

The Joseph Story
A BLESSING DISGUISED AS A BURDEN

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Dedication



This book is dedicated to my father in the ministry, the late Dr. L. E. Harding. Pastor Harding helped me to understand the Joseph story during the early years of my ministry. As a young minister growing up in a small town in Arkansas, I had no clue where God desired to take me on this journey. I vividly remember Pastor Harding instructing me to leave my comfort zone in Camden, Arkansas, to attend Bishop College in Dallas, Texas. For me, I thought this directive was like sending me to Egypt. I actually told him that I didn't want to go but out of respect for him, I would do it.

When I arrived in Dallas to attend Bishop College, I was so disappointed with the city and school that I didn't even unload my car. I drove back to Camden, Arkansas, the next day and Pastor Harding sent me back two days later. I am so glad he made me return.

I didn't know that God had a divine plan for my life that involved Dallas (originally thought to be Egypt). Not only did I meet the woman I would marry and spend the rest of my

life with in Dallas, I was also blessed to organize the Antioch Fellowship Church after graduating from Bishop College, and today it has a membership of over 7,000 people.

I would also like to dedicate this book to the other twelve tribes of Henry and Annie Wesley. I thank God for the twelve siblings I have been blessed to have in my life. All of them have been such an inspiration over the years. My brother Christopher has often called me “the Joseph” of the Wesley descendants.

I would like to thank my wife, Cheryl, for being my number one cheerleader. She has been my greatest source of inspiration over the years. She has always given me the time and space to do all that I attempt to do for the kingdom of God.

Lastly, I want to thank a member of the Antioch Church where I have been blessed to serve for over twenty-nine years at the time of writing this book. Sister Jackie Harris told me years ago that I needed to publish this book about Joseph to help people on their journey. Every time I started working on it, Jackie’s words crossed my mind.

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*The Family History
and the Future*

Genesis 25:19-28



The Twin Brothers

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The Different People
The Distinct Personalities
The Divine Plans
The Delivery Period
The Divided Parents
The Deceitful Plot

The Tricky Believers

The Father's Blindness
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The Formed Barrier

Before looking at the story of Joseph, let's spend some time dealing with his grandparents, parents, and siblings. Joseph came from the patriarchal line of the most well-known people of Hebrew history. His great-grandfather was Abraham. His grandfather was Isaac. His father was Jacob. In this section of the book, I would simply like to highlight the family history by addressing different sections of the narrative. Why do this? The family history is usually connected to the future happenings. The story of Joseph's father, Jacob, will serve as the introduction to this study.

Isaac was the only son of Abraham by his wife, Sarah. Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was ninety (Genesis 17:17; 21:5). Isaac married Rebekah when he was forty years old and when he was sixty years old, Rebekah conceived and gave birth to two sons (Genesis 25:20-26). Let's begin the history lesson from here.

The Twin Brothers

Rebekah was barren for approximately twenty years after she married Isaac (Genesis 25:26). After she conceived, **the difficult pregnancy** occurred (Genesis 25:22). I am sure Rebekah was aware of the patriarchal promise given to her father-in-law Abraham. I sure she heard the birth story related to her husband who was born when his parents were really old. Yet the pain of child bearing has a way of taking your mind off of the miraculous stories of the past. She is struggling with "the child" she thinks she is carrying in her womb.

As a result of this difficult pregnancy, we read about **the delivered prayers**. She didn't have a primary care physician or OBGYN specialist to go to. She talked to God about it. When there are difficulties, we need to tell God about them. She chose

to spend time in prayer to address her struggle. Prayer is always the best route to take when life throws you a curve ball. Later on in the narrative, Rebekah tries to deal with matters related to her grown sons on her own when she should have taken the time to pray about her situation.

God gives some detailed information about **the different people** growing in her womb (Genesis 25:23). After inquiring of God, she learned that she was pregnant with twins. God informed her that there were two nations in her womb. She learned that she is carrying a set of twins rather than one baby in her womb. God informs her that both of the babies would eventually grow and become leaders of nations. In other words, she would birth future world leaders. By the way, this should give us another reason to be opposed to abortion. God sees the future path of the babies conceived.

When you examine God's response to Rebekah's prayer, you immediately detect **the distinct personalities** of the two people in her womb. In Genesis 25:23, God described the two people in her womb as "two manner of people." The word *manner* suggests that the two people would have distinct personalities. From later descriptions of the two people, it does not appear that they were identical twins. All we know is that Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents (Genesis 25:27). However, if they were identical in their early physical features, God informed Rebekah that their personalities and temperaments would be different.

After Esau and Jacob were born, their lifestyles give us a glimpse into **the divine plans** for their lives. You can sense the prophetic plan of God without knowing the rest of the story by looking at God's response to Rebekah's prayer. God declared that

the older would serve the younger (see Genesis 25:23c). Later on, we will learn that Esau did not take the “spiritual matters” to heart (see Hebrews 12:16). Maybe he looked at his position as the firstborn son as the only leverage needed to secure his place in God’s plan. His behavior was irresponsible toward family affairs and the heavenly Father’s plan for the spiritual condition of His people.

Next you have **the delivery period** taking place. We can plainly see that there was an attempt by Jacob to adjust the patriarchal lineage. At their birth, Esau was born first but Jacob held on to his heel in an attempt to switch the birth order. The infant Jacob was unsuccessful in his attempt to do so. By the way, I believe this is how they came up with the name Jacob. The name means “trickster.” I have no clue how an infant can think through the process of making a move like this. Yet I do know why he was unsuccessful. I know that God prevented it from happening. Why? Jacob was destined by God to be the younger, who would be served by his older brother.

When we examine the childhood period of Esau and Jacob, we immediately see **the divided parents** carrying out their parental responsibilities. As you study the twins’ childhood, you learn that the mother favored Jacob and the father favored Esau (see Genesis 25:28). This would lead to a lot of the problems later on. There is really no justification for parents to show favoritism with their children. Parents are required to love their children the same. On the other hand, I don’t believe parents should treat their children the same because of the unique personalities they possess. They should be treated according to their God-given design.

Before moving on, let’s address **the deceitful plot** of Jacob to trick Esau out of the blessing of the birthright. One day, Esau

came home hungry and Jacob had food. Instead of sharing food with his brother, he bargained with him. He basically said, “I will feed you some of the stew if you will sell me the blessing of the birthright.” Esau basically says, “You can have it. Just give me something to eat” (see Genesis 25:29-34). The thing most interesting about this transaction is that Esau could not officially give the birthright because the head of the family was the only one qualified to do so.

The Tricky Believers

Rebekah and Jacob are involved in the next season of deceit and trickery. They end up getting away with it because of **the father’s blindness**. Isaac is up in age and his days are fading (so they think). He has lost his sight. He is ready to transfer the blessing of the birthright to his favorite and the firstborn son, Esau. Esau really didn’t deserve this honor but he was the firstborn son whom the blessing of the birthright was to go to.

The blessing of the birthright basically deals with Jacob passing on **the family business**. The firstborn son would become the HNIC (Hebrew Now in Charge). The blessing of the birthright essentially meant that the person chosen would become the head of “Isaac Enterprises” in the future. The promise made to Abraham would be passed on to the next generation.

When you consider **the flawed behavior** of Esau, you can see why Rebekah is concerned. Rebekah believed that, as far as being “spiritually fit and equipped” for the blessing of the birthright, Jacob was the one more deserving. Yet it is during this episode of deceit that we see Jacob behaving in a way that did not please God. Look at what he is doing and saying in the presence of Isaac. Jacob is pretending to be who he is not. He is wearing a

disguise. He is lying to his father. If this is not flawed behavior, I don't know what else to call it.

When it comes to **the fixed blunders** of life, God does not need you to do anything outside of His will to try to correct them. Rebekah believed Isaac was about to make a crucial mistake by giving Esau the blessing of the birthright. Why does Rebekah believe this to be the case? Let's go back to the answered prayer during the pregnancy. God told her that the older son would serve the younger. She had to do something about this error that her husband was about to make. She decides to help out God, her husband, and her favorite son.

Rebekah desires to make sure her favorite son is the recipient of **the future blessing** according to the revelation given by God to her when she was pregnant. When it comes to blessings from God, He does not need our assistance to bring them to pass. The only part of the project that warranted Rebekah's participation was the birthing and rearing of the boys. God could take care of the rest of the process.

Let me comment on **the forsaken beliefs** of Rebekah and Jacob in this episode. As mentioned before, the flawed behavior disqualified Esau to receive the birthright but Rebekah and Jacob were guilty of implementing flawed behavior to be blessed. Rebekah and Jacob came up with a sinful plan, which means that it was a premeditated act. Jacob was disguised as Esau and Rebekah served Isaac his favorite meal. After Isaac was tricked into believing he was dining and having a discussion with Esau, he blessed Jacob with the birthright proclamation.

We never have to lie or use deceptive measures to receive what God has in store for us. We should simply believe that God is in control and able to change and correct those things that

don't exactly line up with His perfect will. In due season, He will take care of them. The problem is that we are not willing to wait on God to handle them. When we choose to break the rules of God to be "blessed," a red flag should go up immediately.

After Isaac was eventually tricked into giving the blessing of the birthright to Jacob instead of Esau, we read that Esau returned from the field and delivered a meal to his father. He stood ready to receive the blessing of the birthright. Isaac soon discovered he had been tricked and Esau became **the furious brother** according to Genesis 27:30-41. Esau hated his brother so much for stealing the birthright that he vowed to slay him (see Genesis 27:41). Although this narrative was recorded early in the records of biblical history, a similar incident had already occurred between two more brothers, Cain and Abel. Therefore, we should not dismiss Esau's vow as an idle threat made in anger. He desires and is determined to slay his own brother over this cruel act.

Rebekah immediately realizes the need for **the formed barrier** between the two sons. She informs Jacob of Esau's plan to kill him and both parents order him to leave home and go to her brother Laban's house in Haran (see Genesis 27:42-45). When we lie and deceive to receive the blessings of God, it will produce some barriers that we didn't consider while planning our schemes. It will cost you now or later (sometimes now *and* later). He receives the blessing of the birthright but it cost more than he and Rebekah bargained for.