

Today, I will ask you: Are there spiritual lessons we can learn from our reading?

**I. Genesis 27: Rebekah and Jacob deceive Isaac**

- The trickery that plays out in Genesis 27 is a complicated and planned deception:
  - It begins with Rebekah eavesdropping on the conversation between Isaac and Esau.
  - She hatches a plan in her mind and brings Jacob into the mix.
  - The execution of her plan takes time; this is not a spur-of-the-moment choice. She prepares a meal, puts Esau's clothes on Jacob and covers his hands and neck with goat skin.
  - Jacob lies to his father about his identity when asked directly.
  - Jacob even lies about being helped by the Lord (Isaac should have known it was not Esau then, as Esau would not be expected to quickly invoke God's name).
  - Jacob reinforces the lie again in v. 24.
- Isaac is old and blind (likely bed-ridden, v. 19, 31). Rebekah and Jacob work hard to trick his other senses (smell of clothes, touching of hairy skin). It seems that Jacob makes no effort to disguise his voice and Isaac fails to trust his hearing.
- Jacob receives the blessing of his father. Esau comes in just after Jacob leaves and learns of the trickery. Esau is blessed with a lackluster blessing similar to the one Ishmael received.
- Many harmful things spring from this deception:
  - A mother has, in effect, shown her son a lesson in well-planned out deception.
  - A father is deeply hurt and troubled (v. 33).
  - Anger is cultivated in a man to the point of fratricide
  - Brothers are divided.
  - From what we know, Jacob never sees his mother alive again
- To think God is pleased by the practice of lies and trickery within family relationships, one simply needs to see his displeasure of the practice in a depraved Judah centuries later (Jeremiah 9:3-8).
- Two questions for thought: Was Isaac really fooled by the deception? Could God's plan for Jacob been fulfilled without this course of action?

**II. Genesis 28: Jacob begins his journey to Haran**

- Jacob is sent to the land of Haran to get wife from among his kin. Esau, who has already married Canaanite women to the displeasure of his parents (26:34, 35), decides out of spite to marry again outside of his people. This time it is a daughter of Isaac's half-brother, Ishmael.
- Jacob has a vision of a ladder (better translated as staircase or ramp). Angels are seen ascending and descending along it. What does this vision mean?
- God speaks to Jacob (in the Bible's first dream-vision) and reinforces the covenant he made with his grandfather, Abraham. Despite Jacob's deception of his father, God seems to still regard Jacob as righteous and more worthy to be blessed than Esau.

**III. Genesis 29: Jacob, Rachel and Leah**

- Jacob arrives in the land of Laban and meets some men from Haran at a well. Rachel arrives with the flocks she oversees. It is an interesting thought: Jacob, the momma's boy who stayed in tents while his brother stayed in the field, falls in love with the girl who lives the hard life keeping flocks. Jacob does some showing off and rolls the stone away from the mouth of the well and waters the flock. His mom did the reverse for the servant that came to find her.
- Jacob goes to Laban and asks to marry Rachel. Since it seems that Jacob has no dowry to present, he must work off the bride price. Time flies for Jacob and he marries who he thinks is Rachel, but it turns out the next morning to be Leah. How could he not tell the difference? A veil over her face? Darkness? Perhaps this corresponds to blindness of Isaac that kept him from seeing the truth.

- Jacob agrees to work seven more years if Laban will give him Rachel at the end of the week after marrying Leah. Laban agrees and after marrying Rachel, Jacob works another 7 years for Laban. Curiously, it is forbidden in the law given at Mt. Sinai, for a man to marry sisters (Leviticus 18:18).
- God sees that Leah is hated (literal meaning of Hebrew, not “unloved” as generally translated) by Jacob and takes pity on her. She gives birth to the first four children of Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah. Perhaps we see the Lord’s blessing of the first marriage (most legitimate?) in bringing forth the first priests from Levi and the Messiah from Judah.

#### IV. **Genesis 30: The makings of a good reality TV show**

- Rachel, desperate to be equal with her sister pleads with Jacob, but Jacob seems to realize the Lord’s hand in her barrenness. His seemingly uncompassionate response is a stark contrast to the compassion we see centuries later from Elkanah in a similar situation (I Samuel 1).
- Rachel, taking matters into her own hands, gives her handmaiden, Bilhah, to Jacob as a concubine. Dan and Naphtali are born from this relationship.
- Leah, not to be outdone, gives her handmaiden, Zilpah, to Jacob. Gad and Asher are born from this relationship.
- The story goes on and it seems that Rachel is the preferred sleeping partner of Jacob, as Leah has to trade some mandrakes to Rachel in order to sleep with Jacob. Leah’s son, Reuben, had picked these fruits, which were supposedly an aphrodisiac and the roots used to make a narcotic. God blesses Leah with another two sons (the mandrake deal must have been long lasting): Issachar and Zebulun. Leah is also given a daughter, Dinah.
- Rachel is finally relieved of being barren and gives birth to Joseph.
- Jacob is now the father of 12 children, 11 boys and one girl, by 4 different women. Perhaps he is still being taught a lesson because of deceiving his father.
- Jacob requests to leave with his wives and children. Laban, recognizing the blessing Jacob is to his wealth, offers to pay him wages if he will remain with him (Jacob has been playing the role of indentured servant thus far).
- Jacob requests that all the spotted, speckled and black goats and sheep from Laban’s flocks be his wages. Laban agrees, but as the usual, tries to cheat Jacob by separating out the marked animals and taking them far away from Jacob’s flocks. Jacob, through some strange breeding practices, winds up propagating his own flock with the marked animals.