

The Way of Man Is ...

DECEIT! — Gen 27:1-28:9

Opening Thoughts

- * Gen 27 is a vivid illustration of Jeremiah's appraisal of the human heart — it is desperately wicked
- * NONE of the characters in this narrative rightfully elicit much sympathy ... though some tug on our sense of "fair play"
- * And the chapter is loaded with irony ...
 - ◆ Jacob & Rebekah scheme to acquire what God has already promised
 - ◆ Isaac attempts to give away what God has already taken away
 - ◆ Esau mourns losing something he already gave away

The Summons

- * Our story begins with an aging Isaac, who believes “his days are numbered”
 - ◆ Though ironically, he will not die for another 43 years
- * He summons Esau and signals his intent to bestow the patriarchal blessing ... after one more savory meal
 - ◆ Seems father and son have the same affection for food 😊
- * What is odd about Isaac's actions?
 - ◆ Their stealth and secrecy
 - ◆ The blessing should have been a joyful and public occasion — a celebration

The Summons

- * Why this approach?
 - ◆ Because Isaac clearly knows God's intentions for the two sons ... therefore his actions are a willful attempt to subvert God's will
- * What is so ironic about Isaac's actions?
 - ◆ They are completely “out of character” ...
- * What had changed in this man of great faith to cause him to resort to faithless actions to exert his will?
 - ◆ The text DOES NOT SAY — but perhaps his wealth and easy life led him into spiritual complacency?? ... *Should be a reminder to us to always be diligent!*
- * What does Esau do wrong?
 - ◆ Presume he can ignore the oath he swore to his brother & thwart God's will!

The Summons

- * So what is the point of vv. 1-4?
 - ◆ At a minimum — to set the context for what follows
- * But I think a great deal more than that ... namely
 - ◆ To highlight our natural tendency to exert our own will despite full knowledge of God's revealed will!
- 📖 So even in these opening verses, we have some core implications ...
 - ◆ God will accomplish His purposes despite our plans, and —
 - ◆ The source of sin lies in supplanting God's will with our desires

The “Supplanters”

- * Enter Rebekah and Jacob
 - ◆ Seems the patriarch's wives are never out of “earshot”
- * Having heard of Isaac's plans, Rebekah naturally and instinctively drops to her knees in prayer ... right?
 - ◆ NO — which is odd given her appeal to God over the troubled pregnancy ... which HE immediately answered! - Gen 25:22ff
- * So sorry, I must have a bad English version ... “What she does is humbly approach and appeal to Isaac — just like all you biblically submissive wives do” ... right?

The “Supplanters”

- * Nope — wrong again. **What does she do?**
 - ◆ Hatches a “plan of her own,”
 - ◆ Conscripting Jacob into her deception, and ...
 - ◆ Acting quickly and decisively ... just as she did when she first met Abraham’s servant and with her assent to leave at once
 - ◆ Note also that Rebekah “embellishes” what she heard - v. 7
- * OK — Mom doesn’t do so well ...
- * But thankfully Jacob saves the day with his pious response ... **right?**

The “Supplanters”

- * Not even close ... **What does Jacob do?**
 - ◆ He worries about getting caught — being more concerned about **detection** than **deception**
- * About the only positive thing you can say about Jacob’s response is that he sees the flaw in Rebekah’s plan ...
- * Along with the ramifications ...
 - ◆ Instead of being blessed — he will be cursed
- * So finally Rebekah comes to her senses and backs off ... **right?**

The “Supplanters”

- * No again ... she compounds the problem **demonstrating what?**
 - ◆ Willful and premeditated deceit, along with ...
 - ◆ Complete disregard for God’s ability to control the situation
- 👉 Reminding us that unchecked sin ALWAYS leads to more sin ... remember the “garden” and David
- * So, Jacob accedes to her wishes and fetches the goats
- * And then Rebekah reveals the full extent of her plan ...
What is it?

The “Supplanters”

- ◆ She dresses up Jacob in Esau’s clothes — **Why?**
 - To deceive Isaac’s sense of smell
- ◆ She disguises Jacob’s “smooth skin” with the animal hides ... **Why?**
 - To deceive Isaac’s sense of touch
- ◆ She disguises the food — “savory” dishes ... **Why?**
 - To deceive Isaac’s sense of taste
- * Rebekah launches a full onslaught to deceive Isaac’s “operative” senses, so that he will bless Jacob
- * **What is the common thread in Rebekah’s plan?**
 - ◆ An appeal to the PHYSICAL senses!

The “Supplanters”

👤 Reliance on our “physical” senses subverts “spiritual” sense!

* What shall we say about Rebekah's character?

- ◆ Willful, Deceitful, Untrusting ... But decisive and clever!
- ◆ Reminding us that “we don't mess with the Momma Bear”

* What shall we say about Jacob's character?

- ◆ Complicit, Weak, Self-Serving

* We have a classic example of OT narrative — the plot line is building suspense toward an uncertain outcome leading us to the “Supplanting” itself

The “Supplanting”

* The ruse is placed in motion - vv. 18-20

- ◆ Jacob enters with the “savory game” and presents himself to Isaac as Esau ...
- ◆ Lying to his father no less than 4 times — Can you pick them out?
 - ▶ I am Esau, your firstborn ... NO — It's Jacob
 - ▶ I hunted as you told me ... NO — He took them from the flock
 - ▶ Eat my game ... NO — it's domesticated goats
 - ▶ God made it happen! ... WOW — that's a “doozy”

The “Supplanting”

- * Jacob has been “well prepped” but it appears that Isaac is suspicious from the start
- * **How do we know?**
 - ◆ Wow, that seemed fast my son!
 - ◆ Clearly the time frame seems a bit quick to Isaac ... and it was!
- * So, Isaac does some investigating - vv. 21-23
 - ◆ **Test #1:** Isaac deploys his sense of touch and concludes ...
 - ◆ Yup — Hairy like Esau ... But the voice doesn't seem quite right

The “Supplanting”

- ◆ Isaac is confused, but he is trapped by his own plan — **What is his problem?**
 - ▶ His hands are tied by his own secret plot!
 - ▶ To call on witnesses to verify the identity would have exposed his treachery
 - ▶ Isaac has been “**hoisted with his own petard**” ... i.e. an ironic reversal of his fortunes
- ◆ So Isaac blessed him ... a **proleptic*** summary of the details to follow

*A literary technique that represents something as existing before it actually occurs

The “Supplanting”

- * Still not quite satisfied, Isaac probes further in vv. 24-27a
 - ◆ **Test #2:** Are you REALLY Esau?
 - ◆ Seems Isaac does not expect his boys to outright lie to him
 - ◆ Yet Jacob does lie ... a 5th time ... saying “I am”
 - ◆ **What is Test #3?**
 - ▶ TASTE ... Isaac chows down — and is obviously fooled by Rebekah’s food prep
 - ▶ Seems the “old gal” can still cook up a savory meal 😊

The “Supplanting”

- ◆ Still suspicious, Isaac works in one last test ... **What is it?**
 - ▶ Yup — he has to pass the “sniff test”
- * Now fully satisfied, Isaac proceeds to bless “Esau/Jacob” in poetic verse - vv. 27b-29
- * **There are the 4 categories of blessing — what are they?**
 - ◆ The 1st is **material** — Water & fertile land yielding abundant crops
 - ▶ Heavy dew (literally) was a source of irrigation in dry periods
 - ◆ The 2nd is **political** — Ruler over people & nations (Gen 25:23a)

The “Supplanting”

- ◆ The 3rd is [Familial](#) — Master over the entire household
 - Your “peeps” ... And your brother (25:23b)
- ◆ The 4th is [Protection](#) — Blessings and curses on those who bless and curse you (Gen 12:3a)
- * It is interesting that Isaac stops short of Gen 12:3b ...
 - ◆ Some think this is because he believes he is blessing Esau ... and knowing he is “wrong” he won’t go as far as the “seed promise”
 - ◆ I think this reads too much into the text as Isaac is basically recalling the prophecy in Gen 25:23

The “Supplanting”

- * Whatever your view ...
- * The blessing given to Jacob is far-reaching, leaving little of importance for his brother Esau

The “Supplanted”

- * Jacob had barely left his father with the blessing when Esau returns — vv. 30-31
 - ◆ Try to imagine how “high” Esau must have been ... going in!
 - ◆ The food was prepared and he was about to be crowned “king of the household”
 - ◆ Finally the whiny conniver was about to be put in his place!
- * Esau enters and presents himself to Isaac for the blessing ... and the **ruse is revealed** — vv. 32-35

The “Supplanted”

- ◆ And it's all over except for the CRYING ...
- * Isaac responds to Esau's presence with a bewildered “**SAY WHAT ... Who are you!**”
 - ◆ To which Esau replies ... it's me “Pops,” your first-born
 - ◆ Leading Isaac to have a violent convulsion — followed by **the dawning of truth & conviction**
 - ◆ No sooner than the question is asked — the light goes on and the struggle is over ...
 - Isaac immediately knows he was deceived by Jacob

The “Supplanted”

- ◆ But what is the more important truth he sees?
 - The providential hand of God!
- ◆ And what is Isaac's response?
 - He [repents](#) (realizing he has brought this situation upon himself) and [submits](#) to God's sovereignty ... “YES, and he shall be blessed”
 - No longer his will, but rather [God's will be done!](#)
- * Verse 33 is the fulcrum of the narrative ...
 - ◆ Everything has been building to this climactic point
 - ◆ Will the Rebekah/Jacob team pull off the ruse, and ...

The “Supplanted”

- ◆ Will Isaac recognize his folly and stand by his blessing
- * The answer to both questions, of course, is YES — which takes us to Esau's response
- * But before we go there, I want to take you to the writer of Hebrews assessment of Isaac which in light of his behavior seems strange
 - ◆ In Heb 11:20, the writer says that Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau “[by faith](#)”
 - ◆ What does he mean by this?
 - One notable commentator says this affirms that Gen 27:33 marks Isaac's conversion (Boice) — with which I cannot agree

The “Supplanted”

- ◆ It does mark “a conversion” ... one of resisting God’s will to accepting it — but it is not “salvific”
- ◆ Once the light dawned on Isaac ... He accepted God’s correction and proceeded [by faith](#) after all
- ◆ The [faith](#) entails passing on God’s promises — even they have not been fulfilled in his lifetime
- ◆ Now, as to when Isaac acquired his “salvific” faith, we cannot pinpoint the precise time —
 - But ... If I had to guess I would suggest Mt. Moriah, with this present event being a vivid “wake up call,” or reminder

The “Supplanted”

- * Moving to Esau’s response — [do you see him as a sympathetic figure?](#)
 - ◆ I don’t — remember that he willing [gave away](#) his birthright ... sworn by an oath!
 - ◆ And by going along with Isaac, he was about to ignore his oath ... and God’s will
- * Both here in v. 34 and again in v. 39, “the strong man cries”
- * [Are these tears of repentance?](#)
 - ◆ NO — I’d say remorse ... “crocodile tears” bemoaning his fate

The “Supplanted”

- * Esau doesn't care a lick about anything other than his selfish ambitions
- * Now, how can we know these are crocodile tears?
 - ◆ 1st from his assessment of the situation — I've been robbed ... look at v. 36
 - ◆ And 2nd ... because he plots to kill Jacob - note v. 41!
- * Nevertheless, Esau is nothing but persistent ... **three times** he presses Isaac for a blessing - w. 34, 36, 38

The “Supplanted”

- * What are Isaac's three responses?
 - ◆ To the 1st attempt he responds by acknowledging Jacob's deceit ... but does not relent - v. 35
 - ◆ To the 2nd attempt he responds by repeating the blessings given to Jacob ... but does not relent - v. 37
 - ◆ To the 3rd attempt Isaac relents and responds
- * What is the form of his response?
 - ◆ It is a prophecy — NOT a blessing

The “Supplanted”

* What is the content of the prophecy?

- ◆ He will dwell in a “barren and dry” land - v. 39
- ◆ He will be a violent man - v. 40a
- ◆ He will serve his brother - v. 40b
- ◆ But ... he will do so rebelliously - v. 40c-d

* And indeed, history records the relationship of Edom (Esau’s descendants) and Israel (Jacob’s descendants) as ...

The “Supplanted”

* A reiterating cycle of ...

- ◆ Servitude
- ◆ Revolt
- ◆ Reconquest ...

* Until their complete and final conquest by John Hyrcanus in approx. 129 B.C.

* Jacob was to rule over his brother ... but it would be contentious

The “Supplanted”

- * Perhaps in response to his wrong in deceiving his father, it would seem that the full enjoyment of Jacob’s blessing will be curtailed in part
- * Summing up vv. 30-40, the writer of Hebrews describes Esau’s character and Isaac’s resolute conviction in this way ... Heb 12:16-17
 - ◆ [READ from v. 14-17]

The Sequel

- * Well, like any good drama — we’re not done yet, there is a sequel in vv. 41-45
 - ◆ If this were a fencing match ... we have a final “thrust and parry” before this saga ends
- * Esau makes a quick recovery ... His “tears” changing from remorse to revenge
- * He harbors a “grudge” and taking a play from Cain’s playbook — he plots to kill Jacob - v. 41
 - ◆ Though he will wait until his father dies

The Sequel

- * It's hard to discern Esau's true intentions
 - ◆ Is it just boasting — to save face
 - ◆ Or angry talk “in the moment”
 - ◆ Clearly it is not an imminent threat as Isaac will not die for another 43 years
- * Nevertheless, the “ever-present” and “over-protective” Rebekah gets wind of the plot ...
- * And, in character, acts decisively — if not completely forthrightly ... **What is misleading in her report to Jacob?**

The Sequel

- ◆ She seems to imply the threat is imminent ...
- ◆ And does not add the “qualifier” ... i.e. after Isaac dies
- * She devises a simple plan to protect Jacob
 - ◆ Flee to Laban
 - ◆ Hang out there for a while until Esau has cooled off
 - ◆ Then I'll summon you
- * Clearly she believes this is a temporary problem and she will soon be reunited with her beloved Jacob

The Sequel

- * But to her grief — she will never see Jacob again
- * What does the last part of v. 45 mean - “why should I be bereaved ...?”
 - ◆ Under ANE law — a kinsman would have redeemed Jacob’s murder by killing Esau
- * So the plan is hatched — Why doesn’t Jacob just leave?
 - ◆ Because he needs his father’s permission ... which Rebekah knows and leads to her [subterfuge](#)

The Subterfuge

- * A schemer to the end, Rebekah approaches Isaac about the matter of a wife for Jacob ...
 - ◆ A “true enough” ploy, but something less than [the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help her God](#)
 - ◆ And a little drama thrown in — these “daughter-in-laws” are going to kill me
- * Verse 46 brings our minds back to Gen 26:34-35 and Esau’s Canaanite wives, reminding us ...
 - ◆ They had been a constant source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah

The Subterfuge

- * Rebekah seizes the situation to get Isaac's permission to send Jacob away
- * Isaac immediately accedes to the plan and charges Isaac Jacob to seek a wife
- * What are the particulars?
 - ◆ Canaanite women are "off limits" - v. 1
 - ◆ Your bride is to be chosen from among the daughters of Laban — Rebekah's brother in Paddan-aram - v. 2

The Subterfuge

- * What does Isaac do next?
 - ◆ He extends the full Abrahamic blessing including ...
 - Be fruitful and multiply - v. 3a
 - Become a company of peoples ... i.e. a nation - v. 3b
 - The land ... note the prominence of the land in all of the blessing sections — it is of central importance to God - v. 4
- * The blessing extended, Isaac sends Jacob on his way — emphasizing once again the destination, the person, his nationality, and his relationship to the family - v. 5

The Segue

- * Vv. 6-9 record Esau's final flailing for parental favor before he recedes from the narrative
 - ◆ We will encounter Esau again only briefly in his reunion with Jacob and his final genealogy
- * What is pitiful about Esau's attempt to court favor?
 - ◆ He completely misses the point — focusing only on going to “family” for a wife ... with no regard for the “right” family
 - ◆ The details of spiritual matters entirely escape Esau — he is all around the truth but never seems to quite grasp it ... or care!
- * Esau now fades out and Jacob becomes the focal point

Closing Thoughts

- * Resorting to our ways to accomplish God's purposes only makes life more complicated
- * There is a difference between remorse and repentance
- * Right motives don't justify “any” means — God's will our way does not work
- * “God accomplishes His purposes by means of man's crimes, without relieving them of guilt or being Himself the author of sin” (S. Lewis Johnson)
 - ◆ God may use the wickedness of men to accomplish His purposes, but men are still guilty!

Closing Thoughts

- * The cost of sin is always greater than we imagine
 - ◆ Rebekah lost Jacob (never saw him again)
- * Deceit never prospers
 - ◆ Jacob fell prey to deceit ... Both Laban and his son Joseph
- * God reigns — Prov 16:9; Isa 46:10
 - ◆ Man cannot frustrate the purposes of God
