



Leaves From the Tree

Studies from God's Word

In 2005, Pastor Tim Bourgeois began a daily bible reading to encourage Tree of Life Christian Church and the larger body of Christ to read the entire Bible cover to cover.

The following series of articles are transcripts of Pastor Tim's original emails.

Please use these articles for meditation, personal devotion, Bible study, or your own daily Bible reading.



GENESIS 22 - 27

Genesis 22

22:1 - "Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

This is a significant event in Abraham's life, but also identifies one of the deeper issues of Christian discipleship. The circumstance is a test that God gives to Abraham. We should be clear on what is meant by test here. A test in this sense is a trial or process by which one determines the quality or genuineness of the thing tested. God gives to Abraham an incredibly challenging test and while the exact circumstance is unique to Abraham, the principle of what God is after in this test applies to the discipleship of every true believer. God will test each one of us like He does Abraham here. The similarity of the tests is in their purpose. He will take us through a process that will expose the true nature of our faith and determine whether at our core we are committed to obey Him. It should be obvious from this test that God's tests are not easy to pass. He knows our hearts better than we know ourselves and He will choose the elements of our own test from things that matter most to our hearts. We can be sure that no one God tests is left unscathed or unaffected by the test. In Abraham's case, God chose his son Isaac; the son he waited 25 years to be born. Isaac was also the one through whom God had promised to fulfill His purpose to make Abraham's descendants a great nation.

The way it is phrased in the conversation between the Lord and Abraham, the test seems to be so that the Lord can see what is really in Abraham's heart. We are meant to look one layer beneath that conclusion since we understand that God already fully knows Abraham's heart before the test even begins. The real purpose of the test is to reveal Abraham's heart to Abraham. God does not want Abraham to fail the test, but pass it, learn more about his own heart in the process, and grow from the experience. The deep lesson is meant to drive home that in this covenant relationship it is God Who is in charge of Abraham as well as everything and everyone that belongs to him.

22:2-5 - "He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you."

As we have seen in previous situations, Abraham has handled some situations with real faith, and others with fear and a fleshly response. In this case Abraham

shows strong faith from the beginning of his greatest test to the end. His faith is on display with a hidden depth in what he says to the young men here. He tells them to wait with the donkey while he and Isaac go apart and worship and then return together. God had made clear to Abraham that Isaac was to be offered as a "burnt offering" which meant that he had to first kill Isaac and then light a fire under his body which would completely consume his body. When Abraham told the young servants that he and Isaac would worship and return together, he is either lying to them, or he is declaring a greater faith in the Lord than is obvious on the surface. Since there is no indication in the passage that Abraham is lying we should conclude that he believes that even though he must kill Isaac as a sacrifice, that somehow they will return together at the end. This conclusion is confirmed for us in this New Testament commentary on what Abraham believed in this moment.

"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type. (Hebrews 11:17-19). Abraham knew that it was God requiring him to offer his son. He also knew that God had promised to give him descendants through this same son. Therefore, he believed that if he sacrificed Isaac, God was able to raise him from the dead to fulfill His promise through him. Hebrews tells us that Abraham received Isaac back "as a type". This means that the moment Abraham chose to obey God and sacrifice Isaac, his son was as good as dead, and also by faith going to be raised from the dead. Isaac then functions as a type of Christ, pointing forward to when God the Father would receive His own Son back from the dead after offering Him in the ultimate sacrifice on the cross.

22:6-12 - "Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

The parallels between the sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham and the sacrifice of Christ by His Father are obvious throughout this passage. Isaac is the

lamb, pointing to Christ Who is the Lamb of God that God Himself provided for salvation's sacrifice. As they walked to the place of sacrifice it was Abraham that laid the wood for the sacrifice on the shoulders of Isaac. In the same way God the Father laid the cross on the shoulders of Jesus to carry the wood for His own sacrifice to the place where He was to die. The key issue in this test of Abraham's heart was whether he would withhold his son, his only son from God. These two New Testament passages describe for us the cost to the heart of God of the sacrifice of Jesus. "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16). While Isaac is not technically Abraham's only son, because of Ishmael, God is emphasizing in this statement Isaac's role as the promised child and the only son of the covenant.

Isaac has not been told by his father the details of this test from God and in curiosity of seeing no lamb for the sacrifice he asks his father about it. Abraham's answer is itself a preview of one of the foundational principles of the cross. Abraham answers, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." The cross principle revealed by Abraham's statement of faith is that the cross provides what man cannot supply for himself. The cross is a powerful and sufficient provision for our sins because Christ's sinless life makes His sacrifice infinitely worthy. Only God could provide such a sacrifice, so He had to provide for Himself the Lamb of God.

22:2, 14 - He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you... Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided."

One detail from the story could easily be missed, but is important to notice. God ordained that Abraham not only offer Isaac, but that he do so in a predetermined location. God directs him to the land of Moriah to a specific mountain there. This implies that the setting of the sacrifice bears its own spiritual significance. We find that significance in this later mention of Moriah. "Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite." (II Chronicles 3:1). This specific mountain for the sacrifice later is named Mount Moriah. It is the same mountain on which Solomon is directed by the Lord to build the temple of the Lord. That will be the location for all generation to follow where the lamb is offered on the Day of Atonement for the sins of the covenant people. The Lord directs Abraham to this mountain to establish the connection between Isaac's sacrifice, and the lamb of the temple sacrifice both pointing forward to Christ.

Questions from Genesis 21:

Question: Genesis 21:16 - The "lad" should be around 17 years old, yet he is being addressed like an infant being taken care of by his mother? Is there more to the story?

Answer: No, there is no more to the story that you are missing. Your confusion is due to the translation. The words "lad" and "boy" in our translation generally convey the sense of a young child in English. You are correct that by this time Ishmael was between 14-17 years old since he was 14 when Isaac was born and this event happened when Isaac was weaned. The Hebrew words in the original text translated lad and boy actually have a range of meaning. They can be used to describe any child from birth to adolescence. Keep in mind that Hagar and Ishmael wandered for some time together in the desert until their food and water was depleted. Ishmael's crying was not the crying of an infant, but like Hagar, he was probably frightened and exhausted.

Question: Genesis 21:28 - What is the significance of Abraham setting seven ewe lambs by themselves?

Answer: There is no hint in the text or in any parallel passages elsewhere in the Bible that this event bears any special symbolic importance beyond the event itself. Abraham gives them as a gift to Abimelech as part of the covenant they are making with each other. When a covenant was formed it was customary for the parties to give a gift to each other, but in this case only Abraham gives the gift as a formal declaration that the well of water belongs exclusively to him. He most likely chose seven because of the common symbolic meaning of completeness. The seven sheep would serve as a complete witness to their covenant.

Genesis 23

23:1-2 - "Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah. Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her."

Up until this point in the account of their lives Sarah has played a prominent role. She was chosen by God to bear the promised child Isaac, just as Abraham was chosen to be the patriarch of the covenant. Sarah gave birth to Isaac at age ninety. She also played an important role approximately two or three years after Isaac's birth when he was weaned and she demanded that Hagar and Ishmael be driven out. Now we learn that she died at the age of 127. In the years between those events and her death, her name is not mentioned at all. The implication is that other than raising Isaac as his mother and remaining a faithful wife to Abraham, Sarah serves no other purpose in God's kingdom in those last 35 years.

The absence of any other mention of Sarah actually ends up magnifying the significance of her role in the birth and parenting of Isaac. The point is that Sarah's calling in life was to be the wife of Abraham and the mother of Isaac. Those two roles gave her life great significance in God's kingdom and make her life worth remembering. The daily activities of the next 35 years that filled Sarah's life are not even mentioned because they will only diminish the spiritual focus we have on her God ordained purpose. The lesson we can draw from Sarah's example is that there may not be 50 different things that give our lives true spiritual significance. There may only be one or two things which God has ordained for us to be or to accomplish that will, in the end, define our lives and give them eternal significance. In other words, it is the things that God identifies as worth remembering about us that make our lives memorable. We can test this about ourselves at any point by looking back on our lives so far and asking ourselves, "What about my life will be worth remembering when I am gone?"

23:4 - "I am a stranger and a sojourner among you; give me a burial site among you that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

Abraham has now been in the Promised land of Canaan for over 60 years by the time of this event. Yet, both in his perspective and in his circumstances he remains "a stranger and a sojourner" in the land of Canaan. He uses terms here that would be similar to our modern designation of resident alien. It refers to a person that has settled to live in a land but who is not yet fully identified with the land of their residence. In practical terms it was an appropriate designation for Abraham, because even though God had promised this land to him as his possession, Abraham did not yet actually own any of it. This was not a failure on God's part to fulfill His promise. Remember, God had previously told Abraham

that the full possession of the Promised Land would be by his descendants over 400 years later (Genesis 15:13-16).

This long delay between the promise and the eventual fulfillment caused Abraham to live out his years on the earth in the cultural status of stranger and sojourner. As we should expect, God had a deeper purpose in this too. Abraham's status becomes a template for the spiritual situation of every believer that follows Abraham in all of history. This New Testament passage explains for us how Abraham's status applies to our spiritual situation. "By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God... All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth." (Hebrews 11:9-13). The application for us is in this perspective: this world is not our home. The greatest fulfillment of our lives will not be experienced in this world, but in the next one. We live our lives here for God's purpose, but that purpose will be fulfilled not here, but in the "city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God", the heavenly Jerusalem.

23:6 - "Hear us, my lord, you are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our graves; none of us will refuse you his grave for burying your dead."

There is a principle that should instruct our opinions in this chapter that is not the primary point of the chapter but is established by inference. As a pastor, I am on occasion asked about whether there is any Biblical principle regarding burial practices. For instance in our culture it is a common and accepted practice to cremate the body at death. When this option is chosen it is usually because it is a low cost and efficient way to dispose of the body. It also provides an opportunity for a final symbolic gesture by either preserving the ashes or scattering them in a special spot. My answer to those who ask is that while there is no passage anywhere in the Bible that explicitly requires one way of handling the body of those who die, and while it is not a sin to choose one method over another, there is a spiritually preferred way to handle the body of one who has died in the Lord.

That spiritually preferred way is burial. We can interpret Abraham's efforts to obtain a proper burial place for Sarah one of two ways. He may have been simply following common cultural practice in doing so with zero spiritual significance attached to the method of handling her body. However, I believe the Lord had this event written to give us the first of many significant burials in the Bible. There are also a few examples of cremation that we will find, but in every case, the cremation is connected to a person that died in rebellion toward the Lord. The burning of their body spiritually symbolizes the experience awaiting them beyond physical death. On the other hand, special care to preserve the integrity of the body in burial symbolizes the Lord's ongoing purpose for the body

beyond physical death. Burial points forward to the hope of a future resurrection from the dead.

23:8-16 - "And he spoke with them, saying, "If it is your wish for me to bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and approach Ephron the son of Zohar for me, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he owns, which is at the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me in your presence for a burial site." Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the sons of Heth; even of all who went in at the gate of his city, saying, "No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead." And Abraham bowed before the people of the land. He spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, "If you will only please listen to me; I will give the price of the field, accept it from me that I may bury my dead there." Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, "My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between me and you? So bury your dead." Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, commercial standard."

Abraham purchased the burial site for Sarah at great cost. The price of 400 shekels of silver that he insisted on paying was the equivalent of 100 pounds of silver in weight. He was given the opportunity to acquire the cave for Sarah's burial for free since Ephron graciously offered it as a gift. However, Abraham insisted on paying the full price to purchase the land. There is a subtle point for our benefit in Abraham's actions here. Even though God had promised to him that his descendants would one day possess all of this land, this was the first portion of the Promised Land that Abraham would actually own. It is similar to his decision to not accept the offer of the king of Sodom in Genesis 14. "Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, 'I have made Abram rich.'"

God's promise to Abraham of the land is God's free gift to him. Abraham did not earn the promise from God. Yet, in the actual acquisition of the land we find that to possess it will cost him. From God it is a free and gracious gift, but toward man it is costly. In the same way, everything we acquire of value in God's kingdom comes to us as a free gift from God, but to actually possess it we discover there is a cost involved. Our salvation is given to us by God as a free gift, but to fully possess our salvation as disciples of the Lord we must pay the cost of discipleship.

Genesis 24

24:5-8 - "The servant said to him, "Suppose the woman is not willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?" Then Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there! The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I will give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there. But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this my oath; only do not take my son back there."

The Lord had previously promised to Abraham to make his descendants through Isaac a great nation. Abraham trusted God that this would be so. At this point, though, there is the spiritual tension of the unfulfilled promise. God had given Isaac to him, but until Isaac is married and has children of his own, the fullness of God's purpose remains unfulfilled. From this we can see that the necessity of walking in faith in God's promise did not end for Abraham with the birth of Isaac. Abraham trusted in the Lord's promise for 25 years until Isaac was born. Since then he has needed to trust God to see Isaac married to the right woman to be his life partner in God's covenant purpose and to bear the children that will carry on the covenant. What we are meant to see from this development is that the necessity of faith in Abraham's life has not changed, only the details of the circumstances in which he is trusting God. The faith necessary to carry Abraham's heart up to the birth of Isaac laid a foundation for the faith needed for this next test. In this situation, Abraham demonstrates a much more mature faith than in the 25 year wait between God's original promise and the birth of Isaac. In that long wait we saw Abraham's faith stutter at least once when he followed Sarah's plan to "help God out" by having a child with her handmaiden. Here in this new test of his faith, Abraham is strong and bold in his trust in the Lord. Another indication of Abraham's growth in faith is that he is now unwilling to allow Isaac to leave the Promised Land. In earlier years, Abraham had twice compromised and left the land of God's direction, but now he is rock solid in his insistence that Isaac remain where God has directed.

We can draw encouragement from Abraham's example. In spite of spiritual hiccups along the way, Abraham eventually grew to be a man of mature and rock solid faith and faithfulness. We can be certain that the credit for his maturity lies with the Lord and not Abraham himself. None of us have walked before the Lord without stumbling and struggling at times. In those times of struggling it is understandable to wonder whether you will ever reach the place like Abraham of rock steady faith. That Abraham grew into this kind of faith in spite of his flaws and weaknesses is a testimony that the Lord was committed to his growth. Our hope is in the Lord that He will cause us to grow through our own tests of faith, and reach in this life a similar mature faith.

24:21-27 - "Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence, to know whether the LORD had made his journey successful or not. When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half-shekel and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels in gold, and said, "Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room for us to lodge in your father's house?" She said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor." Again she said to him, "We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to lodge in." Then the man bowed low and worshiped the LORD. He said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the LORD has guided me in the way to the house of my master's brothers."

The mission of Abraham's servant is a tremendous example of following God's guidance and discerning the will of God in an uncertain circumstance. The servant had received clear orders from Abraham, but the details remained unknown. He was given the general direction for his mission, but there remained several blanks to fill in once he arrived. What developed once he arrived can only be credited to one of two possible factors. Either he experienced an amazing coincidence or an amazing expression of the providence of God as He sovereignly guided the servant and Rebekah to this ordained meeting. The servant displays his own real faith in the way he handles this responsibility. It seems the faith of Abraham has rubbed off in a good reflection on his servant. When Rebekah fulfills the guidelines he had prayed and it becomes clear that she is of the family line that Abraham had sent him to find, the servant does not hesitate with any consideration of coincidence. He recognizes the hand of God and worships the Lord for His guiding hand upon him. The servant has experienced the blessing of this spiritual guidance principle. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6).

True faith is more about the heart than it is the head. The Lord's guidance at times will lead us ahead of our "own understanding". Once we arrive where the Lord has led, and our understanding catches up to the Lord's plan, we will be able to look back and see the wisdom of the Lord. The tension in those times of real faith is that we would always prefer to fully know all the details in advance and for it all to make perfect sense to our understanding before we take the first step of obedience. Of course, if He shows us all the details in advance, there is no possibility for our faith to grow in the experience. It's in trusting the Lord when we don't understand how or even why that we have the greatest opportunity for growth. The ability to trust God in these times really boils down to the perspective that He understands more than we do, and that He is fully trustworthy to lead us.

24:51-52, 58 - "Then Laban and Bethuel replied, "The matter comes from the LORD; so we cannot speak to you bad or good. "Here is Rebekah before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has spoken." When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the ground before the LORD.... Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go."

This chapter is one of the first to develop the theme of the faith of God's people. Up until this chapter, faith has for the most part been exceptionally displayed in the heart and life of one specially called person at a time. We have seen Enoch, Noah, and Abraham walk in faith as spiritual exceptions to everyone around them. Now, that true faith displayed in their lives becomes evident in the lives of several key people in this story. First, Abraham's servant showed true faith in carrying out his mission. Here, both Laban and Bethuel respond to the servant's request for and answer with a declaration of faith. In deciding whether to send Rebekah back with the servant of Abraham, they do not mention the family relationship, the wealth of Abraham, the suitability as a husband of Isaac, or any of the natural concerns a father and brother would be expected to have. They only mention one concern and once satisfied, that concern settles the question for them. Is this development "from the LORD"? Their faith is revealed in the way they simplify the question. If it is from the Lord then they cannot speak against it, not would anything they say add any strength to it. Oh, if only all believers would be as simple and settled in their faith as these two men were. Some of my most difficult experiences in spiritual counsel have been when a believer knew the Lord's will or direction, but was struggling against it. True discipleship is measured by our willingness to accept and embrace the will of the Lord as our own will.

Rebekah also displays the wisdom of the Lord in choosing her as Isaac's wife to become mother of the next generation of the covenant people. Her faith is strong and she shows zero hesitation to follow the will of the Lord for her life. She has not met Isaac. She has never laid eyes on him. For all she knows he may be ugly and ornery. She has no access to a computerized dating service to give her the assurance of matching her to a mate in multiple areas of compatibility. Their personalities may not be compatible. All she knows at this point is that, "the matter comes from the LORD". Her three word answer speaks volumes about the depth and quality of her faith in God. "I will go."

Genesis 25

25:5-6 - "Now Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac; but to the sons of his concubines, Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the east."

The way Abraham handles this situation highlights the difference between the ways of the world and the ways of the Lord. Abraham was aware that he was in the latter part of his life. He recognized his responsibility to apportion inheritance to his children before his death. His chosen allotments might seem unfair and even shocking in our modern culture. He gave the entire inheritance to his one son Isaac, while giving comparatively small gifts to his other sons and sending them away. If this happened today and in this country you can be certain that a protracted court battle would follow after Abraham's death as the other sons would fight for their "fair share." Sadly, the courts today might even listen to their argument and rule in their favor. The ruling perspective today is that equality concerns overshadow all other considerations. The intention of the father can be disregarded by the court if it is determined that one child has been treated unfairly.

Abraham did not seem concerned at all by the arbitrary issue of fairness. He showed no inclination to make sure each son got the same sized slice of the inheritance pie. Was Abraham merely insensitive to the other sons and playing favorites toward Isaac at the expense of righteousness here? No, what Abraham did here reflected God's will and was an expression of God's righteousness. God wanted Isaac to receive the lion's share of the inheritance because of His purpose for Isaac's life. Because all that Abraham owned was given to him by the Lord, it was the Lord's prerogative through Abraham to designate where that wealth would go next. God chose to pass it to Isaac because of Isaac's role in the covenant. One of the lessons we must learn to avoid ever insinuating impropriety on God's part is that God is free to bless whomever He chooses. We should be clear that He always has good reason for blessing whom He chooses, but that He does not owe equal blessing to everyone else.

25:20-21, 26 - "and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived... Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them."

We saw the difficult and long term tests of faith that Abraham faced in his own walk with the Lord. Now, Isaac is the focus of God's covenant purposes in the earth. Isaac is not given a free pass on similar tests because his father has already been tested. Isaac must face his own tests of faith. This is the qualifying

requirement for all true believers in their own walk with the Lord. God tests us all in the context of customer designed life circumstances because He is committed to our spiritual growth and development. No testing = no growth. We cannot avoid being tested, nor should we want to, if our heart's desire is for our faith and character to grow.

Isaac's particular test here had two parts. God had promised to cause his line of descendants to grow into a great nation. God had guided his father's servant to the specific woman that God had chosen for him to marry. That meant Rebekah was chosen by God to be the mother of that promised nation. Yet, once married to the woman the God had chosen, Isaac discovers that Rebekah is unable to have a child. The first part of the test for Isaac is in the question, "Why would God choose for him a woman to fulfill His promise who is barren?" The second part of the test is mentioned only in passing in the story, but we should consider the strength of the test based on the length of the time involved. Isaac married Rebekah when he was 40. She finally gave birth to the twins when he was 60. The test lasted a 20 years. This is a similar pattern to how God tested his father Abraham. Remember Sarah was originally barren and Abraham waited 25 years for her to give birth to the son God had promised. The long delay is the fire in which our faith is purified. I am the same way you are. I prefer instant gratification, but I also recognize that God on purpose rarely works in our lives that way.

One notable difference between Isaac and Abraham is that Isaac handled his test better than Abraham had handled his. Perhaps Isaac had learned from his father's story. All we know is that when faced with the test, Isaac prayed for his wife. It was both the most simple and most powerful thing he could do to pass the test. I can't tell you how many times, in pastoral counseling with someone in a time of testing from the Lord, I have asked the simple question, "Have you prayed?", only to discover that was the one thing they had neglected to do. Let's learn to follow Isaac's example. "Isaac prayed..."

25:22-23 - "But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I this way?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples will be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger.""

Rebekah began to experience difficulty in her pregnancy. There was an unusual amount of movement and she was troubled by what she was experiencing. Her question is worded in our translation in such a way as to be a bit obscure or even confusing. "If it is so, why then am I this way?" can be simplified to a more familiar expression. What she was asking was, "Why is this happening to me?" Because God has chosen her through whom to fulfill His purpose for the coming generation, she is not exempt from her faith being tested anymore than Isaac was. Have you ever been in a situation in which the same question that Rebekah

asked was squeezed out of your heart by the pressure of the circumstance? Rebekah does not sin by asking the question. It is where she goes after asking the question that reveals whether her heart is right with the Lord or not.

Her next move is toward the Lord. The same question can be a first step into disappointment with the Lord and even bitterness for many. Rebekah's faith motivates her to inquire of the Lord. If we are unsettled as to why something is happening to us the best thing we can do is ask the Lord. But keep in mind that there are two ways to ask the Lord the "why" question. One is almost accusatory in which we ask having already decided we don't deserve the situation we are in and are already blaming the Lord in our hearts for placing us there. We should not expect to receive much insight in response from the Lord if we are asking in that way. The second way to ask is how Rebekah did. If we are seeking wisdom regarding our situation so that we can handle it in a more God honoring way, the Lord is faithful to inform our hearts with the insight we need. The Lord's answer to Rebekah was prophetic. He opened her eyes to see that what was playing out in her womb was a sovereign purpose of His for two future nations of people. We should notice that God's answer did not make the discomfort of the physical experience go away. By understanding what was happening and why, Rebekah now had grace to endure the circumstance for the sake of God's greater purpose.

25:27-28 - "When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents. Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob."

What is revealed in this passage is a classic case of parental favoritism. There are two sons and each parent chooses one of the sons as their personal favorite. This is completely different than the greater favor Abraham had shown Isaac in the inheritance. That was done for God's purpose with spiritual motive by the father. Here, God's purpose is still at work as always, but His purpose is not in the forefront, but rather hidden in the background. Neither parent is showing much if any spiritual wisdom or integrity in the way they handle their relationship with their sons here. The favorites are chosen, not on the basis of any spiritual qualities either possessed, but on the parents natural tastes and preferences. Isaac favors Esau because he provides him a good steak regularly by his hunting. Rebekah loves Jacob more because he stays home more and apparently shares in her interests. Both parents serve as object lessons of how not to handle the relationship with your children. Amazingly, as we will see later, God's purpose will be accomplished even through this unhealthy parent-child pattern. However, the goal should be to establish the healthiest possible parent child relationship and see what God accomplishes with that, not test how far we can veer from the right way to see how God will redeem it.

25:29-34 - "When Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished; and Esau said to Jacob, "Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished." Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." Esau said, "Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?" And Jacob said, "First swear to me"; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright."

This seemingly small incident focused on a bowl of stew sets in motion a permanent change in family status and begins to reveal God's sovereign plan for the next generation of the covenant. Esau and Jacob were fraternal twins, but Esau was born first. As the first born, even if only a few minutes apart, Esau possessed the right of the first born. That right meant that at the death of the father, the first born became the new head of the family. In order to establish this position of responsibility the first born was also given a double portion of the inheritance. In this case with two sons, Esau was due to receive two thirds of the inheritance from Isaac and Jacob one third. This role within the family, and in this special case, the one family on earth that was in covenant relationship with God, was an extremely important role. It should have been valued by Esau above all other things in his life. Instead, in this moment of great hunger, Esau exposes how little he regarded his special responsibility, and ultimately how little he regarded the Lord. Hebrews later characterizes Esau in 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." (Hebrews 12:15-16).

At first glance, Jacob comes off as the bad guy in the story because he is clearly maneuvering the situation to his own advantage. While there is a fleshly element in Jacob's actions here (which the Lord will deal with later), there is no rebuke from the Lord for his obtaining the birthright in this way. There are two reasons why the Lord does not frown on Jacob at this point. First, the Lord had planned for Jacob to hold the birthright from the beginning. God chose for him to end up with the birthright. Second, even though Jacob did not obtain it in the most honorable way, his actions reveal how much he valued this position of responsibility that also mattered to the Lord. He values what the Lord values and in doing so finds favor from the Lord.

Genesis 26

26:1-7 - "Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines. The LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws." So Isaac lived in Gerar. When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," for he was afraid to say, "my wife," thinking, "the men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is beautiful."

The Lord's purpose in testing the faith of Isaac is not yet complete. He brings about a circumstance that should remind us of an earlier test of his father Abraham. A famine occurs in the Promised Land. The famine serves two purposes. The Bible teaches that famines are not accidental events of history, but in every case under the direct control of God. He ordains and works through such society shaping events. The general category in which to interpret famine is the judgment of God. Famine is never described as a blessing from God, but a curse. In this case, the famine is a judgment from God on the inhabitants of Canaan. God designed this famine to accomplish judgment on one group, while providing a test of faith for Isaac. The lesson for us is that God is dealing with everyone affected by the event, but that His specific purpose is not the same for everyone affected. One man's test may be another man's judgment.

As the test unfolds for Isaac, we see him respond in a pattern of similarity to how his father had first handled the same test. Isaac leaves the land of promise searching for a steady food source. What is glaring in his decision to leave is the absence of any mention of prayer. Isaac is not seen crying out to God as the famine begins to seek Him for wisdom and direction. Instead we simply see him put food in front of faith as Abraham had also done in the same situation. Once Isaac leaves, we do see the Lord speak to him, but there is not indication that it was as a result of Isaac's prayer. The Lord gives him a warning not to continue as far as Egypt. This implies for us, that the Lord anticipated this was where Isaac was heading next which would have followed his father's pattern to seek refuge in Egypt. The Lord also gives Isaac a wonderful confirming word of His commitment to him in covenant relationship. The Lord gives to Isaac the ultimate promise, "I will be with you and bless you." The Lord also calls Abraham to his attention as a model of obedience for Isaac to follow. Isaac has now received the assurance of God's companionship and God's blessing. Then, the very next thing Isaac does is lie about his relationship with his wife out of fear for his own safety.

Isaac does follow Abraham in doing this, but not Abraham's faith and obedience. Instead Isaac mimics Abraham's character flaw and spiritual compromise. This is the "like father like son" principle in action in its worst expression. What we are meant to learn from this is that, as parents we exert discipleship influence on our children. This happens at all times whether we intend it or not. If they see faith and obedience in us, then they will be influenced in that direction. If they see fear and deception in us, then they will pick up those traits and make them their own.

26:12-16 - "Now Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. And the LORD blessed him, and the man became rich, and continued to grow richer until he became very wealthy; for he had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household, so that the Philistines envied him. Now all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines stopped up by filling them with earth. Then Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are too powerful for us."

Isaac's behavior in the land of Gerar does not earn him the blessing of God. Yet, when he plants his first crop there it produces a hundredfold, which indicates the measure of great blessing. What are we to make of this? The Lord does not bless him with abundant crops because of his fear and lying, but in spite of them. This blessing shows the Lord's faithfulness to His own purpose for Isaac's life and to His covenant. This is an example of what I would call risky blessing by the Lord. The "risk" that the Lord takes here is that in blessing Isaac in spite of his flaws, He might leave the impression that it is acceptable to be fearful and deceptive. I know for a fact that the Lord has blessed me far beyond what my actual behavior deserves. Here is the spiritual principle behind this risky blessing. "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4). The Lord does not always wait until we do everything right to show us His great blessing. He will at times bless us to lead us. The blessing is meant to encourage us in the right way to go. When He blesses you in spite of you, don't make the mistake of seeing the blessing as a justification for continued compromise. Be grateful for His great kindness, tolerance and patience with you and follow His blessing to a place of greater obedience.

Abimelech eventually tells Isaac to leave the area. It is interesting to notice what the motivating factor was in wanting Isaac to go. Earlier Abimelech had not required he leave when he discovered Isaac's deception. What Abimelech could not handle was Isaac being abundantly blessed by the Lord. Deception was familiar to Abimelech, but the blessing of the Lord made Isaac a threat in his eyes.

26:18-25 - "Then Isaac dug again the wells of water which had been dug in the days of his father Abraham, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the same names which his father had given them. But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of flowing water, the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with the herdsmen of Isaac, saying, "The water is ours!" So he named the well Esek, because they contended with him. Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over it too, so he named it Sitnah. He moved away from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he named it Rehoboth, for he said, "At last the LORD has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land." Then he went up from there to Beersheba. The LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; Do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and multiply your descendants, For the sake of My servant Abraham." So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well."

Isaac left the city at Abimelech's request, but remained in the region of Gerar. In each place Isaac camped, his servants dug wells and discovered water. The herdsmen of Gerar claimed the water for their own which led Isaac to name the wells to describe the disputes. The first well he named Contention and the second well he named Opposition. Rather than stay and fight over the wells in dispute, Isaac moved to a new location and dug a third well. He named this one Room, because the Philistines did not dispute with him for it. He chose this name because he saw this peaceful well as the evidence of the Lord's hand upon him to have led him to a place free from strife where he could be fruitful. Isaac's response to the first two disputes over water rights forms a pattern for us to follow in our dealings with the world. This was essentially a business or economic dispute. Since Isaac's servants had dug the wells he had every right to stand his ground and insist that the water was his. What he decided was that the cost of the fight was not worth the value of the water. By moving on to the third well, Isaac was not simply giving up, he was walking in real faith, trusting that the Lord would provide what the world had taken from him.

The Lord honored his faith. The Lord appeared to Isaac and declared to him His commitment to watch over him, bless him, and provide for him. He confirmed for Isaac that He was with him and because of that, there was no reason for him to fear. The Lord called Isaac's attention to Abraham in order to encourage him that their relationship was based upon the covenant between God and his father. The relationship between the Lord and Isaac linked to the permanent relationship between the Lord and Abraham. The parallel that should encourage our hearts even more has to do with a similar but greater covenant. Each of us who belong to the Lord and know the Lord have our own personal relationship with Him. However, the foundation of our relationship with the Lord is deeper and more secure than anything we could do or say. Our relationship with God is 100% based in the covenant that is shared between God the Father and Jesus His

Son. Like Isaac was blessed because God remembered Abraham, we are blessed beyond measure because God remembers Jesus.

Questions from Genesis 25:

Question: 25:5 - "...but to the sons of his concubines..." - Are there any Scriptures that address how God views men like Abraham, and others in the OT, having concubines? Was it a commonly held practice that God just "overlooked"?

Answer: It was a commonly accepted cultural practice. We saw examples from both Pharaoh and Abimelech that having multiple women in their personal harem was a cultural sign of power and prestige. In determining how God saw this practice, we should first be clear on His revealed standard and then work our way to an understanding. When God originally created humans in the garden of Eden He made one man and one woman, when making several women would have been practically quicker if the only concern was populating the earth. The Lord Jesus later identified for us that this established an intended pattern. "And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." (Matthew 19:4-9)

The conclusion is that God's pattern was always one man / one woman from the beginning. Any changes to that basic pattern should be interpreted as veering from the ideal due to cultural influence by cultures not properly reflecting the Lord's pattern of righteousness. This passage refers to how God handled many cultural shortcomings in the Old Testament era, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent," (Acts 16:30). He chose to overlook it, not because it didn't matter to Him, but because in a fallen world He allowed some compromises to go unpunished or else He would have to destroy the world.

Genesis 27

27:1-4 - "Now it came about, when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." And he said to him, "Here I am." Isaac said, "Behold now, I am old and I do not know the day of my death. Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me; and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die."

Isaac has a growing sense of his old age and his inevitable death. The awareness of his own mortality causes him to turn his thoughts toward the continuation of the covenant with God. He intends to pass the blessing of the covenant on to the next generation. In this moment we see a spiritual mixture in Isaac. It is a good thing that he is mindful of the covenant and desirous of passing on the blessing of God. That is a godly quality that every believing father should share and emulate. The mixture of bad with the good is revealed in Isaac's choice for the covenant blessing. In this critical moment, Isaac should have sought the Lord's will rather than presuming on the Lord's choice. Now, more than ever, Isaac should have stopped and prayed. His failure to seek the Lord here leads him into a situation in which he is actively working against the Lord's plan without knowing it.

In fact, Isaac is without excuse in his choice of Esau. He chose Esau because he was the natural firstborn and he also favored him over his younger son Jacob. Yet, years before, the Lord had made His choice between the two clear. "The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb; and two peoples will be separated from your body; and one people shall be stronger than the other; and the older shall serve the younger." (Genesis 25:23). We are not told whether Isaac had forgotten this declaration of the Lord regarding his sons, or whether he intentionally was ignoring it. Either way, it was his responsibility as the spiritual leader of the family to lead according to God's will and not his own preferences. It is a sad testimony of the heart priorities of Isaac, that here at this key moment at the end of his life his greatest concern is for one last savory meal. In this we see a hint of the likeness between Isaac and Esau who had himself sold his birthright for a meal. God made us with the capacity to enjoy the pleasures of our natural senses and gives us good things to enjoy, but we must always be on guard against our natural senses overwhelming our spiritual judgment.

27:8-14 - "Now therefore, my son, listen to me as I command you. Go now to the flock and bring me two choice young goats from there, that I may prepare them as a savory dish for your father, such as he loves. Then you shall bring it to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death. Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man. Perhaps my father will feel me, then I will be as a deceiver in his sight, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing." But his mother said to him, "Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me." So he went and got them, and brought them to his mother; and his mother made savory food such as his father loved."

The long standing pattern of parental favoritism now comes to a head. Isaac has always favored Esau and Rebekah has always favored Jacob. Isaac plans to bless Esau, but Rebekah listens in and forms her own plan. She sets in motion a plan filled with deception aimed at "pulling the wool" over her husband's eyes. She concocts a plan with a threefold deception including using Esau's recipe for game, Esau's clothing, and the skins of a goat to convince Isaac that Jacob is Esau. Rebekah is clearly the ringleader in this plan of deception, but Jacob is not an innocent accomplice. He does initially raise an objection to her plan, but not on grounds of righteousness, truth, integrity, or honor for his father. Jacob's only concern regarding her plan is that he might get caught in the deception and end up being cursed by his father. The implication of his objection is that he has no issue with cutting corners and manipulating his father, only with whether they can really pull it off. His mother's insistence and her offer to take all the blame should he be caught is all he needs to go forward with the plan. As he carries out his part he boldly lies to Isaac about his identity, the task Isaac had assigned to Esau, and worst of all Jacob takes the Name of the Lord in vain by making the Lord part of his lie (Genesis 27:20).

What is obvious is that this is a family splintered by personal agenda and spiritual compromise. It is interesting that throughout this chapter we never see the entire family in one place together in face to face relationship. There are only four people involved here to keep together and unified, but in every scene of this story there are only two of the four together. We never see Isaac call his wife and two sons together into his presence and pray and if need be iron out their differences. Instead, we see them in pairs working at odds against each other. This is again an indicator of where Isaac fell short as a father, and the events of his last days are actually the repercussions of the absence of healthy parenting and needed family leadership over the long years before.

27:28-29 - "Now may God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and an abundance of grain and new wine; may peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you; be master of your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you."

Isaac here blesses his son Jacob. At the moment he pronounces the blessing he believes he is giving it to Esau. The blessing here is much more than a natural inheritance or the expression of good thoughts and wishes for his son. Isaac speaks here in the role of the patriarch of the family and the current possessor of the covenant blessing. Even though he is ignorant about the identity of Jacob, he is speaking here as the representative of the Lord. The blessing he pronounces is irrevocable. He will regret what he says later, but he cannot take it back, or reverse the blessing. In this, we see the nature of the blessing we receive in Christ. Once God pronounces His blessing upon us in Christ it is permanent and secure. "for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." (Romans 11:29). Like Jacob, our past behavior did not earn or merit in any way the blessing of God. His graciousness toward us is entirely because of His choice and not at all because we deserved it.

27:33-36 - "Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, "Who was he then that hunted game and brought it to me, so that I ate of all of it before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed." When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" And he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing." Then he said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?"

Once Isaac learns of Jacob's deception he is deeply affected by it. His violent trembling shows that he is shocked and enraged at having been so manipulated by his younger son. Without justifying Jacob's deception at all, we should ask the question though whether Isaac has any moral high ground to stand on in his outrage over being deceived. Remember Isaac was the one who chose to perpetrate an even more serious deception upon Abimelech and his people by lying about his relationship with his wife. In doing so, he exposed them to the possibility of committing adultery without knowing it. The Lord is teaching a deep lesson to Isaac here even at the end of his life as he is forced to taste from the other side the fruit of deception.

Of course, this development is the Lord's discipline, not only for Isaac, but for Esau also. Now that it is just beyond his grasp, his birthright, and the blessing that belongs with it seems so much more important to Esau than it did in earlier years. As he learns of the loss of the blessing, Esau cries out with a heart rending bitter and anguished cry. Hebrews comments for us on this reaction by

Esau. "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." (Hebrews 12:16-17). Esau's tears here are not feigned. He really feels the loss of the blessing from his heart. The loss to him is as irrevocable as the blessing was for Jacob. We hear in his despair a preview of the scene on the final day of judgment. "In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out." (Luke 13:28). The anguish of Esau is magnified because he was offered the birthright and because he despised it, it was forever taken from him. That is only a pale foreshadow of what those will experience on the final day when they reap the harvest of their rejection of the greatest blessing of the Savior.

27:41-45 - "So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob." Now when the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him, "Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you by planning to kill you. "Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban! Stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury subsides, until your brother's anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?"

Jacob ends up with both the birthright and the blessing that had previously been Esau's. This end result was the will of God and what God had planned for them before these twins had even been born. Even though the blessing comes to Jacob without a price, because he did not and could not earn it, it does not come to him without a cost. The cost is a complete fracture of the fragile relationship between the brothers. Esau holds a grudge against Jacob from this moment forward. This is not a grudge of annoyance or dislike. This is a much deeper and more dangerous murderous grudge. In this result we see that Jacob is in one sense the winner and in another the loser. He wins the blessing of the Lord, but he loses his brother, his father, and even his supportive mother because he now must flee his home for the safety of distant relatives. Jacob has no grace here to trust God for his own physical safety because he has been only leaning on himself and not the Lord all along.

The lesson for Jacob and for us is significant. God's will must be pursued God's way in order to receive the fullness of God's blessing. Jacob will inherit the blessing of the covenant, but for the next twenty years he will be a fugitive and servant because he sought to grab with the hand of the flesh what God was going to give him in His way and time. This is a similar lesson that Abraham had to learn from the consequences of the Hagar incident. Both Abraham and Jacob

had followed the end justifies the means principle and had the consequences sting them. Rebekah too loses out in the end as a consequence of her deceptive scheming. She manages to deceive her husband and gain the blessing for her favored son, but as a result she loses her relationship with Jacob. She sends him away for his own safety, thinking that "time heals all wounds", not realizing at the time that she will never see Jacob again as he will spend the next 20 years in Laban's household. Jacob's escape of "a few days" will become many years because there are some bitter wounds that apart from the grace of God, time just will not heal.