

# Come Follow Me February 21-27

## Genesis 24-27

### “The Covenant Is Renewed”

*As you read [Genesis 24-27](#), pay attention to spiritual insights you receive. Pray to know how the principles you find are relevant to your life.*

#### Record Your Impressions

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God’s covenant with Abraham included the promise that through Abraham and his posterity “shall all the families of the earth be blessed” ([Abraham 2:11](#)). That’s not a promise that could be fulfilled in one generation: in many ways, the Bible is the story of God’s ongoing fulfilment of His promise. And He began by renewing the covenant with the family of Isaac and Rebekah. Through their experiences, we learn something about being part of the covenant. Their examples teach us about kindness, patience, and trust in God’s promised blessings. And we learn that it’s well worth giving up any worldly “pottage” ([Genesis 25:30](#)) in order to secure God’s blessings for ourselves and our children for generations to come.

### (7-1) Introduction

Why did the Lord choose Isaac and Jacob? How were they chosen to perpetuate the covenant the Lord had made with Abraham? The purpose of this chapter is to assist you in picking out the significant events as the God of Abraham became the God of Isaac and Jacob. You will learn that of the eight sons of Abraham recorded in scripture the Lord singled out Isaac to become the heir to the covenant. Later, God chose Jacob over Esau, even though Esau was the firstborn and seemed to be his father’s favorite.

Isaac and Jacob were foreordained to their responsibilities. Through their personal worthiness, however, they justified their callings in the covenant line. Since the time of these mighty patriarchs, all of the chosen people of the Lord have come through their lineage or have been adopted into their lineage. In the Old Testament, Jehovah is

repeatedly called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Thus, it is significant that you understand not only who Abraham is but also why the Lord chose Isaac and Jacob to be the first of the house of Israel.

As you begin to study the expansion of the covenant line, remember one thing. Sometimes we tend to oversimplify the concept of a covenant people and the heritage of certain groups of people. For example, we tend to think of the Arabs as descendants of Ishmael or Esau, the Jews as descendants of Judah, the American Indians and South Pacific Islanders as descendants of Laman, and so forth. In broad terms all of these statements are true, of course, but through centuries of intermarriage and conversion, the “pure blood lines” (an impossible term in reality) of the various ancestors have been vastly intermingled. Surely down through nearly four thousand years the descendants of Isaac have intermarried with the descendants of Ishmael and the other sons of Abraham. We know that after the ten tribes were taken into captivity the term *Jew* was used in a nationalistic sense (to mean a member of the kingdom of Judah) and not just in a tribal sense (to mean a descendant of Judah, son of Jacob). Thus, Lehi, who was of Manasseh (see [Alma 10:3](#)), and Ishmael, who was of Ephraim (see Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses*, 23:184–85), were Jews, that is, were living in Judah. In the Book of Mormon, *Lamanite* was used in a spiritual sense (to mean one who had apostatized from the truth), as well as in the sense of lineage from Laman (see [4 Nephi 1:38](#)). A later example of how blood lines mix is found in the conversion of a whole nation to Judaism in the eighth century A.D. The majority of the people in the kingdom of the Khazars, in what is present-day Russia, became Jews by religion (see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. “Khazars,” 10:944–47). Many modern Jews from Europe can trace their lineage to the Khazars who, before 740 A.D., were Gentiles. The black Africans of Ethiopia claim to be descendants of King David through the marriage of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (see [1 Kings 10:1–13](#); *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. “Ethiopia,” 6:943). So it is possible that the blood of Israel spread through Africa as well. Even though there are groups today that could be thought of as predominantly Israel or predominantly Gentile, almost certainly blood of both lines can be found in most peoples of the earth. The important thing is that being Israel, or a covenant person, involves faithfulness as well as blood lineage. Thus, as Nephi said, repentance and faith in the Holy One of Israel is what determines whether one is of the covenant (see [2 Nephi 30:2](#)), a concept also taught by Paul (see [Romans 2:28–29](#)). In other words, while the blood lineage is significant, it can be overridden by one’s own faithfulness or lack of faithfulness. You will see this concept taught from the beginning as you read the early history of the covenant people.

## **(7-2) Genesis 24–28. When and Where Did the Events in the Lives of Isaac and Jacob Take Place?**

From chronological information in Genesis and the book of Moses it is estimated that Isaac was born approximately 1900 B.C. Isaac was forty years of age when he married Rebekah. Esau and Jacob were born twenty years later, or about 1840 B.C. Jacob's flight to Padan-aram, or Haran, likely occurred about 1800 B.C., which means the twelve sons would have been born between 1800 B.C. and 1780 B.C. In the line of Adam's royal generations Abraham was the twentieth, Isaac the twenty-first, and Jacob the twenty-second.

According to the information that has come down to modern times, Isaac spent his whole life in an area that could be encompassed by a circle approximately one hundred miles in diameter. On the northern edge of this circle would be Jerusalem, where Abraham took his son. Most of the circle would be in that part of southern Israel known as the Negev. Jacob, on the other hand, traveled much farther, going to Haran in the northern regions of the Euphrates River, and later, down into Egypt where his son Joseph preserved him in his old age.

The Negev responds to agricultural pursuits that harmonize with its arid character. It appears that Isaac, a herdsman, and his large household found sufficient pasture and other means of subsistence there. They had to move about, however, because of famines that occurred. Centuries of conflict, neglect, and natural causes have since turned the Negev into a barren area that covers nearly half of modern Israel. In recent years the Israelis have been turning the Negev into a productive area once again.

Chiefly, Isaac lived in three areas of the Negev: Beer-lahai-roi, Gerar, and Beersheba. Like his father, Isaac dug many wells. His tribe and flocks often went where the water was to be found. Isaac was a peaceful man, according to the record, choosing to move on and dig new wells rather than fight for the ones he had already dug. The Lord prospered him exceedingly.

Gerar is southwest of Jerusalem; Beersheba is southeast of Gerar and thirty-five miles due west of the south end of the Dead Sea. Isaac's clan established Beersheba, and the community since then has always been associated with his name. Beersheba is fifty miles south of Jerusalem and in Old Testament times marked the southern border of the Judean kingdom.

While fleeing to Padan-aram (Haran), Jacob had a remarkable vision at Bethel, where his grandfather, Abraham, had built an altar many years before.

Eleven miles north of Jerusalem, Bethel later became the religious center of the Northern Kingdom.

## GENESIS CHAPTER 24

*Abraham commands that Isaac shall not marry a Canaanite — The Lord guides Abraham's servant in choosing Rebekah as a wife for Isaac — Rebekah is blessed to be the mother of thousands of millions — She marries Isaac.*

1 And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.

2 And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:

### **(7-3) Genesis 24. Finding a Wife for Isaac**

This chapter of the Old Testament contains one of the most remarkable stories of commitment and faith in the scriptures. The following items are of interest:

Verses 2, 8. The Joseph Smith Translation account records that the servant put his hand under the *hand*, rather than the *thigh*, of Abraham. The gesture seems to have been a token of the covenant being made between the two men, perhaps similar to our shaking hands.

3 And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:

4 But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

5 And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?

6 And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.

7 ¶ The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that swore unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.

8 And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again.

9 And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning that matter.

10 ¶ And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master *were* in his hand: and he arose, and went to “Mesopotamia, unto the city of “Nahor.

11 And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, *even* the time that women go out to draw *water*.

12 And he said, O “LORD\_God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, “send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.

13 Behold, I stand *here* by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw “water:

14 And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: *let the same be she that thou hast* “appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.

Verses 12–14. These verses show that the servant, like Abraham, was a man of great faith. Abraham had told him that his errand was a commandment of the Lord (v. 7). So when faced with a tremendously challenging task, the servant turned to the Lord for help. Instead of just asking the Lord to solve his problem, he presented a plan for the Lord to confirm.

15 ¶ And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to “Bethuel, son of “Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

16 And the damsel *was* very “fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man “known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.

Verse 16. The King James Version suggests that Rebekah was very beautiful, but the Joseph Smith Translation says that she was the most beautiful woman the servant had ever seen. The Joseph Smith Translation reads, “And the damsel being a virgin, very fair to look upon, such as the servant of Abraham had not seen, neither had any man known the like unto her ...” (JST, Genesis 24:16).

17 And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.

18 And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.

19 And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw *water* for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.

Verse 19. Considering the capacity of a thirsty camel, one can well imagine how much effort it took for Rebekah to draw water by hand for ten camels. Not only was she beautiful but she was a willing worker and was quick to serve.

20 And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw *water*, and drew for all his camels.

21 And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.

22 And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten *shekels* weight of gold;

23 And said, Whose daughter *art* thou? tell me, I pray thee: is there room *in* thy father's house for us to lodge in?

24 And she said unto him, I *am* the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor.

25 She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.

26 And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD.

27 And he said, Blessed *be* the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I *being* in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.

28 And the damsel ran, and told *them* of her mother's house these things.

29 ¶ And Rebekah had a brother, and his name *was* Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well.

30 And it came to pass, when he saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well.

31 And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the LORD; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels.

32 ¶ And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that *were* with him.

33 And there was set *meat* before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on.

34 And he said, I *am* Abraham's servant.

35 And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses.

36 And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath.

37 And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell:

38 But thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.

39 And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me.

40 And he said unto me, The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house:

41 Then shalt thou be clear from *this* my oath, when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give not thee *one*, thou shalt be clear from my oath.

42 And I came this day unto the well, and said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go:

43 Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw *water*, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink;

44 And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: *let* the same *be* the woman whom the LORD hath appointed out for my master's son.

45 And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew *water*: and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee.

46 And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her *shoulder*, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also.

47 And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter *art* thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the earring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands.

48 And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son.

49 And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.

50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good.

51 Behold, Rebekah *is* before thee, take *her*, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken.

52 And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, *bowing himself* to the earth.

53 And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave *them* to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.

54 And they did eat and drink, he and the men that *were* with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master.

55 And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us *a few* days, at the least ten; after that she shall go.

56 And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master.

57 And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth.

58 And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.

Verse 58. This verse gives a great insight into the faith of Rebekah. For a young woman to leave her home, travel to a new country completely foreign to her, and marry a man she had never met would present a tremendous challenge. One would expect that she would have wanted to stay with her family as long as possible, but when given her choice, she said simply, "I will go."

59 And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men.

60 And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou *art* our sister, be thou *the* mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.

61 ¶ And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

62 And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi; for he dwelt in the south country.

63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels *were* coming.

64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel.

65 For she *had* said unto the servant, What man *is* this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant *had* said, It *is* my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself.

66 And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done.

67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Verse 67. When one contemplates the faith and beauty of Rebekah and how the servant of Abraham was led to her by the hand of the Lord, the comment "and he loved her" is not surprising.

#### Genesis 24

**Marriage is essential to God's eternal plan.**



Today many people make marriage a low priority or even consider it a burden. Abraham had a different perspective—to him, the marriage of his son Isaac was of highest importance. Why do you think it was so important to him? As you read [Genesis 24](#), think about the importance of marriage in God’s plan of salvation. You might also read Elder D. Todd Christofferson’s message “[Why Marriage, Why Family](#)” (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2015, 50–53) and consider why “a family built on the marriage of a man and woman supplies the best setting for God’s plan to thrive” ([page 52](#)).

Questions like the following might help you consider other important principles in this chapter:

**[Genesis 24:1–14](#)**. What did Abraham and his servant do to include the Lord in their efforts to find a wife for Isaac?

**[Genesis 24:15–28, 55–60](#)**. What qualities do you find in Rebekah that you would like to emulate?

What other insights do you find?

See also [Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4](#); “[The Family: A Proclamation to the World](#),” [Church of Jesus Christ.org](#).

## GENESIS CHAPTER 25

*Abraham marries, has descendants, dies, and is buried in the cave of Machpelah—His descendants through Ishmael are listed—Rebekah conceives, and Jacob and Esau struggle in her womb—The Lord reveals their destiny to Rebekah—Esau sells his birthright for a mess of pottage.*

1 Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name *was* Keturah.

2 And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and <sup>a</sup>[Medan](#), and <sup>b</sup>[Midian](#), and Ishbak, and Shuah.

3 And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim.

4 And the sons of <sup>a</sup>[Midian](#): Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoth, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these *were* the children of <sup>b</sup>[Keturah](#).

5 ¶ And <sup>a</sup>[Abraham](#) <sup>b</sup>[gave](#) all that he had unto Isaac.

6 But unto the sons of the <sup>c</sup>[concubines](#), which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and <sup>b</sup>[sent](#) them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the <sup>c</sup>[east](#) country.

7 And these *are* the “days of the years of “Abraham’s life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years.

8 Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good “old age, an old man, and full of *years*; and was “gathered to his people.

#### **(7-4) Genesis 25:8. What Does It Mean When the Record Says Abraham “Was Gathered to His People”?**

The early patriarchs had a clear knowledge of gospel principles taught to them from Adam down to Abraham. The phrase “gathered to his people” is one more evidence of their gospel knowledge. Two Bible scholars commented on the significance of that phrase: “This expression ... denotes the reunion in Sheol with friends who have gone before, and therefore presupposes faith in the personal continuance of a man after death, as a presentiment which the promises of God had exalted in the case of the patriarchs into a firm assurance of faith [see Hebrews 11:13]” (Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:1:263). *Sheol* is the Hebrew word for the world of spirits where one goes when one dies, the equivalent of the spirit world. The Hebrews had not only a concept of life after death but also a correct concept of the intermediate place between death and the Resurrection.

9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael “buried him in the cave of “Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which *is* before Mamre;

10 The field which Abraham “purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham “buried, and Sarah his wife.

11 ¶ And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the “well Lahai-roi.

12 ¶ Now these *are* the “generations of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, whom “Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s handmaid, “bare unto Abraham:

13 And these *are* the names of the sons of “Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam,

14 And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa,

15 Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah:

16 These *are* the sons of Ishmael, and these *are* their names, by their towns, and by their castles; “twelve princes according to their nations.

#### **(7-5) Genesis 25:16. The Twelve Tribes of Ishmael**

The twelve tribes who eventually descended from Jacob are much discussed, but it should be remembered that another twelve tribes also came from Ishmael.

17 And these *are* the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people.

18 And they dwelt from <sup>a</sup>Havilah unto <sup>b</sup>Shur, that *is* before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: *and* he died in the presence of all his brethren.

19 ¶ And these *are* the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: <sup>a</sup>Abraham begat Isaac:

20 And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of <sup>a</sup>Bethuel the Syrian of <sup>b</sup>Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

21 And Isaac entreated the LORD for his <sup>a</sup>wife, because she *was* <sup>b</sup>barren: and the LORD was <sup>c</sup>entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

### (7-6) Genesis 25:21. "Because She Was Barren"

The brevity of the historical account in Genesis tends to compress the time it covers. The simple statement about Rebekah's barrenness is more poignant when one remembers the great value people placed on childbearing in those times and that Isaac and Rebekah went childless for twenty years (see vv. 20, 26).

22 And the children struggled together within her; and she said, *If it be so, why am I thus?* And she went to <sup>a</sup>inquire of the LORD.

23 And the LORD said unto her, <sup>a</sup>Two nations *are* in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and *the one* people shall be stronger than *the other* people; and the <sup>b</sup>elder shall serve the younger.

24 ¶ And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, *there were* twins in her womb.

25 And the first came out red, all over like an <sup>a</sup>hairy garment; and they called his name <sup>b</sup>Esau.

26 And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's <sup>a</sup>heel; and his <sup>b</sup>name was called <sup>c</sup>Jacob: and Isaac *was* threescore years old when she bare them.

27 And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning <sup>a</sup>hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob *was* a <sup>b</sup>plain man, dwelling in <sup>c</sup>tents.

28 And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of *his* <sup>a</sup>venison: but <sup>b</sup>Rebekah loved Jacob.

### (7-7) Genesis 25:27–28. Jacob Was a Plain Man

In contrast to Esau, who is described as a "cunning hunter," Jacob is called a "plain man" (v. 27). The Hebrew word used there means "whole, complete, or perfect," so it is a very positive adjective.

The *loved* of verse 28 is used in the sense of "favored" or "preferred." Thus, Isaac favored Esau and Rebekah favored Jacob.

29 ¶ And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he *was* faint:

30 And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red *pottage*; for I *am* faint: therefore was his name called Edom.

**(7-8) Genesis 25:30**

*Edom* means “red.” The Edomites (descendants of Esau) played a significant role in the Old Testament, usually as antagonists to the Israelites. They inhabited the territory in and about Mount Seir between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea (see Genesis 36). Esau’s descendants today are also found among the Arab nations.

31 And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.

32 And Esau said, Behold, I *am* at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

**(7-9) Genesis 25:32**

This rationalization seems to reflect more scorn than hunger. Jacob would almost certainly have succored Esau freely if his life were in jeopardy. The point of this account seems to be primarily to show how little value Esau placed on the birthright. His immediate bodily needs were more important to him than the rights of the covenant. Additional evidence of this attitude is Esau’s marriages to Canaanite women, which broke the covenant line (see Genesis 26:34–35).

The birthright itself should have been a treasured thing. The highly desirable birthright blessing is the right to the presidency, or keys, of the priesthood. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

“It appears that anciently under the Patriarchal Order certain special blessings, rights, powers, and privileges—collectively called the *birthright*—passed from the father to his *firstborn son*. (Gen. 43:33.) In later ages special blessings and prerogatives have been poured out upon *all* the worthy descendants of some who gained special blessings and birthrights anciently. (3 Ne. 20:25–27.) Justification for this system, in large part, lies in the pre-existent preparation and training of those born in the lines destined to inherit preferential endowments.” (Mormon Doctrine, p. 87.)

In the patriarchal order this birthright was passed from father to son, who was often, but not always, the eldest son. Righteousness was a more important factor than being the firstborn.

33 And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised *his* birthright.

### Genesis 25:29–34

#### **I can choose between immediate gratification and things of greater value.**

In Abraham's culture, the oldest son in a family typically received a position of leadership and privilege, called the birthright. This son received a greater inheritance from his parents, along with greater responsibilities for caring for the rest of the family.

As you read [Genesis 25:29–34](#), consider why Esau might have been willing to give up his birthright in exchange for a meal. What lessons do you find for yourself in this account? For example, is there any “pottage” that is distracting you from blessings that are of most value to you? What are you doing to focus on and appreciate these blessings?

See also [Matthew 6:19–33](#); [2 Nephi 9:51](#); M. Russell Ballard, “[What Matters Most Is What Lasts Longest](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 41–44.

### GENESIS CHAPTER 26

*The Lord promises Isaac posterity as the stars of heaven in number — In his seed, all nations will be blessed — The Lord prospers Isaac, temporally and spiritually, for Abraham's sake — Isaac offers sacrifices — Esau marries Hittite wives to the sorrow of his parents.*

- 1 And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar.
- 2 And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of:
- 3 Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father;
- 4 And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;
- 5 Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

### Genesis 26:1–5

#### **The Abrahamic covenant was renewed through Isaac.**

The covenant God made with Abraham was intended to continue through many generations, so Abraham and Sarah's legacy of covenant keeping would need to be passed down to Isaac, Jacob, and other faithful women and men

among their posterity. As you read [Genesis 26:1–5](#), look for some of the blessings of the covenant that God mentioned. What do you learn about God from these verses?

6 ¶ And Isaac dwelt in Gerar:

7 And the men of the place asked *him* of his wife; and he said, *She is my sister*: for he feared to say, *She is my wife*; lest, *said he*, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she *was fair* to look upon.

8 And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac *was* sporting with Rebekah his wife.

9 And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she *is* thy wife: and how saidst thou, *She is my sister*? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die for her.

10 And Abimelech said, What *is* this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might lightly have lied with thy wife, and thou shouldest have brought guiltiness upon us.

11 And Abimelech charged all *his* people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.

12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him.

13 And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great:

14 For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him.

15 For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.

16 And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we.

17 ¶ And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

19 And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.

20 And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water *is* ours: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him.

21 And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah.

22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

23 And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba.

24 And the <sup>a</sup>LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I *am* the God of Abraham thy father: <sup>b</sup>fear not, for <sup>c</sup>I *am* with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy <sup>a</sup>seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

25 And he builded an <sup>a</sup>altar there, and called upon the <sup>b</sup>name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

26 ¶ Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and <sup>a</sup>Phichol the chief captain of his army.

27 And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye <sup>a</sup>hate me, and have sent me away from you?

28 And they said, We saw certainly that the <sup>a</sup>LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, *even* betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee;

29 That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in <sup>a</sup>peace: thou *art* now the <sup>b</sup>blessed of the LORD.

30 And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink.

31 And they <sup>a</sup>rose up betimes in the morning, and <sup>b</sup>sware one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.

32 And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water.

33 And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city *is* <sup>a</sup>Beer-sheba unto this day.

**Genesis 26:18–25, 32–33**

### **Jesus Christ is the well of living water.**

You may notice that wells and springs and other water sources play important roles in many Old Testament stories. This isn't surprising, because most of these stories happened in very dry places. As you read in [Genesis 26](#) about Isaac's wells, ponder what water may symbolize in the scriptures. What insights do you find about spiritual wells of "living water"? (see [John 4:10–15](#)). How are you digging spiritual wells in your life? How is the Savior like living water to you? Note that the Philistines had "stopped" the wells (see [Genesis 26:18](#)). Is there anything in your life that is stopping your wells of living water?

34 ¶ And Esau was forty years old when he took to <sup>a</sup>wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite:

35 Which were a <sup>a</sup>grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.

*Rebekah guides Jacob in seeking blessings — Jacob is blessed to have dominion and rule over peoples and nations — Esau hates Jacob and plans to slay him — Rebekah fears that Jacob may marry one of the daughters of Heth.*

1 And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, *here am I*.

2 And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death:

3 Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me *some* venison;

4 And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring *it* to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.

5 And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt *for* venison, *and* to bring *it*.

6 ¶ And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying,

7 Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death.

8 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee.

9 Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth:

10 And thou shalt bring *it* to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.

11 And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother *is* a hairy man, and I *am* a smooth man:

12 My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.

13 And his mother said unto him, Upon me *be* thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me *them*.

14 And he went, and fetched, and brought *them* to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved.

15 And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which *were* with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son:

16 And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck:

17 And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

18 ¶ And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am I*; who *art* thou, my son?



19 And Jacob said unto his father, I *am* Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.

20 And Isaac said unto his son, How *is it* that thou hast found *it* so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God brought *it* to me.

21 And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou *be* my very son Esau or not.

22 And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice *is* Jacob's voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau.

23 And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him.

24 And he said, *Art* thou my very son Esau? And he said, I *am*.

25 And he said, Bring *it* near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought *it* near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank.

26 And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son.

27 And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son *is* as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed:

28 Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine:

29 Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed *be* every one that curseth thee, and blessed *be* he that blesseth thee.

30 ¶ And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

31 And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.

32 And Isaac his father said unto him, Who *art* thou? And he said, I *am* thy son, thy firstborn Esau.

33 And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where *is* he that hath taken venison, and brought *it* me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, *and* he shall be blessed.

34 And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, *even* me also, O my father.

35 And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.

36 And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

37 And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?

38 And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, *even* me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.

39 And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above;

40 And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

### **(7-10) Genesis 27:1–40. Jacob Obtains the Birthright from Esau**

The story of how Jacob obtained the birthright blessing from Isaac with the help of his mother is a troubling one in many respects. Typically, commentators who do not have access to latter-day scriptures come to one of two conclusions: either they emphasize Esau's unworthiness for the birthright and therefore justify the deception, or else they criticize Jacob's shrewd and crafty nature.

A more complete knowledge of gospel principles, however, may pose some additional problems. Can a person deceive a patriarch and get a blessing that belongs to someone else? Was Jacob a deceitful and crafty man? Was Isaac blindly favorable to certain children? Can one be dishonest and still get a valid patriarchal blessing? The following points should be carefully considered:

1. As the record in Genesis now reads, there is little option but to conclude that Rebekah and Jacob deliberately deceived Isaac and that Jacob explicitly lied to his father (see [v. 24](#)). Rebekah and Jacob believed the deception was necessary because Isaac obviously favored Esau. Joseph Smith, however, taught that certain errors had crept into the Bible through "ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests" (Teachings, p. 327). For example, a comparison of the early chapters of Genesis with the fuller accounts revealed to the Prophet (now found in the books of Moses and Abraham) shows how much has been lost. It is possible that the story of Jacob's obtaining the birthright has also lost much or been changed by unbelievers. These changes could then explain the contradictions.
2. Rebekah knew by personal revelation that Jacob was to be the son of the covenant (see [Genesis 25:22–23](#)). Jacob reluctantly gave in to his mother's wishes after she told him that she would take the responsibility for what they were about to do.
3. Although the early patriarchs and their wives were great and righteous men and women who eventually were exalted and perfected (see [D&C 132:37](#)), this fact does not mean that they were perfect in every respect while in mortality. If the

story is correct as found in Genesis, Isaac may have been temporarily shortsighted in favoring Esau. Or Rebekah may have had insufficient faith in the Lord to let Him work His will and therefore undertook a plan of her own to ensure that the promised blessings would come to pass. These shortcomings do not lessen their later greatness and their eventual perfection.

4. Whatever the explanation for the circumstances surrounding the reception of the blessing, one thing is perfectly clear. Priesthood holders are given the keys to bind *and loose* on earth and have that action validated in heaven (see [Matthew 16:19](#)). Once Isaac learned of the deception, he could have revoked the blessing and given it to Esau. Instead, he told Esau, “Yea, and he shall be blessed” ([Genesis 27:33](#)). Later, when Jacob was preparing to leave for Padan-aram to escape Esau’s wrath, Isaac clearly gave him the blessing of Abraham (see [Genesis 28:3–4](#)), an additional proof that Jacob received the blessing meant for him and that Isaac confirmed it upon him. Thus, if the Genesis record is correct as it now is, Jacob, like others, received a call and a promise of eventual blessings because of his potential and in spite of his weaknesses. Like anyone, he had then to live worthily in order to obtain the promised blessings.

41 ¶ And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.

42 And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, *purposing* to kill thee.

43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran:

44 And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother’s fury turn away;

45 Until thy brother’s anger turn away from thee, and he forget *that* which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?

46 And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these *which are* of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?

#### **(7-11) [Genesis 27:34–46](#). Subsequent Effects of Jacob’s Blessing**

“Esau was also blessed—with the bounties of the earth, and with the potential to cast off the yoke of oppression; but like most of us he valued what he had lost after it was gone and rued the day he had traded the birthright off to Jacob. He bitterly resolved to get revenge by fratricide when he saw the blessing of transmittal of the birthright actually confirmed upon the head of him to whom he had bartered the right to it. The alert and resourceful Rebekah averted a double tragedy (loss of both sons—one by

murder and one by execution, as the law of [Genesis 9:6](#) would require) by proposing to Isaac that they send Jacob away to find a proper wife in her home land. Thus she would remove him from harm proposed by Esau until feelings could cool. The proposition that he be sent for a proper wife apparently was approved immediately by Isaac, for doubtless he saw that it was true, as Rebekah said, that their life’s mission would be frustrated if Jacob married as Esau had.” (Rasmussen, Introduction to the Old Testament, 1:47.)

### [Genesis 27](#)

#### **Were Rebekah and Jacob wrong to deceive Isaac?**

We don’t know the reasons behind the approach Rebekah and Jacob used to obtain a blessing for Jacob. It is helpful to remember that the Old Testament as we now have it is incomplete (see [Moses 1:23, 41](#)). There may be information missing from the original records that would explain what might seem troubling to us. However, we do know that it was God’s will for Jacob to receive the blessing from Isaac because Rebekah had a revelation that Jacob was to rule over Esau (see [Genesis 25:23](#)). After Isaac acknowledged that he had blessed Jacob instead of Esau, he affirmed that Jacob “shall be blessed” ([Genesis 27:33](#))—suggesting that God’s will had been accomplished.

## Ideas for Family Scripture Study and Home Evening

### [Genesis 24:2–4, 32–48.](#)

Abraham asked a trusted servant to find a wife for Isaac, and the servant covenanted with Abraham that he would. How did Abraham’s servant show faithfulness in keeping his covenant? How can we follow his example?

### [Genesis 24:15–28, 55–60.](#)

Your family could look in these verses for attributes that made Rebekah a worthy eternal companion for Isaac. Encourage family members to pick one of these attributes that they feel they should develop.

### [Genesis 25:19–34; 27.](#)

To review the stories of how Esau’s birthright and blessing came to Jacob instead, you could write the sentences from “[Jacob and Esau](#)” (in *Old Testament*

*Stories*) on separate strips of paper. Family members could work together to put the sentences in the correct order.

As you discuss Esau selling his birthright, you might also talk about what matters most to your family, like your relationships with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Perhaps family members could find objects or pictures that represent what they consider to be of eternal value. Let them explain why they chose those things.

### **Genesis 26:3–5.**

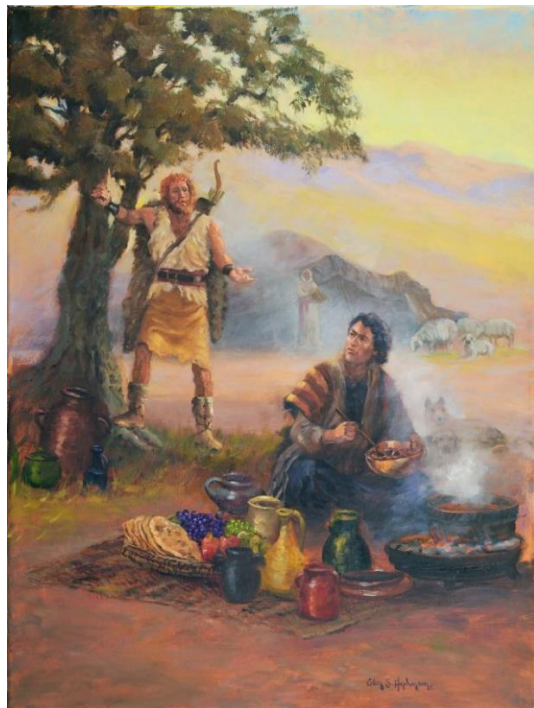
To help your family understand the Abrahamic covenant, you could invite them to find the promises described in these verses. Why is it important for us to know about these promises today? (see “[Thoughts to Keep in Mind: The Covenant](#),” in this resource).

### **Genesis 26:18–25, 32–33.**

Why are wells important? How is Jesus Christ like a well of water?

For more ideas for teaching children, see [this week’s outline](#) in *Come, Follow Me—For Primary*.

Suggested song: “[Choose the Right](#),” *Hymns*, no. 239.



*Esau Sells His Birthright to Jacob*, by Glen S. Hopkinson