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GENESIS 27:1 When Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his elder son, and said to him, "My son?" He said to him, "Here I am."

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Isaac, grown old and feeble, and apprehending the approach of death, desires his son Esau to provide some savory meat for him, that having eaten of it he might convey to him the blessing connected with the right of primogeniture, Gen 27:1-4. Rebekah hearing of it, relates the matter to Jacob, and directs him how to personate his brother, and by deceiving his father, obtain the blessing, Gen 27:5-10. Jacob hesitates, Gen 27:11, Gen 27:12; but being counseled and encouraged by his mother, he at last consents to use the means she prescribes, Gen 27:13, Gen 27:14. Rebekah disguises Jacob, and sends him to personate his brother, Gen 27:15-17. Jacob comes to his father, and professes himself to be Esau, Gen 27:18, Gen 27:19. Isaac doubts, questions, and examines him closely, but does not discover the deception, Gen 27:20-24. He eats of the savory meat, and confers the blessing upon Jacob, Gen 27:25-27. In what the blessing consisted, Gen 27:28, Gen 27:29. Esau arrives from the field with the meat he had gone to provide, and presents himself before his father, Gen 27:30, Gen 27:31. Isaac discovers the fraud of Jacob, and is much affected, Gen 27:32, Gen 27:33. Esau is greatly distressed on hearing that the blessing had been received by another, Gen 27:34. Isaac accuses Jacob of deceit, Gen 27:35. Esau expostulates, and prays for a blessing, Gen 27:36. Isaac describes the blessing which he has already conveyed, Gen 27:37. Esau weeps, and earnestly implores a blessing, Gen 27:38. Isaac pronounces a blessing on Esau, and prophecies that his posterity should, in process of time, cease to be tributary to the posterity of Jacob, Gen 27:39, Gen 27:40. Esau purposes to kill his brother, Gen 27:41. Rebekah hears of it, and counsels Jacob to take refuge with her brother Laban in Padanaram, Gen 27:42-45. She professes to be greatly alarmed, lest Jacob should take any of the Canaanites to wife, Gen 27:41.

#### Verse 1

Isaac was old - It is conjectured, on good grounds, that Isaac was now about one hundred and seventeen years of age, and Jacob about fifty-seven; though the commonly received opinion makes Isaac one hundred and thirty-seven, and Jacob seventy-seven; but see note on Gen 31:55, etc.

And his eyes were dim - This was probably the effect of that affliction, of what kind we know not, under which Isaac now labored; and from which, as well as from the affliction, he probably recovered, as it is certain he lived forty if not forty-three years after this time, for he lived till the return of Jacob from Padan-aram; Gen 35:27-29.

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GENESIS 27:2 He said, "See now, I am old. I don't know the day of my death."

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#### Verse 2

I know not the day of my death - From his present weakness he had reason to suppose that his death could not be at any great distance, and therefore would leave no act undone which he believed it his duty to perform. He who lives not in reference to eternity, lives not at all.

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GENESIS 27:3 Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field, and take me venison.

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#### Verse 3

Thy weapons - The original word כלי keley signifies vessels and instruments of any kind; and is probably used here for a hunting spear, javelin, sword, etc.

Quiver - תלי teli, from תלה talah, to hang or suspend. Had not the Septuagint translated the word φαρετραν, and the Vulgate pharetram, a quiver, I should rather have supposed some kind of shield was meant; but either can be suspended on the arm or from the shoulder. Some think a sword is meant; and because the original signifies to hang or suspend, hence they think is derived our word hanger, so called because it is generally worn in a pendent posture; but the word hanger did not exist in our language previously to the Crusades, and we have evidently derived it from the Persian khanjar, a poniard or dagger, the use of which, not only in battles, but in private assassinations, was well known.

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GENESIS 27:4 Make me savoury food, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat, and that my soul may bless you before I die."

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#### Verse 4

Savoury meat - מטעמים matammim, from טעם taam, to taste or relish; how dressed we know not, but its name declares its nature.

That I may eat - The blessing which Isaac was to confer on his son was a species of Divine right, and must be communicated with appropriate ceremonies. As eating and drinking were used among the Asiatics on almost all religious occasions, and especially in making and confirming covenants, it is reasonable to suppose that something of this kind was essentially necessary on this occasion, and that Isaac could not convey the right till he had eaten of the meat provided for the purpose by him who was to receive the blessing. As Isaac was now old, and in a feeble and languishing condition, it was necessary that the flesh used on this occasion should be prepared so as to invite the appetite, that a sufficiency of it might be taken to revive and recruit his drooping strength, that he might be the better able to go through the whole of this ceremony.

This seems to be the sole reason why savoury meat is so particularly mentioned in the text. When we consider, 1. That no covenant was deemed binding unless the parties had eaten together; 2. That to convey this blessing some rite of this kind was necessary; and, 3. That Isaac's strength was now greatly exhausted, insomuch that he supposed himself to be dying; we shall at once see why meat was required on this occasion, and why that meat was to be prepared so as to deserve the epithet of savoury.

As I believe this to be the true sense of the place, I do not trouble my readers with interpretations which I suppose to be either exceptionable or false.

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GENESIS 27:5 Rebekah heard when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it.

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Verse 5

And Rebekah heard - And was determined, if possible, to frustrate the design of Isaac, and procure the blessing for her favorite son. Some pretend that she received a Divine inspiration to the purpose; but if she had she needed not to have recourse to deceit, to help forward the accomplishment. Isaac, on being informed, would have had too much piety not to prefer the will of his Maker to his own partiality for his eldest son; but Rebekah had nothing of the kind to plead, and therefore had recourse to the most exceptionable means to accomplish her ends.

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GENESIS 27:6 Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, "Behold, I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying,

GENESIS 27:7 'Bring me venison, and make me savoury food, that I may eat, and bless you before the LORD before my death.'

GENESIS 27:8 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command you.

GENESIS 27:9 Go now to the flock, and get me from there two good young goats. I will make them savoury food for your father, such as he loves.

GENESIS 27:10 You shall bring it to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death."

GENESIS 27:11 Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man.

GENESIS 27:12 What if my father touches me? I will seem to him as a deceiver, and I would bring a curse on myself, and not a blessing."

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Verse 12

I shall bring a curse upon me - For even in those early times the spirit of that law was understood, Deu 27:18 : Cursed is he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way; and Jacob seems to have possessed at this time a more tender conscience than his mother.

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GENESIS 27:13 His mother said to him, "Let your curse be on me, my son. Only obey my voice, and go get them for me."

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Verse 13

Upon me be thy curse, my son - Onkelos gives this a curious turn: It has been revealed to me by prophecy that the curses will not come upon thee, my son. What a dreadful responsibility did this woman take upon her at this time! The sacred writer states the facts as they were, and we may

depend on the truth of the statement; but he nowhere says that God would have any man to copy this conduct. He often relates facts and sayings which he never recommends.

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GENESIS 27:14 He went, and got them, and brought them to his mother. His mother made savoury food, such as his father loved.

GENESIS 27:15 Rebekah took the good clothes of Esau, her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob, her younger son.

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#### Verse 15

Goodly raiment - Mr. Ainsworth has a sensible note on this place. "The priest in the law had holy garments to minister in, Exo 28:2-4, which the Septuagint there and in this place term την στολην, The robe, and στολην ἁγιαν, the holy robe. Whether the first-born, before the law, had such to minister in is not certain, but it is probable by this example; for had they been common garments, why did not Esau himself, or his wives, keep them? But being, in all likelihood, holy robes, received from their ancestors, the mother of the family kept them in sweet chests from moths and the like, whereupon it is said, Gen 27:27, Isaac smelled the smell of his garments." The opinion of Ainsworth is followed by many critics.

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GENESIS 27:16 She put the skins of the young goats on his hands, and on the smooth of his neck.

GENESIS 27:17 She gave the savoury food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

GENESIS 27:18 He came to his father, and said, "My father?" He said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?"

GENESIS 27:19 Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done what you asked me to do. Please arise, sit and eat of my venison, that your soul may bless me."

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#### Verse 19

I am Esau thy first-born - Here are many palpable falsehoods, and such as should neither be imitated nor excused. "Jacob," says Calmet, "imposes on his father in three different ways. 1. By his words: I am thy first-born Esau. 2. By his actions; he gives him kids' flesh for venison, and says he had executed his orders, and got it by hunting. 3. By his clothing; he puts on Esau's garments, and the kids' skins upon his hands and the smooth of his neck. In short, he made use of every species of deception that could be practiced on the occasion, in order to accomplish his ends." To attempt to palliate or find excuses for such conduct, instead of serving, deserves the cause of religion and truth. Men have labored, not only to excuse all this conduct of Rebekah and Jacob, but even to show that it was consistent, and that the whole was according to the mind and will of God!

Non tali auxilio, non defensoribus istis

The cause of God and truth is under no obligation to such defenders; their hands are more unhallowed than those of Uzzah; and however the bearers may stumble, the ark of God requires not

their support. It was the design of God that the elder should serve the younger, and he would have brought it about in the way of his own wise and just providence; but means such as here used he could neither sanction nor recommend.

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GENESIS 27:20 Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" He said, "Because the LORD your God gave me success."

GENESIS 27:21 Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not."

GENESIS 27:22 Jacob went near to Isaac his father. He felt him, and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau."

GENESIS 27:23 He didn't recognise him, because his hands were hairy, like his brother, Esau's hands. So he blessed him.

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#### Verse 23

And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy - From this circumstance we may learn that Isaac's sense of feeling was much impaired by his present malady. When he could not discern the skin of a kid from the flesh of his son, we see that he was, through his infirmity, in a fit state to be imposed on by the deceit of his wife, and the cunning of his younger son.

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GENESIS 27:24 He said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He said, "I am."

GENESIS 27:25 He said, "Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless you." He brought it near to him, and he ate. He brought him wine, and he drank.

GENESIS 27:26 His father Isaac said to him, "Come near now, and kiss me, my son."

GENESIS 27:27 He came near, and kissed him. He smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him, and said, "Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed."

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#### Verse 27

The smell of my son is as the smell of a field - The smell of these garments, the goodly raiment which had been laid up in the house, was probably occasioned by some aromatic herbs, which we may naturally suppose were laid up with the clothes; a custom which prevails in many countries to the present day. Thyme, lavender, etc., are often deposited in wardrobes, to communicate an agreeable scent, and under the supposition that the moths are thereby prevented from fretting the garments. I have often seen the leaves of aromatic plants, and sometimes whole sprigs, put in eastern MSS., to communicate a pleasant smell, and to prevent the worms from destroying them. Persons going from Europe to the East Indies put pieces of Russia leather among their clothes for the same purpose. Such a smell would lead Isaac's recollection to the fields where aromatic plants grew in abundance, and where he had often been regaled by the scent.

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GENESIS 27:28 God give you of the dew of the sky, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and new wine.

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Verse 28

God give thee of the dew of heaven - Bp. Newton's view of these predictions is so correct and appropriate, as to leave no wish for any thing farther on the subject. "It is here foretold, and in Gen 27:39, of these two brethren, that as to situation, and other temporal advantages, they should be much alike. It was said to Jacob: God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine; and much the same is said to Esau, Gen 27:39 : Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. The spiritual blessing, or the promise of the blessed seed, could be given only to One; but temporal good things might be imparted to both. Mount Seir, and the adjacent country, was at first in the possession of the Edomites; they afterwards extended themselves farther into Arabia, and into the southern parts of Judea. But wherever they were situated, we find in fact that the Edomites, in temporal advantages, were little inferior to the Israelites. Esau had cattle and beasts and substance in abundance, and he went to dwell in Seir of his own accord; but he would hardly have removed thither with so many cattle, had it been such a barren and desolate country as some would represent it. The Edomites had dukes and kings reigning over them, while the Israelites were slaves in Egypt. When the Israelites, on their return, desired leave to pass through the territories of Edom, it appears that the country abounded with Fruitful Fields and Vineyards: Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country; we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells; Num 20:17. And the prophecy of Malachi, which is generally alleged as a proof of the barrenness of the country, is rather a proof of the contrary: I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness, Mal 1:3; for this implies that the country was fruitful before, and that its present unfruitfulness was rather an effect of war, than any natural defect in the soil. If the country is unfruitful now, neither is Judea what it was formerly." As there was but little rain in Judea, except what was termed the early rain, which fell about the beginning of spring, and the latter rain, which fell about September, the lack of this was supplied by the copious dews which fell both morning and evening, or rather through the whole of the night. And we may judge, says Calmet, of the abundance of those dews by what fell on Gideon's fleece, Jdg 6:38, which being wrung filled a bowl. And Hushal compares an army ready to fall upon its enemies to a dew falling on the ground, 2Sam 17:12, which gives us the idea that this fluid fell in great profusion, so as to saturate every thing. Travellers in these countries assure us that the dews fall there in an extraordinary abundance.

The fatness of the earth - What Homer calls *ουθαρ αρουρης*, Ilias ix., 141, and Virgil *uber glebae*, Aeneid i., 531, both signifying a soil naturally fertile. Under this, therefore, and the former expressions, Isaac wishes his son all the blessings which a plentiful country can produce; for, as Le Clerc rightly observes, if the dews and seasonable rains of heaven fall upon a fruitful soil, nothing but human industry is wanting to the plentiful enjoyment of all temporal good things. Hence they are represented in the Scripture as emblems of prosperity, of plenty, and of the blessing of God, Deu 33:13, Deu 33:28; Mic 5:7; Zac 8:12; and, on the other hand, the withholding of these denotes barrenness, distress, and the curse of God; 2Sam 1:21. See Dodd.

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GENESIS 27:29 Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers. Let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you. Blessed be everyone who blesses you."

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#### Verse 29

Let people serve thee - "However alike their temporal advantages were to each other," says Bp. Newton, "in all spiritual gifts and graces the younger brother was to have the superiority, was to be the happy instrument of conveying the blessing to all nations: In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed; and to this are to be referred, in their full force, those expressions: Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee. Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee. The same promise was made to Abraham in the name of God: I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, Gen 12:3; and it is here repeated to Jacob, and thus paraphrased in the Jerusalem Targum: 'He who curseth thee shall be cursed as Balaam the son of Beor; and he who blesseth thee shall be blessed as Moses the prophet, the lawgiver of Israel.' It appears that Jacob was, on the whole, a man of more religion, and believed the Divine promises more, than Esau. The posterity of Jacob likewise preserved the true religion, and the worship of one God, while the Edomites were sunk in idolatry; and of the seed of Jacob was born at last the Savior of the world. This was the peculiar privilege and advantage of Jacob, to be the happy instrument of conveying these blessings to all nations. This was his greatest superiority over Esau; and in this sense St. Paul understood and applied the prophecy: The elder shall serve the younger, Rom 9:12. The Christ, the Savior of the world, was to be born of some one family; and Jacob's was preferred to Esau's, out of the good pleasure of Almighty God, who is certainly the best judge of fitness and expedience, and has undoubted right to dispense his favors as he shall see proper; for he says to Moses, as the apostle proceeds to argue, Rom 9:15. 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' And when the Gentiles were converted to Christianity, the prophecy was fulfilled literally: Let people serve thee, and let nations bow down to thee; and will be more amply fulfilled when the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved."

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GENESIS 27:30 As soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob had just gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

GENESIS 27:31 He also made savoury food, and brought it to his father. He said to his father, "Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that your soul may bless me."

GENESIS 27:32 Isaac his father said to him, "Who are you?" He said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau."

GENESIS 27:33 Isaac trembled violently, and said, "Who, then, is he who has taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before you came, and have blessed him? Yes, he will be blessed."

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#### Verse 33

And Isaac trembled - The marginal reading is very literal and proper, And Isaac trembled with a great trembling greatly. And this shows the deep concern he felt for his own deception, and the

iniquity of the means by which it had been brought about. Though Isaac must have heard of that which God had spoken to Rebekah, The elder shall serve the younger, and could never have wished to reverse this Divine purpose; yet he might certainly think that the spiritual blessing might be conveyed to Esau, and by him to all the nations of the earth, notwithstanding the superiority of secular dominion on the other side.

Yea, and he shall be blessed - From what is said in this verse, collated with Heb 12:17, we see how binding the conveyance of the birthright was when communicated with the rites already mentioned. When Isaac found that he had been deceived by Jacob, he certainly would have reversed the blessing if he could; but as it had been conveyed in the sacramental way this was impossible. I have blessed him, says he, yea, and he must, or will, be blessed. Hence it is said by the apostle. Esau found no place for repentance, μετανοιας γαρ τοπον ουχ ευρε, no place for change of mind or purpose in his father, though he sought it carefully with tears. The father could not reverse it because the grant had already been made and confirmed. But this had nothing to do with the final salvation of poor outwitted Esau, nor indeed with that of his unnatural brother.

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GENESIS 27:34 When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, my father."

GENESIS 27:35 He said, "Your brother came with deceit, and has taken away your blessing."

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#### Verse 35

Hath taken away thy blessing - This blessing, which was a different thing from the birthright, seems to consist of two parts:

1. The dominion, generally and finally, over the other part of the family; and,
2. Being the progenitor of the Messiah.

But the former is more explicitly declared than the latter. See note on Gen 25:31.

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GENESIS 27:36 He said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright. See, now he has taken away my blessing." He said, "Haven't you reserved a blessing for me?"

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#### Verse 36

Is not he rightly named Jacob? - See note on Gen 25:26.

He took away my birthright - So he might say with considerable propriety; for though he sold it to Jacob, yet as Jacob had taken advantage of his perishing situation, he considered the act as a species of robbery.

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GENESIS 27:37 Isaac answered Esau, "Behold, I have made him your lord, and all his brothers have I given to him for servants. With grain and new wine have I sustained him. What then will I do for you, my son?"

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#### Verse 37

I have made him thy lord - See note on Gen 27:28.

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GENESIS 27:38 Esau said to his father, "Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, my father." Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.

GENESIS 27:39 Isaac his father answered him, "Behold, of the fatness of the earth will be your dwelling, and of the dew of the sky from above.

GENESIS 27:40 By your sword will you live, and you will serve your brother. It will happen, when you will break loose, that you shall shake his yoke from off your neck."

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#### Verse 40

By thy sword shalt thou live - This does not absolutely mean that the Edomites should have constant wars; but that they should be of a fierce and warlike disposition, gaining their sustenance by hunting, and by predatory excursions upon the possessions of others. Bishop Newton speaks on this subject with his usual good sense and judgment: "The elder branch, it is here foretold, should delight more in war and violence, but yet should be subdued by the younger. By thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother. Esau might be said to live much by the sword; for he was a cunning hunter, a man of the field. He and his children got possession of Mount Seir by force and violence, expelling from thence the Horites, the former inhabitants. By what means they spread themselves farther among the Arabians is not known; but it appears that upon a sedition and separation several of the Edomites came and seized upon the south-west parts of Judea, during the Babylonish captivity, and settled there ever after. Before and after this they were almost continually at war with the Jews; upon every occasion they were ready to join with their enemies; and when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, they encouraged him utterly to destroy the city, saying, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundations thereof. Psa 137:7. And even long after they were subdued by the Jews, they retained the same martial spirit; for Josephus in his time gives them the character of 'a turbulent and disorderly nation, always erect to commotions, and rejoicing in changes; at the least adulation of those who beseech them, beginning war, and hasting to battles as to a feast.' And a little before the last siege of Jerusalem they came, at the entreaty of the Zealots, to assist them against the priests and people; and there, together with the Zealots, committed unheard-of cruelties, and barbarously murdered Annas, the high priest, from whose death Josephus dates the destruction of the city." See Dr. Dodd.

And - when thou shalt have the dominion - It is here foretold that there was to be a time when the elder was to have dominion and shake off the yoke of the younger. The word תָּרִיד *tarid*, which we translate have dominion, is rather of doubtful meaning, as it may be deduced from three different roots, יָרַד *yarad*, to descend, to be brought down or brought low; דָּרָה *radah*, to obtain rule or have dominion; and רָוַד *rud*, to complain; meaning either that when reduced very low God would magnify his power in their behalf, and deliver them from the yoke of their brethren; or when they should be

increased so as to venture to set up a king over them, or when they mourned for their transgressions, God would turn their captivity. The Jerusalem Targum gives the words the following turn: "When the sons of Jacob attend to the law and observe the precepts, they shall impose the yoke of servitude upon thy neck; but when they shall turn away themselves from studying the law and neglect the precepts, thou shalt break off the yoke of servitude from thy neck." "It was David who imposed the yoke, and at that time the Jewish people observed the law; but the yoke was very galling to the Edomites from the first; and towards the end of Solomon's reign Hadad, the Edomite, of the blood royal, who had been carried into Egypt from his childhood, returned into his own country, and raised some disturbances, but was not able to recover his throne, his subjects being over-awed by the garrisons which David had placed among them; but in the reign of Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, the Edomites revolted from under the dominion of Judah, and made themselves a king. Jehoram made some attempts to subdue them again, but could not prevail; so the Edomites revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day, 2Chr 21:8, 2Chr 21:10, and hereby this part of the prophecy was fulfilled about nine hundred years after it was delivered." See Bishop Newton. "Thus," says Bishop Newton, "have we traced, in our notes on this and the 25th chapter, the accomplishment of this prophecy from the beginning; and we find that the nation of the Edomites has at several times been conquered by and made tributary to the Jews, but never the nation of the Jews to the Edomites; and the Jews have been the more considerable people, more known in the world, and more famous in history. We know indeed little more of the history of the Edomites than as it is connected with that of the Jews; and where is the name or nation now? They were swallowed up and lost, partly among the Nabathean Arabs, and partly among the Jews; and the very name, as Dr. Prideaux has observed, was abolished and disused about the end of the first century of the Christian era. Thus were they rewarded for insulting and oppressing their brethren the Jews; and hereby other prophecies were fulfilled, viz., Jer 49:7, etc.; Eze 25:12, etc.; Joe 3:19; Amo 1:11, etc.; and particularly Obadiah; for at this day we see the Jews subsisting as a distinct people, while Edom is no more, agreeably to the words of Obadiah, Oba 1:10 : For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, in the return of his posterity from Egypt, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. And again, Oba 1:18 : There shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau, for the Lord hath spoken it. In what a most extensive and circumstantial manner has God fulfilled all these predictions! and what a proof is this of the Divine inspiration of the Pentateuch, and the omniscience of God!"

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GENESIS 27:41 Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him. Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand. Then I will kill my brother Jacob."

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#### Verse 41

The days of mourning for my father are at hand - Such was the state of Isaac's health at that time, though he lived more than forty years afterwards, that his death was expected by all; and Esau thought that would be a favorable time for him to avenge himself on his brother Jacob, as, according to the custom of the times, the sons were always present at the burial of the father. Ishmael came from his own country to assist Isaac to bury Abraham; and both Jacob and Esau assisted in burying their father Isaac, but the enmity between them had happily subsided long before that time.

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GENESIS 27:42 The words of Esau, her elder son, were told to Rebekah. She sent and called Jacob, her younger son, and said to him, "Behold, your brother Esau comforts himself about you by planning to kill you.

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#### Verse 42

Doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee - מִתְנַחֵם לְךָ mithnachem lecha, which Houbigant renders cogitat super te, he thinks or meditates to kill thee. This sense is natural enough here, but it does not appear to be the meaning of the original; nor does Houbigant himself give it this sense, in his Racines Hebraiques. There is no doubt that Esau, in his hatred to his brother, felt himself pleased with the thought that he should soon have the opportunity of avenging his wrongs.

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GENESIS 27:43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice. Arise, flee to Laban, my brother, in Haran.

GENESIS 27:44 Stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away;

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#### Verse 44

Tarry with him a few days - It was probably forty years before he returned, and it is likely Rebekah saw him no more; for it is the general opinion of the Jewish rabbins that she died before Jacob's return from Padan-aram, whether the period of his stay be considered twenty or forty years. See note on Gen 31:55, etc.

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GENESIS 27:45 until your brother's anger turn away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send, and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?"

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#### Verse 45

Why should I be deprived also of you both - If Esau should kill Jacob, then the nearest akin to Jacob, who was by the patriarchal law, Gen 9:6, the avenger of blood, would kill Esau; and both these deaths might possibly take place in the same day. This appears to be the meaning of Rebekah. Those who are ever endeavoring to sanctify the means by the end, are full of perplexity and distress. God will not give his blessing to even a Divine service, if not done in his own way, on principles of truth and righteousness. Rebekah and her son would take the means out of God's hands; they compassed themselves with their own sparks, and warmed themselves with their own fire; and this had they at the hand of God, they lay down in sorrow. God would have brought about his designs in a way consistent with his own perfections; for he had fully determined that the elder should serve the younger, and that the Messiah should spring not from the family of Esau but from that of Jacob; and needed not the cunning craftiness or deceits of men to accomplish his purposes. Yet in his mercy he overruled all these circumstances, and produced good, where things, if left to their own operations and issues, would have produced nothing but evil. However, after this reprehensible transaction, we hear no more of Rebekah. The Holy Spirit mentions her no more, her burial excepted, Gen 49:31. See note on Gen 35:8.

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GENESIS 27:46 Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, of the daughters of the land, what good will my life do me?"

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Verse 46

I am weary of my life - It is very likely that Rebekah kept many of the circumstances related above from the knowledge of Isaac; but as Jacob could not go to Padan-aram without his knowledge, she appears here quite in her own character, framing an excuse for his departure, and concealing the true cause. Abraham had been solicitous to get a wife for his son Isaac from a branch of his own family; hence she was brought from Syria. She is now afraid, or pretends to be afraid, that her son Jacob will marry among the Hittites, as Esau had done; and therefore makes this to Isaac the ostensible reason why Jacob should immediately go to Padan-aram, that he might get a wife there. Isaac, not knowing the true cause of sending him away, readily falls in with Rebekah's proposal, and immediately calls Jacob, gives him suitable directions and his blessing, and sends him away. This view of the subject makes all consistent and natural; and we see at once the reason of the abrupt speech contained in this verse, which should be placed at the beginning of the following chapter.

1. In the preceding notes I have endeavored to represent things simply as they were. I have not copied the manner of many commentators, who have labored to vindicate the character of Jacob and his mother in the transactions here recorded. As I fear God, and wish to follow him, I dare not bless what he hath not blessed, nor curse what he hath not cursed. I consider the whole of the conduct both of Rebekah and Jacob in some respects deeply criminal, and in all highly exceptionable. And the impartial relation of the facts contained in this and the 25th chapter, gives me the fullest evidence of the truth and authenticity of the sacred original. How impartial is the history that God writes! We may see, from several commentators, what man would have done, had he had the same facts to relate. The history given by God details as well the vices as the virtues of those who are its subjects. How widely different from that in the Bible is the biography of the present day! Virtuous acts that were never performed, voluntary privations which were never borne, piety which was never felt, and in a word lives which were never lived, are the principal subjects of our biographical relations. These may be well termed the Lives of the Saints, for to these are attributed all the virtues which can adorn the human character, with scarcely a failing or a blemish; while on the other hand, those in general mentioned in the sacred writings stand marked with deep shades. What is the inference which a reflecting mind, acquainted with human nature, draws from a comparison of the biography of the Scriptures with that of uninspired writers? The inference is this - the Scripture history is natural, is probable, bears all the characteristics of veracity, narrates circumstances which seem to make against its own honor, yet dwells on them, and often seeks occasion to Repeat them. It is true! infallibly true! In this conclusion common sense, reason, and criticism join. On the other hand, of biography in general we must say that it is often unnatural, improbable; is destitute of many of the essential characteristics of truth; studiously avoids mentioning those circumstances which are dishonorable to its subject; ardently endeavors either to cast those which it cannot wholly hide into deep shades, or sublime them into virtues. This is notorious, and we need not go far for numerous examples. From these facts a reflecting mind will draw this general conclusion - an impartial history, in every respect true, can be expected only from God himself.

2. These should be only preliminary observations to an extended examination of the characters and conduct of Rebekah and her two sons; but this in detail would be an ungracious task, and I wish only to draw the reader's attention to what may, under the blessing of God, promote his moral good. No pious man can read the chapter before him without emotions of grief and pain. A mother teaches her favorite son to cheat and defraud his brother, deceive his father, and tell the most execrable lies! And God, the just, the impartial God relates all the circumstances in the most ample and minute detail! I have already hinted that this is a strong proof of the authenticity of the sacred book. Had the Bible been the work of an impostor, a single trait of this history had never appeared. God, it is true, had purposed that the elder should serve the younger; but never designed that the supremacy should be brought about in this way. Had Jacob's unprincipled mother left the matter in the bands of God's providence, her favorite son would have had the precedency in such a way as would not only have manifested the justice and holiness of God, but would have been both honorable and lasting to Himself. He got the birthright, and he got the blessing; and how little benefit did he personally derive from either! What was his life from this time till his return from Padan-aram? A mere tissue of vexations, disappointments, and calamities. Men may endeavor to palliate the iniquity of these transactions; but this must proceed either from weakness or mistaken zeal. God has sufficiently marked the whole with his disapprobation.

3. The enmity which Esau felt against his brother Jacob seems to have been transmitted to all his posterity; and doubtless the matters of the birthright and the blessing were the grounds on which that perpetual enmity was kept up between the descendants of both families, the Edomites and the Israelites. So unfortunate is an ancient family grudge, founded on the opinion that an injury has been done by one of the branches of the family, in a period no matter how remote, provided its operation still continues, and certain secular privations to one side be the result. How possible it is to keep feuds of this kind alive to any assignable period, the state of a neighboring island sufficiently proves; and on the subject in question, the bloody contentions of the two houses of York and Lancaster in this nation are no contemptible comment. The facts, however, relative to this point, may be summed up in a few words. 1. The descendants of Jacob were peculiarly favored by God. 2. They generally had the dominion, and were ever reputed superior in every respect to the Edomites. 3. The Edomites were generally tributary to the Israelites. 4. They often revolted, and sometimes succeeded so far in their revolts as to become an independent people. 5. The Jews were never subjected to the Edomites. 6. As in the case between Esau and Jacob, who after long enmity were reconciled, so were the Edomites and the Jews, and at length they became one people. 7. The Edomites, as a nation, are now totally extinct; and the Jews still continue as a distinct people from all the inhabitants of the earth! So exactly have all the words of God, which he has spoken by his prophets, been fulfilled!

4. On the blessings pronounced on Jacob and Esau, these questions may naturally be asked. 1. Was there any thing in these blessings of such a spiritual nature as to affect the eternal interests of either? Certainly there was not, at least as far as might absolutely involve the salvation of the one, or the perdition of the other. 2. Was not the blessing pronounced on Esau as good as that pronounced on Jacob, the mere temporary lordship, and being the progenitor of the Messiah, excepted? So it evidently appears. 3. If the blessings had referred to their eternal states, had not Esau as fair a prospect for endless glory as his unfeeling brother? Justice and mercy both say - Yes. The truth is, it was their posterity, and not themselves, that were the objects of these blessings. Jacob, personally, gained no benefit; Esau, personally, sustained no loss.