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The Faith of Isaac

11: 20

The faith of Isaac DIG: Name the three basic features of the Abrahamic Covenant. Why do you think that although Isaac lived longer than either Abraham, Jacob, or Joseph, the book of Genesis devotes less space to his life than to theirs? What were Isaac's failures? Why did God bless him anyway? Why did Isaac want to bless Esau even though he knew God told Rebekah that the older will serve the younger? As a result, how did Isaac put Jacob and Rebekah in a horrible position? How can we understand the situation that Isaac put them in? Describe how God brought about His plan despite the scheming of Isaac, Rebekah and Jacob? How did God finally get Isaac into the Promised Land?

REFLECT: God's sovereignty was shown in His choice of Jacob over Esau. God is no less sovereign over the circumstances of your life. Spend some time this week thinking back over the events of your life. Praise God for the times He helped you through a difficult experience or blessed you. Then thank Him for all the difficult things He allowed you to go through, remembering that all trails in the life of a believer are for a purpose (James 1:2-4). Events that seem good to us (and those we don't like), both fall under God's sovereignty. Finally, thank God for His sovereignly choosing you to be saved, before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).³¹⁹



By **faith** Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. **And those who are righteous will live their lives by faith** (Hebrews 10:38 CJB quoting **Habakkuk 2:4 CJB**). Just as **his father** had done to **him**, Isaac passed on the **blessings** of ADONAI's promise to **his sons** by **faith**. **He** was absolutely certain that those **blessings** would be realized. For the time being, the promises of **God** were the inheritance, which the patriarchs cherished as much as most people cherish material possessions, fame and power.

Isaac showed great **faith** by allowing **Abraham** to tie **him** up and place **him** on the wood as a burnt offering. **He** knew exactly what was going on, and could have easily resisted **his father** who was much older than **he**. But, by **faith**, **he** did not, as a result, became a type of **Messiah** (see the commentary on **Genesis**, to see link click [Fm](#) - **Take Your Only Son Isaac and Sacrifice Him as a Burnt Offering**).

However, it is interesting that **Isaac** lived longer than any of the other patriarchs, less space in **Genesis** and **Hebrews** is devoted to **him** than to **the others**. Whereas **Abraham**, **Jacob** and **Joseph** each have about twelve chapters in **Genesis** that center on them, **Isaac** has just over two and-a-half - **Chapters 26** and **27** and about half of **Chapter 25**. **Isaac** was easily the least spectacular and the most ordinary of the four. **He** was less dynamic and colorful, being generally quiet and passive. And, overall, **he** seems to have had the weakest **faith**. But just like **his father**, **Abraham**, when **Isaac** blessed **his sons** in regard to their future in **faith**, it was credited to **him** as **righteousness**.

Nevertheless, we know more about **his** failures than we do about **his** successes. Because of a famine, **God** spoke to **him** in a remarkable and encouraging vision. **Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed (Genesis 26:3-4)**. In other words, the covenant promises to **Abraham** were passed on to **Isaac** directly by **God**. Those promises alone should have kept **Isaac** from worry and fear, for **ADONAI** could not have fulfilled them if **Isaac** were not protected. Not only that, but **YHVH** specifically told **him**, **"I will be with you and will bless you."**

Yet at the first sign of possible danger, **Isaac** proved faithless. When **the men of Gerar** became interested in **Rebekah** because of **her** beauty, **Isaac** said **she** was **his sister** instead of **his wife**, for fear that one of those Philistines might kill **him** in order to have **her**. In that, of course, **he** was merely following in **his father's** footsteps, because **Abraham** had twice lied in the same way about **Sarah (Genesis 12:13 and 20:2)**. **Rebekah** was beautiful

and the Philistines were not above doing what **Isaac** feared. But rather than trusting **ADONAI** for protection, **he** lied. Not only that, but **he** seems to have been more concerned for **himself** than for **Rebekah**.

YHVH disclosed to Abimelech (a term like king or pharaoh) **Rebekah's** true relationship to **Isaac**, and then **he** put **them** both under a protective order. Abimelech, a pagan Philistine, was more concerned about the ethics of the matter than was **Isaac**, a chosen man of **God**. **He** rebuked **Isaac** sharply, saying: **What is this you have done to us? One of men might easily have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.** **ADONAI's** grace prevailed, though it was through an unbeliever, with no help from **Isaac** (see the commentary on **Genesis Gp - Abimelech, King of the Philistines, Saw Isaac Caressing His Wife Rebekah**).

But **the LORD** continued to bless **Isaac**, who became wealthy. The envy of the Philistines caused them to keep filling up **his wells** until **he** finally moved out of their land, which seems to have been what **God** wanted all along. At that point **Isaac** acknowledged **Ha'Shem's** hand in the matter: **Now the LORD has given us room and we will flourish in the Land** (See the commentary on **Genesis Gq - Isaac Reopened the Wells of His Father Abraham**). **YHVH** was gently, but firmly, leading **Isaac** back to Beersheba (see the commentary on **Genesis Gr - Isaac Went Up to Beersheba. That Night the LORD Appeared to Him**) and **God** repeated the covenant promises. By **His** sovereign will, **God** brought **the prodigal** home.³²⁰

Isaac was basically materialistic. **He** lived mostly by sight and taste. **He** was partial to **Esau**, who had always been **his** favorite **son**, while **Jacob** had been the favorite of **Rebekah**. **Esau was a mighty hunter** who would go out and bring home venison and cook it just the way **Isaac** liked it. Even when **Isaac** was old and about to die, **he** asked **Esau** to go out and kill **some game and prepare a savory dish** for **him** before pronouncing **the** patriarchal **blessing** on **him**. But **Isaac** was disobedient to wishes of **the LORD**, for **ADONAI** had told **Rebekah** that **Jacob** was to receive **the blessing** rather than **Esau**, **"Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be strong than the other, and the older will serve the younger"** (**Genesis 25:23**). **Isaac** had to know about this, and **he** put both **Rebekah** and **Jacob** in a terrible position because of **his** disobedience.

It seems that the only way to understand their situation is to conclude that even though the way in which Jacob and Rebekah went about obtaining the blessing from Isaac was wrong, the sin of Isaac and Esau was greater. The LORD does not

approve of lying; **Jacob** and **Rebekah** knew this. **They** were sensitive and spiritual people, but **they** had decided that, as bad as deception might be in the sight of **ADONAI**, it had become necessary in this case in order to prevent a greater sin, that of conveying the most holy of **God's** promises to a **man** who neither wanted it nor would honor it. This was as much of a lapse of faith as when Abraham went to Egypt in **Chapter 12**, and when Sarah suggested that they have a child through her handmaiden Hagar in **Chapter 16**. **Rebekah** had already received the revelation from **the LORD** that **the older would serve the younger**. Here, then, **Rebekah** needed to trust that in **ADONAI's** timing **Jacob** would receive **the patriarchal blessing**. But because of a lack of faith **she** felt that **she** needed to take matters into her own hands because it seemed that nothing could stop **Isaac**. **Esau** could have come back at any moment! We can only imagine how hopeless **they** felt. This was a desperate situation, but it wasn't the first time that someone had lied to preserve **God's** people.

The **Hebrew midwives** deliberately disobeyed **Pharaoh** and lied to **him**. Why? Because **they feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do (Exodus 1:15-16 and 22)**. To do otherwise would have resulted in the deaths of countless **Hebrew boys**. Did **the LORD** punish these **midwives** for lying? No, **Elohim was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. And because the midwives feared God, He gave them families of their own (Exodus 1:20-21)**.

Another example of **ADONAI's** blessing on a lie was in the life of **Rahab**. **She and her family and all that belonged to her** were saved because **she hid two Israelite spies** and lied about it to the king of **Jericho (Joshua 2:4-7 and 6:25)**. There are a number of other instances in the Bible in which godly men, in order to accomplish the will of **God** and to glorify **Him**, had to break another of **His** commandments. *These are rare exceptions and can only be justified in very special and unusual circumstances as we have here with Isaac and the patriarchal blessing.* Furthermore, the people in these examples never gain any financial advantage for themselves. In fact, **Rahab** and the **Hebrew midwives** risked **their** lives because of the lies **they** told.

Similarly, **Jacob** and **Rebekah**, in order to do what **they** thought was necessary to accomplish **God's** will, were willing to risk the wrath and hatred of their own loved ones, and **Jacob** even to risk **his** life at the hands of **his** angry **brother**. **Their** action hardly had any financial advantage. Because **Jacob was righteous** (see [Cr - The Faith of Jacob](#)), **he** only cared about the spiritual ramifications of **the blessing**.³²¹

It wasn't until **Isaac** had already **blessed Jacob** and knew **the blessing** couldn't be

reversed, did **he** began to show **faith**. If **Jonah** was the reluctant prophet, then **Isaac** was the reluctant patriarch. Only when **he** realized that **the blessing** was going to be on **ADONAI's man** regardless, did **he** give in. **Isaac** finally, begrudgingly, said yes to **God**. **The LORD** had to box **him** into a corner before **he believed**; but **believe he** did, and when facing death, **he blessed Jacob** in **faith** knowing that the promises would be fulfilled.³²²