

# Esau

Romans 9:13 Jacob I loved but Esau I hated.

My name is Esau. I've been called other names, like Edom (red) and Seir (hairy). My twin brother, Jacob, is completely different from me and was known, not for his appearance, but his nature as a schemer. He was extremely competitive to begin with – he struggled with me before birth, and he came out second, holding onto my heel. “Heel-grasper is slang for “deceiver” in our language. Perhaps he was not responsible for that because it was just an instinct. But later he deliberately cheated me.

When he stole my birthright, it was a clever scheme. He waited until I was terribly hungry one day, coming in from the fields. He had made some delicious red stew that he knew I loved. I said, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" He replied, as if it were the most natural comment, "First sell me your birthright." I said, "Look, I am about to die. What good is my birthright to me?" He replied, "Swear to me first."

He must have been planning this for some time, looking for an opportunity — possibly with the help of our mother, who always liked him best. I told him that I was starving to death and needed food. I guess it was not literally true, but what was true was that I did not value anything unless it immediately gave me pleasure.

I expected to have every appetite satisfied at once. I guess you can call that impulsive. It showed up when I married two Hittite women without asking my parents. Sometime later, I overheard mother saying that my wives disgusted her and then I saw father sending Jacob to marry a woman from among our family. I got the picture; marry a relative. So, I married a daughter of my half-uncle, Ishmael. That's family, isn't it? But it was not satisfactory for either mother or father. So, I gave up trying to understand or please them.

As if taking the birthright was not enough, Jacob and our mother conspired to steal my blessing. She over-heard my father, Isaac, say he wanted to bless me and asked for a dish of wild game. She told Jacob to quickly bring two goats that she would cook. Jacob then dressed in my clothing and put goatskin on his hands and neck to disguise his smooth skin. Father—nearly blind -- was suspicious but Jacob lied like an expert, glibly stating that he was the older son. By the way, deception runs in the family, both on mom and dad's side. By this deception Jacob got the blessing.

I heard the tail end of Father saying the blessing as I came in -- just too late, "May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed."

Does a fraud deserve to be blessed? I begged father for a blessing, and this is what he said: "Your dwelling will be away from the earth's richness, away from the dew of heaven above. You will live by the sword and you will serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck." So, at some point in the distant future, I would overcome him. Do I actually care about the distant future? It would feel good right now to kill him.

Mom and dad then sent him away to our ancestral homeland to marry a cousin. After 20 years, he came back with a big family and great wealth. He was apparently terrified of me, thinking I would take revenge. But I had also done very well, had wives and children and had gotten over the conflict with my brother.

I had everything I wanted and did not want to take anything from him. I was not interested in things that I could not touch or smell. What was a birthright, after all? I did not even worry about what might have happened or how things could have been different as long as I was happy.

When I heard that Jacob had seen a ladder to heaven on his trip out to the family and had wrestled with an angel (or perhaps the LORD) while on the way back, it sounded strange to me. Apparently, he said that he would not quit fighting until he was blessed, I couldn't understand it. It sounded like insanity or a bad dream. Picking quarrels with supernatural beings seems like a mistake. And anyway, who is this LORD he always talks about? What is a blessing after all except words?

Life doesn't have to be complicated. I have what I want, and my brother apparently has what he wants. I guess I didn't make God happy, but that doesn't bother me one way or the other.

And by the way, it did make me feel a lot better when I found out that Uncle Laban had out-cheated Jacob and got 20 years of free labor, ended up with both daughters married and without paying dowry.

Genesis 25:19-34; 26:34; 27:1-46; 32:1-32; 33:1-16; 29:1-16; Malachi 1, Matthew 7:7, Romans 1:18-24, 9:10 – 13; Ephesians 2:3, Philippians 3:18-19, Hebrews 11:6, 12:14-17