogative pronoun lammah strengthens the meaning of the interrogative, adding directness and force and emphasizing the close personal involvement of the speaker.

“I” is the pronoun `anokhi, which refers to Rebekah of course.

Again, the question is “elliptical” so we could translate this expression, “why am I having this happen to me, which is very uncomfortable?”

Therefore, Rebekah is saying in effect to the Lord in prayer, “If this is Your will that I get pregnant, then why am I having this struggle take place in my womb, which is very uncomfortable?”

Rebekah asks this question because she fears that she might be miscarrying and doesn’t understand why the Lord would permit her to get pregnant but then lose the children through a miscarriage. The Lord’s response to Rebekah’s question appears in Genesis 25:23.
The Lord’s Prophecy of Rebekah’s Twins

Genesis 25:23 The LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples will be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger.” (NASU)

The Lord’s statement to Rebekah that “two nations are in your womb” implies that she is pregnant with twins and refers to the fact that these twins are twin progenitors of two nations.

The oldest son “Esau” would be the progenitor of the Edomites (See Genesis 36:1-43) whereas the younger son “Jacob” would be the progenitor of the Israelites.

Jacob would father twelve sons who were heads of the twelve tribes of Israel (1 Chronicles 1:34; 2:1-2; Acts 7:8) and through the nation of Israel would come the Savior of the world (John 4:22; Romans 9:3-5).

To the nation of Israel would be given the Old Testament Scriptures, the adoption as sons, the Mosaic Law, the Shekinah Glory, the promises and the unconditional covenants (Davidic, Palestinian, New and Abrahamic) (see Romans 9:1-5).

The Edomites and the Israelites fought continuously.

From Rebekah’s womb, Jacob and Esau would be at odds with each other.

The Lord’s prediction that “two peoples will be separated from your (Rebekah’s) body” indicates that Jacob and Esau would be separated, divided and hostile towards one another and would have nothing in common.

The Lord’s prediction that “one people shall be stronger than the other” refers to the fact that the Israelites would prevail over the Edomites in history. Also this prophecy indicates that Jacob and not Esau would be in the Messianic line and would inherit the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. Normally, the oldest would receive the father’s inheritance and estate but the Lord does not always subscribe to this.

In Genesis 25:23, the Lord declares that the “older shall serve the younger” indicating that the younger son, Jacob would receive the inheritance and not Esau who was older. Esau, the older, did not actually serve Jacob, his younger twin but rather Esau’s descendants did (see 1 Samuel 14:47; 2 Samuel 8:14; 1 Kings 11:15-16; 22:47; 2 Kings 14:7).

This prophecy that “one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger” indicates that the sovereign will of God has ordained the following: (1) Jacob to be in the Messianic line and not Esau. (2) Jacob would be the beneficiary of the divine promises enumerated in the
Abrahamic Covenant and not Esau. (3) Jacob would receive his father’s estate and not Esau.

Just as the Lord had chosen Isaac who was younger over Ishmael to receive Abraham’s inheritance so the Lord had chosen Jacob who was younger than Esau. In the Messianic line, Seth, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and David were not first-born sons. Therefore, we see the Lord is expressing His sovereign will for Rebekah’s twin sons, Esau and Jacob and that He has ordained from eternity past, that Jacob would be in the line of Christ and not Esau.

Jacob did “not” merit this privilege, nor did Esau do anything to “not” merit it but rather, it was all based upon God’s grace and mercy and sovereign will. The prophet Malachi cites evidence of this conflict between Esau and Jacob in Israel’s experience.

Malachi 1:2 “I have loved you, says the LORD. But you say, ‘How have You loved us?’ ‘Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?’ declares the LORD. 3 Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.” (NASU)

The terms “love” and “hate” are “anthropopathisms,” meaning that the writer is ascribing the human emotion of personal love and hate to God, which He does “not” possess in order to explain God’s choice of entering into a covenant relationship with Jacob rather than Esau and does “not” indicate one is saved and the other is not.

The verbs in the Hebrew translated “I have loved” and “I have hated” are in the perfect tense and therefore, express not only God’s past relationship with Israel and Edom but also His historical and present dealings (in Malachi’s day) with these peoples.

Both Israel and Edom received judgment from God at the hands of the Babylonians in the sixth century B.C. (Jer. 27:2-8). However, God promised to restore Israel over and over again because of His covenant promises (Deut. 4:29-31; 30:1-10) but He condemned Edom to complete destruction, never to be restored (Jer. 49:7-22; Ezek. 35).

In Romans 9:13, Paul quotes Malachi 1:3 to demonstrate that God elected Jacob’s descendants, the nation of Israel as His covenant people and He rejected the Edomites as His covenant people who were descendants of Esau.

In Romans 9-11, the apostle Paul discusses the future of the nation of Israel and teaches that God has temporarily set aside the nation at this time in history and will restore her in the future because she was elected by Him to be His covenant people. Therefore, when we see the statement “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” we must understand that Paul is not referring to individuals but rather to the nations which descended from Jacob (Israelites) and Esau (Edomites).
Therefore, the statement “Jacob I loved but Esau I hated” does “not” refer to the fact that Esau was not saved and Jacob was since that would imply that God hates sinners and elects some people to be saved and others to eternal condemnation, which contradicts the teaching of Scripture that God’s will is for all men to be saved (See 1 Timothy 2:4, 4:10, 2 Peter 3:9, John 3:16-18, 1 John 2:2).

The statement “Jacob I loved but Esau I hated” is “not” a reference to Jacob and Esau as individuals but rather it is a reference to the nations, which descended from them, namely, the Israelites from Jacob and the Edomites from Esau. Therefore, the statement refers to the “national” election of Israel as God’s covenant people who are descendants of Jacob and the rejection of the Edomites as His covenant people who were descendants of Esau.

The rejection of Esau’s descendants as His covenant people does “not” mean that God elected the Edomites and the Gentiles to eternal condemnation and the Israelites to salvation since that would contradict the biblical doctrine of the unlimited atonement, which states that God desires all men to be saved.

The election of the nation of Israel, like the choice of Jacob over Esau was “non-meritorious” meaning that there was nothing that the nation of Israel and Jacob did that secured God choosing them since many times both sinned and failed to obey God.
The Birth of Esau and Jacob

Genesis 25:24-26 records Rebekah giving birth to twins, Esau and Jacob.

**Genesis 25:24** When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. 25 Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. (NASU)

The parents give the names to twins and not the Lord. But the Lord does predict their tumultuous relationship with each other and between their future descendants. The name given to the twins pokes fun at them.

“**Red**” is the adjective `*adhmoni*`, which describes the older twin anticipating his rugged nature.

The name given to **“Esau”** means, “hairy,” implying an animalistic nature and describes the oldest twin as “the hairy monster.”

**“Esau”** became the father of the Edomite people according to Genesis 36:1-43 who later became the arch rivals of the Israelites.

The name **“Seir,”** demarcating the Edomite territory means, “hairy” and may have been implemented in remembrance of Esau.

**Genesis 25:26** Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them. (NASU)

The actions of Jacob at his birth in grasping the heel of his brother Esau was the first manifestation of the volatile relationship that the Lord predicted would take place between the two children later and their descendants.

The manner in which the twins were born was a visible omen underlying the Lord’s prophecy. The actions of Jacob at birth towards his brother where he is described as desperately trying to catch up to his older brother and their struggle with each other in their mother’s womb sets the pattern for their relationship in life and the relationship between their descendants.
The Conflict Between Isaac and Rebekah over Esau and Jacob

In Genesis 25:27-28, we have the record of the conflict between Isaac and Rebekah over Esau and Jacob.

Genesis 25:27 When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents. (NASU)

As the twins grew, the difference in their characters, which God in His omniscience already knew of, began to be apparent through their respective interests and activities.

“Skillful” is the yadha, which is in the qal active participle form of the verb meaning, “one who is knowledgeable and therefore, skilled in a particular endeavor.”

“Hunter” is the noun tsayidh, which refers to the act of hunting wild game.

Therefore, Genesis 25:27 describes Esau as being a man “who was skilled in hunting wild game.”

Esau is also described as a “man of the field,” which refers to the fact that he searched for game by roaming the territories situated outside cities and towns where wild animals roamed. Therefore, we see that the Bible describes Esau as the rugged outdoor type, which would endear him to his father Isaac who did not possess these qualities himself.

He was a skillful hunter and spent his time out in the fields searching for game in the open country. The fact that Esau was a skillful hunter really did “not” help his family at all since his family was not endangered by wild beasts, nor did they, with their extensive flocks and herds, have any need to slaughter deer and other wild animals for food.

There was no over population of animals that needed thinning out for the sake of a balanced ecology since Esau had to become a “skillful” hunter to find them! In fact, hunting does not receive a favorable description in the Bible.

Even though the Law made provision for hunting and eating game, the biblical writers commend pastoralists and condemn predators. Deuteronomy 14:4-5 demonstrates that hunting was sometimes an economic necessity in Israel since the Lord permits Israel to eat certain wild animals. Leviticus 17:13 presents legislation concerning the preparation for food of an animal caught in the hunt.

The only hunter other than Esau mentioned in the Bible is Nimrod who is described in Genesis 10:9 as a “mighty hunter against the Lord” meaning that he was a rebel against the Lord who hunted for the souls of men whereas Esau was a sportsman unconcerned with God. Esau preferred playing in the fields even long before he was a grown man, to working for his family and serving the Lord.

Nahum Sarna commenting on Esau as a hunter, writes, “Near Eastern art often portrays kings and nobles in pursuit of game, but no Israelite or Judean king or
hero is ever mentioned as indulging in the sport. However, the fact that Leviticus 17:13 legislates concerning the preparation for food of an animal caught in the hunt and that Deuteronomy 14:5 includes wild animals among those permitted to be eaten proves that hunting was sometimes an economic necessity even in Israel. Nevertheless, it is highly significant that sacrifice in Israel was restricted to domesticated animals” (The JPS Torah Commentary, Genesis, page 181, The Jewish Publication Society).

**Genesis 25:28 Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.** (NASU)

Isaac loved Esau because of his own taste for wild game. Therefore, Esau’s nature and occupation were favored by Isaac because of the satisfaction of his palate. On the other hand, Jacob was loved by Rebekah. This was probably due to the prophecy that she received from the Lord that Esau and his descendants would serve Jacob’s descendants and that Jacob would be in the line of Christ.

The other reason why Rebekah favored Jacob over Esau was that Jacob was a homebody. He also appears to have been a “momma’s boy” as demonstrated by he and Rebekah conspiring together against Esau. Therefore, we see that the Word of God describes Esau as an outdoor-type man who loved to do the things a father could take pride in.

He was a skillful hunter, and he knew how to handle himself in the outdoors. In our culture I believe Esau would have been a football star in high school and college and might have played in the pros. He was a real macho man, the kind of son a father would swell with pride to talk about among his friends.

Jacob was entirely different. While Esau seems to have been aggressive, daring, and flamboyant, Jacob appears to be just the opposite in that he was quiet, thoughtful and more interested in staying at home than in venturing out and taking part in great physical endeavors. This is not to say that Jacob had no ambition, on the contrary. It was that Jacob couldn’t see the sense in roaming the wilderness just to bag some game.

In the solitude of his tent Jacob could mentally reason out how to get ahead without getting his hands dirty and without taking dangerous risks. Esau was the kind of son that Isaac could proudly take with him wherever he went.

Rebekah, on the other hand, favored Jacob. She probably thought Esau was crude and uncultured. Jacob was a much more refined person, gentle and kind, the type of son a mother would be proud of. Jacob spent more time at home than Esau did.

Each parent seems to have identified too much with a particular son, thus creating divisions which were devastating. This favoritism also brought about disharmony between Isaac and his wife.
Later Rebekah was to conspire with Jacob to deceive her husband (chapter 27). This parental favoritism causes a rift in the marriage of Rebekah and Isaac.

Isaac’s love for Esau is based upon the natural senses whereas Rebekah’s love for Jacob is based upon the Lord’s choice of Jacob and that Jacob was a responsible individual who took care of the family business and matters around the home.

Now, remember, Isaac and Rebekah’s marriage was made in heaven since the Lord’s will was for Rebekah to marry Isaac. Yet, even though the marriage was made in heaven, it was still dysfunctional since Isaac, Rebekah, Esau and Jacob possess old Adamic sin natures.

The marriage and family of Rebekah and Isaac was dysfunctional as demonstrated by Isaac’s love for Esau over Jacob because Esau’s pursuits satisfied his palate’s desire for wild game!

Although Isaac was a spiritual man he developed a taste for Esau’s wild game, which blinded him to the point that he preferred Esau over Jacob.

Rebekah preferred Jacob not only because of the Lord’s choice of Jacob but also what mother would not prefer a son that was always there when she needed him, a son who could be counted on to keep the business of tent dwellers going smoothly and prosperously.
Esau’s Sells His Birthright

Genesis 25:29-34 presents to us Esau selling his birthright to his twin brother Jacob.

Genesis 25:29 When Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished; 30 and Esau said to Jacob, “Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished.” Therefore his name was called Edom. (NASU)

Genesis 25:34 identifies that the food Jacob was boiling was “lentils,” which in the Hebrew is `adhashim. A “lentil” is a small annual legume of the pea family and its lens-shaped edible seed is rich in protein and is one of the most ancient of cultivated foods. The red pottage of lentils, which Esau sold his birthright for probably was made from the red Egyptian lentil.

“Famished” is the adjective `ayeph, which describes physical exhaustion brought on by hunger and great exertion. Therefore, the adjective `ayeph describes Esau as being physically exhausted as a result of being hungry and greatly exerting himself in the wilderness hunting.

“Let me have a swallow” is the verb la`at, which is in the hiphil imperative form meaning “give a gulp” and the 1st person common singular pronominal suffix meaning “me.”

“Red stuff” is the adjective `adhom, which refers to the red lentil soup that Jacob was making.

Esau does not care to know the name of the food that he is requesting from Jacob indicating his coarseness meaning that he is unrefined and crude, lacking good manners.

So, Esau is saying, “Please let me have a gulp from that red stuff, this red stuff here,” which is expressive of his aggressive and inconsiderate nature. Esau’s request demonstrates his bad manners, selfishness and inconsideration for others since he makes this request not knowing whether or not Jacob was making the red lintel soup for himself, his parents or others in the household.

He never takes into consideration that maybe Jacob is making this soup for others since he only cares that his own need be fulfilled. Esau demonstrates that he doesn’t put others ahead of himself.

“Edom” is the proper noun `edhom, which literally means, “red,” and was the name given to Esau to mark the occasion in which he exchanged his birthright to Jacob for some red lintel soup.

Genesis 25:31 But Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.” 32 Esau said, “Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?” 33 And Jacob said, “First swear to me”; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he
ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright. (NASU)

“Birthright” is the noun $b^e\text{khorah}$, which refers to the rights of the first-born in a family (See Exodus 4:22).

The firstborn had a privileged status (See Genesis 43:33; 49:3) and the right of succession (2 Chronicles 21:3) and received a double portion of his father’s inheritance (Deut. 21:17).

The father’s inheritance was divided among his sons and the firstborn always has right to two of these portions. If there are ten sons, the firstborn receives two portions and the other nine split eight portions. If there are only two sons then the firstborn inherits everything.

With this privileged status came responsibility in that the firstborn was the protector of the family and leader. Not only did the firstborn have the responsibility of providing leadership and material things in Isaac’s family but also he had the responsibility to provide spiritually for his family.

Spiritual responsibilities were paramount in the family of Abraham and Isaac. The selling of the birthright demonstrated that Esau rejected those responsibilities and was thus not only an irresponsible person but also an unbeliever.

Abraham and Isaac were in the line of Christ and the birthright in the family of Isaac included the promises and blessings given in the Abrahamic Covenant. In the family of Abraham and Isaac, the birthright included the privilege of carrying on the line of Christ that would bring salvation and therefore blessing to the entire world. Jacob knew this and desired these things, thus demonstrating his spiritual discernment and that he was a believer.

The birthright was transferable where the youngest can displace the eldest as in the cases of Joseph and Judah, Reuben, and Ephraim and Manasseh, Moses and Aaron, David and his six older brothers, Solomon and Adonijah.

Since the birthright concerns the future, its value is appropriated by faith. Therefore, by selling his birthright, Esau was demonstrating his unbelief in the promises contained in the Abrahamic Covenant and thereby forfeited the blessings of this covenant (Hebrews 12:16-17).

In Genesis 25:31, Jacob is exploiting Esau’s hunger and exchanging the red lintel soup for the right to be heir of the family’s estate and assume the family headship. Jacob erroneously believed that by his own human power that he had come into possession of the birthright. He erroneously thought he could “merit” the blessings when in reality he could only receive them according to God’s grace meaning that he could not earn or deserve the blessings since they would be freely given to him by God when he exercised faith in Him.

Jacob was on a works program and thought God needed his help. He was ignorant of God’s method and thus inserted his own way of doing things. This
demonstrated in Jacob that self-confident attitude rather than a dependence upon the Lord and His provisions and His plan and methods. He desired a right thing but chose to attain it in a wrong way. A right thing must be done in a right way.

God did not need Jacob’s help since God had chosen Jacob over Esau from eternity past based upon His sovereign grace and mercy to carry on the line of Christ and inherit the blessings and privileges and responsibility of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Jacob and Esau were simply manifesting attitudes towards God’s plan that God in His omniscience already knew and predicted to Rebekah they would possess before they were born as recorded in Genesis 25:23.

Genesis 25:32 Esau said, “Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?” (NASU)

Esau’s statement in Genesis 25:32 expresses a worldly viewpoint.

Isaiah 22:13 “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die.” (NASU)

Genesis 25:33 And Jacob said, “First swear to me”; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. (NASU)

The fact that Esau agreed to sell his birthright to Jacob reveals that Esau did not value spiritual things since by selling his birthright he was forfeiting the blessings of the covenant that the Lord made with Abraham and which his father Isaac had inherited.

The selling of the birthright demonstrated that Esau was a psuchikos, “soulish” man and not a pneumatikos, “spiritual” man since he was expressing his dislike of the plan of God for the patriarchs that was expressed in the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant.

1 Corinthians 2:14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (NASU)

In eternity past, before Jacob and Esau were born God knew in His omniscience that Esau would possess such a negative attitude towards His plan and that Jacob would have a positive attitude. Therefore, Malachi 1:2-3 states, “Jacob have I loved but Esau I have hated.”

“Sold” is the verb makhari, which in context means, “to exchange” since Jacob did not give money to Esau but rather offered him the red lintel soup in “exchange” for the birthright.

Genesis 25:34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright. (NASU)

“Despised” is the verb bazah, which means, “to the act of according little worth to something, to undervalue something” implying contempt.” Therefore, by exchanging his birthright for a bowl of red lintel soup, Esau was demonstrating
that he valued little his firstborn status in the family of Isaac, which involved inheriting the promises, privileges and responsibilities of the Abrahamic Covenant and thereby expressed his contempt for the plan of God.
Esau’s Wives

Genesis 26:34-35 presents to us the record of Esau’s marriage to two Hittite women who were descendants of Canaan and unbelievers, which brought grief to his parents, Isaac and Rebekah.

As we will note, this marriage of Esau to two Hittite women was due in part to his parents’ failure to teach him that it was against the will of God for their family to marry Canaanite women.

**Genesis 26:34 When Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; 35 and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.** (NASU)

The problem of Esau marrying these Hittite women, who were descendants of Canaan, was due in part to the failure of his parents, Isaac and Rebekah, since they apparently failed to teach both Jacob and Esau that it was against the will of God for members of their family to marry Canaanite women.

In Genesis 9:24-27, Noah, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit pronounces a curse upon the Canaanites and a blessing upon the Shemites who would be in the line of Christ.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were Shemites meaning that they were descendants of Shem and were therefore to marry other Shemites. Neither Jacob nor Esau had ever previously been taught by their parents that marriage to Canaanite women was against the will of God.

We know this to be the case since Isaac’s prohibition to Jacob, recorded in Genesis 28:6, to not marry a Canaanite was never in the past given to either Jacob or Esau since nowhere previously has this instruction been given. This is further confirmed by Esau’s response to learning that his Canaanite wives were displeasing to his father.

So the failure of Esau was due in part to the failure of his parents to teach him the ways of the Lord. The Bible teaches that Christian parents have been given the responsibility by the Lord to teach their children the Word of God.

Fathers and mothers are to train their children by means of the Word of God. Parents must stop passing the buck to Sunday school teachers and Christian day school teachers and start fulfilling their responsibility before the Lord to train them and educate them in the Word of God. Your child’s knowledge of the Lord should be received primarily in the home from the parents and not in public school or even Sunday school (Deuteronomy 6:4-7).

The Israelite parents were commanded by the Lord to teach their children to love the Lord with all their heart, soul and with all their might, which is accomplished by obedience to the teaching of the Word of God. Isaac and Rebekah
reaped what they sowed by not teaching Esau Noah’s prophecy since Esau’s marriage to these Hittite women brought them grief.

“Grief” is the noun morah, which means, “bitterness.” Therefore, Esau’s marriage to these Hittite women was literally “bitterness of spirit” to Rebekah and Isaac because their lifestyles radically differed from Abraham’s family spirituality and training (cf. Genesis 15:16, 20; 18:19; 24:3; 27:46).

So we can just picture the scene, Esau brought home his two pagan wives and then left to go hunting for days on end and left Isaac and Rebekah to contend with these women and their pagan ways and attitudes. Thus, Esau’s marriage to these two Hittite women was a great source of bitterness for both Isaac and Rebekah since they rejected the worship of the one true God, Jesus Christ since they were unbelievers.

Proverbs 10:1 A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother. (NASU)

Proverbs 17:25 A foolish son brings grief to his father and bitterness to the one who bore him. (NASU)
Jacob’s Deception

Genesis 27:1 begins a set of dialogues and ends at Genesis 28:5, which give us the record of Jacob under the instruction of his mother Rebekah, deceiving his father Isaac and stealing the blessing of the birthright from his twin brother Esau. These dialogues contained in Genesis 27:1-28:5 are framed by the marriage of Esau to Hittite women, which is recorded in Genesis 26:34-35 and his marriage to an Ishmaelite woman, which is recorded in Genesis 28:6-9.


The information provided in Genesis 26:34-35 regarding Isaac and Rebekah’s displeasure over Esau’s marriage to Hittite women and the information provided in Genesis 28:6-9 regarding his marriage to an Ishmaelite supply essential data for interpreting developments recorded in Genesis 27:1-28:5.

Genesis 27 gives us a perfect example of the “overruling will of God” in the lives of His people where Isaac’s bad decision to give the blessing to Esau and not Jacob is “overruled” by God.

The sovereign will of God functions three different ways in relation to the will of angels and men: (1) Directive will of God: God directly states what He desires of us. (2) Permissive will of God: God permits us to have our own way. (3) Overruling will of God: God overrules our decisions—not letting them have their intended results—in order to protect us and the rest of mankind from our own negative volition and to preserve and perpetuate His own marvelous plan.

A comparison of Genesis 25:23 with Genesis 27 manifests the function of God’s “directive”, “permissive” and “overruling” will. The “directive” will of God for the lives of Esau and Jacob is revealed in the Lord’s prophecy to Rebekah prior to the birth of the twins, which is recorded in Genesis 25:23. The “permissive” will of God is manifested in Genesis 27:1-4 where the Lord “permits” Isaac to attempt to give the blessing to Esau rather than Jacob. The “overruling” will of God is manifested in Genesis 27:5-46 where Jacob deceives Isaac and receives the blessing rather than Esau.

In Genesis 27:1-4, we have the record of the conspiracy of Isaac and Esau to secretly secure the blessing of the birthright for Esau rather than Jacob, which was against the will of God.

**Genesis 27:1** Now it came about, when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, “My son.” And he said to him, “Here I am.” 2 Isaac said, “Behold now, I am old and I do not know the day of my death. 3 Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and
your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me; 4 and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die.” (NASU)

Isaac was one hundred years of age at this point in the narrative since Genesis 25:26 records that Isaac was sixty years of age when he had Esau and Jacob and Genesis 26:34 records that Esau got married at forty years of age. He would live to one hundred eighty years of age according to Genesis 35:28.

Genesis 27:1 records that Isaac was already blind as indicated by the phrase “his eyes were too dim to see.” This blindness is also symbolic of his spiritual blindness that is expressed in his desire to give Esau the blessing of the birthright and not Jacob. It appears that Isaac’s blindness caused him to erroneously think that he might be dying soon. Therefore, as was the custom in his day, he desires to give his blessing before he died.

The term “savory dish” is the noun mat`ammim, which in the plural means, “delicacies, gourmet food” and appears six times in Genesis 27 (4, 7, 9, 14, 17, 31) to emphasize Isaac’s sensuality and not the role the meal played in the blessing ritual (Genesis, A Commentary, Bruce K. Waltke, page 377, Zondervan).

Isaac’s love for fine foods has superseded his love for doing the will of God and has regressed spiritually in that he has in fact become like Esau who exchanged his birthright for a bowl of lintel soup.

This conversation that Isaac had with Esau regarding the blessing of the birthright was private and was in fact a conspiracy on the part of Isaac to see that Esau, who was his “favorite”, would get the blessing of the birthright. Normally the blessing would have been a public affair, given before the entire family because it was, in reality, an oral will which legally determined the disposition of all that the father possessed (See Genesis 49:1, 28; 50:24-25; Deuteronomy 33:1).

“From excavations at Nuzi in central Mesopotamia we learn that the oral blessing or will had legal validity and would stand up even in the courts. Nuzi tablet P56 mentions a lawsuit between three brothers in which two of them contested the right of a third to marry a certain Zululishtar. The young man won his case by arguing that this marriage was provided for in his father’s deathbed blessing.” (Howard Vos, Genesis and Archaeology; Chicago: Moody Press, 1963, p. 96. The information cited by Vos comes from Cyrus Gordon, “Biblical Customs and the Nuzi Tablets,” The Biblical Archaeologist, February, 1940, p. 8; Quote from Vos cited from The Book of Genesis by Bob Deffinbaugh, pages 194-195, Bible Studies Press).

Distribution of family wealth and headship would best be carried out in the presence of all who were concerned, thus we later find Jacob giving his blessing in the presence of all his sons (Genesis 49). Neither Jacob nor Rebekah was present, and this was hardly an oversight but rather Isaac conspiring to give the blessing to
Esau who was his favorite and not Jacob who was Rebekah’s favorite and more importantly, the Lord’s choice. If it were not for Rebekah eavesdropping on the conversation, the entire matter would seemingly have been completed with only two parties involved. Therefore, we have a conspiracy and secrecy where Isaac intended at this clandestine dinner to convey his blessings upon Esau rather than Jacob, which is why Isaac had no blessing left to convey upon Esau, cf. Genesis 27:37-38.

Here was a premeditated plot to thwart the plan and purpose of God for Jacob. Isaac was not ignorant of the revelation of God to Rebekah, which we saw recorded in Genesis 25:23. The fact that the Lord’s choice of Jacob over Esau was justified was that Esau exchanged his birthright for a bowl of red lintel soup. Therefore, God’s purposes for His people could never be achieved through such a person as Esau.

In spite of all these elements, Isaac sought to overrule the verdict of God that the elder serve the younger. He anticipated doing so by a misuse of the pronouncement of the blessing before his death. Therefore, it appears that Isaac intended to manipulate God by reversing the decree of God and the rightful ownership of the rights of the first-born as purchased (although unethically) by Jacob.

This he purposed to do by giving his oral blessing to Esau, which he thought he was doing but in reality, he was giving it to Jacob (See Genesis 27:29). The fact that Isaac sought to give Esau rather than Jacob the blessing after Esau demonstrated his disdained for the plan of God reveals that at this time in his life, Isaac was putting his personal love and affection for Esau ahead of doing God’s will.

Unlike his father, Isaac put his relationship with his children ahead of obedience to the will of the Lord since Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac in obedience to the will of the Lord.
Jacob and Rebekah’s Counter Conspiracy

In Genesis 27:5-17, we will see the counter conspiracy of Rebekah and Jacob to deceive Isaac and secure the blessing of the birthright, which would thwart the conspiracy of Isaac and Esau from succeeding. In this passage, we see that Isaac’s wife, Rebekah is a master of deception and superior to him in clandestine operations.

Also in this passage, we see the third round of Jacob’s battle with Esau. The first round was at their birth (See Genesis 25:21-28) and the second round was Jacob securing the birthright from Esau (See Genesis 25:27-34).

Genesis 27:5 Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game to bring home, 6 Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Behold, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying, 7 ‘Bring me some game and prepare a savory dish for me, that I may eat, and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.’”

Little did Esau and Isaac know that Rebekah was eavesdropping in on their entire conversation in which they had conspired to secure the blessing of the birthright for Esau rather than Jacob who was Rebekah’s favorite.

Rebekah is functioning here as a counter spy in the service of her son Jacob. Here we see Rebekah eavesdropping in on the conversation between Isaac and Esau. She tells Jacob of the conspiracy between Isaac and Esau and their plot to secure the blessing of the birthright for Esau rather than Jacob.

The family rivalry and parental favoritism is pointed out by Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by designating Esau as Isaac’s son and Jacob as Rebekah’s son. The blessing that Rebekah is referring to was given at departures or imminent death in patriarchal times and could not be altered.

Rebekah adds to Isaac’s statement, the phrase “in the presence of the Lord” in order to impress upon Jacob the significance of this critical moment in the family’s history and that it was essential that they act immediately to thwart Isaac’s attempt to give Esau the family blessing.

She also uses this phrase to manipulate Jacob to take part in a counter conspiracy, which would thwart the conspiracy launched by Isaac and Esau. Isaac never used this prepositional phrase since Isaac was going against the will of the Lord by attempting to give Esau the blessing rather than Jacob.

Rebekah and Jacob erroneously believed that by their own human power that Jacob could come into possession of the birthright. They erroneously thought Jacob could “merit” the blessings when in reality he could only receive them according to God’s grace meaning that he could not earn or deserve the blessings since they would be freely given to him by God when he exercised faith in Him.
Jacob and Rebekah were on a works program and thought God needed their help but they were ignorant of God’s method and thus inserted their own way of doing things. This demonstrated in Jacob and Rebekah that self-confident attitude rather than a dependence upon the Lord and His provisions and His plan and methods. Rebekah desired a right thing for his son but she chose to attain it for him in a wrong way.

Genesis 27:8 “Now therefore, my son, listen to me as I command you.” (NASU)
Rebekah commands Jacob and does not suggest for him to do something since she is using her maternal authority to manipulate Jacob to carry out her plan of deception.

Genesis 27:9 “Go now to the flock and bring me two choice young goats from there, that I may prepare them as a savory dish for your father, such as he loves. 10 Then you shall bring it to your father that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death.” (NASU)
Rebekah knows her husband too well and commands Jacob to get two young goats from the flock, which would have a similar taste to wild game, which Isaac loved. She had lived long enough with Isaac to know what kind of food that he loved and how to prepare it. Notice that Rebekah, like Isaac, believes that Isaac is about to die.

Genesis 27:11 Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, “Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man.” 12 Perhaps my father will feel me, then I will be as a deceiver in his sight, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing.” (NASU)
Jacob does not complain that his mother’s plan of deceiving his father and her husband is wrong and is sin but rather he was afraid he would be caught in this deception and bring down a curse upon himself. Therefore, we see that Jacob has no reservations about the morality of the plan but only the feasibility of such a plan.

Jacob could not see how their plan could overcome the fact that he was smooth skinned and his brother was very hairy. But Rebekah was prepared for this problem and had undoubtedly thought about it for quite some time and devised a plan.

Genesis 27:13 But his mother said to him, “Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me.” (NASU)
Gordon J. Wenham, “Rebekah’s reply is as remarkable for what it does not contains as for what it does. She says nothing about dressing up Jacob in goatskin and his brother’s clothes. That might have alarmed Jacob even more. Instead she focuses on the most serious point, that Jacob may be cursed for his efforts. The word order, ‘let the curse on you fall on me,’ emphasizes that Rebekah is the one,
not Jacob, who will suffer should Isaac pronounce a curse instead of a blessing. Her remark is hypothetical, for Isaac does not curse Jacob, but it is doubtful whether she could have diverted any curse onto herself by simply saying so. The blessing is not transferable even to Esau for whom Isaac intended it, so who could a curse be diverted? Presumably Rebekah realized this, for her plan depends on the irrevocability of the blessing, so her remark, ‘let the curse...on me,’ expresses the ferocity of her desire to make Jacob carry out the plan. Probably, Jacob realized curses could not be transferred either and his submission to his mother’s will again underlines his complicity in the scheme. But her closing words, ‘Just obey me. Go and get it for me,’ repeating her opening injunction (vv 8-9) somewhat more brusquely, reveal her impatience and urgency. It is a naked appeal to maternal authority” (Word Biblical Commentary, volume 2, 16-50, page 207).

**Genesis 27:14** So he went and got them, and brought them to his mother; and his mother made savory food such as his father loved. (NASU)

Moses under the inspiration uses the phrase “his father” rather than “her husband” to bring out the rift between Rebekah and Isaac.

**Genesis 27:15** Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. 16 And she put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. 17 She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob.” (NASU)

Notice that Jacob just brings her the materials needed to pull off her scheme and she does all the preparation of the materials. Rebekah’s plan reveals that she was not only devious but that her plan was well thought out in advance. There is no way that her plan was conceived on the spur of the moment but rather it was a plan conceived well in advance since she thought out every minute detail, using goatskin gloves and neck coverings.

Also, in a few moments time, she fashioned a costume for Jacob that fooled Isaac, which also indicates a premeditated plan. Rebekah was too shrewd to leave these matters to chance or to last minute accomplishment. This production had been staged far in advance of its performance.

Rebekah promised to assume the negative consequences personally if anything were to go wrong since she did not consider that there would be any negative consequences for her scheme since she thought the ends justified the means. She did not consider the Lord’s attitude towards her insubordination to her husband and her deception for if she did she would not have attempted the deception.

Rebekah did suffer greatly for the part she played in this scheme. What neither Rebekah nor her son considered, however, were the consequences for their sin even if they did succeed, which they did.
Their plan went off without a hitch, but the results were the opposite of what they had hoped for. There can be no doubt that Rebekah’s desire to secure the blessing of the birthright for Jacob was according to the will of the Lord (see Genesis 25:23, 29-34; 26:35; 27:46) but the means by which she sought to secure it for him, namely, by deception was wrong. For Rebekah, the ends justified the means.

In this passage, we see Rebekah exploiting her husband’s blindness, which was against the Word of the Lord.

**Leviticus 19:14** “You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the LORD.” (NASU)

**Deuteronomy 27:18** “Cursed is he who misleads a blind person on the road.” And all the people shall say, “Amen.” (NASU)

Undoubtedly, Rebekah felt justified in deceiving Isaac since the Lord had told her that Jacob was His choice. But because of a lack of faith she failed to understand that God’s purposes for Jacob would be accomplished whether or not Isaac cooperated or not. She failed to understand that Isaac’s blessing of Esau could not overrule God’s will, which was decreed from eternity past (See Genesis 25:23). She evidently thought that the Lord needed her help.

The family of Isaac and Rebekah is not communicating with each other and working with each other but conspiring against one another. The reason for this is that Isaac who according to the Word of God is the head of the marriage and family is not leading his family according to the will of the Lord.

The Lord’s will is that Jacob receive not only the birthright but also the blessing of the birthright since the Lord declared to Rebekah prior to the birth of the twins that Jacob would be the heir of the Abrahamic Covenant and carry on the line of the Messiah. He goes against the will of the Lord and secretly conspires to give Esau the blessing even though Esau has demonstrated that he is indeed not the one to receive the inheritance since he married Hittite women and exchanged his birthright with Jacob for a bowl of lentil soup.

So the problem in the family is the result of poor leadership by Isaac. Isaac has failed to exercise his authority in accordance with the will of the Lord and will reap the consequences of his failure as the husband of Rebekah and playing favorites with his twin sons.

Rebekah has failed as Isaac’s wife in that she doesn’t respect her husband’s authority, which is against the Word of the Lord.

**Ephesians 5:22** Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. (NASU)

Rebekah fails as a mother in that like her husband, she plays favorites with her twin sons, choosing Jacob over Esau.
The marriage of Rebekah and Isaac is a mess because of no communication and terrible leadership from Isaac. Unlike Abraham and Sarah who communicated with one another and sought each other’s spiritual counsel regarding the inheritance (See Genesis 15:5-6; 21:8-14), Isaac and Rebekah are not communicating with each other.

The first thing Rebekah should have done was to confront Isaac respectfully in love about his contemplated sin. Submission to authority never includes silence toward evil.

We are to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15), even to those in authority over us (cf. Acts 16:35-40).

Having fulfilled her responsibility to warn her husband of the consequences of the evil he had planned, Rebekah should have been content to leave the disposition of the matter to God, Who is all-powerful and all-wise. Her actions betrayed her lack of faith in the sovereignty of God.
Rebekah’s Plan Succeeds

Genesis 27:18-29 records the success of Rebekah’s plan where Jacob successfully deceived his father Isaac into thinking he was Esau so that Isaac unknowingly bestowed upon him the family blessing rather than Esau.

Genesis 27:18 Then he came to his father and said, “My father.” And he said, “Here I am. Who are you, my son?” (NASU)

Isaac’s question, “who are you, my son” indicates also that he has not identified the voice as being Jacob’s or Esau’s implying that Jacob was impersonating the voice of his brother Esau.

Being brothers, there was certainly some similarity in their two voices. Isaac was expecting Esau and not Jacob and he could smell the dinner and so he presumes that it was Esau.

Genesis 27:19 Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me.” (NASU)

We can be sure that Jacob did not want Isaac to question him at all in order to conceal his true identity. He lies to his father and identifies himself as Esau in order to assure his father that he had done as he was told and was ready to receive the blessing.

Notice also that Jacob requests that his father “get up, sit” indicating that Isaac was lying down in bed and as we noted before, expecting his death would be soon. Of course, as we noted, he lived another eighty years.

Genesis 27:20 Isaac said to his son, “How is it that you have it so quickly, my son?” And he said, “Because the LORD your God caused it to happen to me.” (NASU)

Isaac was a bit suspicious since he asks another question, namely, how did he accomplish the task of killing the wild game and preparing it so quickly since Isaac had just sent Esau out? Jacob is in trouble here but rises to the challenge and invokes the name of the Lord as being the reason for his quick success in catching the wild game for his father. This will prompt a further question and investigation from Isaac.

Jacob excused his sin by claiming that the Lord gave him success. By doing so, he is using the Lord’s name in vain and compounding his lie with blasphemy.

Exodus 20:7 “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.” (NASU)

Jacob’s response does not satisfy Isaac and aroused his father’s suspicions further since there is no record of Esau ever mentioning the Lord’s name. Isaac’s response here to Jacob’s impersonation of his brother indicates that Isaac was not
out of it mentally. His response also indicates that he suspected that Rebekah might attempt to deceive him since she was totally against him blessing Esau rather than Jacob.

Thus, far we have seen that Isaac cannot trust his eyesight because he is blind. Then, we have seen that he does not trust his hearing, which is indicated by his next question, which appeals to his sense of touch.

Now, those who have children will know that sometimes it is hard to identify them by their voices since they can sound similar to each other.

**Genesis 27:21** Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come close, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not.” (NASU)

Jacob’s worst fears are coming to pass when Isaac requests that he come closer so that he might touch him in order to confirm his identity. He expressed this fear to his mother but as we will see the animal skins that he wore did the trick.

The distinctive quality and inflection of Jacob’s voice put his impersonation of Esau in jeopardy but the skin disguise does the trick and saves Jacob from being discovered by his father. So Isaac knows that sometimes Esau can sound like Jacob and vice versa but now he is thinking to himself that they both cannot feel the same because he knows that Esau is very hairy and Jacob is not.

**Genesis 27:22** So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” 23 He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau’s hands; so he blessed him. (NASU)

Isaac has identified Jacob’s voice but the skin disguise has made him doubt his suspicions that Jacob is impersonating Esau. His hearing says that he is talking to Jacob but his sense of touch tells him it is Esau.

The statement “he blessed him” is “not” a reference to the blessing of the inheritance but rather it is the blessing to admit Jacob into Isaac’s presence. This is indicated by Isaac’s statement recorded in Genesis 27:25, “Bring it (the meal) to me and I will eat of my son’s game, that I may bless you.”

Remember, Genesis 27:3-4 records telling Esau to kill him some wild game and prepared it the way he likes so that he might bestow upon him the blessing of the inheritance and at this point in Genesis 27:23, Isaac has not eaten the meal.

**Genesis 27:24** And he said, “Are you really my son Esau?” And he said, “I am.” (NASU)

Even after blessing Jacob, Isaac expresses his doubts as to the identity of the son speaking to him by asking Jacob point blank, “are you really my son Esau?” Isaac still won’t eat the meal until he receives an answer for this point blank question. It appears that it did not enter his mind that Jacob would attempt to deceive him but I am sure he knew that Rebekah would.
Genesis 27:25 So he said, “Bring it to me, and I will eat of my son's game, that I may bless you.” And he brought it to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank. (NASU)

Three times we have seen that Isaac voiced his suspicions (Genesis 27:20, 22, 24) but in the end was deceived by his sense of touch (Genesis 27:16, 23) and smell (Genesis 27:27) and blessed Jacob instead of Esau. Isaac’s decision was reached based upon all five senses: hearing, seeing, tasting, touching and smell and yet he was still deceived.

After Jacob answered this point blank question to his satisfaction, Isaac will now eat the meal. By demanding to eat the meal, Isaac is imposing the test of taste. The phrase “my son’s game” implies that Esau prepared Isaac’s favorite meal in accordance with a special recipe, which was distinctive of Esau’s skill in cooking, which endeared him to his father in the first place.

Isaac’s judgment is not impaired because of his blindness or poor health since he asks pointed questions and is suspicious and sensed that Rebekah was trying to thwart his attempt to bless Esau rather than Jacob. Rather, his judgment is impaired because of his haste to bless Esau before Rebekah knows about it and he dies.

Isaac’s command to Esau to kill his favorite wild game and prepare his favorite meal for him expresses his urgency in bestowing the blessing upon Esau. If Isaac wasn’t in such a rush, he would have requested the presence of Jacob along with Esau but because of his plan to secretly bless Esau without the presence of the entire family, he did not do this. Therefore, Isaac will make a poor judgment for the sake of urgency.

Genesis 27:26 Then his father Isaac said to him, “Please come close and kiss me, my son.” (NASU)

The kiss was not only a token of true personal love and affection but of loyalty, thus making Jacob’s deception and treachery more deplorable. The phrase “my son” here implies “my favorite” son who of course was Esau.

Genesis 27:27 So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said, “See, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed.” (NASU)

The smell of Esau’s garments prompts an emotional response and blessing from him where he recalls the vocation of his son as a hunter. The smell of Esau’s garments, which Jacob used to deceive his father, fully convince Isaac that Esau is standing before him. Therefore, he proceeds to unknowingly pronounce the blessing of the inheritance upon Jacob.

The blessing that Isaac will unknowingly pronounce upon Jacob was inspired by God the Holy Spirit since he spoke by means of faith according to Hebrews 11:20 even though he was intending to go against the will of God by pronouncing a blessing upon Esau.
Hebrews 11:20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come. (NASU)

Isaac’s intention was to bless Esau, which was against the will of the Lord and yet Isaac pronounced a blessing upon Jacob even though he did it in ignorance. Like Isaac, the prophet Balaam was inspired by the Holy Spirit to bless Israel against his will (Numbers 23:11-12). Also, the high priest in Jesus’ day spoke prophetically of the meaning of our Lord’s death, though he himself did not understand the real import of what he was saying (John 11:49-52).

Genesis 27:28 “Now may God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and an abundance of grain and new wine.” (NASU)

When Isaac pronounces the blessing, he uses the term Elohim, “God,” and not the personal covenant name of God, Yahweh, “Lord” since he knows that Esau is not concerned about spiritual blessings but rather material blessings.

The first material blessing was the dew of heaven. Dew is of great importance in Palestine since the area possesses a dry summer subtropical climate. The entire Mediterranean Basin experiences this climate, in which a stationary high pressure system does not allow moisture to penetrate the region during the summer. This system shifts to the south during the winter allowing moisture to penetrate. Thus, the land is dependent upon dew throughout the summer. Heavy dews are normal because of the great difference between night and day temperatures.

Bruce K. Waltke, “Dew from westerly and northwesterly Mediterranean winds plays an important role in the irrigation of crops in many parts of Palestine” (Genesis, A Commentary, page 379, Zondervan).

The second material blessing was “the fatness of the earth,” which is a figurative expression referring to the fertility of the land.

These first two material blessings would result in the third material blessing, namely, “an abundance of grain and new wine,” which refers to rich harvests.

It is interesting to note that these first three material blessings would be of interest to the settled farmer but of no interest to a nomadic hunter like Esau, making these blessings more appropriate for Jacob rather than Esau.

Genesis 27:29 “May peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you; Be master of your brothers, and may your mother’s sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you.” (NASU)

The blessings contained in Genesis 27:29 are directly related to the nation of Israel since Jacob who later had his named changed by the Lord to “Israel” is the progenitor of that nation. Also, they are Messianic in that they find their ultimate fulfillment in the Person of Jesus Christ who is a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

“Peoples” is the noun `am, which refers to the entire Gentile population of the earth in contrast with the population of Israel. Therefore, in relation to the nation of
Israel, the blessing “May peoples serve you” refers to the fact that the entire earth’s population, the Gentiles, shall serve the nation of Israel.

In another sense, this prophecy is Messianic in that the entire earth’s population will serve the Lord Jesus Christ who is a descendant Abraham, Isaac and Jacob during His millennial reign (Psalm 22:27-28; Malachi 1:11; Zechariah 14:16).

“Nations” is the noun l’om, which refers to the human race in their unified groups and reflecting their distinct characteristics. Therefore, in relation to the nation of Israel, the blessing “May nations bow down to you” refers to the fact that all the Gentile nations shall serve the nation of Israel.

In another sense, this prophecy is Messianic in that all the Gentile nations will serve the Lord Jesus Christ who is a descendant Abraham, Isaac and Jacob during His millennial reign (Psalm 22:27-28; Malachi 1:11; Zechariah 14:16).

The plural form of the nouns l’om, “nations” and ‘am, “peoples” expresses the comprehensiveness of Israel and Jesus Christ’s dominion over the Gentile nations of the earth.

The command “Be master of your brothers” confirms the Lord’s prophecy to Rebekah recorded in Genesis 25:23 that “the older shall serve the younger.”

In Genesis 25:23, the Lord declares that the “older shall serve the younger” indicating that the younger son, Jacob would receive the inheritance and not Esau who was older.

“Master” is the noun g’vir, which is a technical term designating the position of inheritance and legal superiority over another. Therefore, the command to Jacob to “be master of your brothers” denotes the fact that Jacob would hold the position of inheritance in the family and denotes his legal superiority over his brother Esau and that he would inherit his father’s position as patriarch over his clan.

The blessing “may your mother's sons bow down to you” does not imply that Rebekah had other children beside the twins. But rather it denotes the fact that Rebekah’s descendants through Esau who were the Edomites would pay homage and show honor and respect to Jacob’s descendants who are the nation of Israel (See Genesis 36:1-43).

The blessing “cursed be those who curse you and blessed be those who bless you” is a reference to the blessing the Lord pronounced upon Abraham that is recorded in Genesis 12:3.

Therefore, we see that the blessing “cursed be who curse you and blessed be those who bless you” indicates that Jacob is inheriting an Abrahamic blessing. This blessing indicates that like his grandfather Abraham, the Lord would identify Himself with the cause of Jacob. Therefore, this blessing indicates that like Abraham, blessing Jacob would be equivalent to doing it to God whereas those who curse Jacob would in effect be cursing God.
So like Abraham, those who curse Jacob and his descendants would be cursed by God and those who bless him would be blessed by God. The nation of Israel is descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Therefore, those who curse Israel will be cursed by God and those who bless Israel will be blessed by God.
Isaac Learns He Has Been Deceived By Jacob

In Genesis 27:30-40, we see Isaac learning that he had been deceived by Jacob and Esau attempting in vain to secure a blessing from Isaac but instead his father pronounces an antiblessing upon Esau.

**Genesis 27:30** Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. (NASU)

This was not an accident that Esau came a moment too late since his late arrival was according to the providence of God, which expresses the fact that the world and our lives are not ruled by chance or fate but by God.

**Genesis 27:31** Then he also made savory food, and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, “Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me.” 32 Isaac his father said to him, “Who are you?” And he said, “I am your son, your firstborn, Esau.” 33 Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, “Who was he then that hunted game and brought it to me, so that I ate of all of it before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed.” (NASU)

The expression “trembled violently” is composed of five words in the Hebrew text and literally means that Isaac “trembled, a trembling, that was great and excessive.”

The irony of it all was that since Isaac had tried to give everything to Esau, there was nothing left that could be considered a blessing to his favorite son, for all had been given to Jacob. Isaac set his heart on that which was contrary to the revealed will of God, and because of this his world came crashing down upon him when God’s purposes prevailed.

The Holy Spirit convicted Isaac that he was going against the will of God by attempting to secretly bestow the family blessing upon Esau rather than Jacob, which is indicated by Isaac’s violent emotional reaction to finding out that he had been deceived into giving the blessing to Jacob rather than Esau. He now realizes that he was wrong by choosing Esau over Jacob in defiance of God’s revealed will.

Isaac’s statement “Yes, and he (Jacob) shall be blessed” not only indicates the irrevocability of the blessing but also it indicates that Isaac knows now that he was wrong to choose Esau rather than Jacob.

Isaac had just encountered the “overruling” will of God where Isaac against the will of God sought to bestow the blessing of the inheritance upon Esau, who was not God’s choice, but rather He chose Jacob.

**Proverbs 19:21** Many plans are in a man's heart, but the counsel of the LORD will stand. (NASU)
Genesis 27:34 When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, “Bless me, even me also, O my father!” (NASU)

Esau was an emotional and irrational person as revealed in the fact that he was quick to exchange his invaluable birthright and the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant as the first-born in the family for a bowl of lintel soup but now he wants the blessing of the birthright, which he rejected by exchanging the birthright.

Isaac and Esau conspired against Jacob and their plan has backfired on them since they reaped deception because they sowed seeds of deception.

Genesis 27:35 And he said, “Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing.” (NASU)

The statement “he has taken away your blessing” indicates that the blessing that Isaac bestowed upon Jacob unknowingly was “irrevocable” and that Isaac has come to his senses and realizes that God has chosen Jacob and not Esau.

Genesis 27:36 Then he said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.” And he said, “Have you not reserved a blessing for me?” (NASU)

“Supplanted” is the verb `aqav, which means, “to seize by the heel” and is used a play on Jacob’s name, which is derived from this verb.

The name given to “Jacob” means, “heel,” implying grasping and describes the younger twin as “the heel catcher.”

Esau was definitely cheated when Jacob stole the blessing but he was definitely not cheated by Jacob when he exchanged his birthright for a bowl of lintel soup, rather the latter was a result of his own bad decision. Therefore, Esau fails to take responsibility for his actions and has himself only to blame for the exchange of the birthright.

Genesis 27:37 But Isaac replied to Esau, “Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?” (NASU)

The statement “I have made him (Jacob) your (Esau) master” is confirmation of the command given by Isaac to Jacob to “be master of your brothers,” which is recorded in Genesis 27:29, which in turn confirms the Lord’s prophecy to Rebekah recorded in Genesis 25:23 that “the older shall serve the younger.”

The command “be master of your brothers” and the statement “I have made him your master” denotes the fact that Jacob would hold the position of inheritance in the family and his legal superiority over his brother Esau and would inherit his father’s position as patriarch over his clan.
Isaac’s statement “all his relatives I have given to him as servants” echoes the blessing in Genesis 27:29, “may your mother's sons bow down to you” and denotes the fact that Rebekah’s descendants through Esau who were the Edomites would pay homage and show honor and respect to Jacob’s descendants who are the nation of Israel (See Genesis 36:1-43).

Isaac’s statement to Esau “with grain and new wine I have sustained him” echoes the blessing bestowed upon Jacob that is recorded in Genesis 27:29, “may God give you an abundance of grain and new wine,” which refers to rich harvests.

Isaac’s rhetorical question to Esau, “Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?” means that since Isaac unknowingly gave everything to Esau, he now has only an antiblessing to offer Esau, which are prophecies.

Genesis 27:38 Esau said to his father, “Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.” So Esau lifted his voice and wept. 39 Then Isaac his father answered and said to him, “Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling, and away from the dew of heaven from above. 40 By your sword you shall live, and your brother you shall serve; But it shall come about when you become restless, that you will break his yoke from your neck.” (NASU)

Since Isaac gave everything to Jacob, all he has to give Esau is an antiblessing, which is a parody on Jacob’s blessing and are also prophecies concerning the future of Esau’s descendants who were the Edomites.

The antiblessing/prophecy “away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling” means that Esau and his descendants would be denied the earth’s fertility unlike Jacob and his descendants.

The antiblessing/prophecy “away from the dew of heaven from above” means that Esau and his descendants, the Edomites, would be denied dew, which plays such an essential role in the irrigation of crops in Palestine.

Therefore, we see that Esau’s descendants, the Edomites, would not participate in the blessing of rich harvests as Jacob’s descendants, the Israelites would and would live away from fertile places, which implies that his descendants would live in a dry and barren land-as Edom on the whole actually was.

The antiblessing/prophecy “by your sword you shall live” means that Esau’s descendants, the Edomites, would live in continuous conflict, always having to defend themselves from their enemies. Edom appears as a militant nation throughout the Old Testament Scriptures (Numbers 20:18; 1 Samuel 14:47; 1 Kings 11:14-16; 2 Kings 14:7-10; Obadiah; Psalm 60:10-11).

The antiblessing/prophecy “your brother you shall serve” means that the descendants of Jacob, the Israelites would prevail over Esau’s descendants, the Edomites. Esau, the older, did not actually serve Jacob, his younger twin but rather
Esau’s descendants did (see 1 Samuel 14:47; 2 Samuel 8:14; 1 Kings 11:15-16; 22:47; 2 Kings 14:7). This prophecy is a confirmation of the prophecy that was given to Rebekah and is recorded in Genesis 25:23 that the “older (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob).”

The prophecy “But it shall come about when you become restless, that you will break his yoke from your neck” means that the time would come when the Edomites would break free from Israel (See 1 Kings 11:14-15; 2 Kings 8:20-22).

From the time of David, Edom was part of the Israelite empire but later regained its independence (See 2 Kings 8:20-22) but after the fall of Jerusalem, Edom took revenge on Judah (Obadiah; Psalm 137:7). Therefore, we can see that this prophecy of future freedom was in a sense a blessing and thus Esau was blessed as it says in Hebrews 11:20 that Isaac blessed not only Jacob but also Esau.

**Hebrews 11:20** By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come. (NASU)

Now, it might appear on the surface that God rewarded Rebekah and Jacob for their sin of deceiving Isaac but this is far from the case. Both Rebekah and Jacob reaped what they sowed. God disciplined both Rebekah and Jacob for their deception.

For instance, Rebekah and Jacob apparently never saw each other again after the separation that grew out of this deceit, which was a painful experience for both. Secondly, Jacob was more cruelly deceived by his own sons when they sold Joseph into slavery.

Lastly, Jacob went from being a man of means and influence to being demoted to a position of hard rigorous service for twenty years to Laban.
Rebekah Learns of Esau’s Plot to Kill Jacob and Sends Jacob Away

Genesis 27:41-46 records Rebekah learning of Esau’s plot to kill Jacob once Isaac has died and as a result advising Jacob to leave home.

Genesis 27:41 So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” (NASU)

“Bore a grudge” is the verb *satam*, which means, “to hate.”

Love and hate are absolutes meaning you either love your fellow human being by obeying the Lord’s command to love one another or you hate your fellow human being by disobeying this command. Therefore, when love is absent, hate is present and love unexpressed is not love at all.

Hate is expressed in both an “active” and a “passive” sense. Hate in the “active” sense refers to unjustifiable hostility and antagonism towards one’s fellow human being, which expresses itself in malicious words and actions. Hate in the “passive” sense is manifested by coldness, by isolation, by exclusion, unconcern for your fellow believer.

Esau hated his brother Jacob in both an “active” and “passive” sense for stealing the blessing of the birthright.

1 John 2:9 The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. 10 The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes. (NASU)

By plotting to kill Jacob when his father died, Esau was being governed by his old Adamic sin nature. This attitude of hate led to Esau plotting to murder his brother, which is one of the sins that God hates (Proverbs 6:16-19).

Just as Cain killed his brother Abel in a jealous rage, so Esau plans to kill his brother Jacob because of jealousy.

Proverbs 6:34 For jealousy enrages a man, and he will not spare in the day of vengeance. (NASU)

Like Cain, Esau was an emotional person who was governed by his emotions.

Genesis 27:41 So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” (NASU)

Esau’s statement “the days of mourning for my father are near” indicates that he anticipates that his father will not live much longer but as it turns out, Isaac lived for another eighty years.

His statement “the days of mourning for my father are near, then I will kill my brother Jacob” also indicates that love for his father and fear that his father
would curse him and disinherit him constrained him from murdering Jacob immediately.

**Genesis 27:42** Now when the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him, “Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you by planning to kill you.”

Rebekah received this information that Esau was plotting to kill Jacob by divine revelation since Genesis 27:41 records that Esau divulged this plan to no one but in fact was stating this intention to kill Jacob only to himself.

**Genesis 27:43** “Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban!” (NASU)

Just as Rebekah commanded Jacob to deceive his father into giving him the blessing of the birthright so she commands him again to flee from Esau.

**Genesis 27:44** “Stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury subsides, 45 until your brother's anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?” (NASU)

Unknown to Rebekah was that she thought she would see Jacob again in just a few days, but she never saw him again. She never thought that Jacob’s exile would be for twenty years as it turned out to be (See Genesis 31:41). Rebekah not only destroyed her relationship with Esau after conspiring with Jacob to steal the blessing of the birthright but in the end she also lost Jacob.

**Genesis 27:46** Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?” (NASU)

Just as Sarah took the initiative to provide for Isaac by driving out Hagar and Ishmael (See Genesis 21:10) so Rebekah acts for Jacob by providing for his get away with a cover of legitimacy.

Rebekah’s desire to get a wife for Jacob among her relatives was not her real motivation for sending Jacob to her relatives. But rather, it was to spare Jacob from Esau’s wrath. Rebekah uses Esau’s Hittite wives as a pretext for sending Jacob away to her relatives.

Esau’s Hittite wives brought grief not only to Rebekah but also Isaac according to Genesis 26:34-35. Therefore, by appealing to Isaac’s dislike for Esau’s Hittite wives, Rebekah knows that Isaac will consent to her sending Jacob away to her relatives in Paddan Aram.

The Hittites were the descendants of Heth who was the son of Canaan (See Genesis 10:15) and as a result were under a curse according to the prophecy of Noah, which is recorded in Genesis 9:24-27. At times the Hittites, Gergashites,
Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, were called “Canaanites” but strictly speaking the nations who dwelt on the coasts or river lowlands were called “Canaanite” (Nm. 13:29).

Against the will of the Lord, Esau married Hittite women, who were Canaanites according to Genesis 26:34-35. Therefore, Rebekah had a legitimate reason for sending Jacob away.

The Aramean women embrace the faith of their husbands, unlike the Canaanite women who seduce their husbands to join their lifestyles (See Genesis 24:4; 26:34-35; 31:50).

Again, we see Rebekah manipulating her husband and whining at him, which manifests how bad Rebekah and Isaac’s relationship had gotten. As a wife to Isaac, Rebekah is not conducting herself according to the Word of God.

**Colossians 3:18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.** (NASU)

Rebekah has become a contentious woman as a result of her disobedience (Proverbs 19:13; 21:9, 19; 25:15, 16, 24). She states to Isaac that she won’t be fit to live with if Jacob marries a Canaanite like his brother.

Rebekah is lying about her true motivation for sending Jacob to her relatives, indicating that her and Isaac were not communicating on important spiritual matters.

Also, Rebekah is pouring salt on the open wound of Isaac who knew full well that Esau disobeyed the Lord and betrayed the Abrahamic Covenant by marrying Hittite women rather than an Aramean woman.
Esau Displeases His Father

Genesis 28:6-9 records Esau marrying an Ishmaelite in order to please his father after discovering that his Hittite wives displeased him.

**Genesis 28:6** Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take to himself a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he charged him, saying, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan, 7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Paddan-aram.” (NASU)

The prohibition to not marry a Canaanite woman and the command to marry a cousin corresponds to the prohibition and command recorded in Genesis 24:2-4 that Abraham gave his servant Eliezer regarding a bride for Isaac.

The family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was prohibited by God from entering into marriage with the Canaanites and instead were to marry Shemites since Noah prophesied in Genesis 9:20-27 that Canaan was under a curse and that Shem was in the line of Christ. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were Shemites meaning that they were descendants of Shem and were therefore to marry other Shemites. Rebekah’s family were Shemites and therefore, Jacob is sent away to marry one of his cousins.

Neither Jacob nor Esau had ever previously been taught by their parents that marriage to Canaanite women was against the will of God and unsatisfactory to their parents. We know this to be the case since Isaac’s prohibition to Jacob to not marry a Canaanite was never in the past given to either Jacob or Esau since nowhere previously has this instruction been given. This is further confirmed by Esau’s response to learning that his Canaanite wives were displeasing to his father when he went and married an Ishmaelite, which is recorded in Genesis 28:6-9. Therefore, it appears that Isaac and Rebekah failed as parents in the eyes of the Lord since they did not teach Jacob and Esau Noah’s prophecy recorded in Genesis 9:24-27.

**Genesis 28:8** So Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan displeased his father Isaac; 9 and Esau went to Ishmael, and married, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth. (NASU)

When Esau learned of Jacob’s departure, he then finally realized how displeasing his Hittite-Canaanite wives were to Isaac. Evidently, he did not know how his wives acted when he wasn’t around. So he did not understand that the real problem that their Canaanite lifestyle caused. He thought it was because they were not relatives. So when Jacob was sent to get a wife from Rebekah’s relatives, Esau jumped to the conclusion that he could please his father by marrying a relative and somehow receive a blessing from him.
Esau never did understand the spiritual issues involved since he was soulish man and uninterested in the things of the Lord as manifested in his exchanging his birthright for a bowl of red lintel soup. The fact that Esau was a naturally minded or soulish man and not a spiritual man is the reason why he never understood spiritual issues.

So Esau goes to his relatives, the home of Ishmael and takes a wife from among them. But again he has no spiritual perception and doesn’t realize that Ishmael was not in the line of Christ either and that the Lord had chosen Isaac over him as Abraham’s heir. In fact, Psalm 83:6 records an alliance of Edomites with the Ishmaelites against Israel!

Genesis 28:6-9 also reveals how desperately Esau desired to please his father but he lacks spiritual understanding to connect with Isaac and Rebekah.

“Ishmael” was the son that Sarah’s Egyptian maid Hagar bore to Abraham and his name means, “God hears” which alludes to the fact that God heard or took notice of Hagar’s suffering when she was sent out of the home by Abraham and Sarah while pregnant with Ishmael (See Genesis 16).

“Ishmael” became the progenitor of the Arabs, who have traditionally been the enemies of Israel and also from the line of “Ishmael” came Muhammad and Islam, one of the most demonic of religions and a foe of not only Israel but also Christianity.
Jacob and Esau Reconcile

Genesis 32:1-2 presents to us the record of Jacob encountering the angels of God as he was returning to the land of Canaan and naming the place, “Mahanaim,” which means, “This is God’s camp.”

In this chapter, we see Jacob leaving behind forever his problems with Laban but now he has to confront his past and Esau who he cheated out of the blessing of the birthright. Genesis 31 records Jacob escaping one conflict with Laban but now in Genesis 32, we see him returning to another conflict, namely his unresolved feud with his twin brother Esau.

So we see that Jacob had two great enemies, one that resided outside the Promised Land in Laban and the other in the Promised Land, that being Esau. Esau typifies the believer’s enemy within, that being the old Adamic sin nature and Laban typifies the believer’s enemy from without, that being the cosmic system of Satan.

As soon as Jacob made his way through the mountains of Gilead, after triumphing over Laban and separating from him by the Mizpah monument, his thoughts would soon turn to his old adversary, Esau.

If you recall, his mother Rebekah said that she would send for Jacob after Esau had cooled down (Genesis 27:45). However, Jacob never heard from her during the twenty years in Paddan Aram. Either she was ill or died and was therefore not able to call him back or Esau was still threatening to kill Jacob.

Also, at this time, Jacob probably thought that his father Isaac had died since prior to leaving his family, the entire family was anticipating that his death would be soon. So Jacob was facing an uncertain future just as he was when he left Canaan.

The reader in Genesis 32 finds a potentially dangerous conflict taking place between the two brothers but the anticipation of this encounter creates an opportunity to drive Jacob to prayer to solve the potential problem. But before Jacob meets Esau, he has two unexpected meetings, one with the elect angels of God who have been protecting him while in exile, which is recorded in Genesis 31:1-2 and the other with the preincarnate Christ, which is recorded in Genesis 32:22-32.

These two meetings, one with the angels and the other with the preincarnate Christ were designed to reassure Jacob of God’s protection and presence when he encounters Esau. These two encounters with the angels and the Lord mark the second and third turning points in the life of Jacob, with the first being of course, his encounter with the Lord at Bethel.
Each time that Jacob encounters the angels of God and the preincarnate Christ, he memorializes it by constructing a pillar, the first at Bethel (28:19), the second at Mahanaim (32:2) and the third at Peniel (32:30).

The first encounter with the angels of God and the preincarnate Christ as recorded in Genesis 28:10-15 prepared him to meet Laban and the second encounter prepares him to meet Esau.

The outline of Genesis 32 is as follows: (1) Angels of God meet Jacob at Mahanaim (32:1-2) (2) Jacob sends messengers to Esau (32:3-6) (3) Jacob divides his family out of fear of Esau (32:7-8) (4) Jacob prays for protection from Esau and claims covenant promises of God (32:9-12) (5) Jacob sends gifts to Esau (32:13-21) (6) Jacob sends family across Jabbok (32:22-23) (7) Jacob prays as he wrestles the God-Man, Jesus Christ at Peniel (32:24-32).

In Genesis 33:1-17 we see Jacob finally encountering Esau and the two men reconciling with each other. Therefore, Genesis 32 can be described as “God Prepares Jacob to Meet Esau.”
Jacob Sends Gifts To Esau

Genesis 32:13-21 presents to us the record of Jacob sending gifts to Esau to restore stealing the blessing of the birthright and thus pacifying him in case Esau has hostile intentions towards him.

Genesis 32:13 So he spent the night there. Then he selected from what he had with him a present for his brother Esau: 14 two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, 15 thirty milking camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. (NASU)

When Genesis 32:13 records that Jacob “spent the night there” it is referring to “Mahanaim,” which according to Genesis 32:2 was the place that he encountered the elect angels.

“Mahanaim” is the proper noun machanayim, which means, “two camps,” referring to Jacob’s human encampment and the angels encampment and was located on the Jabbok River, along which the major east-west trade route connecting the Trans-jordan King’s Highway and the coastal Via Maris run.

The statement “Then he selected from what he had with him” indicates that Jacob had little time to assemble these animals and simply took whatever was brought to him and did not have the opportunity to inspect them since this was done at night.

A comparison of Genesis 32:13 and 21-22 indicates that after his prayer to the Lord for deliverance and during that same night, Jacob decided it proper to send a very gracious gift to Esau.

Genesis 32:14 records that Jacob sent Esau two hundred female goats and twenty male goats. Goats were domesticated as early as 3000 B.C. and their milk, butter, cheese and meat provided sustenance. Goat hair and hides were useful in making clothing and containers for liquids. This verse also records that Jacob sent Esau two hundred ewes or female sheep and twenty rams or mature male sheep.

Genesis 32:15 records that Jacob sent Esau thirty milking or nursing camels and their colts. The camel was a prime beast of burden and a prime measure of wealth in the ancient Near East, owing both to its ability to store water and to survive on desert and steppe scrub. With the camel’s domestication, overland trade routes to the remote spice regions of the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula were opened to the rest of the ancient Near Eastern economic sphere.

Camels were used for milk and hides and their skins were used for sandals. The Israelites were prohibited from eating the meat of camels (Lev. 11:4; Deut. 14:7). However, camel meat is a common part of the diet of Arabic peoples today and was also part of the diet of many biblical peoples.

The possession of many camels implied that the owner was engaged in
caravanning. The camel was used for riding and as a beast of burden and for recreational purposes such as racing.

Genesis 32:15 records that Jacob also sent Esau forty cows and ten bulls as well as twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. These animals were valuable for transportation, milk and leather. The females are especially prized for breeding and thus herd expansion and milking, thus Jacob sends more females than he does males. Donkeys were domesticated early and were comparatively plentiful. Therefore, if we do the math, Jacob sent a total of 550 animals, which is not counting the young camels.

This gift was very generous and gracious and was Jacob’s attempt to reconcile with Esau and offer restitution for his deceiving his blind father Isaac into bestowing the blessings of the birthright upon him rather than Esau.

Jacob sends the gifts in increments in order to offer restitution to Esau in case he is still offended by Jacob’s past conduct in relation to the blessing of the birthright. The animals were sent as free gifts to compensate the wrong Jacob had done to Esau when he deceived his father Isaac into bestowing upon him the blessing of the birthright rather than to Esau.

Bruce K. Waltke, “He is ready to restore the blessing and to recognize Esau as lord (See Proverbs 25:21-22), trusting God to keep His covenant promises (See Genesis 13; 32:9-12)” (Genesis, A Commentary, page 444, Zondervan).

This gift was “not” a bribe on Jacob’s part but rather it was to express that his intentions towards Esau were peaceful and conciliatory and deferential.

Also, this gift was “not” an attempt on Jacob’s part to help God out here and therefore an act of unbelief. If you recall, Jacob prayed to God for deliverance from Esau in Genesis 32:9-12. This gift should be “not” construed that Jacob was now forgetting about his prayer to God for deliverance and thinking that he could deliver himself with this gift or help God out with this gift. Rather, Jacob was doing what was required of him under these circumstances since he had cheated and had been deceitful with Esau in the past and was offering restitution for his past conduct with Esau.

With this gift, Jacob was attempting to offer “restitution” to Esau and make amends for actions against Esau when he had deceived his blind father Isaac into bestowing the blessings of the birthright to him rather than Esau. The Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples the doctrine of restitution (Matthew 5:21-25).

Our Lord taught His disciples that if their horizontal relationships with people are not right because of sin, then they are not right in their vertical relationship with God. For instance, if we don’t forgive our fellow believers, then God won’t forgive us in the experiential sense and thus we won’t be restored to fellowship (Mt. 6:14-15; Mt. 18:21-35).
So, if we have sinned and injured someone whether his or her property or reputation, we must confess it to the injured party and offer restitution, which in some cases, restitution could simply involve an apology.

Sins against society and against one another require civil restitution for experiential forgiveness before God and men, thus, the thief steals, realizes his sin, and confesses to God and his victim, then makes restitution, and God forgives him.

Leviticus 6 presents clear guidelines about the principles involved when one sins against God and another person. In the Gospel of Luke, Zaccheus informed the Lord that he gave to those whom he had defrauded four times as much (Luke 19:8-10).

Therefore, we see that in Genesis 32:13-21, Jacob is offering restitution to Esau in order to make amends for defrauding Esau when he stole the blessing of the birthright.

Genesis 32:16 He delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, “Pass on before me, and put a space between droves.” (NASU)

Genesis 32:16 records that Jacob divided the animals into five different droves: first the goats (200 female and 20 male), then the sheep (20 male and 200 female), then camels (30) and their young, then the cattle (40 cows and 10 bulls) and then the donkeys (20 female and 10 male).

Jacob told his servants to keep a good distance between each drove of animals so that as a result Esau would receive five separate gifts at different times. Jacob instructed his servants in command of each drove to inform Esau that each drove of animals was a gift from Jacob who would be following behind them.

Notice also that Jacob gives instructions that each shepherd was to “follow” his herd, rather than lead it in order to impress Esau with the herd and then the message that the herd was a gift for him.

Genesis 32:17 He commanded the one in front, saying, “When my brother Esau meets you and asks you, saying, ‘To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and to whom do these animals in front of you belong?’ 18 then you shall say, ‘These belong to your servant Jacob; it is a present sent to my lord Esau. And behold, he also is behind us.’” 19 Then he commanded also the second and the third, and all those who followed the droves, saying, “After this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him 20 and you shall say, ‘Behold, your servant Jacob also is behind us.’” For he said, “I will appease him with the present that goes before me. Then afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me.” (NASU)

“Appease” is the piel form of the verb kaphar, which in the context of Esau and Jacob’s relationship at this point refers to “reconciling” or “repairing” their relationship. The implication of this word is that with this gift Esau would be
visually blocked from seeing Jacob’s transgression of twenty years earlier or in other words, the gift was designed to “cover” the sin that Jacob had committed against Esau some twenty years earlier.

**Genesis 32:21** So the present passed on before him, while he himself spent that night in the camp. (NASU)

In Genesis 32:22-23, we see that by faith Jacob sends his family across the Jabbok River and into the land of Canaan.

**Genesis 32:22** Now he arose that same night and took his two wives and his two maids and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23 He took them and sent them across the stream. And he sent across whatever he had. (NASU)

In Genesis 32:24a, we see Jacob alone in prayer prior to his encounter with Esau and entrance into the land of Canaan, which was in obedience to the Lord’s command. Then, we see in Genesis 32:24b Jacob wrestling with the preincarnate Christ.

**Genesis 32:25a** records the Lord as not prevailing over Jacob in their wrestling match. The Lord did not prevail over Jacob in the sense that the Lord could not refuse Jacob’s prayer requests because they were according to His will and because Jacob persevered in prayer. Genesis 32:25b records the Lord dislocating Jacob’s hip. The dislocation of Jacob’s hip symbolized that by means of the fourteen years of hard labor for Laban, which constituted divine discipline, the Lord had succeeded in getting Jacob to stop trusting in his own power to solve his problems and to depend upon the power of God.

In Genesis 32:26, we see the crippled Jacob clinging to the Lord and not letting Him go until the Lord blesses him. In Genesis 32:27-28, we have the account of the Lord changing Jacob’s name to Israel. Genesis 32:29-32 presents to us the record of Jacob naming the place of his wrestling match with the Lord “Peniel” and then crossing it.

In Genesis 33, we see Jacob reconciling with his twin brother Esau. In Genesis 33:1, we see Jacob, now Israel meeting up with his family and caravan and preparing to meet Esau.

**Genesis 33:1** Then Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids. (NASU)

According to Genesis 33:1, Jacob divides his household into two groups. The first were Jacob’s concubines and their children and they were followed by his primary wives, Leah and Rachel with their children.

**Genesis 33:2** He put the maids and their children in front, and Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. 3 But he himself passed on ahead of them and bowed down to the ground seven times, until he came near
to his brother. 4 Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. (NASU)

Unlike, Laban who needed to be warned by the Lord to not harm Jacob, Esau does not need to be restrained by God. Esau initiates the physical contact with Jacob since he is by nature impulsive as demonstrated by his exchanging his birthright for a bowl of red lintel soup simply because he was hungry.

His emotional response is typical of him since we saw him cry uncontrollably when he discovered that Jacob had stolen the blessing of the birthright. Esau’s emotional response here undoubtedly expressed his relief that Jacob was not going to attempt to subjugate him and his family and fulfill the prophecy that the “older shall serve the younger.”

His emotional response towards Jacob is also expressive of his appreciation to Jacob for his thoughtfulness in sending the gifts as restitution, which expressed Jacob’s desire to reconcile.

Notice that the statement “they wept” indicating that both Jacob and Esau were weeping in each others arms. Jacob emotional response also expressed his relief that Esau did not still harbor bitterness towards him for stealing the blessing of the birthright but rather was desirous to reconcile as he was.

During the twenty years apart from each other, Esau realized that Jacob was properly entitled to the birthright and the blessing and that God had chosen Jacob to be in the line of Christ and inherit the blessings, promises, privileges and responsibilities of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Esau was able to accept that Jacob was entitled to the birthright and the blessing because in Genesis 33:9 when Jacob urged Esau to take the gifts, Esau replies, “I have plenty, my brother; let what you have be your own.”

Furthermore, Genesis 36 reveals that God had prospered Esau with possessions and posterity and had made him a great nation, the nation of Edom, which would have given him fulfillment and prevented him from becoming jealous of Jacob’s great prosperity.

For twenty long years the two brothers had neither seen each other or spoke with each other but now all their emotions are released and on full display. Jacob has offered restitution and demonstrated humility towards Esau and Esau in return has forgiven Jacob and the two are reconciled (Psalm 133:1-3).

Genesis 33:5 He lifted his eyes and saw the women and the children, and said, “Who are these with you?” So he said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.” (NASU)

When Esau sees Jacob’s children, he asks Jacob “who are these with you” and he does so because when Jacob left home twenty years prior, he was unmarried and therefore, childless.
“Graciously given” is the verb chanan, which refers to the act of God bestowing Jacob with the gift of four wives and twelve children and indicates Jacob’s recognition that his wives and children were an unmerited gift from God meaning he neither earned nor deserved these blessings.

Grace is all that God is free to do in imparting unmerited blessings to us based upon the merits of Christ and His death on the Cross-and our eternal union with Him. Grace is God treating us in a manner that we don’t deserve and excludes any human works in order to acquire eternal salvation. Grace means that God saved us despite ourselves and not according to anything that we do but rather saved us because of the merits of Christ and His work on the Cross. Grace excludes any human merit in salvation (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5) and gives the Creator all the credit and the creature none.

Here we see Jacob giving God the credit. He learned through the discipline that he could not merit the blessing of God, nor could he do anything that could merit the blessing of God. Therefore, Jacob has learned what God’s grace is all about, namely, that we can not merit the blessing of God because of who we are or what we do, that it is a gift and cannot be earned or deserved.

Jacob tactfully avoids the term barakh, “bless” in order to avoid provoking Esau to jealousy and reminding him of the stolen blessings of the birthright. “Tact” is a keen sense of what to say or do to avoid giving offense and is the skill in dealing with difficult or delicate situations.

Also, Jacob demonstrates great tact by employing the term Elohim, “God” rather than the covenant name of God, Yahweh, “Lord” since Esau was not chosen by God to inherit the blessings, promises, privileges and responsibilities of the Abrahamic Covenant.

The fourteen years of divine discipline under Laban have developed in Jacob the ability to use tact in dealing with delicate and difficult situations with people.

Genesis 33:6 Then the maids came near with their children, and they bowed down. 7 Leah likewise came near with her children, and they bowed down; and afterward Joseph came near with Rachel, and they bowed down. 8 And he (Esau) said, “What do you mean by all this company which I have met?” And he (Jacob) said, “To find favor in the sight of my lord.” (NASU)

When Esau asked about the gifts of animals, Jacob replied that they were meant to seek Esau’s favor or in other words to seek his forgiveness for stealing the blessing of the birthright twenty years before.

As we noted in our study of Genesis 32:20, when Jacob sent the gifts he states that they were to “appease” Esau meaning the gifts were designed to reconcile or repair their relationship and by implication “cover” the sin that Jacob had committed against Esau some twenty years earlier.

Genesis 32:16 records that Jacob divided the animals into five different droves:
first the goats (200 female and 20 male), then the sheep (20 male and 200 female), then camels (30) and their young, then the cattle (40 cows and 10 bulls) and then the donkeys (20 female and 10 male).

With this gift, Jacob was attempting to offer “restitution” to Esau and make amends for actions against Esau when he had deceived his blind father Isaac into bestowing the blessings of the birthright to him rather than Esau.

**Genesis 33:9** But Esau said, “I have plenty, my brother; let what you have be your own.” (NASU)

Notice that Esau never mentions God once in their conversation and Jacob eventually mentions God twice. The fact that Esau does not mention God once does “not” mean that he was an atheist but it does indicate that he is an unbeliever and has failed to acknowledge the hand of God in his life.

The etiquette of the Middle East in that day required Esau to make a show of refusing the gift and Jacob to press it on him.

According to Isaac’s prophecy concerning Esau recorded in Genesis 27:39-40, Esau acquired his possessions through war and not by farming or shepherding as Jacob did. Of course, God gave Esau the victories on the battlefield and was thus the source of Esau’s prosperity.

**Genesis 33:10** Jacob said, “No, please, if now I have found favor in your sight, then take my present from my hand, for I see your face as one sees the face of God, and you have received me favorably.” (NASU)

“Present” is the noun *minchah*, which refers to the gift of the five droves of animals that served as restitution for Jacob stealing the blessing of the birthright twenty years before.

Jacob’s statement to Esau, “I see your face as one sees the face of God” is not flattery meant as if Jacob had been overjoyed to see Esau as one would see the face of God since that would be obnoxious and insincere. Rather, the statement means that Jacob saw in Esau’s acceptance of him a reflection of God’s grace because he knew that it was God Himself who had changed Esau’s heart so that he could be reconciled to his brother Esau.

As we noted in Jacob’s wrestling match with the Lord recorded in Genesis 32:24-32, during the fourteen years of divine discipline Jacob had learned of the power and importance of persevering in prayer, which is called by theologians, “prevailing prayer.”

The wrestling match between God and Jacob was “symbolic” of Jacob’s struggles in life with men, which in reality were with God. Therefore, by means of persevering in prayer with God, Jacob had solved his problems with Esau.

Now that Esau had welcomed him with open arms, Jacob saw that looking on the face of his brother was like looking on the face of God. The one was the result of the other. God, not Esau, had been the obstacle to Jacob’s entry into Canaan.
Now that he had prevailed with God by means of petition and clinging to Him by faith, Esau was no longer a foe, but a friend. Therefore, Jacob’s statement to Esau, “I see your face as one sees the face of God” implies that Jacob acknowledges God’s sovereignty in his life in that God and not Esau had prevented him from reentering the land of Canaan.

The fact that the Lord attacked at Jabbok before reentering Canaan also indicates this to be the case.

**Genesis 33:11** Please take my gift which has been brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me and because I have plenty. Thus he urged him and he took it. (NASU)

The fact that Esau accepted Jacob’s gift of five droves of animals and did not reciprocate indicates that Esau has accepted Jacob’s gift as settlement for Jacob stealing the blessing of the birthright twenty years before.

Notice that Esau only took the gift after Jacob had insisted indicating that Esau had forgiven Jacob long ago and did not need the gift to pacify him. From God’s perspective offering the gifts to Esau was the right thing for Jacob to do since our Lord taught His disciples that if horizontal relationships with people are not right because of sin, then they are not right in their vertical relationship with God.

Unlike the conflict with Laban that was settled with a non-aggression pact, the conflict with Esau is resolved through the accurate application of the Word of God, genuine expressions of humility and tact and consideration of others.

The reconciliation between Esau and Jacob is sealed with the acceptance of this reparation gift. Esau’s acceptance is witnessed by Esau’s four hundred men and by Jacob’s entire household just as Abraham’s claim to Ephron’s cave and field was sealed when Ephron accepted the payment before witnesses.
Esau Departs From Jacob

In Genesis 33:12-16, we see Esau departing from Jacob.

**Genesis 33:12** Then Esau said, “Let us take our journey and go, and I will go before you.” (NASU)

“Let us take our journey” is the verb *nasa`, which means, “to pull up” stakes that stabilize a tent and is a technical term for “breaking camp.”

Now, remember Esau has four hundred men who serve as Esau’s military and were therefore, accustomed to traveling at a swift pace. On the other hand, Jacob could not travel fast but could only go at the pace of the cattle and his children. Therefore, Jacob is hindered by the animals in his flocks and herds that are nursing and the children in his household.

In fact, they had just completed a very difficult and arduous journey from Paddan Aram to the Mount Gilead region, which was over three hundred miles. So Jacob is smart and knows full well he can’t continue to drive his flocks and family at such a pace because they will die of exhaustion.

**Genesis 33:13** But he (Jacob) said to him (Esau), “My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds which are nursing are a care to me. And if they are driven hard one day, all the flocks will die. 14 Please let my lord pass on before his servant, and I will proceed at my leisure, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord at Seir.” (NASU)

Jacob employs deferential language when addressing his brother Esau, using the terms “my lord” and “his servant,” which demonstrates the humility he learned while enduring fourteen years of divine discipline under Laban in Paddan Aram by bowing seven times to the ground before Esau.

We must not think this deferential language on the part of Jacob was intended as an acknowledgement of servility on his part, but simply as a token of respect and recognition of Esau as ruler of the region.

Believers are commanded in the Word of God to defer to one another and consider each other as more important than themselves.

**Romans 12:10** Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor. (NASU)

**Philippians 2:3** Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves. (NASU)

Esau offers to accompany Jacob in a southerly direction however Jacob declines the offer, not because he is afraid of Esau or that he did not trust him, which is indicated in that when Jacob approached his encounter with Esau, he had no fear of being attacked because of the assurance that the Lord gave him at Peniel.
The fact that Jacob passed ahead of his wives and children and put himself ahead of them to meet Esau demonstrated that he had no fear of his twin brother but was a demonstration of his faith, his confident assurance that God has given him the victory and reconciliation with Esau.

Therefore, it is clear that Jacob did not fear or mistrust Esau prior to meeting him or even after making contact with him since Jacob was operating in faith, resting in the promise of God to protect him and his family. If he was living in unbelief, he would have never have initiated contact with Esau.

Also, another factor indicating that Jacob would have no mistrust or fear Esau at this point in the narrative is that the two had reconciled as demonstrated by Esau accepting Jacob’s gift before witnesses as restitution for stealing the blessing of the birthright from Esau.

Jacob declined Esau’s offer because Jacob’s caravan had to travel slowly due to the presence of young children and large flocks, which were nursing their young whereas Esau’s soldiers would have been impatient with Jacob’s slow pace.

The second reason why Jacob declined Esau’s offer to travel with him to Seir but did not mention it to Esau was that the Lord commanded him to return to the land of Canaan (See Genesis 31:3) and even promised him possession of it (See Genesis 28:13).

The fact that Jacob doesn’t mention to Esau that the Lord had promised him the land of Canaan and commanded him to return to it does “not” mean that Jacob has lost sight of what the Lord said to him but rather he is being tactful. “Tact” is a keen sense of what to say or do to avoid giving offense and is the skill in dealing with difficult or delicate situations.

The fourteen years of divine discipline under Laban have developed in Jacob the ability to use tact in dealing with this delicate situation with Esau. Jacob demonstrates great tact in that he avoids mentioning that the Lord commanded him to return to Canaan in order to avoid provoking Esau to jealousy and reminding him that God did not choose him to inherit the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant, which would include possession of the land of Canaan.

By demonstrating tact with Esau, Jacob, now Israel was loving his neighbor as himself and treating others the way that he would want to be treated.

Mark 12:28 One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, “What commandment is the foremost of all?” 29 Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; 30 AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.’” 31 The second is this, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE
YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (NASU)

Matthew 7:12 “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” (NASU)

Obviously, Esau knew that Jacob had returned for just this reason yet Jacob wanted to avoid mention of it because he was sensitive to Esau’s feelings. During the twenty years apart from each other, Esau realized that Jacob was properly entitled to the birthright and the blessing and that God had chosen Jacob to be in the line of Christ and inherit the blessings, promises, privileges and responsibilities of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Esau was able to accept that Jacob was entitled to the birthright and the blessing because in Genesis 33:9 when Jacob urged Esau to take the gifts, Esau replies, “I have plenty, my brother; let what you have be your own.”

Furthermore, Genesis 36 reveals that God had prospered Esau with possessions and posterity and had made him a great nation, the nation of Edom, which would have given him fulfillment and prevented him from becoming jealous of Jacob’s great prosperity.

Jacob’s reference to visiting Esau in Seir does not mean that Jacob planned to go directly to Seir, but rather it meant that he would visit him by himself in the future without the flocks and family as indicated by his use of the personal pronoun “I” instead of “we,” which would of course denote his entire family.

Scripture does not record whether Jacob ever made such a trip but this doesn’t mean he didn’t take it either.

Genesis 33:15 Esau said, “Please let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.” But he said, “What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.” (NASU)

Esau then offered Jacob a portion of his men to accompany him for protection but Jacob declines this offer as well. Jacob declined this offer from Esau because Jacob was confident in the Lord’s promise to protect him and be with him as witnessed by the Lord’s protection of him while dealing with both Laban and Esau. Therefore, he saw no need for this military presence to protect him since he had faith and was totally and completely confident that the Lord was with him and would protect him from any and every possible adversary.

Genesis 33:16 So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. (NASU)

Jacob politely refuses Esau’s offer of men and Esau agrees to Jacob’s request and headed back to Seir. “Seir” is the proper noun se`ir, which is a mountainous region located primarily east of the Gulf of Aqaba, but west as well and was originally settled by the Horites, also known as the Hurrians, a non-Semitic people dispersed throughout the ancient Near East.
Eventually, the descendants of Esau, the Edomites took over the land and so therefore, Seir was also synonymously called Edom (Genesis 32:3; 33:14, 16; Joshua 24:4; cf. Genesis 36:1, 39).
The Descendants of Esau

In the original Hebrew text, Genesis 36:1-37:1 is one of the longest sections in the book of Genesis constituting the ninth major section in the book presenting the genealogy or family history of Esau and his descendants. The family history of Esau, like that of Ishmael (See Genesis 25:12-18) immediately follows the obituaries of their fathers (See Genesis 25:7-10; 35:29).

Just as in the accounts of Abraham’s sons, the “rejected” line of Ishmael (See Genesis 25:12-18) is presented before the “elect” line of Isaac (See Genesis 25:19-35:29), so the accounts of Isaac’s sons, the “rejected” line of Esau (See Genesis 36:1-37:1) is presented before the “elect” line of Jacob (See Genesis 37:2-50:26).

The “rejected” descendants of the patriarchs are given because these sons are also under divine blessing according to the divine promises given to Abraham that are recorded in Genesis 17:20 and 27:38-40.

It is interesting that the twelve legitimate sons and grandsons of Esau listed in Genesis 36:9-14 match the twelve sons of Nahor (See Genesis 22:20-24), and of Ishmael (See Genesis 17:20; 25:13-16) and Israel (See Genesis 35:22b-26) indicating that these peoples existed as twelve tribe confederacies.

In Genesis 36, the superscription ‘elleh toledhoth ‘esaw, “these are the descendants of Esau” is repeated thus dividing the chapter into two unequal halves and two genealogies.

The first genealogy appears in Genesis 36:1-8 presenting a one-generation “segmented” genealogy of Esau’s sons born in the land of Canaan whereas the second genealogy that appears in Genesis 36:9-43 is framed by the statement “Esau the father of the Edomites.”

This genealogy consists of two three-generation “segmented” genealogies of those born in Seir, which appear in Genesis 36:9-19 and 20-30. It also contains one “linear” genealogy containing the succession of kings for eight generations before an Israelite king reigns (See Genesis 36:31-43).

When I say “segmented” genealogy I mean that the genealogies, which appear in Genesis 36:9-19 and 20-30 display the existing relations between individuals, which trace their lineage back to Esau. When I say “linear” genealogy I mean that the genealogy establishes continuity of the succession of kings descended from Esau over a stretch of time without narrative.

The following is an outline of the ninth major section in the book of Genesis, which appears in Genesis 36:1-37:1: (1) Title (36:1) (2) Esau’s marriages (36:2-5) (3) Esau’s move to Seir (36:6-8) (4) Esau’s sons and grandsons (36:9-14) (5) Chiefs (political or military leaders) descended from Esau (36:15-19) (6) Descendants of Seir the Horite (36:20-28) (7) Chiefs descended from Seir (36:29-

Now, although Genesis 36 may appear boring to read, to the serious student of the Word of God, it furnishes valuable information. Remember what Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (NASU)

The purpose of the genealogies in Genesis 36 is seven-fold: (1) To demonstrate the Lord’s faithfulness in fulfilling His promise to Abraham that he would be “the father of a multitude of nations” (See Genesis 17:4). (2) To demonstrate the partial fulfillment of God's promises to both Abraham and to Jacob that kings would come from them (Abraham-See Genesis 17:6 and 16; Jacob-See Genesis 35:11). (3) To demonstrate the Lord’s faithfulness in fulfilling His prophecies concerning Esau and his descendants, which are recorded in Genesis 25:23 and 27:39-40. (4) To provide the nation of Israel the origins of her great enemies, namely, the Edomites (See Genesis 36:8) and the Amalekites (See Genesis 36:12). The book of Genesis was originally written to the Israelites who were about to cross over the River Jordan to possess the land of Canaan and to annihilate the Canaanites (cf. Deuteronomy 1:8; 20:16-18). There were, however, some people who were not to be attacked or annihilated, among whom were the Edomites, the descendants of Esau according to Deuteronomy 2:1-5. (5) Therefore, in order to insure that this command would not be disobeyed, it was most essential for those Israelites of Moses’ day to know who the Edomites were and to have a carefully documented record of the generations of Esau and that record is the substance of Genesis 36. (6) To demonstrate that the Lord Jesus Christ controls history and is sovereign over the nations (See Deuteronomy 32:1-8; Psalm 66:7; Isaiah 40:15-17; Acts 17:26; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Timothy 6:15). (7) To present the distinction between the covenant people of God, the nation of Israel that was established based upon faith in the promises of Yahweh, the Lord Jesus Christ and the nation of Edom, which was based upon unbelief.

Genesis 36:1-8 presents the title for the ninth major section in the book of Genesis as well as Esau’s genealogy or family history and his exodus from Canaan and his move to Seir.

Genesis 36:1 Now these are the records of the generations of Esau (that is, Edom). (NASU)

“These are the records of the generations of Esau” refers to the record of the descendants of Esau, which follows in Genesis 36:2-43 as indicated by the noun toledhoth, “the records of the generations” which is always used as an introduction to what follows.
“Edom” is the proper noun `edhom, which literally means, “red,” and was the name given to Esau to mark the occasion in which he exchanged his birthright to Jacob for some red lintel soup (See Genesis 25:29-34). Esau’s personal name is transformed into the national name Edom just as Jacob’s personal name was transformed to the national name Israel.

**Genesis 36:2** Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan: 3 Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah and the granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite, also Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, the sister of Nebaioth. (NASU)

The statement “Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan” was against the will of God and demonstrates Esau’s contempt for the plan of God since the prophecy of Noah, which is recorded in Genesis 9:24-27 prohibited Isaac’s family from marrying Canaanites since they were under a curse.

The family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was prohibited by God from entering into marriage with the Canaanites and instead were to marry Shemites since Noah prophesied in Genesis 9:20-27 that Canaan was under a curse and that Shem was in the line of Christ. Thus, in Genesis 24:2-4, Abraham prohibited his servant Eliezer from taking a wife for his son Isaac from among the Canaanites and commanded him to go to his relatives in Paddan Aram who were descendents of Shem. Not only did Abraham seek a wife for Isaac among the Arameans rather than the Canaanites but also Isaac did as well for Jacob according to Genesis 28:6-7. The reason for this is that Abraham and Isaac and the Arameans were descendants of Shem (i.e. Semitic) who according to the prophecy of Noah recorded in Genesis 9:24-27 were in the line of Christ.

In Genesis 28:6-9 neither Jacob nor Esau had ever previously been taught by their parents, Isaac and Rebekah that marriage to Canaanite women was against the will of God and unsatisfactory to their parents. This is confirmed by Esau’s shock upon learning that his Canaanite wives were displeasing to his father and so therefore, to make matters right, he went and married an Ishmaelite, which is recorded in Genesis 28:6-9.

Unlike the Canaanites and Aramean women embraced the faith of their husbands, unlike the Canaanite women who seduce their husbands to join their lifestyles (See Genesis 24:4; 26:34-35; 31:50). The Canaanites were idolatrous (Deut. 29:17), involved in the occult (Deut. 18:9-10) and gross immorality (Lev. 18), which archaeology confirms. The Lord used the nation of Israel under Joshua to pour out His judgment upon the Canaanites for their immoral degeneracy (Gen. 15:16; 19:5; Lev. 18; 20; Deut. 12:31). They were defeated on the battlefield, destroyed, or integrated with other nations or enslaved to Israel (Gen. 14:1-16; 15:18-21; Ex. 3:7-10; Deut. 1-3; Josh. 10-19).
“Adah” is the first wife of Esau mentioned and her name means, “ornament” and her father was “Elon” whose name means, “terebinth.”

“Oholibamah” is the second wife of Esau mentioned and her name means, “tent of the high place.” Her father was “Anah” whose name means, “answer,” whose grandfather was “Zibeon” whose name means, “colored” and who was a Hivite.

“Basemath” is the third wife of Esau that is mentioned and her name means, “fragrance” and she was “Ishmael's daughter, the sister of Nebaioth” and she is not to be confused with the “Basemath” mentioned in Genesis 26:34 whose father was Elon, the Hittite.

Her brother was “Nebaioth” whose name means, “heights” and who was the firstborn son of Ishmael according to Genesis 25:13 and 28:9. The fact that “Adah” was a “Hittite” and “Oholibamah” was a “Hivite” meant that Esau’s marriages to these women were totally out of the will of God since both the Hittites and the Hivites were descendants of Canaan. Even though Basemath was an Ishmaelite and therefore a descendant of Shem, Esau’s marriage to her was also out of the will of God since Isaac and not Ishmael was in the line of Christ.

Now, a problem arises when we compare the list of Esau’s wives recorded in Genesis 36:2-3 with the lists recorded in Genesis 26:34 and 28:9.

Genesis 36:2-3 records that Esau married “Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah and the granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite, also Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, the sister of Nebaioth.”

Genesis 26:34 records that Esau married “Judith, the daughter of Beeri the Hittite and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite” whereas Genesis 28:9 records that Esau married “Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebaioth.”

The solution to this apparent contradiction is found when we understand that the purpose of Genesis 36 is to present the family history of Esau and so the women in Genesis 36:2-3 that bore Esau children would serve this purpose whereas the women in Genesis 26:34 and 28:9 died childless and would not.

Genesis 36:4 Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, and Basemath bore Reuel, 5 and Oholibamah bore Jeush and Jalam and Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan. (NASU)

Genesis 36:4-5 reveals that Esau’s wives, Adah, Basemath and Oholibamah bore to Jacob five sons while he lived in the land of Canaan.

Adah bore to Esau “Eliphaz” whose name means, “God is fine gold.” Basemath bore to Esau “Reuel” whose name means, “friend of God.”

Oholibamah bore to Jacob three sons: (1) “Jeush” whose name means, “helper.” (2) “Jalam” whose name means, “concealed.” (3) “Korah” whose name means, “bald head.”
Genesis 36:6 Then Esau took his wives and his sons and his daughters and all his household, and his livestock and all his cattle and all his goods which he had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to another land away from his brother Jacob. (NASU)

Esau has already “temporarily” occupied Seir prior to Jacob’s return to Canaan according to Genesis 32:3, 33:14, 16, however, he does not “permanently” remove his family from the land of his forefathers until Jacob’s return (See Genesis 35:29).

Genesis 36:7 For their property had become too great for them to live together, and the land where they sojourned could not sustain them because of their livestock.

The statement “for their property had become too great for them to live together” indicates that Esau and his family left the land of Canaan for “economic” reasons in that there was an insufficiency of natural resources to support both Esau and Jacob’s flocks and herds.

The statement “the land where they sojourned could not sustain them because of their livestock” indicates that Esau also left Canaan for “social” reasons in that the land was overcrowded since not only were the Canaanites inhabiting the land but also Jacob and Esau’s family.

These social and economic reasons for Esau leaving Canaan were the direct result of God blessing both men abundantly.

Esau left the land of Canaan instead of Jacob for two reasons: (1) Jacob had just returned to Canaan. (2) Jacob was promised the land by God.

During the twenty years apart from each other, Esau realized that Jacob was properly entitled to the birthright and the blessing and that God had chosen Jacob to be in the line of Christ and inherit the blessings, promises, privileges and responsibilities of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Esau was able to accept that Jacob was entitled to the birthright, the blessing and the land of Canaan because God had prospered Esau with possessions and posterity. This is indicated by his statement to Jacob in Genesis 33:19 when Jacob urged him to accept his gifts as restitution, “I have plenty, my brother; let what you have be your own.”

Furthermore, Esau was able to accept that Jacob was entitled to the land of Canaan since God had made him a great nation, the nation of Edom, which would have given him fulfillment and prevented him from becoming jealous of Jacob’s great prosperity.

Genesis 36:8 So Esau lived in the hill country of Seir; Esau is Edom. (NASU)

“Seir” demarcates the Edomite territory, which was situated at the southeast border of Palestine (Judges 11:17; Numbers 34:3) and was properly called “the
land of Seir” (Genesis 36:8; Gen 32:3; Joshua 24:4; Ezekiel 35:3, 7, 15) and “the country of Edom.”

Genesis 36:9-30 concerns itself with the sons and chiefs of Esau to the third generation as well as the Horites of Seir.

**Genesis 36:9 These then are the records of the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir. (NASU)**

A comparison of the statement “These then are the records of the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites” that appears in Genesis 36:9 with the statement “Esau is Edom” that appears in Genesis 36:8 indicates an advance in status of Esau from an individual person to a nation.

**Genesis 36:10 These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Esau's wife Adah, Reuel the son of Esau's wife Basemath. (NASU)**

The sequence of Esau’s wives is presented according to the descending number of children and so Adah is listed first because she bore to Esau five children who is then followed in Genesis 36:13 by Basemath who bore to Esau four children and then lastly, Oholibamah, in Genesis 36:14 who bore three children.

Genesis 36:11-14 presents the grandsons of Esau through his five sons.

**Genesis 36:11 The sons of Eliphaz were Tema, Omar, Zepho and Gatam and Kenaz. 12 Timna was a concubine of Esau's son Eliphaz and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These are the sons of Esau's wife Adah. (NASU)**

The statement “These are the sons of Esau's wife Adah” does “not” refer to the children that Esau had with Adah but rather it refers to his grandchildren through his wife Adah since the children listed were fathered by his son Eliphaz who Adah bore to Esau. In the Hebrew and Aramaic languages there is no specific word for grandson so that the word “son” can refer to any descendant down the line.

Genesis 36:12 is “parenthetical” since it deals with Esau’s concubine, Timna who bore to him, Amalek. As we noted earlier, when the Israelites crossed over the Jordan River to possess the land of Canaan and to annihilate the Canaanites, the Edomites, the descendants of Esau were not to be attacked according to Deuteronomy 2:1-5. However, the descendants of Amalek, the Amalekites did not come under this protection since he was a child of a concubine.

The Amalekites were a warlike tribe, living south of Canaan on the road to the land of Canaan and when Israel did journey to Canaan, they stood against Israel to war. This first military confrontation was memorable because Aaron and Hur held Moses’ arms up as he held the rod of God so that Joshua and the Israelite army could defeat the Amalekites (See Exodus 17:8-16). Exodus 17:8-16 records God declaring war on the Amalekites “from generation to generation.”
Israelite armies fought them in both Saul (See 1 Samuel 15:2) and David’s reign (See 1 Samuel 27:8; 30:1-20) and they were eventually destroyed during the reign of Hezekiah (See 1 Chronicles 4:43).

**Genesis 36:13** These are the sons of Reuel: Nahath and Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These were the sons of Esau's wife Basemath. (NASU)

The statement “These are the sons of Esau’s wife Basemath” does “not” refer to the children that Esau had with Basemath but rather it refers to his grandchildren through his wife Basemath since the children listed were fathered by his son Reuel who Basemath bore to Esau.

**Genesis 36:14** These were the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah and the granddaughter of Zibeon: she bore to Esau, Jeush and Jalam and Korah. (NASU)

The statement “These are the sons of Esau’s wife Oholibamah” does “not” mean that the children listed were sons Oholibamah bore to Esau but rather to his grandchildren since this statement echoes the statement in Genesis 36:5, “Oholibamah bore Jeush and Jalam and Korah,” which appears in the context of the sons Esau fathered through his wives Adah, Basemath and Oholibamah in the land of Canaan.

Genesis 36:15-18 presents a list of chiefs that descended from Esau, who were of course, his grandsons.

**Genesis 36:15** These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz, the firstborn of Esau, are chief Teman, chief Omar, chief Zepho, chief Kenaz, chief Korah, chief Gatam, chief Amalek. 16 These are the chiefs descended from Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah. (NASU)

The statement “These are the sons of Adah” does “not” mean that the chiefs listed were sons Adah bore to Esau but rather to her grandchildren since they are said to be sons of Eliphaz who she bore to Esau.

The name “Korah” appears as a tribal chief under Eliphaz who was the son of Adah and it also appears under Oholibamah since the list of chiefs descending from Esau reflects the political development of Edomite tribal history. Therefore, “Korah” appears as a tribal chief under Eliphaz in order to reflect the fact that the Korahites split off from the Oholibamah group and attached itself to the Eliphaz confederation.

Also, “Amalek” is included among the tribal chiefs descending from Esau under Eliphaz whereas he is not included in the list of Esau’s grandsons because he was a child of a concubine, “Timna.” The reason for this is also to reflect the political development of Edomite tribal history and so the tribe of Amalek also incorporated itself into the Eliphaz confederation.

Furthermore, the name of Eliphaz’ concubine, Timna, is given but his primary wife is not and the reason for this is because of the future prominence of her son,
Amalek, who became the ancestor of the infamous Amalekites, who were perpetual enemies of the nation of Israel.

The statement “These are the chiefs descended from Eliphaz in the land of Edom” means that these seven sons of Eliphaz were “not” born in the land of Canaan, like Esau’s five sons but rather they were born in the land of Edom.

**Genesis 36:17** These are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: chief Nahath, chief Zerah, chief Shammah, chief Mizzah. These are the chiefs descended from Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Esau's wife Basemath. (NASU)

The statement “These are the sons of Esau's wife Basemath” does “not” mean that the four chiefs listed were sons Basemath bore to Esau but rather they refer to her grandchildren since they are said to be sons of Reuel who she bore to Esau.

The statement “These are the chiefs descended from Reuel in the land of Edom” means that these four sons of Reuel were “not” born in the land of Canaan, like Esau’s five sons but rather they were born in the land of Edom.

**Genesis 36:18** These are the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah: chief Jeush, chief Jalam, chief Korah. These are the chiefs descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah. (NASU)

The statement “These are the sons of Esau’s wife Oholibamah” does refer to the children that Esau had with Oholibamah and not grandchildren. The reason for this is that the statement echoes the statement in Genesis 36:5, “Oholibamah bore Jeush and Jalam and Korah,” which appears in the context of the sons Esau fathered through his wives.

**Genesis 36:19** These are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these are their chiefs. (NASU)

The statement “These are the sons of Esau (that is Edom)” refers to Esau’s grandchildren through his sons Eliphaz and Reuel (See Genesis 36:15-17) and his sons through his wife Oholibamah (See Genesis 36:18), all of which became chiefs of tribes according to the statement “These are their chiefs.”

The genealogy recorded in Genesis 36:20-30 is a “segmented” genealogy, which is bracketed by a list of seven identical Horite chiefs in Seir (36:20-21, 29-30). When I say “segmented” genealogy I mean that the genealogy, which appears in Genesis 36:20-30 displays the existing relations between individuals who trace their lineage back to Seir, the Horite.

The genealogy presents seven sons and one daughter of Seir the Horite (36:20-22) and extends to twenty sons of the third generation (36:21-28). The conclusion identifies the seven sons of the first generation as chiefs. Esau either destroys (See Deuteronomy 2:22) or marries (See Genesis 36:20, 22, 25) these aboriginal inhabitants of Seir.
Genesis 36:20 These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan and Shobal and Anah, and Dishon and Ezer and Dishan. 21 These are the chiefs descended from the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom. (NASU)

The name “Seir” is “eponymous” meaning that it refers to an historical person whose name is the source of the name of a geographical area, which was a mountainous region, located primarily east of the Gulf of Aqaba, but west as well.

“The land of Edom” mentioned in Genesis 36:21 is synonymous with the “land of Seir” mentioned in Genesis 36:30.

“The Horites” were mentioned in Genesis 14:6 as being defeated by the Eastern Mesopotamian Coalition in the days of Abraham and were cave dwellers and Esau either destroys (See Deuteronomy 2:22) or marries (See Genesis 36:20, 22, 25) them.

“The Horites” were rather disorganized until Esau came in and brought them together and gave them leadership and united them with his people and as a result they intermarried and together became the Edomites.

Genesis 36:22 The sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timn. 23 These are the sons of Shobal: Alvan and Manahath and Ebal, Shepho and Onam. 24 These are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah -- he is the Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness when he was pasturing the donkeys of his father Zibeon. (NASU)

The statement that Anah “found the hot springs in the wilderness when he was pasturing the donkeys of his father Zibeon” is the only anecdote in this genealogy, distinguishing Anah from his uncle of the same name who is mentioned in Genesis 36:20 and 25. Hot springs are still found southeast of the Dead Sea in Edomite territory.

Genesis 36:25 These are the children of Anah: Dishon, and Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah. 26 These are the sons of Dishon: Hemdan and Eshban and Ithran and Cheran. 27 These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan and Zaavan and Akan. 28 These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran. 29 These are the chiefs descended from the Horites: chief Lotan, chief Shobal, chief Zibeon, chief Anah, 30 chief Dishon, chief Ezer, chief Dishan. These are the chiefs descended from the Horites, according to their various chiefs in the land of Seir. (NASU)

1 Chronicles 1:38-42 contains a list of names that parallels this list of sons and chiefs of Esau to the third generation as well as the Horites of Seir, which appears in Genesis 36:9-30.
Genesis 36:31-37:1 presents to us the kings and chiefs of Edom as well as the geographical division of Esau and Jacob. Genesis 36:31-43a presents a “linear” list of eight kings meaning that this list establishes continuity of the succession of eight kings who reigned in Edom over a stretch of time without narrative.

**Genesis 36:31** Now these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the sons of Israel. (NASU)

The line of succession of these kings of Edom is related to their different capitals as indicated by the phrase “his city,” which appears in Genesis 36:32, 35, and 39 and is used of three of the eight kings. The reason why three of the kings are said to have a city and the other five are not said to have a city does not indicate that the five did not have a city but that the five used the city of their predecessor until his successor shifted to another city.

The fact that the line of succession of these eight kings of Edom is related to their different capitals suggests an elective kingship and not a dynastic one. Further substantiating this is that the line of succession of the kings of Edom was “not” hereditary since none of these eight kings succeeded his father. The Scripture does not tell us if they were elected based upon their charisma or intelligence or based upon their military prowess.

The statement “Now these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the sons of Israel” indicates quite clearly that kings reigned in Edom before Israel had her first king, which was Saul.

Now, the critics of the Bible contend that Moses did not write this statement but rather either David or Saul since there were no kings in Israel during the time of Moses. However, they fail to take into consideration that Moses knew prophetically that Israel would eventually have kings (See Deuteronomy 17:14-20).

**Genesis 36:32** Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, and the name of his city was Dinhabah. 33 Then Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah became king in his place. (NASU)

“Bozrah” is the proper noun botsrah, which means, “fortress” and has been identified with the modern village Buseira, which is located 25 miles southwest of the southern end of the Dead Sea.

Archaeological excavations reveal that the town was heavily fortified covering twenty acres serving as a crossing point for several principle highways and was a major center for shepherding, weaving and the manufacture of dyed garments.

**Genesis 36:34** Then Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites became king in his place. (NASU)
The “land of the Temanites” appears to have been located at the southern end of Edom with Bozrah, its capital in the north since the meaning of “Teman,” is “south country.”

**Genesis 36:35** Then Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the field of Moab, became king in his place; and the name of his city was Avith. (NASU)

“Midian” was the fourth son of Abraham through his concubine Keturah according to Genesis 25:2. His descendants were a well-known Arabian tribe east of the Gulf of Aqabah and the Red Sea who traded in gold and incense according to Isaiah 60:6, Genesis 37:25, 28, and did this from Moab to Sinai and Ephah according to Numbers 22:4, 7, Judges 6-8.

The first wife of Moses, Zipporah was a Midianite and her brother Hobab guided Israel through the steppe of Sinai (Num. 10:29-32) and later, Midianites in association with the Moabites fought Israel (Num. 25; 31:1-12) and Gideon drove them out of Israel (Judges 7-8).

“The field of Moab” was located along the eastern border of the Dead Sea, on the plateau between the Dead Sea and the Arabian desert and was about 35 miles long and 25 miles wide. Although it was primarily a high plateau, Moab also had mountainous areas and deep gorges and it was a fertile area for crops and herds and to the south and west of Moab was the nation of Edom and to the north was Ammon.

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The phrase “the plains of Moab” found in Numbers 22:1 is distinguished from the phrase “the field of Moab.” The “field of Moab” was a narrow strip of arable land east of the Dead Sea, whose boundaries were the Dead Sea on the west, the Arnon Gorge on the north, the Arabian Desert on the east and the Zered River canyon on the south.

The “plains of Moab” are referred to throughout the Balaam story in the book of Numbers since this was where the Israelites camped as they made their way to the land of Canaan (See Numbers 22:1).

Genesis 19:30-38 records that “Moab” was the product of the incestuous relationship between Lot and his oldest daughter after their flight from Sodom according to Genesis 19:30-37.

The Moabites and the Ammonites were the bitter enemies of Israel (see Num. 23-25; 2 Kings 3) and as a result were rejected by God but not because of their questionable lineage (see Deut. 23:3-6) and yet from this lineage will come Ruth, and so Jesus Christ (see Ruth 4:18-22; Matt. 1:5).

**Genesis 36:36** Then Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah became king in his place. (NASU)
The name “Masrekah” indicates a grape growing region and has been identified with Jebel el-Mushrak, located approximately 22 miles south-southwest of Maan.

*Genesis 36:37* Then Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the Euphrates River became king in his place. (NASU)

“Rehoboth” is the proper noun *rückovoth*, which means, “space” and was located on the Euphrates River according to Genesis 36:37.

“Euphrates River” is the noun *nahar*, which is usually used in Scripture with reference to the Euphrates River, however, the river in question is very far from Edom and actually refers to the Wadi el-Hesa, which is the natural border between Edom and Moab.

*Genesis 36:38* Then Shaul died, and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor became king in his place. 39 Then Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar became king in his place; and the name of his city was Pau; and his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, daughter of Mezahab. (NASU)

Hadar’s father is not named but rather his mother and grandmother indicating that his mother possessed a very distinguished ancestry.

*Genesis 36:40* Now these are the names of the chiefs descended from Esau, according to their families and their localities, by their names: chief Timna, chief Alvah, chief Jetheth, 41 chief Oholibamah, chief Elah, chief Pinon, 42 chief Kenaz, chief Teman, chief Mibzar, 43 chief Magdiel, chief Iram. These are the chiefs of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of the Edomites), according to their habitations in the land of their possession. (NASU)

1 Chronicles 1:43-54 contains a parallel list of these Edomite Kings that appear in Genesis 36:31-43. The list of Edomite chiefs that appears in Genesis 36:15-19 is different than the list of Edomite kings that appears in Genesis 36:40-43 since the former contains fourteen names whereas the latter contains eleven names and the names “Oholibamah, Kenaz, Teman” appear in both lists.

The list of Edomite chiefs that appears in Genesis 36:15-19 is “historical” and “genealogical” whereas the list that appears in Genesis 36:40-43 is “geographical” and “statistical.”

The fact that the list of Genesis 36:40-43 is “geographical” is indicated by the phrases “according to...their localities” and “according to their habitations in the land of their possession” and it is “statistical” as indicated by the phrase “according to their families...by their names.”

Therefore, the list of Genesis 36:40-43 is apparently arranged by localities that are identical with the clan names, which may reflect Edomite administrative districts within the kingdom.
The Tragic Life of Esau

As we noted in our introduction, the life of Esau is a tragic story because even though he was born into a home of great privilege, which had a tremendous spiritual heritage, he remained an unbeliever. At no time in his life, did he never place his faith in the God of his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac, who is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Esau was born into a family that was ordained by God to receive the promises, privileges, responsibilities and blessings of the covenant God made with Abraham. His brother Jacob would be in the line of Christ and the father of the nation of Israel, which would be the vehicle used by God to bring in the Savior of the world.

God blessed Esau by making him the progenitor of a great nation as well, namely, the nation of Edom, yet he never accepted Christ as his Savior and thus now resides in “Torments,” which is the temporary fire for the souls of unbelievers from every dispensation according to Luke 16:19-31. Eventually, like all unbelievers he will be transferred to the Great White Throne Judgment according to Revelation 20:11-15 and from there will be cast into the eternal Lake of Fire because of his rejection of Jesus Christ as his Savior.

Remember, Esau was the older twin brother of Jacob whose father was Isaac and mother was Rebekah. As we have noted before, his name means, “hairy,” implying an animalistic nature and describes him as “the hairy monster.” As we also noted before as well, he became the father of the Edomite people who later became the arch rivals of the Israelites.

Esau’s mother’s Rebekah received a prophecy from the Lord concerning not only Jacob and his descendants, the Israelites but also Esau and his descendants, the Edomites.

The Lord’s prediction that “two peoples will be separated from your (Rebekah’s) body” indicates that Jacob and Esau would be separated, divided and hostile towards one another and would have nothing in common.

The Lord’s prediction that “one people shall be stronger than the other” refers to the fact that the Israelites, Jacob’s descendants would prevail in history over the Edomites, Esau’s descendants.

In Genesis 25:23, the Lord declares that the “older shall serve the younger” indicating that the younger son, Jacob would receive the inheritance and not Esau who was older.

Esau, the older, did not actually serve Jacob, his younger twin but rather Esau’s descendants did (see 1 Samuel 14:47; 2 Samuel 8:14; 1 Kings 11:15-16; 22:47; 2 Kings 14:7).

This prophecy that “one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger” indicates that the sovereign will of God has
ordained the following: (1) Jacob to be in the Messianic line and not Esau. (2) Jacob would be the beneficiary of the divine promises enumerated in the Abrahamic Covenant and not Esau. (3) Jacob would receive his father’s estate and not Esau.

In Genesis 27:39-40, Isaac prophesied about Esau and his descendants. Since Isaac gave everything to Jacob, all he has to give Esau is an “antiblessing,” which is a parody on Jacob’s blessing and are also prophecies concerning the future of Esau’s descendants who were the Edomites.

The antiblessing/prophecy “away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling” means that Esau and his descendants would be denied the earth’s fertility unlike Jacob and his descendants.

The antiblessing/prophecy “away from the dew of heaven from above” means that Esau and his descendants, the Edomites, would be denied dew, which plays such an essential role in the irrigation of crops in Palestine. Therefore, we see that Esau’s descendants, the Edomites, would not participate in the blessing of rich harvests as Jacob’s descendants, the Israelites would and would live away from fertile places, which implies that his descendants would live in a dry and barren land-as Edom on the whole actually was.

The antiblessing/prophecy “by your sword you shall live” means that Esau’s descendants, the Edomites, would live in continuous conflict, always having to defend themselves from their enemies. Edom appears as a militant nation throughout the Old Testament Scriptures (Numbers 20:18; 1 Samuel 14:47; 1 Kings 11:14-16; 2 Kings 14:7-10; Obadiah; Psalm 60:10-11).

The antiblessing/prophecy “your brother you shall serve” means that the descendants of Jacob, the Israelites would prevail over Esau’s descendants, the Edomites. This prophecy is a confirmation of the prophecy that was given to Rebekah and is recorded in Genesis 25:23 that the “older (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob).”

The prophecy “But it shall come about when you become restless, that you will break his yoke from your neck” means that the time would come when the Edomites would break free from Israel (See 1 Kings 11:14-15; 2 Kings 8:20-22). From the time of David, Edom was part of the Israelite empire but later regained its independence (See 2 Kings 8:20-22) but after the fall of Jerusalem, Edom took revenge on Judah (Obadiah; Psalm 137:7). Therefore, we can see that this prophecy of future freedom was in a sense a blessing and thus Esau was blessed as it says in Hebrews 11:20 that Isaac blessed not only Jacob but also Esau.

Like Jacob, both Esau’s appearance and character is described for us in Scripture. Genesis 25:27 describes Esau as being a man “who was skilled in hunting wild game” and he is also described as a “man of the field,” which refers
to the fact that he searched for game by roaming the territories situated outside cities and towns where wild animals roamed.

As Esau and Jacob grew up, their attitudes towards spiritual matters contrasted, with the former indifferent and the latter interested. Their contrasting attitudes regarding spiritual matters was manifested when Esau agreed to exchange his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of lentil stew according to Genesis 25:29-34. Therefore, Esau was not qualified to inherit the responsibilities attached to the Lord’s covenant promises.

By exchanging his birthright for a bowl of red lintel soup, Esau was demonstrating that he valued little his firstborn status in the family of Isaac, which involved inheriting the promises, privileges and responsibilities of the Abrahamic Covenant and thereby expressed his contempt for the plan of God.

Jacob knew this and desired these things, thus demonstrating his spiritual discernment and that he was a believer. Since the birthright concerns the future, its value is appropriated by faith and so by exchanging his birthright for a bowl of red lintel soup, Esau was demonstrating his unbelief in the promises contained in the Abrahamic Covenant and thereby forfeited the blessings of this covenant (Hebrews 12:16-17).

The selling of the birthright demonstrated that Esau was a psuchikos, “soulish” man and not a pneumatikos, “spiritual” man since he was expressing his dislike of the plan of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). Thus, Esau lived a tragic life by rejecting the promises of God.