

OUTLINE GENESIS 27:1-33 'GOD'S CALL IS IRREVOCABLE' + suggestions for reflection
Series 'God moves in a mysterious way' #4
IBC Eindhoven, 21 February 2021

INTRODUCTION

- Shocking story. This is Israel's patriarch!
- In chapter 25 we read that Esau had sold his birthright for a stew. Jacob was clever to seize the opportunity when his brother was starving. But it was open and honest all the same.
- But now deceit, lies and in a horrible mean way taking advantage of his father's blindness. Surely this Jacob doesn't deserve a blessing!
- We as readers are left with all sorts of questions. Who knew about the oracle besides Rebekah? What about Esau's birthright sold to Jacob? Who knew about that? And when Isaac discovers the deception, why not just denounce the blessing, making it invalid?
- What is Torah's teaching here? Why is this in the Bible with all the details? Much teaching in the Bible is through narrative. We as readers are invited to identify ourselves with one person or the other or the situation. And then share the shocking outcome, God moving in a mysterious way. Let's have a closer look at the story and then in the light of another passage in Romans draw some conclusions.

GENESIS 27

- * Verses 1-4 setting the scene: Isaac almost blind (spiritually) giving Esau instructions: prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and then he will receive the blessing.
 - * The same ingredients as in Genesis 25:29-34 - the tasty stew Jacob had made for which Esau sold his birthright.
- * Verses 5-17 Rebekah overheard this and prepares a plan to thwart Esau getting the blessing and in stead having Isaac blessing Jacob. How mean! Surely this is not the way to realise the promise given to her when the twins were still in her womb?
- * Verses 18-29 Jacob deceives his father and receives the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant. Note that in the blessing Jacob is said to be lord over his brothers and 'may the sons of your mother bow down to you.' Ironically in Jacob's life the opposite happens. But we'll come back to this when studying chapter 33.
- * Verses 30-40 the story is well written and composed in such a way that the tension is built up. You would expect Isaac to get a heart attack and indeed in verse 33 he 'trembled violently'. But to our modern ears the most astonishing words are Isaac saying 'I blessed him and indeed he will be blessed'.

WORDS THAT SHAPE HUMAN LIFE

And here we learn about the power of words. Language is not simply an exercise in propaganda and manipulation. That is what we are made to think today struggling with fake news and the information attached to video's. Words are not a matter of indifference which may be attended or not as is convenient.

Bible offers a critique of our presumed life-world which tends to be flat and one dimensional. E.g. language only describing what is. We live in a technocracy which would make us believe that life is defined by the present, what can be handled, explained and managed. But words and gestures, promises and claims... these have a power that technical capacities cannot void or even diminish.

Words spoken by authoritative persons in proper contexts are means towards life and death, blessing and curse

- Proverbs 12:18 'reckless words pierce like a sword' and 16:24 'pleasant words are healing to the bones'
- Proverbs 18:21 'The tongue has the power of life and death and those who love it will eat its fruit'
- Make blessing others into a way of life: The power of blessing. Call to bless, especially call for parents and teachers to bless the children and students. You are in a position of authority and have the power to bless and to curse!

IRREVOCABLE BLESSING

- * Genesis 27:30 'I blessed him and indeed he will be blessed' compare with Hebrews 11:20 '*By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.*' What's happening here? What kind of faith is Hebrews talking about? Somehow God is involved. That's for sure!
- * Mystery of God's calling, our divine predestination on the one hand and on the other hand our freedom to make our own decisions, for good or for bad. So live responsibly but don't think too big of ourselves. There is more going on than meets the eye! God is moving in a mysterious way. He is the one and only God, Creator of heaven and earth, Saviour, Lord of all. We know, but we need to hear it again and again. Otherwise we will be deceived by our technocracy, by our confidence that most things in life we can manage...
- * Romans 11:28-29 '*As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.*'
 - * This coming Friday: Purim - read the amazing story - remember what Zeresh, Haman's wife said to him: Since Mordechai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him - you will surely come to ruin!' Esther 6:13

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

1. Reflect on the narrative and try to get 'into' the event. What kind of emotions seemingly are controlling the four characters?
2. Check the book of Proverbs on 'words', 'mouth' and 'tongue'. Which verse appeals to you and why?
3. Study James chapter 3:1-12 about the tongue.
4. 'Make blessing others into a way of life' - how would you do this in your situation?
5. Read Romans 11:28-29 in its context. What conclusions can you draw from these verses that would help you join Paul in worshipping the God of Israel in verses 33-36?