

## The Blindness of Isaac

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Isaac built wisely upon the foundation that Abraham had laid. He was firmly in control of Isaac Enterprises when Abraham died. He led God's people in a successful venture into agriculture which broke the famine fostered by the lazy Philistines. As Isaac "waxed great [in] possession of herds, and great store of servants" (Genesis 26:14), he also drew upon Abraham's experience and renegotiated a peace treaty with envious Philistines at Beer-sheba (Genesis 21:22-32; 26:26-33). Unhappily, Isaac went blind and foolishly sought to bless Esau as his successor (Genesis 27:1-5). In the ensuing crisis, his master shepherd, Jacob, was driven out and Isaac Enterprises went into a period of extended economic decline.

Isaac had a huge blind spot regarding his son, Esau. In her troubled pregnancy, Rebekah had inquired of God. "And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, . . . and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23). But, Isaac, whose work kept him indoors a lot, bonded with Esau the outdoors man. Similarly, Abraham had favored his eldest son and pleaded with God, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" (Genesis 17:18). But, Sarah demanded that Ishmael and his mother, Hagar, be expelled. Abraham, despite his grief, obeyed God who directed that he "hearken unto her [Sarah's] voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Genesis 21:12).

Isaac, however, stubbornly resisted the prophecy despite the signs of Esau's lack of competence in business. As the prophecy unfolded, Jacob grew to be a plain/perfect man overseeing the work of Isaac's servants from his headquarters in tents (Genesis 25:27). Under Laban, the fields per force became his "office" (Genesis 30:16; 31:3-4,40). But, Esau became instead a recreational, hungry hunter who ended up selling Jacob his birthright for a mess of red beans. Edom ("Red") as Esau was thereafter known, "did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright" (Genesis 25:34). Furthermore, when he was forty, Esau married not one but two heathen women who grieved both Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 26:34-35). Still, Isaac "loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison" (Genesis 25:28). His obsession resembled those Paul later decried "whose God is their belly" (Philippians 3:19).

At last, some 37 years later, Isaac called Esau to hunt and prepare venison "that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die" (Genesis 27:4). Rebekah intervened to help her husband, as did Abigail centuries later for Nabal (Genesis 27:6-29; I Samuel 25:18-37). Rebekah sought to shock Isaac to his senses and avert Edomization of Isaac Enterprises. She partially succeeded. When her judicial ruse was revealed, "Isaac trembled very exceedingly" (Genesis 27:30-33). Later, one of the Lord's names was "the fear of Isaac" (Genesis 31:42). Isaac again blessed Jacob and sent to him Padanaram to seek a wife (Genesis 28:1-4). And, the Lord confirmed Isaac's blessing with the vision of the ladder at Luz (Genesis 28:12-15).

But the damage was done. Refusal to heed God's prophecy to Rebekah cost Isaac services of Jacob, under whose care Laban's livestock holdings multiplied (Genesis 30:27-34). Esau stayed and recruited hundreds of Isaac's able servants into Edom (Genesis 32:6) despite resistance from Rebekah and Isaac. Over 20 years later, by God's grace, Jacob was restored to Isaac (Genesis 31:13). He returned to Canaan with extensive holdings in livestock having overcome Laban's exploitation (Genesis 31:36-55). Jacob negotiated a peaceful re-entry into Canaan with Edom (Genesis 33:1-15). "Jacob came unto Isaac his father [at] . . . Hebron" and, years later, with Esau Jacob buried Isaac in the cave of Machpelah nearby (Genesis 35:27,29). And, Esau finally moved to Mt. Seir "from the face of his

brother Jacob” (Genesis 36:6).