

The Next Generation, Part 4: Blessing and Sin's Consequences (Genesis 27)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at GCBC on October 6, 2013

It'll be Christmas before we know it and in the next couple months you'll be getting Christmas pictures and letters in the mail. I've heard someone talk about getting annual letters from "the perfect family" with their picture and letter about their perfect life.¹ What might Isaac and clan write in their card if they were writing to their believing family and friends (Laban, Bethuel)? If we were to sum up Genesis 26 in today's language in a letter it might say:

"Isaac here: Hope you find yourself as blessed as we are this year. We had a blessed crop, reaped a hundred-fold, and our family business has grown so much, we've had to add a lot of workers. Pray for us as our flocks are so big now, it's been a challenge to find land that can accommodate us so we're moving a lot, but it seems we've found a place in Rehoboth and Beersheba. We praise God for the blessing of finding water in every well we try to dig! I'm sending a picture of me and Abimelech as we signed the peace treaty."

"*My son Esau*, as you know from our past annual letters, he's been hunting and killing animals since he was 3 years old. This year was his record year! As I write, I'm eating his legendary venison, which is like heaven on earth to me. Doctors tell me my eyesight is failing, but thank God my taste-buds aren't! Here's a picture of me and *my son* at the hunter's feast, he's holding his bow; as hairy and manly as ever. *I love it, that's my boy!* You remember when the twins were younger we used to send drawings of them with Jacob posing holding onto his heel, Esau was hairy even then! Ok, here's Becky..."

"Rebekah here (I try to tell him every year I don't like being called Becky, but hey, what can I expect from an old blind guy :) I guess it's better than being called 'sister' which I've heard some guys call their wives. Seriously, I try to keep closer to the tent these days to care for my beloved husband but it's not a chore, it's my joy to serve Isaac (plus it helps me keep an eye on him :) I can't believe it's been over 60 years since I first met him the day we got married. It's been a blessed year. My son Jacob is a big blessing around the house. Here's a picture of the 2 of us cooking a new recipe. That's my boy! We pray you know God's blessing next year like us. In Yahweh's love"

25:27 NIV *The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents.*²⁸ *Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.*

Through the years you realize their family wasn't as perfect as you thought.

It's no question God has blessed them as much or more than any family you get annual year-end letters from, but you've also become concerned with the favoritism they don't even seem to realize (but you're sure the twins see it). You're also concerned that Jacob is now middle-aged and still a homebody mama's boy who isn't married and seems dependent on mama unhealthily. You get a feeling she treats her grown adult son like he's still her little boy.

You know God told your ancestors men were to leave mother and father to be joined to a wife, taking on independent responsibilities in his own family.

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Speaking of which, you've heard through the Canaanite grapevine that Esau got married last year, but why doesn't their annual letter say anything about that? And it seems Isaac and Rebekah are increasing the jabs at each other? You haven't seen Jacob and Esau close to each other in a picture for years? And now the next year comes and there's no letter from Isaac's family at all?

In Genesis, God writes a letter on the real story of the not-so-perfect family:

Look at Genesis 26:34 *When Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite [polygamy with pagans];³⁵ and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.*

27:1 *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." ² Isaac said, "Behold now, I am old and I do not know the day of my death. [in another language "mokolo ngai na kakufa"].*

In ancient Mesopotamian language they've found Nuzi court records using that exact phrase "I am old, I do not know the day of my death" as wording for an official legally binding pronouncement about one's inheritance. That wording was used to establish an estate or trust for blessings and property.ⁱⁱ

³ *"Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me; ⁴ 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." ⁵ Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game to bring home, ⁶ Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Behold, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying, ⁷ 'Bring me some game and prepare a savory dish for me, that I may eat, and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.' ⁸ "Now therefore, **my son, listen to me as I command you.** [ESV "obey my voice," remember, Jacob is a grown adult 40-50 years old, not a toddler or teenager]*

⁹ *"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. ¹⁰ "Then you shall bring it to your father, that he may eat, so **that he may bless you** before his death." ¹¹ Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man [Jacob's actually smooth more ways than one, a smooth operator, a professional liar]*

¹² *Perhaps my father will feel me, then I will be as a deceiver in his sight [or "mocking him"], and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing.*

This isn't Jacob's conscience; this is Jacob's con-man mind trying to figure out how to not get caught, and how his con-mother plans to pull this off.

¹³ *But his mother said to him, "Your curse be on me, my son; only **obey my voice, and go, get them for me.**" ¹⁴ So he went and got them, and brought them to his mother; and his mother*

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made savory food such as his father loved. ¹⁵ Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her elder son, **which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son.**

That's not a real healthy sign when a grown middle-aged man is obeying his mom like a toddler-age son and it's even worse that she's still dressing him! She not only wears the pants, she puts them on the grown men in her home!

In Gen 3:17 God rebukes Adam for "obeying to the voice" of Eve into sin instead of being a man obeying God's voice. In Gen 16:2 Abram "obeyed the voice of Sarai" (same expression in Hebrew) by sinning with Hagar, instead of being a man obeying God's voice. Now Jacob obeys his mommy.

¹⁶ And she put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. ¹⁷ She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob. ¹⁸ Then he came to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "**Here I am. Who are you, my son?**" ¹⁹ Jacob said to his father, "**I am Esau your firstborn; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me.**" ²⁰ Isaac said to **his son**, "How is it that you have it so quickly, my son?" And he said, "**Because the LORD your God caused it to happen to me.**" [He brings God's name in! Rabbis taught Isaac was suspicious as Esau wouldn't speak of God's nameⁱⁱⁱ]

²¹ Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come close, that I may feel you, **my son**, whether you are **really my son Esau or not.**" ²² So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and **he felt him** and said, "The voice is **the voice of Jacob**, but the hands are the hands of Esau." ²³ He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother, Esau's hands; **so he blessed him.**

This is the first example of someone pulling the wool over someone's eyes, but not with wool of sheep, with goatskin. The Genesis commentary by Keil and Delitzsch say 'people used the black, silk-like hair of the camel-goat of the East (v. 16) as a substitute for human hair as late as the Roman period.'^{iv}

²⁴ And he said, "Are you **really my son Esau?**" And he said, "**I am.**" ²⁵ So he said, "Bring it to me, and I will eat of **my son's game, that I may bless you.**" And he brought it to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank. ²⁶ Then his father Isaac said to him, "Please **come close and kiss me, my son.**" ²⁷ So he came close **and kissed him**; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed **him** and said, "See, the smell of **my son** Is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed; ²⁸ 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; ²⁹ 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.**"

This is a repetition of God's prophecy to Isaac's father Abraham in 12:3 "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you." Isaac now prophesies the same to Jacob, which also fulfills God's prophecy in 25:23 that the twins would become "peoples" and "nations" and one would prove stronger as a master to the other; "the older shall serve the younger [Jacob]"

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One Study Bible explains: 'In patriarchal times, a solemn family blessing was given at departures (24:60; 28:1–5) or when death was imminent. It could be given to only one person and could not be altered. The patriarchal blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had spiritual significance because the Lord used the social customs of those times to communicate His sovereign purposes. While God initially mediated His covenant blessing through the patriarchs, after the Mosaic law was given, God's blessing was mediated to all His people through the priest (Num. 6:22–27).'^v

This isn't just dad's best wishes and "God bless" before son goes to college. In the OT, an oral blessing like this was as legally binding as a written will, even stronger than our wills in some ways, because it couldn't be changed.^{vi}

And beyond ancient laws, Isaac was the chosen son or seed of Abraham that God gave power to bless others through God's chosen line (22:18, 26:4).

The next section is almost like a play, exit stage left, and enter stage right:

³⁰ Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. ³¹ Then he also made savory food, and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, **that you may bless me.**" ³² Isaac his father said to him, "Who are you?" And he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." ³³ 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.**" ³⁴ 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!**" ³⁵ And he said, "Your brother came **deceitfully and has taken away your blessing.**" ³⁶ 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?"

He's talking about the end of chapter 25 when Esau the hunter and trapper was hunted and trapped by his crafty brother Jacob who knew his weakness for food, and set up a trap Esau stepped in, trading away his birthright for it. A firstborn's birthright was a double portion of inheritance plus the estate. And on top of that, the patriarchal prophetic blessing was now also Jacob's.

³⁷ But Isaac replied to Esau, "Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?" ³⁸ Esau said to his father, "**Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.**" So Esau lifted his voice and wept.

One writer calls this the most pathetic scene in Genesis, in the truest sense of the word. There's pathos we feel for Esau, the mighty warrior, reduced to a puddle of tears, weeping pleading seeking favor from a blind betrayed dad:

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³⁹ Then Isaac his father answered and said to him, "Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling, And away from the dew of heaven from above. ⁴⁰ "By your sword you shall live, And your brother you shall serve [an 'anti-blessing'=opposite of Jacob's blessing]; But it shall come about when you become restless, That you will break his yoke from your neck." ⁴¹ 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.**"

There's no pretty family portrait here. There won't be a Hallmark Christmas card, in fact, Esau wants to make sure Jacob won't be alive for the next one!

He's saying "as soon as dad is dead, Jacob will be, too!" No reality TV show or "Big Brother" hidden camera can match this big brother's reality drama.

Our natural sympathies might go to Esau, but he's the only one of the 4 who isn't in God's family! The other 3 are believers who God speaks to in special ways in the OT and positively in the NT, but all 3 of them are seen here in a bad light in their darkest lowest points. Jacob debased bald-faced deceiving blaspheming scheming worm Jacob -- this is the son God chooses to be the father of God's chosen people?! Where's godly Rebekah of Gen 24-25? You ask "this is the family God chose to bless all families of the earth through?!"

Warren Wiersbe quotes a writer who called the human family "one of nature's masterpieces" and adds "If that's true...many of these masterpieces have become nothing but pieces because they forgot the Master." ^{vii} Let's not forget, though, Isaac and Esau aren't victims, all four characters are villains who have forgotten God. None are heroes, they need another Hero-Rescuer. If you want to take notes, let's look at sin's consequences in all four sinners in the order of today's text: Esau, Isaac, Rebekah, and last *and least* Jacob:

1. A Fleshly Firstborn (26:34-35)
2. A Declining Dad (27:1-4)
3. A Manipulating Mom (v. 5-17)
4. A Second-born Scoundrel (v. 18-30)

If you don't like alliteration, just use the names Esau, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob

First, the Fleshly Firstborn Esau (26:34-35)

Instead of seeking his father's blessing in marriage to a godly woman, Esau seeks his flesh in marrying 2 pagan wives outside God's plan and blessing. The end of chapter 26 says this grieved his parents, and by the end of Gen 27, the parents talk about how unbearable Esau's Hittite women are (27:46).

Esau had already turned his back on the Lord earlier in chapter 25 when he despised the blessing of God and now Esau's planning to murder like Cain.

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Heb 12:16 (NIV) *See that no one is ... godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. ¹⁷ Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears ...*

Some translations say repentance but Esau wanted the riches not repentance His remorse was like the remorse of Judas, like Paul called *worldly sorrow*, but all his wanting inheritance and weeping couldn't change Isaac's mind.

Which takes us to the 2nd bad guy: A Declining Dad (27:1-4)

Isaac was driven by fleshly appetites, too, which affected his favorite son.

Isaac wasn't just declining physically; his spiritual senses seem in decline.

Isaac is another one in this story you might have thought of as a victim, not a villain, but Isaac also acts sinfully in v. 1-4. God had already decreed He would give the blessing to Jacob in Gen 25:23, but Isaac's love for Esau has blinded him as much as his physical eyesight and he wants Esau to get what God said should go to Jacob, even though Esau already sold his rights away.

There were consequences for Isaac's sin as a father playing favorites with his son and also his sin as a husband lying about his wife. Isaac in Gen 26 was a deceiver, now in Gen 27 *Isaac the deceiver is deceived*. Isaac had reaped more than he'd sown physically in Gen 26 (a hundredfold), now in Gen 27 he reaps exactly what he had sown *spiritually*. His wife doesn't trust him and eavesdrops on his secret plan to sneak the blessing to Esau in v. 1-4

Which brings us to the 3rd villain: A Manipulating Mom (v. 5-17)

As sobering as Isaac is to dads, Rebekah is to moms who pull the strings in a home like her to get her will done, justifying it by saying it's God's will. It's true God promised Jacob the place of blessing, but He doesn't need him to say things that are *untrue* for God's promises to *come true*, anymore than He needed her mother-in-law Sarah's plan to bring the promised blessing by Hagar. Rebekah prayed to God in Gen 25 but for some reason she doesn't talk to her Lord here and doesn't talk to her husband. She talks to Jacob and makes a plan to manipulate incapacitated Isaac and outwit dim-witted Esau.

Kent Hughes writes 'She knew that the way to Isaac's heart was through his stomach ... [in this goatskin get-up] How absurd Jacob must have looked ... Jacob hoped no one would see him. Almost surely, Rebekah hovered in the background gesturing to her ridiculously costumed favorite. But there is a deeper absurdity here – the mother and son's belief that God would not be able to accomplish His own purposes without their help ... and therefore their deceitful ways were justified ... In today's world many similarly believe that personal ethics are irrelevant if what you are doing helps effect the will of God... "It is God's will that I provide adequately...therefore..."^{viii}

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Was Rebekah the winner because it “worked”? No, there’s no winners here. In the end of the chapter the beloved son she idolized has to flee for his life, away from the land of blessing for 20 years, and she never sees him again. And by the last verse of the chapter Rebekah's life is miserable to no end. God blessed Isaac despite sin all around, but their sin still had consequences

Boice: ‘If you are not trusting God and are therefore trying to do your will instead of his, or even his will in your own way, learn that the plotting’s of sin never work out and that that path of disobedience is always rocky. When Moses took matters into his own hands ... God later delivered the Jewish people from their Egyptian bondage, but Moses had to spend 40 years in the wilderness learning to wait upon God’s strength and timing [Jacob 20 years in exile before his deliverance]...better to wait for God at the beginning.’^{ix}

4th and final villain, last and least: A second-born scoundrel (v. 18-30)

I don’t need to convince you her second-born was a scoundrel. One says it well: ‘arrayed in the skin borrowed from a senseless animal, and the robes stolen from an unwitting brother...he heaps lie upon lie...abuses the simple confidence of the blind old man ... betraying his father with a kiss,—steals from him the birthright-blessing,—and then hastens out of his sight, as if he were not only afraid to meet his brother, but impatient to [celebrate] in secret over the success with which his daring stratagem has been crowned ... whatever side we view it, the crime into which Rebekah hurries her favorite child Jacob is a very sad one; and deeply have they both occasion, all their life long, to [regret] the day when they were tempted to take into their own hands the execution of the plans and purposes of the Most High’^x

Is Jacob the winner? No. He loses his home and would himself be deceived by Laban with Leah, given unfair wages by him. Later, Jacob's sons will kill a goat like in Gen 27 but put blood on Joseph's coat to deceive father Jacob.

The sins of the parent can be visited on the children to the 3rd and the 4th generation. Abraham lied, his son Isaac lied and now is lied to, his son lies to his father and will later be a father lied to by his sons. God says in the 10 Commandments He may punish "*children for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation ... but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me...*" (Ex 20:5-6 NIV). His covenant love breaks cycles of sin for generations to come in a far greater way, to those who love Him.

Jacob does not yet love God, but God isn't through with him yet. God says "Jacob I have loved..." In Gen 28 God's making this deceiver into a believer and it's good news for us. Our sin may be different but it affects our family, too. We yell at our children to stop yelling. We try to deal with problems in anger and wonder why our kids do. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree in Genesis 3 with Adam and Eve. But the good news is there's “Someone” promised in Genesis 3 coming to redeem wives who take matters into their own hands, and dads who fail to be spiritual leaders, and sinful copying kids

Genesis 3:15 promised a Messiah to come who would crush the head of the devil, that deceiver from the beginning, but in the process, Messiah would be wounded in the heel. That's the only

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other mention of "heel" before Esau is born with his twin brother grabbing his heel, Jacob aka "heel-grabber." It would take Christ to save this heel-grabber by letting other sinful men grab His heel and pierce it to the cross and His hands as Christ dies for sinners like Jacob and us. Scandalous grace! Scoundrel-saving grace, worm-saving mercy from a God who also saves such a worm as I and you, at the cross.

We need to close with a 5th and final character: A Sovereign Savior

Despite sinful siblings, a declining dad and manipulating mom, God is still sovereignly bringing His will to pass despite sin all around that they're all responsible for. Kind of like He did with sin around Christ's death (Acts 4).

In Genesis 3, God not only promises Christ, He pictures Christ by covering sinners with animal skins (the only other mention of people wearing skins of animals before Gen 27). God covers the shame of Adam and Eve and He would later cover the shame of Jacob in Gen 27, but not by man's dressing himself up, Isaiah said Messiah would clothe us in righteousness. Zech 13:4 prophecies a day men *'will not put on a hairy robe in order to deceive.'* For all who repent, God takes our smelly garments, dresses us up like His Son and sees us as His son, and God the Father, unlike Isaac, prepares a meal of bread and wine *for us*, and *He serves us*, and He invites us *to His own table!*

Isaac promised new wine, Jesus is its reality. The smell our heavenly Father smelled from His Son was a pleasing aroma of Christ slain as our scapegoat

Ephesians 5:2 explains it this way: *"Christ ... loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."*

After we sing we'll come to the table, and may this picture be in our mind: If we have repented of our sins and trusted in this Sovereign Savior as Lord, even us by nature like Jacob, Christ invites forgiven sinners to eat and drink

- His farewell meal (last supper/Lord's Supper) was for all redeemed
- For deceivers betrayed by a kiss like Isaac (or like Jesus with Judas)
- For strong-willed ambitious moms like James and John's who came to Jesus trying to get her will for her boys to get a place of blessing in the kingdom, a mom with an influence on her boys like Rebekah
- Even fleshly sons who the Word became flesh for, lived for, died for
- He even came for hated brothers and was hated by His own brothers (a descendant of Esau, Herod tried to kill Jacob's descendant, Jesus, and He and His family also had to flee far away to escape murder)
- Verse 40 says the yoke could be taken from Esau's neck when he would become restless, and Jesus offers that to any Gentile: *"come to Me...take My yoke upon you...and you will find rest for your soul"*
- The words Isaac gives to Jacob in v. 29, Jacob later understood they looked beyond him to Messiah to come through him, through Judah:

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²⁹ *May peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you; Be master [ESV “lord”] of your brothers, And may your mother’s sons bow down to you [all those things are promised Judah’s tribe in Messiah]*

Cursed be those who curse you, And blessed be those who bless you

- If you bless Christ you’re blessed but if you don’t you’ll be cursed
- But for those in Christ He takes the curse we deserve. Rebekah said in v. 14 to Jacob “your curse be on me...” but Jesus doesn’t just say “your curse be on Me,” He actually takes it on Himself (Gal 3:13??)
- Jesus Himself also trembled violently like Isaac did and wept greatly far more than Esau, in tears mixed with blood at Gethsemane before He went to the cross. His separation from His father on the cross was far worse than what Jacob faced being separated from his father
- Unlike Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Jesus had no deceit found in Him
- Jesus rightfully holds the preeminent firstborn place among brethren and is rightfully called Master and Lord and nations bow before Him
- Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, place of greatest blessing, not like Jacob’s stolen one-Jesus shares his inheritance with his brothers

One pastor has said it better than I can that Gen 27 shows God ‘will bring his promised Redeemer, not from picture-perfect parentage but from the offspring a long line of sinners ... Our Redeemer was also to be found in clothes that were not his ... In the most awesome reversal of all, Jesus ... took your curse so that you might inherit the blessing. The curse that Jacob deserved for his trickery, the curse that you and I earn for ourselves every day by our manifold sinfulness, was laid upon him, so that the blessing that was rightfully his might be given to us, his undeserving people. Jesus wore the shroud of death that we deserved so that we might lawfully be clothed in our elder brother’s garments, the spotless robes of Christ’s righteousness.’^{xi}

Let’s ‘stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene
And wonder how He could love me, a sinner condemned unclean!
How marvelous, how wonderful ... is my Savior’s love for me!’

Let’s pray, then let’s praise our Savior in that song, and then let’s prepare our hearts for the Lord’s Supper, by examining our hearts for sin we haven’t repented of in our family or in the family of Christ or to others, let’s extend forgiveness in our heart toward sins against us, and let’s exalt Christ’s grace

ⁱ Sinclair Ferguson in his sermon on Genesis 27 at www.thegospelcoalition.com

ⁱⁱ John Davis, *Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis*, p. 239-40.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Esau," in *Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*.

^{iv} Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the OT*, vol. 1, p. 257, note 1.

^v *The Reformation Study Bible*, 1995.

^{vi} Tom Constable's *Expository Notes*, Gen 27.

^{vii} Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Authentic*, p. 22.

^{viii} Kent Hughes, *Genesis*, p. 349.

^{ix} James Boice, *Genesis*, p. 754.

^x Robert S. Candlish, *The Book of Genesis*, vol. 1, 460–462.

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^{xi} Iain Duguid, *Living in the Grip of Relentless Grace*, p. 43-44.