

**A Plain Man Named Jacob
Comments on Genesis 25
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Our patriarch father Jacob is commonly viewed as a deceiver intent on getting ahead at all costs. Despite an ample source of biblical social facts to the contrary, God's people often tend to sympathize with Esau as one who was tricked into selling his birthright. But, Moses cites this infamous, foolish deal as evidence that Esau "despised his birthright" (Genesis 25:34). Further, we are explicitly warned against the baseless bitterness of "any fornicator or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright" (Hebrews 12:15-16).

Esau, a failed ("skunked") recreational hunter, was merely having a "Big Mac attack" resulting from his failure to provide sufficient rations for his hunting trip. A man who is literally starving cannot immediately ingest a full meal and then just walk away with impunity (Genesis 25:34). Ask any physician. The account in Genesis reveals no deception or coercion by Jacob who was more than willing to endure a rumbling stomach to purchase the birthright Esau obviously did not prize. "I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" The Bible militates against giving Esau any benefit of the doubt in the sale of his two thirds interest in Isaac Enterprises however hotly decried after the fact (Genesis 27:36).

Actually, our father Jacob is described as a "plain" man, a translation of the same Hebrew word, "tam" (8535), used in reference to Job (1:1). Yet, "tam" is there translated "perfect" instead of "plain" when evaluating the successful founder of Job Industries. Both Jacob and Job demonstrated remarkable ability to recover from disastrous setbacks in their respective business ventures. Jacob, CEO of Isaac Enterprises, was suddenly furloughed to seek a wife in the wake of Esau's murderous threat (Genesis 27:42-28:1). Job lost everything in one day as his faith was tested to silence Satan's slander (Job 1:9-12). Yet, by God's grace, within twenty years Jacob became two bands able to give Esau over 500 animals for safe passage into Canaan (Genesis 32:10, 13-20). And, God "blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters" (Job 42:12-13).

How is it that the testimony of profane Esau against the "plain" man, Jacob is more credible than that of Satan against the "perfect" man, Job? We should remember Isaac again blessed Jacob when he sent him to Padanaram seeking a wife. Isaac had been shocked to his senses (Genesis 27:33) by Rebekah's ruse which directed the blessing of the purchased birthright to Jacob, the ordained covenant head of God's people (Genesis 25:23; Romans 9:11-12). The Lord Himself restated the blessing in the vision of the ladder which transformed Jacob's lonely Luz, into an awesome Bethel (Genesis 28:12-22). Let us repent of our confusion regarding Jacob's successful purchase of the birthright. After all God himself has declared "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Romans 9:13). Let us honor our father Jacob (Romans 13:7) by diligent pursuit of our respective callings. So, will we supplant evil Esaus in our day by hard work exemplified by father Jacob in the house of exploitative Laban (Genesis 31:38f).