

Toledot - Genesis – Bereshit (25.19-28.9)

God has blessed Abraham and Sarah's son Isaac who is now married to Rebecca. They don't have any children and Isaac prays to God for a child. God accepted his plea. Lo! Rebecca became pregnant and it felt like babies were fighting within her. She went to God. God said, "You will have twin boys and when they grow older, they will become two nations and these two kingdoms will be separated. One kingdom will be more powerful than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger."

Behold when Rebecca gave birth, there were twins! The firstborn boy was red-cheeked and hairy as a fur coat so they named him Esau. His brother then emerged and his hand was grasping Esau's heel so they named him Jacob. The boys grew up. Esau became a skilled hunter in the fields while Jacob worked inside his tent. Isaac favored Esau because of his hunting but Rebecca favored Jacob.

One day Esau came from the field and saw Jacob making a pot of stew. "Please let me have some stew for I am exhausted."

Jacob said, "Only if you sell me your firstborn birthright to our father's property and blessings."

Esau said, "If I am about to die, what is good is my birthright to me!" So Jacob gave him bread and stew and Esau ate, drank and left. Thus Esau rejected his birthright.

Famine came to the land and Isaac and Rebecca prepared to journey but God told them to stay in the land of the Philistines. God said, "I will be with you and bless you and give you and your offspring these lands. I will keep my oath to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars of the sky. All the nations of the earths shall be blessed through your descendants. All of this I give you because Abraham obeyed My Voice and kept charge, and kept My Commandments, Decrees and Laws."

Time passed then Esau intermarried and his wives became a source of spiritual bitterness to his parents.

Isaac became blind over time and was now close to death. He said to his oldest son Esau, "Make me a tasty dish that I love so that my soul will bless you with your birthright before I die."

Rebecca heard this and quickly went to Jacob. She said, "Fetch me what I need and I will make a tasty stew, then you will dress up like your brother and you can give it to him so he can eat it and give you the blessing. "But Mother," said Jacob, "Esau is a hairy man and I am smooth. If Father finds out I am lying, I will bring a curse upon myself and not a blessing."

"Let that curse be on me," said Rebecca as she dressed her son Jacob to look and feel and smell like her son Esau. She gave him the stew and bread and left to deliver it.

Jacob said, "Father,"

Isaac said, "Who are you, my son?" "

"It is Esau back from the hunt."

Isaac was surprised, "How are you back so quickly?"

"Because God, your God, caused it to happen before me."

Isaac said, “Come closer so I may feel you and see if you are really my son Esau.” He felt, and then said, “The voice is Jacob’s voice but the hands feel like Esau. Isaac was about to bless him then hesitated, “Are you really my son Esau?”

Jacob said, “I am.” So Isaac told his son to serve him the food and he ate then said, “Come closer and kiss me, my son.” And when Jacob did, Isaac smelled his clothes and blessed him. “May God grant you the dew of heaven and bounty of earth Nations will serve you; governments will bow down to you. You shall be like a lord over your brother and your mother’s children will bow before you. Those who curse you are cursed and those who bless you are blessed.”

Jacob left his father after the blessing and Esau came back from the hunt and delivered his stew. “Father, come and eat as I have brought your meat stew so that your soul can bless me.”

Isaac said, “Who are you?”

“I am your firstborn Esau.” Isaac was seized with violent trembling. “Who is the one who just served me? I ate his stew and blessed him and the blessing will remain his.”

When Esau heard he let out a loud and bitter scream, “Bless me too,” he pleaded.

Isaac said, “Your brother came with deceit and took your blessing.”

Esau said, “Isn’t Jacob the perfect name for him. He was born on my heel and has gone behind my back twice. First he took my birthright and now he took my blessing!” He wailed, “Please father, don’t you have a blessing for me too?”

His father said, “Indeed, you will have the fatness of the earth in your dwelling and receive heaven’s dew but by sword shall you live and your brother, you shall serve. When you have valid complaints and rebel, you may cast off his yoke from upon your neck.”

Esau felt seething hatred towards Jacob and said that after his father died, he would be able to kill his brother. These plans were reported to Rebecca. She went to Jacob. “Go to my brother Laban’s house and wait until things cooled down. I will send for you.”

Later Rebecca said to Isaac, “Send Jacob to my brother’s house to prevent him from intermarrying with a Canaanite.” Isaac went along and blessed Jacob before he left. “Go now and marry one of Laban’s daughters and you will be blessed and fruitful and become an assembly of nations. You will take over the land which God gave to Abraham where you previously only lived as a foreigner.”

Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob to go and find a non-Canaanite wife and thus he knew that Canaanite girls were displeasing to his father. So he married the Canaanite daughter of Ishmael, son of Abraham and Hagar.

Questions: 1) When have you felt hatred? 2) What is your birthright? 3) Who do you want to bless? And why?

Illustration Ideas: Rebecca having twins...Jacob selling Esau the stew...Rebecca helping Jacob look like Esau...Jacob dressed as Esau receiving Abraham’s blessing...Esau finding out his blessing has been taken by his brother.