

Jacob Went Close to Isaac Who said: The Voice is Jacob's, but the Hands are Esau's 27: 18-29

DIG: Sin is sin, but who is more at fault here? What makes Isaac suspicious? How many times did Jacob lie? In what were Jacob's lies similar or dissimilar to the lies of the Hebrew midwives (see my commentary on Exodus Ah - So God Was Kind to the Midwives) Did Jacob earn the blessing? Did he merit the blessing?

REFLECT: Does the family blessing apply to us today? Or was it just something for Old Covenant times? Who have you been a blessing to lately? What does this account teach us about the way God carries out His plans?

Jacob, no doubt with considerable hesitation, went to his father and said: **My father (27:18)**. Already being suspicious, Isaac asked: **Who is it?** Then Jacob (Hebrew: **Ya'akov**) told his first lie when he said to his father, **"I am Esau your firstborn."** In Hebrew there are two ways of saying **I**. The first way is saying *ani*, and the second way is saying *anochi*. The difference is telling. When Jacob said **I**, he used *anochi* in place of *ani*. The word *anochi* when used with a predicate noun emphasizes the pronominal subject. However, the word *ani* is used to emphasize the predicate nominative, as will be the case later in **27:32**, which emphasizes the person. So here, **Ya'akov** must lie, but he used *anochi* instead of *ani* so he didn't have to emphasize the person.

But he quickly tried to draw attention away from himself, and to the issue at hand by saying: **I have done as you told me**. The sin lies in the deception of **the father**, not in the taking of the patriarchal blessing, but what **Isaac** and **Esau** were trying to do was even more sinful because they were trying to thwart the very purpose of **God**. Not wanting to draw attention to himself, he changed the subject: **Please sit up and eat some of my venison so that you may give me your blessing (27:19)**.

Jacob had no easy task to perform before his father. Isaac asked his son suspiciously: **How did you find it so quickly, my son?** Then Jacob lied for a second time when he said: **ADONAI your God gave me success**. And when he uses the name of **God**, he makes it all the worse. Then Isaac said to Jacob still in doubt: **Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not (27:20-21)**. Isaac conducted four tests to see if this was really his son. He used logic (27:21-22), then he used sound (27:22), he used words (27:24), and finally he used scent (27:27).⁴³⁸

Ya'akov went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said: The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau. He did not recognize him for who he really was, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him (27:22-23). So Isaac allowed his sense of touch more weight than his sense of hearing.

I am sure Jacob had hoped that Isaac (Hebrew: Yitz'chak) would not question him at all. But now all he could do was to be as persuasive as possible. Then his father asked him a direct question: **Are you really my son Esau?** Then Ya'akov lied the third time when he replied: **I am** (27:24). This time Jacob uses the word *ani*, so he will not arouse the suspicion that he did earlier when he used the word *anochi*.

Jacob's actions demonstrated his immaturity in the LORD. In his zeal to follow God's revealed will, he had sinned. He did the wrong thing for the right reason. In this regard, he wasn't that much different than his grandfather Abraham. Abraham demonstrated a lack of faith four times; he stayed in Hebron when he should have gone to the Promised Land (11:31b), he left Palestine and went to Egypt (12:10-20), he listened to his wife instead of waiting on ADONAI, which resulted in the birth of Ishmael and untold problems (16:1-16), and he refused to trust the LORD for his and his wife's safekeeping when he lied to Abimelech (20:1-18). However, He used those failures to build Abraham's faith before his ultimate test on Mount Moriah (22:1-19). And the same was true for Ya'akov. God would use this failure to build Jacob's faith before his ultimate test at Peniel (32:22-32).

Then finally assured in his own mind that it was really Esau, Isaac said: **My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing. Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank (27:25). There were five parts to Abraham's blessing. These continue to serve as a model for us today.**

First, meaningful touch was part of the blessing. Then, trying one last time to remove any lingering doubts, his father Yitz'chak said to him, **"Come here, my son, and kiss me"** (27:26). So Ya'akov went to him and kissed him. For anyone, whether it is a child, a spouse or a friend, meaningful touch is an essential part of the blessing.

Secondly, the spoken message was part of the blessing. When Isaac caught the smell of Jacob's clothes he blessed him **and said to him:** Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that ADONAI has blessed (27:27b). **The rabbis teach that according to tradition, the garment that Yitz'chak smelled had belonged to Adam, and had passed from him to Nimrod, and then on to Esau.** Just being physically present is not enough. For a child in search of the blessing, the major thing silence communicates is

confusion. Children who are left to fill in the blanks when it comes to what their parents think about them will often fail the test when it comes to feeling valuable and secure. To see the blessing grow in the life of a child, spouse or friend, we need to verbalize our message. Good intentions aside, good *words* are necessary to provide genuine acceptance.⁴³⁹

Thirdly, meaningful words of value were part of the blessing. Meaningful words convey the thought that the person is valuable and has redeeming qualities. Isaac uses a word picture to describe his son's value to him. He said: **May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness, an abundance of grain and new wine (27:28).** In Eastern countries, where there is so little rain, the dew is the most important prerequisite for the growth of the fruits of the earth and is often mentioned as a source of blessing (Deuteronomy 33:13 and 28; Hosea 14:6; Zechariah 8:12).⁴⁴⁰ **The rabbis have interpreted this symbolically. They believe that the heaven's dew is Scripture, the earth's richness is the Mishnah or the Oral Law (see my commentary on The Life of Christ Ei - The Oral Law), the abundance of grain is the Talmud, and the new wine is the Passover Haggadab.**

Fourthly, meaningful goals were part of the blessing. May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. In Hebrew, the word bless literally means *to bow the knee*. Be lord over your brothers is a direct contradiction of what God had told Rebekah. And may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed (27:29). This blessing is thus connected with the Abrahamic Covenant of 12:3, which will now be carried on through Ya'akov and not Esav. Therefore, what we have here is divine intervention in spite of Yitz'chak and Jacob's sin. Many are the plans of a man's heart, but it is ADONAI's purpose that prevails (Proverbs 19:21). Isaac ends up blessing Jacob against his own will. We can encourage our children to set personal, spiritual and work-related goals. The picture of a promising future is very powerful. It can shape the way they think about themselves and give them purpose in life.

And lastly, an active commitment was part of the blessing. The LORD spoke directly to Abraham (12:1-3, 15:7-21, 17:1-8, 22:15-18), to Isaac (26:1-5, 23-24) and to Ya'akov (35:9-12), confirming His active commitment to their family line. ADONAI provided for them, protected them, reaffirmed them and periodically reminded them of His faithfulness to them. His commitment to them was active, not passive. This is the example we have to bless our children, spouses, parents and friends.

Today, as in centuries past, orthodox Jewish homes bestow a special family **blessing** on their children. Each child in the family was given a general **blessing** as well as a special **blessing** for the **firstborn** . It has been an important part of providing a sense of acceptance for generations of children. But recently, it has also provided an important source of protection to those children.

All across our country, cults are holding out a counterfeit **blessing** to our children. Cult leaders have mastered the elements of the **blessing** . Providing a sense of family and offering (at least initially) the promise of personal attention, affection and affirmation is an important drawing card for many of these cults. Children who grow up without a sense of parental acceptance are especially susceptible to being drawn in. In fact, thousands are every year. However, like smell and aroma may draw them to the table, after eating they are left hungrier than before.

If you are a parent, learning about the family **blessing** can help you provide your child or children with a protective tool. The best defense against a child's longing for imaginary acceptance is to provide *genuine acceptance* . *This is not a spiritual formula and there are no guarantees* , but you can greatly reduce the likelihood that he or she will seek acceptance in the arms of a cult member or with someone in an immoral relationship. *Genuine acceptance radiates from the concept of the* **blessing** .

However, the **blessing** is not just an important tool for parents to use. The **blessing** is also of critical importance for anyone who desires to draw close to another person in an intimate relationship.⁴⁴¹