

Abraham's family - not in good shape

• Isaac – unfair and pleasure seeking

God used one family in which to bring the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, to the world. But at this point, the family of Abraham was not in a good condition.

Isaac had lost his spirituality. There had been a time when he would be meditating on the things of God and seeking His will. In Genesis 24:63 he was out in the fields seeking God at the time God answered his prayer and sent Rebekah to him. But now Isaac seems to be an unspiritual person. He likes his food more than he likes God's will. An occasion comes when Isaac thought he might not live very long and he wants to make a legal will handing over the leadership of the family to Esau ¹. Isaac's eyesight was bad, and he was getting on in years. He wanted to legally 'bless' Esau before he died.

¹ 27:1–4

Now this 'blessing' was a very important matter. It was a way of handing over the supreme position of authority in the family. It meant that Isaac wanted Esau to have the privilege of managing the family property. And it meant that Isaac was expecting and praying that the worldwide 'blessing' that would come would take place through Esau. Isaac was taking no notice of the prophecy of Genesis 25:23 which said that *'the older shall serve the younger.'* His favourite son was Esau. He wanted the younger to serve the older! So he gets ready to legally make a 'will', a last 'testament' in which he legally handed over the leadership of the family to Esau.

Isaac gets ready to make this a special occasion. He calls only Esau, deliberately excluding Jacob. If he had not excluded Jacob from the occasion Jacob would not have been able to play the trick that he did. Isaac ignored the prophecy Rebekah had received, and he ignored the legal oath with which Esau had sold his inheritance rights. It is clear that Isaac was not a very spiritual person at this time in his life. He had lost his love of God.

• Rebekah – a deceitful mother

But **Rebekah is no better than Isaac.** Despite the great love which had once existed between Isaac and Rebekah ¹ their relationship was no longer a close one. There was no communication between them. Rebekah's way of finding out what was happening was to listen to what Isaac said to other people ²! They were not working together for the future of the family. Isaac was quite happy to plan his will without consulting Rebekah's wishes. Rebekah was quite happy to practise deliberate deception on her husband.

¹ 24:67

² 27:5

• Jacob – cheating, conniving and crafty

And **Jacob was not a very pleasant person.** We tend to treat him as one of the heroes of the Bible but at the beginning of his life he was not a very nice person to know. He did not begin as a godly person. God saves people by grace and not by 'good works'. It is a mistake to think that when God decides to use someone He chooses a godly person. Far from it. God chooses some very unstable, unsophisticated, unspiritual people, and then He shapes them to get them the way he wants them to be. Jacob was not a nice person or a godly person. Jesus said *'I have not come to save the righteous but to call sinners to repentance.'* If God can bless Jacob, God can bless me!

What a family. An unfair, pleasure-seeking father. A deceitful mother. A carnal-minded Esau. And a cheating, conniving, crafty Jacob!

Deceitful ways bring much suffering

• The trick succeeds yet...

• Isaac gained nothing worth having

• Rebekah gained nothing worth having

• Jacob gained the inheritance but only at the price of great suffering

God can be trusted to give us his blessing without our clever or deceitful ways

Isaac asks Esau to prepare a meal ^{☞1}. Rebekah and Jacob hear about what is happening, and they scheme to get things changed ^{☞2}. While Esau is hunting for a animal to be a tasty dish for Isaac, Jacob prepares a meal. He dresses in Esau's clothes, and covers himself with some animal-skins so that he is like hairy Esau! ^{☞3}

The trick succeeds ^{☞1}. He had to tell shameless lies and he even used pious spiritual language ^{☞2}, but Isaac was deceived and passed on the supremacy in the family to Jacob. *'May peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master of your brothers!'* he said as he legally passed the senior inheritance to his son ^{☞3}!

No one got much pleasure out of this event. **Isaac gained nothing worth having.** He had schemed to overthrow God's promise in Genesis 25:23. It was amazing that he should want to give the spiritual leadership of the family to someone who had just married two Hittite women and who cared nothing for the spiritual privileges of Abraham's line.

Rebekah gained nothing worth having. Her scheme created such resentment, Jacob had to run for his life, and she lost her favourite son. She had wanted to bring blessing into his life but actually she lost him altogether.

Jacob gained the inheritance but only at the price of great suffering. Jacob would have done better to leave his future in the hands of God. God had said that the elder would serve the younger. Jacob could have trusted God to bring about the promise.

The Bible says that there is a 'wisdom' that is earthly, natural or demonic ^{☞1}. The cleverness of men and women is of no value in getting the blessings of God. You might even try to do God's will in deceitful ways but it will do no good.

The amazing thing was that God blessed Jacob anyway! Jacob's tricks brought him great suffering. Jacob had to run away. He lost his membership of the family altogether for many years. He never saw Rebekah again!

If God has promised blessing, He can be trusted to work it out for us. Our clever deceitful ways are not needed. God will give us His promise in a different way altogether. If we grab it prematurely, we shall only bring upon ourselves much delay and suffering.

☞1 27:1-4
☞2 27:5-8
☞3 27:9-17

☞1 27:18-29
☞2 27:20
☞3 27:29

☞1 James 3:15



Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



These specially reformatted chapters "Slices of Bread" produced by Sovereign World Trust are available in three categories as set out below

Slices for the Nations	Slices for Sponsors	Slices for Everyone / Slice of the Week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For pastors, libraries and colleges in those parts of the world where resources are scarce and unaffordable In the fullness of time the whole series will be made available free of charge Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or available to download from the Slices web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those in more prosperous circumstances who can afford to contribute to the development of this material and its distribution with a small monthly donation The same material as Slices for the Nations Weekly emailings of 3 - 4 Slices or by download from the Slices web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those who wish to sample the material or dip into it from time to time, a proportion of the PTTB series is available free of charge Slices for Everyone (as a download) or Slice of the Week (attached to a weekly email) The remainder of the PTTB material is available to Sponsors and those eligible to receive Slices for the Nations

To subscribe please contact: slicesofbread@sovereignworldtrust.org.uk stating which category fits your situation. Further details are at www.slices.org.uk
Details of the availability of *Preaching Through The Bible* books and how they may be purchased can be found on www.ibtr.org.uk