

INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSON.— Sunday Oct. 10.

JACOB AND ESAU—Gen 7:22-40

GOLDEN TEXT "Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil"—Isa 4:27.

To be learned—Verses 22-40. Time—1770 B. C.

INTRODUCTION AND CONNECTION.

Again we pass over a period of some twenty-five years of which we are told nothing of the history of Isaac and his family, until the morning of the day in which the events of our present lesson transpired. Isaac, who was old and suffering from enfeebled sight, supposing his end near, felt within him the prophetic impulse to bless his sons preparatory to his own decease; and accordingly he called his eldest and favorite son, Esau, and bade him procure some venison, and prepare for him some food of which he was particularly fond, and in the preparation of which he knew Esau to be skilled, in order that, having eaten of it, he might give him his final blessing. Rebekah heard the order, and covering the blessing for her favorite son, Jacob, who had already purchased (ch 25:28-34) the birthright from his brother, she sent him to the herd for a kid, which she herself prepared in a way to suit her husband's taste, disguised her son, and sent him in, to procure his father's blessing by falsehood and deceit, as he had already, (ch 25:28-34) by cruelly taking advantage of his brother's hunger, secured the birthright. In this transaction the character of Rebekah appears in the most unfavorable light; and Jacob, who yielded readily to her suggestion, showed himself not only eager for the accomplishment of her purpose but very unscrupulous in regard to the means by which it was attained.

LESSON NOTES.

(22) And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father, etc. Isaac was at first surprised (v. 18) at the shortness of the time that had been taken in securing and preparing the food; and when questioned by his father, Jacob not only boldly declared that he was really Esau, but that the reason of his speedy return was that the Lord had brought the animal to him (v. 20.) Such barefaced falsehood, in which Jacob even had the hardihood to mix up the name of God, is most revolting. But we must not forget that we view Jacob's act in a far stronger light than that in which he committed it. We look at it as it shows in the clear light of the Gospel, and after more than three thousand years of religious progress. Jacob committed it at a time when there was no Bible, and no knowledge of God except such as was rudimentary and obscure. Comparing his guilt with what our own would be in the same circumstances, is like comparing the sin of a six-year old child with that of a mature man. Besides, there is no evidence to show that Jacob's heart was renewed at that time. Although God led him by the hand, and had purposes in regard to him, which had been already indicated to his parents, yet he had little or no experimental knowledge of Him at that time.

(23-25) Isaac was not satisfied. The food had been prepared too quickly. It is possible, too, that he had previously discovered Jacob's eager desire for the birthright, to which Esau was so manifestly inebriated, and which he had so recklessly sold (ch. 25:28-34). However, with all his questioning and care he did not discover Jacob's fraud. He took the savory meat, and ate it, and Jacob brought him wine and he drank.

(26-27) Thus strengthened and refreshed Isaac said, come near unto me, and kiss me, my son! Great was the danger of being detected, Jacob, in his fixed determination to have the blessing, ran the risk; he gave the kiss, and Isaac, satisfied by the odor of the sweet herbage that pervaded his garments, that there was no deception, explained with child-like satisfaction—See! the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed. All this is very painful. A son, thus stooping to deceive his fond old father, blind, and apparently near his end, is a sad picture, and one from which we would turn away. Had we not remember that God often overrules the sins of men to bring them to repentance, or to bring them into circumstances where they shall learn more of themselves and more of Him, than they otherwise would. God made Jacob's sin the means of bringing him into circumstances wherein he was humbled in spirit, and very sorely chastened; and Rebekah soon learned by bitter sorrow the folly of seeking to obtain a legitimate end by unholy means.

(28) Therefore—because the examination had satisfied him—Isaac proceeded to give the blessing. The reason that both Isaac and Esau were each so anxious to secure this blessing for himself, was, that the blessing of the dying was supposed to be prophetic. In this case it was really so: The blessing Isaac pronounced upon Jacob was prompted by the Holy Spirit, and had Jacob not interfered, he would not only have had it all the same, but have saved himself the guilt and shame of his falsehood and deceit. God give thee of the dew of Heaven: The dew, in that country, where rain was so uncertain, was one of the greatest of temporal blessings. The fatness of the earth—not only its riches and choicest products, but abundance of those more common and necessary.

(26) Let people serve thee, etc. Only a small portion of this blessing was enjoyed by Jacob personally; but it ensured to him in his posterity all the temporal blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, and the additional right of supremacy.

not only over the nations, but over the posterity of his brother. As the spiritual blessings were promised to Abraham and his seed, and belong only to the heirs of the same precious faith, the promise that in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed was not given to Jacob at that time; but was afterwards given to him by God Himself; (ch. 28:14), yet not until his spiritual understanding began to be opened, to entertain higher ideas of God and his own relation to God than he had had before.

(30-33) The simple, artless story of Esau's coming in with the food he had prepared; his father's surprise at learning that he had only then returned; the agitation, grief and disappointment of the old patriarch, need no comment; their meaning is plain to the youngest child. But we need not waste our sympathy upon Esau. He had despised his birthright, though knowing well its value; sold it for a dinner; and it was too late to bring it back—(Heb. 12:17). Thus it is often with sinners now. They scorn God's promised blessings, and refuse to accept them, forgetting that God's time is now; and at length, when they would fain receive them, they learn too late that they are gone forever. Isaac knew well that the blessing he had pronounced upon Jacob was prophetic, that God had given it and it could not be recalled; and all he could say was—I have blessed him; yea, and he shall be blessed!

(34-36) Esau cried with a great and bitter cry, and said, etc. It was only then that Esau realized what he had lost. His father by that time saw through the whole proceedings, and replied—thine brother came with subtlety (deceit) and hath taken away thy blessing. It is hard to be overreached by a stranger,—much more so by a brother. Esau's anger was only natural, yet he should have remembered he had sold his birthright, and confirmed the bargain by an oath. Still, there is no defending Jacob's conduct. It was base and wicked. Had he waited God's time, the blessing would surely have been his; but this neither he nor his mother were willing to do;—they took the matter into their own hands, and the consequences of their rashness and impiety cast a shadow over all their future lives. Jacob—Supplanter. Jacob was a prophetic name. He was indeed to Esau a supplanter in a very bad sense; but we must keep in mind that it was God's purpose that Esau should be supplanted. He had proved by his indifference to his birthright, and his selling it so cheaply, that he was unworthy of it. Jacob's mistake and sin were in taking the matter into his own hands, and not leaving it to God.

Again, both the natural and spiritual seed of Jacob were designed by God to be supplanted;—the former, of the corrupt Canaanites in the land that had been given to Abraham; (Lev. 18:24, 27, 28;) and the latter, of the wicked throughout the whole earth—(Psalms 1:6-8; Luke 1:32-33; Rev. 20:4.) He hath supplanted me these two times! This was a false charge Esau, in selling his birthright, acted deliberately and freely. It is true, Jacob took an unbrotherly advantage of Esau's need; but then Esau could not have been in such a famishing state as to make his act in any sense necessary. He was not supplanted there; he despised his birthright, and sold it for a dinner of pottage. His whimpering about being supplanted on that occasion, is simply childish. Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

(37-38) Isaac answered—hold I have made him thy Lord, (thy superior) etc. What shall I now do unto thee, my son? Esau's pitiful cry is very touching. Oh, how bitter is the knowledge that the blessing we learn too late to value, is gone,—gone forever! Esau had despised his birthright.

(39-40) We are told (Heb. 11:20) that Isaac blessed both his sons by faith. His words were prophetic; and though not intended for Jacob, they were certainly given to him. Isaac's faith assigned the blessing to the person to whom he was speaking, not to the one to whom he intended to speak. God's purposes often run counter to man's—it was notably so in this instance.

All the prophecy embodied in Isaac's blessing upon Esau was ultimately fulfilled; but that part which referred to subjection to his brother, was fulfilled in his posterity and not in himself. Esau probably remained for a number of years in Canaan; but at length satisfied, apparently, that it was really Jacob's, he withdrew to Sier, (ch. 36:8) the possession of which was confirmed to him by God—(Deut. 3:5; Josh. 24:4.)

Esau's life, in a worldly point of view, seems to have been very prosperous and happy;—that of Jacob, though full of rich spiritual experiences, was, on the other hand, a life of much toil and sorrow.

PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS.

Jacob's sorrows were sanctified to his spiritual good; he lives in the sacred record as God's "Servant,"—as the third in that grand trio with whom the faithful are to sit down in the kingdom of heaven.

Esau's prosperity, alike with his disappointment and pain, failed to bring him to God. He lives in the Scripture record as the profane person who sold his birthright.

What God promises He will surely perform. Any attempt, like that of Jacob and his mother, to take the accomplishment of God's purposes into our own hands is sinful, and will prove disastrous to ourselves.

Rebekah prepared the way for Jacob's sin, and both aided and encouraged him in accomplishing it.

In a few days her son was taken from her, and she saw him no more on earth.

Confidence in God's faithfulness to His promise (Gen 25:23) would have saved Rebekah from the sin and folly of her intermeddling.—Unbelief is the fruitful parent of all sin. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.

QUESTION SUMMARY.

(For the Children.)

If you read the whole story you will find that Jacob was trying to make his father believe that he was Esau; and you will see what he did in order to make him think so (22, 23). Did he succeed? Do you not think Isaac was suspicious a little that somebody was trying to cheat him? (24). What makes you think he was suspicious? What did Jacob say? Was that very wicked? Was it as wicked in Jacob as it would be in you? Why not? Because Jacob had not God's law as you have, nor the teachings of Jesus, the Bible, the Sunday School, and many other means of knowing what is right. (25-29). Relate what is found in those two verses. What was it made Jacob quite sure at last that he was speaking to Esau? (28) What did this part of Isaac's blessing promise to Jacob? (29) How many things does it promise here? Did these all come to Jacob? Not all of them to Jacob's self; but all of them to Jacob's descendants. (30) What happened as soon as Jacob had got his blessing and gone? (31) What did he bring? and what say to his father? (32, 33) What made Isaac tremble so? Because he was afraid that Esau had lost the blessing. And had Esau lost it forever? How are you sure? (34) How did Esau feel? Ought Esau to have felt very bad, do you think? Yes, he ought. He had despised his birthright, and sold it for a mess of pottage! Oh, how foolish he had been! But are you not doing the same thing, only ten thousand times worse, when you despise the Lord Jesus, and refuse his salvation? Esau's blessing was gone forever—so may yours be, if you are not careful! (35-38) What is the meaning of subtlety? What is the meaning of Jacob? What is a supplanter? One who gets another's place. Did God intend Jacob should have Esau's place? Why? Because Esau despised his birthright. Did God intend Jacob should get it in the way he did? No, God would have given it to Jacob if he had waited. (39, 40) Did Esau get any blessing? Yes, and a very good one if he had made good use of it. What does it call Esau? The profane person who sold his birthright. Did Jacob ever become good? Yes, and God loved him and called him His servant!

Sunday, Oct. 17.

JACOB AT BETHEL—Gen. 28, 10-22.

GOLDEN TEXT—"Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whithersoever thou shalt"—Genesis xxviii 15.

To be learned—12-16. Time—1770 B. C.

INTRODUCTION.

The intermeddling of Rebekah and Jacob for securing the blessing resulted, as they might have foreseen, in Esau's bitter resentment. He hated Jacob, and resolved that as soon as the day of mourning for his father's death were ended, he would kill him. Esau's character is not hard to understand. He loved a lawless, unsettled life—witness the occupation he chose. He despised his birthright and all the bright prospect of opening up to him who possessed it—witness the contemptible price he set upon it, and the flippancy with which he parted with it. He was, when roused, of a malignant and murderous spirit—witness his contemplated revenge upon his brother. All these reveal a character altogether unfit to be the successor of his grandfather and father, the heir of such vast and far-reaching promises, and the one with whom God should hold personal intercourse. Jacob, though deeply faulty in some respects, was a man of steadfast purpose,—every thing he attempted in life evinced that. He appreciated and valued very highly the promises that pertained to his family—witness his unscrupulous eagerness to secure them for himself. He was amiable in his disposition, his ready compliance with his mother's plan for securing the blessing is but one phase of it. He was, notwithstanding some faults of character, of a deeply religious cast of mind,—under divine guidance and discipline he became eminently pious, and won from God his new name, Israel—one who prevails with God.

LESSON NOTES.

(10) And Jacob went out, etc. Isaac, when his grief had had time to abate, seems to have recognized God's purpose of grace towards Jacob, in preventing his partial love for Esau from accomplishing its purpose, and, accepting the artful pretext of his wife as the true reason for wishing Jacob out of the way, he called him to him, repeated the blessing he had formerly given him, and then sent him away to his mother's relatives in Padanaram, with the command to take a wife from among them, and on no account to marry a Canaanite woman.

(11) This was, most likely, the beginning of hardships for Jacob. Until that day he had been accustomed to the society and tender care of his mother; and we can only imagine his home-sick loneliness while journeying on until the sun was set, or the sinking of heart with which he arranged the stones for his pillow, and lay down to rest on the

hard earth under the open sky. It is probable that that day had been to Jacob one of much heart's aching and sincere penitence for the conduct that had thus rendered him homeless and a wanderer in the world; for it is only reasonable to suppose that God had in some measure prepared him for the gracious revelation of Himself he was about to make.

(12) And he dreamed. This is one of the many instances recorded in the Bible, of God's revealing Himself and His purposes to men in dreams. It was the time of the world's childhood; and God adapted His methods of instruction to the weakness and ignorance of those He taught. Behold, (mark, notice,) a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven, etc. This ladder would probably signify no more to Jacob than that, however unlikely it might seem, God had really opened up a way of communication between heaven and earth—between men and him self; and that angelic messengers might avail themselves of it, in order to come and go between God and men. We, with the whole Bible in our hands, and with Christ's own words (John 1:51) know that that ladder typified Christ,—that with its foot upon the earth and its top in heaven, it signified that, uniting His divine nature with our human nature, He would, at once, link the Creator with the creature; and that, by Him as a medium of communication, angels should come and go on fitly errands between God and men.

(13) And behold, the Lord stood above it. Notice: It was from the top of this ladder that God spoke. It is only in and through Christ, whom this ladder represents, that God can descend to deal with men. It is only through Christ that we may deal with God, or that angels may go between Him and us. I am the Lord God of Abraham, Jacob had, doubtless, heard much of this great Being; he is now told that the same God is speaking to him. Of Abraham, thy father, and of Isaac. He is reminding of his noble parentage, as if to lead him to seek to be worthy of it. He who is the son of Abraham and Isaac, God's chosen servants, should deport himself accordingly—how blessed a man likened with the world! The land whereon thou hast, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. Jacob is still further identified with Abraham and Isaac, as an heir of the promised inheritance.

(14) Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west and to the east, etc. and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Just previous to receiving this promise, Jacob had been favored with a revelation of Christ. It was only a pictorial representation, if we may so call it,—God but dimly understood, indeed, but it was calculated in itself strongly to arrest the attention and stimulate his faith; and seen in connection with his renewal of the promises by God Himself, must effectually have fixed in his mind the idea of God's personal nearness to, and abiding interest in him.

(15) I am with thee . . . will keep thee . . . will bring thee again into this land. Nothing strengthens, stimulates, and encourages like the assurance when believed, that God is, and will be with us. To Jacob, these assurances would prove of incalculable value in the life of toil, privation, and disappointment that awaited him, and the last would be an unending source of confidence and hope. For I will not leave thee until I have done that which have spoken to thee of. In other words,—God would have a special and peculiar care over both Jacob and his seed until He had brought to pass all that was involved in the promise. This promise is but partially fulfilled even now. How much remains yet to be fulfilled for the natural seed of Jacob, we may learn by a careful study of the Old and New Testaments. In its application to the spiritual seed of Jacob, it will only be fulfilled when all Christ's people are brought home.

(16-17) Jacob awakened . . . and said,—surely, the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not! I supposed I was alone—utterly alone and desolate—was I. But the Lord is surely here. And he was afraid. There was nothing in what he had heard to terrify him; but every thing to comfort and assure. Still, his fear was very natural.

He realized the presence of God as he never had before. He was alone, in the night, in silence and darkness. In his dream he had seen the Lord, and heard His voice. How those solemn and yet tender words would thrill and agitate him, and fill him with new and strange emotions. We can almost fancy we see the lonely, startled man lifting his hands in surprise and fear as he sits there beneath the stars, and hear his half-whispered exclamation,—how dreadful is this place!—not dreadful in the sense of to be dreaded, or shunned; but because of the presence of the high and holy God with him, a sinful, but humbled man. This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. It is possible that Jacob, in his simplicity, imagined he had literally found the entrance—way to heaven, for at this time all his ideas of God and heaven must have been very obscure, and mixed with much that was childish and fanciful.

(18) We may suppose that, for the remainder of the night, there was very little sleep for Jacob, while the blessed assurances and promises he had just heard would repeat themselves over and over in his mind. Rose early in the morning, doubtless with the first flush of day—and took the stone that he had put for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, partly to mark the place where God had revealed Himself to him, and, probably, also, as a memorial of the solemn vow he was about to make. Poured oil on the top of it, thus signifying its consecration to a holy use. Bethel,—the house of God, Luz,—the