

The Church of God

(La Iglesia de Dios)

Jacob's Sojourn in Padan-Aram

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JACOB'S SOJOURN IN PADAN-ARAM

To determine the years that Jacob spent in Padan-Aram a time marker is needed; such as the birth and death dates of one of his sons. That son is Joseph.

The bible does not directly record the year of Joseph's birth, but it does reveal it through the use of several pertinent scriptures. These scriptures must be assembled in time order, and are as follows: Genesis 41:46-47. Joseph was 30 years old when he gave the Pharaoh the meaning of his dream at the beginning of the seven years of plenty.

Genesis 47:9 relates that Jacob was 130 years old when he went to Egypt in the second year of the famine, making Joseph 30, plus seven years of plenty, plus 2 years of famine equals 39 years. This is Joseph's age when his father came to Egypt.

Joseph's birth year would be 130 (Jacob's age) minus 39, making the age of Jacob at Joseph's birth 91. Joseph is the only offspring of Jacob who has both his birth and death spelled out on a biblical timeline.

This makes it clear that Jacob was 91 when Joseph was born. Gen. 30:25. *"And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph that Jacob said to Laban, 'Send me away that I may go to my own people and to my country.'"*

In Genesis 28:3 Jacob received the blessing. *"May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of people."*

Why was Isaac's blessing given to Jacob, the younger son? Genesis 26:34. *"When Esau was 40 years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite. And Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebecca."*

This grief of mind for Isaac and Rebecca was intense. They realized from their own experience that the promise to Abraham could not be fulfilled if one married into the family that they were to expel from the land in future years. Mixing with the Canaanites would have resulted in their falling into the same lifestyle that would cause God to reject them from the land in future years. Genesis 15:16. *"But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."* For that reason it was important for Abraham to choose a wife for Isaac from his kindred, and should have been the same motivating force for Isaac to do the same. However it was Rebekah who was moved to see that Jacob would not fall into the same marriage trap that Esau did.

Gen. 27:46. *“And 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 like these who are the daughters of the land, what good is my life to me.’”*

The statement in Genesis 27:1 gives the impression that some time had elapsed from Esau’s marriage to the blessing of the two sons. *“Now it came to pass when Isaac was old and his eyes were dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, ‘My son.’ And he answered him, ‘Behold now I am old I do not know the day of my death.’”*

This occurred when Isaac was 137 years old and Jacob was 77. It will be shown once the passage of time is explained by scriptural evidence of the bible. Rebekah was the one who realized that the eldest son’s blessing could not be given to Esau because he had married into the Cainite nation. It negated the very purpose of her marriage to Isaac. At this time there was no doubt that the blessing had to go to Jacob who was as yet unmarried.

In Genesis 24 verse 3 Abraham gives instructions to his servant. *“And I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell;”*

Rebekah correctly understood that once the blessing was given it could not be taken back. which Gen.27:33-35 explains. *“Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, ‘Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him – and indeed he shall be blessed.’ When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, ‘Bless me, even me also, oh my father!’ But he said, ‘Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing.’”*

It is necessary to remember that the bible only contains the core information, leaving out the details of interactions of those involved. One of the details is that Isaac and Rebekah knew that Esau had sold his birthright to Jacob. In Genesis 27:36 Esau reiterates his loss of the birthright, which was no surprise to Isaac. Another fact is the deep disappointment of Esau’s marriage at age 40 to the two Cainite women, automatically eliminated him from the birthright and the blessing. Finally, the blessing took place 37 years after Esau’s marriages.

For Isaac the rejection of the birthright by Esau had faded over the 37 years, and he was willing to look past the errors and give the birthright to Esau. On the other hand, Rebekah felt a constant irritation which left her no peace as Genesis 27, verse 46 has previously shown. At this point it is necessary to establish the age of Jacob when this blessing was given. As already pointed out Jacob was 91 at Joseph’s birth. Then at what juncture did his birth occur? Gen.30:22-26. *“Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. And she conceived and bore a son, and said, ‘God has taken away my reproach.’ So she called his name Joseph, and said, ‘The Lord shall add to me another son.’ And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph that Jacob said to Laban, ‘Send me away that I may go to my own place and to my country. Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know my service which I have done for you.’”*

Joseph was born at the concluding point of Jacob's service of 14 years; Seven years for Leah and seven years for Rachel. Jacob was 91 years old at the birth of Joseph. Subtracting the 14 years of servitude from 91, the age of Jacob was 77 when he left his home in the Promised Land soon after receiving the blessing of the first born.

Remember, this was 37 years after Esau had married the two Hittite women. Isaac was then 137 years old. The sting of Esau's marriages had faded for Isaac, so he was now willing to give Esau the blessing of the first born.

For Rebekah this was not the case. She continued to be greatly disturbed and pleaded with Isaac to send Jacob back to her homeland to find a suitable wife. Gen. 27:46. "And 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, like these who are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?'"

Because of our modern way of thinking it is easy for us to forget that it was the responsibility of the father to arrange the marriage for his son. It is not told why Isaac failed to carry out that responsibility, but he did not.

From the time that Esau married into the Canaanite society and had sold his birthright the topic of a wife for Jacob, and his marriage were one of prime importance. This is what would insure the birthright for Jacob. As the years passed and Isaac failed to act things came to a head when Rebekah heard Isaac's final decision to give the first born blessing to Esau.

It may seem that this decision came about without much discussion. There are two points to note here. The first is found in Gen.25:28. "And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob." This is important because it shows what would affect their decisions in the future about the two brothers.

Esau showed his lack of belief in the prophetic destiny of the family that God gave to his grandfather Abraham and his father, Isaac. He did this first by selling his birthright to his brother Jacob, and then marrying into the Canaanite family which was a strictly forbidden act. As each incident occurred they prevented Isaac from giving the birthright blessing to Esau. There would be a continued discussion between Rebekah and Isaac because of the importance of taking a wife from outside the land of Canaan, which would allow the birthright to fall on the one who would carry out the covenant that God had made with Abraham and Isaac.

Finally, after 37 years Isaac decided to overlook Esau's failures and give him the blessing. Conversely, Rebekah, holding to the prophecies that God gave her before the birth of the twins, and the failure of her husband to place the birthright on the son who would keep the covenant, she made the decision to ensure that Jacob received the birthright blessing. This caused the subterfuge that followed. She also understood that once the blessing was given it could not be rescinded, making it imperative that Jacob receive the blessing. Gen.27:33, 37. "Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said 'Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him – and indeed he shall be blessed.'" Vs. 37, "Then Isaac and said to Esau, 'Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you my son?'"

At the encouragement of Rebekah Isaac sent Jacob off and gave him an additional blessing. Gen.28:1-4. "Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: 'You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to PadanAram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.' May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples; and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.'"

It is interesting that there is no recrimination of either Rebekah or Jacob for the deceit they perpetrated on Isaac. Did Isaac recognize that he needed to give the blessing to Jacob; but needed an excuse to give to Esau? Is this why he allowed Rebekah to overhear his instructions to Esau? He knew that Rebekah would go to any length to see that the blessing went to Jacob. Did Isaac realize that his wife had saved him from making a fatal error? It appears he did as he was happy to give a second blessing to Jacob confirming the first.

What was it that Rebekah did to deceive Isaac? First she cooked the savory meal, then dressed Jacob in Esau's clothes, and encouraged Jacob to play the part of his brother. This enabled Jacob to receive the birthright blessing. Can it be said that this was directed by God? Absolutely not! God does not use lies and deceit to accomplish His ends. On the other hand He does not force men to do the right thing; each must make right choices on their own. God uses our mistakes to teach us important lessons. Jacob spent most of his life learning the consequences of deceit being used on him. Gen. 47:9 shows this. "Jacob said to Pharaoh, 'The days of the years of my pilgrimage are 130 years; Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the wife of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.'"

Now that the age of Jacob has been established as 77 years when he received the blessing, the year of his arrival in PadanAram must also be established.

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