



God Chooses Jacob over Esau

Genesis 25:21–26; 27:1–29



LESSON GOAL

Students will learn that God promised to bless Jacob instead of Esau.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- God blessed Jacob instead of Esau.
- Jacob was a liar, and Esau rejected his parents.
- God allowed Jacob to lie to his father to steal the inheritance.
- God was gracious to Jacob.

KEY VERSE

“The LORD said to her, ‘Two nations are in your womb,.... and the older shall serve the younger’” (Genesis 25:23).

APPLICATION

- We all are sinners. Call out for God’s mercy.
- Don’t commit one sin to make up for another sin.
- Be patient for God’s promise. Don’t take matters into your own hands.

NEXT WEEK

Jacob Wrestles with God
Read Genesis 32.

Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group

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PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Background

Genesis 27 gives the account of a family tragedy. It is the account of Isaac and his relationships with God, with his wife, and with his sons. Isaac’s father, Abraham, had been a man of faith; he had obeyed God and worshiped Him. But Isaac’s love for the Lord never seems to have developed into the controlling preoccupation it had been for Abraham. As a result, the members of Isaac’s household became egocentric, self-serving, and underhanded in their dealings with one another. Their relationships were regrettably devoid of honesty, respect, and love. As they struggled against the Lord’s sovereignty, they made victims of themselves and of one another. Yet, because of His promise to Abraham, God continued to work out His plan for Abraham’s descendants, despite their arrogant resistance and interference.

When Isaac was about 137 years old, he lost his eyesight. Although he would live for another 40 years, he felt that his death might be imminent. Therefore, he prepared to pass on the family blessing to his oldest son, Esau—despite knowing that God had chosen Jacob to inherit the blessing (Gen. 25:23). Isaac should have announced God’s blessing to the son whom the Lord Himself had chosen. Instead, he sought to circumvent God’s will and award the blessing to Esau, his favorite son. Isaac’s actions showed selfish arrogance and were based on human preference rather than on commitment to God. Esau was unworthy of the blessing. His lack of concern for the spiritual heritage of his grandfather was reflected in the sale of his birthright to Jacob and in his forbidden marriages to Hittite women. But these facts, even accompanied by the knowledge that God had chosen Jacob to receive the promise (Gen. 25:23), were insufficient to persuade Isaac.

Rebekah overheard Isaac promise the blessing to Esau, and because she loved her son (literally, her “favorite”) Jacob more than Esau, she set out to foil Isaac’s plan. Seeing Isaac’s unwillingness to conform to God’s plan, Rebekah and Jacob should have openly confronted the patriarch and left the results in God’s hands. Instead, they decided to trick Isaac. Although Jacob and Esau were over 70 years old by this time, Rebekah gave Jacob commands with imperative urgency, and he complied. Jacob had initial misgivings that his father would discover the truth anyway, through his senses of smell, touch, and hearing. He feared that, if discovered, he would receive a curse rather than a blessing because he was taking advantage of an old man’s weakness. Rebekah must have found a solution to this problem as she was skinning the goats: she would bind their hides to Jacob’s arms and neck.

The sad lack of honesty in Isaac’s relationship with his sons is revealed in his words: “Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not” (27:21). His dependence on hearing to identify those around him would have been well developed, and the person standing before him sounded like Jacob, even though he otherwise gave every evidence of being Esau. Isaac had decided to bless this person, yet doubts left him unsure. Having made every effort

Additional Reference Materials

*The MacArthur Study
Bible* by John MacArthur

*Paradise to Prison:
Studies in Genesis* by
John J. Davis

to determine the truth through circuitous means, Isaac asked Jacob directly, "Are you really my son Esau?" To this question, Jacob offered a direct lie: "I am."

Isaac ate the goat meat and drank the wine. Then he said to his son, "Come near now and kiss me," willfully setting aside all previous doubts. Isaac's blessing took poetic form as he recalled the characteristic of Esau that he loved best: his love for the hunt and the open field. Esau was a "man's man" who had often provided Isaac with delicacies from the earth. At first Isaac spoke of Yahweh, the faithful Maker of covenants with His chosen people. Then he abruptly changed to speak of Ha Elohim, the true God, Creator of everything. In Genesis 27:28, he said, "May God give you of the dew of heaven." The mention of dew was significant because the Palestinians relied heavily on dew for irrigation of their crops. Isaac also invoked God to give his son the "fatness of the earth," the fat, fertile places. Then he attempted to reverse the Lord's earlier verdict that the older son would serve the younger.

No sooner had Jacob left Isaac's quarters than Esau suddenly appeared. Jacob barely escaped being caught in the act. Esau's words were very similar to those Jacob had used, showing how carefully the deception had been planned. The older brother spoke with greater deference to his father, however. Isaac was caught by surprise. He said (literally), "Who thou?" In rapid succession, Isaac realized that Esau had been deprived of the blessing he had intended to give him and that the blessing had gone to Jacob. Blessings and cursings made through deceit or ignorance were considered invalid, but Isaac refused to change his words. Apparently, he finally recognized God's sovereign hand in the situation and repented. Because of Isaac's sudden reversal of heart, the writer of Hebrews could say, "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come" (11:20).

Hebrews 12:16 calls Esau an immoral, godless person who sold his birthright for a single meal. He had wanted nothing to do with God, and yet on hearing from his father's lips the finality of his loss, this 70-year-old man had a temper tantrum. Again, we see signs of a dishonest relationship between father and son, for Esau tried to manipulate Isaac with tears and pleadings, demonstrating a complete lack of self-control. Yet he could not change his father's mind (Heb. 12:17).

Esau's final remarks revealed the selfishness and spiritual meanness of his heart; he was indeed a wicked, godless man, and Isaac must have been forced at that moment to admit that his oldest son's nature was incongruous with that of the patriarchs. This man who had played away his life in the fields, mindless of God's will, now was bitterly seething with anger toward his brother. He had been injured, and he feigned innocence. Suddenly and dramatically, Isaac was confronted with the fact that he had reared a son who was worthy only of God's curse. Esau's descendants were condemned to live in the barren land of Edom. They would be ruled over by Jacob's posterity, only occasionally shaking off their subservience.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth”
(Psalm 78:1).*

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.

Who was Isaac, and what was special about him?
He was Abraham’s promised son.

Why did God ask Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering?
To test Abraham.

Did God really want Abraham to kill Isaac?
No. He wanted to find out whom Abraham loved more—Him or Isaac.

Did Abraham trust God?
Yes. He believed that God would provide.

Did Abraham pass the test? How?
Yes. He obediently did everything God told him.



All about Twins

Read a children’s book on twins, such as *About Twins* by Shelley Rotner, to the class. Ask the students whether any of them have friends who are twins. Explain that in today’s lesson, they will learn about twins named Jacob and Esau.



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Butcher-Paper Brothers

Select two students to lie down on butcher paper and make poses (hands on hips or waving, for example). Trace around them with a black pen. Identify which is Jacob and which is Esau. Allow the students to take turns decorating Esau (with red skin, hairy arms, etc.) and Jacob (as a gardener, wearing a chef’s hat, holding veggies, etc.). Cut out the shapes through two layers of paper, leaving a one-inch border. Add shreds of paper between the layers and staple all around. Set the 3-D boys on either side of you as you teach the lesson. Point to them throughout the story or while discussing their differences.



Guess Who?

Seat the students in a large circle in the middle of the room. Have one of the teachers or helpers sit on a chair in the middle of the circle. Place a blindfold on the teacher. Have students come up to the teacher, and allow him to touch their arms. You may wish to bring in a piece of fur or cloth to put on each student's arm. See if the teacher can guess who the student is. Take enough time to allow each student a turn. In today's lesson, we will see how Jacob tried to trick his blind father and steal his blessing. If you teach a large class, you may wish to select only four or five students to try tricking the teacher.



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Jacob, Jacob, Esau!

Have the students play the game "Duck, Duck, Goose" using the words "Jacob, Jacob, Esau." Tell them that in today's lesson they will learn about twin brothers named Jacob and Esau.



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Touch and Smell

Blindfold the students. Pass around several roughly spherical objects. Here are some ideas: orange, softball, tennis ball, apple, lemon, ball of yarn, ball of string, onion, or potato. Have students try to identify these items by touch and smell. It's not so easy, is it? In our Bible lesson, we will hear about how Isaac was fooled when he could only touch and smell.



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Life's Story

Show the class a current newspaper. What kinds of things are going on in the world? Does God know about all this? God has a plan for our world and our lives. What happens to His plan when people do bad things? Does anything take God by surprise? Why not? Because God is in control of the future.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done" (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included to use during worship time. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Reading of the Text

Read Genesis 25:21–26 and 27:1–29.

God had promised to make Isaac into a big family, but he and Rebekah had no children. Rebekah was sad because she wanted a baby. So Isaac prayed to God, and God gave Isaac and Rebekah twin boys.

Esau was born first and was the oldest son. He had lots of red hair all over his little body. Does anyone in our class have red hair? Jacob was the second son, but by

only a few seconds. Jacob did not have hairy skin. His skin was smooth. The oldest son normally would receive a special blessing from his father, but God told Rebekah that this special blessing instead would go to Jacob, the younger son.

Isaac and Rebekah were thrilled to have two baby boys. God had given them a family! When Esau got older, he was an active boy who loved to play outside. When he became a teenager, he loved to hunt for animals. His father, Isaac, loved Esau and wanted him to receive the special family blessing, even though God had said it should go to Jacob. Jacob was a quiet boy who liked to stay inside the tents. He liked to cook and help his mother. Rebekah loved having Jacob around and always remembered God's promise to Jacob.

One day while Esau was out hunting, Jacob was cooking some stew. When Esau came back to the tent, he said to his brother, "Quick! Give me some stew. I'm starving to death." Jacob said to his brother, "Sell me your birthright, your right to our father's treasures, and I will give you some stew." The birthright went to the first son and meant that he would get twice as much of the father's things. It also meant being the leader of the family.

Esau didn't care about his birthright; he was hungry. Esau said, "What good is my birthright if I'm going to starve to death anyway? You can have the birthright." He cared more about a quick meal than he did about God's promises. Esau gave Jacob the birthright, and Jacob gave Esau a big bowl of lentil stew.

When Isaac was old, his eyes became so blind that he could not see. He knew that it was time to pass on the special family blessing to his son. Isaac knew that God had said the blessing would belong to Jacob, but he didn't obey God. Isaac called Esau and said, "You are my firstborn son. It is time to give you the family blessing. But first, go to the fields and hunt for a wild animal. Cook it the way I like it and bring it to me." Esau gladly went out to do what his father had asked.

But Rebekah overheard what Isaac said to Esau. She also knew that God wanted Jacob to have the family blessing. So she said to Jacob, "Quick! Go bring two young goats, and I will cook them the way Isaac likes. Then you can take his favorite food to him and receive the blessing."

Jacob said, "He will know who I am and get mad at me. Esau is hairy, and my skin is smooth." Rebekah knew that it was wrong to lie, but she did not obey God. She said to Jacob, "Put this goat fur on your arms and wear Esau's clothes, which smell like the field. Isaac will think you are Esau." Jacob knew it was wrong to lie, but he wanted the special blessing, so he pretended to be Esau. He put the goat hair on his arms and wore Esau's clothes. He took Isaac his favorite food. Isaac knew something was wrong because it was Jacob's voice, but when he felt Jacob's hairy arms, he thought it was Esau. Isaac said to his son, "My son, God has promised to make you into a great nation, and He will bless you. Your brothers will bow down to you and serve you."

After Jacob received Isaac's blessing, he quickly left his father's room. Soon after Jacob had gone, Esau came to Isaac with his favorite food. Esau said, "Here I am for the blessing." Isaac was confused. "Who are you? I have already given the blessing." When Esau found out what had happened, he cried bitterly. He begged Isaac to give him a blessing, but Isaac knew that God had wanted Jacob to have the blessing.

What Jacob did was wrong. He should not have lied to his father. But God is in control over everything. Long ago, he had planned to bless Jacob instead of Esau, and that is exactly what happened. We can be glad that God is in control of everything that happens and that He always does what is right and good.



Lesson Questions

What were the names of Isaac and Rebekah's twin boys, and what were they like?

Esau had lots of red hair and loved to hunt. Jacob was quiet and liked to cook.

Why did Esau sell his birthright to Jacob?

Esau didn't care about his birthright and sold it to Jacob in exchange for some food.

How did Jacob get the family blessing?

Jacob wore Esau's clothes and put goat hair on his arms.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Flash Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



Bedsheets and Bathrobes

Bring in bedsheets and bathrobes to dress up for today's Bible lesson. Get help from the other teachers and from the class to act out the story of Jacob and Esau. You may wish to be the narrator of the drama.



Birthrights and Blessings

Before class, cut out pictures of things that are part of an inheritance, such as houses, land, cars, and jewelry. At the beginning of class, ask students what happens to someone's house, car, and money when that person dies. (Show the students the pictures.) Explain to the students that when someone dies, all that he owned is called an inheritance. Usually these things eventually will go to the person's children. In today's story, we are going to learn about Jacob and Esau. Esau was older. In those days, the older son had a birthright. That means he got a double portion of the things his father owned. (Divide the pictures into two groups, one twice as large as the other.) Another name used for this was a blessing. In today's story, we are going to see why and how Jacob took the birthright from Esau.



Mystery Touch/Smells

Bring paper bags or bowls filled with various items. Some of these items could represent parts of today's lesson. Items could include: dried beans, a hairy or furry toy, wads of paper, silk or burlap, marbles, and sandpaper. Have the students close their eyes and try to identify what is in each bag or bowl. Explain that Isaac's eyesight was bad, so he had to rely on touch and smell. Rebekah and Jacob used this weakness to trick Isaac. Tell the students that Isaac also relied on odors. Put in bags things that have distinct odors, and have the students try to identify what is in each bag. Suggested items include popcorn, lemons, rose petals, and cut grass.

Variation: Disguise an item and have students guess what it is. For example, put a cloth bag around an orange or a rock, or sandpaper around a book. Reveal the item to the students. Explain to them that Jacob was being deceitful when he tricked his father. Jacob was wrong to trick his father, and he sinned by lying to him.

Praise and Worship

God Is So Good

He's Got the Whole World

In His Time

My God Is So Great

Trust and Obey

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



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Jacob and Esau Puppets

Before class, create puppets using foam balls, wooden craft sticks, and thin felt squares. Press the craft stick into the foam ball. Cover the ball with a piece of felt, and tie the bottom corners together with a piece of yarn. During craft time, give each student two puppets. Have each of them draw a face on the felt. Then, using red yarn, have each student glue red hair and a beard on the Esau puppet. Using brown yarn, have the students glue brown hair on the Jacob puppet.



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In His Hands

Before class, trace your hand on a piece of white paper and make copies for the students. During craft time, have the students trace their hands onto a piece of colored construction paper. Help them cut out their hands and glue them on top of the hands you made earlier. Give them a cutout of a preprinted caption to glue on the bottom of the page. The caption should read: "[Student's name]'s hand in His hands—you can trust God." Tell the students that the characters in today's Bible story took matters into their own hands instead of trusting in God. When God gives a promise, He will make it happen, and He does not need us to help Him fulfill His promises.



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Paper-Plate Story

Have the students cut out and color the paper-plate story shapes at the back of this lesson. Have them glue the shapes onto a paper plate. Give them beans and pasta to glue onto the plate to represent the savory stew.

Coloring Sheets

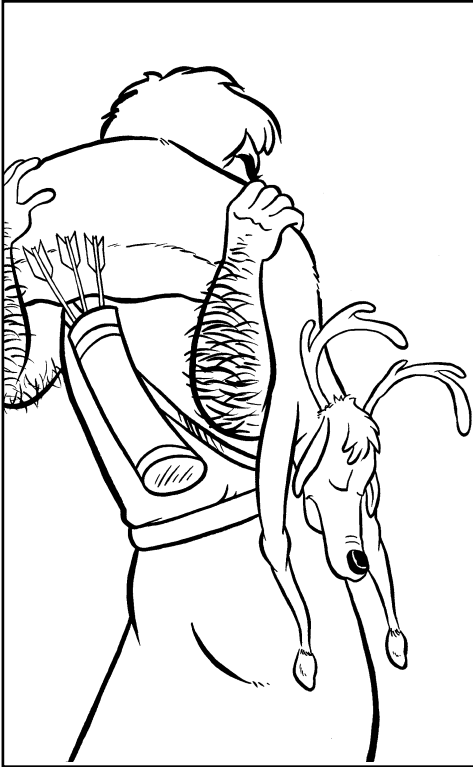
Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of this lesson. Have the students color the pages in class or at home.



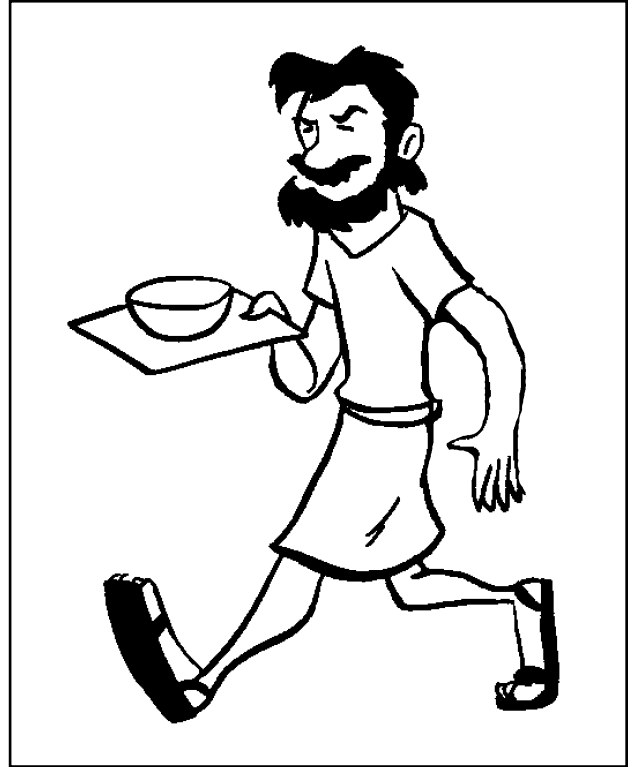
MEMORY VERSE

"The LORD said to her, 'Two nations are in your womb,....and the older shall serve the younger'" (Genesis 25:23).

Paper-Plate Story



Esau



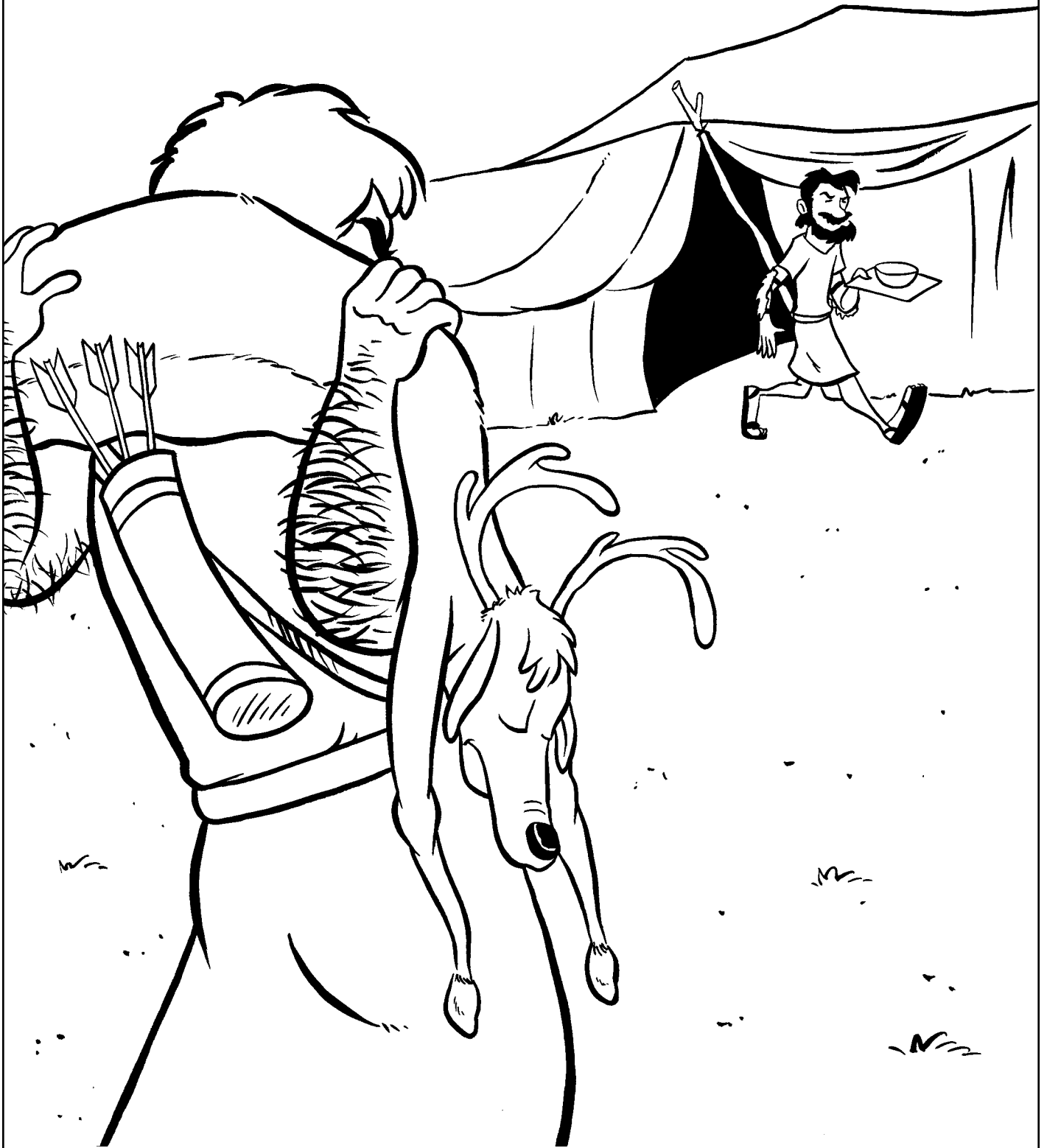
Jacob



Jacob Deceives His Father



Jacob dressed like Esau and lied to Isaac, stealing Esau's blessing (Gen. 27:18–29).



**Esau came back from hunting just after Jacob had stolen his blessing.
When he found out, he was very angry (Gen. 27:30–45).**

