



BEGINNINGS

A Study of the Book of Genesis

Sanctuary Bible Studies – Woodbury Lutheran Church

Session 22, Copping a Blessing (Genesis 26-27)

1. SAME LIE, TAKE THREE (Chapter 26)

- 90 years after his father Abraham did it the first time (Gen 12:10-20; he did it a second time in Gen 20:1-13), Isaac uses the same lie, saying Rebekah was his sister, rather than his wife. The story here is eerily familiar to what happened with Abraham earlier, although the Abimelech and Phicol are probably different, their names being titles or family names. The events flow as follows:
 - A famine hits Canaan, and Isaac moves his family and flocks to Gerar, planning to take them on to Egypt.
 - God visits Isaac and tells him not to go to Egypt but to stay in Gerar. God promises to be with him and bless him and renews the covenant with Abraham.
 - When the men of Gerar ask about Rebekah, Isaac says she is his sister. Abimelech confronts Isaac with his deception and issues a death warrant for anyone who molests Isaac or Rebekah.
 - Isaac settles in, plants crops, and reaps a hundredfold. The Philistine neighbors become jealous and stops up the wells Abraham had dug.
 - At Abimelech's request, Isaac relocates to the Valley of Gerar, where he reopens wells Abraham had dug. There quarrels break out with the Philistine herdsmen over the wells.
 - Isaac keeps moving, digging new wells. He eventually goes up to Beersheba, where God renews His promises. There Isaac builds an altar for worship, marking the place as a place of God's presence and blessing (as in Gen 12:7; 13:17-18; 35:7).
 - Finally Abimelech comes to cut a treaty with Isaac, sealed with a feast.
- Comparing the three times we meet this lie looks like this:

	Abraham (1)	Abraham (2)	Isaac
Famine in Canaan	12:10		26:1
Plans to go to Egypt	12:10		26:2
God confirms His covenant			26:3-6
Stays in Gerar		20:1	26:6
Motivated by fear for his life	12:12-13	20:2, 11	26:7
Calls his wife his sister	12:12-13	20:2, 11	26:7
Wife's beauty	12:11, 14		24:16
Deception exposed by God	12:17-18	20:3-7	
Abimelech's alarm at possible adultery		20:4-7	26:10
Received a rebuke	12:18	20:9-10	26:10
Asked to leave	12:19-20	20:15	26:16
Treaty requested by Abimelech	12:19-20	21:22-32	26:26-31

- Vss. 34-35: Esau at 40, still "godless" and looking for immediate gratification, marries two Hittite women, which only brings grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

2. COPPING A BLESSING (Chapter 27)

- In Gen 25:27-34, Jacob had made a deal to get the birthright from his twin brother. Now Jacob needed to seal the deal with his father Isaac's blessing. His mother Rebekah would help make it happen. In Hebrew the play on words is engaging: birthright = bekorah; blessing = berekah; Rebekah = ribqah
- Vss. 1-4: Even though Isaac knows that the birthright is meant for Jacob (and perhaps that Jacob has struck a deal for the birthright [vs. 21]), he intends to give it to his favorite, Esau.
- Vss. 5-29: Note the following in this story of deception:
 - Rebekah's complicity and even take-charge leadership in deceiving Isaac (vs. 13)
 - Jacob's bringing God into the deception (vs. 20)
 - Isaac's suspicion throughout the deception (vss. 21-24)
 - Jacob's outright lie (vs. 24)
 - Betrayal with a kiss (vss. 25-26; see Mt 26:28-29; Lk 22:48)
 - Isaac's words in vss. 27-29, echoing the promises given Abraham and him and fulfilling the promise to Rebekah in Gen 25:23
 - The sympathy the reader feels for Isaac, who clearly loved Esau deeply (vs. 27)
- Vss. 30-40: Isaac trembles and Esau cries and blames Jacob. As Esau pleads for a blessing, he learns that this decision is irrevocable. Isaac has made Jacob lord over Esau. Isaac's blessing for Esau says he will live by the sword, serve his brother, and restlessly shake off this yoke of service (vs. 40). Hebrews 11:20 says that Jacob's blessing of his two sons was an act of faith. Perhaps that faith was shown in his recognizing the will of God being done in the whole heart-wrenching episode.
- Vss. 41-46: Rebekah takes charge again. Aware of Esau's plan, to kill Jacob after Isaac's death, Rebekah sends Jacob to Uncle Laban in Haran or Paddan Aram in Mesopotamia. She covers the scheme by telling Isaac that she is afraid Jacob too will find a wife from among the Hittites, something she knows Isaac does not want. Jacob will remain with Laban for 20 years before he returns to Canaan (Gen 31:38, 41). There he will find Rachel.

BE GINNINGS

1. **An altar marks a place where God makes His presence and promises known.**
2. **God's promises withstand panic and quarrels.**
3. **Immediate gratification is no substitute for long-term faithfulness.**
4. **Impatience, envy, and lies all contribute to dysfunctional families.**
5. **Some choices in life cannot be undone.**
6. **Faith sees the will of God working for good.**
7. **Sometimes in a family quarrel, withdrawal is the best strategy.**