

READ

Genesis 27:1 - 28:9

REFLECT

Jacob was known as a trickster. Even his name reflected his habit of grabbing onto the things that weren't his (Jacob means heel-catcher, since he was birthed with his hand grabbing onto Esau's foot). Jacob had already taken Esau's birthright, though that was due to Esau's willingness to sell it for a meal, and now Jacob has stolen Esau's blessing. Though Jacob may have wanted that blessing, he wasn't the brains behind the operations – that was his mother, who was willing to deceive her dying husband for the sake of her favorite son. Isaac's dying wish was for fresh game hunted and prepared by his favorite son, but Jacob cut corners by killing some of the livestock, cooking it, and dressing with goat skin on his arms to deceive his blind father. It wasn't a particularly good disguise – Jacob didn't even try to change his voice – but it worked. Isaac's blessing was powerful and important, a blessing that told Jacob he'd inherit great wealth and power. When Esau got back from his hunting trip and prepared the game he'd caught, he surprised his father, who realized he'd been deceived by Jacob. Isaac told his son that he'd already given his blessing to Jacob and Esau was furious. It seems odd that there was no blessing to be had for the second son, but that was a product of the culture. The eldest inherited the most while the women and secondary sons received very little. It's no wonder Esau was so mad – he was basically all set to win the lottery, but his prize was stolen from him. In anger Esau plotted to kill his brother, but Rebekah (the real trickster of the story) had a plan for that, too. She told him to go to her brother Laban to find a wife; not only would he marry someone she was more likely to approve of, but it would get him away from Esau. Isaac gave yet another blessing and sent his son away. Esau heard what was happening and that his father didn't approve of Canaanite women, so decided to get himself another wife, too, and he married Ishmael's daughter Mahalath – the daughter of another older son who could not inherit what their culture said was theirs.

REACT

- While Jacob's actions against his brother are detestable, so is a social structure that would have left him with little to nothing just because he was the second born. It doesn't excuse bad behavior, but it does help explain his actions and his mother's plotting. Have there been times when you've wanted to act to correct something you perceived to be a social wrong, even if that action was also wrong (or maybe you have)?
- The blessing Jacob received was quite beautiful – agricultural bounty and power over others. If you were to give a blessing to your children, what would it consist of? Or, what blessing would you have liked to receive from your parent?
- Jacob's name was a window into his character – he grabbed for the things that didn't belong to him. Have you known other people whose character and identity (name, nickname, or whatever) were similarly linked?

RESPOND

Blessings Abound: Isaac had a blessing prepared for his eldest son. Though it went to his other son, instead, the blessing itself came true. Take time to write out a blessing for someone in your life – a child, grandchild, friend, or spouse. Write what you hope their life will contain. If you feel comfortable, share it with them. And as you think about the blessing you wish to give, think also about how you can help make that blessing come to fruition for them or with them.