

## "Birthrights and Blessings "

[For those online, there is the text of Scripture at the end]

### Introduction

Two boys grew up in the same home, under the same star sign, with the same parents, but turned out quite differently. Their mother might have dressed them the same, and taught them how to read and write at the same table, but did they ever turn out differently. The boys are none other than Patriarch Jacob and his evil twin, Esau. But all most knew about them in their birth was that Esau was the firstborn, and that later as boys, Jacob stayed in the house more often than his brother. The boys could not have been any more dissimilar. What they did with their relationships with their parents, their God, and with one another is easy pickings for Hollywood films and London Times books. It's no formula book either, as we will see today as we study Jacob and Esau in their birthright, blessing and brotherhood. The relationships are worth the reading. [read text]

### Disdain of the birthright (Chapter 25.27-34)

וְלִמְהֵרָה לִּי בְּכוֹרָה Who needs a birthright! Or more literally (and less axiomatically "And why is this to me a birthright?" or perhaps "why is this birthright for me?" Whatever this b'chorah was, it was not at all relevant to the man of the field, Esau. He despised it, and found it to be a nuisance, a non entity of concern.

So that we can sort this out, let's find out what birthrights are anyway. In ancient times the birthright included the inheritance rights of the firstborn (Heb. 12:16). The law of primogeniture provided that at least a double share of the father's property be given to the firstborn son when the father died (Deut. 21:15-17). Parallels to this practice come from Nuzi, from Larsa in the Old Babylonian period and from Assyria in the Middle Assyrian period. Esau was Isaac's

firstborn son according to law and thus the birthright was his. Jacob was ever the schemer, seeking by any means to gain advantage over others. But it was by God's appointment and care, not Jacob's cleverness, that he came into the blessing.

So what Esau wanted was food today and who cared about land in the dusty drought ridden areas of Canaan. What a picture of a man who lived for today. I'm not speaking about a person who is commended for such, that is, a man who lives in the moment and is not worried or anxious about tomorrow. No, I mean, a person who is almost childish in his passion for pleasure and satisfying pleasure of the moment.

The writer of Hebrews says it this way,

"See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears." (12.15-17)

And earlier regarding Moses he also wrote, "choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Messiah greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward." (11.25-26)

God wants you to enjoy things, certainly. And He wants you to enjoy Him. But the heart of the matter is temporary pleasure versus long ranged pleasure in relation to God. What a shame on Esau that he sold his long ranged inheritance in the Land of Promise for a bowl of soup.

What 'passing pleasures of sin' are appealing to you? What brings your knees to knock? What are you supposed to be doing that you are not doing because you are being pulled away by other things or enterprises?

With whom are you to relate but by distraction and adulteration you find yourself mixing with others and thus not giving time to the first?

Distraction can be a devastating thing. On the cricket pitch, there are rules about conversation, so they tell me. But in baseball, cricket's younger brother, there are no such rules. There is a story involving Yogi Berra, the well-known catcher for the New York Yankees, and Hank Aaron, who at that time was the chief power hitter for the Milwaukee Braves. The teams were playing in the World Series, and as usual Yogi was keeping up his ceaseless chatter, intended to pep up his teammates on the one hand, and distract the Milwaukee batters on the other. As Aaron came to the plate, Yogi tried to distract him by saying, "Henry, you're holding the bat wrong. You're supposed to hold it so you can read the trademark." Aaron didn't say anything, but when the next pitch came he hit it into the left-field bleachers. After rounding the bases and tagging up at home plate, Aaron looked at Yogi Berra and said, "I didn't come up here to read."

Aaron kept his eyes focused on the task, hit a 6 and helped his team win the victory. We should know that things that distract bring failure and when we overcome distraction, we win. How simple is that?

Esau was distracted by the needs of the moment, his famishing, and he despised the very thing that would give him plenty in the years to come. No wonder Moses continues to write of Esau that he brought shame and dishonor on his family and brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

We have choices to take our birthright in God very seriously. We as Jews are given the responsibility to make Messiah known around the earth. We are charged to live out the godly life and to share God's love freely. Let's embrace this opportunity today.

**Deception at the blessing (Chapter 27:1-29)**

Let me tell you a story about deception. As physics professor at Adelaide University, Sir Kerr Grant used to illustrate the time of descent of a free-falling body by allowing a heavy ball suspended from the lecture-theater roof trusses to fall some 30 feet and be caught in a sand bucket.

Each year the bucket was lined up meticulously to catch the ball – and each year students secretly moved the bucket to one side, so that the ball crashed thunderously to the floor. Tiring of this rather stale joke, the professor traced a chalk line around the bucket. The students moved the bucket as usual, traced a chalk mark around the new position, rubbed it out and replaced the bucket in its original spot. "Aha!" the professor explained, seeing the faint outline of the erased chalk mark. He moved the bucket over it and released the ball – which thundered to the floor as usual.

Deception may be cute, in the story, but it's a loser all the way around. The persons involved in the deception and those who fall to it, neither wins in the end. In the biblical narrative today, we see Esau being deceived. We see Isaac being deceived by his son and wife. We see some serious trickery. No wonder Esau is upset at the end and cries at his father ... "No wonder he was named Jacob!" In a way, he's blaming his parents for the name and the character of his brother.

Deception will rule in the biblical story for quite some time. We will see it with Jacob and his uncle, and with the brothers in their lying report to their father Jacob about the loss of Joseph. Let me tell you another story about deception.

"Marathoner Loses by a Mustache." So read the headline of the international press story. It appeared that Abbes Tehami of Algeria was an easy winner of the Brussels Marathon--until someone wondered where his mustache had gone! Checking eyewitness accounts, it quickly became evident that the mustache belonged to Tehami's coach, Bensalem Hamiani. Hamiani had run the first seven-and-a-half miles of the race for Tehami, then dropped out of the pack and disappeared into the woods to pass race number 62 on to his pupil. "They

looked about the same," race organizers said. "Only one had a mustache." It's expected that the two will never again be allowed to run in Belgium. (1992)

Even earlier in the US Civil War in 1864 Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest was leading his troops north from Decatur, Alabama, toward Nashville. But to make it to Nashville, Forrest would have to defeat the Union army at Athens, Alabama. When the Union commander, Colonel Wallace Campbell, refused to surrender, Forrest asked for a personal meeting, and took Campbell on an inspection of his troops. But each time they left a detachment, the Confederate soldiers simply packed up and moved to another position, artillery and all. Forrest and Campbell would then arrive at the new encampment and continue to tally up the impressive number of Confederate soldiers and weaponry. By the time they returned to the fort, Campbell was convinced he couldn't win and surrendered unconditionally!

Sorting out the facts is not only incumbent on marathon marshals or wartime generals, but on all those who want to win in life and find the true pleasure of the Almighty.

Did the trickery of Jacob and his mother do what God did not want to have happen? Not at all. It was God's intention to have the younger be in charge. This was announced in the womb of Rebekkah. And this method of gaining the ascendancy was unnecessary, but it eventuated in getting things in the right order. Esau was not tricked out of something he cared about. He wanted nothing to do with the people of God. He married out. He wanted nothing to do with the inheritance; he sold it for a pot of stew.

But trickery is never honored in God's eyes. If you will, this scene evidences God's choice, rather than the purpose of deception.

### **Despising of the brother (Chapter 27.30ff)**

As a result of sin, people grow in darkness. Sin produces more sin. That's why we have to nip it in the proverbial bud at any cost and at any time. Be

ruthless with sins, lest they nip at you. Cain was so warned but despised the warning in chapter 4. (verse 7)

Watch for the order of things in the Scriptures. For instance, Rom. 13:13 "Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy." See what happens? First there is drunkenness, then sexual promiscuity, then jealousy. This envy and strife will result naturally from a dishonoring of the natural order and self disciplined lifestyle God ordained.

Or here's another example, "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. (James 1.14-15) Lust brings sin and sin brings death. Lusting for things is not deadly, but succumbing to the temptation does.

So, in our story today, we see the result of the sin of Esau. He hates his brother. He despises him and promises to ruin him, bring him down. It looks like a WWF wrestling promotional advert. Verse 41 says, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob." At least Esau had the decency to wait and not trouble his father. But look out Jacob, as soon as Dad's gone, you are history. I want what I want, and if you have it, I'm taking it from you.

This is not about the Abrahamic covenant. This is not about honoring God and the God of their fathers. This is about wanton lust and self-satisfaction. Esau wants everything and he doesn't want his brother to have it at all. If he has to murder his brother, so be it. Cain did it. Others will do it for similar reasons in the later stories of this book. Jealousy is a lousy master.

During the Sydney Festival in January, Samuel Beckett and his plays will be featured. This Irish novelist and playwright received great recognition for his work--but not every one savored his accomplishments. Beckett's marriage, in fact, was soured by his wife's jealousy of his growing fame and success as a writer. One day in 1969 his wife Suzanne answered the telephone, listened for a moment, spoke briefly, and hung up. She then turned to Beckett and with a

stricken look whispered, "What a catastrophe!" Was it a devastating personal tragedy? No, she had just learned that Beckett had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature!

We need to rejoice with those who rejoice. Esau didn't even come close to that one.

No matter what causes our friends and brothers give us to hate, we must choose to live the life of Y'shua before them. Remember He had reason to hate those who despised Him, although He was brother to them.

### **Summary**

Here are some things I see as we conclude, and you can add your thoughts to your own list.

- 1) God's gifts are to be enjoyed by God's people
- 2) What you ignore will not be yours
- 3) Wait on the Lord for His provision
- 4) Jealousy is a lousy master; we must master it.
- 5) One sin produces more sins. Stop this steady regress somewhere!

Dear friends, we have eternal life due to the Saviour Y'shua, due to His love and forgiveness. His Resurrection has proven His new covenant. His teaching is great, and yet it goes well beyond that to His life and death. No amount of good works will give us enough information to help us overcome evil. No amount of information will help us overcome our own evil inclination. Only the messiah can repair our relationship with God, which will in turn give us pleasure with Him.

If you have never experienced this eternal and new life about which we are speaking, if you are yet outside the relationship with God, then pray with me. If you



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## \$70,000 paternity ruling sets precedent

By Ian Munro  
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A man who successfully sued his former wife for damages because she told him he was the father of her lover's children had set an Australian legal precedent, the man's lawyer said yesterday.

Judge John Hanlon awarded Liam Magill \$70,000 for general damages and economic loss, and ordered his former wife, Meredith Magill, to pay costs.

Mr Magill's solicitor, Vivien Mavropoulos, said the decision had extended the law of deceit to the circumstances of a man being falsely led to believe he was the biological parent of a child.

A tearful Mr Magill, 52, would not comment after the judgment, but his partner, Cheryl King, said they were ecstatic. "It's the mere fact we got a judgment in favour," Ms King said. "Money does not come into the equation - it's the fact we have been able to set a precedent.

"We wanted this woman to be held accountable for her actions. So far as setting a precedent, we have achieved what we set out to achieve."

Mrs Magill's barrister, Bill Gillies, obtained a 28-day stay on the court order, leaving open the option of an appeal.

The court had heard that Mr Magill married his wife in 1988. DNA tests in 2000 showed that Mr Magill was the biological father of only the first of their three children born between April, 1989, and November, 1991.

After the couple separated late in 1992, Mr Magill made child support payments for all three children until 1999. At one time his take-home pay was reduced to about \$130 a week.

Judge Hanlon said evidence that Mrs Magill, 36, had misled her husband about paternity began with the children's birth certificates in which she nominated him as the father.

He said evidence suggested that Mrs Magill knew her husband was not the father of either child. "If she did not know for a positive fact that Mr Magill was not the father, she was at least being reckless as to the truth," Judge Hanlon said.

He said he accepted Mr Magill's testimony that the couples' sexual relationship had all but ceased by the time the third child was conceived, and it was likely that Mrs Magill was having sex more frequently with her lover than with her husband.

The court heard that Mr Magill suffered stress, anxiety and depression over the break-up of his marriage and the revelation that he was not the father of all of his children. He had been unable to work for several years.

Judge Hanlon said the damages award was not a punishment for Mrs Magill's infidelity, nor was it an adjustment or rebate for past child support.

Judge Hanlon said he was aware that Mrs Magill would have been trying to save her marriage from the enormous uproar had she revealed her suspicions about her younger children's paternity.

Mr Magill had sought \$100,000 in general damages and \$300,000 in further, exemplary damages. Judge Hanlon said that awarding exemplary damages would have disregarded the complexities of the situation that confronted Mrs Magill.

*This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/11/22/1037697877139.html>*