



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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Genesis 25:19-34 **New International Version** **November 4, 2018**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, November 4, 2018**, is from **Genesis 25:19-34**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(Genesis 25:19) This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac,

Abraham's servant brought Rebekah from Haran to be Isaac's wife. Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah. After Isaac was married, Abraham lived thirty-five more years: he died at the age of 175 years old. Twenty years after Isaac was married, Rebekah gave birth to Esau and Jacob. Therefore, during the formative years of Esau and Jacob's lives, they had the opportunity to know both their father and grandfather and receive spiritual guidance from them. They could have heard firsthand from Abraham all the events that were so crucial to his and Sarah's life, all the details of the LORD's visits with Abraham, the miraculous birth of Isaac in Abraham and Sarah's old age, and about Lot before and after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Most especially, they learned about the promises that the LORD had made to Abraham and Isaac's descendants. They could also learn firsthand from Rebekah about her family in Haran and their history.

(Genesis 25:20) and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean.

Bethuel was a nephew of Abraham, and the father of Rebekah and Laban. Paddan Aram or Padanaram means “Plain of Aram,” which was the region that included the city of Haran (located in Syria), where Rebekah’s family lived. Arameans spoke the ancient language known as Aramaic.

(Genesis 25:21) Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant.

Perhaps remembering the experience of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of Rebekah and the LORD answered his prayer. The Bible does not tell us how long he prayed or how many times he offered his prayer. He could pray to the LORD based on God’s promises to Abraham and to him; God had promised to give him children. After giving them promises of descendants, God tried both the faith and patience of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Rebekah, which reminds us to always pray for our children and patiently wait for God to achieve His plans for them and us.

(Genesis 25:22) The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, “Why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the LORD.

Rebekah did not know why her babies seemed to be fighting within her, so she prayed to the LORD for an answer. Both Isaac and Rebekah were godly parents, and Rebekah went to the LORD alone when she was concerned about her children, and the LORD told her why her children were difficult.

(Genesis 25:23) The LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.”

With more than one wife (see Genesis 28:6-9), Esau had two sons, Eliphaz and Reuel, and from Esau the Edomites became a nation (see Genesis 36:1-43). His descendants became many people groups and after many generations became nations that did not accept the faith of the Israelites. The two nations that the LORD spoke of were the two separate large groups of people that would come from Esau and Jacob. Eventually, of course, Israel would divide into a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom, but the LORD had no purpose in foretelling everything we know now to Rebekah. One nation would be spiritually and in every other way stronger than the other nation. From a worldly perspective, Esau never personally served Jacob; however, Jacob was stronger intellectually than Esau when he convinced Esau to sell him his birthright, and by doing so Esau became culturally and legally a servant of Jacob. As punishment for their sins, Obadiah prophesied of Esau's descendants as a nation, "But how Esau will be ransacked, his hidden treasures pillaged!" (Obadiah 1:6).

(Genesis 25:24) When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb.

These twin boys were different and became more different as they grew into manhood. Their descendants were also different spiritually.

(Genesis 25:25) The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau.

These boys were not identical twins. The meaning of Esau's name is "hairy" or "rough."

(Genesis 25:26) After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

The fact that Jacob grasped Esau's heel verified from their birth what the LORD had told Rebekah. The name Jacob means "holder of the heel" or "supplanter;" or "deceiver," which Jacob became: his action of deceiving Esau may have given the name "Jacob" that additional meaning. Jacob

would deprive Esau of the benefits of being a firstborn son. Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born, and Isaac was 60 when his twins were born.

(Genesis 25:27) The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents.

As a skillful hunter, Esau was physically more active and stronger than his brother Jacob. Jacob knew that in a fight between them, he would lose — one reason he would later flee from his brother. Since Esau spent much time outdoors, and Jacob stayed at home, Jacob would have had the benefit of learning more about the LORD and his family history directly from his family. Jacob developed his intellectual abilities while Esau developed his physical abilities.

(Genesis 25:28) Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Though Esau was often away from home hunting, Isaac loved Esau for the food he could bring the family from his hunting. Rebekah loved Jacob because he spent most of his time with the family. Working and eating together enabled Jacob to learn much from Isaac and Rebekah. Jacob lived at home as the shepherd of the family flock, who also learned how to cook as well as other domestic duties. Later, he would be a successful shepherd for Laban in Haran.

(Genesis 25:29) Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished.

Having described their family situation, Genesis reveals how Esau lost his birthright. Jacob had obviously learned how to cook good food at home from what they raised in their fields. We do not know if Esau's hunt was successful or not, but he came home starving.

(Genesis 25:30) He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.)

The name Edom means “red,” the same as the meaning of “Esau.” There are recipes on the Internet for red lentil stew, a member of the pea family.

(Genesis 25:31) Jacob replied, “First sell me your birthright.”

Having spent much time at home and perhaps knowing what the LORD had told Rebekah, Jacob probably knew far better than Esau the value of the birthright, and thought it worth bargaining for, if given the opportunity.

(Genesis 25:32) “Look, I am about to die,” Esau said. “What good is the birthright to me?”

Like many people, Esau followed his emotions at the moment rather than his reason. Without considering all the possible consequences, which often result in poor decisions and even sinning, Esau figured that if he died his birthright was no good to him, so he made a poor trade for a bowl of stew.

(Genesis 25:33) But Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob.

Jacob gave Esau the opportunity to reconsider his decision by asking Esau to swear an oath that he was selling his birthright to Jacob. This oath would make the bargain or sale legally binding in that culture. Jacob had the wisdom to make the bargain and make sure that the bargain was legal. This birthright may not have included the father’s blessing (but it was probably assumed that it did). Esau may not have taken the time to think about the value of his birthright or blessing, because when Isaac called Esau to go hunt for him, Esau expected to receive his father’s blessing. The birthright gave the oldest son twice the material inheritance at the death of the father. Financially, for example, if the inheritance were \$100.00, Jacob would now get \$66.66 at his father’s death and Esau would now get \$33.33. Esau would now get half as much as Jacob at Isaac’s death.

(Genesis 25:34) Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.

Having received Esau's binding pledge, Jacob fulfilled his part of the bargain and even gave Esau some bread along with his stew. Esau did not seem to regret his bargain, for after eating he simply left. To despise means "to feel contempt for or a deep repugnance for" or "to regard as negligible, worthless, or distasteful." Because of his attitude, Esau was not mentally or spiritually qualified to be the head of the family at the death of Isaac. Surely, Esau would have preferred to keep hunting outdoors with enough inheritance to support a comfortable lifestyle rather than show concern for passing on the truths of the LORD to his family and help them grow spiritually and mentally. Esau proved he was unfit to follow in Isaac's steps.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. How old was Isaac when he married Rebekah, and how old was he when he became a father?
2. What did Isaac and Rebekah do when they had problems? What does their example and the results tell us?
3. How did the LORD explain to Rebekah what was happening to her?
4. How were her twins born? How did they grow up to be different?
5. What does it mean to despise something? What did Esau despise? What was a benefit of receiving what he despised?

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