

Was Jacob Dishonest?

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The captains of industry and wizards of Wall Street are in full-fledged retreat from the envious Esaus of our day. Their vulnerability to guilt manipulation sharply contrasts with Jacob who fended off Esau's bitter profanity (Hebrews 12:15-16) and evaded Laban's exploitation (Genesis 31:41-43). Wait a minute! Doesn't everyone know Jacob was dishonest? Isn't it true Jacob was unrepentant until he made peace with God and Esau whom he tricked? The short answer is no. We do well to recall God loved Jacob and hated Esau (Romans 9:13).

Confusion of these fraternal twins gives double trouble. We become prone to attack from envious losers, like Esau, who, as Moses declares, "despised his birthright" (Genesis 25:34). Next, we cloud the extended Genesis account of a remarkable, God-fearing entrepreneur. As a reality check, let's dismiss any notion Jacob was hard-hearted in failing to feed his starving brother. Hunting trips may well result in hunger, if one fails to pack a lunch. Esau was in fact ill-prepared and only having a "snack attack;" definitely not starving (Genesis 25:29-34). Starving men cannot eat a full meal and just walk away. Ask your doctor. Finally, Genesis reveals no hint of fraud or coercion in Jacob's famous birthright purchase. A deal is a deal!

Failure in Western societies to keep God's command to honor parents fosters anarchy in government as we sadly see. It also blurs our reading of authority relationships in the house of Isaac. Thus, we easily miss the fact that the one really responsible for Isaac's irregular blessing of Jacob instead of Esau was Isaac himself. Despite the prophecy that "the elder shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23) and evidence Esau was an irresponsible play boy, Isaac perversely continued to favor his first-born son. Rebekah intervened to shock her husband out his disastrous course. She ordered Jacob to secure Isaac's blessing in disguise and took full responsibility should Isaac curse Jacob instead (Genesis 27:7-13). Jacob dutifully obeyed.

Blessing Esau portended grave danger to Isaac's house, not unlike some shaky American leaders who must cope with persistent threats in an undeclared war. Isaac's servant-saints were surrounded in Canaan by envious Philistines whose hostility was barely restrained by Isaac with Jacob's help (Genesis 26:12-33). Rebekah's short-lived, judicial ruse partially succeeded. When the ruse ended as Esau returned with venison, "Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I . . . have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed" (Genesis 27:33). "The fear of Isaac," afterward became one of God's names (Genesis 31:42). The blessing was not revoked. Jacob was not cursed. And, Isaac again blessed Jacob as he left home to seek a wife (Genesis 28:1-4). Later, Jacob was blessed at Bethel in a visionary ladder of Christ (Genesis 28:12f; John 1:51).

This discussion of the blessing of Jacob does not justify lying or deception. Rather, it likens the judicial ruse by Rebekah, the second ranking authority in Isaac's house, to King Solomon's bluff to divide the baby (I Kings 3:23-28) and the prophet, Nathan's story, before guilt-ridden David, of a rich man's merciless slaughter of a poor man's lamb (II Samuel 12:1-13). Each of these ruses revealed the truth needed for their respective, righteous outcomes. It is high time that God's people acknowledge with Henry Morris, regarding Jacob's business dealings, "There is never a single instance *in the Bible* of criticism of Jacob (except on the lips of Esau and Laban both of whom are unworthy witnesses)." [The Genesis Record, Baker, 1976, p- 428]

See other short studies of Jacob on page 4 and page 5 at somepilgrimsinprogress.com. wlt