

The dish of lentils – Isaac’s blessing



Genesis 25: 21–34; 27: 1–40

God blessed Isaac and Rebekah with two sons, the twins Esau and Jacob. Esau was the firstborn son. One day Jacob prepared a dish of lentils. Esau returned home from the field very hungry and wanted to try the dish Jacob had prepared. But Jacob said: “Sell me this day your birthright.” Esau considered his birthright so unimportant that he agreed.

Many years later Isaac considered that the time had come to give his son Esau his blessing. Rebekah heard this and persuaded Jacob to trick his blind father. Thus Jacob received the blessing. Esau came too late.

The children are shown the value of God’s blessing.

The story which we are going to discuss today concerns two brothers; the children of Isaac and Rebekah.

You will surely remember who Isaac’s father was. It was Abraham. Abraham once sent out his servant Eliezer to find a wife for Isaac. With God’s help, Eliezer found Rebekah and brought her to Isaac.

Isaac and Rebekah are overjoyed at the birth of their twin sons. The two boys look very different. The older one is reddish and has a very hairy body. His parents give him the name Esau. The younger boy they call Jacob.

Both grow and the older they get, the more their interests differ. Esau loves nature, where he can continually prove his courage and strength. He becomes a hunter. Jacob, on the other hand, loves to stay at home, where he can care for the animals and busy himself around the tents. Isaac loves Esau, his firstborn, especially. He often thinks: “Esau will one day be a fine head of this family. I am happy that he will receive the

greater part of my inheritance.” Rebekah, the mother, loves Jacob more.

One evening Esau returns home from the field. He has had a tiring day and is hungry. Jacob is busy cooking a thick lentil soup and Esau says: “Mmh, does that smell good! I am hungry and tired, Jacob, please let me have some of your soup.” Jacob answers: “Only if you will sell me your birthright.”

Esau laughs: “I have to die anyway, what use is the birthright to me?”

“But I want you to swear,” insists Jacob. Esau swears. Jacob gives him of the soup and hands him some bread as well. Esau enjoys the food and, after having completed his meal, gets up and walks away. His birthright means nothing to him.

Many years later the following happens: The aged Isaac has been blind for some time. He feels that the time has come to give Esau the firstborn’s blessing. Isaac says to Esau: “Go into the field and hunt for venison. Then prepare my favourite savoury stew. I want to bless you today for I have grown old and shall soon die.”

God blesses – Esau and Jacob

Rebekah, standing nearby, has heard everything. She hastens to tell Jacob: "Bring me two beautiful kids from our flock, I want to prepare your father's favourite dish. This you must then take to him so that he will bless you." Jacob has some misgivings, but his mother insists. He then hastens to fetch the animals. A little later the food is ready. Rebekah makes Jacob put on some of Esau's clothing and puts the skins of the kids on his hands and around his neck. Camouflaged in this way, Jacob brings his father his favourite dish. Isaac asks: "Who are you, my son?" And Jacob answers: "I am Esau. Your favourite dish is ready. Eat, Father, so that you may bless me." Isaac puts



out his hand to feel his son and says with some uncertainty: "Strange, the voice is Jacob's but the hands are Esau's." Isaac then eats the food prepared for him. Jacob kisses his father and Isaac smells Esau's clothing, whereupon he blesses his son.

Esau appears in Isaac's tent shortly afterwards. Greatly shocked, Isaac realizes his mistake. He says: "Who is the hunter who brought me that meal? I have blessed him before you came and he shall remain blessed." Esau cries out loudly and says to his father: "Please bless me too, my father!" Isaac answers: "I have blessed Jacob, your brother." Esau asks: "Have you then only one blessing?" Esau is very sad, but also angry with Jacob for having forestalled him and tricked him a second time.

3

*Jacob received the firstborn's blessing from his father.
Esau received nothing.*

- 1 We look at the picture of the family and discuss with the children where they are placed in their own families.
We then tell the story.
- 2 We explain to the children that a firstborn in Israel had many rights and privileges: He inherited twice as much as each of his brothers and sisters and usually took the position as head of the family after the father's death.
We encourage the children to give their opinion of Esau's actions. (Esau only sees the momentary gain. He does not consider his eventual loss.)
- 3 Together we look at the second picture in the children's book and speak about the godly blessings (cf Genesis 27: 28–29) which Jacob receives.
We are children of God. God will bless us too if we ask him to do so.